

6-11 Tactical Operations, Building Entries, Ballistic Entry Vests, Helmets, Soft Vest Covers, Shirts & Jerseys- Officer Safety

NARCOTICS BUREAU

DETECTIVE DIVISION

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT

Bureau Order Number: **6-11**

Subject: **TACTICAL OPERATIONS, BUILDING ENTRIES,**

BALLISTIC ENTRY VESTS, HELMETS, SOFT VEST COVERS, SHIRTS & JERSEYS - OFFICER SAFETY

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I. CONCEPT

A. Purpose

The purpose of this order is to provide policy and guidelines to delineate the number and configuration of, equipment deployed by, and the appearance of Narcotics Bureau personnel during entry and other tactical operations. This order also sets policy and guidelines for the use of ballistic vests, helmets, the display of items of identification and other officer safety issues.

NOTE: It is impossible to anticipate each and every possibility or potential contingency surrounding

dynamic tactical building entries or other tactical operations. This order is intended to provide general guidance and instruction for Narcotics Bureau personnel and others participating or assisting in Bureau tactical operations. It is not intended to be a comprehensive “How-to-Guide” or provide step by step instructions to cover every possible contingency.

B. Background

Narcotics investigations that culminate in dynamic building entries to serve arrest or search warrants necessarily involve risk and the potential for injury or death for personnel, suspects and bystanders. Through advanced training, careful planning and thoughtful execution, many of these hazards can be reduced.

To assist in making all operations safer, certain equipment is issued to Narcotics Bureau personnel for their use during tactical operations. Tactical operations include high, moderate and low risk operations.

For purposes of this order, the definition of “tactical operations” encompass all potentially hazardous events where there is a possibility for confrontation with a suspect, (e.g. arrests, service of warrants, undercover operations, supervising controlled buys, “rip operations,” surveillance or any other field operation where law enforcement officers come in contact with suspects who might resist, fight or flee from capture, etc.).

C. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all permanent Narcotics Bureau personnel, on-loan personnel and police personnel assigned to LASD led task forces.

D. Accountability

NOTE: Bureau Order #6-11 must be read in conjunction with Bureau Orders #5-8, (Operations Plans), #6-1, (Search warrants, Probation and Parole Searches, Consent Searches & Arrest Warrants), and #2-10, (Use of Communications Equipment), to obtain a full understanding of the scope of these orders. Each contains subject matter and information about tactical operations that is interrelated and compliments material in each of the other three Bureau Orders.

Bureau personnel will be held accountable for being familiar with and strictly adhering to the individual and collective contents of these orders. Sergeants and Lieutenants are responsible for ensuring that their subordinates are aware of and comply with these orders.

II. POLICY

A. Entry Team Staffing

1. As a general rule, most Narcotics Bureau building entry operations require a team that consists of a minimum **of five** sworn Narcotics Bureau members, (a team sergeant and four detectives). However, that number may need to be increased depending upon the size or configuration of the target location and/or the number of individuals anticipated to be encountered. The five member team configuration shall always be the basic starting point when planning building

entries.

2. Each time a tactical entry is planned, personnel **shall** consider the following as part of the planning process:

a. Examine the feasibility of utilizing an SEB, Tactical Entry Team, (TET), to make the entry whenever it appears that such use would enhance Bureau safety and efficiency.

Some examples where a TET could be utilized are: a target location that has a complicated layout, not enough Narcotics Bureau personnel are available to make up a complete entry team, the entrance to the location makes it particularly difficult to access or where too many “unknown” factors exist. Special Enforcement Bureau personnel should be contacted for consultation or whenever questions arise or general guidance is sought.

b. Examine the feasibility of detaining primary suspects away

from the location prior to the entry, securing them and then returning to the location with a key to conduct a controlled "soft entry." This technique, while certainly not hazard free, has almost always proven to be effective in reducing the potential for confrontations during entries.

Personnel utilizing this technique must adhere to the same staffing, equipment and identification requirements as described in this order. **While this technique can reduce the potential for confrontation, it does not eliminate this possibility. Personnel must not let their guard down and must be fully prepared for a confrontation as they enter the location.**

Sergeants and Lieutenants shall ensure that the above is considered during the planning of all tactical operations.

3. In circumstances where a forced or dynamic building entry is not required, the number of entry personnel may be reduced. In these circumstances, the Crew Sergeant and Investigating Officer, (IO), shall discuss the proposed operation in advance with the concerned Zone Lieutenant. If the circumstances indicate that the operation

can be conducted safely with a smaller number of personnel, the Zone Lieutenant may authorize a reasonable reduction commensurate with available intelligence, sound tactical consideration and common sense.

Some examples where a reduction in entry personnel may be appropriate include: where the location is clearly unoccupied; where the location is an outbuilding, (shed, garage, etc.), where the location is an open business or where the search warrant is for records only.

