

# PREPARING

/Kelly Foreman,  
Public Information Officer

## FOR THE

# WORST

Kentucky's tactical teams face the gravest of dangers

**R**ecreating a plot created by Stephen King, a 17-year-old boy armed with a shotgun, revolver and automatic pistol took hostage 11 of his classmates for more than seven hours.

The hostage taker was not a big-city terrorist or professional gunman. He was a small-town teen from McKee, Ky., a city with a population of about 250 people at the time, who just wanted to see his dad.

That was 1989, and national media turned its attention to school shootings.

Four years later the violence escalated. An exceptionally bright student in Carter County, Ky., opened fire on his teacher and a custodian, killing both. Twenty-two students in the classroom trembled in fear for their lives until police talked 17-year-old Scott Pennington out of the room.

Another four years passed. More than 350 miles west of Carter County in Paducah, a 14-year-old student told teachers the blanket he carried containing two rifles and two shotguns was an art project. Before going to class, Michael Carneal pulled a pistol from his bag and began firing into a circle of praying students. Three were killed; five were wounded by the bullets. >>



Nearly a year and a half later, the term “school shooting” was on the tongues of law enforcement, school officials and parents everywhere after 13 students and teachers were killed in the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colo.

Obviously, those who think Kentucky is immune to the kinds of mass-casualty tragedies that have occurred all too frequently nationwide need to think again, said Kentucky Tactical Officers Association President Tony Cobaugh.

“We would all like to live in the bubble and think, ‘Hey, that thing that happened over there in that little 20,000-populated town where those bad people took over that school, that will never happen here,’” said Cobaugh, who also serves as commander for Louisville Metro Police Special Weapons and Tactics.

“If we believe that will never happen here, then it probably will,” Cobaugh continued. “And then when you are not prepared and your response is less than acceptable, and more lives than should have perished — that to me is the measuring stick. You think of the worst situation and prepare for that,

which is a school take-over — because every community has a school — and you start with that mindset right there.”

Kentucky tactical teams and their support teams, such as hostage negotiators, bomb squads, search and rescue teams and more, offer a wide range of specialties to the commonwealth.

Like others across the nation, they all must train and be prepared for tragedies such as school shootings. But handling that type of situation is only one element of their work. Their job descriptions include facing the worst criminals and the most dangerous crimes that plague Kentucky communities.

#### VARIETY OF TEAMS

When the KTOA first was formed three-and-a-half years ago, Cobaugh said the group identified approximately 60 tactical teams across the commonwealth. The size and makeup of Kentucky teams vary, but most average about 10 to 15 officers, Cobaugh said.

Only one team in the state operates as a full-time tactical unit: the Kentucky State Police Special Response Team.

Like most teams, the KSP SRT responds for hostage rescue, barricaded persons and service of high-risk warrants, said SRT Sgt. Jeremy Slinker. But they are responsible for a variety of other operations as well, such as high-risk surveillance and intelligence gathering and high-risk security transport such as death row inmates. At special events such as the Kentucky Derby and governor’s inauguration, the SRT also is on standby, just in case.

“We travel from the flat lands of western Kentucky to the mountains of eastern Kentucky,” Slinker said. “So, we deal with a lot of different people, and you have to come up with a lot of innovative ideas to deal with both. I think that is probably what makes us unique, is that we have such a variety of calls and a variety of places that we go.

“Our agency allows us to train to be experts in all these fields,” Slinker continued. “So if the incident calls for a high-risk

technique, like an explosives breach, our agency doesn’t hesitate in allowing us to use that because they know we have spent so much time perfecting it.”

As the team celebrated its 20th anniversary as full-time operators last year, Slinker said the calls for service rose dramatically.

Last fall, Slinker said, “this last year and a half, starting late 2007 to the current time, we have been as busy as we have been over the past several years.

“I think it was in 2005 and 2006 when we did 20 and 24 calls those two years,” Slinker continued. “In 2007 we had 34, then we went to 77 in 2008 and we are pushing about that pace for 2009. We’re staying pretty steady.”

This year, Slinker said the calls for high-risk surveillance have really picked up and the team had responded to about 35 calls by mid-July.

After eight years of service to the team, Slinker attributes the rise in calls to a paradigm shift in which the team no longer serves as a last resort.

“We have sold ourselves as a support part of this agency,” Slinker said. “We went out to our agency and told them, ‘We are not here for you when it gets so dangerous you can’t handle it. Just don’t think of us that way.’ Police in general hate to ever actually come out and say, ‘Hey, it’s too dangerous, I need some help.’ So we wanted to get out of that mindset of just calling our team when it’s super dangerous.”

#### COMBINING RESOURCES

Two challenges many chiefs and sheriffs face when it comes to establishing a tactical team are the limitations of manpower and resources. In northern Kentucky, the leaders of 10 different agencies recognized these limitations and created the Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit.

