A Knowledge Resource for Chicago Police Department Members

Education & Training Bulletin

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Crowd Control Operations

In order to produce high quality results during a crowd control situation, police personnel need to work as a team. Working as a team builds confidence and reinforces proper reaction. The presence of organization within a team can psychologically impact an unruly crowd. Additionally, team tactics can counteract tactics that are utilized by some law breakers.

This training bulletin will examine baton positions, formation speeds, crowd control formations, and gas mask deployment techniques. The aforementioned will assist officers in becoming a well-disciplined and organized team during crowd control situations.

Baton Positions

- *Port arms position*: Port arms puts the officer in a ready position and more able to react. The right hand is to be positioned on the handle of the baton with an overhand grip. The left hand will be placed on the long portion of the baton with an underhand grip. It is held this way regardless of the officer's strong or weak hand. When the baton is brought to port arms, the left hand is positioned directly in front of the left shoulder, keeping the elbow close to the side. The right hand is positioned in front of the right hip, keeping it at belt level. The right elbow is kept close to the side. The baton should be at an approximately 45 degree angle to the belt.

- *On-guard position*: Normally, officers move from the port arms position to the on-guard position. The right hand will be on the handle portion of the baton and the left hand will be on the long portion. There are two differences between the port arms and on-guard positions. First, the officer will move the left foot slightly forward. Second, the long portion of the baton is rotated down until it is pointing forward. The left hand will be extended out and the elbow bent. The right hand will be at belt level on each officer's side.

- *Port arms push:* This is used to move a person who is too close to an officer when an officer intends to move. It can be used from a standing or moving position and is very effective when used with the verbal command "Move Back." The officer moves the baton straight out from the port arms position and pushes the baton against the person. The port arms push is a controlled shove, not a sharp strike.

How hard an officer needs to push will vary with the situation. The key is to use only reasonable and necessary force based on the Use of Force Model.

- *On-guard thrust:* This is used to move a person who is too close to the officer or when the officer intends to move. It can be used from a standing or moving position and is very effective when used with the verbal command "Move Back." From the on-guard position, the baton is moved straight forward. The officer extends the arms straight forward until the tip of the baton comes into contact with the target area. The key is to use only reasonable and necessary force based on the Use of Force Model.

FORMATION MOVEMENT: Speeds

Squads can be moved in formation at different speeds: at a half-step, forward, and double-time.

At a half-step march: At a half step is a slow walk. Officers step forward with their left foot and then bring the right foot forward, even with the left foot. The right foot does not move in front of the left as with a normal step. In addition to the half step, officers yell, "Move Back," and do a port arms push or an on-guard thrust. The officers in a squad must step, yell, and baton thrust at the same time.

- *Preparatory command*: At a half-step
- *Command of execution*: March
- *Hand Signal*: One arm in front at an approximately 90 degree angle and tapping it halfway between the elbow and the wrist with the other hand.

Forward march: Forward march is a regular interval walk. Squad members do not yell or execute a baton thrust. It is important that squads maintain line formation and present a well-trained and disciplined front.

- *Preparatory command*: Forward
- *Command of execution*: March

Double-time march: Double-time is used when squads need to move quickly and it is a slow run. It allows the squad to get from one location to another more quickly in an organized manner.

- *Preparatory command:* Double-time
- *Command of execution:* March

LINE SPACING

Line spacing can vary, depending on the number of officers, the area to be covered, the number of protesters, and the threat the protesters present. Line spacing will be considered either tight or tactical.

- *Tight spacing:* Tight formations require a large number of officers, but are very effective in presenting an intimidating show of force. They are also much more difficult for protesters to breach. In tight spacing, the officers are shoulder-to-shoulder. There is just enough room between officers for them to move without interfering with those next to them.

- *Tactical spacing:* Tactical spacing allows fewer officers to cover a large area. It can be used with all crowd control formations. The width of the space can vary from one to several feet. There will be a point at which the space is too large for officers to hold the position without compromising their safety. The decision must then be made whether to reinforce or tactically redeploy to another area. The squad leader will determine the size of the gap and move officers accordingly. The weak spot of the formation will be the space between the officers.

