

GLOVES OFF

Police model gun crime tactics on New York's 9/11 response



NSW Police wants to relax rules governing the use of the Bearcat so it can be deployed to fight gun crime and (right) a New York cop taking part in Operation Hercules.

EXCLUSIVE
MARK MORRI
CRIME EDITOR



Deputy Commissioner Kaldas.

POLICE have vowed to take the fight to Sydney's gun-toting criminals to end the scourge of deadly shootings, adopting a hardline approach similar to that used by heavily armed New York cops in the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks.

Operation Talon, which echoes the NYPD's Operation Hercules and is headed by Deputy Commissioner Nick Kaldas, was announced yesterday by Commissioner Andrew Scipione.

Described as a "gloves off" form of policing, special units of heavily armed officers could be deployed to trouble spots and areas where criminals congregate to get in the face of known offenders. Mr Kaldas

will have most of the NSW Police force at his disposal, including the public order and riot squad.

He will also have access to the seldom seen but intimidating Bearcat, a heavily armoured 4WD capable of posting officers on the frontline of suburban shootouts.

"We are looking at interstate and overseas tactics that have been deployed," Mr Kaldas told The Daily Telegraph

yesterday. "The criminals have got away with some things in the past and pushed the envelope and now we are going to push back. Some of what we are doing is about dominating the criminals as we need to reclaim the ascendancy."

Both Mr Scipione and Mr Kaldas have met several times with former New York police commissioner Bill Bratton, the architect of the city's successful zero tolerance crime-fighting policy.

Part of that involved Operation Hercules, born out of 9/11, when armed officers in combat gear patrolled the streets, transported in armoured vehicles.

It's understood NSW Police will look at relaxing strict rules that dictate when the Bearcat and specialist weapons can be deployed.

"These protocols have been in place for a long time, and served the force well, but perhaps we have to rethink some

of them," Mr Kaldas said. Some senior police have become increasingly concerned about the types of weapons being seized from criminals, including military assault weapons and explosive devices.

Since being given responsibility for cracking down on gun crime, Mr Kaldas has met with eight assistant commissioners and other senior officers to map out a new strategy.

Intelligence analysts have begun working on a hit list of criminals and organisations, including bikie gangs, involved in shootings and gun supply.

"Intelligence will be used to prioritise targets," Mr Kaldas said. "Many of these shootings can be attributed to local criminals or even domestics, and in those cases will stay with local detectives."

The NSW government has come under increasing pressure over the issue of gun crime after a spate of drive-by

shootings. Mr Scipione said the force needed to respond to the changing nature of crime.

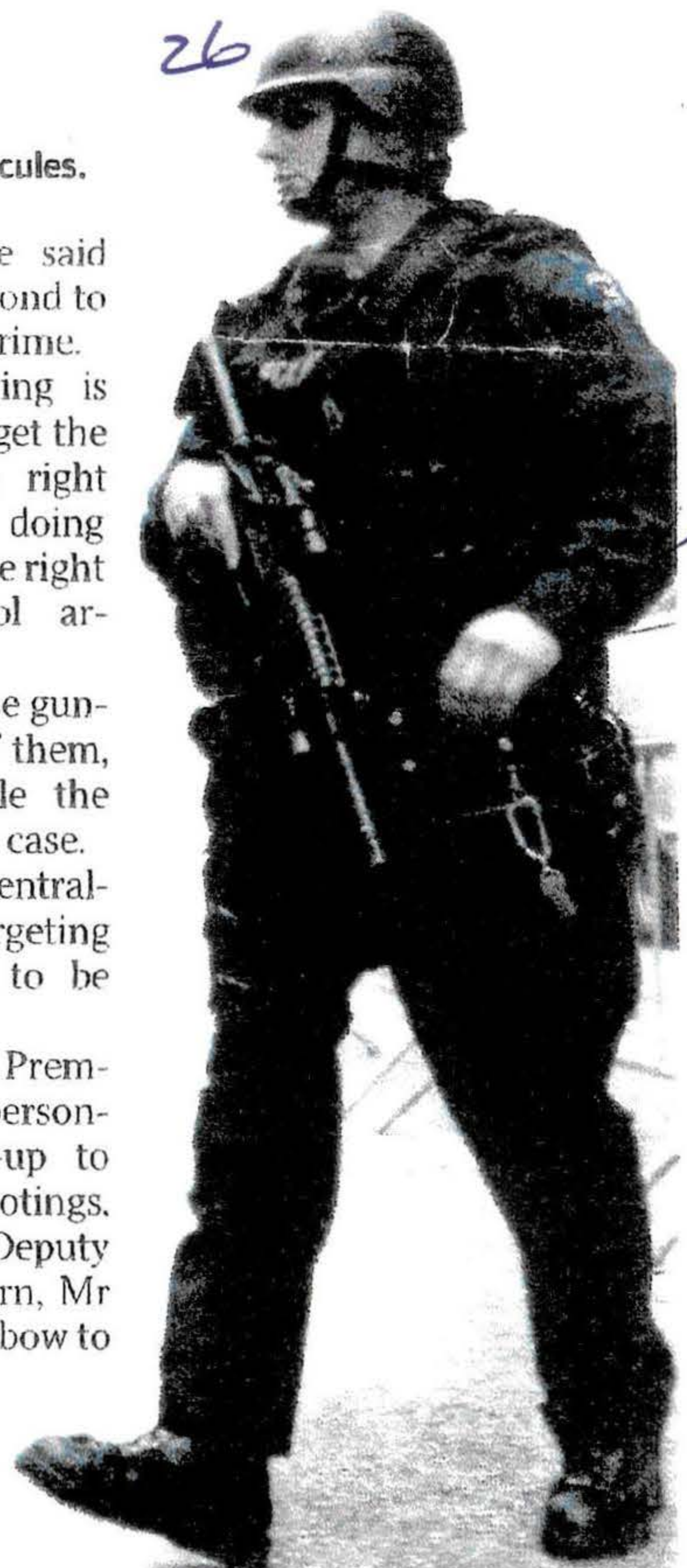
"The trick to policing is about making sure you get the right resources in the right place at the right time, doing the right things under the right command and control arrangement," he said.

