



Message from the Chairman of the Board

By Luke Sherman

Today's law enforcement personnel find themselves in a rapidly changing and unpredictable world. The public relies on our services now more than ever, yet there is a growing level of distrust in our professional capabilities. It is commonplace for the decisions of law enforcement to be challenged and second-guessed. This, as well as the increase in violent criminal behavior and the ever-present threat of terrorism, means the need has never been greater for law enforcement officials to operate at the highest levels of professionalism when performing their duties. In response to these challenges, the NTOA established the National SWAT Standard in 2008 and launched the NTOA Academy in 2016 to prepare today's tactical officers and policing leaders to succeed in a high-risk, ever-changing professional environment.

The NTOA's executive team has kept these principles at the forefront of all decisions, and for the past five years Executive Director Mark Lomax has understood these challenges. He brought a background in global law enforcement, along with command experience and an ability to network with key stakeholders in the law enforcement community and beyond. The association and its members have benefited from his expertise and owe a great debt of gratitude to him for his contributions to the continued success of the NTOA.

As Phil Hansen writes in his column this issue, "Leadership embodies change. After all, our goal as leaders is to take an organization and its members to a different place, to new levels of performance." True success can be measured by how momentum is maintained and goals are accomplished during and after significant change. It is with this in mind that the NTOA Board of Directors announces the appointment of Thor Eells as the NTOA's new executive director.

Commander Eells retired in June 2017 after more than 30 years with the Colorado Springs (CO) Police Department. Most of his career has been in SWAT, where he was an operator, team commander and division commander. As commander of the Specialized Enforcement Division, he was responsible for highly specialized units such as SWAT, K9, EOD, traffic enforcement, special events and air support.



He is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy and Center for Creative Leadership.

Thor has taught extensively for the NTOA and is one of the core instructors in SWAT Command and Leadership courses. He has represented the NTOA in the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to develop SWAT capabilities and typing, and helped develop the National SWAT Standard. Thor is a recipient of the NTOA's prestigious John Kolman Award of Excellence and has been awarded his department's Distinguished Service Medal. He has served on the NTOA Board of Directors for seven years and was board chairman for two years.

On a personal note, having worked with Thor on the Board of Directors for the past several years, I have learned that professionalism is at the core of his priorities for this organization. He believes that an important aspect of accomplishing this mission is the image we present to other working groups, associations and the public we serve, as well as building relationships and forming partnerships with these groups. He embraces change, while at the same time recognizing the history and lessons learned from our past. As we move through these uncertain and trying times for law enforcement, strong leadership with the capacity to provide clear expectations, direction and vision for the future is more important than ever.

Speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire staff of the NTOA, we are excited to have Thor Eells at the helm and have the utmost confidence in his leadership and organizational management abilities in guiding the NTOA in the years to come. ■

An interview with Thor Eells will appear in the Fall 2017 issue of *The Tactical Edge*.