SQUADS AND PLATOONS

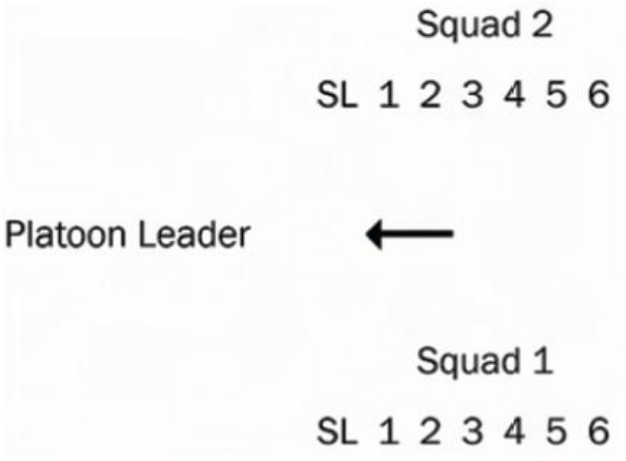
A squad is normally led by a sergeant and a platoon is normally led by a lieutenant or captain. All units are directed by verbal commands, hand signals, and physical contact. Everyone must understand all of the commands and react immediately when the commands are given. Commands are given by the platoon or squad leader. If given by the platoon leader, the commands are repeated or echoed by all squad leaders.

A squad normally moves to their destination in a column formation. The squad leader leads the column and the squad members are one arm's length apart. If more than one squad is moving together, they move in a double column with the odd-numbered squads on the left and the even numbered squads on the right.

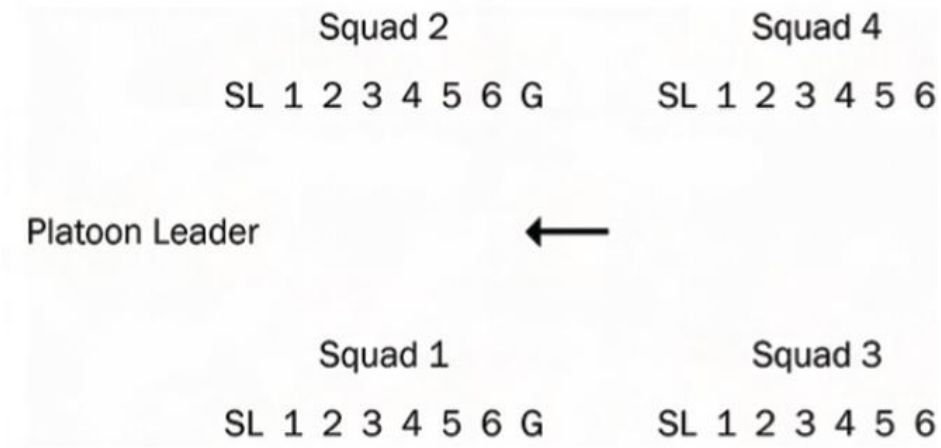
When multiple squads are moving in a column formation, the platoon leader leads in front. This enables all squad leaders and officers to see the platoon leader's hand signals.

Squad leaders need to conduct a quick inspection of equipment and designate squad members as even or odd numbers prior to moving in columns.

