



TECH *b.e.a.t*

Dedicated to Reporting Developments in Technology for Law Enforcement, Corrections, and Forensic Sciences

Good Day for a Riot

Early this past May, 3 days of ongoing inmate unrest and rioting rocked this normally tranquil West Virginia prison. Correctional personnel faced almost 80 individual incidents—everything from food fights in the cafeteria to hostage situations, knifings in the recreation yard, seriously injured officers and inmates, and brazen escape attempts.

This has not been the first time this prison dealt with serious inmate disturbances. Every spring since 1997, the old West Virginia State Penitentiary, in the community of Moundsville along the Ohio River, experiences in a few days some of the most serious challenges faced by any correctional facility in the Nation.

The combination of well-trained tactical units and new and innovative technologies, however, quickly resolves the incidents and keeps staff and inmate injury to a minimum.

For the past 11 years, the Mock Prison Riot™ has put correctional tactical teams into real-life, crisis management scenarios. In resolving the scenarios, the teams rely not only on their training but also on new and emerging public safety technologies. Tactical personnel are exposed to the technologies and in turn provide real-world feedback to developers and manufacturers. The annual event is sponsored by the Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC), a program of the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

"This event results in so much quality collaboration between technologists and end users," OLETC Interim Director Steve Morrison says. "That is what we are all about: getting the most innovative and effective technology in the hands of the law enforcement and corrections officers who need it."

"We had many technologies for the first time this year," Morrison says. "In addition, we had more certification workshops than ever before. These certification workshops save valuable training dollars for attendees and allow them to stretch their training budgets."

This year, the event featured products from 85 vendors and included officer protection products, less-lethal weapons, through-the-wall surveillance and night vision

equipment, crowd control devices, robots, biometrics, alarm systems, and prisoner restraint systems.

In reviewing the products on display, a tactical team has an opportunity to talk with the individual vendors and even request a chance to use the product in their scenario. "This," Morrison says, "eventually may result in a sale for a vendor. It may also result in key user feedback that leads to development of a better product. But it always results in officers having the opportunity to try out something new and learn from the experience."

TRAINING DOESN'T STOP

Administrators who cannot send their tactical teams to the Mock Prison Riot™ can take advantage of year-round training offered at the former penitentiary in Moundsville, West Virginia, through the National Corrections and Law Enforcement Training and Technology Center (NCLETTTC), a program of the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice and an initiative of the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation.

NCLETTTC offers instruction to Federal, State, local, and international corrections, law enforcement, and first-responder agencies. Facilities include classrooms, indoor and outdoor firing ranges, fixed and mobile firearms simulators, an obstacle course, and the use of penitentiary facilities to provide a realistic environment.

"We emphasize scenario-based training and hands-on classes. Practical training sinks in a little bit better," says Michael Logsdon, NCLETTTC executive director. Logsdon has a 4-member, full-time training team and more than 40 adjunct instructors who provide input into courses. "We do all types of scenarios. We do correctional scenarios using the facility, but we'll also set up a simulated library or a convenience store and run a 'hostage-taken' scenario so participants can work on negotiation skills."

Continued on page 2

Training Doesn't Stop (continued)

A sample of class topics offered throughout the year include the following:

- Strategies and tactics of patrol stops.
- Introduction to correctional supervision.
- Duty shotgun for patrol.
- Inmate transport.
- Principles of physical fitness for first responders.
- Cell extraction.
- Basic crisis/hostage negotiation.
- Close-quarter handgun techniques.

"We offer a unique, hands-on training experience in a secure environment to enhance established practices and skills through training and technology applications," Logsdon says.

"We try to make it as interesting as possible," he says. "We don't want people to sit there and listen to someone read a presentation to them. That's boring and they're not going to remember anything. We have them ask questions. We have them tell us about a situation and how they handled it, and we discuss how it may have been handled differently."

He adds, "We allow the agencies to get the type of training they need. The building is great because you can't hurt it. It's sturdy and there are no issues about breaking things. This allows us to be very flexible."

NCLETTTC publishes a schedule of planned trainings. An agency also can request training designed specifically for its own requirements or use of the Moundsville facilities using the agency's own instructors.

NCLETTTC also sponsors the annual Mock Disaster drill every September, which gives first responders the opportunity to test disaster-relief techniques and technologies. Its primary objective is to provide comprehensive operational training for emergency service providers in mitigating large-scale disasters. In addition, some classes are offered at a satellite location at Glenville (West Virginia) State College, where dormitory-style lodging and onsite dining are available. Also, some courses are eligible for credits through West Virginia Northern Community College.

Enrollment in all classes generally is limited to certified police officers, chiefs of police, sheriffs and deputy sheriffs, correctional officers, investigative agents, other criminal justice professionals, and the first-responder community, although exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. All sessions are offered contingent

on achieving sufficient enrollment and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants will be notified a minimum of 7 days in advance of course cancellations.

Classes vary in length from 1 day to a full week and costs vary. Logsdon says NCLETTTC will negotiate group rates if an agency wants to train a large number of people at the same time. Agencies can also host training at their own facilities to mitigate the cost of training.

