

LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

Review of Active Shooter Training



Conducted by the

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW OF ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING

I. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC or Commission), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reviewed the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's or Department's) training regarding the law enforcement response to active shooter incidents and compared that training to the content of equivalent training programs in other large agencies across the country.

In order to conduct this review, the OIG evaluated the training materials of the LAPD and compared them to those of six other large law enforcement agencies – the New York Police Department, the Chicago Police Department, the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, the San Diego Police Department, the Dallas Police Department, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The OIG's review of these materials was supplemented in some instances by follow-up discussions with training staff from those agencies.

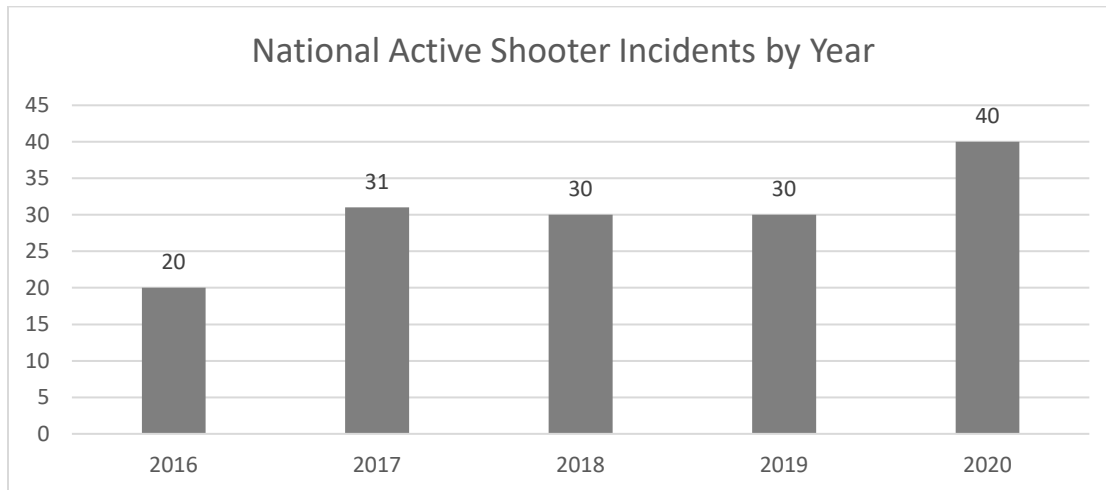
Overall, the OIG found that each the agencies surveyed provides training that follows a similar framework for the response to an active shooter incident. Current LAPD training was found to address all standard components of the equivalent training programs used by the other agencies, and it was found to exceed the overall standard established by those programs in several respects.

II. BACKGROUND

After the tragic shooting that occurred in 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, law enforcement agencies throughout the United States began re-thinking their response to active shooter incidents. The previous practice of containing the incident while awaiting the arrival of specialist resources was found to potentially expose additional victims to violence. As such, a new practice of having the first officers who arrive on the scene rapidly deploy in order to stop the ongoing threat quickly became the standard across the country.

As shown below, national active shooter incident data reveals an upward trend since the year 2016. The number of active shooter incidents identified in 2020 represents a 33% increase from the prior year, and a 100% increase from 2016.¹

¹ "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2020," Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021.



III. COMPARISON OF LAPD TRAINING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In its comparative review, the OIG examined the following components of each subject agency's active shooter training program: active shooter definitions, initial response protocols, use of force policy, and medical care and victim rescue.

The LAPD's training for responding to an incident involving an active shooter is primarily encompassed in the following documents, as well as in the materials that are used by the LAPD for classroom and practical instruction of Multi-Assault Counter Terrorism Action Capabilities (MACTAC) training:

- Training Bulletin: Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment (IARD) Tactics Part I – Immediate Action (2003). IARD is a concept defined as, "The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to ongoing, life threatening situations where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury to innocent persons." This bulletin describes steps that initial responding officers should take prior to the arrival of a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) unit, including preliminary assessment of the incident, command and control, the creation of contact and rescue teams, and search tactics.
- Training Bulletin: Immediate Action Rapid Deployment Tactics Part II – Rapid Deployment. This bulletin provides additional tactical instruction regarding entering and clearing rooms.
- Use of Force - Tactics Directive: Multi-Assault Counter Terrorism Action Capabilities (MACTAC) (2016). MACTAC includes training on IARD tactics as well as the provision of aid to, and rescue of, injured victims at mass casualty incidents, which are relevant to responses to active shooter incidents.

A. Definitions

The LAPD defines an active shooter as “[a]n armed person who has used deadly force or is inflicting serious bodily injury and **aggressively** continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional victims.” (*Emphasis in original.*)

The definitions provided in the training materials of other agencies surveyed all included the following components:

- 1) The assailant(s) involved in the incident is armed with a weapon;
- 2) The assailant(s) has inflicted serious bodily injury or death to one or more victims, or is attempting to do so;
- 3) The assailant(s) has ready access to additional potential victims; and,
- 4) The incident is ongoing.

