

New elite police squad out hunting terrorists

By Phillip Wattley

WOULD-BE guerrillas who want to start their revolution in Chicago and other criminals who pose threats to the life and property of innocent parties are the targets of a special new police unit here.

The Heavy Weapons Squad, headed by Walter Vallee, deputy chief of patrol, consists of 80 members of the force trained in the use of tear gas and carbines or high-powered rifles equipped with sniper-scopes.

The unit, with its own fleet of specially equipped vehicles, is called in to cope with extraordinary situations, according to Vallee.

Examples, he said, would be a robber taking over an armored truck or barricading himself in a building, a demented person armed with deadly weapons or explosives holding up in a building, a plane hijacking, or rioting.

THE SQUAD concept was born in 1970, Vallee said, when police feared radical groups might try to disrupt the city. Its need became further ap-



Walter Vallee

parent during the rash of airplane hijackings about the same time.

All 80 squad members have at least five years of police experience and have undergone extensive psychological testing, he said.

In addition to heavier-caliber weapons, the squad members are equipped with bulletproof vests, binoculars, ropes, and heavy-duty hydraulic jacks to break open doors. Vallee stressed the unit vehicles are not the only police vehicles to

carry heavy weapons.

Two or three members of the squad are on duty around the clock monitoring police calls for developing situations that may require their special expertise and equipment, Vallee said.

ONCE SENT to the scene of a disturbance, he said, squad members form teams. They position themselves so that if a suspect refuses to surrender, he can be flushed out with tear gas or, if he is threatening the lives of others such as hostages, he can be wounded or killed.

If they have to shoot, Vallee said, the police will try to wound rather than kill.

When hostages are involved, he said, "The most important thing is to negotiate. I always stress that the lives of people are the most important."

"In most situations only a command officer can order the equipment out of one of our trucks," he said. "However, if these men come upon an emergency situation where people are being shot at, then they will go to work immediately."