

TACTICAL WEAPONS



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Military & Police

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Display Until Sept. 29, 2008

By Chuck Menley

Medics Armed And Ready!

Training for when docs may have to take a life to save a life in the hot zone.

There is a growing trend in the tactical community to utilize qualified medical personnel as an integral component of the tactical unit. This trend is receiving various levels of acceptance by tactical teams, commanders, and agencies. Some hold an elitist view of tactical operations. They view medics as outsiders and believe that there is no justification for medical personnel of any stripe to enter this exclusive domain. However, most understand the efficacy of a qualified tactical medic in your back pocket anytime a team enters the hot zone.

Tactical teams readily accept the inherent risks of tactical operations. A team with its own tactical medic not only acknowledges this risk but proactively manages it as well. To secure this important asset, teams often have to look beyond the horizon. Most agencies will not have someone in-house with an adequate medical background.

Fire department medics are usually the first place to look. Depending on your relationship with your fire agency as well as the progressiveness of your governing authority, this may be an excellent source.

Consider the local EMS (emergency medical services). Emergency department doctors and nurses, or ambulance service paramedics and EMT's (emergency medical technicians) may be the right people to augment the tactical team. Do not make the mistake of focusing on men only. It is not unusual to find women serving on tactical units.

Team Integration

Once you have selected a suitable candidate, your efforts turn to the task of fully integrating the tactical medic into your team. This means training. And the immediate question is just how do you train tactical medical personnel?

Tactical principles can be absorbed through the process of observation and mentoring by experienced team members. Once the key concepts have been learned,

the medic can then progress to engaging in tactical training scenarios.

Firearm training is another matter and may require a different approach. The medic must possess rudimentary firearms skill and safety habits before



In addition to handgun training, medics should also be trained with shoulder-fired weapons like the HK MP5.

more comprehensive training can take place. Most new tactical medics will probably have little or no practical firearms experience. Keep in mind that most LE firearms instructors are oriented to main-

tain standard firearm skills, not develop them. Academy firearms instructors may be more adept at developing skill among inexperienced shooters but the "boot camp" nature of academy training may not be the best way to train tactical medics.

Set The Training Pace

Tactical medics are typically not from the LE community, so trainers must take care not to throw them into "the deep end of the pool." Training tactical medics must proceed incrementally and be appropriately paced. Many trainers subscribe to the "crawl-walk-run" model of skill development. CRAWL: Initially, your medic must master the basics of marksmanship and safety. WALK: The next level of training will introduce elements such as multiple targets, malfunctions and reload drills, multiple shooting positions, low light techniques, etc. RUN: Skills such as shooting and movement techniques will bring your medic to a skill level where they can be incorporated into the team.

An important part of the firearms training program is a solid indoctrination in the legal and moral aspects involved in the use of deadly force. There are some obvious and not so obvious reasons for

this. The most obvious, of course, is that the medic may be required to protect their own life from a deadly threat. Coupled with this is the moral obligation to protect another team member from the same.

A less obvious reason is that the medic will most likely be present when the team utilizes deadly force as a necessary method of resolution to a tactical incident. The medic will probably render medical aid to a suspect injured by the direct action of the tactical team.

A medic with an ambiguous understanding of deadly force issues because of outside influences (such as the entertainment media) may not be morally prepared to support the team's actions.

The type of firearms used to train tactical medics raises another set of issues. If the team subscribes to the concept of handgun uniformity, then your medic will carry the same handgun as the rest of the team. The medic will be obliged to master whatever pistol they are required to carry. If the medic has a handgun choice within a range of options, then a more subjective equipment decision can be made. Handgun models with one trigger mode may offer the best type for training and the eventual deployment of the tactical medic.

Individualize to Suit Team Needs

The extent to which the medic will use other special weapons is a matter for each team to decide. Tactical medics should at least be familiar with the all of the standard team weaponry in case an injured member's firearm has to be rendered safe. There is also the extreme case where the medic may have to utilize a special weapon in an emergency.

Team commanders and their agencies have choices regarding the deployment of tactical medical support. Traditionally, emergency medical support has been staged a set distance (and minutes) away, staffed by competent medical personnel without any knowledge of tactical operations. But consider an armed and equipped tactical medic standing at your side, ready to make heroic medical efforts to save the life of their fellow team members. Which would you choose?

About the author: Chuck Menley is an instructor for the International School of Tactical Medicine. Contact him through the ISTM website at tacticalmedicine.com.

BLACKHAWK'S SERPA HOLSTER

In response to operator demand, BlackHawk Products Group of Norfolk, VA has developed a tactical thigh version of the very popular SERPA Technology Retention Holster. This allows the operator to have a tactical holster that offers unequalled speed and comfort, with the security of the patented SERPA locking system.

The Blackhawk SERPA holster is constructed of durable carbon fiber synthetic and allows a rapid draw when the pistol is needed, and locks securely upon re-holstering.



Unique features include:

- Thigh platform molds itself to the size of the user's leg
- Quick-disconnect swivel attachments
- Adjustable non-slip straps keep the holster for shifting
- Attachment points allow quick mounting and changing for duty-gear

To draw your sidearm from the SERPA holster, simply grasp your handgun in a natural firm ready-to-draw grip. Your index finger will naturally find and align itself with the finger-activation platform. Depress the finger-activation platform, releasing the lock mechanism while drawing the gun from the holster.

The SERPA system is great for the tactical medic who may need quick access to their sidearm, yet keep it secured when not in use. To learn more about the company's tactical gear visit blackhawk.com

— Lawrence Heiskell, MD