



AOS members, 1960s. Photo: NZ Police

"Cordon, Contain, Appeal"

Armed Offenders Squad 50th Anniversary

Media Kit





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"Cordon, Contain, Appeal" – Armed Offenders Squad marks 50 years

When four police officers and a civilian were senselessly gunned down by armed offenders in early 1963, the tragedies sparked sweeping changes to the way Police were to deal with all future armed incidents.

In early August 1964, those changes saw the first group of hand-picked Police officers receive orders to attend "a course to train squads to deal with armed offenders" at the Papakura military camp – and the Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) was born.

This weekend, past and present AOS members from around the country, their families, and members of the Police Executive are gathered in Wellington to mark the squad's 50th anniversary and remember those who have gone before. Also marking their contribution are the Police Special Tactics Group (STG) and Police Negotiation Team (PNT). Each of the country's 17 AOS units will also be hosting their own events over the coming months.

"These anniversary commemorations are a significant and poignant milestone for Police, and mark the huge contribution that past and present members have made," says Assistant Commissioner Operations Mike Rusbatch, a former AOS Commander and member of the Anti-Terrorist Squad, a forerunner to the STG.

"Over the last 50 years, emerging out of great tragedy has been a proud tradition of service to our communities, led by dedicated men and women under some of the most extreme and challenging circumstances imaginable, which has undoubtedly saved many innocent lives."

The official commemorations, which involve past and current members and guests, include a public event at the Royal New Zealand Police College, Porirua, today (Saturday 9 August) from 1.30–3.30pm. This will feature live demonstrations of equipment and tactics, Police dogs and other displays.

The New Zealand Police Museum features a significant exhibition showcasing important milestones and exhibits in the history of the AOS and other specialist squads. To mark the occasion, Police will also be presented with a carved Wahaika (or mere) reflecting the squad's history and traditions.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to show the public the range of work we do and demonstrate the skills of our specialist units," Mr Rusbatch says. "What began 50 years ago as a programme delivering military-focused arms training to small groups of hand-picked officers, has grown into a network of around 300 highly trained, well-equipped and skilled staff who respond to a range of extremely challenging situations up and down the length of the country every day."

There are currently 17 AOS units across New Zealand, made up of nearly 300 volunteers from within Police. To gain a place on the squad, officers must qualify at a rigorous national

selection course and attend regular training. AOS members are part-time and come from all branches of Police. Also attached to every squad is a PNT, trained in crisis intervention techniques.

Former AOS commander, Detective Superintendent Ray van Beynen, who has also authored a history of the squad, says its motto of "cordon, contain and appeal" reflects its focus on resolving every incident as peacefully as possible.

"In its 50 years, the AOS has undertaken thousands of deployments, ranging from domestic incidents and drug warrants to armed sieges. However, in that time, no AOS member has been lost during an operation – a record that we strive to continue.

"This is despite members putting their lives on the line in some of the most dangerous, highly-charged and difficult situations possible. The fact they resolve the vast majority of incidents without a shot fired is testament to their skill, training, courage and commitment, and I have no doubt that countless other lives have been saved because of their intervention."

ENDS

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THE ARMED OFFENDERS SQUAD 1964-2014

The catalyst

The double homicides of four officers and a civilian at the hands of lone gunmen in separate incidents in early 1963 were the catalyst for important changes to the way Police dealt with armed incidents.

On the afternoon of 6 January 1963, a mentally disturbed gunman opened fire on people at boarding kennels located in Bethells Road, Waitakere, killing kennel owner James Berry and seriously wounding customer Harry Pettit. Detective Inspector Wallace Chalmers and Detective Sergeant Neville Power, who were among the first Police staff to respond to the incident, were also shot and killed as they tried to surround the offender.

The offender was later declared insane and found unfit to stand trial. He spent the rest of his life in a psychiatric facility.

Less than a month later, on 3 February 1963, Constables Bryan Schultz and James Richardson were called to a domestic incident in Herbert Street, Alicetown, Lower Hutt. As they pulled into the driveway, a lone armed offender opened fire from the house, killing both men before they had switched the engine off or gotten out of the vehicle. He was caught without further incident, tried and jailed.