TWO COLUMN FORMATIONS: TWO SQUADS



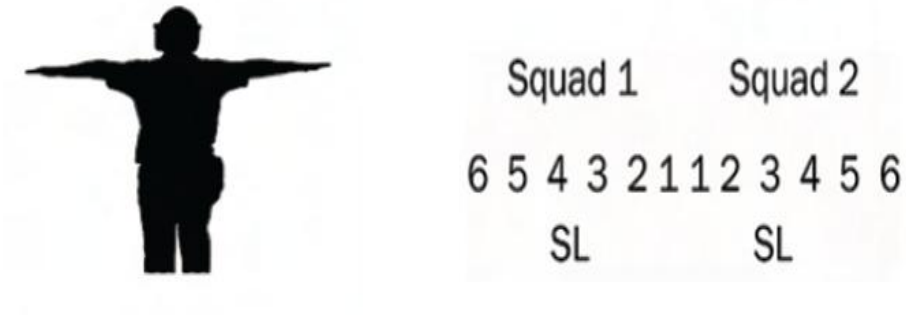
TWO COLUMN FORMATIONS: FOUR SQUADS



COLUMN MOVEMENT TO SKIRMISH LINE

The squad or platoon may be formed into columns in order to be moved into position. When they arrive at their assigned area, the platoon leader will give the commands to form into a skirmish line. On the preparatory command, the squad leader will step out so that everyone in formation will see the signal. On the command of execution, the squad leader moves to the side and allows the squad to move into formation. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. The first officer from squad one and the first officer from squad two should immediately move to the location designated by the platoon leader. The other members of squad one should deploy to the left of the first

officer from that squad. The members of squad two should form to the right of the first officer of that squad. Squad three should continue on line to the left of squad one and squad four should continue the line to the right of squad two. The squad leaders should then take a position directly behind their squad and ensure that members of the squad are properly aligned. The skirmish line can remain static as a human barrier or can move to channel or disperse the crowd.



SKIRMISH LINE COMMANDS

- *Preparatory command:* Line formation
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held parallel to the ground, fingers apart

SKIRMISH LINE CLOSE SUPPORT

Close support provides two lines of officers, one in the gap behind the other. Close support can be used when officers are facing large numbers of protesters, when protesters are attempting to break the line, or to display an intimidating police presence.

In order to form a skirmish line in close support from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon leader should voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal. The squad leaders repeat the preparatory command and the command of execution.

- *Preparatory command:* Line formation close support
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held parallel to the ground with clenched fists

Squad 1 - 6 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 - Squad 2
Squad 3 - 6 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 - Squad 4
G SL SL G G SL SL G

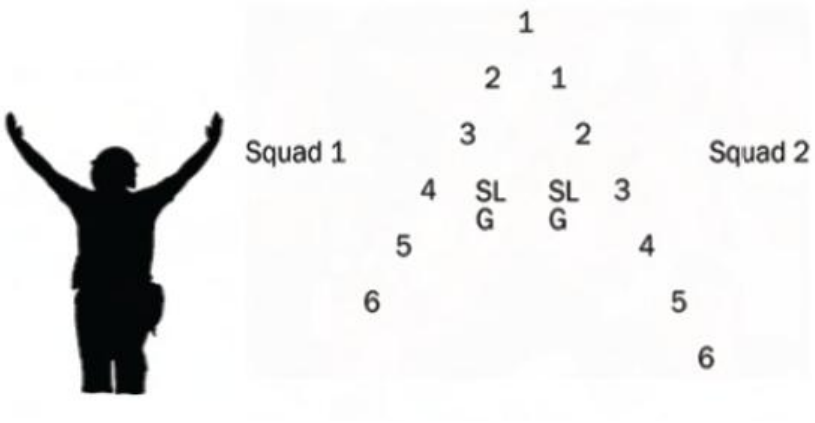
On the command of execution, the squad leader moves to the side and allows the squad to move into formation. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. The first officer from squad one and the first officer from squad two should immediately move to the location designated by the platoon leader. The other members of squad one should deploy to the left of the first officer from that squad. The members of squad two should form to the right of the first officer of that squad.

Squad three should move directly behind squad one in the same sequence, filling in the gaps. Squad four should move directly behind squad two in the same manner. The squad leaders should then take a position directly behind both squads on their side of the center and ensure that members of the squad are properly aligned. Only the front line of the formation (squads one and two) should be executing the baton thrust.

