

Anything, Anytime, Anywhere: The Unofficial History of the FBI Hostage Rescue Team

Credits:

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OVERVIEW

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has designated the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the lead agency for crisis management of domestic terrorist incidents in the US. The Bureau has a variety of operational response capabilities, maintaining a number of specialized units at various locations though out the US.

When a threat or incident exceeds the capabilities of a local FBI field office, the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) deploys the necessary resources to assist that office, and facilitates the FBI's rapid response to, and management of the crisis incident. The CIRG is home to several of the FBI's specialist units. It contains crisis managers, hostage negotiators, behaviorists, surveillance assets, agents, manages the Bureau's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) program, and the Bureau's elite Hostage Rescue Team, or HRT.

The CIRG was established in 1994 as a separate field entity to integrate the tactical and investigative expertise needed for terrorist, and other critical incidents, that require an immediate law enforcement response. Some of these incidents may include terrorist activities, hostage takings, child abductions and other high-risk repetitive violent crimes. Other major incidents that may require their assistance include prison riots, bombings, air and train crashes, and natural disasters. Its personnel are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to respond to crisis incidents.

The CIRG has three branches including: The Operations Support Branch, the Tactical Support Branch, and the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. Each branch furnishes distinctive operational assistance and training to FBI field offices as well as state, local and international law enforcement agencies.

The Operations Support Branch contains the Crisis Negotiations Unit, Crisis Management Unit and Rapid Deployment Logistics Unit which supports the HRT in critical incidents where the HRT is deployed. The Tactical Support Branch is the branch the HRT falls under. The other units under the TSB are the Operations Training Unit and the Special Detail Unit. The OTU manages HRT core training programs, provides operations management, and provides planning and oversight during HRT deployments. The OTU is also responsible for managing and integrating the nine enhanced FBI SWAT teams into HRT training exercises. The SDU is responsible for protecting the US Attorney General.

Based at the FBI Academy, on Quantico, Virginia, the HRT is the nation's primer law enforcement tactical unit. It is the primary unit responsible for conducting counterterrorist operations within the US and its territories. It is a full time tactical force that trains to remain in a constant state of operational readiness. Its operators train for a wide variety of missions, in all climates found within the US and its territories.

Among HRT skills are: hostage rescue tactics, precision shooting, advanced medical support, tactical site surveys, parachute operations, maritime operations, underwater operations, explosive breaching, helicopter operations, and man tracking. The team is also capable of operating in a chemical environment, as well as rendering safe nuclear devices. The team receives intensive and frequent specialized training to maintain high levels of expertise in these skills.

When notified by the Director of the FBI, or his designated representative, the team is expected to "deploy within four hours, with part or all of its personnel and resources, to

any location within the United States or its territories, to rescue individuals who are held illegally by a hostile force or to engage in other law enforcement activities as directed." The HRT operationally deploys in support of FBI field divisions and performs a number of law enforcement tactical functions in all environments and under a variety of conditions. The HRT may also deploy teams and individual operators to act as snipers or to provide protective service details to certain high profile federal witnesses or dignitaries.

HRT operations are directed out of the Strategic Information Operations Center (SIOC), located on the fifth floor of the J. Edgar Hoover Building, in Washington DC. In times of crisis, the SIOC operates 24-hours a day and serves an effective intelligence collection and dissemination site as well as a centralized, albeit distant, command post.

Since its inception, the HRT, or components of the team, has been involved in many of the FBI's most high profile cases, executing numerous operations involving domestic militant groups, terrorists, and violent criminals. Unfortunately some of these cases have drawn the team a lot of unwanted, and in many cases unwarranted attention. The HRT came under increased public and Congressional scrutiny, along with federal law enforcement in general, due to what some saw as heavy-handed tactics used during the incidents at Ruby Ridge and Waco.

On the other hand, the HRT has been involved in over 850 successful missions, both in the US and abroad. Many of these low-key operations have received little to no attention from the world press. Operations have included the team performing traditional law enforcement missions during hurricane relief operations; dignitary protection missions; tactical surveys; pre-positions in support of special events such as the Olympic Games, presidential inaugurations, and political conventions; and the capture of the suspected master minds of the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Africa.

THE EARLY YEARS

The concept for the HRT was originally conceived during the late 1970's as a sort of "super SWAT team" that would be capable of handling extra-ordinary hostage situations, large scale counter-terrorist operations, situations involving nuclear or biological agents, or operations where local law enforcement or the regional FBI field office was not trained or equipped to handle. Final approval for the HRT was given in early 1982, and formal planning began in March, 1982. The initial HRT selection course was held in June, 1982 and consisted of three groups of thirty candidates each (including one female). Of this group fifty candidates were selected to continue on to more advanced training. The one female agent who tried out for the team voluntarily dropped herself from the course after becoming injured (she stayed on with the team, accepting a position with the HRT's support unit and eventually married one of HRT operators).

Note To this date no female agent has successfully completed the HRT selection and training course.

Upon completing its initial selection, the team began acquiring the equipment it believed it would need and upgrading training facilities at Quantico. One of its very first projects was the construction of a "shoot house". The building, which was built out of old tires, would allow the team to conduct live-fire training exercises, and enhance their shooting skills. The final touches were added to their facilities just before Thanksgiving 1982, and after a short holiday break, the team began its initial training program.

After spending roughly the entire month of January, 1983 honing its shooting and tactical skills at Quantico, the team traveled to Fort Bragg, North Carolina in February, for a month of training with the US Army's "Delta Force" counter terror unit. Delta provided the team with a wide ranging block of instruction that covered a number of topics that would be useful during their future operations. The team returned to Quantico to further enhance their new abilities and maintain the skills they acquired on Fort Bragg, and became fully operational in August.

The team's final certification exercise, codenamed Operation Equus Red, was held in October, 1983 at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. During the exercise the HRT, a local SWAT team, and a Department of Energy (DOE) Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST) were tasked with assaulting a terrorist stronghold. The "terrorist" group was also believed to be in possession of a simulated nuclear device, which was located at a separate location, which had to be recovered or neutralized. After NEST aircraft confirmed the location of the device, HRT operators assaulted the terrorist safe-house, secured the device and managed to "kill" the terrorist involved in approximately 30 seconds. The FBI's senior leadership viewed the exercise as a complete success and granted final approval for the team to become fully operational.

Upon completing its certification exercise, the team began to expand its capabilities by sending small teams of operators out for more specialized training courses. Approximately a dozen operators visited the Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado to receive combat diver and maritime operations training from the US Navy SEALs. Other team members conducted helicopter operations and aerial insertion training with the US Army's Task Force 160 (forerunner of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment). The Marine Corps provided the team with training in small unit tactics and night operations. The team also began to build links with similar units from around the world, by conducting exchange programs or joint training with the Briton's 22 SAS, the French GIGN, Germany's GSG-9, and the US Navy's SEAL Team Six.

The first test of the team's capabilities came in the summer of 1984, when the team deployed to Los Angeles as part of the security buildup prior to the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. The games were being held in Los Angeles and the surrounding area. Prior to the onset of the games, the HRT conducted a series of joint training exercises with the Los Angeles Police Department's SWAT platoon. Despite the political infighting over Olympic security arrangements, the games went off without any serious incident occurring.

HRT's first large scale deployment occurred in March of 1985, when a white supremacist group known as Covenant, the Sword & the Arm of Lord (CSA) fortified themselves inside their 224 acre compound. The compound, known as the Zarepath-Horeb, was located near Bull Shoals Lake, in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. The group had been conducting paramilitary training, manufacturing explosives, and had modified several of its weapons to make them capable of firing fully automatic.

During a routine traffic check, two state troopers stopped a man, a Neo-Nazi wanted on a firearms offense, as he was heading to the CSA compound. The man killed one trooper and injured another with a submachine gun. He was arrested shortly after. The government suspected that several more fugitives had taken refuge inside the CSA compound, and deployed the HRT along with several FBI SWAT teams to the area surrounding the compound. The force eventually grew to 200 law enforcement agents. HRT operators conducted several clandestine nighttime searches of the compound to

gather information on its occupants.

Eventually the HRT, along with several FBI SWAT teams, stormed the compound capturing the outer buildings, and then settled in for a long siege. Through the successful use of negotiations, the FBI persuaded the remainder of the CSA members to surrender two days later. Inside the main CSA compound agents found barrels of cyanide poison, that CSA members were planning to dump into a major city's water supply, homemade antipersonnel mines, a large supply of antitank rockets, and even a scratch built armored car with a .30 caliber machine-gun mounted in a turret.

