



WSTOA

Newsletter

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In This Issue

- Conference Wrap Up
- Training
- Benefits of Explosive Breaching for SWAT Teams

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Conference Wrap Up

By: Wayne DuBois - President

The 2012 Pacific Northwest Tactical Conference & Vendor Show, held at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver, WA, was another success this year. This was the second annual event in which WSTOA teamed with OTOA to bring low cost training and debriefs to both memberships. Although many officers shared with us that, due to budget cuts to training funds and having to choose between our conference or the NTOA conference in Seattle this year, We still had nearly 100 officers register for training tracs.

The first day brought two incident debriefs of high profile SWAT hostage incidents, and a vendor show with nearly 40 vendors. There were just over 300 in attendance for the first day, which is always free to law enforcement/military personnel. Officer Rick Anzaldo debriefed the LAPD SWAT Team's response to a hostage situation in which the offender used his own child to shield himself from law enforcement fire. Sgt. Ken Stephens of the Montgomery County, MD, Department of Police, debriefed his teams response to a suicide bomber that took hostages in a large commercial building.

The next two days brought numerous training tracs in various locations around Vancouver:

- Hostage Rescue, Vehicle Take-Downs, Urban Sniper, Rifle/Pistol, Impact Munition Instructor Certification

As well as numerous classroom based training, to include:

- Team Leader Basics, Legal Update, and Warrior Mindset

As always, WSTOA strives to provide high quality and low cost training to the membership. We are currently planning for the 3rd PNW Conference, which will be held in the same time frame next year. Please check our website (www.wstoa.org) for updates on next year's conference, training, and association business.

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Training

By: Steve Lobdell - Vice President

There are very few teams in this state or in the nation for that fact that feel that they are provided enough time to train. So what can we do about it? Yes we can complain but truly what does that accomplish? We can attempt to get more training time but with staffing and budget issues we know that this is not an easy sell. My recommendation is simple: use the most of the training time you have!

I have been around a long time and seen my share of training days where precious time was spent on doing tactics your team may never use as opposed to focusing on what your missions usually are. Then there is taking overly long lunches, talking about what gun or ammo is best, poorly prepared training, and the list goes on.

But let's just focus on poorly prepared training, since we have all been to these training days. "Prepared" is the key word here. Teams usually know months to a year in advance when their training days are. So barring some last minute problems or un-planned circumstances, the team should know what is being taught and possibly even who is teaching on those days. Not a week in advance but months. You cannot be wasting training time waiting for the training location to be prepped, or not having a lesson plan or outline to follow and just making it up as you go.

There is a very simple fix, TL's or training officers need to create a calendar, add the training objective for that month and who is in charge of it. By putting a name with a month, it creates some ownership and hopefully some sense of responsibility to provide a great training day for the team.

You want your team members to be excited about going to training, not frustrated or bored. Look for new training locations and not the same place over and over again. Be sure to get role players for your training so that other SWAT operators do not have to miss training to be a "bad guy". Don't just plan scenarios for all day because it is easy; actually teach something for part of the day. You can never go wrong with hitting the basics over and over again. Reach out to other teams in the area and ask them for assistance with lesson plans, training locations, teaching, etc.

Benefits of Explosive Breaching for SWAT Teams

By: Eric Gordon - District 6

The basic premise of breaching is that your team; no matter how high-speed, well-trained or equipped, is worthless if it cannot make entry into a crisis site. Any experienced tactical breacher will tell you that explosive breaching or "high energy breaching" is the most effective way to ensure a positive breach. Although it is gaining popularity and acceptance within the civilian tactical community, it is still one of the most under utilized tools in our line of work.

Mechanical and ballistic breaching capabilities for the majority of SWAT teams are common, but the main obstacles to an explosive breaching program

are administrative concerns. These concerns revolve around fire hazards, structural damage and injury to personnel on both sides of the breach. As with any breaching technique, there is always some safety risks to the suspects and officers involved. It is through proper training, target analysis and a sound explosive breaching policy that these safety risks are mitigated and minimized. There are many good schools such as T1G, Tactical Energetic Entry Systems, and Forced Entry Tactical Training available to law enforcement that offer classes on explosive breaching and developing an explosive breaching policy.

Aside from a dynamic entry or a hostage rescue situation, explosive breaching has many applications that are useful in regards to a slow and methodical clear of a structure or a barricaded suspect. Some examples of these applications include locked interior doors, port and cover locations, and a secondary access to an attic or crawl space.

To give an example, the Valley Regional SWAT team in Washington State has recently applied explosive breaching to most barricaded suspect calls. Prior to the team utilizing chemical agents on a structure, we will use an explosive breach on the main door to the structure. The thought process behind this is two-fold: The first is psychological impact on the suspect; People feel secure in their homes when the front door is closed and locked (the same reason you lock the door to your house at night). If we can remove that safety blanket from the suspect, they will feel more exposed and we become more likely to gain compliance. Secondly, the main door of any structure is the most dangerous point of entry. At some point operators will have to make entry into the structure to make the scene safe for the detectives and the community. If we can open that entry point early on and begin to examine the interior of the structure from the outside via the visual opening created by the breaching, it will make our entry into the structure safer for all involved.

When applied correctly, explosive breaching is a safe and effective tool for almost all SWAT applications. The bottom line is that it is our job to apply the proper tool for the technique that we have chosen. Explosive breaching is just that, another tool in our inventory to use to accomplish the mission safely.

As with anything, it is better to possess this skill and never have to use it rather than wish you had it when a serious situation develops.