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## **720.00, Special Emergency Reaction Team (SERT) and Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) Use**

*First Universal Review: 3/1/24 – 3/31/24*

### **Refer:**

- DIR 631.35, Press/Media Relations
- DIR 730.00, Bureau Response to Active Violence Incidents
- DIR 1010.00, Use of Force
- Investigations Branch Standard Operating Procedure #1, Planned Arrest and Search Warrant Execution

### **Definitions:**

- Activation Tiers: There are three progressive tiers of activation: 1) Unit Assistance, 2) Limited Deployment, and 3) Activation.
  - Unit Assistance: Special Emergency Reaction Team (SERT) and Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) members used to assist during incidents short of full activation. Such assistance is limited to members utilizing the less-lethal tools and equipment that are available to SERT and CNT, and are not available for patrol operations (e.g., pole cameras, robots, armored vehicles, etc.), and where SERT and CNT does not provide supervisory oversight of the incident. On-duty assistance is not a substitute for a limited deployment or full activation. A Critical Incident Commander (CIC) is not required to respond for this level of activation.
  - Limited Deployment: A tactical response authorized by a CIC that includes SERT only, CNT only, or a partial response by either or both units utilizing tools or tactics available to the CIC.
  - Activation: Receiving an order to report for duty. SERT and CNT members will report to the requested location, prepare for deployment, and respond to mission requests at the direction of the On-Scene Incident Commander or CIC.
- Appropriate Initiative: The authority delegated to SERT and CNT by the CIC, unless specifically suspended during a call, to safely resolve an incident before they are able to request and receive permission from the CIC (i.e., “window of opportunity”).
- Command Post: Any location, fixed or mobile, designated by the On-Scene Incident Commander or CIC from where operations are directed.
- Critical Incident Commander (CIC): A specially trained on-call command person who responds to all SERT and CNT activations (other than unit assistance), high-risk warrants, and any other event designated by the Chief of Police or designee. The CIC has the authority and responsibility for all police actions related to the incident and reports to the designated Assistant Chief during emergency activations.
- On-Scene Incident Commander: The highest-ranking sworn Police Bureau member who assumes command at the scene of an incident prior to the CIC assuming command.
- Police Action: Any circumstance, on or off duty, in which a sworn member exercises or attempts to exercise police authority.

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- **Rapid Response Team (RRT):** The Bureau’s all-hazard team of members who are specially trained to assist in the response to manmade/natural disasters and other emergency management situations which include, but are not limited to, the management and control of crowds through various tactics and techniques.
- **Special Weapons:** Any weapons provided or approved by the Bureau and authorized to be used only by trained SERT and RRT members in a police action. Examples of special weapons include non-aerosol contained chemical agents (including CS gas), automatic weapons, rifles and other special tactical weapons and ammunition.

**Policy:**

1. This Directive sets forth the protocols for accessing SERT and CNT resources, prescribes when the use of the units is mandatory, establishes a clear chain of command during activations, and defines responsibilities.
2. In accordance with the Police Bureau’s mission, members will make every effort to ensure the safety of everyone involved in an incident while attempting to de-escalate and resolve special emergency situations. The Bureau recognizes that some incidents may require the support of specially trained incident commanders and tactical and negotiating teams to increase the ability to safely resolve these situations.
3. There is nothing in this directive that would prohibit a member of SERT from taking police action outside of team activations. In these instances, SERT members shall follow directives and training guidelines set forth by the Bureau.

**Procedure:**

1. SERT and CNT Activations:
  - 1.1. SERT and CNT Assistance: SERT and CNT serve to provide tactical support to the Police Bureau. After reasonable efforts have been undertaken to resolve an incident, Bureau members may request SERT and CNT assistance to de-escalate an escalating situation, devise and implement re-engagement plans, or to decisively resolve an incident.
  - 1.2. Mandatory Activation Situations:
    - 1.2.1. In all situations described below, SERT and CNT activation procedures shall be implemented after the On-Scene Incident Commander has gathered sufficient information to believe with a reasonable degree of certainty that one of the listed situation exists.
      - 1.2.1.1. Active Violence Incident: An incident involving an armed person(s) who has the ability and intent to use or has used deadly force on other persons and continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional victims. These incidents include circumstances under which the threat of deadly force may include but are not limited to a suspect’s use of knives, firearms, vehicles, and/or explosive devices.

