

Police Department

LOB #213:

SPECIAL OPERATIONS DIVISION

Purpose

The Special Operations Division encompasses the Canine Section, SWAT Team, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Marine Patrol, Special Response Unit, Underwater Search and Recovery, and Search and Rescue. This division provides specialized support in areas where traditionally trained police officers would be at higher risk of physical injury or where specialized equipment or training is required.

Description

The Canine Section is staffed 24/7/365 with fifteen police officers and provides patrol support to members of the Department with highly mobile, specially trained police service dogs (both Canine and Bloodhound). The police canine has particular attributes in searching for items or people that can quickly ascertain their location. In this regard, resources can be better managed with increased safety for the police officer and improved crime detection and prevention capabilities. The Police Department purchases adult, untrained canines and trains them to its needs. SOD Canines are trained as dual purpose dogs as they can track people and search for narcotics. Canine teams are highly trained and participate in a fourteen week basic school prior to being utilized on the street.

The Fairfax County Police Department's SWAT Team is a designated unit of law enforcement officers that is specifically trained and equipped to work as a coordinated team. The SWAT Team provides support to hostage/barricades, high risk warrant services, active shooter situations, VIP protection, stake-outs, advanced tactical training for other entities within and outside the agency, and other duties as assigned. The diversity and complexity of missions requires an advanced state of readiness and complex and continuous training. The Nationally recommended standard of training for a full-time tactical team is twenty five percent of the team's time being devoted to training.

The primary mission of EOD is to locate and render safe explosive devices and safely store and dispose of all explosive related items that come into the Department's possession. EOD can scan/x-ray suspicious packages to determine if they pose a threat. EOD has four bomb dogs that have the ability to search for explosive materials and precursors to explosive materials by scent. The EOD canines have the ability to sweep large areas for the presence of explosive materials or their precursor elements. EOD provides support to other sections through advice about explosive material and with robotic platforms that are utilized extensively on EOD cases with suspicious packages, barricades and high risk warrants.

The Marine Patrol patrols the Fairfax County portions of the tidal Potomac River, to include the Occoquan River, Belmont Bay, Gunston Cove, Pohick Bay, Accotink Bay, Dogue Creek, Little Huntington Creek and Belle Haven, approximately 9,600 acres total. During normal patrol the unit observes violations which include registration and documentation violations, reckless and boating under the influence, wake violations, equipment (both personal and vessel safety) violations and national resource violations. The MPU also has the capability to patrol all lakes and ponds located in Fairfax County. The MPU investigates all boating accidents occurring on the waterways, assists boaters in distress and responds to medical emergencies. All boat operators are United States Coast Guard certified as Captains. The unit also provides assistance to the Underwater Search and Recovery Section for dive platforms and sonar searches. Lastly, the unit provides boating safety education to the general public as applicable. Fairfax County has more registered boats than any other County in Virginia.

Additional part-time units supervised or supported by SOD include; the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) which includes the Police Department's twenty three hostage negotiators, 5 Tactical Medics who are police officers trained as Emergency Paramedics to provide medical support for high risk cases, and the Technical Response Unit (TRU) of 4 officers which provides specialized support of electronic and computer equipment at emergency scenes or large scale events.

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Benefits

The Special Operations Division supports the rest of the department with specially trained and equipped officers that respond where needed in the entire County. Providing a centralized source of the resources is an efficient way to manage selection of officers, procurement of equipment and ensure consistent training. These resources can then be directed to any of the eight patrol districts as needed. These resources aid in catching suspects, solving crimes, assisting boaters in distress, containing violent offenders, finding lost persons, serving high risk warrants and resolving barricaded or hostage events. This serves both the public and the Department.

Mandates

In their role as police officers, the Division is responsible for enforcement of selected laws of the Code of Virginia and Fairfax County Code.

EOD Technicians must follow the mandates of the FBI Hazardous Devices School and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF). Mandated case reporting to the Bomb Data Center (BDC) using the Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS) is required.