In August 1985, a team of HRT operators flew to Puerto Rico to apprehend suspects who had fled to the island after robbing West Hartford Wells Fargo of \$7 million dollars in 1983. The suspects were believed to be members of "Los Macheteros" (Spanish for "The Cane Cutters"), a Puerto Rican terrorist group. Eleven suspects were arrested in that operation. One suspect, Victor Manuel Gerena, is still on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives" list. Also in 1985, the FBI received permission from the DOJ to begin conducting international counter-terrorist operations, in support of US national interests and as a result the HRT began to conduct operations overseas.

In April of 1986 the team's first casualty occurred. Special Agent James A. Mcallister, an original member of the team, was killed during a helicopter rappelling exercise at the team's Quantico headquarters.

That same year the team deployed to New York City as part of the security force arrayed around Liberty Island for the Statue of Liberty's centennial birthday celebration. US security agencies believed that the event might provide terrorist with a perfect target. Luckily the event was incident free.

In January of 1987 a team of HRT operators traveled to Frankfurt, Germany to retrieve Mohammed Hamadei for his part in the hijacking of TWA flight 847, and brutal murder of a US Navy enlisted diver. The attempted extradition was foiled when two West German citizens were kidnapped in Beirut, Lebanon and German authorities decided to retain Hamadei for use as a possible bargaining chip, and the FBI was unable to take custody of the terrorist. However he was later convicted and sentenced to prison in Germany.

In September of 1987 the HRT was able to put its new international arrest powers into action. The FBI received information that suspected Lebanese terrorist Fawaz Younis was hiding in Lebanon. Younis was wanted for the 1985 hijacking of a Royal Jordanian Airlines flight, on which three Americans were passengers. As part of an elaborate plan to capture him, the HRT leased a yacht and coaxed Younis into a supposed drug deal taking place on the boat. Once Younis was successfully aboard the yacht, and in international waters, he was arrested by a team of HRT operators and returned to the US for trial.

In November of 1987 Cuban inmates at several federal prisons simultaneously rioted. The entire episode began on November 21 when inmates at the Federal Correctional Facility Oakdale, Louisiana (OCF) stormed the prison gates taking employees, and fellow inmates, hostage. In response the HRT deployed OCF to regain control of the facility. Two days later Cuban inmates at the US Penitentiary, Atlanta (USPA) rioted taking large numbers of the prison staff hostage.

After several days of tense negotiations the situation at OCF was resolved peacefully

and the HRT was redeployed to USPA to assist in any possible rescue attempt. Luckily a full-scale assault on the prison was not necessary, and the hostages were released after a series of negotiations with the inmates.

In January 1988 the HRT, and several FBI SWAT teams, were deployed to Marion, Utah. A religious zealot named Adam Swapp, and several of his followers, had barricaded themselves in Swapp's home. Swapp had allegedly detonated bomb as retaliation for the killing of his father-in-law, John Singer, nine years earlier by law enforcement officials.

Following Singer's death in 1979, Swapp of Fairview, Utah, had moved in with the Singer family and had taken two of Singer's daughters as wives. During the following years Swapp fathered six children with Heidi and Charlotte, as well as developing a deep hatred for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS/Mormon Church), several residents of Summit County, and the state of Utah in general.

In addition, Vickie Singer, one of the family members living in the home, continued to harbor bitter feelings toward the Mormon Church, Summit County officials, and the state of Utah. This hatred was shared by Vickie's oldest son, Timothy Singer, and Addam's younger brother, Jonathan Swapp.

On May 25, 1987, Addam wrote a letter naming 13 men "and all those involved in Marion Water works" as responsible for the death of John Singer and demanded atonement. The letter also accused the LDS Church of being an "evil church" involved in a conspiracy to drive the Singers from their 2 ½ acre farm. That same year, Vickie refused to pay property taxes on her farm.

On January 16, 1988, two days before the ninth anniversary of the death of John Singer, Addam Swapp broke into the Kamas LDS Stake Center. He filled the cultural hall with 50 pounds of dynamite and a "booster" of ammonium nitrate, which doubled the explosive force. The bomb was detonated at 3 a.m., causing \$1.5 million in damage. This was Addam's way of notifying the LDS Church and the state of Utah that he had begun the "atonement" with a vengeance.

Upon leaving the church, Addam stuck a spear in the ground in the northeast corner of the church property. Nine feathers were attached to the handle, next to the engraved date - January 18, 1979. The nine feathers signified the nine years since John's death. Tracks in the snow led from the spear directly to the Singer farm. When police contacted Addam Swapp and Vickie Singer and ordered them to surrender, they refused, and promised a battle if lawmen stepped onto their property.

The Summit County Sheriff's office immediately requested assistance from the Utah Department of Public Safety. Due to the use of explosives and the involvement of the LDS Church which is located worldwide, DPS summoned experts with the ATF and the FBI. Within 24 hours, approximately 100 law enforcement officers had responded to the scene. The Singers/Swapps refused to communicate with police. Fifteen people were inside the home, including Addam Swapp's six children, all under the age of six.

During the ensuing 13 day standoff, authorities used a variety of tactics in an attempt to resolve the siege peacefully. Low flying aircraft buzzed the house and circled the farm. Spotlights were extinguished and aerial flares were fired over the compound. Emergency vehicles activated lights and sirens. Later, a public address system was installed which directed high-pitched electronic static at the Singer compound. The main water line into

the compound was severed. During this period of time, law enforcement officers were often fired upon. As ordered, officers refrained from responding with deadly force.

On the final day of the siege a Utah Department of Corrections K-9 officer, Fred House, was hit and killed by a gunshot fired by one of the children inside the Swapp household. The authorities had developed plan they believed would successfully end the standoff without bloodshed. Police attached a "flash bang" to a speaker. When activated, this device produces a loud noise and a bright flash. The device is used to temporarily distract and disorient a suspect. The plan was to subdue Addam with the aid of a police dog during this brief period of time. Officer House, a member of the Utah DOC's SWAT team, was summoned to the scene because of his specialized skill with dogs. The dog would be used to apprehend Swapp during the operation.

At 6 a.m. the plan was placed in motion. As expected, Addam emerged from his home and approached the loud speaker, firing several rounds, and shouting obscenities at the police. As Addam began to remove the speaker, the flash bang was activated and Officer House released his dog. The dog was startled by the flash bang and ran from the scene, failing to engage the suspect. Addam fired at the dog as it ran for cover. Addam then hastily retreated to the safety of the house.

Although this plan had failed, authorities were convinced that the plan had merit. A backup plan was set in motion. Another daily routine observed by police was the morning milking of several goats by Addam and Jonathan Swapp. At 8:30 a.m., Addam and Jonathan left their home to milk the goats. As in the past, each was armed with a rifle. As they approached the goat pen, Officer Fred House appeared in a nearby doorway and ordered his dog to attack. Watching from the Singer home was Timothy Singer, armed with a .30 caliber carbine.

Upon seeing Officer House, Timothy opened fire. Officer House was shot and fell in the doorway. An FBI Agent tried to pull Officer House to safety. Officers attempting to recover the body of the fallen officer came under intense gunfire from the house. During this barrage of gunfire, the FBI Agent fired two rounds at Addam Swapp. One 9mm round struck Addam in the right wrist. The bullet passed through his arm and lodged in his chest. Addam fell to the ground, then stood up, and ran to the house.

Two armored personnel carriers (APCs) had been standing by in case of emergency, and Officers immediately summoned them to evacuate Officer House. As the two APCs moved forward, they came under extremely heavy gunfire. More than 100 rounds ricocheted off the front of the vehicles. Operators were fearful that a bullet would pass through the narrow slits utilized for vision. As officers were attempting to move Officer House to safety, Swapp emerged from the house, waiving a white towel stained with blood. He surrendered without further incident. His injuries were not life threatening. With Swapp now in custody, the rest of the group surrendered to authorities soon afterward.

Not long after that the team was involved in a kidnap case in northern Virginia. On April 9th agents from the FBI Richmond and Washington Field Office SWAT Teams had tracked a man, Charles Anthony Leaf II, who was accused of kidnapping his former girlfriend and her four year old son, to a small farm near Sperryville, Virginia.

Leaf demanded that authorities provide him, and his hostages, safe passage out of the area. Leaf also demanded that he be granted the use of a nearby FBI helicopter in which to make his get-a-way. After several hours of negotiation, FBI negotiators came to

the conclusion that no matter what they did, Leaf intended to kill both his hostages. The decision was made to take him out at the first opportunity.

