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# FBI Law Enforcement

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# Crisis/Hostage Negotiation Team Profile

By  
MITCHELL R. HAMMER, Ph.D.,  
CLINTON R. VAN ZANDT, M.P.A.,  
and RANDALL G. ROGAN, Ph.D.



Over 600 crisis/hostage negotiators and members of special operation teams gathered in February 1992 to share ideas and exchange information and experiences. During this seminar, conducted jointly by the Baltimore County, Maryland, Police Department and the FBI, attendees from Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States reviewed five hostage incidents. Each presentation provided insights into the complex and dynamic nature of the negotiation process under highly stressful situations.

Unfortunately, little comprehensive data exist concerning crisis negotiation activities in the United States. Therefore, in an effort to develop such critical data, the authors requested that hostage negotiation unit team leaders attending the February seminar complete a crisis negotiation survey (CNS). The survey was designed to identify the needs of crisis negotiation teams. In addition, the authors hoped to gather demographic information about the negotiation teams. Only team leaders completed the survey to preclude duplicate responses.

## THE SURVEY

The CNS consisted of 44 questions focusing on specific issues that affect crisis negotiation teams. These issues included demographics, selection and training, incident responses, use of mental health professionals, information and training needs, and the feasibility of establishing a national clearinghouse for crisis negotiation. The survey was initially developed based on input from FBI hostage negotiators. Its intent was to obtain responses from

team leaders regarding hostage negotiation needs. Then, in order to ensure that it was appropriate for the purpose of this study, FBI hostage negotiators and outside experts on surveys reviewed the items, sequencing, and overall wording of the survey.

One hundred hostage negotiation team leaders completed the survey. Therefore, the percentages listed equal the actual number of respondents (e.g., 76 percent equals 76 out of 100 responses).

## SURVEY RESULTS

### Team Demographics

The survey responses revealed that few females served on negotiation teams. Seventy-six percent of those responding indicated that women comprised between 0-20% of their hostage negotiation teams.

The ethnic composition of negotiation teams was primarily white. Seventy-one percent of the

respondents indicated that their negotiation teams consisted of 81-100% Caucasian members.

Further, respondents indicated that most of the negotiation team members' duties were either in investigation or patrol, with some in administration. Specifically, 51% of the respondents stated that more than 40% of their teams had primarily investigative responsibilities, while 47% stated that 40% or more of their team members served primarily in patrol. Overall, 72% responded that fewer than 20% of their team members were actively involved in administrative duties.

### Negotiation Team Selection and Training

Fewer than half (45%) of the teams had any written negotiator selection policy. In addition, once selected, team members received a fairly limited amount of initial training in hostage negotiations. Seventy-four percent of the re-

spondents stated that their teams received 10 days or less. Many team leaders (44%) said initial negotiator training lasted 5 days or less. Only 1% of the respondents indicated that their team members received 21 or more days of initial negotiator training.

According to the survey results, the FBI provided 40% of the initial training. However, initial negotiator training was also provided either by the respondents' own departments (17%) or through outside contractors (15%).

Departments spent even less time on continuing or followup training each year. The majority of teams (61%) recorded, on the average, 5 days or less inservice training each year. Overall, 82% of all teams received 10 days or less of this type of training. Only a few teams (6%) devoted 15-20 days to followup training annually, while no team received more than 20 days of continuing hostage negotiation team



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## *Survey Highlights*

- Fewer than half (45%) of the negotiation teams have any written negotiator selection policy.
- Most negotiation teams (61%) spend, on the average, 5 days or less each year in continuing negotiator training. Most of this training is conducted in-house (44%).
- Almost half (44%) of the negotiation teams receive initial training lasting 5 days or less. This training is primarily provided by the FBI. Very little continuing training is conducted jointly with SWAT teams (44% of the negotiation teams jointly train with SWAT 3 days or less each year). Over one-third of the negotiation teams (39%) engage in no joint training at all with their SWAT teams on an annual basis.
- Generally, most negotiation teams responded to and actually negotiated 10 or fewer crisis situations during 1991. The most common situation was barricade incidents, followed by domestic situations, suicides, hostage-takings, criminal/high-risk arrest situations, and kidnappings.
- About one-half of the teams (56%) use a mental health professional as a consultant (primarily in the area of post-incident counseling).
- Team leaders believe there is a substantial need for additional information and training in assessing hostage-takers' emotional stability, resolution strategies, negotiator communication skills and strategies, suicide indicators, and decisions on when to go tactical.
- A high percentage of team leaders (92%) cite a need for a national crisis/hostage negotiation clearinghouse.

training. Most continuing training was undertaken either in-house (44%) or was provided by the FBI (24%).

Overall, little or no joint training was undertaken with SWAT teams. Forty-four percent of the negotiation teams trained with their SWAT teams 3 days or less, and 39% engaged in no joint training.

### **Negotiation Team Incident Responses**

Generally, most negotiation teams responded to a relatively small number of crisis negotiation situations during 1991. During that year, 72% of the teams responded to 10 or fewer incidents, while 20% of the teams responded to 11-20 incidents.

