

York County QRT In the News Archive

COUNTY'S SWAT-TYPE TEAM NEAR PENNILESS

Has no budget, thanks donors who keep it afloat

By JOHN BUGBEE The York Dispatch

Friday, June 18, 2004 - The police officers who serve on the York County Quick Response Team admit they're reduced to scrounging for what little money and assistance they get to purchase equipment, ammunition and fuel for their vehicles.

"We've become masters at begging," said York City Police Lt. Wes Kahley, the team's ranking officer. "In all honesty, we have a zero budget."

So when the team decided to thank those individuals, businesses and organizations who've donated funds and material, members had to reach into their own pockets just to buy the plaques that were handed out last night during a ceremony at the Police Heritage Museum in York City.

Although it doesn't have a budget, the team's costs run about \$35,000 annually, Kahley said.

Any of the county's police departments can use the 35-member team in hostage and barricade situations, as well as for assistance in serving high-risk warrants. The team was called out 14 times last year.

Members also are trained to respond to terrorism attacks as part of the South Central Pennsylvania Counter-Terrorism Task Force.

The team's members include 16 officers from the York City Police Department, and officers from Northern York County Regional Police, York Area Regional Police and Springettsbury, Spring Garden and Newberry townships. Each department covers their own officers for equipment and time away.

Although those departments and municipalities make contributions, the team has primarily functioned hand-to-mouth since it went from being a city police operation to a countywide service two years ago.

"Right now we're just limping along," city Police Commissioner Mark Whitman said.

The lack of funding is so chronic that during last year's Olde York Street Fair, team members took a soaking in the dunk tank that was good for \$800.

By working with the York County Chiefs of Police Association, Whitman said, the York County Commissioners might eventually be persuaded to include the team in its annual budget.

The team is still waiting to learn if it's eligible for state and federal law-enforcement grants, Kahley said.

Support: Among those who received plaques were members of the York Riflemen's Association, which allows the team's sharpshooters to use its range in Hellam Township free of charge.

Plaques also were given to York County District Attorney Stan Rebert, chief deputy prosecutor Bill Graff and Samantha Dorm of the county's Criminal Justice Advisory Board for their legal assistance and support of the team.

George Hansford, Chris Keech and Jim Miller, employees of Custom Machine in Windsor Township, received plaques for contributing their time to modify the team's armored vehicle, known as the "Peace Keeper."

"We just took the ideas these guys (on the team) had and brought it to fruition," Miller said.

The Peace Keeper provides the team with protection if they come under fire.

Since it was acquired last year, the used armored vehicle has undergone about \$15,000 in modifications that were donated in time and material. The team is also looking to raise money to convert a van donated by Snyder's of Hanover into an equipment transporter.

Also receiving plaques were the Fraternal Order of Eagles of York and the York County Constables Association, which donated \$1,000 each to the team.

STANDOFF CLOSES NEIGHBORHOOD

Police allege Franklyn Ott Sr., 37, barricaded himself in his home.

By MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News
Friday, November 12, 2004

York County Quick Response Team members Bruce Veseth, left, and Sgt. Ron Comacho, inside, talk with residents at a Dover Township home on Thursday. One man was arraigned late Thursday after a standoff there, which lasted a few hours. Neighbors were kept away from the area during the police incident.

Sonjia Horn paced the street and took a drag from her cigarette Thursday evening.

She was on her way home from a long shift on her feet at Wendy's and buying groceries when she was stopped by fire police at an intersection about a block from her Dover Township home.

Horn was tired. Her feet hurt. She just wanted to go home.

"Why can't I go to my house? I want to go to home," Horn said.

The fire policewoman blocking Horn's street didn't have many answers for her. She just knew it was not safe for Horn and others who lived on Night-in-gale Drive to go down their street.

Defeated, Horn said, "I just want to go home."

Northern York County Regional Police went to Horn's neighborhood, Sunrise Acres, shortly after 5 p.m., to respond to a report of a couple fighting at their home on the 3200 block of Night-in-gale Drive.

When they arrived, police said, Beth Ott was outside, but her husband, Franklyn E. Ott Sr., 37, was armed and had barricaded himself inside the house. His son, Frank Ott Jr., 16, was in the house with him during the standoff, but it wasn't clear if the teen was being held against his will, police said.

For more than three hours, authorities closed sections of Night-in-gale Drive, Emig Mill Road and other nearby streets and asked residents to stay inside while they negotiated with Ott.

York County's Quick Response Team, a specialized force that deals with special threats and high-risk situations, was called in to help.

While police worked, Horn and several others stood at the intersection of Night-in-gale and Chickadee drives wondering what was going on.

After standing for about an hour, Horn remembered the butter and frozen french fries she bought earlier.

"I've got groceries in the car. What am I going to do about them?" Horn asked.

One of her other neighbors, who had been sitting in her car for about an hour, was tired of waiting. She snatched her purse and other bags out of her car before she locked it.

"This is ridiculous," she said. "I'm going home."

She walked in the other direction, away from the fire police officers, ducked around the corner through someone's back yard, and went into her own.

Horn was tempted to do the same, but worried it could be dangerous. Her other neighbors told her they saw police officers with big rifles and police helmets carrying large shields. She didn't want to be in the middle of whatever was going on.

She called her husband and son, who were at home, to tell them she was OK. Her husband told her he wouldn't go to sleep until she came home. She had to yell at her 16-year-old son, Justin, to keep him from trying to come down the street to get her.

"No, you cannot leave the house. Do you hear me?" she told him. "No, I don't know what's going on, but you can't come outside."

