

BOOK REVIEW



Crisis Cops

The evolution of hostage negotiations in america

Patrick R. Doering

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REVIEWED BY ANDREW YOUNG

In his new book “Crisis Cops: The Evolution of Hostage Negotiations in America,” Lt. Pat Doering provides an in-depth look at the beginning of the hostage (crisis) negotiating profession in the early 1970s. Through interviews and stories, Doering details how teams formed, the beginnings of training and the bringing together of different disciplines as the foundation for modern-day police negotiations. The interviews are a mix of historical accounts and war stories from the officers trying to find their way in complex situations and with a new approach to negotiating critical incidents.

Departments at that time were seeing a need for specialized hostage negotiating units in the wake of airplane hijackings, bank robberies gone wrong and other standoffs involving hostage-taking that required a sophisticated police response. A few high-profile cases were the catalysts needed to formalize hostage negotiating units.

Accounts from 16 departments across the United States comprise the bulk of the 141 pages, including stories from the NYPD and an interview with Frank Bolz, who is one of the founders of police negotiations. The book also details the beginning of the FBI’s Crisis Negotiation Unit and includes an interview with Tom Strentz, author of “Hostage/Crisis Negotiations: Lessons Learned from the Mad, Bad, and Sad.” Other departments included are San Francisco, Chicago and Los Angeles, all of which are represented by founding and pivotal members of those first hostage negotiating teams.

The author also details the terminology, skills and mindset of a hostage negotiator, so a reader unfamiliar with the world of crisis negotiations and SWAT teams can understand the stories and situations discussed throughout the book. Those familiar with police negotiations, and those reading about this field for the first time, will be astounded by the first-hand accounts of how negotiations were conducted early on. This book does a great job sharing first-hand interviews and the stories of these negotiators.

The “lessons learned” chapter is a nice touch. It is a number of quotes from the founding fathers of crisis negotiating. Doering closes with a look to the future of negotiating in the final chapter, “The Future.”

“Crisis Cops” was very interesting to read and I learned much about the origins and beginnings of the field of police negotiating. I am very glad Doering was able to chronicle these stories, not only for posterity and because of their historical significance, but also for the valuable lessons found within these accounts. I recommend “Crisis Cops” to anyone interested in the origins of the field of hostage crisis negotiating, and in riveting first-hand stories from those who pioneered this discipline.

Lt. Patrick Doering has over 22 years of law enforcement experience and currently serves with the Lake Saint Louis (MO) Police Department. Lt. Doering is the Crisis Negotiations section chair for the NTOA.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Andrew Young has been a professor in behavioral sciences at Lubbock Christian University since 1996. He has worked with the Lubbock Police Department since 2000 and is the coordinator and a founding member of the department’s Victims Services Crisis Team. He also is a SWAT negotiator with the Lubbock PD and Lubbock County Sheriff’s Office. He has published a book called “Fight or Flight: Negotiating Crisis on the Frontline.”