Special Reaction Team Training

by John T. Meyer, Jr.

***EDITOR'S NOTE**: In keeping with the Association's objective of providing a platform from which to share information, the following article describing a six-day training program is included for the benefit of the membership.*

In November, 1986, the ARDEC (SRT) organized a Training Seminar with just a couple of people from local departments. Its purpose was to get together to talk about the latest tactical and training ideas. This "get together" gradually transformed into the training seminar that we know today. The seminar has gone from a 40-hour, 5-day course to a 70-hour, 6-day course, exclusive of breaks and meals. To date, the SRT has conducted over sixteen seminars. More than 600 people from over 80 departments have attended the seminar or some portion thereof. The following is an overview of the course.

Day 1

The first subject covered in the seminar is SRT concepts. Here we discuss how the team is developed.

Special Reaction Team Concepts: This category of training addresses questions concerning why a department should have a team, composition of the team, team objectives, and the type of situation to which the team is expected to respond.

Planning: This is one of the most critical areas, and provides instruction on "how to plan" reactions to the situation at hand. It covers warn-

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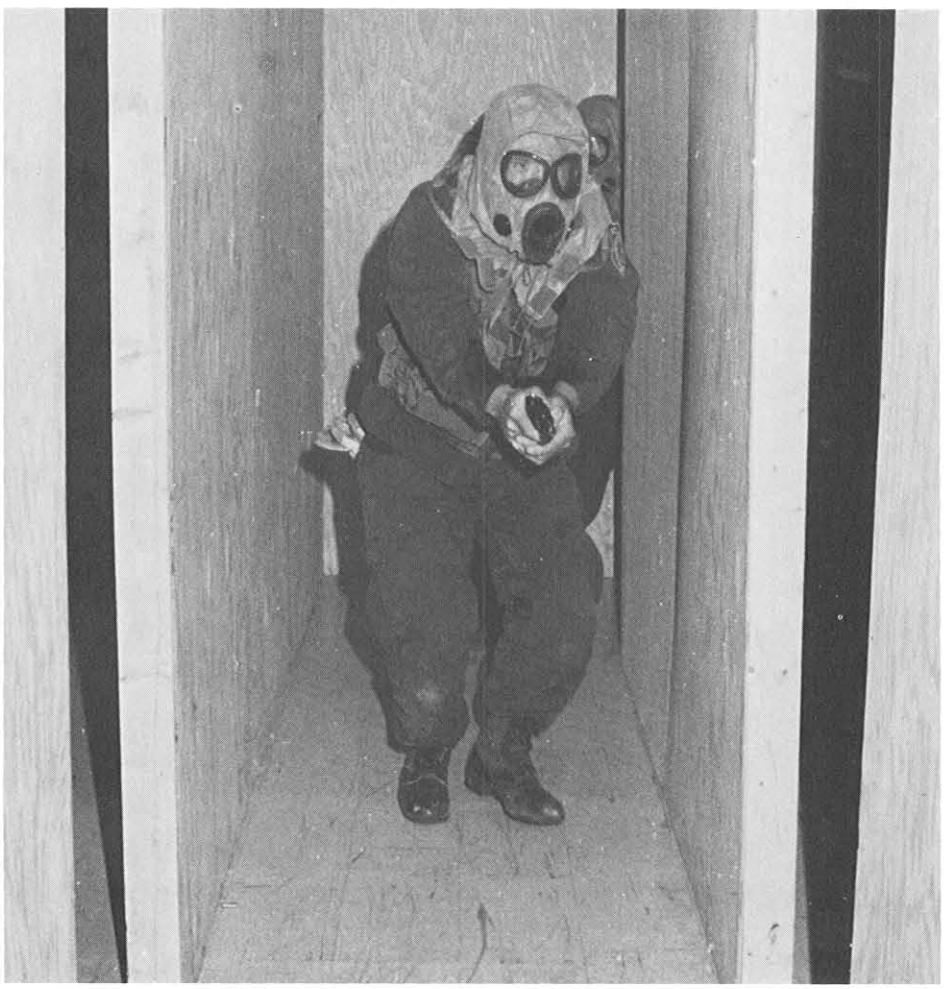

Team member approaches doorway while wearing gas mask.

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ing orders, reconnaissance, building intelligence, subject intelligence, operations orders, backward planning schedules and debriefing.

Tactical Team Equipment: A department must acquire very specific equipment for its tactical members. This section covers the range of equipment each man must possess, as well as the team equipment necessary for "special situations." It also addresses some of the "Hollywood" myths we've all been led to believe.

Building Movement: This training instructs a team how to move in and around buildings with proper cover and concealment. It teaches a number of team formations, body climbs and a variety of ways to ascend one story buildings without the use of extraordinary equipment.

Building Entries: Instructions are given in basic team doorway and window entries with minimum risk to life. It includes the use and development of hand signals as a means of coordinating desired actions.