Horn got in the car to warm herself up, and then got out again to talk to Devon Beck, who was riding his bike up and down Night-in-gale Drive. The 14-year-old was stopped by a police officer who told him to turn around and get off the street — now.

"It's crazy. This is Dover. You don't expect any excitement here," Devon said.

Neighbor Joel Anderson, who lives on another street, came down because he was curious.

Shortly after 8 p.m., the group heard police broadcasts that said officers had cleared the scene. Ott came out of his home and was taken into custody, police said. He faces several charges, including harassment, terroristic threats, recklessly endangering another person and endangering the welfare of a child, according to police.

The district justice on duty Thursday night set Ott's bail at \$10,000. He posted it and was released, police said.

Ott's neighbors were able to go home about an hour after his arrest. Horn waited until a police officer came to the intersection and told the fire policewoman she could let the residents go home. The officer thanked Horn for being patient, and for cooperating with police.

"No problem. That was four houses down from mine," Horn told the officer. "I wasn't going down there." After he left, she rushed to her car. Horn made a U-turn and hurried down Night-In-gale Drive.

She had a hot shower, left- over baked chicken and macaroni and cheese at home waiting for her, she said.

POLICE CONFRONT MAN IN STANDOFF

By TED CZECH
Daily Record/Sunday News
Sunday, January 2, 2005

An armed man who refused to leave his Windsor Township home Saturday morning — and who police said fired a shot into one of their vehicles — peacefully surrendered six hours later.

Harold F. Frazier, 46, of the 200 block of Taylor Road, was charged with aggravated assault, institutional vandalism, recklessly endangering another person, and disorderly conduct. As of Saturday, Frazier was still in York County Prison on \$10,000 bail.

"Luckily, everything worked out for us, and it ended peacefully," said York City Police Lt. Wes Kahley, commander of the York County Quick Response Team.

The stand-off began just after midnight Saturday, when a relative of Frazier's called York County 911 and said that Frazier was armed with a gun, intoxicated and suicidal, said York Area Regional Police Officer Leonard Hoffer.

Minutes later, four York Area Regional officers, each in their own cruiser, arrived at Frazier's home. Hoffer, who was the last to arrive, said his fellow officers saw Frazier inside his home, and so they positioned themselves around the house.

That's when Frazier allegedly shot a police cruiser's left rear tire, Sgt. Patrick Gundel said.

"We figured it wasn't directed toward us," because no officers were inside or near the vehicle parked in Frazier's driveway, Hoffer said.

Hoffer said Frazier used a rifle to allegedly fire the shot from inside his home through a broken window.

Hoffer's commanding officers, including Chief Thomas Gross, arrived at the stand-off. At some point, the York County Quick Response Team was called, Hoffer said.

The team has officers from numerous municipal departments specially trained to protect the public and negotiate with an armed person refusing to come out of a house.

The team's negotiators began talking with Frazier by phone, Kahley said.

"It went on for several hours," Kahley said, although he declined to say what prompted Frazier to surrender at 6:22 a.m.

Kahley said Frazier walked out of his house unarmed and did not struggle with police. York Area Regional officers went through Frazier's house and found several other weapons and ammunition, Hoffer said.

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STANDOFF IN YORK

An alleged home invasion brought police to the 300 block of South Queen Street late Thursday night.

By RICK LEE and MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News
Friday, January 7, 2005

York County Quick Response Team members await orders in an alley behind a home on South Queen Street late Thursday night. Police were searching for at least one armed man. Police closed several nearby blocks to traffic as they tried to get the men to come out.

Members of the York County Quick Response Team surrounded a house in the 300 block of South Queen Street in York where police believed armed men were hiding Thursday night, said York County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Bill Graff.

Police closed several nearby blocks to traffic as they tried to get the men to come out. At 11:20 p.m., one of the men was in custody, according to police. Officers were still searching for others.

The standoff started around 8 p.m. after two men allegedly hid out in a row house at 316 S. Queen St. while trying to get away from police. Graff said the men were suspects in a home invasion at a nearby house, 318 S. Queen St.

City officers were called out to 318 S. Queen St., on reports that armed men were trying to force their way into a home. When the officers peered through a window, they saw two men with guns inside, Graff said.

"They popped the door," Graff said of the police officers, and when they went inside the house, the armed men ran out a back door.

The officers charged after them. Two shots were fired toward the officers, Graff said. The officers weren't hit and didn't return fire, he added.

The armed men went into the house next door at 316 S. Queen St. Authorities cordoned off the area around the house and surrounding area with yellow police tape, Graff said. Police thought one of the men was on the roof, he said.

Police also began evacuating those in neighboring houses, Graff said.

South Queen Street residents huddled together on their porches in the cold, looking in the direction of the flashing police lights on the next block. Those who walked into the area police had blocked off asked, "What's going on?"

No one really knew. They had heard it was something about some men with guns in one of the vacant houses.

Drivers of vehicles that pulled up to the intersection were told to turn around. They couldn't go down East College Avenue or South Queen Street, police told them. They had to take another route.

Shortly before 11 p.m., police yelled commands into a bull horn in English and Spanish, telling the armed men to put their guns down and come out of the row house with their hands up.

About 20 minutes later, officers had one man in custody. At 11:30 p.m., police continued to look for at least one more armed man.

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SUSPECT CAUGHT AFTER STANDOFF

Elias Jimenez was charged in a home invasion last week.

By CARYL CLARKE
Daily Record/Sunday News
Tuesday, January 11, 2005

Police found the second of three home invasion suspects at 12:56 a.m. Monday burrowed in the dirt and ash behind a furnace in the basement of 768 W. Market St., York Police Capt. Bruce Veseth said.

