


## COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: Critical Response Team	
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**POLICY:** It is the purpose of this General Order to provide general guidelines for the formation, selection, maintenance, Standard Operating Procedures and deployment considerations for the Colchester Police Department Critical Response Team (CRT). The Critical Response Team exists to enhance the department's ability to adequately plan for, respond to, and substantially increase desirable conclusions concerning high-risk and critical incidents while adhering to a Priority of Life Model.

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### I. DEFINITIONS

- A. COMMAND STAFF: Any Colchester Police Department law enforcement officer holding the rank of Lieutenant or above.
- B. COMMANDER: The highest-ranking member of the CRT with administrative and operational oversight. The CRT Commander serves under the direction of the Chief of Police.

- C. CRITICAL INCIDENT: Any incident, scenario or call for service that will, or is likely to, exceed the operational capabilities of the department's Patrol and/or Support Divisions.
- D. DESTRUCTIVE DEVICE: Any device or hoax device intentionally built or placed as defined by Title 13 Sub-Section 1603.
- E. EVENT: Any future instance which allows for preoperational planning, creation of operational plans, surveillance and/or counter surveillance. Examples include: Fourth of July, planned demonstrations, visits from persons who may be considered high value targets or polling centers during elections.
- F. HIGH-RISK WARRANT: Any warrant service executed upon an individual, and/or a vehicle, and/or a residence that involves a heightened risk to officers, the suspect(s) or the general public. Such factors to be evaluated include, but are not limited to: risk of flight by involved persons, prior criminal history, number of persons expected to be present or detained, risk of enhanced subject resistance, risk of barricade, risk of vicious animals, knowledge of the presence or likely presence of firearms, knowledge of illicit drugs, knowledge of possible explosives, or knowledge of counter surveillance.
- G. HOSTAGE: A person or persons held against their will by force or threat of force, or held as security for the fulfillment of substantive demands on a third party.
- H. INNER PERIMETER: The distance at which police actively involved in a critical incident will remain away from the situation. This is the shortest possible distance necessary to maintain the safety of officers and security of the scene.
- I. NEGOTIATOR: Any law enforcement officer that has completed formalized training as a negotiator as defined in Colchester Police Department General Order # 29 concerning Crisis Negotiations.
- J. OPERATOR: Any law enforcement officer serving as a member of the CRT.
- K. OUTER PERIMETER: The distance at which other police personnel not actively involved in a critical incident shall remain away from the situation. Media personnel and the public are prohibited from crossing into the outer perimeter, unless specific permission has been granted by a supervisor.

- L. PRIORITY OF LIFE MODEL: The guideline model used by CRT members to enable a decision-making process within operations (commonly referred to as POL or Safety Priority Model). This model does not place different values on or rank the value of life, but rather stands to evaluate each individual's ability to remove themselves from danger or a situation. Most commonly the POL Model hierarchy is: 1) Hostage(s), 2) Innocent(s), 3) Law Enforcement, 4) Suspect(s).
- M. SPECIALIZED CIVILIANS: Civilians who are not members of the CRT, but may take part in CRT operations and incidents. Specialized Civilians possess a knowledge base or a skillset not held by CRT members or other readily available law enforcement officers.
- N. TEAM LEADER: A team member, regardless of rank, appointed to a leadership role within the CRT command structure. Team Leaders act in administrative, tactical and operational capacity under the CRT Commander to coordinate and supervise training, planning and deployment activities.
- O. TERRORISM: The engagement in or taking substantial steps toward committing criminal activity by an individual or group of individuals with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury to multiple persons or the threatening of civilian populations with mass destruction, mass killings, or kidnapping.

## **II. PURPOSE**

- A. The Colchester Police Department Critical Response Team (**CRT**) consists of a designated team of officers specifically selected to be highly trained and equipped to respond to critical incidents. The Critical Response Team delivers expanded response capabilities coupled with enhanced skillsets to increase the likelihood of successful resolutions to critical incidents.

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

- A. The Critical Response Team will enhance the Colchester Police Department's ability to serve and protect the citizens of the Town of Colchester.
- B. The Critical Response Team will consist of highly qualified and trained officers who will utilize special equipment and will follow a Priority of Life Model to bring about the successful resolution of critical incidents.

#### **IV. COMMAND STRUCTURE**

A. The Critical Response Team will consist and maintain an internal command structure that will be responsible for team training, equipment, deployments, operations and support.