COLUMN MOVEMENT TO WEDGE FORMATION

On the command of "Wedge Formation, Move," the squad leader moves to the side and allows the squad to move into formation. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. The first officer from squad one should immediately move to the location designated by the platoon leader. The next officer from squad one should simultaneously take a position one step to the left and one step behind the first member of squad one. The other members of squad one should deploy one step to the left and one step behind the officer in front of them. The members of squad two should deploy one step behind and one step to the right of the officer in front of them. This will form a wedge, with squad one forming the left side and squad two on the right.

The squad leaders should then take a position directly behind their squad and assure that members of the squad are properly aligned. Wedges are useful for penetrating and dividing a crowd.



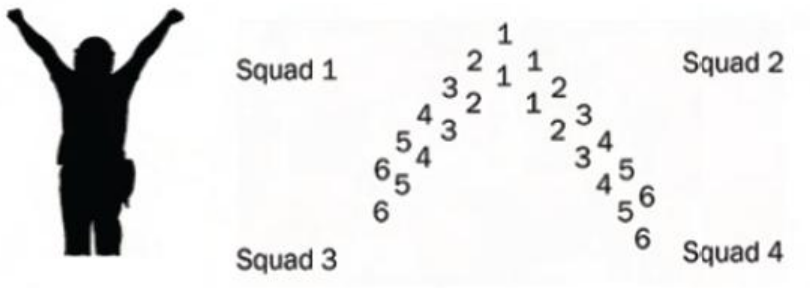
WEDGE COMMANDS

- *Preparatory command:* Wedge Formation
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held in a "V" position above the shoulders, fingers apart.

WEDGE FORMATION CLOSE SUPPORT

In order to form a wedge formation close support from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon leader should voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal:

- *Preparatory command:* Wedge formation close support
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held in a "V" position above the shoulders with fists clenched



On the command of execution, the squad leader moves to the side and allows the squad to move into formation. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. The first officer from squad one should immediately move to the location designated by the commander. The next officer from squad one should simultaneously take a position one step to the left and one step behind the first member of squad one. The other members of squad one should deploy one step to the left and one step behind the officer proceeding them from that squad.

The members of squad two should deploy one step behind and one step to the right of the officer in front of them. This will form a wedge, with squad one forming the left side and squad two on the right. The members of squads three and four should deploy behind squads one and two in the same manner, filling in the gaps.

The squad leaders should then take positions directly behind their squads and ensure that members of the squads are properly aligned. Only the front line of the formation (squads one and two) should be executing the baton thrust.

LATERAL SUPPORT

The weak spots of the line and wedge formations are at the ends. If the end is left hanging, protesters can move to the rear flank of the formation and officers can become surrounded. Using squads as lateral support can provide protection for the flanks of the formation. The squads face forward when in the lateral support formation. They must be aware of and react to threats coming from the side.

In order to form a lateral support from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon leader should voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal:

- *Preparatory command:* Right (left or right and left) lateral support
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* The appropriate arm(s) is held out to the side, bent at a 45 degree angle so that the fist is up. The arms moving back and forth toward the head in a waving motion.

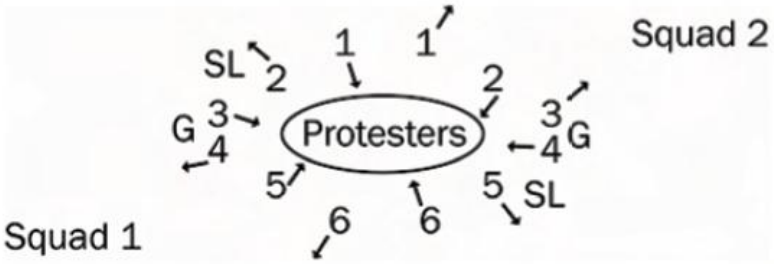
COLUMN MOVEMENT TO ENCIRCLEMENT

The encirclement technique is used to contain a group of individuals and effect an orderly arrest. On the command of execution, the squad leader moves to the side and allows the squad to move into formation. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. On the command of execution, the platoon should immediately move to the location designated by the platoon leader and form a circle around the group that must be contained.