For more information about the training opportunities available through NCLETTTC, visit www.nclett.org, call 877-625-3882, or e-mail cthomas@wvhtf.org.

"The riot is exciting," says Odell Wood, special tactics and response team commander from Ohio. "All my team members are excited about the great technology that is here, and we love to work with it. Our motto is 'Perfect Practice Makes Perfect.' We enjoy the opportunity to do that and at the same time use the most up-to-date equipment."

This year Wood's team, along with several other tactical units, had the opportunity to use a new riot feature: the APARTment [Area for Practical and Realistic Training], a mockup of a two-story house with a number of rooms, hallways, windows, and a stairway where a variety of hostage scenarios were run.

"We used a sniper in one situation and it came to a point we had to decide whether to shoot," Wood says. "We had a concern about the safety of an infant. It's a heavy decision to make, to use lethal force."

In his seventh year at the riot, Jack Harne, a retired major with the Maryland Department of Corrections and contractor with NIJ, served as safety officer for the APARTment scenarios. "The environment at the penitentiary reminds me of the first facility I worked at," says Harne, who is retired from the corrections field. "I get to talk to and network with those still working in the corrections community and gain input for NIJ's corrections program. I might locate a future project for NIJ or a facility for a pilot project. I also like seeing the new technologies and how they work, but one thing you always need to remember, the technology is only as good as the person who is using it. There is always a human element in the process."

"The riot gives our team members a chance to bond together in realistic situations," Wood says. "During the year, we try to do this as well, but in Moundsville the realism of the setting is greatly increased."

Wood's team did four scenarios in the APARTment—two solo, two with a team from Oklahoma. In addition, he

ensured that at least one team member attended a workshop on every one of the 31 topics covered. His team also presented a workshop on hostage negotiation and tactics.

“The individuals learn from the workshops, then they go back and give talks to their colleagues about what they’ve learned. We talk about things we do that are similar, and practices that we might adopt,” says Wood, whose team has been participating since the first riot 11 years ago. That year, Ohio sent two people (compared to the 45 participants and 100-plus observers who attended this year).

“For a team that has never been before, I think it would be a great experience,” Wood says. “It gives them a chance to see the best teams from around the world, gives them the opportunity to see what technologies are out there, and gives them the ability to network with other organizations, all of which will lead to improved performance.”

Another first for the 2007 riot was a scenario specifically for law enforcement personnel, during which members of the Stark County (Ohio) Sheriff’s Department and the Wheeling (West Virginia) Police Department raided a simulated crack house set up inside the chapel on the penitentiary grounds. Also for the first time, the riot included a course on making decisions under extreme stress taught by two former officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and scenario participation by a Canadian team. (The riot’s 1,687 attendees came from 39 States as well as from Austria, Norway, the United Kingdom, Israel, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, and Northern Ireland.) In addition, the Ohio team coordinated the riot’s first-ever Command March, which gave the citizens of Moundsville a chance to view the riot participants as they marched, in formation and full tactical gear, through the town’s streets.

“The Mock Prison Riot is probably the most exhilarating and useful experience that a corrections officer could ever have,” says David Mason, team leader of the Institutional-Crisis Intervention Team from Ontario, Canada. “This is probably the only correctional event of this nature that I have seen in my career.”

“The Mock Prison Riot is becoming a truly international event,” says Marc Caplan, Chief, Operational Technologies Division, NIJ. “The riot’s reputation is strong among the corrections and law enforcement community in the United States, and it’s branching out around the world.”

The next Mock Prison Riot is scheduled for May 11–14, 2008. For more information, visit www.oletc.org/riot/index.html.

MORE THAN 70 WORKSHOPS

In addition to training scenarios and technology exhibits, the annual Mock Prison Riot™ includes a number of no-cost workshops, some of which offer participants free certification—a tremendous asset for corrections and law enforcement agencies with budgets stretched to the limit and beyond. This past year the riot featured 78 sessions on 31 different topics.

“We view the workshop component as integral to the riot and we have worked hard over the years to schedule offerings on the newest, most-cutting edge technologies and techniques as well as the most relevant topics in the field of law enforcement and corrections,” says Steve Morrison, Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization interim director. “We offer workshops on a wide variety of topics and attempt to do so in a manner that can accommodate almost every riot attendee’s schedule. They can experience the newest technologies, techniques, and information available in a classroom setting and then apply what they’ve learned in an actual scenario.”

Sample course topics include the following:

- Instructor-level certification (good for 3 years) on the deployment, handling, and documentation of the use of chemical aerosols, including medical and liability issues for law enforcement and corrections.
- Tactical shield deployment for correctional and law enforcement staff.
- Advanced skills training for tactical planning for hostage event management and resolution.
- Training on the use of electronic control devices geared toward the special needs of law enforcement and correctional officers, medical personnel, and the military.
- Operator certification on night vision law enforcement equipment.
- Considerations in the utility of K-9 deployments in operational and tactical circumstances.
- Preservation of cell phone forensic evidence.
- Deciphering encrypted gang writing.

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