

Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department

R.L. (Butch) Conway, Sheriff



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TO: Engage Gwinnett
Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group

FROM: Mike Boyd

SUBJECT: Sheriff's Department SWAT Team Information

DATE: January 11, 2010

Introduction

The Engage Gwinnett Law Enforcement and Judiciary Work Group has requested information regarding the Sheriff's Department tactical SWAT Team. This report will provide details regarding the purpose and function of the team, along with budget, equipment and resource information.

SWAT Team

The current Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department SWAT Team was created 13 years ago. The team exists to support the functions of the Sheriff's Department in high-risk situations where conventional responses by Deputies are deemed too hazardous. The Team's core function is the service of "high risk" search and arrest warrants. The Team operates under NOTA (National Tactical Officers Association) requirements and guidelines.

The Team responded to 32 call-outs in 2009. Over the past several years, the Team has consistently responded to 30-40 call-outs each year. These service calls were initiated from units within the Sheriff's Department such as Fugitive, Family Violence, Field Operations, and Civil. In addition, the Team responded to calls for assistance from local municipalities, state and federal agencies.

The Team has 56 members to include tactical, perimeter, intelligence and support personnel. The Team is commanded by Captain R. Rollison. The Team does not have any "full time" members and several members have to respond to call outs in their personal vehicles as they are assigned to Divisions/Units where department vehicles are not issued to Deputies. Each Team member is an employee of the Sheriff's Department working in various Divisions/Units within the organization and SWAT participation is voluntary. Team members are required to meet high standards of physical readiness, tactical skills and training.

Budget

In 2009, \$ 51,924.00 was dedicated to the SWAT team as part of the department operating budget. Those budgeted monies included:

Ammunition _____	\$ 30,404
Simunition Training _____	\$ 6,520
General Operating Supplies _____	\$ 10,000
(2) Ballistic Blankets _____	\$ 5,000

Any expenses that may include call-out overtime or training costs due to the activities of the SWAT Team are absorbed as part of the regular departmental operations budget. Whenever possible, overtime costs are minimized by flexing the hours worked, and Team training is scheduled a year in advance to allow for work schedule adjustments and alleviate shift replacement overtime.

Equipment

Virtually all equipment needs for the SWAT Team have been funded through Drug Asset Forfeiture Funds and surplus military equipment acquisitions through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. These purchases with Drug Asset Forfeiture Funds include weapons, personal protection gear and specialized vehicles.

Response Capabilities

The Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department has the capability to respond or react to most situations that call for a tactical response. However, the Team does not have EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) capabilities nor does it have robotic response.

The Gwinnett County Police Department and the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department operate the only two fully functional SWAT Teams in Gwinnett County. Some Gwinnett municipalities have tactical response units to assist their patrol functions, but are not classified as fully functional SWAT Teams. Gwinnett County has an estimated population of almost 800,000 people and operates the largest school system in the state. The availability of two functional SWAT Teams in a county the size of Gwinnett is not unusual in public safety. Every time one of the SWAT Teams is activated, sometimes for hours, the other team serves as a response backup if another incident occurs. On several occasions, both Teams have been activated together to serve warrants and effect arrests in large scale multi-agency enforcement sweeps such as the recent operation where numerous arrests and search warrants were executed on Mexican drug cartels. In these large scale operations, the size of the operation required more than the resources of a single SWAT Team. In the event of a natural or man-made disaster, two teams would be essential and is part of the County Emergency operations plan.

In addition, utilization of the Sheriff's Department SWAT Team keeps GCPD officers on the street. If the Sheriff's Department did not have SWAT capabilities, the GCPD Team would have to be called on each "high risk" warrant service currently handled by the GCSO, taking officers off the streets answering calls and providing patrol services.