



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
TACTICAL CONCEPTS
Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 1

November 2022

SHADOW TEAM OPERATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Tactics Training Overview is to explain the concepts of Shadow Team operations and address tactical considerations for their deployment in field operations.

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of a Shadow Team operation is to covertly gather real time intelligence, evidence of criminal activity, and supply that information to the Incident Commander.

Shadow Team objectives:

- Protect lawful First Amendment activity;
- Report intelligence to the Incident Commander; and,
- Coordinate with assigned uniformed support to facilitate arrests.

DEFINITIONS

Shadow Team Operator: An officer assigned to a non-uniformed operation who proactively seeks to establish a relationship or to make contact with a subject or group to gather evidence or intelligence while concealing their identity as a police officer.

Note: All Shadow Team Operators shall complete the Undercover (UC) Operations/Tactical Response Training and Shadow Team Concepts Training, prior to being assigned to the Shadow Team.

Uniformed Support: A uniformed officer or supervisor assigned to support Shadow Team Operators. Supporting tasks may include, but are not limited to, arrest, officer rescue, or dispersal of suspects.

PLANNING

Shadow Team operations are a type of UC operation, where the operators conceal their identity as police officers. Shadow Team operations should not be confused with plain-clothes assignments where the role and identity as a sworn officer is not intended to be confidential or clandestine.

The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for providing adequate time and intelligence to the Shadow Teams to prepare for deployment in the crowd. A Shadow Team's ability to remain undetected is based on proper attire, knowledge of the group, and specific tactical considerations unique to the operational environment.

The scope and expectations of the Shadow Team must be clearly communicated to the Shadow Team Supervisor by the IC. Supervisors shall communicate the operation plan to all members of the Shadow Team.

Note: Just as with other UC and surveillance operations, Shadow Team deployment requires a written operation plan that is approved by the IC or the Commanding Officer of the responsible Area/Division, or their designee. Verbal or telephonic approval is acceptable; however, such approval shall be documented in the operation plan.

If the Shadow Team operation is part of a larger pre-planned event with an existing operation plan, no separate or distinct operation plan is required. If there is no overarching operation plan that covers the Shadow Team, then one is required.

DEPLOYMENT

The operational area should be divided into sections designated by streets and/or landmarks which will be used to define geographic areas for each Shadow Team.

Once deployed in their assigned area, Shadow Teams will assimilate into the crowd. The uniformed component will parallel the Shadow Team Operators (as much as possible) and be able to respond for the Shadow Team Operators, as needed. The two components shall maintain communication via radio and/or cell phone. The Shadow Team Supervisor will have ultimate supervisory oversight for the operation.

The mission of Uniformed Support personnel includes but is not limited to entering a hostile crowd to effect an arrest, extracting Shadow Team Operators, or initiating other crowd control tactics to support the Shadow Team. The Uniformed Support Squad should consist of a minimum of 10 uniformed officers with a dedicated supervisor. However, if vehicle security in a crowd control situation is anticipated, the Uniformed Support Squad should match existing Mobile Field Force configuration at one supervisor and 15 uniformed officers.

Shadow Team Configurations

A Shadow Team operation consists of two components: Shadow Team Operators and Uniformed Support personnel. The Shadow Team Operator component shall not be deployed without Uniformed Support personnel. The Shadow Team Operator squad should consist of four to six operators and a supervisor. This undercover squad is referred to as a Shadow Team.

Note: If a Shadow Team is deployed without Uniformed Support personnel, it shall be documented who authorized the deployment. This can be documented on a supervisor's daily report or an Incident Command System activity log.

A Shadow Team should, at a minimum, consist of:

- (1) Shadow Team Supervisor (Team Leader);
- (4) Shadow Team Operators;
- (1) Uniformed Support Supervisor; and,
- (10) Uniformed Support Officers.

The role of the Shadow Team Operators is to communicate to the Shadow Team Supervisor any observed criminal activity or unusual behavior by crowd members. This information will be forwarded to the IC by the Shadow Team Supervisor or a designee.

It is incumbent upon all Shadow Team Operators to monitor the movements of the Shadow Team squad and be ready to provide immediate assistance in the event they are confronted by a hostile crowd member.

DETENTION/ARREST

Absent an immediate need to effect an arrest, the Shadow Team Supervisor will determine probable cause and based on the information provided, decide if an arrest will be made. If the decision is made to effect an arrest, the Shadow Team Supervisor or designee shall ensure the Uniformed Support Squad is given the necessary information to locate and identify the suspect.

If practical, Shadow Team members are encouraged to physically direct the Uniformed Support Squad to the location of the suspect. The Shadow Team Operators should remain in the area to witness the arrest and verify the correct suspect(s) is taken into custody. If unable to visually verify the suspect at the time of detention or arrest, Shadow Team Operators are required to positively identify the suspect prior to booking.

