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A MULTI-METHOD STUDY OF SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS TEAMS*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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A MULTI-METHOD STUDY OF SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS TEAMS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams,[1] first appeared in American policing in the later half of the 1960s when a series of high-profile incidents -- such as Charles Whitman's murderous sniping from a tower on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin that claimed over a dozen lives -- showed that a single violent episode could easily outstrip the capacity of "standard" law enforcement tactics, weapons, and officers to respond effectively. Innovative police officials thus developed SWAT teams to provide their agencies with the means to handle such extra-ordinarily dangerous incidents (see, e.g., Hudson, 1997; Kolman, 1982). In the years since the first teams came on line, SWAT units have grown in number, sophistication, and frequency of operations, so that today the vast majority of the police agencies serving populations over 50,000 have some sort of tactical team, and yearly SWAT deployments nationwide number in the tens of thousands (e.g., Kraska and Kappeler, 1997).

Despite the crucial role they currently play in dealing with the high-risk incidents that are commonplace in contemporary policing, we know very little about how SWAT teams around the nation are organized, and even less about what they do and how they do it. The primary reason for this is that very little research on tactical teams and operations has been conducted. A second is that the small body of research literature that has been produced is quite limited in scope.

In 1998 the National Institute of Justice funded a study designed to help develop a better picture of the role that SWAT plays in contemporary American law enforcement. This study included four distinct data collection components. The first was a nationwide survey of law enforcement agencies with 50 or more sworn officers (N=2,027) that sought information about their emergency response capabilities and structures (henceforth referred to as the SWAT

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[1] Tactical teams around the nation go by a number of names -- Special Response Teams (SRT), Emergency Response Units (ERU), Tactical Action Group (TAG), for example. For simplicity's sake, this proposal will limit itself to the terms "SWAT" and "tactical."

Operations Survey, or SOS). The second aspect of the study was the collection of standardized after-action reports from SWAT teams that agreed to provide information about select aspects of incidents they handled (henceforth referred to as the Post Critical Incident Report, or PCIR). The third element of the research was a series of site visits to several police departments during which the PI observed their SWAT teams. Finally, both the PI and the second author of this report conducted intensive observation of SWAT teams in areas near where they resided, accompanying these teams during training and field deployment at critical incidents.

The proposed research was designed to pursue three specific goals to accomplish its objective of enhancing knowledge about SWAT teams and the role they play in contemporary American policing. The *first* goal was to develop a better picture of the structure and nature of SWAT teams in American law enforcement (e.g., the mix of full and part-time teams, how crisis negotiations and emergency medical services are structured, etc.). The *second* goal of the research project was to increase the amount of knowledge about how SWAT teams prepare for and execute operations (e.g., what sorts of training they do, how they plan for specific operations, and what they do during actual operations). The project's *third* goal was to develop information about one specific aspect of SWAT operations; the use of force, especially deadly force, by both officers and suspects. Where SWAT officers goes, we sought information about matters such as how frequently they fired shots, the types of cases in which officers fired shots, officers' team assignments when shootings occurred, the types of weapons they used, and the number of rounds they fired. Where use of deadly force by suspects is concerned, we sought data on the sorts of weapons possessed by individuals SWAT was called upon to deal with and how these citizens used them against police officers, other citizens, and themselves.

Our research efforts were only partially successful, due to low participation in the SOS and PCIR. Telephone calls to the 2,027 agencies with 50 or more sworn officers indicated that 1,183 of them had some sort of SWAT team. Fewer than one-third of these agencies, however, participated in the SOS. Participation in the PCIR was even more dismal; fewer than one in 10 sent in any after-action reports, just 476 PCIR forms were submitted, and more than half of these came from just seven agencies. Given the poor participation in the PCIR, it will not be addressed any further in this executive summary. Rather, the remainder of this document will provide an overview of what was learned from the SOS and the field research, starting with an overview of how agencies that responded to the SOS organized their crisis response capabilities.

Before moving on to these matters, however, it is important to point out that the SOS data set we developed contained considerable missing data. The largest portion of the missing data was for yearly counts of various SWAT team activities (e.g., number of team activations in given years, number of SWAT officer-involved shootings, number of cases in which suspects discharged firearms; see discussions of specific data sought below). Consequently readers are cautioned to take matter of missing data into account as they read what follows and to examine the full report before drawing any conclusions about the meaning of the numbers that follow, especially where SWAT activities are concerned.

SWAT OPERATION SURVEY

Crisis Response Organization

SWAT teams come in a variety of forms and sizes, and the SOS included several items seeking information about the structure and organization of respondents SWAT teams and related matters. Areas of interest included whether agencies had their own SWAT team or contributed officers to a multi-jurisdictional team, whether officers were assigned to SWAT on a full or part-time basis, the number of officers assigned to SWAT duties, how they structured their crisis negotiations capabilities, the nature of command and control on SWAT deployments, and the sort of steps they took to provide EMS when SWAT deployed . This section summarizes findings on these points.

Responding agencies showed a strong preference for having their own SWAT teams, as fewer than 5% of them contributed officers to a multi-jurisdictional team.[2] Another dominant trend was for agencies to staff their teams with officers who serve on SWAT on a part-time basis. Eighty-eight percent of the teams were staffed by officers who worked SWAT as ancillary duty, 8% of the teams were composed entirely of officers whose primary assignment was SWAT, and 4% included both part- and full-time SWAT officers. (As might be expected, most of the agencies with full-time SWAT contingents were large departments located in major metropolitan areas). The smallest team that responded to the survey included seven individuals (three officers, three sergeants, and one captain), while the largest team had 104 people (90 officers, 10 sergeants, and four lieutenants).[3] Across all of the agencies, SWAT teams averaged 16 officers, three sergeants, one lieutenant, and one captain.

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[2] All of the statistics reported in this summary are based on the N of cases for which valid responses were reported. Missing values were typically in the range of 2-3%, though the missing values for some variables were more than twice that high.

Responding agencies reported a variety of approaches to structuring their crisis negotiations capabilities. The vast majority (82%) indicated they had a unit separate from their SWAT team devoted to negotiations, several housed negotiations within the SWAT team, while several others used only personnel who were members of neither the SWAT team or a negotiations unit. Across all three of these basic structures, some agencies supplemented their negotiations capability with non-sworn personnel such as mental health professionals, police chaplains, and individuals who spoke foreign languages.

Where overall command and control of SWAT incidents goes, the survey disclosed two dominant approaches: agencies that placed overall incident command in the hands of the SWAT commander/supervisor (47%) and those that assign the responsibility to a non-SWAT supervisor/commander (43%). The remaining 10% of the agencies were closely split between those in which the senior officer in charge of the incident that prompted SWAT activation retains command and those that employed some "other" sort of system, such as having the SWAT commander in charge of the inner perimeter and a non-SWAT supervisor run everything outside the inner perimeter.

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[3] It should be noted here that the NYPD, which did not participate in the survey, includes a contingent of more than 300 tactical officers assigned to their Emergency Services Unit.

Where emergency medical services goes, 5% of respondents reported that they had in place no special means to deal with medical emergencies at SWAT operations, while many of the agencies that did so included more than one. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents had an ambulance stand-by at the scene, 43% included paramedics on their SWAT team, 8% had an MD on respond to the location, and 20% reported having some “other” special provisions for EMS.

Training

The SOS sought information about three aspects of SWAT training: The amount of time SWAT officers spent training in a typical month, the sorts of things they trained for, and the sources of the training they received. There was substantial variability in how much time SWAT teams devoted to training, from a low of no training in a typical month to a high of 80 hours per officer. Between these extremes, the vast majority of teams (81%) spent between eight and 20 hours training per officer per month. Including the eight teams that spent no time training in a typical month, 9% of respondents devoted less than eight hours to training, while 10% averaged more than 20 hours per month (58% of these agencies spent 40 or more hours training). A closer look at the data disclosed substantial differences in the amount of time per month that different sorts of SWAT teams devote to training. Officers on part-time teams tended to train far less than did their peers who were assigned to full-time teams and teams that included both full-and part-time members, with full-time teams tending to train the most.

Because SWAT teams can be called upon to handle a substantial variety of special threat situations, they often devote training time to preparing for specific sorts of matters. The SOS included an item that asked each team whether they had trained for each of 15 specific sorts of situations during 1998, and whether the team trained for any “other” types of matters. Table 1 below summarizes the results.

Table 1: Percentage of Teams That Trained for Specific Activities in 1998 (N=339)

Activity Type	*Percent*	*Activity Type*	*Percent*
Suicidal Subjects	71%	Water-Borne Assault	7%
Barricaded Suspect	95%	Civil Unrest	49%
Hostage Incident	92%	Narcotics Warrants	91%
Hostage Rescue	87%	Other Warrants	80%
Auto/van Assault	80%	Building Searches	94%
Bus Assault	64%	Area Searches	60%
Train Assault	11%	Downed Person Rescue	86%
Aircraft Assault	12%	Other	19%

Counted among the sorts of matters practiced for by those 19% of the agencies that indicated they had conducted “other” training were wilderness search and rescue, response to incidents involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and rural operations.[4]

Operations

The SOS sought information about how frequently SWAT teams handled each of the following several sorts of situations each year between 1986 and 1998: barricaded suspects, hostage incidents, search warrants, civil disturbances, “other” matters (e.g., stake outs, saturation patrol, etc.). Table 2 summarizes the findings on these points, presenting the total number of incidents of each sort between 1986 and 1998, the average number of each sort of incident handled per team *on an annual basis*, and the range of number of incidents handled per team per year. Civil disturbances are not reported because the vast, vast majority of teams never deployed at any civil disturbances during the years in question.

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[4] Several other types of specific training were reported that are best understood as special circumstances involving standard SWAT matters involving hostages and barricades. E.g., vertical insertion, deploying from helicopters, rock climbing, and so on.

Table 2: SWAT Operations During 1986-1998

Type of operation	*Total Number*	*Range per Annum*	*Mean per Annum*
Barricaded Suspect	7,384	0-92	3.5
Hostage Taking	1,180	0-18	.5
Warrant Service	34,271	0-463	14.1
Miscellaneous Other	4,918	0-191	2.1

A key point that is not evident in the table – but which one might expect – is that SWAT teams from larger jurisdictions were notably more active than those from smaller agencies, tending to handle larger number of each sort of incident. It should also be noted, on the other hand, that several of the larger-agency teams did not serve a big numbers of warrants. For example, teams from two of the five largest jurisdictions (2,000 plus sworn) never served even 100 warrants in any single year.

Deadly Force

The SOS sought information about three aspects of the use of deadly force during SWAT operations: lethal rounds fired by SWAT officers, lethal rounds fired by suspects, and suspect suicides (nearly all of which were from gunshots). In addition, respondents were asked to complete a supplemental form we dubbed the “Firearms Discharge Report” (FDR) to provide details (e.g., the nature of the operation in question, the number of officers who fired, and number of rounds they fired) about each incident in which any SWAT officers fired lethal rounds from their weapons.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the deadly force findings is that SWAT officers rarely discharge their firearms at human targets. We estimated that *across the hundreds of team years for which we had data* that SWAT officers took suspects under fire in just 342 of the tens of thousands of operations they undertook. SWAT gunfire struck nearly 200 citizens, killing 139 of them. A second notable aspect of the shooting data is that we estimated that the officers on the teams who responded to the SOS had 39 accidental discharges. Respondents completed FDR’s on 273 of the 371 shootings (342 intentional, plus 39 accidentals). The FDR’s disclosed that almost half (46.5%) of the shootings occurred during incidents involving barricaded subjects, 29.7% happened during narcotics warrants, 18.7% during hostage incidents, 4.8% happened on miscellaneous SWAT operations (e.g., stake-outs and sting operations), and a single shooting occurred during a civil disturbance. Another point of interest from the FDR's is that among the situations in which SWAT officers intentionally discharged their weapons, the total number of rounds fired was fewer than 10 in 75% of them, and three or fewer in half.

While the facts that SWAT teams in our sample rarely fired their weapons and that when they did they typically fired few rounds are heartening, we find the number of accidental discharges to be disturbing. This data indicates that something is substantially amiss with the way that at least some SWAT officers handle their weapons, and strongly suggests that this problem is rooted in training. That more than one in ten of the incidents in which those who are supposed to be the most highly trained officers in their agency fired shots involved accidental discharges is simply unacceptable in our minds.

Among the aforementioned 139 citizens who died after being struck by SWAT gunfire were two who fatally shot themselves after being hit by SWAT bullets. In addition to these two, we have firm data that 379 other individuals killed themselves in situations in which they were not shot by SWAT officers. It is thus clear that it in the current data that it is far more likely that citizens will take their own lives during SWAT operations than be killed by SWAT officers, by a margin of more than 2.5 to 1.[5] Finally, the data indicate that nearly one in four of the citizens struck by SWAT gunfire wished to be shot, as respondents classified their actions as indicating they wished to commit "suicide-by-cop." If respondents' classifications are correct, this indicates that an even higher portion of the citizen deaths in SWAT operations involved individuals who wished to die.

The SOS also identified several hundred (455 counted and 538 estimated) cases in which suspects discharged firearms but SWAT officers did not fire their weapons. While in many such cases the suspects actions did not present an immanent threat to innocent life (e.g., barricaded suspects who fired shots into furniture inside their house), in many other situations SWAT officers held their fire in the face of rounds directed their way. This aspect of the SOS data suggests that SWAT officers frequently display considerable restraint in the face of serious threats to their safety.

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[5] The full report includes more fine-grained data on suspect deaths and the use of deadly force by both suspects and SWAT officers, including somewhat different fatality ratios.

Injuries to SWAT Officers

The danger SWAT officers face is exemplified by what the SOS data disclose about SWAT injuries. A total of seventeen officers suffered penetrating or perforating wounds from bullets fired by suspects, including two officers who were fatally shot. Ten other SWAT officers were struck by hostile fire on their body armor, tactical helmets, or face shields. In addition to these cases, four SWAT officers suffered non-fatal gunshot wounds from rounds fired by fellow officers. That 13% of the SWAT officers struck by gunfire in the current data were shot by fellow officers suggests that while the most substantial threat officers face comes from armed subjects, the prospect of fratricide looms large in tactical operations.

FIELD WORK

We observed a wide array of SWAT training sessions and operations; from firearms training on shooting ranges to scenario training at a variety of venues on the training side of the coin, and from search warrants to hostage incidents on the operations side. The full report offers a detailed account of these observations. Here, we identify three key themes that emerged from the training, plus a pair from the operations we observed.

One theme that emerged from training was a strong emphasis on teamwork. It was constantly preached by those running the training sessions and all of the training sessions included team activities. A second theme was that the teams focused their training time on matters they believed to be closely related to the sorts of things they might encounter in the field. All of the training was designed to replicate as close as possible what the team might face during actual operations. The final theme was that the teams placed a premium on officer safety; both in terms of ensuring that the training sessions were conducted in a safe fashion and in terms of incorporating features that were intended to promote officer safety in actual incidents. All three themes are perhaps best illustrated with a brief discussion of what we observed during what is normally viewed as an individual skill, shooting firearms.

We observed several range sessions in which members of various SWAT teams fired handguns, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and shotguns. Most of these sessions included some variant of the following when an officer had a malfunction or ran out of ammunition: He or she would announce the problem, drop to a knee, and either transition to their sidearm (if they were firing a shoulder weapon) or began to clear/reload their handgun. An officer in an adjacent lane would then would step off their lane, stand over the kneeling officer, and point their weapon at the kneeling officer's target as that officer completed his/her re-load/clearing drill. Once the kneeling officer completed clearing/re-loading his weapon he would announce this fact. The covering officer would then move back towards his or her lane and announce that s/he was no longer behind the kneeling officer. At this point, the kneeling officer would then stand back up and re-engage his target.

When we asked some of the team members why they ran this drill during range training, they told us the following: Building malfunctions and running dry into the training was done to replicate what could happen in an actual situation in which an officer either ran out of ammunition or had a weapons malfunction (the emphasis on realism). The practice of having another officer step up to support an officer who was temporarily unable to put bullets down range was designed to protect the officer in question (officer safety during an actual situation) by working in a coordinated fashion (teamwork), a part of which was the verbal communication, which decreased the chance that the kneeling officer would be shot by his partner (immediate officer safety during the training session, and officer safety if an actual situation came about).

Operations

The two key themes that we identified from observing SWAT operations were an emphasis on teamwork and a desire to resolve the situation at hand with a minimum of risk to both officers and citizens (including suspects). On call-outs these themes were evident in the fashion in which the teams managed the incidents in question. In nearly all cases, the call-outs proceeded through a three-step process of staging (arriving at the designated rallying point and discussing the situation and team assignments), deploying (moving to assigned places; such as containment, observation, and so on), and working the problem (e.g., negotiations, physical tactics, employment of chemical agents). During each phase there was a regular stream of communication between operators, negotiators, and incident commanders. At the staging point, for example, incident commanders dispersed intelligence to sergeants and team leaders, who then passed it on to their charges as they set to deploy. As call-outs progressed, information was constantly routed back and forth between the operators who were deployed at the objective, the negotiators back at the command post (CP), and the incident commander (also at the CP). The operators undertook no non-emergency action without first consulting with the incident commander, a practice that ensured a cohesive response in each incident.

This team approach was designed to achieve the ultimate police goal of minimizing the likelihood that anyone involved in the incident would suffer serious injury. There was constant discussion as incidents played themselves out of the various options that might be available to resolve them with no or minimal physical damage. In a confrontation with an emotionally disturbed gunman who was wandering around the outside of a house he had set on fire, for example, team members tried to keep their distance, held their fire when the individual menaced officers, and then tried to resolve the matter by employing less lethal munitions. Unfortunately, the suspect committed suicide with his firearm before team members could prevent him from doing so.

The same sort of attention to teamwork and injury prevention was evident in the search warrant operations we observed. Prior to each warrant, team members met to discuss how they were going to serve the warrant. At these meetings supervisory officers described the nature of the warrant location, provided information about the involved suspects, and assigned specific tasks to certain people in a fashion they believed would allow the team the best opportunity to conduct the operation in the safest fashion possible (although, as the full report points out, there was substantial diversity in the amount of preparation among the teams we observed). After briefing, team members moved to their vehicles, loaded-up, and drove to the warrant location.

Upon arriving at the warrant location, the team exited their vehicles and deployed in the manner foreordained in the briefing. After all of the team members reached their assigned spots outside the location, the lead officer at the entry point (the front door in each instance) announced the team's presence and stated that they were there to serve a search warrant. In each case, the team then waited several seconds, forced the door open (usually with a two-man ram), and entered the location.[6] Because we stayed outside the warrant locations, we did not observe how the teams cleared the locations they entered. Upon entering locations after they were secured, however, we observed officers holding positions in a systematic fashion that allowed them complete coverage of the interior of the location. Team members were communicating with one another about the status of the individuals they detained and discussing plans for dealing with both those detained and the location more generally. In sum, from start to finish the teams we observed worked together to serve the high-risk warrants assigned to them in a fashion designed to reduce the likelihood that anyone would be injured.

CONCLUSIONS

That the SWAT teams we observed comported themselves during operations in a manner that is consistent with what they practiced in training suggests strongly that the substantial time many teams devote to training is a sound investment. In a time of tight budgets and manpower constraints, some might chaff at the costs (in both time and payroll) associated with extensive SWAT training. Such concerns need to be measured against the performance of SWAT teams when they do deploy (i.e., how closely their actions fit with the standards set forth in training), and against the outcomes of the operations they are called upon to handle. SWAT teams came into existence almost 40 years ago in order to handle special threat situations with minimal human injury or loss of life, and SWAT operational doctrine has evolved since then in a constant attempt to improve their capacity to fulfill this mandate. The hard data from the SOS showing that SWAT teams only rarely resort to lethal force indicates that SWAT teams appear to be doing what they are designed to do. The field work we conducted helps explain why this is so: SWAT teams do in the field what they have been taught to do in training. Our initial conclusion, therefore, is that SWAT teams should be encouraged to train as much as time and budget considerations will permit. It makes little sense to outfit a group of police officers with SWAT appurtenances and then fail to provide them with the training necessary to put these tools to work to the utmost.

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[6] Teams deployed noise-flash diversionary devices between forcing the door and entering in three cases.

Embedded in this initial conclusion is a second: SWAT teams appear to be fulfilling their intended purpose of resolving high-risk situations with limited force. Where the ultimate level of force is concerned, one of the key pieces of evidence on this point is the aforementioned finding from the SOS that SWAT officers use deadly force in just a small fraction of the incidents they handle. A second piece of evidence on the deadly force issue is the deliberate approach the teams we observed used when training for and dealing with crisis situations. Outside of the range training and scenario training that was designed to include gunfire, the officers we observed usually held their fire during training evolutions in situations in which shooting would have been permissible. Moreover, even in scenario training that called for the application of deadly force the teams used measured, deliberate procedures – with a substantial emphasis on negotiations – that were designed to bring the matter to a close without having to fire any shots.

In the field, we observed teams take slow and controlled steps to resolve situations without gunfire. From simply talking armed and dangerous people into surrendering peacefully, to using low levels of physical force to take non-compliant suspects into custody, to using impact munitions against a violent mentally-unbalanced suspect with a gun whose actions were quite provocative, the teams we observed sought mightily to use tactics short of lethal gunfire to complete their tasks.

Another key finding is that the nation's SWAT teams have been able to accomplish their fundamental purpose with a variety of organizational forms, structures, and practices. While most of the teams are made up of officers from a single agency, some teams include officers from multiple jurisdictions. While some consist exclusively of full-time SWAT officers, some are made up of officers who work SWAT as an ancillary duty, and others still include both part- and full-time SWAT officers. While some teams train 40 or more hours per month, others train very little. And so on and so forth on various other dimensions such as command and control of SWAT operations, negotiations, and emergency medical services.

One thing our research was not able to ascertain was whether any particular approach to SWAT appears to be better than any other. We simply have no sound standard upon which to make such judgments. And even if one were to take an obvious indicator such as the frequency of shootings, the number of SWAT officer involved shootings is so small that meaningful analysis is not possible. It is therefore not possible to draw any “best SWAT practices” from the quantitative data collected during the current study. All we can say is that it indicates that in an overall sense SWAT is an effective tool for accomplishing it’s intended purpose to save lives.

Where training is concerned, it is only through preparation for and execution of realistic scenarios that teams were able to identify weak points in their capabilities and move to strengthen them. Teams that do not have the time to conduct such training on a regular basis have a much lower capacity to discover and correct weaknesses. It consequently makes sense to us that SWAT teams that are currently on the lower end of the training time distribution should seek to increase the time they devote to training. Because the potential costs associated with SWAT failure are quite high – the unnecessary loss of life or limb, as well as the potential fallout from same – SWAT teams should be encouraged to undertake the sort of rigorous training that will permit them to identify and correct problems before they lead to operational failure.

In this connection, the present study did produce hard data that speaks to a substantial problem in the SWAT community. It is simply unacceptable that SWAT officers have the number of unintentional discharges of firearms –approximately three dozen – that were disclosed by the SOS. Even though the number of accidental discharges averages less than 3 per study year across hundreds of teams and thousands of operations, SWAT officers should not be having anywhere near that number. Driving this point home is that fact that two of the fatal shootings reported in the SOS were unintentional. We hope that the tactical community will take seriously the problem of unintentional gunfire, take steps to reduce their frequency, and thereby preclude further unnecessary deaths. No human system of dealing with dangerous situations can ever reduce negative outcomes to zero, but SWAT teams and officers can strive to do better.

And we believe that this is a sound theme upon which to close this final report. Our research indicates that SWAT teams have accomplished many good things in recent years. They have trained and worked hard to fulfill their life-saving mandate and they have done so by constantly striving to improve their capabilities. We believe that a continued focus on improvement by SWAT teams will allow the American police to do an even better job of fulfilling their mission to serve the citizenry in the future.

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A MULTI-METHOD STUDY OF SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS TEAMS

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have witnessed a dramatic shift in the basic philosophical approach that law enforcement agencies around the nation bring to their fundamental task of serving the citizens they are sworn to protect. The professional model of policing -- with its emphasis on officers who are largely detached from the public responding to crimes and other problematic incidents as they occur -- has given way to the community policing model, which stresses the need for the police to work closely with citizens to resolve the underlying conditions that give rise to specific problems (see, e.g., Goldstein, 1990; Kelling and Moore, 1988; Greene, 2000). Despite the shift in emphasis away from incident-driven police work, however, law enforcement in the era of community policing still requires that agencies and officers devote considerable attention to handling individual incidents (e.g, Eck and Spellman, 1987). Indeed, how given cases are handled can have a substantial impact on community policing efforts, for the actions that officers take in specific incidents have the capacity to create either good or ill will among the citizenry.

Nowhere is this more evident than in those types of incidents that involve a substantial potential for violence between officers and citizens. As numerous writers have pointed out in recent years, nothing can do more to damage the community goodwill that is necessary for successful community policing than violent police-citizen encounters where the actions of the involved officer(s) are seen by the public as inappropriate (e.g., Radelet and Carter, 1994; Geller and Scott, 1992). The use of force is integral to the police mission (e.g., Bittner, 1970; Klockars, 1985), but experience and research have shown that how officers manage their encounters with citizens can, in many instances, appreciably affect both the likelihood that they will have to resort to force and the amount of force they will use if some is necessary (e.g., Fyfe, 1993).

One way that many agencies in this time of community policing seek to properly manage potentially violent episodes is by having teams of specially trained and equipped officers handle those incidents that exhibit the highest risk of violence -- armed gunmen holding hostages, for instance. Known most commonly as Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams,[1] such units first appeared in the later half of the 1960s when a series of high-profile incidents -- such as Charles Whitman's murderous sniping from a tower on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin that claimed over a dozen lives -- showed that a single violent episode could easily outstrip the capacity of "standard" law enforcement tactics, weapons, and officers to respond effectively. Innovative police officials thus developed SWAT teams to provide their agencies with the means to handle such extra-ordinarily dangerous incidents (see, e.g., Hudson, 1997; Kolman, 1982). In the years since the first teams came on line, SWAT units have grown in number, sophistication, and frequency of operations, so that today the vast majority of the police agencies serving populations over 50,000 have some sort of tactical team, and yearly SWAT deployments nationwide number in the tens of thousands (e.g., Kraska and Kappeler, 1997).

Despite the crucial role they currently play in dealing with the high-risk incidents that are commonplace in contemporary policing, we know very little about how SWAT teams around the nation are organized, and even less about what they do and how they do it. The primary reason for this is that very little systematic research on tactical teams and operations has been conducted. A second is that the small body of research literature that has been produced is quite limited in scope.

Prior to the last few years, criminal justice researchers paid almost no attention to SWAT. A small number of research-oriented publications did mention tactical teams in passing (e.g., Crime and Social Justice Associates, 1983; Geller and Scott, 1992), but the only works that focused on SWAT appeared in the news media and law enforcement publications, such as *Police Chief,* and *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin.* While articles appearing in law enforcement and media outlets provide a good deal of information about specific things such as the details of particular SWAT operations, as well as training, management, and operational issues, they provide no *systematic* information about the structure, social organization, and activities of the SWAT component of American policing.

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[1] Tactical teams around the nation go by a number of names -- Special Response Teams (SRT), Emergency Response Units (ERU), Tactical Action Group (TAG), for example. For simplicity's sake, this proposal will limit itself to the terms "SWAT" and "tactical."

In the late 1990s a small bit of academic research that sought to shed some systematic light on SWAT was undertaken. One of the first publications to emerge from this research effort was Kraska's (1996) ethnographic study of SWAT training. Unfortunately, this research was based on a single visit to an unstructured, unsanctioned, unofficial target practice session carried out by a group of citizens and police officers who had some designs to become involved in SWAT at some point in the future, so it offers very little insight into actual SWAT training. Another study conducted by Kraska and a colleague, on the other hand, did provide some information relevant to actual SWAT training.

Kraska and Kappeler (1997) conducted a survey of U.S. police agencies that employ at least 100 sworn officers and serve populations of 50,000 or more citizens to develop information about various aspects of SWAT team organization and activity. One of topics they addressed in their research was the role that military influence played in the SWAT training conducted by those agencies that had tactical teams.[2] They reported that 30% of the agencies received training from "police officers with special operations experience in the military" and that 46% of the agencies "trained with active-duty military experts in special operations." They also reported that inter-agency training was common, as 63% of the agencies reported that they provided some sort of tactical training to other agencies.

