

Policing in the face of terror

Despite last year's predictions by the previous Met Commissioner and the Mayor of London of an inevitable terrorist attack against the capital, people were shocked, disturbed and deeply upset at the terrible images we witnessed on July 7.

Londoners and all the emergency services worked tirelessly together to demonstrate their resilience and spirit against terrorism. This was recognised at the start of the Police Bravery Awards ceremony last month when Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, accepted an award on behalf of all Londoners to recognise the role everyone played in the face of the four separate but very deliberate attacks.

Had it not been for the policing requirements of G8, the annual Police Bravery Awards would have been held on that fateful Thursday and 59 nominated

brave officers would have found themselves caught up in the middle of the incident. Fortunately, the ceremony was held the week after on 14th July and after serious debate by the judging panel the Home Secretary presented the overall winner award to Constables Gareth Gent and Liam Wood from South Yorkshire Police.

Since this time, there have been more attempted bombings. This prompted firearms officers to shoot Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes, mistaking him for a suicide bomber.

His death was a tragedy and no one can take away the sense of loss his family must feel, but it is also important to look at the bigger picture here. Firearms officers are working under tremendous pressure, the suicide bombers responsible for the deaths of more than 50 people were still at large when the inci-

dent took place, and they could have been face-to-face with any one of them.

Around the country people will have debated the rights and wrongs of such a decision – which is all very well in retrospect and in a comfortable and safe environment. If mistakes were made, of course they should be dealt with, but what should also be remembered is that the officers in question had to make a judgement in that split-second, if they had been right, what would the repercussions have been? I for one would not have wanted to be in their place.

This is why Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, has written to the Independent Police Complaints Commission and asked that investigators take into account the gravity of the situation firearms officers are working under.



Editorial by Syreeta Lund Deputy Editor of Police magazine

What do you think? We would like to hear your views on the issues discussed in this month's magazine. Write to **Syreeta Lund** at: **15 Langley Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6LP.** Fax: **020 8390 2249** or by Email: **slund@jcc.polfed.org**

In Focus



Police chaplains involved in counselling police officers at the scene of the London bombings talk about their role and the effect of the terrifying scenes on those working in the heart of the aftermath. **Page 6.**



Met firearms officer Mark Williams speaks out on the need for the Independent Police Complaints Commission to take into account the pressures faced by those working under a 'shoot to protect' policy. **Page 7.**



Professor Tim Newburn looks at the possible shape of the future police service as a report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary on force structures is due to be published over the summer. **Page 12 and 13.**