



2014 Jail Best Practices Award Official Entry Form

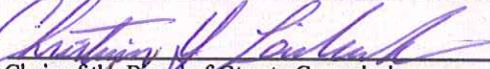
This form must be attached to all entries. Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available electronically at www.pacounties.org.

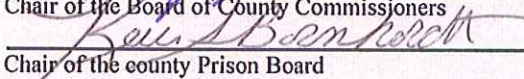
County Name BERKS County Class 3RD
Address 1287 COUNTY WELFARE ROAD City LEESPORT Zip 19533
Contact Name JANINE QUIGLEY Title ACTING WARDEN
Department BERKS COUNTY JAIL Phone (610) 208-4800 EXT 4007
Fax (610) 208-4880 E-mail JQuigley@countyofberks.com

Project Information

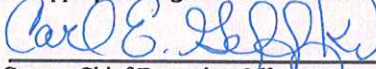
Title SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (SOG) Start Date OCTOBER 2008

Each application must be submitted with two signatures. Place appropriate signatures on two of the lines below:



Chair of the Board of County Commissioners


Chair of the county Prison Board



County Chief Executive Officer

Program Narrative

A separate program narrative document must be attached to this form that answers the following questions in the order presented. This must be typed in a Word-document, Times New Roman, 10-point type.

- **Need:** a description of the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any, and how it led to this effort
- **Program/policies:** a description of how the project enhanced general operations programs/policies, treatment, and custody
- **Approach:** a description of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to jail diversion, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc.
- **Evaluation:** a brief description of how the project was evaluated and any lessons learned
- **Stakeholders:** a brief description of the community, including a description of key stakeholders, organizations, and county departments that were involved in the project
- **Processes:** a description of how the activities or processes utilized in this project were altered or will be continued based on experience, including plans for leveraging additional resources
- **Costs:** a description of any costs associated with the project and how it was funded; cost savings, if any and any change in community acceptance, reductions in insurance costs, or inspection improvements that resulted from the program

Scoring will be based on the elements as described above.

Please attach supporting documents, forms or other information that support the award entry. Entries must be received by close of business on **February 14, 2014**. Winners will be announced during the CCAP Spring Conference, March 23 - 25 2014. More information: Brinda Carroll Penyak, bpenyak@pacounties.org or (717) 526-1010.



Berks County Jail System

Special Operations Group (SOG)

The unfortunate aftermath of a 2006 hostage situation, which occurred at Cambria County Prison, weighed heavily upon our Chief Deputy Warden (CDW), Janine Quigley. It was a somber wakeup call that eventually prompted her to reevaluate the procedures in place at our own facility to deal with a similar incident. After intense and honest scrutiny, it was determined that our traditional methods of response were seriously lacking if not obsolete. This response consisted of a thirty member, part-time, on call, Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT). Our CERT was activated for major incidents and operated with outdated equipment and minimal training in perishable skills that relied heavily upon the outside intervention of the Pennsylvania State Police Special Emergency Response Team (PSP SERT). Albeit extremely capable, PSP SERT's unfamiliarity with the jail's layout coupled with a delayed response time increased the likelihood of harm to staff and inmates in the event of a hostage crisis. This dilemma was unacceptable. It was clear that an entity capable of a rapid response and comprised of highly trained individuals armed with state of the art equipment and an intimate knowledge of the facility was needed.

A concerted effort, spearheaded by CDW Quigley, located an outside training entity that claimed to combine cutting edge technology with unconventional, corrections-specific, tactics. This entity was and continues to be the largest, full-time, Corrections special operations government contractor in the United States. Its Senior Instructor promised to deliver a cadre of highly skilled, self-sufficient, instructor certified, operators that would form a cohesive unit capable of handling the most extreme situations both inside and outside of the facility. Remaining true their progressive philosophy, jail administration committed to the process without reservation. A training program was tailored to meet the needs of the jail and it was decided that sixteen would be the optimal number of operators to complete any mission. In September of 2008, two years after the incident that so haunted her, CDW Quigley was poised to move forward with an ambitious plan to ensure the safety of her staff. The next step was the selection process.