Kraska and Kappeler (1997) also sought information about when the agencies they surveyed created their SWAT teams and about the operational activities that these teams undertook over the years. They found that a bit more than half of the agencies formed their SWAT units during the 1970s, and that most of the rest instituted their teams during the 1980s. Tracing annual deployments over time, they reported that the average number of activations per

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[2] Approximately 90% of the agencies that participated in the survey reported having a SWAT team.

SWAT team increased substantially between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s – from 13 in 1980 to 83 in 1995 among the 193 agencies that provided data for each year. They reported that the bulk of this increase was due to SWAT teams becoming involved in the execution of high-risk narcotics search warrants as the so-called "war on drugs" heated-up during the 1980s and into the 1990s. Unfortunately, the information that Kraska and Kappeler provided was not detailed enough to determine whether the reported increase in SWAT activity was widespread across the nation or if it was concentrated in a few agancies.

Kraska replicated the research he conducted with Kappeler among smaller agencies (those serving populations between 25,000 and 50,000; Kraska and Cebellis, 1997) and found a similar pattern of SWAT development and deployment. Reporting, for example, that the largest increase in the number of SWAT teams occurred during the 1980s and that the lion's share of SWAT activations involved the service of high-risk warrants.

While the research carried out by Kraska and his colleagues has shed some initial light on some aspects of the tactical component of modern American policing, it leaves many SWAT-related issues unexplored. Take the structure of SWAT teams, for example. We know from various professional publications that some police agencies field full-time SWAT teams, others have teams that operate on a part-time basis, while others still field teams with both full and part-time members; that some agencies have their own teams, while others contribute officers to regional teams; that some agencies have dozens of SWAT officers, while others have but a few; and so on. We have no idea, however, about how many agencies fall into each category on these various issues. In a similar vein, we know little about SWAT training; the sorts of things SWAT teams train for, the nature of the training they receive, how this training is related to the operations they undertake, and so on. Where operations are concerned, the limited research on SWAT offers very little information about how often teams handle various sorts of situations and none whatsoever on topics such as how teams respond to specific sorts of mobilizations, how they develop tactical plans, the sorts of actions they undertake during activations, what citizens do during operations, and various and sundry other matters. Finally, one glaring hole in our knowledge of SWAT operations is the use of force by citizens and the police during them, as the existing research includes absolutely no information on this topic. Consequently, we are completely in the dark when it comes to the issue that gave rise to SWAT in the first place.

In the later half of the 1990s the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), a non-profit organization that serves the law enforcement profession by providing training and disseminating information regarding SWAT to police agencies and officers across the country, noted the lack of systematic information about SWAT and set out to help remedy the situation. To this end, the NTOA undertook a pair of data collection efforts that sought to develop detailed information about several SWAT-related issues. The first program consisted of collecting standardized after-action reports from three-dozen SWAT teams around the country. Dubbed the "Post Critical Incident Report (PCIR) Project," this program collected information about select aspects of SWAT activations. These aspects included: the type of incident, the type of location where it occurred, the involved offender(s) and his/her/their equipment (e.g., weapons, body armor, etc.), what the offender(s) did, victim(s)/hostage(s) characteristics, the negotiation process, police activity (including the use of force), and incident resolution.

The second program the NTOA instituted was a survey of police jurisdictions that served populations of 250,000 and above, which they conducted in concert with the lead author of this report. Dubbed "The SWAT Operation Survey" (SOS), this study was designed to obtain information about the development and growth of SWAT teams in large agencies, how often these teams are mobilized for different types of incidents, and the use of deadly force in these operations. The survey included two instruments; the Operations Form, which sought various sorts of information about organization and functioning of SWAT teams, and the Firearms Discharge Report, which sought information about incidents in which SWAT officers and suspects discharged firearms during SWAT operations.

In 1998 the National Institute of Justice funded a study designed to build upon the twin data collection efforts instituted by the NTOA in order to develop a better picture of the role that SWAT plays in contemporary American law enforcement. This study included four distinct data collection components. The first was an expansion of the PCIR; the second, a re-tooling and expansion of the SOS; the third, a series of site visits to several cities to observe their SWAT teams, and fourth, accompanying SWAT teams in the areas where the PI was employed for in-depth observation of training and field deployment.

The rest of this report provides details about this research project and what it disclosed about SWAT teams and the role that SWAT plays in contemporary American law enforcement.

STUDY AIMS AND DESIGN

RESEARCH GOALS

The research was designed to pursue three specific goals to accomplish its objective of enhancing knowledge about SWAT teams and the role they play in contemporary American policing. The *first* goal was to develop a more complete picture of the structure and nature of SWAT teams. It was noted above, for example, that while we know that there is considerable variability across police agencies in terms of various aspects of SWAT team structure (e.g., full or part time status), there is a dearth of information about the particulars of team structure across the nation. In a similar vein, we have little systematic information about how police agencies around the nation design various aspects of their tactical response capabilities in areas such as crisis negotiations and emergency medical services. The first goal, therefore, was to develop information about such issues.

The *second* goal of the research project was to increase the amount of knowledge we presently possess about preparation for and execution of SWAT operations. We know that SWAT teams devote considerable energy to training, but save the garbage-dump "training session" report from Kraska (1996), there is no research literature on SWAT training. We also know that SWAT units undertake considerable planning for some specific operations before carrying them out (e.g., for given search warrants), but there is absolutely no literature on this important aspect of SWAT activity. Where the actual handling of SWAT operations is concerned, we have more knowledge, but it is still quite limited. We know, for example, that teams handle a variety of types of assignments; from the aforementioned hostage, barricade, and warrant incidents, to others such as stakeouts, suicidal subjects, and civil disturbances. Other than the coarse data Kraska and Kappeler (1997) and Kraska and Cubelius (1997) offer about a single year, however, we have no idea about how many incidents of different types teams handle.

Moreover, we have no systematic information about the sorts of tactics (e.g., negotiation strategies, securing/ breeching doors), tools (chemical agents, rams, less-lethal munitions, and so on), and personnel (e.g., long rifle, K-9, and so on) that are used in SWAT operations. Finally, we have no systematic information about how SWAT operations are resolved: How often hostage and barricade incidents result in a negotiated surrender? How often do teams employ chemical agents? How often does this prompt the subject to surrender? To whom do those subjects who do give-up surrender? By pursuing the project's second goal, the research reported herein begins to fill these substantial gaps in our knowledge base about SWAT operations, from training, to planning, to onset, to resolution.

The project's *third* goal was to develop information about one specific aspect of SWAT; the use of force. SWAT teams exist to deal with the threat posed by citizens who use, or are liable to use, force in an illegal fashion. And their operational mandate is to do so in a fashion that ensues that the application of force by law enforcement is measured and controlled. Because the management of force lies at the core of the SWAT mission, we devoted considerable attention to developing information about the use of force by suspects and officers during SWAT operations.

Where the use of force by SWAT officers goes, we focused our attention on deadly force, seeking to collect information about matters such as the frequency of police firearms use, the types of cases in which officers fired shots, officers' team assignments when shootings occurred, the types of weapons they used, and the number of rounds they fired. We also sought to develop information about one aspect of non-lethal force: the use of less-lethal weapons. In recent years, many tactical teams have acquired systems for delivering munitions that have a low probability of causing death (e.g., bean-bags fired from shotguns and 37/40 millimeter gas launchers), yet we have very little systematic data on the use of these innovative technologies.[3] Similarly, there exists little systematic data on the use of other sorts of non-lethal weapons that antedate the advent of impact munitions (e.g., TASERs). We sought to narrow the knowledge gap where non-lethal weapons usage by SWAT teams is concerned by collecting data on the use of impact munitions, TASERs, and other weapons in this class during SWAT operations.

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[3] See e.g., Klinger and Hubbs (2001).

Where use of force by suspects during SWAT operations is concerned, we set out to collect data on the sorts of weapons possessed by individuals SWAT was called upon to deal with and how these citizens used them against police officers, other citizens, and themselves. This last factor is especially important because many of the individuals that SWAT teams are called upon to deal with are emotionally unstable and the limited data that is available on deadly force during SWAT operations indicates suspects are substantially more likely to take their own lives than they are to be shot by SWAT officers.[4]

In a related vein, the research also sought to develop information about the phenomenon known as "suicide-by-cop." Several writers have noted that some suicidal individuals, instead of taking their own lives, force armed confrontations with law enforcement officers in order to be killed by police gunfire (e.g., Gebreth, 1996; Wilson et al., 1998; Klinger, 2001). While there is no systematic data on suicide-by-cop incidents around the nation, anecdotal evidence in the literature suggests that SWAT teams are regularly involved in such scenarios (e.g., Van Zandt, 1993), so we set out to develop information on of suicide-by-cop during SWAT operations.

To conclude where the third goal is concerned, the research set out to develop substantial information about the armaments and actions of both tactical officers and citizens in SWAT operations.

METHODS

As noted above, the NTOA pilot survey focused on agencies that served jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 and above. The expanded survey broadened the sampling frame to include all U.S. state, county, municipal, and special district law enforcement agencies that employed 50 or more sworn officers in 1996 (Reaves and Goldberg, 1998). The NTOA placed calls to the office of the head (usually a chief of police or sheriff) of these 2,027 agencies to inquire whether they had a SWAT team. When this call indicated that the agency did not have a team, the respondent was thanked for his or her time and the negative response was noted in a data file that had been established to track the information obtained during the survey. When this call indicated that the agency did have a SWAT team, the respondent was asked to supply the name and contact information of the commander of the SWAT team so that further correspondence could be sent directly to that individual.

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[4] Los Angeles Police Department records indicate, for example, that during the 20 year period from 1972 to 1991, 46 citizens killed themselves during SWAT operations, while LAPD SWAT officers fatally shot only 15 people (seven other suspects died when the house they were shooting from burned down in 1974).

The next step of the data collection effort consisted of sending a small information packet to the SWAT commander that included a letter that briefly introduced the research project, explained the expanded SOS and PCIR data collection efforts, and sought their participation in both. The information packet also included a stamped, self-addressed envelop and a reply form for commanders to provide some basic information about their team (e.g., the number of officers currently assigned to it) and indicate whether they would participate in one or both aspects of the research. The reply form also asked commanders to indicate whether they would like to report the information we would be seeking from them via standard paper instruments or via computer, through data collection software the NTOA had developed.

After six weeks had passed, NTOA personal re-contacted the SWAT commanders of those agencies that had not responded to the mailer in order to ensure that they had received the packet and to encourage participation in the research effort. Messages were left for those commanders who were not available when the calls were made and follow-up mailers were sent to those who reported that they had not received the initial packet.

Once agencies replied to the initial contact efforts, indicated whether they would like to participate in one or both of the data collection efforts, and indicated their preference for participating via computer or paper and pencil (among those who indicated a desire to participate), NTOA staff sent the appropriate survey media, along with a set of instructions for filling out the relevant (paper or computer) forms and returning them to the NTOA.

The Operations Form sought the following information (see Appendix 1):

1) Agency name
2) The year the agency established its SWAT team
3) Whether the agency has a full or part time SWAT team
4) Whether the agency had its own SWAT team or supplies officers to a multi-agency team
5) The number of officers assigned to the SWAT team
6) The nature of incident command in situations in which the SWAT team was mobilized
7) Deadly force decision-making in hostage/barricade situations
8) Crisis negotiations structure
9) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) when SWAT is deployed
10) The amount of time SWAT officers train per month
11) The sources of training SWAT officers received
12) The types of situations for which SWAT officers trained
13) The annual number of SWAT mobilizations of various sorts (e.g., barricaded suspect incidents, hostage incidents, and warrants) from 1986 through 1998
14) The annual number of incidents in which SWAT officers discharged lethal weapons during SWAT operations
15) The annual number of SWAT operations in which suspects discharged weapons, but SWAT officers held their fire
16) The number of suspects who killed themselves each year during SWAT operations
17) Whether and how often the SWAT team had physically rescued hostages
18) Whether and how often suspects killed hostages during SWAT operations

Respondents were instructed to complete a separate Firearms Discharge Report for each incident in which any SWAT officers fired their weapons. Firearms Discharge Reports sought the following information (see Appendix 1):

1) The date and time of the incident
2) The nature of the incident (e.g., barricaded suspect, hostage incident, warrant service)
3) The number of SWAT officers deployed
4) The number of suspects, the weapons each one possessed, whether each suspect fired any guns they possessed, whether each suspect was taken under fire by SWAT, and the nature of the wounds each suspect fired upon suffered
5) The number of SWAT officers who fired their weapons, their assignment (e.g., entry, long rifle, containment), the type of weapon they fired (e.g., pistol, assault rifle, sub-machine gun) and the number of rounds they fired
6) The total number of rounds fired at suspects by SWAT during the incident
7) The number of rounds fired by SWAT that struck suspects
8) The number of rounds fired by SWAT that were not directed at humans (e.g., warning shots, accidental discharges, suppressive fire)
9) The nature and number of wounds suffered by SWAT officers
10) Whether suspects who were shot by SWAT officers may have been committing "suicide-by-cop"

Where the Post Critical Incident Report effort is concerned, the revised data collection document sought general information about the submitting agency (e.g., agency name, name of team commander or point of contact, and number of team members), plus 11 distinct sections that sought information about specific aspects of the incident in question (see Appendix 2).

Section 1: Incident Profile

This section sought information about the date and time the incident began and ended, when SWAT and other assets (e.g., negotiations and K-9) arrived on scene, and the number of SWAT officers deployed and their assignments.

Section 2: Location Profile

This section sought information about the nature of the location where the incident occurred, such as whether it happened in a building, conveyance, in the open, or some other sort of place;

the specifics of the location (e.g., if a building, was it a single family dwelling, a commercial structure, an apartment); and whether the location had any special fortifications.

Section 3: Incident Type

This section sought information about the general nature of the incident (e.g., high-risk warrant, barricaded suspect, hostage situation), as well as specifics about the particular sort of incident that was involved (e.g., did the barricade involve a criminal, a mentally unbalanced individual, a terrorist or political extremist).

Section 4: Offenders/Suspects

This section sought information about the background (e.g., employment, criminal record, mental/emotional status), activity (e.g., shots fired), and armaments (e.g., weapons, body armor, explosives) possessed by the offender(s)/suspect(s) involved in the incident, as well as how the incident ended for the offender(s)/suspect(s) (e.g., surrendered, taken into custody by force, committed suicide).

Section 5: Victim/Hostage

This section sought information about involved individuals who were either victims of crimes that led to the SWAT mobilization or who were held hostage by offender(s)/suspect(s) during the SWAT operation. Information sought included socio-demographics and relationship to offender(s)/suspect(s).

Section 6: Negotiations

This section sought information about any negotiations that might have occurred during the incident, including the assignment of the individual(s) involved in the negotiation, the mode of communication (e.g., face to face, land line, cell phone, throw phone), and demands made by offender(s)/suspect(s).

Section 7: Police Use of Deadly Force

This section sought information about the use of deadly force by police officers, both prior to the arrival of SWAT and by SWAT officers. Information sought when SWAT officers fired shots included officers’ assignment, number of rounds fired, and outcome of shots fired.

Section 8: Less Lethal Weapons Usage

This section sought information about the deployment of less lethal specialty weapons and munitions such as 12 gauge bean bag rounds, 37/40 mm rounds, and TASERs.

Section 9: Special Munitions

This section sought information about deployment of chemical agents, diversionary devices, and breaching tools.

Section 10: Legal

This section sought information about any criminal charges and civil litigation that arose from the incident.

Section 11: Summary

This section asked respondents to provide a brief narrative that included 1) any information that they felt was important but which was not sought in previous sections of the report and 2) a summary of the incident that provided a chronology of events.

The NTOA advertised the existence of the research project to the SWAT community in several issues of its official journal *The Tactical Edge,* a publication that is sent to several thousand Association members each quarter. This effort was intended to inform the SWAT community about the existence and nature of the project and to encourage agencies to participate in it. It was also hoped that the advertising effort would prompt some officers who worked for agencies in the sampling frame whose commanders had declined to participate due to the labor that would need to be expended for some aspects of it to volunteer to do the necessary work.

Where the observational component of the research is concerned, the PI conducted separate one week site visits to five police agencies around nation, accompanying members of these agencies' SWAT teams as they carried out their regular duties. The PI also spent a week with each of two other SWAT teams that were in the immediate vicinity of his place of employment and made arrangements with these two teams for him or his research assistant (the second author of this report) to accompany them on team activations throughout the course of the research project. Finally, the research assistant spent several months during 2002 in the field with one of these two teams, observing their activities and interviewing team members about various aspects of their jobs. In sum then, the observational aspect of the research consisted of the PI spending seven weeks in the field with SWAT teams, the PI or his research assistant accompanying two of these teams on activations that occurred outside of the week-long observation that the PI conducted with each team, and the research assistant conducting several months of field research with one SWAT team.

The PI and the research assistant kept field notes of the observations they made when accompanying the SWAT teams they studied, cataloguing the training activities they observed and keeping chronological logs of the events that transpired during actual SWAT activations.

RESULTS

Respondents at 1,183 of the 2,027 agencies telephonically contacted by NTOA staff reported that their department had a SWAT team. Just over 500 of the mailers NTOA sent to SWAT commanders of these 1,183 agencies were returned within six week of the mailing. Follow-up phone calls and mailings netted an additional 89 responses within the next six weeks, for a total of 590 replies from SWAT teams to the initial efforts to get the research instruments into the hands of SWAT commanders. The vast majority of these 590 agencies indicated a willingness to participate in the SOS, several dozen reported they wished to also participate in the PCIR, and several indicated that they did not wish to participate in either aspect of the data collection effort. The relevant forms (and/or software) were sent to those agencies that had indicated they wished to participate in the research, while no further attempts were made to contact those agencies that had declined to participate.

Just 292 agencies returned SWAT Operations Surveys within two months after NTOA sent the survey forms/software to them. Repeated follow-up phone calls over the next several months yielded but 49 additional replies. With a total of 341 responses then, the SOS data collection effort yielded a paltry response rate of just 29% (341/1,183). A look at respondents answer to one item on the SOS survey led to some follow-up that improved slightly the sad picture painted by the low response rate.

Several of the agencies that returned SWAT Operations Surveys indicated that they contributed officers to multi-jurisdictional SWAT teams. Each of these agencies was contacted to obtain a list of the other agencies that participated in their multi-jurisdictional team. The list produced by this effort was checked against the roster of 2,027 agencies that comprised the sampling frame to see if the various additional agencies identified by the phone calls were 1) within the sampling frame, and if so 2) identified as having a SWAT team. This cross check identified an additional 24 agencies that had not been listed in the original list of 1,183 agencies with SWAT teams (less than a handful of other teams identified by the follow-up calls were already counted among the 1,183). Adding these 24 agencies to the 1,183 agencies already counted as having SWAT teams yielded a revised count of 1,207 agencies within the sampling frame as having SWAT teams. Because information about each of these 24 teams had been reported in the response sent by the agency that submitted a SWAT Operations Survey to the NTOA, we classified these 24 agencies as having responded to the survey, which yielded a final response rate of 30% (365/1,207).

Where the PCIR is concerned, just 105 agencies submitted any after-action reports to the NTOA. The degree of participation varied substantially among these 105 agencies. Of the 476 PCIR forms sent in to the NTOA, 186 came from a single agency, 88 came from the six agencies that submitted between 10 and 20 reports, while the remaining 202 came from the 98 agencies that submitted fewer than 10 reports. (The modal number of reports submitted was one; N=56).

During field work, the research team responded to approximately 24 call-ups regarding hostage/barricaded situations, accompanied various SWAT teams on nearly 20 high-risk search warrants, joined SWAT officers on a several other sorts of tactical duties, and observed SWAT officers as they carried out various law enforcement duties that were not SWAT-related (such as directed patrol, narcotics interdiction, and helicopter patrol). We also spent many hours with SWAT officers during training sessions devoted to tasks such as firearms usage at police ranges, entry work at shoot houses, chemical agent training at police facilities, and mock scenarios at various locations.

With this general overview of responses to the SOS and the PCIR and what we observed during field work in hand, attention now turns to research findings, starting with information about the temporal development of SWAT teams in American law enforcement, team structure, organization, and training that was gleaned from the SOS.

FROM THE SWAT OPERATIONS SURVEY

THE RISE OF SWAT

As noted at the outset of this report, the move toward formalized SWAT teams in American law enforcement began in the later half of the 1960s. Prior to this time, however, a small number of agencies had specialized squads whose duties included responding to select emergencies. Some agencies in New York State, for example, developed specialized details dubbed "Emergency Services Units" (ESU) to deal with situations such as suicidal subjects, people trapped in wrecked vehicles, and criminal activities that required assets beyond normal patrol capabilities. One of the agencies that responded to the SOS was a New York State agency that established an ESU tactical team in the 1930s. One other agency indicated that they did not know the year in which its SWAT team was instituted. The rest of the teams that responded to the SOS were established from the 60s on. The growth of SWAT teams among the agencies that responded to the SOS is similar to that reported by Kraska and Kappaler (1997), who reported an initial period of slow growth during the 1960s that began to pick up during the early 1970s, continued into the 1980s, and plateaued in the 1990s. In raw numbers, the current data show that 14 (4%) of the teams came on line in the 60s, 121 (35%) were founded in the 70s, 120 (35%) were created in the 80s, and 85 (25%) were established in the 90s. Figures 1 and 2 below display the number of SWAT teams established each year through the 1990s and the cumulative frequency of teams over time, respectively.

INSERT FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

The cumulative frequency distribution takes the "S" shape of a standard diffusion curve, which, in concert with Kraska and Kappaler's (1997) data, indicates that the spread of SWAT teams in American policing has followed a path typical of how successful innovations are diffused across time and space in human societies (Rogers, 1995; see also Klinger, 2003). Research in a wide variety of areas has consistently shown that when new ideas, technologies, organizations, and other human creations are introduced into social systems they tend to follow a pattern in which just a few individuals/organizations/institutions immediately adopt the innovation, and then more and more adopt, until the innovation is widely diffused and a point of saturation is achieved.

While the overall picture painted by the current data is one of consistency with both those presented by Kraska and Kappaler (1997) and the broad literature on the diffusion of innovations, there is one point that we should keep in mind as time moves forward. That roughly half of the agencies in the sampling frame reported having a SWAT team means that there is a good deal of room for SWAT to further diffuse in American law enforcement. Indeed, in the two years between when Kraska and Kappaler and we ceased collecting data (1996 vs. 1998), a goodly number of agencies formed SWAT teams; particularly in 1998, which was the seventh largest start year (15 teams formed). The question of continued SWAT growth is particularly salient since the terror attacks of September 2001, which may have led at least some teams that had not yet developed SWAT teams to consider doing so.

TEAM ORGANIZATION

While all SWAT teams share the same general mission, there is substantial diversity across the nation in how agencies organize their tactical response capabilities. This section describes what the SOS disclosed about several key aspects of SWAT team/emergency response organization.

Stand-Alone and Combined Teams

As noted above, some agencies have their own SWAT teams while others contribute officers to multi-jurisdictional teams. In the current survey, seven agencies failed to report whether they had their own SWAT team or if the SWAT officers in their employ served on a multi-jurisdictional team. The vast majority of the 334 teams that did provide this information (318) had their own team. In order to ensure that none of the data collected on other aspects of the survey were duplicated, we-cross checked all of the multi-jurisdictional teams to see whether two or more of the reporting agencies belonged to the same team. Because no duplicates were found, we proceeded apace with the rest of the analysis of the information from the SWAT Operations Survey.

Team Nature and Size

Police agencies can field one of three sorts of SWAT teams: a team made up of officers whose primary duty is SWAT (a full-time team), a team of officers for whom SWAT is an ancillary duty (a part-time team), or a team that includes both part- and full-time SWAT officers.

As shown in Table 1 below, two-hundred-ninety-nine (299) of the 337 agencies that provided information about team type reported had teams whose members worked SWAT as ancillary duty, 24 had teams composed entirely of officers whose primary assignment was SWAT, while 14 other agencies fielded SWAT teams that included both full- and part-time members.[5]

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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[5] As might be expected, most of the agencies with full-time SWAT teams were large police and sheriff’s departments located in major metropolitan areas. Fourteen of the agencies with full-time SWAT teams were police or sheriff’s departments that employed 1,000 or more sworn officers (seven of these agencies were 2,000 plus), seven were municipal or county agencies with between 500 and 1,000 officers, while the remaining two included a state police agency and a county sheriff’s office that employed fewer than 500 sworn officers. Among the fourteen agencies whose SWAT teams included both full-and part-time officers were two that employed 2,000 or more sworn officers, two that fell into the 500-1,000 sworn range, ten with fewer than 500 sworn (three of which had fewer than 250 officers), and one state police agency.

The number of personnel assigned to SWAT duties varied substantially across the responding agencies. Three-hundred-twenty (320) agencies reported the number of team members who held the rank of officer in 1998. This number ranged from zero (0) for one team (all members were sergeants or above) to 90. The mean number of team members at the officer rank was 16, with the lion's share of teams (260) including 20 or fewer officers. Among the 60 remaining teams were 44 that had between 21 and 30 officers assigned to them, nine with 31 to 40, a single team that fell into the 41 and 50 range, four teams with 51 to 60 officers, one with 88 officers, and one with 90. These numbers are displayed in Table 2 below.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

There was also notable variability in the number of supervisors and managers assigned to SWAT across the responding agencies. Three-hundred-fourteen (314) agencies provided information on the number of SWAT sergeants their teams employed. Fourteen of them reported they had no sergeants, while the other 300 included an average of three (3) SWAT sergeants, with a high of 12. Lieutenants were not nearly so common, as 76 of the 301 teams that provided data on this item reported having no SWAT personnel at this rank, 167 had just one, 47 had two, seven had three, three had four, and one had five SWAT lieutenants. Team members at the rank of captain or above were rarer still as 147 of the 279 agencies reporting information on this point indicated they had no SWAT team members who held the rank of captain or higher, 119 had one, 10 had two, four had three, and a single team had four.[6]

As might one might expect, SWAT teams that included full-time members tended to be larger than those made up entirely of part-time members. Part-time teams included an average of 14 officers and three sergeants, full-time teams averaged 26 officers and four sergeants, while teams that had both part-and full-time members had an average of 29 officers and five sergeants.

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[6] The greater number of cases with missing data for SWAT lieutenants and captains may simply be due to the fact that some agencies with no team members at this rank left the field blank instead of penciling in "0."

At the ranks of lieutenant and captain and above there were only minor differences across the three types of team structure as all types averaged one lieutenant and one captain.[7]

Negotiations

From the advent of the SWAT concept nearly four decades ago to the present day, talking with the citizens who are the cause of the incidents that prompt SWAT deployment has played a central role in the police response to such crises (see, e.g., McMains and Mullins, 1996). Following the police vernacular for talking to citizens in crisis situations, we asked respondents about how they were set-up to "negotiate" during incidents involving a SWAT mobilization. Respondents were asked whether their negotiations capabilities included each of the following six possibilities:

1) SWAT officers and/or supervisors serving as negotiators
2) Officers/supervisors assigned to a separate negotiations unit
3) Non-SWAT officers/supervisors NOT attached to a negotiations unit
4) Civilian mental health professionals (MHPs) assigned to a separate negotiations unit
5) Civilian MHPs NOT assigned to a separate negotiations unit
6) Any other negotiations capability

As indicated in Table 3 below, the vast majority (82%) of the 337 agencies that provided information about the structure of the negotiations component of their crisis response capabilities reported they had a special unit, separate from their SWAT team, that was devoted to crisis negotiations. Sixteen (16) percent of the agencies used SWAT officers as negotiators, 7% had negotiators who were sworn personnel that were assigned to neither their SWAT team or a special negotiations unit, 4% included civilian negotiators who were assigned to a negotiations unit, 5% used civilian negotiators who were not assigned to a negotiations unit, and 7% of the agencies reported employing a negotiations framework that fell into some “other” category. Among these “other” sorts of frameworks for negotiations were employing police chaplains as negotiators, having personnel who spoke languages besides English serve as translators for the primary negotiator(s), and having FBI negotiators respond to SWAT call-ups to serve in support of the agency’s negotiators.

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[7] There was a bit of variability as the mean number of lieutenants ranged from .98 to 1.36 while the range for the captains mean was from .51 to .81.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The vast majority of agencies (80%) employed negotiators that fell into just one of the above categories, 19% employed negotiators from more than one of the classifications, while 1% had no formal negotiations capability.[8] Among the agencies that utilized multiple negotiations elements were 59 that had two, six that had three, and a single agency that negotiators who fell into five of the six possible categories (the only sort of negotiators this agency did not have were non-SWAT personnel not attached to their negotiations unit).

