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NPIA

National Policing
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**PRACTICE
IMPROVEMENT**

GUIDANCE ON COMMAND AND CONTROL

2009

Produced on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers
by the National Policing Improvement Agency

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GUIDANCE ON COMMAND AND CONTROL

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FOREWORD

This guidance has been produced by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) following consultation with the Police Service and partner agencies. It establishes the foundations of effective command and control for the Police Service and helps partner agencies to better understand the principles of command and control that the Police Service work to.

The guidance aims to encourage the Police Service to use common language, systems and processes. It is not about risk aversion, but focuses on the essential areas of command and control, including the need for clarity of command and clear and auditable decision-making processes.

It represents the first step in establishing a consistent service-wide approach to command and control that will include, over time, nationally accredited competency-based training programmes, and the review of existing doctrine to incorporate the principles set out in this document.

This guidance is for all police officers who perform a command function. It provides them with a framework of key principles for managing both spontaneous incidents and planned operations at a local, regional and national level and can assist in enabling and delivering tactical options across all areas of policing. It cannot, however, provide prescription about how to manage every eventuality or prescribe specific systems or technologies to support effective command and control, signposting readers to relevant doctrine instead.

The first section of this guidance focuses on the general principles of command, defining clearly the term command and control and describes the responsibilities of commanders where a formal command structure is introduced. The formal command structure follows the Gold, Silver, Bronze model which is widely used by the Police Service and partner agencies.

The second section describes the importance of effective decision making in the context of the Conflict Management Model (CMM). It also identifies other factors commanders should consider such as communication, community impact assessments (CIAs) and debriefing.



Chief Constable Jon Stoddart QPM

Section 1

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

This section sets out the general principles of command and control that apply to all police officers when responding to an incident or managing an operation. It also clarifies the terminology used in command, and describes the Gold, Silver, Bronze (GSB) command structure used by the Police Service and partner agencies.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Police Service deals with a wide range of incidents and operations that are typically resolved by deploying resources available at that time. On occasion, however, the police response to certain incidents or operations requires a different approach and the establishment of a dedicated command structure may be required.

This section looks at the general principles of command and control that apply to all officers, and clarifies formal command structures following the Gold, Silver, Bronze (GSB) model. GSB is sometimes referred to as the strategic, tactical and operational model.

This section also sets out the important role partner agencies play in the management of planned operations and the resolution of spontaneous incidents. Although the Police Service usually takes the lead and plays a coordinating role through chairing meetings and coordinating resources, increasingly, partner agencies in certain phases of an incident or operation may be best placed to take the lead where their responsibility, level of experience and expertise is more suited to a successful resolution of the incident or operation.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

It is essential that the language of command and control is clearly understood when responding to an incident or operation, particularly where the response involves partner agencies.

The terms identified here are well known and widely used throughout the Police Service. However, these terms are often interpreted broadly and inconsistently, which can lead to confusion. This guidance, therefore, seeks to clarify the key definitions of command and control.

This guidance recognises that the principles are scaleable and can be used to resolve incidents and operations ranging in size and scope, from the policing of a local community event to a major criminal investigation such as a multi-seated terrorist attack requiring the mobilisation of several police forces.

1.2.1 COMMAND AND CONTROL

Command and control can be defined as being the authority and capability of an organisation to direct the actions of its own personnel and the use of its equipment.

1.2.2 STEADY STATE

Steady state is the term used to describe the activities that the police respond to and manage as part of their everyday responsibilities. Steady state may also be known as business as usual or normality in some forces.

The different size of police forces, availability of resources and their ability to respond to incidents and operations, mean that what one force may consider a steady state may differ from that of a neighbouring force.

1.2.3 RISING TIDE INCIDENTS

Rising tide incidents develop from a steady state, to become an emergency or major incident over a more prolonged period of time. Examples of this type of incident include severe weather events such as widespread flooding, or epidemics such as foot and mouth disease.

Managing a rising tide incident requires careful consideration. Using a decision-making model, such as the Conflict Management Model (CMM), can help to ensure that the nature of an incident is properly understood and that a proportionate response is applied. This is particularly important where a formal command structure is in place and command and control of the incident requires escalation to a more experienced officer.

For further information on rising tide incidents, see *ACPO (2009) Guidance on Emergency Procedures*.

1.2.4 PLANNED OPERATION

A planned operation, sometimes referred to as a pre-planned operation, is one in which the Police Service has had the opportunity and time to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans before an anticipated operation takes place. The amount of time of the advance warning will, however, vary.

If the date, size and nature of a public event is known many months or even years in advance, commanders should use that time to work closely with event organisers, partner agencies and others, such as community groups, as part of a pre-event strategy.

The police response to a planned operation should be based on the information and intelligence available at the time.

1.2.5 SPONTANEOUS INCIDENT

A spontaneous incident is where the police have not had prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans. A spontaneous incident requires an initial response, even though the information about the incident may be incomplete. As a result, the initial response to a spontaneous incident may be directed towards increasing the level of intelligence. Commanders should, therefore, ensure that robust information and intelligence management processes are in place to provide as clear a picture as possible of the spontaneous incident as it develops. This will then help form the basis of the police response.

The initial response may also be directed towards early intervention to prevent the escalation of an incident.

For further information on the importance of understanding information and intelligence in the CMM see **2 Principles of Decision Making**.

A common theme running through the definitions of 'planned' and 'spontaneous' is time. While the nature of a planned operation suggests that the police have advanced notice of a departure from a steady state, a spontaneous incident may occur at any time and without notice. What at first appears to be a straightforward planned operation may have the potential to develop into a spontaneous incident, should further information and intelligence identify a new or changed threat.

1.3 THE FUNCTION OF COMMAND

Authoritative command is carried out by those who have been given authority over others for a specific operation or incident. Commanders should be aware that their role is to make decisions, give clear directions and ensure that those directions are carried out. Working in this way promotes cohesion and provides direction that helps to deliver the strategy. The absence of effective command by one or more in the command structure will undermine a successful operation or incident, and put both the police and public at unnecessary risk.

Effective command is, therefore, based on the existence of:

- A role within an organised framework (GSB);
- Training, exercise and experience;
- Processes and systems to support effective decision making.

1.4 FORMAL COMMAND STRUCTURES – GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE

In certain situations, an incident or operation will result in the escalation of decision making into a formal command structure with clear lines of accountability and responsibility. Depending on the needs of the situation, this structure may or may not include all elements of GSB. Similarly, it may also involve local or Basic Command Unit (BCU) police officers and staff, partner agencies and, ultimately, the government.

The command structure used by the Police Service is based on the GSB hierarchy of command and can be applied to the resolution of both spontaneous incidents and planned operations. GSB is also widely recognised and adopted by other partner agencies.

The GSB structure provides a framework for delivering a strategic, tactical and operational response to an incident or operation. It also provides an opportunity to establish the processes that will ensure the flow of information, and that decisions are communicated effectively and documented as part of an audit trail. It is essential that everyone involved in the police response clearly understands what they are required to do, how they are required to do it and when. This is particularly important where a multi-agency response is required as confusion and uncertainty can lead to 'command paralysis' where commanders are unable to make and/or communicate decisions effectively.

Gold, Silver, Bronze is role, rather than rank specific. Officers of a senior rank to those nominated to undertake one of these three roles should not automatically assume superiority, solely on the basis of rank or territorial responsibility. However, they are accountable for any information or advice given to commanders.