In order to maintain transparency and increase the pool of qualified candidates, the CERT team was disbanded at the end of September and the selection process was opened to all custody staff. In early October thirty-one individuals attended phase one of the selection process, which included an extensive assessment of physical capabilities followed by multiple question and answer sessions, and scenario based interviews. Nineteen candidates moved on to phase two. They were instructed as to when and where to report for the first day of a four week training evolution. The first week, appropriately dubbed Hell Week, further separated the wheat from the chaff. It taxed and tested the candidates' physical and mental thresholds, placing a much greater emphasis on the latter. By design, the process was identifying and cultivating candidates that possessed a "Warrior" mindset. Traditionally, CERT has favored the physical attributes, but of what use are these if an Operator cannot think for himself or hesitates to follow lawful orders or fails to differentiate between lawful restraint and excessive force? Given time, physical fitness can be improved upon and skill sets polished, but the mindset is what allows an Operator to recall his training and properly apply it under stressful conditions. Upon completion of phase two, fourteen candidates were left standing. It was understood that anyone could be dropped from the program at any time. The decision to remain was entirely voluntary and no one was guaranteed a slot on the team. The training began in earnest. Candidates endured grueling physical training and up to sixteen hour work days. Their knowledge and skills were tested on a daily basis. Candidates were expected to achieve and maintain tactical proficiency in the following areas: advanced firearms training (to include pistols, shotguns, and submachine guns), close quarters combat, riot/disturbance response, mechanical breaching, explosive breaching, dynamic cell extractions, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) operations, low light operations, intelligence gathering, high risk security patrols, high risk inmate transports, and hostage recovery operations. Failure was not an option.

On November 5, 2008, CDW Quigley's vision became a reality. All fourteen candidates had earned the title of Operator and together they formed the first generation of Berks County Jail Special Operations Group. Iron sharpens iron. As promised, the team formed an unbreakable bond while pushing each other towards personal excellence. Incidentally, the Operators also developed a fierce loyalty towards CDW Quigley as they had observed firsthand her fight on an administrative front to ensure the team's success.

Graduation was the first of many milestones. SOG continued to train and excel in all areas, eventually earning a Tier One designation. It is the only Tier One program in Pennsylvania and one of a few nationwide. This designation is usually reserved for elite units and means that said team is extensively trained to handle daily, routine incidents all the way to crises such as riots and hostage situations. The team operates on a full time basis providing daily security inside the institution.

SOG is constantly adapting and evolving. The more you learn, the more you realize how little you know. The Senior Instructor continues to provide at least four weeks of training per year. During this time, we update certifications, review current corrections trends, become proficient in cutting edge tactics, and run the selection process for new candidates. We recognize that the skills acquired are perishable and as such we also dedicate at least three days a month to the honing and refinement of same.

What is the best way for an Operator to apply his learned skills inside the corrections environment? The answer is High Risk Security Patrol (HRSP). This is an aggressive, proactive, tactic that simultaneously allows the Operator to ensure compliance with regulations while reinforcing the feeling of safety through presence. The Operator patrols among the population and conducts random cell searches, pat downs, and field interviews. HRSP places the Operator in the optimal position for a rapid response to any crisis and facilitates intelligence gathering. While on HRSP, the Operator dons his full gear. At a minimum, this includes a ballistic vest with a mounted video camera, a shotgun, less lethal ammunition, a Taser, oleoresin capsicum, a gas mask, and a radio. This may seem extreme, but common sense dictates that assailants prefer easy targets. An Operator in full gear does not meet these criteria and actually serves as a visual deterrent. The shoulder mounted video camera is added insurance as it records the behavior of both the inmate and staff. This reduces the number of false allegations by inmates and constantly reminds the Operator that he is a professional and willing to have his actions under close scrutiny. Having all the necessary tools on his person allows the Operator to respond immediately and effectively. He is equipped and trained to handle any situation until help arrives. Needless to say, HRSP goes against the grain of the traditional Corrections mindset. Admittedly, we encountered opposition among our own ranks to the extent that a grievance was filed for unsafe practices. Eventually, an arbitrator ruled in our favor. Introducing a weapon into the secure perimeter of a jail may appear foolhardy, but it has been overwhelmingly successful. In fact, over a five year span there has not been one documented case of an inmate attempting to take an Operator's weapon. Barring mental health inmates, the majority of our prison population does not wish to feel the effects of OC or the Taser, much less, less lethal ammunition deployed from the barrel of a shotgun. Whether it is the Operator's display of confidence in his skills or the inmates' perceived threat of overwhelming firepower, the fact is it works. To date there have been no incidents as feared by opponents. SOG's constant presence, rapid response capabilities, and operational readiness have put offenders on alert and staff and inmates at ease. Note that the number of inmates in disciplinary confinement in January 2008 (prior to SOG) was 60 out of a total population of 1186 (5%). Today at submission, there are 37 out of 1123 inmates (3.3%). While the number may appear to be insignificant, it is not the case to those who manage these inmates... any reduction in the number of disciplinary inmates reflects less rule violations and a more secure facility.

