

# OpTac International News Bulletin

## Hostage Rescue

The taking of hostages has become a common occurrence throughout the world. Motives include terrorism, domestic violence, as a means of escape, and ransom. These complex situations require intense preparation and targeted response to increase the likelihood of consistently successful outcomes. There are four interconnected factors that determine the outcome of all hostage rescue operations: organizational conditions, leader skills, team performance, and suspect actions. What varies is the degree of interconnectedness and the corresponding casualty for achieving a successful outcome.

Understandably, the rescue team and all of its individual components must be able to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. Team performance is affected by leader skills, organizational conditions (pre-incident and incident conditions), and both the psychological and physical fortitude of team members in carrying out assigned tasks. Thus, the decisions made by leaders and team members alike, affect their performance, thereby playing a critical role in determining the outcome of an incident. Additionally, commanders must recognize that they may only be able to react to and restrict some suspect actions. For example, preventing suspects, especially terrorists, from killing hostages. In this case, the suspects changed the tactical mission from hostage rescue to casualty reduction.

Therefore, while negotiations are the preferred method of resolving these violent incidents, they must not be utilized at the exclusion of taking decisive tactical action when a window of opportunity arises. Negotiations can also be a tool for gathering vital intelligence, something that plays a crucial role in incident outcomes. As such, commanders must be adept at implementing optimal strategies for each specific incident---this can only occur through adaptive expertise and predictive analytics gained with experience.

Further information will be presented in future News Bulletins.