The NKY ERU consists of team leaders from Fort Mitchell and Taylor Mill as well as operators from Independence, Erlanger, Fort Wright, Ludlow, Edgewood and the Kenton County Sheriff’s office. Two volunteer tactical medics from St. Elizabeth Medical Center round out the team.

“The current makeup of the team is a mix of the old emergency response unit and the Independence-Elsmere Police SWAT team,” said Independence Police Capt. Jon Lonaker, commander of the team. “We merged just about 11 years ago to form the current Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit.”

An inter-local agreement was signed by all the participating agencies to form the unit, which is governed by two participating chiefs. All the chiefs form a board of directors to make decisions about budgeting issues and other items that affect the team. Each department is responsible for dues for training and equipment, Lonaker said.

The team employs 12 officers from the various agencies and has contracts with other surrounding agencies, which pay a yearly fee to use the multi-agency ERU’s services when necessary. The team’s duties include service of high-risk arrest and search warrants, dealing with barricaded subjects and hostage situations, fugitive searches, dignitary protection and anything else that falls within their training. >>



KENTUCKY STATE POLICE SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM, THE ONLY FULL-TIME TACTICAL TEAM IN KENTUCKY, TRAINS AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK AS THEIR SCHEDULE ALLOWS BETWEEN CALL OUTS. THE TEAM PRACTICED VEHICLE ASSAULTS RECENTLY AT A TRAINING IN FORT KNOX.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



THE NORTHERN KENTUCKY EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT IS A GROUP OF AGENCIES THAT CAME TOGETHER TO FORM ONE TACTICAL TEAM, REALIZING THE AGENCIES COULD NOT SUPPORT SUCH A GROUP INDIVIDUALLY.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



With service to so many cities, Lonaker said the group stays pretty busy.

"We average one about every six to eight weeks," Lonaker said last fall. "January 2, (2009) we had a call out for a guy who shot his wife and barricaded himself in his house. Two days later we had a guy who threatened his wife with a gun, she left, and then he wouldn't answer the door and we had to go in to get him. You just never know, it's crazy. Then we will go two to three months without anything."

After 10 years of service as the team's commander, Lonaker said there is good and bad in having a multi-jurisdictional team.

"The good thing is the guys don't work together all the time, so when we get together once a month we're not on each other's nerves as we would with normal co-workers," he said. "There are some logistical difficulties sometimes just with getting purchases because there are so many agencies to go through to get what information we need. But overall it runs pretty smoothly, especially with the administrators we have. They have been very supportive of the team."

#### SUPPORT TEAMS

While tactical teams are responsible for a variety of calls, even the largest teams are limited in what they can do on their own. For that reason, tactical support teams are an equally important part of any agency working to protect its citizens from tragedy.

Bomb squads, hostage negotiators, underwater search and recovery teams, meth lab clean-up teams and rescue teams also bring additional expertise to intense and dangerous situations.

In Frankfort, Capt. Jeff Rogers leads a team of three other hostage negotiators, which are separate from the agency's Tactical Response Unit.

"Basically, when it was first started, it was decided that the four general detectives would be trained and respond to these types of situations because we were already subject to be called out on crime scenes and were already in plain clothes," Rogers said. "Which at the time, they were kind of leaning toward the best case scenario, which would be for someone dressed in something other than a uniform to respond to that situation. Then it just grew from there."

Rogers, Detective Mike Johnson, Officer David Dearborn and Detective Joe Banta have worked together as negotiations team for more than 10 years. The team responds to calls with hostages, barricaded subjects and situations with suicidal or mentally ill people who need to be negotiated with in order to come to a peaceful resolution, Rogers said.

The ultimate goal of the hostage negotiation team and the TRU are basically the same, Rogers said, but sometimes the methods by which they reach that goal are different.

"Anytime you go in with a show of force, if that person is armed, someone could get hurt," he said. "He could hurt himself, he could hurt innocent bystanders — especially if he has a hostage he is holding against his or her will. Of course, the police are main targets when they go through that front door. So, it is always, in my opinion, the best course of action to stabilize that situation, >>

secure it and then attempt to verbally get this person to come out and resolve that situation just to reduce the chances of someone getting hurt."

Paducah's bomb squad follows the same theory of keeping people from harm as Frankfort's hostage negotiators.

"When we respond to a suspicious package that turns out to be nothing, we get a lot of people apologizing, saying 'We are sorry we called you all out, we're sorry we bothered you,'" said Paducah Police Commander Will Gilbert. "And what they don't understand is they're not bothering us. We would much rather respond to 50 fake packages than respond to one that was real that somebody handled and was killed or injured."

Paducah is one team of four Paducah police officers and two Mercy Regional paramedics who all respond to 13 counties in western Kentucky. The first bomb technician was trained nearly 30 years ago, but the team has been operating as a fully accredited squad since 1999, Gilbert said.

