



Government of the United States Virgin Islands Virgin Islands Police Department



Policy and Procedure Manual

Series ROC	Effective Date December 12, 2011	Review Date Annually	Policy Number 3.12
Subject SPECIAL OPERATIONS- SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM & HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS TEAM			
Chapter 3 - RULES OF CONDUCT			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Policy
References			<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces-

I. PURPOSE:

Purpose of this policy is to establish rules and regulations for the Virgin Islands Police Department (“VIPD”) Special Response Team (“SRT”) and Hostage Negotiation Team (“HNT”) for the deployment, training, qualifications and use of the teams. The VIPD policy is to ensure that Tactical Operators and Hostage Negotiators adhere to the proper procedures in accordance with the use of force policy

II. POLICY:

The VIPD utilizes the SRT teams to preserve life during a tactical response to high-risk situations that exceed those immediately available to the agencies first responders through special weapons and tactics, containment, de-escalation and control. The Utilization of the Special Response Team requires strict adherence to procedures that guide the Tactical Operator in the use of force during a tactical response where force is necessary. Use of force is only authorized when it is objectively reasonable and for a lawful purpose. SRT officers are required to utilize the principles of escalation and de-escalation when using force. SRT officers will decrease the severity of force used in direct response to a decrease in the level of resistance by the subject. The use of force by VIPD officers is governed by Federal and Virgin Islands law, including, but not limited to, the United States Constitution.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Tactical Operator - A law enforcement officer who is trained and certified in the use of special weapons and tactics who is utilized in various capacities meeting the US Department of Home Land Security SWAT Team Classification System.

- B. Tactical Commander – A certified Tactical Operator holding the rank no less than a police sergeant who has the overall command authority in all matters pertaining to the internal organization of the team and at all the incident deployments. During the deployments the SRT Commander reports directly to the Special Operations Commander or his designee. The Tactical Commander is the liaison between the tactical team and upper management and is responsible for equipment procurement/logistics, budgeting, team staffing, training guidance, rules, regulations and standard operating procedures.
- C. Team Leader – The first line supervisor who plans missions, training and standard achievements, team control and logistics, equipment recommendations and liaison between the team members and the tactical supervisor.
- D. SRT – An acronym for Special Response Team. A SRT Team usually refers to a group of members who have had special marksmanship training, defensive tactics training and who are equipped with shotguns, sniping rifles, automatic weapons, climbing gear, or other specialized equipment useful in dealing with snipers, barricaded persons, or hostage-takers.
- E. Tactical Medic – A certified firefighter/paramedic, employed full-time by the Virgin Island police or fire department, selected and trained using the same criteria as a Police Department member of the SRT team SRT Medics have the same authority, responsibility, and are required to comply with all Police Department Policies and Procedures. If not a sworn officer they have no authority to perform any law enforcement function or duty except when functioning as part of the SRT Team.
- F. Hostage Situation - Any situation where a suspect(s) is holding a person(s) against his or her will by force or the threat of bodily injury or death.
- G. Hostage Negotiators- Designated officers who have been specially trained to negotiate directly with a principal in a crisis situation.
- H. Hostage Negotiations Commander – A certified Negotiator holding the rank no less than a police sergeant who has the overall command authority in all matters pertaining to the internal organization of the team and at all the incident deployments. During the deployments the HNT Commander reports directly to the Special Operations Commander or his designee. The Hostage Negotiations Commander is the liaison between the HNT team and upper management and is responsible for equipment procurement/logistics, budgeting, team staffing, training guidance, rules, regulations and standard operating procedures.