Elias Jimenez, 39, was one of two men police said forced their way into a house in the 300 block of South Queen Street at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and set about kicking and robbing six victims at gunpoint. The third suspect served as their lookout, according to police.

Police allege Jimenez fired two shots at Officer Michael Muldrow as he fled police Thursday night.

Sunday night, Jimenez walked past detectives working on a different case, Veseth said. He said they recognized Jimenez as he entered the apartment building at 768 W. Market St.

The detectives called for backup to secure the perimeter of the building, Veseth said, and about 25 members of the York County Quick Response Team assisted in the ensuing standoff.

They surrounded the building at 768 W. Market and the buildings on each side because they initially thought the buildings' basements were connected, Veseth said. It turned out they weren't.

Police said they spotted Jimenez once or twice watching them from a window.

He failed to respond to orders shouted over bullhorns or to answer a telephone thrown in a window, Veseth said.

The captain said tear gas canisters were fired through the windows and door, but the suspect did not come out.

Police finally threw in distraction devices — flash grenades that emit a blinding light and a loud noise — and then forced their way in, Veseth said. Officers searched every room of the building, even checking above ceiling tiles.

Jimenez was finally found crouching behind the furnace, according to Veseth.

He refused to come out, Veseth said.

Duty District Justice Nancy Edie arraigned Jimenez, of no fixed address, on charges of attempted homicide, aggravated assault, burglary and six counts of robbery. He remained in the York County Prison on Monday in lieu of \$25,000 bail.

The home invasion on Queen Street sparked two long standoffs. The first started Thursday night and lasted 13 hours as police combed the area around the building that was broken into. Residents were told to stay in their homes.

Police arrested Dwight Bartow, 24, of Dauphin County, but could not find the other suspects.

Veseth said Bartow provided police with the names of two men he said were involved — Jimenez and a suspect who remains at large.

Detectives have not yet figured why the people were attacked Thursday night, Veseth said.

Police came to the home after a woman had called 911 about men in her rowhouse robbing people downstairs.

Muldrow and Officer Andy Baez looked in a window and saw someone being thrown to the floor, according to the arrest affidavit in District Justice Ronald Haskell's office.

The two officers knocked on the door. Upon entering, they saw several people face down on the floor. The victims said that they had been robbed and that the robbers were running out the back door.

The victims said the robbers had ordered them to the ground at gunpoint and stole jewelry and money, according to the affidavit. They said they were kicked and that earrings were ripped from one person's ears.

The third suspect apparently was the lookout, Veseth said. He probably ran off when he saw police arriving, Veseth said.

The captain praised the detectives who spotted Jimenez and the teamwork that led to his arrest.

"This man was desperately trying to get away," Veseth said. "He fired at a police officer. We wanted to get him off the streets."

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AS QRT USE GROWS, WHERE ARE LIMITS?

York Dispatch - Wednesday, January 12, 2005 -

Quick Response Team stories are common news fare these days. Last week such units were called out twice in York County -- one for a 13-hour incident, the other just five.

The first, on Thursday, led to the arrest on South Queen Street of a Harrisburg man on assault and burglary charges. Two suspected accomplices weren't found.

Then on Sunday, after another QRT response, a second man was arrested in connection with the earlier standoff -- this time after a standoff of his own in which tear gas was thrown and flash grenades were used.

The York County QRT, in two standoffs, had their men -- two of them.

The system apparently worked -- although the first one went on for eight hours after the lone suspect was arrested --but are such situations the reasons for forming and using such teams?

The system didn't work so well in Dauphin County's Swatara Township just after Christmas when that area's QRT surrounded a house for more than 10 hours, and evacuated residents in a two-block area -- only to find their quarry had flown. He was arrested several days later, quietly, at a motel.

Back in York County we have the tragic -- and as yet unexplained -- case of Yvonne Gouseff, shot and killed by a county QRT officer last September.

Officials have yet to reveal why the woman was killed or what threat -- alone in her own home -- she posed to the community, or the justification for forcing a possibly violent confrontation.

And again the question: Was that situation one that called for a quick response team? We seldom hear the term "SWAT" team any more. It's an acronym for special weapons and tactics -- a specialized, highly trained unit used to resolve extremely dangerous situations requiring tactics and weapons not normally available to patrol officers.

Membership in such an elite unit originally called for law enforcement officers highly trained in handling crisis intervention by negotiation or, if necessary, assault.

Supporters of the teams say they're the price we pay in a post-9/11 world. That's an easy rationalization.

Actually it began in the 1960s when Los Angeles police decided the best way to deal with rioters in the volatile Watts district was by using a highly mobile, military-style attack squad.

The idea caught on and thanks to television every department began to itch for the day when they could have their own such unit, or be part of one.

Supporters of the concept saw such units as invaluable in engaging barricaded and heavily-armed criminals and rescuing hostages.

That's hardly the case today. Endings to QRT-involved incidents hardly meet such criteria, as witness the Gouseff slaying or even the case of the Swatara Township suspect that wasn't there.

Law-enforcement enthusiasm for having and using a QRT unit with its military discipline and heavy weaponry is understandable. But if officials' use of such teams is going to become more common, as it seems, and perhaps more concentrated on situations where previously a lower level of police response was adequate, where are the guidelines?

When is a threat level sufficient to order QRTs into action? No doubt many instances offer an excellent training opportunity. But every such opportunity also carries the risk of a mistake -- possibly a fatal one.

Recent QRT actions here and elsewhere highlight the need for a tightening of operational guidelines, and more reporting to funding authorities on when and if use of those teams is really necessary for public safety.