The first officer in squad one will face out. The rest of squad one will face in and out alternately. The first officer in squad two will face in. The rest of squad two will alternate facing in and out. This allows officers to address threats from both the encircled

group and from outside the encirclement. It is very important for squad members to anticipate their position in the circle before moving.

An officer opposite the platoon leader reads the warning to disperse. This officer attests that the warning was audible to the furthest person away. Upon the command to arrest, the arrest team supervisor deploys arrest squads in an orderly and controlled process.



ENCIRCLEMENT COMMANDS

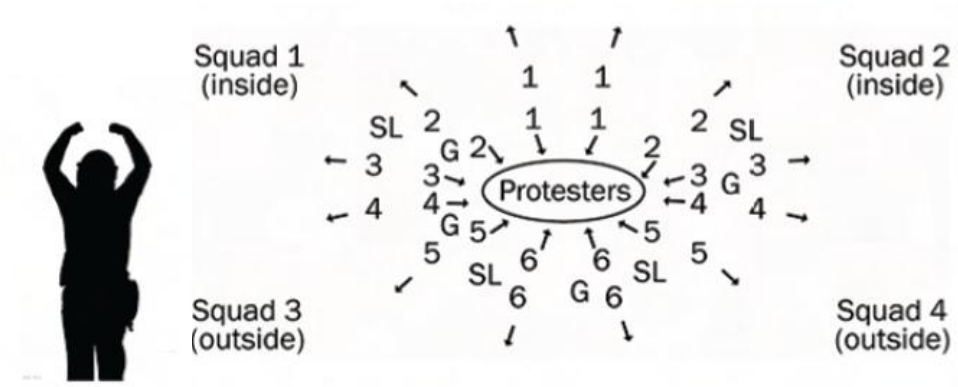
- *Preparatory command:* Encirclement
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held in a circular position above the shoulders, fingers apart

ENCIRCLEMENT CLOSE SUPPORT

Using multiple squads, officers can form two circles around a group of protesters. This tactic is very effective when there are threats from outside the circle and more security is needed. This tactic allows officers to stay more focused on the task in front of them and not worry about covering their backs.

In order to use the encirclement close support technique from a two column formation, the platoon leader should voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal:

- *Preparatory command:* Encirclement close support
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms extended and held in a circular position above the shoulders with fists clenched



All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. On the command of execution, squads one and two should immediately move to the location designated by the platoon leader and form a circle around the group that must be contained. All squad members will face inward toward the protest group.

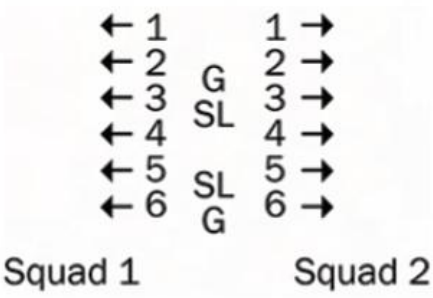
Squads three and four move in the same manner in a circle outside of squads one and two. All squad members will face out. It is very important for squad members to anticipate their position in the circle before moving. This will reduce the risk of overrunning the position and leaving a gap in the circle.

The platoon leader and squad leaders will be in a position between the inner and outer circles. An officer opposite the platoon leader reads the warning to disperse. This officer attests that the warning was audible to the furthest person away. Upon the command to arrest, the arrest team supervisor deploys arrest squads in an orderly and controlled process.

COLUMN MOVEMENT TO SEPARATION FORMATION

Sometimes opposing groups face off (i.e. pro-choice and pro-life groups) and police officers become the peacemakers. When the line of distinction between two protest groups is erased and they become mixed, a swift police response can diffuse the situation.

On the command of "Separation, move," the entire platoon shall move to the position designated by the platoon leader. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. This position could be between two opposing groups of protesters. Once in position, the members of squads one and three shall perform a left face and the members of squads two and four shall perform a right face. The objective of the separation formation is to redefine and separate the groups.



