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Officers with firearms will now be seen at strategic sites across Scotland.  
Picture: Ian Rutherford

### **Armed police to guard key power plants against terror**

FRANK URQUHART AND AURA SABADUS

ARMED police are to be stationed at some of the country's most important oil and gas terminals and power stations amid fears they could be targeted by terrorists, it was revealed yesterday.

The move to bolster security will see armed officers stationed at St Fergus gas terminal near Peterhead for the first time from next week.

Four major oil companies have separate terminal facilities at the complex, operated by Total, near Peterhead where a fifth of the UK's daily North Sea gas production is processed.

Details of other locations have not been confirmed but are expected to include the gas compressor plant at Garlogie in Aberdeenshire and Grangemouth petrochemical plant near Falkirk.

The deployment of armed police officers, supplied by the Ministry of Defence, follows a review of the "critical national infrastructure" by the Home Office, however officials stressed the move was not a response to any specific threat.

"Additional police resources will be assisting Grampian Police with the protection of the St Fergus gas terminal," said a Grampian Police spokesman.

"The decision to place additional police resources, who will be armed, is part of an ongoing review of critical infrastructures around the country."

A Home Office spokesman said: "The package of protective security measures available to protect the UK's critical national infrastructure is being enhanced by the deployment of MOD police officers at certain locations in the UK.

"We have been very clear that we face a threat of terrorism. It is therefore important that we consider all options for protecting our assets in infrastructure.

"This particular review does not come from any specific threat and the general threat level to the country has not changed."

Total spokeswoman Jenny Costelloe, said: "We met some Home Office representatives last week and they advised us that they'd been looking at what they described as areas of strategic importance in the UK. They identified Fergus as one of these areas and they took pro-active measures to increase the security."

Claire Fleming, senior intelligence analyst at international security risk specialists AKE said: "The energy industry worldwide has been on the agenda for review against terrorist threats, particularly al Qaeda, for a number of years. Fergus is one of the key points in the UK.

"The fact that they have identified it now indicates that it is a critical infrastructure which could be at risk. But I don't think there is a specific terrorist threat as such. It's a sensible measure to guard against the risk we face today."

Last night Alex Salmond, the Scottish National Party MP for Banff and Buchan, welcomed the deployment of a high-visibility armed presence at the critical energy installation.

"This is a sensible precaution especially considering the current international environment," he said.

The deployment is due to begin on Tuesday.

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