Command and Control

Agencies can institute any number of management strategies for command and control of SWAT incidents. In order to assess the prevalence of various approaches to command and control during SWAT operations we asked respondents to report the title of the person in their agency who played the role of overall incident commander. The options listed were:

1) The SWAT commander/supervisor
2) Non-SWAT supervisor/command staff member
3) The senior officer in charge of the incident that prompted SWAT response
4) Other person in overall command

The results of this question disclosed a substantial diversity in the approaches that the responding agencies took to the overall command and control of incidents that include SWAT mobilization. No single approach dominated as there was a near even split between agencies that placed overall incident command in the hands of the SWAT supervisor/commander (47%) and those that assigned the duty to a non-SWAT supervisor or command staff member (43%). There was a similarly close split among the remaining 10% of the agencies, as just under half (N=15) have the senior officer in charge of the incident that prompted the SWAT response retain overall incident command while just over half (N=18) employ some "other" mode of incident leadership. Most of these "other" sorts of command structure were variations on the theme of a split command system. One variant of this is having the SWAT and Negotiations Unit supervisors serving as dual commanders who must reach consensus about how to handle incidents. Another variation is having the SWAT commander in charge of all matters regarding what takes place within the inner perimeter and assigning responsibility for all that occurs outside the inner perimeter to a separate supervisor. A third version of the split command system bases the incident command structure on the scope of the activity in which the SWAT team is involved so that the SWAT commander is in charge of minor incidents and a member of the agency command staff manages major matters.

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[8] The few agencies that did not have any sort of formal negotiations capability reported that they relied on trained negotiators from other agencies to handle the negotiations aspect of their crisis response.

Authority to Exercise Deadly Force

In order to assess the breadth of authority that incident commanders hold and to understand how teams controlled the use of deadly force by SWAT officers, we asked respondents to report whether deadly force decision-making authority in hostage/barricade incidents resided with SWAT officers, the incident commander, or if the agency had some other sort of control system in place. Just over one in five of the agencies (21%) reported that the authority of the incident commander extends to the use of deadly force by SWAT officers. Most of the other agencies (60% of the total) reported that the decision to employ deadly force resides with SWAT officers, while the rest (19% of the total) reported that they had in place some "other" sort of deadly force decision-making protocol. A closer look at the data, however, discloses that they should not be taken to indicate hard and fast differences across the reporting agencies. Several responding agencies reported (in marginal notes or during phone conversations with the research team) that they had trouble deciding which of the three response categories to check because they felt that they did not fall clearly into any of them. And agencies that ultimately ended-up checking different response categories provided essentially the same commentary about their dilemma.

Their commentary, in essence, was that there were circumstances under which the incident commander would use his or her authority to either forbid, permit, or command that deadly force be used, and circumstances under which SWAT officers would be free to use deadly force as per their agency's shooting policy and state law. Within this framework were three basic variations on this theme. One was that the SWAT commander retained deadly force authority under all circumstances other than an immediate threat to the life of a SWAT officer, in which case officers were free to use gunfire to defend their own lives.

The second was that SWAT officers could use deadly force at their discretion to defend the life of anybody (including officers) at any time, but that there might be some situation that could arise in which the incident commander would either command officers to hold their fire in the face of an immediate life threat or command them to fire upon a suspect. The example that was provided most often for the command to hold fire was a hostage incident involving multiple hostages and multiple hostage takers in which the circumstances were such that shooting a hostage taker whose actions threatened the life of one hostage would likely increase the degree of threat to other hostages. The example that was offered most often for giving the command for SWAT officers to shoot someone was that of a hostage taking in which the commander determined that deadly force was necessary to protect the lives of hostages. (One version of this was a situation in which the commander had knowledge of immanent life threat that the officers did not possess. The other was a sniper-initiated hostage rescue scenario).

The third variation on the combined authority theme was that the shooting policy of the agency was the default guide for SWAT officers' use of deadly force, but the incident commander would issue orders to refine the broad contours of the policy for the circumstances of each call-up (several respondents that employed this system used the term "rules of engagement" in reference to it). Thus, for example, one responding SWAT commander indicated that he might decide that an armed felon who was barricaded in a vehicle in a confined location should not be permitted to drive onto a busy adjacent highway. In such a situation, he might, therefore, give an order that officers were authorized to use deadly force to stop the suspect if he attempted to drive away.

Emergency Medical Services

Given the potential for violence that exists at SWAT operations, many agencies have instituted special emergency medical provisions – such as including medics on the SWAT team, having MD's respond to the incident, and having ambulances standby on scene – in case any officers, citizens, or both are injured. In order to assess the structure of emergency medical services, we asked respondents to report whether they had each of the following sorts of emergency medical assistance routinely available during SWAT operations:

1) Paramedics on their SWAT team
2) An MD on standby on-scene
3) An ambulance on standby on-scene
4) Some other sort of EMS provision
5) No special EMS provisions

Just 16 of the 339 agencies that provided information reported having no special EMS provisions. Among the rest, 27 included having an MD respond to call-ups, 263 had an ambulance on stand-by at the scene, and 145 reported including paramedics on their SWAT team. Sixty-seven other agencies reported having some other special provisions for EMS. Several of these teams reported that they had tactical paramedics who were firefighters, not police officers, on their SWAT team. This finding raised the possibility that some of the respondents who indicated they had paramedics on their SWAT team may have been referring to firefighters, not police officers, which is problematic because it would create a situation in which teams with the same structure might have responded differently to this item. Follow-up phone calls to a sample of agencies that reported having tactical paramedics indicated that some of them were in fact referring to firefighters, not police officers. Because we could not call all 145 teams for clarification, we do not know how extensive the problem of non-mutual exclusivity with the EMS item is. What we can say is that readers should view the data on tactical paramedics with caution because there is some substantial degree of imprecision in it.

TRAINING

As noted above, the SOS sought information about three key aspects of SWAT training: the amount of time SWAT officers spend training, the sorts of matters they train for, and who provides the training. The presentation of what the survey disclosed on these points begins with a discussion of how much time SWAT teams devote to training.

Time Devoted to Training

Respondents were asked to report the average number of hours per month each member of their SWAT team received during 1998. There was substantial variability across the 338 agencies that provided information on this point, from a low of zero hours in a typical month (eight teams) to a high of 80 (just one team). Between these extremes, the vast majority of SWAT teams (81%) spent between eight and 20 hours training per officer per month. Including the eight teams that spent no time training in a typical month, 9% of respondents devoted less than eight hours to training. On high end, 10% of the teams averaged more than 20 hours per month, with 42% of these (N=14) spending less than 40 hours and the remaining 58% (N=19) spending 40 or more hours training. Where measures of central tendency go, the mean number of monthly training hours was 14, the median 11, and the mode eight, which was how much time 71 agencies devoted to training.

A closer look at the distribution indicates that in addition to the mode of eight, there were several other training-hour clusters. Eleven teams spent 4 hours training per month, 60 teams spent 10 hours, 36 teams spent 12 hours, 55 teams spent 16 hours, 17 teams spent 20 hours, and 8 teams spent 40 hours. These figures translate into discernable blocks of training; with four hours making for one-half day training per month, eight and 10 hours corresponding to a single work day (for agencies that work eight and 10 hour shifts, respectively), 12 hours equaling a one and one-half training days, 16 hours translating into two training days per month, and so on up to 40 hours equaling a single week per month devoted to training.[9] In sum, a large majority of SWAT teams conduct their training in full-and half-day increments.

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[9] Some of the teams that spent 20 hours per month training worked two 10 hour days, while others worked two and one-half eight hour days.

A closer look at the data disclosed substantial differences in the amount of time per month that different sorts of SWAT teams devote to training. Officers on part-time teams tended to train far less than did their peers who were assigned to full-time teams and teams that included both full-and part-time members, with full-time teams tending to train the most. This tendency is most clearly seen in a comparison of the mean number of hours per month each of the three sorts of teams devoted to training each month. Part-time teams spent an average of 12 hours training per-officer per-month, while teams with both part-and full-time members averaged 23 hours, and full-time teams averaged 34 (with 14 of the 18 teams that spent an average of 40 or more hours per month in training full-time teams).

Training Topics

Because SWAT teams can be called upon to handle a substantial variety of special threat situations, they often devote training time to preparing for specific sorts of matters. In order to get some idea of the types of situations our respondents trained for, we asked them whether their SWAT team had trained for each of 15 specific sorts of situations listed below during 1998. We also asked respondents to indicate whether the team trained for any "other" types of matters, and, if so, to specify what they were.

X Suicidal subjects
X Barricades suspects
X Hostage situations
X Hostage rescue
X Auto/van assault
X Bus assault
X Train assault
X Aircraft assault
X Water-borne assault
X Civil unrest
X Narcotics search warrant service
X Other high-risk search warrant service

X Building searches

X Area searches

X Downed civilian/officer rescue

Table 4 below displays the proportion of respondents that had trained for each of the sorts of situations listed on the survey (including “other”).

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

As indicated in Table 4, there was substantial variability across agencies in terms of the sorts of activities for which they trained. Where more than nine in 10 teams included barricaded suspects, building searches, hostage incidents, and narcotics warrants in their training portfolio, less than 10% trained for water-borne assaults and just over 10% aircraft and train assaults. This variability likely is a reflection of a combination of the nature of the SWAT mission and the diversity of localities in terms of things such as size, propinquity to water, port facilities, rapid transit capabilities (e.g., most locales have busses, few have commuter trains).

Counted among the sorts of matters practiced for by those 19% of the agencies that indicated they had conducted “other” training were wilderness search and rescue, response to incidents involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and rural operations.[10] By far the most common other type of “other” training reported, however, was what respondents identified as “active shooter,” “immediate action,” or “rapid deployment” training in which team members were taught to take aggressive action to locate and defeat armed subjects who were in the process of committing crimes of mass violence. Follow-up phone calls to some of the agencies that indicated that they had conducted such training disclosed that it was generally a recent addition to their team’s curriculum and that it had been instituted as a response to the April 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO. (Many of these agencies further reported that their SWAT team had then taken what they learned and provided training on active shooter response to other members of their department).

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[10] Several other types of specific training were reported that are best understood as special circumstances involving standard SWAT matters involving hostages and barricades. E.g., vertical insertion, deploying from helicopters, rock climbing, and so on.

That several agencies reported instituting rapid deployment training in the wake of the April 1999 Columbine incident raises questions about the validity of the data because the survey asked for information about training in *1998.* It is obvious that the agencies who linked the onset of active shooter training to Columbine were telescoping, reporting events from 1999 as having occurred in 1998. As a consequence, we can not know how many SWAT teams actually had active shooter training in 1998.

Sources of Training

SWAT training is available from many different sources, including municipal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; national and state-level SWAT officer associations; private vendors;[11] and members of the armed forces. In order to round out the picture of SWAT training, we sought to learn who SWAT teams turn to for training. To this end we asked respondents to report whether their team received training from each of the following sources:

X Members of their own police agency
X Members of municipal and/or county police agencies
X Members of federal police agencies
X The National Tactical Officers Association
X State tactical officers associations
X Private vendors
X U.S. Military personnel
X Foreign military
X Any other sources

As shown in Table 5 below, nearly all (98%) of the agencies conducted in-house training and hardly any (1%) received training from foreign military. Between these extremes, there was substantial diversity in how many teams received training from other sources, with private vendors (at 61%) being the only one that trained more than half of the responding agencies (although 49% did receive training from some local law enforcement agency). Counted among the "other" sources that provided training to 9% of the respondents were colleges and universities.

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[11] Many private vendors provide training about specific products they sell, such as noise flash diversionary devices.

Follow-up phone calls to several agencies provided information that readers should keep in mind as they consider the above findings about training sources. When respondents were queried about who trained their SWAT team, they frequently indicated that their involvement with some of the training sources they utilized was minimal. For example, several agencies who reported receiving training from the NTOA reported that the training consisted of sending one or two team members to the association's annual conference, as opposed to having NTOA trainers provide a block of instruction to the entire team. In a similar vein, several agencies who reported that their SWAT teams were trained by U.S. military personnel indicated that they had sent a few officers to a single class taught by soldiers or sailors. Because some training involved all officers from a given team, it is apparent that there is substantial variation in what it means to have received "training" across both training sources and SWAT teams.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

FIELD OPERATIONS

The survey asked respondents to report the number of times each year between 1986 and 1998 that their SWAT team handled each of the following sorts of incidents:

X Barricades involving emotionally disturbed persons (EDPs)

X Barricades involving criminal suspects

X Hostage incidents

X Narcotics search warrants

X Service of other warrants

X Civil disturbances

X Other matters

We knew from the NTOA pilot study that some agencies do not keep records that distinguish between the two types of barricades (i.e., criminal and EDP) and warrants (i.e., narcotics and other) that we listed in the survey. We included a set of instructions in the survey to account for such record keeping practices. First, we instructed those agencies who did not make the distinction between criminal and EDP barricades to place an "X" in the blank for Criminal Barricades and report all barricades in the EDP blank. Similarly, we instructed respondents who did not distinguish between types of warrants to place an "X" in the Narcotics Warrants blank and report all warrants served in the Other Warrant blank.

A substantial number of respondents did not distinguish between EDP and criminal barricades, one the one hand, and narcotics and other warrants, on the other. Because many of the larger, more active, SWAT teams were among those that did not distinguish between types of barricades and warrants, this reporting practice led to substantial undercounts of criminal barricades and narcotics warrants and over counts of EDP barricades and other warrants in the data set. We resolved this problem by simply combining the types of barricades and warrants, respectively, to produce generic counts of barricades and warrants for each agency for each year. Thus, the data on barricades and warrants reported below does not distinguish between types of these two sorts of incidents.

One additional note regarding barricaded subjects is in order before reporting what the survey disclosed about SWAT activity. One large police agency reported that they do not distinguish between barricades and hostage incidents in their records and that they count all incidents of both sorts as barricades. In order to assess the effect of this reporting practice on counts of hostage and barricade incidents, we called the agency in question to develop some idea of how their team responded to hostage incidents. Armed with information from a veteran SWAT officer that his team typically handled about a hand full of hostage incidents each year, we concluded that the data set we developed includes a slight undercount of hostage incidents and a slight over count of barricades. Readers should keep this in mind when reviewing the data in Table 6 below. Readers should also keep in mind that the number of agencies reflected in the data on SWAT operations below will vary across years due to the previously discussed growth in the number of SWAT teams over the years of interest.

Barricaded Subjects

Table 6 below displays information about the annual number of total barricades reported each year. This information includes the number of agencies that had a SWAT team each year that reported how many barricades they handled; the total number of barricades reported among these agencies for each year; the high and low number of barricades across agencies for each year; and the mean, median, and mode of each annual distribution. Perhaps the most notable finding in Table 6 is that barricades were relatively rare events throughout the course of the study years. While the total number of barricades handled each year increased substantially during the course of the study, the number of cases handled per SWAT team did not. That barricades remained relatively uncommon events throughout the study years is evident in several aspects of the table. First, the measures of central tendency indicate that SWAT teams handled an average of four or fewer barricades each year, that more than half the teams handled two or fewer barricades each year (and one or none in eight of them), and that the most frequently observed number of barricades handled annually never exceeded one (and was zero in 10 of the 13 years). It is also clear from the table that even the busiest SWAT teams usually handled fewer than one barricaded subject incident per week, as the highest annual number of barricades exceeded 52 in just four of the 13 years.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

On the flip side of the coin, it should be noted that the data indicate that in the aggregate barricaded subject calls are a common occurrence in American law enforcement. While fewer than one in three of the agencies with SWAT teams as of 1998 participated in the study and many of those that did participate did not provide information about annual barricades (i.e., there was substantial missing data for each year, as indicated by the second column of Table 3), we were still able to identify a total of 8,284 call-outs involving barricaded subjects between 1986 and 1998. Moreover, that the busiest SWAT teams handle dozens of barricades each year indicates that dealing with barricaded subjects is a regular feature of law enforcement in some jurisdictions. In sum, the data indicate that while the total number of barricaded subject call-outs increased substantially between the mid 1980s and the late 1990s, and that some SWAT teams are called upon to deal with barricades on a regular basis, the most SWAT teams respond to but a small number of incidents involving barricaded subjects each year.

Hostage Incidents

Table 7 below displays information about the annual number of hostage incidents handled by SWAT during the years of the study. This information includes the number of agencies that reported how many hostage incidents they handled each year; the total number of hostage incidents reported among these agencies for each year; the high and low number of hostage incidents across the agencies for each year; and the mean, median, and mode of each annual distribution. Perhaps the most notable highlight in Table 7 is that hostage incidents are truly rare events. This is evident in that each year's median shows that the typical SWAT team does not handle even a single hostage situation in a given year, that each year's mean indicates that average annual number of incidents per team never exceeded one, and that in most years even the busiest team averaged less than one hostage case per month.

As was the case with barricades, the flip side of the infrequency coin is that dealing with hostage takings is a regular aspect of American police work. With a total of 1,180 incidents reported across the 13 years the survey covered, the reporting agencies together handled an average of almost two hostage takings per week. Because a substantial number of agencies did not participate in the current study (and because of the substantial missing data among those who did), it is clear that across the nation the average number of hostage takings handled by SWAT teams exceeds the two per week mark by some notable amount.

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Warrants

Table 8 below displays data about the annual number of warrants served by the SWAT teams that participated in the current study. This information includes the number of agencies that reported how many warrants they served each year; the total number of warrants served among these agencies for each year; the high and low number of warrants served across the agencies for each year; and the mean, median, and mode of each annual distribution. It is clear from this table that serving warrants[12] is far more common than dealing with either barricades or hostage incidents. While the average number of barricades handled per year per team was about 3.5 and the annual average of hostage incidents per team was less than one, the mean number of warrants served per year was just over 14. Comparisons of the high end of the ranges bring the differences between the frequency of warrants and the other two activities into even sharper relief. Where the largest number of barricades and hostage incidents handled by any team in any year was 92 and 22, respectively, the busiest SWAT teams served well over 100 warrants in all but two of the years under study, 200 or more in all but three of them, 300 or more in almost half (6/13) of the years, and more than 400 in two years. Finally, the point is driven home by the fact that the total number of warrants served (34,271) exceeds the number of barricades dealt with (8,284) by more than four to one and hostage incidents (1,180) a factor of 29 to one.

While the number of warrants served far exceeds the number of barricades and hostage incidents handled in both absolute numbers and on average, it is worth noting that these large numbers are driven by a small number of SWAT teams. This is apparent in the last two columns of the table, which show that half the teams served less than a handful of warrants in a typical year and that the most frequent number of warrants served among the teams in 12 of the 13 study years was zero. Consider also some data not presented in Table 8: A look at the yearly frequency distributions discloses that just 12 or fewer teams served 100-plus warrants in each year in which at least one team exceeded the century mark (e.g., 1988-98) and that an average of just 7.7 teams served 100 or more warrants in each of these years.

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[12] It is worth noting that narcotics warrants dominated the warrant work of the vast majority of the agencies that differentiated between types of warrants.

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

Civil Disturbances

The SWAT teams in the study rarely deployed at civil disturbances. Across the 13 years of the study the vast, vast majority of the teams did not deploy in even one such instance. The busiest year for civil disturbances was 1996, when 36 of 234 teams that reported data for that year indicated they handled at least one disturbance and the total number handled across these teams was 63. No table on this matter is provided because there was so little variability in the number of civil disturbances handled.

Other Operations

SWAT teams may be called upon to conduct a variety of missions besides the aforementioned barricades, hostage incidents, warrants, and civil disturbances. Such missions can include stake-outs, serving as arrest teams in high-risk sting operations, take-downs of wanted subjects, dignitary protection, and saturation patrol. Table 9 below displays data about the annual number of operations of these sorts handled by the SWAT teams that participated in the current study. This information includes the number of agencies that reported how many “other” operations they conducted each year; the total number of such operations conducted among these agencies for each year; the high and low number of other operations across the agencies for each year; and the mean, median, and mode of each annual distribution.

Again, the most notable aspect of this table is the evidence that “other” SWAT missions are rare events. The unbroken string of zeros in the median column indicates that at least half of the teams were involved in no miscellaneous SWAT operations in any give year (in no year did the number of teams in the zero category drop below 57%) and the numbers in the mean column indicate that reporting teams handled an average of three or fewer “other” matters per year. A closer look at the data indicates that the means are actually somewhat misleading about the frequency of miscellaneous SWAT missions during the last 10 years because one team average

168 "other" operations between 1989 and 1998. This team counted as "other" operations a wide variety of activities such as crime suppression patrol and support of other entities in their agency, things that our telephone follow-ups and site visits disclosed were not counted as SWAT activities by other teams. The degree to which this single team skewed the data is disclosed by the fact that recalculating the mean number of "other" activities with the team removed dropped it by nearly one full operation per year and highest yearly mean was just 2.1 (in 1996).

INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

DEADLY FORCE

As previously noted, we collected information about three aspects of deadly force: the discharge of lethal rounds (as opposed to impact munitions, chemical ordinance, etc.) by SWAT officers during SWAT operations, situations in which suspects fired shots and officers did not, and suspect suicides. This section of the report will address each of these issues in turn.

SWAT Officer-Involved Shootings

The 341 responding agencies reported a total of 462 incidents in which SWAT officers discharged lethal weapons, for an average of 36 reported shootings per year across the 13 years of the study. Respondents submitted Firearms Discharge Reports (FDR) for 354 of these incidents, so we were able to develop considerable information about 77% of the 462 reported shootings. A review of the FDR's disclosed that the only rounds officers fired in 81 of these cases were directed at animals (54 cases; almost always dogs shot during the service of warrants) or inanimate objects (streetlights during barricaded subject incidents in 18 cases and vehicle tires or engine blocks in 9 others). The remainder of shootings consisted of 240 in which SWAT officers directed gunfire at suspects, 2 in which all the rounds officers discharged consisted of suppressive fire, and 31 in which the only rounds fired were accidentally discharged.[13]

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[13] No warning shots were reported and no shots were fired at suspect's guns, the other two shooting classifications in the FDR. For readers who might wonder why we asked about rounds fired at guns, there have been several incidents around the nation in which SWAT officers (usually precision marksmen) disabled suspect's firearms with gunfire and we wanted to provide the clear opportunity for any agencies that had done so to report it in our study. Obviously, none of these cases made it into our data.

Telephone calls to a sample of agencies that did not provide FDR's for every shooting disclosed two important bits of information. The first is that many respondents did not include shootings of dogs and inanimate objects in their yearly tallies of SWAT OIS's. As a consequence, the number of shootings reported by responding agencies undercounts to some unknown degree[14] the true number of SWAT OIS's that occurred during the years for which data is available (the matter of missing data will be discussed below). The second point is that we were able to determine that officers definitely fired shots at human targets in 41 of the 108 cases for which no FDR was filed, which means that we do not know the nature of the shots fired in 67 of the 462 OIS's reported during the years of the study.

We did not want to undercount the number of shootings in which officers fired at humans or accidentally discharged their weapons because these two categories of incidents are those most likely to produce injuries to humans. Consequently, we decided to run the risk of over-counting such shootings and simply count each of the 67 ambiguous cases as involving either shots fired at humans or accidental discharges. While this likely does overestimate the number of such cases to some degree, there are two reasons to suspect that the over count is not too substantial. The first is that nearly four out of five of the shootings for which FDR's were completed involved shots fired at humans or accidental discharges. The second is that the aforementioned phone calls to agencies that did not submit FDR's on each shooting they reported did not identify any animal or inanimate object shootings. Because 88% of the 273 shootings that were not limited to animals or inanimate objects involved shots fired at humans and 11% were accidental discharges (and less than 1% were limited to suppressive fire) we identified 59 of the 67 "unknown" shootings to be cases in which shots were fired at humans and the other eight as accidental discharges.

We thus estimated that *for the years that respondents provided data on SWAT OIS's* that there were a total of 340 shootings in which SWAT officers fired at humans (i.e., 240 from

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[14] The undercount is likely quite substantial as some of the teams contacted telephonically indicated they shot several dogs each year on warrants and others indicated they frequently shot out street lights on nighttime operations.

FDR's, 41 from phone calls, and 59 assigned "unknowns") and 39 accidental discharges (i.e., 31 from FDR's and eight assigned "unknowns"). Because the two cases in which SWAT gunfire was limited to suppressive fire involved officers shooting in the direction of suspects, we decided to identify these incidents as involving shots fired at suspects, which ups the total N of shootings at humans to 342. In sum then, we counted a total of 381 incidents in which SWAT officers either accidentally discharged their weapons or purposely fired them towards people. We will focus the remainder of our discussion about SWAT OIS's on these types of shootings.

As was the case with the various sorts of team activity, there was considerable missing data where shootings are concerned (though not as much as was the case with incident types), so it is quite likely that officers from the teams that participated in the study were involved in more shootings in which they fired at citizens, fired suppression rounds, or accidentally discharged their weapons than the 381 possible and 314 definite cases reported here. Consideration of the missing data, however, indicates that the number of unmeasured shootings is likely not substantial. It is well-known that officer-involved shootings of all sorts occur more frequently in larger jurisdictions (e.g., Geller and Scott, 1992). The data that we did obtain demonstrates that this pattern holds for SWAT officer-involved shootings as well. Among the 30 largest agencies, 27 reported information about the annual number of shootings for at least eight of the 13 years in question. These 27 agencies reported a total of 158 – or more than 40% – of the 381 shootings of interest. There was missing data for 23 of the 351 possible years (i.e., 13 years x 27 agencies) among these teams, so we had 158 shootings across 328 years. This translates to just under one half of one (.48) SWAT OIS per agency year. If we take the 23 missing agency years among the 27 teams with most of the data in place and add them to the 39 agency years from the three teams that provided no or very little shooting data we come up with 51 missing agency years. At .48 shootings per agency year, we can estimate that an additional 24.5 shootings occurred among the 30 agencies in the survey that served the largest populations.

The remaining 311 agencies averaged less than one tenth of one SWAT shooting (.077) per agency year for the years with valid data. As the data set contained 384 agency years of missing data across these 311 teams, we can estimate that there were an additional 29.5

shootings among them. In total then, we estimate that the agencies that responded to our survey were involved in 54 more SWAT shootings (of the sort under consideration) than they reported to us. In sum, it seems reasonable to estimate that there were some 435 shootings in which SWAT officers fired at suspects or accidentally discharged their weapons among the 341 agencies that participated in our study during the years 1986-1998.

With the caveat in mind that the current data likely underestimates the number of SWAT officer-involved shootings among participating agencies by more than 50 incidents over the 13 study years, Table 10 below displays data about operations in which the teams that participated in our survey fired at suspects, fired suppressive rounds, or/and accidentally discharged their weapons. This information includes the number of agencies that reported how many SWAT officer-involved shootings they had each year, the total number of shootings among these agencies for each year, the number of agencies that had at least one SWAT OIS, the high number of shootings by a single team for each year, and the mean of each annual shooting distribution.

Perhaps the most important point in the shooting data is that SWAT officers rarely fired their weapons. With 381 reported shootings in which officers fired at people or accidentally discharged their weapons across 3,201 agency years the average number of SWAT shootings of the sort in question per team per year was just .12 (and still just .14 if the 54 estimated additional shootings are considered). Another point illustrating just how rare SWAT shootings are is the fact that each year the vast majority of teams did not have even a single one; in most years fewer than 10% of the teams had at least one shooting and during the year with the highest team shooting ratio (1996) just 12.5% did. In sum, it is clear that no matter how one slices it the data indicate that SWAT shootings are very rare events.

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The Firearms Discharge Reports on the 273 shootings of interest (i.e., those that involved shots fired toward people or accidental discharges) offer additional information about the role that deadly force plays in SWAT operations. Almost half (46.5%) of the shootings occurred during incidents involving barricaded subjects, 19.8% happened during narcotics search warrants, 18.7% during hostage incidents, 9.9% during non-narcotics warrants,[15] a single shooting occurred during a civil disturbance, and the remaining 4.8% happened on miscellaneous SWAT operations (e.g., stake-outs and sting operations).

