

**The Bill Blackwood
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Justifying the Need for S.W.A.T. Training at Texas A&M University

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ABSTRACT

The need to plan for extra-ordinary events that are outside the normal capabilities of patrol officers is readily apparent. The Texas A&M University Police Department, like most university police departments, has not accepted the idea that tactical planning or training is needed. When called to action, this lack of foresight will be detrimental and may well cause unnecessary injury or death.

The purpose of this paper is to outline examples of university crisis throughout the country to establish that "it can and does happen here." A review of some of the universities that participate in SWAT training is included to show that, although rare, the idea is not completely unique in a university environment. The paper seeks to justify the need for the Texas A&M University Police Department to begin planning and training for the SWAT function by using the resources at hand with a minimum of financial strain.

The paper found that SWAT training is a tool that is necessary in the times in which we live. Teams fall into three types: stand-alone, cooperative or regional, and subsidiary. All teams should form, train, and operate under specific policies. Must have areas are inter-agency agreements specifically related to the SWAT function, selection criteria for applicants and commanders, and regulations/SOP's regarding the use of and responsibilities of the team.

The conclusion, for Texas A&M University, is that the Department recognize past events and potential problems. The Department does not need to start a SWAT team but should train five to ten officers in basic SWAT to establish a fundamental knowledge base. Further, the local municipal SWAT teams should be brought on campus to train in

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the buildings they will have to search. It will be the University's home field. Will there be coherent, educated action or panic when the big game comes to town?

INTRODUCTION

Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) training has become a standard for police agencies throughout the United States. Police departments big and small have determined the need for units that train for the extra-ordinary. Hostage situations, barricaded subjects, group violence, and terrorist activities are issues that city police departments must plan for and are expected to handle. Universities are rarely included in the plan, even though the same problems occur in their environment. Few university police departments plan or train for extra-ordinary events and few cities plan or train at the universities their cities encompass. Establishing SWAT teams at universities or co-training with city SWAT teams is a practice that should become the standard, not the exception.

The creation of university police departments in Texas, staffed with commissioned officers, began with a terrible event. On August 1, 1966 Charles Whitman killed 15 people and injured 31 others from a 28-story observation deck at the University of Texas (Buckley, 1994). This event spurred the 60th Legislature of the State of Texas to adopt Senate Bill 162 in April 1967. The act provided for commissioned police officers to protect the safety and welfare of students and employees of institutions of higher education in Texas (Buckley, 1994). From that day forward uniformed police officers have become a standard at universities. However, the ability of these officers to handle the extra-ordinary "Charles Whitman's" of the world never materialized.

Tall buildings, large emotionally charged gatherings, diverse racial and religious populations, stresses imposed by the rigors of the university in obtaining a degree, and presidential libraries all lend themselves to a potentially explosive atmosphere. Yet these facts are largely ignored.

The information gathered in this project is intended to encourage the Texas A&M University Police Department to combine resources with city police departments in the areas of SWAT planning, training, and response. Books, journals, interviews, policy proposals, interagency agreements, and newspaper clippings will be used to demonstrate the ongoing need for universities to plan for the worst as it applies to the police function.

The goal is to open Texas A&M University to a realistic approach to planning and training for extra-ordinary law enforcement response. Police agencies in Brazos County should share resources in the SWAT function. Texas A&M's Police department is large enough that it's contribution should be manpower, equipment, and co-training. Police departments all over the United States are challenged to provide their "clients" with professional, proficient, and fair law enforcement. Part of that challenge includes the incorporation of SWAT in the university environment.

Historical Context

Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut, started the first organized, professional university police department in the United States in 1894. The city police patrolled the campus and relationships between the students and police had been poor. Confrontations were common and a town committee suggested that 2 new haven officers be assigned full time to the campus with the intent that these officers establish better relationships with the student body. Little growth occurred in University policing until the 1960's when mass demonstrations, building takeovers, arson, and more began to convince university administrators that their campuses needed full time, professional police officers (Buckley, 1994). No one was prepared, however, for an event that occurred in Austin, Texas.

