



## People for Proper Policing in North Wales

### Police weapon handover criticised by the IPCC

By Chris Bowlby BBC News

The BBC has seen details of the IPCC report which was completed last year. North Wales Police did not create an inventory of weapons handed in. Serious failings in the handling of weapons given to North Wales Police by the public for safe disposal have been highlighted in an internal report. **The firearms registry in Prestatyn, Denbighshire**, is the place where weapons handed in to police stations across north Wales by the public are sent for safe disposal. It said it was impossible to determine how many weapons had been destroyed and that there is no national policy on how the police should handle such weapons. No inventory was created of weapons received in the force firearms registry so it could not be proved that they had all been destroyed when they were taken to a smelter in Yorkshire to be melted. The force said it regretted poor record keeping and had new procedures for the registration and disposal of weapons.

The investigation came about in 2006 and completed last year by North Wales police and was supervised by the Independent Police Complaints Commission. It discovered a lack of senior management oversight and extremely poor record keeping.

**The MP for Wrexham, Ian Lucas**, said *there had been "gross incompetence" and "no management at all" in the firearms registry unit. It seems to be a picture of chaos and chaos that was not in any way supervised. The result of that is that we had for a number of years disposal of firearms simply not happening in a recorded way, and in a controlled way, and that could have been very, very dangerous indeed.* He has called for the report to be made public.

The force said it was satisfied the weapons handed in were destroyed. **Detective superintendent John Clayton**, who led the investigation for North Wales Police, told the BBC he thought the force now knows what happened to all the weapons that had come into the firearms registry. He said: *"I'm satisfied that, though we had very poor record-keeping in some respects, I'm satisfied that the weapons were destroyed, although we can't reconcile it. It had taken many months and hundreds of man-hours to achieve that result.*

In a statement, North Wales Police said it had made improvements in handling weapons surrendered by the public. It said: *"North Wales Police no longer retain surrendered weapons for up to 12 months with the bureaucracy that goes with that old process. **Weapons are now destroyed within the force using a guillotine.** Over 850 weapons have since been destroyed without the need to waste time storing and following unnecessary bureaucracy and paper trails. The learning has been shared with other police forces."* The force said no arrests had been made in relation to the internal inquiry.

**The Home Office is creating an £8m database, the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS), which aims to provide a registry of all recovered guns and ammunition coming into police possession in England and Wales.** The service aims to roll-out incrementally from April this year and be fully operational by September.

**The PPP comments ... we heard unsubstantiated rumours over a year ago that valuable confiscated weapons may have gone 'missing'. We also reported twice on delays and internal strife in the gun licencing department. Meanwhile the OSD commander CS Geraint Anwyl has been moved to Western Division.**