Respondents provided information about the number of suspects involved in 269 of the 273 incidents. The vast majority of incidents (233 or 85%) involved a single suspect. Among the rest were 13 cases involving two suspects, 8 cases with three suspects, 4 cases with four suspects, 2 cases with five suspects, 5 cases with six suspects, 2 cases with eight suspects, 1 case with 10 suspects, and, finally, a single case that involved no suspects (a narcotics search warrant served on what turned out to be an empty location in which one officer had an accidental discharge).

Twelve of the 240 FDR's dealing with shots purposely fired at suspects contained virtually no details about the incident beyond the fact that officers intentionally discharged their weapons at someone. Of the 228 other cases, FDR's provided information about the number of officers who fired their weapons in 220 of them. In the vast majority of these, less than a handful of SWAT officers fired, as just one officer fired in 59% of the shootings, two officers fired in 22%, three fired in 11%, and four SWAT officers fired in 4% of the shootings. Among the 3% of the cases in which more than four officers fired were one in which five shot, two in which six officers fired, one in which seven officers fired, one in which eight shot, one in which 13 officers fired, and, finally, one in which 16 officers fired shots. In sum then, it was quite rare for more than a few SWAT officers to discharge their weapons in incidents in which SWAT take suspects under fire.

Few rounds were fired in most of the 228 SWAT shootings in which officers intentionally shot at citizens. In 75% of these shootings the number of rounds officers fired at suspects totaled less than ten, three or fewer in one-half the cases, and the modal number of shots fired at suspects was one (in 70 cases). On the other end of the continuum, a few shootings saw SWAT officers fire more than one-hundred shots. In one of these, eight SWAT officers fired 130 rounds between them at a hostage taker who shot his rifle at officers. In another, officers fired 76 rounds at a barricaded gunman during an hours-long gun-battle in which they also fired 420 rounds of suppressive fire (13 officers discharged their weapons in this shootout). Finally, the case in which officers fired the largest number of rounds involved a barricaded gunman who fought it out with three SWAT teams (who relieved one another as the incident played itself out over many hours) that fired a total of 783 rounds; 20 at the suspect and 763 of suppressive fire.

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[15] Counted among the shootings included in this "other warrant" category was a case in which officers engaged in a gunfight after taking fire upon attempting initial entry, retreated and treated the situation as a barricade, and fired additional shots during the barricade phase of the operation when the suspect again fired at officers and killed a police service dog. The suspect was struck by several police bullets but died from a self-inflicted gunshot to his head.

Respondents provided information in 225 of the 228 cases in which SWAT officers fired at suspects about whether any SWAT bullets struck any suspects and whether any suspects died. Across these 225 cases, 198 suspects were struck by at least one bullet fired by SWAT and 138 of these suspects died.[16] It should be noted, however, that at least two of the suspects who did not survive their encounter with SWAT succumbed to self-inflicted gunshot wounds they fired after being shot by SWAT officers. One of these cases is the incident mentioned in footnote 14 above. The other case involved an unsuccessful hostage rescue attempt in which a four-officer React element executed a crisis entry when they heard gunfire inside the objective, which, unfortunately, turned out to be contact shots into the hostage's body. The suspect fired a round at the SWAT officers as they made entry, then turned the gun on himself as the point officer shot him.

Suspect Suicide and Suicide-by-Cop

In addition to the two cases in which it is clear that suspects killed themselves after being shot by SWAT officers, respondents reported that 379 suspects took their lives by their own hands during SWAT operations. The follow-up telephone calls and inquiries we made during site visits suggest that the vast majority of these cases involved barricaded suspects who purposely shot themselves. Counted among the few cases that were not of this ilk was one in which a barricaded suspect immolated himself by intentionally running into a flame-filled room, one in which a barricaded gunman accidentally shot himself in the head when he nodded-off (ending an hours-long stand-off), and another in which a fleeing suspect shot himself in the chest when he tripped trying to get out of his car after he crashed it at the termination point of a pursuit.

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[16] Just one suspect was shot at in 223 of cases. Two suspects were fired upon by SWAT in two cases. Both suspects died in one of these cases. In the other case, one suspect died and the other survived his wounds. In two other cases in which SWAT fired at just one suspect additional suspects were unintentionally struck by SWAT gunfire. In one case a single additional suspect was struck, in the other case two suspects were inadvertently shot. Finally, one additional case involved a mistaken identity shooting in which a SWAT marksman fatally shot a hostage that he believed was a suspect. Thus, the number of citizens struck by bullets intentionally fired by SWAT officers is 199, and the number of citizens fatally wounded by SWAT gunfire is 139.

The 379 reported suicides occurred across 3081 team years of data, for an average .123 suspect suicides each team year. Data on suspect suicides was missing for 569 team years. If we assume that the mean number of suicides per team for the missing years is the same as what was observed among the years for which data was reported, we would estimate that 70 additional suspects killed themselves across the agencies that participated in our survey, which would bring the number of suspect suicides to 449.

In a related vein, the FDR data indicates that a notable fraction of the incidents in which SWAT officers shot suspects were cases of suicide-by-cop (or attempted suicide-by-cop when suspects survived their wounds). Respondents reported whether there was evidence that the target of SWAT officers' bullets wished to die in 216 of the cases, and classified 51 – or nearly a fourth of these – as suicide-by-cop. We were not able to make phone calls to follow-up on each SWAT shooting, so we were not able to comprehensively validate respondents' classifications on this point.[17] The follow-ups we were able to conduct, however, disclosed clear evidence of suicidal motivation on the part of suspects in each case respondents classified as suicide-by-cop (e.g., suicide notes, statements to officers they wanted to be shot, statements to accomplices they would not be taken alive). The follow-ups also provided evidence that some of the suspects in incidents that respondents *did not* classify as suicide-by-cop may well have wanted to die at the hands of the police. In one such case, for example, a barricaded gunman who spied a five-officer entry team positioned behind shields left his hiding point, raised his weapon, and ran directly at the entry team and into a fusillade of bullets. It is possible then, that the actual number of SWAT shootings that involved suicidal suspects may have been somewhat higher than the 24% identified by the FDRs.

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[17] There is often substantial ambiguity about the role that self-destructive impulses might play in given police shootings (see e.g., Klinger, 2001). Readers should keep this in mind when considering the data presented in this section.

Whatever the case regarding the precise portion of suspects shot by SWAT who wished to die from police bullets, consideration of the officer-involved shooting data in concert with the data on suspects who commit suicide by their own hand makes an interesting point about the nature of the danger suspects face during SWAT operations. The academic literature on SWAT operations intimates that SWAT shootings are a common occurrence (e.g., Kraska and Kappeler 1997; Kraska and Cebellis, 1997) and is silent on suspects' taking their own lives, whether directly by their own hand or by SWAT bullets. This literature gives the impression that suspects in SWAT operations are at considerable risk of being injured or killed by police gunfire. Because the current data indicate that SWAT officer-involved shootings are rare, that some substantial portion of the shootings that do occur are a form of unconventional suicide, and that suspects kill themselves by their own hands far more often than they are shot by SWAT officers, the SOS paints a substantially different picture or the risk to suspects during SWAT operations. For it shows that the odds of a suspect being struck by SWAT gunfire are quite low, that when SWAT officers take suspects under fire it is often because the suspect desires them to do so, and that the primary risk of suspect death in SWAT operations is that of self-infliction.

To review where the use of deadly force is concerned, we were able to identify 281 incidents in which members of SWAT teams in the sample shot at suspects (exclusive of suppressive fire only) and estimated that officers from these teams took suspects under fire in 113 other cases (i.e., 59 assigned and 54 imputed from missing data). We were able to establish from the 225 FDRs that reported on suspects' injuries that SWAT bullets struck suspects 193 of these cases and that suspects died in 137 of them (see footnote 16). If we apply the hit and fatal wound ratios (.86 and .61 respectively) from these 225 cases to the 394 estimated total shooting cases (281 known plus 113 estimated) we get 339 cases in which suspects were shot by SWAT and 240 in which suspects died. If we factor back in the handful of multiple suspects shot cases noted in footnote 15, we come up with an estimated 343 suspects shot and 241 suspects killed by SWAT teams across the 13 study years.

These numbers are notably lower than the counts of suspects who committed conventional suicide (i.e., 449 estimated and 379 confirmed). In fact, the estimated data indicate that conventional suicides outnumber deaths from SWAT gunfire by nearly two-to-one (i.e., 449/241= 1.86/1), which puts a mathematical perspective on the aforementioned finding that suspects are at substantially higher risk of dying by their own hand than by SWAT bullets.

That the primary danger to suspects during SWAT operations lies with suspects themselves is even more apparent when one considers the data on suicide-by-cop. Taking the suicide-by-cop cases from the counts of suspects who died from SWAT bullets (i.e., 24% of 241 estimated deaths, or 58) and counting them as suicides shifts the ratio of suicide to killed by SWAT from 1.86 to1 to 2.77 to 1 (i.e., 507/183). Thus does a more liberal construction of suicide suggest that suspects are almost three times as likely to commit suicide as they are to be (unwillingly) killed by SWAT. In sum, whether one takes a more expansive construction of suicide or stays with a more conservative take on self-destruction the data clearly indicate that in SWAT operations suspects pose a substantially greater danger to themselves than do the police.

Fire From Suspects Only

Additional evidence that SWAT officers are generally restrained in their use of deadly force comes from the data on situations in which suspects discharge firearms and SWAT officers do not return fire. Respondents reported a total of 455 such incidents across the 3,087 team years for which they reported data on this phenomenon. Extrapolating from the reported data to impute values for the years of missing data yields 83 additional incidents (455/3,087 = .147 incidents per year x 565 missing team years = 83.06), for a total of 538 cases in which SWAT officers held their fire when suspects discharged weapons during SWAT operation involving responding agencies during the years of the study. This data indicates that officers were about one-and-one-quarter times more likely to fire no rounds when suspects discharged their weapons than they were to intentionally fire at suspects, fire suppression rounds, or accidentally discharge their weapons (i.e., 538/431) once team years are equalized.

A few words of caution are in order when considering the data on incidents in which suspects shoot and SWAT doesn't. The follow-ups we conducted disclosed that the shots suspects fired in some of these cases did not present any immediate threat to officers or any innocent third party. In some such cases the shots suspects fired were clearly not directed at human targets (e.g, shots fired into the air, the ground, and inanimate objects inside locations in which suspects had barricaded themselves), while in other cases shots that were fired at officers could not possibly have injured them (e.g., small caliber rifle rounds fired at officers who were completely secreted behind large tree trunks and handgun rounds fired at officers in armored vehicles). Because we not able to obtain detailed information about all incidents reported, it is not possible to know how often SWAT does not fire in cases in which suspects discharge weapons because the suspect's actions presented no imminent threat to innocents.

Danger to SWAT Officers

Not all SWAT operations in which suspects fired their weapons are as innocuous as those just discussed. Several SWAT officers were shot by suspects in the 228 incidents involving suspect gunfire for which detailed information was available. Hostile gunfire struck 10 officers in their body armor, tactical helmets, or face shields, fifteen officers suffered non-fatal penetrating or perforating wounds from rounds fired by suspects, and two officers were fatally shot by suspects. To sum up, despite SWAT teams' best efforts to safely carry out their dangerous mission, they sometimes suffer casualties.

In addition to these injuries incurred at the hands of criminal suspects, four other officers were shot by fellow officers (all survived). That 13% of the officers struck by gunfire during the tactical operations for which data is available indicates that while the most substantial threat that SWAT officers face during tactical operations comes from suspects, the prospect of fratricide looms large. This, coupled with the fact that a non-trivial number of the SWAT shootings in the current data (at least 31) involve accidental discharges, indicates that the tactical community has considerable room for improvement where the handling of firearms is concerned.

FROM THE PCIR PROJECT

The information developed through the Post Critical Incident Report (PCIR) aspect of our research did not yield much insight into SWAT beyond that produced by the survey data. One reason for this was that the number of cases that involved issues such as characteristics of negotiations, explosives, and other points not covered by the survey were quite small. The other is that the picture of SWAT operations that emerged from the limited PCIR data was entirely consistent with the one developed from the survey data. Because the PCIR shed little additional light onto the matters at hand, our discussion of it will be brief.

Participating agencies submitted information about 476 incidents. Two-hundred-ninety involved the service of high-risk warrants (nine of which turned into barricades), 116 were barricaded suspect call-outs, 26 were hostage incidents, 10 were interventions with mentally disturbed individuals, while the rest included an amalgam of miscellaneous sorts of incidents. Consistent with the survey data, the vast majority of the incidents (90%) were resolved with no shots fired by SWAT officers. As was also the case with the survey, more suspects committed suicide than were shot by SWAT officers (17 vs. 11) and suspects shot more often than did SWAT officers (in 51 vs. 48 cases). On this second point the PCIR provides a bit more detail than the survey, showing that suspects fired a total of 259 shots while SWAT fired 171. Thus, while the PCIR data show just a slight difference between suspects and officers in terms of number of incidents in which they shot, it shows that officers were far more restrained when they did shoot.[18]

In sum, the PCIR data confirm that the vast majority of SWAT operations involve no shooting by anybody and that suspects are more likely to resort to deadly force than are SWAT officers.

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[18] That the proportion of cases in which SWAT fired weapons (10%) is higher in the PCIR data than the survey and the ratio of suspect to SWAT shooting cases is much closer in the PCIR is likely due to the tendency of participating teams to send in PCIR forms for the more dramatic sorts of incidents in which they participated. For example, while the survey data shows that the overwhelming number of SWAT activations involve warrant work, just 60% of incidents reported via the PCIR involved warrants.

INSIGHTS FROM FIELD WORK

The field work we conducted provided additional insight into many of the findings we developed from the SOS and PCIR. This section of the report describes the work we conducted, discusses how it sheds additional light onto findings from the SOS and PCIR, and identifies other findings beyond those obtained via these two data collection efforts.

The seven tactical teams we spent time with in the field were a diverse lot. Two were located on the west coast, two were in the Southwest, two were in the Midwest, and the last one was located in the Northeast. The agencies in which they were ensconced varied in size from several thousand sworn officers to just over 300. The largest team numbered in the hundreds of SWAT officers, while the smallest had just 17. All of the members of five of the teams were assigned to SWAT on a full time basis, while the other two teams included both full and part time SWAT officers. Some of the full-time teams had ancillary duties (e.g., crime suppression patrol, warrant enforcement, and highway drug interdiction), while others devoted 100% of their time to tactical duties. Six of the teams were housed in a central headquarters, while the officers of the largest team were spread across several locations across the city. The standard deployment of three teams had all full-time SWAT officers working the same hours. Officers on the other four teams normally worked different hours. Two of these teams split their officers into two units and usually deployed one on day shift and one on nights, another team assigned officers to different shifts based on the requirements of their ancillary (e.g., crime suppression) duties, while the last team had officers working standard shifts around the clock to provide 24 hour tactical coverage to the city.

Given the diversity of the these teams, the structure of the site visits and the activities the PI participated in during them varied considerably. In the largest agency, for instance, the department assigned a sergeant to the PI and gave him *catre blanc* to take the PI to any police venue or activity in the city. In other departments the PI sometimes reported to SWAT headquarters and observed whatever team activities were scheduled for (or came-up) during the day, sometimes met officers at remote training sites, and sometimes accompanied officers as they carried out their ancillary duties.

One thing that was common across six of the seven visits was spending some time observing training. Given the interest in how SWAT teams prepare for operations, the PI sought to conduct each visit when the team to be studied was scheduled to conduct some sort of training. The teams we observed schedule their training in a variety of formats. One, for example, set aside the first week of each month for the whole team to train together and then scheduled additional small group training (e.g., long rifle practice) throughout the rest of each month. Another team devoted a full week every three months to team training and conducted additional sub-team training at other times throughout the rest of the year. Among the rest of the teams, some had one or more team training days per week with additional small unit training as they saw fit, while other teams did not have set training days or weeks (i.e., their training calendars shifted from month to month). The PI was able to schedule his site visits to coincide with the training weeks of the two agencies that set aside a full week for such activities and at least one day for the other five teams. Unfortunately, a scheduling conflict arose at one of the agencies on the training day the PI was to attend, so we missed one team. Across the other six teams, we spent well over 200 hours spread across 33 days (17 with one team; primarily by the second author) observing training that included shooting at firing ranges; explosive breeching; building searches; warrant work; the rescue of injured parties from kill zones; vehicle take downs; chemical agent deployment; live fire exercises in shoot houses and abandoned structures that simulated hostage incidents; and Simunition training that involved search warrants, covert searches, and active shooter scenarios.

Where operations are concerned, we observed teams prepare for and execute 17 high risk warrants (16 of them narcotics), manage 20 barricaded subject incidents (both criminal and EDP), and handle seven miscellaneous operations (two non-barricaded EDP's calls, a security detail for the transfer of a large seizure of illegal drugs from one police station to another, a security detail for the transfer of a suspected international terrorist from one federal lock-up to another, a building search for a murder suspect, one security detail for a presidential candidate, and one presidential security detail). We also responded to several call-outs that were resolved before we arrived to observe. All but one of these cases involved barricaded subjects who surrendered to patrol before SWAT deployed. In each of these patrol-resolved cases the SWAT commander notified us of this fact prior to our arrival and we simply returned to our abodes without proceeding to the scene. The other case was resolved by SWAT gunfire within the first few minutes after the initial SWAT officers deployed, and about a minute before the PI arrived on scene. In this case, the PI stayed at the location to observe the immediate post-shooting procedures, and later interviewed both of the SWAT officers who shot the suspect.

Presentation of what we learned from our efforts in the field begins with training.

SWAT TRAINING

The results of the SOS indicated that while all SWAT teams train on a regular basis, there is substantial diversity in the amount of time teams devote to training and the sorts of things they train for. Our field observations indicate that there is also substantial diversity in how SWAT teams conduct training of a given sort; such as barricaded suspect or hostage situations. At the same time, we also found some common threads across all of the training we observed; three that stand out. The first of these was an emphasis on safety. It was apparent in each training session that the teams we observed placed a premium on minimizing the risk that anyone would suffer a physical injury . A second theme that was evident was teamwork, as a strong emphasis on working together was present in all of the training we observed; even things that might normally be considered to be quintessentially individual skills. The final theme that we identified was realism, as all the training was designed to mimic as much as possible the actual conditions team members were liable to encounter in real operations. Consideration of these three themes will serve to organize our presentation of what we learned during the many hours we spent watching SWAT officers train, starting with firearms training.

Firearms

Because SWAT officers are expected to be exceptionally proficient with the various firearms they carry, they typically spend far more time shooting their guns than do their peers who work other assignments. This was the case at each of the six teams whose training we observed, as they all required members to shoot more frequently than the other officers in their agencies. We were fortunate enough to observe at least some range training at each of these agencies and we thus were able to develop a good deal of information about firearms training within these SWAT teams. The shortest block of training we observed was an hour of sub-machine gun practice, the longest was three consecutive days of shooting that included both pistol and shoulder weapons courses. We also spent a full day observing one team run their standard pistol course, the better part of another day observing the precision marksmen of another team qualify with their long rifles, a half-day with a small group of officers from another team as they conducted their regular pistol qualification and conducted an evaluation of different loads during shotgun practice, and approximately 19 hours spread out over several weeks watching members of one nearby team conduct a variety of range training exercises.

All of the range training we observed included an emphasis on weapon safety. Each range session was run by either one or two team members who were certified firearms instructors, and each one opened with a reminder from the instructor(s) about basic firearms safety procedures (e.g., all guns should be considered loaded at all times, don't cover anyone with the muzzle of your weapon who you are not prepared to shoot, stay behind the firing line until the officer running the course of fire declares cease fire and all weapons are holstered or otherwise rendered safe).

From there, the training diverged based on the requirements of the weapons the officers were training with (e.g., long rifles fired at targets quite a distance from the firing line vs. pistols fired at close-in targets) and local practices. Some of the handgun training we observed, for example, included a good deal of tuition from the firearms instructors before the shooting began, while in other handgun training officers went straight to the firing line after a brief safety review. Among the sorts of instruction we observed were reviews and demonstrations of how to properly draw one's weapon and bring it to bear on the target (which all of the officers then practiced for several minutes before any shots were fired), how to execute tactical and combat reloads (which officers again practiced for some time before starting their courses of fire), and how to clear malfunctions.

The diversity in training continued once firing commenced. Some teams, for example, had officers firing all rounds during the pistol courses we observed from static positions, while others incorporated shooting on the move into their handgun training. Some of the teams who did shooting on the move limited it to forward movement, while others included lateral movement. In a variation of the shoot on the move theme, one team we observed ran their officers through a "stress course" that began with a 100 yard run (to elevate officers' heart rates) and then moved through a series of targets that officers had to successfully engage from a variety of distances and positions (e.g., standing, prone, on the move).

The stated purpose of the firearms training sessions we observed was to maintain/enhance officers' capacity to place shots on target if the need to use deadly force arose during an actual operation. Officers repeatedly told us that they had to be proficient with their firearms because they were expected to be able to perform appropriately if they found themselves in a shooting situation. The stated purpose of accurate fire was to stop deadly threats with a minimum number of rounds, as expressed in the words of a SWAT supervisor who told his officers on more than one occasion that he expected them to "fire a limited number of well-placed rounds to stop the suspect" in any deadly force situations that might arise.

While shooting police weapons is in essence an individual skill, teamwork played a prominent role in range training. Each of the range training sessions we observed included a component that stressed the notion that individual officers are part of a team who can count on one another in dangerous situations. This was evidenced perhaps most notably during weapons training that dealt with firearms malfunctions.

All police officers who carry semi-automatic weapons are trained how to clear malfunctions and how to re-load under gunfight conditions, but SWAT teams often include more refined, team-oriented, training on this point. Four of the five teams whose close-quarter (i.e., pistol and sub-gun) range training we observed included some variant of the following drill: Each time an officer ran out of ammunition or had a malfunction (sometimes because the weapon just malfunctioned, and sometimes because the instructor created one by, for example, placing an empty cartridge in an officers magazine) he or she would call out in a loud voice a codeword (i.e., "BLACK," "STOPPAGE," or "COVER" depending on the team) to inform others of his or her predicament, transition to his or her secondary weapon (if firing a shoulder weapon), and then drop to one knee. The closest officer (in one case the closet two officers) would then step out of their firing lanes, move to the officer in question, and stand over him or her with their weapon(s) pointed down range as the officer in question either re-loaded or cleared the malfunction. Once the officer in question had taken care of the problem, s/he would inform the other officers by shouting another codeword, then return to his or her feet while the other officer(s) moved away, and then re-engage the target.

A more detailed look at how one team executed their malfunction/out of ammo drill while firing their shoulder weapons illustrates more completely this process. When an officer ran dry or had a malfunction he would shout “COVER,” transition to his sidearm, and drop to one knee as he brought his secondary weapon on target. He would continue to engage the target until another officer stepped over to support him and shouted “CLEAR.” The first officer would then holster his sidearm, clear or re-load the primary weapon), and shout “READY.” The covering officer would then step away from the first officer, move the barrel of his weapon off the first officer’s target, and shout “UP.” At this point the first officer would stand up and re-engage his target, completing the re-load/malfunction drill.

Officers from each of the teams that ran such drills stated that they did so in order to ensure they would have a coordinated response to protect one another should any team member run out of ammunition or have a malfunction during an actual gunfight. An officer from the team that used the “cover, clear, ready, up” procedure explained that his team developed it to minimize the possibility that the first officer would be injured; first by ensuring that (in a real gun battle) he would not cease firing until he had verbal confirmation from another team member that there was lethal cover on the threat he had been engaging, and second, by ensuring that he would not be shot in the back of the head (in either a real gun battle or on the range) by standing up into the line of the covering officer’s fire.

Several of the officers from this team engaged in a rather involved discussion amongst themselves about the merits of some aspects of their drill during a break in their training. Some of them were concerned about the nomenclature they were using because they felt that using the word “CLEAR” might create confusion in a real-life gun battle because they also used the term during secondary clearing operations to indicate that a given room was secure. After batting around several options for different words (including a set of four colors) and procedures for an extended time, they tabled the discussion and went back to their shooting drills. We later learned that after several more rounds of discussions on the topic the team retained the "cover, clear, ready, up" procedure because the team was used to it and because they decided that the vast contextual differences between a gun battle and secondary clearing operations made the likelihood of any confusion an extremely remote possibility.

Other teams also engaged in discussions about the real-world applicability of the range training they conducted, consistently noting that they attempted to maximize the value of shooting practice for the work they did and seeking fresh ways to gain new skills. One team we observed did this by incorporating an active shooter scenario into their range training as part of a new tactical response doctrine the department had developed in the wake of the Columbine High School massacre. The team was divided into three man teams that consisted of a one man stand-off element and two-man entry element to run the following scenario: Team supervisors had set up at the target end of the firing line a plywood building facade (approximately 8 feet high and 10 feet across) with a door-sized cut out. On the other side of the plywood were both aggressor and innocent paper targets that one could not see from the firing line side of the facade. With all three officers positioned at the far end of the range (some 100 yards from the plywood facade), they were told via their radios that they were to respond to a call of shots being fired inside the "building" at the other end of the range. After being told that he was to assume he was the first SWAT officer on scene, the stand-off officer was instructed to deploy to a position that simulated the roof of a building some 50 yards from the objective to meet a "patrol officer" stationed there and gather intelligence about the situation at the far end of the range. The "patrol officer" (a SWAT supervisor) on the "roof" told the stand-off officer that there were at least two armed subjects involved in the situation, one of whom was loitering just outside the objective, and that there were at least two injured citizens inside the objective. The stand-off officer relayed this information to the other two officers, who were simulating that they just arrived, and instructed them to deploy to the front of the objective. As they were deploying, the SWAT commander came on the air and told the officers that they were cleared to conduct a sniper-initiated crisis entry if the situation permitted.

Soon thereafter a hostile target appeared just off to one side of the objective. The stand-off officer then relayed this information to the other two officers and asked them if they were ready to execute the aforementioned crisis entry. Once they responded in the affirmative, the stand-off officer told the other officers that he was prepared to take a shot and that they should be ready to go on his command. Soon thereafter the stand-off officer shot the loitering hostile target and announced “Rescue, rescue, rescue” over the air (to ensure that the entry officers did not mistake some other gunfire for his). The other two officers immediately entered the “building” and had to make decisions about engaging targets therein. In most cases, there were hostile targets for each officer to engage, but not always. By varying the number and location of hostile targets the SWAT supervisors were able to test both their officers’ decision-making and shooting skills as the entire team cycled through the exercise.

The training was overseen by a single supervisor who ensured that no officers were on the firing line when the targets were switched out and who made sure that both members of each two-man entry team were in place and out of the line of fire before he gave the command to the stand-off officer that he was free to initiate the crisis entry. After each rotation the three involved officers got together with the supervisors to discuss their actions. This debrief included a critique of how well the officers operated as a team, focusing on the communication between the three officers, the movement of the entry element prior to the initiating gunshot, how well the entry element performed once the initial shot and “Rescue” command were executed, and the team’s communication after the entry element had cleared the objective.

The supervisor who ran the exercise indicated that their team had decided to conduct the training as described for two reasons: First, because the set-up of the scenario itself was the sort of situation that the SWAT team might be called upon to handle now that the department had decided to permit rapid deployment during active shooter situations. And second, because he wanted his men to train as he expected them to handle such a situation in real life; i.e., having a coordinated, disciplined response that included sound communication among team members and with the chain of command. In sum, this range training exercise included all three of the dominant themes that emerged from the training we observed: safety, teamwork, and realism.[19]

Shoot House Training

The crisis entry training session described above was conducted on the range firing line because the team in question did not have a training apparatus that many large (and even some smaller) police agencies possess: a shoot house, which is a structure with ballistic walls that are designed to prevent bullets from passing through them. Many of the other teams we visited had shoot houses (made up of double-walled stacked railroad ties with gravel in between) and we were able to observe two of them conduct live-fire training exercises therein. One team used their shot house to simulate a structure in which armed criminals were holding hostages for a single scenario, while the other one used theirs to repeatedly practice high-risk warrant entries.