- I. Barricaded Suspect – An armed suspect is wanted on criminal charges or for mental commitment proceedings and has assumed a position that provides him with a significant tactical advantage over officers attempting to make an apprehension.
- J. Suicidal Suspect – An armed suspect who appears to be an imminent threat to him/herself or others and has assumed a position which provides him/her a tactical advantage over officers attempting to make an apprehension.
- K. Operational Plan – A written report of the units pre-planned goals, objectives, area of operation, date, time, person(s) or place(s) of interest, type of operations, personnel taking part in the operation, special problem, cautions, concerns of operations, operational instructions, equipment needed and execution that is approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- L. After Action Report – A written report detailing the results of the tactical operation.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. General

- 1. The VIPD's Special Response Team is trained in, although not limited to, hostage situations, barricaded suspects, suicidal suspects, search warrants/arrest warrants, surveillance/stake-outs, dignitary protection, search and rescue and any situations where the risks of death or serious injury are imminent.
- 2. The VIPD's Special Response is also trained and can be utilized in the threat of domestic terrorism.

B. Deployment of SRT Teams

- 1. Decision to activate/utilize the Special Response Team and Hostage Negotiations Team shall be limited to instances that exceed the capabilities of the agencies' first responders and situations where the risk of death or serious injury is imminent.
- 2. Zone Commander, Watch Commander and the Chief of Police are authorized to request a SRT Team and/or Hostage Negotiation Team, to assist them when their personnel cannot adequately handle an event or situation. Procedures for the deployment of special operations teams to supplement other operational components will be handled according to the type and scope of the incident, including:

1. Exigent Circumstances/Unplanned Events:

The Watch Commander assumes the role of Incident Commander and coordinates all special operations that require immediate attention, until relieved by a higher-ranking officer. These types of operations generally include the following:

- i. Special Response Team usage
- ii. Hostage Negotiation Team
- iii. Bomb threats and bomb disposal
- iv. Man-made disasters
- v. Riots, crowd control, and civil disorders
- vi. Unplanned civil defense emergencies

2. Planned Events:

Special operations that do not require an immediate response are delegated to the Special Operations Commander. In situations that permit time for planning, the Operation Commander is to be contacted for a decision on the deployment of a Special Operations Team for the operation. The Operations Commander may then assign the task to the appropriate command officer and/or supervisor for organization and coordination. The Operations Commander has the option of assembling a Special Operations Team to handle the following. These types of operations may include the following:

- i. Use of Special Purpose Vehicles
- ii. Undercover surveillance/stakeouts
- iii. Raids and high-risk warrant service
- iv. Decoy operations
- v. Coverage of special events, such as, fireworks displays, parades, etc.
- vi. VIP protection
- vii. Natural disasters
- viii. Planned civil defense emergencies

3. The Special Operations Commander has the responsibility for planning, managing, assigning personnel, and determining the scope of such callout, based on the factors present. SRT will be required as warranted, for reasons such as, the potential for weapons, violence, or other dangers at the target location.
4. Prior to deployment of the SRT team for deployment for raids and warrant service the Tactical Commander will use the Arrest Warrant Matrix attached as **Appendix** to ensure that SRT usage is warranted. It will be the responsibility of the Tactical Commander to ensure completion and

documentation showing use of the Arrest Warrant Matrix. The Matrix should be attached to the After Action Report at the completion of the operation.

C. Coordination and Operational Control of a Special Operations Response

1. Once an operation is undertaken, it will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander to establish and maintain coordination and cooperation with all other operational components to alleviate potential misunderstandings among all involved components and units, to provide for the safety of involved members, and to facilitate success of the operation. These other components include:
 - a. Watch Commander/Officer-in-Charge
 - b. Special Operations Teams (SRT/HNT)
 - c. Communications Center
 - d. Other involved units or components
2. The watch commander will act as the Incident Commander until relieved by the Tactical Commander. The Incident Command (ICS) will be initiated and applied accordingly.
3. Upon initial arrival on the scene the ranking SRT member will assume and maintain incident command until relieved by the Tactical Commander or a higher ranking team member. If immediate action is required the on-scene Tactical Commander will initiate the appropriate response action. If immediate action is not required the highest SRT team member will stabilize the situation pending the arrival of the Tactical Commander, Team Leader or the highest ranking team member.
4. Tactical Decisions are the primary responsibility of the Tactical Commander, Team Leader or the highest ranking SRT member on the scene. In the absence of the aforementioned SRT personnel tactical decisions may be made jointly with the incident commander.
5. The most appropriate response choice to a situation often involves de-escalation, area containment, and surveillance, waiting out a subject, summoning reinforcement or calling in other specialized units.