Day-to-day calls vary from suspicious packages to known explosives, like those located by relatives of deceased family members in a barn, shed or garage, Gilbert said. While he said he does not like to spread fear, Gilbert said it is important to recognize that Kentucky is home to several locations that can be considered terrorist targets.

"It's not that I'm worried about Al Qaeda rolling into the city of Paducah, but in this day and age, if you don't have us, who else are you going to call if Carlisle County has a bomb or old explosives or what not?" Gilbert asked. "If we weren't around, then they would have to wait on Owensboro. If Owensboro wasn't there, then they would have to wait on KSP and KSP's bomb techs are in the Louisville-Lexington area."

Cops, firemen and paramedics often have a "hero complex" about them, Gilbert said, and are natural problem solvers.

"We feel like there is no problem that we can't solve," Gilbert said. "There is a positive in that everybody wants to serve and do their best for their communities

— but the problem with that is officers could find themselves handling something they shouldn't or thinking less about it than what they should. There have been many instances where we have responded where officers have handled pipe bombs or suspicious packages and the best thing is to just leave it alone. We're the trained guys and we don't even handle them."

#### ADVICE FOR COMMUNITIES

Tactical teams require money, manpower, equipment and intense training. But Cobaugh said there definitely are benefits for communities that employ them.

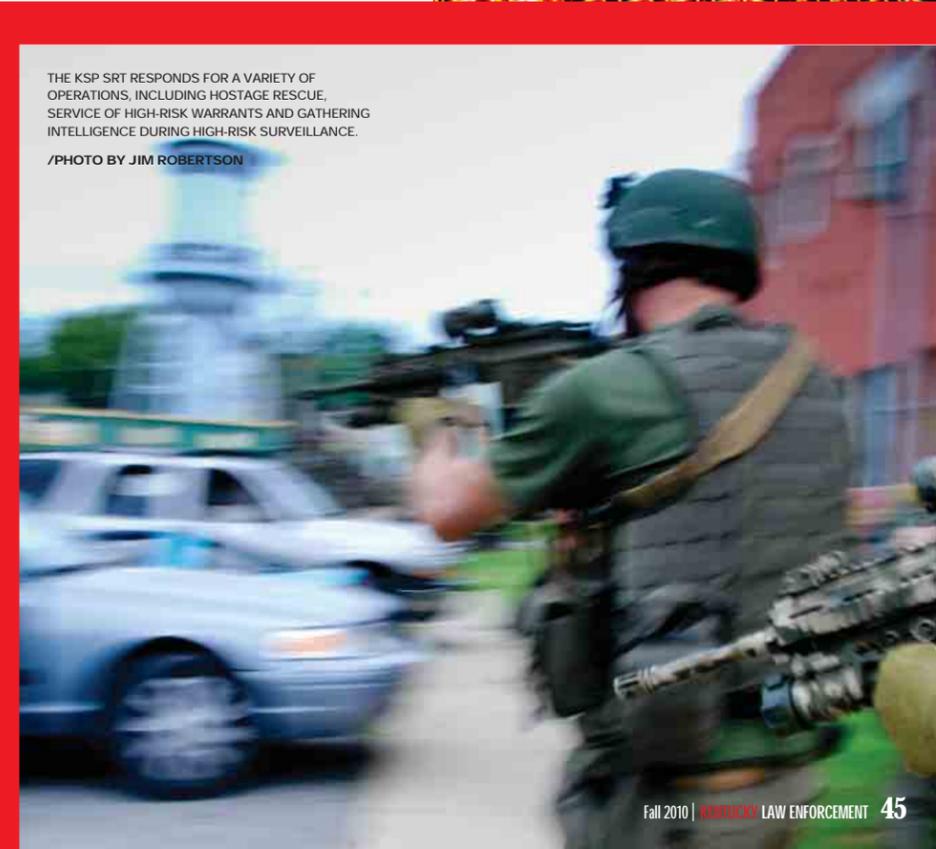
"[For example,] the mentally ill consumer who has a bad day downtown on 4th Street," Cobaugh said. "We are going to be better suited to handle that situation. We don't need to wait two or three hours for another tactical team from hours away to come here. We should be able to handle this," he continued.

The same principals apply to agencies that implement new strategies to address the community drug problem, Cobaugh said. >>



A NORTHERN KENTUCKY EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT OFFICER SEARCHES A LOCAL SCHOOL FOR A SUSPECT DURING TRAINING ABOUT ACTIVE SHOOTERS.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



THE KSP SRT RESPONDS FOR A VARIETY OF OPERATIONS, INCLUDING HOSTAGE RESCUE, SERVICE OF HIGH-RISK WARRANTS AND GATHERING INTELLIGENCE DURING HIGH-RISK SURVEILLANCE.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

“Then there is that other component — high-risk warrant service,” he said. “Crime in progress involving a criminal who takes hostages. Or someone does something bad at our schools.

