



NTOA's 2025 Crisis Negotiations Conference — Chandler, AZ

The NTOA's 2025 Crisis Negotiations Conference was held Oct. 27-30 at Gila River Resorts & Casinos – Wild Horse Pass in Chandler, Arizona. The event drew a record-breaking 711 attendees from 268 agencies across 46 states, as well as participants from Australia, Canada, Singapore and Ukraine. Throughout the week, attendees sharpened their skills through a variety of courses, debriefs and networking opportunities, and explored an outstanding multi-day trade show featuring the latest tools and technology in crisis negotiation.

The conference began with an opening ceremony, during which NTOA Executive Director Thor Eells served as the master of ceremonies. The Honor Guard from the Gila River Indian Police Department and Arizona Law Enforcement Emerald Society Pipes and Drums presented the colors. Prescott Valley Police Department Officer April Zicopoulos sang an incredible rendition of the National Anthem, and Rabbi Robert Kravitz of the Scottsdale Police Department delivered the invocation.

Jeff Kingsfield, a visionary CEO, author and leadership coach, provided the keynote address. Jeff focuses on transforming the way individuals and organizations prepare

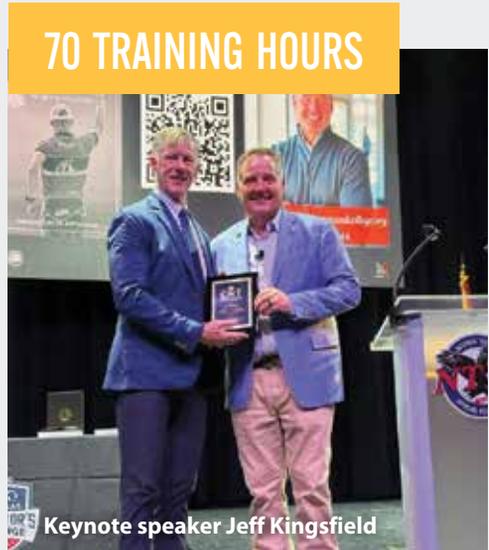
for high-stakes environments. A 12-time Ironman and Kona World Championship finisher, Jeff blends neuroscience, performance and purpose-driven leadership to help others build resilience and lead with authenticity, courage and compassion. In his powerful presentation, he shared compelling insights on the importance of first responders taking care of themselves. He offered awareness techniques and even asked the audience to participate in an exercise that allowed attendees to gauge their current level of stress and well-being.

Deborah McMahon, founder and owner of Crisis Systems Management, was awarded the NTOA's 2025 Spirit of NTOA Award in recognition of her work, which epitomizes the ultimate vision of the NTOA — to save lives. Deb's decades of experience in providing training, coordinating and conducting negotiator special events and her volunteer work with dozens of law enforcement organizations have made a difference for thousands of crisis negotiators and the citizens they serve.

The NTOA's second National Negotiators' Challenge took place on Sunday, Oct. 26, offering a realistic, day-long, stress-based training experience for crisis negotiation teams from across the country. This dynamic, scenario-driven



Rabbi Robert Kravitz



Keynote speaker Jeff Kingsfield



**711 ATTENDEES
FROM 46 STATES AND
AUSTRALIA, CANADA,
SINGAPORE AND UKRAINE
WITH 268 AGENCIES
REPRESENTED**



26 COURSES & DEBRIEFS



Deborah McMahon
Crisis Systems Management
Spirit of NTOA Award



Officer April Zicopoulos
Prescott Valley PD





competition brought together 11 teams who tested their skills under pressure, supported by professional roleplayers, judges and facilitators. The event provided valuable training and constructive feedback, offering both seasoned competitors and first-time participants the opportunity to learn, grow and enhance their performance in a high-stakes environment.

For the second time, Heckler & Koch (HK) proudly sponsored this year's Negotiator's Challenge. As part of their generous support, Jason Whitten, HK's Law Enforcement Sales Manager, presented each member of the winning team with a certificate for a brand-new HK handgun. (See Challenge winners on next page.)

Our popular Welcome Reception took place Monday evening on the hotel's event lawn, bringing together conference attendees, vendors and instructors for a relaxing outdoor dinner to kick off a week of training and networking. Set beside the resort's sparkling pools, guests enjoyed a laid-back evening of good food, great conversation and the rare chance to watch the World Series and Monday Night Football at the same time.

