



# **NTOA Academy: The art and science of tactical leadership development**

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*“You should have no other aim or thought nor take up any other thing for your study but ‘conflict’ and its organization and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands.”<sup>1</sup>*

*– Niccolo Machiavelli, “The Prince”*

The NTOA has dedicated itself to the development of leaders within the law enforcement profession. To that end, the NTOA Academy is focused on the Machiavellian principle of honing the art and science of tactics and strategy for law enforcement leaders through a rigorous academic and resident Command College.

## **HISTORY OF THE COMMAND COLLEGE**

In summer 2015, the NTOA invited CATO and other state SWAT associations to a planning conference. The two-day conference resulted in the development of roles, relationships and initial requirements and led to the NTOA becoming a national certifying entity for SWAT officers and agencies. Dr. Mitch Javidi and the IAPS offered to share resources to further the program. The attending state associations polled their members for acceptance of the concept. The result was overwhelmingly favorable.

Later that year, the NTOA held a strategy meeting at its annual conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. The concept was presented to the board, and the board voted unanimously to implement the program. Shortly after the conference, the NTOA announced the creation of the NTOA Academy, the next phase of the professionalization of law enforcement tactical officers and units. The NTOA Command College enrolled its first student on Oct. 17, 2016.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE COMMAND COLLEGE**

The NTOA Command College is a dynamic learning experience using online, resident and experience-based tactical learning modules to introduce new concepts and refine tactical team members' understanding of their application. Officers then use those skills to resolve some

of the most complex, challenging, and high-risk incidents involving their communities. The curriculum is based upon best practices and designed to ensure that graduates are prepared to meet the dynamic challenges of modern policing.

The Command College's learning environment provides its students with the most contemporary information and skills necessary for applying the gained knowledge. It is the most robust certificate program available to law enforcement to date. This endeavor is in keeping with the NTOA's goal of providing an avenue for a continuum of training and education of the highest quality.

## **CURRICULUM**

The NTOA Command College is a certification program wherein graduates are accredited as credible leaders based upon their successful completion of a comprehensive academic program, in addition to meeting substantive standards of corroborated field experience.

The curriculum covers 562 hours divided between three modules: Tactical Leadership, Operational Leadership and Strategic Leadership. Each module is packed with online learning content, essays and a professional reading list to enhance leadership and education. Modules include core leadership courses, SWAT courses and discussion boards, and culminate with a capstone paper and residency courses.

The online learning management system allows students to attend leadership courses at their own pace, thus reducing the overall costs of travel, lodging, and per diem generally associated with other leadership education programs. The in-class residency allows students to come together in a classroom setting to enhance their

learning on timely leadership topics, analyze recent critical incidents from across the country, and discuss current events.

The NTOA Command College differs significantly from most conventional law enforcement tactical leadership courses, which limit their focus to decision-making in the tactical environment. In contrast, the Command College places a strong emphasis on core leadership principles that have an application to every work environment. Ethical decision-making, the motivation of personnel, and change management are just a few of the important topics addressed in this program.

## **COLLEGE CREDITS**

The core leadership courses of the Command College are accredited with the American Council on Education (ACE). ACE is an accrediting organization for hundreds of universities throughout the world. Its college credit recommendation service helps students receive academic credit for formal courses and examinations taken outside the traditional classroom. Students may request credit hours from any member university, not just a limited few, like most programs. Any Command College graduate who completes all three modules is eligible for six semester hours of either upper-division baccalaureate or graduate degree credits. The college credit recommendation is managed by the Office of the Registrar and Records Department of the National Command and Staff College.

## **APPLYING TO COMMAND COLLEGE**

Similar to academic colleges and universities, the NTOA Command College has entry requirements. Applicants must:

- Be an NTOA member at the time of application and remain a member throughout the program
- Be on active duty as a sworn officer with a current or expected future SWAT assignment. Negotiators would also benefit from this program by receiving a greater appreciation on the tactical side of the equation
- Have a minimum of a supervisory assignment, but that may be waived with formal educational experience.
- Have a minimum of five years of law enforcement experience and a letter of support from your agency chief executive

These are the minimum requirements. The curriculum is demanding.

You must be a dedicated individual to the law enforcement profession who can complete the academic curricula. The Command College is a challenging, thought-provoking curriculum that will enhance any supervisory career. This certificate program affords officers dynamic studies, analysis, and higher decision-making skills to grow as a patrol supervisor, tactical team leader or commander.

“The military profession has long recognized the value of studying tactical science to educate officers and have established premier institutions like West Point, Annapolis, the Army War College, and the Naval War College. All of these institutions strive to instill the importance of this science and to provide a forum for

understanding and applying tactical principles that have been proven throughout the ages.”<sup>2</sup> The NTOA Command College gives officers the medium in which to study tactical science through understanding, apply law enforcement principles in the tactical environment through a vigorous academic and residence program, and enhance their leadership skills in today’s environment.

To find out more about the NTOA Command College, visit our website at [ntoa.org/academy](http://ntoa.org/academy) or contact Buck Rogers at [brogers@ntoa.org](mailto:brogers@ntoa.org).

## ENDNOTES

1. Machiavel, & Bec, C. (2019). *Le Prince*. Paris: Pocket.
2. Heal, S. (2014). *Field command*. New York: Lantern.

## COMMAND COLLEGE ANNOUNCES CAPSTONE PAPERS RELEASE

The NTOA is excited to announce the Command College is providing Capstone Papers access to our members. Select papers related to leadership, tactics and strategy will be available exclusively to members of the NTOA. These well-researched papers contain insight into current trends in law enforcement and ideas to improve job performance. They also will provide current Command College students an idea of some of their peers’ work and give prospective students a better understanding of the level of expertise needed to attend the college.

The need to improve leadership and education in tactics and strategy in the law enforcement profession is more evident than ever during this time of public demonstrations and

a pandemic. The NTOA’s commitment and initiative to strengthen knowledge and training for the law enforcement professional is shown with the NTOA Command College.

Recently, the NTOA announced the ACE college credit process for Command College graduates. Providing access to Command College Capstone Papers furthers that commitment to professionalize SWAT command leadership and training.

In his book, “Call Sign Chaos,” General Jim Mattis stated, “If you haven’t read hundreds of books, you are functionally illiterate, and you will be incompetent because your personal experiences alone aren’t broad enough to sustain you. Any commander who claims he is too busy

to read is going to get people killed as they learn the hard way. The consequences of incompetence are final.”

It’s been said that if you spend 30 minutes a day reading a book, by the end of the year you will have read 24 books. These capstone papers are only 12 to 20 pages. They will not take a lot of your time, but what you will read will help your career. If you have an extra 30 minutes a day, access your member resource documents tab, and read a Capstone paper for your professional development.

**Capstone Papers may be accessed in the Members Only section of the website, [members.ntoa.org](http://members.ntoa.org), under Resource Documents, in the “Command College White Papers” folder.**