“Are those not reasons enough to at least sit down and talk about why we do not have a team in our area?” Cobaugh asked. “Could these things not occur? Yes, they could. Can we do it?”

Cobaugh recognizes that some departments are not large enough to shoulder their own tactical response team. But he encourages those agencies to begin talking with the other municipal and county police and sheriffs in their area who might be able to develop a multi-agency team.

“Wise police administrators and leaders — that is where the discussions should begin, at the top in an area. The heads of those departments should be sitting down and should talk about this first. Then they should say, ‘Hey, what about forming a multi-jurisdictional or regional team.’”

Any leader or group of leaders who decide to create a team should make creation of a clearly-defined mission statement a top priority, Cobaugh said.

“You must provide training,” he said. “You must provide the proper equipment. You cannot just throw something like this together. A community has to make a commitment with standards, a mission, training and equipment. And that is not just initially, that must be sustained to continue the team and the mission that it serves. Those communities that make that commitment are the wisest communities in the commonwealth.” J



/Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer

## Rapid Deployment Critical for Patrol Tactical Skills

▼ RAPID DEPLOYMENT TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL BEAT OFFICERS WHO ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO BEING CALLED OUT TO ANY HIGH-RISK SITUATION.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



When seconds are critical, patrol officers can't always wait for a tactical team to get on scene, said Bill Sullivan, Department of Criminal Justice Training advanced individual training instructor.

“The patrol officers become the ones who have to handle it,” said Sullivan, a former commander of the Kentucky State Police Special Response Team. “Most situations are going to be over in a matter of minutes. That is why it (rapid deployment training) is so critical.”

Sullivan teaches the DOCJT Rapid Deployment course with fellow DOCJT AIT Instructor Paul Root. The course, taught 12 times annually, teaches patrol-level officers how to use tactical measures with a limited number of resources, Sullivan said. Among the skills taught are movement to contact, 360 cover, room entries and dealing with hostages and threats, he said.

An advanced rapid deployment course is being developed for 2011.

The course is based on the national model of four-person teams, but because of the limited size of many Kentucky law enforcement agencies, Sullivan said it has been modified for three- and two-person teams as well.

In the past, Sullivan said patrol officers were taught the four C's — contain the environment by setting up a perimeter, control the situation by not letting anyone in or out, communicate by establishing negotiations and call for a SWAT team. However, in many situations, such as those including an active shooter, this response will not work, he said.

Rapid deployment training allows the first officers on scene to employ tactical skills and hopefully bring the situation to a quick and safe conclusion, with or without a formal tactical team.

Sullivan also said that getting every Kentucky officer trained in rapid deployment skills is crucial so that all officers can be on the same page when responding to critical incidents. Dedicated tactical teams usually spend time training together, he said. But, in many cases, patrol officers responding to a call requiring tactical response may be met with fellow officers he or she has not trained with or even officers from a neighboring agency.

If all those officers had been trained in rapid deployment, the potential for successful communication between them and an effective, quick conclusion rises, Sullivan said.

“It would be ideal if this were offered in basic training and be part of [their skill set] when they graduate,” he said. “It's just like firearms or like anything else; it is critical that the officers continue to train when they return home. It has to be maintained. Having the training is better than nothing, but it makes a difference if they get to do it a few times a year.” ■

*The remaining 2010 offerings for this course all are full. Look for the new DOCJT schedule book in late October or early November to sign up for 2011 courses. Book early for greatest availability, the class fills quickly.*



## basic elements of a Tactical team

/Kelly Foreman,  
Public Information Officer

If you are considering starting a tactical team within your agency, here are some important elements to include from someone who knows.

Kentucky Tactical Officers' Association President Tony Cobaugh describes a tactical team as, "any team that is formed with a clear mission statement that they are going to handle high-risk warrant service, barricaded subjects, hostage rescue — and in these days and times — you should include active shooter situations. If that is in a clearly defined mission statement and that is what that team clearly understands as their mission those are the baseline things that we train for if you are going to be a tactical team."

Once that mission statement clearly is defined, Cobaugh identified four basic elements that create the structure of a developed team:

- Entry team
- Containment team
- Sniper team
- Medical support

"There is an entry team, which tends to be your most experienced and very best tactical operators," Cobaugh said. "That is, if there had to be a hostage rescue, that team commander knows that this group here, this entry element, that is who I am going to send in to take care of [it]."

Secondly, Cobaugh said there must be officers who begin containment of the situation.

"When you are talking about a barricaded situation, it all starts with patrol level. Some beat cop somewhere in some county or city in Kentucky gets sent somewhere and boy it goes sideways very quickly," he said. "Whether somebody takes a pot shot at them from a house or trailer or whatever, somebody starts getting cover and starts setting up the 360 degree containment around the structure.

"You have to have that and it has to be a very disciplined group," Cobaugh continued. "And in the systems that I am aware of, this is where the newest squad members start out."