The team that used the shoot house for warrant service practice ran several different scenarios with targets placed in different locations each time. They carried the same weapons each time (MP-5 sub machine guns) and always announced their presence by shouting “POLICE, SEARCH WARRANT” just before entering the shoot house, but varied how they approached and entered the structure. They sometimes approached from one side of the structure, sometimes from another. They sometimes made entry from the “front door” and sometimes entered from the “back door.” And once they entered the “back door” after first approaching the

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[19] Members of the SWAT team that conducted this crisis entry exercise executed two crisis entries during actual operations within 24 months of the above-described training. While neither one involved any gunfire, both mirrored many other aspects of the training they conducted. A brief overview of the first incident illustrates this point. It was a workplace shooting in which patrol officers who took positions outside the business in question had spotted at least three victims down inside. They believed the shooter was still inside and asked for SWAT. Four team members who had been training nearby responded to the scene within a few minutes, along with the team’s Lieutenant. He gave them permission to enter as soon as possible, so they developed a hasty entry plan and deployed in a stack at the front of the building. As they were about to enter, a fifth SWAT officer arrived, loaded his shoulder weapon, and joined the stack. He was given a quick (5-10 second) brief on the situation and tactical plan, and the team then entered. They found four dead individuals on the floor and another half-dozen or so un-injured people hiding in various places. After escorting the living victims out of the location and securing the rest of the office, the team determined that one of the dead people was the shooter, while the other three were his victims. The fifth officer later told the PI that while no SWAT officers fired any shots, he believed that the above-described training proved to be invaluable because the team would not have been able to conduct themselves as smoothly as they did had they not had it, primarily because the training had inculcated in the team a mind-set that crises entries were part of their operational doctrine rather than something that was to be avoided, which had been the case prior to Columbine. It should be noted that the team had conducted other crisis entry training between the time of the above-described training and the office entry.

"front door" and simulating that it was not breachable. The team also altered their movements through the shoot house based on the placement of targets. For example, the point officer led the flow deep into the structure when he encountered no targets in the initial rooms, but he stayed in the front room in other runs when he engaged a hostile target, while another officer took his spot leading the rest of the team into the other rooms. The team also practiced an officer rescue drill in which the point officer (who had not told the other team members of his plan) discharged a shot into the ground about a yard in front of his feet, shouted "I'M HIT," and fell to the ground after moving his finger off the trigger of his sub-gun. The second officer immediately fired a three round burst from his sub-gun at head-height into the jamb of an interior door that was directly in front of the "downed" point officer, and then stepped to the side with his weapon pointed in the "threat" area and backed out of the location just behind other officers who were dragging the "downed" officer out.

After completing these drills, team members told the PI that they had varied their approaches and target placement in the shoot house because each warrant location is different and suspects are found in different places within them. Setting things up and approaching differently each time thus made the training more realistic, allowing the team to practice the movements, communication, and coordination they would employ when serving actual warrants.

Where the downed officer drill was concerned, the officers indicated that it was a standard aspect of their shoot house training designed to ensure that they have a coordinated, safe, effective response should one of them be shot in the field. They reported that while the team had long been concerned about dealing with downed officers, the matter had recently become more salient because one of them had been shot during a barricade incident several months prior to the site visit. In fact, the officer who had been shot showed the PI a video tape of the incident. It showed several SWAT officers in the vicinity of the open front door of a motel room, with the officer in question crouched down behind a ballistic shield. When chemical agent munitions were fired into the room, the suspect fired several shots at the SWAT team and one of the rounds glanced off the door frame and struck the officer near his groin. He stated, "I'M HIT," and was drug away by a pair of teammates as other officers returned fire.

While the situation turned out OK in the officer's mind (he survived and the suspect did not), the rescue had not gone smoothly. One officer's sub-machine gun had malfunctioned, and it took a few seconds for the officers who ultimately dragged the downed officer away to react. The team was concerned that should a similar situation arise in the future that it be resolved seamlessly, with no delay in grabbing the downed officer and immediate suppressive or directed fire to cover the rescue. Thus did this team take a real-world experience and incorporate it into training to enhance their capacity to work as a unit to thereby safely extract any officers who might be wounded in the future.

The simulated hostage rescue that we observed at the other agency's shoot house was also conducted to enhance that team's ability to safely carry out a dangerous assignment. Because the scenario was supposed to involve innocents held in a residence, the shoot house was configured to resemble (as much as possible) a single story residence, with sofas and chairs on the inside and an real door (frame and all) affixed to one of the shoot house openings. Hostile and innocent targets were set up inside, along with video cameras to record the actions of the team once they made entry. The exercise was run in real time, and, according to the team commander, in the same fashion the team would conduct itself in an actual event. (See discussion in the "CALL OUTS" section of this report below).

The team commander deployed snipers, checked to ensue that all other assets were in their proper places, and so on. Supervisors obtained information from their men, passed it on to the commander, and so on. And officers deployed as ordered, developed information, passed on to their superiors, and so on. At one point the commander was given information indicating that the suspect was about to harm one or more of the hostages and he gave to order to initiate the rescue. The entry element breeched the door as they would in an actual incident, then moved through the structure as they would in an actual hostage rescue operation, working as a team to clear rooms, locate and rescue the hostages, and engage the hostage takers with gunfire when appropriate.

After the scenario had been completed, the officer running the training that day called everyone together to debrief the event. After briefly reviewing what had transpired prior to entry so that all team members were sure to be aware of what teammates in other positions had seen and done, attention turned to some difficulties the entry element had encountered. The primary problem was that the door breach had not gone smoothly. The initial attempt with a ram did not defeat the door (a steel blank in a steel frame with multiple locks) and it took several seconds to get a pry tool up to the door and several more seconds to finally defeat the door. It was apparent from the look on the face of the lead breacher while he was trying to force the door that he was getting frustrated, and possibly nervous, that the door had not opened right away. During the debrief he stated that was indeed worried about the situation with the door because he knew that every second lost at the entry point was a second during which hostage takers would have been able to harm their hostages in a real situation. This led to some discussion about the pros and cons of various options for forcing entry and the importance of keeping one's composure and focus in the face of difficulties during operations, as some other officers stated that they had also become frustrated over the delay in breeching the door.

After the debrief had been completed, the officer who ran the training session told the PI in a private conversation that he had placed extra fortifications on the door to create the very difficulty the entry tem had encountered, one they could easily encounter in an actual operation. He stated that some team members had been getting a bit cocky and that one purpose of the exercise was to show them that their best efforts could be easily frustrated. He stated further that he felt that the comments in the debrief indicated the officers in question had been humbled by the exercise (particularly because an outsider was present) and that the team was better for it. Thus did the officer in charge of the training use the realism of SWAT training to move beyond the primary focus in such sessions on technical proficiency to teach his mates a lesson about attitude.

Other Live Fire Exercises

Many of the teams we observed informed us that they sometimes conducted live-fire exercises in deserted locations in their communities. We got to observe two such training sessions, both of which were hostage rescue exercises that included hostile and innocent targets placed in front of bullet traps. The first occurred at night in a neighborhood of abandoned structures. According to the scenario, a group of home-invasion robbers were holding two citizens in a one-story single family residence while waiting for a third victim to get them some money from her bank. This third citizen had notified the police of the situation, and SWAT had been called in to handle it. The robbers had threatened to kill the two hostages if they got wind the police had been notified and the robbers fit the description of a team that had executed cooperative victims in the past. Snipers, deployed on two sides of the residence, fed a constant stream of information to the command post (CP). A scout team reconnoitered the location, returned to the CP, drew a basic sketch of the residence on a white board (along with input of the interior floor plan from the "victim" who was supposed to get the money), and discussed their observations with the SWAT commander.

The information provided by the snipers and the scout team disclosed that both hostages were being held in one wing of the residence by two of the criminals, while the other two robbers were standing watch in other parts of the house. Based on this, and the previous violence displayed by the robbers, the SWAT commander had decided that a sniper-initiated hostage rescue with no warning was the best way to protect the victims inside the residence. After the commander ensured that all SWAT officers were aware of the plan he had approved, one of the team leaders led a group of seven other officers to the front yard of the residence, where they squatted in front of some large bushes several yards from the front door that hid them from the view of people inside the residence. When the snipers reported that they had certain identification of the two hostage takers who were away from the rest of the group and clear shots on both, the commander began a count down from five. On one, each sniper fired at their respective targets, "Rescue, rescue, rescue" was announced over the air, the entry team advanced to the front door, broke it down with a battering ram, and entered. In the next few seconds, several volleys of shots went off as the team moved through the residence, someone announced over the air that the scene was secure and that they needed paramedics for "four suspects and one victim down," and the commander declared that the scenario was over.

While walking back to the CP from the residence, one of the officers on the entry team explained that one of the other officers who had already gone back to the CP had mistaken one of the hostage targets as a hostile target and fired two shots from his M-16 rifle into it. He, along with other officers within ear shot, were visibly upset about the mistake, declaring that there was no excuse for it, that the officer in question didn't belong on the team because he had made similar mistakes in previous exercises, and that they were embarrassed that such a terrible miscue had occurred in front of an observer. Another officer later told the PI that both the anger at the officer who screwed-up and the embarrassment over his action stemmed from the fact that team prided itself on doing things correctly so that when one of them did something wrong it reflected poorly on the entire team. He said that everyone on the team felt that the mistake had ruined what had been an otherwise flawlessly executed drill, and that that was all that really mattered because shooting a hostage in an actual situation was simply unacceptable. He explained that one purpose of the training was to test the team's mettle to handle the toughest sorts of situations and the mistake was evidence that they were not up to snuff. In this case then, the realism of the training had identified a weak link in the team chain.

The other hostage rescue scenario we observed also illustrates how realistic training can not only provide a SWAT team with a sound training session but also help to identify weaknesses. While this scenario had many similarities with the first one, it also included several notable differences. One of the big differences was the setting; the second training session took place on and around some vacant floors of a downtown office building. Another difference was that this second training session incorporated a negotiations component. Indeed, it was the culmination of a crisis negotiations course that the agency had run and was designed on this point to demonstrate that it is sometimes not possible to talk hostage takers into releasing their victims and surrendering. It was also designed to provide practice for and test the skills of one of the SWAT team supervisors. He was playing the role of team commander, as the scenario assumed that the actual SWAT commander was not available to respond to the location.

Several negotiations teams were seated around the CP, located on a separate floor from the supposed hostage situation, each in telephonic contact with an officer who was playing the role of the leader of the hostage takers. Only one of these negotiations teams was working along with the SWAT team as part of the larger scenario. The rest were involved in "dummy" negotiations with different sorts of suspects who were holding different types of hostages under different circumstances, which gave the students a sense of the varieties of possible hostage scenarios they might actually confront one day. Only information developed by the negotiations team working with the "real" hostage taker was incorporated into the scenario.

As the negotiations were proceeding, others in the CP were developing information about other aspects of the situation, such as hostage profiles, a floor plan of the area in which the hostages were being held, and information (relayed from snipers who were deployed inside and on top of an adjacent building) about what was going on there. All major bits of information (e.g., suspects' descriptions, weapons, criminal histories, and so on) were written on sheets of butcher's paper and taped to the walls of the CP in conspicuous places so (the SWAT supervisor in charge said) it would all be readily available at any time. At one point the supervisor in charge decided that if a crisis entry were to become necessary that the door to the room in which the hostages were being held should be explosively breached. After receiving permission from the chief of police to use explosives (something that would be required in this agency in an actual situation), a member of the bomb squad who was deployed with the entry team placed an explosive charge on the door in question and set it so that he could blow the door on short notice.

Several hours into the scenario, negotiations faltered and the decision was made to execute a sniper-initiated hostage rescue. Two snipers had clear shots on one of the suspects (i.e., a hostile target), but not on any of the others. Both were told they were to take shots on the visible suspect at the same time the bomb tech would set off the explosive charge, all of which would occur upon the order of the supervisor in charge. The supervisor announced he would use a count down from five to one to signal the rescue and that the shots should be taken and the explosive detonated when he stated "one." After ensuring that everything was in order (e.g., the entry team was set, the snipers were ready, etc.), the supervisor in charge began his countdown. As soon as he finished saying "two," but before he started to say "one," a single gunshot rang out (obviously from one of the snipers across the street). When the supervisor/commander said "one," a fraction of a second later, a second gunshot and the sound of the explosive charge rang out simultaneously. A few seconds after that, shouts and bursts of automatic gunfire began to ring out from the hostage location. The firing stopped within a few seconds, but some shouting went on for bit longer before someone announced over the radio that the situation was secure, that all hostages were OK, and that all suspects were down.

One point of interest concerned the reactions of those in the CP to the slightly premature sniper round. The real team commander was at the training session and was standing with the supervisor who was playing the commander role and another officer who had supervisory responsibility over the team's snipers. Looks of incredulity came over the faces of three officers as they immediately exchanged glances. Well before the automatic weapons fire died out, the team commander looked directly at the sniper supervisor and said in a firm voice, "You need to fix that." The sniper supervisor replied, "Yes, sir," and all three officers shifted their attention back to the scenario.

The commander proceeded to the hostage area soon after radio traffic indicated that the scene was secure and walked through the location with some of the senior officers who had made entry. During this time he examined the targets (all hostile targets had numerous hits and no hostage targets had any) and discussed the operation with the officers who accompanied him to get their sense of how things had gone. They explained how the explosive breech had gone, how the team had moved through the location, engaged the hostile targets, and secured the hostages.

Throughout this scenario each of the three themes of teamwork, realism, and safety were highly visible. The team commander explained that the primary tactical purpose (i.e., aside from the negotiations practice) of the scenario was to give the team the chance to conduct an operation in as realistic a fashion as possible. Hence, they conducted the operation in real time; ran the CP as they would in an actual operation (e.g., taping information on walls, feeding information from various sources to the supervisor playing the role of team commander, and so on); communicated via the radio as they would in real life; deployed officers (e.g., snipers and entry team members) as they actually would; and conducted the coordinated sniper shots/explosive breech, entry, and clearing operation as they would in an actual hostage rescue (hopefully, with better timing, as indicated by the commander's concern about the initial sniper shot).

The emphasis on safety was evident in several aspects of the training session. Among the more conspicuous were that 1) all of the targets had been set up so that any off-target shots that might occur would strike interior walls rather than easily passing outside, 2) the team commander had called in some patrol officers to shut down pedestrian and vehicle traffic on the street between buildings that housed the primary scenario and the snipers' perches, and 3) two workers from the city's risk management office monitored the exercise. Once the scenario had been set up and all participating officers were in place, the team commander escorted these two individuals around to each station where officers were deployed. As he made these rounds the commander explained to the risk managers what the training was designed to accomplish, how the particulars of it would lead to this objective, and what the team had done to minimize the possibility that anyone might be injured (placement of traps and closing the street, for example). These individuals stayed for the duration of the training, at different times going to different positions to observe the happenings there.

Before taking the risk managers on their tour, the team commander explained their presence to the PI. He stated that the city had recently instituted a program in which representatives from the risk management office had to be present at all major SWAT training exercises. This had come about in response to a serious accident during a previous SWAT training exercise. The city wanted to do all it could to prevent additional training accidents, so they instituted the above described oversight program. It was apparent from remarks made by several team members that they were none too pleased that their training was being monitored by outsiders. At the same time, it was clear from both other comments team members made about the risks involved in live-fire exercises and the way that the team interacted with the risk managers that they intended to cooperate fully with the new safety program.

While this was the most bureaucratically intense safety regime we encountered in our observations, we also observed other safety protocols that were quite intense in other regards. One of the most intense was what we found in the force-on-force training conducted by one SWAT team, which we discuss in the next section of the report.

Other Scenarios and Force-on-Force Training

Because live fire exercises preclude the presence of role players in areas where officers might use their firearms, the static target aspect of such exercises detracts somewhat from the realism of scenario training. To inject more realism into their training, many SWAT teams conduct exercises in which other officers or civilians play the role of citizens, both innocent and criminal. In one variation of such training, all firearms are either mock or unloaded guns that officers and role players use simply as props. In another, all of the firearms involved shoot some sort of round that leaves a colored mark where it hits. Sometimes teams train with paint-ball guns, while other times they train with actual firearms that are modified so that they can chamber only special rounds known as “marking cartridges.” We observed (and occasionally participated in) several role play exercises in which officers and role players used empty guns and several others in which participants were armed with weapons that fired marking cartridges.

Where empty gun training goes, we observed teams practice vehicle take downs, building searches, downed person rescues, and several other scenarios. The pacing of the exercises varied according to incident type as all of the teams we observed stressed that they ran such exercises at the same pace they would conduct actual operations. In some instances (e.g., vehicle take downs), officers repeatedly ran through the paces of the final aspect of mock incidents when the involvement of the SWAT team in an actual incident would be limited to but a few seconds (in the case of vehicle take downs, for example, exiting their raid van and approaching vehicles). Situations that would normally take considerable time, on the other hand, were usually practiced just once or twice. On a day that one team we observed had slotted the whole afternoon for building searches, for example, they conducted two exercises in a large multi-story abandoned structure. The team stressed slow, deliberate movement and thus took considerable time to move small distances, taking upwards of 15 minutes to climb a single flight of stairs that led to a long hallway, for example.

When the teams ran empty gun drills, they had an officer assigned to check all of the weapons that were to be used to ensure that none contained any live rounds. These checks were done at the point of entry into the scenarios, where ever they were being held. A more involved sort of safety regime was observed on a training day in which the team in question employed marking cartridges to practice the execution of search warrants and responding to active shooter situations.

In this case, one team member was assigned the title “safety officer” for the day and given the responsibility (among other things) of ensuring that no one present had either any regular firearms or any live rounds either on their person or anywhere else within the training area (part of an abandoned multi-story office building). The officer had all officers report to a single room where they were instructed to leave all of their firearms and live rounds, then move into a second room that served as the staging area for the training. Here the safety officer searched each person present (including the observer) by patting them down and opening all their pouches and pockets that might possibly contain an operable firearm or standard ammunition, reminded the team that no actual firearms or live rounds were permitted outside the room where their weapons and ammo were stored, and that any time any one left the immediate area in which the training was being conducted that they would be searched again before re-entering the area in question.

The safety officer and team commander separately explained that the team followed this stringent safety protocol in order to reduce to the absolute minimum the possibility that an officer could be accidentally shot by a real bullet. They were aware that officers in other places had been inadvertently shot when actual firearms containing live rounds had been somehow introduced into training scenarios and instituted their protocols to prevent it from happening during their training. None of the officers objected as the safety officer went through his paces and some of them later explained that they had no problem with the safety procedures because they took very seriously the charge to use the utmost care when it comes to firearms.

After the safety officer completed searching his teammates, he issued them headgear that covered their face, eyes, and throat (to protect sensitive areas from the marking cartridges), along with converted weapons and a supply of marking cartridges. The team then discussed how the training would proceed, and they went to work.

During the morning session the team ran several mock search warrants with a small number of team members playing the role of citizens. In each scenario the "citizen" officers played different roles (e.g., outsider visiting the location in question, drug dealer, and drug customer), placed themselves in different positions within the training site, and acted differently (e.g., sometimes complying with officers orders, sometimes refusing, and sometimes taking aggressive action against officers). Each of the scenarios was run as a dynamic entry with team members moving into and through the "objective" in the same fashion they would in an actual dynamic warrant service. In each case officers announced in loud voices "POLICE, SEARCH WARRANT" as they entered the "objective" and used a version of the "fill and flow" movement method to clear rooms from the point closest the entry to the farthest away point, entering rooms only in pairs. If the room contained a suspect, both officers would remain until the suspect was in custody. At that point, one officer would remain with the suspect and the other would leave to join the end of the line of officers moving down the main hallway as they pressed forward towards the rear of the objective. When officers did not locate any suspects in a room, they both vacated it and joined the tail end of the team. With this system then, officers would sometimes pair-up with different teammates as the team cleared the objective one room at a time.

Once the last room had been cleared, a senior officer radioed the sergeant (who stayed near the entry point, keeping an eye on what was transpiring in front of him) to inform him of this fact. The sergeant verified the transmission, inquired about the status of the officers and any suspects, and then ordered the team to conduct a secondary clearance of the objective. During the secondary sweep the team moved from back to front, entering each room in pairs and visually clearing them from the floor to the ceiling, taking much more time than they had in the initial clearance. When all of the rooms had been cleared this second time, the sergeant announced over the radio that the location was secure and the exercise was over.

At the end of each mock warrant the team came together and debriefed the exercise. The "citizens" explained what they saw, heard and did; the officers did the same and also explained why they did what they did; and the team commander (who was just observing) offered her impressions of how well the officers had performed. In one case she noted, for example, that one officer had committed a serious safety infraction by sweeping the barrel of his gun across the back of the head of a fellow officer as they prepared to enter a room and chided him for doing so.

After the last mock warrant the team took a lunch break. A group of officers who had brought food and drink with them stayed at the training site to protect the equipment, while the rest of the team left in search of sustenance (after retrieving their sidearms from the storage room). When the team reconvened to conduct active shooter training about an hour later, they repeated the safety drill they had conducted in the morning, placing all firearms and live ammunition in the designated room and repairing to the briefing room, where they were again searched by the safety officer and re-issued marking cartridge guns, ammunition, and headgear.

The active shooter scenario simulated responding to a small business located in a single-story building. The scenario further called for the team to receive notification of this situation as they were all together preparing to serve a search warrant, which allowed for the whole team to respond at the same time. The only information the team was given was that some number of suspects were shooting weapons inside a business and that it was believed there were victims down inside. The team moved quietly to the "front door" of the business, stacked-up, announced their presence, and then entered the location at a pace that was about half as fast as their movements had been during the warrant practice. Officers again moved in pairs into rooms from the main hallway, and then flowed back out into the hallway as they cleared each space.

After a few room had been cleared, a male armed with a shoulder weapon moved into the hallway from a room on the left side of the hallway some 30 or so feet in front of the lead officer. This apparent "suspect" held the weapon in his right hand with the barrel pointed downward while pushing another male in front of him with his left hand. When they first appeared, the two individuals were perpendicular to the line of SWAT officers, so that their right shoulders were facing the lead officer. The lead officer quickly ordered the "suspect" to drop his weapon and surrender. By the time the commands were issued, however, both individuals had already turned their backs to the officers and were beginning to move away from them. The "suspect" said something (the facial protection he was wearing made it difficult to make out precisely what) and pushed the "victim" in front of him as he began to run down the hallway away from the line of officers. After traveling several steps, both men disappeared into another room on the right side of the hallway.

The lead officer had continued to demand that the "suspect" drop his gun and surrender as the pair moved down the hallway. He also sped-up his movement considerably, as did the rest of the team, but not in a uniform fashion. This created substantial space between some of the officers as they moved towards the room that now contained the two citizens. The team got caught up into a cohesive line within several seconds, then stopped their advance just short of the room containing the two "citizens." Some officers deployed around the open doorway, while others moved to provide security for the officers who were so deployed and still others continued clearing other rooms in the "objective." After several minutes had passed, during which the officers at the doorway engaged the "suspect" in a dialogue, the "suspect" agreed to lay down his weapon. After doing so, he was ordered to face away from the doorway and walk backwards to the lead officer. After taking the "suspect" into custody, officers ordered the "victim" to do the same thing the suspect had done, and then took him into custody as well. Once the team determined that the "victim" was indeed what he appeared to be, they released him.

The team then cleared the rest of the rooms in the "objective" and the scenario ended. The team spent considerably more time debriefing this scenario than they had the warrants. Several members of the team spoke about various aspects of the operation, particularly how the team responded when the "suspect" and "victim" appeared in the hallway. Some officers were concerned that the focus on the pair had distracted the team, leaving them vulnerable to any other suspects who might have been there. Others were concerned that the spaces that emerged as the team gave chase was another safety problem because the distances between officers jeopardized their ability to support one another. The lead officer opined that he had considered shooting the "suspect" as he moved down the hallway with his hostage, but opted not to due to concerns for the hostage that would be present in a real situation from over-penetration of any rounds he might fire. After touching on a few other topics, the team practiced a few more crisis entries that were far less involved than the one just described, and called it a day.

Overall, in seeking to make training scenarios as realistic as possible, the SWAT teams we observed sought to prepare their officers for the sorts of challenges they believed they might be called upon to face in real life. The degree of fit between the training and operational realms is addressed in the next section.

OPERATIONS

As noted at the outset of the field work portion of this report, we accompanied members of the teams we observed on a variety of field activities, including "standard" police efforts such as anti-crime and drug interdiction patrol. Because the primary purpose of this research project was to develop information about those aspects of SWAT officers' activities that pertain directly to the specialized aspects of their work, however, we focus our attention here on team mobilizations. We will first address the service of warrants, which are the predominant type of pre-planned SWAT activations, then move on to discuss the unplanned SWAT mobilizations.

Warrants

All but one of the warrant service operations we observed where narcotics search warrants, which the officers from the various units informed us constituted the majority of the warrants they served (and which is consistent with what our survey disclosed). While narcotics warrants were the bread and butter of the warrant work of each team we observed, however, the guidelines for when SWAT would serve a narcotics warrant varied substantially across the agencies. Most of the agencies had policies that their SWAT unit should serve those narcotics warrants that appeared to pose a greater than normal threat to officers, which was determined by information (from informants or other intelligence) that the suspect(s) involved had a propensity for violence, that the suspect(s) possessed something more than run-of-the-mill weapons, or that the location to be searched had some sort of unusual fortification.[20] One of the agencies we studied, however, required that their SWAT team serve all search warrants developed by their narcotics section. This policy had been instituted some 20 years prior when evidence went missing following some raids conducted by narcotics detectives and a poorly planned and executed warrant led to a questionable shooting.

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[20] These criteria were in place for all warrants, regardless of whether narcotics were involved.

Whatever the parameters an agency set for when tactical officers should serve warrants, all of the SWAT teams we observed took the same basic approach to their task. Each divided the mission into two primary phases: a pre-raid session in which the team would plan for the operation, which included everything the team did prior to making a move towards the warrant location, and then the service of the warrant itself. There were, however, some notable differences in how the teams carried out their work, particularly where pre-raid activities are concerned.

Pre-raid activity

One of the major differences between teams was the amount of notice given to SWAT to prepare for the warrant. Two of the teams we observed had a strong preference (which they indicated was almost always observed) that the narcotics case investigator notify SWAT about the warrant at least 24 hours before it was to be served. This allowed SWAT officers to survey the warrant location well ahead of time in order to develop a detailed plan about how to serve the warrant. SWAT officers in these agencies would use the time to drive by the location (and/or fly over it in a police helicopter), taking still photos and/or video tape they would then study to identify possible problems with the location and the best routes of travel to it. These teams also sometimes obtained additional information about the location from publicly available government records to develop information about things such as floor plans and utility lines. With all the information in hand, the officers who had collected it would develop a tactical plan for serving the warrant (including how the team should approach the location, where officers would be stationed, how the team would make entry, and so on). Once this was accomplished, supervisory officers would call together however many members of the team they deemed necessary to execute the plan in order to finalize it and assign specific duties to specific officers (e.g., who would breach what entry point [usually a door], who would brake and rake what window, who would deploy a noise-flash diversionary device). The following description of a warrant briefing illustrates how this went.

The SWAT team had been called upon to serve a warrant at an apartment in which an informant had been assaulted with a firearm when he went there to purchase drugs. The informant told the officer he worked with that one of the occupants of the apartment had accused him of working with the police, placed the barrel of a large caliber revolver under his chin, and threatened to kill him. With this information in hand, two SWAT officers had worked-up a plan that called for more than a dozen officers to execute the warrant. They ran the plan by the SWAT commander, and then met in the SWAT roll-call room with the rest of the officers (including a sergeant) who would be serving the warrant. The officers in charge of the planning then briefed the others and the team discussed the pending operation, clarifying any point about which they were unclear of. Once all issues had been resolved, the officers went to retrieve their weapons and other equipment from their vehicles and assembled on the roof of the police garage, where the raid van was parked. After the raid team had loaded into the van, it drove several yards, then stopped and the officers flowed out of the back with their weapons at low ready. The PI, seated with the team commander in his car some 20 yards behind the van, asked the team commander what was happening. He responded that the officers were practicing getting out of the van and went on to report that it was his belief that every single aspect of serving high-risk warrants was a skill and that all skills were "highly perishable." As a consequence, he went on, his officers practiced getting out of the raid van before each warrant to ensure that there were no glitches that needed to be fixed before deploying in the field. If something went wrong in the practice run, they corrected it before going on to serve the warrant. In this instance, all officers exited smoothly, so they loaded back up straight away and went off to serve the warrant.

The rest of the teams we observed did not usually have as much time to prepare for warrants, typically receiving notification within a few hours of the time they were expected to serve them (in one case we observed, less than 30 minutes). With such short notice, these other teams utilized far less involved pre-raid protocols than the two teams who nearly always had at least 24 hour notification. The team that exhibited the least involved warrant preparation usually sent one or two officers to drive by the location to get some general information about the location and its environs, which they brought back to the rest of the team in order to develop a raid plan and make assignments. At the other end of the spectrum, another team that typically had far less than a day to prepare for warrants had a far more detailed pre-raid routine, as the following description of one of their pre-raid planning sessions indicates.

