NOVEMBER ROLL CALL TRAINING

High-Risk Critical Task/Special Operations

Name _____ Date _____

Some law enforcement situations require units with specialized training and equipment, such as SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics), ERT (Emergency Response Teams), and SRT (Specialized Response Teams). These units help resolve high-risk incidents involving weapons, barricaded suspects and/or hostages, threatened suicide, and high-risk warrant service. Given the high-risk nature of tactical operations, these units require careful deployment decisions and command oversight. Their purpose is to protect the individuals involved, deputies, and the community. The sheriff's office should deploy them only when the circumstances warrant their specialized capabilities.

Specialized units operate as a team and, when deployed, shall be at full complement whenever practicable. Individual members may support other law enforcement incidents through their specialized equipment. Whenever use of an individual member is considered, the SWAT commander shall be notified for assessment and approval.

Scenario: One afternoon, patrol deputies respond to a residential neighborhood where a man has barricaded himself inside his home. His wife reports that he grabbed her by the throat during an argument, has been drinking heavily, and threatened to harm himself. She is unsure whether firearms are in the home.

Deputies establish a perimeter and confirm that the man is alone inside and his wife is safely outside. He refuses to come to the door and shouts through a window that deputies need to "back off" and that he "doesn't want to go to jail."

A supervisor arrives. Deputies report no shots fired, no direct threats toward deputies or others at the scene, and no displayed firearm. Reports that the man may own a firearm remain unconfirmed. The situation remains stable for approximately 45 minutes while deputies maintain containment and a crisis negotiator is enroute.

The on-duty commander must decide whether to activate SWAT or continue with patrol and crisis negotiation resources. A newly promoted patrol lieutenant recommends immediate activation, citing deputy safety and the possibility that the man is armed.

Question: Do the known facts warrant full SWAT deployment now, and what risks should inform the commander's decision under sheriff's office policy?

Answer: The facts do not support an automatic yes or no. Containment, no known hostages, and no observed gunfire or displayed weapon support taking time to assess the incident. They do not establish that the man is unarmed or that no one is at risk. The reported assault, alcohol use, self-harm threat, and possible firearm access remain significant concerns. SWAT deployment is not limited to active violence or hostage incidents; barricaded suspects may also warrant a tactical response. The commander should follow sheriff's office activation criteria, consult tactical and

negotiation resources as appropriate, and reassess as information changes. Continued containment and crisis negotiation may be appropriate while the scene remains stable, but the response should reflect the assessed risk, not merely whether a weapon has been seen.

Before full-team deployment, the commander should use the applicable Risk Assessment Matrix to evaluate the need for specialized resources. Document the known facts, unresolved risks, and reasons for the response selected. A matrix supports judgment; it does not replace sheriff's office policy or ongoing reassessment.

For more on this topic, see this article: When Should Law Enforcement Leave from an Armed Suicidal Barricade?

Adapted from the Legal and Liability Risk Management Institute (LLRMI) Law Enforcement High-Risk Critical Task Lesson Plans and edited by NIRMA for Nebraska agencies. This training discussion does not replace the sheriff's office's adopted policies.