B. Defined Roles and responsibilities:

##### **1) CHIEF OF POLICE**

- i. All members of the Critical Response Team are answerable to the Chief of Police.
- ii. The Chief of Police may, at any time and with just cause, remove any officer from membership with the CRT.
- iii. The Chief of Police shall designate a member of the Colchester Police Department Command Staff holding the rank of Lieutenant or higher as the CRT Commander.

##### **2) CRT COMMANDER**

- i. The CRT Commander is answerable directly to the Chief of Police. All other CRT members are answerable to the CRT Commander.
- ii. The CRT Commander may, at any time and with just cause, remove any officer from membership with the CRT.
- iii. The CRT Commander will have overall command of the Critical Response Team to include team activation, deployment, training, equipment and operations.
- iv. The CRT Commander shall approve and annually review any existing Standard Operating Procedure concerning the CRT.
- v. The CRT Commander will be tasked with retention of all related training materials for the CRT to include training dates/hours, topics, certifications and results of testing and qualifications.

- vi. The CRT Commander will review and approve any operation plans concerning CRT operations.
- vii. The CRT Commander will conduct post-incident reviews of deployments to identify areas of improvement or deficiencies. He/she will support reasonable efforts to better the CRT's ability to safely and effectively respond to and resolve critical incidents.
- viii. The CRT Commander will appoint at least one—but not more than two—CRT Team Leaders. The CRT Commander may, at any time with just cause, remove any member from a leadership role.
- ix. A roster of past and present CRT members to include their dates of service and team rank will be held by the CRT Commander.

### **3) TEAM LEADER**

- i. Team Leaders are answerable directly to the CRT Commander or the Chief of Police, or in their absence a member of the Command Staff.
- ii. Team Leaders are tasked with the daily coordination and supervision of team training, planning, equipment, and deployment.
- iii. Upon arrival at an active scene, CRT Team Leaders will take command of the CRT operations in the absence of the Chief of Police or the CRT Commander.
- iv. The position of Team Leader should rest with CRT Operators holding the rank of sergeant or above.
- v. Team Leaders are expected to display sound judgment, professionalism, tactical proficiency, and leadership.

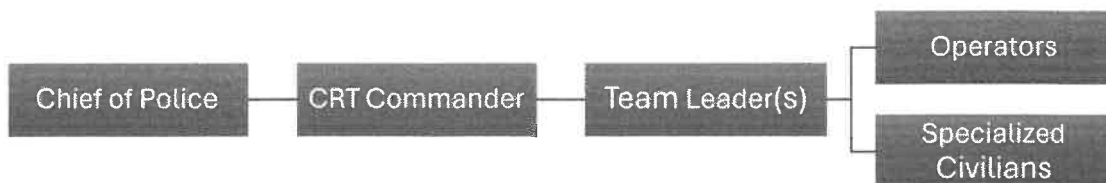
### **4) CRT OPERATORS**

- i. CRT Operators are answerable to the Chief of Police, the CRT Commander, or Team Leaders.
- ii. All Operators are expected to display sound judgement, professionalism, and tactical proficiency.

## 5) SPECIALIZED CIVILIANS

- i. Specialized Civilians (SC), may be utilized within tactical team operations only with express approval of the CRT Commander or Chief of Police.
- ii. Team members will be notified of the use of civilian personnel prior to an operation and will be briefed on the SC's role and operational capabilities within the mission.
- iii. Specialized Civilians used in team operations will be under the direct supervision of the Team Leader or his/her designee during operations.
- iv. The use of Specialized Civilians may only be authorized by the CRT Commander as set forth below.
  - a. The use of Specialized Civilians within actual team operations will require the CRT Commander to find that the use of the CS will:
    - 1) greatly enhance the safety of Operators taking part in the mission and/or:
    - 2) provide a specialized skillset that is paramount to the success of the mission at hand and that particular skillset cannot be readily or safely performed by an existing CRT member, another officer of the Colchester Police Department, or any other readily available Vermont law enforcement officer.
- v. Examples of Specialized Civilians include, but are not limited to: tactical medical staff, physicians, military personnel, explosive experts or other civilians possessing a highly specialized knowledge base or skillset.

### C. Team Hierarchy Flowchart:



## **V. MEMBERSHIP / SELECTION**

- A. The Critical Response Team is a highly specialized unit within the Colchester Police Department consisting of officers expected to operate in diverse, high-risk and rapidly evolving environments. Therefore, members will be expected to display superior officer safety, marksmanship, use of force skills, and fitness ability.
- B. Any current CRT member who is placed on probation or that is currently subject to disciplinary action may be suspended from CRT trainings and operations as determined by the CRT Commander or the Chief of Police.
- C. Officers who have received substantiated use of force allegations regarding utilizing inappropriate levels of force will not be eligible for membership.

