

# Operations Planning and Deconfliction

## 608.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for planning, deconfliction and execution of high-risk operations.

Additional guidance on planning and serving high-risk warrants is provided in the Warrant Service Policy.

### 608.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**High-risk operations** - Operations, including service of search and seizure warrants, arrest warrants and other enforcement operations that are likely to present higher risks than are commonly faced by deputies daily, including suspected fortified locations, reasonable risk of violence or confrontation with multiple persons, or reason to suspect that persons anticipate the operation.

## 608.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to properly plan and carry out high-risk operations, including participation in a regional deconfliction system, in order to provide coordination, enhance the safety of members and the public, decrease the risk of compromising investigations and prevent duplicating efforts.

## 608.3 EST COMMANDER

The Sheriff or Assistant Sheriff will designate a member of this office to act as the EST Commander.

The EST Commander will develop and maintain a Threat Assessment/EST Assistance Request form to assess, plan and coordinate operations. This form should provide a process to identify high-risk operations.

The EST Commander or designee will review Threat Assessment/EST Assistance Request form with involved supervisors to determine whether a particular incident qualifies as a high-risk operation. The EST Commander or designee will also have the responsibility for coordinating operations that are categorized as high risk. In consultation with the EST Commander, or designee, EST operations are scalable to the size and scope of the particular operation/incident.

## 608.4 THREAT ASSESSMENT/EST ASSISTANCE REQUEST

### 608.4.1 THREAT ASSESSMENT/EST ASSISTANCE REQUEST FORM PREPARATION

Deputies assigned as operational leads for any operation that may qualify as a high-risk operation shall complete a Threat Assessment/EST Assistance Request form.

When preparing the form, the deputy should query all relevant and reasonably available intelligence resources for information about the subject of investigation, others who may be

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present and the involved location. These sources may include regional intelligence and criminal justice databases, target deconfliction systems, firearm records, commercial databases and property records. Where appropriate, the deputy should also submit information to these resources.

The deputy should gather available information that includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Photographs, including aerial photographs, if available, of the involved location, neighboring yards and obstacles.
- (b) Maps of the location.
- (c) Diagrams of any property and the interior of any buildings that are involved.
- (d) Historical information about the subject of investigation (e.g., history of weapon possession or use, known mental illness, known drug use, threats against police, gang affiliation, criminal history).
- (e) Historical information about others who may be present at the location (e.g., other criminals, innocent third parties, dependent adults, children, animals).
- (f) Obstacles associated with the location (e.g., fortification, booby traps, reinforced doors/windows, surveillance measures, number and type of buildings, geographic and perimeter barriers, the number and types of weapons likely to be present, information that suggests the presence of explosives, chemicals or other hazardous materials, the potential for multiple dwellings or living spaces, availability of keys/door combinations).
- (g) Other environmental factors (e.g., nearby venues such as schools and day care centers, proximity of adjacent homes or other occupied buildings, anticipated pedestrian and vehicle traffic at the time of service).
- (h) Other available options that may minimize the risk to deputies and others (e.g., making an off-site arrest or detention of the subject of investigation).

#### 608.4.2 THREAT ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Deputies will present the Threat Assessment form and other relevant documents (such as copies of search warrants and affidavits and arrest warrants) to their supervisor. Once approved they will coordinate with their Division/On-Call Commanders to the EST Commander. The Threat Assessment, EST Assistance Request, and any supporting documentation will be forwarded to the Assistant Sheriff/Sheriff for final approval.

The supervisor and EST Commander, or designee, shall confer and determine the level of risk. Supervisors should take reasonable actions if there is a change in circumstances that elevates the risks associated with the operation.

The completion of the Threat Assessment should not delay the activation of the EST in exigent circumstances. When confronted with these incidents, the circumstances should be reviewed verbally, and the Threat Assessment form completed as soon as practical.

Law Enforcement officers are often presented with rapidly evolving information and unique circumstances which may necessitate officers to take immediate action to protect and safeguard

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the public. These incidents, such as in-progress high-risk incidents, may prevent the immediate notification of the EST Commander, and/or the completion of the Threat Assessment. In these cases, officers shall use good judgment, take appropriate action to safeguard the public, and notify their supervision as soon as reasonably possible.

#### **608.4.3 HIGH-RISK OPERATIONS**

If the EST Commander, after consultation with the involved supervisor, determines that the operation is high risk, the EST Commander should:

- (a) Determine what resources will be needed at the location, and contact and/or place on standby any of the following appropriate and available resources:
  - 1. Emergency Services Team (EST)
  - 2. Additional personnel
  - 3. Outside agency assistance
  - 4. Special equipment
  - 5. Medical personnel
  - 6. Persons trained in negotiation
  - 7. Additional surveillance
  - 8. Canines
  - 9. Property Unit or analytical personnel to assist with cataloguing seizures
  - 10. Forensic specialists
  - 11. Specialized mapping for larger or complex locations
- (b) Contact the appropriate office members or other agencies as warranted to begin preparation.
- (c) Ensure that all legal documents such as search warrants are complete and have any modifications reasonably necessary to support the operation.
- (d) Coordinate the actual operation.

#### **608.5 DECONFLICTION**

The case officer will make every effort to deconflict with allied agency with high-risk operation.