D. Command and Control of Special Operations Teams

The following procedures serve as a guideline for the command and control of special operations teams, including provisions for the following:

1. Special Operations Teams

The Special Operations Command is composed of the SRT Team and Hostage Negotiation Team under the command of the Special Operations Commander. Primary responsibility for these units is as follows:

a. **SRT:** SRT will handle the following duties:

- i. All incidents involving special weapons and tactics
- ii. Hostage/barricaded persons
- iii. High-risk entry and extractions
- iv. Inner perimeter security
- v. VIP security/High Risk Prisoner Details
- vi. Search missions

b. **Hostage Negotiations Team (HNT):** The Hostage Negotiations Team will handle the duties and responsibilities generally delegated to hostage negotiators, including:

- i. Barricaded persons
- ii. Hostage situations
- iii. Suicidal persons

2. Special Operations Command Protocol

When two or more supervisors are assigned to a special operation, the ranking supervisor, or the supervisor specifically designated by the Chief of Police or Operations Commander, will be in charge. If no other Supervisor is on scene, then the Watch Commander will be in charge of the entire incident.

3. Command and Control of Special Operations Teams

a. During an actual incident, SRT and Hostage Negotiation Teams are under the supervision of their respective Team Commanders who report to the Special Operations Commander. This includes personnel providing assistance from other agencies.

b. The Special Operations Commander reports to the Incident Commander.

c. The Chief of Police has the ultimate exclusive command and control over any situation, unless the situation is turned over to another law enforcement agency that has joint jurisdiction with the Virgin Island Police Department, such as the FBI.

d. The Special Operations Commander will be responsible for

coordination of effort between the Hostage Negotiation Team and SRT. The SRT Team Commander and the Hostage Negotiation Team Leader shall keep the Special Operations Commander informed on the status and developments of all tactical and negotiation efforts.

- e. The Chief of Police may assume command of the overall incident at his/her discretion.
- f. The Commissioner may assume command of overall incident at his/her discretion.
- g. Special Operations officers and/or supervisors from other agencies, who may be utilized in these situations, should attend staff meetings with the planners to alleviate misunderstanding, provide safety of officers, and insure the success of the operation. Discretion is advised in disseminating information to operational components in activities where disclosure may jeopardize a tactical operation.

E. Responsibility once an Operation is Undertaken

1. It will be the responsibility of the *SRT Team Commander* to coordinate operational functions and components of SRT with the Special Operations Commander.
2. It will be the responsibility of the *Hostage Negotiation Team Leader* to coordinate operational functions and components of Hostage Negotiation Team with the Special Operations Commander.
3. It will be the responsibility of the *Special Operations Commander* to coordinate all operational functions and components of all Special Operations Teams, including those from other agencies.
4. It will be the responsibility the *Operations Commander* to serve as Incident Commander of the incident or event, unless relieved otherwise.

F. RAPID INTERVENTION TEAMS (RIT)

1. In order to facilitate the stabilization and prevent the growth of a critical incident, the Department may assign officers to Rapid Intervention Teams, which will consist of on-duty officers who will be specially trained for this purpose. They will be utilized until the arrival of SRT, and then may supplement the operation as needed, as determined by the Incident Commander. Guidelines for the selection, training, and deployment of this unit will consist of the following:
 - a. Officers will be specially trained in tactical operations and weaponry.

