



Home Office

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Thank you for your letter of 20 March requesting that the Ziegler Wasserwerfer 9000 be authorised for use by the police in England and Wales, and for copying me in to your letter of 6 June to Professor Flower. Professor Flower has now written to me to confirm his views on the progress that has been made in meeting the recommendations of the interim SACMILL statement. I am considering carefully the information that you and Professor Flower have provided.

In addition to the scientific and medical factors I need to consider, I would like to better understand the operational context in which water cannon could be used. The police have dealt with a number of public order events in recent years. I would be grateful for your assessment of the policing of such incidents, including the strengths and weaknesses of the range of tactics available at the time, and additionally what impact, if any, water cannon could have made had it been authorised. The following events are particularly of interest to me, but I would also welcome information on any other examples that you consider illustrative.

- Countryside Alliance protest (2002)
- G20 protests in London (2009)
- Israeli Embassy protest (2009)
- Student protests (2010)
- Summer riots (2011)

I would welcome your views on a number of specific questions on the applicability of water cannon in these instances.

- Would water cannon have stopped the disorder entirely?
- If not entirely, to what extent could water cannon have reduced disorder, strengthened public protection or prevented injury to life and property?
- Would other available weapons or tactics, such as firearms, baton rounds, taser or CS gas, conventional public order policing methods, or other tactics, such as containment, have been useful? If so, would they have been more or less useful than water cannon?
- At what point in the escalation of public disorder would water cannon be deployed? Would they be an intermediate step before the use of plastic baton rounds? What would be the level of authorisation?

I am aware that the use of water cannon requires the deployment of a number of specifically-trained officers and that this may have implications for wider deployment of officers.

- How would water cannon be used alongside other public order tactics?
- What are the implications for specialist training of officers and staff?
- How many officers would be needed to protect the water cannon and in what formations?
- How would the use of water cannon affect the deployment of your officers both in terms of the specific public order threat and the wider policing of the community?

Finally, I would welcome descriptions of how water cannon are used outside of England and Wales, particularly in Northern Ireland but also more broadly, if relevant.

- What are the scenarios in which water cannon have been used in other jurisdictions, to what effect and at what cost?
- Is the type of disorder in which water cannon are deployed in these jurisdictions comparable to our own experience of disorder? Are they more useful in dealing with demonstrations that become disorderly or is there evidence of their use in tackling spontaneous outbreaks of disorder and lawlessness?
- Have there been specific public order events elsewhere that are of particular relevance to the use of water cannon in England and Wales?
- To what extent do those countries in which the use of water cannon is authorised have differing legal and policing traditions to England and Wales and what are the implications for the applicability of water cannon here?

I would be grateful for your views by 1 August.

I am copying this to Alex Marshall, Lynne Owens, Justine Curran, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Sir Peter Fahy, Chris Sims, Chris Eyre, Sir Jon Murphy, George Hamilton, Lord Blair, Sir Paul Stephenson, Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington, Sir Hugh Orde and Matt Baggott, as I would be interested in their views.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. May', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP