



Note Verbale No. 232/23

Protocol Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) presents its compliments to all Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations in London and has the honour to remind them of the procedures for security arrangements for VIP visitors to the United Kingdom.

We know that the security arrangements are key elements of any inward VIP visit. Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations are requested to use the information in this Note Verbale to help plan arrangements for their visitors.

Inward Visits Protection Policy

Under the Government's Inward Visits Protection Policy (IVPP), the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) will provide protective security arrangements for Heads of State, Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers when they are visiting the United Kingdom on official and working visits.

This means that the VIP visitors are either visiting the United Kingdom on a visit at the invitation of His Majesty The King or senior members of His Majesty The King's Government (HMG) or they are undertaking a working visit to the United Kingdom that includes meetings/ engagement with senior HMG ministers and/ or senior members of the Royal Family. The level of protective security provided depends on the assessment of the threat and risk to the VIP visitor while in the United Kingdom. Under the terms of the IVPP, the MPS will not provide protective security for private visits or transits through the United Kingdom.

Protective Security Arrangements

The VIP Visits Team in Protocol Directorate, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is the first point of contact for all security matters relating to an inward VIP visit, including requests for protective security arrangements. Requests for protective security should be submitted by Note Verbale to VIP Visits Team (VIParrivals.departures@fcdo.gov.uk).

The Note should include details of the VIP visitor's programme (or an outline programme, if meetings are still to be confirmed), their arrival/ departure details and confirmation of their accommodation. It is important that Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations give as much information as possible in good time. Missions should also provide details of any officials and security officers accompanying the VIP visitor.

Requests for protective security should be submitted at the earliest opportunity, and no later than 10 days before the VIP visitor's arrival. There are no guarantees that protective security arrangements can be formulated for requests submitted outside these timescales.

Should the United Kingdom agree to provide police protective security arrangements, the Metropolitan Police Service would expect any security/protection officers accompanying their VIP to operate in a liaison role under the direction of the Metropolitan Police Service.

Weapons

Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations are reminded that, under United Kingdom law, international protection/security officers are prohibited from carrying weapons. This includes firearms, batons, incapacitant spray (such as CS or Pava), tasers and knives.

Any weapons brought into the United Kingdom must be surrendered to United Kingdom Border Force officials on arrival, where they will be stored securely until departure. Diplomatic Missions, International Organisations, and international protection/security officers should be aware that weapons may not be left on board aircraft.

Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations must also notify airlines or private charter companies, before departure, that weapons will be taken on-board the aircraft. Weapons may not be carried or brought into the United Kingdom by Eurostar.

The VIP Visits Team requires the details of all weapons being brought into the United Kingdom in order to notify United Kingdom Border Force in advance of the visit. Any delay forwarding that information to United Kingdom Border Force could lead to a processing delay on arrival. Details should be submitted to the VIP Visits Team in writing. (VIParrivals.departures@fcdo.gov.uk)

The United Kingdom Border Force does not process the transfer of weapons from one airport to another. If the visiting security team is arriving and departing from a different airport and they are travelling with weapons, Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations must employ the services of a private United Kingdom-registered firearms company to process the transfer of weapons from one airport to another. Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations should contact VIP Visits Team (VIParrivals.departures@fcdo.gov.uk) if they require further details.

Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations should also contact VIP Visits Team if their VIP will transit through the United Kingdom and the VIP's accompanying security team will be bringing weapons.

Radios and Radio Frequencies

Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations must request authority from Ofcom to use radios/radio frequencies during VIP visits to the United Kingdom. Requests should be submitted in writing to VIP Visits Team (VIParrivals.departures@fcdo.gov.uk), ahead of the visit, with the following information: bandwidth, frequency range (also known as the spectrum), any preferred frequencies, area of usage and power output.

Details of any other communications equipment to be used during the visit must also be provided with as much detail as possible so that authorisation for use can be obtained. Please note, the import and use of electronic countermeasures (ECM) or similar devices to jam radio frequencies is not permitted.

It is FCDO Protocol Directorate's (VIP Visits Team) responsibility to liaise with the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police Service and other agencies who may be involved with security arrangements for VIP visits to the United Kingdom. Delay in providing the above information could hinder the FCDO Protocol Directorate (VIP Visits Team) and other agencies in processing the request for security assistance.

Protocol Missions Website

The [Protocol Missions website](#) has a section dedicated to VIP Visits, which is updated regularly and has the latest Arrival & Departure and Security NVs listed. Protocol Directorate encourage Missions to use this website as it may help to answer a question you may have.

Contacting the VIP Visits Team

If you have a question that is not covered by the information in this section or you are seeking clarification, please email the Protocol VIP Visits Team:

VIParrivals.departures@fcdo.gov.uk

Protocol Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations the assurances of its highest consideration.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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