Upon notification that they were to serve a warrant, the dozen or so members of this team who were assigned to warrant service duty drove from their headquarters to the station house of the precinct that contained the warrant location. There they met with several members of the local precinct, including the precinct commander, and were briefed by the narcotics detectives who had requested their assistance. The briefing included descriptions of the suspects and the location in question, a report on what was usually going on outside the location (i.e., drug buyers lined up), a discussion of the best approach to the location, and the assignment of duties for the non-SWAT officers who would be going along on the warrant (e.g., detaining the customers outside, searching for drugs after SWAT had cleared the location, and taking any suspects in to custody). The precinct commander asked a few questions that clarified some points about the plan. Once he was satisfied that everything was in order, he gave his blessing on the operation and everyone moved out to go serve the warrant.[21]

Execution of Warrants

As was the case with pre-raid activity, there was substantial diversity in how the SWAT teams we observed actually served their warrants. At one end of the spectrum were teams (including those two mentioned above as having extensive pre-raid preparation) that took extensive efforts to monitor the warrant location between the time they left their pre-raid meeting and coordinate their efforts with other police entities. At the other end of the spectrum were teams that did virtually nothing to either monitor the warrant location or to coordinate their actions with other law enforcement personnel.

At the detailed end of the spectrum, for example, the commander of the team that practiced exiting their raid van was in constant radio contact with a narcotics officer who was monitoring the warrant location (a small apartment) while the team drove towards the location. He explained to the PI that he did this to ensure that the suspects were going to be present when his team served the warrant. The commander, in fact, halted the team's progress toward the location at one point when he got uncomfortable with the information the narcotics officer was providing about the location of one of the suspects, who had apparently stepped outside the location when the team was still a few miles from it. When the narcotics officer reported that the suspect had repaired to the location after standing outside for short time, the commander ordered the warrant service to proceed as planned. When the raid van arrived, the team members exited rapidly and one officer took a suspect who was standing outside the location into custody while two other officers ran to a rear window and covered it with their weapons as the rest of the other officers approached the front door, announced their presence to the occupants, forced the door open, entered the location after deploying a noise-flash diversionary device, secured the occupants, then turned the scene over to the narcotics detectives.

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[21] In this agency the precinct commander was apparently responsible for everything that went on in his area.

The importance of keeping warrant locations under surveillance was demonstrated by an incident that occurred with one of the teams that did not include this practice in their warrant service protocol. The incident in question took place one evening at a motel where narcotics officers had developed information that two persons were dealing drugs from one specific room. After discussing how they would execute the warrant, the team drove to the location in their raid van, deployed at the door to the motel room, announced their presence, forced open the door, tossed a noise-flash diversionary device into the room, then made entry. Several seconds later the team emerged from the room to report to their supervisor that there was no one inside it. Soon thereafter, an individual who had rented an adjacent room emerged and began to yell at the officers. He had mistaken the noise-flash diversionary device for gunfire and was upset because he believed that the SWAT team had placed his family in danger by firing their weapons nearby. The team supervisor told the man that his officers had not fired any shots, that there was no danger to the man's family, and that if his officers had had to shoot they would have hit the suspects, not any of the members of his family. The man remained upset, said words to the effect that he sure didn't trust the aim of a group of police officers who didn't even know whether anyone was inside the places they were raiding, stormed off, gathered his family, and left the motel.

With these two examples anchoring opposite ends of the spectrum where surveillance is concerned, we turn our attention to a more in-depth look at the mechanics of actually serving warrants once SWAT arrives at the location in question, which can be broken down into three primary stages or components; approach, entry, and search. The approach consists of what officers do between the time they arrive at the warrant location and deploy to make entry. Entry activity is what officers do to get inside the warrant location. And the search refers to everything the officers do between the time they enter and leave the location.

There are two basic means that SWAT teams use to serve high-risk warrants, which go by the names "surround (or 'contain') and call-out" and "dynamic." The surround and call out tactic consists of just what it says: SWAT team members deploy around the warrant location, announce their presence, and demand that those inside come outside. After securing all of the suspects who exited, team members then enter the location, search it to ensure that no one else is inside, and then either search for whatever evidence the warrant specified or turn the location over to other officers (e.g., narcotics detectives) to conduct the search for evidence.[22] This method of warrant service is designed to reduce the likelihood that anyone will be injured by creating a buffer between SWAT officers and any potentially violent individuals inside the location. SWAT teams generally employ this tactic when the evidence specified on the warrant they have been called upon to serve can not be easily destroyed.

When there is concern that evidence might be destroyed if it is not immediately seized, SWAT teams often opt to serve the warrant with dynamic tactics (also referred to as "dynamic entry"). When SWAT teams serve warrants with dynamic tactics, the seek to rapidly enter the location in question and move through it post-haste in order to secure the individuals inside before they can destroy evidence or arm themselves with deadly weapons. In this way, dynamic tactics are intended to reduce the likelihood of injury by allowing officers to gain control of citizens before they can present a threat. All of the warrants we observed involved dynamic tactics, so the remainder of this section is limited to reportage of this sort of warrant service.

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[22] If the team is serving an arrest rather than a search warrant, there may be no search for evidence.

Approach

Because we have already described some aspects of how SWAT teams approach warrant locations, this section offers a more detailed description of this initial aspect of warrant service. In all of the warrants we observed, the driver of the raid vehicle stopped as close to the primary entry point of the location as was possible to let the officers out of the vehicle. They would then exit the vehicle in a pre-determined order and approach the entry point. The pre-determined order in one agency we observed, for example, was to have the officers who were slated to be the third and fourth to enter the location seated closest to the raid van's rear doors so they would exit first, followed by the officers slated to enter first and second, followed by the fifth and sixth officers, and so on. The third and fourth officers provided cover for the whole team as they moved up on a location, focusing their attention on what they considered possible threat locations (e.g., doors and windows from which suspects could ambush them). As the team neared the entry point the third and fourth officers would yield to let officers one and two bypass them and set up on the door.

Entry

Once the initial officers were in place, the rest of the team would "stack" behind them in the order in which they were scheduled to enter the location. In most cases, the number one officer knocked on door and, in a loud voice, announced the team's presence and stated they were there to serve a search warrant.[23] If there was no answer after a short period of time, the officers would breach the door and enter the location. In most of the instances we observed, entry was gained by having one or two officers swing a large metal ram to force open the door. There were situations, however, in which the team had to defeat security doors before they could attempt to breach the primary entry door. In most of these cases, one of the officers in the stack used a pry tool to separate the security door from its frame, and then pop it open to expose the primary door. Other cases, however, were more involved.

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[23] This knock and announce would not be performed when the warrant specified that officers need not do so (i.e., when serving a "no knock" warrant).

Some of the warrants we observed were served on locations that had fortified security doors which would not easily yield to a simple pry bar. In these cases, the team used a cable that was affixed to a winch mounted on the front of the raid vehicle to pull the security doors from their moorings. This was accomplished by pulling the raid vehicle as close to the entry door as possible, having two officers attach hooks located on the cable's end to the door, and then backing the raid vehicle away from the location. Once the security doors were removed, the team would move forward and breach the primary door in the usual fashion.

As alluded to above, the teams we observed sometimes incorporated noise-flash diversionary devices into their entry protocol. These devices were generally used in cases in which it was believed there was a higher than usual potential for violence, such as the aforementioned case in which the informant was threatened with a firearm. The teams we observed used flash-bangs in a variety of ways. In some instances, they deployed the devices directly inside the main entry point immediately after breaching the door. In others, they tossed them deeper into the structure, when the information they possessed indicated that there were no suspects in the front room. While in others team members deployed flash-bangs at secondary entry points, such as windows, to draw attention from the officers at the primary entry point.

Search

However the team secured entry, the officers then filtered into the location in their pre-assigned order, moving at a speed and in a fashion designed to permit the team to secure the location in short order while at the same time minimizing the degree of danger to which officers are exposed. The initial aspect of officers' movements inside search warrant locations is actually determined by the manner in which the team sets-up outside them. When officers "stack" at the entry point, for example, they typically do so on the hinge side of the door, which permits the number one officer to cover the first angle of exposure to possible danger from inside the location. The first officer, after ensuring that there is no threat immediately inside the door,[24] enters and leads the rest of the team into the location. The officers spread out in the first room/foyer/hallway to cover the various angles of exposure/danger and from there begin the clear the remainder of the location. The teams in our study used somewhat different techniques for moving through the location once all members had successfully entered, but all operated under the general principle that officers should never move from one room to another by themselves. All of the teams that we actually observed as they moved through warrant locations[25] followed this rule.

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[24] One of the teams we observed had in a shooting a few years prior to the current study in which an armed drug dealer was waiting inside the front door for them. When the breacher forced open the door, the initial officer was staring down the barrel of a shotgun. He immediately fired several rounds into the suspects chest.

Following the procedures we observed in training, the officers coordinated their movement during search warrants through both verbal and non-verbal communication. The primary means of non-verbal communication was something the teams called "squeezing up." This occurred when an officer who was by himself in a hallway would stop outside the doorway of a room, waiting for a second officer before entering. When another officer arrived at the doorway he too stopped for a moment, then -- with his non-gun hand -- squeezed the back of the leg of the first officer to let that officer know he was there and ready to move forward, and then followed the first officer into the room. This procedure allowed the officers to communicate with one another while allowing the first officer to remain focused on the areas that had not yet been searched.

The two primary means of verbal communication amongst the team were speaking to one another through their radios and shouting. When officers in one portion of the location wanted to communicate with those in another place, they would simply key their radio and speak into the mike. Officers used shouting to communicate with officers in their immediate vicinity. Officers waiting outside a room, for example, sometimes yelled for another officer to come to their position with some sort of pre-arranged phrase, such as "I need one!" (to indicate one additional officer is needed to enter a room; or "I need two", three and so on) and then waited for another officer to squeeze-up. Once inside rooms, officers would talk to one another about threat areas and announce in loud voices when they determined that there was no threat in the room by shouting something (usually “clear!”) in order to ensure that all officers in the vicinity were aware that there were apparently no suspects therein. Officers inside rooms would also sometimes use raised voices to reduce the likelihood of a friendly-fire shooting as they prepared to exit the room, shouting terms such as “coming out!” before they move from a room they had cleared.

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[25] We entered some locations along with the officers. In other cases we stayed immediately outside the entry point, observing officers' movements from the relative safety of that vantage point. Finally, to conform with the wishes of team commanders, we observed some warrants from somewhat distant perches (e.g., from inside the raid vehicle) and entered the locations only after it had been deemed secure.

Officers also used verbal means to control the citizens they encountered inside locations. This began immediately upon entry as multiple officers would state in loud voices some variant of the general statement, “Police, search warrant. Don’t move!” as they flowed into the location. When officers made contact with individuals during the search, they usually maintained their distance and issued specific commands to gain control of them. In some cases the officers commanded the citizens they encountered to lay on the floor and place their outstretched arms beside them. In others, officers ordered citizens to show their hands, turn so they faced away from the officer, walk slowly backward toward the officer’s voice, and then stop when they reached a place where the officer felt it was appropriate. Whatever the citizens’ final position of compliance, once they reached it one officer would handcuff and search them while other officers covered potential threat areas. Once all citizens had been secured, the team conducted a secondary clearing operation to ensure they had not missed anyone and then either began to look for whatever contraband was specified in the warrant or turned the location over to detectives who had developed the warrant, depending on the agency’s standard operating procedures on this point.

Callouts

Despite the fact that call-outs are ad hoc events that emerge at unpredictable times, occur in unpredictable locations, and involve unpredictable events, the SWAT teams we studied handled the call-outs we observed in a systematic fashion akin to that we saw in the service of high-risk warrants. They did so following a formula for dealing with whatever circumstance they confronted that consisted of a generic set of three primary steps: *staging, deploying, and working the problem*.

Staging

Staging refers to what the team does as it prepares to take action in any given call-out. This begins when team members are notified of the call-out, usually via their pagers. The officers are informed of the nature of the incident prompting the call-out and a location to which they should respond to meet the rest of team. Staging locations are determined by the officers requesting SWAT assistance and are supposed to be both near enough to the incident location so that the SWAT team can respond if something requires immediate SWAT action and far enough away that the team is not exposed to whatever danger exists at the incident location. The staging areas we responded to were typically a block or two from incident locations and were usually chosen with the comfort of the team in mind. Counted among the staging areas we observed were an automobile car rental yard with spacious awnings that protected the team from a raging rain storm, the headquarters of a small municipal police agency that kept the officers out of a bitter cold winter’s night, and a church parking lot with plenty of room for the team to park their cars and gather.

Once officers arrived at the staging area, they retrieved their SWAT gear from their vehicles and engaged in informal discussions about the nature of the problem at hand. This could go on for some time (upwards of 45 minutes) as officers had to respond from distant locations and through traffic. The first SWAT supervisor to arrive made contact with the person in charge of the incident (which ranged from patrol sergeants to police chiefs) to obtain an update about the situation they’d been called upon to handle. With this information in hand, the SWAT supervisor would assign a group of officers to scout out the incident scene in order to obtain information about matters such as the physical layout of the location, lines of sight, and specific positions of advantage to which the team might want to deploy (e.g., points of cover and concealment).

These scouting missions were the first step of an information gathering and dissemination process that occurred throughout the call-outs. When the officers scouting the location completed their missions, they met with their supervisor, who then served as a conduit to the team commander. Sometimes supervisors reported to the team commander via radio, while other times they would walk back to the CP to relay their findings in person. During these sessions the supervisors and the commander (sometimes along with the negotiators) would discuss the situation and develop plans for handling the incident. As the incident progressed, the supervisors would intermittently return to the CP to pass on additional information, discuss the progress of the mission, and modify (if necessary) their plans. On some occasions, the team commander left the CP to see for himself some aspect of the situation, and then returned to discuss matters with others who had remained at the CP. In this way, there was often a regular coming and going of personnel in and about the CP as the incident played itself out.

As some officers were conducting the initial scouting missions, others (typically negotiators) would seek to develop information about the history and mental state of the suspect(s), the types of weapons accessible to them, and other pertinent information. They did this through two primary means: 1) By identifying, locating, and interviewing the friends, family members, and other acquaintances (e.g., neighbors, co-workers) of the suspects (sometimes telephonically) and 2) By running warrant and criminal history checks on the suspect(s).

These aspects of the intelligence gathering process were conducted to verify the information provided by the officers who called-out the SWAT team, develop new information about possible hazards to the officers and others involved, and identify potential options for resolving the situation. In this connection, one SWAT supervisor told us that he regularly stressed to his team the importance of independently verifying the information provided by the initial responders because on more than one occasion they had been given incomplete or distorted information. In one case, for example, patrol simply told SWAT that the situation to which they responded involved a barricaded individual who was suicidal, failing to report that the individual had committed a serious violent crime immediately prior to barricading himself from the police.

In most of the cases we observed, once all available SWAT officers were present and the SWAT commander determined that he had sufficient intelligence, the commander briefed his team. In this briefing he would disseminate the intelligence and relay to the rest of the team the initial plan of action he had developed in concert with the subordinate supervisors and senior officers. For the unit we observed most extensively, the first step in conveying the initial action plan was to designate one team for containment and the other for entry/assault. Following this, the officers on each team were given individual position assignments (e.g., the specific location to which the snipers were to deploy) and specific zones of coverage. All of the teams we observed had in place a formal system for generic identification of specific aspects of the locations to which they were called out. In most cases this was a numbering system in which the front side of the location was dubbed the "1-side" and the remaining sides assigned numbers in order in a clockwise fashion. When facing the front side of a typical residence, for example, the left side of the structure would be the "2-side," the back of the house the "3-side," and the right side the "4-side."[26] Containment officers might thus be assigned to deploy to a position covering the 1-2 corner in order to observe the front and left side of a residence. Once all the assignments had been handed out, the officers left the assembly area and deployed to their assigned positions.

Deploying

The first aspect of deployment in most of the incidents we observed was for the SWAT officers assigned to containment to replace the patrol officers who were manning the perimeter. This allowed the SWAT team to form a 360 degree perimeter around the incident location designed to prevent the individual(s) inside the location from fleeing and to keep other citizens out of the location. (We were told of several incidents in which barricaded individuals had attempted to flee, only to be caught by containment officers, and others in which suspects' family members or friends had attempted to enter the incident scene, which would greatly complicate the team's ability to manage the situation). A second critical task the containment officers performed was to gather intelligence about the location and what was transpiring within. The 360 degree coverage often allowed these officers to see such things as movement inside a location or lights being turned off and on. To enhance this surveillance activity, containment officers generally attempted to take up covert positions that concealed their location from suspects, which also served to protect the officers from the threat posed by the suspect(s).

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[26] Some teams use letters, so that the front is the "A-side" and so on.

While containment officers' primary tasks are security and intelligence gathering, the job of the officers who constitute the assault/entry team is to take action within the perimeter area. They are responsible for tasks such as rescuing individuals in jeopardy, searching locations, confronting suspects, and taking surrendering individuals into custody. In order to be in position to accomplish such tasks, assault team members typically deployed somewhere inside the perimeter that allowed them quick access to the entry and exit points of a structure. For example, if a structure had both front and rear doors, they might position themselves on whichever side (i.e., 2 or 4) provided best access to both doors.

A final aspect of deployment is selection and manning of the incident CP. In some of the call-outs we observed, the staging area became the CP, but in most it was a separate area that was a bit closer to the location of the incident itself. We observed teams set-up CPs inside private residences, apartments, and government buildings; in the open air using patrol vehicles as platforms; and inside specially equipped vehicles (e.g., modified mobile homes) that were outfitted to serve as CPs for crisis situations. The CP served as the nerve center for the call-outs we observed, the place where the commanding supervisor and the negotiators deployed, the communications hub, and the place where all major decisions were made.

It should be noted that the generic descriptions of both the staging and deployment phases are ideal types that held for the majority, but not all, of the call-outs to which we responded. Activity sometimes deviated substantially from this model, when the circumstances at an incident indicated that the deliberate approach outlined above was sub-optimal. In one instance, for example, one of us was with a team at a barricaded suspect call at a single family residence when an "officer down" call came over the air. This was followed soon thereafter by a request for SWAT, because the individual who had shot the officer (fatally, it turned out) had barricaded himself inside a building. At the time the request came out, the team was about to conduct a clearing operation after having taken all known suspects into custody. The team commander called the team off the search, deployed other officers to secure the residence, briefly told the team of the situation, and ordered them to go to the "officer down" location (just a few miles away) and deploy as necessary. The officers left immediately (the majority of them in the

SWAT van) as the commander made sure the situation at the first incident was secure, then drove to the second incident with the observer in tow.

Upon arrival, the scene was flooded with dozens of police vehicles and scores of officers. The commander drove to the location where the SWAT van was parked (about one-half block from the incident location) parked, got out, and immediately began talking with some of the officers at the scene, gathering information about the initial shooting, what had transpired since then, and the location of officers around the perimeter. Several of the SWAT officers had already deployed to the location, taking-up positions along side patrol officers who had responded to the initial "officer down" call. In this instance then, there was no formal staging phase as officers began deploying well before the team commander arrived.

A variation on the deployment without staging occurred in the aforementioned incident in which members of one of the SWAT teams we observed were involved in a shooting. In this instance, a murder suspect had refused to surrender to a group of patrol officers who had pulled him over as he was riding in a private vehicle that was being driven by a friend. The friend had surrendered, but left the engine running when he exited the vehicle. The suspect then slid into the passenger seat, produced a handgun, and then alternately pointed it out the window and at his own head. At this point the patrol officers called for SWAT. The first three team members to arrive were two officers and a supervisor. As soon as the officers were geared-up, the supervisor told one of them to take-up a position with a group of patrol officers who were using police vehicles as cover some 50 yards directly in front of the suspect's vehicle. A few minutes after the first SWAT officer took-up the position, one of his teammates joined him behind the police vehicles. A few minutes after that, the suspect put the gun somewhere in the front seat area, put the vehicle in drive, and drove directly at the two SWAT officers at a high rate of speed. As the tires of the suspect's vehicle squealed from spinning to fast to maintain uninterrupted traction, one of the SWAT officers fired two rounds at the suspect as the vehicle approached. The vehicle continued towards the officers' position and they both jumped away from the police vehicles as the suspect plowed into them. When the proverbial dust from the collision cleared, both officers saw that the suspect was groping around with his right hand in the front passenger area. They both concluded that he was trying to retrieve his handgun and shot him from close quarters. Thus did the immediate deployment of SWAT officers place them in a position in which they could bring their superior firepower to bear on a dangerous criminal who decided to take aggressive action against the police.

Working the Problem

Excepting unusual circumstances such as the one described immediately above in which suspects provoked police action before all SWAT officers were in place, the teams we observed took a deliberate approach to handling call-outs that involved moving through a series of steps designed to peaceably resolve the problem. Typically, the initial step in this process was for the crisis negotiators to try to contact the suspect, usually via a telephone. In most of the cases we observed, suspects did not answer the first time the negotiators tried to reach them. In these cases, negotiators would leave a message on an answering machine or, if no machine picked-up, make repeat calls. When they left messages, the negotiators stated in relaxed tones that they were police officers, that they wished to talk to the individual in order to resolve the current situation, and left their call-back number. For those situations that were in an open area or there was no phone service to the location, negotiators used a bullhorn, deployed a throw-phone,[27] or, if safety permitted, got close enough to use direct voice contact. In those instances in which the negotiators were able to eventually make contact they then began a dialogue with the suspect that was designed to convince him or her to surrender.

In several of the situations we observed, the negotiators were able to convince suspects to surrender through such a dialogue. In some cases the dialogue was quite brief and suspects gave up after just a few minutes of discussion with negotiators. Other cases, however, lasted for extended periods of time. One such instance involved an emotionally disturbed adult male suspect who lived in a single family residence with his mother. The SWAT team had been called-out because patrol had received information that the man was armed with a rifle, was suicidal, and might present a threat to his mother.

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[27] A throw-phone is a compact phone with a couple of hundred yards of phone line, that allows for communication while keeping the officers at a safe distance.

When the negotiators called, the mother answered and told them that everything was fine, that there was no danger, that neither she nor her son needed police assistance, and then hung-up. Given the concern that the mother might be in danger, the negotiators called back, told the mother about their concerns, and asked to speak with the son. She again insisted that all was copasetic and refused to put her son on the line. Over the next several hours and several more phone calls, the negotiators were able to chat with the son and establish that he might have some sort of injury. Both the mother and the son insisted, however, that he did not need medical attention. The negotiators maintained that the SWAT team would not leave until they could establish that neither the mother nor the son needed medical attention, and finally convinced the mother (who the negotiators surmised from the discussions was actually in charge of the situation in the house) to permit EMT's to assess her son's condition. It was agreed that both the mother and son would step outside to meet some paramedics in front of their residence. The team set in motion a plan in which two team members donned paramedic's jackets and drove an ambulance to the front of the residence. When the mother and son emerged from the house and stepped towards the ambulance, members of the entry/assault team, who had hidden nearby, took them both into custody. After securing the scene, the team turned the son over to the real paramedics, who had remained a safe distance away. They determined that the son had several small caliber gunshot wounds to his upper torso, all apparently self inflicted from a .22 caliber rifle the SWAT team recovered from the residence.

In situations involving suspects who refused to answer the phone, otherwise refused to speak with the SWAT team, or would not agree to surrender after extended discussion, the teams we observed turned to other means to resolve matters. The first step in this process was generally a meeting among supervisory personnel to assess the situation by reviewing what had transpired to that point and discussing the options available to them. In the course of a typical discussion of this sort the teams we observed entertained many alternate courses of action, and settled on one in rather short order. Among the key options teams employed during the course of our observations were:

X Cutting power to a location - The basic purpose of this tactic is to take from suspects something they value in an attempt to prompt them to initiate conversation with the negotiators or (in the case of unfruitful negotiations) move the negotiations process forward. One instance of this we observed occurred when a team dealing with a barricaded individual who had no phone to his residence cranked-up the volume on his stereo, which drowned out the negotiator who was attempting to make direct voice contact. Cutting the power took from the suspect his music, allowed the negotiator to be heard, and eventually led to a dialogue.

X Breaching and holding - This tactic involves creating an opening in the structure in which the suspect is ensconced, but not entering. In the call-outs we observed, the breach was done by mechanically forcing open doors, but SWAT teams have been known to use other breaching techniques, such as punching holes in walls with armored vehicles and using explosives to defeat doors or blow holes in other portions of buildings. The primary purpose of breaching and holding at barricade call-outs is to change the psychology to the situation by breaking down a symbolic security barrier that shields the suspect through a show of force that demonstrates that the SWAT team can force their way into the location if they so desire.

X Breaking windows - This was used for some of the same reasons as breaching and holding. Breaking the windows was viewed as breaking down a security barrier. This approach had become quite regular with the unit we extensively observed, as they had recently acquired a multi-shot 37 mm gas gun, which allowed them to break windows with rubber baton rounds from considerable distance. The commander and some of the officers from this unit stated that they preferred breaking windows to breaching doors because it had a similar effect with increased safety through distance.

- Revealing the position of containment or entry/assault officers - One common way we observed units do this by putting entry/assault officers in the units' armored vehicle and placing that vehicle within a few yards of the location the barricaded individual was in. Placing this vehicle in such close proximity was meant to pressure the individual to stop avoiding the negotiators' attempts to contact them.
- Introducing chemical agents into a location - On more than one occasion in which barricaded suspects refused to negotiate or negotiations proved fruitless the teams we observed deployed CS gas. The intent of this action was to cause the suspect sufficient physical irritation to exit the location in search of uncontaminated air.

The first four techniques were generally employed to agitate the individual inside to the point they would respond to negotiators attempts to contact them. One commander noted that even if the barricaded individual only answered the phone to yell at them, at least they were now on the phone with the negotiator. The introduction of gas was primarily used with the intention of forcing individuals out of their stronghold location and then having them surrender.

Another option that was always in play at the barricaded suspect call-outs we observed was for officers to enter and search a location for the barricaded individual(s). However, most of the supervisors and officers preferred using these other prompts to get the individual out. They explained that going into a location increased a chance for a confrontation where a suspect might be in a position to attack the officers (but see below).

It is important to note that in selecting a course of action the teams we observed paid careful attention to the nature of the specific situation at hand. For example, one team commander noted that when dealing with suicidal individuals he wanted to avoid taking action that might prompt the individual to commit suicide. Teams also considered factors such as the burden their actions might place on innocent third parties and the health of suspects. Both of these considerations were evident in one case we observed that involved an elderly man who had barricaded himself in his house after brandishing a firearm. The team commander took the use of chemical agents off the table, stating that he was concerned that CS might seriously effect the man's health and that he did not want to cause any discomfort for the suspect's wife, who would return to the residence after the situation was resolved.

Most of the call-outs we observed ended with the suspect(s) surrendering as a result of negotiations, which were often initiated after one of the above-mentioned (non-gas) prompts. When suspects did agree to surrender, the negotiator would given them instructions on how they should do so. In the standard procedure we observed, negotiators would instruct suspects to exit with nothing in their hands, walk to some pre-determined point, lay down on the ground, and comply with whatever commands the arresting officers might give. This discussion of the surrender procedure was done to reduce the chance of confusion between the surrendering suspect and officers and thereby reduce the chances that someone might be unnecessarily injured. Once all suspects had been taken into police custody a group of SWAT officers would enter the location in question and search it to ensure that no one else was inside.

The surrender process was somewhat different in those situations in which gas was employed. In these cases, SWAT officers near whatever location the suspect(s) exited would issue verbal commands for the suspect(s) to lie on the ground and assume a handcuffing position. If they did so, a group of officers would approach the prone suspect(s) and take them into custody. If the suspect(s) refused to comply, officers would use physical tactics to gain compliance. The suspect who had barricaded himself in a residence after shooting a police officer, for example, did not immediately comply with verbal commands after being forced from his stronghold position with gas. Within seconds, the arrest team used an aggressive swarm technique to take him into custody. In other situations, officers used less aggressive means to arrest non-compliant suspects forced from locations by gas, typically by simply grabbing and handcuffing them.

While the teams we observed were usually able to get suspects into custody by some combination of negotiations and lower-level force tactics, there were three occasions in which such an approach do not succeed; the aforementioned SWAT officer-involved shooting, and two instances in which suspects committed suicide. Both of the later situations involved barricaded individuals who were suspected of having committed serious crimes.

