



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Government Security Classification:	OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE
Force/Organisation:	National Police Chiefs' Council Armed Policing Portfolio
Unit:	National Armed Policing Coordination Office (NAPCO)
Publication Date:	25/11/2024
Review Date:	24/11/2026
Version:	V4.0

Jointly agreed procedural guidance for the deployment and command of armed police officers within prisons

Revision History

Revision date	Version Control	Summary of changes	Authorised by
20/2/2018	v1.0	Original circulated version	Richard Thomas – Head of NPCC APP
07/04/2021	V2.0	Minor amendments to structure and wording. Contact address for Portfolio amended. 3.7 amended to reinforce command protocols. 3.9 amended to reinforce the meaning of command of HMPPS assets. Section 4 amended to include contingency planning considerations. 6.3 review period reduced from three yearly to annually.	Richard Thomas – Head of NPCC APP
08/02/2023	V3.0	Para 2.2 addition stating force contingency plans and NPRAS arrangements.	Richard Thomas – Head of NPCC APP
25.11.2024	V4.0	Review 1. Document transferred to standard NAPCO template. Additions to wording highlighted in purple text. Inclusion of introductory section setting out participants to the joint guidance and review period. 2. Unit name change – National Armed Policing Coordination Office (NAPCO) 3. Para 1.4 cross reference of MOU of unarmed deployment of police into prisons in the event of unlawful industrial action. 4. Para 4.7 added to include HMPPS command arrangements in privately managed prisons. 5. Para 4.17 added to include communication methods between HMPPS and police commanders 6. Appendix A added to include existing protocol between police and HMPPS negotiators	Rich Thomas – Head of NAPCO

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Any queries relating to this document should be directed to npccmailbox-armedpolicing@met.police.uk

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	PURPOSE	4
3	INITIAL REQUEST FOR ARMED SUPPORT	4
4	COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS	5
5	CONTINGENCY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS.....	8
6	NEGOTIATION.....	10
7	AGREEMENT	11
8	SIGNATURES	12
	APPENDIX A – NEGOTIATOR PROTOCOL.....	13
	APPENDIX B – GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	15

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This procedural guidance has been jointly developed by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Armed Policing Portfolio on behalf of police forces in England & Wales and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). It is intended to assist police forces in the development of local plans for the deployment and command of armed police officers within a prison establishment.
- 1.2 The National Armed Policing Coordination Office (NAPCO), HMPPS and the National Negotiating Group (NNG) have responsibility for reviewing this guidance every two years, or more often as required in response to relevant developments.
- 1.3 This guidance supersedes *Jointly Agreed Procedural Guidance for the Deployment and Command of Armed Police Officers within Prisons Version 3*, dated February 2023.
- 1.4 This guidance has been reviewed against the 'NPCC MOU with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)' and the 'Police Assistance to His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in the event of industrial action by prison staff' guidance notes¹. It has been agreed that there is no conflict between this guidance and those two documents.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 Where an operational requirement is identified via the Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA) process, **police forces should create bespoke contingency plans to cater for the deployment of armed officers into prison establishments or other places of mandatory confinement.** These plans should be developed in conjunction with the relevant establishment.
- 2.2 To ensure consistency of preparedness across all police forces, the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) within Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters (CTPHQ) has included these contingency plans within the National Plans Review and Assurance Schedule (NPRAS). **NPRAS is intended to provide assurance that plans are relevant, current, and consistent with national guidance.** Police forces are therefore required to develop contingency plans as appropriate and maintain them through regular review as directed by NPRAS.

3 Initial request for armed support

- 3.1 In most circumstances, the command and resolution of incidents within prison establishments will be conducted by HMPPS without necessity to request police assistance. However, **where those in command of an incident within a**

¹ approved by the NPCC Civil Contingencies Portfolio

prison establishment have reason to suppose that a threat or potential threat to life exists, and that mitigation of that threat is beyond the capability of the prison service, a request may be made for the support of armed police officers. Such a request may also be made where it has been identified that an appropriate contingency may be required to deal with such an eventuality.

- 3.2 A request for the deployment of armed police will be based on a threat assessment, conducted by a HMPPS silver commander, or the most senior HMPPS person in charge during the initial stages of the incident.
- 3.3 Contact will initially be established with the force control room (via the 999 system) in the policing area where the prison establishment is located. The request will provide an outline of the circumstances, including a threat and risk assessment, and should provide sufficient information to enable the initial tactical firearms commander (iTFC) to fulfil their responsibilities in respect of the deployment of armed officers. This will include setting a working strategy, based upon the threat assessment provided by the HMPPS silver commander or the most senior HMPPS person in charge.
- 3.4 Where initial contact is not reliant on the 999 system, communications staff within both the prison and police force control room should be aware of any locally agreed process.
- 3.5 The decision for the prison service to request armed police officers will be made or subsequently ratified by a gold commander within the HMPPS command and control structure. This process should provide an assurance to police that such a request justifies the deployment of armed officers into the prison, on the basis that they may be required as an operational contingency.

