

THE INFORMATION SOURCE FOR PRISON & JAIL MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

CORRECTIONS FORUM

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Thwarting Surprise Attacks and De-escalating Riots

Personal protection gear and other officer safety tools.



The chest, shoulder, and back hard-shell panels on the DFX2 Full Body Protection Kit from Damascus Gear have a modular flex design that fits all shapes and sizes without sacrificing mobility.

Corrections officers never know when an attack might occur or unrest may foment within an institution. They work in hostile environments that experience the highest rates of non-fatal work-related injuries in the United States.

In one case that took place in Lincoln County, Arkansas, a correctional sergeant within the maximum-security unit barely

escaped with her life after being attacked by an inmate wielding a 12-inch shank improvised from a sink faucet. According to the Arkansas Department of Corrections, the sergeant “did everything right, she kept her cool, used her training and was wearing a vest.”

It’s clear that the right equipment goes a long way in protecting corrections officers, but the

buck doesn’t stop there. Here, leading experts in the personal protection industry share their suggestions and insights with *Corrections Forum* on how not only equipment but situational awareness can keep them safe.

Bill Geraghty, owner of Body Armour Canada, which services its customers in the USA through BAC Tactical, states that although personal protection equipment is

invaluable, an officer's safety also comes down to personal preparedness. "Personal safety in the type of environment where officers work cannot be guaranteed," he underscores. "An officer should continually practice situational awareness so that they can read a room to get a sense of any tension between inmates as well as towards the officer. Officers should strive to be as physically and mentally fit as possible as well as have the determination to continually work in a hostile environment."

Nonetheless, in addition to mental and physical preparedness, having the right equipment plays an important role. Geraghty point out that "should an officer be attacked using an improvised weapon, such as glass, shanks, or blunt force objects like chair legs or cans in a sock, having the right protective equipment can often mean whether they survive an attack or not."

For equipment to be effective it must shield an officer's main internal organs (heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys) as well as the main arteries, such as the axillary artery (located in the armpit) and the femoral artery (located in the groin). The company's stab, needle, and blunt force trauma-resistant vests and their slash-resistant clothing defend these vulnerable areas.

Their vests can be worn both covertly and overtly. Made from 5mm molded polycarbonate panels that incorporate impact foam, their vests effectively shield the spine, ribs, and vital organs while weighing in at only at 1.9 kg or about 4.19 lbs.

BAC Tactical's cut- and slash-resistant clothing offers protection from sharp edges, averting lacerations of skin, arteries and veins. Currently, the company offers clothing that is tested to cut-resistance level A4 (ASTM F2992 – TDM 100). They will soon introduce products at the A5 level and some products at the A6 level that will also be fire-resistant.

Harmful Uprisings

"Prison riots are a destructive threat to corrections officers and their ability to maintain control over their facilities," says Jason Donaldson, marketing manager with Damascus Gear. During uprisings, some of the more harmful injuries corrections officers sustain are from blunt force trauma caused by heavy objects, as well as stab wounds from knives

and homemade weapons.

Damascus Gear manufactures the DFX2 Full Body Protection Kit, which is specially designed to provide substantial protection from blunt force trauma without sacrificing fit or comfort. The company also offers vests, as well as a wide variety of full-body protective gear.

Donaldson adds that "safety is improved every year as new materials are made available for protective gear including fire-resistant fabrics, cut-

and puncture-proof gloves and modular designs that allow for strike force and cut-resistant upper body plates."

The chest, shoulder, and back hard-shell panels on the DFX2 Full Body Protection Kit have a modular flex design that fits all shapes and sizes without sacrificing mobility. The chest portion of the suit features an aluminum stab plate insert for additional protection. The backplate is designed with a

raised portion at its center to protect the spine from blunt force injury.

The safety of the corrections team while maneuvering a hostile environment is a top priority, believes Donaldson, and firms such as his are working to make products that offer the ultimate protection while still allowing COs to effectively do their jobs.

