

# SFO OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

The SFO Operational Handbook is for internal guidance only and is published on the SFO's website solely in the interests of transparency. It is not published for the purpose of providing legal advice and should not therefore be relied on as the basis for any legal advice or decision. Some of the content of this document may have been redacted.

## Introduction

An Operational Order ("Op Order") is a document in which all aspects of a proposed major operational deployment are formally recorded and authorised prior to the activity taking place. [See Operational Order template in "Operational Stock Forms"].

An Op Order must be prepared by a senior member of the case team, checked by the Principal Investigator, agreed by the Case Controller and Principal Divisional Investigator, and authorised by the Head of Division, Head of DFU, and Chief Investigator in advance of the planned deployment and, if appropriate, search warrant application. This authorisation process is mandatory and the completed Op Order must be signed at each authorisation level using the table on page 2 of the form prior to application being made to the Chief Investigator.

The Op Order must be supported by Operational Risk Assessments (ORA) [See "Operational Risk Assessments"] and, if appropriate, the search warrant application [See "Applying for Search Warrants"] and the search warrant/s.

Case Controllers should be prepared to provide relevant case decision log entries regarding search warrants if requested by the Chief Investigator. For further guidance [See topic on "Case Record"]. Accompanying search warrant applications will also be subjected to scrutiny, legal assurance and authorisation by General Counsel.

The Case Controller must keep the Head of Division and Chief Investigator apprised of the development of the Op Order and provide the relevant documentation in good time to allow for the authorisation process.

## Registering the Op Order

An Op Order reference must be obtained from the Chief Investigator's office prior to commencement of the Op Order. A central record of all authorised Operational Orders will be maintained by this office. The Op Order reference is also added to the relevant entry in the Central Search Register. [See the Registering the Search section in "Applying for Search Warrants"].

## Benefits of the Operational Order

- Enables critical challenge of the deployment, providing an opportunity for the making of additional/alternative proposals
- Promotes the execution of an efficient, health & safety compliant, legal search operation

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- Provides operational and, where necessary, legal assurance
- All aspects of the search planning, intention, methodologies and administration are formally recorded in one place
- Aides dissemination of information to relevant parties at briefings
- Standardises operational planning across the SFO and other law enforcement bodies
- Ensures a professional transparent approach

### Completion of the Operational Order

Guidance for the completion of the Order is contained within the Operational Order Template [See “Operational Stock Forms”].

When properly completed, the Op Order will form the basis of an operational briefing prior to a major operational deployment. The Op Order is structured on the IIMARCH model commonly used amongst law enforcement to deliver briefings.

For further guidance on the level of information required under each heading in the Op Order see “ID38 IIMarch Structured Operational Briefing”.

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