



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
TACTICAL CONCEPTS
Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 6

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ARMED SUSPECTS IN PUBLIC

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide officers with prudent tactical concepts and considerations when responding to armed suspects in public.

The Los Angeles Police Department's guiding principle when using force is reverence for human life. It is a reality that our officers respond to dangerous situations involving suspects who are armed with weapons such as firearms, edged weapons, blunt objects, etc. Due to their potentially violent nature, these situations can result in death or serious bodily injury. Therefore, officers must rely on their training, tactics, techniques, and tools to help resolve these dynamic, fluid, and often unpredictable situations.

PROCEDURE

While at scene, officers must quickly determine the type of weapon that is available to the suspect and properly assess the suspect's ability to inflict death or serious bodily injury. This assessment will allow officers to employ the proper tactical response and de-escalation techniques available to them while at scene.

Officers also must consider that distance is not the only consideration when confronting a suspect armed with a weapon in public. There are a myriad of tactical responses and concepts that should be considered while responding to these situations. The tactical responses and concepts to consider are listed below.

Command and Control

It is imperative to establish Command and Control as quickly as possible to contain, de-escalate, and minimize any potential negative impact of an incident involving an armed suspect in public. The four key components of Command and Control should be utilized during these types of incidents:

Active Leadership: Incident Commanders should utilize clear, concise, and unambiguous communication to develop and implement a plan, direct personnel, and manage resources.

Using Available Resources: Identifying and managing those resources that are needed to plan and implement the desired course of action.

Accomplishing Tasks: Breaking down a plan of action into smaller objectives and using personnel and resources to meet those objectives.

Minimize Risk: Taking appropriate actions to mitigate risk exposure to those impacted by the incident, including the community and first responders.

Tactical Four C's

When dealing with armed suspects in public, officers should be mindful of the following guidelines known as the “Tactical Four Cs.” The senior officer in the primary unit acts as incident commander until relieved by a supervisor.

Tactical Four Cs

- Control
- Communicate
- Coordinate
- Contain

Control: Officers should attempt to prevent the suspect from having any outside contact that would allow the suspect the opportunity to get help or take a hostage. To the extent practical, the affected area should be isolated from all pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Generally, any buildings, rooms, or adjoining areas that an armed suspect may have access to should be evacuated or secured.

Communicate: Officers should give direction to responding units to seal the perimeter. Officers on the perimeter should be given regular updates including when officers are searching or evacuating areas within the perimeter. Additionally, when appropriate, a tactical frequency should be requested.

Coordinate: Officers should establish a command post (CP) far enough away to be out of the line of sight or fire, but close enough to exercise control over the situation and provide for the safe arrival of personnel. The CP location and any changes to the location should be broadcast. If the K-9 unit is used, officers should avoid entering the perimeter to prevent contaminating the scent in the area.

Contain: All sides of the perimeter should be covered, with officers being placed in a position to see the suspect if there is an attempt to escape. Once the perimeter is set, officers should maintain their position to ensure the integrity of the containment and alert the command post if a possible suspect is seen. Officers on the perimeter should not give chase, rather communicate their observations via the radio. During containment operations, good cover is critical to ensure the safety of officers on the perimeter. Cover offers protection from gunfire and allows an officer to safely observe the suspect's probable position. Also, it is important to ensure that no crossfire situation exists.

Contact and Cover

A coordinated response by law enforcement officers, which includes Command and Control, and the concept of Contact and Cover is crucial for effectively handling various situations, especially those involving armed suspects. Here's an overview of these components:

Contact Officer: The contact officer is the one who directly interacts with the suspect. This officer focuses on giving commands, assessing the threat, and making initial contact.

Cover Officer(s): Cover officers provide protection and support to the contact officer. Their primary role is to maintain a position of cover, keeping an eye on the surroundings, and being ready to respond if the situation escalates.

Tactical Responses and De-Escalation

Law enforcement officers must approach suspects armed with weapons, including firearms and knives, with the utmost caution and prioritize the safety of themselves and others. The response and approach may vary depending on the specific situation, but some general de-escalation principles are listed below.

