

Appendix 'B'

Procedures and Guidance Regarding the Wearing of Public Order Protective Equipment

Introduction

- B1 This section sets out the procedure to be considered during the planning phase of a public order event. It will provide an indication of the requirements for the wearing of personal protective equipment by police officers on duty at such events. Protective equipment includes riot helmet, boots, arm and leg protection, gloves, public order baton, riot shields and the flame retardant coveralls including undergarments and balaclavas.
- B2 It is acknowledged that to achieve maximum protection from the threat of burning petrol or other fluids, flame retardant coveralls should be the final outer layer of clothing with limb protection worn underneath. However, it is recognised that the covert wearing of limb protection has created various problems for operational officers. For example when required to wear the equipment for long periods of time there is a risk of officers suffering from heat exhaustion.
- B3 Whilst it is desirable that control measures be built into operational orders to allow frequent refreshment breaks to be taken, it is not always operationally practicable. A more flexible approach to the wearing of limb protection based upon a risk assessment is therefore approved. Two issues are central to this approach, they are, the wearing of flame retardant coveralls and the wearing of additional PPE.
- B4 The mode of dress/equipment provision for police officers will be determined by the likelihood of disorder. This will be based upon a risk assessment and should be specified in the operational order. Public Order events are varied and officers planning deployments should assess:
- The potential for disorder at each event.
 - The situations likely to be encountered.
 - The equipment/clothing necessary to provide suitable protection.
 - Other relevant factors.
- B5 To determine the potential for disorder, District/Silver Commanders should consider the following during any assessment:
- Current intelligence – what is the likelihood of incidents involving the throwing of blast bombs, petrol bombs, stones or other missiles?

- Organisations involved.
- Previous history.
- Advance publicity.
- Opposing factions.
- Known protagonists or militants.
- Current state of public relations.

B6 It should be remembered that flame retardant coveralls, in addition to their flame retardant qualities, also afford:

- Additional protection from other liquids and fluids.
- Additional protection from inclement weather.
- A much greater flexibility of movement for the individual when engaged in public order activity.

B7 Bearing these points in mind, a tiered deployment to the wearing of PPE should be adopted. This approach will take the following form:

Tier 1 Deployment

B8 Prior to any pre-planned event or during serious public disorder, a risk assessment should be carried out by the Operational Commander (i.e. the officer with overall responsibility for the event or incident). The Operational Commander should liaise with the TSG Commander to ensure that TSG Command has an opportunity to shape and direct the decision-making process with regard to the deployment of their personnel. Where there is a risk of petrol bombs being used against police, personnel should deploy in the mode of dress as agreed by the Operational Commander and TSG Unit Commander and outlined in operational orders.

B9 It should be remembered that where full public order dress (i.e. flame retardant coveralls with full protective equipment) is directed, covert wearing of limb protection provides an enhanced level of protection for the highest level of threat. Operational orders should indicate whether limb protection should be worn overtly or covertly.

Tier 2 Deployment

B10 When detailed for routine public order duties, unless otherwise directed by TSG Command, TSGs should deploy in flame retardant coveralls. Where deployment to disorder is required immediately in these circumstances, officers should wear their limb protection on top of their flame retardant coveralls.

B11 Where a unit is deployed to spontaneous disorder and petrol bombs are used or intelligence indicates that they may be used, action should be taken to allow those officers involved to be removed from frontline duties and replaced as soon as possible by fully protected officers wearing covert limb protection (Tier 1). Where there is no threat or intelligence to suggest attack from petrol bombs, the officer in charge of the unit can make an 'on the ground' risk assessment and may decide to keep the officers in overt limb protection.

Tier 3 Deployment

B12 It is acknowledged that in the absence of any threat of potential disorder or where the risk of disorder is assessed as low and where the threat to the safety of officers is also assessed as low, officers should generally deploy in normal patrol uniform (i.e. number 2 or 4 uniform). In these circumstances, where there is spontaneous public disorder and a requirement to deploy immediately, wearing of the limb protection over normal patrol dress is approved. If the use of petrol bombs is likely or evident then the caveat as outlined at Tier 2 will also apply.

B13 If flame retardant coveralls are subsequently worn over normal patrol uniform, arrangements should be made as soon as possible for officers to change clothing. It is stressed that the requirement for officers to change from standard dress into public order dress in pre-planned operations should be exceptional and not routine. In assessing the potential for disorder, commanders should, if there is any doubt, err towards the safety of officers involved and instruct public order dress to be worn.

General

B14 It should be highlighted that the requirement for assessing the risk of attack from petrol bombs must be balanced against the risk of other injury such as heat exhaustion. The additional benefits of the flame retardant coveralls must also be considered in the assessment.

B15 It is acknowledged that there will ultimately be a trade-off in comfort in achieving personal protection. It is necessary for the user to assess that the combined PPE as a whole provides an adequate degree of protection and to appreciate that it is possible for one type of equipment to be compromised by the presence of another. It should also be noted that the limb protection on current issue is flame retardant. However it should also be borne in mind that the overt wearing of limb protection does provide 'grab' points for assailants during close quarter confrontations. Furthermore, overt wearing of PPE may highlight and expose those vulnerable parts of an officer's body that are unprotected.

B16 The circumstances, which exist while an event is being policed, may permit the Operational Commander some flexibility concerning the wearing/carrying of riot helmets, shields and batons. This may facilitate the wearing of forage/patrol caps when protective helmets are not required. The balaclava however should only be worn below the protective helmet and not as an outer garment.

- B17 TSGs/PSUs will not normally be expected to travel long distances to venues in public order dress. Operational Planners should make arrangements for visiting units to change before and after deployments.
- B18 All officers need to be mindful of the potential for dehydration whilst wearing the flame retardant coveralls. The possible effects can be minimised, if individuals, when they have an opportunity to do so, unzip their coveralls to improve air circulation. The risk is greater in hot weather where there is substantial physical exertion. In normal healthy officers the body will respond to the problem and they may experience increasing thirst and some dizziness. In such circumstances they should take additional fluids and seek first aid assistance. In cooler conditions with normal mobility, there is little risk of dehydration.
- B19 Officers are reminded of the requirement to ensure that rank insignia/numerals are visibly displayed on their outer garments at all times.
- B20 Regional ACCs will determine the mode of dress for TSGs deployed on routine patrol tasks. They may devolve this authority to District/TSG Commanders for specified periods, or generally, as they judge appropriate.
- B21 Further information regarding the care and wearing of uniform and protective equipment can be found in the corporate uniform standard.