SEPARATION COMMANDS

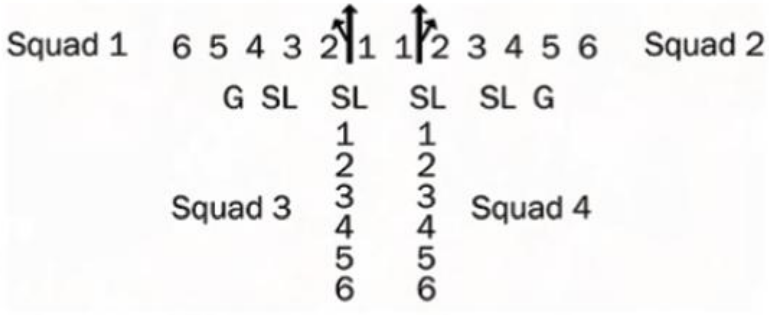
- *Preparatory command:* Separation
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Arms held straight out to the side with approximately a 90-degree bend at the elbows. The hands are not clenched. (The arms are held in this position while moving forward until the elbows touch. This movement is repeated a minimum of three times).

CROSS BOW

The cross bow tactics are dynamic and use tactical spacing and quick platoon movements. The tactics are platoon-sized maneuvers. As with all tactics, communication is critical. Cross bow tactics use surprise and a controlled rush to startle the protest group and cause them to move.

All cross bow hand signals are given in two parts. The first indicates that the tactic will be a cross bow. The signal is the arms crossed above the head. The second signal is for the specific tactic: Line, arrest, or rescue.

CROSS BOW LINE



The cross bow line is much the same as the skirmish line. It is a line of officers, tactically spaced and facing the crowd. The difference is in how it is formed and reinforced. The formations are quickly formed with officers moving at double-time.

The platoon comes to a halt and the platoon leader gives the commands for the tactic. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. Squads one and two will move forward at double-time, yelling as they move. They form a tactically spaced skirmish line and begin moving forward at a half-step. Squads three and four remain in place.

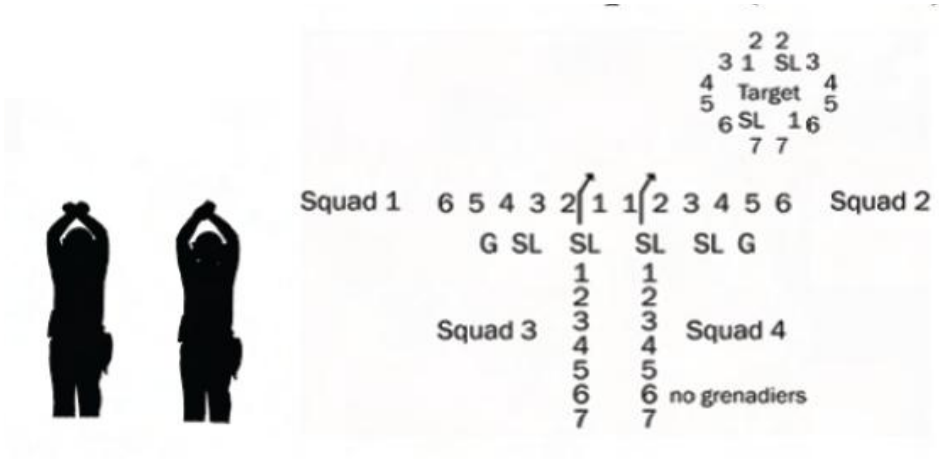
The first skirmish line moves forward no more than 15 yards. As they approach the 15 yard mark, the remaining two squads are given the command for a cross bow line. They move forward at double-time in columns until they split the first line. Squads three and four then form into a tactically spaced line and begin moving forward at a half-step.

After squads three and four are moving forward, squads one and two form into a two-column formation.

To form a cross bow line from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon leader should voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal:

- *Preparatory command:* Cross bow line formation (When the preparatory command is given, all squad members will move their left foot forward. This indicates that they understood the command and are prepared to move).
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Two parts-The arms are raised above the head and are crossed at the wrists (cross bow); the arms are then extended straight out to the side (line).

