

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

NTOA'S POSITION PAPER ON NO-KNOCK WARRANTS



It has been several weeks since the NTOA released its position paper on no-knock warrant service. If you are not familiar with it, I would encourage you to read it on page 22 of this issue. No-knock warrant service has been receiving a lot of attention lately, but this is not new. The topic has generated a lot of controversy over the past 15 to 20 years, and I want to address some of that.

The overwhelming response to our position statement has been positive, with respondents offering thanks and support. Many comments correctly noted that our position is “old news.” For over 15 years, the NTOA has been discouraging no-knock warrant service coupled with immediate entry. There have been numerous articles published in *The Tactical Edge* discussing this tactic specifically.

Despite the supporting comments, there have been some criticizing the NTOA's stance, and several suggested that it is politically motivated. A few have even asserted that some of the legislative actions to ban no knocks are the result of the NTOA position. Neither of these statements are true. The NTOA has always been and will continue to be apolitical. In our eyes, this topic is not political in nature. The scrutiny of this issue is a direct result of agencies using no-knock warrants as a routine tactic, despite having been cautioned not to do so.

We are acutely aware of the intense public, media and legislative scrutiny on no knocks. As a leadership organization, we believe it is our obligation to address this life safety issue and share information to mitigate risk in our community. Recent events have only served to remind us we still have much work to do to assist and educate law enforcement in risk mitigation.

Some responses questioned the use of the term “tactical science” and wanted to see the data. There is no national, regional or state database which captures information on law enforcement warrant service, to include numbers served or type of warrant (knock and announce vs. no-knock). It was never our intent to imply such. The use of the term is an extension of tactical science as developed and presented by Sid Heal (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department) in many venues, including his regular column in *The Tactical Edge* and in his feature article “The Importance of Understanding Tactical Principles and Doctrines” on page 34 of this issue. This “science” is defined as something that may be studied or learned — a system of knowledge covering general truths. This certainly applies to SWAT tactics and the lessons that have been learned over the years and the countless debriefs to identify errors and ways to improve.

The NTOA understands that *all* warrant service involves danger and risk. We know that the alternatives to no-knock tactics that we advocate involve risk. It is not our intent to minimize this. However, numerous SWAT teams throughout the country have been operating successfully for many years without once serving a no-knock warrant.

Our top priority has been and continues to be advancing the safety and professionalism of the SWAT community. We truly value all the input and I am grateful for the feedback. This dialogue helps us identify our strengths and weaknesses. Please know that we stand ready to answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

As always, we are thankful for your service and continued support. Be safe and God Speed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Eells".

Thor Eells
Executive Director