On August 1, 1966, at about midnight, Charles Whitman stabbed and shot his mother. At about 2 am he stabbed his wife and killed her. By 1135 am Whitman was in a 28 story observation tower at the University of Texas in Austin and was shooting people. Austin police got the call to respond and Officer Billy Speed was shot and killed as he stood behind a wall. Eventually, two Austin police officers killed Whitman, but 31 people had been injured and 15 had been killed (White, 1986). Almost immediately "...law enforcement administrators throughout the United States began to assess their own departmental capabilities to handle a similar incident within their jurisdictional boundaries. Most agreed that their departments were ill equipped to resolve such problems" (Kolman, 1982, p.10).

The episode motivated the Texas Legislature to pass Senate Bill 162 in April 1967 that provided for commissioned police officers to be employed at Texas Universities (Buckley, 1994). Cities began Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams but Universities did not look to move beyond uniformed officers.

RESERVE

At about 2:46 PM on February 14, 1985 a 28 year old Texas A&M University graduate named Steven Parsons was caught by two teachers stealing from a woman's wallet in the Fine Arts building at the Temple Junior College. Parsons was armed with a .22 caliber handgun and shot one teacher once and the other twice. He took one victim into a classroom and locked the door. Temple Police Department patrol officers arrived within minutes of the call and a standoff ensued. The situation was resolved several hours later when Parsons shot himself in the chest with his own gun and died (Temple Police Department, 1985).

In March 1988, a Texas A&M student named Harry Horak walked into the corps dorm of his ex-girlfriend at about 1 am. He was carrying two rifles, an arsenal of ammunition, a knife, and pieces of pre-cut rope. The ex-girlfriend and her roommate happened to be sleeping on the floor instead of their beds. This caught Horak by surprise and a struggle for the rifles ensued. Horak fired both rifles several times during the struggle but eventually the females fled the room with his guns. Horak remained in the room with only his legs showing from a closet. Texas A&M officers arrived within minutes and a standoff began. Texas A&M police officers eventually improvised a plan and made an entry on the room capturing Horak. The surrounding cities of Bryan and College Station were just beginning to institute SWAT team policies, training, and personnel and so they were unavailable for specialized help (Kline, personal communication, June 17, 1999).

In 1990 a Texas A&M student killed someone in a drug deal in Houston and a warrant was issued. The student returned to the Texas A&M campus where he lived. The high-risk warrant was served by Texas A&M police; something that many departments would issue to their SWAT team (Kline, 1999).

The University of California, Berkeley decided to start a SWAT team after several episodes happened in and around their area. In 1990 a woman broke into the Chancellor's house on the campus of UC Berkeley with a machete intent on killing the Chancellor. She was shot by a police officer. In 1991 students of UC Berkeley were taken hostage one block off campus and the Berkeley Police Department SWAT team handled the situation (Tejada, personal communication, June 16, 1999).

In 1998 at Ohio University, a juvenile at the University psychiatric hospital (one of several hospitals on campus) took another patient hostage with a knife and demanded to be released. Ohio University PD has maintained a SWAT team and negotiating team since 1974. The patrol division called the SWAT team and a negotiator talked the suspect out without violence (Morman, personal communication, June 17, 1999).

In Littleton, Colorado, 1999, two disenfranchised Columbine High School students took bombs and guns to their school and began killing. Police from all over the area responded. The size of the school, the age of the victims and offenders, and the coordination problems of multiple groups from different agencies working through unknown territory all combined to give experts and media something to critique for years to come. Children with personalities that are similar to the shooters at Columbine High School will be entering University environments because, for the most part, they are intelligent. Once in a University, devoid of a support structure and subject to stresses of curriculum and dating, we will see more episodes like Columbine at Universities in the next five years (Tejada, 1999).