CROSS BOW ARREST



The cross bow arrest tactic is effective in apprehending an individual in a crowd. It is a fast moving tactic, using the elements of speed and surprise.

The platoon comes to a halt and the platoon leader gives the command for the tactic. Before moving, the platoon leader will designate either squad three or four as the arrest squad. The squad leader will assign members as either security or carry officers and quickly brief them on their assignments. There should be at least three security officers and either two or four carry officers, depending on the need. If only two are needed, the other two officers will be assigned to security. The squad leader of the arrest team will signal the platoon leader when he or she is ready. It is very important for the squad leader to take a minute to make assignments in the squad, identifying the carry officers and the target(s) of the arrest.

When the command is given, squads one and two will move forward at double-time, yelling as they move. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. They form a tactically spaced skirmish line and begin moving forward at a half-step. Squads three and four remain in place.

The platoon leader will signal either verbally or by touch for the arrest squad to move forward. The signal should be as covert as possible, so as not to alert the targeted

individual and allow him or her to flee. The arrest team then moves forward. They do not yell, but move through the skirmish line directly to the target.

When the arrest team reaches the target, they quickly take their positions and secure the person. The sergeant will give the signal to return back through the line. Due to noise, this signal may need to be done by tapping each squad member on the shoulder.

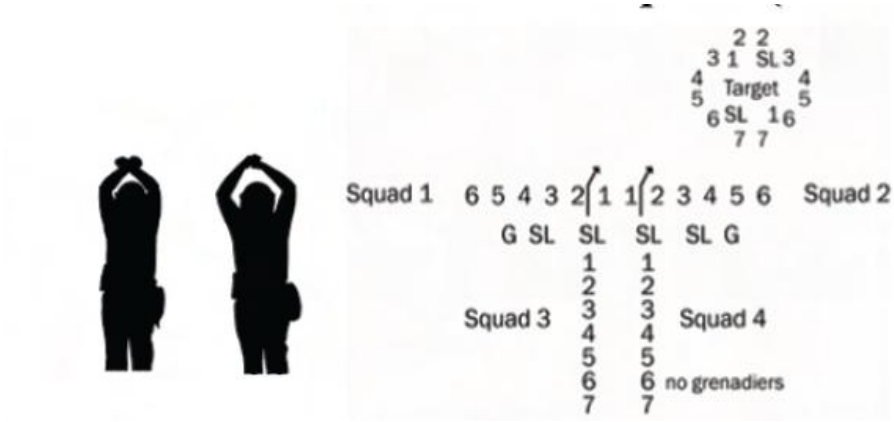
If the target runs, the arrest team is not to pursue. A general rule of thumb is that the arrest team should not go further than 15 yards into the crowd. Any further could cut them off from assistance. The squad leader is the last squad member back through the line. He or she must ensure that all officers are accounted for.

CROSS BOW ARREST COMMANDS

To use a cross bow arrest technique from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon commander shall not give any verbal signal. Only hand signals and touch commands will be used.

- *Preparatory command:* No verbal preparatory command is given and only hand signals are used. When the first hand signal (cross bow) is given, all squad members will move their left foot forward. This indicates that they understood the command and are prepared to move.
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Two parts – The arms are raised above the head and are crossed at the wrists (cross bow); one hand grips the wrist on the other arm (arrest).

CROSS BOW RESCUE



During a civil disorder event, individuals may be injured. Police officers may be tasked to rescue the person by entering a hostile crowd. The cross bow rescue is a dynamic tactic that moves officers into and out of a crowd quickly.

The platoon comes to a halt and the platoon leader gives the commands for the tactic. Before moving, the platoon leader will designate either squad three or four as the rescue squad. Based on information regarding the person to be rescued, the squad leader will assign officers to either carry or security. In most cases, only two carry officers will

be needed. The squad leader of the rescue team will signal the platoon leader when he or she is ready.