- b. Former SRT members may be assigned to these units, as well as others who qualify and are selected for this assignment.
- c. Officers will be selected and retained for this assignment based on a process and criteria similar to that for the SRT Team.
- d. Officers will be provided special weapons and body armor, as warranted.
- e. Members of a Rapid Intervention Team may be temporarily assigned to SRT as needed.

G. Criteria for Selections to the Special Response Team

1. Members of SRT will be carefully screened and selected, taking into consideration their experience as police officers, verbal skills, problem solving skills, and psychological suitability for the responsibility. The selection process for personnel assigned to SRT will involve a careful and systematic process similar to that used to select personnel for other specialized assignments within the Department.
2. The following is the minimum selection criteria to be utilized by the Department in the selection for officers to SRT. This is not an all-inclusive listing of all selection criteria as more specific criteria may be listed in the memorandum announcing the vacancy and selection process. The selection criteria are as follows:
 - a. Assignment to SRT is completely voluntary due to the inherent hazards and rigorous on-going physical training requirement.
 - b. Generally, a candidate must have at least three (3) years of service as a full-time sworn police officer with the Virgin Islands Police Department. However, officers with prior equivalent experience with the military, service with a Department of similar or larger size, or other pertinent skill sets, knowledge, and abilities, may qualify upon completion of eighteen months of service with the Department with the approval of the Commissioner.
 - c. Demonstrate satisfactory level of physical conditioning and agility as determined by testing conducted by the Special Operations Commander.
 - d. Demonstrate satisfactory level of firearms proficiency as determined by a test consisting of a course of fire approved by the Special Operations Commander.

- e. Demonstrate satisfactory level of prior good police performance.
 - f. Recommendation from a screening panel consisting of SRT members from our Department and other jurisdictions, who will examine the following factors:
 - i. Evaluations
 - ii. Disciplinary Actions
 - iii. Commendations
 - iv. Use of force incidents
 - v. Use of firearms
 - vi. Ability to function as a team member
 - vii. Training schools attended
 - viii. Special Skills
3. The screening committee will make their recommendations in writing to the Commissioner, listing all of the candidates in order of preference along with their justifications for the recommendations.
 4. The Commissioner has the exclusive right of appointment to SRT.
 5. All Department personnel must satisfactory complete any medical and/or psychological examinations as required the Department for this assignment.
 6. Members of SRT shall serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner, and may be removed upon recommendation of the Special Operations Commander.
 7. All members of SRT and SRT Tactical Medics shall abide by the responsibilities, duties, rules, regulations, and code of conduct set forth in VIPD Policies.

H. Special Response Team Training

1. Tactical training is necessary to achieve the results most beneficial to the Department and to the Team and must be accomplished on a regular basis to attain proficiency. The National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and case law identify the standard for SRT Tactical Training is 10% of the officer's duty time. Therefore, VIPD Police SRT Team officers will train an average of 4 hours per week, or about 200 hours per year, to maintain those Tactical skills. As such the VIPD SRT team will train at least 16 hours a month as a team.

2. Operators with a special assignment such as canine, sniper, explosive entry and tactical medic will require maintaining current training in the discipline.
3. New officers assigned to SRT are required to attend a 40 hour basic certification Tactical Response Certification course. Officers must pass a certification in the use of special weapons and tactics meeting the US Department of Home Land Security SWAT Team Classification System. In the event that the new member fails to obtain certification he/she may be considered to be a part of the support services of the SRT until certification can be obtained.
4. Tactical training for VIPD Police SRT officers will be based on the Tactical Triangle Principle: shooting skills; physical and mental conditioning; and tactics.
5. The Special Operations Commander will ensure that a schedule of training based on the Tactical Triangle Principle is made out for a one-year period, and distributed to Team Members. The one year training outline will be prepared by July 1st and distributed to the Commissioner or his/her designee for approval.
6. The Special Operations Commander or designee shall document all SRT Team training and copies of that training will be given to the supervisor of the Professional Development Unit.
 - a. Prior to the commencement of the training session a training outline and objective must be prepared and submitted to the Special Operations Commander. The training outline will identify the objective of the training program, location; those involved and summarize training principles. Training Outlines will be kept in the training files for five (5) years.
 - b. At the conclusion of the training program the Team Commander will prepare a Training Summary Report identifying training conducted and will be kept in the team training files for five (5) years.
7. The Special Operations Commander will make every effort to ensure that the SRT Team trains in a manner consistent with its anticipated functions.