SWAT teams, tactical training for university officers, or city SWAT training on university property is rare. Very few civilian administrations at universities are aware of the need to plan for the "major" events that cities encounter. They seem to believe that crisis

does not or will not happen on campus. The types of crimes committed at universities are identical to those committed in the cities except the rate of occurrence is lower. Some administrators may believe that the police department has done the appropriate planning for major incidents and they leave the details to the police administrators.

Very few university police administrators believe there is a need to plan or train for SWAT operations. The routine for many university police departments is to function as report takers for the mostly minor crimes that occur. The hope appears to be that a hostage situation or mass shooting will "happen in the city." There is apathy. Believing "it won't happen" or "we have done fine in the past" perpetuate the status quo. Universities do not want to scare away potential applicants and their parents, nor should they, by promoting fears of mass unrest or injury. However, the desire is to promote a vision of bliss and academic rigor can be a roadblock to any meaningful, proactive, tactical training.

The "vision of bliss" extended to universities hiding statistics about the crimes that were occurring on campus. Congress saw that universities were lax in reporting crimes and passed the Jeanne Clery Act (formerly the Campus Security Act of 1990). This act requires, among other things, universities to report to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system. Municipal police participation in UCR, by comparison, is voluntary (CampusSafety, 1999).

Review of Literature or Practice

The idea that police departments need to arm themselves "as well as they can" in order to provide the best protection and response to the citizens they serve is valid (Sharp, 1989, p.103, 104). "Special weapons" will probably be necessary in heavy police combat situations, barricaded suspects, and dangerous arrests (Ayoob, 1975). An integral part of

"tactics" involves hostage negotiators. Negotiators are a vital resource and should be available in every police agency due to the dangers that a hostage situation will bring to the public (Roberts, 1988). These resources make up the typical SWAT organization.

However, there is also validity to the idea that patrol, being the first responders, also need basic tactical training. The National Tactical Officers Association consolidated some details in 1988. They found that when SWAT was used, 64% of the time initial patrol officers requested some sort of tactical response within the first 20 minutes. It took SWAT 40 minutes or longer to arrive (Higgins, 1988). It is logical to assume that some type of arrest action had to be taken before SWAT was assembled and staged at least part of the time.

In a situation needing a SWAT response at Texas A&M, the unwritten policy is to call the surrounding cities of Bryan and College Station that have one SWAT team each. These teams are staffed with patrol officers that are on call for their SWAT duties so some or all of the team may not be at work. Notification, approval, assembly, and staging either or both teams in less than an hour would be remarkable.

According to Commander Fealy, Austin Police, who have a full time SWAT team, found that their officers had to take action after the SWAT team was called, but before SWAT arrived, a significant percentage of the time. The rate was high enough to justify exposing all patrol officers to basic tactical training such as two and three man shooting, multiple man building searches, approach planning, and perimeter control (personal communication, June 18, 1999).

The Texas A&M Police Department should follow Austin's example. Due to Texas A&M's geography, the response time to most areas of campus is very short (typically one to

two minutes) and most buildings on campus are multi-story. A typical dorm, for example, is four stories and has approximately 400 residents. It is the nature of the large buildings and groups of people on a campus that presents the greatest challenge to a police response.

When a SWAT operation is called for, typically a barricaded subject or a hostage situation, there are several predictable options police must use. The first option is to contain and attempt to negotiate. Another option is to contain and demand surrender. That may lead to the use of chemical agents to force surrender or the use of a SWAT team that assaults the area or uses a sniper to neutralize the subject (Fuselier, 1981).

In a hostage or barricade situation, Texas A&M Police will be severely limited in their ability to follow the options as described by Fuselier. The primary problem is that the department does not have a SWAT team, tactical training, or any basic tactical equipment (pry bars, flash bangs, smoke, gas, etc.). With the size of the buildings, it is reasonable to assume both cities' SWAT teams would be needed in any major event where the suspect's location in a building is generally unknown or he is mobile. However, neither team trains together, they have different policies, none have trained in campus buildings, and there is no written interagency SWAT agreement that clarifies chain of command, etc.

