

**A GUIDE TO  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS  
TEAMS**



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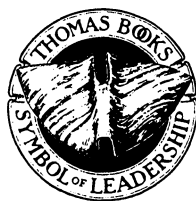
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This book is dedicated to Deputy George R. Barthel, a fine friend and dedicated police officer, who was slain by a sniper's bullet on April 19, 1979.



## FOREWORD

**T**HROUGHOUT THE SPAN OF MY FORTY-ONE years in public service, I have recognized that change in the social structure is inevitable. This necessitates an innovative response on the part of law enforcement.

During my tenure as Sheriff of Los Angeles County, I have been rewarded with having many gifted officers whose ideas and concepts have revolutionized law enforcement around the country.

One of the most innovative tactical changes in the last fifteen years has been the implementation of Special Weapons and Tactics Teams to resolve the increasing problem of barricaded suspect situations.

In spite of the significant role played by these specially trained teams, little printed material has been made available to assist departments in evaluating their programs or needs. I firmly believe that the existing void will be filled in a large part by the publication of this textbook.

Lieutenant John Kolman, a member of the Sheriff's Department and a veteran of twenty-one years in law enforcement, is qualified by virtue of education and experience to author such a work. With eight years of experience as a member of our Special Weapons Teams, he has gained exceptional insight into this highly successful concept.

He has skillfully written his text in such a way as to educate conceptually, yet to instruct tactically, so that the question of responsibility in all its applications is fully answered.

Peter J. Pitchess, Sheriff  
Los Angeles County





## **PREFACE**

**T**HE INCREASING NUMBER OF HOSTAGE AND barricaded suspect incidents has led to the implementation of Special Weapons and Tactics Teams (SWAT) by many agencies throughout the United States.

Experience gained since the concept was first developed in the Southern California area in 1966 has demonstrated the value and effectiveness of specialized teams in resolving these often hazardous and sensitive situations.

Unfortunately, this specialization has, on occasion, been erroneously depicted in a negative way by the entertainment media. Contrary to these early images, contemporary Special Weapons and Tactics Teams are comprised of highly disciplined, well-trained law enforcement officers who are dedicated to the protection of innocent victims, as well as the perpetrators themselves. Deadly force is rarely utilized, and then only as a last resort when all available alternatives have been exhausted.

Although many law enforcement agencies have developed a tactical team concept over the years, two pioneers in the field have been the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Because the concept as implemented and administered by both departments is adaptable to the needs of most enforcement agencies, the material contained within this publication will relate primarily to their concept. This should not be interpreted as criticism of the many fine tactical organizations existing nationwide. Instead, this limitation has allowed the author to exert maximum effort in providing the most comprehensive and valuable material.

Commencing with a discussion of the history and organization of tactical teams, this text will probe selection of personnel, and logistical and training requirements, as well as the step-by-step solution of a hypothetical situation, from initial response through deployment and resolution. In this way, the reader can see the direct application of the principles and procedures discussed in the text.

The purpose of this book is not only to provide assistance to agencies interested in organizing a Special Weapons and Tactics Team but also to provide comparative data by which existing teams can be evaluated and perhaps refined.

The reader will notice that no attempt has been made to discuss specific tactics. This avoidance is for the sake of security and safety. It has long been known that the criminal elements of society obtain a great deal of operational information from the media, as well as printed works. Because the author has no intention of sharing specific tactical knowledge with potential adversaries, the subject of tactics will be treated in the most general terms.

Notwithstanding this void, which can be filled with common sense, discipline, and experience, the text should prove to be a valuable aid to the administrator interested in building and/or improving his tactical response capabilities.

J.A.K.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**A**LTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF INFORMATION contained in this textbook is based on personal knowledge and experience, its preparation would not have been possible without the support and assistance of the following people:

My friends and fellow SWAT team members assigned to the Special Enforcement Bureau, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

My friends and counterparts assigned to "D" Platoon, SWAT, Los Angeles Police Department.

Mr. Timothy J. Birkeland, who provided expert photographic assistance.

My wife, Janice, who sacrificed countless hours typing and proofing the manuscript.

My daughters, Kathleen, Heather, and Judith, whose youthful understanding and support were a much needed source of inspiration.



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## Chapter 1

### ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**T**HE UTILIZATION OF SPECIALLY trained and skilled marksmen to achieve specific objectives is well documented within military history. Although most nations of the world have made use of selected riflemen, the wars of America are particularly replete with examples of their effectiveness in battle.

From the Revolutionary War to Vietnam, American military leaders frequently took advantage of the disruptive and demoralizing effect of concealed marksmen.

During the Revolutionary War, American frontiersmen, recruited and led by Daniel Morgan, made effective use of the extremely accurate Pennsylvania-Kentucky rifle. In contrast with a musketeer, who could rarely hit a man beyond 60 yards, a rifleman armed with the Pennsylvania-Kentucky rifle could hit a man at 250 yards.<sup>1</sup> All of Morgan's men were selected marksmen.<sup>2</sup> As special troops skilled in picking off British sentries and officers, their reputation was fearsome. A British soldier called "these shirttailed men with their cursed twisted guns, the most fatal widow and orphan makers in the world."<sup>3</sup> Morgan's men, who later became known as Morgan's Riflemen, were the forerunners of modern military sniper teams.

Later, the Civil War produced Colonel Hiram Berdan's Sharpshooters. Only those men who could put ten consecutive shots inside a 10 inch circle at 200 yards were eligible for selection to this unit. Those selected received special physical training not unlike that provided commando or ranger battalions in more recent times. Ultimately, two full regiments, the 1st and 2nd Regiments of U.S. Sharpshooters, made up Berdan's brigade.



**Figure 1:** Captain Daniel Morgan organized and led Morgan's Riflemen during the Revolutionary War. Photo courtesy The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Figure 2: Colonel Hiram Berdan, a competitive rifle shot, recruited and led Berdan's Sharpshooters during the Civil War. Photograph, Library of Congress.

Equipped with breech-loading Sharps rifles, instead of prevalent muzzle loaders, these skilled marksmen won recognition in both armies.<sup>4</sup> Berdan's Sharpshooters, together with their Confederate counterparts, further confirmed the value of specially trained riflemen.

Throughout the balance of American military history this concept proved of value. Today, specialized units consisting of well-trained and specially armed personnel stand ready to defend the United States under limited or protracted combat conditions.



Figure 3: Colonel Berdan and one of his Sharpshooters, "California Joe," epitomize the modern-day military sniper/observer team. Notice the Sharp's breech-loading rifle, which was standard issue for Berdan's Sharpshooters. Photograph courtesy of Civil War Times Illustrated.

Law enforcement has long been recognized as being paramilitary in both structure and administration. Therefore, it is only fitting that many of its policies and procedures are patterned after the military. While most agencies have tailored these procedures to better suit the civilian atmosphere, they are nonetheless mili-