Teams which employ snipers act as the third component, Cobaugh said. While the word sniper may tend to be politically incorrect in some areas of the state, Cobaugh said these men and women basically are precision long riflemen, an element that ranks with him as one of the most important on any tactical team.

"At any given moment, in the worst-case situation any of our minds could piece together — a hostage situation — someone presents themselves in a window, in a doorway; and the opportunity arises for that precision long rifleman to save that [hostage's] life," Cobaugh said. "That is, to me, the primary element within a SWAT team because they have to be such solid, precision riflemen."

Finally, the fourth element a tactical team needs is medical support, Cobaugh said. In Louisville, that team is called TEMS, the Tactical Emergency Medical Services unit. >>

TEMS began in 1992, and Cobaugh said its mission is two-fold: to protect and treat.

(See sidebar on tactical medics to the right)

"In Louisville, we have six medics," Cobaugh said. "Three of them are emergency room physicians and three of them are paramedics. They are not sworn, they do not carry weapons, however, they go through all of our schooling, all of our training and when we have firearms qualifications, they are required to fire the same weapons and qualify just as the SWAT officers are.

"The mindset is that if they are in a situation, sometimes every gun you can get down range to protect everybody is a good thing," Cobaugh continued. "They have been trained in those weapon systems and they know that under KRS they are allowed to defend themselves. If they access one of our SWAT weapons that they have been trained on and qualified on, they know that they are going to be covered if they need to use force to protect themselves or someone else."

As with most aspects of law enforcement, different agencies approach tactical medics in different ways. Some teams have their medics deputized for call-out purposes, Cobaugh said. Others will send current tactical team members for medical training. But regardless of how the medics are employed, Cobaugh said they are an essential part of keeping the officers safe and providing on-the-spot response to medical emergencies that occur on scene. ■

## TACTICAL MEDICS PROVIDE ON-SCENE EMERGENCY CARE

/Kelly Foreman,  
Public Information Officer

When the officers of the Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit are called out, they can take comfort knowing that they are supported by medical professionals.

A few years ago, St. Elizabeth Hospital Emergency Room Nurse Practitioner Bill Cooper and NKY ERU team commander Jon Lonaker talked about the benefits of having tactical medics as part of the team. Cooper joined the team in 2007, and about a year and a half later, Emergency Room Physician Brian Donoghue signed on as medical director.

The NKY ERU tactical medics are just two samples of medical professionals who have joined teams around the state in various capacities.

"They have full law enforcement powers," Lonaker said of Donoghue and Cooper. "They are not technically policemen, but they are deputized, deploy with us and are armed for self protection. They volunteer and receive absolutely no compensation whatsoever. They are always here, even when we call them in the middle of the night. They really want to be here and do this stuff on their own time."

"Our primary mission is to be here for the officers if any are injured," Donoghue said. "Secondarily, we are here if anybody else is injured. The primary reason we offer immediate care to officers

is because there can be dangerous situations where we might not be able to get Emergency Medical Services into a situation for quite an amount of time. So, we can bridge that gap to get them emergency care immediately."

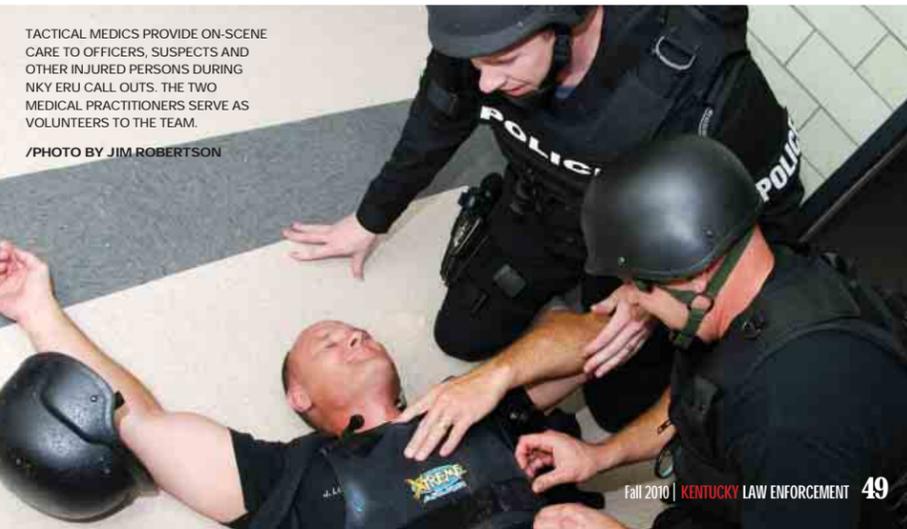
Donoghue and Cooper train with the team, too, to better understand and prepare for the types of emergencies to which the team responds, Cooper said.

