



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

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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR

NO.: **2025-029**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION
IN AN ARMED ENCOUNTER INCIDENT IN CRITICAL AREAS**

1. REFERENCES:

- a. Republic Act No. 11479 otherwise known as "The 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. Joint Letter Directive No. 02-2021 entitled, "AFP PNP Guidelines and Procedures in the Handling and Management of Seized Digital/Electronic Evidence";
- d. Revised PNP Police Operational Procedures (September 2021);
- e. Revised Crime Laboratory Scene of Crime Operations Manual (August 2021);
- f. Revised Criminal Investigation Manual (2011);
- g. Primer on Protocol for Explosives Related Incidents Investigation (2009);
- h. PNP Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2020-081 dated November 2, 2020 entitled, "PNP Critical Incident Management Operational Procedures (CIMOP)"; PNP Memorandum Circular No. 2024-050 dated June 27, 2024 entitled "PNP Critical Incident Management Operational Procedures (CIMOP) (Revised 2024)"
- i. PNP MC No. 2016-076 dated November 17, 2016 entitled, "Policies, Procedures and Guidelines in the Prediction, Prevention, Preparation, Response, Investigation, and Conduct of Post Action and Assessment of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN)-related Incidents/Emergency and Criteria in the Activation of CBRN Response Investigation Task Group (RITG)";
- j. PNP MC No. 2016-033 dated June 1, 2016 entitled, "Guidelines on the Recording, Monitoring and Investigation of Missing and Found Persons, and Identification of Human Remains";
- k. Standard Operating Procedure No. ODIDM-2011-008 dated April 7, 2011 entitled, "Conduct of Crime Scene Investigation";
- l. Investigative Directive No. 2020-03 dated May 27, 2020 entitled, "Protocols on Investigative Processes, Systems and Activities vis-à-vis "New Normal" Caused by Covid-19 Pandemic";

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- m. Investigative Directive No. 2017-17 dated December 4, 2017 entitled, "Directive on the Referral and Conduct of Digital Forensic Examination"; and
- n. Investigative Directive No. 2016-08, Reiteration of Policies and Guidelines on the Investigation of Bombing and Explosive Related Incidents.

2. RATIONALE:

This Memorandum Circular (MC) provides the guidelines and procedures to be undertaken by PNP offices/units concerned in conducting crime scene investigation of armed encounter incidents in critical areas.

3. SITUATION:

In line with the PNP's mandate, crime scene investigation is one of the most critical stages in criminal investigation. The proper collection, preservation, and documentation of physical evidence that may be found at the crime scene are vital as there are tangible objects which may link the offender to the crime. Along with this important aspect of investigation are some hurdles and difficulties being experienced by crime scene investigators on the ground.

Crime Scene Investigation is a primary responsibility of the PNP being performed by trained investigators of every local police/territorial police. Previous issues on the scope and functions of the first responders (FRs), Investigator-on-Case (IOC), and the Scene of Crime Operations (SOCO) team have already been resolved through the delineation of their respective functions in the crime scene as laid down on several PNP issuances.

One of the significant challenges faced by PNP investigators on the ground is the investigation of armed encounters, particularly in critical areas where safety and security are at risk. Investigating such incidents involving government forces against armed groups has been a growing concern especially when the location is an enemy-infiltrated territory. Crime scene processing in these situations is further complicated by the difficult access to the site and some basics in criminal investigation which have often been neglected resulting in loss of potential forensic evidence. In one particular incident where the SOCO Team was requested to conduct crime scene processing in the mountainous area of Brgy. Cuyago, Jabonga, Agusan Del Norte, the team had to board a PAF helicopter and still had to walk for several hours going to the incident scene due to the inaccessibility of the area. Such situation makes it difficult for the responding team to process the crime scene as they might be exposed to danger.

There were several recorded incidents in the past wherein the investigating team, while on their way to conduct crime scene investigation, fell victim to ambushes perpetrated by non-state armed groups resulting in loss of lives and injuries to responding SOCO. Among these incidents are the following:

On November 25, 2020, the SOCO Team from Surigao Del Norte Provincial Crime Laboratory Office (PCLO) conducted crime scene processing at Purok 13, Barangay Mat-I, Surigao City, Surigao Del Norte. After the processing and while



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walking towards their parked unmarked vehicle, they were ambushed by an undetermined number of assailants. The PNP security detailed from Special Weapon and Tactics and Provincial Mobile Force Company engaged the perpetrators in a gunfight;

On March 8, 2017, the Davao Del Sur PCLO received a request for SOCO assistance from Bansalan Municipal Police Station (MPS) related to a shooting incident in Brgy. Sibayan, Bansalan, Davao Del Sur. While on their way to the crime scene, two SOCO members on board a dispatched vehicle of Bansalan MPS were fired upon by undetermined number of assailants which resulted in the death of three personnel of Bansalan MPS and one SOCO team member and injury to another SOCO personnel; and

On March 6, 2011, Bukidnon PCLO responded to a call for SOCO assistance regarding a shooting incident at P-1, Brgy. Mapayag, Malaybalay City. The SOCO Team together with the personnel of Malaybalay City Police Station (CPS) proceeded to the area but was ambushed along the way by suspected members of NPA/CTGs which resulted in the death of two SOCO team members, one personnel of Malaybalay CPS, one civilian, and the wounding of four police officers.

