

San Antonio Police Department Coordinated Response Protocol

2022 Winner General Officer Safety

During the latter half of 2020, with the changes in life brought on by the COVID Pandemic, the San Antonio (TX) Police Department (SAPD) made use of the time created by those changes and began an in-house training program by using its highly trained Special Operations Unit (SOU), SWAT Operators. The SOU members had more time as the pace of San Antonio changed. The normal flood of tourists, conventions and annual festivities that drew upon the SOU were in far fewer numbers than before, giving the department time to utilize the operator's expertise to create an on-duty training regimen. This initiative was prompted by an analysis of their officers' tactical decision making and finding that additional training would be beneficial.

It took time to prepare the training and to get buy in from the Patrol Supervisors and officers. The department worked with the Police Officers Association and addressed concerns about the Collective Bargaining Agreement and met with the Patrol Supervisors to get their input on not only implementation of the new training regimen but on the training subject matter.

In January 2021, the training schedule had been established and the SOU members began training groups of officers at their station houses in four-hour blocks. While this idea was met with some skepticism, it was soon quickly accepted as the members of the highly regarded SOU trained officers on a series of important tactical concerns. Officers were given training on tactics, de-escalation, "Stop the Bleed", and Strategic Disengagement. The training had the added benefit of officers in the same "Section" or "Detail" working with each other and their supervisors. This in-house training helped to enhance familiarity and cohesion within each of the six patrol districts' details. This unique approach to on-duty training utilizing the SOU staff, rather than the academy staff allowed for the SAPD to train over 4,000 of its members for a total of 11,434 hours of training.

While conducting this additional training, the SAPD noticed that in the first half of 2021, several of its Officer Involved Shootings (OIS) involved multiple officers, firing multiple rounds at a rate higher than in years past. The rate was alarming, more than doubling from the annual total of rounds fired in all of 2019. Recognizing the inherent liability and wanting to reduce the number of this multiple discharge OIS, the SAPD made use of its Body Worn Camera (BWC) program to review and analyze the responses and tactics used by officers involved in several recent shootings.

This examination of how these incidents unfolded and the tactics used by the responding officers led to a new **Coordinated Response Protocol (CRP)**, which trains officers to tactically coordinate their response and to come up with a game plan prior to addressing calls for service that have a potential for violence. In their study of the OIS data, where there were multiple (3+) officers on the scene, revealed that in 2019, SAPD officers fired a total of 127 rounds in a

series of incidents, but by 2021, that number had grown to 265 rounds, but in a fewer number of incidents.

It was clear that changes needed to be made and better coordination amongst responding officers was key among them. As part of this new and ongoing in-house training regimen the SAPD began training on a new method to better coordinate actions, establish clear lines of authority and work to reduce the number of officers discharging their weapons. CRP called for a coordinated proportional response that was directed.

Since this program has been introduced, the **number of officers discharging their weapons in any situation requiring deadly force has dropped significantly and the number of rounds fired has also decreased sharply**. The SAPD, has created an intense PowerPoint, utilizing footage from its own officers Body Worn Cameras (BWC)to get them to see the benefits of better coordination and slowing response to ensure officers can arrive, formulate a plan, and tactically address the potentially dangerous situation.