Staffing a SWAT team or at least having some tactically trained officers and a negotiator may seem overwhelming in terms of budget and manpower at most universities. A large university will typically have 50-70 sworn personnel; Texas A&M has about 53. The centralized concept would cross train patrol officers in negotiating and tactical areas with a broad enough base in the department to almost guarantee some tactical expertise on any scene to which patrol must respond (Roberts, 1988).

The University of California, Berkeley, has approximately 75 officers at the police department. They sent some officers to a basic SWAT school in December 1993 and have maintained a Special Response Unit (SRU) since early 1995. The team includes negotiators, dignitary protection/mass arrest officers, and entry personnel. All SRU operators are patrol officers that are on-call for their SRU duties (Tejada, 1999).

The University of Illinois, Champaign has about 35,000 students, 51 police officers, and they operate the regional basic training academy much like Texas A&M. They are part of a regional SWAT team called the "Metropolitan Emergency Tactical Response Team" along with Champaign County SO and the cities of Rantoul and Urbana. There is a board that sets policy, training and dates, budget, and call out needs for the metro team. At least one practical scenario is practiced on campus each year to involve the entry team and negotiator. Southern Illinois University also has regional team with City of Carbondale (Brown, personal communication, June 17, 1999).

Ohio University is similar to Texas A&M in that it has 50 officers, a student population of about 50,000, and they have an airport in their jurisdiction. They started a team called Counter Weapons Team (now called the Special Response Team) in 1974. The team includes SWAT, VIP protection, and hostage negotiators. There is an interagency agreement with one of three neighboring cities (Upper Arlington) which has about 50 officers. In this rare agreement, Upper Arlington calls the University for SWAT response. Upper Arlington sent some officers to a SWAT school to assist in the time period before the main SWAT team makes it to the scene (Morman, 1999).

Discussion of Relevant Issues

"It is not necessary, in justifying a special tactics team, to postulate an international

terrorist incident or an extraordinary event like the Texas Tower sniper or the McDonald's restaurant killings in San Diego" (Palmer, 1988, p.44). A more common event on a university campus is an intelligent student that behaves in an unexplained manner. The hostage taker at Temple Jr. College was a Texas A&M graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree (Temple Police Department, 1985) and the student at Texas A&M in 1988 that tried to kill his girlfriend had a 4.0 grade point average in Nuclear Engineering (Kline, 1999).

Events such as those described above clearly show the need for some form of tactical training and planning in a university environment. This does not mean that all universities need SWAT teams. There are several levels of participation a department can utilize when discussing the arena: stand-alone, cooperative, and subsidiary.

The first option is a stand-alone SWAT team. This team is self sufficient with manpower and equipment. The department has dedicated the resources, namely money and time, to the training, staffing, and equipment necessary for a SWAT response in their jurisdiction. Very few incidents would require outside tactical assistance at a scene. Stand-alone SWAT teams will be either full time, where their only job at work is training and responding to SWAT calls; or part-time, where patrol officers are used on-call for SWAT activation. The full time teams are usually found at large police departments for obvious reasons. Two university SWAT teams described earlier, Berkeley and Ohio, are part-time.

The second option is a cooperative or regional team. This is where the departments in a given area, usually the county, each maintain some tactical officers and equipment but they all come together in a SWAT call out. Each team does not necessarily have all the expertise or equipment to "stand-alone" but the combination of resources creates a complete operation. The University of Illinois, Champaign, and Southern Illinois University are examples of

these types of teams. Each team operates and trains together under the same rules established by the regional board. In the case of the University of Illinois in Champaign for instance, each department has a Lieutenant on the board to coordinate policy, training, money, and equipment.

