Policy 702

Subject
HOSTAGE / BARRICADE / SNIPER INCIDENTS

Date Published
8 May 2017

Page
1 of 9

By Order of the Police Commissioner

POLICY

1. **Sanctity of Human Life.** It is the policy of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) to value and preserve human life when resolving all incidents, including Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incidents.

2. **Peaceful Resolution.** The BPD shall employ negotiation, de-escalation, and skill in an effort to peaceably resolve every Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident.

3. **Firearms Discipline.** Members shall maintain firearms discipline at all times, being especially mindful of “sympathetic” or “contagious” fire.

DEFINITIONS

**Barricade Incident** — Any incident in which a person subject to arrest or apprehension is attempting to evade capture or avoid police contact by occupying a position from which he/she refuses to exit.

**Barricaded Position** — Any position occupied by a person subject to arrest or apprehension that delays or prevents police entry by means of fixed structures or objects, obstacles (natural or manmade), and/or intentional fortifications.

**Command Post** — The control center for all actions involved in the resolution of a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident.

**Emergency Action Team (EAT)** — Members who have completed the EAT Training Program provided by the Professional Development and Training Academy (PDTA) and who, at the scene of a critical incident involving an immediate, ongoing threat to human life, can employ specialized small-unit tactics to locate, close with, and incapacitate or apprehend the person(s) creating that threat.

**First Responder** — Any law enforcement officer, fire/rescue personnel, or other public safety professional charged with responding to critical or hazardous situations affecting the general public.

**Hostage Incident** — Any incident in which an assailant, armed or unarmed, is by force or threat of force, unlawfully holding any number of persons (to include First Responders) against their will.

**Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT)** — A specialized team of highly trained members tasked with communicating with any suspect(s) during a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident. In general, the team consists of a Team Leader/Coordinator, a Preliminary Negotiator, a Coach, an Intelligence Coordinator, a Chronographer, and a Team Technician.
Host Zone — Area within a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper incident where the suspect(s) movements cannot be easily suppressed, and the danger to hostages, civilians and First Responders is greatest. Generally, this refers to a specific area within the Inner Perimeter, or the location of the suspect before an Inner Perimeter can be established.

Inner Perimeter — The area in immediate proximity to any Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident in which police personnel, First Responders, and the general public are vulnerable to direct gunfire or other harm from a suspect or police counter measures. The Inner Perimeter is also the area in which the presence of uninvolved civilians and/or media can create the greatest obstruction to police actions intended to resolve the incident. Only uniformed personnel may hold a permanent position on the Inner Perimeter.

Outer Perimeter — The area outside of the Inner Perimeter in which officers and the general public are not vulnerable to direct gunfire or harm from the assailant or police countermeasures. The Outer Perimeter is still under police control and will contain Entry Control Points, Staging Area(s), Logistics Depots, etc. Outer Perimeter positions may be staffed by plain-clothes personnel provided they are properly attired/equipped in accordance with current policy and procedures.

Sniper Incident — An incident where an assailant(s) is believed to be armed, and intends to shoot at or has shot at targets of opportunity. For the purpose of this policy, an ambush shall be considered a Sniper Incident.

Staging Area — An area out of the line of fire and designated as the reporting location for any additional units who respond to the situation.

Suppression Fire — Deliberate police gunfire delivered on a clearly identified target (or target area), for a limited period of time, in order to allow personnel to maneuver into, out of, or through an area exposed to on-going or imminent gunfire from an armed subject. The actual target engaged by suppression fire is situation-dependent and may either be a “point target” (such as a single window from which a suspect is or has been shooting) or an “area target” (such as an area of dense vegetation from which more than one suspect is or has been shooting).

**GENERAL**

1. If tactically feasible, members shall attempt to make contact with a Hostage/Barricade suspect at the earliest possible time in an effort to arrange the release of any hostage(s) and the peaceful surrender of the suspect. Once confirmed that a hostage is present immediately request the Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT) via the dispatcher.

2. While it is preferred that negotiations be conducted by HNT members, reasonable attempts to communicate with the suspect may be made by on-scene personnel (prior to the arrival of HNT) if it is believed that doing so may de-escalate or stabilize the situation.
Barricade Incidents

1. Any situation in which a suspect refuses to exit from a position that delays or prevents police access shall be considered a Barricade Incident, regardless of whether or not hostages have been taken. Members must apply the procedures described in this policy even in cases in which the suspect barricades him or herself in a non-typical position (such as a vehicle, boat, office boardroom, etc.).

2. The first officer(s) to discover or respond to a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident must rapidly assess the nature of the threat posed by the suspect(s) to human life, and determine whether the best course of action is to make an immediate entry attempt or await the arrival of SWAT. The life and safety of any hostage(s) shall take priority when attempting to determine this best course of action.

3. If the best course of action is to await the arrival of SWAT, on-scene personnel shall make every effort not to withdraw from positions they have gained during the initial response, provided those positions offer sufficient cover from any weapon(s) believed to be in the suspect’s possession.