The suspect in the first of these was a male wanted for shooting two police officers in another state who had barricaded himself in the attic of a ten room single story motel. After repeated attempts to establish verbal contact with the suspect failed, the team decided to conduct a methodical search of the entire building by clearing the rooms from the end furthest from the one the suspect had been staying in (the attic area was such that anyone entering it from one room could access the rest of the rooms from there). After clearing a room, they used a thermal imaging device they had borrowed from the fire department to scan the attic area immediately above that room before moving on to the next one. After clearing several rooms and much of the attic space in this fashion, the thermal imaging device indicated the presence of a human sized heat source in the space above one of the final rooms. When the team attempted to verbally contact the suspect, they heard some unintelligible speech, attempted to develop a dialogue, but were not successful. As the officers in the room were seeking to establish dialogue, the officer monitoring the thermal imaging device informed them that the shape had moved to a standing position and was pointing what appeared to be a firearm toward the ceiling from above.

At that point, one of the officers posted near the attic opening threw a sting-ball device into the attic. The device fell back out of the opening and detonated. A few seconds later, the officer monitoring the thermal imager reported that the figure was no longer in a standing position. The team then attempted several times to establish a dialogue with the suspect. After each attempt was met with silence, one of the officers attempted to fire a small number of 37mm plastic baton rounds through the ceiling at the immobile shape. When none of these rounds penetrated the Sheetrock, the team discontinued this tactic and decided to insert a pole-mounted camera into the attic. The officer monitoring this device reported that it appeared that the shape was indeed a human and that the person appeared to have a massive gunshot wound to his head. At that point, other team members used fireman’s poles to rip away the ceiling Sheetrock from around the supine suspect. After a good deal of the Sheetrock had been ripped away, the suspect fell through what remained of the ceiling and onto the floor of the hotel room. It was apparent at that point that the suspect was dead, and that he had died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

The second incident that ended in suspect suicide involved an armed male who had broken into his estranged girlfriend's house, causing her to flee to the safety of a neighbor's house. When the patrol officers who responded learned that the boyfriend had a violent history and that he was armed with a handgun when he broke into his girlfriend's house, they set up a perimeter around the residence in question and called for SWAT assistance after the suspect refused to surrender to them. Shortly after SWAT arrived, and before the team could gather for a formal briefing, the suspect set fire to his girlfriend's house and then exited the front door armed with a handgun. The suspect walked toward a group of patrol and SWAT officers who had taken cover behind their police vehicles, approaching to within about 25 feet of them with his handgun at his side. After failing to comply with repeated orders to drop the gun and surrender, the suspect retreated to the front yard of the burning residence, sat down with his back against a tree, and alternately cradled the gun in his lap and lifted it to wave it about his head and in the general direction of the officers stationed behind their vehicles.

At this point and from a distance of some 30 yards, the SWAT negotiator, through a bullhorn, tried repeatedly to engage the suspect in a dialogue aimed at getting him to relinquish his gun and surrender. After several attempts were rebuffed, the SWAT commander ordered two of his officers to fire less-lethal munitions at the suspect in an attempt to force him to drop the gun. Despite being struck by multiple 37 mm plastic baton and 12 ga. beanbag rounds, the suspect maintained his grip on his weapon, stood up, and began to walk towards the 2-side of the flaming house. While he was near the 1-2 corner of the burning residence, SWAT officers took him under fire with three additional less-lethal rounds. The suspect then proceeded along the 2-side of the residence and into the back yard where he confronted a group of SWAT officers who had moved into position there. While in the back yard, SWAT officers again fired less-lethal projectiles at the suspect, striking him multiple times. Within a few moments of this, the suspect ended the standoff by firing a single round into his right temple.

The three call-outs that ended with lethal gunfire (i.e., the previously described officer-involved shooting and the two suicides) illustrate that even with the procedures that SWAT units employ to manage call-outs in a measured fashion, they are never in complete control of the incidents they are called upon to handle. In short, during call-outs SWAT teams are ultimately in a reactive mode, constantly adjusting their tactics and activities to the vagaries that each situation produces. And when a suspect refuses to cooperate, SWAT officers may not be able to resolve the matter without bloodshed.

However the various call-outs we observed concluded, and whatever transpired between the time the first team members arrived and the situation ended, there were some commonalities across all of them. First, the teams always sought to employ a regularized routine as they set out to do their business and only departed from it when circumstances indicated that some modification was in order (i.e., rapid as opposed to deliberate deployment following a controlled staging phase when presented with a dynamic threat). Second, the teams engaged in a constant effort to gather pertinent information, which they then continually evaluated to aid their decision making process. Third, and in a related vein, the teams sought to have a regularized flow of the information amongst themselves in order to enhance their ability to engage in coordinated action. And fourth, because the teams viewed negotiations as their primary incident resolution tactic, they always sought to establish communication with suspects with the intention of negotiating their surrender, whether or not they were able to actually establish a dialogue. In all of these ways then, the teams sought to model their actions during call-outs on what they had practiced in training.

CONCLUSIONS

That the SWAT teams we observed comported themselves during operations in a manner that is consistent with what they practiced in training suggests strongly that the substantial time many teams devote to training is a sound investment. In a time of tight budgets and manpower constraints, some might chaff at the costs (in both time and payroll) associated with extensive SWAT training. Such concerns need to be measured against the performance of SWAT teams when they do deploy (i.e., how closely their actions fit with the standards set forth in training), and against the outcomes of the operations they are called upon to handle. SWAT teams came into existence almost 40 years ago in order to handle special threat situations with minimal human injury or loss of life, and SWAT operational doctrine has evolved since then in a constant attempt to improve their capacity to fulfill this mandate. The hard data from the SOS showing that SWAT teams only rarely resort to lethal force indicates that SWAT teams appear to be doing what they are designed to do. The field work we conducted helps explain why this is so: SWAT teams do in the field what they have been taught to do in training. Our initial conclusion, therefore, is that SWAT teams should be encouraged to train as much as time and budget considerations will permit. It makes little sense to outfit a group of police officers with SWAT appurtenances and then fail to provide them with the training necessary to put these tools to work to the utmost.

Embedded in this initial conclusion is a second: SWAT teams appear to be fulfilling their intended purpose of resolving high-risk situations with limited force. Where the ultimate level of force is concerned, one of the key pieces of evidence on this point is the aforementioned finding from the SOS that SWAT officers use deadly force in just a small fraction of the incidents they handle. A second piece of evidence on the deadly force issue is the deliberate approach the teams we observed used when training for and dealing with crisis situations. Outside of the range training and scenario training that was designed to include gunfire, the officers we observed usually held their fire during training evolutions in situations in which shooting would have been permissible. Moreover, even in scenario training that called for the application of deadly force the teams used measured, deliberate procedures – with a substantial emphasis on negotiations – that were designed to bring the matter to a close without having to fire any shots.

In the field, we observed teams take slow and controlled steps to resolve situations without gunfire. From simply talking armed and dangerous people into surrendering peacefully, to using low levels of physical force to take non-compliant suspects into custody, to using impact munitions against a violent mentally-unbalanced suspect with a gun whose actions were quite provocative, the teams we observed sought mightily to use tactics short of lethal gunfire to complete their tasks. And in the single case we responded to in which a suspect assaulted SWAT officers with a deadly weapon, the application of deadly force was measured: six shots between two of the many officers on scene.

Another key finding is that the nation's SWAT teams have been able to accomplish their fundamental purpose with a variety of organizational forms, structures, and practices. While most of the teams are made up of officers from a single agency, some teams include officers from multiple jurisdictions. While some consist exclusively of full-time SWAT officers, some are made up of officers who work SWAT as an ancillary duty, and others still include both part- and full-time SWAT officers. While some teams train 40 or more hours per month, others train very little. And so on and so forth on various other dimensions such as command and control of SWAT operations, negotiations, and emergency medical services.

One thing our research was not able to ascertain was whether any particular approach to SWAT appears to be better than any other. One reason for this is that we simply have no widely-agreed upon standard upon which to make such judgments. And even if one were to take an obvious indicator such as the frequency of shootings, the number of SWAT officer-involved shootings is so small that meaningful analysis is not possible. A second factor that limits our capacity to draw conclusions from the hard data about what sort(s) of organizational forms and behaviors are superior is the limited number of agencies that participated in the current study. Due to low participation and the lack of clear-cut indicators of SWAT performance, it is not possible to draw any "best SWAT practices" from the quantitative data collected during the current study. All we can say is that it indicates that in an overall sense SWAT is an effective tool for accomplishing its intended purpose to save lives.

This conclusion should not be taken as the final word on the subject, however. It is quite likely that there are specific SWAT organizational properties, training regimes, and so on that are superior to others. Where operations are concerned, for example, that keeping warrant locations under surveillance until SWAT arrives is likely preferable to having SWAT serve warrants with no idea about who may (or may not) be present. Doing so would have prevented (or at least muted) the previously described verbal tiff between the upset guest and the SWAT commander whose team raided a vacant motel room. Additional research that seeks to establish sound measures of SWAT organization and activities (and that had better participation than we were able to obtain) might well be useful for shedding some empirical light on matters of this sort.

Where training is concerned, it is only through preparation for and execution of realistic scenarios that teams were able to identify weak points in their capabilities and move to strengthen them. Neither the problem that led one officer to sweep the barrel of his weapon across the back of the head of another officer nor the one that produced the timing discrepancy in sniper shots, for example, would have been identified had it not been for the involved training these teams regularly conducted. Teams that do not have the time to conduct such training on a regular basis have a much lower capacity to discover and correct weaknesses. It consequently makes sense to us that SWAT teams that are currently on the lower end of the training time distribution should seek to increase the time they devote to training. Because the potential costs associated with SWAT failure are quite high – the unnecessary loss of life or limb, as well as the potential fallout from same – SWAT teams should be encouraged to undertake the sort of rigorous training that will permit them to identify and correct problems before they lead to operational failure.

In this connection, the present study did produce hard data that speaks to a substantial problem in the SWAT community. It is simply unacceptable that SWAT officers have the number of unintentional discharges of firearms – approximately three dozen – that were disclosed by the SOS. Even though the number of accidental discharges averages less than 3 per study year across hundreds of teams and thousands of operations, SWAT officers should not be having anywhere near that number. Driving this point home is that fact that two of the fatal shootings reported in the SOS were unintentional. We hope that the tactical community will take seriously the problem of unintentional gunfire, take steps to reduce their frequency, and thereby preclude further unnecessary deaths. No human system of dealing with dangerous situations can ever reduce negative outcomes to zero, but SWAT teams and officers can strive to do better. In this connection, research directed at identifying the circumstances under which SWAT officers accidently discharge their firearms (e.g., the type of weapon [type, caliber, model, etc], the sorts of missions [warrant, barricade, etc.], precisely what the officer was doing when the round was discharged [entering a location, moving on the perimeter, placing firearm into vehicle, etc.], and how the weapon was being held) might provide some insight for trainers to help on this point.

And we believe that the notion of training to perform better this is a sound theme upon which to close this final report. Our research indicates that SWAT teams have accomplished many good things in recent years. They have trained and worked hard to fulfill their life-saving mandate, they have developed and/or adopted many innovations that appear to help save lives (e.g., crisis negotiations and impact munitions), and they have done so by constantly striving to improve their capabilities. We believe that a continued focus on improvement by SWAT teams will allow the American police to do an even better job of fulfilling their mission to serve the citizenry in the future.

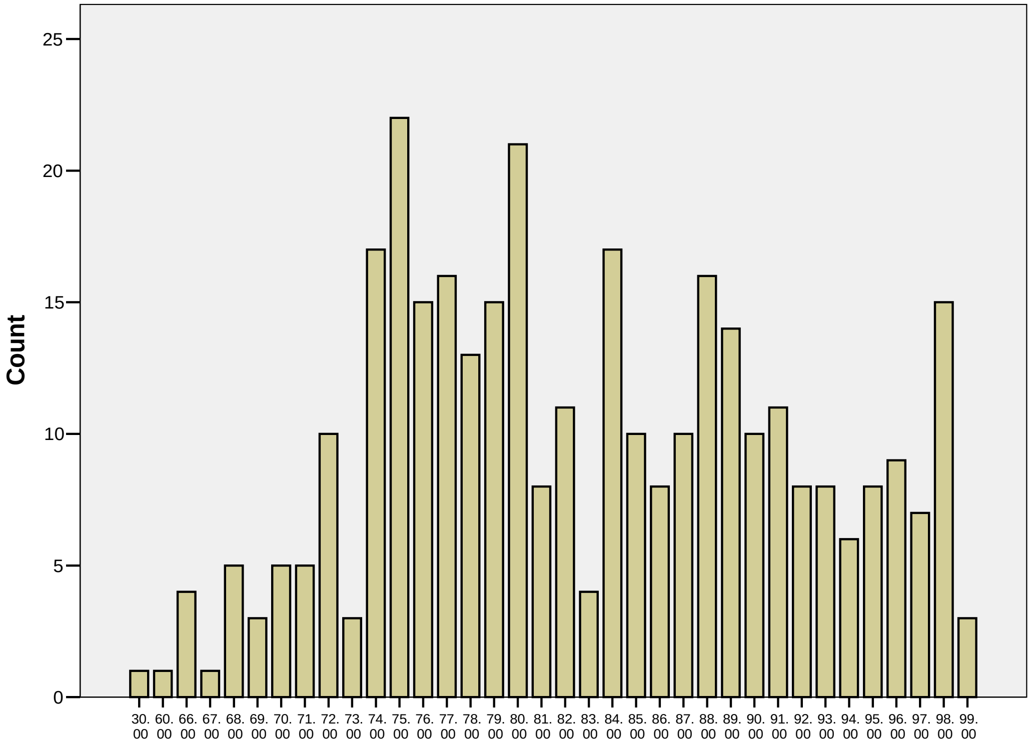

Figure 1: Year SWAT Team was Established (Count)

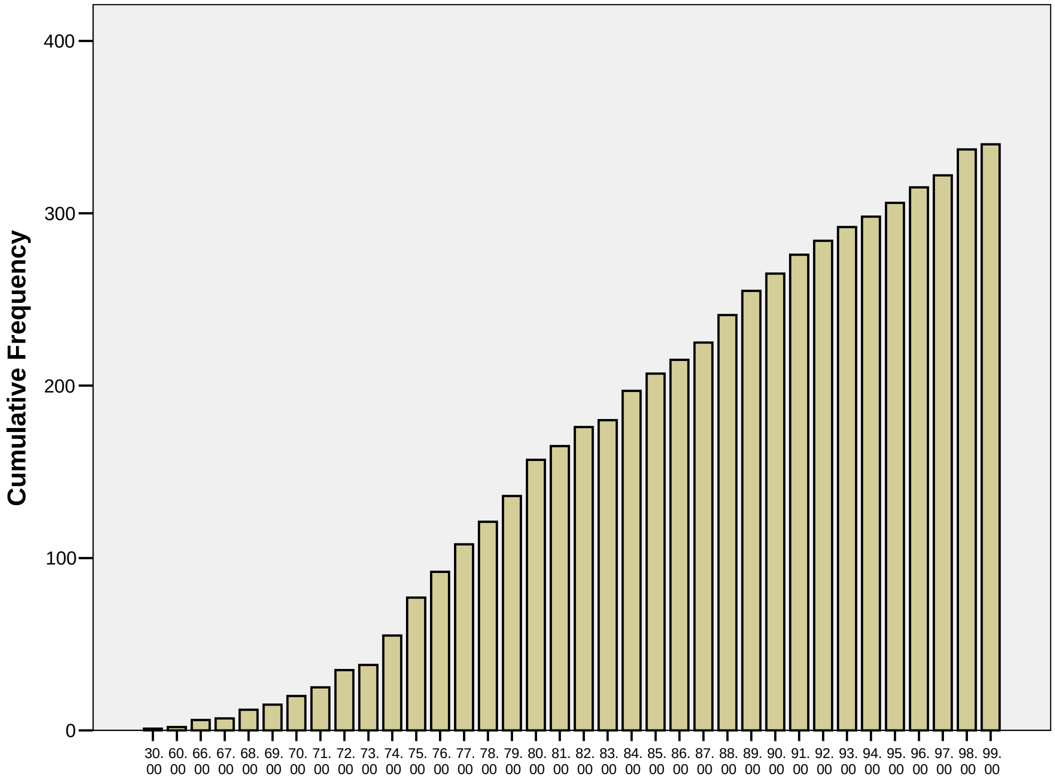

Figure 2: Year SWAT Team was Established (Cumulative)

Table 1: SWAT Team Types (N=337 teams reporting)

	Number of Teams	Percent
Full Time Teams	24	7%
Part Time Teams	299	89%
Mixed Teams	14	4%

Table 2: Number of SWAT Officers per Team (320 agencies reporting)

	Number of Teams	Percent
20 and below	260	81%
21-30	44	14%
31-40	9	3%
41-50	1	>1%
51+	6	2%

Table 3: Crisis Negotiations Structure (338 teams reporting)

	Number of Agencies	Percent
SWAT Officer Negotiators	55	16%
Sworn, Negotiations Unit	277	82%
Sworn, Not Assigned to Unit	24	7%
Civilian, Negotiations Unit	15	4%
Civilian, Not Assigned to Unit	16	5%
Other Negotiations	23	7%

Table 4: Percentage of Teams That Trained for Specific Activities in 1998 (N=339)

Activity Type	*Percent*	*Activity Type*	*Percent*
Suicidal Subjects	71%	Water-Borne Assault	7%
Barricaded Suspect	95%	Civil Unrest	49%
Hostage Incident	92%	Narcotics Warrants	91%
Hostage Rescue	87%	Other Warrants	80%
Auto/van Assault	80%	Building Searches	94%
Bus Assault	64%	Area Searches	60%
Train Assault	11%	Downed Person Rescue	86%
Aircraft Assault	12%	Other	19%

Table 5: Portion of Teams Receiving Training From Specific Sources in 1998 (N=339)

Training Source	*Percent*	*Training Source*	*Percent*
Own Agency	98%	State Tac. Officers Assoc.	34%
Local Agency (besides self)	49%	Private Vendor	61%
State Agency (besides self)	24%	U.S. Military	34%
Federal Agency	45%	Foreign Military	1%
National Tac. Officers Assoc.	42%	Other	9%

Table 6: Annual Number of Barricades Handled by SWAT Teams

Year	*Teams Reporting*	*Total N of Barricades*	*Range*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mode*
1986	78	230	0-36	2.9	1	0
1987	95	268	0-26	2.8	1	0
1988	104	411	0-53	3.9	1	0
1989	129	447	0-48	3.5	1	0
1990	142	452	0-44	3.2	1	0
1991	162	524	0-48	3.2	1	0
1992	180	596	0-38	3.3	1	0
1993	200	718	0-38	3.6	1	0
1994	215	873	0-48	4.0	2	0
1995	231	889	0-43	3.8	2	0
1996	248	960	0-58	3.9	2	1
1997	253	954	0-92	3.7	2	1
1998	270	962	0-67	3.6	2	1

Table 7: Annual Number of Hostage Incidents Handled by SWAT Teams

Year	*Teams Reporting*	*Number of Cases*	*Range*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mode*
1986	79	52	0-9	.66	0	0
1987	88	66	0-22	.75	0	0
1988	99	61	0-18	.62	0	0
1989	126	92	0-13	.73	0	0
1990	134	52	0-9	.39	0	0
1991	157	59	0-5	.38	0	0
1992	173	77	0-14	.45	0	0
1993	191	93	0-12	.49	0	0
1994	202	113	0-9	.56	0	0
1995	214	125	0-7	.58	0	0
1996	235	147	0-9	.63	0	0
1997	232	135	0-11	.58	0	0
1998	243	108	0-6	.44	0	0

Table 8: Annual Number of Warrants Served by SWAT Teams

Year	*Teams Reporting*	*Number of Cases*	*Range*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mode*
1986	75	350	0-69	4.7	1	0
1987	89	488	0-68	5.5	2	0
1988	99	913	0-188	9.2	2	0
1989	126	1804	0-262	14.3	3	0
1990	132	2143	0-334	16.2	4	0
1991	155	2923	0-463	18.9	4	0
1992	176	2977	0-387	16.9	4	0
1993	192	3219	0-305	16.8	5	0
1994	213	3599	0-283	16.9	4	0
1995	223	3585	0-338	16.0	4	0
1996	252	4629	0-417	18.4	5	0
1997	248	3745	0-200	15.1	5	1
1998	267	3896	0-207	14.6	5	0

Table 9: Annual Number of Miscellaneous SWAT Operations

Year	*Teams Reporting*	*Total N of "Other"*	*Range*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mode*
1986	77	42	0-5	.55	0	0
1987	89	72	0-14	.81	0	0
1988	99	128	0-32	1.3	0	0
1989	118	309	0-171	2.6	0	0
1990	131	300	0-162	2.3	0	0
1991	150	325	0-157	2.2	0	0
1992	173	405	0-175	2.3	0	0
1993	189	440	0-162	2.3	0	0
1994	200	453	0-156	2.3	0	0
1995	212	492	0-173	2.3	0	0
1996	242	696	0-191	2.9	0	0
1997	233	614	0-148	2.6	0	0
1998	241	642	0-187	2.7	0	0

Table 10: Annual Number of SWAT Officer-Involved Shootings

Year	*Teams Reporting*	*Total N of OIS's*	*N of Teams That Shot*	*High N of Shootings*	*Mean*
1986	178	21	12	9	.12
1987	187	16	11	4	.09
1988	203	19	17	2	.09
1989	220	22	18	4	.10
1990	229	17	14	2	.07
1991	243	25	21	5	.10
1992	256	29	22	3	.11
1993	262	34	32	2	.13
1994	270	32	27	4	.12
1995	277	44	32	3	.16
1996	289	43	36	3	.15
1997	288	38	28	4	.13
1998	299	41	34	2	.14

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Appendix 1: SWAT Operations Form, Firearms Discharge Report, and Instructions

Appendix 2: Post Critical Incident Report Form

FIREARM DISCHARGE REPORT *(SWAT Operations Survey)*

*Enter **UK**, for unknown, if you do not know the date and /or time of the incident.*

1) Name of your agency ______________________________

2) a) Date Incident Started ___ ___ ___ (mo day year) b) Date Incident Ended ___ ___ ___ (mo day year)

3) a) Time Incident Started (military)_______ b) Time Incident Ended (military)_______

4) Incident type (please check appropriate blank):

Barricaded Person____ Hostage Incident____ Civil Disturbance____
Narcotics Warrant____ Other Warrant____ All Others____

*Enter **UK**, for unknown, if you do not know the number of officers or suspects*

5) Total number of SWAT officers deployed_____

6) Total number of suspects involved in incident _____

7) Please indicate the type(s) and numbers of weapons possessed by each suspect involved in this incident, whether each suspect discharged any firearms, and whether each suspect was taken under fire by team members by **checking** the appropriate response. If suspect possessed or fired more than one of a given weapon type, please **enter the number** of weapons possessed/fired in the appropriate blank. If the incident involved more than five suspects, please report the relevant information for suspect #6, #7, etc. on the other side of this sheet.

*If the answer to a question is unknown, enter **UK.** If the answer is zero, enter **0.***

Suspect 1

Weapons Possessed (Report all that apply)	Firearms Discharged (Report all that apply)		
____Handgun	____Handgun	Did team members fire at this suspect?	____Yes ___No
____Shotgun	____Shotgun	***If yes**, how many rounds?*	____
____Rifle	____Rifle	***If yes**, did any round(s) strike suspect?*	____Yes ___No
____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm		
____Other Weapon		***If yes,** were wounds fatal?*	____Yes ___No
(specify)___________			
____Unarmed	____None		

Suspect 2

Weapons Possessed (Report all that apply)	Firearms Discharged (Report all that apply)		
____Handgun	____Handgun	Did team members fire at this suspect?	____Yes ___No
____Shotgun	____Shotgun	***If yes**, how many rounds?*	____
____Rifle	____Rifle	***If yes**, did any round(s) strike suspect?*	____Yes ___No
____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm		
____Other Weapon		***If yes,** were wounds fatal?*	____Yes ___No
(specify)___________			
____Unarmed	____None		

Suspect 3

Weapons Possessed (Report all that apply)	Firearms Discharged (Report all that apply)		
____Handgun	____Handgun	Did team members fire at this suspect?	____Yes ___No
____Shotgun	____Shotgun	***If yes***, *how many rounds?*	____
____Rifle	____Rifle	***If yes***, *did any round(s) strike suspect?*	____Yes ___No
____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm		
____Other Weapon		***If yes,*** *were wounds fatal?*	____Yes ___No
(specify)____________			
____Unarmed	____None		

Suspect 4

Weapons Possessed (Report all that apply)	Firearms Discharged (Report all that apply)		
____Handgun	____Handgun	Did team members fire at this suspect?	____Yes ___No
____Shotgun	____Shotgun	***If yes***, *how many rounds?*	____
____Rifle	____Rifle	***If yes***, *did any round(s) strike suspect?*	____Yes ___No
____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm		
____Other Weapon		***If yes,*** *were wounds fatal?*	____Yes ___No
(specify)____________			
____Unarmed	____None		

Suspect 5

Weapons Possessed (Report all that apply)	Firearms Discharged (Report all that apply)		
____Handgun	____Handgun	Did team members fire at this suspect?	____Yes ___No
____Shotgun	____Shotgun	***If yes***, *how many rounds?*	____
____Rifle	____Rifle	***If yes***, *did any round(s) strike suspect?*	____Yes ___No
____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm		
____Other Weapon		***If yes,*** *were wounds fatal?*	____Yes ___No
(specify)____________			
____Unarmed	____None		

8) Number of SWAT officers who fired weapons in this incident ____

9) For each officer who discharged a weapon, please indicate the team element to which s/he was assigned, the type(s) of weapon(s) s/he fired, and the number of rounds discharged from each weapon. If more than five officers fired shots, please report the relevant information for officers # 6, #7, etc. on the other side of this sheet.

*If the answer to a question is unknown, enter **UK.** If the answer is zero, enter **0.***

Officer 1	Element Assignment (Check team)	Weapon Fired (Check all that apply)	Rounds Fired (Enter number per weapon)
	____Entry/Assault	____Handgun	____Handgun
	____Containment	____Shotgun	____Shotgun
	____Long Rifle	____Subgun	____Subgun
	____Other	____Assault Rifle	____Assault Rifle
	(specify)___________	____Long Rifle	____Long Rifle
		____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm

Officer 2	Element Assignment (Check team)	Weapon Fired (Check all that apply)	Rounds Fired (Enter number per weapon)
	____Entry/Asault	____Handgun	____Handgun
	____Containment	____Shotgun	____Shotgun
	____Long Rifle	____Subgun	____Subgun
	____Other	____Assault Rifle	____Assault Rifle
	(specify)___________	____Long Rifle	____Long Rifle
		____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm

Officer 3	Element Assignment (Check team)	Weapon Fired (Check all that apply)	Rounds Fired (Enter number per weapon)
	____Entry/Assault	____Handgun	____Handgun
	____Containment	____Shotgun	____Shotgun
	____Long Rifle	____Subgun	____Subgun
	____Other	____Assault Rifle	____Assault Rifle
	(specify)___________	____Long Rifle	____Long Rifle
		____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm

Officer 4	Element Assignment (Check team)	Weapon Fired (Check all that apply)	Rounds Fired (Enter number per weapon)
	____Entry/Assault	____Handgun	____Handgun
	____Containment	____Shotgun	____Shotgun
	____Long Rifle	____Subgun	____Subgun
	____Other	____Assault Rifle	____Assault Rifle
	(specify)___________	____Long Rifle	____Long Rifle
		____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm

Officer 5	Element Assignment (Check team)	Weapon Fired (Check all that apply)	Rounds Fired (Enter number per weapon)
	____Entry/Assault	____Handgun	____Handgun
	____Containment	____Shotgun	____Shotgun
	____Long Rifle	____Subgun	____Subgun
	____Other	____Assault Rifle	____Assault Rifle
	(specify)____________	____Long Rifle	____Long Rifle
		____Other Firearm	____Other Firearm

If the answer to a question is unknown, enter ***UK.*** *If the answer is zero, enter* ***0.***

10) *This item pertains to shots* ***directed at humans.***
Please report the **total number** of rounds of each sort fired by SWAT in this incident.

a) Number of shots fired at any suspects ____
b) Number of shots striking any suspects____

11) *This item pertains to shots taken by team members that* ***were NOT directed at humans.***
Please report the **total number** of rounds of each sort fired by SWAT in this incident.

a) Number of warning shots fired ____
b) Number of shots fired to disable firearms ____
c) Number of suppression shots fired____
d) Number of shots accidentally discharged ____
e) Number of shots fired at animals____
f) Number of shots fired at vehicles, *but not occupants* (e.g., engine block, tires)____
g) Number of all other shots not directed at humans (e.g., to kill street lights)____

12) Number of SWAT officers who suffered **non-gunshot** injuries at the hands of suspects (i.e., officers stabbed, struck by blunt objects, etc.)____

13) *This item refers to SWAT officers struck by* ***suspect*** *gunfire.*

a) Number of officers hit by gunfire in body armor, tactical helmet, or face shield____
b) Number of officers suffering **non-fatal** penetrating or perforating gunshot wounds____
c) Number of officers suffering **fatal** gunshot wounds____

14) *This item refers to SWAT officers struck by gunfire from* ***other SWAT officers****.*

a) Number of officers hit by gunfire in body armor, tactical helmet, or face shield____
b) Number of officers suffering **non-fatal** penetrating or perforating gunshot wounds____
c) Number of officers suffering **fatal** gunshot wounds____

15) If a suspect was shot by SWAT officers in this incident, did the suspect's actions indicate that it may have been a "suicide by cop" (or an attempt if suspect survived)?

