



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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## BARRICADED SUSPECTS/SUBJECTS

Incidents involving a barricaded suspect/subject present significant safety concerns to first responders, the barricaded individual, and the community. To ensure the safety of all involved, these volatile situations often require police to utilize not only special equipment and tactical training, but specific expertise in crisis negotiation. The Department's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team along with its Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) component is equipped and trained to resolve incidents that involve a barricaded suspect/subject.

The purpose of this Bulletin is to provide the incident commander (IC) and/or first responders with the information necessary to manage an incident that involves a barricaded suspect/subject.

### What is a Barricaded Suspect?

A barricaded suspect incident prompting a SWAT response may include, but is not limited to the following criteria:

1. The suspect is probably armed; **and**
2. Probable cause exists to believe that the suspect has been involved in a criminal act **or** is a threat to the lives and safety of the community and/or police; **and**
3. Is in a position of advantage, affording cover and/or concealment; **or** is contained in an open area and the presence or approach of police officers could precipitate an adverse reaction by the suspect; **and**
4. The suspect refuses to submit to a lawful arrest.

**Note:** Not all suspects who refuse to surrender are considered barricaded suspects necessitating a SWAT response.

### What is a Barricaded Subject?

In addition to established protocols for a SWAT response, any of the following criteria may also activate a CNT only response for a barricaded subject depending on the incident's nature and imminent possibility of carrying out a suicidal threat:

- Armed persons threatening to commit suicide; or
- Suicidal person on an elevated platform or other unique venue that poses a significant safety risk to first responders

It is extremely important to understand that not all suicidal subjects are considered barricaded or require a SWAT/CNT response or immediate police action. There is a distinction between an armed barricaded suspect wanted for a crime, and a barricaded subject who has not committed a crime, but has expressed the desire to commit suicide. It is not a criminal act to express the desire or even attempt to commit suicide, and suicidal subjects or persons suffering from a possible mental illness are afforded the same level of legal protection as everyone else.

### **Requesting SWAT**

Once the IC believes the incident meets the criteria for a barricaded suspect, the IC shall immediately contact Metropolitan Division's Watch Commander (WC) to request SWAT. The IC should be prepared to answer questions needed to determine if SWAT's response is warranted: who, what, why, when, where, and how.

Information about the suspect(s) should be gathered and communicated to the IC:

- Number of suspects
- Number of hostages
- Physical descriptors
- Clothing
- Ages
- Drug/Alcohol use
- Criminal history
- Mental state
- Floor plan of location
- Additional pertinent facts

### **Special Weapons and Tactics Team**

Handling barricaded suspects is one of the SWAT team's specific assignments. The SWAT team has a dual role at the scene of a barricaded suspect. They gather information to provide tactical recommendations and/or solutions to the IC who maintains overall responsibility of the incident. The SWAT team will also develop and recommend a tactical plan to capture the barricaded suspect at the IC's request. Once SWAT has been assigned its mission, all tactically deployed personnel or first responders near the crisis site shall be guided by the direction of SWAT supervisors.

### **Crisis Negotiations Team**

The SWAT team includes a Crisis Negotiations Team. The CNT component is comprised of SWAT officers and police psychologists from Behavioral Science Services (BSS) who are specially trained in crisis negotiations. Together, the team integrates tactical, verbal, and psychological knowledge and skills in order to negotiate the safe surrender of the barricaded suspect(s) and any victims who may be held against their will. In all instances, the CNT component will be deployed with any SWAT response.

### **Mental Evaluation Unit**

When feasible and upon scene stabilization, any IC or officer who is in charge of an attempted suicide and/or barricaded suspect scene shall notify the Mental Evaluation

Unit (MEU), Detective Support and Vice Division, for advice. The MEU can help determine if any identified subjects have had previous contact with Department personnel. The Systemwide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART) may be dispatched and able to assist in debriefing family members, witnesses, or other persons concerning issues related to the mental health of the involved person. The MEU personnel should not be used for tactical operations or other duties beyond establishing rapport with the subject, family members, or other persons who may provide crucial information that would help in resolving the situation peacefully. The MEU personnel may be relieved with IC approval.

### **Tactical Disengagement**

Disengagement is the tactical decision to leave, delay contact, delay custody, or plan to make contact at a different time and under different circumstances. This tactic should be considered when an officer reasonably believes continued contact may result in unreasonable risk to the person in crisis, the public and/or Department members. Disengagement can be proposed by the primary unit, but requires consultation with the field supervisor at scene, the MEU Watch Commander (if the subject is experiencing a mental health crisis) and with Area watch commander approval.

