

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Negotiation Guidelines for First Responders to Crisis and Hostage Situations

Purpose

The purpose of this training bulletin is to provide negotiation guidelines to personnel who respond to crisis and hostage situations prior to the S.W.A.T./negotiators arrival. These situations include attempt suicides and barricaded suspects with or without hostages.

Introduction

The first 15 to 45 minutes are critical in a hostage or crisis situation. It may take up to 30 to 45 minutes for trained S.W.A.T. negotiators and team members to arrive and deploy. This places a great deal of responsibility on the first responder and their course of action.

Control and stabilization are essential in the first response. Immediate action such as an emergency rescue, establishing perimeters, evacuation of the area and proper notification and request for specially trained personnel are some of your first considerations. Once the situation is stabilized proper negotiations may be used to reduce the likelihood of further violence, obtain the release of hostages or bring a safe resolution to the situation.

Initial Contact

The safety of hostages and citizens are of the utmost priority. Approach the situation with caution and attempt to calm the individual or suspect. It is not recommended that the first responder begin negotiations, however, it may be appropriate to initiate contact with the suspect(s) in order to assess the situation or gain intelligence. Remember, a good negotiator is a good listener! The first few statements may set the tone for the next few hours of interaction. Use a professional approach by telling the suspect your name, rank, and agency. Reassure the suspect that things are under control outside and that you don't want anyone, including him/her, hurt. Tell the suspect that no one is going to try to come in and ask him/her if you can count on them to keep things calm.

Negotiations

Primary negotiations is a full time assignment. A secondary negotiator should be assigned to assist, monitor and offer suggestions to the primary negotiator. The secondary negotiator should initiate a log of all communications with the suspect. Note the time and exact words

used by the suspect. Do not include your opinions such as *"I think he's going to kill them or I think he's going to surrender"*. Stick to the facts and exact statements. Document all events related to the negotiations and provide the S.W.A.T. Negotiation team with this information. If the situation allows, it would also be a good idea to tape record the negotiations.

Allow the suspect to speak. This is very important as it may reduce the anxiety of the suspect and provide valuable information about his background, demeanor or state of mind. It may develop rapport with the suspect and gain time. Time can be a positive tool for successful negotiations and/or for proper preparation of a tactical response.

If the suspect brings up demands like, *"I have a clerk in here with a gun to her head and I'll shoot her if you're not gone in five minutes"*, explain to him that you can't leave, however you can assure the safety of the people outside and ask him if he can do the same with those inside? If the suspect makes an outlandish demand such as *"I want a million dollars and a helicopter out front in five minutes or I'll start killing hostages"*. respond calmly by echoing his demands and ask him to confirm exactly what he wants such as the denominations of money, the color of the helicopter or where it is to land. Try to keep the suspect talking. Assure him that these things take time and that you and him together will work all this out. Advise him that you have passed the request on to the appropriate person and you are awaiting the response.

Avoid giving orders that may escalate the confrontation. Direct your efforts towards decreasing anxiety and tension. Do not allow him to dominate the situation; be ready to use a reflective or conciliatory posture. It is best to minimize the seriousness of the crime or injuries to anybody. Do not acknowledge any deaths. Simply respond by saying *"They are all Ok"* or *"I don't know his condition because I've been here talking with you but he looked Ok when I saw him."* You could even try to develop his question into an agreement such as *"I'll get someone to check on his condition if you will assure me of the safety of everyone inside."*

Do not offer the subject anything. The suspect is usually interested in his own safety and escape. Unsolicited offerings such as food may cause difficulty for the S.W.A.T. Negotiation team later. Listen to the suspect and he will tell you what is important to him.

Avoid directing frequent attention to the hostages. Try to avoid the term **"Hostages"**. Refer to them as **"People, Folks, Men, Women or Children."** Redirect his attention from the hostages to you and your conversation and what you two can accomplish together.

Be as honest as possible. The suspect may have an adverse reaction if he discovers you have lied to him. He will, in most cases, accept the fact that you can't allow him to go and you can't make the final decision regarding possible deals. Focus his attention on how you will be representing him to your supervisors.

Use active listening statements such as *"What I'm hearing you say is..."* and *"So, as you see it..."* Clarify any unclear statements made by the suspect without infuriating the situation or enticing him to repeat threats towards the hostages.

Try not to use the word **"No."** Respond to unreasonable demands by indicating you understand and will pass it on to the negotiation team. If possible, soften the suspects demands. Respond to a demand for a car and \$100,000 in 30 minutes by saying *"Ok, I understand you would like some money and transportation, I'll get someone working on it as soon as they get here."*

Exchanges for hostages is strongly discouraged. Past experience has shown that they usually worsen the situation. This includes family, friends, police officers and even negotiators. This tactic would only be permitted in extreme cases with the approval of the S.W.A.T. Commander.

Use cover and or concealment when conducting negotiations. Avoid talking "**Face to Face**" with the suspect and or individual in a crisis. He or She may attempt to use the situation to provoke officers to shoot or attempt to pull an officer or negotiator with them off the building or bridge.

The surrender phase is very important as it involves perimeter and arrest officers who may or may not be aware of current negotiations. All officers on scene should be advised of the surrender plan. A description of the suspect and location of the arrest should be broadcast. The best case scenario would be to have an arrest team ready to accept the surrender. Use very clear and deliberate commands to the suspect. Avoid having the suspect exit with a weapon. It would be better to have the suspect leave the weapon inside the house in a safe location. Have the suspect keep his hands in plain view, walk slowly to a designated area and instruct him or her to lie on their stomach with arms spread. This position limits the suspects ability to flee, assault or run back inside the building. If you have the option, have the suspect exit first in order to avoid changing their mind. If the suspect insists on releasing the hostages first, have them exit orderly.

It is best to have hostages walk slowly, keeping their hands in the air and walk to a specific location where they can be searched, identified and taken to a place of safety. Screen all hostages for suspects attempting to escape by posing as hostages.

Summary

Although each crisis. or hostage situation is different, the guidelines in this training bulletin are very effective. They are intended to provide first responders with the basics for negotiating until the S.W.A.T. Negotiators arrive. Remember, the ultimate goal is a, safe and successful resolution to crisis situations.

Acknowledgment: This Training Bulletin replaces TB 89-06 and was prepared by Sergeant Charles Deakins on 11/95.

Reviewed By: Sgt. J. Miller

Reviewed Date: 07/05