

Dynamic Entry versus Surround and Call-Out

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Abstract

Tactical (SWAT) law enforcement teams are increasingly falling victim to increased scrutiny by the general public. This scrutiny often originates from the public's perceived overuse of force and employment of military style tactics within communities nationwide. For many years SWAT teams have employed the use of dynamic entry to execute narcotic search warrants. Recently, somewhat of a shift has occurred whereas some tactical teams have begun utilizing an entry method called the surround and callout method. This research will gather information from several law enforcement agencies in the Central Florida area in an effort to determine which entry method those teams employ as well as the respective team's perception of the National Tactical Officer's Association stance on dynamic entries and any resultant affects.

Introduction

Since the inception of Special Weapons and Tactical (SWAT) teams in the 1960's there has been a myriad of discussions on the tactics used to successfully serve a court ordered search warrant. Search warrants range from capturing a fugitive to recovering weapons and narcotics. This paper will examine the two most commonly employed methods, dynamic entry versus the surround, breach and call-out technique. Moreover, this writer will seek to determine future trends in the Central Florida area as to which tactic is best suited for the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

A number of factors beg consideration prior to the employment of either entry method. The following questions represent a condensed overview of those factors requiring attention. This writer has an extensive background in SWAT operations and intends to survey SWAT commanders in Central Florida who belong to the Regional Anti Terrorism Task Force (R.A.T.T.F.) "Region V", as well as SWAT commanders representing city/local law enforcement agencies in Lake County, Florida, in an effort to answer the following questions.

- Does your SWAT team use the dynamic entry method for narcotic search warrants?
- Does your SWAT team use the Surround and Call-Out method for narcotic search warrants?
- Does your agency have a policy for employment of a SWAT team in executing search warrants?
- How will the National Tactical Officer's Association (NTOA) stance on dynamic entry affect your team?
- Will your SWAT team employ the Surround and Call-Out method in the future?

Literature Review

Dynamic Entry is referred to as the rapid entry into and rapid movement through a target location. Speed is paramount when employing this tactic, which is meant to surprise and overwhelm the suspect(s), thus preventing them from taking/harming hostages or in some cases, destroying evidence. To enhance the success of the Dynamic Entry tactic, speed must be accompanied by the element of surprise and, when conducive, by diversion. While speed is very important operators should never move faster than they can accurately acquire and assess a target. Another important factor to consider in the employment of a successful dynamic entry is proper planning (Hansen, 2010).

Proper tactical planning for high risk warrant service should include some form of a threat assessment which generally takes into consideration the known and unknown. Upon completing the threat assessment thus determining the threat level meets the threshold for employment of a tactical team, the tactical commander must then review all the intelligence available to properly formulate a tactical plan to facilitate the warrant's execution (French, 2010).

The dynamic entry tactic is generally the fastest option for clearing large threat areas. In accomplishing the overwhelming force aspect, many teams employ six (6) to eight (8) operators. Different situations and/or factors may call for more or less operators. The operators stack up at the entry point, knock and announce, breach and enter the target location. Operators then begin clearing the target by moving toward the most immediate threat(s) (French, 2010).

Usually, two operators enter a room together but there are times that three or more may enter a room such as the room being very large. Upon entering the target location, SWAT operators must be cognizant of their responsibilities and objectives. As each room is cleared generally an announcement such as "clear" is given. Doing so allows other members to anticipate team members reentering their view. As they exit the room, an announcement of something to the effect of "coming out" is given and those operators rejoin the clearing operation. The search is a fluid occurrence that requires operators to adapt to a variety of factors (French 2010).

The primary advantage of dynamic entry is that it provides speed throughout the target location, especially when the location of an adversary is unknown. Speed and the element of surprise affords the operators an opportunity to locate, identify and neutralize the threat before the threat or potential threat has the opportunity to go on the offensive (French, 2010).

The philosophy of the National Tactical Officer's Association (NTOA) regarding the selection of the best suited tactical option is quite simple. First, conduct a complete evaluation concerning all aspects of the mission, including goals, intelligence and legal constraints. Next, consider all the tactical options at your disposal, and then choose the safest alternative possible to successfully complete your mission. Finally, once a course of action is chosen, be flexible and ready to adjust to circumstances as they occur (Hansen, 2010).