When asked to indicate the number of situations the teams actually negotiated, the majority (83%) of teams negotiated 10 or fewer crisis events and 13% negotiated between 11-20 situations. In terms of the type of crisis situation in which teams needed to negotiate with a perpetrator, the most common was barricade incidents, followed by domestic situations, suicides, hostage-takings, criminal/high-risk arrest situations, and kidnappings.

### **Use of Mental Health Professionals**

Only about one-half of the teams (56%) indicated that they used mental health professionals as consultants. Team leaders indicated post-incident counseling as the most predominant reason for using mental health consultants (58% of the teams that use mental health professionals use them in this capacity).

In a significant number of agencies, mental health professionals also act as on-scene advisors to negotiation teams (40%) and become involved in the training (34%) and selection of team members (32%). However, only 6% of the team leaders stated that they use mental health professionals as primary negotiators.

### Information and Training Needs

In order to determine the most critical information and training needs of the negotiation teams, the respondents were asked to rate 11 topics on a five-point scale, with 1 denoting "little need for additional information and training" and 5 denoting "great need for additional information and training." The mean, or average, score was computed for each issue.

In general, the team leaders believed that their teams had a substantial need for additional information and training (mean = 3.0 or higher) for all of the issues listed with only one exception: impact of nonpolice personnel on negotiations (mean = 2.91; sd [standard deviation] = 1.24). The top five information and training needs of the respondents were—in order of priority—assessing hostage-takers' emotional stability (mean = 4.05; sd = .90), resolution strategies (mean = 4.04; sd = 1.02), negotiator communication skills and strategies (mean = 3.97; sd = 1.03), suicide indicators (mean = 3.97; sd = .93), and when to employ tactical strategies (mean = 3.85; sd = 1.17). The remaining prioritized issues were rapport building (mean = 3.81; sd = 1.09), negotiation differences among various situations (mean = 3.81; sd = .97), impact of psychological character-

istics of hostage takers (mean = 3.75; sd = 1.02), hostage-takers' views on negotiations (mean = 3.70; sd = 1.06), cultural impacts on negotiation (mean = 3.56; sd = 1.12), and impact of nonpolice personnel on negotiations (mean = 2.91; sd = 1.24).

### Need for National Clearinghouse

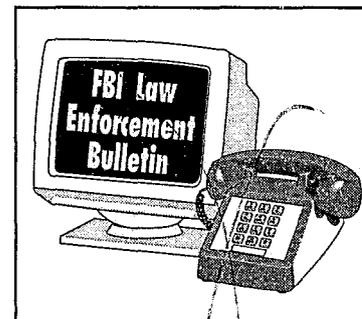
The overwhelming majority (92%) of the respondents cited a need for a national clearinghouse to collect, analyze, and disseminate information regarding crisis negotiation. Further, 94% of the team leaders indicated a willingness to use such a clearinghouse, and 93% of the team leaders indicated a willingness to assist the clearinghouse by providing both information and audio visual materials on their crisis negotiation experiences.

### CONCLUSION

The crisis negotiation survey provides preliminary insights into selected demographic and functional characteristics of a sample of crisis/hostage negotiation teams within the United States. It represents the first attempt at collecting and disseminating information on hostage negotiation team characteristics and crisis incidents.

The information obtained through the CNS can provide an initial benchmark by which to assess the needs and functions of individual crisis/hostage negotiation teams. Further, this information can be used to create effective training and information dissemination programs. Most important, however, the research can be used to identify and address the most critical needs of crisis teams throughout the country. ♦

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# Notable Speeches

## Seven Seeds for Policing

By  
David C. Couper, M.A.



**I**n my over 30 years of police service, I have seen some changes of which I am proud, specifically, the higher education levels of police recruits and the larger number of women and minorities in police departments. At the same time, I confess that all I hoped for did not happen.

However, because I am not one to lament the past, I want to look ahead and think about what could be for those who choose to serve as police officers. My vision is to see seven seeds planted in the field of policing—leadership, knowledge, creativity, problem solving, diversity, control of force, and community policing. If these seven seeds take root and grow, they can, hopefully, provide a vision for tomorrow's police leaders.

### The Seed of Leadership

The police may be the last organization in America to maintain the authoritarian organizational structure. We don't seem to understand the fear it generates among employees or realize how it chills creativity and initiative within the ranks.

Today, the best organizations in America are adopting leadership styles based on Total Quality

Management. This leadership style stresses listening to others, coaching, and fostering the personal growth of employees.

Nevertheless, many of this Nation's police leaders continue to wrap themselves in the protective mantle of authoritative and coercive leadership styles. The longer we delay this needed change in police departments, the more difficult it will be to accomplish it. Once and for all, coercion and fear must be cast away as leadership methods—the police officers we lead deserve no less.

It is time to move from *fear* to *fostering*. It is time to stress listening, coaching, and fostering employee development as the three most important characteristics of a police leader.

### The Seed of Knowledge

As a young police officer in 1967, I became excited over the report released by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. The report challenged me to finish my college degree and attend graduate school.

I was convinced, as I am now, that policing could be a profession of intellectual substance with an