

AUGUST 24-29, 2025



2025

WASHINGTON, DC
THE GAYLORD NATIONAL HARBOR

LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS
CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

2025 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW - Washington, D.C.

BY BUCK ROGERS

The NTOA's 42nd Annual Law Enforcement Operations Conference and Trade Show was held Aug. 24-29 in Washington, D.C. More than 900 attendees, representing over 400 agencies from 44 states and six countries, including Germany, Spain, Italy and South Korea, joined us for a week of seminars, incident debriefs, and networking with leaders and innovators in the law enforcement community.

Our two-day trade show featured 247 companies — including more than 45 first-time exhibitors — who showcased the latest technologies and products, many of which had been featured in our Member Tested Program throughout the year. The trade show was one of our largest to date, and members networked with the makers of some of the best products in the industry. The NTOA also had the

opportunity to showcase its new BrainHQ partnership, allowing members to test their abilities on-site with BrainHQ staff who offered insight into the program.

Conference welcome and awards

A warm welcome from Executive Director Thor Eells opened the conference on Monday morning. It began with a moment of silence in honor of those who have given their lives in the service of protecting their country and communities.

Chief George Nader of the Prince George's County Police Department also made comments to open the conference, followed by special welcome messages from U.S. Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma and Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland.



**MORE THAN 900
ATTENDEES FROM 44
STATES, 6 COUNTRIES
AND 400 AGENCIES
WERE REPRESENTED**



Prince George's County Police
Honor Guard



National Anthem,
Det. Jason Ehrhart of the
Carroll County Sheriff's Office



DC Police Pipes & Drums



Thor Eells, NTOA Executive Director



Awards



Award of Valor - Deputy Pierce Acosta of the Volusia County (FL) Sheriff's Office for his valorous actions during a tactical operation.



Spirit of the NTOA - Dave DuBay, vice president and general manager of Less Lethal at Defense Technology, for his steadfast commitment to the NTOA's mission of saving lives.

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

In its second year, the NTOA's Hall of Honor paid tribute to extraordinary leaders whose contributions to the tactical profession merit the highest recognition. The 2025 inductees — Phil Hansen, Richard Carmona and Mike Foreman — were all present to receive this honor. These distinguished men have shaped our profession and devoted their lives to advancing and professionalizing the industry. Through their example and life's work, we are inspired to carry their legacy forward and continue striving for excellence. (See the Hall of Honor recipients on page 6 of this issue and visit ntoa.org/hall-of-honor to learn more about their enormous contributions to our profession through dedications and videos.)

An unforgettable evening was had by all at the annual Welcome Reception on Monday night in the beautiful Riverview Ballroom & Patio at the Gaylord National Harbor. Attendees were able to unwind and make new connections with the NTOA community in a laid-back, lively setting. Point Blank Enterprises and Lenco Armored Vehicles generously co-hosted the event.

The Tree of Life Documentary was aired Tuesday night as a special event produced by The Debrief Podcast, hosted by Jon Becker. It included interviews with some of the victims, as well as several tactical officers and team leaders who responded to and entered the Tree of Life Synagogue during the active shooter incident in 2018. This event was the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, resulting in 11 people killed and several others wounded, including four police officers. You can watch the documentary at thedebrief.live/confronting-hate.

Debriefs

Beginning on Tuesday, attendees had their pick of an extensive lineup of seminars and incident debriefs. One of the conference's most well-attended debriefs examined the U.S. Marshals Task Force officer-involved shooting and barricaded suspect incident in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. On April 29, 2024, a marshals task force attempted to serve warrants at 5525 Galway Drive when the suspect, armed with an AR-style rifle, opened fire from an elevated position. The deadly confrontation left eight officers shot and four fatally wounded, prompting an urgent SWAT all-call and a massive multi-agency response. The presentation provided a detailed analysis of the event, underscoring the immense challenges of managing a rapidly evolving critical incident involving multiple responding agencies.

Hall of Honor Awards



Phil and Debbie Hansen



Richard Carmona and his son-in-law Robert Guillot



Mike and Kathy Foreman and family

★ ★ Read more about the 2025 Hall of Honor recipients on page 6. ★ ★

Another highly attended debrief focused on a 2023 Austin (TX) Police Department SWAT hostage rescue in which an officer was killed in the line of duty. The incident began when a suspect seriously injured three victims; one managed to self-evacuate while patrol officers attempted an emergency entry, only to be met with heavy gunfire. When SWAT arrived, a partial team made entry, resulting in one officer killed and another critically injured. The debrief walked attendees through the incident step-by-step, examining key decision points, tactical considerations and post-incident factors.

The presentation addressed both patrol and SWAT lessons. Patrol-related topics included the value of victim interviews, breaching tools and emergency entry training. SWAT-related themes emphasized intelligence gathering, robust training programs and the Officer Down/Trauma Pit Crew concept. Presenters also highlighted the importance of unified command for coordination and accountability, the role of cover versus concealment under elevated threat conditions and responding to an unknown number of suspects — including implementation of a gas plan. Terrain challenges

and their impact on armored vehicle deployment also were reviewed. What set this session apart was the inclusion of perspectives from those directly involved in the incident, including the wife of the fallen officer, offering a powerful reminder of the operational and human costs of high-risk operations.