4. On-scene supervisors shall then prioritize the identification of all positions held by officers, the safe collection of intelligence, and, if necessary, the evacuation of uninvolved persons/bystanders from the area(s) outside the suspect’s barricaded position.

Command-and-Control

1. During the initial moments of the police response to a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident, supervisors and commanders who have not yet arrived at the incident, and who do not have pertinent information related to the incident or the suspect, shall defer to the observations and assessments made by on-scene officers (regardless of rank). Subordinates shall be empowered to make immediate on-scene decisions that best protect the life and safety of hostages and bystanders.

2. Prior to the arrival of the Special Operations Section (SOS) Commander, the highest ranking member on-scene shall have command over all aspects of the police response. Members shall assume and transfer command, assess on-scene resources, and execute other command and control functions.

3. Upon the arrival of the SOS Commander, command-and-control responsibilities shall be divided as follows:

3.1. The ranking member of SOS shall be the Incident Commander and have direct control over the size and boundaries of the Inner Perimeter, the selection and placement of personnel within the Inner Perimeter, and all tactical measures taken to resolve the incident.

3.2. The ranking on-scene member from the Patrol Division shall coordinate with SOS/SWAT in order to establish and staff an Outer Perimeter, Staging Area, Entry Control Points, etc. He/She shall request additional resources from other commands as necessary.
Suppression Fire

1. The purpose of suppression fire is to protect any personnel who must maneuver in an area in which an armed suspect can apply deadly force.

2. Suppression fire provides this protection by rendering the armed suspect’s position temporarily ineffective by threatening the suspect with deadly force if he/she attempts to attack from or occupy that position while suppression fire is delivered.

3. Only a permanent-rank supervisor may order the use of suppression fire, and he/she must be able to articulate during any post-incident use-of-force investigation how the suppression fire was intended to support or protect personnel at the time it was ordered. General considerations for the employment of suppression fire are:
   3.1. The permanent-rank supervisor who calls for suppression fire is not required to be physically located with the officers who will actually fire their weapons. Target description and fire/cease-fire commands may be communicated by radio or some other means of signaling.
   3.2. While some extreme circumstances may require an instantaneous call for suppression fire, it is preferred that the permanent-rank supervisor who calls for suppression fire provide the following to the officers who will actually fire their weapons:
      3.2.1. A description of the target (or target area) at which they are to shoot;
      3.2.2. The left, right, and vertical limits of the target (or target area);
      3.2.3. A general understanding of what actions will be attempted by other personnel while the suppression fire is delivered;
      3.2.4. What signals or conditions will be used to begin and cease firing.
   3.3. Considerations related to backstop(s) and potential ricochets are situation-dependent and shall be evaluated in accordance with training provided by the Firearms Training Unit.

Initial Response to Scene

Primary Officer(s)

1. Upon discovering or responding to a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident:
   1.1. Report to the Police Dispatcher the exact location in which the suspect is barricaded via police radio.
   1.2. Make every attempt to determine:
      1.2.1. If the suspect is armed and, if so, with what type of weapon, and;
1.2.2. Whether or not the suspect has taken hostages, or if there are uninvolved persons inside the location who could become hostages.

2. Evaluate the suspect’s continuing actions to determine if he/she is preparing to cause immediate harm to any hostage, bystander, or First Responder.

3. Whenever possible, broadcast by police radio any developments in the incident in order to keep other officers, supervisors, and commanders updated on the tactical situation.

4. Determine whether the best course of action is to make an immediate entry attempt or await the arrival of SWAT.

**NOTE:** Any indication that a suspect is actively harming, or is preparing to harm, any hostage, bystander, or First Responder shall be considered sufficient cause to force entry and take appropriate actions to safeguard human life.

5. Render first aid, as needed.

6. Attempt to locate and secure witnesses.

**Supervisor**

1. If not on-scene during the initial discovery of, or response to, the incident:
   1.1. Monitor any developments broadcast by police radio and proceed to the location in an appropriate manner.
   1.2. Defer to the observations made by officers at the scene of the incident.

2. Assist on-scene officers in requesting or obtaining specialized equipment and additional personnel.

3. Upon arrival at the location, obtain a tactical debrief from officer(s) already on-scene.

4. Take charge of determining the appropriate follow-on course of action. This includes attempts to resolve the situation with available resources or initiating a SWAT activation.

**Communications Unit Supervisor**

1. Maintain communication with the caller until patrol units arrive on the scene.

2. Interview the caller and continue to providing updates to the Communications Shift Commander.

3. Secure as much detailed information as possible concerning the assailant(s) including:
   3.1. Name and description of the assailant(s),
   3.2. Exact location of the assailant(s) and description of the inside of the location/premesis,
3.3. Type of weapon(s),

3.4. Number of shots fired (if applicable),

3.5. Knowledge of mental and/or physical impairments,

3.6. Possible motive or cause for the incident,

3.7. Presence of other persons (e.g., hostages, family members, children, etc.), and

3.8. Any injuries to the assailant(s) or others.

4. Once a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident is confirmed, ensure the following notifications have been made:

