The Georgia Department of Corrections’ (GDC) Special Operations oversees internal processes that support the Facilities Division’s primary task of supervising offenders. Special Operations is comprised of the following specialized units: 26 Tactical Squads to include 3 Regional Interdiction Response Teams, and 27 Correctional Emergency Response Teams (CERT). In addition, GDC is part of the state’s overall law enforcement and criminal justice system.

**Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

**OVERVIEW**
- 27 CERT teams
- Traditional team has 5 members (team leader or Sergeant and four Correctional Officers)
  - Team size may be increased at Level V (close) facilities
- Gray battle dress uniforms with untraditional patches
- Receives extensive training on managing non-compliant offenders in day to day facility operations
- Receives advanced training in cell extractions, chemical munitions, less lethal escorts and transports, offender searches, interview and interrogation techniques, intelligence gathering and Security Threat Groups (STG)
- Conducts shakedowns
  - Unannounced operation conducted to detect & prevent the introduction of contraband, escapes & other disturbances & discover hazards to health or safety that may go unnoticed during a routine inspections
- On-call 24/7

**Locations of teams**
- Arrendale State Prison
- Augusta State Medical Prison
- Autry State Prison
- Baldwin State Prison
- Burruss Correctional Training Center
- Calhoun State Prison
- Central State Prison
- Coastal State Prison
- Dodge State Prison
- Dooly State Prison
- Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison
- Georgia State Prison
- Hancock State Prison
- Hays State Prison
- Johnson State Prison
- Lee State Prison
- Macon State Prison
- Macon State Prison
- Pulaski State Prison
- Rogers State Prison
- Rutledge State Prison
- Smith State Prison
- Telfair State Prison
- Valdosta State Prison
- Ware State Prison
- Washington State Prison
- Wilcox State Prison

**REQUIREMENTS**
- POST certified employee (security) with the rank of Correctional Officer (CO) I
- Must successfully complete the Special Operations Physical Fitness Test (push-ups and sit-ups for a duration of 2 minutes and a 1 1/2-mile run) with a minimum score of 60 percent according to the Army Physical Fitness Testing standards
- Successfully qualify with their duty weapon with a minimum score of 80 percent on the Georgia Double Action Course
- Endure a formal review board, maintain physical fitness and firearms standards, and attend certificate training sessions

**TRAINING**

**Special Operations Basic Course**
- 40-hour basic course
- Physical and demanding training
- Classes administered Defensive Tactics, Chemical Agents and Less Lethal Munitions, Drill and Ceremony, Squad Formations, Mobile Field Force, Cell Extractions, and Intelligence Gathering

**Auto Pistol Transition**
- Advanced firearms course
- Successfully qualifies and transitions each member from the standard departmental issued duty weapon 38 revolver to the Glock (preferred duty weapon)
- Successfully qualifies and transitions each member from the Glock

**Tactical Squads OVERVIEW**
- 26 squads
  - 23 based at facilities
  - 3 regional (SE, SW, N) tactical squads (Interdiction Response Teams - IRT)
• 11 members (IRT exception with 18 members)
• Black battle dress uniforms with untraditional patches
  • Receives extensive training on riot and crowd control, firearms, chemical munitions, and other less than lethal munitions
• Highly scrutinized to guarantee they have the proper personnel in place to carry out the highly difficult tasks
• Responsible for hostage rescue
• Conducts shakedowns
• Assists in local community during disasters such as: tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods
• On-call 24/7

Locations of teams
• Augusta State Medical Prison
• Autry State Prison
• Baldwin State Prison
• Coastal State Prison
• Dodge State Prison
• Dooly State Prison
• Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison
• Georgia State Prison (houses 2 Tactical Squads)
• Hancock State Prison
• Hays State Prison (houses 2 Tactical Squads; combined with Walker SP)
• Johnson State Prison
• Lee/Calhoun State Prison (combined; housed at Lee SP)
• Macon State Prison
• North Interdiction Response Team (Regional)
• Phillips State Prison
• Rutledge State Prison
• SE Interdiction Response Team (Regional)
• SW Interdiction Response Team (Regional)
• Smith State Prison
• Telfair State Prison
• Valdosta State Prison
• Ware State Prison
• Washington State Prison
• Wilcox State Prison

REQUIREMENTS
• POST certified employee (security) who ranks from CO I to Lieutenant
• Must successfully complete the Special Operations Physical Fitness Test (push-ups and sit-ups for a duration of 2 minutes and a 1 1/2 mile run) with a minimum score of 60 percent according to the Army Physical Fitness Testing standards
• Successfully qualify with their duty weapon with a minimum score of 80 percent on the Georgia Double Action Course
• Endure a formal review board
• Members must maintain physical fitness and firearms standards
• Attend certificate training sessions
• Cobra teams are CO II only

TRAINING
**Special Operations Basic Course**
• 40-hour basic course
• Physical and demanding training
• Classes administered Defensive Tactics, Chemical Agents and Less Lethal Munitions, Drill and Ceremony, Squad Formations, Mobile Field Force, Cell Extractions, and Intelligence Gathering

**Auto Pistol Transition**
• Advanced firearms course
• Successfully qualifies and transitions each member from the standard departmental issued duty weapon 38 revolver to the Glock (preferred duty weapon)

**Judgmental Use of Deadly Force**
• Advanced firearms course
• Teaches judgment when to shoot and when not to while utilizing the Glock

**Statewide Shakedown Initiative**
Determined to eradicate the state’s prison system of contraband, the Georgia Department of Corrections implemented and bolstered interdiction methods within its facilities across the state of Georgia in January 2016. During the first quarter, the agency confiscated a total of 7,825 items of contraband. The items seized between January and March are as follows:

• 2,007 cell phones
• 879 cell phone chargers
• 1,648 handmade weapons
• 4,118.489 grams of marijuana
• 69,406.94 grams of tobacco
• 420.237 grams of meth
• 67.3 grams of cocaine
• 223 pills (ecstasy, loritab, xanax)
• 86 bottles of alcohol
• 109 bundles of financial information (debit & green dot cards and numbers)
• 34 syringes
• 13 SIM cards
• 10 SD cards

This contraband was seized from seven prisons to include Burress Correctional Training Center and Autry, Central, Hancock, Dooly, Rogers, and Wilcox State Prisons. The remainder of the state prisons will be hit with surprise shakedowns over the course of 2016.