

History of the **EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT (ERU) & TACTICAL SUPPORT TEAM (TST)**

The creation of Emergency Response Units in Canada date back to the mid 1970's when Police Forces were faced with rising fears of political terrorism and increasing numbers of incidents involving firearms and other weapons.



**Winnipeg Police Department - Emergency Response Unit (ERU)
"The Original Five"**

ERU Team Members (from left to right): Det. Wayne KING, Det-Sgt. Ivan KLEPATZ, Det. John KIDD, Cst. Ken DOWSON, Cst. Randy BELL (c.1975)

The Winnipeg Police Emergency Response Unit (ERU) was formed in May of 1975 and consisted of 5 members:

- Detective Sergeant Ivan KLEPATZ #111
- Detective Wayne KING #217
- Detective John KIDD #228
- Constable Randy BELL #586
- Constable Ken DOWSON #658

These members were sent to the F.B.I. training academy in Quantico Virginia, where they received specialized weapons and tactics training from instructors there.

ERU was designed as a part-time unit and remained as such for many years. Members were called out on an “as needed” basis, and consisted of officers from varying backgrounds who regularly worked in other positions throughout the Service. Over time the unit was expanded to 20 members, consisting of 1 coordinator, 3 team leaders, and 3 teams (1-Assault, 1-Gas & 1-Sniper). The unit eventually saw its role expand to include hostage rescue, armed and barricaded, high risk warrants, VIP protection, and high risk escorts.

ERU originally started with a Chevrolet G20 delivery van, but as the unit expanded in size, so did the need for a larger vehicle to transport both the members and their equipment to scenes and training facilities. The delivery van was replaced with a much larger truck which became known as “Big Blue” and had the call sign of “ALPHA 1-1”. This truck was later replaced with a diesel powered 2003 Chevy 5500 5-ton van which also took on the “Big Blue” nickname. Around this time the unit also acquired a Chevy Suburban that was converted for tactical use and was assigned the call sign “WHISKEY 101”.

In May of 2008, as part of a pilot project the Part-time Emergency Response Unit became a new full-time operational unit consisting of 16 members and one coordinator. The ERU title was officially retired and the new Tactical Support Team (TST) was formed, originally having two 8 member platoons (1-A side and 1-B side) working from 13:00 to 01:00. These platoons were increased to 10 members each after the addition of 4 more members in December of 2008.

Demand on the unit was such that staffing was increased again in the spring of 2009 to the present 37 members who, along with a coordinator, made up 4 platoons of 9 officers (1 Sgt, 1-P/Sgt & 7 Cst) to cover both A-side

and B-side, day and evening shifts, between the hours of 7:00 am - 02:30 pm.

Some notable events for the unit include the acquisition of a Mercedes Benz Sprinter Van as a deployment vehicle in 2011, the creation of a Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS) team in conjunction with Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service in 2014 to enable paramedics to better care for those involved in high-risk emergency situations, the acquisition of a Terradyne Gurkha Armoured Vehicle in June of 2016, and the selection of the first 2 female team members in April of 2017.

As a full time unit, the TST will be found on active patrol, and attending all manner of calls involving firearms and other weapons. Their mandate also includes executing high risk search warrants where firearms, weapons, or gang members may be involved. They also work closely with specially trained members of the Service’s K9 Unit as well as the Bomb Unit when required in high-risk situations.

The Museum is currently working on a display recognizing the creation and history of the ERU/TST members of the Service.

New Unit Crest - Design & Meaning

As part of the change, the Tactical Support Team created a new unit crest which symbolized the ideologies of the members who formed the Winnipeg Police Service’s first full time emergency/tactical team.



Article written with files supplied by the Tactical Support Team.

DESCRIPTION

The crest consists of an upwards pointing dagger inside of a triangle. The triangle is enclosed by having each side of the triangle displaying a component of the team's name. The word "Tactical" encloses the left side of the triangle, the word "Support" encloses the right side of the triangle and the word "Team" encloses the bottom of the triangle.

MEANING

The name Tactical Support Team is significant as each word represents the core principles of the team itself.

TACTICAL

The word "Tactical" represents the special skill set that the team was formed to perform. Each member of the team was evaluated, selected and trained specifically for tactical expertise. Members invest hundreds of hours training, both in individual and team skill sets. This training elevates their tactical abilities to a higher standard than expected prior to their selection to the team. These skills are honed in actual high risk events compounding real experience in this area.

SUPPORT

The word "Support" represents the team's mandate within the Winnipeg Police Service. Counter to the elitist ideologies that specialized teams can fall prey to, the team views themselves as subservient to the front line officers. These front line officers have the greatest impact on safety and security in the City of Winnipeg. The team was created to function in harmony with these officers, providing additional support during high risk events.

TEAM

The word "Team" is not just a label to identify this group of officers but the philosophy that the Tactical Support Team is only a small component of a greater team, the Winnipeg Police Service. The Tactical Support Team views every sworn and non-sworn member of the Winnipeg Police Service as the "Team". It is placed at the bottom of the triangle to emphasize that it is the core foundation of how the Tactical Support Team operates.

THE DAGGER

Housed within the triangle is an upwards pointing dagger. Throughout history, the warrior culture always carried daggers as a means of last resort if disarmed of their primary weapon. The Tactical Support Team looks at the dagger as representing the team's philosophy of using force only as a last resort. The dagger points up towards the heavens to represent the belief that when force is used, it is used righteously with justification both spiritually and morally.

COLORS

Grey and black. The colors not only assist tactically in reducing the reflective signature of brightly colored crests, but represent the history of the Tactical Support Team. The Tactical Support Team was formed by members of the former Emergency Response Unit. The Emergency Response Unit was the first unit on the Winnipeg Police Service to adopt the grey on black stitching for the tactical reasons stated above. These colors remain not only to assist in officer safety, but as a reminder the original Emergency Response Unit.



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