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- 1.2.1.2. High-Risk Search/Arrest warrant: Where there is a potential threat sufficient to require SERT and CNT to execute the warrant. Requests for SERT to execute warrants will be forwarded through channels along with a completed SERT Service Request – Planned Operations Risk Assessment Form. All SERT warrant plans require prior CIC approval and command during service. At the conclusion of the warrant service, SERT will attach and forward the original assessment form along with their After Action Report to the Chief of Police’s Office.
- 1.2.1.3. Hostage Situation: An incident involving a person being held by a suspect who is reasonably believed to be armed, as a means of forcing compliance with some demand.
- 1.2.1.4. Sniper Situation: A person, usually concealed, shooting or threatening to shoot at other people.
- 1.3. Discretionary Activation Situations:
  - 1.3.1. In all situations described below, activation procedures may be implemented for SERT and CNT, if Bureau members have undertaken reasonable efforts to resolve an incident and members are uncertain regarding the advisability of disengagement from the incident. Bureau members may consult with SERT, CNT and CIC to determine a course of action. If the CIC deems activation is appropriate, they will initiate the proper activation tier.
    - 1.3.1.1. Barricaded Person: SERT and CNT response is required in cases where patrol or other units have exhausted reasonable efforts to resolve a barricade incident where a person uses an obstruction (e.g., building, car, etc.) with the threat of deadly force to accomplish a criminal goal such as avoiding capture, and a determination is made that the totality of circumstances do not support disengagement from the incident.
    - 1.3.1.2. Area Search for an Individual Armed with a Gun: SERT and CNT activation is required to support or assist patrol during incidents where a search is necessary for an armed individual(s) who has fled or is hiding from members in a respective area. Involved supervisors must evaluate whether effective containment of the suspect has likely been achieved within a suitable geographic area in order to conduct an area search. In cases where supervisors conclude that effective containment of the suspect is achieved, supervisors shall activate SERT and CNT to conduct the area search.
    - 1.3.1.3. Any other requests or circumstances approved by the CIC.
- 1.4. An On-Scene Incident Commander may contact and consult with the on-call CIC at any point during the incident.
- 2. Responsibilities:
  - 2.1. Operations Branch: The Operations Branch has full responsibility for the Bureau’s initial response to a field tactical situation. However, when SERT and/or CNT are called to a tactical operation, they shall be under the direct command of an Assistant Chief, as directed by the Chief of Police, for the duration of the incident.

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- 2.1.1. The CIC shall inform the designated Assistant Chief of all full deployments and the service of high-risk warrants as soon as it is practical to do so. The Assistant Chief will respond to the scene and assume command of full deployments and high-risk warrant service in the event that no CICs are available.
- 2.2. On-Scene Incident Commander: The On-Scene Incident Commander has the authority and responsibility for all police actions during the incident unless, or until, relieved by the CIC.
- 2.3. Critical Incident Commander: The CIC responds to all emergency SERT and CNT activations, warrants, and limited deployments. The CIC has the authority and responsibility for all police actions during an incident once they assume command from the On-Scene Incident Commander.
- 2.4. Precinct Commander: The Precinct Commander, or their designee, will respond to all activations, with the exception of high-risk warrant service. The Precinct Commander (or designee) will direct patrol resources in support of the event at the direction of the CIC. The Precinct Commander (or designee) will also manage precinct operations unrelated to the event.
  - 2.4.1. If the Precinct Commander is the on-call CIC for the incident, the Precinct Commander shall designate a member to supervise the precinct response.
- 2.5. In the event that all CICs are unavailable, the designated Assistant Chief be responsible for responding to and managing all emergency SERT/CNT activations, warrants, and limited deployments. In the event the Assistant Chief is unavailable, the Precinct Commander of the event location shall be responsible. If they are not available, the Precinct Commander closest geographically to the incident shall be responsible.
- 2.6. If it is determined that SERT and CNT are needed, that information shall be relayed to a supervisor (i.e., a member at the rank of sergeant or above) who can initiate an activation and immediately report to the scene, if not already present.
- 2.7. SERT, CNT, and CIC activation procedures shall be implemented by the Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) upon the order of a supervisor. The precinct of occurrence will be responsible for making all command notifications.
- 2.8. The tactical functions, which shall be accomplished by the CIC, include:
  - 2.8.1. Assessment of the situation.
    - 2.8.1.1. Assume command and communicate.
    - 2.8.1.2. Ensure adequate and appropriate resources are on-scene or en-route.
    - 2.8.1.3. Prioritize the objectives (e.g., life/safety, containment needs, end state, etc.).
    - 2.8.1.4. Legal standing.
  - 2.8.2. Development of the plan.
    - 2.8.2.1. The plan and subsequent supporting missions are based on the above assessment. Continually re-evaluate as the call progresses.
    - 2.8.2.2. Create a command post that includes SERT, CNT, and Patrol command.