4 Command and control arrangements

- 4.1 Overall responsibility and accountability for the management and safe resolution of an incident rests with HMPPS.
- 4.2 Having determined that the deployment of armed police is required, a command protocol will be established to ensure clarity of the command relationship between the HMPPS and the police service. This protocol will define an appropriate command structure and specific responsibilities of who owns what, where and when.
- 4.3 Under the Home Office Codes of Practice on the Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons (2020) (Section 39A (5) of the Police Act 1996 as amended by Section 124 of Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014), it is a lawful requirement for suitably trained and accredited police firearms commanders to command any deployment of armed police officers. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice – Armed Policing (APP-AP) provides further guidance in this regard. Therefore, where armed police are deployed under this protocol, suitably accredited police firearms commanders must always command them.

- 4.4 There is set criteria for the deployment of armed officers. The deployment should only be authorised where the officer authorising the deployment has reason to suppose that officers may have to protect themselves or others from a person who:
- is in possession of, or has immediate access to a firearm or other potentially lethal weapon, or
 - is otherwise so dangerous that the deployment of armed officers is considered to be appropriate, or
 - as an operational contingency in a specific operation (based on the threat assessment)
- 4.5 The use of the words 'reason to suppose' sets the level of knowledge required about the existence of a threat justifying the deployment of armed officers at a far lower level than that which would justify the use of firearms (APP-AP). There is also an additional criterion for the destruction of animals which would not be relevant for the purposes of this arrangement.
- 4.6 In the context of an armed deployment within a prison establishment, the strategic firearms commander (SFC) should establish communication with the prison service gold commander as soon as practicable. This should allow the SFC to gain sufficient understanding of the strategic intention set by the prison service gold to ratify the deployment of armed officers, ratify the working strategy and to implement an appropriate command structure for the armed operation.
- 4.7 In the case of a privately managed prison (PMP), the contractor's gold commander will retain command of the incident. HMPPS may establish a supporting structure, which may take command if there is an operational need to do so. The PMP gold commander may refer the incident to the HMPPS duty director in the event of a disagreement as to which prison command structure (PMP or HMPPS) has primacy. The HMPPS duty director will use the established Incident Management Framework to appoint the most appropriate command structure in the circumstances. The SFC will work with the PMP gold commander unless they are informed of a change in command arrangements as above.
- 4.8 In the event that the request from HMPPS for armed support occurs without notice, an early tactical level relationship will have been established between the iTFC and the HMPPS silver commander or the most senior HMPPS person in charge. Owing to the nature and context of such a deployment, a cadre/ground assigned TFC (GATFC) should be deployed to the establishment as soon as practicable, to co-locate with the HMPPS silver commander. It is likely that armed officers will arrive prior to a cadre/GATFC. In such cases an operational firearms commander (OFC) should establish direct contact with the HMPPS silver commander. Communications will be established between the iTFC, OFC, HMPPS silver and armed officers.

- 4.9 Where an armed deployment is requested within a setting of broader establishment disorder, a more sophisticated command protocol will be required.
- 4.10 Once ratification of both the authority to deploy armed officers and the working strategy is confirmed by the SFC, the TFC, together with the HMPPS silver commander, should consider the tactical options available to both organisations to best achieve the strategy. Where it is identified that the deployment of armed officers (either as part of the primary plan or as a contingency) is required to achieve the strategic intention, command of the incident should be transferred to the police. This should be communicated to the SFC and HMPPS gold commander as soon as practicable.
- 4.11 Having considered the tactical options provided, a strategic decision will be required as to whether -
- there is an immediate threat to life or a likelihood that this will occur (a threat to life need not be present at the time command is transferred to police), and
 - the tactical resolution requires armed police (in terms of the primary plan or contingencies) and will therefore be commanded by the police.
- OR**
- all elements of the tactical response remain within the capability of the prison service and will therefore be commanded by the prison service
- 4.12 Where the SFC considers setting tactical parameters related to the police tactical plan, it may be appropriate to discuss these with the HMPPS gold commander to ensure a full understanding of the implications.
- 4.13 Where command for the resolution of the incident is transferred to the police, this will include command of the HMPPS assets directly involved in the tactical resolution. Any use of HMPPS within a tactical resolution will be subject to a threat and risk assessment by the TFC, to minimise the risk to all police and HMPPS resources. In undertaking this threat and risk assessment, the TFC will consider relevant advice from HMPPS in respect of their tactics. Examples of where HMPPS assets may be utilised include:
- securing of outer cordons
 - providing access to secure areas / walking maps
 - provision of distraction options
 - specialist method of entry (MOE) (e.g. cell doors)
 - subject handling
 - scene preservation
- 4.14 Any activity related to the wider establishment or outside of the specific resolution will remain under the command of the HMPPS.