The FBI allowed Leaf to see them loading the helicopter with supplies, and then allowed Leaf to begin his approach to the helicopter. Leaf exited the farm house using his former girlfriend as a human shield. Leaf was holding a knife to her throat, a gun to her temple, and had tied her terrified son to his shoulders with a bath robe. As Leaf approached the waiting helicopter, Leaf realized that he was trapped, dropped to his knees, jammed the gun to the woman's head, and said, "Goodbye, kitten."

A HRT sniper, positioned in the tall grass approximately seventy yards away, fired one shot at Leaf, striking him. The shot severed Leaf's brain stem killing him instantly. Both of the hostages were freed unharmed.

In late September of 1989 the HRT was deployed to the Caribbean island of St. Croix in the wake of Hurricane Hugo. Hugo had caused wide spread devastation throughout the Caribbean and along the East Coast of the US. The island's local jails had released inmates in an effort to keep them from drowning in the rising waters or dying when the buildings they were housed in began to crumble around them. HRT operators were sent in, along with other federal law enforcement agencies, to quell the violence, restore order, capture the criminals who were now running wild in the streets looting and destroying anything they could get a hold of, and build criminal cases against looters, and anyone else attempting to commit crimes. The team spent two weeks on the island before returning home.

Later that year, shortly before the U.S. invasion of Panama, a team of HRT operators deployed to Panama, at the request of the U.S. invasion of that country, at the request of the U.S. military.

In August 1991, 121 Cuban inmates, awaiting deportation back to Cuba, overran the Alpha Unit of the Federal Correctional Facility Talladega, Alabama. The inmates, who were armed with homemade weapons, were able to take 10 hostages. The HRT, several FBI SWAT teams and Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Special Operations Response Teams (SORTs) arrived on scene. After conducting several days of failed negotiations the HRT was given permission to retake the facility.

In the early morning hours of August 30, the HRT launched its assault. Using several explosive charges, the HRT was able to successfully breach the unit's steel doors and outer walls. HRT then stormed the Alpha Unit and liberated the hostages within 30 seconds. The Bureau of Prisons SORTs then moved in and placed the prisoners back in their cells.

In April of 1992 the HRT, along with several other federal tactical units, including the US Marshals Service (USMS) Special Operations Group (SOG), BOP SORTs, multiple FBI SWAT teams, and the US Border Patrol deployed to the city of Los Angeles, California. The units deployed in response to riots that had broken out on April 29th, in the wake of the Rodney King beating trial verdict. HRT operators spent 10-days conducting vehicle mounted patrols throughout the city, before returning to Virginia.

On May 12, 1992, Daniel "Danny" Ray Horning, a convicted kidnapper, bank robber and murder, serving four life sentences, escaped from the Arizona State Prison, by walking out the front gate dressed as a prison medical technician, and disappeared.

On June 25, Horning suddenly reappeared near Flagstaff, Arizona kidnapping a couple and forcing them to drive him to the Grand Canyon. Horning also stole a shotgun he found in the trunk of the couple's car.

Horning was eventually spotted by Park Rangers, who gave chase. Horning managed escape into Grand Canyon National Park, where the Rangers lost track of him. He then reappeared, a few days later, stole a car, and was stopped a roadblock, but he once again he managed to escape into the desert.

The HRT, and several dog teams, joined the pursuit. Helicopters equipped with night vision devices proved ineffective in locating Horning because the desert floor radiates so much heat it was impossible to tell a rock from a human.

On the 4th of July, a resident called the police, claiming that a man was drinking water from the hose in his backyard. Early in the morning of July 5th, the HRT moved in, and with the assistance of tracker dogs found Horning hiding under the deck of a house. Horning was arrested and returned to prison to complete his sentence.

In 1992 the HRT was deployed to San Juan, Puerto Rico to conduct several high-risk drug raids as part of the Safe Streets Task Force. The raids were successfully executed without incident, and the HRT returned to the US.

RUBY RIDGE

In August of 1992 the HRT was deployed to Ruby Ridge, Idaho to in response to a call for help from the local US Marshal's office. During the course of a surveillance operation being conducted by the Marshals, a gunfight erupted. The Marshals had been conducting the operations as part of their attempt to serve an arrest warrant on former Special Forces operator, and avowed white separatist, Randal "Randy" Weaver. During the firefight Weaver's son, Sammy, was killed along with Deputy US Marshal, William F. Degan, and the Weaver family dog, "Striker". The Marshals, ATF, FBI and the Idaho State Police immediately secured the area surrounding area deploying snipers and tactical personnel. After Weaver refused to surrender the HRT was called in.

FBI SWAT teams were deployed around the command post to help control access along the road leading to the Weaver cabin, and HRT sniper/observer teams took up positions around Weaver's cabin. Later that evening the teams were withdrawn due to extremely cold weather. After hearing his sniper teams initial reports, and assessing the situation, the HRT commander, Richard "Dick" Rodgers, issued Special Rules Of Engagement to the HRT stating that "they'd have the 'green light' to fire on any adult carrying a weapon in the vicinity of the Weaver home." The order was direct violation of standard FBI rules of engagement, that normally only allow agents to use deadly force when someone's life is directly threatened. Most of the HRT operators choose to ignore their commander's new order. However one sniper, Lon T. Horiuchi, choose to follow the order. On the evening of August 22, Horiuchi, seeing what appeared to be an adult male aiming a weapon at a helicopter over flying the property, fired at the male, and missed. His bullet instead struck Randy Weaver's wife Vickie, killing her.

After Vickie Weaver's death, the FBI, with assistance from for Special Forces Col. James "Bo" Gritz, was finally able to convince Weaver to surrender. The ensuing scandal created a lot of bad feelings among the general public and within the Justice Department and the FBI as to the proper role of the team.

WACO

In late February, 1993 the HRT was once again called on. This time the team deployed to the Branch Davidian Compound in Waco, Texas, in response to a failed raid by the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The entire incident began on February 28th, when the ATF attempted to serve a search warrant on a breakaway religious group known as the Branch Davidians. According to the ATF they had received reports that the Davidians, who were led by the charismatic Vernon Howell, who was known to his followers as David Koresh, had been stockpiling ammunition, explosives, and illegally modified weapons. ATF also reported that the group was possibly manufacturing narcotics, and that Koresh was abusing children living on the compound.

Prior to the raid, ATF assembled five of its regional Special Reaction Teams (SRTs), who'd received specialized training from a US Army Special Forces A-Team for a daylight assault on the compound.

As the raid force entered the compound they were immediately taken under fire by Davidians inside the main building. The Davidians had inadvertently been tipped off about the impending raid by a TV reporter and were waiting for the raid force. In the ensuing 45-minute gunfight, four ATF agents were killed and sixteen were wounded. On March 1st, the FBI assumed control of the situation. The FBI immediately deployed several FBI SWAT teams and the HRT around the compound.

Over the course of the next few weeks the situation escalated with the HRT using their own version of psychological warfare in an effort to drive the Davidians out of their stronghold. Some of the tactics employed by the HRT included: low flying helicopters buzzing the compound at all hours of the night, shining bright lights into the windows to prevent them from sleeping, and blaring loud rock-and-roll music all night. On March 27 the HRT used two borrowed Texas Army National Guard Combat Engineering Vehicles (CEVs) to knock down trees and clear abandoned vehicles from the area surrounding the compound. Members of the HRT were assigned to be tank drivers, tank commanders, Bradley vehicle crew, snipers, and snipers' support. Fifteen snipers were deployed.

As the siege dragged on, the HRT's commander, Dick Rodgers, began planning for a possible assault on the main compound itself. As part of this planning process Rodgers sought advice from both the US Army's "Delta Force" counter terror unit and the British 22 SAS Regiment, both of whom had sent observers to monitor the situation. Eventually, the Delta contingent departed due to some problems between them and the FBI, but left behind a few operators to act as observers.

On the 51st day of the standoff, with fatigue and stress beginning to take its toll on the team, the HRT used two modified National Guard Combat Engineering Vehicles (CEVs) to begin smashing down the compound's front walls in order to force its occupants to surrender. The CEVs were immediately met with heavy gunfire, and the HRT responded by inserting tear gas into the building. This tactic failed to achieve the desired result, and Rodgers ordered the team to begin firing pyrotechnic CS gas canisters into the building.

Sometime after this a fire began inside the compound. How the fire actually started is still a point of conjecture. The only thing that is known for certain is that a fire started, the entire complex burned to the ground, and most of compound's occupants, both children and adults, died in the inferno.

As a result of Waco, the HRT came under intense pressure from both the government and the media to justify their methods of operation. As a result the team was restructured, and refocused. Congress granted permission for the team to double in size, and closer coordination with the Bureau's hostage negotiators, and crisis management personnel was mandated. All of this eventually led to the formation of the CIRG.