Shadow Team Operators should only be used to effect an arrest as a **last resort**. In those rare instances in which the situation dictates that Shadow Team Operators may intervene to make an arrest:

- The supervisor must ensure all team members know the arrest is imminent;
- Shadow Team Operators should move decisively to complete the contact/arrest of the suspect and form the rescue/protection circle (fluid movement);
- The Shadow Team Operators should readily identify themselves as police officers;
- The Shadow Team should establish command presence with the arrestee and members in the crowd in close proximity, if necessary;
- Shadow Team Operators should maintain resolve to extract arrestee from the crowd as quickly as possible once the decision to arrest has been made;
- Hand-off arrestee to the uniformed component as soon as practical; and,
- If a Shadow Team Operator's identity is compromised, they should be removed from the incident.

Note: If a Shadow Team Supervisor/Operator should need to effect an arrest as a last resort, they shall be guided by the Department Policies on Use of Force, Drawing and Exhibiting Firearms, and Use of Deadly Force.

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Radio communication is a critical part of officer safety and mission success. The implementation of Shadow Teams for any planned incident should include a separate tactical frequency assigned for their operation. The Shadow Team shall have a minimum of one radio.

The use of Department issued cell phones by Shadow Team members is strongly recommended as an officer's personal cell phone can be requested as part of the discovery process for legal proceedings if used as part of a Shadow Team operation.

Note: Supervisors assigned to oversee shadow team operations may have limited access to radio communications but remain accountable for the safety of their personnel. Supervisors shall ensure that support and assistance are available and requested when necessary.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

At minimum, Shadow Team Operators shall carry the following equipment:

- Department approved firearm;
- Department badge and identification (concealed and secured);
- Cellular telephone (preferably Department issued);
- Minimum of one pair of handcuffs with key (per Shadow Team squad); and,
- Minimum of one radio (per Shadow Team squad).

Note: The minimum required safety equipment for Shadow Team Operators is specific to these types of operations and should not be confused with other undercover and surveillance policies. Any deviation of the required equipment shall be approved by the IC or designee.

Other equipment that should be strongly considered when feasible for all Shadow Team Operators:

- Radio;
- Taser;
- Backpack;
- Raid jacket; and,
- Collapsible baton or Asp.

Personnel assigned as a Shadow Team Supervisor and/or Operator are exempt from wearing body armor when the wearing of the body armor would directly compromise the covert nature of the operation.

When undercover operators identify themselves as police officers they shall clearly verbalize and display their Department badge or identification card as soon as practical.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN UNIFORMED AND UNDERCOVER OFFICERS

Shadow Team Operators should consider and anticipate the perceptions of uniformed personnel who may respond to the area when an incident occurs. The display of a Department badge or identification may not provide enough identifiers to these responding units; therefore, Shadow Team Operators should never assume that they will be recognized by uniformed personnel responding to the scene.

Note: As part of the incident briefing, and prior to deployment, the Uniformed Support Squad should meet with the Shadow Team Supervisor/Operators to identify the physical and clothing description of the Shadow Team Supervisor/Operators. This will help in reducing “blue on blue” situations.

If detained, Shadow Team Operators should cooperate with any direction given by uniformed officers and calmly explain the situation to the officers while continuing to follow instructions and commands. Most importantly, Shadow Team Operators should avoid making any sudden movements which includes reaching for police identification. Such movements could easily be mistaken for a threatening gesture which could result in swift and severe reaction by the uniformed officers. In the interest of safety, Shadow Team Operators should make every effort to remain calm and cooperative to de-escalate a potentially volatile confrontation.

ARREST REPORT

When a Shadow Team Operator witnesses a crime and calls in the Uniformed Support Squad to effect an arrest, it is the responsibility of the Shadow Team Operator to complete the arrest report.

As soon as practical following the arrest, the officer who witnessed the criminal activity must give basic information regarding the incident to the officer who took the suspect into custody.

Officers should have several copies of the Field Jail Task Force Arrestee Information Sheet to document all necessary information. The completed form will then be handed over to the field jail transport officers.

In the event arresting officers do not have a copy of the Field Jail Task Force Arrestee Information Sheet, the following information must be provided to the transporting officers:

- Booking charge;
- Arresting officer's name, serial number, and unit designation;
- Location of the crime and location of arrest;
- Brief account of incident that led to the arrest (e.g., elements of the crime); and,
- Victim, witness information (include business names), and any other pertinent information (e.g., use of force, medical treatment, complaint).

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force Policy.

Field Training Services Unit
Police Training and Education

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