



40TH ANNUAL

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LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

AURORA, CO • AUG. 27 - SEPT. 1, 2023

GAYLORD ROCKIES RESORT AND CONVENTION CENTER

2023 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW - Aurora, CO

BY BUCK ROGERS

The NTOA celebrated its 40th Anniversary Law Enforcement Operations Conference and Trade Show in Aurora, Colorado, this year. More than 1,000 attendees representing 410 agencies from 46 states and six countries from as far away as the UAE, Tunisia, Italy and Singapore, joined us at the majestic Gaylord Rockies Resort for a full week of seminars, incident debriefs, and networking with leaders and innovators in the law enforcement community.

More than 200 companies, including over 50 first-time exhibitors, showcased the latest technologies and products during our two-day trade show. Attendees had an opportunity to see for themselves many of the products featured in our Member Tested Program throughout the year.

A warm welcome from Executive Director Thor Eells opened the conference Monday morning, which began with a moment of silence for those who have given their lives protecting their country and communities.

Eells then introduced members of the Rocky Mountain Tactical Team Association and thanked them for their support. Also recognized were the board of directors and

agencies that support the RMTTA and the Aurora Police Department, which worked tirelessly for more than a year to make this conference a reality. Aurora police Chief Art Acevedo also made comments to open the conference.

Bob Koonce, founder and president of High Reliability Group, served as keynote speaker. He started his company after serving 21 years in the U.S. Nuclear Submarine Force, including as commanding officer of USS Key West (SSN 722), a nuclear fast attack submarine, and five years of energy industry consulting experience. Koonce spoke about operational excellence in organizations. During his powerful presentation, he shared his experience in the nuclear submarine fleet and how that relates to police organizations and SWAT teams. One of his main messages was to achieve true operational excellence, we must have a culture that is devoted to professional knowledge, have honest self-assessment, strive for continuous improvement, and have a growth mindset. Koonce reinforced Admiral Hyman Rickover's philosophy that "human experience shows that people, not organizations or management systems, get things done."



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He also gave an example of a real-world crisis in the nuclear submarine force and how the main issues that led to the disaster related to what we face in police organizations, such as fatigue on missions, inadequate decision-making, team dynamics, and poor policies and procedures. Finally, Koonce provided some key leadership takeaways from his experience in the U.S. Nuclear Submarine Force: “Culture eats strategy (and tactical doctrine) for breakfast, and culture reflects leadership.” His words were an inspiration to all in attendance.

The annual presentation of the NTOA Awards recognized outstanding individuals and significant achievements that occurred throughout the law enforcement special operations community over the past year. Such accomplished and dedicated members contribute to our field in so many ways, and the NTOA was gratified to acknowledge some of these exceptional individuals. (See award winners below.)

During our annual Welcome Reception, attendees enjoyed a beautiful evening of relaxation and socializing on the lawn of the Gaylord Rockies Resort. The outdoor setting was a phenomenal backdrop for a buffet-style dinner and networking with various vendors and police departments. The event was generously co-hosted by Point Blank Enterprises and Lenco Armored Vehicles.

Beginning Tuesday, attendees had their pick of more than 100 seminars and incident debriefs. Debriefs included the Safeway Active Shooter Incident in Bend, Oregon, in which Jeff Fricky and Andrew Davis gave lessons learned from their perspective about the patrol response to this active shooter incident. One of the main takeaways included considering the risk-benefit analysis of a multiple-point entry on a large structure and the crossfire situations they create for patrol teams.

The Bardo Museum Attack in Tunisia debrief was one of the most technically advanced presentations. The Tunisians shared their lessons learned and challenges encountered from that incident, which resulted in the death of 22 hostages, and the process that went into rescuing others, which led to police killing both terrorists.

The Canadian Incident Debrief from Matthew Houlieff and Maxwell Bruce was very informative and described a novel bank robbery that escalated into a hostage situation with the suspect having a suicide vest strapped to him. As the situation unfolded, several hostages escaped out a rear door, and in the process, uniform officers stepped in to escort them. Those officers inadvertently made visual contact with the suspect, who was approximately 25 meters behind the teller area, and wearing a suicide vest with a deadman’s

Awards



John Kolman Award of Excellence

Capt. Jeff Garden of the Sioux Falls Police Department for his dedication and tireless devotion to the tactical law enforcement profession.



K9 SWAT Deployment Award

Deputy Shane Day of the Riverside County (CA) Sheriff’s Office for demonstrating extraordinary courage and dedication to the protection of his fellow officers.



Spirit of NTOA Award

Jon Becker, founder and president of AARDVARK Tactical, for his longtime support of the law enforcement community and his unwavering commitment to the mission of saving lives.

switch. Tactical members and two snipers mobilized within the bank and took over uniform positions. This debrief covered many relevant points for tactical teams, including transition procedures between patrol and SWAT teams, as well as command, control and communication procedures for such incidents. It gave insights into how tactical and bomb personnel deal with such a threat.

These were just some examples of the extraordinary debriefs discussed at our annual conference. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the officers who bravely shared their personal experiences of harrowing incidents. Their courage in sharing these stories is truly commendable. We recognize the impact that these events have had on their lives and appreciate their willingness to share openly with their fellow officers. We hope that their stories inspire us all to work toward a safer and more supportive community for everyone.

