

Who We Were, Who We Are Now, and How we Got There: The TLO Program

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Dr. Reyes served as a special agent supervisor, working with governmental agencies in covert operations in the fields of narcotics and intelligence throughout the world. He created and manages the Emotional Health Research (EHR) Consultancy, and is currently associated with Lukin and Associates, an international consulting and training consortium specializing in terrorism, security, and criminal justice related issues, a POST certified instructor to the State of California/Department of Justice Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, and a Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) Training Course facilitator. Dr. Reyes describes the event that precipitated a career in behavioral studies: “Due to the stress related events during my covert government career, I found it necessary to retire at an early age for my own mental and emotional health . I believe we all have a purpose in this life; my purpose is to help others by providing education in the field of stress behavior management.”

It would seem we tend to exploit negativism before exploring the positive changes that are occurring, or have been implemented since the terrorist attack of 9/11. Why do we not instead look for ways to contribute our talents and education in the behavioral realm to assist those dedicated individuals who contribute endless hours to safeguard our country from militant terrorists? I refer to first responders to traumatic events and most certainly the brave men and women who are being deployed on a daily basis to fight these elements in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A faith belief system should not be looked upon as a meaningless attribute, but rather as a moral standard of ethical values. A convoluted belief in ideological dogma is often more dangerous to mankind than the overt acts of militant Islamic terrorists. Let us analyze our own behavior and be willing to contribute our time and energies for the good of all humanity.

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 demonstrated the necessity of a comprehensive law enforcement strategy to assist in the national effort to prevent further acts of terrorism against the people of the United States. It is essential for components of this law enforcement strategy to address the need to improve the communication, cooperation and coordination between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

As part of such a comprehensive national law enforcement strategy, and an effort to enhance the desired collaboration between law enforcement agencies, California’s Office of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, and the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), developed the concept of a “Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO).”

Four TLO California-specific pilot programs were conducted in different regional areas of the state in 2002. Slightly less than 200 officers received TLO training and became part of the

California Program. They joined about 50 officers who had been acting in the role of a TLO, but without the benefit of TLO training. We have now trained over 400 personnel in the program.

The Concept

The Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) is designed to be a nationally interconnected program of designated law enforcement officers, firefighters, military, and other first responders that attend an approved and accredited course of instruction. This shared learning experience prepares the TLOs to fill a specific role within their organization as a link or “liaison.”

As envisioned, the TLO will not only liaison between various inter-departmental entities, but also with other law enforcement agencies. Last, but certainly not least, the TLO will liaison with identified stakeholders and all other elements of the community. The TLO is a collaborator, a coordinator, and a conduit, an instructor and facilitator, a person with the answers to questions concerning terrorism and the resources to retrieve those answers if not immediately known.

The TLO concept is not really different or new. It is rooted in the philosophy of community policing, fundamentals of crime prevention, theories of modern communications, models for organizational development, and the basis of good “old-fashioned police work.” The TLO is merely an effort to formalize, organize, and properly prepare officers to perform these duties.

TLO Course Curriculum Design

The TLO Course Curriculum was developed to support the anticipated duties and responsibilities of the TLO. POST considered in detail the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform these functions. Consequently, the proposed course curriculum was designed to include necessary training components to address the identified KSAs, including:

- The Terrorist Threat
- Force Protection
- Community Information Networking
- Fourth Generation Warfare
- International Terrorism
- Militant Islam
- Informational Terrorism
- Domestic Terrorism
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Cross Cultural Communications
- Related Agency Roles and Responsibilities
- The National Emergency Management System
- Connecting and Working with the Private Sector
- The Role of the Office of Domestic Preparedness
- Developing Community Anti-Terrorism Awareness Progress

The TLO Course curriculum is designed to be delivered in four eight-hour days (32 hours). It allows for some optional curriculum on the fifth day to provide an additional one-half day or one full day of instruction, lengthening the class to 36 or 40 hours.