Building Searches: This area deals with concepts and approaches of building searches. It covers different types of building searches, such as "Dynamic" and "Slow and Deliberate," and the appropriate uses. Also covered are stairway searches and how mirrors and stun grenades may be utilized.

S.O.P. (Standard Operating Procedure): Here is covered the authority for SRT, its limitations, and jurisdiction. Also discussed is the use of force and what is considered acceptable. Additionally, what is permitted and how to avoid overreaction which may cause undue use of force.

Day 2

Physical Training: Daily physical training includes stretching exercises and short runs, from 3/4 to 1-1/2 miles.

Multiple Weapons Stress Course: First and foremost in this area is weapons safety. Weapons safety is stressed throughout the entire seminar . . . its importance is second to none.

During the weapons stress course, an entire team moves through the course shooting at metal falling plate, decision-making, and moving targets while negotiating a variety of obstacles such as cars, buildings, fences, etc. The team is scored on time, accuracy and use of available cover.

Terrorist Weapons Familiarization: Here, discussion addresses a wide variety of automatic weapons. Details on safety, location, rate of fire, and operation are given. Some of the weapons discussed vary from AK 47's, H&K MP5, Suppressed Mini UZI's, Thompson submachine guns, etc. Each weapon is demonstrated and students are given the opportunity to fire them.

Rifle Marksmanship: In this section, the teams are taught basic marksmanship with assault rifles. Instruction includes firing from prone, kneeling, sitting and standing positions from varied distances.

Explosive Ordnance Familiarization: Here students learn the numerous disguises and initiators for bombs. Also discussed is an array of improvised bombs.

Night Exercise (1 of 3): Each team is given a situation for which they must plan, approach and assault.

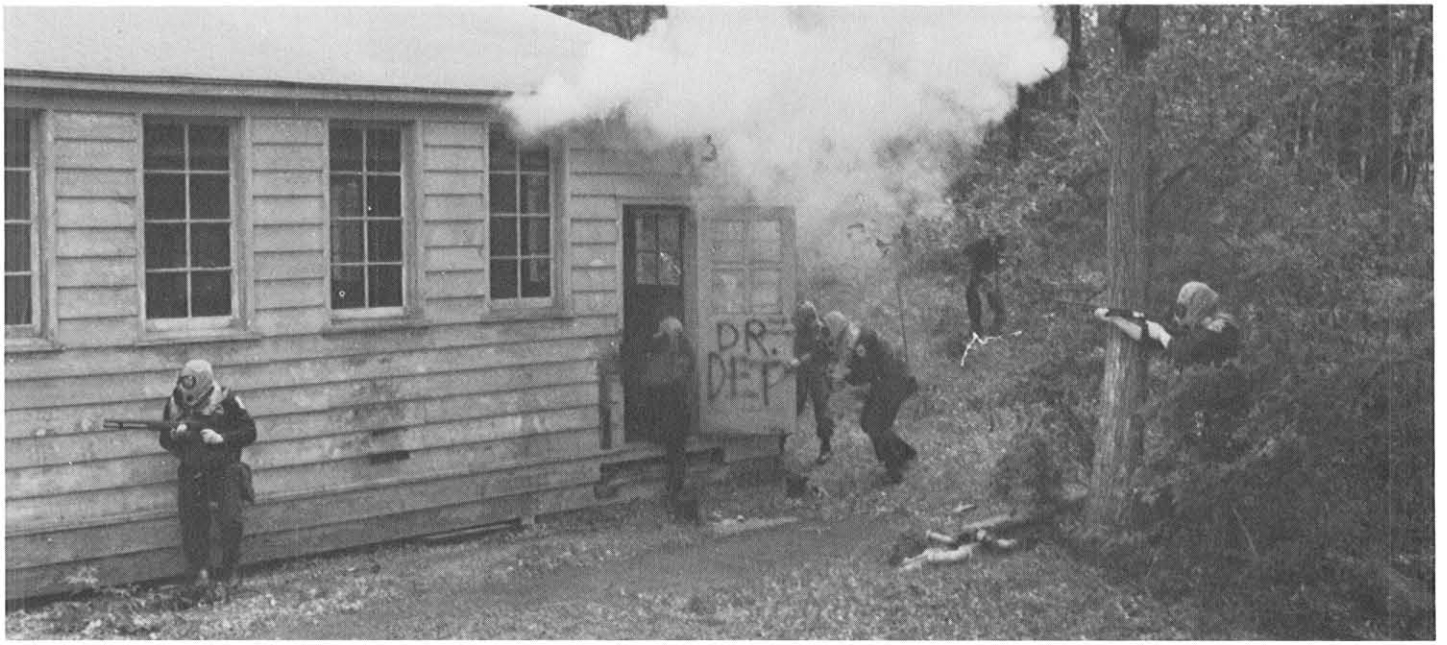
Day 3

Range: Weapons safety is discussed.

Combat Skeet: The team is required to shoot at multiple moving and decision-making targets. This provides the opportunity to become familiar with the shotgun.

Instinctive Firing: Here team members must shoot handguns and rifles at close range (under seven meters).

