

THE NTOA TACTICAL RESPONSE AND OPERATIONS STANDARD — AN EVOLUTION

In July 2017, the NTOA once again began the arduous task of updating the Tactical Response and Operations Standard (TROS). Given the impact that this document has on our profession, it was critical to consider input from our members. The NTOA contacted all state association presidents, as well as several federal partners, and invited them to serve on the review committee.

The final committee consisted of 20 participants, each bringing valuable input from the associations and organizations they represented. The member comment period was then opened for one month. All comments offered by members were carefully assessed and considered.

The overall goal of the review committee was to ensure that the voluntary consensus standard continues to provide guidance to law enforcement special operations leaders and evolves to meet the ever-changing tactics, technology and practices of those in our profession.

The 2018 NTOA Tactical Response and Operations Standard is available on our website at ntoa.org/swat-standard. While there always are minor grammatical and formatting changes made throughout the document, there also were several major additions or changes that occurred during this process, which are outlined below.

Equipment

The review committee recognized that one of the deficiencies of previous versions was that there was no reference to either team or individual operator

equipment. Review committee members agreed that this is one of the most frequently asked questions among team commanders. Those decision-makers should be provided a minimum list of equipment items that are necessary to ensure individual operator safety and a team's ability to carry out its intended mission. It's important to recognize that the standard merely states that individuals or teams should be equipped with these items. It does not delineate ownership or number, with the intent that certain items can be shared through an MOU.

Training hours

As in past revision processes, training hours continue to be an issue of concern for many in charge of tactical teams. Again, this subject took up a majority of the review committee's debate. Recognizing that the number training hours an agency invests in its team can be directly correlated to its likelihood of success, the committee was compelled to not lower the training hour standard. That being said, the committee did expand the definition to include an annual total for teams that are unable to meet the monthly goal. Collateral duty teams are recommended to train for 16 hours a month, or 192 hours a year. The full-time recommendation remains 40 hours a month, or a total of 480 hours annually. The training must be regular and reoccurring and based on critical skills training specific to the SWAT mission capability defined by the agency.

Crisis Negotiation Teams

An entirely new section was created within the TROS to provide more guidance and direction on the use of Crisis Negotiation Teams (CNT). The CNT function continues to grow in importance and complexity. Contemporary tactical teams across the country now rely as heavily on their negotiators as they do on their tactical operators in safely resolving critical incidents with violent individuals. This new section provides guidance on minimum training levels, equipment and suggested policy necessary to fully integrate CNT functions into a tactical response program.

Tactical Emergency Medical Support

Although the NTOA has previously issued a position statement on the use of tactical emergency medical support (TEMS), language has been added to Section 3.0 of the TROS that provides more detailed guidance on recommended training levels and roles of TEMS members within a tactical team. (See more about the TEMS standards on page 74 of this issue.)

Safety priorities

For years now, the NTOA has utilized the phrase "Priority of Life" (POL) to describe the factors that influence our decision-making process in a critical incident where lives are in the balance. The POL utilized a structure of "ranking" individuals in numerical order and priority: 1) hostage, 2) innocent civilians, 3) law enforcement, and 4) suspect.





NTOA CELEBRATES 35 YEARS



The term POL and the ranking was never intended to place a different value on human life, although many have interpreted it that way. No person's life is intrinsically more valuable than another and as a profession, we hold all life in the highest regard.

The NTOA Standards Review Committee spent many hours attempting to address this issue by providing a better term and explanation of the concept. The concept is now more appropriately termed Safety Priorities, in lieu of Priority of Life.

Any prioritization of our efforts should be based primarily on the person's ability to remove themselves from a dangerous situation. For example, hostages have little or no ability to remove themselves from the dire situation they may be in. Conversely, suspects have the most ability to remove themselves or affect the outcome of the situation through surrender. So, a hostage still has the highest priority, based not on any valuation of their life, but rather on the fact that they are in the most peril with the least amount of control. When contemplating an action, remember to evaluate who would benefit or suffer most. These should be guiding factors.

Those that use the TROS as a guidepost for policy development and training references should be reminded again that this is a voluntary consensus standard. It is based on input from members like you and continues to evolve as the profession does.

Download the TROS at:
ntoa.org/swat-standard

Anniversaries serve as milestones, and this year the NTOA is fortunate to celebrate the 35th anniversary of its founding. Visionaries like John Kolman, who began the organization in 1983, saw the need for improved training, higher standards and information sharing among police tactical teams. That legacy endures as our mission, and has expanded to include all first responders involved in resolving critical incidents.

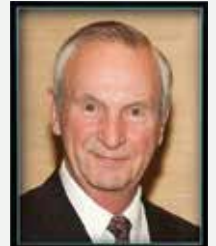
Over the years, our country has endured horrific events that have challenged law enforcement to its core, and the role of the first responder has increasingly emerged as one requiring rock solid training and unparalleled professionalism. In response to these challenges, the NTOA established the Tactical Response and Operations Standard in 2008 and launched the NTOA Academy in 2016 to prepare today's tactical officers and leaders to succeed in a high risk, ever-changing professional environment. Both the standard and the academy are evidence that the NTOA has not only helped shape national discussions on our profession, but it has also defined the benchmarks toward which agencies should strive.

The NTOA is proud of its history of innovation and service. Beginning with the cost-effective training and information network envisioned by its founders, the NTOA has consistently strived to offer the best training, finest instructors and most sound tactics.

The Tactical Edge, the NTOA's award-winning professional journal, was integral from the beginning and continues to be a major benefit and prime communicator to the NTOA membership. Along with the journal, the NTOA reaches its membership through e-newsletters, social media and a robust website.

Thirty-five years of NTOA history is well worth celebrating, so join us at our 35th annual conference in Milwaukee this September. But as we celebrate our 35 years, we also will be looking forward to the challenges and opportunities of the future. Our membership helps drive our future direction. You'll find the names of our board members and section chairs on page 6 of this issue. Contact any one of these individuals with ideas or concerns. Become a part of the innovations that are ahead, the innovations that will save lives.

On behalf of the entire association, we thank you for your continued support of the NTOA and we are excited about the opportunities to serve you in the years to come.



John Kolman
NTOA Founder