As mentioned above, HRSP is essential to intelligence gathering. Human intelligence (HUMINT) is gathered through field interviews. These serve a dual purpose. They allow the Operator to build a rapport with inmates and develop informants. The more you interview inmates the more desensitized they become to the process. It makes it difficult to determine who is actually giving information and suspecting inmates are less likely to take action.

Combine HUMINT with cell searches, pat downs, and SOG's ability to move freely throughout the institution and you have the "perfect storm" for Security Threat Group (STG) identification.

In 2008, two Operators were tasked with taking over an almost nonexistent STG program. It has since evolved into a model program with close to five hundred STG validations. Its primary mission has grown from solely identifying members to aggressively suppressing activity. Two more Operators have joined the program in an official capacity, but it is truly a SOG team effort. Recognizing the need for training, CDW Quigley allows the core team to attend STG training conferences twice a year. This information is disseminated to fellow Operators during monthly training and then to staff via in-service training. Operators are briefed on the major players within our facility on a daily basis and then aggressively pursue same. This dogged determination has uncovered evidence which resulted in the successful prosecution of several witness intimidation cases in Berks County. SOG's commitment and dedication to STG suppression have proven infectious as numerous line staff have requested to become part of the STG team. Even those not interested in membership provide information via STG identification cards that have been placed on all units. Since the advent of SOG, STG identification has multiplied exponentially increasing officer safety to the same degree. If we can identify a threat, we can isolate it, and eventually suppress it. This information is crucial in ensuring the safety of our staff. We all know that our STGs spill over into the street and vice versa. For this reason, we share all information with local law enforcement as permitted and affected agencies to increase their safety as well.

Sharing and collaborating is what we do. Since its inception, SOG's philosophy has been one of excellence, sharing, and service. We have conducted joint training exercises with Her Majesty's Prison Service, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Hudson County Jail SOG, Berks County Emergency Response Team, Chester County SWAT, Berks County's Hostage Negotiation Team, and the Berks County Sheriff's Office. We currently conduct educational presentations and demonstrations on a variety of levels from local college students to staff from international Corrections agencies. We have presented at STG training conferences for county agencies alongside adult and juvenile probation agents. We have also presented at STG training conferences for state agencies at the Elizabethtown Training Academy. We have volunteered to participate in youth oriented activities such as PSP Camp Cadet and Deputy Pagerly's Explorer Post #027 as well as community oriented projects at local food banks. SOG encourages and leads the way in collaboration between local county agencies and wholeheartedly embraces any opportunities to serve outside organizations.

How does one evaluate an entity like SOG? Its primary mission is to respond to crisis situations and use the least amount of force necessary to restore normal operations. If you look at the tangibles, there is the obvious absence of major incidents and the reduction in violence. SOG receives a gold star. But if you dig deeper, you'll see that SOG has raised the bar for the entire industry. Anytime an Operator is among the general population in full gear it is considered a deployment. Over the course of five years, SOG has had several thousand deployments and several hundred extractions. To date, not one of these has resulted in an unjustified or excessive use of force based on the close scrutiny and after-incident reviews. As a matter of fact, SOG has intervened to prevent such incidents and which cannot be disclosed due to obvious reasons. When use of force is necessary, technology and cutting edge tactics provided safe and innovative methods to control the inmate's aggressive behavior. For us, gone are the days of the five person cell extraction where it was difficult to determine who was using what force, let alone in fair or excessive amounts, due to the perceived "dog pile" that followed. Every application of the tools deployed by an Operator is measurable and defensible in court. In fact, you would be hard pressed to find an Operator who used profanity towards an inmate, which is grounds for dismissal. Just as impressive, is the fact that SOG has not had any workers' compensation claims resulting in loss of work time due to injuries incurred in real world operations. Note that from 2002 through 2005 there were five loss work time cell extraction related injuries to staff. These facts alone justify SOG's existence. But let's dig deeper and look at the intangibles. Good leaders must first be good servants. If you look at the makeup of the SOG cadre you will notice that almost half are supervisors. Of these, half were promoted after joining SOG. More than half of the team is instructors and the remaining Operators have all