SRT members participate in explosive entry exercise.



This allows students to experience their actual reaction time, as well as the shooting distance of a real situation.

Sniper Techniques: In this area we discuss the role of the sniper on a team, personnel selection and mental conditioning for that individual. Also discussed are the effects of shooting through glass and other materials.

Second Night Exercise: Here the teams are given a more complex scenario.

Day 4

Physical Training:

Rappelling: Teams are instructed in rappelling safety, rope and equipment care, selection of anchor points and rappelling techniques.

Knots and Seats for Rappelling: Here are discussed the selection of anchor knots, the tying of figure eight's, bowline knots, etc. Also demonstrated is how to tie a ranger seat.

Demonstration/Student Participation: First the demonstration, then the student participation. Students learn to rappel with figure eight's, "Slide for Life," the proper use of ascenders, "Rescue Rappels,"

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Instructions to Contributing Authors

"The Tactical Edge" welcomes relevant articles from Association members.

When preparing articles, the following rules should be observed:

1. Manuscripts should be typed, double spaced on 8½ x 11 paper, and should be at least 8 pages in length.

2. The title should be typed on a separate piece of paper.

3. A black and white photograph of the author, along with a biographical sketch should also be included.

4. Any photographs submitted to supplement the article should include captions. Black and white photographs are preferred. Photographs will be returned on request.

The author should retain a copy of the manuscript, as the original cannot be returned.

Authors will receive five complimentary copies of " The Tactical Edge" in which their article appears.

Articles to be considered for publication should be sent to the Editor, "The Tactical Edge", P.O. Box 1412, La Mirada, California 90637-1412.

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and how rappelling is used for tactical and rescue operations.

Protective Mask Exercise: During this segment, students are exposed to the difficulty of working while wearing a gas mask. They learn about types, quantities and methods of deploying chemical agents.

Terrorism: Here, the term terrorism is defined, along with terrorist methods, justification, and how to protect against terrorist acts.

Third Night Exercise: Given their most complex scenario, teams must develop and execute a plan.

Day 5

Physical Training:

Funhouse Exercise: Here, a scenario is laid out for the teams requiring them to search and clear a building using search techniques taught throughout the seminar. Rubber bullets are used to shoot at decision-making targets.

Obstacle Course: In this exercise, teams carry weapons while they attempt to rescue a hostage in an urban movement course. This course requires movement up and down stairways, in and out of windows and doorways, negotiating fences and rappelling into windows.

Defensive Tactics: In this section, students learn front and rear takedowns, controlling techniques and how to break holds. They learn to maintain control over a suspect or a hostage who has panicked.

Day Exercise: Again the teams are required to plan an assault, search for and rescue hostages.

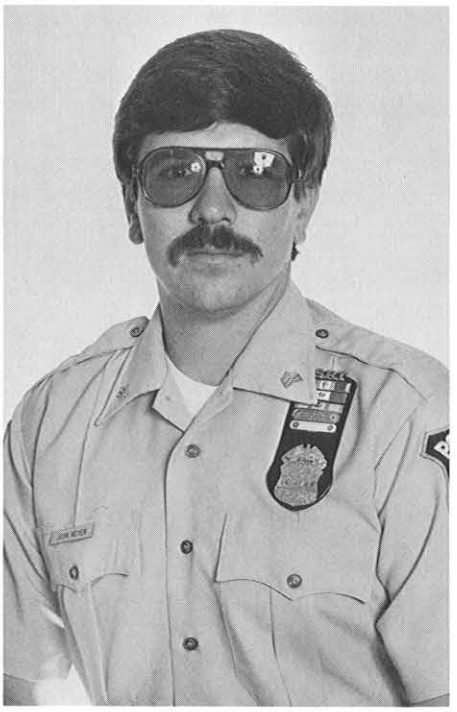
Day 6

Day Exercises: The entire class participates in planning an assault and rescuing hostages from an area consisting of multiple buildings and structures. This allows the teams to experience interaction with other teams, simulating working with other police departments in a real situation. During the assault, the suspects are equipped with paint guns and paint ball ammunition. The goal of the exercise is to rescue the hostages without being shot.

Critique: Students are asked to comment on the SRT Seminar.

Graduation: Certificates are awarded.

We do not claim to be the experts, but we hope these seminars provide an opportunity for communication between departments and for experimentation with new and different equipment and tactics. If we can help you or your department, or you have anything that would be of interest to us, please call: Sgt. John T. Meyer, Jr., Special Operations, Special Reaction Team, (201) 724-3192 or 724-4275.



About the Author

Sergeant John Meyer is the Special Reaction Team Leader, Chief Firearms instructor for the Department of Defense Police at the U.S. Army Armament Research Development and Engineering Center, Dover, NJ.

He has attended both the Emergency Service Team course at Lackland AFB, and the Special Reaction Team Course at Ft. McClellan. In 1983, Sergeant Meyer organized the Tactical Team Training Seminars at ARDEC. He is currently Vice President of the National Association of Tactical Teams.

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