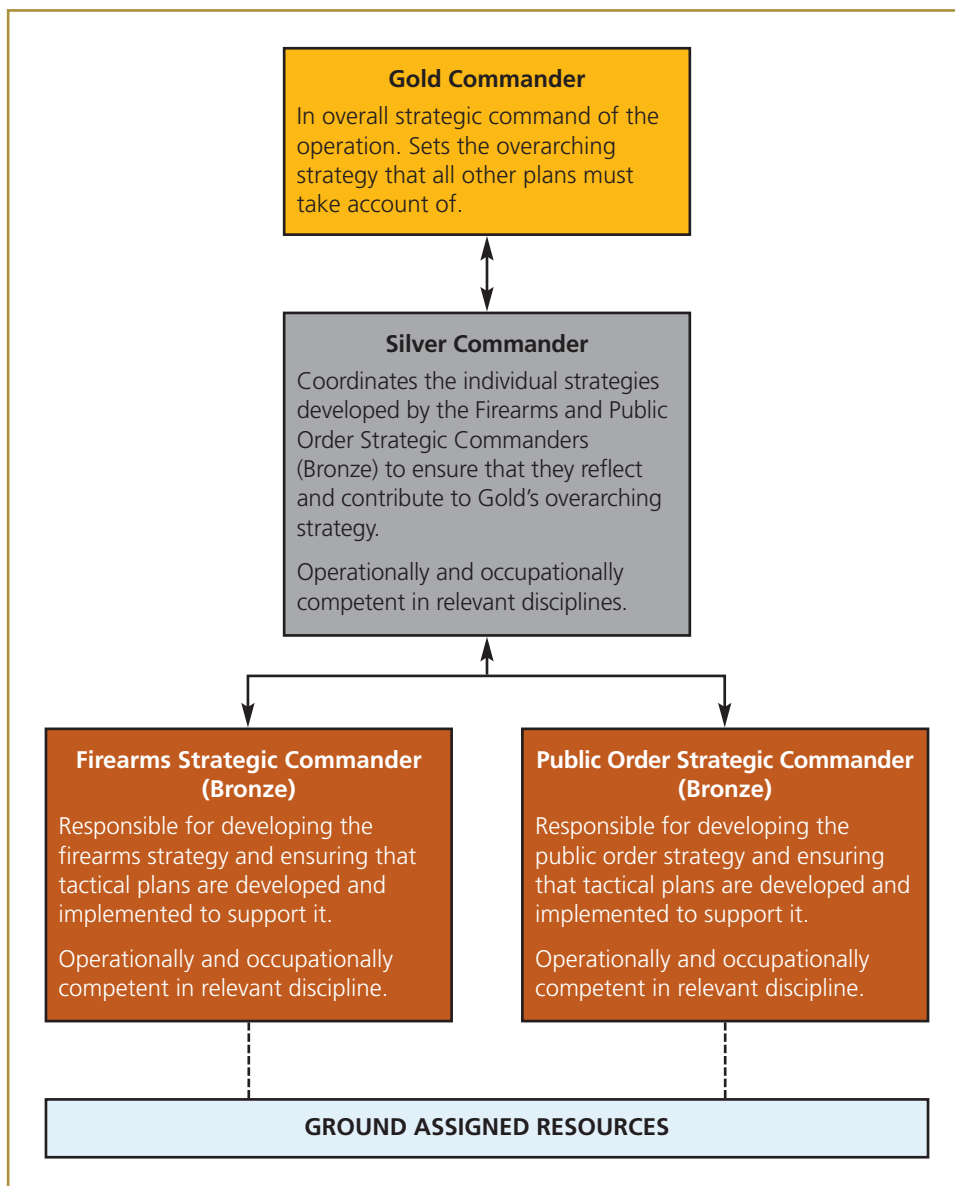
The command structure should be regularly reviewed to ensure that those performing the required roles are sufficiently trained and competent.

The GSB model is flexible and can be applied to any type of incident or operation. It is, therefore, important to ensure that every command structure is reviewed regularly and remains flexible enough to adapt to changes in the nature of the threat, incident or operation without jeopardising clear lines of communication or accountability.

The resolution of most incidents and operations is achieved by using a simple GSB command structure, with the responsibilities and accountabilities of each commander clearly set out in a command protocol. In more complex incidents and operations where the police response is likely to comprise a number of different elements, or where the police response requires the deployment of officers across force boundaries, the GSB command structure may become stretched and command responsibilities less clear. To avoid this, consideration should be given to establishing a supporting chain of command for each element of the police response, which should be underpinned by clearly defined command protocols.

Figure 1 is an example of a formal command structure designed to manage the response to more complex incidents or operations involving firearms and public order. The example ensures that any interdependencies or potential conflicts are managed effectively while ensuring clarity of command throughout the duration of the incident or operation.

Figure 1 Example of a Command Structure When Responding to More Complex Incidents or Operations



Throughout the command chain, officers delegating responsibility to the next level should ensure that any delegation will meet the strategic objectives set by Gold. Similarly, 'arc-ing' across the levels of command should be avoided to prevent confusion, for example, Gold passing on commands to Bronze of which Silver is unaware.

In responding to local incidents and operations, there will only ever be the need for one police Gold Commander at any one time. For further information on dealing with incidents or operations that have an impact across a regional or national level, see **1.8 Gold, Silver, Bronze at a Regional and National Level**.

In most incidents or operations, it is usually only necessary to deploy a single Silver Commander. On some occasions, however, where the incident or operation is located across a wide area, such as a flood or a multi-seated terrorist attack, the use of more than one Silver Commander may be considered. The decision to deploy more than one Silver Commander will always rest with the Gold Commander.

If a decision to use more than one Silver Commander is made, the Gold Commander should be satisfied that the following considerations have been met:

- Clear and commonly understood command protocols are in place which delineate lines of command and responsibility;
- That deploying more than one Silver Commander does not create a gap within the command structure at the tactical level which draws the Gold Commander into tactical decision making;
- Lines of communication and responsibility remain clear;
- That each Silver Commander is sufficiently trained and competent to perform the role.

Prolonged or protracted events put pressure on the ability of the command team to resolve an incident or operation. Replacing Gold, Silver and Bronze Commanders with fully briefed and appropriately trained and competent equivalents will prevent fatigue and, consequently, poor judgement.

To ensure command resilience throughout the duration of an incident or operation, consideration should be given to the individual officers' fitness for duty, the identification of emerging stress factors and the capability and capacity of others involved in the response. Consideration should also be given to whether there is a need for mutual aid from other police forces.

It is essential that commanders are physically and mentally capable of performing their roles and responsibilities. All forces should, therefore, ensure that they have processes in place to monitor the impact on staff of protracted incidents or operations.

Where a commander is replaced, the formal command structure should ensure that:

- The incoming commander has a full grasp of the situation, is fully briefed and able to undertake the role;
- The integrity of the audit trail is maintained;
- The integrity of individual logs is protected;
- Others in the command structure are informed when the handover is complete;
- Everyone involved in the response is aware at all times who is in command.

A Gold or Silver Commander's ability to perform their role effectively depends on them being in a location where they have:

- Knowledge of the circumstances and the available intelligence;
- The ability to communicate effectively with others;
- Advice available from advisers;
- A suitable environment from which to exercise their command function.

Bronze Commanders will normally be located close to the officers that they are commanding. In complex incidents and operations involving the use of operations rooms this may not always be the case. Bronze Commanders should, however, be able to maintain effective operational command of their area of responsibility.