NOTE: When considering a reduction in the number of personnel participating in any entry operation, supervisors must be ever mindful that they will be held fully accountable for the safety of their personnel.

4. It is the policy of the Narcotics Bureau that all entry and search teams shall be comprised exclusively of trained Narcotics Bureau personnel. Personnel from other Department units or other police agencies will not be utilized to fill entry team positions without the specific authorization of the responsible Zone lieutenant and then only under the most compelling of circumstances. Exceptions to this policy are:

On-loan personnel who have received tactical entry instruction and are actively working as part of a Bureau crew or unit.

Task force personnel assigned to a Bureau led task force, (e.g. Cal-Met, GANET, etc.).

NOTE: Personnel not assigned to the Narcotics Bureau may assist in the operation by holding a perimeter position, conducting administrative duties, conducting traffic control, conducting prisoner security and booking or any other function not part of the active entry and search of the location.

5. Team Briefing - Bureau Order 5-8 mandates a face to face briefing with all participants:

A briefing attended by all participating personnel shall be conducted prior to the commencement of the operation. All personnel who are assigned to participate in a Narcotics Bureau tactical operation shall physically attend this briefing and then sign the roster indicating their presence. Briefings via telephone or separate briefings of individuals are not allowed. The possibility of mis-communication, mis-identification of participants and errors increase when all personnel are not present at a central briefing.

This policy includes Canine deputies who are going to directly participate as a member of the tactical entry team or will hold a containment position during the initial entry.

Any deviation from this policy must be pre-approved by the concerned Zone Lieutenant and be based on compelling reasoning and sound tactics.

Refer to Bureau Orders 5-8 and 6-1 for additional information on operations plans and search procedures.

6. Team Supervision - regardless of perceived threat level, all building entries

and tactical operations shall be directly supervised by a Narcotics Bureau supervisor at the minimum, permanent rank of Sergeant.

The team supervisor carries dual responsibilities during tactical operations and entries. First, the primary role of the

sergeant/supervisor is to supervise and direct team members; in the planning and investigative portion of the operation; during the operation itself and again after the operation has stabilized. Second, the sergeant must participate as a member of the entry team, observing and directing team members throughout the operation.

During operations and entries, the sergeant is responsible for maintaining a position that will allow the maximum ability to observe and direct the various team members and permit rapid tactical decisions throughout the operation. During the initial entry, the supervisor must not be positioned first in the entry line, but toward the center or end of the line.

Sergeants, at their discretion and if certified, may deploy a specialized weapon,(e.g. M-4 rifle/MP5), so long as it does not interfere with conducting critical decision making or other supervisory responsibilities at a critical juncture during the operation.

B. Ballistic Protection

1. All personnel participating in tactical operations including entry or potentially hazardous arrest or search operations shall wear the Bureau issued Black Tactical Ballistic Entry Vest and the Bureau issued RBR black combat level IIIA Ballistic Helmet. Eye protection, (e.g. goggles), is recommended for all tactical entries.

Personnel issued a tactical vest with removable shoulder armor, shall always wear the shoulder armor during tactical entries and high risk arrest or search operations. Personnel issued a tactical vest with a removable ballistic protection plate have the option of removing the plate. **It is highly recommended the ballistic**

protection plate be worn during tactical operations but it is optional. There shall be no exceptions to the above requirements other than personnel operating in an undercover capacity.

2. Personnel participating in other potentially hazardous operations, (e.g. area search for a suspect, vehicle stop, money flash or an arrest/detention situation), shall at a minimum wear Department approved ballistic body armor and clearly visible means of identification. Depending upon the situation, serious consideration

should be given to utilizing the full Black Tactical Ballistic Entry Vest and the Bureau issued RBR black combat level IIIA Ballistic Helmet to provide maximum adequate protection against potential threats.

3. Personnel participating in routine field operations that are not considered immediately hazardous but still carry a potential for confrontation, (e.g. surveillances, controlled buys, etc.), must be prepared for any contingency. What starts out as a routine operation can rapidly evolve into a dynamic confrontation or arrest situation with little warning.

4. Undercover Operations - Personnel operating in an undercover capacity generally cannot wear protective body armor as its use would reveal their law enforcement status and are exempted from the equipment and identification requirements specified in this order.

All backup/rescue personnel covering the undercover operation shall wear ballistic protection as described above (in section **B1**, entry or potentially hazardous arrest or search operations), to be able to provide immediate rescue or emergency aid for undercover personnel.

C. Basic Equipment

1. To ensure the ability of Bureau personnel to respond to any threat during field activities, they shall, at a minimum, have the following equipment in their immediate possession: an authorized firearm in a secure holster, additional ammunition, approved ballistic body armor with identifying outerwear and insignia, (e.g. raid jacket, vest cover, jersey or other form of identification), portable radio, handcuffs, badge and identification, and at least one less than lethal weapon, (e.g. OC spray, baton or collapsible baton, etc.).

