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Law Enforcement Bulletin

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THE COVER

Pictured are New York City police officers assisting hostages from a rooftop to which they had escaped from armed felons during "The Siege of Williamsburg." See article beginning page 10 and related comments in Mr. Kelley's Message, beginning on facing page, and in article beginning page 19.



Defusing Human Bombs—

HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS

By
LT. JOHN A. CULLEY
Office of the Chief
of Detectives
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New York, N.Y.

“Just as we would send only trained bomb squad personnel to defuse a bomb, so too, we should send only trained negotiators to deal with these emotionally explosive hostage situations.”

A detective (in business suit) begins negotiations in a simulated hostage situation.



In the early evening of January 19, 1973, four armed men entered a sporting goods store in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, N.Y., and attempted a robbery. One of the proprietors activated a silent alarm, and uniformed officers from the local precinct and emergency service division responded in patrol cars. During an exchange of gunfire which ensued, one police officer was killed and two others wounded. One suspect was also wounded. The felons, thwarted in their escape, seized 12 persons who were in the store at the time and held them as hostages. The store was practically impregnable and contained a wide variety of weapons and ammunition. This marked the beginning of a tense drama which was to last 47 hours and become known as “The Siege of Williamsburg.”

In overall command of police personnel engaged at the scene was Chief



Inspector Michael J. Codd, who was appointed police commissioner in January 1974. Just prior to the Williamsburg incident, Chief Codd had reviewed and approved plans for handling hostage situations, plans which he had been working on with various units of the police department since September 1972. The primary purpose of these plans was the preservation of the lives of hostages, officers, and captors.

Upon responding to the scene, Chief Codd assessed the situation and ordered immediate implementation of the hostage plan. No hypothetical case, the plan was going to receive its “baptism under fire” and be put to a true test. As it turned out, the policy of “waiting” provided time for the hostages to escape, and ultimately the four felons surrendered with no further bloodshed. Greater loss of life was prevented through careful planning, coordinated efforts, and great restraint on the part of all the police officers at the scene. The plan had worked.

Hostage incidents have been increasing since 1972; therefore, law enforcement agencies throughout the country have to concern themselves with this trend. Since human lives are

at stake, the challenges facing police officers in such situations are delicate and critical. If there is no proper planning and training, or if police actions are impulsive or uncoordinated, lives may be lost unnecessarily.

Initially utilized in the formulation of the New York City hostage plan were the standard patrol, detective, and emergency service units of the police department. Then the newly formed Psychological Services Unit was called upon to supply a new and valuable adjunct to the department’s existing methods for combating hostage situations, namely a psychological understanding of the hostage-taker.

The success of any hostage plan hinges on a team approach, good communications, and coordination of tactical maneuvers under one commander. In all hostage situations occurring in New York City, the on-the-scene commander is the uniformed patrol area commander. (New York City is divided into seven patrol areas, each commanded by an assistant chief.) The rationale for this is that he is the senior officer most familiar with the locality involved and the one who, when the incident is over, will still be left to deal with community reaction to the handling of the situation. Once the initial confrontation is over and the situation is contained,

Lieutenant Culley



“ . . . the newly formed Psychological Services Unit was called upon to supply . . . a psychological understanding of the hostage-taker.”

the patrol area commander is the only person who can authorize the discharge of weapons except in emergency self-defense situations such as the felons attempting to charge a containment team.

The New York City Police Department’s plan consists of three phases with patrol, emergency service, and detective units responding and carrying out predetermined, specifically delineated duties and responsibilities. Phase I, the containment phase, occurs at the initial location when the hostage is first taken. Phase II, the mobile phase, goes into effect if a demand for a vehicle or other means of escape is made by and granted to the felon. Phase III, the relocation phase, is principally a duplication of Phase I, but at a new location.

The Detective Bureau’s responsibilities under this plan are to provide specially trained detectives for negotiations during Phase I, to provide escape and chase vehicle operators for Phase II, and to function as containment teams during Phase III pending arrival of the special emergency service containment teams. This article deals primarily with the role of the detective negotiator in hostage situations.

Why Negotiate?