TLO Selection Criteria

The selection of officers assigned to the TLO Course and program is one of crucial importance. The selection process must be designed to allow the officer with the most potential for success to

emerge. POST has determined that a successful TLO has certain desirable qualities that administrators should be aware of, and consider, when selecting TLO candidates.

TLOs are communicators. Communication skills are essential. The TLO Course will refine and hone pre-existing skills, but it is difficult to instill these skills in a basically non-communicative officer. TLOs must be enthusiastic and passionate about their assignment, willing to contribute and give of themselves to the over riding public interest. Reluctant or “ordered” acceptance of the position will quite probably lead to an unsuccessful and potentially harmful conclusion.

Applied Behavioral Analysis

Once we have prepared this sophisticated, highly trained group of first responders, how do we keep them emotionally and mentally healthy? It was determined by those involved in the formation of this valuable course that a segment of the curriculum had to include instruction in Critical Incident Stress Management.

Ideally, the most suitable candidate to facilitate this segment would be an individual who possesses not only the credentials as a behavioral clinician, but someone with prior experience in the field of law enforcement/first responder with covert operational experience, principally for the sake of credibility.

Due to the behavioral traits of individuals in this profession, and their apprehension about sharing their personal or professional problems with anyone outside their profession (Heaven forbid talking to their department psychologist!), they need an avenue to speak with a neutral person in confidence with no fear of disclosure. Individuals in these professions will more likely open up with someone who has personally experienced the stress relative to traumatic events. This remains the mind set of the continuing classes of TLOs. It is a rare occurrence when someone will voice issues which are occurring in their life in the presence of their peers. However, I receive an average of fifteen to twenty e-mails or phone calls from each class after the completion of their week of training. These individuals will openly discuss personal issues which they are experiencing relative to traumatic stress.

Objectives

- Understand Critical Incident Stress
- Recognition of Clinical Stressors
- Understand the CIS Stress Cycle
- Culture Awareness
- Learn the “Warning signs of CIS
- Learn stress reduction techniques
- Reactions to traumatic events-Responses
- Gradation leading to Suicide: Addresses the statistically high suicide rate in these professions.
- Defense Mechanisms

CIS is a critical component of the *Terrorism Liaison Officer Course*, which received approval from the Center for Domestic Preparedness after a desk audit of the course materials. Analysis and evaluation of the submitted materials found the training course met the required standards.

The continued threat of terrorist attacks on United States soil is no longer a matter of “if”, but sadly, a matter of “when” the next one will occur. We must prepare mentally now, prior to

response, to cope with the absolute carnage associated with suicide bombings or other terrorist-related events in our communities.

“Anticipate (and prepare for) the worst, and hope for the best.” This is the premise applied to our responses to the aftermath associated with the effects of homeland terrorism. As our great nation continues to recover from the tragic events that took place in 2001, emergency responders must prepare now for continued response-related trauma associated with terrorist attacks to our communities. Anticipating (and preparing for) the worst and hoping for the best, prior to action, will help public safety first responder and military personnel recover from these non-traditional emergency response requests.

Our attempts to visualize and comprehend the unimaginable before it occurs will make our post-incident recovery process more effective. Open communication and the realization that any of those involved in emergency response may be called upon to manage the unmanageable may allow for a more efficient incident management process and a more effective post-critical incident recovery process.

Some of the issues raised on this subject in previous editions of this newsletter are answered with the limited information provided within this document. We realize we are only touching the surface of the TLO Program with this article and assure you that more is happening than we can reveal because of the nature of the curriculum.

From this behavior analyst’s viewpoint, we have a long, weary road to travel....but travel we will. And we shall overcome the obstacles before us. We do not often agree with those in exalted positions, and quite often we don’t agree with one another. While this is often healthy and good, let us work together in our chosen profession for the mental health of our country.

Lukin, Anthony A. Ph.D. The California Specialized Training Institute, The Terrorism Liaison Officer: A National Strategy.

Shobert, Matt, Chief Fire Officer (CFO), M.A., Homeland Terrorism Response: Anticipate (and prepare for) the worst, hope for the best, *International Association of Fire Chiefs’ Magazine*, posted on the internet July 15, 2001.