



Kern County Sheriff's Office
Policies and Procedures

TITLE: CRITICAL INCIDENTS-HOSTAGE SITUATION		NO: H-200	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: August 1, 1990	REVIEWED: 10/20/2020	REVISED: 04/01/1996	UPDATED: 11/28/2007

POLICY

The increasing use of hostages by an individual or group as a means to secure criminal, political, or other personal objectives presents a serious law enforcement problem. The purpose of this section is to provide direction, uniformity, and expertise in effectively dealing with hostage situations and barricaded subjects.

The goals in these incidents are:

- Secure and maintain complete operative control;
- Protect the lives of every person involved;
- Explore every source of available information regarding the circumstances, location, and persons involved in the incident;
- Attempt, by every means available, to attain tactical advantage over all suspects involved, and ultimately, to effect the arrest of those persons responsible for causing the situation;
- Attempt to negotiate surrender of the hostages(s) and the suspect(s) through the use of Sheriff's Office expertise and/or other individuals available for assistance. Failure in obtaining a negotiated surrender of the hostage(s) or suspect(s) does not necessarily mean that the suspect(s) demands or conditions must be met. Such a determination must only be made by those at the scene with command responsibility after due and careful consideration of the variables involved.
- The tactical principles used to achieve these goals include:
 - containment;
 - delaying tactics;
 - control of suspect gunfire;
 - acquiring physical control of suspect.

NOTE: The tactical principles required in a jail setting vary from those stated here. Depending on the facility, the number of inmates involved and other factors, containment and quick action may be more appropriate.

Nothing in this policy shall preclude the use of necessary force, deadly or otherwise, by members of the Sheriff's Office in protecting themselves or others from death or serious injury.

Strict gunfire discipline shall be maintained by all involved personnel. Gunfire shall be directed at known targets only, except as cover fire in the protection of life or when directed by the officer in charge of the operational phase of the assignment.

The application of deadly force in a hostage situation must be considered when all reasonable negotiating alternatives have been presented and the immediate threat to human life has intensified or when a human life has been taken by the suspect(s).

If, during a hostage situation, a tactical solution presents itself, (i.e. the use of deadly force or other force) that would resolve the situation with minimal risk of injury or loss of life to officers or innocent citizens, the incident commander may opt for the tactical solution rather than continuing negotiations. This decision must be made quickly in some cases, but the incident commander must make that decision based on input from the Tactical Team leader and the hostage negotiator.

Upon a responsible decision to neutralize the situation through the use of deadly force, the personnel available with the best chance of success will be utilized. All involved personnel must be briefed as fully as possible concerning the incident as it pertains to them and specifically instructed as to their assignment or mission.

DIRECTIVE A

No member of the Sheriff's Office, regardless of rank or position within the Sheriff's Office, shall retain his/her authority when taken hostage.

No member of the Sheriff's Office shall be expected to surrender their weapon(s) upon the demand of a hostage taker.

No member of the Sheriff's Office shall be expected to, nor should they, exchange themselves for one or more hostages.

PROCEDURE

Any officer who identified a situation as being a hostage/barricaded suspect incident will:

- Refrain from any act which would endanger the hostage(s) or other individuals;
- Confine the suspect(s) to the smallest possible area that is consistent with their own safety;
- Notify Communications Center.

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Communications Center will:

- Immediately notify the on-duty sergeant, the applicable Division Commander if on duty and/or the Watch Lieutenant.

The sergeant on-duty will:

- Respond to the scene;
- Initiate incident command system;
- Establish a perimeter;
- Evacuate persons in danger;
- Detain witnesses;
- Set up command post;
- Request additional assistance as required.

NOTE: If no sergeant is available, the most senior officer at the scene will assume the duties listed above until relieved.

DIRECTIVE B

In all cases where an incident commander has been identified, that officer shall remain in control of the situation until relieved. No other officer, regardless of rank, shall order, direct nor in any way interfere with the operation, unless assigned to do so by the incident commander.

Any officer that relieves the incident commander of his duties shall notify the incident commander, the Communications Center, and any incident command staff in place. The change in incident commander will be logged on the incident log. The new incident commander will assume all responsibility and commensurate authority.

DIRECTIVE C

The incident commander of the situation that requires a S.W.A.T. team response has overall command of the incident. If a decision is reached to implement a tactical solution, all aspects of the tactical solution are to be controlled by the S.W.A.T. team commander or leader present.

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