If the nature or scope of an incident or operation changes, commanders may decide to move to a more appropriate location, which may result in a temporary loss of access to communications, current intelligence or command support. Where this occurs, commanders should ensure that a trained, competent and briefed replacement is available to take over until the original commander is in a position to continue.

For major incidents or operations that require resources above and beyond local mutual aid arrangements, commanders should consider the Police National Mobilisation Plan (PNMP), which can help to assess, deliver and manage resources on a larger scale. Consideration should also be given to the capacity and capability of partner agencies to resource an equivalent structure.

For further information on the PNMP, see *ACPO (2006) Guidance on the Police National Mobilisation Plan*.

1.4.1 COMMAND TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

Command roles can be challenging and at times extremely demanding with both corporate and personal implications. It is, therefore, essential that individuals with appropriate skills are selected, trained and supported. When allocating roles, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of the task to the individual's training, experience and competence.

Officers discharging command responsibilities should be competent and able to demonstrate how they achieved, updated and maintained this competency. This should include a record of evidence through a personal log to demonstrate operational deployment and learning. Achieving, maintaining and developing competence is, however, a tri-partite relationship between the organisation, line manager and operational commander, all of whom play a role in facilitating and checking the commander's attainment of operational competence. Everyone involved in operational command should reasonably expect this process, and to have their competency examined on a regular basis, but particularly during a post-event enquiry.

1.5 GOLD COMMANDER (STRATEGIC)

The Gold Commander is ultimately responsible for determining the strategy, and any tactical parameters, that Silver or Bronze Commanders should follow. Gold Commanders retain strategic oversight and overall command of the incident or operation.

Properly trained and competent Gold Commanders can provide objectivity, test tactical and operational plans for effectiveness in delivering the strategy, and can offer support to the rest of the command team.

While Gold should not make tactical decisions, they will be responsible for ensuring that any tactics deployed are proportionate to the risks identified, meet the objectives of the strategy and are legally compliant.

Chief officers should ensure that Gold Commanders are trained and competent in relation to the nature and context of the operation they command as this will enable them to test, approve and review the development and implementation of the tactical plan.

The Gold Commander is also responsible for:

- Chairing the Strategic Coordinating Group where there is a multi-agency response to an incident or operation, although this responsibility may be delegated to another agency;
- Setting, reviewing, updating and communicating the strategy;
- Consulting stakeholders when determining the strategy, including partner agencies and community groups as appropriate;
- Considering setting tactical parameters for the police response;
- Being suitably located in order to maintain effective strategic command by ensuring that appropriate communication mechanisms exist;
- Maintaining a strategic overview and, as such, should not become drawn into making tactical level decisions;
- Resourcing the response to the incident or operation;
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, command protocols are set, agreed and understood by all relevant parties;
- Remaining available to the Silver Commander;
- Ensuring that the strategy for the incident or operation is documented in order to provide a clear audit trail, including any changes to that strategy;
- Approving the Silver Commander's tactical plan and ensuring that it meets the strategic intention for the incident or operation;
- Reviewing and ensuring the resilience and effectiveness of the command structure and the effectiveness of the Silver Commander;
- Completing community and equality impact assessments;
- Identifying the level of support needed to resolve the incident or operation;
- Considering whether the incident or operation should be declared as a critical incident;
- Having, within the command structure, overall responsibility for ensuring that health and safety, diversity, equality and human rights legislation and policy is being complied with.

1.5.1 DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

When an incident or operation takes place, the Gold Commander should develop an effective strategy that sets out the purpose, rationale and parameters in which others within the command structure are to operate.

A working strategy may start to be developed when information and intelligence is received and formalised once a threat assessment has taken place.

A strategy can be defined as being a plan of action designed to achieve a series of objectives or a particular goal.

The purpose of a strategy is to establish an agreed set of objectives relevant to the knowledge of the situation, arising from the analysis of the risks presented. It should be dynamic and capable of revision in light of amended threat analysis and assessment. It should include a list of clear and unambiguous objectives.

The strategy should also be an enabler for Silver Commanders to make justifiable decisions and implement tactical options that meet the overall strategy. It should not prevent a Silver Commander's activity.

Each incident is unique and should have its own strategy. Previous, similar incidents may provide a list of objectives that can be referred to when developing a strategy.

Generic objectives such as 'ensuring public safety' should be avoided unless it can be shown how public safety can be guaranteed specifically in relation to that particular incident or operation.

It is essential to use plain language when writing a strategy, to avoid confusion. Terms that are not clearly understood or explained can be misinterpreted.

The Gold Commander is the owner of the strategy, which means they are accountable for its contents and any action taken in response to a specific threat. The Gold Commander should, wherever possible, consult Silver during the formulation of the strategy, and should also document the rationale behind it in the command log. This process requires effective communication between Gold and Silver.

Where a spontaneous incident occurs, it is unlikely that the Gold Commander will be the person responsible for setting the working strategy. This activity may have been undertaken by the officer first on the scene using the information and intelligence available at that time. As new information emerges and is assessed and evaluated, a Gold Commander may be appointed to take overall responsibility for the strategy and its delivery. In incidents that have a significant impact on resources or are particularly high profile, the initial Gold Commander may be replaced by a more experienced officer.

In planned operations, staff may often be involved in conducting early analysis of the event and developing a draft strategy before a Gold Commander is appointed.

Although it is important that a strategy is defined and agreed as quickly as possible, it should be based on all the information available at the time. However, it is rare for a complete or perfect picture to exist. Commanders should, therefore, avoid waiting for any further information about the incident or operation which may not, in any case, come to their attention.

While the strategy and the rationale behind it should be recorded as part of an audit trail, so should any revisions or amendments. Similarly, the strategy should be regularly reviewed, particularly where a change or handover of command occurs.

1.6 SILVER COMMANDER (TACTICAL)

The Silver Commander commands and coordinates the overall tactical response in compliance with the strategy.

The Silver Commander is also responsible for:

- Developing and coordinating the tactical plan in order to achieve the strategy set by the Gold Commander within any tactical parameters set;
- Testing the Gold Commander's strategy to ensure that it is achievable and proportionate to the threat faced;
- Assessing the available information and intelligence to properly evaluate the threat, vulnerabilities and risk;
- Being suitably located in order to maintain effective tactical command of the incident or operation;
- Ensuring that all decisions are documented in the command log in order to provide a clear audit trail;
- Providing the pivotal link in the command chain between Bronze Commanders and the Gold Commander;
- Reviewing and updating the tactical plan and ensuring that any changes made are communicated to the Bronze Commanders and, where appropriate, the Gold Commander;
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, the strategy and tactics are properly briefed to all staff on the operation;
- Ensuring that the tactics employed by Bronze Commanders meet the strategic intention and tactical plan;
- Considering the wider community, public safety and evidential implications of using certain tactics;
- Managing and coordinating, where required, multi-agency resources and activities during the response to an incident or operation;
- Ensuring that any deployment is commensurate with the level of threat faced;
- Ensuring that a full debrief of the incident or operation takes place which contributes to organisational learning.

Silver Commanders should, where practicable, liaise with Bronze Commanders in the tactical planning process. Silver Commanders should also ensure that Bronze Commanders understand the strategic intentions, the key points of the wider tactical plan, and tactical objectives that relate specifically to their area of responsibility.