- 4.15 The overall strategy and risk assessment relating to the wider operation will remain with the HMPPS. Where command of the resolution of the incident is transferred to the police, the police will discharge responsibility for the specific strands of the working strategy directly related to the resolution and mitigation of threats to life.
- 4.16 Where command of the resolution and the activation of related tactical plans is transferred to the police, there is a requirement for the TFC to update the HMPPS silver commander regarding developments where practicable. This should allow the HMPPS silver commander to manage consequence management and wider support arrangements.
- 4.17 The TFC and/or SFC will liaise with the HMPPS silver commander, via video conference or telephone where necessary. The cadre/GATFC will, where practicable, operate from the prison's own local command suite.

5 Contingency planning considerations

- 5.1 On notification by HMPPS, the iTFC should activate the agreed local contingency plan as soon as practicable. This should prompt the deployment of armed officers to the establishment concerned, thereby reducing any delay in the provision of a tactical capability, pending ratification of the deployment as previously described (at 4.10 above).
- 5.2 The contingency plan should be readily available to those who require immediate access to it and should describe protocols to facilitate the arrival, entry, and movement of armed officers within the establishment. The plan should include:
- an identified rendezvous point (RVP) outside the prison establishment
 - an expeditious entry process for armed officers
 - internal RVPs for police and prison staff
 - radio communications plan
 - security and escort arrangements
 - egress procedure
- 5.3 Armed officers should remain at the internal RVP until:
- the police firearms command structure has been established
 - primacy of command has been confirmed
 - effective communications have been established
 - a tactical briefing has been delivered
- 5.4 Considerations when pre-selecting RVPs should include:
- their proximity to the agreed vehicular access point for armed officers
 - a secondary RVP, should the primary RVP be unsuitable at the time of an incident

- that communication devices can operate at the RVP, even if HMPPS take mitigating action to deny prisoners access to electronic communication

5.5 Due to environmental factors, mobile telephony and radio communications may be impaired within a prison. In a high security prison, police or personal mobiles usually require surrender on entry. However, armed officers should be permitted access into the prison with police mobile phones. This will enable initial command and communications to be maintained. Alternative means of communication should also be identified, and a dedicated or shared communication system should be established which is capable of providing communication between the TFC (if they are remote) and the scene. This may be achieved through:

- the provision and use of prison service radios, controlled through a prison service silver command point
- permitted mobile telephony
- a dedicated radio channel on existing prison networks
- landline communications
- face to face communications

5.6 Where communications are challenging due to the loss of any satellite or transmitter, it may be necessary to establish a link to relay communications from the system being utilised within the prison establishment to the iTFC at the police force control room. Initially this is likely to be an armed response vehicle (ARV) officer positioned within the prison silver command suite to relay critical communications and provide a pivotal link between police tactical firearms command, prison silver command, and the OFC. If police and prison tactical command can be co-located in the prison silver command suite, this task may not be required.

5.7 An entry process for armed officers should be included within a contingency plan, to ensure it is as expeditious as possible. This should address any requirements that could impede entry and outline the detail of any special arrangements to be implemented.

5.8 Examples of entry requirements that may impede the expeditious entry of armed officers are the:

- search of armed response vehicles or other vehicles containing weapons and specialist equipment
- search of armed officers
- recording of armed officers' details and equipment

5.9 Special arrangements that could be considered within local contingency plans include:

- no requirement to search armed officers or vehicles on arrival
- armed officers providing a prepared vehicle inventory on arrival

- briefing reminder to prison security staff at the point of entry on any agreed special arrangements prior to the arrival of armed officers
- armed officers being met by dedicated prison officers to escort them throughout their movement on site
- a nominated secure holding area for armed officers, vehicles, weapons, and equipment
- dedicated prison staff to provide security for unattended armed response vehicles

5.10 This is not an exhaustive list but provides examples of special arrangements that could reduce the time it takes for armed officers to deploy into a prison environment particularly when there is an immediate threat to life. These arrangements should also allow the prison to confidently maintain a safe and secure environment whilst armed officers are within the establishment.

