



**Training Advisory
Council Coursework
Comments and
Suggestions**

**Crowd Control Training
Scenarios**

May 27, 2021



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CROWD CONTROL TRAINING SCENARIOS

May 27, 2021

1. TAC Participant

Jim Kahan

2. High Level Summary

PPB Training Division (TD) Lt. Jake Clark provided a handout and walked an audience of Training Division, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and TAC participants through the content of three Crowd Control Skill-Based Training Scenarios:

- "Riding the Rails," or use by Mobile Field Force (MFF) teams of the Rapid Response Team (RRT) transportation vans to respond to a crowd situation.
- "MFF Disengagement," or when, where, and how MFF responders to a crowd situation can consider and accomplish disengagement.
- "Officer on Fire," or how to respond to an officer (or crowd member or even perpetrator of a fire incident) who is on fire.

A fourth scenario was provided in the handout but was not verbally presented.

- "Use of Force During Crowd Control," or a description of different situations and which levels of force are permitted in each situation.

While the TAC expected to see the scenarios performed as dry runs, the written and verbal descriptions did a good job of covering the basic principles that would be used and provided details of the objectives, methods, and rationale of the scenarios. The TAC would have liked to have heard a presentation of the fourth scenario. The presentation was open about connecting the scenarios to ways in which crowd control situations in 2020 and to date in 2021 might have been better managed by

better training and never lost sight of the need to include the role of Procedural Justice (PJ) as an important factor in any crowd control situation.

3. Comments and Suggestions

Overview

This report is direct feedback by the TAC, provided to assist the PPB Training Division (TD) in developing materials. It differs from TAC recommendations, which are developed over months of research and interviews and voted on by the full TAC membership.

The following is feedback given by the TAC member attending a presentation by Lt. Jake Clark of three scenarios and written descriptions of those three plus one additional scenario, all intended for use as part of the PPB's forthcoming Crowd Control training in response to a request by the United States Department of Justice (DoJ) to conduct such training and the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) issued by Judge Marco Fernandez on 26 June 2020 regarding the use of force in crowd control. The written texts of the four scenarios referred to PPB Directives 635.10 (Crowd Control, which is currently under revision) and 1010.00 (Use of Force). Although the TAC believed that the session would be a dry run of scenarios, instead written and oral presentations were delivered. This was in all likelihood because personnel were not available for conducting a full dry run of the scenarios. The crowd control training is expected to be given to PPB officers in June and July 2021.

The scenario descriptions consisted of four written descriptive handouts describing proposed live scenarios involving trainees, Training Division personnel, and sometimes other members. The four scenarios are entitled "Riding the Rails" (unit transportation to a crowd situation using RRT vans), "MMF Disengagement (multiple situations calling for different degrees of disengagement and how to accomplish them), "Officer on Fire" (how to deal with Molotov cocktails that cause a person—be it PPB member, crowd member, or perpetrator—to be on fire), and "Use of Force During Crowd Control" (multiple situations calling for different degrees of use of force).

The remainder of this section will separately discuss the four scenarios.

"Crowd Control Skill-based Training—Riding the Rails"

In this scenario, MFFs make use of an RRT van as transportation to and from the site of a crowd. The RRT vans have side rails on which four members can travel, hanging on to the vehicle. Lt. Clark presented this scenario in the classroom and outside in the NW corner of the TD back lot paved area. No RRT van was available to use for the outdoor demonstration, so three regular police vehicles were used instead. The scenario dealt with obtaining the vans, who would be placed where within the van as the van went to its destination, and how MMF members would manage disengagement to leave the site in the van. A search of the internet using the terms [Portland Police vans with rails image] did not produce any pictures of what the vans look like—the vans portrayed in those images appear to seat about six to eight members (including the driver), which means that—especially given the high likelihood that all MMF members would be wearing riot gear, one van can replace two to three regular vehicles. This means that the vans can be an efficient means of transportation, but not if immediate response is needed, because they cannot safely move as quickly as regular vehicles if members are riding the rails. This efficiency appears to be the primary advantage of this operation.

In providing a Procedural Justice (PJ) view of the scenario, the written text states that “Using the RRT van in a crowd control environment increases the efficiency and professionalism of our response. Community trust is developed when members display professionalism with their movements and actions.” This statement appears a bit exaggerated. Seeing a mobile van with four members in riot gear, two of whom are “line backers” carrying “less lethal” weaponry might well be viewed as a display of force and a threat, not as professionalism, and could trigger an escalatory response. While it is appropriate that PJ be part of any training course, this particular scenario appears to be weak in that regard.

The discussion in the text, emphasized in the presentation, of having disengagement tactics well-rehearsed when using RRT vans is appropriate, but these tactics do not appear to differ very much from the tactics used for disengagement no matter what mode of transportation is used.