"The overreliance on dynamic entry tactics is a topic of discussion that I personally have a great deal of passion about. Year after year, I have seen good police officers killed and wounded in the line of duty while utilizing dynamic entry as a "one

size fits all” solution, without the element of surprise, and without a mission that supports its use,” said Lieutenant Phil Hansen, NTOA Chairman of the Board. Recent articles have criticized what is described as the overuse of dynamic entry tactics (Hansen, 2010).

In an article posted in the Summer 2009 issue of *The Tactical Edge*, Jim Clark, the National Tactical Officer’s Association’s Legal Chair stated, “While there are always exceptions, the NTOA has taken the position that dynamic and crisis entry techniques are usually reserved for rescuing human life in peril” (Clark, 2009). The article indicates that dynamic entry for a drug search warrant is, for the most part, not supported by current standards in existence today from reputable training entities around the United States of America. Clark also stated, “The International Association of Chiefs of Police has adopted a similar methodology and philosophy. Thus: The two largest tactical training entities in the country agree that dynamic entry is reserved almost exclusively for saving lives, not recovering narcotics or property” (Clark, 2009).

The surround, breach and callout technique, also referred to as deliberate entry, has recently become the more commonly accepted means of executing search warrants. The basic concept using the deliberate entry is that it’s slower and you can reasonably clear objectives from the outside prior to making the actual entry. If you observe a subject inside the room then you can verbalize commands to have them exit the room to the team or prone out on the floor. Once you decide to enter the stronghold you may then go dynamic or continue the deliberate clearing method (French, 2010).

There are several advantages to employing this method of search warrant execution. Operators can “slice the pie” into the target and employ mirrors to clear corners and other danger areas prior to completely entering. The use of ballistic shields and blankets is easier due to a more controlled and deliberate pace at which the tactical element moves. Verbal commands are generally given to occupants throughout this method. By all accounts this method is much easier to control from a team leader perspective than that of a dynamic entry (French, 2010).

Methods

This research presents an overview of the factors in consideration regarding the employment of Dynamic Entry versus Surround and Call-Out methods. I chose this topic due to recent scrutiny surrounding the blanket use of Dynamic Entry in the execution of search warrants. It is this writer’s intention to form an educated conclusion as to the situation(s) in which Dynamic Entry would or would not be the best suited entry technique, in comparison with that of the Surround and Call-Out method. The methods of research included:

- Reviewing literature regarding the employment of each technique as well as their respective pros and cons.
- Preparing and disseminating a survey to each SWAT commander of the (12) agencies that are members of the Region 5 Regional Anti Terrorism Task Force, which encompasses Central Florida.

- Interviews of SWAT commanders representing the local/city law enforcement agencies within Lake County, Florida.

While no two (2) situations requiring the employment of a SWAT team led entry are mirror images of one another, a number of advantages and disadvantages likely exist. A portion of my survey requests responses from the SWAT commanders polled and interviewed, regarding their opinion(s) of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the aforementioned entry methods.

Results

Regarding the issue of Dynamic Entry versus Surround and Call-Out, I obtained data and information specific to the question at hand by way of an e mail survey requesting responses to specific questions. The group queried included each agency's respective SWAT Commander from the Region V Regional Anti-Terrorism Task Force (R.A.T.T.F.), which encompasses the greater Central Florida area. Also instituted in the survey were personal interviews of SWAT Commanders representing municipal law enforcement agencies within Lake County, Florida. A total of twelve (12) email surveys were dispersed with a 100% return.

- On the question, Does your SWAT team use dynamic entries for narcotic search warrants? All twelve (12) SWAT Commanders replied in the affirmative.
- On the question, Does your SWAT team use the surround and call-out method for narcotic search warrants? Eight (8) of the teams responded in the affirmative with four (4) negative responses. Varying reasons were provided for employing the use of this method or the lack of employment.
- On the question, Does your agency possess a policy for use of a SWAT team for narcotic search warrants? Eight (8) of the teams presently have a policy in place with four (4) teams not having a policy.
- Regarding the question, Are you aware of the NTOA's stance regarding the use of dynamic entry for narcotic search warrants? All SWAT commanders replied affirmatively.
- As for the question, How will the NTOA stance on dynamic entry for narcotic search warrants affect you team? This question returned the most feedback. All SWAT Commanders indicated such would have no affect but would take such into consideration and respect the position of the NTOA.