### **1) ELIGIBILITY**

- i. Only currently Level III certified law enforcement officers are eligible for membership on the CRT.
- ii. Officers must have completed field training and not be on any probationary status for consideration.
- iii. Officers currently under investigation by this agency (IA) or another agency for a violation of department rules, regulations, or other conduct may not apply for membership on the CRT until the investigation has been resolved.

### **2) LETTER OF INTEREST**

- i. Any officer wishing to express interest in membership on the CRT must complete a memorandum addressed to the CRT Commander stating their interest in joining the CRT, why they wish to be considered for membership, and any special qualifications they possess that may be of value to the overall success of the CRT.
- ii. The letter of interest must be submitted to the CRT Commander accompanied by a supervisor recommendation, a Firearms Committee member recommendation, and a Use of Force Instructor recommendation as outlined below.

### **3) LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

#### **i. Direct Supervisor Recommendation:**

- a) Interested officers are required to obtain a written letter of recommendation authored by their direct supervisor for consideration for membership on the CRT.
- b) Direct supervisors shall examine the officer's ability to act in high-stress environments, ability to work as part of a team, ability to accept training, ability to make difficult decisions quickly without assistance, the officer's fitness level, and their officer safety record.
- c) Supervisors shall only author a letter of recommendation for the officer if they feel the officer exemplifies all the items outlined in section 'b' above and their performance in every category is above average.
- d) The supervisor shall note all areas outlined in section 'b' above and provide written confirmation that they have found the officer performs above average in all these categories.

#### **ii. Firearms Instructor Recommendation:**

- a) Interested officers are required to obtain a written letter of recommendation from a Firearms Instructor for consideration for membership on the CRT.
- b) The Firearms Instructor shall only author a letter of recommendation if the officer regularly and routinely qualifies on all weapon platforms (handgun, shotgun, rifle) with no assistance and shows a high level of proficiency in weapon platform accuracy, safety, and manipulation.
- c) If the officer meets the requirements outlined in section 'b' above, the Firearms Instructor shall state that they have found the officer performs above average in all listed categories.



iii. Use of Force (UOF) Instructor Recommendation:

- a) Interested officers are required to show that they are highly proficient in use of force to include UOF tactics/knowledge. They are required to obtain a written letter of recommendation from a Use of Force Instructor for consideration for membership on the CRT.
- b) Use of Force Instructors at the Colchester Police Department shall only author a letter of recommendation on behalf of the officer if they show a highly proficient level of knowledge, practice, and execution in all areas of UOF and shall state so within their recommendation.

iv. Panel Interview:

- a) The CRT Commander will review all submitted paperwork and, if approved, may select three current team members to interview the prospective officer.
- b) The panel of three CRT members will include at least one current Team Leader.
- c) The panel will render a decision of fail, pass, or recommend to the CRT Commander at the conclusion of the officer's interview.

v. Command Interview:

- a) If the officer applying to the CRT receives a passing or recommended score from the interview process, they shall be interviewed by the CRT Commander.
- b) The CRT Commander and Chief of Police will have authority over granting membership opportunities to officers.
- c) If approved for membership, the Team Leader will be tasked with administering the onboarding of the new member to include the CRT Fitness Evaluation and Firearms Qualification.

- vi. Fitness Evaluation and Firearms Qualification:
  - a) After onboarding, and prior to taking part in any CRT operation, the new Operator shall be required to pass the CRT fitness test as outlined in this general order.
  - b) After onboarding and prior to taking part in any CRT operations, the new Operator shall be required to qualify on every weapon platform he/she will be authorized to carry.

## **VI. STANDARDS**

- A. The Fitness Evaluation for the CRT should reflect industry standards, with testing elements being directly related to the CRT member's job function(s).

### **1) FITNESS EVALUATION**

- i. All CRT members will take part in an annual Fitness Evaluation. All members are required to meet the minimum required fitness level in order to maintain their membership on the CRT.
- ii. If a CRT member fails a Fitness Evaluation, they shall be allowed to continue to train with the CRT, but may not take part in any pre-planned operations.
- iii. Members who fail a Fitness Evaluation will be eligible to take the Fitness Evaluation again in 3 months and in 6 months.
- iv. Members who fail to meet the minimum fitness standards after the two re-tests may be removed from membership from the CRT.

