



# Royal Anguilla Police Force

Final

## Public and Media Relations Policy

### Releasing of Names

## **Introduction**

Anguilla is a small Overseas Territory with a population of just over 13,000. Like any other developing nation Anguilla has its own share of crime and anti-social behaviour. With this have come the need and the cry from civil society to know who are committing the crime in Anguilla. The principle of open justices serves to prevent crime and inform the public. As small a society as we are there is a need by the police department whilst recognizing the need to protect those charged with crimes to also protect society provided that by doing so it does not undermine the presumption of innocence.

With that in mind the RAPF has consulted with and has taken advice from the Honourable Attorney General, The Anguilla Bar Association as well as other persons in Anguilla as to the RAPF releasing names of persons charged by the police in Anguilla.

Those names will now be released with the general principle, that nothing would be said or reported that would prejudice a forthcoming trial of any defendant before the courts in Anguilla. This is in keeping with the general principle that every defendant is entitled to a fair trial and there is always a presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

In the interests of open justice, the public and press are encouraged to attend all open and public court proceedings.

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To define the relationship between members of the Royal Anguilla Police Force, RAPF, with the media and establish guidelines to assist members of the RAPF when communicating to the media and providing information as to the name(s) of offenders to the public.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1 The policy of the RAPF will be to:

2.1.1 Assist the news media and community with the provision of information as it relates to the name(s) of offenders whilst creating and maintain a relationship of mutual trust, cooperation and respect.

2.1.2 Provide this information to the media without undue delay by methods that are convenient, economical and impartial.

2.1.3 Provide members of the Service with instructions specific to dealing with the news media as it relates to the releasing of names of offenders.

2.1.4 Reserve the right to withhold information to:

- (a) Protect the identity of victims in vulnerable circumstances;
- (b) Protect the identity of offenders which, if disclosed, could interfere with an on-going investigation or endanger the life of such person(s).

- 2.2 Names of those charged with criminal offences will be named if:

2.2.1 They are an adult defendant (over the age of 18).

- 2.2.2 Charged with a non-sexual offence (bearing in mind section 183 of Criminal Code which prevents identification and publication of both complainants and defendants accused of most sexual offences unless specific exceptions apply).
- 2.2.3 The individual has appeared before a court at a public hearing at which hearing they will be heard and named.
- 2.2.4 The court has not made any specific order requiring privacy, reporting restrictions nor anonymity then the presumption should be in favour of the name being reported by the police or published in a press release.
- 2.2.5 Accompanying any Press Release we will clearly state:
- a) The defendant is entitled to a fair trial;
  - b) There is a presumption of innocence until proven guilty;
  - c) Nothing would be stated or published which would prejudice a fair trial taking place; and
  - d) Section 116(g) of the Criminal Code applies and which provides for an offence in respect of any person who, while a judicial proceeding is pending, makes use of any speech or writing misrepresenting such proceeding or capable of prejudicing any person in favour of or against any parties to such proceeding, or calculated to lower the authority of any person before whom the proceeding is to be held.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 *RAPF members:* police officers, support staff and members of the RAPF Special Constables.
- 3.2 *Daily Report:* information that is provided to the media on a daily basis in a formatted report.
- 3.3 *Press Release:* Formal written information to the media on a specific subject.

- 3.4 *PMR:* Public and Media Relations Unit
- 3.5 *Public and Media Relations Officer:* Individual responsible for running the PMR office. He/she will be the principal point of contact for the media within the RAPF.
- 3.6 *Press Officer:* Individual working for the RAPF who is trained in the field of media relations. The official spokesperson for the RAPF who is responsible for the information management function in relation to press releases made by the Service and the handling of media inquires:
- 3.7 *Press Conference:* A formal meeting with the press both print and electronic where the RAPF outlines a specific issue that it wishes to bring to the attention of the public. A press conference is called to ensure all media outlets get the same information and that it reaches the largest possible audience.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES/PROCEDURES FOR PMR OFFICE**

- 4.1 The Public and Media Relations Officer shall be the principal contact for the public and the media within the RAPF.
- 4.2 In the absence of the PMR Officer, the COP may assign a Press Officer to receive and respond to requests from the public and the media for information as it relates to the name(s) of offenders.

#### **5. PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES**

- 5.1 No member of the RAPF or the PMRO will release any information to the news/press media that concerns the following:

- a) The identity of a victim if such a release is prohibited by law or in cases of death or serious injury (unless the next of kin has been notified).
- b) The name and address of any victim of a sexual assault unless the victim has died as a result of the crime and then only with the approval of the Commissioner of Police.
- c) The identity of any juvenile persons that have been charged. Records concerning juvenile offenders will not be open to public inspection or released to the media.
- d) Details of persons who are suspected of having attempted to take their own life.
- e) Personal information relating to RAPF members such as address, age or marital status unless the officer gives expressed consent.
- f) Personal information or particulars of members of the RAPF who have been charged with an offence or are under investigation by the RAPF or another agency.
- g) The names of RAPF staff who have been injured as a result of a police related incident (until either the next of kin have been advised or the member has given their consent).
- h) Whenever officers have been involved in a firearms incident, media releases will adhere to the Post Incident Management provisions within the Firearms Standing Operating Procedures (SOP). Precautions should be taken to protect the officers and their families from unwanted publicity. The PIM must ensure that, where practicable, the Principal Officers are informed of all media releases prior to their circulation and he or she may make representations on their behalf. This action may assist in prompting officers to consider their families and others likely to be affected by a media release and allow them to

make early arrangements to cater for any foreseeable problems. No information that might unintentionally identify officers concerned with the incident should be passed to the media.