And if the use of such units for lower-level incidents is going to be commonplace in the neighborhood, such guidelines should be a matter of public record.

Meanwhile, York County awaits the report of the Pennsylvania State Police and District Attorney Stan Rebert on the slaying of Elaine Gouseff four months ago.

POLICE CLEARED IN DEADLY STANDOFF

The district attorney said officers were justified when they shot Yvonne Gouseff.

By MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News
Thursday, January 27, 2005

Two York County Quick Response Team members were justified in using deadly force against an armed West Manchester Township woman in September, said York County District Attorney Stan Rebert.

In a report released Tuesday, the district attorney said no criminal or professional conduct charges would be filed against York City Police Officer Roger Nestor and Detective Anthony Fetrow — two officers involved in the shooting that killed Yvonne Gouseff on Sept. 4.

The report and law enforcement officials shed light on questions raised about Gouseff's death by her family, including why officers entered the home and why they didn't try some other way to subdue her.

Local members of Gouseff's family were not available for comment Wednesday. When reached at her Las Vegas home, Gouseff's daughter, Jaclyn Ulmer, didn't know the report was complete.

"This is really big news to me. I'd rather not say anything," she said.

Authorities have been investigating Gouseff's death more than four months. She died after a Sept. 3 and 4 standoff that lasted more than 10 hours. Officers came to her home in the 2400 block of Broad Street after a deliveryman reported she answered the door holding a silver revolver.

When she refused to come out after hours of negotiations, members of the York County Quick Response Team entered her home. Gouseff met the officers in the kitchen, where she approached them with a gun. They ordered her to put the gun down, but she kept coming.

Nestor and Fetrow each fired once at Gouseff. One shot struck her in the chest, killing the 56 year old, according to York County Coroner's Office.

Why go inside?

In a situation like the Gouseff standoff, police have a legal obligation to take action, said retired New York City Police Sgt. Lou Savelli. A police officer for more than 20 years, Savelli spent several years as a SWAT team member. He now trains tactical officers.

"They don't have the luxury to just walk away," Savelli said. "They are mandated to be there until the threat has been neutralized."

Although she was home alone, an armed woman such as Gouseff still poses a threat to herself and her neighbors. Gouseff could've shot herself or fired at neighbors or police, Savelli said.

It's a risk police officers can't afford to take, he said.

In the hours before she was killed, a negotiator talked to Gouseff for two to three hours. At times, she told him she loved police. At other times, she said she would shoot any officers who came into her home, according to police reports.

Then she stopped talking, police said.

Officers threw a portable phone into a rear window, and yelled to Gouseff to answer. She didn't. They fired several canisters of tear gas into the second and third floor of her home, police said.

Gouseff didn't come out, so authorities sent Quick Response Team members in.

Under standard procedures, the decision to send QRT members into a house is left up to the incident commander. In this case, it was West Manchester Township Police Chief Art Smith. Because of pending litigation involving the case, Smith would not comment.

Several factors can lead police to go inside a home during a standoff, but the decision is often forced after authorities have exhausted other means, said Newberry Township Police Chief David Duffy.

"There comes a point when a decision has to be made. We can't continue to wait outside. We can't leave the person alone," Duffy said, who works with the QRT. "We have to try to go in and bring them out safely."

However, the outcome isn't always peaceful.

"Having worked closely with the QRT team, I know their goal is to save lives," Duffy said. "I don't believe anyone wanted what took place (in the Gouseff case) to happen."

Why use deadly force?

In the days after her death, her family wondered why team members didn't use a Taser — a device that delivers a non-lethal electric shock.

When faced with lethal situations, police officers have to match force with force, said Savelli. "You're not going to use a Taser when a gun's involved or you're going to be dead," he said.

Also, when someone threatens people or police officers or has barricaded him or herself inside a home, the situation calls for more force than a weapon such as a Taser, Savelli said.

"I've used Tasers, and the reality is — sometimes they don't work," Savelli said. They are good weapons, but can be ineffective in life-threatening situations, he said.

In the Gouseff standoff, authorities asked for a robot equipped with a Taser, but it wasn't available.

Duffy, who teaches police officers non-lethal force, tells his students the methods are effective, but may not apply when someone is trying to kill them.

"If someone presents a lethal threat, the officer has to be ready to handle that threat. That could mean using deadly force," Duffy said.

During the confrontation with Gouseff, it was clear the officers were in danger of serious bodily injury or death, Rebert said. With a person with a gun approaching them, Nestor and Fetrow determined the use of deadly force was appropriate, the report said.

"Time is of the essence in these situations, and split-second decisions must be made without the benefit of hindsight," Rebert said.

After Gouseff's death, her family said the .357 Magnum she pointed at officers had been disabled and couldn't fire. An investigation showed the gun was functional and fully loaded, the report stated.

In weeks after the shooting, city police officers Nestor and Fetrow were placed on administrative duty and their department conducted an internal investigation. The two have since returned to regular duty, said York City Police Commissioner Mark Whitman.

"This has been tough for the officers and their families, but they are holding up," Whitman said.

Even with the officers cleared of any charges, this is not a happy ending, the commissioner said. "There's enough pain to go around in this situation," Whitman said.

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KEEPING THE SIGNAL STRONG

Grant will allow the York County Quick Response Team to improve its communication systems

By MICHELE CANTY
Daily Record/Sunday News
Sunday, January 30, 2005

YDR

York County Quick Response Team members await orders in an alley behind a home on South Queen Street in York earlier this month. Police closed several blocks to traffic as they tried to get armed men to come out of a house. The team recently received a state grant that will go toward new equipment.

