

Back to Basics: Understanding Force Protection Conditions

Signs posted on military installations state the Force Protection Condition (FPCON) at which that location is operating. Educators new to DoDEA may not immediately recognize how these terms affect schools within the installation. However, familiarity with FPCONs, and their implications for schools, can help educators support installation security measures and remain prepared for unexpected changes in the local conditions.

FPCONs describe security measures that are implemented at military installations in response to various levels of terrorist threats. Military Commanders adjust FPCONs as necessary to respond to the local threat environment. Sometimes the FPCON status is raised or lowered just to practice the more stringent measures briefly or to keep potential terrorists from being able to predict how tightly an installation will be protected on any given day.

There are five Force Protection Conditions: Normal, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. For each condition, there are several security measures stipulated. At each progressively higher FPCON, all of the security measures for the previous condition are implemented, and a few more measures are added.

District Safety and Security Officers (DSSOs) assist administrators in determining how the elevated FPCONs will impact schools. Understanding how a change in the overall installation FPCON affects individuals can help administrators adapt to changes in the FPCON as they occur. For example, if the force protection condition is raised from Bravo to Charlie, the installation will strictly enforce control and entry. This could mean that vehicles will be searched; purses and bags inspected; or that normally accessible parking areas will be closed. Military personnel may erect additional barriers and obstacles to control traffic flow through the installation.

At FPCON Delta, the military installation might receive a Non-Combatant Evacuation Order (NEO). In some areas, the military installation officials require schools to review their plans to determine what procedures they need to implement if the school has to respond to a NEO with limited notice.

Security is not always convenient. It can be arduous for individuals to continue to operate at heightened FPCONs for an extended period of time. However, understanding why individuals might encounter stringent security procedures helps everyone work together to ensure students and staff are protected in all threat environments. For additional information on Force Protection Conditions, consult your Area or District Safety and Security Officer. ■

FPCONs in DoDEA

The FPCON system is mandated by Department of Defense Instruction 2000.16: DoD Antiterrorism (AT) Standards. DoDEA Regulation 4700.1: Antiterrorism Program provides guidance and establishes standards for implementing FPCONs in DoDEA. Local commanders determine which FPCON is appropriate.

DELTA Localized, specific terrorist threat or attack.
CHARLIE Imminent threat of terrorism.
BRAVO Increased and predictable threat of terrorism.
ALPHA Possible threat of terrorist activity.
NORMAL No known enemy or threat.

The graphic above describes each condition and the type of threat that might prompt commanders to implement that FPCON. Sometimes Random Antiterrorism Measures deter attacks simply by showing potential adversaries that they cannot predict the defensive posture of an installation.