5.11 A forward deployment area may be established to provide a more suitable location for a tactical deployment to the incident. Prior to moving from the RVP to a forward deployment area, the following should be considered:

- prison staff escort to facilitate access and orientation
- where appropriate, emergency responder partner agencies have been briefed and are in attendance
- contingencies for the risk of un-associated conflict or compromise on route to the forward deployment area

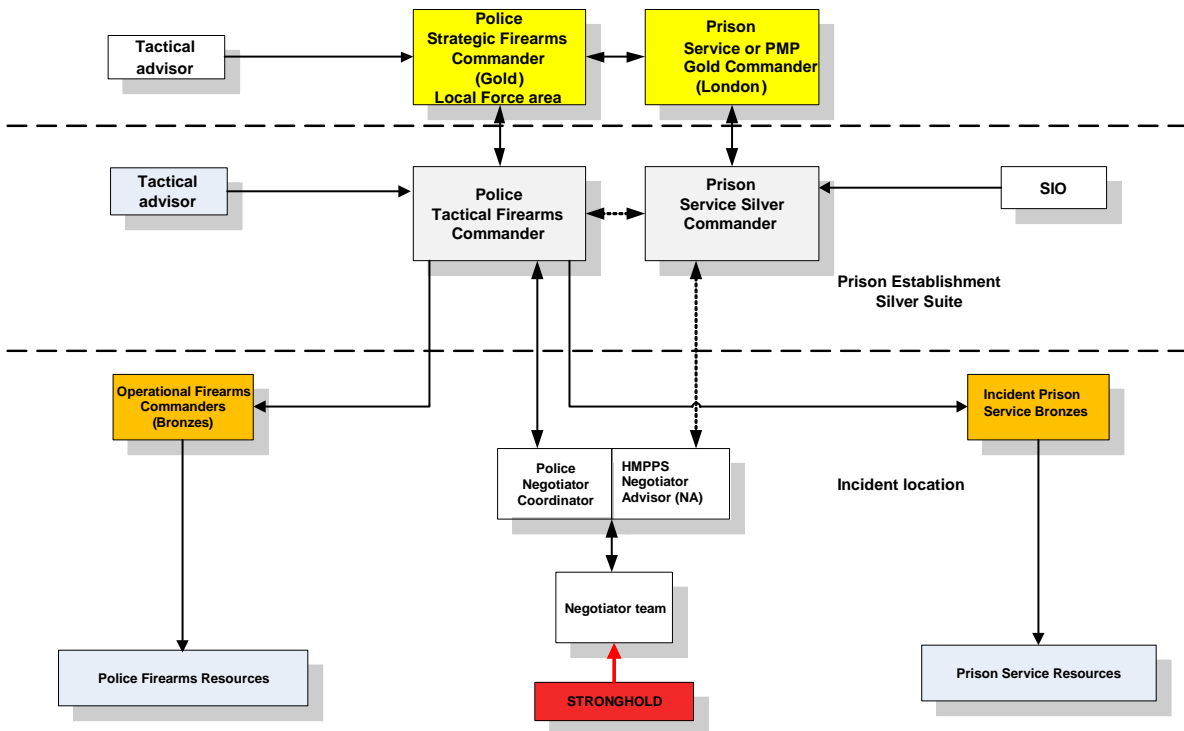
6 Negotiation

6.1 In the first instance, HMPPS will establish a negotiator team, led by a negotiator advisor, and commence negotiation. The negotiator advisor will work to the HMPPS silver commander under existing HMPPS arrangements.

6.2 Where the deployment of armed officers has been ratified, a police negotiation team will also be established and deployed to the incident.

6.3 Under an existing protocol (see Appendix A) agreed by HMPPS and the police NNG, a combined negotiation team will be established, led by the police negotiator coordinator, in liaison with the negotiator advisor. Where armed police are deployed within a prison establishment, this arrangement ensures sufficient context and understanding within the negotiation team to ensure that the strategy is achieved. This protocol also ensures the maintenance of resilience and flexibility should primacy for the tactical resolution of the incident revert to HMPPS.

Figure 1. Command model for the deployment of armed officers within a prison establishment



7 Agreement

- 7.1 This guidance is owned by the NPCC Armed Policing Portfolio lead. It will be reviewed and managed by NAPCO, in consultation with the HMPPS Head of National Incident Management Unit and NNG.
- 7.2 The guidance outlined within this document is accepted and agreed between the NPCC Armed Policing Portfolio and HMPPS Head of National Incident Management Unit.