It is in this light that necessary guidelines and procedures need to be implemented to ensure a swift and coordinated response to promptly secure the crime scene and facilitate the proper documentation, search, and collection of evidence in an armed encounter with due consideration to the safety and security of the responding PNP crime scene investigators.

4. PURPOSE:

This MC aims to provide guidelines and procedures in conducting investigation involving armed encounter incidents in coordination with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) or other government security forces to facilitate the safe and expeditious crime scene processing in critical areas.

5. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

For purposes of this MC, the following terms, words, or phrases shall mean or be understood as follows:

- a. Armed Encounter – an armed confrontation between government forces against any armed groups.
- b. CBRNE Incident – refers to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive issues that could harm society through their accidental or deliberate release, dissemination or impacts.
- c. Crime Scene – a venue or place where the alleged crime/incident/event has been committed.
- d. Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) – the conduct of processes, more particularly the recognition, search, collection, handling, preservation and documentation of physical evidence to include identification of

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witnesses and arrest of suspect at the crime scene.

- e. Critical Area – a location where non-state armed groups, private armed groups or dissident groups are known to operate and the threat to life is high considering the location, terrain, topography, and other factors that may pose imminent danger to government forces. This includes the route going to and from the area where the armed encounter took place.
- f. Critical Incident – any emergency event, whether man-made or natural, that requires the implementation of special tasks by one or more of the urgent services of the government and will generally include the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of the PNP. It is a crucial and rapid intervention point at the acute phase of a crisis.
- g. Evidence – the means sanctioned by the Rules of Court, of ascertaining in a judicial proceeding, the truth respecting a matter of fact. These include but not limited to documentary, testimonial, electronic, and object evidence gathered in the course of investigation.
- h. First Responder (FR) – any member of the PNP or other law enforcement agencies who is mandated and expected to be the first to respond to calls for assistance to crime incidents. It generally refers to a police officer who has jurisdiction of the area where the incident or crime has taken place. He/she is tasked to proceed to the crime scene to render assistance to the victim and to protect and secure the incident scene.
- i. Forensic Evidence – a form of legal evidence that can be used in a court of law to prove or refute a legal question and as a category of public presentation.
- j. Human-Induced Critical Incident – refers to act of terrorism, destabilization/public disturbances, biological health hazards caused by either terrorists or by major epidemic and pandemic and/or criminal activities that require prompt implementation of police procedures or interventions to contain the incident and mitigate its impact as well as to normalize the situation.
- k. Investigator-On-Case (IOC) – the police officer who determines the cause or motive of the crime, identify and interview witnesses, and effects arrest of suspect/s.
- l. Local Police Unit (LPU) – police unit locally assigned and having responsibility in the area (i.e., PS, MPS, CPS, PCP, CPO, PPO, PRO etc.).
- m. Physical Evidence – evidence addressed to the senses of the court that can be exhibited, examined, or viewed by the court. These include weapons, tools, fingerprints, body fluids, hazardous chemicals, soil, burnt debris, explosive device/debris, and other trace/miscellaneous evidence.



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- n. Protocol for Explosive-Related Incidents Investigation – is an established procedures and guidelines for agencies concerned such as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), PNP, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and Bureau of Fire Protection in responding to explosive-related incidents and the conduct of investigation.
- o. Render Safe Procedure (RSP) – the portion of the explosive ordnance disposal procedures involving the application of special explosive ordnance disposal procedures, methods, and tools to provide the interruption of functions or separation of essential components of unexploded ordnance (including improvised explosive devices) to prevent an unintended detonation.
- p. Scene of Crime Operations (SOCO) – includes the processing of crime scenes, technical and forensic examination of evidence and similar scientific investigative assistance.
- q. Territorial Police – other national support units assigned in a regional or provincial area (i.e., RCIDU, RACU, PIAS, etc.).