I. Specialized Equipment for SRT Operators

1. The Department will provide members of SRT with specialized equipment for protection and to facilitate the successful resolution of tactical operations. Only equipment authorized by the Commissioner shall be used, and shall include, at a minimum:

- a. Radio
- b. Special Uniforms
- c. Body Armor
- d. Ballistic Shields
- e. Kevlar Helmets
- f. Special Weapons and Accessories
- g. Less Lethal Ammunition and Delivery Systems
- h. Chemical Weapons and Delivery Systems
- i. Ammunition
- j. Distraction Devices
- k. Mechanical and Explosive Entry Equipment
- l. Tactical Rope Equipment
- m. Ladder and other Climbing Devices
- n. Tactical EMS Equipment
- o. Electronic and Mechanical Surveillance Equipment
- p. Hydration and Energy Supplies for Tactical Personnel
- q. Explosives
- r. Breaching Equipment

J. Criteria For Selection of the Hostage Negotiation Team

1. Hostage negotiators will be carefully screened and selected, taking into consideration their experience as police officers, verbal skills, problem solving skills, and psychological suitability for the responsibility. The selection process for personnel assigned to the Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT) will involve a careful and systematic process similar to that used to select personnel for other specialized assignments within the Department.
2. The following is the minimum selection criteria to be utilized by the Department in the selection for officers to the Hostage Negotiation Team. This is not an all-inclusive listing of all selection criteria as more specific criteria may be listed in the Personnel Order announcing the vacancy and selection process. The selection criteria are as follows:
 - a. Assignment to the Hostage Negotiation Team is completely voluntary due to the inherent stress of this position
 - b. At least three (3) years as a full-time sworn police officer with the Virgin Island Police Department.
 - c. Demonstrate satisfactory level of physical conditioning as determined by testing conducted by the Special Operations Commander.
 - d. Demonstrate satisfactory level of prior good police performance.

- e. Recommendation from a screening panel consisting of Hostage Negotiation Team members from our Department and other jurisdictions, who will examine the following factors:
 - i. Evaluations
 - ii. Disciplinary Actions
 - iii. Commendations
 - iv. Use of force incidents
 - v. Use of firearms
 - vi. Ability to function as a team member
 - vii. Training schools attended
 - viii. Special Skills
3. The screening committee will make their recommendations in writing to the Commissioner, listing all of the candidates in order of preference along with their justifications for the recommendations.
4. The Commissioner has the exclusive right of appointment to the Hostage Negotiation Team.
5. All Department personnel must satisfactory complete any medical and/or psychological examinations as required the Department for this assignment.
6. Members of the Hostage Negotiation Team shall serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner, and may be removed upon recommendation of the Special Operations Commander

K. Hostage Negotiations Team Training

1. Members who serve as hostage negotiators will receive training in negotiating techniques applicable to crisis-type situations.
2. Ongoing training in new techniques for crisis-type situations to include rescue operations should be attended by hostage negotiators periodically. Specialized instructors will be selected in accordance with training needs.
3. The Chief Hostage Negotiator or Chief of Police designee will be charged with monitoring all training, certification, and performance records maintained in the Police Department Training Unit for each negotiator.
4. The Special Operations Commander will ensure that a schedule of training based is made out for a one-year period, and distributed to Team Members. The one year training outline will be prepared by July 1st and distributed to the Commissioner or his/her designee for approval.

