

# WSTOA NEWS

Washington State Tactical Officers Association, 1805 Continental Pl, Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

[www.wstoa.org](http://www.wstoa.org)

## New Year, New Training

By Steve Lobdell

With a new year come new hopes. I want to look at 2013 and what we at WSTOA wish to accomplish during the year. The WSTOA board has to assess 2012 and be "open, honest and professional" and see where we can make improvements in order to provide the best training to our members. Quarterly training was re-instituted with success, and we are hoping for more members to attend quarterly training this year. In order to make that happen there are a few things we can do. First, we need ideas on what training you as members feel is important. The Board can come up with training topics, but we want to meet the training needs of our members. Second, we will be tasking our District Reps to get the information out about scheduled training to all the teams in their district. Lastly, we need each team member (YOU!) to pass the information on to your fellow team members, Team leaders, etc.

The final quarterly training of 2012 was MTT and case law. We were asked if we could put the case law information on the WSTOA website so that our members could have access to it. We will be adding this to the password protected portion of the website, MY WSTOA. One piece of reading material that you should all read is [www.waprosecutors.org](http://www.waprosecutors.org) On the front page you will find a downloadable 2012 Search and Seizure manual. It has items related to service of search warrants and detaining of persons.

Our State Conference will be held in the summer

### Inside This Issue

New Year, New Training	1
What Equipment Should We Buy?	2
Tactical Robots	3

this year. Our hope is this will provide teams the ability to have more members come to the training. Amongst the many training tracs we will run the CJTC Advanced SWAT & Sniper courses.

In October of 2012 we ran SWAT basic in Vancouver for the first time. The feedback from students on hotel and classroom was positive as well as the training locations we had access to. As instructors we were also happy with the venue location and will run the 2013 Fall course in Vancouver again. The spring class will be held in the Tri-Cities.

Finally, WSTOA will be providing a Basic Sniper course. We have received much interest in this course, which we are now prepared to run in 2013. You will be able to see our course listings on both CJTC and WSTOA's websites, on the training page.

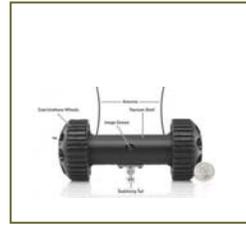
In just a few paragraphs I have tried to give you an idea of what WSTOA has planned for this year. As with all plans, things may change, but if they do we hope they are for the better. Please keep checking the website for classes, locations and dates.

## What Equipment Should We Buy?

By Steve Lobdell

What to buy? This is a question I have been asked numerous times. The answer is always the same, “it depends”. Obviously a Bearcat or other armored vehicle would be at the top of the list, but when the question is asked, it has more to do with things like shields, robots, etc. Below I have listed some ideas on how to make the decision.

1. After your team debriefs is there a common theme? “Sure would have been nice to have.....” If the team keeps saying they need a specific tool then you should consider getting that as opposed to some cool new item that may rarely be used.
2. Mission. This goes without saying, if you do not do certain missions, then you probably should not be buying equipment for those missions just to say you have it....Yes that happens.
3. Do not let one person on the team make the decision. Why? Because he or she may get what they think is the most important thing to them. Additionally, they may not
4. Are you limited by where the money comes from? Is it a grant that limits you to certain items, or money that has been donated? You may need to tailor your wants list and take that new equipment. This is not a bad thing, because grant items will not cut into your regular budget.
5. Once you have an idea of what you want to purchase, ask other teams that have those items what they think. This is especially true for things like robots, communication gear, and vests. It is better to make sure what you want to buy is worth the money, rather than purchasing an expensive piece of junk.



*Recon Robotics Recon Scout  
“throwbot”.*

ever deploy into the danger area. Discuss proposed purchases with your team or team leaders’ in order to ascertain what would best help you accomplish your mission.

*“It is better to make sure what you want to buy is worth the money, rather than purchasing an expensive piece of junk.”*



*A Lenco Bearcat provides ballistic protection to SWAT team members.*

## Tactical Robots

By Steve Lobdell

The use of tactical robots has dramatically increased with US Tactical Teams over the last 5 years. This is a piece of equipment all SWAT teams should try to get into their inventory, or have readily available. There is no perfect robot, so each team should decide which robot(s) will best suit their team.

There are numerous companies out there making “tactical robots”. I have not used all of them but I can give input on those many WSTOA members have used in real missions.

1. **Recon Robot (Throwbot).** This is probably the most widely used robot in Washington. The benefits for those who have never used or seen one is the fact that it is small and light (8+ inches and a little over 1 lb.) and can be thrown through a window, upstairs or anywhere you wish to throw it, up to about 120 feet. Another benefit is that you can put it in a dump or similar pouch and bring it into the location with you. Picture quality is good and the new version also has audio which is a big bonus. It is very easy to get from box to building. Attach some antennas, pull a pin and turn on. Pretty simple for SWAT cops to figure out. It is small so it cannot climb stairs or go over large objects but we have found that with proper placement you can search a lot of a location with this camera. The cost of the robot is reasonable and we have found the customer service to be excellent.

[www.reconrobotics.com](http://www.reconrobotics.com)

2. **Avatar.** Don't get your hopes up; this isn't some blue colored alien creature. This is a track driven robot. With the tracks it has the ability to be driven up a set of stairs. It can



*Avatar II Robot by Robotex*

also be used in an attic since it has the capability of driving over the rafters. It does take a little more training to use it correctly and get comfortable driving it. Set up time is longer than the Recon but with training you can get the time down. Picture quality is good with 2 different cameras. One is a front drive camera and the other is a 360 degree camera on the top. It is larger but it can be carried into the location. Whoever is carrying the Avatar will need a cover officer since their hands will be full. Unlike the Recon it would be difficult to throw through a window (24" and 25 lbs), but it can easily be driven into the location if you have an open door. Customer service has been excellent.

[www.robotex.com](http://www.robotex.com)

3. **Pointman.** This robot's size is smaller and lighter than the Avatar (19" wide and 18 lbs). It is a 4 wheeled vehicle as opposed to tracks. Like the Avatar it can climb stairs and goes over other obstacles just as well. Set up is easier than the Avatar, but like the Avatar learning to work the controller takes a little time. It has 2 cameras, one for climbing and then one for navigation. Unlike the Avatar it does not have a 360 degree

camera. I have not dealt with their customer service in some time, but when I did the service was always excellent.

[www.ara.com](http://www.ara.com)

As you can see all 3 of these have their strengths weaknesses. Before you go and spend money check the company websites and contact an agency that has one of these so you can get feedback, as well as the possibility of testing and evaluating it yourself.



*Pointman Robot by ARA*