[The [50th anniversary](#) of the men's deaths was marked in February 2013 with a special ceremony at the Royal New Zealand Police College].

Formation of the Armed Offenders Squad

Both events sparked a wide-ranging review of Police tactics relating to armed incidents – resulting in a recommendation that a special Police squad to deal with armed offenders be formed.

Police officers and an Army representative were subsequently instructed to formulate training, tactics and procedures, and the Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) was formed. The first AOS training camp took place in Papakura, South Auckland, from 3-14 August 1964.

The AOS today

The New Zealand Police is still a routinely unarmed service. However, following the events of 1963, there was clearly a need for a way for Police to safely resolve armed incidents, leading to the formation of the AOS.

Today, there are 17 Armed Offenders Squads across New Zealand, made up of nearly 300 volunteers from within the Police. To gain a place on the AOS, officers must qualify at a rigorous national selection course and attend regular training. Squad members are part-time volunteers and come from all branches of Police.

Following the tragic events of 1963, Police called to an incident first gather information about the presence of drugs, alcohol and weapons. Police no longer park directly outside the address they have been called to.

AOS operating philosophy

The main operating philosophy of the AOS is "Cordon, Contain, Appeal" – cordon off the affected area, contain the offender(s), and appeal to them to surrender. These tactics are very successful and most incidents are resolved without the use of force.

Other specialist groups within the Police support the Armed Offenders Squad in their role. These include the Police Negotiation Team, the Police Dog Section, and the Special Tactics Group.

Police Negotiation Team

The vast majority of AOS incidents end peacefully, supported by expert negotiators in the Police Negotiation Team (PNT).

A PNT is attached to each AOS unit. Police negotiators are trained in crisis intervention techniques and are able to provide the voice of reason in conflict. Like AOS members, negotiators are part-time volunteers who come from other areas within the Police. They respond to events like armed incidents, suicide threats and hostage situations.

Police Dog Section

The Police Dog Section works closely with the AOS. In the early years of the squad, dogs and their handlers were called in when necessary to deal with armed incidents. Over time, it became clear that dogs could be useful in many situations, and today they are a vital and permanent part of the AOS.

Special Tactics Group

The AOS is also supported by the Special Tactics Group (STG). Created in 1977 as the Anti-Terrorist Squad, the STG was renamed in 1991 to reflect its wider role. The STG is called upon to deal with situations that may be beyond the capability of the AOS, and is expert in resolving counter-terrorist and siege situations. Other STG roles include specialist intelligence gathering around criminal activity, and security for VIP operations.

AOS deployments

The AOS on average attends almost 800 incidents every year, which comprise both pre-planned operations and emergency call-outs. However, on average, shots are only fired once by Police for every 260 deployments.

In the early days of the AOS, operations were mainly robberies and domestic incidents. Now, because of the violent behaviour and presence of firearms often associated with drugs manufacture, AOS members are increasingly attending pre-planned operations like executing warrants on clandestine labs.

It is testament to the skill, training, courage and commitment of AOS members that the vast majority of incidents have been resolved without a shot fired, and that no squad member has been lost while on an AOS operation.

[Note the figures below cover the nine year period 1 July 2005–1 June 2014 – the furthest back that electronic records are available. Figures are for all AOS deployments, including pre-planned, emergency and PNT operations. A district breakdown is also attached - see pages 8/9].

Shots fired	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	Grand total
None fired	593	530	562	706	869	900	807	742	746	6455 (93%)
Offender at Police	2	2	2	8	6	2	1	1	2	26 (0.4%)
Offender (before Police arrival)	50	54	51	55	68	58	45	33	40	454 (6.5%)
Police	4	3	5	6	1		1	3	4	27 (0.4%)
Police (at animal)						1				1
TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS	649	589	620	775	944	961	854	779	792	6963