5. The Special Operations Commander or designee shall document all HNT Team training and copies of that training will be given to the supervisor of the Professional Development Unit.
 - a. Prior to the commencement of the training session a training outline and objective must be prepared and submitted to the Special Operations Commander. The training outline will identify the objective of the training program, location; those involved and summarize training principles. Training Outlines will be kept in the training files for five (5) years.
 - b. At the conclusion of the training program the Team Commander will prepare a Training Summary Report identifying training conducted and will be kept in the team training files for five (5) years.
6. The Special Operations Commander will make every effort to ensure that the HNT Team trains in a manner consistent with its anticipated functions.

L. Critiques and Operational Briefing

As soon as practical following the termination of SRT involvement operations, an incident de-briefing and critique will be held. All elements involved in the incident should be present; including but not limited to participating SRT members, department command staff, communication personnel, support services, patrol and investigations.

M. After Action Reporting

1. In addition to the critique, a member of the SRT Commander or his/her designee who was involved in the operation will be designated to complete a written summary of the incident identified as an After Action Report. The summary will include such information as the details leading up to the incident, SRT deployment, operational command and actions while on the scene, and should include a copy of all relevant offenses material. The summary shall be presented to the Commissioner within twenty four (24) hours of the incident.
2. A Response to Resistance form shall be completed by all SRT entry personnel and by those who utilized any type of force.
3. The Tactical Supervisor shall ensure that all members of the SRT comply with policy.
 - a. A Team leader and Tactical Supervisors shall immediately respond to any scene in where serious use of force has been utilized.

- b. Comply with all reporting and investigation requirements outlined in the VIPD Reporting, Investigating Use of Force Policy.

N. SRT Tactical Commanders responsibility

1. The Tactical Commander is the liaison between the tactical team and upper management and is responsible for equipment procurement/logistics, budgeting, team staffing, training guidance, rules, regulations and standard operating procedures.
2. The Team Leaders report directly to the Tactical Commander and the Tactical Commander reports directly to the Special Operations Commander.


Assistant Police Commissioner

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

**VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT
WARRANT SERVICE MATRIX**

Obtain updated criminal history before completion.

DATE:		CASE #
DIVISION :		LOCATION:
POINTS	FACTS	SCORE
0	Search Warrant is for evidence of property crime(s).	
1	Search Warrant is for drugs.	
1	Search Warrant is for evidence of crime against person.	
0	Arrest Warrant is for property crime(s).	
2	Arrest Warrant is for crime against person.	
3	Arrest Warrant is for drug possession/distribution.	
0	Suspect has history of property crimes ONLY.	
1	Suspect has history of crime(s) against persons (assault).	
1	Suspect has made statements regarding resisting arrest.	
2	Suspect has history of arrest/ involvement in drugs.	
3	Suspect has violent criminal history or "Officer Cautions" on record.	
4	Suspect has used weapons during the commission of crimes	
1	Service of warrant requires minimal forced entry.	
2	Service of warrant requires use of ram, sledgehammer, etc...	
3	Service of warrant is a "No Knock" entry.	
4	Location is fortified or suspect has guard dogs.	
3	Firearms readily available at location of warrant.	
3	Subject is known to carry firearms / been arrested on firearms charges.	
5	Subject of warrant is believed to be armed.	
3	Multiple suspects are expected at warrant location.	
3	Subject of warrant is a known gang member.	
4	Subject has a history of assault or resisting offenses against police.	
5	Subject of the warrant is believed to be involved in a Shooting or Homicide.	
TOTAL POINTS:		

0 - 14 POINTS - Service may be handled by investigating unit with notification of appropriate command staff.

15 - 24 POINTS - Consultation with SRT Commander is required for determination of appropriate service. Command staff also notified prior to service.

25 + POINTS – SRT activation is required for service. All appropriate command staff is notified. SRT will assume authority of service.