A subsidiary team is where the department sends several officers and commanders to SWAT schools to establish a basic understanding of tactics, training, and planning. The department would also purchase limited tactical instruments, such as gas grenades and flash bangs, to be used by those officers as needed. Machine guns, tactical vests, and sniper rifles, are not necessary for the team but could be purchased as desired. The tactically trained officers would assemble in a SWAT operation as inner perimeter and intelligence for the fully geared SWAT team. Co-training with the primary teams would add to the ability and credibility of the subsidiary team (Tejada, 1999). Brown takes the idea step further by stating that co-training is an essential ingredient to a university team to give them needed skills (1999). The subsidiary team is a modification of Austin Police Department's training. Patrol officers respond first and may have to act before a SWAT team arrives (Fealy, 1999).

It is the last option, subsidiary, that should be incorporated by the Texas A&M Police Department. Sending 5-10 officers and two supervisors to at least a basic SWAT school (and the supervisors to an additional SWAT Command school) will allow the tactical element to be spread out on all shifts almost guaranteeing that there will be SWAT experience at all times. These officers would operate as a "Special Assignment Team (S.A.T.)." Duties would include training other patrol officers in tactical elements for safety purposes, maintaining intelligence on areas of campus necessary for effective SWAT planning (such as building floor plans, etc.), response planning at major events like football and dances, VIP

protection, and inner perimeter staging/holding at SWAT operations.

If the S.A.T. team concept is approved, the policy governing the team should contain specific elements to ensure quality, effectiveness, and reliability. The first step in the process is to establish a SWAT inter-agency agreement. This is a specific document to describe the command and control functions of the SWAT team(s) at a university crisis. The standard mutual aid agreement the county agencies currently have is inadequate to establish the "pecking order." Which city team will be the primary responder (College Station or Bryan)? To whom do they report? Who decides on a final course of action? It is for these reasons that there needs to be one or two university supervisors trained as SWAT Commanders to be able to effectively assimilate and direct the response of all parties involved. Again, it is reasonable to assume that Texas A&M University will need both SWAT teams due to the size of the buildings and volume of people inside. There is, therefore, a possibility of conflicting options given by the two different SWAT teams (Holland, personal communication, July 20, 1999).

As Tejada commented, the university will retain command and control. An outside agency will be hesitant, with good reason, to let their team be controlled by an outside source. If left to their own devices there may be a tendency for the outside officers to do things at the "away game" that they would not do at a "home game." A full time UPD officer knows the views and realities of the university environment differently than the city (1999). Brown concurs by saying that tactical training alone is not the only factor in an operation. Differences in policy, personnel, and training are magnified in a SWAT operation over and above what is seen on the patrol level when different departments combine in an event (1999).

The second requirement will be selection criteria for officers. Fitness, personality, skills, and experience are all areas to be defined. Written and physical tests should be adopted that qualify the efforts of the applicants. Separate criteria will be needed for supervisors applying for the S.A.T. team. Re-qualifications to stay on the team, once selected, will have to be defined as well (Hallmark, personal communication, July 10, 1999).

Another key ingredient is S.A.T. responsibility. Items to be covered would include the command structure of the team, team member responsibilities, and training requirements. If each member is cross-trained in the same skills the need to specialize functions per member is reduced or eliminated. The supervisors will be responsible for scheduling regular training and coordinating co-training with the cities. Activation procedures of some or all of the S.A.T. team members will need to be explored. For instance, what type of events would need S.A.T. members and how is the notification made?

Utilizing a subsidiary team will substantially cut the monetary costs usually involved with a SWAT team. No-cost items will include incentive pay, on-call pay, firearms purchases, firearms range fees, uniforms, or tactical vests. There is no current pay incentive for any specialized function at the Department and one would not have to be created. On-call detectives are given compensatory time (while it is a "cost" it is not monetary). No specialized firearms will be needed so there is no cost there. The firearms range is part of the university and there will be no charge for its use. There will be no additional uniform expense because the S.A.T. officers will be in regular uniforms and vests that the department already provides.