Silver Commanders should encourage and support Bronze Commanders, within the defined parameters, to use their initiative in order to meet the tactical plan and wider strategic objectives. An unnecessarily restrictive approach by Silver Commanders that attempts to micro-manage will potentially stifle action where it is needed, devalue and de-motivate subordinate commanders and result in Silver Commanders losing sight of the wider picture.

For further information on developing tactical plans, see **2.1.4 Tactical Options**.

1.7 BRONZE COMMANDER (OPERATIONAL)

The Bronze Commander is responsible for the command of a group of resources, and carrying out functional or geographical responsibilities related to the tactical plan.

The Bronze Commander is also responsible for:

- Implementing the relevant part of the Silver Commander's plan by using appropriate tactics within their geographical or functional area of responsibility;
- Having a clear understanding of the Gold Commander's strategy, the Silver Commander's tactical plan and their own role within it;
- Making decisions within their agreed level of responsibility, including seeking approval for any variation in agreed tactics;
- Where circumstances constantly change, testing the Silver Commander's tactical plan to ensure that it is achievable and proportionate;
- Ensuring staff within their area of responsibility are fully briefed and understand their role, responsibilities and limits;
- Updating the Silver Commander on any changes including any variation in agreed tactics within their geographical or functional area of responsibility;
- Being suitably located in order to maintain effective operational command of their area of responsibility;
- Being available to those under their command – Bronze Commanders should, however, ensure that those carrying out tasks for Bronze have sufficient independence to conduct their specific role in accordance with the strategy and tactical plan;
- Ensuring all operational decisions made are documented in a command log to maintain a clear audit trail.

1.8 GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE AT A REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

The GSB model is a scaleable command structure that can be applied to operations and incidents at a local, regional or national level.

In most instances the police response will be contained within one force area. On occasion, however, a regional or national police response may be required where the resources of other forces, and potentially other partner agencies, are needed.

Where cooperation with other forces and, potentially, other partner agencies are needed, commanders should ensure that all responsibilities and procedures are clearly defined and agreed between each force involved in the resolution of the incident or operation. This may be undertaken through a command protocol. To do this effectively forces should sufficiently prepare themselves by planning with other forces.

For further information see [1.9 Command Protocols](#).

1.8.1 REGIONAL OPERATIONS OR INCIDENTS

A regional operation or incident is one which has implications for more than one police force within a particular region.

Where an operation or incident crosses police force boundaries, the chief constables of the forces involved should consult each other and establish a formal command structure under a single Regional Coordinator. The role of the Regional Coordinator depends on the level of threat. Where there is a high threat, interdependencies and tactical activity in one area can affect risk in another and the Regional Coordinator's role becomes a command function responsible for setting the overarching strategy. Where the assessed threat is lower however, the Regional Coordinator's role will be to coordinate the efforts of the forces involved. The Regional Coordinator may also act as a liaison with partner agencies where appropriate.

The Regional Coordinator may, depending on the circumstances, be required to attend the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR).

Any police force affected by the incident or operation, where the Regional Coordinator is not from that force, should appoint a force Gold Commander to ensure that the legal responsibilities chief officers have within their own force are properly addressed. The officer performing this function should attend the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) if one is established. The SCG and Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC) may be replicated at the force Gold command level.

Silver Commanders may be appointed in each police force to support the force Gold Commander.

Figure 2 Regional Command Structure demonstrates how the response to a regional incident or operation should be structured.

1.8.2 NATIONAL OPERATIONS OR INCIDENTS

A national operation or incident is one which has implications for all the police forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The nature and scale of a national operation or incident is likely to involve the activation of COBR and the need for regional and local coordination.

In these circumstances the ACPO President may assume the role of National Police Gold Coordinator, based at the Police National Information Coordination Centre (PNICC). The ACPO President may, however, delegate this role to another chief constable.

The role of the ACPO President or nominated officer is to represent the Police Services of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (with the agreement of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland). This may include attending COBR meetings on behalf of the Police Service, acting as a focal point for national and international media, and disseminating national policy and strategy to all police forces affected.

Each police force affected by the operation or incident should appoint a force Gold Commander to assume responsibility for the implementation of national policy and strategy within their own force area.

The SCG and SCC may be replicated at Regional Coordinator and/or force Gold command level.

Figure 3 National Command Structure demonstrates how the response to a national incident or operation should be structured.