### **2) FIREARM QUALIFICATION**

- i. The Firearms Qualification for the CRT shall be based upon CRT member job function(s), CRT applications, and CRT operational capabilities.
- ii. The CRT Firearm qualifications shall be held annually in the presence of a certified Firearms Instructor.

- iii. Operators will be required to qualify on all available weapon platforms they are certified/trained to carry along with any other weapon platform utilized within normal team operations.
- iv. Members who fail a Firearms Qualification will be eligible to retest but must qualify on every platform annually to retain their membership on the CRT.

## **VII. ACTIVATION / DEPLOYMENT**

A. The CRT will be available for activation and deployment as outlined below.

### **1) ACTIVATION**

- i. The authority to activate the CRT will rest with the Chief of Police, the CRT Commander, or any other command staff member. In the event none of the above entities are readily available, and the matter is exigent, a Team Leader may activate the CRT. In the event the CRT is activated by a Team Leader, the Chief of Police or CRT Commander shall be notified as soon as reasonably possible of the CRT activation.
- ii. A supervisor, or the on-call supervisor, may request activation of the CRT. When feasible, the supervisor shall contact the CRT Commander, the Chief of Police, or a Command Staff member for approval for an activation.
- iii. Non-exigent requests for CRT involvement in operations (such as search warrants) will be directed to the CRT Commander for review and authorization.
- iv. The decision to activate or stage the CRT regarding an incident in a neighboring jurisdiction will rest with the Chief of Police, a Command Staff member, or the CRT Commander. When feasible, the requesting agency shall submit an operations plan and related search warrant(s) for review by the CRT Commander. Any member taking part in a neighboring jurisdiction operation shall be required to attend a briefing.
- v. The CRT Commander—or in his/her absence, a Team Leader—shall be notified of any critical incident involving actual or suspected active

shooters/threats, hostages, barricaded subject(s), destructive device(s), terrorism, or any other incident that will or is likely to exceed the operational capabilities of the department's Patrol and/or Support divisions.

## **2) DEPLOYMENT**

- i. The CRT will adopt and maintain a phone page-in system that will simultaneously contact all members of the CRT to notify them of a critical incident requiring deployment of the Critical Response Team. Members of the CRT are not on-call but may be called when off duty to respond— if willing and able. The Chief of Police, a Command Staff member, or the CRT Commander may place any number of CRT members on-call in preparation for a known event or threat. In this circumstance, members will receive on-call pay as stipulated in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- ii. The first CRT member to arrive at an active scene, regardless of team ranking, shall have control of CRT actions/functions until a higher-ranking team member, a Team Leader, the CRT Commander, or the Chief of Police arrives at the scene.
- iii. At no time will a member who is not part of Command Staff and who is not a current member of the CRT assume command of team functions/actions pertaining to operational capabilities unless directed to do so by the Chief of Police, a Command Staff member, or the CRT Commander.
- iv. Upon arrival, a CRT member will first attempt to contain the incident by implementing both an Inner Perimeter and Outer Perimeter. Officers who are not CRT members—to include patrol officers, neighboring department officers, or support staff—may be utilized to secure perimeters.
- v. The CRT may be deployed to events within the Town of Colchester that the Chief of Police or CRT Commander feel may be targeted by terrorism or have a large amount of people and a higher propensity for violence or unrest.
- vi. Any member in command of a scene where the CRT has been deployed or will be deployed may request negotiators to respond to the incident.

Negotiators will report to the incident commander upon their arrival at the scene.

- vii. A separate Valcour case shall be generated for every CRT activation/deployment/operation. All CRT members responding to or present at the scene of the incident shall be documented in the case.

## **VIII. OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES**

- A. The Colchester Police Department Critical Response Team will meet the definitional criteria set forth by the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) for a Tier 2 Team.

### **1) CAPABILITIES**

- i. The CRT will be trained and equipped for the following operational capabilities:
  - a. Emergency (unplanned) hostage rescue operations
  - b. Barricaded subject operations
  - c. High-risk warrant service
  - d. High-risk apprehension operations
  - e. High-risk security/surveillance operations
  - f. Terrorism response operations

## **IX. MISCELLANEOUS**

- A. Nothing in this policy prohibits any officer of the Colchester Police Department from immediately engaging an active threat such as an active shooter/killer. All Colchester Police Department members are expected to engage active threats without unreasonable delay. All members shall act to protect the public, engage active threats and avoid the loss of life.