In March of 1994 the HRT was again deployed to San Juan Puerto Rico, to assist the local field office in executing several high-risk warrants. The San Juan field office had been dealing with a crime wave unlike anything they had seen before. After conducting an extensive investigation the field office, and local authorities, determined that several violent drug gangs were responsible for most of the mayhem. Due to the difficulty in gathering any usable evidence against the perpetrators, both the FBI and local law enforcement had been unable to act against the gangs.

To remedy the intelligence situation an elaborate plan was developed using informants, electronic surveillance, undercover agents, and the covert video taping of the suspects from a hidden location. Beginning in January of 1994 the FBI began around the clock surveillance of one of the main drug gangs operating on the island. After finally catching a break, the local FBI SAC decided it was finally time to take action, and the HRT was brought in.

Approximately 80 members of the HRT and their support staff flew into the island over the course of several days, and set up an operations base on the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. After coordinating with the field office the HRT operators deployed several sniper teams around their potential target. Over the next four days the HRT snipers were able to move within less than 50 yards of their suspects. They positively identified all of the main suspects, their primary drug houses, weapon storage areas, sentries and several other items that would be of critical use to the operations planners.

After receiving the snipers reports, plans were finalized, arrangements were made with the local authorities and on March 11th, the operation was launched. During the execution phase, ten separate targets spread over several square blocks were simultaneously struck. HRT snipers provided cover for the assault teams, with one additional sniper placed on each of the raid teams. The raid was executed flawlessly, 28 suspects, several weapons and a small quantity of narcotics were seized. Most importantly, no law enforcement personnel, suspects, or local residents were injured, and the HRT never had to fire a single round.

Later that month the HRT began making the final preparations for the 1994 World Cup Soccer games as part of the security buildup, prior to the games. HRT operators scouted out game sites across the US including locations in Chicago, Giants Stadium in New York City, and California. During one such mission, in East Rutherford, New Jersey, HRT operators put on a graphic display of their capabilities for the world media. During the show HRT operators conducted simulated assaults on the stadium, displayed their rappelling and shooting skills, and allowed members of the media to photograph some of their weapons and equipment. This was all part of a carefully orchestrated plan to deter any possible terrorist action during the games.

In early 1995 the team was again deployed to San Juan, Puerto Rico to assist in the local field office's investigation of a kidnapping. That spring the HRT was once again deployed to Puerto Rico, this time to conduct a number of high-risk drug raids. At roughly the same

time, they also began to conduct a series of high-risk dignitary protection details.

THE MONTANA FREEMEN

In March, 1996 the Freeman of Montana, a militant anti-tax, anti government group, began an 81 day standoff, with authorities at their 960-acre ranch in Garfield County, Montana. The group refused to pay taxes or be evicted from the property, which was foreclosed on 18 months earlier. They even went so far as posting bounties for the capture of police and judges, and threatened to shoot their neighbors' sheep and cattle.

The incident began after 57 year old LeRoy Schweitzer (the group's leader) and member Daniel Petersen were arrested by the FBI on March 25th, 1996. Even though both men were carrying loaded weapons, they were taken into custody without incident. Both men had been indicted the previous year on federal charges for writing bad checks and threatening a judge's life.

Several FBI SWAT teams secured the area by surrounding the Freeman compound, until the HRT arrived on scene. FBI negotiators managed to coax several of the Freeman's 26 members into surrendering to authorities, while the few remaining holdouts were arrested in small groups during the course of the siege.

ARRESTING THE UNIBOMBER

That same month, the HRT became involved in the investigation of Theodore Kaczynski, the infamous "Unabomber." Between 1978 and 1995, Kaczynski engaged in a nationwide bombing campaign against modern technology, planting or mailing numerous home-made bombs, killing three people and injuring 23 others.

In January 1996 authorities finally got the break they'd been looking for. They received a tip from an attorney representing David Kaczynski, Theodore Kaczynski's brother. David had grown suspicious that his brother might be the author of the Unabomber's published manifesto.

But the FBI, having learned David Kaczynski's identity, had already begun checking Theodore Kaczynski's background. They eventually learned the location of Theodore Kaczynski's remote mountain cabin, and managed to persuade his mother to authorize a further search of the family's house in Lombard, Illinois.

Then US Postal Inspectors, FBI agents and explosive specialists, disguised as lumberjacks and other outdoorsmen, began slipping into Helena, Montana and the rural hamlet of Lincoln approximately 50 miles northwest.

While the agents and Postal Inspectors attempted to learn more information about Kaczynski, a pair of HRT snipers moved into a hide site, and took the cabin under surveillance. Over the course of several weeks, the pair relayed information on his activities, to their superiors, by radio.

The snipers reported that Kaczynski would sometimes tend his garden or retrieve provisions from his root cellar. But he never left his property. On Tuesday, April 3rd, 40 agents ended the surveillance, converging on his mountain home armed with a search warrant.

Kaczynski tried to withdraw inside the cabin but was restrained. Once restrained, Kaczynski reportedly put up no further resistance, and instead, became "quite personable and well spoken. He did however ask for a lawyer, and declined to answer questions but engaged in pleasant small talk with the agents.

Then in July of that same year, the HRT, along with dozens of US military special operations and law enforcement tactical units, deployed to Atlanta, Georgia as part of Operation Olympic Charlie the security build up for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Prior to the games taking place, HRT operators visited all training sites and game venues. The team planned for dozens of possible scenarios and developed contingency plans to deal with them. They conducted numerous training exercises designed to familiarize themselves with the area and develop working relationships with the other security teams. The games were uneventful until a terrorist pipe bomb exploded, killing one woman and wounding several other bystanders.

Also In 1996, the HRT was also back in Puerto Rico to once again execute a high-risk arrest warrant. Upon successful completion of the arrest the team stood down and began to pack for the journey back to Quantico, but several hours later, they were ordered to immediately re-deploy to upstate Michigan to handle a new situation that had developed. In less than twelve hours the team had gone from the tropical heat of Puerto Rico to -35 degree temps and near Arctic conditions.

In March of 1997 a team of HRT operators deployed to Israel and the West Bank to act as bodyguards for FBI director Louie Freeh, while he conducted a series of meetings with Israeli and Palestinian security agencies.

Not long after that, another team group of operators deployed to Pakistan to retrieve Mir Amal Kansi, and return him to the US for trial. Kansi was on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List for being the suspected gunman in the January 25, 1993 attack outside of the CIA headquarters that killed two and wounded three others.

In May 1997, an informant walked into the U.S. consulate in Karachi, and informed them he had information about Kansi's whereabouts. After providing proof, he was told to lure Kansi to a location he could be more easily arrested. Once there, he checked into a room at Shalimar Hotel located in Dera Ghazi Khan, in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

The team, consisting of FBI HRT operators, agents from the Washington Field Office, and agents of the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service. Just after 4:00 a.m. local time, on the morning of June 15, 1997 the team burst through the door of his room, taking him into custody, and flying him back to the US for trial, and eventual execution.

Then in August of 1998 a small team of HRT operators were involved in the capture of suspected terrorist mastermind, Mohamed Rashed Al-'Owhali. Al-'Owahli was wanted in connection to the 1998 terrorist bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya that killed or wounded several hundred people and completely destroyed the US Embassy Compound located there.

In early 1999 a small team of operators deployed to war ravaged nation of Kosovo, as part of an FBI team investigating alleged war crimes in the former republic of Yugoslavia. The FBI team was part of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The HRT provided security for a group of FBI forensic specialists looking for

evidence of mass grave sites in the countryside and investigating other crimes such as mass rapes, forced deportation, and genocide.

In the fall of 1999 the HRT once was again deployed to Puerto Rico, this time to Vieques Island, a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico. Vieques Island is home to one of the US Navy's primary live fire training areas, but the locals had been pressuring the Navy to shut down the range for years, saying they feared for their safety. Events finally came to a head after a security guard, employed at the range, was killed by a stray bomb.

The Navy immediately suspended all training at the site pending the outcome of their investigation. After reviewing its options the Navy recommended that it continue use of the range, with certain restrictions and new safety procedures in place. This infuriated local activists who threatened to stage mass protests on and around the range facilities, including penetrating the range's security perimeter. As a precaution a small group of HRT operators quietly visited the island to begin preparations in case the President decided to accept the Navy's recommendation, and begin immediate live-fire exercises on the island. After a larger number of protesters penetrated the outer safety and security barriers, and took up positions on the range itself the Department of Justice was ordered to remove the protesters.

