Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

ATF

Fact Sheet

At the Frontline Against Violent Crime   Public Affairs Division - Washington DC

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SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAMS

Purpose

The Special Response Team (SRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) was formed to manage the inherent risk associated with the investigation and apprehension of some of the country's most violent criminals. This is accomplished through promoting survivability by protecting the public, the Bureau's agents, other law enforcement officers and subjects.

Authority

Averaging 250 activations a year, SRT components respond to high-risk operations that involve the service of arrest and search warrants, home invasion investigations, robberies, buy/bust and undercover operations, rural operations, tracking of personnel in rural areas by human and canine operators, high-risk surveillance, use of highly-trained, precision marksmen and precision weapon systems, quick reaction or response to natural disasters and public safety concerns, as well as high threat protection detail assignments.

During the past four years the SRT has supported multiagency operations involving outlaw motorcycle organizations, terrorist organizations and organized crime groups. These significant investigations require superior tactical operational proficiencies and specialized equipment.

SRT Composition

The SRT comprises five regional teams located in Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C. The five teams consist of 145 full- and part-time members. Most team activations include the following ATF personnel and resources:

- Tactical operators are trained in a variety of tactical disciplines to include forward observer, explosive and mechanical breaching, hostage rescue, dynamic and covert entry techniques, personal security detail, rappelling and fast rope training, along with a variety of other disciplines. The SRT tactical operators use a variety of specialty tools and weapons to perform their missions.

- The Crisis Negotiator Program has 50 crisis negotiators trained and available to support all SRT operations. The negotiators, recruited from the ranks of ATF agents, specialize in barricade and hostage incidents and are trained to deal with mentally unstable suspects.

- ATF's Operational Medic Program consists of 68 tactical medics located in all 25 field divisions and Bureau headquarters. The Operational Medic Program is made up of special agents who are specially trained to provide basic and advanced medical support during enforcement and training operations for the SRT and ATF field divisions. The Operational Medic Program also prepares a Medical Threat Assessment in advance of enforcement and training operations; and upon request provides basic CPR/first aid/trauma training to agents in the field.

- SRT Tactical Canine Program is a unique asset developed by ATF. Most law enforcement agencies use canines in a police/security role. ATF goes beyond this by requiring its dogs to not only be aggressive when required, but to be social as well. The SRT canines work in conjunction with the tactical teams to clear buildings and other target locations, perform searches for hidden suspects, conduct tracking and large area search missions, and as a last resort, attack threats. The SRT program trains its canines in-house and uses a national association, the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA), with no ties to ATF, as the certifying body. ATF has seven canine teams in the Tactical Canine Program.

Strategy

The SRT strategy, in place since 1996, uses regionally based teams to conduct high-risk ATF tactical operations within the capabilities of the SRT program.

The teams:

- Provide options to increase the likelihood of safe and efficient resolutions to life-endangering situations;

- Develop tactics, operating procedures, and contingency plans, combined with the appropriate equipment and personnel (ATF tactical, crisis negotiators and medics) to provide the necessary support during high-risk ATF operations; and

- Provide ATF field divisions and the ATF Academy with a cadre of tactical instructors to increase ATF's training and overall capabilities.

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