

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING : 19 October 2015

#### IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

#### **(SE15/130) - Officer numbers qualified to handle firearms - Programme 1.2: Border Management**

Senator Hanson-Young, Sarah (L&CA 54) asked:

Mr Quaedvlieg: Just a couple of points of detail to the secretary's response then I will ask Assistant Commissioner Peter Docwra, who is in charge of our Border Force Capability Division, to answer questions in more detail in terms of the training. The legacy functions within Customs that have been armed for quite a period of time—I think seven or eight years, but I will get some more precision on that—are the maritime unit, the surveillance operatives, investigators, and some enforcement staff. It is the intent to increase the number of officers who are able to use force up to and including lethal. However, we need to go through an assessment process in terms of the functions. The secretary has mentioned the latter edition of the counted-terrorism unit teams at the airports. We note an enterprise decision to arm those officers. All officers in the CTU teams as they take up the positions will be armed in the future. There may be some other roles that require officers to be armed, but it is about the function and not about the individual officers—I think that is an important distinction to make. Where we make a judgement that a function ought to be conducted by an armed officer, no person without a formal qualification will be able to take up those positions. The curriculum that we have put in place emulates the policing standard. In fact, we have adopted the Australian Federal Police standard in terms of the use of force, and that includes recertification on a periodic basis. In terms of the number of officers who are armed in the ABF, I think it is under 1,000, but I will ask Peter Docwra if he has any more detail in relation to numbers.

Mr Docwra: As the commissioner said, we do not have officers who are permanently armed per se. The latest number of officers who are trained to carry firearms is in the order of 1,000.

During the course of this briefing I will get the exact number for you.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: Is that an increase overall? I understand that there are some people who have been carried over from the old Customs unit, but overall this is an increase—is that right?

Mr Quaedvlieg: Yes, that is right. It is an increase.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG: How many people are we talking about, or how many positions are we talking about as an increase?

Mr Docwra: I do not have an exact number. As the commissioner said, there are a number of new functions. The functional review and the risk assessment process is new, so we do not have a previous number to compare it to. I can get an order of magnitude figure for the officers who were previously qualified under the old Customs and Border Protection Service for you shortly.

*Answer:*

There are approximately 1,000 highly-trained officers who have valid Use of Force permits and can be deployed operationally with personal defence equipment including weapons. Between 1 July 2015 and 19 October 2015, 48 additional officers were trained for deployment with personal defence equipment including weapons.