So in May, 2000 a small team of HRT advisors, along with a joint force several hundred federal law enforcement officers and military personnel, all operating under the command of the CIRG, landed on Vieques, and executed Operation Eastern Access. Operation Eastern Access was designed to remove the protesters, by force if necessary, from the range facility and ensure the safety of personnel operating there.

More than 200 protesters were removed, but not before the entire incident was turned into a media circus, with scenes of protesters being dragged away by heavily armed federal agents under the guns of US Navy ships. Not exactly the image the government hoped to portray.

Not long after that the HRT, along with other elements of the CIRG, and several FBI SWAT teams, deployed to St. Martin Parish Louisiana. The local jail, located in St. Martinville, was under contract to house Cuban detainees for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). In December of 1999 approximately one dozen Cubans inmates rioted and took control of the facility taking the sheriff, several correctional officers, and other inmates, hostage. The Cubans had completed their US sentences, and were being held indefinitely in a state of legal limbo. The INS wouldn't release the Cubans because it considered them subject to deportation, but there is no agreement between the United States and Cuba to have them sent back.

The rioting inmates demanded that they be released, and stated that if their demands were not met, they would begin killing their hostages. Louisiana's Governor, asked for additional assistance from the local FBI field office. The local field office in turn requested assistance from the CIRG, and the HRT was wheels up within hours.

Within a few hours of their arrival the HRT, local and FBI SWAT teams had secured all but a small section of the jail, and evacuated the remaining jail inmates. The HRT secured blueprints of the facility, and immediately to construct a mockup of it. They also planned and rehearsed several possibly rescue scenarios in case the Cubans began killing their hostages. Luckily FBI negotiators from the Crisis Negotiations Unit were able to convince

the Cubans to surrender, without a full scale assault being necessary.

SEPTEMBER 11th

The events of September 11th, 2001 was a day that would forever change the way the US government, and the HRT in particular, dealt with terrorism.

On September 10th, 2001, the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), along with most of the HRT, flew to San Francisco, California for a week of counter-terrorism training. After arriving in San Francisco, that evening, most of the team's equipment, vehicles, and transport helicopters were transported to Monterey, California.

The team learned of the attacks when the FBI's San Francisco field office phoned two agents belonging to the CIRG just before 9:00 a.m. EST and alerted them.

The two agents quickly went to the local field office, where the Special Agent in Charge (SAC), gave them the details of what had happened in New York and Virginia, and told them to get the team together and head to the San Francisco airport. The SAC also informed them that although US airspace was closed to all commercial air traffic, he would do what he could to get them transported back to Washington as soon as possible.

The team was immediately ordered to assemble at the San Francisco Airport, and return home. Team members scrambled to pack their gear before rushing to the airport to obtain return flights home, only to learn that those flights wouldn't be available. The team had initially been scheduled to fly back commercially, but due the White House and NORAD grounding all civilian aircraft, and shutting down US airspace until further notice, they were unable to get return flights home.

That afternoon FBI officials contact the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), and requested possible military support in getting the team back to Virginia. The request is forwarded to the an action officer within the White House Military Office, who forwarded the request to Joe Hagin, the White House deputy chief of staff. Hagin immediately approved the request.

United Airlines, after learning of the HRT's predicament, offered use of its services. NORAD, with White House approval, quickly provided the appropriate flight clearances, and within an hour the HRT boarded a return flight to Washington, DC. Just after Midnight, on September 12th, 2001, the HRT's flight finally landed at Reagan National Airport., and the team stood by for possible deployment.

On September 26th, 2001, the FBI Washington Field Office (WFO) assumed responsibility for collecting evidence at the Pentagon. The HRT, as part of a joint security operation with the Defense Protective Service (DPS), Virginia State Police (VSP), and US Secret Service (USSS), deployed a counter-sniper team in an over-watch position along the perimeter of the Pentagon. The team provided security for teams collecting evidence, classified documents, and human remains from the Pentagon debris.

In February, 2002 with the events of September 11th, 2001 still burned into nation's collective memory, the HRT took part in what was at that time, the largest peacetime security deployment in US history. Approximately 16, 000 security personnel were deployed to Utah to defend against any possible terrorist attack at the 2002 Winter

Olympic Games. Unlike the 1994 Summer Olympic Games, this time the games went off without a hitch.

THE BELTWAY SNIPER

Then in October of 2002 the HRT became involved in the hunt for the so-called "D.C." or "Beltway Sniper" suspects. The Beltway sniper attacks were a series of coordinated shootings that took place in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, during three weeks in October 2002. The shootings killed ten people and wounded three others. At the time of the attacks, it was widely speculated that a single sniper, who was initially identified as a white man with what was assumed military experience, possibly in a white panel van or truck, was using the Capital Beltway for travel, and to avoid capture.

The response was massive, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies began a massive manhunt for what was initially believed to be a lone gunman. HRT operators conducted a series of joint security patrols with other local, state, and federal tactical units, around the DC metro area and along Interstate 95.

It was later learned that the attacks were perpetrated by two men, John Allen Muhammad, and his minor companion, Lee Boyd Malvo. It was also learned the two had actually been driving a blue 1990 Chevrolet Caprice sedan, while conducting the attacks, and not a white truck, as originally reported.

Six HRT operators were part of the joint nineteen-man tactical team that was responsible for capturing Malvo and Muhammad, at a Maryland rest stop. During the actual takedown two HRT operators, two Maryland State Troopers, from the Maryland State Police Special Tactical Assault Team Element (STATE) tactical unit, and two Montgomery County Police Emergency Response Team (ERT) operators stormed the vehicle, and captured both suspects without firing a shot. The entire operation took thirty seconds to complete.

The subsequent investigation revealed that the pair's actual crime spree had begun a month earlier when the two had conducted a series of murders and robbery in Louisiana and Alabama, which had resulted in three deaths.

On Monday, August 29th, 2005 Hurricane Katrina struck the US Gulf Coast, causing severe damage from Florida to Texas. The city of New Orleans, Louisiana was devastated, with 80% of the city being flooded, and numerous deaths occurring. While initially reluctant, city and state authorities were completely overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster, and requested federal assistance.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, thousands of federal law enforcement officials, military personnel, and emergency workers were flown into New Orleans to help restore order and to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the storm. Included in the group were approximately 500 FBI personnel, including multiple FBI SWAT Teams and members of the HRT. The tactical teams assisted local and state law enforcement authorities by answering emergency calls, stopping looter, and assisting in search and rescue operations.

CONTROVERSY IN PUERTO RICO

A few weeks after the Katrina deployment, the HRT became involved in yet another controversy. This time, it involved the shooting of Puerto Rican dissident Filiberto Ojeda Ríos by HRT operators.

Ríos was the leader of the "Macheteros," a violent Puerto Rican separatist movement that had claimed for a number of robberies, murders, bombings throughout Puerto Rico and the U.S. The group's publically stated goal is to obtain Puerto Rican independence of Puerto Rico through armed struggle against the United States government. They had also claimed responsibility for the August 1978 murder of a police officer in Naguabo, Puerto Rico. In 1985, when FBI agents attempted to arrest Ríos for his participation in a 1983 Wells Fargo robbery in West Hartford, Ríos shot at the agents, seriously wounding one of them. In 1992, while still a fugitive, Ríos was convicted federal charges in connection with the robbery.

In September of 2005, after years of investigative effort, the San Juan FBI located Ojeda's home on a rural hillside near Hormigueros, Puerto Rico. An HRT sniper-observer team conducted surveillance on the house, and once they confirmed Ríos' presence, they began planning to arrest him. The operation was initially planned to take place in the early morning hours of September 24th. However, on the afternoon of September 23rd, the HRT sniper-observer team reported that their presence had been detected by several people who stopped a vehicle near Ríos' residence and began speaking in Spanish. One of the sniper-observers saw one of the people gesture with his hands, point at the ground, and then at the trail led to the sniper-observer team's location.

Because the Bureau believed that the HRT presence was compromised, they ordered the team to conduct an emergency daylight assault. The assault team rappelled from helicopters, and attempted to gain entry by assaulting up the front stairs of the house.

Ríos was prepared for a possible assault and on the agents as they approached the house, and HRT operators immediately returned fire. Ríos managed to shoot HRT members, seriously injuring one of them. The HRT withdrew and a standoff ensued. Ríos' wife eventually came out of the house, and an FBI negotiator called out to Ríos in an effort to get him to surrender. Ríos responded that would not negotiate unless a particular reporter was brought to the scene.

