

# “TRAINING THE SWAT TRAINER”

by Sandy Wall and Tom Mijares

Reviewed by Barbara A. Schwartz

Tactics and techniques in the SWAT realm constantly evolve and improve, and they will continue to do so as criminals invent new ways to promote evil. SWAT training must stay ahead of the game, preparing for what might never happen, rehearsing responses for the unthinkable, always imagining the greatest of horrors. However, when some instructors craft lesson plans and scenarios, they fail to keep one critical enemy and combatant in mind — the courts. Veteran SWAT trainer and past Texas Tactical Police Officers Association (TTPOA) president Sandy Wall and Dr. Tom Mijares, Texas State University professor and TTPOA Training Advisory Board member, have written a new book, “Training the SWAT Trainer,” that arms instructors against this often-forgotten foe.

Mijares initially envisioned the book’s concept and approached Wall to contribute content and training standards. “Training the SWAT Trainer” differs from other books on your shelf by diving head first into the issue of bulletproofing your agency’s “fatal force” training.

“Strapping a gun on an officer, giving him body armor, and sending him out into the community, he will realistically come across that (fatal force) situation,” Wall explains. “Our mission is to ultimately save lives. We have to train for it.”

Wall points out that when a carpenter makes a bad cut on a board, he can

pick up another and start over; when an accountant makes a mistake on a ledger, he can erase the error. Police officers do not have that luxury. When they make mistakes, people can die, and sometimes the wrong people die. Mijares stresses that one of the first things a defense attorney does when filing a lawsuit against officers and agencies is subpoena training records.

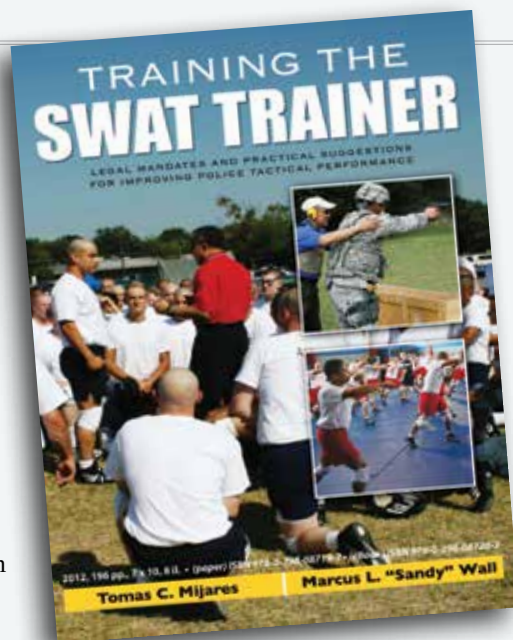
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Wall agrees. “First thing that we expect to be challenged is the training. When it happened, who instructed it, their credentials, what is contained in lesson plans.” Those instructors who don’t expect to be deposed and put on trial, with a jury examining what was done in training, are kidding themselves, according to Wall.

“This book is about saving officers’ lives,” Wall states, meaning not only their physical lives, but also their careers and financial and personal well-being. The book accomplishes this with chapters on lesson plan development, compliance with professional standards,



documentation, presentation and the need for continuous training and evaluation, among other topics.

The future of SWAT tactics rests in the hands of instructors. What is taught today may be challenged in court tomorrow. In “Training the SWAT Trainer,” the authors present case law archives that relate to the training theme of each chapter and illustrate how case law should be considered during the development phase of any training protocol. “If we can keep one police officer from getting hurt, or jammed up legally, then we have done our job,” Mijares says.

Instructors are obligated to continuously improve and educate themselves. Wall promises that the book will add to any instructor’s arsenal of knowledge, reminding them of what they already know or restating it in a new way. The book gives instructors building blocks to develop lesson plans and challenges them to be innovative in creating those plans, reminding the trainer that high-priced facilities are not always needed to achieve exceptional training.

“Training the SWAT Trainer” should be read not only by SWAT instructors, but by students, agency administrators, agency and union legal staff, as well as all law enforcement instructors who

want to bulletproof their training from liability and litigation.

“Hostage rescue training is not just for SWAT teams anymore,” Wall said, pointing out that when a narcotics team needs to save an undercover officer from a situation gone south, that is a hostage rescue incident. When a patrol officer hears shots fired and screams from inside a house at a domestic scene, that is also hostage rescue.

Students will learn how to obtain more from their training experience and to optimize their performance through skill development. Chapter 5, “Presenting the Material,” states: “Keeping students engaged in their own learning is the key to successful lesson presentation and student recall.”

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“Training the SWAT Trainer” also serves to educate agency administrators on the factors facing the modern law enforcement trainer. As stated in the preface, “...the chief executive officer of any organization bears the ultimate responsibility for any actions taken during the operation of the organization, no matter how far removed and insulated from the action...it is also incumbent on police executives to become familiar with the issues of training.”

“Training the SWAT Trainer” emphasizes that “performance is a function of preparation.” Reading the book will bulletproof your training preparation, support two good causes (see below), and enhance the performance of your officers, ultimately leading to lives being saved.

And that, we all know, is the real mission of SWAT. ▀

*The authors are donating all proceeds from the book’s sales to two scholarships they hold near and dear: TTPOA’s Les Early Scholarship, named after a Pasadena, Texas SWAT officer killed in the line of duty, and Texas State University’s Yari Mokri Scholarship, named for a former criminal justice student killed in Iraq while serving his country.*


*The book can be obtained from the publishers at 800-258-8980 or online at Charles Thomas Publishing ([www.ccthomas.com](http://www.ccthomas.com)).*

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Barbara A. Schwartz, a civilian member of TTPOA and NTOA, has dedicated her life to writing about the brave officers of law enforcement.



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