Figure 2 Regional Command Structure

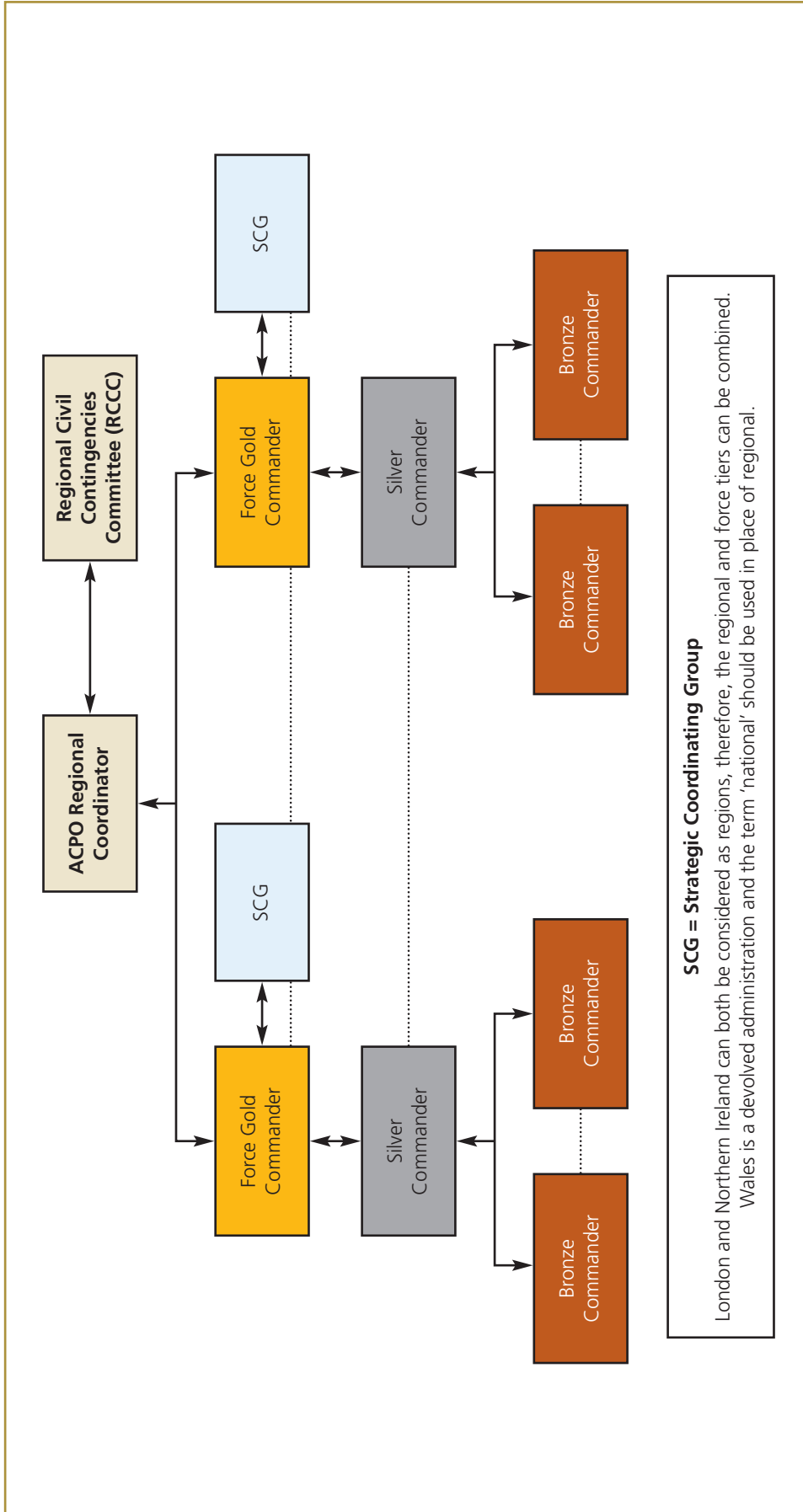
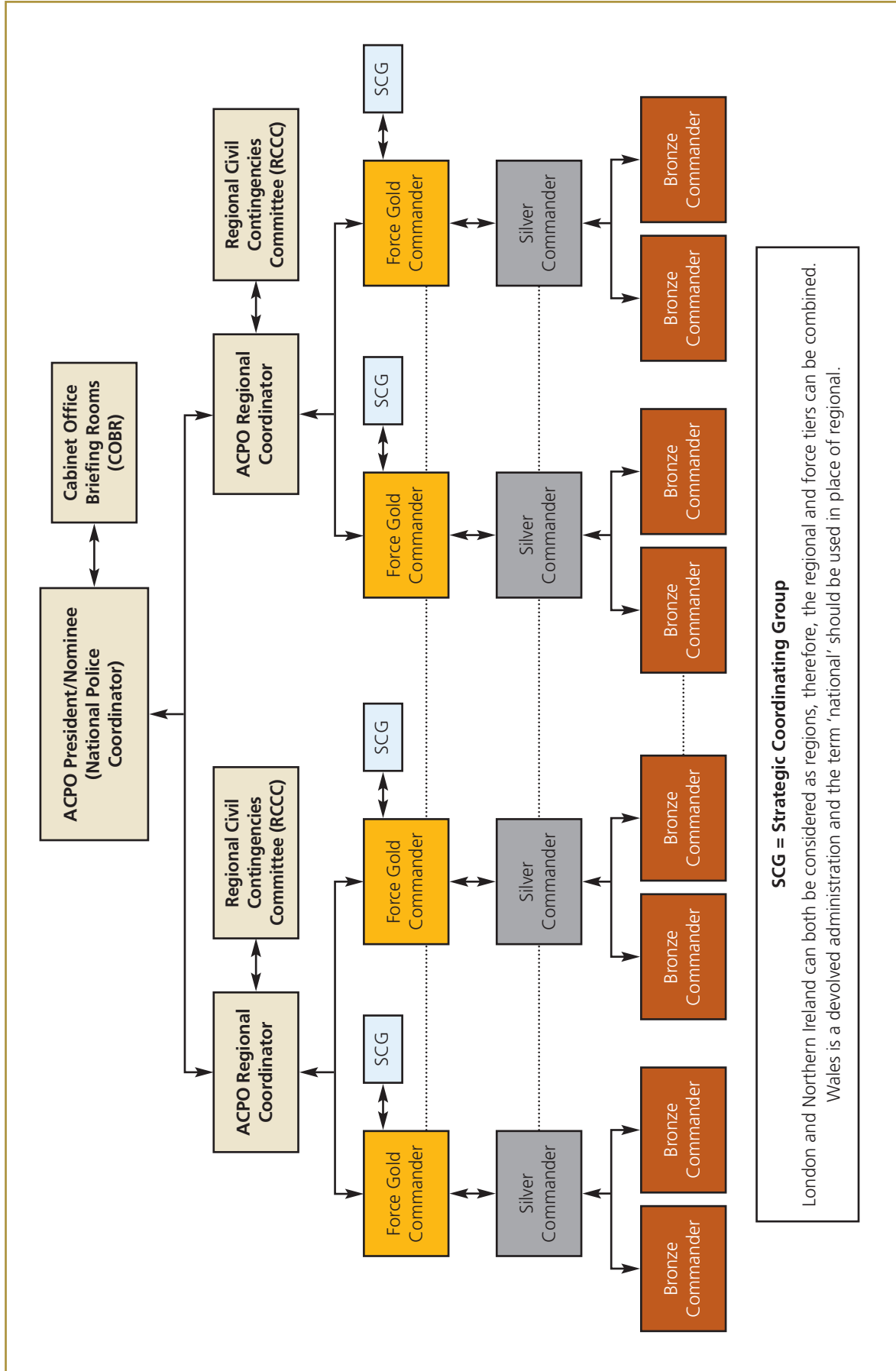


Figure 3 National Command Structure



1.9 COMMAND PROTOCOLS

A key part of effective command and control is the ability of the command team to adjust quickly to changing circumstances. One way of achieving this is through the development of command protocols.

A command protocol may contain formal arrangements that establish how the command team will react to changes, ensure the proportionate use of legal powers and how the deployment of specialist equipment will be managed.

A command protocol may also set out:

- Who is responsible for achieving each of the tasks allocated when contingency plans are activated;
- Who commands what resources and where;
- When and how resources will be transferred between one commander and another;
- Who commands each separate geographical area;
- Who is responsible for managing specific risks;
- Procedures for the transfer of command from one commander to another – this includes how this is initiated, communicated and recorded;
- The relationship between the formal command structure and existing force systems and processes;
- How each of the functions will operate during the planning, operational and post-deployment stages of the incident or operation.

These considerations are particularly important where more than one Silver Commander is deployed.

Where multiple command elements are engaged in the response to the same incident or operation, it may be necessary to describe scenarios that helpfully explain the transfer points, if precise tipping points are not clear.

1.9.1 TRANSFER OF COMMAND

In situations where the designated Gold or Silver Commander is not immediately available to take command, the transfer of command should take place as soon as is practicable once the commander has been briefed and is in a position to communicate with others. In spontaneous incidents, the quick transfer of command to the most appropriate person is particularly important as the nature of the incident becomes clearer.

Any transfer of command should be documented in the command log and include the time and date of transfer.

1.10 COMMAND SUPPORT

Maintaining effective command and control, especially when faced with a complex and fast-moving situation, can present significant challenges to commanders. There is the potential for those in command to be overwhelmed if they are not sufficiently supported.

Officers performing a command role should recognise that they will not be able to do everything all of the time. Commanders need support from both people and technology so that they can focus on their primary function of command.

Commanders should carefully consider the organisation and level of command support that will be needed, which will help to ensure that the level of support is commensurate with the expected demand. This may include:

- The nature and dynamics of an operation or situation;
- The size of an operation, the scale and type of resources that are likely to be deployed;
- The size and make up of the command structure;
- The anticipated workload on individual commanders;
- The information and communication needs of individual commanders.

Where possible, the nature and level of command support should be adjusted in response to a changing information picture or situation, and take into account contingency plans as and when they are formulated.

Commanders should also recognise that the level of command support provided will vary depending on experience, expertise or resources available at the time. Awareness of these issues during the planning process will help to:

- Establish a realistic expectation of the capabilities, limitations and potential of the command support available, thereby avoiding assumption and unrealistic or unreasonable demands;
- Make judgements on the level of resourcing needed both in terms of people and technology, including the way in which the command structure is organised;
- Determine the nature of command protocols that maintain effective command, clarity of command and a robust audit trail.

