



Republic of the Philippines  
 NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION  
 NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE  
 OFFICE OF THE CHIEF, PNP  
 Camp BGen Rafael T. Crave, Quezon City

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

JAN 26 2021

NO.: 2021-008

**OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES IN THE UTILIZATION OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE SPECIAL ACTION FORCE (PNP SAF) UNITS BY POLICE REGIONAL OFFICES (PROs), TASK FORCES (TFs) and NATIONAL OPERATIONAL SUPPORT UNITS (NOSUs)**

**1. REFERENCES:**

- a. Republic Act No. 11479 "Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020";
- b. Executive Order No. 70 "Institutionalizing the Whole-of-Nation Approach in Attaining Inclusive and Sustainable Peace, Creating a National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, and Directing the Adoption of a National Peace Framework" dated December 4, 2018;
- c. PNP Command Memorandum Circular No. 27-2019 "Operationalization of Executive Order No. 70 National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)"; AFP-PNP Campaign Plan "KAPANATAGAN" 2019-2022 dated January 10, 2019;
- d. SAF Operational Guidelines; and
- e. Guidelines for the Creation of Task Forces and Defining the Command and Control Relationship of PNP Units dated May 29, 2012.

**2. RATIONALE:**

This Memorandum Circular (MC) provides the operational guidelines for a clearer functional relationship between the Special Action Force (SAF) and the Police Regional Offices (PROs), Task Forces (TFs) and National Operational Support Units (NOSUs).

**3. SITUATION:**

As a backgrounder, the RA No. 6975 otherwise known as the Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990, established the SAF as a mobile strike force or reaction unit of the PNP to augment the regional, provincial, municipal and city police forces for civil disturbance control, counter insurgency, hostage taking rescue operations, and other special operations.

The Memorandum dated November 27, 2011 with subject: "Defining the relationship of PNP Units" issued by then CPNP, PDG NICANOR A BARTOLOME stated that PNP SAF, having no regional office, is only placed under the Tactical Control (TACON) of the Regional Director (RD) where their units are deployed.

However, the aforesaid memorandum was rescinded by the memorandum dated May 29, 2012 with subject: "Guidelines for the Creation of Task Forces and

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Defining the Command and Control Relationship of the PNP Units", also issued by PDG BARTOLOME, which states that the PNP SAF Units are under the Operational Control (OPCON) of the RD, PRO or the TF Commander where they are attached or deployed. The PNP SAF can be deployed by RD, PROs/TF Commanders according to their inherent mission/task and tactical doctrine only. In exceptional cases, where the PROs or territorial units would need the support of SAF to undertake mission in high-risk areas, the RD, PROs/TF Commanders can deploy the PNP SAF units in its Area of Responsibility (AOR) beyond its inherent mission upon clearance from the CPNP through The Director for Operations (TDO) only.

The aforesaid directive was further reinforced by the issuance of another memorandum dated April 8, 2013 with subject: "Reiteration re: Defining the Command and Control Relationship of the PNP Units" issued by then TDO Police Director ALEX PAUL I MONTEAGUDO which states that all Regional/Provincial Offices of NOSUs including SAF are under OPCON of the RD, PROs/Provincial Director, Police Provincial Offices (PD, PPOs) or the TF/Joint TF to which they are deployed. As such, the RDs/PDs will exercise full authority to employ them. The Regional Offices of NOSUs including SAF could be employed by the RD, PRO/TF Commander according to their inherent mission/core function only. In Exceptional Cases where the PROs/PPOs would need the support of SAF and other NOSUs to undertake mission in high-risk areas, the concerned Commanders can employ them in their AOR beyond their inherent mission only upon clearance from the CPNP through TDO.

SAF being the elite unit of the PNP is mandated to conduct operations as a rapid deployment force anywhere in the country specifically in situations with national and international implications in the areas of counterterrorism, counter-insurgency, hostage rescue, civil disturbance management, search and rescue, and other special operations.

SAF has gradually expanded from a battalion-size Unit into a brigade-size rapid deployment force with 13 line battalions [12 Special Action Battalions (SAB) and one Rapid Deployment Battalion], one Force Support Battalion (FSB), and one Air Unit deployed in different areas of the country fulfilling the mandate of providing tactical support to other PNP units, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and other Law Enforcement Agencies.

As of this date, only Regions 1 and 2 have no SAF units deployed in their area but they can be catered by 14<sup>th</sup> SAB and 2<sup>nd</sup> SAB which are deployed in Cordillera Administrative Region and Region 3, respectively.

Based on the existing guidelines, SAF units are under the OPCON of RD, PRO or the TF Commander where they are attached or deployed and can only be utilized in accordance with their inherent mission/functions and tactical doctrine. However, if RD, PROs or TF Commanders shall utilize them beyond their inherent mission and functions, a clearance from the CPNP through TDO is necessary, which creates confusion particularly on the part of the territorial units.

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To address these gaps, there is a need to harmonize the command and control relationship between the territorial units and SAF units deployed within their AOR.

### 4. PURPOSE:

To provide standard operational guidelines in the utilization of SAF units by PROs, TFs and NOSUs.