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- 2.8.2.3. Consult with SERT, CNT, and Patrol when time allows.
- 2.8.2.4. Communication: Ensure that SERT, CNT, and Patrol all have the same situational awareness.
- 2.8.3. Execution of the mission.
  - 2.8.3.1. Communicate clear and specific missions to each resource.
  - 2.8.3.2. Clearly communicate the CIC’s intent throughout the incident.
  - 2.8.3.3. Communicate the results of each mission to maintain the same situational awareness by SERT, CNT, and Patrol.
- 2.8.4. Support.
  - 2.8.4.1. Displaced community members.
  - 2.8.4.2. Relief of members.
  - 2.8.4.3. Medical.
  - 2.8.4.4. Fire.
  - 2.8.4.5. Designation of an off-site briefing post for City representatives.
  - 2.8.4.6. Public Information Officer (PIO): Coordinate media message and/or community notification.
  - 2.8.4.7. Post-incident coordination.
- 2.9. Once the activation procedure has been initiated, SERT and CNT shall be on standby status until the On-Scene Incident Commander or the CIC directs them to perform in either their separate functions or as part of the operation.
- 2.10. SERT and CNT may be canceled only by the On-Scene Incident Commander or the CIC.
- 2.11. The CIC (regardless of rank) has the authority and responsibility to direct all Bureau resources towards the situationally appropriate resolution of an incident and reports only to the designated Assistant Chief during activations. When time and circumstances permit, the CIC will consult with SERT about tactics, with CNT about negotiations, and with Patrol Command about resources. The CIC shall determine the objectives and approve the missions to meet those objectives of the operation, while the team leaders of each unit shall develop the specific tactics or strategies to effectively execute the missions. However, the CIC is ultimately responsible for the approval of tactics, negotiations and the allocation of resources. The CIC will direct SERT, CNT and Patrol resources. The CIC may, at any time, direct or stand down, tactical, negotiation, or patrol responses. SERT and CNT shall not take action independent from the CIC direction, except when a member reasonably believes that an immediate threat of death or serious physical injury exists or as part of being delegated Appropriate Initiative.
- 2.12. Appropriate Initiative must meet the standard of having a high likelihood of success. This clearance to act should be used in limited circumstances. SERT and CNT must understand the CIC’s intent. Members taking action under appropriate initiative must immediately communicate whether the action was successful. Appropriate Initiative is not a substitute for requesting permission for action when time allows. SERT and CNT

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supervisors and members assume responsibility for actions taken in the exercise of Appropriate Initiative.

3. Bureau Supervisors and Non-Police Bureau Personnel:
  - 3.1. Bureau supervisors and City representatives not involved in the operation shall be directed to a location other than the command post, as designated by the CIC. The CIC will appoint one member as liaison to keep these observers apprised of any changes in conditions.
4. Outside Agency Coverage:
  - 4.1. Generally, outside agency tactical and negotiation teams are authorized to provide coverage when SERT and CNT are unavailable. In these situations, the on-call PPB CIC will respond and command the incident.
    - 4.1.1. In these circumstances, members should be aware that the conduct of the outside agency’s officers is subject to their respective policies and procedures.
5. Outside Agency Requests:
  - 5.1. Outside agency requests for full team SERT and CNT services within a 50-mile radius of Central Precinct must receive approval from the on-call CIC and the designated Assistant Chief. Requests for full team SERT and CNT assistance beyond the 50-mile radius must receive the approval of the Deputy Chief of Police or, if unavailable, the designated Assistant Chief. All such requests for full team SERT and CNT services that are approved require SERT and CNT command and the CIC to respond. The CIC will work with the agency lead assigned to command the incident and ensure that full team SERT and CNT resources are properly and safely utilized.
6. Special Weapons Use:
  - 6.1. SERT and RRT shall be responsible for developing and conducting annual special weapons qualification courses and for establishing qualification and familiarization standards for their respective teams.
  - 6.2. The use of special weapons is restricted to SERT and RRT members who have successfully completed the special weapons qualification course within the last twelve months, as required by SERT and RRT training policy.
  - 6.3. The Training Division shall be responsible for maintaining complete training records of participating SERT and RRT members.
  - 6.4. The SERT team leader shall decide when special weapons shall be carried by SERT members in an emergency police action; however, absent exigent circumstances, the use of special weapons shall be determined by the CIC.

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