- 5.2 Ranks below Inspector shall not speak to the media on behalf of the Service unless they have been approved by Commissioner of Police (COP).

## **6. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES/PROCEDURES**

- 6.1 If an officer is approached by a member of the media, he/she should tactfully refer the media to PMR unless they are authorized to speak.
- 6.2 It is important that officers speaking to the press are clear on what they can communicate. Approved RAPF media training will be provided for personnel likely to be required to communicate to the media. This training should ensure that officers meet a proficient standard and are able to communicate competently.
- 6.3 The Commissioner of Police is the official spokesperson for the RAPF. Anyone who speaks on behalf of the Service should do so understanding that they represent the RAPF and not their own personal view points.
- 6.4 Officers may be designated by the COP or DCOP to engage with the media. When doing so, the officer may only speak to matters of operational fact relating to their area of responsibility.
- 6.5 Officers need not refer all inquiries to the PMR, but may respond to legitimate news inquires within their remit, in accordance with the directives and guidelines set forth in this policy.

## **7. Press Releases**

**7.1** All press releases shall come from the PMR office. The PMR Officer will ensure that the vetting of the information has been done and that all relevant approval has been received.

**7.2** In the event that a member of the RAPF, other than a member of the PMR office, has to issue a press release/statement, a standard format must be followed. The approved formats are as follows:

**7.2.1 Road Traffic Collision (Non Fatal):** The standard release collision should include the time the collision took place, the location, and a general description of the vehicles that were in the collision. An important note is to mention the exact street(s), intersection and landmark (if possible) that identifies where the collision took place. Identify the occupants of the vehicle(s) by gender, age and village only (if possible), followed by an appeal for witnesses. Provide the full name of an officer dealing with the incident, a department and contact number where the officer can be reached. **An example of release for RTC is given in (Appendix I)**

**7.2.2 Fatal RTC (initial):** The initial media report should be brief, after consultation with the hospital and a senior officer. The officer should identify that someone has lost their life as a result of a road traffic collision. The information should include the person's gender, age & village (if possible). Specific information should not be given unless the next of kin has been notified. Identify where the collision took place and, if necessary, give any advice that may be consistent with the area of the collision. A formal follow-up interview/release should be done at a later time. **An example of release for Fatal RTC (initial) is given in the Appendix II.**

**7.2.3 Fatal RTC (formal):** An officer should identify the name, age, street and village of the deceased, give brief circumstances of the collision then appeal for witnesses. Also, give the name of the officer dealing with contact details so that they can be reached by a member of the public. **An example of release for Fatal RTC (formal) is given in the Appendix III.**

**7.2.4 Missing Person:** When an officer conducts an on-camera or radio interview for a missing person, the officer must identify the missing person's full name, age, where they were last seen and the approximate time. The description of the individual should include complexion, weight, age, and the clothing being worn when last seen. The officer should then give a contact name and department where members of the public can leave information. If a picture is available, this should be given to the media as soon as possible. **An example of release for a Missing Juvenile is given in the Appendix IV.**

**7.2.5 Other Incidents:** Identify time, location, classification of incident and a general synopsis of what happened. Officers should identify critical environmental factors (e.g. street closures and building evacuations) and critical police messages that must be communicated (e.g. reassurance or police resources in the area). Officers should include a non-specific identification of injury. Speak in broad terms, and do not mention names of victims and suspects. If necessary, victims should only be referred to by age, gender and parish (e.g. 38 year old North Valley man). Officers should not refer to exact injuries (e.g. three gun-shot wounds to the chest). Speak in generalities (e.g. received gun shot wounds to the abdomen). **An example of release for an officer at the scene of a major and minor incident in Appendix V**

**7.2.6 Aggravated Burglary and Robbery:** In order to reduce the possibility of a repetition of the offence; do not identify the victim(s) of aggravated burglary and or robbery, particularly if they are living alone or elderly. On occasion, an emotional appeal for the return of stolen property may raise the profile of the crime and produce witnesses and garner public support. Hotels and businesses may be identified unless the complainant specifically requests that such information be withheld. In such instances, specific reasons why the information is being withheld should be given and documented. In case of private residences, the road can be identified but not house names or numbers.

**7.2.7 Arrests:** Generally the facts of an arrest will not be reported. If for good reason the facts of an arrest are to be reported; the suspect would not be named or identified or any factors released that will lead to their identification.

**7.3** All Press Releases shall be kept on file in the PMR office.

**8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION**

**8.1** This policy will be implemented immediately. It will be evaluated as required.

**9. SIGN OFFS**

Approved by Commissioner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Amendments approved by Commissioner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Published in General Orders: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: