DYNAMICS OF HOSTAGE RESCUE TECHNIQUES

COURSE: LECTURE

OBJECTIVES: At the end of this period of instruction the student will be able to understand, discuss, and demonstrate the following:

1. Understand and be able to discuss the dynamics of a hostage situations.
2. Understand the impact that the "Stockholm Syndrome" plays in the recovery of hostages.
3. Understand the importance and uses of negotiations in hostage situations.
4. Describe the various components necessary for a tactical intervention for hostage rescue and their mutual dependence of each other.

LENGTH OF INSTRUCTION: 2 hours

TIME CHART: None

MATERIALS NEEDED: Blackboard and Chalk, Overhead Projector

TRAINING SITE: Classroom

POINT OF CONTACT: None

NOTIFICATIONS REQUIRED: None


3. "Taking Hostages and Kidnapping," by Middendorf, Dr. Wolf, (Kriminalistik, December 1972) a paper prepared by Dr. Middendorf dealing with this subject.

4. "Law Enforcement Policy and Ego Defenses of the Hostage", by Strentz, Thomas, FBI LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN, April 1979

5. Taken from a lecture given by Dr. Harvey Schlossberg, 1010 hours on October 12, 1988, San Jose State University, at the Los Gatos Lodge, Los Gatos, California


SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: None

DATE PREPARED: February 1, 1989

DATE REVISED: September 10, 2008

PREPARED BY: Sgt. Sid Heal, LASD/SEB
DYNAMICS OF HOSTAGE RESCUE TECHNIQUES

I. HOSTAGE DEFINED

A. What is a hostage?

1. According to Webster a hostage is "a person kept as a pledge pending the fulfillment of an agreement."

2. The German legal definition is, "a person held by another person as a security for the fulfillment of a certain demand." (3)

3. A hostage is a victim, held against his or her will by threat or the actual use of force.

   a. It matters little whether the hostage is taken as a result of a family dispute, bungled crime, or by terrorists.

      (1). The end result has placed a human being in danger of being killed or seriously injured while being used as chattel in the suspect's attempt to bargain for something.

   b. The jeopardy to the hostage is continuous and uninterrupted until he or she is released. The hostage should never be considered safe until he is in the hands of the authorities.

      (1). Although the tension may rise and fall it is only an indicator of the temporary safety of the hostage and should never be considered more than that.

   c. Because the victim is in constant danger while being held hostage, we are legally and morally obligated to secure the hostages release at the earliest opportunity.

      (1). A missed opportunity only subjects the victim to continual danger and possibly death.
(2). It may become necessary to rescue the hostage at the expense of the hostage taker.

(a). If a hostage rescue assault is necessary, the rescuers must recognize that the primary purpose of an assault of this nature is to rescue the hostage(s), all other missions are subordinate. i.e. arrest the suspect, recover the stolen property, etc.
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. One of the earliest recorded hostage rescues was about 1930 BC\(^1\) and is recorded in the book of Genesis, Chapter 14. The rescue, involved a night attack by 318 trained men when Abraham rescued his nephew, Lot, and his household.

1. "The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom. One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Amre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. When Abram heard that his relatives had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went into pursuit as far as Dan. During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people." (2)

NOTE: It is interesting to note that many scholars believe that one of the four kings which took Lot hostage was Hammurabi of Babylon. Many police officers will be aware of his rule when the first codified laws were published.

B. In the middle ages the practice of giving hostages was used to insure fulfillment of treaty obligations and was governed by a strict code of honor.

1. The legend of Robin Hood took place in the 12th century. Legend has it that King Richard was being held hostage and Robin Hood "robbed from the rich and gave to the poor" and assisted in helping raise the ransom to release King Richard.

2. This practice was abandoned sometime in the 18th century.

C. "The word 'kidnapper' has been known since 1678." (3)

\(^1\) The actual date can not be precisely determined and estimates vary from about 2100 to as late as 1930 BC. This is based on Abraham’s life and estimates his age at about 60 years at the time of the incident.
1. In England, during the 17th century, "organized gangs in British port cities used to steal children (kids) and sell them to America where manpower was badly needed." (3)

D. Kidnapping has been used around the world for centuries to aid in bargains and demands from criminals and terrorists.

1. Probably the most notable kidnapping in the history of the United States was in 1932 when the child of Charles Lindberg was kidnapped in the city of Hopewell, New Jersey.