Approximately 100 minutes after the initial assault, an HRT operator saw Ojeda in the kitchen window when he was illuminated by a refrigerator light. The operator saw Ojeda holding a gun and fired at him three times. HRT members heard Ojeda cry out and fall. The team immediately began preparing to enter the house, and cut the power as darkness approached. However, FBI Headquarters assumed command of the operation at approximately 8:05 p.m., and subsequently ordered the agents at the scene not to enter the house that evening. Instead, the FBI sent a second team of HRT operators to Puerto Rico, and had this team make entry in to the house, the next day, at approximately 12:34 p.m., 18 hours after Ojeda was shot. They found Ojeda on the floor, dead from a gunshot wound.

The US Department of Justice Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an extensive investigation of the shooting, and the events leading up to it. Their report cleared the HRT of any wrongdoing.

On December 6th, 2006 the HRT suffered its second training death, when Special Agent Gregory J. Rahoi was accidentally shot and killed, during a live fire training exercise on

Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia. Special Agent Rahoi was flown to Mary Washington Hospital, in Fredericksburg, where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

THE HRT GOES TO WAR

Beginning in early 2002 and lasting until 2010 when the FBI drew down its deployments, teams of HRT operators would continue to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, with most HRT operators having deployed to Afghanistan three to five times, and several being deployed well over half a dozen times.

During the deployments, which were usually 90 days in duration, HRT operators provided security for other FBI personnel, as well as conducting joint operations with elements of US Special Operations Command and the intelligence community.

During one such deployment to Afghanistan, HRT operator Jay Tabb, along with two Army Rangers, was injured by a suicide bomber while searching a terrorist safe house. A few months prior to being wounded in Afghanistan, Tabb had been awarded the FBI Star, after being wounded during the arrest of a wanted fugitive.

K-9's

In December 2008, the HRT underwent a major change in its organizational structure. For the first time in its history it added two canines and two dog handlers to its ranks. The specially selected and trained dogs, a 70-pound black Czech Sheppard, named Booger, and Belgian Malinois named Freddie, were fully integrated into team's training regimen, undergoing their own version of the same rigorous training their human counterparts undertake.

OPERATION GUARD SHACK

In October 2010 the HRT participated in Operation Guard Shack. Operation Guard Shack was a two-year FBI investigation into reported corruption by Puerto Rican law enforcement and government officials. The operation came to a conclusion on the morning of 6 October, 2010, when the FBI executed a series of pre-dawn raids that led to the arrest of 133 suspects.

The operation began at 3 a.m., when 65 tactical teams, including FBI SWAT teams and the HRT, fanned out across the island of Puerto Rico in a series of pre-dawn raids. In addition to SWAT and HRT operators, the operation involved over 1,000 personnel, who were flown in from 50 of the FBI's 56 field offices. These personnel included crisis negotiators, evidence response team members, K-9 teams, and 80 medical personnel from first responders and nurses to a trauma surgeon and a veterinarian.

The list of suspects includes 61 officers from the Puerto Rico Police Department, 16 officers from other municipal police departments, a dozen Puerto Rico Department of Corrections officers, members of the National Guard, and two U.S. Army soldiers.

HALTING DOMESTIC TERRORISM

In March, 2011 the HRT was in action again, this time to arrest 36 year-old white supremacist Kevin William Harpham, a former member of the white supremacist group,

the National Alliance, for reportedly planting an improvised explosive device (IED) along the Unity March route in downtown Spokane, Washington on January 17, 2011.

The device was originally reported as a suspicious package when three contract workers found the black Swiss Army backpack and notified police. When officers opened the backpack they found an explosive device wrapped in two t-shirts.

The shrapnel laden device, which was designed to be detonated from up to 1,000 feet away, was deactivated, and flown to the FBI Crime Lab for analysis. Upon analysis it was discovered that the shrapnel (fish weights), had been laced with rat poison. The rat poison would keep blood from clotting resulting in more severe injuries to anyone it struck.

The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in Spokane immediately launched an investigation, and JTTF investigators canvassed the area for batteries and other components similar to those used in the bomb.

Investigators focused on rural Stevens County, Washington because of the two T-shirts used to wrap the device. The two T-shirts had links to rural Stevens County, Washington; one was distributed at a 2010 "Relay for Life" event in Colville, Washington, about an hour northwest of Spokane, and the second T-shirt, with the words "Treasure Island Spring 2009" on the front, was given out to students who participated in a performance of Treasure Island in the Chewelah School District in March 2009 at Jenkins High School in Chewelah.

Because of the timing and location of the bombing attempt, investigators focused on whether or not the attempt was made by white supremacists.

Within a month of failed attempt, investigators discovered that a local outlet of a large retail chain was selling the same kind of fishing weights used in construction of the device, in a small town about 60 miles north of Spokane.

The store's records indicate there had been three large purchases of the weights in recent month, while two of the purchased were paid for in cash, one transaction used a debit card, and that card belonged to Harpham. At the same time, the FBI Laboratory had been working to extract a DNA sample from the backpack that was later matched to Harpham through his military records.

Investigators had also learned of Harpham's white supremacy postings on the Internet and his affiliation with a neo-Nazi group called the National Alliance. Harpham had allegedly posted a series of over 1000 posts using the alias "Joe Snuffy" on the anti-Semitic website Vanguard News Network (VNN). In those posts, which date back to 2006, Harpham allegedly made numerous racist comments, referred to his desires to obtain blueprints on how to build an IED, as well as bragging about purchasing the T-shirts found in the backpack.

With evidence linking the Harpham to bomb rapidly stacking up, the FBI obtained a warrant for his arrest. Because Harpham lived in what was described as "a remote, relatively inaccessible wilderness area", near Addy, Washington, and was believed to be heavily armed, the HRT would be used to execute the arrest. A ruse was devised to lure Harpham out of his home.

On the morning of Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 FBI officials contacted Stevens County officials and asked if they could borrow some road equipment. Agents then moved the equipment, a backhoe and two trucks, to a position near Harpham's home and pretended to work on a culvert, staging near his home and keeping the area under surveillance. They also placed a 3-mile No Fly Zone into effect before they executed the raid.

As Harpham slowed down his car, for what he thought were construction workers, an HRT operator dropped the backhoe's front loader onto the rear of the vehicle, breaking the car's back window. They then fired a flash-bang through the car's broken window. Once the device detonated, they quickly surrounded the vehicle, and took Harpham into custody without incident.

But as agents suspected, he was armed at the time. Agents found 2 rifles and \$10,000 in U.S. currency in his car, and Harpham reportedly began to faint when agents told him he was under arrest for the MLK Backpack bomb.

FBI agents executed the search warrant on both Harpham and his father's homes, while Washington State Patrol troopers set up a roadblock on the road leading down to his home. Tools, rat poison, a copy of the Anarchist Cookbook, the Turner Diaries, and photos of Harpham with members of minority groups were seized. One of the tools seized was a pair of pliers that were linked to tools used to construct the IED.

Harpham was charged with attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and possession of an unregistered explosive device. He eventually pleaded guilty to the charges, and being sentenced to 32 years in prison, and lifetime probation.

An HRT operator was involved in the February, 2011 raid of a yacht, the Quest. The vessel, and its four American passengers, had been on a round-the world trip, when it was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. The pirates sailed the yacht to the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Oman. Throughout the journey the vessel was being followed by US Navy vessels, and monitored by aircraft, while FBI negotiators attempted to secure the release of the hostages.

On the morning of February 23rd, a team of Navy SEALs launched a rescue operation after the pirates fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a U.S. Navy ship about 600 yards away from the yacht -- and missed -- and the sound of gunfire could be heard on board the Quest.

When the SEALs boarded the vessel, they killed two of the pirates, as well finding the bodies of two additional pirates, all four of the hostages, and capturing thirteen more pirates. The four hostages, Scott Adam, his wife Jean Adam, and their friends Phyllis Macay and Bob Riggle had all been shot. Once the scene was secured, the HRT operator immediately boarded the vessel to collect evidence from the scene, to be used at the pirate's prosecution. The thirteen pirates captured onboard the vessel, as well as two others who'd been conducting negotiations aboard the Navy vessel, were all transported to the U.S. for prosecution.

The in April of 2011 the HRT participated in the capture of Mohammad Saaili Shubin. The operation, which was coordinated by the FBI and Somali authorities, as conducted by the FBI and U.S. military Special Mission Units of the US military. The 50 year Somali

Shibin was flown to the U.S., and charged in a three-count indictment with being the alleged pirates' shore-based negotiator.

A VERY BUSY YEAR

Even with the team's withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, its operation tempo has remained busy. 2013 was a particularly busy year for the HRT, with the team participating in a number of high profile operations, as well as experiencing the tragic loss of two more of its personnel.