During training at Dallastown Area High School last summer, members of the York County Quick Response Team found out something — they couldn't talk to each other as they moved around inside the building.

The squad — a SWAT-like team of police officers trained to deal with special threats — were practicing at the school. Apparently, the building's steel beams blocked the portable radio and cellular phone signals from getting to their destination.

"Depending on the type of building that we're in, the radios lose power," said York City Police Lt. Wes Kahley, the team's commander.

The QRT needed a receiver to help transmit their signals. The machine, called a portable repeater, was one of the top items on their wish list when they applied for a state grant last year.

Portable repeaters help boost radio and cellular phone signals. In essence, the machines take in the signals, bounce them and make them stronger.

Several fire departments in York County use portable repeaters. The machines also have been installed in the York County Courthouse and are part of plans for a new school in the Central York School District.

The QRT will get one of its own, with the help of a \$103,200 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The QRT was informed they'd won the grant in December.

Kahley and other officials talked with a vendor a few weeks ago about purchasing and setting up a portable repeater for the team and radios with encrypted signals that can't be heard on public scanners.

"(A portable repeater) enhances our safety. Everything we're buying with the grant goes toward safety and other equipment," Kahley said.

With the funds, they'll also purchase body armor, bunkers, or police shields, as well as pay for repairs to the team's vehicles, he said.

Grant money will also help replenish supplies for the team, including tear gas canisters and flash grenades that emit a blinding light and a loud noise.

During one QRT call, the team could use between \$1,000 and \$2,000 worth of materials, said Samantha Dorm, a grant writer who helped secure state funds for the QRT. On a call earlier this month, team members fired several canisters of tear gas into a house on South Queen Street.

"Each one of these (canisters and grenades) cost between \$25 to \$33 each," Dorm said. She's looking into other grants and state funds to help outfit the team with warm, waterproof gear they can use during the winter months.

A small portion of the grant will also help reimburse localities for the overtime Quick Response Team members accumulate during calls. QRT members often don't get paid for the hours they spend tracking down suspects or trying to get someone barricaded in a home to come out.

"These guys are getting called out of their beds at night or having to deal with incidents after working a regular shift," Kahley said.

Some officers get comp time from their departments for the their work on the QRT team. Others don't, Kahley said.

"It's not going to cover all our call-outs this year, not by any stretch of the imagination." The team is mostly funded through contributions from grants, municipalities and private donations.

When the team first formed, members paid for much of their own gear. Now, grants, money from localities in York County and contributions are helping the team suit up and buy more of the equipment it needs, Dorm said.

Since the beginning of the year, the team has been on four calls. It averages about 10 calls a year, she added.

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Background

The York County Quick Response Team was formed in November 2002 to assist to local law enforcement agencies in resolving special threats and high-risk cases, such as standoffs and hostage situations.

The team is made up of 25 officers from several York County police departments, including York City, Springettsbury, York Area Regional, West Manchester, Spring Garden, Newberry and Northern York County Regional.

TheWGALChannel.com

[POLICE: MAN SURRENDERS AFTER SHOOTING AT OFFICERS](#)

POSTED: 11:50 am EDT May 23, 2005

UPDATED: 12:29 pm EDT May 23, 2005

YORK, Pa. -- A five-hour police standoff in York ended peacefully Monday morning.

Police were called to a home on the 600 block of Salem Avenue at about midnight for a noise violation.

Moments after police arrived, they found themselves under fire.

A quick response team used tear gas and Scott Wertz, 24, surrendered at about 5 a.m.

The charges against Wertz include criminal attempted homicide for allegedly firing on two uniformed police officers. The shots might have been fatal for one of the officers were it not for a police shield, or bunker, as it is called.

Police said the bunker deflected a 25-caliber bullet that Wertz fired. The bullet left a small depression in the metal, but no one was hurt.

York police said this is the first time a bullet has struck one of their bunkers. The department has seven or eight of them.

Police have not yet identified the officer in question, but News 8 was told that the officer has returned to duty.

Police said they believe the suspect was under the influence of drugs.

The man was taken to York Hospital for evaluation.

Police expect to charge him with aggravated assault.

NOISE COMPLAINT LEADS TO 5-HOUR IMPASSE, MORNING ARREST

By CHRISTINA KAUFFMAN The York Dispatch

Monday, May 23, 2005 - A five-hour standoff in the 600 block of Salem Avenue in York City that began when police responded to a noise complaint ended this morning after officers fired tear gas into the house and the man surrendered to police.

When York City Police responded to the noise complaint around midnight, Scott Wertz, who shares a first-floor apartment at 634 Salem Ave. with his mother, Wendy Wertz, fired several shots at the officers, said York City Police Capt. David Arnold. The bullets ricocheted off the officers' body shields; no officers were injured.

Wendy Wertz was standing in front of a neighbor's house in a baby blue nightgown. After the county's Quick Response Team arrived at the scene, she became upset and police moved her to their command center, out of sight from the house.

Several neighbors -- some standing outside in nightgowns and bare feet after being told to evacuate their homes -- said Wertz had been fighting with his mother and yelling to rap music earlier in the evening.

Scott Wertz's screams and the bass of rap music could be heard outside the house for hours after officers surrounded the house.

Several blocks around the scene were blocked from traffic, and residents were either kept inside their homes or asked to leave their homes for their safety.

Randall Doyle Sr., who lives at 636 Salem Ave., said he and his three children were asleep when police knocked on the door shortly after midnight and evacuated the family.

A little while earlier, Doyle's son, 15-year-old Randall Doyle Jr., said he heard several "cracks" that sounded like gunfire as he lay in his bed.