When the command is given, squads one and two will move forward at double-time, yelling as they move. All squad members should utilize physical contact in order to make every member aware that the squad is moving. They form a tactically spaced skirmish line, not to exceed 15 yards forward and begin moving forward at a half-step. Squads three and four remain in place.

The platoon leader will signal for the rescue squad to move forward. Both verbal and hand signals are given. The rescue team then moves forward. They yell as they move through the skirmish line directly to the target.

When the rescue squad reaches the target, they quickly take their position and secure the person. The sergeant will give the signal to return back through the line. Due to noise, this signal may need to be done by tapping each squad member on the shoulder. The squad leader is the last squad member back through the line. He or she must ensure that all officers are accounted for.

To use the cross bow rescue technique from a two-column platoon formation, the platoon commander shall voice the following commands while simultaneously rendering a visual hand signal:

- *Preparatory command:* Cross bow rescue (When the preparatory command is given, all squad members will move their left foot forward. This indicates that they understood and are prepared to move).

- *Command of execution:* Move

- *Hand signal:* Two parts – The arms are raised above the head and are crossed at the elbows (cross bow); one hand is cupped over the top of the other (rescue).

GAS MASK DEPLOYMENT

The deployment of gas masks must be a coordinated effort by all officers and conducted in a manner that will not compromise the safety or integrity of the unit. When officers arrive on scene, the squad leader will conduct a quick inspection. The officers then count off and their number will determine whether they deploy gas masks with the odd or even group in a non-emergency situation.

ODD/EVEN GAS MASK DEPLOYMENT

The odd/even gas mask deployment is used when the squad or platoon is in a skirmish line or wedge formation. It is used when there is time to conduct masking operations, not for an emergency situation. When the squad or platoon leader gives the commands, half of the officers fall behind the officers to the left, drop to one knee, and don their gas masks quickly. After donning their masks, the officers take their place back in line, tap the shoulder of their counterparts, and change positions. The next officers, who were providing cover, immediately drop behind the officers who already donned

their gas masks, don their mask, and then take their place back in formation. The commands for odd/even gas mask deployment are as follows:

- *Preparatory command:* Prepare to mask with odd/even deployment
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Pulling on the chin and then waving one finger

GAS MASK DONNING

The donning steps are as follows:

- Drop to one knee, placing the baton behind the knee
- Remove the mask from the carrying case
- Remove helmet
- Place the mask on
- Pull face straps
- Conduct pressure test
- Replace helmet

EMERGENCY DONNING

There may be a time when a squad is not notified that gas has been deployed in its area or when suspects are believed to have released a suspected injurious substance. When this occurs, the squad must conduct emergency donning operations because they do not have time to wait. The officers must put the mask on as quickly as possible or become overcome themselves. When the command is given, all officers drop and don the mask as quickly as possible. Officers should still maintain visual contact with the protesters.

Commands for emergency mask donning are:

- *Preparatory command:* Mask, mask, mask
- *Command of execution:* Mask, mask, mask
- *Hand signal:* Both hands tapping the tops of the shoulders

GAS MASK DOFFING

After the "all clear" signal is given, officers will remove their masks using the odd/even tactic. The doffing steps are as follows:

- Drop to one knee, placing the baton behind the knee
- Remove helmet
- The mask is quickly pulled off
- Replace helmet
- Prepare straps for donning
- Replace the mask in the carrying case

Commands for gas mask removal are:

- *Preparatory command:* Prepare for all clear
- *Command of execution:* Move
- *Hand signal:* Tapping the face-piece of the mask

This training bulletin has reviewed baton positions, formation speeds, crowd control formations, and gas mask deployment. When used appropriately, strategically planned team tactics can overwhelm a large crowd. Team tactics can be organized using any number of officers, depending on the needs and abilities of the unit. Team tactics are an important part of a coordinated response for bringing an incident of civil disorder to a safe conclusion. The key to successful team tactic operations are in the creation of a well-disciplined, trained, and controlled working team.

References

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2007). *Field force operations.* Anniston, AL: Center for Domestic Preparedness.