The team began the year by participating in the security arrangements for the January 2013 Presidential Inauguration. A team of HRT operators was on hand, along with thousands of other law enforcement and military personnel, ready to respond to any terrorist incident that may have arisen. Luckily, the inauguration was held without incident.

Only a few weeks after the Inauguration, a team of HRT operators found itself deploying to rural Alabama. The situation began on January 29th, 2013 when 65-year-old Jimmy Lee Dykes boarded a school bus, killed the bus driver, 66-year-old Charles Poland, and took a 5-year-old boy, suffering from Asperger syndrome, and only referred to in press reports as "Ethan", hostage. Dykes then fled, with the boy, to a fortified underground bunker he had constructed on his property near Midland City, Alabama.

Upon reaching the bunker, Dykes called the local 9-1-1 dispatcher and gave the authorities instructions on how they could communicate with him. Soon FBI hostage negotiators arrived on the scene and began communicating with Dykes through a narrow PVC ventilation pipe that ran down into the bunker.

As this was happening, local and state personnel took up positions around the bunker. A short time later a roughly 30-man element of HRT operators arrived and began preparations for a possible assault on the bunker.

For six long tension-filled days FBI negotiators tried unsuccessfully to resolve the situation peacefully. Throughout the six days HRT operators continued their preparations for a possible rescue operation, including constructing a full-size mockup of Dykes bunker, and running through rehearsals of possible scenarios.

Then on the morning of the seventh day, February 4th, 2013, the situation was finally resolved when HRT operators assaulted Dykes bunker. Sensing that Dykes was becoming increasingly rattled, FBI negotiators feared that Dykes would kill the boy. Officials had been monitoring Dykes deteriorating mental state on a hidden camera, which had been secretly inserted into the bunker, and after spotting Dykes holding a weapon, authorities finally authorized an assault on the bunker.

At 3:12 p.m. HRT operators breached the roof of the bunker using explosive charges. They then threw two distraction devices into the bunker, before entering it, exchanging gunfire with Dykes, killing him in the process.

While Ethan was unharmed in the assault, he was immediately taken to a local hospital for a full medical examination, and once a doctor medically cleared him, he was reunited with his mother.

A subsequent search of the bunker revealed that Dykes had booby-trapped the bunker with two IEDs. One in the bunker itself, and a second device located in the PVC pipe Dykes had been using to communicate with authorities.

Just over a month later HRT operators found themselves once again deploying, this time to upstate New York. On the morning of Wednesday March 13th, 2013 64-year old Kurt Meyers set fire to his home, which was located in the small town of Mohawk, New York, and then, armed with a shotgun, went on a rampage at a car wash and a barbershop that left four people dead and two others wounded. In the aftermath of the shootings, Meyers barricaded himself in an abandoned bar in Herkimer, New York, called Glory Days. The Herkimer Police SWAT Team and all four of the New York State Police's Special Operations Response Teams (SORT) were deployed to around the abandoned building as a response.

While law enforcement officials were discussing the possibility of someone being held up in the abandoned building, several shots were fired from inside the building. While no one was injured, the rounds struck nearby buildings and several police vehicles.

As a response to the shots, SORT Troopers utilized robots in an attempt to locate the Meyers. For nine hours SORT utilized CS gas, flash bangs, and other noise-generating devices in an attempt to ensure Meyers wouldn't be allowed to rest. In addition, the building had no electricity or heat, and the outside temperatures were in the high teens.

As planning for a way to end the siege progressed, one of the SORT officers suggested the idea of using the HRT to resolve the situation. SORT officers contacted the FBI, and short time later authorization was granted. That evening a team of seven HRT operators, and a two year old Czech German Shepherd, named Ape, flew to Herkimer, arriving early on the morning of Thursday the 14th.

That morning law enforcement authorities made the decision to allow the HRT to assault the building. Around 8:00 a.m., a breach was initiated and Ape, was the first through the door. Ape had a camera attached to his body that was being monitored by the FBI agents outside. Upon seeing the dog, Meyers fired a shotgun blast at Ape, but the blast missed and destroyed Ape's camera instead. Meyers fired a second blast, which struck Ape in the chest, killing him instantly. Seconds later the HRT assault team entered the room, engaged Meyers, and shot him dead.

Ape, having died in the line of duty, received a formal burial. His remains were cremated, and after a short ceremony, attended by the FBI and NY State Police, his remains were returned to Virginia.

THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBERS

On the afternoon of April 14th, 2013, at 2:49 p.m., during the annual running of the Boston Marathon, two "pressure cooker" IEDs exploded seconds apart, killing 3 people and injuring 264. The FBI immediately took over the investigation, coordinating the response of the various law enforcement agencies involved. On April 18, they released photographs and surveillance video of two suspects believed to have been involved in the bombings. Later that day, the two suspects were tentatively identified as 26 year-old Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his 19 year-old brother Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, and an extensive manhunt ensued.

Shortly after their photos were released the brothers shot and killed MIT Police officer Sean Collier, in an effort to obtain the officer's weapon, before carjacking a Mercedes-Benz SUV, at gunpoint, in the Allston-Brighton neighborhood of Boston. Tamerlan took the vehicle's owner hostage, telling him that he was responsible for the Boston bombings and for killing a police officer.

The brothers then forced the vehicle's driver to use his ATM cards to withdraw \$800 in cash, before the card reached its daily cash withdrawal limit. The pair then transferred several objects to the Mercedes-Benz. Dzhokhar followed them in their green Honda Civic, for which a "be on the look out" (BOLO) was issued by law enforcement officials, later joining them in the Mercedes-Benz. Later interrogation allegedly revealed that the brothers "decided spontaneously" to go to New York and planned to bomb Times Square.

The vehicle's driver, Danny, a Chinese national managed to escape, when the pair stopped at a gas station. He ran across the street to another gas station and alerted law enforcement officials. The police were able to track the vehicle's location, using GPS chip in the SUV owner's cell phone, which had been left in the vehicle. A short time later, the SUV and a second vehicle being driven by one of the brothers, were spotted in by a Watertown, Massachusetts police officer.

The lone officer was instructed not to confront the pair, but was fired on. The officer immediately tried to disengage, by putting his car in reverse, but continued to take fire. Calling for help, officers from six separate agencies responded. When responding officers attempted to stop the two vehicles, a shootout broke out. The two brothers were armed with a single handgun and multiple IEDs including several pipe bombs, four improvised hand grenades, and another pressure cooker bomb. During the firefight the police fired over 300 rounds of ammunition at the pair, who responded with gunfire, and by tossing IEDs at the police. A Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Police officer was wounded by gunfire. A later investigation revealed that the officer was actually wounded by fire from other officers, and not the brothers as initially thought.

At one point, during the gun battle, Tamerlan, with explosives strapped on his body and holding an explosive trigger, approached the responding officers on foot, firing a handgun at the officers. The officers returned fire, wounding him and police officer managed to tackle and handcuff him.

At some point during the gunfight, Dzhokhar was shot and wounded, but managed to retreat to the hijacked SUV. He grabbed the wheel and drove toward the police. As he toward the officers, who had restrained his brother, the officers scrambled out of the way and Dzhokhar proceeded to drive over his brother's body. Tamerlan would later die from the gunshot wound and the blunt force trauma of being run over by his brother.

A massive manhunt involving thousands of law enforcement, and National Guard personnel ensued. Tactical teams from multiple local, state, and federal agencies, as well as teams from adjoining states fanned out across Watertown, conducting door-to-door searches, and advising residents to stay in their homes.

A 20-block area of Watertown was cordoned off police, and the entire transit network in the area was shutdown to prevent Dzhokhar from using it as a method of escape. Dzhokhar's father was enlisted into the effort. He issued a number of statements encouraging his son to surrender without further violence.

The manhunt ended on the evening of April 19, two hours after the shelter-in-place order had been lifted. A resident outside the search area stepped outside and noticed that the cover on his boat, in his back yard, was loose. When he looked into the boat, he saw a body lying in a pool of blood, and immediately notified police. The authorities surrounded the boat and verified movement through a forward looking infrared thermal imaging device in a State Police helicopter. When the suspect started poking at the boat's tarp, police began firing at the boat, only stopping after the on scene Superintendent called for a cease fire. A tactical medic from the ATF's Washington Field Office Special Response Team rendered medical attention to Dzhokhar before he was transferred to a local hospital.

Throughout the entire episode HRT operators, being monitored by people owning radio scanners, could be heard planning how they would handle Dzhokhar's arrest, and made the decision to allow local agencies to affect the actual arrest.

