

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



On June 12, our country awoke to news of the largest and most tragic mass shooting in U.S. history. The carnage that was inflicted upon the city of

Orlando was the ultimate worst-case scenario for law enforcement: hundreds of patrons, packed tightly in a closed environment, being systematically killed by a terrorist. The response of the men and women of the Orlando Police Department (OPD) and the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) was commendable. The OPD SWAT team, along with the OCSO Hazardous Device team, ultimately breached the wall of the club, rescued numerous patrons, and engaged and killed the terrorist. This was a result of well-trained, well-equipped law enforcement agencies that regularly worked and trained together.

Moreover, the equipment that was used in this hostage rescue, which has been criticized by so many anti-SWAT activists, saved lives. A SWAT officer's Kevlar helmet took the brunt of the impact of one of the shooter's bullets. An armored Lenco BearCat served as cover for the first responders and was used to collapse a wall of the club, allowing dozens to escape. The NTOA thanks all those law enforcement officers who were involved in responding to and ending the tragic shooting in Orlando. As we, and you, have always professed and will continue to declare — SWAT saves lives!

As proven in the Orlando incident, training is essential to our jobs. In July we launched the NTOA Academy, the first national program geared toward professionalizing tactical operations, leading to tactical command certification. This intensive, hybrid online/res-

idency program is designed to prepare today's tactical officers and policing leaders to succeed in a high-risk, ever-changing professional environment and to effectively meet the challenges of the future. Don Kester, NTOA director of training and education, deserves accolades for spearheading this most important initiative.

In April, I met with key leaders in both the House and Senate appropriations, judiciary, and crime and terrorism committees. One meeting was to support the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization, which was signed into law by President Obama on May 16. Other meeting topics included the 1033 program, federal funding for SWAT/tactical training and the recent NTOA SWAT Study.

Also in April, the NTOA was invited to a Law Enforcement Leadership Summit hosted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in Alexandria, Virginia. The nation's 17 major police associations decided to meet and discuss the recently released Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) document "Guiding Principles on Police Use of Force," which has created a stir in the law enforcement community. The daylong summit opened lines of communications between the associations, which in the past had been very isolated. The consensus among attendees was to continue the dialogue about use of force and other topics by meeting on an annual basis.

In June, we hosted the first SWAT Team Legal Defense Summit. With more than 100 in attendance, including defense attorneys and police commanders, the two-day summit focused on legal cases against SWAT teams and departments. The summit was facilitated by nationally known police defense attorneys, who spoke about their experiences in defending SWAT teams and the pitfalls to avoid. The NTOA will be conducting

additional relevant summits and seminars throughout the country.

Recently, the NTOA Board of Directors approved a new section for chaplaincy. This section, chaired by retired U.S. Marshal Rick Iannucci, will be tasked with coordinating and developing programs and initiatives that address critical/post-traumatic stress incidents, officer wellness and personal welfare. We look forward to having Rick and his section provide continuing support to our members.

Finally, this year the NTOA was again invited to participate in the Mock Prison Riot in Moundsville, West Virginia. We conducted several workshops and classes for the internationally attended event. I want to thank Corrections Section Chair Keith Moon and his section colleagues for bringing the NTOA and the corrections community closer together. We anticipate more training and educational opportunities with corrections tactical teams and commanders. ■

Be safe and God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Lomax".

Mark Lomax

At press time, the July attacks on Dallas and Baton Rouge police officers had just occurred. Our sympathy and prayers remain with all those who were killed or hurt, as well as their loved ones who support them every day.