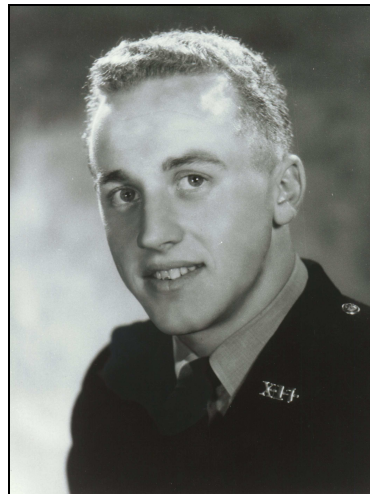
Timeline – key events that shaped the AOS

- **Jan/Feb 1963:** Double Police homicides and the death of a civilian within the space of a month prompt a review of Police approach to armed incidents, with a recommendation that a specialist squad to deal with armed offenders be formed.
- **Aug 1964:** The AOS is formed, with the first group of hand-picked Police staff undertaking training at the Papakura military camp.
- **Feb 1965:** The newly formed Auckland AOS, led by Detective Inspector Graham Perry, successfully resolve a hostage drama in Auckland following the escape of three inmates from Mt Eden Prison. Using the newly developed method of "Cordon, Contain, Appeal", the prisoners eventually give up and are returned to prison.
- **Jul 1969:** The AOS fires its first shot after being called to a house in Whangarei, where an armed man is holding a baby hostage and threatening to shoot the baby and himself. Following a seven hour stand off, DI Graham Perry shoots the rifle out of the offender's hands, and with other AOS members disarms him and rescues the baby. DI Perry is later awarded the George Medal for bravery.
- **Apr 1970:** For the first time, the AOS fatally shoots an offender following an armed siege involving a gunman holding two hostages in the Wellington suburb of Northland. The official enquiry establishes that Police actions were fully justified.
- **Oct 1983:** An offender on release from prison seizes a shotgun from a sports shop in downtown Auckland and begins firing the weapon at random in public. Police dog Luke is shot and seriously wounded while trying to intervene. After a three hour stand off, the offender is tackled and disarmed by Police. Luke survives the shooting and Police subsequently refine their dog training programme as a result.
- **Nov 1990:** At Aramoana, near Dunedin, resident David Gray begins a shooting rampage, murdering 13 local men, women and children, and injuring three others. His final victim is AOS member and local policeman Sergeant Stewart Guthrie, who is shot while responding to the shooting reports in his role as a general duties officer. After a 34 hour operation, armed Police shoot and fatally wound Gray, when he opens fire on officers after refusing appeals to surrender.
- **Jul 1993:** A man armed with a crossbow, knives and explosives walks into Morrinsville Police station, taking eight people hostage and planting bombs. He demands to speak with well-known broadcaster Paul Holmes, who assists in the release of the civilian hostages. The man is later shot and killed by Police after he opens fire and wounds an officer with the crossbow.

- **Jan 2003:** Antonie Dixon, a regular methamphetamine user, embarks on a deadly crime spree, attacking and seriously wounding two women with a samurai sword before later fatally shooting a man and taking hostages at a house in Flatbush, South Auckland. After lengthy negotiations by the PNT, he eventually surrenders.
- **May 2009:** Former territorial soldier, Jan Molenaar, opens fire on officers executing a routine cannabis search warrant at his Napier home, killing Senior Constable Len Snee, and seriously injuring Senior Constables Bruce Miller and Grant Diver. Friend Len Holmwood is also shot and wounded while trying to intervene. Assisted by the public, the AOS rescue the wounded men. After a siege lasting more than 40 hours, Molenaar is found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot.
- **Aug 2014:** Police commemorates 50 years service of the AOS, supported by STG, PNT and the Police Dog Section.