Randall Doyle Sr. said it was not unusual for Wertz to blast his stereo and loudly sing along to the music.

Attempts to negotiate: Police officers moved silently around the property for about three hours before police started talking to Wertz.

An officer asked Wertz, who is in his 20s, what he wanted. Wertz apparently replied that he would like a drink, because the officer said he could get him a drink if he dropped the gun out of the window and came out of the house.

But Wertz refused.

Police brought in a negotiator who had been talking to Wertz on the phone. For about an hour-and-a-half, Newberry Township Police Sgt. Jay Smith talked to Wertz.

"I promise nobody's gonna hurt you," Smith said. "I don't even have a weapon. I use my voice as a weapon."

He told Wertz that he wanted to get him help for the problems he has with his mom and his girlfriend and their baby.

"Nobody's gonna hurt you, and we're gonna get you a drink," Smith said. "I know you're upset and you're probably scared, too."

About 5 a.m., police fired two shots of tear gas into the house.

"Come out the window with your hands up," officers screamed a couple of times.

Minutes later, police arrested Wertz in the rear of the house.

He was taken to York Hospital for observation, Arnold said.

No charges were filed at press time, but York City Capt. Bruce Veseth said Wertz will likely be charged with aggravated assault today.

Veseth said that because the officers were not injured, it is not clear whether they will be placed on leave.

Fire personnel assisted on the call.

-- Staff writer Elizabeth Evans contributed to this report.

LEAVING HOSPITAL FOR JAIL

Man faces multiple charges after standoff with police

By ELIZABETH EVANS The York Dispatch

Tuesday, May 24, 2005 - A man accused of firing four or five shots from an illegal handgun at York City police officers -- and forcing a five-hour standoff with the county's Quick Response Team -- has been released from York Hospital and is now in prison.

Scott Allen Wertz, 24, of 634 Salem Ave. is charged with two counts each of attempted homicide and aggravated assault, as well as single counts of reckless endangerment, illegal gun possession and possessing a gun with an altered serial number. He remains in the county lockup on \$100,000 bail.

City Capt. Bruce Veseth said Wertz fired at city officers who responded to his mother's home around 11:45 p.m. Sunday because he was playing his music too loudly.

At a press briefing yesterday morning, the captain pointed to a handheld police shield, called a "bunker" by police, that he said stopped a .25-caliber bullet allegedly fired by Wertz.

Cpl. Bart Seelig was standing behind the shield when it was hit, and city officer Jennifer Harrison was standing behind Seelig, according to charging documents.

The \$2,000 shield, with a prominent dent in the center, can no longer be used because another bullet could easily penetrate the damaged area, Veseth said.

"It spared many injuries and possibly saved (Seelig's) life," he said. "I would like to see more (bunkers) available to ... patrol officers."

Neither Seelig nor Harrison could be reached for comment. Veseth said both officers will remain on active duty.

"He's in good shape, in good spirits," the captain said of Seelig. "It was a very good outcome."

Limited phone contact: Police said after officers responded to the Wertz home, Wendy Wertz led them to her son's bedroom door and opened it. However, she closed it immediately and told officers her son had pointed a gun at her.

Officers escorted Wendy Wertz outside and set up a safety perimeter around the home.

Shielded by the bunker, Seelig approached Scott Wertz's window to try to open a dialogue with him, which is when Wertz fired at officers, police said.

"We believe he was possibly under the influence of drugs," Veseth said.

At that point, the York County Quick Response Team, a SWAT-type unit, was called in. Its officers stopped foot traffic in the area and evacuated nearby neighbors, then tried to negotiate with Wertz over several hours. They were ultimately unsuccessful, police said.

"He kept turning (his cell) phone off and on. ... That went on for about two hours," Veseth said. "At some point, he refused to communicate anymore.

"With school (time) approaching, we wanted to resolve the situation," he said. "We wanted to get it wrapped up as soon as possible."

At 5:06 a.m. yesterday, QRT officers used a 40 mm gas gun to shoot pepper-spray gas capsules into the home. The fumes drove Wertz outside, where he was arrested. He was then taken to York Hospital for treatment.

"He got some cuts climbing out the window," and may have also cut himself during the standoff, according to Veseth.

Dealt drugs: Wertz is a felon, having twice pleaded guilty to dealing drugs. Federal law prohibits felons from owning guns, which is why lead Detective Scott Nadzom filed the illegal gun possession charge.

In the charging documents he filed, Nadzom said the serial number of Wertz's handgun had been sanded off, which is also illegal.

Wertz pleaded guilty in July 2000 to delivery of drugs and possession with intent to deliver drugs and received 18 months' probation, according to court records.

In July 2001, Judge John S. Kennedy determined Wertz had violated his probation and sentenced him to 23 months of strict intermediate punishment at a day-reporting center, records state.

Wertz was again found in violation of his probation in March 2002 and was sentenced to nine to 23 months in county prison, although Kennedy ruled Wertz could be released after completing the Freedom Program (for people with drug issues) or after spending four months on the prison's outmate work-release program.

He was released five months later.

-- Reach Elizabeth Evans at levans@yorkdispatch.com or 505-5429.

VOLUNTEERS STAFF QRT

Officers give up personal time to be part of the high-risk Quick Response Team.

By BRENT BURKEY
Daily Record/Sunday News
Tuesday, May 24, 2005

Lt. Wes Kahley apologized at times for stumbling over his words Monday morning. He was a little tired, he told the audience.

"I've been up for 27 hours. I didn't get to bed last night."

The York City Police officer pulled the all-nighter by doing double duty as the team commander of the York County Quick Response Team.