Of the training materials surveyed by the OIG, none limited the definition of an active shooter incident to a particular type of location, thereby acknowledging the possibility that such an event might occur not only in a confined environment such as a building but also in an outdoor or open-air setting. Further, although the generic term, “active shooter” was used in many of the training materials, all definitions reviewed either implicitly or explicitly included situations in which the suspect employs a deadly weapon other than a firearm.

Based on the OIG’s survey of other agencies, the LAPD’s training employs a definition of an active shooter event that is consistent with national standards.

B. Initial Response Protocols – Assessment

The LAPD’s IARD Training Bulletin instructs officers that, upon arrival at an incident, information regarding the nature of the event “may be sparse and fragmented.” Potential sources of intelligence that officers may look to for indications of what is taking place include information obtained “on the run” from “fleeing witnesses,” observations of “spent casings on the ground,” and “damage from fired rounds,” as well as “information reported by Communications Division.” Furthermore, officers are advised that an incident may go in and out of “active shooter” status, such as transitioning from an active shooter situation to a barricaded suspect scenario, and that IARD tactics do not limit officers’ ability to employ conventional tactics when appropriate.

The LAPD’s MACTAC training breaks down essential initial actions into “Four A’s,” the first of which is the *Assessment* of the situation. Specifically, officers are instructed as follows:

Upon arrival to a MACTAC incident, initial responders must rapidly assess the situation to determine the nature of the threat and what measures should be taken in an attempt to stop or control the life-threatening actions related to the incident.

Officers are additionally instructed that, while moving to stop the deadly behavior, they should attempt to gather information regarding the number of suspects involved, the suspect’s location, the suspect’s clothing description, the type(s) of weapons being used, and whether the suspect has access to additional victims.

As it has been described here, the LAPD's training meets or exceeds the standard set by the other agencies that were surveyed by the OIG. The majority of the training materials reviewed from other agencies instruct officers to make a preliminary determination as to whether the situation warrants the employment of active shooter tactics and to quickly gather information to that end, as well as to continue the assessment process as the incident progresses. The LAPD's training materials provide a favorable level of instruction regarding the steps officers may take to make that initial assessment while maintaining an emphasis on the need to avoid delays in mounting an IARD response, when such a response appears warranted. The LAPD's training also clearly establishes that assessment is an ongoing process and that officers may modify their tactical response as additional information regarding the nature of the event is received, or as the nature of the incident changes.

C. Initial Response Protocols – Communications

The second of the "Four A's" established by LAPD's MACTAC training is a requirement to *Announce*, which is characterized as follows:

After the initial assessment, initial responders should announce what they are seeing to Communications Division and responding personnel. The radio broadcast should include a "help call" and the nature of the incident, as well as what resources are needed, including the anticipated number of personnel and any other pertinent information.

Officers are further instructed to gather and communicate additional information as their response progresses, such as indicators of the suspect's location and the presence/location of improvised explosive devices.

The LAPD's IARD Training Bulletin also references the requirement to communicate an overview of the incident as the initial officers are deploying to stop the suspect's behavior, as well as the responsibility for subsequently-arriving officers to facilitate continued information gathering and dissemination once the initial Contact Team² has deployed.

All of the training programs surveyed by the OIG for this report included a communications component. The LAPD's training as it relates to communications during active shooter events meets the overall standard established by the other agencies' training in the aggregate and provides a level of detail as to how communications can be effectively accomplished that is consistent with the more comprehensive materials out of all those that the OIG reviewed.

D. Initial Response Protocols – Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment

The tactic of rapidly deploying officers with the objective of making contact with the suspect and stopping the ongoing deadly threat is the defining characteristic of contemporary active shooter training. The concept underlying this tactical approach is that by stopping the suspect's deadly actions at the earliest opportunity, officers can minimize the loss of life that would otherwise result if the suspect was allowed to continue their attack.

² The role and function of a Contact Team is described below, in III D.

The LAPD's IARD Training Bulletin defines Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment as follows:

The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to ongoing, life threatening situations where delayed deployment could otherwise result in death or serious bodily injury to innocent persons.

Officers are trained to assemble and then deploy in a "Contact Team." The IARD Training Bulletin defines the "primary mission" of a Contact Team as being "to stop the assailant's deadly behavior and prevent escape." The Contact Team's "secondary mission" is defined as being "to direct victims out of the crisis site through secured areas to the staging location." Additional priorities for the team include communicating its progress to other officers and communicating the locations of injured victims to facilitate their rescue. A Contact Team ideally consists of four officers; however, the IARD Training Bulletin instructs that under exigent circumstances it may be necessary to deploy a team with fewer members. The training includes instruction on the formation and movements that team members should employ as they carry out their mission, as well as on the responsibilities of each team member and methods for accomplishing effective communication among team members.

In relevant part, the LAPD's MACTAC training addresses the rapid deployment of officers to stop an ongoing threat with the third and fourth of the "Four A's" – *Assemble* and *Act*:

Assemble – Once the situation has been initially assessed and properly announced, personnel must rapidly assemble in a safe location, configure into contact teams and respond.