1.10.1 STRATEGIC COORDINATING GROUP

Where the incident or operation requires the involvement of partner agencies, the Gold Commander should consider establishing a SCG. The primary purpose of a SCG is to provide strategic leadership.

The membership of the SCG will vary according to the scale and nature of the incident or operation. Careful consideration should be given to the number and role of people who attend the SCG. Ideally, to be effective, the SCG should comprise representatives with an appropriate mix of seniority and authority. Each organisation represented at the SCG retains its own responsibilities and exercises control of its own operations. The SCG, therefore, has to rely on a process of discussion and consensus to reach decisions and to ensure that the agreed strategy is delivered at the Silver and Bronze levels.

For further information on the SCG, see *HM Government (2005) Emergency Response and Recovery* and *ACPO (2009) Guidance on Emergency Procedures*.

1.10.2 STRATEGIC COORDINATION CENTRE

The role of the SCC is to provide support to the SCG and to coordinate the strategic response to the incident or operation. In deciding whether to establish an SCC, the Gold Commander may consider dividing the SCC into cells or groups, depending on the size and scale of the incident or operation. Cells may also be formulated based on organisational type, for example, utilities, transport, local authorities.

For further information on the establishment of an SCC, particularly in counter-terrorist situations, see *Home Office (2007) Counter Terrorism Contingency Planning Guidance (Restricted)*. See also *HM Government (2005) Emergency Response and Recovery* and *ACPO (2009) Guidance on Emergency Procedures*.

1.10.3 ADVISERS

In certain circumstances, using advisers to assist Gold, Silver and Bronze Commanders may be appropriate. They can provide expert advice on the suitability and impact of available options which may help the commander to make decisions.

In fast-moving incidents or where commanders are located in an area without logistical support, recording the advice provided by advisers in the command or policy log at that time may not be practical. In these situations, the advice should be recorded as soon as it is practicable.

Note: an adviser is there to advise and not to make command decisions. The decision on whether to use advisers and follow any advice provided by them will always remain with the Gold or Silver Commander.

1.10.4 CONTROL ROOMS

Most command support will come from conventional police control rooms or forward command centres. There may, however, be occasions when a specific incident or operation requires the establishment of a separate or unique control function to support the command team.

The control room supervisor has an important role to play in the command structure and commanders should ensure that they and their staff are fully briefed during an incident or operation.

Prior to planned operations, commanders should consider inviting control room staff to planning meetings. This ensures that everyone understands the role that they will play, while providing them with the opportunity to offer advice on control facilities, staff and equipment.

For larger operations and incidents or those that are dispersed over a wide area, employing mobile forward control facilities in addition to a central control room may be required. Any decision to deploy a mobile forward control facility should, however, be carefully considered to avoid:

- Confusion about who is controlling what resources and when;
- An added tier of process and communication that unduly delays, distorts or disrupts the passage of information up and down the chain of command;
- A lack of capacity if there is a serious and significant change in the operation or incident that involves a substantial increase in demand.

1.10.5 TECHNOLOGY

The use of technology systems or processes can play an important role in helping commanders to make effective decisions. Commanders should, however, be aware of the potential risks of using technology. For example, the capacity and capability of decision making can be severely limited if commanders are overloaded with information.

Similarly, commanders based in control rooms should not base their decisions solely on the images they see on screen. This has the potential for commanders to 'command through a keyhole', without taking into account other information sources, and may lead to commanders losing sight of the wider picture.

1.11 THE ROLE OF PARTNER AGENCIES

Modern policing increasingly operates within a multi-agency environment. Partner agencies should, therefore, be involved in the planning and resolution of incidents and operations, as appropriate.

Where partner agencies are involved, commanders should ensure that the following considerations are clearly defined and agreed between the Gold Commander and those agencies, to avoid confusion. This may be achieved through a command protocol. For further information on command protocols, see [1.9 Command Protocols](#).

COMMAND

- Who is in command, when and where?

JURISDICTION

- What jurisdiction does each of the agencies involved have in the planning or response to the incident?

PROCEDURES

- What procedures are the agencies involved working to?
- Are there any specific procedures that need to be considered?

CAPABILITY

- What capability do the partner agencies have in responding to the incident?

POWERS

- What specific powers do partner agencies have that can help to resolve the incident more quickly and bring the situation back to a steady state?

In certain phases of an incident partner agencies may be best placed to take the lead, for example, healthcare professionals during an outbreak of pandemic flu.

Where possible, consideration should also be given to liaising with community groups – particularly in the planning stages of operations which are likely to have a significant impact on communities. For further information on the importance of community engagement, see [2.2.6 Community Impact Assessment](#).

Section 2

PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

Effective command and control relies on making justifiable, proportionate and necessary decisions. This section sets out the principles of decision making using the Conflict Management Model (CMM) and describes other factors that need to be considered when responding to an operation or incident.

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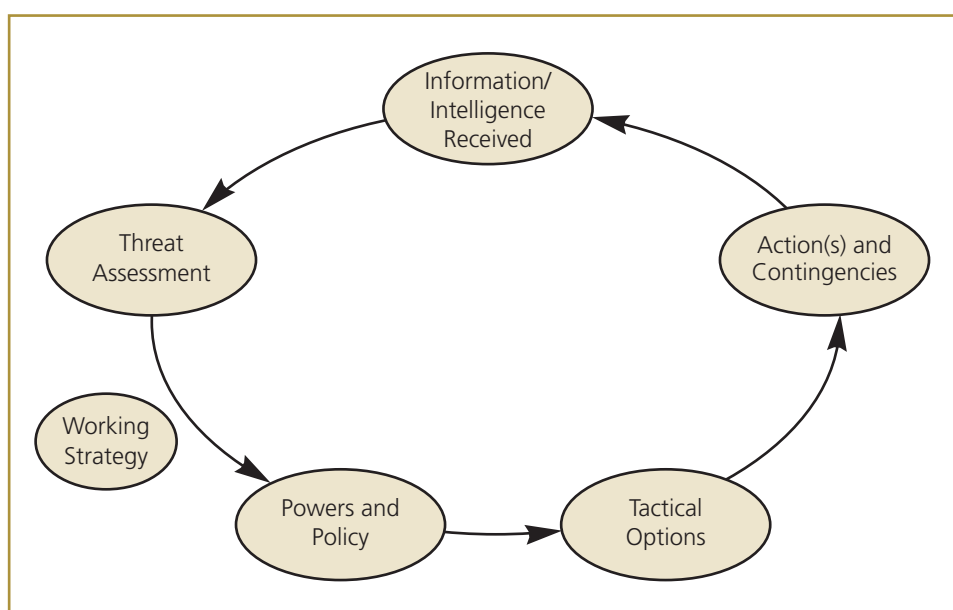
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2.1 THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MODEL (CMM)

The CMM is a decision-making model that is widely known and used throughout the Police Service. The CMM is a scalable model that can be applied before, during and after any type of planned operation or spontaneous incident, and not just to those involving conflict. The CMM provides a framework for recording command decisions and the rationale behind them. It can also be used to brief officers involved in the response.

The CMM is driven by information and intelligence, and is a continuous cycle, constantly subjected to review in light of new information and assessment that will ultimately affect the response to the incident or operation. At the very heart of the model is the need to return to a steady state.

Figure 4 The Conflict Management Model (CMM)



2.1.1 INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE

Collecting information and intelligence is the first and most important stage of the CMM; it enables the threat assessment to be made, defines the strategy and tactical parameters and, ultimately, leads to a proportionate police response to an incident or operation.