2. During the second World War the Germans used hostages extensively in attempts to put down the resistance movement.
   a. At the end of the war, these people were tried as war criminals.

3. Remember the Munich Olympics, in 1972 and the Iranian hostages.
   a. The attempt to use people, especially innocent people by the Moluccans in Holland in 1976 was a more recent in example.
   b. What American doesn't remember the frustration felt by all in trying to secure the release of our hostages held in Iran during 1980 and the tragedy of the foiled rescue attempt.
   c. In November of 1987, the longest simultaneous prison sieges in U.S. history occurred when the inmates of the U.S. penitentiary, Atlanta, Georgia and the Federal Correctional Facility at Oakdale, Louisiana took 54 and 75 hostages respectively.

E. Although kidnapping and hostage taking are not new crimes there have been very few methods of dealing with these situations for fear of harming the hostage.

1. The present is no exception. This class will not give any magic information with which to rescue hostages.
   a. Hostage rescues are complex and dangerous assaults and should be considered as the final option!
   b. The team which is assigned to do a hostage rescue must be aware of a number of dynamics which affect the success of
operations of this type and be thoroughly familiar with hostage rescue techniques. (HRT)

c. Because these assaults are complex and dangerous does not mean that they are not necessary!

(1). Modern criminals and terrorists have used hostages successfully to influence foreign policy, aid in escape or to insure that their demands are met.
III. DYNAMICS OF HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

A. The dynamics of hostage situations are constantly varying and this class will make no attempt to be comprehensive in this area.

B. The persons involved in hostage rescues may anticipate to a high degree of reliability that a number of variables will be present, however, and evaluate each as to the impact on the overall operation.

C. Actions by the Suspect

1. Two fundamental principles are common to all hostage incidents.
   
a. "The hostage in and of himself has no value to the criminal except as a tool or a device for the criminal to get what he wants from the authorities." (5)
   
b. "It is just as much in the criminal's interest as it is in the police interest not to let the situation go violent. In a violent confrontation, the established authorities must always come out the victor." (5)

   (1). The authorities have the manpower and equipment to resolve the incident, usually at the expense of the suspect. It is in the suspect's best interests to try and use the hostages to meet his needs. Once they are killed his bargaining is over and he is in immediate jeopardy.
2. Who takes hostages? The answer to this question will definitely affect the tone of the operation and influence the ultimate tactics for a successful resolution.

   a. "Mentally disturbed persons who take hostages or initiate violent incidents include subjects with histories of mental illness and those whose activities have never brought them to medical attention before." (6)

      (1). "The mentally disturbed hostage taker may behave irrationally or become suicidal." (6)

      (2). "Although mentally disturbed subjects may not seem capable of negotiating rationally, this does not rule out peaceful resolution through negotiations." (6)

   b. "The criminal who is caught in the act and takes hostages, is generally more predictable and rational than the mentally disturbed hostage taker. Similarly, barricaded suspects from crimes gone awry are generally good subjects for negotiated rather than tactical resolution." (6)

      (1). It is important not to create a feeling of hopelessness or despair for this type of hostage taker; he can be compared to a cornered wild animal." (6)
c. "Prisoners in revolt usually form an initial, loosely organized group without specific demands."

(1). Experience has shown that immediate and forceful action is the best response to such an uprising. (6)

(2). "If that action is not taken during the first forty-five minutes, the group will begin to organize and charismatic leaders will emerge." (6)

(3). "If the uprising is a well-planned incident from the outset, with appointed leaders, spokesmen, and demands, the show of force should not be used." (6)

d. "Terrorists are generally ideologically motivated, adventuristic, psychopathic, or a combination thereof. They take hostages usually as a result of a carefully planned strategy." (6)

(1). "Generally, terrorists are well organized and equipped with sufficient weapons and ammunition to sustain them for a prolonged period." (6)
D. Actions by the Hostage

1. The hostage has a desire to survive this encounter unharmed. Consequently, a number of human coping mechanisms will come into play.

   a. The **Stockholm Syndrome** is one such mechanism which is characterized by feelings of sympathy for the suspect and hostility towards the police.