The team responded late Sunday night to a standoff in the 600 block of Salem Avenue that lasted until nearly dawn, then held a conference at the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center on Monday morning to show how the team uses training in high-risk situations.

Kahley said it is important for the public and the media to understand what the team does when it is called to a scene. People will see assault weapons and tactical gear pouring into their neighborhoods, he said.

"There are so many ways to accomplish this job. It's our job to decide what we think works best for (a specific) scenario," he said.

Those ways include everything from a camouflaged sniper rifle to a gas-canister gun that could also fire a nonlethal projectile similar to a bean bag. Military assault weapons filled the space in between.

Training in special tactics, including the team's chosen policy of being "slow and methodical" as opposed to blitzing structures, is done by Baltimore City and Baltimore County police.

And it's all on the free time of volunteers, who maintain their day jobs at local police departments. Money comes from donations and from grants worked primarily through the York County District Attorney's Office, which has oversight of the team.

Time on calls, however, gets subtracted from officer's personal time, which Kahley said takes a toll.

"I don't think we've worked Christmas yet, but that's coming," Kahley said.

The office, along with private citizens and public officials, were honored by the team Monday for everything from painting the team's van to purchasing equipment worth thousands of dollars.

MAN ARRESTED AFTER FIVE-HOUR SPRINGETTSBURY STANDOFF

By MIKE HOOVER
Daily Record/Sunday News

Article Launched: 02/01/2007 10:47:32 AM EST

Feb 1, 2007 — A 39-year-old man was arrested early this morning following a nearly five-hour standoff that started when he held five people at gunpoint inside an apartment complex in Springettsbury Township, police said.

Scott Jay Shultz, of the 2400 block of Kingston Court, is charged with two counts each of burglary, simple assault, reckless endangerment, terroristic threats, unlawful restraint and false imprisonment.

He was being processed at York County Central Booking this morning, prison officials said.

Shultz allegedly forced his way into a neighbor's apartment Wednesday night where he placed a semi-automatic pistol to the head of one of the residents and threatened the people inside, police said. Shultz held five people at gunpoint - including two residents and three friends, police said. The people eventually escaped unharmed after an hour around 10:30 p.m.

One of the people who escaped called police, said Springettsbury Township Police Chief David Eshbach. The York County Quick Response Team was mobilized and responded to the call.

Before police arrived, Shultz went back to his apartment and ignored repeated attempts to contact him by telephone and a public address system, Eshbach said.

Members of the quick response team made a rapid and dramatic entry into Shultz's apartment just after 3 a.m., where he was captured without incident, Eshbach said. Shultz was sleeping at the time. There were no injuries.

Police recovered a full-loaded .22-caliber semi-automatic pistol, Eshbach said.

"By the grace of God everything worked out," Eshbach said.

Police do not have a motive for what transpired

PCCD AWARDS GRANT TO AID YORK COUNTY'S RAPID RESPONSE INITIATIVE

HARRISBURG, Pa., Dec. 11 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency today announced the award of \$10,000 in federal funds to help York County continue its crisis response initiative, or quick response team.

A quick response team is a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement group that is specially trained to handle threats or high-risk incidents, such as a hostage situation, counter-terrorism incident or hazardous material spills.

Today's award builds on past funding provided by PCCD and it will allow the county to expand its training, specialized equipment inventory and quick response services.

"PCCD is proud to continue supporting York County's leadership and creativity in adopting innovative approaches to crises management," said PCCD Chairman Walter M. Phillips Jr. "Utilizing a quick response team combines limited local resources to effectively address emergencies that can occur anywhere in the county or the region. Having this specialized unit maximizes resources, improves crises response and improves public safety."

With the support of Governor Edward G. Rendell, PCCD, through its public safety advisory committee, has awarded more than \$120 million in federal and state funding to all levels of the criminal justice system since 2004.

This grant will be managed by PCCD's Office of Criminal Justice System Improvements, which assesses the needs of Pennsylvania's criminal justice systems and develops and implements policies and procedures to improve their operations.

As the state's justice planning agency, PCCD is dedicated to preventing and reducing crime in Pennsylvania and responding to the needs of victims. PCCD collaborates with the Governor's office, federal, state and local officials, juvenile and criminal justice agencies, victim service agencies, community-based organizations, non-profits, schools and others to achieve these goals.

For more information about PCCD and the commission's other services and programs, visit <http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/>.

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Published: 2007/12/11 18:00:19 CST

ONE DEAD IN NORTH CODORUS STANDOFF

By MIKE HOOVER, York Dispatch

Article Last Updated: 04/01/2008 10:23:31 AM EDT

One person is dead after a standoff in North Codorus Township that lasted more than 12 hours, according to the York County Coroner's Office.

Around 10 a.m., the coroner's office was called to Salem Village Apartments, where Southwestern Regional Police and the York County Quick Response Team have been at a standoff since 8:30 p.m. Monday.

According to York County 911 reports, police and emergency responders were still on the scene of the standoff at an apartment house in the 3500 block of Messersmith Road as of 10:20 a.m. The identity of the deceased has not been released. Members of the Quick Response Team appeared to be packing up to leave.

Police said the man involved in the standoff had been evicted Monday but then had returned to the apartment and refused to leave.

Many who live in the area, including Allen Gauthier, 42, were not allowed to go to their homes, and some were evacuated from them when the standoff began.

Gauthier said he came home from work at the Wal-Mart McDonald's in West Manchester Township around 5 a.m., and was told he couldn't go to his home at 3533 Messersmith Road.

Around two hours later, Gauthier said he heard what sounded like gunshots as he stood in the rain and waited for news.

