

# A modern weapon for a modern role

**Steve Partridge**, Corporate Communications, MDP Wethersfield, profiles the MOD Police taking delivery of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century weapon...

The Ministry of Defence Police has now become the first police force in the country to take delivery of a new generation of firearm. Following rigorous tests to uncover the most suitable weapon for armed guarding duties in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the MOD Police has procured the Heckler & Koch MP7.

The MP7 was developed to fulfil a NATO demand for a light, small, accurate weapon, which can penetrate sophisticated body armour. The firearm will be the MOD Police's (MDP) Utility Weapon and replaces the majority of the three different weapons currently used by officers. These are the Browning pistol, the SA80 assault rifle and the Heckler & Koch MP5.

It will be used by officers who protect a variety of MOD establishments across the United Kingdom against armed attack. The MDP is the only force to have all of its 3,440 officers trained in the use of firearms, and at any one time, some 70% of them are carrying a weapon while on duty. The MDP is now the only organisation in the UK to carry the MP7.

Assistant Chief Constable John Bligh, Director of Operational Support for the MDP, commented: "Our officers work at 100 different MOD sites across the United Kingdom in a wide range of roles, so it makes sense for us to have a very adaptable weapon. The MP7 was the only firearm we tested which could fulfil all of our criteria and be used successfully within a wide variety of our policing operations.

"Among its many advantages are that it is more accurate than a pistol and has a low recoil action. Its power ratio also means that, whilst it can penetrate body armour, it will not pass right through a target.

"There are also very significant benefits to be made in only having to train our people in one firearm system, rather than three. As well as the obvious cost benefit, this will also boost officer safety due to their increased familiarity with the weapon."

He said the MDP had worked closely with the Defence Procurement Agency and Heckler & Koch during the development and testing of the weapon for its suitability.

"We asked for a number of modifications to increase its suitability for the roles in which we use it", he said. "Our officers patrol both on land and at sea, and can be called upon to work in a variety of environments, such as within naval warships."



Among the changes made to the MP7 was the removal of its fully automatic and semi-automatic firing modes, so that it will only fire a single shot at a time. This ensures that the gun meets legislation requirements on the proportionality of a police response if the weapon is fired.

The total cost of the project, including ammunition for three years, is around £3m. However, the weapon is also likely to result in a 42% reduction in the cost of ongoing firearms training for officers – a saving of more than £300,000 a year.

More than 1,500 MP7s have been ordered by the MDP, although a small number of the Force's current weapons will be retained for very specialist operations. Although the MDP is the first force in the country to take delivery of the MP7, many other constabularies are following developments and have expressed an interest in it.

#### MP7 facts:

- Designed to meet NATO demands for a new personal defence weapon, which has the medium range capabilities of an assault rifle and pistol-like close combat dimensions;
- A new 4.6mm calibre of bullet has been specially created for the weapon and it has less than half the recoil of a 9mm gun;
- Features include: a retractable stock, ambidextrous cocking and decocking, mountings for various sights, and a folding foregrip for extra control.

For more information go to the website.

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