      (1). On Thursday, August 23, 1973, the Sveriges Kreditbank in Stockholm Sweden was robbed by Jan-Erik Olsson and Clark Olofson. The duo held four hostages for 131 hours.

      (2). After the hostages release they were interviewed and their behavior was noted as similar to other hostages in similar incidents both prior to and after the foiled bank robber in Stockholm.

         (a). As a result of the findings regarding the behavior of these hostages a number of behavior traits can now be predicted of people who find themselves in similar circumstances.

   b. "The Stockholm Syndrome seems to be an automatic, probably unconscious, emotional response to the trauma of becoming a victim. ...The syndrome has been observed around the world and includes a high level of stress as participants are cast together in a life-threatening environment ..." (3)

   c. The Stockholm Syndrome has three phases.

      (1). The captives have positive feelings for their captors.

      (2). The captors have positive feelings for their captives.

      (3). The captives have negative feelings for the authorities.

         (a). It is important to recognize the feelings of the captives because they may hinder rescue attempts on their behalf as a result of
acquiring the behavior traits of the Stockholm Syndrome.

(b) It is usually to the advantage of the rescuers to nurture the Stockholm Syndrome since it makes it more difficult for the captors to harm the captives.

d. The relationship resembles a "parent-child" relationship in that the captive is dependent upon the captor for everything, nourishment, sleep, comfort, even life itself.

e. The syndrome starts in approximately 10 minutes, lasts for approximately 6 months, (after that the feelings often reverse), it is automatic and is strengthened with time and adverse conditions shared by the captors and captives. i.e. cold, hunger, darkness,
f. It is important to note that there are exceptions to the development of the Stockholm Syndrome.

(1). When the hostage taker is unnecessarily cruel to the hostage the hostage is not apt to identify with the hostage taker.

(2). When the hostage taker and the hostage are prevented from knowing each other, i.e. physical separation or from coming to know each other. i.e. the hostage is blind folded and/or prevented from talking

   (a). In situations where the captor has taken pains to prevent the Stockholm Syndrome from developing, the hostage is in much greater danger.

Example: The separation of the Jewish captives at Entebbe, Uganda or taken from the plane on the TWA 847 hijacking.

2. Hostages undergo a series of emotions beginning while being held captive.

   a. One of the first emotions, other than fear, is one of denial.

   (1). "Many hostages seek immediate psychological refuge in denial." (4)
b. Feelings of fear are repressed and are eventually replaced by acceptance of the situation.

   (1). The ability to survive requires the victim correctly respond to the stimuli presented no matter how bizarre the situation. This requires a rational person to attempt to understand and accept his predicament.

c. Feelings of positive contact are attempted with the captors. This may be the onset of the Stockholm Syndrome.

   (1). It is an attempt by the captive to lessen the danger or at least relieve some of the stress by assisting in the feeling of safety which results from human bonding.

3. Because of these coping mechanisms the actions taken by the hostage during a rescue may not be what would normally be anticipated.

   a. Because of this, it should not be assumed that hostages will assist in their own rescue.

      (1). Indeed, hostages may actually attempt to hinder their own rescue.

   b. Hostages must be protected from the suspects and inhibited from interfering with rescue attempts.

      (1). This often requires hostages to be handcuffed prior to evacuation.
E. The value of negotiators in hostage situations can not be over stated.

1. Attempts to negotiate are required in every hostage situation pursuant to Downs vs. United States.

   a. In August of 1975 the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit ruled that when a judgment may result in the death of innocent persons, law enforcement must exercise "the highest degree of care commensurate with all facts within his knowledge. Such care must be exercised in order to ensure that undue loss of life does not occur." (1)

2. Negotiations play a vital role in hostage situations and the negotiator can provide valuable information to the Special Weapons Team.

   a. As an intelligence gatherer the negotiator has access to information to which the Special Weapons Team is not privy

      (1). The London Metropolitan Police estimate that 40 percent of their total intelligence is obtained from the negotiators.
b. During the dialogue the negotiator can obtain or confirm information regarding:

(1). additional suspects.

(2). number of hostages

(3). weapons

(4). demands

(5). names of friends, relatives, a place of work etc., This may provide additional intelligence.

c. By introducing a telephone inside a location with an open microphone, information can be obtained via a non-obtrusive audio probe.

d. By allowing or encouraging the introduction and retrieving of containers of food, water, medicine, cigarettes, etc. fingerprints can be lifted to confirm the identities of the suspects.