These are just a few examples of the remarkable debriefs presented at our annual conference. We acknowledge the profound impact these moments have had on presenters' lives and appreciate their willingness to share with their fellow officers. May their stories inspire us all to strive for a safer, more supportive community for everyone.

Thank You



Chaplain Paul Anderson of the Prince George's County Police Department



Chief George R. Nader of the Prince George's County Police Department

Seminars

A new course at this year's conference, the Tactical Rope Access Program, introduced SWAT-specific rope techniques and demonstrated how they extend beyond basic rappelling. The training emphasized operational advantages such as conducting rescues, executing tactical insertions and extractions, deploying diversionary devices or chemical agents and maneuvering through difficult terrain. Instructor Dan Vilander, a seasoned expert in tactical and rescue rope work, underscored the importance of proper certification and regular recertification. Because rope access is a high-risk, low-frequency skill, it is highly perishable and demands ongoing, consistent training to ensure both competence and safety.

Another new addition to this year's lineup was Marco Lopez's High-Risk Operations Planning course, which drew on the experience of a large, full-time metropolitan team and shared valuable lessons learned. This seminar emphasized essential knowledge for planning high-risk warrants and complex tactical operations from the perspective of safety priorities. While focusing on tactical operations, it also included insights from investigative units. Officers learned additional strategies and techniques not usually discussed, using asymmetrical tactics with enhanced tactical planning to promote safer and more effective operations. Lopez's decades of experience helped officers understand different approaches to high-risk planning based on real, complex operations.

The Active Shooter Incident Management (ASIM) Basic I & II Course focused on a patrol track utilizing the ASIM Checklist — an integrated response process for law enforcement, fire and EMS — delivered through the Counterstrike tabletop training system. Instructors Bill Godfrey and Terry Nicholas introduced the core concepts of integration and guided participants through three functional exercises, providing responders with opportunities to actively practice their skills. This hands-on approach not only deepened participants' understanding but also strengthened their ability to apply critical knowledge in real-world scenarios. By blending theory with practical application, ASIM Basic equips emergency responders to manage active shooter incidents with improved coordination and efficiency.

O2X instructors Stephen Scrobe, Brandon Hanley and Wayne Sasso delivered an engaging workshop on the role of cognition in tactical officer performance, focusing on decision-making, attention control and response inhibition. They introduced validated testing assessments that officers could try firsthand, demonstrating their value in both cognition training and evaluating key cognitive domains. Participants explored factors that influence cognitive performance and developed personalized strategies to strengthen executive function and mental readiness. Attendees also left with practical testing tools to take back to their agencies, enabling



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

5.11 Tactical • First Tactical • Lenco
Armored Vehicles • Point Blank Enterprises

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 our sponsors, 15 conference scholarships were awarded to attend the conference. Thank you to all who applied, and congratulations to our scholarship recipients.

