

NTOA WELCOMES CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD THOR EELLS



We live in interesting and challenging times. Not since the civil rights and anti-war riots of the mid-1960s have relations between citizens and the police been so strained. In my 28-year career, I cannot think of a more difficult time to be a law enforcement professional. We have all weathered storms

of criticism before and learned that they eventually pass, allowing us to continue to do our jobs. I think everyone would agree that this time things are different. The mantra of the militarization of policing has come to stay. Whether the criticism is warranted or not, it is based upon the public's perception and it is their reality. A quick look at state legislative agendas with police reform bills will confirm the beginning of this new era. So how do we respond to these new challenges?

Professionalism. Now, more than ever, we must take a hard look at how we are conducting ourselves. If we do not, it is clear that others are willing to do so. This should not threaten us. The SWAT community has institutionalized self-analysis as part of our daily operations and few professions examine themselves as closely as we do. We are comfortable in recognizing and correcting our deficiencies, as we do this regularly through debriefs, training and evaluations. Many other professions, particularly the medical community, use associations to assist them in their efforts to set and subsequently reach new goals. The NTOA has always strived to represent the SWAT community well and meet its need for the best training. Now, more than ever, we are committed to enhancing our chosen profession.

The NTOA has been quick to respond to much of the criticism surrounding the Federal Surplus Equipment Program, commonly referred to as the 1033 Program. When various legislators began to propose bills to restrict

and eliminate access, the NTOA provided assistance to better educate them in their efforts. The results have been positive for the tactical community. The bills have been amended to more accurately reflect how this equipment is used. Executive Director Mark Lomax has been invited to the White House to provide input on how the law enforcement community moves forward in today's environment. This endeavor will continue for the immediate future. For the first time ever, the SWAT community has a voice in Washington, D.C.

In addition to its work in Washington, the NTOA has also partnered with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to produce a validated study on the use of SWAT teams and related outcomes. This study will be a first in the field and it will be based on fact, not innuendo. The NTOA has also begun a second review of our SWAT Standard and will make appropriate revisions in order to stay contemporary. All of this is being done for your benefit and to demonstrate the professionalism of our membership.

I was humbled to be elected as your new chairman and am honored to be able to continue to serve as well. I look forward to working with fellow board members, Executive Director Mark Lomax, our new Director of Training and Education Don Kester, and the entire NTOA staff. Our collective goal is to serve the membership and continue to provide opportunities for us all to improve our professional status and image. Our hope is to do this with your active participation and assistance. Please reach out to any of us with your ideas, needs and concerns. I assure you we will do our very best to assist you. On behalf of the board of directors, thank you all for your support and service. Take care and be safe.

Sincerely,
Thor Eells, Chairman