8 Signatures

Signed



Richard Vince
Executive Director – Long Term and
High Security Estate, Security, Order
and Counter Terrorism
Date 24th September 2024

Signed



CC Simon Chesterman OBE QPM
NPCC Armed Policing lead
(On behalf of all Chief Officers)

Date 24th September 2024

Appendix A – Negotiator protocol

HMPPS and the police national negotiator group (NNG) have agreed the following scalable, joint working principles for supporting armed deployments within prison establishments.

Stage 1

Initially, HMPPS will appoint a negotiator advisor (NA) and up to four negotiators (scalable dependent on the circumstances). The NA will provide advice to the HMPPS silver commander.

Stage 2

Where a police command structure is established, the police will initially deploy a negotiator coordinator (NC) and a minimum of two negotiators.

Stage 3

The police negotiation team will take primacy when supporting an armed deployment and will work to the agreed strategy as approved through the NC and TFC. However, the NC will continue to liaise with the NA throughout the duration of the incident. HMPPS negotiators are trained psychologists and can support negotiations by advising on relevant elements.

Stage 4

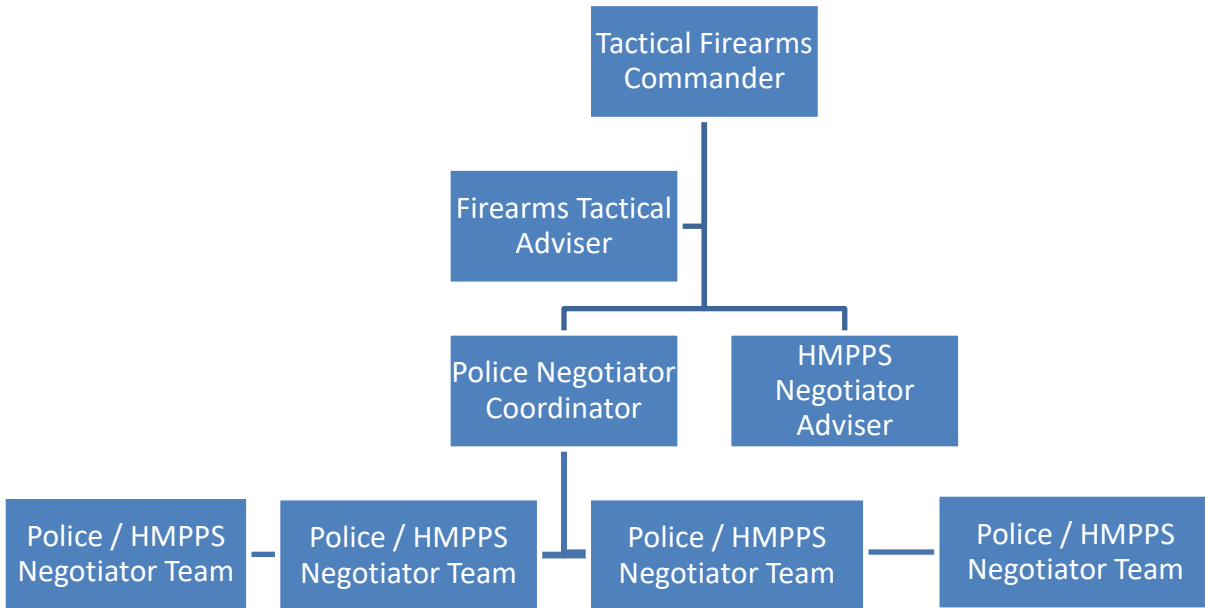
The NC may combine police and HMPPS negotiators into a single team and appoint a team leader (see Figure 2, below). However, no combined working should occur until the NC is in place and able to brief and direct police negotiator resources.

Stage 5

Upon the withdrawal of the police command structure, the HMPPS negotiator team will assume all negotiator responsibilities.

The transfer of primacy between HMPPS and police negotiation teams should be managed in such a way to minimise the impact upon ongoing negotiations.

Figure 2 Police led negotiator structure



Appendix B – Glossary of terms and abbreviations

APP-AP	Authorised Professional Practice-Armed Policing
APSTRA	Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment
ARV	Armed Response Vehicle
CTPHQ	Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters
GATFC	Ground Assigned Tactical Firearms Commander
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
iTFC	Initial Tactical Firearms Commander
MOE	Method of Entry
NA	Negotiator Advisor
NaCTSO	National Counter Terrorism Security Office
NAPCO	National Armed Policing Coordination Office
NC	Negotiator Coordinator
NNG	National Negotiator Group
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NPRAS	National Plans Review and Assurance Schedule
OFC	Operational Firearms Commander
PMP	Privately Managed Prison
RVP	Rendezvous Point
SFC	Strategic Firearms Commander