

CITY OF BARSTOW

CALIFORNIA

POLICIES and PROCEDURES MANUAL: POLICE

Subject: BARRICADED SUSPECT AND HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedure of the Barstow Police Department in reference to those situations wherein a suspect, or suspects, has barricaded himself and may reasonably be expected to possess deadly weapons which might be utilized against law enforcement officers or innocent citizens. The prime consideration is the welfare and safety of innocent persons who might be held hostage by such persons.

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

Criminals who barricade themselves and/or utilize hostages to effect their escape are desperate individuals who, if allowed to escape, will pose a continuing serious threat to law enforcement, the public at large, and their hostage(s). The user of a hostage by an individual or by a group of individuals to secure an objective is a perplexing situation. No two such incidents are identical; thus, specific procedures and methods for handling such situations will be utilized by members of the Special Response Team (S.R.T.) based upon the considered, professional judgment of command personnel at the scene. While tactics for a safe and successful resolution of such police problems will vary, the following policy guidelines will permeate our considerations in all cases.

SAFETY AS A PRIMARY CONCERN

The physical safety of the officers, hostages, general public, and the suspects themselves is the primary concern of this agency. All reasonable and practical means to insure the safety of those persons indicated above will be used. Under no circumstances, however, will the safety of law enforcement officers, hostages, or innocent parties be jeopardized to the benefit of suspects.

SAFETY HOSTAGES

As any assurance that a hostage will be released unharmed if allowed to escape with the suspect(s) is a meaningless promise, it is the policy of this agency not to allow suspects to move hostages from one place to another at will. This agency does not have the ability to protect the safety of a hostage who is allowed to be removed from the presence of others. The safety of hostages can best be assured by keeping them in the presence of officers and by preventing their removal by the suspect(s).

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POLICY OF CONTROL

It is the policy of this agency to maintain complete operational and tactical control of any continuing incident, be it stationary or mobile.

GATHERING INFORMATION

It is the policy of this agency to explore every source of available intelligence regarding the circumstances, location, and suspect(s) in the incident and to attempt, by every means available, to attain any tactical advantage over the responsible individual(s).

USE OF AVAILABLE EXPERTISE

It is this agency's policy, through the expertise of members of this Department and qualified community group sources, such as mental health associations, crisis centers, the clergy, etc., to negotiate a safe and peaceful surrender of the hostage(s) and suspect(s). Officers should utilize every verbal, scientific, humanistic and tactical tool at their disposal to secure the release of the hostage(s) and suspect(s) and to effect the arrest of the suspect(s).

HOSTAGE RELEASE DEMANDS

The process of obtaining a negotiated release of the hostage(s) shall not necessarily include the granting of any part of the suspect(s) demands or conditions. These decisions must be determined at the scene by persons with command responsibility.

USE OF NECESSARY FORCE

Nothing in this policy shall preclude the use of necessary force, deadly or otherwise, by members of this agency in protecting themselves or others from death or serious injury.

SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM

This agency shall establish a Special Response Team to develop and maintain proficiency in the handling of such incidents. This unit shall review hostage/barricade incidents and prepare appropriate training material based upon such occurrences.

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SCOPE OF BARRICADED SUSPECT SITUATIONS

Barricaded suspect situations are those in which a suspect or suspects who are known to be armed, or are reasonably expected to be armed, are within a structure or location, and have used or threatened to use deadly force against responding officers.

PROCEDURE FOR OFFICER IN BARRICADED SUSPECT SITUATIONS

Officers arriving at a scene who determine that the above described situation exists shall do the following:

1. Contain the location from a safe position (cover).
2. Refrain from attempting entry.
3. Notify the Watch Commander immediately.
4. Make recommendation to watch commander concerning the need for S.R.T. and/or hostage negotiator.
5. If the suspect(s) have firearms, evacuate adjacent buildings and establish crowd and traffic control perimeters.

WATCH COMMANDER'S DUTIES

Upon the response of the Watch Commander, an evaluation of the situation will immediately be made. If the incident falls within the definition of this Department General Order, the Watch Commander should immediately:

1. Have the dispatcher notify the Uniform Division Commander and the Chief of Police, advising them of the situation. The Division Commander will evaluate the need for the S.R.T. and authorize the call-out.
2. Establish a Command Post as close as practical to the concerned location but out of the line of fire from same.
3. Summon mutual aid as may be necessary for maintenance of vehicular and crowd control.

MUTUAL AID

Assistance of the San Bernardino County Sheriff Special Weapon/Tactics Team may be requested by the Chief of Police or, in his absence, the Division Commander.

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