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SPECIALIZED UNITS

CHAPTER 16

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: SPECIALIZED UNITS

INTRODUCTION

Almost every law enforcement agency will include the various divisions, squads, or units that have been discussed to this point. Due to the requirements placed on a normal department—those of protecting the citizens of the community—there will always be a need for patrol officers, traffic investigators, and detectives.

A law enforcement agency might also have many specialized units in addition to the basic units listed above. This normally depends on the size of the department and the requirements placed upon the department by the community through the controlling government entity. If, for example, the community feels that there is a need for a specialized unit, such as a D.A.R.E. unit, the request may be taken before the mayor, commission, or council. If appropriate funds can be allocated, the unit will be funded, manpower will be assigned, and the squad will be mobilized.

Often, the law enforcement agency will see a need for a specialized unit and will approach the governing body with a presentation and a request for funding. The funding for the unit might be accomplished from within, or appropriate money may be available through a federal grant. Many specialized units in existence today were originally funded through a grant, proved their usefulness, and had funding continued by the agency's governing body after the grant money ran out.

INDIVIDUAL UNITS

SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS (SWAT)

A Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team is utilized for high-risk operations that require additional tactical training and firepower. The SWAT team is called to assist or take control of situations such as high-risk warrant service; narcotics raids where suspects are known to carry weapons or there is a high probability of weapons availability; and hostage and barricaded suspect situations.

SWAT members are required to participate in additional training, sometimes in excess of 250 hours per year. They must become proficient in the specialized tactics and additional weapons utilized by this team. They are also involved in the training of other officers in areas such as officer survival, building searches, and high-risk traffic stops.

GANG UNIT

The gang unit is responsible for cataloging and tracking known gang members, and is a valuable source of information for patrol officers and detectives in conducting investigations and solving gang-related crimes. This unit also meets with units from other agencies in order to discuss individuals and exchange information, which is important due to the mobility of gang members and their transient nature. This tracking and exchange of information has proven to be an effective tool in the apprehension and arrest of gang member offenders.

NARCOTICS UNIT

The narcotics unit is responsible for the detection, targeting, and eradication of drug distributors from the community, and assists patrol officers as needed in user-level drug cases. They also provide assistance for other officers in areas of specific expertise, such as the preparation and writing of search warrants, conducting controlled drug buys with confidential informants, and formulating viable raid plans.

The narcotics unit also works closely with Community-Oriented Policing (COP) officers. COP officers, working closely with the community, gather information at the neighborhood level and then pass this intelligence on to the narcotics officers. The narcotics officers may also provide additional equipment and technical devices to assist the COP officers in intelligence gathering.

Today's narcotics units have the additional responsibility of closing down and assisting in the cleanup of methamphetamine labs. Close coordination with other government agencies is needed when dealing with this new phenomenon.

The narcotics unit also works with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to eliminate high-level drug trafficking that may cross departmental or even state lines.

VICE SQUAD

The vice squad is responsible for detection and apprehension of all violators of vice-related ordinances. This includes prostitution, gambling, sexually oriented businesses, pornography, tavern and bar checks, and licensing of and work cards for the above businesses and their employees.

The squad investigates prostitution and escort operations and runs periodic stings that focus on arresting the individuals who patronize prostitution. Gambling enforcement focuses on such cases reported to the unit by the citizens of the community.

Sexually oriented businesses are closely monitored and inspected to ensure that the various businesses are in compliance with state laws and county ordinances. The main focus with regard to pornography is stopping distribution, although possession may be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

The inspection of taverns and bars can be either overt or covert to ensure that the businesses are in compliance with laws and ordinances. Additionally, the vice squad is utilized to review and make recommendations with regard to licensing requests that come before the commission.

K-9 UNIT

A K-9 unit is made up of teams composed of a trained police dog and the dog's officer/handler. The dog normally lives at the home of its handler and becomes a member of the family. Most police dogs are trained as command dogs, reacting to the commands of the handler. The K-9 units normally work at night but are available for callout at any time.

The teams are used in support of the patrol function and work in conjunction with patrol units. The training of the dogs allows them to be used to assist in a number of other functions, including drug operations, bomb threats, and search-and-rescue operations.