A few minutes later, he saw members of the Quick Response Team throw "smoke bombs" into the house where the standoff is taking place, but then saw one bomb get thrown back outside.

Gauthier said he was trying to wait it out because he wanted to go home.

He said his country neighborhood is quiet, and nothing like this has happened in the years since he's lived there.

A couple who also lives on Messersmith Road, Shawn Landheart, his girlfriend, Ashley Kinard, and their 6-month-old daughter, Nicole, have been out of their home since last night.

When the couple returned from Wal-Mart last night, they saw police officers at the home next door.

The officers were trying to get through the front door, which appeared to be barricaded, they said.

Kinard said police later told them that a man inside the house had a gun and had leveled it at officers.

The police left the house and yelled to the couple to "Get the hell out of there!"

An officer from Southwestern Regional Police borrowed Kinard's cell phone to call for backup, Kinard said.

Later, the Quick Response Team and other officers come to the scene. Landheart said they watched the man who lives in the home break out its window.

Messersmith Road, between Tunnel Hill Road and Glatfelter Station Road remained close as of 10 a.m. today, according to York County 911 reports.

Officials closed down another road near the standoff this morning, Noss Road.

Additional information on the standoff will be posted as it becomes available.

DALLASTOWN COUPLE ARRESTED IN BANK ROBBERY

By TED CZECH

Daily Record/Sunday News

Posted: 09/11/2009 08:53:24 AM EDT

Police arrested a man and a woman on Thursday afternoon wanted for allegedly robbing a York Township bank branch earlier in the week.

A contingent of officers - made up of York Area Regional Police and the York County Quick Response Team - went to Walnut Ridge Apartments in Dallastown and arrested the pair, according to a news release.

Daryl Nathaniel "Nate" Ragan, 23, and Michele Lynn Caughy, 24, were wanted for robbing the Sovereign Bank branch, 2690 S. Queen St., on Tuesday, police said.

York Area Regional Police Sgt. Rod Varner said that during the robbery, which took place just before 9:30 a.m., Ragan walked into the branch and displayed a gun, while Caughy waited outside to drive the getaway vehicle.

Varner would not say how police developed Ragan and Caughy as suspects.

Officers "made entry" into the apartment, and found Ragan and Caughy, who offered no resistance, Varner said.

Police found money believed to be from the robbery, according to the news release.

Ragan and Caughy were charged with robbery - threat of immediate injury, robbery - taking property by force, theft by unlawful taking and receiving stolen property, according to court records.

Anyone with information on the robbery is asked to call Detective Donald Hoppie at 741-1259.

YORK COUNTY'S QUICK RESPONSE TEAM GETS NEW ARMORED VEHICLE

ELIZABETH EVANS The York Dispatch

UPDATED: 05/24/2011 05:37:43 AM EDT

A new armored vehicle purchased with drug forfeiture funds will keep members of York County's Quick Response Team safe no matter what the situation -- and help them keep citizens safe, the team's commander said.

"There is nothing we're going to face in this county that this (armored vehicle) won't stop," said York City Police Sgt. Craig Losty, who heads up the county's SWAT-type QRT team.

The team unveiled its new BearCat on Monday afternoon at a ceremony honoring the people who made the purchase possible. They call it "the peacekeeper."

It was custom-made by Lenco Armored Vehicles in Pittsfield, Mass., and cost about \$299,000, Losty said.

It replaces the team's old armored vehicle, a U.S. Air Force surplus vehicle made in 1972, according to York City Police Capt. Ron Camacho.

That vehicle cost QRT \$6,000 in 2004 and has now been sold to Chambersburg Police for the same amount, Losty said.

"Times have changed": "We were honored to have that vehicle," Camacho said. "It served us well for many years, (but) times have changed. ... It's good to know (we) have a little peace of mind."

The money to buy the BearCat came from the county's drug forfeiture fund, officials said. When Drug Task Force members arrest drug dealers, they seize the dealers' cash, vehicles and other valuables under federal "zero tolerance" laws. Most items are sold at auction, and that cash is also added to the forfeiture fund.

District Attorney Tom Kearney approved the purchase, which was supported by the York County Chiefs of Police Association. Kearney said the chiefs told him buying the BearCat was a top priority.

"I hope it's put to good use and saves lives," Kearney said. "The caliber of weaponry ... (criminals) have now is so much greater than it was."

Supporters thanked: In addition to showing the public the new BearCat, QRT members also publicly thanked the people who helped make the purchase possible, as well as others who have supported the team for years, Camacho said.

They included York City Mayor Kim Bracey; York Hospital's tactical medics, led by team leader Doug Kimbell; the Drug Task Force and its two leaders, York City Detective Andy Shaffer and York County Detective Craig Fenstermacher; the District Attorney's Office and its former grant coordinator, Diane Wales; and the county's Chiefs of Police Association, including West Manheim Township Police Chief Tim Hippensteel, who is the association's president.

"We're grateful to have (the BearCat) in the county," Hippensteel said. "This is a good day for York County law enforcement."

'Extraordinary results': Also honored was Springettsbury Township Police Chief Dave Eshbach, who used to be QRT's commander and who worked hard to make the new BearCat purchase happen, Losty said.

"Ordinary people can attain extraordinary results" if they work together and "nobody's worried about taking the credit for it," Eshbach said.

Kyle King, administrator for the DA's Office, said that while there was "zero cost" to taxpayers, "You can't put a price tag on officers' safety."

Losty said having such cooperation between county and municipal agencies is uncommon and makes York County unique.

-- Reach Elizabeth Evans at levans@yorkdispatch.com, 505-5429 or twitter.com/ydcrimetime.