(1). Information regarding the suspect may be valuable for tactical reasons.

e. Agreements may be worked out for "deliverymen" etc. to approach the crisis point, thus allowing for close observation from better vantage points.

f. By direct conversation with a hostage during the negotiations.
g. By providing a basis for psychological assessment.

h. By providing a cover story or explanation for any noise or movement caused by tactical probing.

3. Some general techniques may increase the risk-effectiveness during a tactical response are:

a. Negotiation by its very nature creates additional time for intelligence gathering.

b. Negotiation creates time to develop and rehearse a deliberate assault plan.

c. Prolonged negotiation will help to establish a routine for meals, sleep, delivers, etc., inside the crisis point.

d. Negotiation will help to develop the Stockholm Syndrome, which can reduce the likelihood of a killing.

e. Negotiation can develop a rapport between the suspect and the negotiator. This makes the suspect more likely to follow the suggestions of a negotiator.

4. The negotiator can be used to assist as part of the deliberate assault plan and help the tactical part of the operation specifically, by:

a. Arranging the entry of persons into the crisis point as part of a delivery, for medical reasons, as a repairman, etc.

b. Arrange the arrival and placement of a "Trojan Horse" prior to an assault.

c. Be able to identify the leader and/or decision maker, establish his location and engage him in an ongoing conversation at a crucial time.

d. Arrange activity to occupy the suspects and place them in positions where they represent a lesser threat to the hostages or they are less able to obstruct a mission to rescue the hostages.

e. Assist in arranging the hostages in positions of lesser danger or where their rescue is more likely.
f. Arrange the arrival of a vehicle or other diversion to facilitate part of the operation.

g. Provide a cover story and arrange for background noises, (i.e. emergency power generators, etc.) to mask sounds during a critical time.

h. By making significant concessions, lead the subject to believe he was successful, resulting in a psychological let down of defenses on the part of the subject.

F. A successful hostage recovery operation is dependent on the successful integration of the various components into accomplishing the overall objective.

1. A successful hostage recovery operation is actually an aggregate effort by a number of individuals each performing a task in their own area of expertise.
2. These various teams must integrate with each other, each working for the incident commander toward the common objective of the safe release or rescue of the hostages.

3. There are three primary components of the operation.

   a. The Command and Control element

      (1). This element is made up of the Incident Commander, the Special Weapons Team Commander, and the Crisis Negotiation Team Commander.

      (a). It should be noted, that head of this Command and Control element is the Incident Commander.

      1. All decision making is ultimately his responsibility!

      (2). Other key personnel likely to be found with this component are:

      (a). The local police representative, i.e. Chief of Police, etc.

      (b). The Sheriff's station representative.

      (c). A representative from Psychological Services, or a doctor who has treated the suspect(s) or hostage(s)
(d). A representative from Sheriff's Information Bureau or the local Police Department assigned to release information to the press.

1. It should be noted that all information released to the press must be first cleared with the Incident Commander. The suspect may be listening to a television or radio.

(e). A Tactical Liaison from the Special Weapons Team.

1. It is the role of the Tactical Liaison to provide the Incident and SWT Commanders with intricate details of tactics and advice on hostage rescue techniques and related tactics.

2. Another important role of the Tactical Liaison is to provide the SWT with intelligence gleaned from listening to the actual negotiations.

b. The second component is the Crisis Negotiations Team.

(1). Ideally, the suspect can be persuaded to release the hostages and/or give up.

(2). When this is not possible, the Crisis Negotiations Team can provide a variety of services to support the tactical approach as discussed previously.

c. The third component is the Special Weapons Team.

(1). This component has the ultimate responsibility to resolve the situation tactically.

(2). Subordinate missions may be to safeguard innocent bystanders by evacuation, etc.
(3). The use of the Special Weapons Team to resolve these situations should always be considered the last option.

d. Other components which make up the total effort are:

(1). Traffic Control

(2). Ambulance or rescue personnel

(3). Communications personnel for large command posts.

(4). Detectives for follow up intelligence gathering, interviewing witnesses, crime partners, family members, etc.

(5). Utility personnel.

(6). Building managers, owners, or persons who have been inside the building.