



## NTOA's 2020 Law Enforcement Operations Virtual Conference

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many conferences and trainings to be canceled or, in the case of the NTOA's 2020 Law Enforcement Operations Conference, transferred online. While altering a conference may sound simple, a lot of work went into transitioning to an online event. Just as law enforcement frequently adapts to accomplish our mission, the NTOA rapidly adapted to a virtual conference and training mode.

In many ways, our virtual conference created a better experience, as more officers could attend courses than those previously limited by room capacity during an in-person event. Our staff worked hard to bring some of the best instructors from across the country to provide outstanding training to our membership. We were excited to host these instructors through the medium of Zoom conferencing.

We would like to thank all the instructors who presented and all the officers who attended the virtual conference. We had the pleasure of welcoming nearly 600 attendees, representing 323 agencies from 50 states and eight countries. Over the course of three days, the NTOA delivered 30 courses for 72 total training hours.

There was a wide variety of courses offered, from explosive breaching, excited delirium, leadership, and decision-making, to incident debriefs for patrol, crisis negotiations and SWAT, by many instructors from across the country. We appreciate

each and every contribution to our virtual conference.

Some highlights of courses offered this year included "Coordinated Response to Excited Delirium," which was loaded with real-life examples of incidents and identified key risk factors for medical issues when holding a suspect in custody. Chief Fred Farris packed the presentation with vital details and information needed for law enforcement to effectively respond to such incidents.

Lt. Travis Norton's "Lessons Gleaned from High-Profile Critical Incidents" focused on research that supports what we know about commonly occurring incidents. He discussed actual incidents and pre-event issues that can be anticipated and trained for. The presentation focused on decision-making, equipment, strategy, tactics and current training gaps in law enforcement.

Cpl. Mark Lang provided a comprehensive overview of issues related to managing a police sniper program. The presentation, "Supervising Sniper Operations in Today's

*What an outstanding conference! Learned much and everything looked smooth on our end. So proud of you, your team, and NTOA.*

*Thank you for all you did, and all you do.*

*- Barry Collin CTI*



NTOA training team getting ready at headquarters in Colorado Springs to launch the virtual conference.

Environment,” gave listeners a broad look at considerations for programs including selection, training, current legal aspects, and more for leading police sniper operations. The course prompted many great questions and interaction from the students.

“The Consummate SWAT Professional” was delivered by Lt. Shawn Hancock and brought together a multitude of contemporary issues for SWAT commanders to consider. The audience was presented with the NTOA TROS and other topics that relate to the standards such as selection, performance, and fitness, as well as the importance of multi-agency collaboration. Hancock also discussed issues related to community engagement and building trust within our communities and within our teams.

Hancock also presented the webinar, “The Down and Dirty of Being a SWAT Commander.” It had some great information on how to prepare incoming and current SWAT commanders for the types of situations they may encounter. It was not so much about missions, but about the administrative and training challenges they will face, strategies for success, how to keep your team progressive and more forward thinking, and

how to put your team in a more defensible position.

Lt. Spencer Fomby gave us a timely and comprehensive look at “Policing Political Protests with National Standards.” The presentation gave listeners an array of best practices when faced with incidents of civil disorder. This included tactics for crowd management and crowd control as well as a look at several prominent anti-government groups and their tactics.

“*I’ve attended several NTOA training sessions and have always been impressed. You guys do an amazing job and this conference is no exception.*  
Sergeant - Greeley (CO) Police Department

Lt. Richard Besselman and Sgt. Marco Lopez presented an incident debrief titled “SWAT Active Shooter.” The 2016 incident involved a patrol and SWAT team response where the suspect was killed by a SWAT marksman to end the incident.

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The conference would not have been possible without some key sponsorships from generous companies who supported our first virtual conference. We are very grateful for the support from:

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The suspect had shot several civilians and responding officers, and ignited a fire at a gas station. The debrief highlighted decision points from the SWAT command, team leader, marksman, and SWAT doctor who were on scene.

