

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUREAU

NOTICE
1.15

October 26, 2018

TO: All Concerned Personnel

FROM: Commanding Officer, Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

SUBJECT: AERIAL PLATFORM TACTICS PROCEDURES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Notice is to reiterate deployment procedures for the Aerial Platform Tactics (APT) used by Metropolitan Division Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) personnel. The APT is a joint operation conducted in conjunction with Air Support Division (ASD). Aerial Platform Tactics shall only be utilized in extraordinary circumstances. The use of this tactic shall only be approved when the relevant dangers are taken into consideration and outweighed by an immediate life-saving exigency, and conventional SWAT tactics have been, or will likely be, ineffective under the circumstances.

NOTE: This Notice supersedes Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau (CTSOB) Notices dated April 24, 2015, and September 21, 2016, regarding Aerial Platform Shooting procedures. Additionally, nothing in this Notice is meant to supersede the provisions of Special Order No. 18, dated September 13, 2018. Any apparent conflict between this Notice and Special Order No. 18 shall be resolved in favor of Special Order No. 18.

BACKGROUND

The term APT describes an airborne tactical option utilizing ASD aircraft with SWAT personnel onboard to address a potentially deadly threat. The safety of the public and all police personnel involved are paramount to any APT mission.

The basis for developing an aerial tactical response in the City of Los Angeles began with an incident on December 31, 1972, when Mark Essex shot 19 people in New Orleans, including 10 police officers, with a .44 magnum carbine from an elevated position. Numerous incidents since then have emphasized the need for the Department to maintain and support APT. As a result, the Department developed a tactical response using a cadre of SWAT personnel specifically trained to tactically assess critical incidents and if ultimately necessary, in accordance with Los Angeles Police Department Use of Force Policy, deploy and potentially engage a suspect.

PROCEDURES

Safety concerns for the flight crew and onboard SWAT officers, as well as for the general public, shall be paramount to any APT mission. The decision to approve APT shall only be granted when the relevant dangers are taken into consideration and outweighed by an immediate life-saving exigency, and conventional SWAT tactics have been, or will likely be, ineffective under the circumstances, and the threat is active, ongoing and deadly.

The call sign AP followed by a sequential number should be used in identifying an airship with onboard SWAT personnel capable of providing overwatch or a tactical intervention (e.g., AP 1 or AP 2).

In determining whether an incident necessitates the deployment of APT, the following factors should be considered, based upon the facts known at the time of the incident:

- Suspect's access to potential victims;
- Suspect's use of superior weaponry and/or body armor;
- Suspect's position makes ground-based tactics impossible or impractical due to factors such as:
 - Elevated platform;
 - Limited roadway access;
 - Physical barriers; or,
 - Rural or hilly terrain.

Deployment Authorization. When the Incident Commander (IC) determines that APT may be necessary, the IC shall contact the Commanding Officer (CO), CTSOB via the Department Operations Center, Communications Division, or via the CTSOB chain of command. Aerial Platform tactics shall only be approved via the concurrence of both the CO (or acting) of CTSOB and the on-scene IC. In the event that the CO, CTSOB, (or acting) are unavailable, an Assistant Chief may approve the use of APT in concurrence with the on-scene IC. Prior to the actual APT deployment, the on-scene IC shall be briefed on the tactics and approve of its use toward the resolution of the incident. When the IC determines that the use of APT is no longer necessary, he or she shall as soon as practicable, discontinue its use.

Once APT deployment has been approved, ASD will provide sufficient resources to assist the IC and SWAT personnel. Air Support Division will consider deployment of the following assets:

- Air Support liaison officer at the command post to assist the IC and the SWAT Officer-in-Charge
- Airship equipped with downlink capabilities; and,
- A dedicated command and control airship. If a dedicated airship is unavailable, an ASTRO patrol airship should be employed in this role.

The preferred configuration for employing APT is from the Tyler Special Operations Platforms (TSOP) mounted on the side(s) of an aircraft. However, in circumstances where time or safety do not permit use of the TSOP, employment with doors-off without TSOP(s) mounted is an approved option.

NOTE: Aircraft door removal or placement of the TSOP on an airship, commencing defueling, and assigning dedicated SWAT personnel to rendezvous with ASD at a landing zone or orbiting near but away from the incident, is **not considered deployment**, but rather **“staging”** for possible APT deployment. The ASD watch commander shall be notified as soon as practicable that staging should commence once a possible deployment is identified.

The command and control airship should be in a position and at a sufficient altitude to safely monitor the incident. The command and control airship is responsible for providing real time information of the tactical situation to aid the APT crew and the IC by relaying the following information:

- Situation update;
- Suspect(s) description, movement, and/or location;
- Type of weaponry;
- Criminal or deadly behavior; and,
- Any other information deemed crucial.

The APT pilot will have final authority over the flight direction and profile, which may include straight-in, pop-up, orbit, overwatch or aborting the mission based on their assessment and expertise, with safety being paramount. The term “overwatch” refers to the deployment of APT where aerial cover is provided over the incident. Overwatch shall be considered deployment as it may suddenly transition into engagement if a threat requiring deadly force presents itself and the APT crew is in position to address it. The secondary pilot aboard the APT airship shall be equipped with binoculars to assist the command and control airship in providing situational awareness to the SWAT personnel aboard the APT airship while flying in an overwatch or staging profile.

Use of Force Guidelines

The Department’s Use of Force policy shall remain the guiding principle regardless of the type of incident. **Authorization for an APT deployment shall not be considered pre-approved deadly force.** An APT deployment is simply a means by which airborne force could be introduced in addressing a deadly threat, the same as placing a sniper team on a rooftop or transporting a cover officer in an armored vehicle’s turret. Ultimately, each SWAT officer(s) will be responsible for assessing a threat and the requisite response. The decision to use deadly force in addressing a threat remains with each individual officer, consistent with Department policy and directives.

Training

Only SWAT officers and ASD pilots who have trained in APT tactics shall be deployable. Joint live-fire training with ASD personnel should occur bi-monthly unless cancelled due to other deployment needs, inclement weather, or unforeseen SWAT incidents.

NOTE: If a SWAT officer has not participated in live-fire or scenario based APT training within a three-month period, that officer shall be deemed non-deployable with this tactic.

Any questions regarding this Notice may be directed to Captain Jonathan Tippet, Commanding Officer, Metropolitan Division, at (213) 352-4800.



HORACE E. FRANK, Deputy Chief
Commanding Officer
Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

APPROVED:



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