assumed leadership roles in one capacity or another. Why is this? It's because they want to serve and it is in serving that they lead. Does SOG produce leaders or are leaders attracted to SOG? Which came first, the chicken or the egg? I'm not sure, but we can all agree that it's a win-win situation. Our leadership is strategically placed throughout the rank structure and across departments and shifts. Remember the Warrior mindset? The ability to recall one's training and apply it under stressful conditions? Does the daily grind of operations within a Corrections setting qualify as stressful? Is the struggle for a leader to bring out the best in his subordinates waged on a battlefield of sorts? Is it possible to train like minded individuals to harness and retain the intensity and focus needed in a real world conflict and then carry these over in order to launch a full scale assault from an administrative perspective? Can tactics be applied administratively? This is what SOG has done. For example, let's look at the new hire testing process. The first person a candidate encounters is an Operator. His professionalism sets the tone and it is silently implied to the candidate that nothing less shall be accepted should he or she be offered employment. Design or coincidence? This same professionalism follows the Operator as he patrols the jail or walks onto a housing unit. It silently implies two very different messages to the unit officer and the inmate population. When evaluating SOG you have to consider the great strides made in such a short time. If I had to grade it, I would give it an "E" for excellence. Excellence is the unlimited ability to improve upon the quality of what you have to offer. SOG has done this from day one. Through dedication, commitment, and personal example SOG has silently conveyed the message that nothing short of excellence will be accepted. By this standard, SOG has far exceeded any benchmarks or expectations. We have saturated the environment with excellence. And that excellence translates into a safer, more secure institution.

Nothing is perfect. In hindsight, one lesson learned was that jail staff could have been better informed or educated as to what to expect from SOG prior to its implementation. This was a culture shock to many and a philosophy that may have best been ingested in small quantities over a longer period of time.

SOG's major stakeholders are the prison staff, the inmates, the civilians that access our institution, and ultimately the taxpayers. We serve each one by employing the aforementioned tactics in an effort to ensure the safest environment possible. Every time an officer returns home to his or her family or an STG member is identified or dangerous contraband is removed from the facility or an escape plan is thwarted we are providing a return on their investment. By doing so professionally and with the least amount of force necessary to achieve the objective we avoid costly litigation and save the taxpayers' money.

The SOG model has proven to be successful and for the most part has remained unchanged. However, due to budget and time constraints, the initial four week training period for new candidates has been divided into smaller training segments. Training is provided by the Senior Instructor and Senior Operators during monthly training sessions. When candidates have mastered the basic skills as deemed by the Senior Instructor they are authorized to patrol with Operators in a backup capacity. As the candidate's skill sets increase so does his responsibility. This process continues until the candidate is certified as an Operator. The entire process lasts approximately one year and has proven to be beneficial. There is no instant gratification and the time frame allows for an extended observation of the candidate.

The initial costs of this project were substantial, but so were the returns. A valid argument can be made that the investment has already been recouped in the absence of workers' compensation claims, loss of work time, and excessive force lawsuits. Since SOG handles the majority of use of force incidents, savings will be the trend moving forward. The monies initially came from an inmate welfare fund and what better way to spend it than on inmate safety. The 2013 budget called for \$54,000 to cover training expenses. Keep in mind, that Operators are covered under the Senior Instructor's insurance policy for up to two million dollars when using the trained tactics within his operational matrix, thus giving the County additional assurance should costly litigation come to fruition.