In addition to its overriding concern for the preservation of human life, the New York City hostage plan contains a unique innovation that is a departure from the traditional police response to such situations—buying time through the use of detectives

specially trained in psychological techniques for hostage negotiations. Det. Harvey Schlossberg, a New York officer who possesses a Ph. D. in clinical psychology, researched the existing psychological writings on hostage-takers and found little on the subject. Working in conjunction with other members of the department, he developed profiles of the typical hostage-taker. They fell into three categories:

The professional criminal who has his escape blocked during the commission of a crime,

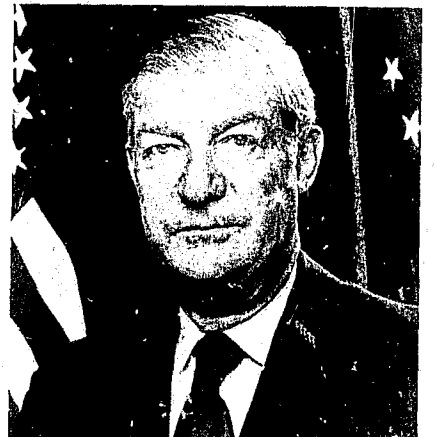
The psychotic with a depraved mind, and

The terrorist or fanatic with a cause.

A methodology of crisis intervention was developed for such situations in order to ease anxieties and tensions, and if possible, to allow the felon to assess the situation rationally. This is done by our detective hostage negotiator engaging the abductor or felon in conversation.

Time is a most important factor working for the police. As a general rule, Dr. Schlossberg notes, the more time the felon spends with the hostage, the less likely he is to take the hostage’s life, because they become acquainted and develop feelings for one another.

Commissioner Michael J. Codd



"As a general rule . . . the more time the felon spends with the hostage, the less likely he is to take the hostage's life"

In addition to allowing this transference of feelings to take place, the passage of time also gives the police an opportunity to prepare for different eventualities and permits the felon to make a mistake. Mistakes by the criminal, when the police are prepared for them, are the "luck" you read about when a hostage situation is brought to a successful conclusion. As someone once observed: "Luck is the residue of careful planning and proper preparation."

Why Detective Negotiators?

It takes a singular type of individual to deal unarmed, face to face, with an armed felon holding a hostage. He must be cool, resourceful, mature, and most of all, effective in verbal communication. Successful detectives have developed these attributes through their experience in dealing with the public, interviewing witnesses, and interrogating suspects.

Selection

The following criteria were used to select the members of the Detective Bureau Hostage Negotiating Team:

- Volunteers only,
- Good physical condition,
- Mature appearance,
- Good speaking voice,
- Skilled interrogator, and
- Representatives of various ethnic and racial groups with, if possible, the ability to speak a foreign language.

The 68 members of the Detective Bureau who were finally selected and

trained as hostage negotiators consisted of 1 lieutenant, 3 sergeants, and 64 detectives, 2 of whom were women. This group included 12 blacks, 12 Hispanics, and 44 Caucasians. The languages spoken by the group included Italian, Spanish, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Greek, Polish and Ukrainian. In addition four members of the department who are not members of the group speak Arabic and are available as translators.

Training

The group underwent an intensive 4-week training course which was conducted at various locations throughout the city as well as in the classroom. Training consisted of the following subjects:

Psychology. The greatest emphasis was placed on intensive psychological training to prepare team members to analyze various situations and develop strategies using psychological techniques rather than force to obtain the safe release of hostages. The point of the training was to provide a basis for understanding and anticipating the hostage-taker's moves as well as his possible reactions to police tactics.

Physical Training. This encompassed general upgrading of physical condition as well as weapon-disarming methods and techniques of unarmed self-defense.

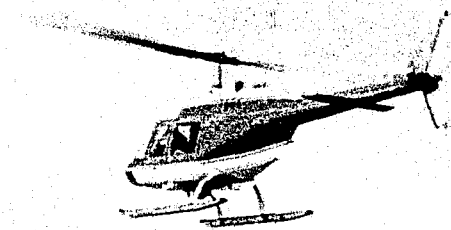
Firearms. Firearms training included the .38 caliber revolver, 9 mm submachine gun, .223 caliber sniper scope rifle, shotgun (double barrel and pump), 37 mm tear gas launcher, .25 caliber automatic, and .22 caliber Derringer. Candidates wore bulletproof vests during the firing of all weapons.

Electronic Equipment. All members were familiarized with and had to qualify in the use of a miniphone wireless transmitter and recorder and in the use of electronic tracking devices which utilize range and relative bearing features that can be quite valuable in Phase II.

Emergency Rescue Ambulance. Each team member learned to operate the emergency rescue ambulance, a full-track armored personnel carrier. This training also included the use of its auxiliary equipment, that is, the public address system, intercom, radio equipment, fire-fighting system, and first aid gear. In the Williamsburg siege, this vehicle was used to rescue officers and civilians who were pinned down by gunfire from the felons. It also served as a safe base for the start of negotiations.

Vehicle Operation. Instruction was given in the operation of the specially equipped escape and chase vehicles, including auxiliary equipment. Special attention was paid to those streets and routes from various locations in the city to airports or other destinations which would offer us the best tactical advantage.

