



# International Police Association

Professional Commission



## Arthur Troop Scholarship 2017 REPORT

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**IPA Section:** United Kingdom

**Course attended:** Violence Against Police Officers and Other Representatives of the State

I have looked at the various courses offered at IBZ Gimborn for many years but in 2016 finally decided that I would look to actually attend my first seminar. I applied for an Arthur Troop Scholarship to help towards this and was delighted to receive notification that I had been successful.

Being involved in Public Order policing in the UK, I decided to enrol on the seminar for 'Violence Against Police Officers and Other Representatives of the State' in November 2017.

I was very grateful to the staff at the IBZ who were excellent in helping me to arrange the logistics of my trip.

The seminar was relevant to my role but also I felt I would be able to make a positive contribution. The content was far more in-depth than the title suggests, and explored causation factors and sought to understand this as an issue, as well as exploring what preventative measures could be employed to mitigate the risk of violence against police officers.

It was clear that the schedule was well thought out, and significant effort had gone in to securing speakers from the UK and Germany and even one speaker who flew in from Canada. It was also evident that the individual sessions were scheduled to link to each other.

There were 16 of us on the seminar from a variety of policing backgrounds and included police officers from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Greece and UK as well as a representative from Austria who was not a serving police officer.



This blend of different nationalities and policing backgrounds only enhanced the overall seminar as delegates were able to benefit from this diversity. The seminar Chairperson was May-Britt Rinaldo, a senior Police Officer from Gothenburg and Chairperson of the Professional Commission for the IPA.

The first speaker was Calum Steele from the European Confederation of Police whose presentation on 'Violence Against Employees of Public Service' looked to address assumptions on this topic. Calum explored some theories on causes for violence against police officers as well as examining a number of high profile events which have turned violent and where that violence turned at those policing them.

In identifying some underlying causes that could result in violence against police including despair, alcohol, ideology and mental illness, Calum sought to address a statement, "Is violence against Police an occupational hazard".

As stated, during this session Calum explored many incidents of social unrest, such as football matches, political protests, and protests regarding Sectarianism and Anti-Far Right when at some stage the violence turned on Police Officers. It was suggested that this group violence was less to do with alcohol and mental health but more likely ideology.

Despite officers wearing significant protective clothing, these incidents involving mass groups can result in extreme violence and injuries to officers. The importance of police departments providing appropriate support to officers who had unfortunately been subjected to violence, was explored during an informative group session where the experiences in how this is managed in the different European countries were shared.

Whereas it was suggested that violence against police could be considered an occupational hazard it is the possibility which should be acknowledged as opposed to the probability being accepted.

On Day 2, Bernd-Uwe Consten, or BUC as he is known, delivered a presentation on preventative measures and de-escalation as a tactic, not just in policing but more widely in all public service. This was the first presentation delivered purely in German so it was my turn to take advantage of the headphones and make use of the excellent interpreters who were present.

BUC provided some startling statistics from Germany regarding the number of staff from the medical profession who have either been verbally or physically abused. In exploring this subject, the mind-set of different public servants was explored. Research had indicated that medical professionals were more likely to see the medical need of someone, for example a person lying on the floor, whereas police officers were more likely to be safety conscious in the same circumstances, considering the presence of a weapon for example. These cultural differences in situational awareness were further highlighted, when it was suggested that paramedics were far more likely to enter a premises and

become focused on the patient, whereas police officers may be more aware of matters such as escape routes.

BUC presented a plan that had been worked through with some public bodies in how they could reduce violence against staff. This plan involved greater awareness of environmental factors including the removal of items that could quite easily be utilised as a weapon, situations being resolved by employees, information sharing and management and lastly the involvement of the Police. What this presentation highlighted, which was linked to the presentation of Calum was the importance of reporting matters of abuse and violence and crucially effective recording systems.

In the afternoon of day 2 we heard from the fascinating and provoking speaker, Volker Kraja. His presentation entitled 'Legitimate Violence Against the State' used arguments and conclusions of political philosophy and theory. The first aspect was to consider legality versus legitimacy and the assertion was made that actions may be lawful but not necessarily legitimate. Police action has to have a legal basis but also to be seen as legitimate by the public.

Mr Kraja discussed that when there is a breakdown in perceived legitimacy this will result in a reaction. Mr Kraja stated that in the case of the state, it defines what is legal and may even attempt to define what is legitimate. It is the breakdown of perceived legitimacy that can result in a reaction which can be a violent reaction. Mr Kraja also illustrated the situation around protest where there are two opposing groups and how this can create conflict. Ultimately, protest is legally protected. However, opposing sides may not see each other as being legitimate or legal and then repel.

When the Police have a role in managing this reaction, this can bring it in to conflict and the risk of violence, which is linked to aspects of the session presented by Calum Steele which talked about ideology.

Day 3 (Wednesday), and next up was Nick Glynn, a retired Police Officer from the UK and now a member of the Open Society Foundation. Nick has a history of public order policing in the UK but has also been instrumental in research in to how Stop Search has been used, particularly on the impact on minority groups.



