

NTOA COMMAND COLLEGE STUDENT PROFILE

CHIEF JUAN GONZALEZ SAN JUAN (TX) PD



San Juan (TX) Police Chief Juan Gonzalez began his law enforcement career in 1988. He's served a number of assignments throughout his career, including patrol officer, sergeant, lieutenant and special

crimes narcotic investigator. He was training commander and SWAT commander for the Pharr Police Department upon his retirement in 2009. In that same year, he was hired as chief for San Juan. He is a graduate of the 201st session of the FBI National Academy and the University of Texas at Pan American Certified Public Manager Program. Gonzalez was instrumental in establishing the first specialized multi-agency law enforcement emergency regional response team (LEERRT) in the Rio Grande Valley. The team is now utilized by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in serving high-risk arrest and search warrants. The team also provides tactical training and support to all agencies.

Q: YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN SEVERAL SPECIALIZED ASSIGNMENTS AND WORK FOR A VARIETY OF LEADERS. WHAT LEADERSHIP TRAITS HAVE BENEFITED YOU ALONG THE WAY?

A: The greatest asset I have received from working under three different police chiefs with varying leadership styles has been my vision and commitment to never be satisfied with the status quo in the department and to be a strong facilitator for implementing or creating new specialized units to combat the criminal element. Don't settle for less just because someone says it can't be done.

Our law enforcement emergency regional response team is a great example of what can be done by putting aside our differences for the betterment of protecting our border. We work in an environment that we can either impact internally or be impacted externally by the way we lead our departments or specialized response units.

The current work environment throughout the nation can easily change the culture of each department or special response unit. Therefore, as leaders of departments and special response units, we need to facilitate what is happening in the country and apply those issues and discussions in our communities. By doing this, it will help our tactical units resolve incidents with minimal risks to them and innocent bystanders.

Q: OPERATING IN A STRONG MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSE SYSTEM, YOU MUST CONSTANTLY HAVE TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER PEERS TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOALS. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ASPIRING LEADERS LEARNING TO OPERATE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT?

A: My vision and commitment has always been very open and clear with every executive leader that is or wants to be a part of our regional team: a no-holds-barred kind of attitude. I do not sugarcoat tactics, techniques, concepts or principles with them. All the police, fire and EMS agencies that composed the LEERRT are constantly kept informed of our regional team's mission and purpose. A report is generated monthly through homeland security meetings to address new tactical trends, asset forfeiture opportunities, grant opportunities, personnel issues, equipment acquisitions and lessons learned during tactical operations. Our success depends on keeping the police chiefs, fire chiefs, EMS directors and city managers involved in the selection,

training and discipline of our SWAT operators, including our crisis negotiations unit. Creating a working environment that all executive leaders and members of the team feel they have ownership in makes my job a lot easier.

Q: HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE NTOA COMMAND COLLEGE BENEFITING YOU IN YOUR ROLE IN THE LEEERT?

A: As the regional commander for our team, I feel it is my duty to better my leadership traits and qualities in order to effectively and efficiently keep my team safe during tactical operations. I have 17 different police chiefs, fire chiefs and city managers, as well as directors of EMS services units, that I have to answer to on a daily basis. I have learned throughout my years as the regional commander that experience without training is ineffective, and vice versa.

The NTOA Command College provides that specialized structured training necessary to continue building my confidence as a commander, and it also benefits my team because I will share and apply my leadership training with them. By enrolling in the NTOA Command College and attending additional NTOA-sponsored training, I will definitely increase my tactical knowledge and be more tactically sound.

Q: AS PART OF THE COMMAND COLLEGE PROGRAM, YOU WERE ASKED TO SELECT A CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT. WHAT TOPIC DID YOU SELECT AND WHY?

A: I selected how a multi-agency regional response team can effectively and efficiently operate in a tactical environment. It has been a great experience for me to have created a regional response team with other local police chiefs from small departments. When I first proposed forming the team with the police chiefs, I was met with some resistance since it had never been done and agency heads were not sure if it was needed. They questioned what purpose it would serve and for what missions would the team be utilized.

Through a lot of commitment and vision from all those involved, we were able to select the command and control structure of the team based on training and experience of personnel. We were able to establish funding for training and equipment through grant opportunities and homeland security funding. We also acquired necessary specialized equipment through asset forfeiture funds. We have been instrumental in assisting other local, county, state and federal agencies in other surrounding counties in establishing

their own regional teams by providing tactical training and support to them.

Q: WHAT FEEDBACK WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER CHIEFS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING THE COMMAND COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR EITHER THEMSELVES OR MEMBERS OF THEIR LEADERSHIP TEAM?

A: In my more than 28 years as a police officer, I have seen very few command colleges or training institutes that provide great quality executive management training to prospective students and at the same time challenge the student to become a successful leader after receiving the specialized training. The NTOA Command College provides that to students.

The challenge is greater than the process. I have assistant chiefs, captains, lieutenants and sergeants from other municipal agencies currently assigned to our team that respect me as their leader. Therefore, I need to lead by example and allow them to visualize that they can be great leaders themselves by taking the right structured training. My main goal is to facilitate the groundwork and path for other police chiefs and their personnel who have limited tactical experience to enroll in the NTOA Command College as well. ■



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The NTOA Command College isn't just for aspiring leaders, it's also the perfect opportunity for experienced tactical team leaders and commanders to validate the leadership philosophies and tactical concepts that they may already know. Through video lectures, quizzes, discussion forums and writing assignments, you'll be able to demonstrate your knowledge of tactical leadership skills. Seasoned leaders in this program often excel at the assigned tasks, as they have numerous experiences to draw from.

Find out today if the NTOA Command College is right for you! Visit ntoa.org/academy to learn more.