

DATE ISSUED: August 9, 2004

REPORT NO. 04-189

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of August 11, 2004

SUBJECT: San Diego Police Department Crisis Response Teams

REFERENCE:

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego Police Department has developed an intensive 80-hour training program to improve officer effectiveness in achieving safe resolutions when responding to a crisis related call. Patrol supervisors and over 300 officers will receive special training in responding to calls involving the mentally ill and people in crisis. Mental health experts from the County's Emergency Psychiatric Hospital and the Mental Health Patient Advocacy program partnered with the Department to provide instruction in the course. The program will include crisis communications techniques, extensive practice of defensive tactics, and training in less-lethal weapons not currently available to patrol officers. This team approach provides a formalized framework for specially trained officers to rapidly respond to critical or potentially critical incidents and increases the availability of less-lethal force options for patrol officers.

DISCUSSION

The protection of human life is the Police Department's highest priority. Across the nation, police departments deal with deadly force issues on a daily basis. Agencies are constantly reviewing how they respond to critical incidents and how they can better resolve these situations without the use of lethal force. Options have included additional crisis response

training and equipping field officers with less lethal force options such as the Taser X26 and Baton Launchers. During a six-month trial period, Phoenix Police Department saw suspect injuries decrease by 67% with the use of the Taser. Before Tasers, they experienced 690 suspect injuries per year. After deploying Tasers, suspect injuries dropped to 228 per year. In Orange County, Florida, the Sheriff's Department experienced an 80% reduction in officer injuries after deploying the Taser. The use of the Taser X26 in the San Diego Police Department is estimated to save 354 suspect injuries per year, down from 528, an anticipated 34% decrease in suspect injuries and their associated costs. The Department also expects to reduce officer injuries from 190 per year to 152 per year, a 20% reduction in on the job injuries.

The Department has embarked on the development of Crisis Response Teams (CRT) that will feature specially trained and equipped patrol officers in each of the eight area commands who can be on scene within 15 minutes. A police response with properly trained and specially equipped officers in the first 15 minutes of a critical incident normally results in a safe resolution to the incident, without the use of deadly force.

The CRT officers will receive 80 hours of training, including response and negotiation skills, how to identify and handle persons with mental illness, defensive and team tactics, and the use of the new X-26 Taser and 40mm baton launcher. The overall goal is to provide police officers with the best training and equipment available to safely resolve critical incidents without escalating to the use of deadly force. In addition, CRT officers will work under safer conditions, reducing officer and citizen injuries and their associated claims.

Western Division will be the first command to form a Crisis Response Team. Patrol officers from Western were selected to attend Phase I of the training, which began August 2nd. Phase II will include training 350 additional officers and supervisors Department-wide to be strategically placed at every area command. Phase III will include training and equipping remaining field officers and supervisors throughout the city to improve response times with less lethal force options. On-going training will maintain proficient CRT officers capable of de-escalating critical incidents in the safest manner possible.

CRT members will be deployed citywide and cover all work shifts. They will typically respond to all calls involving a potentially violent person, or person exhibiting violent behavior that is known to suffer from mental illness and/or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Any sergeant or incident commander may call for a CRT response.

Phase I is in progress without requesting additional, unbudgeted funds. The Department is working on obtaining Federal grant funds, with the assistance of Congresswoman Susan Davis and Congressman Duke Cunningham, to complete Phases II and III, which include:

	<u>Number Needed</u>	<u>Item Cost</u>	<u>Extended Cost</u>
X-26 Taser & Cartridges	364	\$1,008.81	\$367,206.84
40mm Baton Launcher	56	\$618.73	\$ 34,648.88
40mm Baton Rounds	8,000	\$16.75	\$134,000.00

Phase III will include the purchase of 570 tasers and ammunition to equip each of the 979

uniformed patrol personnel. The extended cost of Phase III will be \$575,021.70. The total anticipated cost for completing all three phases would be \$1,110,877.40. As funds become available, the Department will continue the implementation of Phases II and III.

Respectfully submitted,

William Lansdowne
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LANSDOWNE/jcl