4.1. SWAT

4.2. HFNT

4.3. Duty Officer (Unit 41)

4.4. Commanding Officer – Special Operations Section

4.5. Chief – Special Operations and Development Division

4.6. District Commander

4.7. CID Commander / CID Duty Supervisor

Communications Section Dispatcher

Upon receipt of information concerning the possibility of a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident:

1. Assign and dispatch a Primary Unit, Secondary Unit, and the sector supervisor;

2. Order all other units to remain out of the area until requested to respond by a supervisor;

3. Notify the SWAT Duty Officer for monitoring of the initial call for service;

4. Notify all units to switch from the primary radio channel to an alternate channel, when requested to do so by an on-scene supervisor;

5. Monitor and assist responding units by advising of a safe route of approach to the Command Post or Staging Area; and

6. Ensure the requests of the Command Post are fulfilled.
If Immediate Entry Is Necessary

Primary Officer(s)

1. Broadcast by police radio that an immediate entry must be attempted. If possible, describe the actions taken (or being taken) by the suspect that make an entry attempt necessary.

2. In accordance with training and procedures, assemble an EAT (if available) or utilize available resources to form an ad hoc entry team and attempt to force entry on the location.

3. Once inside the location, if it is not possible to incapacitate or apprehend the suspect and the EAT or ad hoc entry team cannot advance further into the location:
   
   3.1. Evacuate any hostages who may have been surrendered or abandoned by the suspect, taking appropriate protective measures in the event a suspect is attempting to conceal him or herself as a hostage; and
   
   3.2. Make every effort to hold all ground gained during the entry attempt. Remain behind appropriate cover, and/or reinforce police positions with ballistic shields/blankets if available.

4. If the suspect is incapacitated or apprehended:
   
   4.1. Ensure appropriate restraint measures are applied;
   
   4.2. Request medical attention as required; and
   
   4.3. Conduct a follow-on search of the location for additional suspects, hostages, or injured persons.

Isolate, Contain, and Hold Response

1. If an immediate entry is not the correct course of action based on the criteria above, members shall then attempt to:

   1.1. Isolate the suspect(s)
       
       1.1.1. Utilizing cover and concealment when possible, position yourself or direct other members to position themselves between the suspect(s) and civilians.
       
       1.1.2. Evacuate, when possible, any person who may be in danger from the suspect to reduce the possibility of casualties or hostages.

   1.2. Contain the suspect(s)
       
       1.2.1. Utilize personnel, physical barriers (e.g., buildings, vehicles, etc.), and natural barriers (e.g., bodies of water, steep terrain, boulders, etc.), to restrict the movement of the suspect to the smallest possible area.
EXAMPLE: If the suspect is contained in one classroom of a school building, attempt to hold a position that would not allow the suspect to exit that room, as opposed to a position that would only restrict the suspect from leaving the school building.

1.2.2. Utilize personnel and physical and natural barriers to force the suspect into a desired location that would put the suspect at a tactical disadvantage, and allow First Responders to be establish points of advantage, to evacuate hostages, or to limit the potential damage the suspect may be able to cause.

EXAMPLE: Attempt to hold a location that would block the suspect from entering a crowded school building, but allowing the suspect to freely move about the sidewalk until additional First Responders can establish a perimeter.

1.2.3. Establish an Inner Perimeter, limiting the size of the Hot Zone as much as possible.

1.2.4. Establish an Outer Perimeter. When in doubt, the Outer Perimeter should be larger than may be required. The Outer Perimeter can always be reduced, but expansion may not be possible once established.

1.3. Hold the situation

1.3.1. Once the suspect(s) is contained, slow down and “hold” the situation until additional specialized resources arrive on scene.

1.3.2. Attempt to de-escalate the situation.

1.3.3. Establish a Command Post.

1.3.4. Identify a Staging Area.

1.3.5. Make any additional notifications that are necessary (e.g., Fire, EMS, Media Relations Section, HNT, Command, etc.)

1.3.6. Evaluate the situation to determine:

1.3.6.1. If additional resources are needed

1.3.6.2. If the situation should be de-escalated or escalated

**Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) / Special Operations Section (SOS)**

1. The ranking member of SOS/Swat shall assume the role of Incident Commander and have tactical command of the situation upon arrival on-scene.

2. Work toward the peaceful resolution of the situation, render the location safe, and return the District to normal operations.
Criminal Investigation Division (CID) Duty Officer / Commander (Captain or Above)

1. Immediately respond to the scene of a Hostage/Barricade/Sniper Incident when requested by the Incident Commander.

2. Remain on-scene until relieved by the Incident Commander.

3. Assume investigative control of the incident once the scene has been rendered safe by the Incident Commander.

4. Coordinate the appropriate CID response and follow-up investigative efforts.

5. Ensure sufficient CID and patrol resources are on-scene at the conclusion of the incident to relieve SOS/SWAT/HNT and other personnel of crime scene responsibilities.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

Policy 707, Bomb Threat or Suspicious Package – Call for Service
Policy 1115, Use of Force

RESCISSION


COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy is effective on the date listed herein. Each employee is responsible for complying with the contents of this policy.