Attorney Eric Daigle gave a legal update about tactical operations liability and current trends in law enforcement. He gave a detailed review of applicable standards and case law as it applies to tactical teams in light of current events. His webinar highlighted the importance for operators, team leaders, and commanders to understand the basis of force decisions and constitutional requirements under the Fourth Amendment.

Attorney Luis Robles presented “The Articulation of the Use of Deadly Force,” which gave an in-depth look at several high-profile uses of force by law enforcement and officer-involved shootings that Robles

was directly involved with. Robles gave officers insight into preparing for and providing testimony regarding their uses of force. This included topics such as perceptual distortion, Boyd's Cycle, the tempo of an incident versus the tempo of articulation, "harmonizing" of statements, the "Ferguson Effect" and considerations for body cameras to name a few. The presentation was very thought provoking and prompted much interaction from attendees.

Mike Anderson and Jennifer Wallschlaeger's debrief involved a vehicle hostage incident on a major freeway. In this incident, officers contended with a vehicle barricade where blankets covered the windows to thwart the tactical response. This hostage situation lasted several hours and utilized a multi-jurisdictional

response. This debrief of a very complex incident provided unique perspectives from both negotiations and tactical.

Master Officer Steve Mescan gave his audience a contemporary and innovative look at issues related to responding to and resolving crises in his presentation, "Critical Thinking and Condensed Time Decision-Making for the Team." Mescan discussed many important issues related to SWAT leadership including: proper mindset; the difference between "guardian" and "warrior;" understanding the controlling objective in an operation; creating synergy through shared mental models and doctrines; understanding Boyd's Cycle; and other methods to streamline decision-making during a crisis.

Lt. Diana Clevenger and Sgt. Travis Gribble's incident debrief explained the "Integration of Fire Personnel into a Tactical Operation." The presentation covered a criminal barricaded subject which lasted over six hours. The subject covered the structure with kerosene and threatened to burn the building down. Through the use of conventional and non-conventional tactics and ingenuity, a mixture of water and foam from the fire department prevented him from burning the multi-family structure.

Chief Randy Watt's presentations "Leading Beyond Chaos" and "Serving Team Leadership" in the current anti-police sentiment compared today's leaders to those leading a small unit through a minefield. His presentations further clarified that most failures in operations result

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from poor leadership and inadequate decision-making. He also gave some tried and true principles for dealing with political operations, and logistical and perceptual risks.

The Cobb County Police Department SWAT team presented an incident debrief, “Lane Drive Hostage Rescue,” which provided an in-depth look at not only this incident, but insight into several of the team’s critical incidents and their responses. The team provided the audience with details about their efforts in resolving several hostage situations and covered topics such as Crisis Response and Emergency Rescue Teams, sniper-initiated hostage rescue considerations, command and negotiation issues, and training. The debrief, presented by team commanders and snipers, gave listeners a unique and personal view

of the rescue efforts from the perspective of team leaders and snipers directly responsible for the hostage rescue operations.

Finally, perhaps one of the most moving and inspirational webinars came from Dan and Christine Brite. Detective Dan Brite’s heroic response in Parker, Colorado, involving a heavily armed suspect who was randomly firing at citizens, ended with him and officers heavily engaged in a firefight which left him critically injured when struck by gunfire. Although Dan flatlined twice because of his injuries and his chance of survival was less than 1%, he courageously fought the astronomic odds against him and survived. This story of family survival left attendees inspired and appreciative. It was an astonishing story of tragedy turned into triumph. One attendee

commented that “Brite’s presentation was powerful!”

## WRAP UP

There is a motto among teams: “The only easy day was yesterday.” In that spirit, the NTOA is not slowing down, but is facing each day as a new challenge to innovate during the continuing pandemic and bring you the best training available anywhere to improve your operational capability and performance.

We currently are offering “SWAT Command Decision-Making II” and “Training Management and Risk Mitigation for SWAT” in an online format. Keep a sharp look out for new announcements with new courses going online, current event topics with our Tac Talks webinars and our first-ever virtual CNT conference in November, along with other special events in the future.

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