



WSTOA

Newsletter

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WSTOA

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A year in review

By: Wayne DuBois, Director of Operations

In order to give a proper perspective on what has gone on this year with WSTOA, it is important to have some background on the history of the association.

In the latter part of 1984 a group of officers began talking about getting a state tactical officers association started, primarily due to a decrease in SWAT training that had formerly been provided by the F.B.I. The first meeting of interest was held in Tukwila on November 13th, 1984, with just 28 officers attending. After several additional meetings, the association was voted on and formed in Yakima, WA, on October 11th, 1985. By-laws were adopted and executive officers were selected. The original officers were 3 executive board member positions (President, Vice-President, & Secretary-Treasurer) and 5 District representatives.

Early on WSTOA partnered with WSCJTC to instruct the SWAT Basic School, and has done so ever since. In the early days of the WSTOA, the association held "Quarterly" training, in which an agency would host and often provide the training. Sometimes experts in the tactical field would be brought out to provide training. Some of these experts included Sid Heal, Al Baker and Phil Singleton, to name a few. The WSCJTC also provided an Advanced SWAT school, however, this discontinued in the early 90's.

I first became involved with WSTOA in 2002, becoming the district 4 representative. At that time we could still get 30 to 50 officers out to any quarterly training. By 2005 the WSTOA started to see a sharp decline in the amount of SWAT officers who would come out to "Quarterly" training sessions. There seemed to be a variety of factors for this. We quickly found out that "Quarterly" training was not a viable option for the WSTOA. In 2007, we held our first true tactical conference and competition, in Richland, Washington. The competition held numerous training "tracs" for every position from incident and tactical commanders on down to the operators.

Approximately 125 officers attended as well as 14 teams in the competition. At the 2008 Conference & Competition we saw a sharp decline in the amount of teams in the competition, so we decided not to do the competition in 2009. The 2009 Conference was held in Spokane, Washington, and again, attendance declined. Many departments cited funding woes due to the declining economy.

So what is the point to all this? Because of these changes we have realized the needs, specifically training needs, of tactical officers across the state are transient due to many factors. The WSTOA strives to meet the needs of its membership by providing many services. The board of directors realized WSTOA had to update our by-laws so they would be contemporary and enable us to meet the needs of the membership. Additionally, we had to re-structure the association in order to have better contact with the membership. A by-laws committee was established and new by-laws were drafted.

In August of 2009, the by-laws were voted on and ratified during a vote in Richland, Washington. Ironically, this vote was done at the beginning of the WSCJTC/WSTOA Advanced SWAT Course, which was the first Advanced SWAT Course run by WSTOA since the early 90's. With the by-laws changes we also changed the districts to mirror the 9 homeland security regions within Washington State.

The WSTOA is working hard to increase contact and communication with its constituents in order to provide a better service. In order to do this, we need your help to have an even better year in 2010.

If you any comments or suggestions you feel could help the WSTOA improve, please contact Wayne DuBois at wdubois@ci.richland.wa.us

Dynamic Entries: Are they really a thing of the past?

By: Mark Renninger

Recently a couple of articles published in the Tactical Edge referencing dynamic entries have stirred some very interesting conversations. And if your team is much like mine, your command staff has approached you and asked the question, "Hey, why are we still doing dynamic entries for dope", or the made the comment, "NTOA says we should not be doing dynamic entries any more". Neither the question nor comment is accurate.

At the most recent NTOA Conference, Jeff Selleg, Mike Don and I had the opportunity to sit down with the Directors of NTOA. During our meeting they told us NTOA is not against dynamic entries, and in fact Phil Hansen would be publishing an article in the up coming Tactical

Edge explaining their position; however they would like all of us to remain flexible and select the most appropriate tactic or technique for our mission. A reasonable position that neither I nor any other member of the WSTOA board can disagree.

All too often we read articles about SWAT Teams losing members or finding themselves involved in a law suit because of tragic mistakes. One of the common threads in most of the tragic outcomes is teams or “units” trying to take on a mission, or using a tactic/technique they are not properly trained to execute. This is due to the fact that in most cases those teams executing the tactic/techniques are “ad hoc” teams.

Simply defined, an ad hoc team is a makeshift team brought together for single problem. The most common mission an ad hoc team takes on is warrant service. The most common problem is they do not have the training needed to accomplish the mission.

The other problem is SWAT teams or “High Risk” warrant teams serving warrants using a tactic or technique that requires more operators than available, or usually incorporates more techniques than the team leadership understands.

Completed by Jeff Selleg

The important lesson from our meeting with the NTOA is that often teams are utilizing inappropriate tactics for the task at hand. Specifically, Hostage Rescue tactics which are used when the compromise of the safety and security of officers through speed an aggression may be appropriate due to the high potential of loss of life – may not be appropriate for the seizure of perishable evidence like powdered narcotics. What the NTOA meant to explain was team leadership needs to first define the mission at hand, then outline the tactic to be used. Once the tactic is identified, then specific appropriate techniques that complement the mission and tactic should be chosen. Often teams around the country reverse the process because of deeply ingrained culture around their team and region.

Some of the specific examples the NTOA listed were teams that use a stop watch as their only gauge for tactical competency in warrant service. One team’s gauge was 45 seconds as the standard for clearing any residence. The team would assign operators (often single officers) to specific rooms and upon the breach, they would move at full speed to the assigned area and secure it. Regardless of what was encountered in route, officers must make it to their assigned area. A second example was a team that developed specific intelligence in the location of the narcotics stash. They breached and pushed a team of 5 officers directly to a back bedroom – bypassing many threats in the residence. Once inside the bedroom they secured the narcotics then systematically cleared backwards until they linked up with the remaining team that was clearing towards them. While this may be a legitimate clearing technique for a hostage rescue mission, it’s totally inappropriate for

narcotics evidence recovery.

In the recent NTOA magazine director Phil Hanson addressed these issues – kind of. We have addressed this issue by changing our “Speeds of Entry” class to better express this theory. The class newly titled “Mission, tactics, and techniques” is taught at SWAT Basic and Advanced SWAT. We will also come to any member agency and provide an overview of this training.

This is a subject that Mark (was) and I am very passionate about and now in his loss I am more dedicated to getting this information out to each and every one of the members. Please contact me with any questions, Jeff Selleg.

Jeff Selleg can be contacted at Selleg.J@portseattle.org

Training: WSTOA will come to you!

By: Wayne DuBois



The WSTOA understands the difficulties involved in both creating and maintaining a professional tactical team. Those minimum training requirements coupled with a tough economy makes it hard for agencies to get the training their officers need. The WSTOA can travel to your location to provide training and keep the cost low. The WSTOA will do both open and closed courses. Closed courses will be done at cost, and if you host an open course, your agency or team can get free slots in the course. Please contact Sgt. Jeff Selleg if you are Interested in hosting a course at Selleg.J@portseattle.org

