



Police

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Letters

Undercover action and the role of Acpo

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I find myself in agreement with Simon Jenkins ([The state's pedlars of fear must be brought to account](#), 11 January) when he says that to have private companies and opaque agencies running undercover police operations cannot be right. However, he is both misled as to Acpo's role and omits to record that the use of undercover officers is highly regulated and governed in law through the [Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act](#). Such operations are closely overseen by the [surveillance commissioner](#) and must be necessary, proportionate and lawful.

While the [Metropolitan Police Service](#) acts as lead force for the [National Public Order Intelligence Unit](#), the NPOIU reports through Acpo to senior police leaders across England, Wales and Northern Ireland because it is historically a national police asset, not owned by any individual force. However, any operations the NPOIU supports must be requested and authorised by individual police forces, not Acpo. I have put on record, including in this paper, my wish to move Acpo away from limited company status to become a professional policing body. I am pleased we have already secured inclusion under the [Freedom of Information Act](#) to take effect later this year, and our aim for the future is to clearly focus the organisation on leadership in policing, under a new governance structure in line with the government's recent consultation on policing.

Hugh Orde

President, *Association of Chief Police Officers*

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