



National
Counter Terrorism
Policing

Headquarters

Andrew Mercer
Group Chief Executive & Secretary General
National Rifle Association

Mark Rowley
Assistant Commissioner
5th Floor
10 Victoria Street
London
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Our Ref: ACSO/249/16
30th November 2016

Dear Mr. Mercer

Thank you for your letter dated the 2nd November 2016.

As you highlight the vast majority of licensed firearms holders are law abiding and responsible who take all appropriate measures to ensure the security of their firearms. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that some do not. During 2015 alone, firearms numbering in the high hundreds, which were held on certificate and recorded on the National Firearms Licensing System (NFLMS) were either stolen or reported as lost.

Unfortunately we do see licensed firearms recovered in criminal circumstances, and we do, on occasions, see licensed firearms holders acting outside of their licence conditions.

A recent high profile and tragic example is the firearm discharged in the murder of Jo Cox. This was originally a licensed firearm that was stolen from a vehicle. It then ended up in the hands of Thomas Mair.

I want to raise awareness of this issue within the firearms community to prevent firearms falling into criminal hands I therefore invite you to support our message that a few reckless owners let the majority down and put the public at risk.

In your letter you raised a number of questions:

➤ **Does the 800 reported losses relate to firearms only?**

In 2015 there were 635 licensed firearms reported stolen or lost. This figure does not include component parts such as barrels or sound moderators. The 800 firearms quoted were over an 18 month period.

➤ **Does the count include ammunition and air rifles?**

The number of 635 as quoted above does not include ammunition. It does include 2 air rifles.

➤ **Were the majority of losses associated with car thefts or domestic break-ins?**

The common scenarios for stolen firearms are those resulting from burglaries at private houses and thefts from motor vehicles. In respect of lost firearms, the most common themes are that a licence holder cannot account for their firearm, or a firearm cannot be found following the death of a licence holder.

➤ **Does the 800 include missing Police or Military Firearms?**

No

➤ **How many of the 800 were subsequently found / recovered?**

- Of those firearms held on certificate and recorded on NFLMS in 2015 as stolen or lost a total of 15 have been recovered and submitted to NABIS. In 2015 NABIS examined 483 shotguns and rifles that were suitable for firearms tracing. Of these 91 (19%) were identified as previously licensed firearms.

I wanted to provide you with this information to assist the National Rifle Association and the wider shooting community. I am grateful to you for your offer of support; your assistance and that of your members will be invaluable in supporting our campaign to develop public awareness, reduce weapon and ammunition availability for terrorists and the enduring threat to the public from illegal firearms.

Police and representatives from the shooting community have a proven record of successful engagement such as the Law Commission review of Firearms and the Obsolete Calibre Discussions.

We can continue engagement through the National Practitioners group that the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC – of which you are a constituent associate) founded and administers, of which the Police and Home Office Firearms Licensing representatives are members; and the NPCC Criminal Use of Firearms Independent Advisory Group (that BSSC are also represented on).

I look forward to your continued engagement in these and other issues.

I have copied this letter to ACC Dave Orford, the NPCC lead for Firearms Licensing.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Barber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that loops back under the name.

Assistant Commissioner
Specialist Operations