Marine Patrol Unit is mandated to report boating accidents (death, injury, damage over \$2,000) and may place charges. Virginia Code § 29.1-739

Trends and Challenges

The trends and challenges in SOD revolve around the national debate regarding use of SWAT and the increased threat in the County of an event using explosives.

SOD has demonstrated the need for a dedicated Analyst. This position was not identified prior to the Public Safety Staffing Plan. With the recent recommendations from PERF and the Ad-Hoc Police Review Committee SOD has greatly increased the analysis in pre-planning SWAT warrant services. There is a wealth of computer information that should be searched. There should be a double check process with first the Analyst in the investigating section doing online checks followed by a double check by an SOD analyst. This would increase the safety of all involved parties and aids in the planning process when developing tactics.

The following staffing requests were covered in the Public Safety Staffing Plan:

Two additional EOD officers are requested, EOD staffing has not increased since 1981. The Department has the lowest number of EOD officers in the region. The increase of commercial office space, businesses that screen their mail, expanded metro-rail stations, and the international terrorist threat make this a staffing necessity. The Tyson's corner area alone is projected to add 19 million square feet of office space, with the high possibility that many are defense contractor related and will be screening deliveries.

Two SWAT officers are requested. The current model of twelve SWAT officers was developed in the 1970s based on response to a typical single family dwelling. Three supplemental SWAT officers supplement the twelve full-time officers for a deployment total of fifteen (including 2 supervisors), this is below the national standard and NCR standard of nineteen. Current staffing does not allow sufficient officers to cover a multi-level building and currently the County has 266 buildings of seven or more stories with twenty four additional buildings planned. The staffing model has not changed in years and new technology, such as robots, require additional officers to operate. The current model does not allow for relief of officers, limits multi-operational period capability, and requires more officers be cross trained and does not let them focus on one skill area.

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One SWAT Sergeant is requested. This is one of the few roles on the department where the supervisor has the dual role of supervising and taking direct part in the police mission which requires all the certifications and training a SWAT officer must have. Critical events require immediate action and direct oversight. A SWAT supervisor is required to coordinate search warrant planning with the investigative entity, must independently verify all plans, do a pre-operational site survey, and conduct a briefing. Adding a SWAT Sergeant would allow for duties to be split between the two Sergeants into operational planning and conducting training.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
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FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$4,580,389	\$4,799,720	\$4,657,899
Operating Expenses	193,940	213,276	229,556
Capital Equipment	32,399	78,438	0
Total Expenditures	\$4,806,728	\$5,091,434	\$4,887,455
General Fund Revenue	\$32,620	\$29,265	\$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$4,774,108	\$5,062,169	\$4,887,455
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	34 / 34	34 / 34	34 / 34
Total Positions	34 / 34	34 / 34	34 / 34

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Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Canine Section Deployments	1,461	1,464	1,400	1,400	1,400
Canine Section apprehensions made, missing persons located, evidence found	123	173	140	140	140
Number of Citizen contacts made to the Marine Patrol unit	330	431	520	400	400
Intoxicated boating checkpoints conducted by the Marine Patrol Unit	137	32	46	45	45
EOD activity rates	285	254	230	250	250
EOD Total training hours	3,093	4,327	3,600	3,500	3,500
SWAT high risk warrant services	36	42	65	50	50
SWAT barricade responses	5	7	2	8	8
SWAT yearly training hours per team member	450	425	450	425	475

The Special Operations Division responds to requests for service, normally from within the department, and therefore does not self-generate most of these metrics.

The number of calls for service is the number that canine responded on. There are times when requests are made and canine is not available due to staffing numbers, or the distance is too far and the response would take too long. There are legal requirements for a timely response that sometimes cannot be met so canine is not dispatched. For example daytime canine staffing is one canine so a request at the far end of the County for a drug search would not be timely.

Marine Patrol actively patrols and self-initiates cases. This sections primary mission is boater safety education and prevention which is measured by the number of citizen contacts made. The 2016 and 2017 estimates are lower than historical averages based on projected staffing shortfalls that will most likely limit boating patrols to Friday-Sunday, Holidays and one other weekday (40 hours per week instead of 70 hours).