Nick's session was entitled 'Diversity in Policing and the fair use of stops'. Albeit the session was based around stop and search carried out by the police, it also carried on the theme from Volker Kraja, of police legitimacy and how perceived illegitimate police action can result in a reaction or even violence against the police. Nick explored the subject of unconscious bias by police officers and how this can lead to discrimination. Nick was clear to say that he did not oppose police use of stop search, but that it needed to be used thoughtfully, at the right time for the right reasons and be properly explained. If used properly, this would have a positive impact on legitimacy and could reduce the threat of violence.

This was a thoroughly interesting session and certainly sparked some considerable debate among the group who recounted stories from their own experiences and countries.

The afternoon of Day 3 was a session presented by Barak Ariel from Cambridge University (UK), entitled 'The bodycam as a protective measure against violence'. This session also continued the theme of police legitimacy.

Barak explored use of force by officers and was clear that on occasions force by police officers is necessary. However, Barak posed the question if there was something that could reduce the necessity for force. Barak stated that the best predictor of police use of force is a suspect's demeanour although accepting it is difficult to anticipate who will be aggressive.

Barak's research indicated that when a subject is aware that a camera is on them, there is a strong possibility that this will change their behaviour and creates enhanced self-awareness. It is accepted that the bodycam may not be as effective as a preventative tool during mass disorder, due to those involved looking to actively engage in trouble. In providing a balanced view, some did report that the presence of bodycams could be a trigger for violence.

Barak did provide evidence of forces who had introduced bodycams and experienced significant reductions in complaints and violence against officers.

On the Wednesday evening, May-Britt very kindly arranged for an excursion in to Cologne to visit the Christmas Market. This provided everyone the opportunity for some enjoyable downtime and also to take in the sights and atmosphere of the market.....including the Glühwein.



Day 4 (Thursday) and we were greeted with a very picturesque Gimborn.



The day started with a presentation from Tad Hughes, from the University of Louisville with his presentation on 'Violence Against Police by their own colleagues'. To explain this more, it was focused on work place aggression, career sabotage and victimisation. This was certainly a thought provoking input regarding how Police Officers interact with each other and he shared his academic

research in support. Tad separated this into 3 levels of work place aggression, (i) overt aggression, (ii) obstructionism which is more passive and (iii) expression of hostility.

Tad explored the negative impact that 'toxic colleagues' have on their co-workers and the research suggested reductions in productivity, performance, attendance and commitment to their role. The research also suggested that supervisor aggression was the most damaging, followed by co-workers and then outsiders. Although the research was US based, I am sure most would agree the content was relevant. Specifically Tad presented research regarding 'backstabbing' by colleagues and the damaging effect this has.

Tad finished with the assertion that police leaders needed awareness of this and if true, would give rise for concern. With lean times ahead for many police agencies care needs to be taken in the event that undermining actually increases. This was an enlightening session that would have equally been at home on a Leadership seminar.

The afternoon of Day 4 was a presentation of Jürgen Sohnemann from the Police Academy, Wiesbaden, who explored how the subject of violence against the police was covered in the media. Jürgen highlighted the change in recent years to a more paramilitary style uniform and asked what affect this had on the officers, in particular younger officers and public perception.

Jürgen stated that the public perception of the police is often gained from what they see through the television and media but interaction makes them aware of the reality. Jürgen posed the question on whether the more the police are seen in a paramilitary style, if this would create less empathy and sympathy from the public when subject to violence.

The last seminar on the start of day 5 was from Konstantinos Papazoglou (University of Toronto) entitled 'Police Resilience – Stress and Trauma'. Konstantinos was previously a police officer in Greece before becoming a scholar. Konstantinos explored the issues of officer loss and trauma in the line of duty and stated that police trauma is complex and usually as a result of a cumulative effect. Although police are generally seen as more resilient than civilians, they are at higher risk of certain medical conditions. Although the research was primarily based in North America, the issues of trauma and resilience were applicable to all.

The course was closed by Peter Leßmann-Faust and it was clear that it was enjoyed by all who attended with a lot of learning taken away. For me, it was never about coming to this seminar to learn tactics in dealing with violence against the police. After all, tactics will vary between countries as does what the public will accept. However, what is constant is the Police. What the week did provide was a very thoughtful experience and reflection on police action and certainly legitimacy, and that we should not ignore the fact that our actions can have a bearing on any given situation and thereafter reactions, whether this be positive and negative.



I had a fantastic time at Gimborn, really enjoyed the seminar and its content. As I have already mentioned, I have taken away some really good learning from the week.

Since my return, I have been sharing some of the learning within my own Force but also promoting the positive experience of attending an IPA seminar as well as the opportunities the IPA can provide. As well as the thoroughly enjoyable seminar, I also had the opportunity to meet some really good people, who I have remained in contact with since returning to the UK. I will certainly cherish the souvenirs I left with. I even have one of my German colleagues visiting in the Spring to watch a Premier League football match, a long time ambition for him, which I have been able to arrange.

I would certainly recommend anyone to attend a seminar at Gimborn and I am extremely grateful to the IPA for the scholarship which helped me attend. I am sure this will not be my last trip to Gimborn.

Mark Lewis, IPA UK Section.