In summary, given the scarcity of training time available, that the intention is that the driver of the RRT van—the most important specialist introduced into the situation—will be taken from RRT members whenever possible (with the likely loss of expertise and increased risk when it is not possible), there is some question as to whether this scenario is worth the time it takes.

“Crowd Control Skill-based Training—MFF Disengagement”

Disengagement of an MFF is clearly an essential part of crowd control. Just as “every war must end” (Iklé, 1971), it is true that every engagement must end, and preparing for the many ways in which an engagement might end is a critical skill for which scenarios portraying a variety of ending circumstances can be highly valuable training tools. The text and presentation both emphasized that disengagement is a potentially risky operation and must be taken with care and with as many options for modification as possible. Signaling a disengagement can be seen as a surrender (by both sides in a conflictual situation) or can be seen as a feint to lull the other side into complacency, which means that disengagement should be prepared and executed as efficiently as possible once it has been decided to do it. This was very clear throughout the text and presentation.

The PJ section of this scenario notes that “a properly planned and orchestrated disengagement reduces the inherent safety risks ...” While the reference in the text is to MMF officers, it is also true that such a disengagement reduces the inherent safety risks to all persons present.

Disengagement as an operation can be complicated and can have a wide range of applicable tactics. The scenario appropriately recognizes this by having four different “iterations” (which might be thought of as subscenarios) as an integral part of this training.

- Iteration 1: The role-playing trainers will engage in a variety of aggressive acts, and the training audience must consider what appropriate options are available.
- Iteration 2: The supervisor will determine that selective arrests should be made. The training audience must consider when to take such actions and when it is wiser to change plans.
- Iteration 3: Trainees will be confronted with soft banners that get in the way of being able to address role players behind the banners engaging in aggression. They must determine how to address this passive resistance and how it influences disengagement considerations.

- Iteration 4: Trainees will be confronted with hard banners pushing against the officers in an effort to interfere with arrests. They must consider how to address this more active interference, including what makes uses of force transparently necessary. Each iteration permits the trainers (acting as role players) freedom to respond in different ways to how the trainees address the situation. While the iterations were presented in increasing order of intensity, the TD should consider randomizing the iterations so as not to telegraph to the trainees that each time through, things get worse, and therefore more intense actions on the part of the MFF are permitted.

This scenario includes the option to stop the scenario and rewind if the situation is becoming out of control, including explanations why this is happening and encouraging trainees to consider alternative tactics based on the lessons just learned. This is a valuable option that, when used sparingly, is an effective teaching tool.

“Crowd Control Skill-based Training—Officer on Fire”

This scenario is a role play of what to do if somebody in the crowd throws a Molotov cocktail at officers and an officer is set on fire as a result. Although the title and background are focused on what an officer who is set on fire should do and how other officers should assist the victim, much of the lessons of the scenario also apply to other persons who might be set on fire, including the perpetrator. The need for such a scenario arose because Molotov cocktails were used in the protests during the summer of 2020 and afterwards; previously, there had been few such incidents in Portland. The fire control procedures were developed by the Portland Fire Bureau.

The PJ discussion for the scenario is solely based on what happens if an officer is the victim. This justification addresses the emotional responses members might have and how if their reaction is based upon emotion instead of a standard effective approach to the threat, public confidence can be endangered. It would be useful to extend this justification beyond officers attacked to any person at the site who suffers from being set on fire.

The actual procedures to be followed are straightforward and active participatory training is greatly superior to textbook descriptions, both in ensuring the correct responses to the fire incident and maintaining unit cohesion and emotional stability during the event.

“Crowd Control Skill-based Training: Use of Force During Crowd Control”

As only the written lesson plan was provided for this scenario, it is slightly less clear how it would unfold. This scenario appears to have been built along lines like the MFF Disengagement one, including iterative plays passing through the general events of the scenario although with different levels of confrontation. The objective is to know and be able to apply the appropriate use of force, if any, depending on what the protestors are doing. As with the MFF Disengagement scenario, it would be useful to randomize the order of presentation of the scenarios.

The PJ part of the lesson plan for this scenario merits special mention because it clearly expresses the spirit of PJ in consideration of transparent and appropriate MFF tactics.

This scenario, with modifications including behind-the-scenes collaboration between selected individual trainees and role players, could be the basis of Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) course scenarios when that course is rolled out in August, 2021.

Active bystander intervention might be an important component of crowd control, especially when the stress of long periods of turmoil creates emotional reactions in all participants.

4. PPB Contacts During the Training Session

Captain David Abrahamson, Training Division
Captain Jay Bates, Family Services
Lieutenant Jake Clark, Training Division
Ashley Lancaster, Office of the Inspector General

5. References

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