Liaison. Hostage team candidates received 2 days of training with Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on jurisdictional matters and cooperation with other agencies including the Federal Aviation Administration. One day of training was held at John F. Kennedy International Airport and La Guardia Airport with the Port of New York and New Jersey Authority Police. We integrated our plan with their emergency programs.



Police helicopter and cars (foreground) follow felons with hostage in automobile.

Retraining. In addition to this initial program, debriefings are scheduled to critique every significant hostage situation that takes place anywhere. During such critiques, "Monday morning quarterbacking" and speculation are encouraged. From the situations under study, officers gain new insights and learn new techniques.

Working Detectives

Members of the Detective Bureau Hostage Negotiating Team are working detectives assigned to various squads throughout the city. Once their training as hostage negotiators is completed, they are returned to their permanent commands and resume their

normal investigative duties. They are placed in predetermined slots in the duty chart for adequate coverage, and their names are entered on a roster for primary response to a hostage situation within their borough of assignment. At the beginning of each tour of duty, the detective area command ascertains which members performing duty within the borough are trained negotiators. Should a hostage situation occur during the tour, the detective area command will notify such members to respond. Seven negotiators are dispatched to the scene of each hostage incident. If there are not seven negotiators on duty within the borough, the adjacent boroughs are notified to dispatch their negotiators.

The reason seven negotiators are utilized is that two are needed as communicators—one member is the primary communicator whose responsibility it is to establish rapport and voice identification with the felon, and the second member assists in developing patterns of questions, analyzes the entire situation, and communicates with the command post—and the other five members are assigned as follows:

- As reliefs,
- As secondary negotiators should the first team be unsuccessful at establishing rapport,
- To operate escape and chase vehicles if necessary, and
- To function as a containment

“... the negotiator should ... not portray himself as the ultimate decisionmaker. The felon should be made to understand that there is someone over the negotiator.”

team at a new location should the felon move the hostage.

Negotiating Techniques and Policies

Since no two hostage confrontations are alike, there can be no standardized format for negotiations. Each situation is treated individually. However, the following techniques have been developed as a result of our experiences.

The negotiator should have a mature appearance so that he will be perceived by the hostage-taker as a person of authority. During the negotiations, the negotiator should command the respect of everyone, but he should not portray himself as the ultimate decisionmaker. The felon should be made to understand that there is someone over the negotiator. This allows the negotiator to defer decisions and buy time. It also allows him to maintain rapport with the felon when demands are delayed or turned down because he is not the one who is denying the felon's requests.

Usually the easiest type of hostage-taker to deal with is the professional criminal. He is considered a relatively rational thinker who after assessing the situation and weighing the odds, in most cases, comes to terms with the police and refrains from unnecessary violence or useless killing.

The psychotic individual, on the other hand, presents a different and somewhat more complex problem. He tends to be irrational and, therefore, less predictable. His actions, the words he uses, and the demands he makes are often valuable clues to his mental condition. The psychotic har-

bors great inner frustration and conflict. He may even feel a degree of pleasure from his precarious predicament, as he now finds himself important and the center of attention, a position which may be unique in his life. Time works for the police in this instance because the psychotic is emotionally tense and expends a great deal of physical and psychic energy which eventually wears him down.

The fanatic or terrorist group creates an even more difficult hostage situation. In a sense, they can be viewed as a group of psychopaths with a cause, all under the leadership of one of the group. When caught in a criminal act, many of them rationalize their behavior by claiming to be revolutionaries who are merely seeking social justice. During the Williamsburg siege, just such a position was taken by the four stickup men. In these situations, the resolve to die for their cause may deteriorate with the passage of time, and time allows for mistakes to be made.

In any of these cases if the felon kills one of several hostages during negotiations, action should be taken to save the lives of the remaining hostages, because once he kills one hostage he is likely to kill more.

Practically all demands are negotiable but one—supplying weapons. If the felon is bluffing with an unloaded or bogus weapon, giving him a gun would truly create a real danger.

Conclusion

If an analogy might be made, a hostage negotiation situation can be compared to a “bomb scare.” Just as we would send only trained bomb squad personnel to defuse a bomb, so

too, we should send only trained negotiators to deal with these emotionally explosive hostage situations. The training of bomb squad personnel stresses what makes a bomb tick and how to defuse it; the psychological training we give our detective hostage negotiators stresses what makes a hostage-taker tick and how to neutralize him.

