

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

May 24, 2017

NO.

600-05

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 600-05, dated May 21, 2013

SUBJECT: SPECIAL THREAT SITUATIONS

POLICY

The Houston Police Department's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Detail and Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT) shall be used in all *special threat situations* as defined in this General Order. The primary goal in such situations is the safe release of all hostages and the successful termination of the operation without the loss of life.

This General Order applies to all classified employees.

DEFINITIONS

Active Shooter. One or more suspects who participate in a random or systematic shooting spree, demonstrating intent to continuously harm others. An *active shooter's* overriding objective appears to be that of mass murder rather than other criminal conduct such as robbery or hostage taking.

Barricaded Suspect. Any person who:

- a. Has demonstrated capability and/or stated the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury to any person, including himself, and
- b. Has achieved tactical superiority by location or the use of a physical obstruction (e.g., an open field, a building, a vehicle, any natural or man-made barrier).

Debriefing/Interviewing. Questioning designed to obtain all useful information for a formal report.

Face-to-Face Communications. Communications in which an officer in the *kill zone* is not using cover or concealment and is able to see and be seen by the suspect.

Hostage Situation. Any incident in which the possibility exists or the available information indicates that a *barricaded suspect* may be holding a hostage.

Inner Perimeter. The area of containment closest to the suspect.

Kill Zone. Any area in which a suspect can fire or use a weapon that could kill or injure a person.

Objective. The physical location where a *barricaded suspect* or hostage is believed to be located.

Outer Perimeter. The area of containment that prevents outsiders from interfering with or being endangered by the threat situation.

Safe Route. Directions to the scene for responding officers that direct them around the *kill zone*.

Sniper. Any person who causes or attempts to cause death or bodily injury to another person by discharging a firearm from an initially concealed position.

Special Threat Situation. Any situation involving a *sniper, barricaded suspect, hostage situation, active shooter, terrorist activity*, or threatened suicide involving a weapon or from an elevated structure such as a bridge or building.

Terrorist Activity. Any in-progress act of violence or threat thereof that creates or is designed to create fear of death or imminent bodily injury in the minds of others and is intended to intimidate governments or citizen populations in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.

1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

[REDACTED]

The police response to all special threat situations shall be measured in proportion to the level of threat to life and public safety.

When it is determined that a special threat situation is an *active shooter*, officers shall follow the concepts and principles taught in the department's *Active Shooter* training course.

2 SPECIAL THREAT RESPONSE

Although any resource of the department may be used to resolve a special threat situation, the primary teams included in the department's special threat response are:

- a. Patrol officers and supervisors
- b. Tactical Operations Division including SWAT Detail and HNT
- c. Special Operations Division

Patrol Officer Responsibilities

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. Communicate by telephone if possible.
 2. Express a willingness to help through positive statements. Do not make threatening or intimidating remarks.
 3. Do not beg or plead with the suspect.
 4. Do not agree to any demands made by the suspect.
 5. Do not allow family members or any non-law enforcement personnel to speak with the suspect without prior approval from the operational commander or HNT coordinator.
- f. Relay, via mobile computing device (MCD) or telephone, the following information to the dispatcher as soon as it becomes available:
1. Description of the suspect and any weapons.
 2. Location and number of hostages.
 3. Possible avenues of escape.
 4. *Safe routes* and location to where additional units should respond.
- g. Detain all witnesses for interviewing by Tactical Operations Division personnel.
- h. Upon being relieved, immediately report to the command post for debriefing.
- i. Remain at the scene until debriefed and released by the operational commander or by the senior Homicide Division representative if Homicide Division personnel have been dispatched to the scene.

Officer Originally Assigned to the Call

Except as noted below, the officer originally assigned to the call is responsible for completing the original incident report and filing charges when necessary. If the officer is unable to remain at the scene, the officer may be relieved by the on-scene supervisor after both of the following have occurred:

- a. The patrol supervisor has verified the officer completed the original incident report including all details up to the time Tactical Operations Division personnel took control of the scene.
- b. The patrol supervisor has assigned another patrol officer to replace the original officer. This replacement officer shall stand by to take custody of any prisoner, file charges when necessary, and supplement the original incident report.

If circumstances warrant having Homicide Division personnel handle the original incident report, the officer originally assigned to the call shall supplement the report as required by the Homicide Division investigators.

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5 OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Following notification by the Command Center, a Houston Police Department public information officer (PIO) shall respond to all special threat situations for which the SWAT Detail and/or HNT have been requested. The PIO is responsible for coordinating and disseminating information to the media via interview(s) provided by the Tactical Operations Division captain, lieutenant, or designee. The PIO shall also be responsible for broadcasting interviews via department approved electronic media per SOPs.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7 OFFICE OF LEGAL SERVICES

When notified of a special threat situation, the commander of the department's Office of Legal Services, or the commander's designee, shall be available by telephone during the event to:

- a. Act as staff advisor to the operational commander.
- b. Serve as a consultant regarding the legal aspects of all criminal or civil issues arising from the special threat situation.
- c. Act as department liaison and representative in communications with magistrates, federal and state prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other members of the legal profession.

It is the responsibility of the operational commander or the commander's designee to contact the Office of Legal Services if needed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9 RELATED GENERAL ORDERS

200-10, Emergency Management
600-17, Response to Resistance
600-36, Bomb Threats, Explosive Devices, Explosions
600-41, Weapons of Mass Destruction


Art Acevedo
Chief of Police