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Figures on the police use of Taser in England and Wales

The Minister of State for Security, Counter-Terrorism, Crime and Policing (Mr. Tony McNulty): This statement is to notify the House about the release of the first formal quarterly figures on the use of Taser.

Taser has been available to all Authorised Firearms Officers since September 2004 as a less lethal option for use in situations where a firearms authority has been granted in accordance with criteria laid down in the Association of Chief Police Officers Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms.

On 20 July 2007 I gave my approval for Chief Officers throughout England and Wales to deploy Taser for use by Authorised Firearms Officers in operations or incidents where the criteria for the authorisation to issue firearms does not apply, but where officers are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that they would need to use force to protect the public, themselves and or the subject.

I also approved a 12 month trial of the deployment of Taser by specialty trained units who are not firearms officers in similar circumstances. The trial commenced on 1 September 2007 involving 10 forces.

Figures on the use of Taser are broken down into three tables:

All uses of Taser in the UK since introduction in April 2004 up to 30 November 2007;

Taser use by authorised firearms officers outside of a firearms authority from 20 July 2007 to 30 November 2007;

Taser use by specialty trained units in the first 3 months in the ten trial forces areas from 1 September 2007 to 30 November 2007.

The figures show that Taser has been used by Authorised Firearms Officers 163 times outside of a firearms authority since 20 July 2007 to end November 2007, and by specialty trained units 16 times in the first quarter of the trial. It should be noted that only 6 of the 10 forces carrying out the trial, actually started on 1 September, and that this excluded West Yorkshire Police Service and Metropolitan Police Service. Therefore, we expect the next quarter figures for the trial to be higher.

Publication of these figures is in line with the Government's rigorous and measured approach to extending the use of Taser and to subject the trial to a full and thorough evaluation.

I have placed a copy of the figures in the Library of the House. Figures on Taser use will be published regularly on a quarterly basis in May, August and November 2008 on the Home Office Scientific Development Branch (HOSDB) website.