To date, the services of the negotiators have been utilized in more than 15 hostage situations. Several of these incidents had resulted in the taking of human life during the initial crime; however, in every case, once negotiations had begun the situation was successfully terminated with the hostage released unharmed and the abductors apprehended. ®

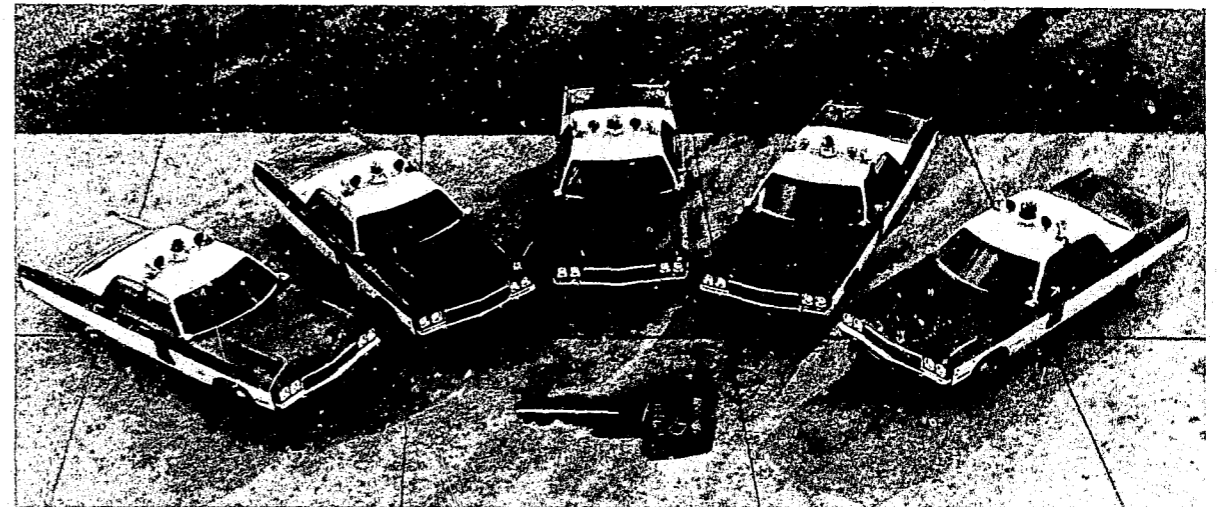
CONVICTIONS

During fiscal year 1974, there were 15,240 Federal convictions in FBI cases. This was the largest number in FBI history, exceeding the previous high in fiscal 1973 by more than 5 percent.

KIDNAPING CONVICTIONS

During fiscal year 1974, there were 96 convictions under the Federal Kidnaping Statute, compared with 71 the previous year, resulting in 19 terms of life imprisonment and other sentences totaling more than 928 years.

THE MASTER KEY SYSTEM



Mr. Henry Marchand, Director, Department of Public Safety, Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich., has brought to the BULLETIN'S attention his department's solution to a problem that might be present in many law enforcement agencies.

Does this situation sound familiar? You are ready to assume patrol and you discover that the patrol car keys are at home with the man you relieved. Or a patrol car needs to be moved and its keys are missing. These two situations might prompt a grimace, or even a smile; but, there are serious problems inherent in both cases. How does an officer gain entrance, for example, into a police vehicle left unattended and locked at a scene of an emergency?

The Grosse Pointe Woods Public Safety Department has faced these situations daily since it not only operates one-man patrol cars but also provides emergency ambulance service to the public. The primary concern of the department arises from emergency calls where the officer must leave his patrol car and accompany the ambulance to the hospital, thus leaving the patrol car unattended. Consequently, it has been department policy to return the unattended police vehicle to the Public Safety Building as soon as possible. There were two alternatives for returning the vehicle. One was to have the officer

lock the car and take the keys with him, which occasionally resulted in having a vehicle unattended for as much as 45 minutes or longer. The other was to leave the vehicle unlocked and unattended with the keys hidden inside the car. Obviously, this is a dangerous practice since police emergencies draw an audience, and there often is no way to secretly hide the keys. It was therefore thought necessary to implement a new procedure for retrieving unattended police vehicles.

After studying the problem and considering several solutions, the Grosse Pointe Woods Public Safety Department decided to inaugurate a system by which a single key would unlock all police car doors, trunks, glove compartments, and ignition switches. It is referred to as the Master Key System.

The Grosse Pointe Woods department is in its 3d year with the Master Key System. Within this time period, the department has not experienced, according to Mr. Marchand, a single police vehicle theft. There is no fuming and fumbling looking for lost patrol car keys since each officer possesses his own master key. No longer are officers awakened at 3 a.m. by a telephone call and a voice saying, “Hey, buddy, where are the scout car keys?”

END