

Truro Police Department

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

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Mass. Gen. Law: Chap.
Other:

I. General considerations and guidelines

In recent years, hostage incidents and confrontations have increased steadily throughout the world. The challenges facing police officers in such situations are sensitive and critical since human lives are at stake. Criminals who use hostages to effect their escape are desperate individuals who, if allowed to escape, will pose a continuing threat to their hostages and to the public at large. Without effective planning, the actions taken by police officers in these situations may be impulsive or uncoordinated and lives may be unnecessarily lost.

The primary overriding objective of police officers responding to any hostage confrontation is the preservation of lives, including those of the hostages, the citizens in the area, police personnel and the hostage-taker. This concern must be foremost in the mind of every police officer at the scene and must guide every tactical decision made. The secondary concern is the apprehension of the perpetrator and recovery of any property seized.

In order to attain this goal, the Officer-in-Charge at the scene must be fully aware of his/her immediate responsibilities:

1. To gain and maintain as much control as possible over the movements and behavior of the captor;
2. To defuse the situation while effecting the safe release of all hostages; and
3. To effect the apprehension of the hostage-taker without jeopardizing the safety of the hostages or other innocent persons.

A hostage negotiation situation can be compared to a "bomb scare". Just as specially trained bomb-squad personal would be sent in to defuse the bomb, so to should competent negotiators deal with emotionally explosive hostage situations.

Time is a very important factor to be considered. As a general rule the more time the hostage-taker spends with the hostage, the less likely [s]he is to take the life of the hostage. The passage of time also gives the police an opportunity to prepare for different eventualities and allows the hostage-taker to make a mistake or simply become apathetic and abandon the confrontation.

If, however, during the course of a hostage confrontation, a hostage is killed, the Officer-in-Charge at the scene must then seriously consider the advisability of taking necessary steps for the immediate apprehension of the hostage-taker. The killing of one hostage may indicate that the hostage-taker intends to kill more and, therefore, direct action to apprehend the captor and effect the safe release of the other hostages may be necessary. The Officer-in-Charge at the scene should ascertain, if possible, whether the hostage contributed to the act by attempting to disarm the hostage-taker or by antagonizing him. [S]he should also determine whether the hostage-taker is agitated, remorseful, or irrational after the killing and attempt to discover his/her frame of mind. After fully assessing the situation, [s]he must then determine the appropriate action to be taken to rescue the remaining hostages.

In any hostage situation, it is extremely important to determine the psychological make-up of the hostage-taker.

1. Is [s]he a professional criminal whose escape was blocked during the commission of a crime?
2. Is [s]he a psychotic or mentally deranged individual?
3. Is [s]he a terrorist or fanatic with a cause?

II. Policy

- A. It is the policy of the Truro Police Department that in any hostage situation:
 1. The primary objective is the preservation of lives, including those of the hostages, the citizens in the area, police personnel and the hostage-taker.
 2. Apprehension of the perpetrator and recovery of any property seized is secondary to the preservation of lives.

III. Procedures**A. Arrival at Scene**

1. Officers responding to the scene of a hostage confrontation shall avoid the impulse to take immediate action and confront the hostage-taker(s). Rather [s]he shall make a quick estimate of the situation and then notify the Chief of Police of the circumstances and the need for assistance from tactical and negotiations personnel. *[46.1.4(a)(b)]*
2. Additional officers should be mobilized. When they arrive, they shall contain the incident by isolating the crime scene and evacuating the immediate area as follows:
 - a. Evacuate all injured persons; *[46.1.4(h)]*
 - b. Remove all uninvolved persons from the area; *[46.1.4(g)]*
 - c. If the hostage is inside a building, evacuate the building and adjacent buildings of all uninvolved persons; *[46.1.4(g)]*
 - d. Prevent pedestrian and vehicular traffic from entering the area; and
 - e. Seal off all possible escape routes as the safety of the hostages can best be assured by preventing their removal by the hostage-taker.

B. Officer-in-Charge at Scene

1. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall be in command of all police operations and make all decisions regarding police action to be taken. *[46.1.4(i)]*
2. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall:
 - a. Establish a command post and inner and outer perimeters; *[46.1.4(f)]*
 - b. Obtain as much information as possible about the hostage-taker;
 - c. Call for assistance from other agencies as necessary. The officer in charge shall summon medical personnel and advise them to stand by at a pre-determined location. *[46.1.4(d)]*
 - d. Determine the deployment of all officers and vehicles at the scene;