### 5. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- a. Command –is the power to effectively manage the available resources of responding units/agencies for the accomplishment of assigned missions. A commander is the one who assumes command over all components/forces involved in all actions, relative to the crisis/emergency situation.
- b. Command Relationship –it is a degree of command and control responsibility a Commander has for forces operating under his command. The interrelated responsibilities between the commanders, as well as the authority being exercised by the Commanders in the chain of command: defined further as OPCON, TACON or Support.
- c. Control –is the ability of the Commander to fully direct or suppress, change or adjust, and supervise the subordinates' execution of the Commander's decisions, guidance, and intent to ensure compliance. Control may take place before, during, and after operations, and may be exercised directly or indirectly by directive, plan, or procedure.
- d. Inherent Mission –essential mission of a certain unit or force that makes it distinct from other units or forces.
- e. Operational Control (OPCON) – the transferable command authority that may be exercised by a Commander through which he can organize and employ units or agencies augmented to his organization, direct these units or agencies in accordance with their inherent mission and assigned task, designate objectives, and give authoritative direction over all aspects of operations and joint/inter-agency training necessary to accomplish missions assigned to the command. Operational control, however, does not, in itself, include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization and unit training. Commanders exercising operational control of a unit or agency cannot assign separate employment of components of OPCON units.
- f. Tactical Control (TACON) –operational authority over assigned or attached forces or command, or forces made available for tasking. Tactical control may be delegated to and exercised at any level at or below the level of unified command. TACON provides the authority to:

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- 1) Give direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish the mission or task; and
- 2) Control and direct the application of force or tactical use of combat support assets within the assigned mission or task (e.g. aircraft, sort, payload management)

**6. GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- a. Joint operations with SAF must adhere to its mission on Internal Security Operations, counterterrorism, hostage rescue and Civil Disturbance Management (CDM) and must be with Implementation Plan (IMPLAN)/Operational Plan (OPLAN)/Operational Order (OPORD) and other legal basis;
- b. Host unit shall always involve SAF and other attached or support units/forces during the conduct of mission planning, briefing, rehearsals, and debriefing;
- c. In hostage rescue operations, SAF shall not be tasked as negotiator;
- d. In case of CDM operations, SAF shall serve as the last line of defense;
- e. SAF counterterrorism unit shall be deployed with an Extended Range Support Team and EOD/K9 unit;
- f. Utilization of SAF armored vehicle, water, and air assets shall be in accordance with the existing standard operating procedures;
- g. Minimum deployment of SAF is one team composed of eight men led by a Police Commissioned Officer (PCO) or Senior Non-Police Commissioned Officer;
- h. SAF shall not be utilized in the regular crime prevention activities of PROs;
- i. No SAF troopers shall be made to conduct investigation as an affiant, arresting officer, witness, etc., in the filing of criminal or administrative charges;
- j. In all operations, the PROs/PPOs shall maintain close coordination with the AFP counterparts to avoid misencounter;
- k. Requesting unit shall support other logistical requirement of SAF;
- l. SAF troopers should be provided with legal assistance by the requesting unit in case of charges arising from the conduct of legitimate police operations;

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m. RD, PROs/TF Commanders can also deploy PNP SAF units beyond its mission and functions without seeking clearance from the CPNP through TDO, provided that:

- 1) The subject of law enforcement operations are High Value or High Risk Individual/s or group/s; and
- 2) In case of emergencies where loss of life/lives is/are imminent, provided that necessary information surrounding the incident/s is/are properly communicated to them like ambush, harassment, attacks, raids, bombings and other incidents with grave security concerns.

The SAF units involved shall immediately inform their mother unit in the fastest way of communication on the impending operations.

**7. COMMAND AND CONTROL RELATIONSHIP:**

- a. PNP SAF units shall be under the OPCON of RD, PROs or the TF Commander where they are attached or deployed;
- b. RD, PROs/TF Commanders can deploy PNP SAF units in accordance with its inherent mission and functions such as counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, hostage rescue, civil disturbance management, search and rescue and other special operations;
- c. Operational Control of RD, PROs/TF Commanders over SAF units in their AOR shall not include authoritative direction over the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) employed by SAF during operations, their logistics, trainings and other administrative matters;
- d. In any operations, SAF units shall always be under the TACON of SAF PCO;
- e. RD, PROs/TF Commanders shall take full responsibility in whatever outcome of the operations involving the employment of SAF; and
- f. SAF-initiated operations specially operating as single force shall be properly coordinated with the territorial units and AFP counterparts.

**8. COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS:**

- a. Respect for human rights must be strictly observed at all times;
- b. Police Operational Procedures must be strictly followed;
- c. SAF shall be the force provider to the PROs or TFs specially on security situations as previously stated;

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- d. RD, PROs and TF Commanders are the force employers who exercise command and operational authority over the OPCON units deployed within their AORs;
- e. As much as possible, territorial units shall exhaust all resources and capabilities before the employment of SAF units;
- f. PROs shall initiate the conduct of regular simulation exercises, communication exercise and joint trainings to harmonize actions and improve coordination;
- g. PROs/TFs shall furnish a copy of their After Operations Report to the SAF Command Group in every operations wherein SAF units were utilized; and
- h. SAF units shall also furnish a copy of their After Operations Report to PRO Command Group in every operations conducted solely by SAF.

**9. RESCISSION CLAUSE:**

Directives, policies, Standard Operational Procedures, and similar issuances inconsistent with these guidelines are hereby rescinded or modified accordingly.

**10. EFFECTIVITY:**

This MC shall take effect after 15 days from filing a copy thereof at the UP Law Center in consonance with Section 3, Chapter 2, Book VII of Executive order 292 otherwise known as the "Revised Administrative Code of 1987," as amended.



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**Distribution:**

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