Our outstanding seminars featured topics such as How Human Performance Impacts CQB. In this four-hour seminar, Dr. Jake Labhart gave data and fitness profiles of officers from a broad spectrum and discussed how strength, anaerobic endurance, power agility and stability balance are key attributes of human performance in tactical operations. One interesting takeaway from his presentation dealt with the question, does training smarter make a difference? Based upon his limited study on 150 operators over a period of a year, he found it does. There was a 22 percent decrease in injury rates within six



Welcome Reception

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

5.11 Tactical • First Tactical • Lenco Armored Vehicles
Point Blank Enterprises Inc. • Tru-Spec • Vertx

RAFFLE PRIZES

Thank you to the many companies who donated prizes to be raffled off at our conference to help raise funds for various scholarships offered by the NTOA.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Through the generosity of Point-Blank Enterprises and the NTOA, four conference scholarships were awarded to attend the conference. Thank you to all who applied, and congratulations to our scholarship recipients.

Sponsored by Point Blank Enterprises

Sgt. Michael Rasmussen – Waterloo (IA) Police Department
Ranger Emanuel Bousios – Suffolk County (NY) Parks Police
Det. Daniel Mihajlovic – Sioux Falls (SD) Police Department

Sponsored by NTOA

Lt. Calvin Brown – Larkspur (CO) Fire Protection District



months, while 95 percent reported a decrease to minimal or no symptoms after program modifications. The seminar gave details on specific physical preparedness related to moving, performance and shooting.

David Pearson gave four separate presentations related to the 20 top tactical concepts that are foundational to the mindset, philosophy and tactical considerations of today's law enforcement officers. Regardless of previous experience, participants came away with a better appreciation of concepts such as balanced officers (warrior versus guardian), the soft skills of de-escalation, OODA loop, tactical decision-making, safety priorities, officer jeopardy, opportunity, the 4 Cs, space and time, tactical pause, and scenario-based integrated training, to name a few. These concepts gave attendees a more balanced perspective to improve their leadership skills and make better informed, consistent and defensible decisions in daily operations and critical incidents by utilizing a five-step decision-making model.

Lealem Mulugeta's seminar provided a scientific and practical understanding of how to structure your tactical conditioning protocol (i.e., pre-, during and post-workout) to enhance physical, physiological and cognitive performance. It also discussed why the pre-workout and post-workout elements are essential to performance, injury prevention and recovery; how the methods can enhance not just general phys-

ical, physiological and mental performance, but also marksmanship proficiency; and simple nutrition considerations that can mitigate systemic physiological states that can be adverse to the operator's health and performance. The most practical and immediate feedback to officers included a hands-on session to learn simple but highly effective methods to recover from and prevent common injuries experienced by tactical personnel; optimize training recovery to promote predictable and sustainable performance development while minimizing injuries; and improve flexibility and mobility to accommodate a wide range of performance and improve overall quality of life. This was an exceptional seminar that provided valuable education to officers on how to prevent injuries in the high-risk environment in which we work.

In addition to incident debriefs and seminars, we brought in over 100 instructors to lecture on various topics to sharpen attendees' skills and educate members on legal updates, trends in policing, and significant incidents across the nation. Our appreciation extends to these instructors, who traveled from far and wide to bring some of the best training available.

In tactical operations, we usually focus on strategy, tactics, fitness, training, shooting and equipment. We rarely do self-assessments and think about metacognition and how we should train our minds. Jeff Selleg discussed maximizing the

Thank You



Commander Nick Sprague
Rocky Mountain Tactical
Team Association



Chief Art Acevedo
Aurora Police Department



Keynote Speaker: Bob Koonce
Founder and president of
High Reliability Group

cerebral processes critical to success in a team environment and preparing them for peak performance during the fight in his seminar Developing the Tactical Leaders' Brain: Optimizing Cognitive Decision-Making for Success. We all understand the need for sustained, disciplined and concentrated effort at functional fitness combined with repetitive skill training to drive the utmost performance for SWAT officers.

Selleg's seminar wove two key cognitive elements that tactical officers must develop to perform at their topmost levels: emotional intelligence and the BrainHQ program. From Posit Science research and study, this one-of-a-kind program impacts all branches of public safety. Through dozens of online exercises created by neuroscientists, cognitive abilities are enhanced and maximize personal performance. Studies show that law enforcement officers increase recognition of environmental conditions, awareness and the speed of decision-making. Officers gain better impulse control and de-escalation capabilities, and reduce use of force, traffic collisions and citizen complaints. Ultimately, agencies maximize risk mitigation and reduce liability through the many benefits of brain science exercises. Selleg's seminar gave us a pathway to better understand what we need to do to improve overall.

Jon Becker's panel discussion on contemporary issues and concerns in the SWAT community was standing-room only. Becker, owner of Aardvark Tactical, moderated the discussion

covering a variety of topics, including no-knock warrants, dynamic entry, trends in tactical operations, legal ramifications in tactical operations, transparency in opposing false narratives, accreditation of SWAT teams, and the role of culture in teams. Panelists included representatives from the Rocky Mountain Tactical Team Association, the California Association of Tactical Officers, the Florida SWAT Association, the Texas Tactical Officers Association, and the National Tactical Officers Association.

Our commitment to providing high-quality training opportunities remains unwavering, and we look forward to continuing to deliver exceptional events like this in the future.

**Next year's conference will take place
Sept. 8-13, 2024, at the
Kansas City Marriott Downtown
in Kansas City, Missouri.**

**Watch our website for updates on the
conference and online registration.**



THE TACTICAL EDGE A CALL FOR ARTICLES

If you have an area of expertise or would like to write about any of the following topics, please contact editor@ntoa.org.

- School and workplace violence
- Public order
- Multi-jurisdictional response
- Crisis negotiations
- Incident debriefs
- Effective intelligence & information sharing
- Mass casualty response
- Counter ambush tactics
- IED threats
- Officer safety, wellness
- Leadership and management
- Police response to the mentally ill
- New technologies
- Education and training trends
- Tactical Emergency Medical Support