



FBI TACTICAL HRT HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAM

More than 800 times in the past 27 years, the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) has been called upon to support FBI missions against terrorism, violent crime, foreign counter-intelligence, and more. Over the last year, this superbly trained, full-time counter terrorist tactical team has been on the ground for high profile operations in Charlotte, Los Angeles, and Detroit. As part of the Tactical Section of the Critical Incident Response Group, HRT supports FBI Field Offices in confronting the nation's most complex threats in all environments.

To become an HRT Tactical Operator, interested special agents go through a two-week selection process at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va. Through this program, HRT evaluates each applicant's suitability as a productive team member, not as an accomplished operator. HRT seeks special agents of all backgrounds who have a minimum of two years of field experience.

Those SAs selected for HRT transfer to the team and spend their first six months in New Operator Training School (NOTS). After NOTS graduation, operators are assigned to one of two operational teams. These tactical teams are supported by intelligence, logistics, and technical operations squads. When they are not deploying to support a hectic mission cycle, HRT operators have a rigorous daily regimen of training in order to stay proficient in tactics, techniques, procedures and tradecraft.

The HRT Selection process helps ensure that the FBI's most capable special agents join the HRT. "This team tackles high-pressure situations, often with people's lives in the balance," says CIRG Section Chief and the HRT Commander. "It requires intense preparation, keen attention to detail, and unparalleled commitment to the mission."

During Selection, HRT tests each candidate's physical fitness, arrest planning and techniques, shooting skills, teamwork, compatibility and ability to make sound decisions in stressful situations. Although several women have attended Selection, none have yet made the team. As more and more women join the ranks of the FBI's SWAT program, the HRT will certainly benefit with a broader pool of candidates wishing to be part of the elite law enforcement Counterterrorism Team.

"Selection was a demanding test of every aspect of being an FBI Special Agent," said a Special Agent from the Memphis Division, who is a former HRT team leader, and current field SWAT team leader. The former operator went through Selection twice before achieving his goal of being a part of the team. "It's also the most rewarding job that I have experienced in my law enforcement career."

Under the constant eye of evaluators, Selection candidates demonstrate their skills and characteristics through various tasks. For example, one task is the Close-Quarter Battle (CQB)

drill, where candidates execute a simulated hostage rescue scenario in an HRT shoot house while evaluators assess them from an overhead catwalk. They are rated on their ability to follow directions and make decisions under stress, as well as marksmanship, leadership, and judgment.

Another event tests each candidate's comfort with heights. The applicants scale a rock wall and then climb a narrow caving ladder to a grate 70 feet above the ground. In the "dog run" exercise, teams of candidates run with a large raft to the lake at Quantico and paddle to specified points. Once the rafts are in the water, a helicopter flies low over the water to impede their progress.

Evaluating candidates during the dog run sparked a particular memory from the former operator's Selection process. "This is really a test of your ability to work as a team and persevere through difficult circumstances and unknown terrain," he explains.

Team bonding is another aspect of Selection. All candidates bunk together in tents and barracks and get to know each other under trying conditions, forming close bonds for a lifetime.

Candidates end Selection with a thorough out-briefing, and then return to their assigned offices. Team leaders and operators make final decisions and convey their recommendations to a local career board. The Tactical Section staff then recommends those chosen to the Mid-Level Leadership Selection Unit for review and approval. Those who accept the assignment report to NOTS after receiving orders from the Transfer Unit.

While assignment to HRT requires a significant personal commitment, it is an extremely challenging and rewarding position that offers many unique experiences. Of a Special Agent's many opportunities to contribute to the nation, "it's the best job in the FBI," said the former operator.



"To save lives"