#### **608.6 OPERATIONS PLAN**

The EST Commander should ensure that a written operations plan is developed for all high-risk operations. Plans should also be considered for other operations that would benefit from having a formal plan.

The plan should address such issues as:

- (a) Operation goals, objectives, and strategies.
- (b) Operation location and people:

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- (a) The subject of investigation (e.g., history of weapon possession/use, known mental illness issues, known drug use, threats against police, gang affiliation, criminal history)
- (b) The location (e.g., fortification, booby traps, reinforced doors/windows, surveillance cameras and/or lookouts, number/type of buildings, geographic and perimeter barriers, the number and types of weapons likely to be present, information that suggests the presence of explosives, chemicals or other hazardous materials, the potential for multiple dwellings or living spaces, availability of keys/door combinations), including aerial photos, if available, and maps of neighboring yards and obstacles, diagrams and other visual aids
- (c) Other environmental factors (e.g., nearby venues such as schools and day care centers, proximity of adjacent homes or other occupied buildings, anticipated pedestrian, and vehicle traffic at the time of service)
- (d) Identification of other people who may be present in or around the operation, such as other criminal suspects, innocent third parties and children
- (c) Information from the risk assessment form by attaching a completed copy in the operational plan.
  - 1. The volume or complexity of the information may indicate that the plan includes a synopsis of the information contained on the risk assessment form to ensure clarity and highlighting of critical information.
- (d) Participants and their roles.
  - 1. An adequate number of uniformed deputies should be included in the operation team to provide reasonable notice of a legitimate law enforcement operation.
  - 2. How all participants will be identified as law enforcement.
- (e) Whether deconfliction submissions are current and all involved individuals, groups and locations have been deconflicted to the extent reasonably practicable.
- (f) Identification of all communications channels and call-signs.
- (g) Use of force issues.
- (h) Foot/vehicle chases
- (i) Body Worn Cameras (BWC)
- (j) Contingencies for handling medical emergencies (e.g., services available at the location, closest hospital, closest trauma center).
- (k) Plans for detaining people who are not under arrest.
- (l) Contingencies for handling children, dependent adults, animals and other people who might be at the location in accordance with the Child Abuse, Adult Abuse, Child and Dependent Adult Safety and Animal Control policies.
- (m) Communications plan.
- (n) Responsibilities for writing, collecting, reviewing and approving reports.

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#### **608.6.1 OPERATIONS PLAN RETENTION**

Since the operations plan contains intelligence information and descriptions of law enforcement tactics, it shall not be filed with the report. The operations plan shall be stored separately and retained in accordance with the established records retention schedule.

#### **608.7 OPERATIONS BRIEFING**

A briefing should be held prior to the commencement of any high-risk operation to allow all participants to understand the operation, see and identify each other, identify roles and responsibilities and ask questions or seek clarification as needed. Anyone who is not present at the briefing should not respond to the operation location without specific supervisory approval.

- (a) The briefing should include a verbal review of plan elements, using visual aids, to enhance the participants' understanding of the operations plan.
- (b) Any participants should be provided a copy of the operations plan and search warrant, if requested. Any items to be seized should be identified at the briefing.
- (c) The EST Commander shall ensure that all participants are visually identifiable as law enforcement officers and their last name and badge number are prominently displayed on their outer vest carrier.
  - (a) Exceptions may be made by the EST Commander for deputies who are conducting surveillance or working under cover. However, those members exempt from visual identification should be able to transition to a visible law enforcement indicator at the time of enforcement actions, such as entries or arrests, if necessary.
- (d) The briefing should include details of the communications plan.
  - (a) It is the responsibility of the EST Commander to ensure that the Duty Officer is notified of the time and location of the operation, and to provide a copy of the operation plan prior to deputies arriving at the location.
  - (b) If the radio channel needs to be monitored by Emergency Communications Center, the dispatcher assigned to monitor the operation should attend the briefing, if practicable, but at a minimum should receive a copy of the operation plan.
  - (c) The briefing should include a communications check to ensure that all participants are able to communicate with the available equipment on the designated radio channel.

#### **608.8 EST PARTICIPATION**

If the Sheriff, Assistant Sheriff or EST Commander determines that EST participation is appropriate, the EST Commander and the EST supervisor shall work together to develop a written plan. The EST supervisor shall assume operational control until all persons at the scene are appropriately detained and it is safe to begin a search. When this occurs, the EST supervisor shall transfer control of the scene to the handling supervisor. This transfer should be communicated to the deputies present.

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### **608.9 MEDIA ACCESS**

No advance information regarding planned operations shall be released without the approval of the Sheriff or Assistant Sheriff. Any media inquiries or press release after the fact shall be handled in accordance with the Media Relations Policy.

### **608.10 OPERATIONS DEBRIEFING**

High-risk operations should be debriefed as soon as reasonably practicable. The debriefing should include as many participants as possible. This debrief may be separate from any EST debriefing.

### **608.11 TRAINING**

The Training Coordinator should ensure deputies and EST team members who participate in operations subject to this policy should receive periodic training including, but not limited to, topics such as legal issues, deconfliction practices, operations planning concepts and reporting requirements.