The actions of first responders will be weighed against the information known and reasonably believed, governmental interest, subject's actions, and efforts to de-escalate the situation. Officers should continually assess the situation as circumstances change and new information is received. Tactical Disengagement is one of the tactics that may be considered when continued contact may result in an undue safety risk to the suspect/subject, the public, and/or officers.

### **Elevated Platforms**

When a person has expressed the desire to harm themselves, avoid underestimating the danger or threat posed by the person's location. A person on an elevated platform may still be capable of causing serious injury or death to themselves or others, including first responders. First-responder actions should be limited to evacuating the area, establishing communication, and de-escalating the situation as much as possible.

**Note:** Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) personnel will most likely respond to these types of scenarios; however, it is important to understand that it remains a police-driven incident, and a unified command should be established to declare roles and responsibilities with LAFD personnel as soon as practicable.

### **Role of The Initial Communicator**

Establishing communication with either the suspect/subject is essential. It is recommended that at least two officers be part of this crucial process. One officer establishes communication with the suspect/subject and the second officer relays information to the IC regarding progress of the incident. For optimum command and

control of the situation, supervisors should generally avoid becoming involved in the role of negotiator. Consideration should be given to de-escalating the scene without compromising safety. The following points are suggested for the initial communicator:

- Find out who, what, when, where, and why before making contact with the suspect/subject to determine their state of mind
- Do not jeopardize officer safety to approach or converse with the suspect/subject (i.e. give up cover, remove protective equipment, disarm or stand in a precarious position)
- Calm down before initiating communication. Attempt to stabilize and de-escalate the situation through dialogue
- Be prepared to remain as the primary communicator until relieved by the CNT

The initial conversation with the suspect/subject is extremely important. As an initial communicator, it is critical that verbiage is introduced that will temper and calm the situation. The following guidelines will assist the initial communicator in establishing productive dialogue:

- Introduce yourself by first name and as a representative of the Department; avoid use of rank or title
- If the suspect/subject does not give their name or refuses to respond, continue to communicate
- Allow the suspect/subject to vent
- Don't rush or interrogate— listen to the suspect/subject; remain calm
- Avoid a critical, uncaring tone or negative non-verbal communication (i.e. body language).
- Avoid rushing to problem-solve
- Build rapport and establish trust by using LEAPS – Listen, Empathize, Ask, Paraphrase, Summarize

### **General Negotiation Guidelines**

The use of negotiations is another resource to control and manage the crisis situation. It is a process of combining verbal and physical tactics to affect the safe release of hostages or surrender of suspects/subjects. However, there are general guidelines that should be followed during the negotiation process:

- Avoid face-to-face negotiations when possible
- Avoid third-party negotiators until properly vetted
- Do not offer transportation or hostage exchange
- Demands for weapons, drugs or alcohol cannot be met
- Generally, suspects and hostages should not be allowed to go mobile
- Communicate in English whenever possible
- Discourage the use of cell phones by on-scene personnel, family members or friends whenever feasible
- Do not have the suspect/subject surrender until officers at the scene are prepared to receive them

- Avoid making promises that may/may not be feasible

Face-to-face negotiations are sometimes unavoidable; such as a “jumper” situation or an open area. However, it is imperative that the communicator stay a safe distance from the suspect/subject during negotiations (Distance + Cover = Time).

Grabbing/grappling with a suspect/subject on an elevated platform puts the contact officer at great risk, as well as nearby officers who may react instinctively.

Third-party negotiators are essentially individuals other than law enforcement personnel, typically family members, clergy, or friends. However, they need to be properly vetted before introduction to ensure that they will contribute to a peaceful outcome. Until the CNT relieves the initial communicator, it is recommended that a third-party negotiator not be introduced into the negotiation process unless it is unavoidable.

## **CONCLUSION**

In incidents involving a barricaded suspect, the primary concerns are the preservation of human life, and the safety of the barricaded individual, first responders and the community. To ensure the safety of all involved, officers should consider tactics and techniques that may persuade the suspect to voluntarily comply or may mitigate the need to use a higher level of force to resolve the situation safely.

**This Bulletin cancels and supersedes Volume XLV, Issue 4, Barricaded Suspects, dated December 2016.**

Field Training Services Unit  
Police Training and Education

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