Monetary items will include basic tactical tools for the team, such as flash bangs, gas grenades, ammunition, SWAT schools, hostage negotiation school, and a firearms instructor

school for a commander if they are not already one. The gas grenade items will not be a major expense because they don't have to be used very often in training and their shelf life does not require constant replacement. Ammunition will probably be used at most monthly training but, because no automatic rifles are used, the costs are not exorbitant. Creative training exercises will keep ammunition demands to a minimum while maintaining the high level of shooting expertise the members should have.

Non-monetary costs would be things such as compensatory time given for training (and later used by the officer making him/her unavailable), on-call status, and operational call-outs. There are enough officers at the department, however, to enable the S.A.T. supervisor to arrange training for the members without accruing much, or any, comp time. Member's time can be re-arranged during the week if necessary to keep comp time from accruing to high levels as well. All large events on campus, such as football games and dances, require security and they all involve overtime pay. There is a strong possibility that some or all of the S.A.T. members will have signed up to work these events because they are paid and they require a large number of officers. It would not necessarily take all S.A.T. members to be present at all overtime events to effectively use their planning and operational skills.

The costs to the Department will be minimal to obtain well trained, motivated, tactical operators whose skill can be used individually and as a group. Their presence on each shift will give tactical expertise to other officers and calls for service such as building searches. They can be used in predictable situations like dances where there is a history of group violence. They can play a role in VIP protection when dignitaries visit the George Bush Library or any part of campus. And lastly, they will provide invaluable resources in

areas like planning, coordinating, and intelligence when the city SWAT teams are needed on campus (Hillmann, 1988). As Ludwig commented, "The traditional 'demonstration of power' is no longer an adequate tactical weapon, with the exception of a very few situations" (Ludwig, 1989, p.56).

Conclusions/Recommendations

While it is acceptable and considered good planning for the city to train, equip, and staff a SWAT team, the same is not true at universities. Sending the wrong message is the fear. Miller comments, "...we will persist in the current attitude of seeking to avoid taking any initiative in a policy domain where the call to action appears to be tantamount to alarmism. If the function of this is to avoid public overreaction, those espousing such a policy should well consider how an unsuspecting public will react to an event that is made all the more horrific because the government itself was too ill-prepared to cope." (Miller, 1980, p.111)

It is proposed that the mindset involving the functions and job scope of university police officers be brought in line with that of city police departments; that universities have a large propensity for the same problems that face cities and may actually have a greater risk. The College Station campus of Texas A&M University has over 40,000 students, almost 10,000 faculty and staff, and countless visitors each year. Football games draw upwards of 80,000 people in a confined area. Dances are held that bring people from all over the state and country and group violence at those dances have become an accepted reality. Students from all parts of the globe, including those from known terrorist centers, attend universities. The George Bush Library and Conference Center is located on the TAMU campus and draws current and past presidents, kings, and other leaders from around the world.

The incidence of "special threats" to police continues to rise. Standard patrol officers lack key ingredients to effectively handle these threats such as manpower, training, or equipment. "Experience has indicated that when inadequate resources and tactics are used, deaths and injuries may result unnecessarily among police, hostages, innocent civilians and suspects" (Barreto, 1988, p.34). Miller goes on to say, "There is little doubt that once we incur the direct experience of a devastating terrorist attack there will be no end to the number of government agencies which will react with concern, nor will we spared the flood of pious platitudes of commitment for which bureaucracies are known (1980, p.111).

The Texas A&M Police Department has the personnel, opportunity, and justification to be proactive in their approach to law enforcement. There is a need to create some form of tactical awareness at the department and a subsidiary form of SWAT would give the most benefit for little extra cost. All that is needed is the will to prepare. As Commander Fealy so aptly put it, "Look at it this way: you can respond to something with training or without. You don't have a choice not to be there" (1999).

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