

Atlanta Police Department Policy Manual		Standard Operating Procedure
Effective Date February 19, 2020		APD.SOP.4042 Hostage Negotiators
Applicable To: Division and Section Commanders, and Hostage Negotiators		Review Due: 2024
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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish policy and procedures for the selection, retention, training and responsibilities of hostage negotiators.

## 2. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the hostage negotiations team to respond to every call that the SWAT team is deployed to with the exception of bomb calls and standard warrant service unless specifically requested by the SWAT Commander. This includes all crisis situations that arise in the city as well as critical events as necessary and appropriate.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Community Service Division (CSD) Commander shall monitor the implementation of this directive.

3.2 The Special Operations Section (SOS) Commander is responsible for the selection, appointment and retention of department employees as hostage negotiators, providing access to training, the supervision of employees on the hostage negotiation team and selecting a unit commander and supervisors.

3.3 The Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander is responsible for coordinating, training and meeting with the hostage negotiation team. The unit commander shall also participate in selection interviews for potential team members and consult with the SOS Commander on all issues that may affect the hostage negotiation team as well as providing an on-call list to communications. The unit commander shall also attempt to ensure that a minimum of four negotiators respond to each call for assistance.



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- 3.4 The Hostage Negotiation Supervisors shall provide assistance to the unit commander in carrying out his or her duties; they shall serve as team leaders during unit deployments and are able to function as the unit commander at the scene when he or she is not present.
- 3.5 Hostage negotiators shall be responsible for providing assistance in crisis situations or other critical events as necessary and appropriate. Hostage negotiators are full time active duty employees assigned throughout the Department. Responding to calls for assistance is paramount and as such, hostage negotiators are constantly on call and expected to respond unless excused by a hostage negotiation supervisor when called. While the hostage negotiations' unit is voluntary, hostage negotiators are expected to respond at least 75% of the time when called.
4. ACTION
- 4.1 Qualifications and Selection
- 4.1.1 The Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander, with the approval of the SOS Commander, shall make a Department-wide announcement for a hostage negotiation team vacancy and request submission of a candidate's criteria. (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 46.2.4)
- 4.1.2 The following minimum qualifications shall be met:
1. Candidates must have completed three (3) years as a sworn police officer prior to an assignment to hostage negotiations.
  2. Candidates must submit a resume to the Hostage Negotiations Unit Commander or designee.
  3. Candidates must complete an oral interview process. The oral interview board shall be comprised of the SOS Commander, Hostage Negotiation Commander and at least one additional negotiator. The structure and content of the interview questions and process shall be consistent for all candidates and the content shall be determined by the Hostage Negotiation Commander or designee.
  4. Candidates must complete a psychological screening examination.
  5. Candidates' performance evaluations shall be reviewed and must average "effective" for the last three years prior to an assignment to hostage negotiations.
  6. Candidates' disciplinary files shall be reviewed from the Office of Professional Standards. Any candidate that has a sustained complaint of a serious nature or a pattern of disciplinary issues shall be excluded from consideration.
- 4.2 Training
- 4.2.1 All hostage negotiators must satisfactorily complete the GPSTC approved basic hostage negotiation class within 6 months of being appointed to the hostage negotiation team to remain on the team. This training must be successfully completed prior to handling a call for service.
- 4.2.2 Hostage Negotiators shall participate in advanced, refresher or update training as necessary or as directed by the SOS Commander or Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander. (CALEA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 4.2.2b)



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#### 4.3 Functions and Responsibilities

- 4.3.1 The Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander or designee shall respond to all requests for assistance. On arrival, the unit commander is responsible for the overall unit function and assignment of negotiators. This includes supervising each of the negotiator roles and ensuring the proper function of the hostage negotiation command vehicle. It is the responsibility of the unit commander to maintain continual contact with the SOS Commander or designee so that he or she has the latest information about a situation.
- 4.3.2 Hostage negotiation supervisors shall act as the unit commander in his or her absence. Otherwise, supervisors may be utilized in one of the four negotiators' roles.
- 4.3.3 Hostage negotiators are expected to fulfill one of the four primary negotiator roles. They shall be assigned to one of the four roles upon arrival at the scene by the Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander. When four negotiators are not on scene, members of the unit may be asked to take on more than one role. This is never considered ideal, and two negotiators are needed at a minimum.
- 4.3.4 Role of Primary Negotiator
1. Responsible for making and maintaining contact with the hostage taker or person in crises;
  2. Attempts to negotiate a safe resolution for all parties to the crisis; and,
  3. Attempts to gather as much intelligence on the suspect(s) and situation as possible.
- 4.3.5 Role of Secondary Negotiator (Coach)
1. Responsible for assisting the primary negotiator with his duties;
  2. Helps provide negotiating ideas to the primary negotiator;
  3. Keeps notes for the primary negotiator; and,
  4. Disseminates intelligence gathered to the unit commander.
- 4.3.6 Roll of Scribe
1. Responsible for keeping a written record of the call. This record shall include a detailed timeline of the events as they occur;
  2. Completes the after-action report on the call using the approved hostage negotiation after action form (APD Form 394); and,
  3. Sends all completed documentation to the Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander.
- 4.3.7 Roll of Intelligence Gatherer
1. Gathers all information pertinent to the call;
  2. Interviews the first officer to arrive and any witnesses;



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3. Interviews any relatives of the hostage taker or person in crisis;
4. Obtains all information about the hostages;
5. Responsible for keeping the unit commander informed of all pertinent information related to the call; and,
6. Provides intelligence information needed to the scribe for inclusion in the after-action report.

#### 4.4. Hostage Negotiation Command Vehicle

- 4.1 The Hostage Negotiation Command Vehicle (HNCV) shall respond to all call-outs where negotiations have been requested unless otherwise directed by the SOS Commander or Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander.
- 4.2 A specially trained hostage negotiator shall be responsible for operating the HNCV. It is the responsibility of the Hostage Negotiation Unit Commander to ensure that someone is available and properly trained to operate the HNCV.
- 4.3 The SOS Commander shall designate a person to be responsible for the condition and maintenance of the HNCV. A city-approved auto shop specializing in the maintenance of oversized vehicles shall perform the required maintenance and repairs to the HNCV. The SOS commander or his or her designee shall ensure that the vehicle is thoroughly cleaned after each deployment.
- 4.4 The HNCV shall, at all times, have the hostage negotiation throw phone, four deployable video cameras, laptop to control the camera system, laptop with internet capability and two flat screen televisions for camera viewing purposes.
- 4.5 Access to the HNCV shall be highly restricted by the SOS Commander. Generally, only the CSD Commander, SOS Commander, SWAT Commander and members of the hostage negotiation unit shall be granted access to the vehicle. The SOS Commander may provide access to other individuals at his or her discretion.

#### 5. DEFINITIONS

N/A

#### 6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.4042 "Hostage Negotiators," effective November 1, 2015

#### 7. REFERENCES

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Standard 33.6.1 & 46.2.4.

#### 8. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

No changes to policy during review.