These items shall be within the immediate reach of personnel to allow them to rapidly react to changing

conditions and

emergencies (e.g. in a “go bag” on the seat next to the member).

NOTE: The use of protective knee & elbow pads, shin guards and gloves during tactical operations is highly recommended for maximum personal protection.

D. Identification

1. To conduct effective narcotics investigations, personnel must conceal their affiliation with law enforcement. This is usually accomplished by growing facial hair, displaying piercings, jewelry, tattoos and/or wearing clothing designed to permit investigators to blend in with the clientele they are investigating.

While these concealing factors are extremely effective for investigative purposes, they make it extremely difficult for uniformed law enforcement personnel to recognize investigators as members of law enforcement. Personnel sometimes overlook the identification “problem” and operate as though they were in uniform. This situation has resulted in several tragic “police on police” confrontations, where officers have been injured or killed by other officers who did not recognize the law enforcement status of the undercover or off-duty officer. Bureau investigators must be vigilant and presume they will not be immediately recognized as members of law enforcement while engaging in law enforcement action.

For maximum officer safety during tactical and visible investigatory operations, personnel must be readily identifiable as law enforcement officers. Vests, jerseys, shirts and/or vest covers

shall be worn at all times which displays insignia that clearly identify team members as law enforcement personnel. During all operations, at a minimum, identifying insignia shall be clearly visible from the front and rear of each member.

During tactical entries and other dynamic operations, identifying insignia shall be visible from the front, rear

and both sides of the member. This shall be accomplished by wearing vests, shirts or raid jackets, or combination of the three that display shoulder patches as well as the "Sheriff" or "Police" insignia on the front and back.

Nothing shall be worn over any cover that would conceal or restrict viewing of identifying insignia.

During searches and investigations that occur after a tactical operation has been stabilized, participating personnel shall, at all times, wear clothing, vest covers, shirts, raid jackets and/or mesh jerseys that clearly identify them as law enforcement personnel.

Other than personnel operating in an undercover capacity, there shall be no exceptions to the above requirements.

2. Uniform: To reduce potential mis-identification and increase officer safety during dynamic entry operations, all personnel participating as part of a tactical entry team shall all wear clothing that is the same color and style, (either black or solid green military style or class "B" pants along with matching shirts bearing imprinted sheriff's patches and emblems).

NOTE: Although the green shirt with the yellow "Sheriff" markings is approved, wearing the black shirt with the yellow markings is more visible and more rapidly recognizable. Therefore, the black and yellow combination is highly recommended.

Regardless of which of the two authorized colors are selected, all team members shall be dressed alike during tactical entry operations.

a. MET Operations - Personnel participating in MET operations are permitted to wear camouflage BDUs but this uniform shall not be worn for other tactical operations.

b. Shorts - Because of the potential for injury to the lower legs and because of the possibility of misidentification by the public, shorts **shall not** be worn during a pre-planned tactical operation where confrontation with a suspect can reasonably be anticipated, (e.g. search warrant service, active building and area searches for suspects and anticipated arrest scenarios).

Any deviation must be approved by the concerned Zone

Lieutenant and shall be based upon sound tactical reasoning

and officer safety considerations or a genuine exigency.

3. Vest Covers, Shirts & Mesh Jerseys When conducting field operations, personnel must always be able to quickly and easily identify themselves from any angle. A solid Ballistic vest cover that can quickly be donned depicting the words SHERIFF, POLICE or LAIMPACT is acceptable. The Green mesh style vest is no longer approved. For LAIMPACT personnel, the word "POLICE" in large bright letters on the front and back, allowing for easy identification as law enforcement personnel shall be obvious.

Personnel can also purchase a ballistic vest cover from a variety of vendors that has been custom fit to be worn over their personal protective ballistic vest. Again, these vest covers may be green or black in color and must clearly display the word "SHERIFF" or "POLICE" in large bright lettering on the front and back of the cover.

Personnel can also purchase black or green light weight Long or Short sleeve shirts displaying "SHERIFF" or "POLICE" in large bright lettering on the front and back in addition to the sheriff's shoulder patches. These shirts can be worn under tactical equipment so that the Sheriff shoulder patches are visible from either side during Narcotics Bureau tactical operations.

E. WEAPONRY

1. Approved Shoulder Weapons: the "Benelli" shotgun, the Colt AR-15(M4) rifle or the MP5 submachine gun, may be deployed during entry operations as authorized. **See Bureau Orders # 2-1, 2-6 and 2-11 for additional information on these weapons.**

2. Less Than Lethal capabilities shall be readily accessible for entry team personnel, e.g. stunbag shotgun, O.C. Spray, Taser and/or pepperball weapons, etc.). All weapons carried by

team members shall be identified in the operations plan. **See Bureau Orders # 2-9 for additional information on pepperball weapons.**

ORIGINAL SIGNED

LOY L. MCBRIDE, CAPTAIN

NARCOTICS BUREAU
