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Monday 18th May 2020

Dear Mike,

I write in a personal capacity to express my disappointment and unease at the IOPC's press release on 14 May 2020, calling for greater scrutiny of Taser use. I believe it is unbalanced in that it dwells far too much on the potential disadvantages of the weapon and omits to mention the way in which its use can act as a powerful deterrent to further violence, and that the vast majority of instances where it has been deployed have contributed significantly to keeping the peace.

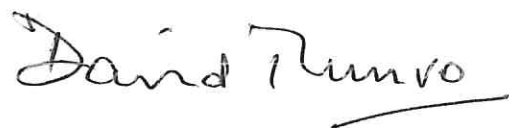
You will be aware of course that the government recently granted more money to allow more officers to be trained and equipped and Surrey, like many other forces, have taken full advantage of this. My Chief Constable's policy is that all front-line officers who wish to carry Tasers should be allowed to do so – naturally after receiving comprehensive training and in the expectation that their use will be rigorously monitored and scrutinised. This is the right policy and I support it 100%.

In my own force and I am sure in most others, there are good oversight procedures already in place to regulate Taser use, just as there are for other front-line crime-fighting and violence-reducing pieces of equipment and I am satisfied that they are fit for purpose. As part of my general performance monitoring role, I have oversight of Taser policy and practice, as of course do HMICFRS. I do not consider that further regulation is necessary – unless there are specific learning points, following your individual reviews of current cases, which suggest otherwise.

I accept of course that it is perfectly proper for the IOPC to investigate cases of alleged concern and to alert the policing community to any perceived shortcomings, but I would also submit that it should present a balanced picture – which I fear your release does not. The danger is that individual officers will be reluctant to deploy Tasers in situations where its use is objectively justified and, as a consequence, more incidents will get out of control and result in greater harm to the general public, police officers and indeed to the potential recipient.

You may be aware that I am the APCC's lead for Equalities, Diversity and Human Rights which includes Stop and Search. The issue of disproportionality is of long-standing concern in the Stop and Search context but I have not picked up any similar issues with Taser deployment. I will however investigate that aspect from the APCC perspective.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Munro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Munro
Police and Crime Commissioner