Maintain Safe Distance: Officers should aim to maintain a safe distance from the armed suspect to reduce the immediate threat. In addition, officers should request additional units and begin setting up containment.

Seek Cover: If possible, officers should seek cover. In addition, officers are encouraged to exploit any available objects, such as barriers, to delay potential attacks from the suspect.

Assess the Situation: It is crucial to assess the suspect's behavior and intentions. Are they threatening suicide/self-harm, or posing an imminent threat to others?

Request for Backup or Help Call: Officers should quickly assess and determine if a request for backup or help call is needed to ensure there is a coordinated and timely response.

Clear Verbal Commands: Generally, one officer should use clear and authoritative verbal commands to instruct the suspect to drop their weapon and comply with orders. Officers are reminded that they can use their public announcement (PA) system, if available, to project their voice. In addition, officers can use the PA system to assist with public evacuations and give directions to secure an area and other locations.

Tactical De-escalation: If the situation allows for it, officers should attempt tactical de-escalation using practiced techniques and tools by engaging in dialogue and using crisis intervention to reduce the intensity of the incident. The Department's PATROL acronym was designed for this purpose – Planning, Assessment, Time,

Redeployment/Containment, Other Resources, and Lines of Communication.

Request Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT): If the Incident Commander on scene believes the incident meets the criteria for a barricaded suspect, SWAT should be requested. These criteria include, but are not limited to:

1. The suspect is reasonably believed to be 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.

The Incident Commander, when feasible and if time permits, shall immediately contact Metropolitan Division to request SWAT.

USE OF FORCE

Deadly Force

If an armed suspect is in an open-air environment or location where they have potential unrestricted access to people, officers should develop a plan for a swift and immediate response based on Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment (IARD) tactics, where a delayed deployment could have catastrophic consequences. As a last resort, if a suspect poses an imminent threat to life or serious bodily injury, officers may use lethal force to protect themselves or others.

Department policy allows the use of lethal force as defense against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person; or to apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended.

A request for a Patrol Rifle and/or shotgun with slug ammunition offers enhanced range and precision over a handgun. These weapon systems allow for increased standoff distances from threats without loss of lethal cover.

Intermediate Force Options

Use of an Electronic Control Device (e.g., TASER), Impact Device (e.g., Baton), Kinetic Energy Projectile (e.g., Beanbag Shotgun, 40mm Less-Lethal Launcher, FN 303 Less-Lethal Launcher), or certain Chemical Agents (e.g., Oleoresin Capsicum) is an appropriate force option when an officer reasonably believes either of the following:

- There is an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others; or,
- If the threat is not immediately addressed, there is an articulable risk the incident could escalate to the use of deadly force.

Intermediate force options should not be used on a suspect or subject who is believed to be unarmed, and, is passively resisting or merely failing to comply with commands. Verbal threats of violence alone do not justify the use of an intermediate force option. The Department uses the objectively reasonable standard and the totality of the circumstances when evaluating the reasonableness of the force used, which includes the number of times a particular force option was utilized. If the force option being utilized appears to be ineffective, Department personnel should consider transitioning to another, potentially more effective force option or tactic.

Officers should utilize available windows of opportunity to deploy intermediate force options if the suspect's actions fall within the parameters of Department policy on the use of intermediate force. Acting when appropriate may prevent a situation from escalating to the use of lethal force.

These force options should be deployed from a position of cover while being supported by a Designated Cover Officer (DCO). In addition, officers should alert other officers and the suspect of their intentions to deploy intermediate force options. This prevents simultaneous deployments of intermediate force and may aid in de-escalating the situation with the suspect.

Medical Aid

After the situation is resolved, if needed, officers shall immediately request a rescue ambulance and provide medical assistance per Department policy.

CONCLUSION

Coordinated responses, including containment, command and control, and contact and cover strategies are designed to enhance safety, minimize risks, and facilitate effective decision-making during high-stress situations. These principles help ensure that officers can respond to incidents involving an armed suspect in a structured and organized manner, while prioritizing safety for all involved parties. It is essential that we are well-trained in handling these situations, and our actions should always be in accordance with the law and Department policies while adhering to the guiding principle of reverence for human life at the forefront of our tactics.

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