Detective Inspector Wallace Chalmers



Detective Sergeant Neville Power



Constable Bryan Schultz



Constable James Richardson

Deployments by AOS squad and call type

% OF DEPLOYMENTS THAT WERE EMERGENCY

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland	54%	38%	32%	30%	18%	20%
Christchurch	52%	45%	28%	25%	24%	24%
Dunedin	63%	74%	61%	66%	78%	64%
Gisborne	70%	76%	57%	59%	55%	67%
Hawkes Bay	55%	54%	52%	55%	36%	34%
Invercargill	52%	57%	55%	50%	61%	45%
Nelson	61%	53%	38%	39%	19%	46%
Northland	78%	59%	44%	46%	40%	44%
Palmerston North	49%	46%	31%	30%	46%	63%
Rotorua	73%	43%	46%	33%	45%	45%
Taranaki	60%	60%	67%	53%	31%	47%
Tauranga	67%	30%	46%	33%	40%	36%
Timaru	69%	80%	79%	52%	63%	69%
Waikato	33%	39%	34%	33%	47%	32%
Wanganui	24%	43%	19%	53%	29%	28%
Wellington	30%	32%	17%	20%	15%	10%
West Coast	42%	65%	62%	33%	62%	33%

% OF DEPLOYMENTS THAT WERE PLANNED

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland	46%	62%	68%	70%	82%	80%
Christchurch	48%	55%	72%	75%	76%	76%
Dunedin	37%	26%	39%	34%	22%	36%
Gisborne	30%	24%	43%	41%	45%	33%
Hawkes Bay	45%	46%	48%	45%	64%	66%
Invercargill	48%	43%	45%	50%	39%	55%
Nelson	39%	47%	63%	61%	81%	54%
Northland	22%	41%	56%	54%	60%	56%
Palmerston North	51%	54%	69%	70%	54%	38%
Rotorua	28%	57%	54%	67%	55%	55%
Taranaki	40%	40%	33%	47%	69%	53%
Tauranga	33%	70%	54%	67%	60%	64%
Timaru	31%	20%	21%	48%	38%	31%
Waikato	67%	61%	66%	67%	53%	68%
Wanganui	76%	57%	81%	47%	71%	72%
Wellington	70%	68%	83%	80%	85%	90%
West Coast	58%	35%	38%	67%	38%	67%

Deployments where shots fired/not fired (by district)

NONE FIRED

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland City	25	24	24	42	43	39	29	32
Bay of Plenty	52	68	59	93	73	94	73	53
Canterbury	75	78	137	129	126	118	171	164
Central	81	81	99	74	85	86	71	85
Counties/Manukau	34	24	48	76	42	46	46	46
Eastern	45	55	59	63	69	67	47	47
Northland	24	27	29	22	27	20	37	33
Southern	51	60	71	78	88	59	54	30
Tasman	27	33	29	44	58	44	36	42
Waikato	26	35	54	82	89	69	50	76
Waitemata	21	27	29	59	39	22	33	21
Wellington	69	50	68	107	161	143	95	117
TOTAL	530	562	706	869	900	807	742	746

BY OFFENDER (BEFORE POLICE ARRIVAL)

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland City	1	2				1	2	2
Bay of Plenty	3	9	10	12	7	3	4	6
Canterbury	6	9	5	10	5	7	3	6
Central	11	4	11	6	1	8	4	6
Counties/Manukau	4	9	3	7	2	2		2
Eastern	5	8	5	10	11	5	3	3
Northland	6	3	7	4	7	4	4	2
Southern	10	3	4	5	5	4	3	1
Tasman	1	1	2	4	3	2	1	3
Waikato	3	1	3	3	9	4	9	7
Waitemata	1	1	3	3	4	3		1
Wellington	3	1	2	4	4	2		1
TOTAL	54	51	55	68	58	45	33	40

BY OFFENDER AT POLICE

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland City			1			1		
Bay of Plenty				1				
Canterbury			1	2	2			
Central	2			2			1	1
Counties/Manukau			1	1				
Eastern			4					
Northland		1						
Southern			1					
Tasman								
Waikato		1						1
Waitemata								
Wellington								
TOTAL	2	2	8	6	2	1	1	2

BY POLICE

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Auckland City			1					
Bay of Plenty		1						
Canterbury		2	3					
Central		1				1	2	
Counties/Manukau								1
Eastern	1	1	1					2
Northland			1					
Southern	1							
Tasman	1							
Waikato				1			1	1
Waitemata								
Wellington					1			
TOTAL	3	5	6	1	1	1	3	4
					At animal			