Seminars and debriefs

Over 70 hours of training and education were provided during the week through 26 presentations. Several case studies, including incidents involving hostages, were presented. The studies were unique and came from around the country.



2025 CNT CHALLENGE



Negotiator's Challenge judges





2025 WINNERS

CURTIS
BLUE LINE

HK
HECKLER & KOCH

Point Blank
ENTERPRISES, INC.



FIRST PLACE

Washington County (OR) SO

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

Point Blank Enterprises
Heckler & Koch
Curtis Blue Line

SCHOLARSHIPS

Through the generosity of our sponsors, four conference scholarships were awarded to attend the conference.

Gabe Beuckman
Mt. Vernon (WA)
Police Dept.

Mary Telya
Scottsdale (AZ)
Police Dept.

Bonita Martin
Hudson County (NJ)
Prosecutor's Office

Kirsten Dunn
Scottsdale (AZ)
Police Dept.

SCHOLARSHIP SPONSORS:

Point Blank Enterprises | Curtis Blue Line



SECOND PLACE

Washington State Patrol



THIRD PLACE

Naperville (IL) PD

CONFERENCE



Additional seminars covered a range of topics, including a fact-filled presentation by Dr. Henry Mahncke, CEO of BrainHQ. Mahncke discussed the brain activity of negotiators and the individuals they are communicating with during stressful events. Each conference attendee received a complimentary 30-day trial subscription to BrainHQ, a program the NTOA strongly supports.

Dr. Antoinette Schlossberg spoke about the history and future of crisis negotiations, as well as the legacy of her late husband, Dr. Harvey Schlossberg, the founder of the Psychological Services Department for the NYPD and considered by many to be the founder of modern crisis negotiations.

The NTOA was honored to have representatives from the Boulder Crest Foundation deliver two presentations on the Struggle Well and Warrior Path training programs. Both programs have proven to be lifesavers for military veterans and first responders who have suffered traumatic experiences during their careers.

Ben Wetzel (retired Phoenix PD) delivered a thought-provoking presentation on preparing for court as a negotiator, an often-overlooked topic. The NTOA was proud to provide the Adult Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety course for over a dozen attendees.

This year's conference provided a unique opportunity for attendees to spend time with and learn from a delegation from Ukraine. Col. Koba Valeriy and his team provided an overview of the situation in their country, highlighting the challenges they face. For example, police officers may be responding to and negotiating at a domestic violence call one minute and fighting on the front lines of the war the next.

They do both — carry on with the daily requirements of police work while also fighting a war. These truly unimaginable circumstances, while challenging to comprehend, demonstrate the tenacity and determination of the first responders.

The Ukrainian delegation received a standing ovation from the more than 200 attendees at their presentation. Afterward, attendees had the chance to speak with the remarkably humble Ukrainian delegation, take photos and exchange gifts. Their presentation was, without question, a highlight of the conference.

These examples are only a few of the outstanding seminar courses offered during the conference by active-duty law enforcement officers and academic experts.



Ukrainian delegation



2026 Crisis Negotiations Conference

The 2026 Crisis Negotiations Conference will return Oct. 26-29 to the Gila River Resort & Casino in Chandler, Arizona, with the third annual National Negotiators' Challenge happening Sunday, Oct. 25. The 2026 event will feature an expanded lineup of programs and special events.

Join us for another exceptional week of world-class negotiations training, networking and professional growth. We look forward to seeing you in Chandler!



Mark Your Calendars!
2026 Crisis Negotiations Conference
Oct. 26 - 29, 2026
Gila River Resort & Casino in Chandler, Arizona
 Stay tuned to our website for the full agenda and online registration details

SAVE *the* DATE

OCTOBER
26-29, 2026



CRISIS NEGOTIATIONS

C O N F E R E N C E

GILA RIVER RESORTS & CASINOS WILD HORSE PASS



WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN 2026 FOR FIRST-CLASS NEGOTIATIONS TRAINING WITH THE NTOA.



REGISTRATION IS OPEN! VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION.



[NTOA.ORG/CNT-CONFERENCE](https://ntoa.org/cnt-conference)