"We train with them, number one, to see how they work," Cooper said. "But sometimes you also learn to be alert of any hidden dangers. Tactical medic is more of a military-based emergency care. Ordinary life squads aren't trained in this. You are put in a position of higher risk of danger."

"It can change the focus of how you provide care in a dangerous situation," Donoghue elaborated. "What you might focus on is different when you potentially could be under fire than if you're in a safe situation. That requires training and practice in the real situation."

Having tactical medics on site also is of great benefit if their services are needed because they already understand the environment of the call and those involved, which can save precious time.

"Instead of bringing somebody in cold who might not know, for instance, how to open these threat-level three vests, they have all their experience from training with us and they are familiar with it all," Lonaker said. ■



TACTICAL MEDICS PROVIDE ON-SCENE CARE TO OFFICERS, SUSPECTS AND OTHER INJURED PERSONS DURING NKY ERU CALL OUTS. THE TWO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS SERVE AS VOLUNTEERS TO THE TEAM.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

# Tactical dispatch class

## Changing the Order of chaos

/Kelly Foreman,  
Public Information Officer

In high-risk situations requiring tactical law enforcement response, chaos often is an inevitable element both on scene and in 911 call centers.

However, a class being taught at the Department of Criminal Justice Training is helping telecommunicators learn how to eliminate some of that chaos.

Tactical dispatching is not a new concept, but it is one that has not been implemented across much of the eastern United States, said Elyse Christian, DOCJT advanced telecommunications instructor. In Kentucky, only one team — Louisville MetroSafe, in conjunction with Louisville Metro police, fire and EMS — has been exercising the concept for some time.

"It was just something I had never thought of," Christian said about tactical dispatching. "It makes perfect sense that a telecommunicator would go with the team. It's a great help to the actual responders who are there and it also helps the communication center."

The purpose of tactical dispatching is to take the confusion out of situations in which law enforcement, fire and/or EMS have been called to an emergency scene by allowing an on-scene dispatcher or dispatchers to take control of the flow of information.

Students learn how to document incoming and outgoing information at the scene, such

as descriptions of suspects, criminal histories, floor plans of involved buildings, suspect demands and more.

"In many cases, if there is not someone going who is actually doing all the documentation," Christian said. "You have police officers writing very cryptic notes and you think, 'What does that say?'"

A tactical dispatcher, however, keeps track of every detail for everyone on scene. They also can be responsible for answering phone calls from chiefs, mayors and citizens as well as quickly filling in responders who come on scene after the rest of the team has been briefed about the incident.

"Any agency can do it," Christian continued. "It doesn't cost a lot of money. You need a ruler, some flip chart paper, a couple of markers and some pencils. The cool thing is, [the information logs] are hanging on the car, and when we are done, your last thing on there is the time that everybody has cleared the scene. You roll it up, put a rubber band around it and you have it ready for court. So, the documentation is a tremendous benefit for liability's sake."

"In a regular communication center, you have a phone in each ear and you are doing your EMS calls and your fire calls and this situation is still going on — it is very hard for somebody to keep track of every little

detail," Christian said. "This just makes it much easier."

Ed Cox, who serves as the coordinator for Louisville MetroSafe's communications response team, said since the team began a few years ago, they have responded to everything from train derailments, plane crashes and major fires to HAZMAT call outs, overturned tankers and high-risk search warrants. The team operates with three highly-trained dispatchers and hopes to expand to include more members in the near future.

Cox considers the team close-range support for the agencies with which it works.

"If an incident commander is on [the scene of] a huge house fire, instead of getting on the radio and calling someone saying, 'I need this,' I'm standing right there close by and they can look at me and say, 'I need a city bus for rehab, I need medical units, I need EPA,'" Cox said. "They don't have to explain to me what is going on or give me a background story like they would have to give a dispatcher because I am already in close support."

"It also relieves some of the responsibility and duties off the communications center," Cox continued. "They can go on about their business because we do all the on-scene

logging like an event record and take care of all the forms and logs. We become the logistics chief on a small scale."

In the class, students spend time familiarizing themselves with video and audio of real-life emergency scenarios. They then learn how to begin documenting information from those scenarios as Cox described. On the second day, the students take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it in scenario-based training with local emergency response teams.

Training telecommunicators across the state in this type of on-scene, emergency dispatching ensures that when situations arise where they are needed, the operation can run more smoothly, be more organized and ultimately lead to a safer and faster conclusion, Christian said.

"The faster you can have a resolution or the faster you can even just contain it, the safer it is for everybody," she said. "The biggest difference in having this person on the team, doing all the documentation, keeping all the records and doing all the radio traffic — that frees up at least one responder, sometimes more, to go do his or her job. It puts a civilian in there so that officers can go out and do what they need to do." ■

▼ RICHMOND POLICE MAJ. BOB MOTT (LEFT, FAR RIGHT), AND RPD SGT. ROY JOHNSON (CENTER) TALK TO MEMBERS OF THE DOCJT TACTICAL DISPATCH CLASS DURING TRAINING WITH THE AGENCY. TACTICAL DISPATCHERS RELIEVE TACTICAL TEAM OFFICERS FROM KEEPING TRACK OF DETAILS AND COMMUNICATIONS DURING HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS.

