

Change legislation which can unfairly brand firearms officers as murderers

Met commissioner Sir Ian Blair is calling for changes to the legal framework dealing with firearms officers who have to take split second decisions which can end their careers.

Sir Ian believes legislation should be more flexible when taking decisions about firearms officers who shoot in the course of their duty.

He said: 'I am very concerned we have not got the legal framework right around firearms officers. Our only option at the moment is either an officer was right (to shoot) or is charged with murder, I do not think that is reasonable.'

He added: 'The question is whether their actions were reasonable [given the circumstances]. If someone is cavalier, that's different, but officers take decisions in a split second.'

His comments follow the case of the two Met officers suspended after shooting Harry Stanley, 46, who was unarmed at the time.

The suspensions prompted an unofficial 'strike' by firearms officers in the Met's SO19 unit in November last year.

After a review of procedures, Sir Ian returned the two officers to 'non-operational' duties.

Sir Ian added that he is proud of the fact that the British police service is one of only two largely unarmed services in the world and that he had 'unarmed officers doing a fantastic job', but he added that one of his worst fears was a 'dead cop'.

Federation Conference 2005

A live webcast of the Federation conference 2005 will be available via www.polfed.org from 17th/19th May.

Community support officers do the jobs police officers 'do not want to do'

Community support officers are taking on the jobs that police officers do not want to do, such as security outside buildings in Westminster, says Sir Ian Blair, commissioner of the Met.

In an interview with *Police* this month, Sir Ian says that CSOs carry out the tasks that police officers prefer to move away from, such as community problem solving and security of buildings in London after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

'In my 30 years, the constable has been regarded as the bedrock of the service, so why is it that everyone wants to get away to be in traffic or CID?', he said.

Sir Ian then goes on to liken it to the medical field where the Nobel prizes go to the great surgeons, rather than the doctors doing an excellent job, vaccinating against illness and preventing deaths by helping to stop people from smoking.

'Everyone knows the beat bobby is the centre piece [of the police service] but everyone wants to do something else,' he adds.



Credit: Howard Sayer

CSOs on patrol in the community

According to the Metropolitan Police Authority, community support officers perform 'routine duties, assist and support police officers, gather intelligence, carry out security patrols and provide public reassurance through a permanent police presence'.

Sir Ian does, however, reiterate

that police officers will always be a part of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams in London boroughs to work within communities to problem-solve and provide reassurance as well as combating anti-social behaviour. (See Sir Ian Blair interview page 12)

Scheme could attract 'new blood' in NARPO

The National Association of Retired Police Officers wants to gain new blood and shake off the image of a 'bowls club' through a scheme set up with local federations to pay membership fees for the first year.

Sandie Wilde, chairman of the Manchester and district branch of the organisation, said that they needed to recruit new members or they would eventually 'curl up and die' and have instigated an innovative scheme, they hope will be repeated across the country.

Manchester Police Federation has set up an initiative

where police officers who are members of their Group Insurance Scheme, get their £14.68 membership paid for during their first year in NARPO.

Paul Kelly, chairman of the Manchester Police Federation, said: 'Officers can suddenly get to the end of their service, they shake hands and then they are sent on their way, but this scheme helps to keep a support network going. We are hoping it will encourage new membership and lower the age profile, it's not just some bowls club, it can offer a range of services and support.'

Officers sign an application form on retirement and the fees

are paid, with the funds being deducted from pensions after the first year, unless officers opt out.

Ms Wilde said: 'We look after welfare and pensions issues but we also want to appeal to younger members with issues that are relevant to them, such as how to move on into different employment or set up their own business.'

The organisation has set up a 'Life After' Club which runs seminars on preparing CVs and business or marketing plans. Officers who are still serving can become associate members and would pay a fee of £15.