



The Management of Police Specialized Tactical Units (Third Edition)

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REVIEWED BY RANDY WATT

Philosopher George Santayana is credited with the phrase, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Not only is this true in life, it is also true in any endeavor, including SWAT. The history of SWAT operations is replete with successes, failures, and formative events leading to the continual evolution of tactics, equipment, and technology. Failure to know our history and, thus, failure to evolve

tactically, may produce catastrophic failures and potentially needless loss of life.

Knowing the importance of history and its effect on tactical evolution and innovation, two noted SWAT experts embarked on a mission to present the historical foundations of SWAT as a means of effecting current and future change. In June 2000, Sgt. (ret.) Ron McCarthy of the famed LAPD SWAT Team and Dr.

Tom Mijares, an original member of the Detroit SWAT Team, published the first edition of their co-authored book, “The Management of Police Specialized Tactical Units.” Focusing on the origins of SWAT and the impact of specific tactical events on SWAT evolution, the authors present a fact-based analysis on the foundational aspects of creating, organizing, and managing law enforcement SWAT units.

In 2008, the authors updated their book with a second edition and included more case studies as well as advances in tactics, technology, and equipment. Legal opinions and updated case law influencing SWAT operations, training, and leadership were addressed. Coincidentally, in March 2015, the authors produced another excellent book titled, “Significant Tactical Police Cases: Learning from Past Events to Improve Future Responses,” which delved into the details of 19 specific tactical situations ranging from the Texas Tower Incident of 1966 through the Dorner Manhunt of 2013, cases which influenced the continuing evolution of SWAT.

Now comes the third edition of “The Management of Police Specialized Tactical Units.” In this edition, the authors expand on previous versions by reviewing more history along with recent significant events in SWAT. Their analysis is cogent and detailed, providing current team leaders and members a roadmap and instruction manual for effectively organizing, equipping, training, and leading a SWAT team.

Chapter 1 contains new information updating the methodology for study and includes a section on ancient history reviewing Gideon’s war in the Bible, the Battle of Thermopylae, and the use of condottieri (mercenaries) in the 16th century.

Chapter 2 adds more background to understanding organizational issues and includes a more detailed analysis of Gideon’s fight, amazingly apropos to the current era of tactical operations. Chapter 3 provides a case review of the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Broward County, Florida. Chapter 4 has new information on developing quality training, including information on physical conditioning and nutrition.

Chapter 5 details advanced training methodologies addressing curriculum, standards, and instructor

development, then uses the Moscow Theater Incident to identify the skills related to ancillary activities beyond “shoot, move, and communicate.”

Chapter 6 is written by Dr. Kevin Jennings and includes excellent, up-to-date information on equipment ranging from less-lethal technologies through clothing and intelligence analytics. Jennings, currently of Lincoln Memorial University, has expertise focused primarily on scientific innovations in law enforcement with particular attention given to digital technology. Along with its application to operational performance, this chapter then uses the Alabama Bunker case study to reinforce the need for advanced technical capabilities related to equipment.

Chapter 7 supports Chapter 6 by creating an understanding of the administrative issues related to ever-advancing equipment and technologies, as well as the value of trade shows. There is also an excellent section on the future of “tactical technology.”

Chapter 8 details leadership, not management, and its influence on successful operations. Included is a section which might be deemed controversial by some law enforcement executives, and which covers the “Pitfalls of Political Correctness and the Ferguson Effect.” Included is a case study of a SWAT incident in Pittsburgh’s Stanton Heights neighborhood in 2009 in which a deadly shoot out occurred.

Chapter 9 adds the Boston Bombing case study to its review on Incident Management, and Chapter 10 adds four case studies on political issues and their effect on tactical operations. Chapter 11 adds significant details and updated information on media relations, while Chapter 12 adds some points on the non-traditional uses of SWAT teams during disasters and calamities.

Chapter 13 is the most valuable chapter in the book, in my opinion, as it addresses “Tactical Operations in the Future.” Including case studies of the Pulse Nightclub shoot-

ing and the Mumbai, India, terrorist event, this chapter also discusses responses to “swatting” situations, increased encounters with narco-terrorists and domestic/international terrorists, cyberterrorism and increasing political criticism.

Chapter 14 is an epilogue that was written sometime after the original authoring of this latest edition. In this chapter, the authors discuss the fallout effects of the Minneapolis Police Department’s incident in which George Floyd died. From “defunding” the police to calls for so-called “police reform,” the authors speak to the cause and effect relationship between organized and ad-hoc political activism, based on a negative outcome to a police encounter, and resulting civil unrest.

This third edition of “The Management of Police Specialized Tactical Units” is a must-read for all tactical officers, leaders and administrators. The information, advice, and analyses are supported by effective use of case studies to buttress the primary points of each chapter.

I give this book five stars and it will be required reading for all of my department’s tactical personnel. Kudos to Ron McCarthy and Tom Mijares for providing such critical updating of their already comprehensive first and second editions.

Available to purchase at ccthomas.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chief Randy Watt currently serves with the Ogden (UT) Police Department. A longtime serving member of the Ogden/Metro SWAT Team, Chief Watt is a well known tactical trainer, as well as a member and instructor for the NTOA since 1995. Chief Watt was author of The Tactical Edge’s On Leadership column, authoring 32 articles over eight years. Chief Watt is a retired Colonel, US Army and Army National Guard Special Forces, with multiple deployments in the War on Terror.