_____ Yes _____ No

POST CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT DATA SHEET

National Tactical Officers Association
PO Box 529, Doylestown, PA 18901
800.279.9127

INTRODUCTION:

The “Post Critical Incident Report” (PCIR) is designed to assist the Tactical and Negotiations Community (TNC) in gathering statistical information. The information will be formulated from incidents that are deemed *critical*. A critical incident is defined as: *any incident that goes beyond the capabilities of patrol and requires the services of specialized department/agency resources*. Incidents such as barricaded suspects, high-risk warrants and hostage situations would be classified as critical. Incidents that require the services of a crisis negotiator could also be considered critical. Any incident that could assist the TNC by way of information dissemination should be reported.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) identified the need for such a document many years ago. Although there are many good resources available to the law enforcement community, none have been designed specifically for the TNC. The United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crimes Reports (UCR) section has for many years been an excellent source of information regarding officers injured or killed in the line of duty. If an officer assigned to a tactical unit was injured or killed during a critical incident, that information would be available through the UCR. Not all incidents are resolved with injury to an officer. Consequently, there are hundreds of incidents that occur which go unreported to agencies outside of neighboring jurisdictions.

The goal of the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), is to provide a database of critical incidents that could be shared with the TNC. The success of this program will be based on active participation throughout the TNC. The value of the program will be measured by a department/agency’s specific needs. The information gathered could support a long-standing tactic and/or identify the need to change a particular tactic. It is not the intent of the LAPD or NTOA to dictate tactics. Incidents are unique with a multitude of variables. The PCIR database is simply a tool to be used as needed.

As with any published document, any and all of the contents are discoverable. This document was designed with that in mind. Most of the information contained in the document could be obtained via other resources, ie; newspaper articles, coroners report, press releases, etc. If the preparer does not wish to include certain information on the document, the space or section should be left blank.

Each year, the NTOA will provide statistical information gathered from all participating agencies. The NTOA will then publish this information in its technical journal, *The Tactical Edge* magazine. It is also the intent of the NTOA to publish selected critical incidents of interest. This method of dissemination will reach hundreds of law enforcement agencies and will enhance their ability to stockpile numerous incidents for immediate reference.

THE DOCUMENT:

The purpose of this document is to assist members of the Tactical and Negotiations Community (TNC) in gathering statistical information regarding the occurrence of critical incidents. Critical incidents are defined as: *any incident that goes beyond the capabilities of patrol and requires the services of specialized department/agency resources.* To complete this document, fill in the appropriate blank or check the appropriate box. Although the information in this report is voluntary, please provide a “point of contact” in the event future inquires are made in reference to the incident.

The PCIR consists of 11 sections. Each section is self-explanatory but is described in detail on the following page. It may be necessary to “fill in” or “check” more than a single response in each section.

CONCLUSION:

The Post Critical Incident Report is designed to assist the Tactical and Negotiations Community. It is not intended to dictate tactics or criticize a department/agency’s actions. It is intended to assist the TNC by providing case studies (actual incidents) to support a long-standing tactic or perhaps cause re-evaluation. The information gleaned from this project will be shared throughout the TNC by way of *The Tactical Edge* journal. Any special/specific requests will be honored on an individual basis. Not all sections of the PCIR will apply to every incident. The preparer should expect to spend a minimum of 15 minutes to complete the PCIR. More involved incidents will take additional time as needed. The output is only as good as the input. As a long-standing member of the TNC, we thank you for your support and cooperation with this project.

DOCUMENT SECTIONS

Agency Information

This section contains information regarding Agency and Team demographics. It is important to include the "Point of Contact" "Phone and Fax" for future inquires.

Section 1: Incident Profile

This section describes the Incident, Date, Incident Start Time, SWAT Arrival Time, Negotiator Arrival Time, and Incident End Time. This section also allows you to enter the names and assignments of personnel for a particular incident.

Section 2: Location Profile

This section gives a "Location" Profile. Incident Location, Location Type, Fortification and other details are listed. Incidents that occur in a Vehicle, or in the Open Air are also listed here. Any type of structure not specifically mentioned on the document may be included by simply writing the Type of Structure in a blank area of that section.

Section 3: Incident Type

This section identifies the Type of Incident, Incident Resolution, and Type of Team(s) Deployed. It further breaks down the Type of Incident into Type of Warrant and Type of Barricade. The Reason for the Warrant and Barricade are also requested.

Section 4: Offenders/Suspects

This section deals with the "Offender." Background information including Military, Criminal, Gang, Employment, Drug/Alcohol, Mental and Physical Impairment are identified. Offender Logistics, Firearms, Other Weapons and Explosives information is also listed in this area. Offender Activity –Shots Fired, Where the Shots were Directed, Type of Offender Weapon and Injuries Inflicted by Offender. Caliber of Weapon Used by Offender should be noted in comments section on this page. Offender Incapacitation is listed in this area.

Section 5: Victim/Hostage

This section deals with "Victims/Hostages." Information. If there is more than one Victim/Hostage, reproduce this section and complete. Name, Personal Statistics and Relationship to Offender Information is requested in this section.

Section 6: Negotiations

This section deals with "Negotiations." The Negotiator and the negotiation process and its impact on the incident outcome are covered. This section should be completed by a representative of the negotiations unit or someone familiar with the negotiations process.

Section 7: Department and Tactical Team Activity

This section deals with "Department Personnel Activity." This activity includes both Tactical and Non-Tactical personnel. Shots fired by Department Personnel Before and After SWAT Arrival. Weapon Type of Department Personnel and Injuries to Suspect Information is requested. Tactical team Shots Fired including What Element, Containment, Entry, and Long Rifle Fired Shots and the Outcome of Shots Fired.

Section 8: Less Lethal Weapons Usage

This section deals with the Deployment of Less Lethal Specialty Weapons and Munitions such as 12 gauge Bean Bag Rounds and 37/40 mm Smooth Bore Bean Bag and 37/40 mm Rifled Barreled Baton and Sponge Rounds.

Section 9: Special Munitions

This section deals with the Deployment of Chemical Agents, Diversionary Devices, Special Breaching information. and Explosives Used. Select all that apply.

Section 10: Legal

This section deals with charges filed against the offender. It also asks for information if the suspect or representatives of the suspect file a subsequent lawsuit against the department. The name and address of the expert witness the department hired to testify is requested.

Section 11: Summary

This section deals with the incident "Summary." Anything of importance not identified in the document should be included. A brief summary of the incident is requested in order to give a chronology of events. If a summary or statement has been previously prepared, you may submit that document with the PCIR and simply check the "See attached document" box of this section.

AGENCY INFORMATION

Agency: ______________________________

Phone: ______________________________ Fax: ______________

Address: ______________________________

____

City: ______________________________ State: _____ Zip: __________

Team Designation (e.g. SWAT, SRT, etc.): ______________________________

Team Commander (or Point of Contact): ______________________________
Title First Name Last Name

Total number of training hours per month: _______ Team Size: _______ Full Time ☐ Part Time ☐

SECTION 1 - INCIDENT PROFILE

Date Incident Started: __________ Date Incident Ended: __________

Time Incident Started: __________ Time Incident Ended: __________

Time SWAT Arrived: __________ Time Negotiator Arrived: __________

Type of Team(s) Deployed (Check All That Apply)

Type of Team	# of Personnel Deployed	Comments
☐ Tactical		
☐ Negotiations		
☐ K9		
☐ Other:		

Team Members Involved Incident:

Officer Name (Last, First)	Assignment	Notes

SECTION 2 - LOCATION PROFILE

Location (Address) of Incident: ____

Location Type (Choose ONE)

☐ Commercial Building
☐ Government Building
☐ Single Family Residence
☐ Town House or Condo
☐ Other:

Number of Levels: ____________________

Number or Rooms: ____________________

Fortification (Choose ONE)

☐ No Unusual Fortification, Ram or Sledge Used
☐ Light Fortifications, Other Mechanical or Shotgun Breaching
☐ Heavily Fortified, Explosive Breaching
☐ Other:

Vehicle Type (Choose ONE)

☐ Sedan
☐ Van
☐ School Bus
☐ Commercial Bus
☐ Rail
☐ Aircraft
☐ Boat
☐ Other:

Open Air (Choose ONE)

☐ Residential Area
☐ Rural Area, Wooded
☐ Commercial Area
☐ Other:

SECTION 3 - INCIDENT TYPE

Type of Incident (Choose ONE)

☐ Barricaded Suspect
☐ Mentally Disturbed
☐ Negotiations/Intervention
☐ Suspect with Hostage
☐ Warrant Service
☐ Warrant Service Turned Barricade
☐ Other:

Type of Warrant (Check All That Apply)

☐ Narcotics
☐ Felony Arrest
☐ Search
☐ Other:

Type of Barricade (Check All That Apply)

☐ Criminal
☐ Domestic
☐ Mentally Disturbed Person
☐ Terrorist/Extremist
☐ Other:

Incident Resolution (Choose ONE)

☐ Apprehended After Entry
☐ Committed Suicide
☐ Jumper
☐ Surrender to Negotiators
☐ Surrender to Tactical Team
☐ Surrendered to Other Party
☐ Surrendered to Patrol
☐ Other:

Reasons for Warrant (Check All That Apply)

☐ Narcotics
☐ Explosives
☐ Firearms
☐ Wanted person
☐ Other:

Reasons for Barricade (Check All That Apply)

☐ Deliberate Hostage Taker
☐ Disgruntled Employee
☐ Disgruntled Employer
☐ Domestic Dispute
☐ Interrupted Crime in Progress
☐ Kidnap for Ransom
☐ Termination of Pursuit
☐ Warrant Turned Barricade
☐ Other:

SECTION 4 - OFFENDERS / SUSPECTS

If there is more than one offender reproduce this section and complete all 4 parts, Profile, Weapons and Logistics, Activity and Incapacitation.

Offender Profile

Name: ____________________

Gender: M F Age: ________ Race: ____________________ Height: ________ Weight: _______

Military History: ☐ None ☐ Active ☐ Reserve ☐ Former Branch: ________________

Criminal History: ☐ None ☐ Felony ☐ Misdemeanor ☐ Firearms Related

Gang Affiliation: ☐ None ☐ Yes Name of Gang/Organization ____________________

Employment: ☐ None ☐ Yes Occupation: ____________________

Drugs/Alcohol Used ☐ None ☐ Yes Type of Drugs/Alcohol: ____________________

Mental Illness: ☐ None ☐ Yes Type of Illness: ____________________

Physical Impairment: ☐ None ☐ Yes Type of Impairment: ____________________

Offender Weapons and Logistics

Offender Logistics (Check All That Apply)

☐ Gas Mask
☐ Ballistic Armor
☐ Military Uniform or Variation
☐ Police Uniform or Variation

Offender Firearms (Check All That Apply)

☐ Handgun, Revolver
☐ Handgun, Semi-Auto
☐ Rifle, Bolt Action
☐ Rifle, Semi-Auto
☐ Rifle, Other
☐ Shotgun
☐ Other

Other Weapons (Check All That Apply)

☐ Cutting Instrument
☐ Bow & Arrow
☐ Club
☐ Other

Explosives Used (Check All That Apply)

☐ Black Powder
☐ Booby-Trap
☐ Dynamite
☐ Hand Grenade
☐ Hazardous Material
☐ Hoax Device
☐ Incendiary Device
☐ Military Ordnance
☐ Pipe Bomb
☐ Plastic Explosive
☐ Smokeless Powder
☐ Other

Additional Logistics

____

____

____

____

SECTION 4 - OFFENDERS / SUSPECTS continued

Offender Activity

Complete Offender Activity information only if offender discharged a firearm.

Number of Shots Fired by the Offender **Prior** to the Deployment of the Tactical Team: ________

Number of Shots Fired by the Offender **After** the Deployment of the Tactical Team: ________

At Who Were Shots Directed: (Choose ONE)

☐ Random
☐ Civilians
☐ Officers
☐ Structure
☐ Victim
☐ Other:

Firearm Offender Discharged: (Choose ONE)

☐ Handgun, Revolver
☐ Handgun, Semi-Auto
☐ Rifle, Bolt Action
☐ Rifle, Semi-Auto
☐ Rifle, Other
☐ Shotgun
☐ Other:

Offender's Actions Caused Death or Injury to: (Check All That Apply)

☐ Offender
☐ Victims/Hostages(s)
☐ Officer(s)
☐ Other:

Offender Incapacitation Information

After Being Shot by Officers, What Did the Offender Do: (Choose ONE)

☐ Become Immediately Incapacitated
☐ Continue Resistance
☐ Return Weapons Fire
☐ Become Combative
☐ Other:

Did the Offender Have a Victims/Hostages at Gunpoint When Shot by Officers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the Offender Discharge His Weapon After Being Shot? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What Was the Distance Between the Officers and Offender When the Offender Was Shot? _________

If a Long Rifle Was Used, Did the Projectile Pass Through the Offender’s Body? ☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION 5 - VICTIM / HOSTAGE

Complete For All Victims. If There is More Than Three Victims/Hostages, Reproduce This Section and Complete.

Hostage / Victim Profile #1

Name: (Optional) ____________________

Gender: M F Age: ________ Race: ____________________ Height: ________ Weight: _______

Relationship to Offender: (Choose ONE)

☐ None	☐ Employee
☐ Family Member (Explain):	☐ Other (Explain):
☐ Employer	
☐ Acquaintance	

Hostage / Victim Profile #2

Name: (Optional) ____________________

Gender: M F Age: ________ Race: ____________________ Height: ________ Weight: _______

Relationship to Offender (Choose ONE)

☐ None	☐ Employee
☐ Family Member (Explain):	☐ Other (Explain):
☐ Employer	
☐ Acquaintance	

Hostage / Victim Profile #3

Name: (Optional) ____________________

Gender: M F Age: ________ Race: ____________________ Height: ________ Weight: _______

Relationship to Offender (choose ONE)

☐ None	☐ Acquaintance
☐ Family Member (Explain):	☐ Employee
☐ Employer	☐ Other (Explain):

SECTION 6- NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiator Profile (Choose ONE)

☐ Department Employee	☐ Psychologist
☐ Other Religious Representative	☐ Sworn Non-Tactical Team Member
☐ Police Chaplain	☐ Sworn Tactical Team Member
☐ Other:	

Primary Language of Offender: ______________________ Secondary Language: ______________________

Was Negotiator Fluent in Primary Language? ☐ Yes ☐ No In Secondary Language? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did Offender Allow Victims/Hostages to Speak With a Negotiator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did An Initial Responder (e.g. First Officer on Scene, Family Member, etc.) Initiate Dialog With the Offender Then Relinquish That Responsibility to the Assigned Negotiator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Indicate How the Negotiator Communicated With the Offender (Choose ONE)

☐ Face to Face	☐ Cellular Telephone
☐ Voice to Voice	☐ Intercom System
☐ Public Telephone	☐ “Throw” Phone
☐ Other:	

Type of Hostage Phone Kit Used (If Any)? ____

Did the Telephone Company Secure Phone Lines? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Demands Made by Offender (Select All That Apply)

Demand Made	**Met before Hostage Released**		**Met after Hostage Released**		**Comments**
☐ None					
☐ Cigarettes	Yes	No	Yes	No	
☐ Food	Yes	No	Yes	No	
☐ Money	Yes	No	Yes	No	
☐ Water	Yes	No	Yes	No	
☐ Transportation	Yes	No	Yes	No	
☐ Other:	Yes	No	Yes	No	

Did the Offender Make Time Lines (Deadlines): ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the Negotiator Maintain a Dialog Through the Time Lines? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the Offender Request the Surrender to the Primary Negotiator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did Offender Request to Surrender to a Party Other Than Primary Negotiator? _____________ (Who)

Did Negotiators Interview the Victims/Hostages After Release? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the Victims/Hostages Available for Interview? ☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION 7 - DEPARTMENT AND TACTICAL TEAM ACTIVITY

Department Personnel Activity

# Of Shots Fired by Department Personnel **Prior** To the Deployment of the Tactical Team (If Any): ________

# Of Shots Fired by Department Personnel **After** Deployment of the Tactical Team (If Any): _____________

Describe the Weapon(s) Used by Department Personnel (Other Than Tactical Team Members): _____________

____

Did the Actions of the Department Personnel Cause Death or Injury to: (Select All That Apply)

☐ Offender ☐ Victims/Hostages ☐ Officer ☐ Other

Tactical Team Activity

Indicate Number of Shots Fired by Each Team; Enter 0 (Zero) If No Shots Fired and Who Was Injured, Leave Blank If No One Was Injured:

Team	**# shots**	**Who Was Injured As a Result of Team Actions:** (Select All That Apply)
Tactical Team		☐ Offender ☐ Victims/Hostages ☐ Officer ☐ Other
Entry Team		☐ Offender ☐ Victims/Hostages ☐ Officer ☐ Other
Precision Marksmen		☐ Offender ☐ Victims/Hostages ☐ Officer ☐ Other
Inner Perimeter Team		☐ Offender ☐ Victims/Hostages ☐ Officer ☐ Other

SECTION 8 - LESS LETHAL WEAPONS USAGE

Less Lethal Weapons Used? (Select All That Apply)

LL Weapon	**Effective**	**Comments**
☐ 12 ga Rifled Barrel	Yes No	
☐ 12 ga Smooth Bore	Yes No	
☐ 37 mm Rifled Barrel	Yes No	
☐ 37/40 mm Smooth Bore	Yes No	
☐ Net Gun	Yes No	
☐ Stun Gun	Yes No	
☐ Taser	Yes No	
☐ Other:	Yes No	
☐		
☐		
☐		

SECTION 9 - SPECIAL MUNITIONS

Chemical Agents Deployed? (Select All That Apply)

Chemical Agent	Effective	Comments
☐ CN	Yes No	
☐ CS	Yes No	
☐ OC	Yes No	
☐ Smoke	Yes No	
☐ Other:	Yes No	

Diversionary Devices Used? (Select All That Apply)

Diversionary Device	Effective	Comments
☐ Break and Rake Tools	Yes No	
☐ Noise Flash Diversionary Device	Yes No	
☐ Star Flash Device	Yes No	
☐ Other:	Yes No	

Types of Breaching? (Choose ONE)

Type of Breaching Used	Effective	Type / Comments
☐ None	Yes No	
☐ Mechanical	Yes No	
☐ Shotgun	Yes No	
☐ Explosives (Select Type Below)	Yes No	
☐ Other:	Yes No	

Explosives Used? (Select All That Apply)

Explosive Used	Check if Used to Make Entry	Check if Used to Breach Opening	Effective
☐ Caulk Explosive	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Det Cord	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Explosive Cutting Tape	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Flex Linear Shaped Charge	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Foam Explosive	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Sheet Explosive	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Slip-on Booster	☐	☐	Yes No
☐ Other:	☐	☐	Yes No

SECTION 10 - LEGAL

Describe Any Criminal Charges Filed Against the Offender? ____

____

____

____

Describe Criminal Charges Filed Against a Department Employee?____

____

____

____

Describe Any Civil Litigation (e.g. Wrongful Death Lawsuit?) ____

____

____

____

List the Name of Expert Witnesses Hired to Testify Against Your Department ______________________________

____

____

SECTION 11 - SUMMARY

Please provide a separate sheet, a narrative of the event that would give the reader a better understanding of the chain of events and what eventually resolved the incident.

SEND TO:

National Tactical Officers Association
PO Box 529, Doylestown, PA 18901
800.279.9127 Fax 215.230.7552

OPERATIONS FORM *(SWAT Operations Survey)*

1) Name of your agency ________________________________, Agency ORI #______________.

2) We may need to discuss some aspects of this survey with someone from your team.
Please list a contact person:

________________________________ ________________
name phone number

3) Your agency established its SWAT team in 19____.

4) Your SWAT team currently (check one):
____is part time
____is full time
____has both part and full time members

5) Please indicate whether your agency has its own SWAT team, or participates in a multi-agency tactical team by checking the appropriate response below.

_____My agency has its own SWAT team
_____My agency supplies officers to a multi-agency SWAT team

6) Please report the number of SWAT personnel **authorized** at each rank for the year your agency established its team, for 1986, and for 1998. If you do not have records regarding personnel for a given year, please place "**UK**" (for unknown) in the relevant blank space(s). If your agency includes the "corporal" (or similar) rank, count all team members of this rank as officers. Enter "0", if you had no officers of a given rank for a given year.

Year team established Officers_____, Sergeants_____, Lieutenants_____, Captains and above_____

1986 Officers_____, Sergeants_____, Lieutenants_____, Captains and above_____

1998 Officers_____, Sergeants_____, Lieutenants_____, Captains and above_____

7) Different agencies take different approaches to the overall command and control of situations involving SWAT mobilization. Please indicate how your agency structures the overall command and control of operations involving your SWAT officers by checking the appropriate line below.

_____The SWAT supervisor/commander is the overall incident commander
_____A non-SWAT supervisor/command staff member is the overall incident commander.
_____The senior officer in charge of the incident that prompted the SWAT call retains overall command of the incident.
_____Other; please specify____

8) Some agencies delegate the decision-making authority to use of deadly force in hostage/barricade situations to SWAT officers, while in other agencies the authority to make the decision to employ deadly force resides with the incident commander. Please indicate which practice your agency uses in hostage/barricade situations by checking the appropriate response below.

_____Decision-making authority regarding the use of deadly force resides with SWAT officers
_____Decision-making authority regarding the use of deadly force resides with the incident commander
_____Other; please specify____

9) Agencies around the nation structure the negotiations component of their crisis response capabilities in a variety of ways. Please indicate the assignment(s) of personnel in your agency who serve as crisis/hostage negotiators by checking the appropriate response(s) below (check all that apply):

_____SWAT officers/supervisors
_____Officers/supervisors assigned to a separate negotiations unit
_____Non-SWAT officers/supervisors **not** attached to a negotiations unit
_____Civilian Mental Health Professionals assigned to a separate negotiations unit
_____Civilian Mental Health Professionals **not** assigned to a separate negotiations unit
_____Other; please specify___________________________________

10) Because SWAT operations involve an increased risk of physical injury, many agencies have special emergency medical services (EMS) procedures for SWAT operations. Please indicate any special EMS procedures that your agency has instituted for SWAT operations by checking the appropriate response(s) below (check all that apply).

_____SWAT team includes paramedics
_____Medical Doctor routinely responds to scene
_____Ambulance routinely on standby at or near command post
_____No special EMS procedures
_____Other; please specify____

11) Please indicate the average number of hours per month that your SWAT officers spent conducting training during 1998 by writing the average number of hours in the blank below.

_____Average number of monthly hours in training in 1998

12) Please indicate all of the sources of training that your SWAT officers received in 1998 by checking the appropriate response(s) below (check all that apply).

_____Own agency
_____Municipal or county law enforcement agency
_____State law enforcement agency
_____Federal law enforcement agency (e.g., FBI, DEA)
_____National Tactical Officers Association
_____State tactical officers association
_____Private vendor/trainer
_____U.S. military
_____Foreign military
_____Other; please specify________________________

13) Please indicate the types of problems that SWAT officers from your agency trained for in 1998 by checking the appropriate response(s) below (check all that apply)

_____Suicidal individuals
_____Barricaded suspects
_____Hostage situations
_____Hostage rescue
_____Automobile/van assault
_____Bus assault
_____Train assault
_____Aircraft assault
_____Water-borne assault
_____Civil unrest/crowd control
_____High-risk narcotics search warrant service
_____High-risk non-narcotics warrant service
_____Building searches
_____Area searches
_____Downed officer/civilian rescue
_____Other; please specify________________________

14) Please report the yearly number of SWAT mobilizations by incident type in the blanks below according to the following criteria:

- Report each call-up just once.
- Report all call-ups involving emotionally disturbed persons (including suicidal persons) **who did not take hostages** as "Barricaded Persons, EDP's."
- If your agency does not differentiate between criminal and EDP barricades, place an "**X**" in the "criminals" blank, and report all barricade incidents in the EDP blank.
- Report all call-ups that involved hostages **at any point after SWAT deployed** -- regardless of the hostage taker(s) emotional state, the length of time hostages were held, and whether the call-up turned into a barricade when the hostage taker(s) released their hostages -- as "Hostage Situations."
- If your agency does not differentiate between narcotics and other warrants, place an "**X**" in the "Narcotics Warrants" blank and report all warrants served as "Other Warrants"
- If you do not have records for a given incident type for a given year, please place "**UK**" (for unknown) in the relevant blank.
- Enter "0", if you had no incidents of a given type for a given year.

1986
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1987
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1988
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1989
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1990
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1991
Barricaded Persons:
a) Criminals _____
b) EDP's _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

14) (Continued) Please report the yearly number of SWAT mobilizations by incident type in the blanks below according to the criteria on the previous page:

1992
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1993
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1994
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1995
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1996
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1997
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

1998
Barricaded Persons:
    a) Criminals _____
    b) EDP’s _____
Hostage Situations _____
Narcotics Warrants _____
Other Warrants _____
Civil Disturbances _____
All Other Types _____

15) Please report the yearly number of incidents during which team members discharged lethal munitions from firearms during SWAT operations. Include all such incidents, regardless of whether the shots were fired accidentally or purposely, and regardless of whether the intended target of purposely fired rounds were humans, animals, or inanimate objects (e.g. vehicles, suspects weapons, etc.).

- *DO NOT INCLUDE* incidents involving your SWAT team where the **only** shots fired were by non-SWAT personnel (e.g., patrol officers exchange gunfire with a suspect who then barricades himself, which prompts a SWAT call-up that results in no gunfire from team members).
- *DO NOT INCLUDE* incidents where team members fired shots in non-SWAT situations (e.g., while on patrol, off-duty, etc.).
- *DO NOT INCLUDE* incidents where the **only** use of firearms was to deliver less-lethal munitions (e.g., bean bag rounds, tear gas, etc.) or breeching rounds (e.g., AVON rounds during warrant).
- Enter “0”, if you had no such incidents in a given year.

For each incident involving the discharge of lethal munitions, please fill out a separate FIREARM DISCHARGE REPORT.

____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
1986	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**

16) *We are also interested in cases where suspects discharged firearms when SWAT was on-scene, but no team members fired.*

Please report the yearly number of incidents where suspects fired weapons after SWAT team members had deployed, but no team member fired. Enter “0”, if you had no such incidents in a given year.

____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
1986	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**

17) Please report the yearly number of incidents where suspects **killed themselves** after SWAT team members had deployed. DO NOT report “suicide by cop” incidents here. Enter “0”, if you had no such incidents in a given year.

____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
1986	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**

18) Since the inception of your SWAT team, has your team ever been involved in any incidents where team members **physically rescued any hostages** (with or without use of deadly force by team members) held captive by hostage-takers?

_____ Yes _____ No

If any such incidents occurred since 1986, please report the number that occurred each year in the following blanks. Enter “0”, if you had no such incidents in a given year.

____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
1986	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**

19) Since the inception of your SWAT team, has your agency ever had an incident where a suspect **killed a hostage** after SWAT team members had deployed?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please report the number of such incidents in the following blank_______