The future is bright. We will be holding tryouts in the Spring. As newer members come on board senior Operators will have the option to retire from active patrol and transition into supportive roles or initiate new projects. Currently, multiple Operators hold certifications as subject matter experts in various fields. As this trend continues,

SOG will eventually be in a position to provide training to outside agencies should the County condone or wish to pursue this direction. It is our hope that someday the SOG Center will become a central training hub providing a venue for outside training and subsequently complimentary seats to our agency. While there are few statistics to quantify the success of this program, the described results speak volumes.

- Sergeant Fernando Torres, SOG Team Leader

This submission was written by Sgt. Torres, a founding member and leader on SOG. While he graciously referenced me in this narrative, I wish to let it be known that the credit for success goes directly to a group of men who possess nobility, honor and commitment to sacrificing one's own protection and interests for the greater good of those inside our facility. Their idea of recognition is not personal – recognition to them is in being able to witness a safer, more secure operation, despite the individual costs and sacrifices.

-Janine L. Quigley, Acting Warden



BERKS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

633 COURT STREET
READING, PENNSYLVANIA 19601-4317
TELEPHONE: 610-478-6000
FAX: 610-478-6002
www.co.berks.pa.us/dept/da

John T. Adams
District Attorney
Michael J. Gombar
Chief County Detective

Dennis J. Skayhan
First Assistant District Attorney
Jonathan H. Kurland
Chief Deputy District Attorney

February 14, 2014

To whom it may concern:

In 2008 The Berks County Jail System implemented a Special Operation Group identified herein as "SOG". This group is now led by Acting Warden Janine Quigley known within the group as the "Chief of Tactical Services".

I am proud to say that my career in law enforcement began twenty-six years ago when I was first hired as a Correctional Officer at the Berks County Prison in 1987. Following my employment with the "Berks County Prison", I became a Police Officer with the City of Reading in 1990. After retiring from the City, I joined the District Attorney's Office as a "County Detective", returning to my stepping grounds of the "County of Berks".

Throughout my career, I have maintained a very respectful and professional relationship with jail staff and witnessed many positive changes at the facility, including the implementation of the SOG.

I have spent a great part of my career as a detective conducting investigations that have led to numerous arrests. In my experience, an arrest is often times the beginning of a successful case and requires additional investigations and intelligence gathering, including interviews with suspects, victims, and witnesses who are incarcerated. The work that the SOG does within the jail to help facilitate such investigative measures has greatly benefited me and my colleagues.

Recently, SOG has worked closely with me in an investigation and provided critical help in the successful prosecution by the Office of the District Attorney. SOG and its diligent work in intelligence gathering in that case prevented the victims, including a juvenile, from being the targets of further intimidation and violence at the hands of defendant. SOG provided me with all of the resources and assistance that I required to collect evidence and prosecute this defendant. This is just one recent example of the high-level work that SOG performs on a routine basis on behalf the County's residents.

In summation, I am proud to say that working with SOG and the entire staff of the Berks County Jail System has always been a pleasure, and I can truly say that the addition of this unit has been a great asset to the law enforcement family in Berks County.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ivan R. Martinez", with the number "018" written to the right of the signature.

Det. Ivan R. Martinez (018)

Quigley, Janine

From: Scolastico, John
Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2011 9:02 AM
To: Wagner, George; Quigley, Janine; Russell, Kyle; Xavios, Nancy
Cc: Smith, Jeffrey R.; Torres, Fernando; Freiwald, Paula; Harting, Brian
Subject: Gang meeting and training.

