





Heartland Tactical Officers Association: Training and collaborating across state lines

BY FRED FARRIS



In 1989, the Metro Tactical Officers Association (MTOA) was born out of an idea proposed by then-Sgt. Steve Smith of the Lenexa (KS) Police Department, who believed that information and equipment sharing along with joint training would improve the capabilities of tactical teams in the Kansas City area. Word began to spread of the quality of training that the MTOA was providing, and membership began to expand out of the boundaries of the Kansas City area to other agencies in Missouri and Kansas that were now training together on a regular basis. Steve would later join the board of directors for the NTOA as he continued to grow the MTOA and develop instructors, many of whom would go on to instruct nationally and become key names in the SWAT profession.

In 2008, the association incorporated as the Kansas City Metro Tactical Officers Association (KCMTOA) and was approved as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a five-member board of directors. The training cadre continued to grow, courses were added, and membership in the association expanded into Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska and Minnesota.

The association continued to produce incredible instructors who were teaching nationwide for the National Tactical Officers Association and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Membership from areas outside the Kansas City metropolitan area continued to rise. Recognition of the KCMTOA drew the 30th anniversary NTOA conference to Kansas City in 2013 and members



from around the nation were able to see firsthand the level of cooperation practiced by the membership of the KCMTOA.

Today, the KCMTOA has over 120 agencies in six states. Nearly 1,000 tactical officers, patrol officers and medics train each year in a multitude of courses. Annually, the KCMTOA has provided a Basic SWAT and Advanced SWAT course; Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Sniper courses; TEMS; SWAT Supervision and Management; Specialty Munitions Instructor; and other specialty courses as needed. Our mission of providing high quality, low-cost training to our members is accomplished through the gracious donation of the time and talent of our instructor staff by the leaders of our member agencies. This has allowed our board of directors to reinvest funds into shared equipment, including a large cache of dedicat-

ed Glock 9mm, AR-15, and MP-5 Simunition weapons that are routinely checked out by our member agencies. Additionally, the association awards five, \$1,000 educational scholarships each year to children of association members.

Our association is truly representative of our members in local and national discussions, funding and best practices. Our members are the best of their respective agencies and collaborate, train and work operationally with each other, even crossing several state lines to do so.

A NEW IDENTITY

For several years, board members have considered changing the name of the association to more accurately reflect the makeup of our entire membership. Those conversations have continued due to the gravity of changing something that has been

part of the fabric of law enforcement special operations in our area for over 30 years. The board believed that the time had come to make that change.

So, after years of discussions along with weighing the pros and cons of such a move, the board of directors has elected to move forward in changing the name to the Heartland Tactical Officers Association (HTOA). It is our belief that this name truly embodies who we have become as a regional, rather than local, professional association.

This decision did not come lightly, and a large part of our discussion surrounded how we would develop our logo and name to preserve and pay homage to our past. We never want to forget where we came from, how we got here, or those who invested a great deal in our success since 1989. Our new logo honors our past by including our established date, 1989, and our previous names. The Heartland Tactical Officers Association also looks to the future as we continue the mission envisioned by our founder, Steve Smith, in training special operators and building strong working relationships between agencies.

The HTOA is proud to once again co-host the NTOA's Law Enforcement Operations Conference in Kansas City, home to some of the best barbecue restaurants in the country, world famous craft beer, and the National World War I Liberty Memorial Museum. Centered in the heart of the nation, Kansas City is within eight hours' drive from Denver, Chicago, Dallas, Milwaukee and St. Louis, and is home to the Kansas City Royals, Super Bowl champions Kansas City Chiefs, Sporting KC, and the Kansas Speedway. Midwestern hospitality and family attractions like Worlds and Oceans of Fun, Science City at Union Station and shopping at the Country Club Plaza make the Kansas City Metro a hidden gem the members of the HTOA look forward to showcasing.

*Contributed by Chief Fred J. Farris,
Goddard Police Department.*



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