- e. Before taking direct police action, make an effort, if possible, to persuade the hostage-taker to surrender;
- f. Ensure that the hostage-taker knows of the presence of the police, but not their specific deployment or strategy;
- g. Determine the necessity for any special equipment, including body armor, special weapons or specially trained police units;
- h. Coordinate the actions of tactical and hostage negotiations personnel; *[46.1.4(c)]*
- i. Request the cooperation of the telephone company to obtain and maintain police control of all telephones available to the hostage-taker (anticipate and prevent attempts by the news media to contact the hostage-taker directly);
- j. Deal with the news media in accordance with the departmental policy on Police Media Relations; *[46.1.4(k)]*
- k. Call for emergency equipment as necessary; *[46.1.4(j)]*
- l. Take every verbal and tactical means available to secure the apprehension of the hostage-taker without harm to the hostage(s);
- m. Take every precaution to avoid injury to the hostage(s), to police officers or to any innocent persons in the vicinity;
- n. Authorize the use of force, including chemical agents; *[46.1.4(l)]*
- o. Ensure that when the appropriate time comes that properly instructed and well-equipped police officers make the actual apprehension of the hostage-taker; and
- p. If the hostage-taker kills one of several hostages during negotiations, take immediate action to save the remaining hostage(s) if it appears the hostage-taker is likely to kill more hostages.

C. Mobility

1. Every effort shall be made to keep the hostage confrontation from becoming mobile because it would become much more difficult to contain and control.
2. If the situation does become mobile, the officer-in-charge at the scene shall assign an unmarked car to follow and maintain constant surveillance. Every attempt will be made to control travel routes so that hostages and the public are kept as safe as possible. This should be accomplished by establishing roadblocks, closures and detours if possible. *[46.1.4(n)]*
3. The surveillance car shall follow and maintain contact with the hostage vehicle as long as hostages are being held and advise the officer-in-charge of their location and their progress.
4. The Telecommunicator shall monitor the progress of the situation and keep the officer-in-charge informed. On the direction of the officer-in-charge, other agencies, including the State Police and F.B.I. shall be asked for assistance. The Telecommunicator will also notify the appropriate agencies if the situation moves into another jurisdiction. *[46.1.4(e)]*

D. Demands

1. The officer-in-charge at the scene shall make all decisions regarding the demands of a hostage-taker. The following demands shall not be complied with under any circumstances:
 - a. No weapons will be supplied to the hostage-taker, as it is always possible that a hostage-taker may be bluffing with an unloaded or imitation firearm;
 - b. No additional hostages will be given, and exchanges of hostages must be made cautiously, if at all;
 - c. A hostage-taker shall not be allowed to remove a hostage to a location where the police may not be able to act immediately.

E. Negotiations

1. **The officer-in-charge at the scene shall utilize the services of a trained hostage negotiator from this department, the state police or the FBI when necessary.** Since no two-hostage confrontations are identical, each must be treated separately on an individual basis. *[46.1.4(m)]*

2. **Relatives or close friends of the hostage taker generally should not be allowed to act as negotiators.** The hostage-taker may harbor deep hostility toward these people and their safety may be jeopardized.
3. It will be the responsibility of the negotiator to: *[46.1.4(c)]*
 - a. Accumulate as much information about the hostage-taker as possible and appear compassionate, yet unemotional;
 - b. Attempt to reduce the size of the number of people involved and only talk to the leader of the hostage takers;
 - c. Never portray himself/herself as the ultimate decision maker so that [s]he may buy time more easily;
 - d. Attempt to ease the personal animosity, which the hostage-taker may have toward the police or other group, agency, organization or individual;
 - e. Avoid any appearance of weakness or lack of confidence and if possible, never give away anything without getting something in return;
 - f. Utilize delicate prodding, such as "what if . . ." or "how can I sell your request to my bosses?"
 - g. Elicit from the hostage-taker how the problem can be resolved;
 - h. Check out alternatives to "buy time";
 - i. Never criticize an idea of the hostage-taker, or attempt to impose his/her own judgments or values;
 - j. Negotiate everything (e.g., trade food, water, electricity, heat, or air-conditioning for hostages or extensions on the hostage-taker's deadlines);
 - k. Keep the hostage-taker in a decision making status by requiring him/her to decide even minor issues (e.g., if he wants food what does [s]he want, hamburgers or hot dogs; what about pizza; what does [s]he want on them; what do the hostages want; what about drinks - large or small, diet or regular; etc. etc.);
 - l. If necessary, provide the hostage-taker with a means of communication; (e.g., telephones, radios) for negotiations with approval of the officer-in-charge. Make certain that the instrument

provided is capable of receiving or transmitting only on the channel set aside for negotiation and cannot be made to receive tactical communications. Telephones are preferable to radios because telephones are more private and radio batteries will go dead during prolonged negotiations.

F. Conclusion of Situation

1. When a hostage confrontation is terminated, the hostage-takers shall be taken into custody and removed from the scene as quickly as possible and the hostages shall be provided with medical attention, if required.
2. REPORTS: The officer-in-charge as well as all sergeants on location of the police operation shall submit a full and complete report of the incident to the Chief of Police. *[46.1.4(o)]*
3. COUNSELING: The Chief Of Police or his designee shall arrange for stress-debriefing sessions with qualified councilors for all officers directly involved in the hostage situation.