6. GUIDELINES:

a. General Guidelines:

- 1) The Chief of Police (COP) or Provincial Director (PD) shall have the primary responsibility of ensuring the safety of personnel conducting crime scene processing in critical areas. When the situation demands due to security risks, the PD/COP shall coordinate with the AFP counterparts for security coverage and facilitate the transportation of all responding personnel and recovered evidence;
- 2) The IOC shall conduct a preliminary assessment of the crime scene to determine if SOCO assistance is required and the extent of the processing needed. If SOCO assistance is required, the LPU shall request the SOCO team through the Station Tactical Operation Center (STOC) to conduct the processing. The LPU shall provide additional logistical requirements not available to the SOCO Team;
- 3) The SOCO team shall respond only upon the request of the LPU/territorial police through the TOC and after the IOC has already made an assessment of the crime scene;
- 4) Requests for SOCO assistance by AFP units or other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) shall be coursed through the LPU/territorial police that will conduct case build-up and file cases, if evidence warrants;



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- 5) All SOCO responses shall be covered by a written request duly signed by the Chief of Police (COP) or his/her duly authorized representative. Requests made verbally or through telephone calls may be accepted, provided the TOC and Investigation and Detective Management Division/Branch are informed, and a written request is signed by the IOC prior to crime scene processing;
- 6) The SOCO team shall not join any operations conducted by the police or AFP units, nor accompany the FR or the IOC in responding to the crime scene;
- 7) The SOCO team shall turn over the crime scene to the IOC/COP for the security of the area, in cases the SOCO team temporarily suspends the processing. The COP shall be the primary responsible and accountable in securing the crime scene to ensure its integrity until the SOCO team concludes the CSI;
- 8) When access or route to the area poses a high security risk to the safety of responding SOCO team, or when the terrain is very difficult to traverse or access to the area poses a danger to the life of the responding team, the IOC may conduct the crime scene processing and collect evidence and shall implement appropriate measures in ensuring its integrity. The physical evidence collected shall then be submitted to the PNP FG for examination. The chain of custody shall be strictly observed;
- 9) In the absence of a SOCO team or local police in critical areas, the RD/PD/COP shall direct the IOC to coordinate with AFP or LEA on the turnover of any recovered evidence for investigation and subsequent submission to the PNP FG, ensuring that the chain of custody is observed;
- 10) All other pieces of recovered evidence for examination that are beyond the technical expertise of the PNP FG will be turned over to the requesting party or the IOC for proper disposition.
- 11) Whenever necessary, a post-processing review/debriefing to assess the effectiveness of the crime scene processing may be conducted at the behest of the Special Investigation Task Group (SITG) Commander/IOC.
- 12) All other existing policies and guidelines in relation to crime scene investigation shall be applied suppletorily.

b. Specific Guidelines:

- 1) The Chief of Police (COP), through the IOC, shall be responsible for transporting recovered bodies or cadavers, if any, to a safe location. The designated safe location shall be a morgue, where the Medico-



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Legal Officer can properly conduct the postmortem examination.

- 2) For incidents classified as human-induced critical incidents, the protocols outlined in the Critical Incident Management Operational Procedures under PNP MC No. 2024-050 shall be applied.
- 3) The IOC shall ensure that any recovered digital or electronic evidence is processed in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM) Directive on the Referral and Conduct of Digital Forensic Examination, as stipulated in Investigative Directive 2017-17. If the AFP is involved in the recovery, the processing shall follow the guidelines detailed in the Joint Letter Directive No. 02-2021: AFP-PNP Guidelines and Procedures in the Handling and Management of Seized Digital/Electronic Evidence.
- 4) The Inter-Agency Protocol for Explosives-Related Incidents Investigation shall be applied in the investigation of bombing incidents and other incidents involving explosive devices and materials. The PNP/AFP/NBI/PCG Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Bomb Technician shall conduct RSP for primary or secondary devices found in the area before the SOCO team is allowed to enter the crime scene and conduct processing. In the absence or non-availability of a PNP SOCO team, the local police, with the assistance of the responding AFP, PNP, NBI, or PCG EOD units, can process the crime scene. This includes identifying, searching, marking, photographing, and collecting possible pieces of evidence. Proper documentation should be maintained at each step to ensure the integrity of the evidence. Once documentation and collection are complete, the evidence shall be transmitted to the PNP Forensic Group or the NBI Forensic Laboratory for laboratory tests and analysis, following the chain of custody protocols.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. **DIDM**
 - 1) Supervise the implementation of this MC; and
 - 2) Perform other tasks as directed.
- b. **FG**
 - 1) Act as the OPR in the implementation of this MC;
 - 2) Ensure that provisions of this MC are properly implemented; and
 - 3) Perform other tasks as directed.
- c. **NSUs**
 - 1) Ensure the implementation of this MC;



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2) Direct the regional field units to monitor and ensure compliance with this MC; and

3) Perform other tasks as directed.

d. **PROs**

1) Ensure the adherence of all offices/units to this MC; and

2) Perform other tasks as directed.

8. PENAL CLAUSE:

Any violation of this MC shall be dealt with in accordance with existing disciplinary policies.

9. REPEALING CLAUSE:

All existing PNP issuances inconsistent with this MC are deemed repealed, amended, or rescinded 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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D-Staff
P-Staff
Ds, NSUs
RDs, PROs
DDs, NCRPO
SPA to the SILG

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