

# ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING AT THE NEW YORK STATE PREPAREDNESS CENTER

By Andy Esposito

*The radio call comes over: “LE 7 and 8, respond to the Rosterfield Hotel for a report of shots fired. Multiple casualties reported, and multiple gunmen.” The two patrol units start their response and pull up to a silent hotel. One of the officers decides to take charge and orders the other three officers to make a diamond formation so they can make entry. As they enter, several unknown parties come running toward them in a panic with their hands in the air, screaming, “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!” As the contact team starts to give verbal commands to the unknown subjects, shots ring out down the hall. The patrol officer who took charge yells to his comrades, “Shots fired! Shots fired! Active shooter! Move! Move!”*

*The contact team bypasses the unknowns, telling them to exit the building down the hallway, and the officers move aggressively toward the sound of gunfire. The hallway fills with smoke; the sprinkler system has been activated and people are screaming. The officer who took charge remembers his training: shoot, move and communicate. Yes, he thinks, we need more cops! He calls on the*



radio: "Shots fired! Shots fired! Rosterfield Hotel! We need backup now!" The contact team turns a corner in the hallway and encounters two heavily armed gunmen. Shots ring out. The point man for the contact team is hit in the hand and arm. As he is returning fire, he yells, "I'm hit!" The point man takes a knee. The rest of his team bypasses him as they continue to return fire down the hall. The point man assesses his wounds and commences self-aid by attempting to apply a tourniquet. One of the other officers notices he is having difficulty putting it on and grabs him, yelling, "Get up and come with me!" The injured officer is assisted into the room and a tourniquet is applied to the arm.

As more officers and EMS personnel arrive at the scene, a patrol supervisor sets up a command post in the hotel parking lot. He assigns additional officers to respond to the hotel to back up the initial contact team. He has also been advised by command that they have received multiple 9-1-1 calls from the banquet hall of the hotel reporting multiple

casualties from gunshot wounds and explosions. The patrol supervisor sends an additional contact team to the hall. The team in the banquet hall reports back they have a mass casualty incident with more than 20 victims and need assistance to secure the scene. As more assets arrive, the patrol supervisor assigns another contact team to escort EMS personnel forward into the banquet hall in order to assist in the evacuation of casualties. He turns to an officer who is about to go in and yells, "That hall is not secure and I'm concerned about secondary devices! Get in there and get a plan with EMS to get those victims out ASAP! I will set a casualty collection point out here! Go!"

**O**n Nov. 26, 2008, the city of Mumbai, India, was attacked by a squad of 10 terrorists. The siege lasted 60 hours; 165 innocent people were killed and 304 injured. This multi-shooter attack tactic is one of the likely courses of actions that extremist terrorist groups will use against our





nation. The 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, subsequent manhunts and the Kenya Westgate Mall shootings are other examples of this tactic. Unfortunately, the groups behind all of these attacks can claim that their efforts were highly successful. They shut down whole cities for days and received extreme amounts of media coverage, spreading fear and doubt about each country's ability to protect its citizens.

Preparing for these types of threats has become the new reality

for American law enforcement. To that end, an Advanced Active Shooters Scenario (A2S2) Tactics and Operations course was developed for the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) by the National Center for Security & Preparedness (NCSP), a subsidiary of the University of Albany.

The Rosterfield Hotel scenario is not an actual attack; it's part of an A2S2 class at the New York State

Preparedness Center in Oriskany, N.Y. By bringing together subject matter experts in the fields of law enforcement and emergency medical care, the NCSP/SPTC team has put together a training event that many attendees say pushes them to their limits and beyond, as they try to save the fictional city of Rosterfield from an attack by several armed terrorists.