Each force will have in place or have access to systems that enable information and intelligence to be collected, recorded, evaluated and shared as appropriate. Forces should also ensure that learning from operational debriefs, inspection reports and other reviews or evaluation are available to be used to make an assessment where necessary.

Where an incident or operation requires the activation and mobilisation of resources across other emergency services and government, for example, a major flooding, the police may need access to knowledge systems that are owned and managed by others. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and supporting regulations and statutory guidance, place an obligation on all Category 1 responders to liaise with stakeholders in multi-agency planning through local resilience forums. For further information, see <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx>

It is essential that any information or intelligence used in the assessment stage of the CMM is as up to date and as accurate as possible. The CMM is a dynamic model that needs to take into account new information and intelligence, particularly where a spontaneous incident occurs as the information available at that time is unlikely to be complete. Similarly, most incidents or operations will generate a significant amount of information and intelligence from many sources – all of which require evaluation and assessment. Commanders should, therefore, consider using trained intelligence officers to ensure that all information and intelligence management systems and processes are fit for purpose and provide an audit trail that demonstrates justifiable decision making.

For further information on managing information and intelligence, see *ACPO (2005) Guidance on the National Intelligence Model* and *ACPO (2006) Guidance on the Management of Police Information*.

Where there is a need to access or share protectively marked information, commanders should ensure that, where practicable, all staff involved in the police response to an incident or operation are appropriately trained and vetted.

2.1.2 THREAT ASSESSMENT

A threat assessment refers to the analysis of potential or actual harm to people or property, the probability of it occurring and the consequences or impact should it occur. It is a key function of command, based on information and intelligence, and will change over time. A threat assessment, ultimately, forms the basis on which the proportionality of the police response will be judged.

Although this guidance does not prescribe a formal method for undertaking a threat assessment, the following points should be considered.

A threat assessment:

- Should be based on information known at the time;
- May be supported by historic information;
- Takes account of the nature of any threat anticipated and its proximity;
- Identifies to whom and under what circumstances the threat may occur;
- Describes any consequences or impacts;
- Takes account of the impact of change;
- May take the form of an analytical report or problem subject profile.

The more accurate and specific the analysis, the greater the likelihood of being able to reduce or mitigate the threat.

A threat assessment, however, is only as effective as the information and intelligence available make it and the capability and competency of staff to analyse it in an accurate and timely manner. The flow of information and intelligence will constantly change and this needs to be considered in light of fast-moving police operations.

A threat assessment also enables the analysis of potential or actual harm and vulnerabilities. Harm refers to the type and extent of injury or damage and may include: physical harm, including loss of life; psychological harm; economic harm; and harm to the community. It may also include 'organisational harm', such as the effect on the reputation of the Police Service.

Vulnerabilities are identified by assessing the probability of any environmental or situational factors occurring that impact upon the threat. This may include security gaps, lack of control measures in place to remove or mitigate harm, capacity and capability of the force to respond proportionately and effectively to the threat, availability of resources (including resources outside the force area), business processes and information management tools, and any other factors that increase the likelihood of harm occurring.

The assessment of vulnerability is dynamic and should be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure that the threat remains valid and the overall vulnerability has not changed.

Both harm and vulnerability should be considered as part of a threat assessment.

2.1.3 POWERS AND POLICY

The police response to an incident or operation should be proportionate and necessary. During the development of a strategy, therefore, commanders should consider the powers and policies that may be available to help resolve the incident or operation. These may include the specific legal powers police officers have as defined in law in the office of constable, or policies agreed at a local, regional or national level. Selecting the appropriate powers and policies will enable a strategy to be developed that addresses the threat in a proportionate manner and ensures accountability by demonstrating the decision-making rationale behind the strategy.

All police officers have an individual responsibility for ensuring that they are properly informed about the extent of their legal powers and the context within which those powers can be exercised. In particular, commanders should be fully conversant with the Human Rights Act 1998, as the police response to many incidents and operations may result in an interference of an individual's human rights. Where an interference of an individual's human rights is likely to occur, commanders should record this in their decision log, along with which articles are being interfered with, and the reasons why an alternative course of action which has less effect on the individual's human rights is not being taken.

In some circumstances, for example, the policing of a demonstration, commanders may wish to seek the opinion of qualified legal personnel where the police response is likely to interfere with an individual's human rights.

Where a multi-agency response is required to an incident or operation, commanders should ensure that they are aware of any specific powers and policies that partner agencies are required to follow. In some circumstances partner agencies may have greater powers to undertake a specific role. Commanders should also be aware of any limitations partner agencies may have.

For further information on legal powers available to officers, see *The Police National Legal Database* at <http://www.pnld.co.uk>

2.1.4 TACTICAL OPTIONS

Once a strategy has been set and the legal and policy framework in which to deliver the strategy has been considered, the development of tactical options can begin. The identification and consideration of tactical options will help to develop a tactical plan that contains the most suitable option or options to deliver the strategy. This plan should be subject to regular review to ensure that it remains a proportionate response and achieves the strategic objectives. It should also provide a clear description of the chosen option and any contingency plans, and remain flexible enough to meet a change in circumstances or threat. The development of tactical options will also help to identify the control measures necessary in order to return to a steady state.

Consideration should also be given to any parameters set by the Gold Commander that limit or restrict the delivery of certain tactics – even though they may be the quickest and most effective method of achieving the strategy. This might include activity that should be avoided, tactics which are not authorised for use or specific risks that are not permitted to occur. For example, parameters may specify that a suspect should be prevented from entering a specific location or from using a particular route. Recognising the importance of tactical parameters is a key part of the CMM that can help to plan for any unintended consequences as far as is reasonably possible.

The development of tactical options rests with the Silver Commander who may, depending on the specific incident or operation, seek advice on the most appropriate tactics to be used.

Once tactics have been developed, they need to be tested against the strategy and any parameters set by the Gold Commander to ensure that they are proportionate to the threat posed. Where a number of tactical options are identified, the Silver Commander should decide on the most appropriate option, depending on their assessment of the situation at that time. The Silver Commander may wish to seek such advice as they consider necessary to make effective decisions. It is, however, acknowledged that the operational demands of ‘crimes in action’ or other fast moving operations may limit the potential for such consultation.

The roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of Silver and Bronze Commanders should be clearly set out and agreed. This will help to maintain an audit trail, which should record any decisions made along with the supporting rationale.

Where the police force does not have the tactical capability to achieve the objectives identified in the strategy, it may be necessary, in some situations, to employ specialist resources. Where this occurs, the circumstances under which control passes to the incoming agency should be clearly defined and understood by all concerned.

Throughout this process, a clear audit trail of decision making should be kept.

2.1.5 ACTIONS AND CONTINGENCIES

When a course of action has been decided on, consideration should be given to directing resources toward the chosen action. An action may include deploying resources, activating a tactical option, briefing, or undertaking a community impact assessment. Commanders should also consider developing contingency or emergency plans. For further information on the development of contingency and emergency plans, see **2.2.5 Contingency Plans**.

It is essential that officers are clear which tactical option they are required to carry out. Where the deployment of a particular tactical option is time critical, there should be, as far as is reasonably practicable, clearly agreed procedures for communicating any decision to defer, abort or initiate a specific tactic.

2.2 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

While using the CMM can help commanders to make proportionate and justifiable decisions, there are other factors, set out in **2.2.1** to **2.2.5**, that should also be considered.