"The message to those gun-slingers, punks many of them, thinking that they rule the streets. (is) that's not the case.

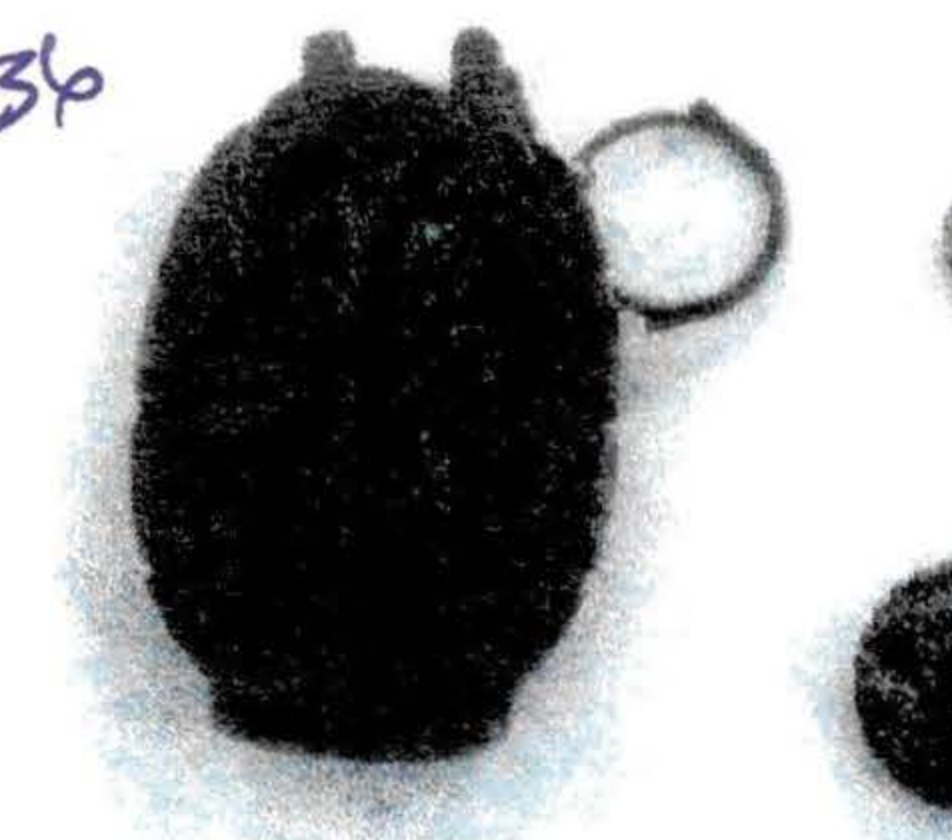
"Talon, in this new centralised approach, will be targeting you. You can expect to be bothered."

Referring to reports Premier Barry O'Farrell had personally ordered a shake-up to clamp down on the shootings, and the sidelining of Deputy Commissioner Cath Burn, Mr Scipione added: "I don't bow to (political) pressure.

"It's not the sort of thing I would respond well to."



Tailor's alter ego as a gunrunner



A grenade discovered at Zoef's home.

CLEMENTINE CUNEO

TO Sutherland Shire locals, Tony Zoef is a friendly tailor who spends his days altering their clothes.

But police allege the 43-year-old space enthusiast is the mastermind behind a haul of military-grade weapons smuggled into Australia.

Zoef faced Sutherland Local Court yesterday charged with 21 offences



Tony Zoef.

after police said they discovered a huge cache of weapons and ammunition at his Sylvania home.

Guns, grenades, an Israeli land mine, a pipe bomb, gas masks, body armour and hundreds of rounds of ammunition were allegedly uncovered during a raid on his home.

Police said they were forced to call

in the army to ensure the stash was safe. Zoef was arrested after the Australian Customs and Border Protection Services allegedly detected a firearm part in a package sent from overseas during screening at the Sydney International Mail Facility in May.

Customs officers then targeted another shipment on July 3.

Zoef did not apply for bail, which was formally refused.



A knife discovered by police.