The responses received indicate varying employment preferences regarding the manner in which agencies execute narcotic related search warrants. A number of agencies are in essence “middle of the road” regarding such, citing employment on a case by case basis based on the information known. The survey provided that while agencies were aware of the NTOA’s stance, it would not affect their agency. A number of responses indicate that while the NTOA stance is respected by their agency, they do not abide by such as it is not Florida State Statute or more closely related to Central Florida’s locale.

Discussion

As the need for SWAT team deployments have increased over the years for narcotic search warrants, the tactic employed has increasingly become a topic of discussion within the SWAT community. As a 16 year veteran of the Lake County Sheriff’s Office SWAT team, the team has experienced slight shifts in philosophy however the manner in which our team trains for and executes narcotic search warrants has changed a great deal.

In my interviews I gathered information from SWAT teams in our region that deploy for the service of narcotic search warrants in an effort to determine whether they employed the traditional dynamic entry method or the surround and callout method; being that the surround and callout method is a fairly new concept. The results indicate little variance from team to team. Of all the SWAT teams queried in our region, all but one team utilize both methods of entry on narcotic search warrants.

While the surround and callout method is still in its infancy, it would seem likely that as time progresses more tactical teams will find the need to employ such on a case by case basis. Most information gleaned from my research indicates this as SWAT teams within my region employ both methods depending on the respective situation. The liability of doing business in the tactical arena has become an insurmountable and undeniable threat to the law enforcement tactical team. With such, SWAT team commanders and agency administrators across the nation must take this into consideration. The more options available provide for a heightened probability that a volatile situation can be handled adequately and safely.

The results also indicate that while all teams are aware of the NTOA stance, most of which agree with it but maintain their individuality. This individuality imparted indicates that most teams have not and will not adopt a “cookie cutter” approach to the service of narcotic search warrants. Some teams went so far as to say that they relied more on standards established by Florida State Statute, case law and the Florida SWAT Association than that of the National Tactical Officer’s Association (NTOA). It is important to note that teams did not completely disregard the NTOA’s stance but choose to mold their tactics to the standards established on a more local level. Teams indicated that they would take the NTOA stance into consideration, all the while maintaining that their decision to employ the surround and callout method would not be based solely on the NTOA stance.

In conclusion, the study indicates a broad knowledge of the NTOA stance with little to no effect on the respective teams. Most teams employ both methods of entry

when serving narcotic search warrants and maintain that their decision to do so is based primarily on that of the situation at hand.

Lieutenant Lee Cheshire has been in Law Enforcement for 22 years. He started his career with the Umatilla Police Department. Lee has been with the Lake County Sheriff's Office for over 18 years and has had many assignments to include Patrol, TAC-Team, K-9, Marine Patrol, School Resource Sergeant, Patrol Sergeant, and Narcotics Sergeant. Lee is currently assigned to the Special Investigations Bureau as the Bureau Commander. He has also been a SWAT team member for 17 years and currently is the SWAT Team Commander. Lee earned an Associate's Degree from Vincennes University and is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree from Columbia University.

References

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Appendix A

All information obtained with this survey will be used for my final project in the Florida Senior Leadership Program at the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute sponsored by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Please indicate your answers by using the TAB key to acquire the appropriate box and place an "X" within such. Additional comments and/or explanations are welcomed. Upon completion, please return the survey to me at lee.cheshire@lcsso.org. Your time and participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

Survey

1. Does your SWAT team use dynamic entries for narcotic search warrants?
Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Does your SWAT team use the Surround and Call-Out method for narcotic search warrants?
Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, briefly explain the manner your team carries it out?
3. Does your agency possess a policy for use of a SWAT team for narcotic search warrants?
Yes ____ No ____
4. Are you aware of the NTOA's stance regarding the use of dynamic entry for narcotic search warrants?
Yes ____ No ____

If yes, go to Question 5

If no, skip to Question 6
5. How will the NTOA stance on dynamic entry for narcotic search warrants affect your team?

6. Is your Agency currently working on protocol for the Surround and Call-Out technique?

Yes ____ No ____

If no, please explain why
7. Will your SWAT team consider using the Surround and Call-Out technique in the future?
Yes ____ No ____

In the event you would like to receive a copy of the results, please indicate such upon returning your completed survey. Kindly return your completed survey to me on or before June 15, 2012.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the survey, you can reach me at:

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