2.2.1 BRIEFINGS

Commanders should ensure that all officers involved in the delivery of the strategy are fully briefed. A briefing does not necessarily have to be given verbally. If circumstances such as the geographical location of staff mean that a face-to-face briefing is impractical, other methods may be used, for example, written briefing notes. Using the CMM as a briefing model also enables any additional information to be reviewed or updated as the situation develops.

Briefings should also inform officers of the procedures to follow at the conclusion of the incident or operation. The briefing may include the procedures to adopt in respect of prisoner handling, scene preservation and evidence collection.

Commanders should consider using other staff in briefings where their expertise may add value.

A record should be kept of all briefings and include a list of attendees and the information given. Where possible, the most comprehensive method of providing an accurate record of the briefing should be used. Where officers are being briefed while travelling, or where they are in a remote location, consideration should be given to using radio or telephone recording as a means of providing a record of the briefing. The absence of secure communication may, however, place constraints on this as an option in situations where protectively marked information is being referred to.

For further information on briefing, see *ACPO (2006) Guidance on the National Briefing Model*.

2.2.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Police forces, as employers, have a duty in law to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Police (Health and Safety) Act 1997 and other relevant statutory provisions and recognised codes of practice to provide, as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe working environment.

It is likely that most spontaneous incidents and planned operations will present both complex and significant health and safety issues. To achieve the safety of staff and others – including members of the public – in a diverse operating environment, a risk-based method should be adopted to assess tactical options and any hazards or other risks faced.

Commanders are responsible for ensuring that health and safety risk assessments have been completed for all tasks and that safe systems of work are implemented and communicated to all staff. Commanders should be conversant with and competent to supervise the health and safety risk assessment process.

The nature of policing means that police officers respond to unpredictable and rapidly changing situations. During a spontaneous incident, a dynamic assessment of the hazards should be undertaken and transferred on to an appropriate risk assessment document when it is reasonably practicable to do so. The dynamic risk assessment should not, however, be considered as a substitute for a formal risk assessment for all anticipated and planned operational activity.

Forces should decide which risk assessment model or tool is used and record the results to provide an audit trail. All risk assessments should be regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy.

2.2.3 WELFARE

The provision of welfare and support to staff during an incident or operation ranges from the daily routine needs required for individuals to carry out tasks and procedures, to identifying and dealing with emotional stress which may be triggered by the nature of the incident or operation. Welfare needs should be identified as soon as possible and procedures put in place to meet the requirements of reducing the potential damage to an individual. These procedures should apply to all incidents and operations regardless of their complexity. If any potential short-term or long-term welfare issues are identified, support, advice and guidance from the force welfare department should be requested at the earliest opportunity.

2.2.4 COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is essential in resolving every type of incident or operation. Everyone involved in the process of command should be clear about their roles and responsibilities, particularly where partner agencies are involved in the delivery of the strategy. Full interoperability between the Police Service and other emergency services can help support decision making and improve understanding of the incident or operation. Effective interoperability can also help to brief those staff involved in the response and provide a mechanism that ensures the public receive consistent information.

For further information on interoperability, see *ACPO (2009) Guidance on Multi-Agency Interoperability*.

Major spontaneous incidents and planned operations often attract significant national media interest and, on occasion, international media interest. Commanders should ensure that robust media and internal communication strategies are developed in response to an incident or operation so that they remain in charge of press releases and the management of media issues, where possible. Commanders should also formulate the media strategy in consultation with the force press officer, who may be required to attend the incident or operation if required. In some situations the police may be required to coordinate the media response on behalf of partner agencies.

An early consideration for commanders when formulating the strategy is to decide whether they will talk directly to the media or whether it is more appropriate for another individual to present the information, allowing the commander to focus on the incident or operation itself.

The purpose of an internal communications strategy is to establish a two-way flow of information between those involved in managing the incident or operation and other police personnel – including those in other forces. Any decision regarding the method of internal communication will be influenced by the audience (local, force-wide or national). Methods of communication should be regularly reviewed and feedback invited from audiences where practical and appropriate.

For further information on developing media and internal communications strategies, see *ACPO (2006) Murder Investigation Manual*.

2.2.5 CONTINGENCY PLANS

The development of contingency or emergency plans is an essential part of command and control and the CMM. Contingency or emergency plans can enhance the resilience and flexibility of the overall tactical plan if there are sudden or significant changes during the incident or operation. Contingency plans for some activities or locations may already exist as part of normal police business, however, it may be necessary to develop new plans in direct response to a particular operation or incident.

While it is impractical to identify every possible outcome to a given situation, commanders should identify appropriate contingencies based on:

- The probability of the outcome occurring;
- The potential impact of the outcome on the strategy and tactical plan;
- The potential risks to individuals involved in the incident and the response.

A contingency plan should, therefore, be a simple, concise and flexible document that is easily understood and that can be revised and updated in the light of changes. It should also be accessible to those who require it.

Where appropriate, forces should consider testing their contingency and emergency plans by training and exercising.

2.2.6 COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The police have a legal duty under the Race Relations Act 1976 to promote the equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial and religious groups. Most incidents or operations, particularly major incidents, will have some impact on the community. The impact will differ depending on the type of incident or operation and the communities affected.

A community impact assessment (CIA) can help to identify any impact that the police response may have on communities. This, in turn, will help to identify where and when any action to overcome a negative impact may be required, either before or after the deployment of resources. A CIA should set out who has the lead for each element of the incident or operation in relation to community engagement. It should also be reviewed regularly to ensure any new impacts are captured. An effective CIA, supported by corresponding risk assessments, will help to decide on the choice of tactical delivery, its timing and location.

Where operationally possible, commanders should also liaise with independent advisory groups (IAGs) to identify how the police response to an incident or operation is likely to affect communities, and the impact that the response may have on the reputation of the police with the public.

For further information on community impact assessments, see *ACPO (2007) Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management*.

2.2.7 POST-INCIDENT DEPLOYMENT

The CMM can be used to show how the chosen response will be concluded and the return to steady state achieved. When considering this aspect of command, recognition of the role partner agencies played in the incident or operation, together with how they intended to conclude their involvement should be taken into account.

2.2.8 FINAL DEBRIEFING AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

Once the incident or operation has been concluded, a full debrief should be considered to identify opportunities for organisational and operational learning. Where partner agencies were involved in the response, they should be invited to participate in the debrief. This is particularly important with larger or protracted incidents or operations where aspects of the command structure, tactics or equipment used can be reviewed for future learning. The outcome of partner agency debriefs should be used by forces to develop future responses, as appropriate.

Advice on the management and support services to conduct a structured debrief can be obtained from the NPIA Uniform Operational Support Team, who can be contacted via the NPIA Specialist Operations Centre on 0845 000 5463 or by email at soc@npia.pnn.police.uk

For further information on debriefing, see *ACPO (2006) Guidance on the National Briefing Model* and *ACPO (forthcoming) Manual of Guidance on the Management, Command and Deployment of Armed Officers*.

APPENDIX 1

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BCU	Basic Command Unit
CIA	Community Impact Assessment
CMM	Conflict Management Model
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms
GSB	Gold, Silver, Bronze
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
PNICC	Police National Information Coordination Centre
PNLD	Police National Legal Database
PNMP	Police National Mobilisation Plan
RCCC	Regional Civil Contingencies Committee
SCC	Strategic Coordination Centre
SCG	Strategic Coordinating Group

APPENDIX 2

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