Act – The teams must respond in a coordinated effort using tactical concepts, such as bounding overwatch, travelling, and Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment as directed by their team leader.

MACTAC training includes instruction on Contact Team movements in scenarios where the suspect's location is known as well as in scenarios when the suspect's location is unknown; on entries and searches of rooms; and on the coordinated deployment of multiple Contact Teams.

The LAPD's training, instructing officers to form into small teams and rapidly deploy to stop the threat in an active shooter situation, is consistent in concept with the training provided by the other agencies that were surveyed for this report. Based on the OIG's review of the other agencies' materials, the LAPD's training materials provide a favorable level of detail regarding Contact Teams' maneuvers and the roles of individual team members, as well as regarding protocols for communications between team members and the objectives and priorities of Contact Teams as they carry out their missions.

E. Use of Force Policy

The LAPD's IARD Training Bulletin³ includes the following advisement regarding the use of deadly force (*Emphasis in original*):

³ The IARD Training Bulletin was produced in 2003. The LAPD's use of force policy has been updated substantially since that time.

*When a suspect's actions present an **Immediate Defense Of Life (IDOL)** situation to an officer or other persons, it may be appropriate to use lethal force. Officers shall not fire under conditions that would subject bystanders or hostages to death or possible injury, except to preserve life or prevent serious bodily injury.*

The LAPD's MACTAC training includes instruction on all components of the current LAPD use of force policy, including the standards regulating the use of deadly force, the requirement that force be proportional, and the duty of officers to intercede when they observe another officer use force that is clearly unnecessary. The training also reminds officers that the Department's use of force policy does not change in an active shooter incident. Additionally, MACTAC training includes instruction on de-escalation, command and control, and procedural justice.

To the extent the training materials from other agencies reference use of force policies, they are consistent in instructing that each agency's policies apply during active shooter scenarios. Although the LAPD's IARD Training Bulletin makes only a brief reference to use of force standards and does not reflect current LAPD use of force policy, MACTAC training does provide comprehensive reinforcement of the current policy as well as instruction on the related areas of de-escalation, command and control, and procedural justice. In these regards, the LAPD's training exceeds the standard set by the training materials of the other agencies, in the aggregate, which the OIG reviewed for this report.

F. Medical Care and Victim Rescue

The LAPD's IARD Training Bulletin provides instruction on the operation of "Rescue Teams" during an active shooter event. According to this training, the "priorities for a Rescue Team are to locate, recover, and facilitate the evacuation process of victims to safe areas or to medical personnel for treatment." Guidance is provided for the movement of the Rescue Team into areas where injured victims may be located, and it is noted that the team should transition its role to that of a Contact Team in the event it encounters the suspect. Additionally, the IARD Training Bulletin instructs that Rescue Team officers may provide fields of cover to establish a "safe zone" when multiple victims are encountered in close proximity to each other, and it provides guidance for techniques that can be used to carry non-ambulatory victims who are in need of rescue.

The IARD Training Bulletin also articulates a system of "zones of diminishing threat" ranging from a "Hot Area" (an unsecured area where the suspect may be present) to a "Cold Area" (an area where there is little or no threat from the suspect). These zones are used as a basis for the movement of victims to areas of relative safety as well as for the identification of areas into which medical personnel may enter to assess and treat victims.

The LAPD's MACTAC training substantially expands upon the IARD training relative to medical care and the rescue of victims. This training includes the provision of emergency aid to victims, including techniques such as the application of tourniquets and the "packing" of bleeding injuries with gauze. The training also provides more detailed instruction on facilitating access to victims by medical personnel, as well as on techniques for evacuating injured victims to areas of relative safety.

Based on the OIG's review of other agencies' training materials, the zone system, the training on providing emergency aid and conducting victim rescue, and the training on facilitating entry by medical personnel into defined areas during an ongoing incident are consistent features of active shooter training on the national level. The LAPD's training includes all of these components, and the level of detail provided in the LAPD's training exceeds that of the other agencies, in the aggregate.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The LAPD's training on active shooter incidents, as compared to that of other large law enforcement agencies around the country, includes all components of the training model that has become standard nationwide for responding to such events. In several respects, including incident assessment, Contact Team tactics, use of force policy instruction, and instruction in the provision of emergency medical aid, the LAPD's training exceeds the aggregate standard of other agencies' training materials.

Although the overall findings of the OIG's review with respect to the Department's training were positive, it was noted that the Department's current training bulletins regarding Immediate Action/Rapid Deployment, Parts I and II, date back to 2003, and that the Part I document includes outdated information relative to the use of force policy. The OIG recommends that the Department review and update the Part I Training Bulletin to ensure that it reflects current use of force policy. Furthermore, given the age of the IARD Training Bulletins and the subsequent development of MACTAC training, portions of which are directly relevant to IARD tactics, the OIG recommends that the Department comprehensively review and update the bulletins to ensure they reflect current Department IARD tactical training. The Department has informed the OIG that the 2003 IARD Training Bulletins and the 2016 MACTAC Tactics Directive are currently being revised and updated.