Police officers attending A2S2 are forced into extreme circumstances in which they must employ all active shooter tactics in their toolbox, both basic and advanced, to include bounding overwatch or clearing a hallway with a fixed point and a hall boss.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responders are challenged with multiple victims and a variety of injuries, from gunshot wounds to blast injuries from IEDs. Officers are pressed to recognize and act on the "priority of life" concept and how to continue with their duty even after clearing the target of armed terrorists. Wounded victims are bleeding to death. Officers are forced to make decisions as to basic triage and scene assessment in order to prevent further loss of life. EMS responders must move out of their comfort zone into an "indirect threat area" to treat multiple casualties who would otherwise perish if not treated



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immediately. Casualty collection points are designated and secured, as officers and medics are pushed to go on with continuing actions such as patient transport, secondary searches, perimeter reinforcement and escorting bomb techs to suspected devices.

At the SPTC, the state of New York has created a training venue that is second-to-none in providing this type of scenario-based training. The A2S2 scenarios require more than 40 role

players and 20 instructors and support staff to put on. The course runs for two-and-a-half days, with half of the time spent in the classroom learning the tactical and medical skills needed to resolve such an attack. The other half of the class is spent sending the students out to defend and save their city against the terrorists.

The students are outfitted with the latest in personal protective gear, non-lethal training ammunition, weapons

and EMS equipment such as litters and homeostatic dressings, all of which is provided by the SPTC. Each student, both law enforcement and EMS, is taught the basics of Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) which is a direct spin-off of the military's Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC). This medical treatment philosophy is directly responsible for saving thousands of our service men and women who are wounded on today's battlefields.



Students attending the class are introduced to the concept of direct and indirect threat areas as well as the tactical philosophy of bringing lifesaving assets forward into an indirect threat area to treat multiple victims

who cannot be treated and transported effectively due to the current tactical situation and resources available.

The course and the logistical efforts that go into it are carried out by the experienced staff of the SPTC, many

of whom are retired police officers or emergency responders from around the state. Most of the expert instructional staff is made up of police officers and paramedics who are also armed services combat veterans from the infantry and medical communities of our military. The role players are a variety of paid actors and trained aggressors, with professional makeup artists to add to the realism of the scenarios. These elements are all brought together in a command post (Sim Cell) that is run from the control tower of the old airport on site.

The class also receives intelligence reports throughout the scenario. NCSP intelligence SMEs brief the students on the ongoing attack within their city, as well as relevant information on the terrorist group which is carrying it out. Aggressive and non-aggressive role players are scripted to give out information which, if reported up the chain, will assist the students on deducing the likely course of action or future targets of their terrorist adversaries.

The A2S2 course is at the cutting edge of training for a complex active shooter event. Officers and medics who attend A2S2 are exposed to

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## STATE PREPAREDNESS TRAINING CENTER

The State Preparedness Training Center (SPTC) is located in the center of New York State at the old Oneida County airport in Oriskany. Hotel and meals are provided by the state for students who travel more than 50 miles to train at the center.

For further information on the A2S2 course, visit the website of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, State Preparedness Training Center ([dhses.ny.gov/sptc](http://dhses.ny.gov/sptc)) or the National Center for Security & Preparedness ([albany.edu/ncsp](http://albany.edu/ncsp)).

realistic and complex incidents that will also assist them in the stresses and response protocols to a less complex critical incident. Although the scenario at the course employs a complicated terrorist attack, it follows the old training mantra: A gallon of sweat today saves a pint of blood tomorrow. //



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lt. Andrew Esposito is retired from the Rockland County (NY) Sheriff's Department. He was the team commander of the county's SWAT team for 10 years and served with the

department since 1988. A retired gunnery sergeant with the U.S. Marine Corps, he has been deployed several times overseas in combat operations as a Marine infantryman.

Lt. Esposito is a graduate of the FBI National Academy Session 231. He is a certified law enforcement instructor in defensive tactics, firearms and chemical agents. He has graduated from FBI SWAT School and FBI Bomb Squad Management Course and is a Cooper Institute law enforcement certified physical trainer.

Esposito is currently an instructor with the New York Tactical Officers Association

(NYTOA) and the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA), in addition to his work with the National Center for Security & Preparedness.

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