5.11

Dep. Josh Sims
Buncombe County (NC) SO

Sgt. Brandon Worthington
Aventura (FL) PD

CURTIS BLUE LINE

Brian Donovan
NSA

BENELLI

Sgt. James Hurley
Atlantic City (NJ) PD

Sgt. Charles Miller
Atlantic City (NJ) PD

Lt. Joel Schmid
Chico (CA) PD

Lt. Jake Elkins
Coeburn (VA) PD

POINT BLANK

Dep. Phillip Britt
Columbus County (NC) SO

Ofc. Zach Garfield
Bozeman (MT) PD

Sgt. Benjamin Milam
Billings (MT) PD

Sgt. Trevor Thomas
Provo (UT) PD

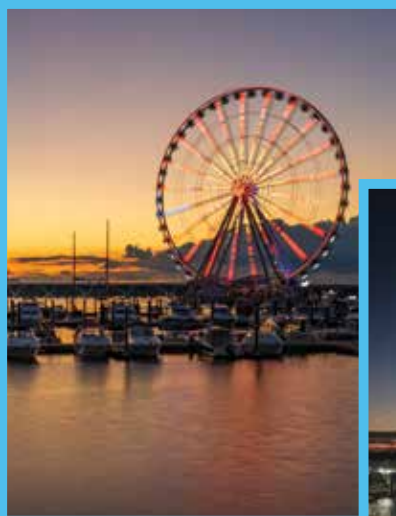
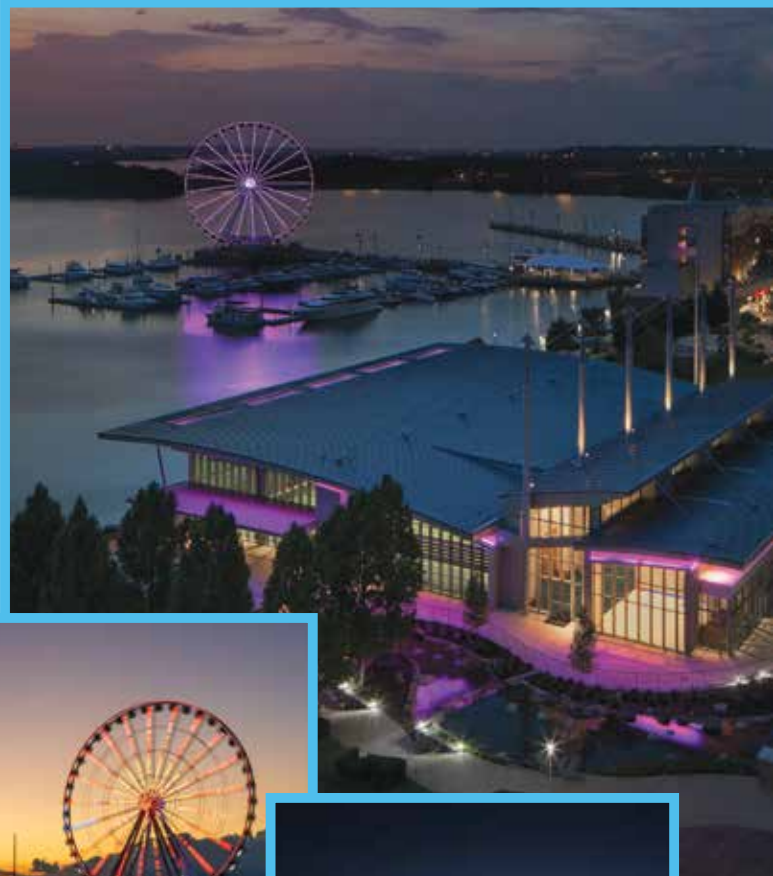
PASTORE FOUNDATION

Sgt. Loren Hilliard
Boise (ID) PD

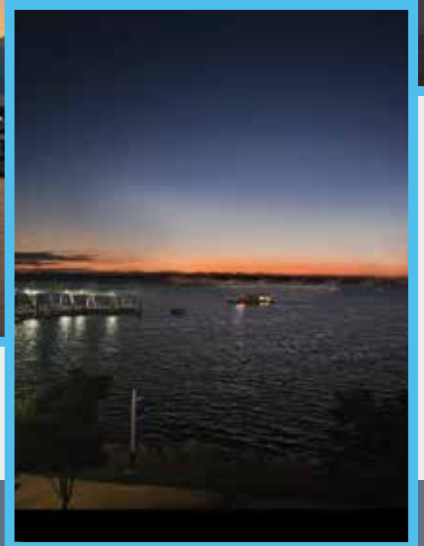
Sgt. David Cohen
Cary (NC) PD

Cpl. Andrew McKinley
Jackson (AL) PD

Det. Bonita Martin
Hudson Valley
Prosecutor's Office



Welcome reception at the beautiful
Riverview Ballroom & Patio at
the Gaylord National Harbor.





them to better assess and enhance cognitive performance. The instruments were highly effective in identifying both strengths and areas for growth. The session proved extremely worthwhile, as reflected in a packed classroom.

One of the conference's standout sessions was Brian Abernathy's presentation on leadership, mission planning and organizational accountability, delivered from the perspective of a Tier 1 Special Operations veteran. Drawing on more than 20 years of service in the Ranger Regiment, Delta Force and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), Abernathy outlined how the principles guiding elite military units can be adapted to address the evolving challenges of modern law enforcement. He highlighted the parallels between Special Operations Forces and law enforcement agencies, underscoring the urgent need for adaptable, capable and accountable leaders at every level. His ability to translate battlefield leadership into law enforcement application made this session both practical and highly impactful.

Brian Willis, one of the most respected voices in self-development, delivered a powerful session titled *Strategies for Preparing the Mind*. He posed key questions: How can we better prepare officers mentally for the situations they will face? And, what simple, proven skills can be seamlessly built into every aspect of training? His interactive session highlighted evidence-based strategies that can be introduced in the academy and reinforced throughout an officer's career — at no additional cost. Grounded in human performance research, these skills are designed to help officers perform at their best, both in daily life and under the tense, uncertain and rapidly changing conditions they encounter in the field.

Willis also challenged common training practices, emphasizing that physical fatigue alone does not replicate the hormonal stress response. True stress involves unpredictability, perceived threat and loss of control — factors that activate the HPA axis and sympathetic nervous system. For force-on-force scenarios, he explained, physical drills must be paired with cognitive, social and emotional stressors to more accurately mirror operational demands. The presentation was both eye-opening and practical, leaving participants with meaningful "homework" to bring back to their agencies.

Our conference drew over 100 instructors to lecture on various topics, sharpening attendees' skills and educating members on legal updates, trends in policing, and significant incidents across the nation. We appreciate these instructors, who traveled far and wide to provide some of the best training.

Nashville 2026

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

**Next year's conference will take place
Aug. 30 - Sept. 4, 2026, at the**

**Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center
in Nashville, Tennessee.**

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

SAVE *the* DATE

2026



LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS

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Nashville, TN

GAYLORD OPRYLAND RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER

Aug. 30 - Sept. 4, 2026