Warden Wagner,

I would like to take the time to thank you for the support and resources you and your staff have provided for the Gang Intelligence Meetings and recent training that was conducted here in Berks County. As you are probably aware, along with Paula Freiwald, I began holding gang information sharing meetings at BCJS in 2006 as part of the 222 Corridor Anti-Gang Initiative and it continues today. I started it as a way to coordinate and communicate among local law enforcement agencies regarding gang related issues and information with the idea that we could expand it to include training local law enforcement. With the support of Lt. Russell and Chief Deputy Warden Quigley, we have continued to hold monthly meetings at your facility and recently provided training to over 100 local law enforcement officers throughout Berks County. Two of your employees, Sgt. Jeffrey Smith and Correctional Officer Fernando Torres have been instrumental in the information sharing meetings and were 2 of the 5 presenters for the Gang Training and did a great job, particularly given they have done very little public speaking on this or any topic. Also, with the blessing and support of Chief Quigley, your Honor Guard presented the colors for the audience in both the morning and afternoon training sessions and were impressive. Communication continues to be a problem among law enforcement officials for various reasons, but the support from your facility and employees shows that if we do communicate with each other, we can be more productive and safer in our jobs. While I have turned the coordination of the meeting over to my successor in the gang unit, Probation Officer Brian Harting, I continue to attend the meetings regularly and I am very pleased as to the number and variety of law enforcement members that attend. We have had officers from Juvenile Probation, Adult Probation, State Parole, local FBI agents, Sheriff's Deputies, Youth Center, Reading PD, Muhlenberg PD, West Reading PD, Wyomissing PD, Cumru PD, Central Berks PD (including Chief Garipoli who has been a champion of our cause), etc... and all have actively participated and shared their concerns with gang activity in their facilities and jurisdictions. We continue to promote our cause and encourage all departments to participate. Thank you again for all of your support and I look forward to our continued relationship in this and all that we do.

Thanks and stay safe.

John C. Scolastico Jr.
Assistant Chief
Berks County Adult Probation/Parole Office
633 Court St. Reading, PA 19601 7th floor
610-478-3400 EXT. 5440
610-478-3451-FAX

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Jan
2010

RETIREES' CLUB OF TEAMSTERS LOCAL #429

Meetings Held Third Wednesday of the Month
10:00 A.M. Union Hall
1055 Spring Street, Wyomissing, PA. 19610

President

Ronald M. Yeity
1425 Museum Road
Reading, PA. 19610
Phone: 610-374-9929

Vice President

Irvin Epting, Jr.
1701 Elizabeth Avenue
Reading, PA. 19605
Phone: 610-929-1091

Recording Secretary

Dolores Young
8 Pinacle Dr
Mohnton, PA 19540
Phone: 610-777-8984

Treasurer

Patricia Strunk
208 Pleasant View Dr
Douglassville, PA 19518
Phone: 610-689-1002

Trustee

Gerald D. Ray
614 N. Wyomissing Ave
Wyomissing, PA 19610
Phone: 610-372-8311

Trustee

Martin Meleon
3033 Octagon Ave
Sinking Spring, PA 19608
Phone: 610-678-2414

Trustee

Kenneth A. Kohl
820 Philadelphia Ave
Reading, PA 19607
Phone: 610-777-9489

**Mr. George Wagner, Warden
Berks County Prison**

Dear Sir:

**On behalf of the Retirees of Teamsters Local Union #429, we would like to
Personally Thank You for the wonderful demonstration your SPECIAL
OPERATIONS GROUP put on for our benefit at the Union Hall on January
17th, 2010.**

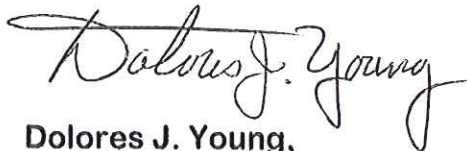
**It was totally awesome and we are so proud to have this "Group" of fine
Young men as part of Berks County History.**

**THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts and hopefully we will be able to
See another demonstration in the near future.**

**I am attaching a copy of our February Newsletter which gives a very brief
Description of what transpired during the "demo."**

Again, Thank You so much.

Sincerely,



**Dolores J. Young,
Recording Secretary**

Encl.

BERKS COUNTY PRISON

INMATE COMMUNICATION FORM

FROM: Nicole [redacted] BCP# [redacted] DATE: 11/16/08

HOUSING ASSIGNMENT F-202 WORK ASSIGNMENT

- TO: WARDEN
- CHOOSE CHAPLAIN
- ONE DIRECTOR OF TREATMENT (Classification, Assignments, Programs)
- ONLY DIRECTOR OF RECORDS (Criminal Case Records, Inmate Accounts)
- SHIFT COMMANDER/LT.
- ASS'T WARDEN
- KITCHEN SUPERVISOR
- DEPUTY WARDEN
- COMMISSARY

COMMUNICATION (Write legibly, supply all relevant details. Forms which are unclear or contain demeaning language, threats, or profanity will not be addressed). ONLY ONE TOPIC PER COMMUNICATION PLEASE.

