



## About John Kolman: A good and great man



Each of us probably knows one of those unique individuals who has influenced and changed lives, institutions, organizations or concepts.

The single most

influential individual in the world of Special Weapons and Tactics is the founder of the National Tactical Officers Association, John Kolman.

John and Janice, his wife of 46 years, started the NTOA in 1982. John had, by that time, been a SWAT team leader and eventually a SWAT commander with one of the leading Special Ops units in the world, the Los Angeles County Sheriffs' Special Enforcement Bureau, or SEB. John had traveled throughout the United States as a consultant and trainer, teaching SWAT teams and incident commanders the basic and advanced concepts of SWAT leadership. With a master's degree, unparalleled field experience and as a graduate of the 140<sup>th</sup> Session of the FBI National Academy, John Kolman was well equipped to support law enforcement and move SWAT forward. He wrote two books on the subject and was the primary coordinator of numerous studies that were the basis of improvement of agency performance.

John could see that there was a wide gap in tactical methodology, team organization and selection criteria. Some of what was taking place was unnecessarily dangerous and fraught with the potential of serious liability. His goal was to create a national base of core SWAT systems and tactics that were realistic solutions inside the limits of the culture and constitutional constraints of the United States. In fact, what he did was save a concept that had as many naysayers as advocates. Without John Kolman and his

energy and foresight, SWAT could very well have died an early death. The early years of SWAT saw special teams formed for very worthy reasons, but the monetary support and executive level backup was often in short supply. Very little SWAT training was available. People who had never actually been involved in any SWAT action were teaching some of the courses.

John and Janice's energy and hard work carried the NTOA through the early years and it was always at their own expense. From the publication of the first edition of *The Tactical Edge* to the first NTOA conference, John and Janice sustained the NTOA. All the while, John was also working as a Los Angeles County Sheriff's lieutenant and then captain.

The first SWAT Supervision, Tactics and Management course was taught by John. The first independent review and evaluation ever done to evaluate an agency SWAT program was accomplished by John.

John was selected by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to participate in the investigation and evaluation of the BATF SWAT operation at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas in 1993, the 51-day standoff that followed the murder of four ATF SWAT agents. This tragedy was compounded by politics with members of the Congress using the incident for their own political advantages. John's excellent detailed investigation and report, followed by his appearance on three separate occasions before Congress, did much to prevent a "witch hunt" and led to needed improvements within the BATF incident command.

John volunteered hundreds of hours of his time to aid the Los Angeles Police Department SWAT team during a lengthy trial in federal court. His participation and testimony was key to LAPD SWAT being vindicated.

In 1998, John was asked to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina to evaluate that government's capabilities to respond to civil unrest. John developed and implemented a one-month training program for management and operational personnel from throughout the war-torn country.

The honors bestowed upon John in recognition of his significant contributions and dedication are many: The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Exemplary Service Medal and Distinguished Service Medal, as well as numerous commendations from federal, state and local agencies. He is also the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Department of Military Medicine 1996 Achievement Award, The International Tactical EMS Association 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award, and the California Association of Tactical Officers 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award.

John has decided to resign as NTOA's first Director Emeritus. He continues to attend the annual NTOA Conference and give the organization the benefit of his wisdom and expertise.

From a personal point of view, I have never met a more ethical, capable and decent man in or out of law enforcement. I have had the honor of working with John for more than forty years in many places in a variety of situations. I am always amazed by his sense of honor and his intellect. His unyielding dedication to law enforcement has saved SWAT officers and SWAT teams, often without notice or acclaim.

It is often said that everyone can be replaced. Because I know John Kolman, I know that this is very far from the truth. He is truly one of a kind.

**Ron McCarthy**

*NTOA Director Emeritus*