The dog and his handler put in many additional hours of training in order to be able to work as a team. The police dog can be a valuable tool in apprehending dangerous suspects, clearing buildings, or controlling crowds.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING UNIT (COP)

Community-Oriented Policing (COP) units have numerous functions and assignments. The concept behind COP is to get the officer into the neighborhood and working with the citizens, but agencies are still exploring the best uses for these officers.

Most agencies use the COP officers as neighborhood liaisons. An officer is assigned a specific geographic area and responds to the needs of the citizens. He/she becomes the person to whom the neighbors turn in order to solve neighborhood problems—anything from a barking dog to a parking problem, from a party house to a meth lab in the neighborhood. He/she is not meant to be the only solution, but is the person who either has or knows how to contact the needed resources.

COP units also become involved with youth groups and schools as they become closer to the community. They meet with area community councils, along with other organizations that have a stake in the community.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

The search and rescue unit is a group of individuals, composed mostly of volunteers, who provide skilled technical abilities in search and rescue operations. Each of these individuals is highly skilled in a specific area, such as mountain rescue, and volunteers this ability in order to assist the community. The unit as a whole is skilled in mountain rescue, water rescue, the rescue of avalanche victims, and numerous other operations. They are also available to assist officers in various searches, whether for a lost child, a downed aircraft, a disoriented person, or evidence and contraband.

MAJOR ACCIDENT TEAM

The Major Accident Team is composed of experienced accident investigators equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The unit is called on to investigate serious-injury and fatal traffic accidents, and using a system of diagramming known as the Nikon Total Station/AIMS system. This team is also used to diagram major crime scenes such as homicides.

COURT SERVICES

Court Services has numerous missions within the judicial system, including provision of security for the various courthouses and courtrooms within its jurisdiction. Each individual bailiff assigned to a courtroom, assisting the judge by starting each session, maintaining order, and helping with the needs of the jury members.

Additional responsibilities include the transport of prisoners to and from the courts, medical facilities, and other offices. Court Services is also required to provide service of civil papers, such as protective orders, judgments, garnishments, summons, subpoenas, and writs.

TRAINING UNIT

The training unit is responsible for the training of all officers in the department. This unit schedules all training required by the department and supervises the elective training that a division or unit requires. This supervision by the training unit is to ensure that all officers in the department meet

the training standard set by state law. Training is designed to provide officers with the latest information in areas such as officer survival, emergency vehicle operations, firearms, and first aid.

CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT (CIU)

The Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIU) acts as a repository and clearinghouse for information that assists with investigations, as well as numerous requests from outside agencies. The Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping capabilities of the unit allow division commanders to look at past crime trends and deploy manpower as needed. The unit can also produce photo spreads and link charts, and tracks pawn shop transactions. Other services include:

- Suspect development by physical description or vehicle description.
- Case matching by physical description.
- Pattern analysis and trend identification.
- Statistical analysis of crime trends.

The functions of these products are both reactive and proactive. Many of the services provided are helpful to the field officer, as well as the detective doing follow-up investigation. The CIU also has contacts with many intelligence gathering agencies and organizations, and access to numerous databases.

CHAPLAIN CORPS

The Chaplain Corps is composed of religious ministers from various churches. They are on call to assist officers and provide spiritual inspiration and guidance in times of need. The chaplains are used to provide notification to families of an officer's death or serious injury, as well as notification of the next of kin of a serious injury or death arising from a case investigated by the office, or at the request of another agency.

Chaplains also provide grief and other counseling for both active and retired office members and assistance at disaster scenes or emergencies.

RESERVE CORPS

The Reserve Corps is composed of volunteer civilians who donate time to assist law enforcement as needed. These individuals must complete a certified course of instruction through POST, at which time they are recognized as Special Function Reserve officers and are able to act as law enforcement officers under limited circumstances.

These volunteers perform numerous duties, including working for patrol divisions and responding to calls, helping with parades and other community events, providing roadblocks and other assistance for critical incidents, and assisting the search and rescue unit.

SUMMARY

The units discussed above are some of the more prominent squads, but there are many other units not included. Some of these specialized units may, in fact, consist of just one officer. Each of these units is important to a department and serves a specific purpose. Most departments today could not provide the public with required services without utilizing some specialized units.