Sir, I'm writing you about the special team that is here at BCP. There was an article in the paper on Thursday about the new team that I totally disagree on. After having as many problems that I had in this jail with inmates & officers I for one feel much safer with this new team. There was a whole lot of stuff going on in F unit that was out of control. A lot of us felt unsafe and was complaining to our families about not feeling safe. Now with this new team those fears are gone. Your new team made it very clear that they're here to protect the officers but also us inmates. And they have more than prove just that. I for one do not want to see this team go. I feel that with them here this jail is much

NOTE: Writing in "response" section will result in form being filed unanswered. Inmate Signature * Nicole [redacted]

RESPONSE _____ DATE 11-18-08 STAFF MEMBER [Signature]

Noted.

CC: _____

BERKS COUNTY PRISON

INMATE COMMUNICATION FORM

FROM: Nicole [redacted] BCP# [redacted] DATE: 11/16/08

HOUSING ASSIGNMENT [redacted] WORK ASSIGNMENT _____

- TO: WARDEN ASS'T WARDEN DEPUTY WARDEN _____
- CHOOSE CHAPLAIN KITCHEN SUPERVISOR COMMISSARY _____
- ONE _____
- ONLY DIRECTOR OF TREATMENT (Classification, Assignments, Programs)
- DIRECTOR OF RECORDS (Criminal Case Records, Inmate Accounts)
- SHIFT COMMANDER/LT. _____

COMMUNICATION (Write legibly, supply all relevant details. Forms which are unclear or contain demeaning language, threats, or profanity will not be addressed). ONLY ONE TOPIC PER COMMUNICATION PLEASE.

Sister, I for one do not have ~~the~~ any problem with this new team there only enforcing the rules here at BCP. I feel the only people that have a problem with this new team is the ones that create the problems here at BCP this goes for inmates and officers. I'm not afraid of the new team. No one should be afraid of them if there doing the right things. I have had my cell ~~search~~ search by this special team and there respectful. I am one that writes alot of grievance when things are wrong so it's only fair to write and let it be known that this team is doing a very good job to protect us as well as enforcing the rules.

Thank you for your time

NOTE: Writing in "response section will result in form being filed unanswered

Inmate Signature * Nicole [redacted]

RESPONSE _____ DATE _____ STAFF MEMBER _____

CC: _____

Regional News

Berks County prison special ops group a first for Pennsylvania

By Lynn A. Gladieux
Berks-Mont Correspondent

When the Berks County Prison Emergency Response Team walks into a room, people take notice.

The 14 men who make up the team have just completed a rigorous recruitment and training process to become the first certified group of their kind in Pennsylvania.

They appeared at a recent county commissioners meeting and were introduced to County Commissioners Mark C. Scott, Christian Y. Leinbach and Kevin S. Barnhardt.

The team of specially trained prison employees will be responsible for handling dangerous and high-risk situations at the prison including hostage negotiation and recovery, cell extraction, transportation of dangerous inmates, and prison riots.

Scott said he saw the formation of the team as a "double-win" in that the use of team reduces the possibility of litigation and enhances public safety.

Leinbach agreed, saying, "I am totally impressed with this organization and proud that this is the first team of this kind in Pennsylvania."

Barnhardt said he was struck by the professionalism of the men. "It shows respect for the inmates, the same dignity and respect that the staff gets. Staff, inmates and visitors are safer."

He went on to say, "What has not been shared with the public is that there are so many levels of compliance without even touching the inmate," in refer-



The Berks County Prison Emergency Response Team of specially trained prison employees will be responsible for handling dangerous and high-risk situations at the prison including hostage negotiation and recovery, cell extraction, transportation of dangerous inmates, and prison riots.

Berks-Mont photo by Lynn A. Gladieux

ence to the numerous levels of procedure involved in handling a disruptive situation. "What we've seen and observed is really commendable."

The men, all volunteers, were chosen from an initial group of 31.

Captain Janine L. Quigley,

Chief Deputy Warden of the prison, said the group had been fully trained to manage every potential incident that might occur within the prison.