/PHOTOS BY KELLY FOREMAN



# STANDARDS FOR SWAT

**B**eslan, Russia. Bovensmilde, the Netherlands. Cokeville, Wyoming. Bailey, Colorado. What do these municipalities have in common? All of these towns and cities have populations of less than 35,000 residents, and all of them became well known as the site of hostage-taking incidents.

Many small towns and rural jurisdictions assemble SWAT teams — some of them part-time, some of them multijurisdictional — with little expectation that these teams will ever be called on in a crisis situation. However, incidents like the ones mentioned above can happen anywhere, at any time, in places like unincorporated Cokeville and Bailey, a town of far less than 1,000 residents, as well as in major cities.

To help teams in towns large and small be better prepared to handle incidents and to work together if the need arises, the National Tactical Officers Association, has developed *SWAT Standards For Law Enforcement Agencies* to serve as an efficient core set of concepts, principles and policies to standardize and enhance the delivery of tactical law enforcement services.

NTOA produced the standards on a quick turnaround timetable, beginning a series of meetings in February 2008 and releasing the standards in September of the same year. The association received assistance in that

effort from the Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center, which provided input into standard development and offered a training track on multijurisdictional SWAT teams at the September 2008 NTOA conference. RULETC is a component of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center system, a program of the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice. RULETC focuses on addressing the technology needs of small and rural law enforcement and corrections agencies.

RULETC has also developed a CD-ROM titled *Multi-Jurisdictional Special Weapons and Tactics*, which is available free of charge and includes the full text of the standards, a multijurisdictional best practices guide, a multi-media presentation and sample forms.

RULETC's efforts to help small and multijurisdictional teams began not long after Dep. Director Scott Barker, a former FBI SWAT team leader and Hostage Rescue Team member, started at the center in 2005. An officer from a small police department came to Barker with a request for assistance, because the officer believed that four to five officers, all his department could spare, were not enough for a SWAT team. His need for help in creating a multijurisdictional team led to RULETC's efforts to create the best practices guide and CD-ROM, and the center's eventual involvement with NTOA.

The NTOA multijurisdictional committee and chair Tom Nolan provided input into RULETC's efforts, and the center in turn became involved in the development of

the standards and presented a small agency training track at the annual NTOA conference held in September 2008 in Albuquerque.

"We were just in the right place at the right time," Barker says. "We released our best practices guide, they introduced the standards, we did the class. It was like it was all planned, but it really just came together very well."

"It can be done if you get the right guidance and the right leadership," said NTOA Executive Director John Gnagey. "Scott and RULETC provided that under the leadership of Dr. John Morgan from NIJ."

Gnagey said the enormous scope of the 2004 Beslan incident caused the tactical community worldwide to take a serious look at whether teams would be prepared to handle a similar incident. NTOA started Project Red, which involved convening focus groups of tactical commanders, supervisors and operators from around the country and asking them some basic questions: the answers they got back were a resounding "no," accompanied by requests for standardization of policies, procedures, equipment and training. Then, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency came up with classifications — not standards — for SWAT teams and requested NTOA's assistance in reviewing and rewriting the National Incident Management System as it applies to SWAT teams.

At that point, Gnagey said, NTOA decided to stop waiting for a federal agency to take the lead in developing a

SWAT standard, and to take on the task.

"The board of directors said look, we have feedback from members, we've been in business 25 years and we've been teaching things and suggesting model policies. Why not just go one step farther and say this is a standard," Gnagey said.

NTOA assembled a committee of practitioners, drew on some existing documents developed by various states and asked RULETC if the center would be interested in a partnership and alliance.

"Within about five meetings, we were able to knock this thing out and get it ready to release at the conference," Gnagey said.

"They said they weren't going to play around, and they didn't," Barker said. He adds that NTOA originally hoped that the standards would be published by NIJ. However, NIJ chose to provide funding and input, and NTOA published the standards.

As with NIJ standards, compliance with the NTOA standards is voluntary. Another point of similarity is that Gnagey and NTOA see the standards as "a living document, always ready for potential revisions." Although copies of the standards have been distributed and are available, NTOA also sent copies to organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Fraternal Order of Police and the National Sheriffs' Association asking for comments, and the association plans to incorporate valid feedback as needed. Ultimately, NTOA would like to see the standards adopted by the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, with compliance potentially tied to receiving certain types of federal funding.

While NTOA waits for feedback from these associations and agencies, feedback is already coming in from SWAT teams around the country. Barker said response to the standards has been mainly positive, although some jurisdictions seem to feel it is too tough.

