

independent and effective investigations and reviews

pirc

Police Investigations &  
Review Commissioner

DECEMBER 2018

# PIRC Investigation Findings

Discharge of Firearm  
31 March 2018

## **BACKGROUND**

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About 1831 hours on Saturday 31 March 2018, a 48-year-old woman attacked police officers and a member of the public with an axe during an incident in the grounds of Craigmillar Castle, Edinburgh. An armed officer of Police Scotland discharged an Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP) Launcher (baton round launcher) at the woman, resulting in her being struck on the thigh with a baton round. This temporarily disabled her, allowing officers to remove the axe and arrest her and stop the threat posed to the officers and the public. As a result of the discharge, the woman sustained bruising to her thigh.

The incident began at 1225 hours that day when a member of the public telephoned Police Scotland to report that the woman had chased him in the woods of Craigmillar Castle armed with an axe. Police officers quickly attended at the scene and contained the woman and the surrounding area. Over the course of the next six hours a number of police officers and a friend of the woman unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate with her to surrender the axe. These attempts all met with further threats from her.

When the woman ran towards officers and a member of the public apparently intent on striking them with the axe, the armed officer discharged the baton round.

She was arrested and later charged with a number of offences.

## **REFERRAL TO THE PIRC**

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In terms of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006, as amended, and the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (Investigations Procedure, Serious Incidents and Specified Weapons) Regulations 2013, all incidents of Police Scotland's use of firearms, including the discharge of an AEP Launcher, must be referred to the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) for independent assessment. In this regard, on 31 March 2018 Police Scotland referred the incident to the PIRC.

## **PIRC INVESTIGATION**

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The PIRC investigation examined whether the use of the AEP launcher was necessary and proportionate.

## **PIRC FINDINGS**

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Following investigation the Commissioner found that:

- The woman posed a danger to a member of the public and police, threatening them with an axe.
- Over a period of six hours, police officers and a member of the public unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the woman to surrender the axe.
- When the woman ran towards the officers and member of the public apparently intent on striking them with the axe, an armed officer discharged an AEP launcher

at her, striking her on the thigh with a baton round. This allowed other officers to overpower the woman and disarm her.

- The use of the AEP launcher in the circumstances was both necessary and proportionate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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No recommendations were made.