Quigley also introduced Lieutenant Miguel Castro, the unit's commander.

Quigley told the commis-

sioners, "There are no tangible rewards. These men have stepped up to accept the risk for our brothers and for the inmates."

She said that the men are taking on this responsibility in addition to their regular duties at the prison, and are receiving no

additional compensation for their work.

Quigley also reminded everyone of the risks involved for the team. "It is our goal that each man go home at the end of the night. This isn't personal, it's business, and we're in the life-saving business."

After the meeting, the commissioners shook the hand of each of the team members and treated the group to a lunch prepared and paid for by the commissioners.

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Special Operations Group goal: Keep prison safe Tactical unit trains to handle events that go beyond the ordinary at Berks County Prison

By Jason A. Kahl
Reading Eagle

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Stun grenades and heavily armed officers were standing by as the Special Operations Group at Berks County Prison cut through a reinforced door to defuse a hostage situation.

After a flurry of rifle fire and an entry of less than a minute, the call was "all clear."

There was no riot or prison break. This was just part of the monthly training for the elite operators in the jail's Special Operations Group, the only Tier 1 tactical unit in the state.

The group, which started in November 2008, has trained with Her Majesty's Prison Service from Great Britain and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on perilous tasks such as hostage rescue, high-risk security patrols and cell extractions.

The goal is to keep everyone at the prison safe - co-workers, civilians and inmates.

And the group's record speaks for itself: no major incidents, escapes or problems since the group formed in response to a hostage situation in Cambria County in 2006 that left one inmate dead, another injured and a guard seriously beaten after being taken hostage.

"I saw the video of the incident and it certainly left me with sleepless nights," said Janine L. Quigley, Berks chief deputy warden. "That's what prompted us to move with this."

The 13 members of the team, all men - several with military and martial arts backgrounds - are trained and certified by the U.S. Corrections Special Operations Group, Williamsburg, Va.

The group trains government correctional agencies in a hands-off approach to controlling situations by using weapons and tactics.

The old style of handling problems in correctional institutions involved more hands-on action with more manpower and physical contact, including tackling.

The unit uses training and an array of weapons to handle unpredictable situations.

Some of the operators are always on patrol at the facility, and others are always on call.

Operators wear special uniforms and ballistic vests and carry 30 to 40 pounds of gear at all times. Their gear includes a stun gun, pepper spray, an earpiece and microphone for radio communications, distraction devices, cameras mounted on their shoulders and a Mossberg 590 rifle.

All members of the group are correctional officers who volunteer and must try out for the group, which emphasizes physical fitness and mental awareness. They do not receive extra pay for their work. Members said they get enough reward just knowing they are making the jail safer.

Quigley said the group shares resources and sometimes trains with other local law enforcement agencies. All the training and equipment was funded by money collected at the jail from the commissary and telephone fees to improve the welfare of inmates.

Members of the group can appear intimidating and often roam through the prison. They can conduct interviews or search cells and inmates at any time as they collect intelligence and

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keep an eye on what is happening among the more than 1,000 inmates in the prison on any given day.

When they started working, members explained they were there to protect inmates and staff.

"The kind of person we're looking for has the mentality of being a servant and a strong sense of honor," said Lt. Kyle Russell, the team leader and acting executive officer of the group. "You've got to have that humble mentality."

The group has its headquarters near the prison in Bern Township. Members practice shooting and do calisthenics and unorthodox training routines to prepare for work in close quarters.

Operator Fernando Torres, who has been with the group since it started, had been part of the prior emergency response team. He was in the Marine Corps for five years and spent 10 years as a state trooper.

"I saw that this was something we needed," he said. "Before we had limited abilities. I think this will affect generations to come. We all have families and all want to go home safe."

Operator Rich Gurry, 25, a newer member, joined last March after graduating from college.

"I would not be on this team if it was not something I thought was going to make a difference here," said Gurry of Bushkill, Pike County. "We're always there making an effort for anyone that needs help. It's awesome. I've learned things here I never thought I would ever be a part of. I'm glad I ended up here. This is great."

Quigley said special operations is just part of the team at the prison.

"Our line correctional officers are just as vital as SOG operators," she said. "It's a system where we all work together and they play just as vital a role."

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