

OpTac International News Bulletin

Importance of Proper Training and Good Decisions

OpTac International, Inc. provides professional program and consultation services to law enforcement, military, and counter-terrorist personnel around the world. Recent events in New Mexico demonstrate the importance of a comprehensive training regimen for law enforcement officers, and its potential effect on decision-making and operational performance. The following tragic events involving the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) reflect the consequences of inadequate training and poor decisions.

The intent of this edition of our **News Bulletin** is *not* to single-out the APD for criticism, but to inform our readers of the following events in order to help prevent their re-occurrence.



On January 12, 2015, two officers from the APD were charged with the murder of a mentally ill homeless man who was armed with two knives, while he attempted to surrender. The prosecutor will later decide whether to proceed with first or second degree murder charges.

Dealing with mentally ill individuals presents unique challenges that require specialized training in order to effectively address each person's illness while ensuring officer safety. In 2013, an APD police detective was held personally liable for \$2.7 million in the shooting death of an Iraqi war veteran. The APD was also found liable for \$7.6 million. The basis of the award was the officer's individual actions and the department's failure to train its officers for crisis situations. The war veteran, who had been suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), was shot by the detective while he held a gun to his own head and threatened suicide. A settlement of almost \$8 million was later reached between the involved parties.

On January 9, 2015, an 18-year veteran APD narcotics lieutenant shot another undercover detective during the arrest of a suspect holding \$60 worth of methamphetamines. Specific details regarding the incident have not been released, pending an interview with the lieutenant. The *Albuquerque Journal* reported that the APD Special Investigations Division Commander commented that "he didn't know what the threat was....and didn't know why [the lieutenant] ended up firing on the officer instead of somehow diminishing, or trying to diminish the perceived threat."

Proper training through which good decision-making skills are developed is essential to increase the likelihood of desired outcomes during stressful situations. Hoping that these types of events do not occur, without taking preventative measures, only increases a law enforcement agency's liability and unnecessary loss of life.