"A lot of chiefs will say this is too expensive to do, but others will say this is what they've been looking for. The days of the four-man SWAT team are over, and some teams will be forced to combine to meet the standards," Barker said. "NTOA is just trying to take the teams we have today and make them better, and RULETC is trying to facilitate NTOA to do this." ■

## GROUND DEFENSE SKILLS BECOMING A NECESSITY

/Kelly Foreman,  
Public Information Officer

**A**n influx of people trained in mixed martial arts has forced law enforcement officers to prepare for and defend against that style of combat, said Joe Jumper, Department of Criminal Justice Training Physical Training and Defensive Tactics instructor.

"Events like Ultimate Fighting Championship have encouraged society to watch, learn and participate in this new way of fighting," he said. "Another reason for law enforcement officers to be trained in ground defense is because of the lack of confidence in physical confrontation on the ground. With that said, officers need more ground training to increase their ability and awareness."

At DOCJT, Physical Training and Defensive Tactics instructors teach a ground defense system called Ground Avoidance Ground Escape, more commonly known as GAGE. The system is taught as part of the Pressure Points Control Tactics, or, PPCT.

"GAGE is an effective system for police officers because they are taught to avoid the ground if at all possible, Jumper said. "If ground engagement is unavoidable, the officers learn how to escape safely."

One Kentucky agency has recognized the value of this type of defense system and incorporated it into their tactical team.

"We have a dedicated hands-on unit," said Independence Police Capt. Jon Lonaker, commander of the Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit. "We have guys on the team who are trained to, once we identify a suspect, apprehend the person and the rest of the team can move on. They also function as team members when needed, but whenever we call contact or hands on, they immediately know to go to that area."

"What that does is it frees up the team members to move on to additional objectives," Lonaker continued. "A lot of times, what we have found is we go into a situation where we'd have our guns drawn and have somebody not giving up, but not resisting to the point where we can employ deadly force."

Hands-on team members have had extensive practice, training and testing in specific ground defense skills designed

for a law enforcement tactical team by a former team member, Lonaker said. They do not carry rifles or TASERS when called out to a scene, he said.

"So, [the hands-on team] allows us to get people who know techniques to take them down. It is safer for us and safer for the bad guy that we don't have any accidental shootings trying to take him down with a gun in hand. If this guy is going to resist, he has two free hands and I only have one. It is not fair to the officer. It works out to our advantage."

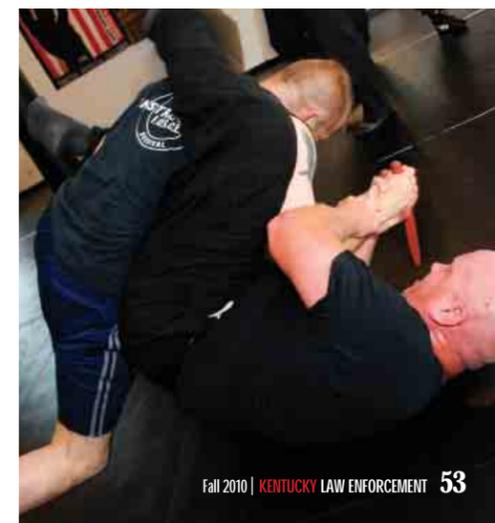
The objective of this part of the team is not about the fight, it's about getting the suspect out of the way of the rest of the team to handle whatever else needs to be handled on scene, whether that be victims, hostages or other suspects.

While every team may not be large enough to employ a hands-on group, Jumper encourages all officers — tactical team members and patrol officers who may be called upon for rapid deployment — to be trained in ground defense.

"I suggest officers practice and update what they learn from the academy," he said. "If you have the funds, join a school that teaches ground defense. If money is an issue, ask your department for support. I recently became aware that some departments are purchasing grappling mats for their officers to practice defensive tactics techniques. This is a great way to get the entire department practicing ground defense." ■

▼ THE NKY ERU EMPLOYS A HANDS-ON TEAM OF OFFICERS WHO ARE HIGHLY TRAINED IN GROUND DEFENSE SKILLS — A SKILL THAT IS BECOMING A NECESSITY WITH THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF MIXED MARTIAL ARTS.

/PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



To obtain copies of *Multi-Jurisdictional Special Weapons and Tactics*, RULETC's CD-ROM that also includes the standards, or for more information about the cooperative effort between RULETC and NTOA, contact RULETC at (866) 787-2553, e-mail [Ruletc1@aol.com/](mailto:Ruletc1@aol.com/).

NTOA defines a Special Weapons and Tactics team, better known as a SWAT team, as a unit with designated members specifically trained, equipped and assigned to resolve critical incidents involving a threat to public safety. Handling these incidents exceeds the capabilities of traditional law enforcement first responders and/or investigative units. SWAT's primary purpose is to provide a systematic approach to saving lives.

The National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center System, Your Technology Partner, [www.justnet.org](http://www.justnet.org), (800) 248 2742.

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