On May 17th, 2013, only a month after experiencing the high of successful arrest in Boston, the HRT suffered the loss of two more experienced operators, when Special Agent Christopher Loreck and Special Agent Stephen Shaw were killed during a maritime counterterrorism exercise, off of the coast of Virginia Beach, Virginia. The two agents were reportedly fast-roping from a helicopter, onto the deck of a Military Sealift Command ship, when the helicopter encountered difficulties due to the weather. The agents fell approximately 75 feet and died due to fatal injuries suffered from the fall.

In October 2013 HRT operators were also part of a pair of operations launched to capture wanted terror suspects in Somalia and Tripoli, Libya. The Libya operation was conducted by the Army's the Army's Special Forces Operational Detachment – DELTA, resulted in the successful capture of Nazih Abdul-Hamed al-Ruqai, who was wanted for his alleged participation in the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The team successfully captured al-Rugai, snatching him from a vehicle, before shipping him to New York City for prosecution.

The Somalia operation, conducted with members of the US Navy's Development group, was an attempt to capture a suspect September 2013 attack on Kenya's Westgate Mall. Unfortunately, the team was compromised on approach, and withdrew under fire.

KIDNAPPINGS & RESCUES

In August of 2013 the HRT was involved in the successful rescue of 16-year-old Hanna Anderson. The incident began on August 4, 2013 when 40 year old James DiMaggio invited Hannah, her mother, Christina Anderson, 44, and brother, Ethan Anderson, 8, to his house in Boulevard, a rural California town 60 miles from San Diego. While at the house, DiMaggio tortured and murdered Hannah's mother and younger brother before kidnapping the teen and setting his house on fire.

Law enforcement authorities issued an Amber Alert for Anderson and a massive search commenced for DiMaggio and his captive. Hundreds of law enforcement officers from local, state, and federal agencies were involved in the manhunt which spanned the entire West Coast region of the United States. Personnel from the San Diego, Valley, Ada County Sheriff's Department's, Idaho State Police, California Highway Patrol, U.S. Marshals Service, and the U.S. Border Patrol all participated in the search, as well as FBI SWAT teams and the Enhanced FBI SWAT team for the Salt Lake City Field Office.

On August 9th, the Idaho State Police received a call that a couple fitting DiMaggio and Anderson had been spotted near Morehead Lake, Idaho. A group of horse back riders, including a retired sheriff, noticed the couple, and thought it was odd that they didn't seem properly equipped to be traveling in such a rugged area. They also found it suspicious that they seemed reluctant to engage in conversation and appeared to be headed away from their stated destination. They didn't report their suspicions to authorities until next, after viewing an Amber Alert on television.

That same day they also received a report that a vehicle matching the description of DiMaggio's Nissan Versa had been located near the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness area. The vehicle had covered with brush and the license plates removed. Soon after, helicopters spotted the duo's campsite near Morehead Lake.

On August 10th HRT operators were transported to the area approximately 2 ½ hours away from the area the campsite had been spotted, by Blackhawk helicopters. The HRT operators, each carrying approximately 100 lbs. of equipment and weapons, moved out on foot toward the campsite.

At approximately 5:20 p.m., HRT operators and members of the Salt Lake City Field Office SWAT Team spotted Hannah and DiMaggio's campsite near Morehead Lake, and moved to make contact with them. As they approached, DiMaggio, who had a rifle, fired one round. He then lowered the rifle to shoulder height, fired one more round, and was immediately shot by members of the HRT. Shot five times, DiMaggio died on the scene. Hannah was rescued and reunited with her grieving father, Brett Anderson.

On April 10th, 2014 the HRT conducted the latest high profile operation, the rescue of Frank Janssen. The incident began in October of 2012, when Wake County Assistant District Attorney Colleen Janssen prosecuted a case against Kelvin Melton. Melton, who'd previously been identified as a leader in the Bloods street gang, was convicted of assault with a deadly weapon, and sentenced to life without parole. When his appeal was denied, Melton hatched a scheme to exact revenge on the prosecutor. The plan was to kidnap Colleen Janssen's father.

Using cell phone, smuggled into the prison, Janssen coordinated the planning of the kidnapping with his coconspirators. On Saturday, April 5th, 2014 a woman knocked on the door to Frank Janssen's Wake Forrest, North Carolina home. When he opened it, he was shocked with an electronic stun device, and kidnapped. When his wife discovered he was missing, she reported it to the local Police department.

Then on the night of Monday, April 7th, Janssen's wife began receiving text messages from the kidnappers stating that Janssen was locked in the truck of a car, and that "We will send [him] back to you in six boxes and every chance we get we will take someone in your family to Italy and torture them and kill them ... we will drive by and gun down anybody" and "throw a grenade in your window." The kidnappers demanded that all charges against Kelvin Melton be dropped in exchange for the safe exchange for Frank Janssen's safe return.

Janssen's wife informed the Wake Forrest Police Department, who informed the FBI of the situation, and they immediately began an investigation. Then night of Wednesday, April 9th, the kidnapper's sent Janssen's wife a text and a photo of her husband strapped to a

chair. The text stated that if their demands were not met, they would begin torturing Janssen, before killing him, and then begin kidnapping other family members.

The FBI managed to trace the kidnapper's cell phone back to Atlanta, Georgia, and began monitoring any calls made on the kidnapper's cell phone, including a call to cell phone Kelvin Melton had in prison.

After intercepting several incriminating statements made during the calls between Melton and the kidnappers, the FBI was able to vector in on the location of the kidnappers.

While all of this was going on, the authorities moved in on one of the kidnapping suspects, a female, who wasn't at the location where Janssen was being held, and arrested her. The woman admitted to being a part of the involved in the kidnapping and led the FBI to Janssen's exact location.

At approximately 11:55 p.m., on the night of Wednesday, April 10th, 2014, the HRT used an explosive charge to breach the door to the apartment Janssen was being held in, and conducted an entry. Janssen was rescued, and four kidnappers were taken into custody.

The five suspected arrested, including the woman who'd lead the FBI to the kidnapper's location, include: Jenna Paulin Martin, 21; Tiana Maynard, 20; Jevante Price; Michael Montreal Gooden, 21; and Clifton James Roberts, 19. All five were charged with Conspiracy to Commit Kidnapping.

This last operation is just another feather in the HRT's cap, and continues a trend of successful operations conducted sense the tragedies of the early 1990's.

TACTICAL RECRUITING PROGRAM (TRP)

Because of its increased operational tempo, In 2007 the HRT initiated the Tactical Recruiting Program (TRP). The TRP is designed to identify potential HRT applicants, with prior military and/or law enforcement tactical experience, and expedite their recruitment process.

Agents accepted into the program must still complete the regular Special Agent hiring process, oral interview, and physical fitness assessment, as well as all serving time in a Field Office before undergoing the HRT selection process.

SELECTION AND TRAINING

Assignment to the HRT is voluntary, and is open to all FBI Special Agents. Agents wishing to join the HRT must have at least 3 years field experience and superior performance evaluations. Operators normally serve from three to five years on the team before moving on to another assignment. Many former operators take up leadership positions with one of the many field office SWAT teams or a position a position within the CIRG.

Prospective HRT operators are selected based upon their background and experience, as well as their demonstrated performance during the HRT selection course, which is held once a year. The rigorous two week selection process includes long distance runs, forced marches, obstacle courses, and other tests of their physical and mental stamina. Throughout the entire selection process candidates are evaluated on their ability to think

under pressure, and to perform while physically exhausted. Even successfully completing the selection course does not guarantee a spot on the team. Just over half a dozen of the survivors are actually selected for a spot on the team, and then they must attend, and successfully complete the five month long New Operators Training School (NOTS) conducted at the Academy and the grounds of Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. NOTS culminates in a full scale hostage rescue exercise in which the candidates must call on all of their newly acquired skills. Then, and only then, are they considered full fledged HRT operators.

HRT Operators fall into one of two groups, either assaulters or sniper/observers. Operators selected for Sniper/Observer position receive additional training from both FBI and US Marine Corps instructors. Attendance at the eight week USMC Scout Sniper School provides fledgling HRT snipers with the skills necessary to execute their dual mission of providing precision firepower and acting as the HRT's intelligence gathering force. The program of instruction covers a variety of topics including concealment/camouflage; covert movement; field-craft; stalking, land navigation, sniper-hide construction, target reconnaissance, and urban sniping.

When not operationally deployed, the HRT conducts full-time training for its members at various sites across the US. Two hours a day are set aside for physical training and a defensive tactics session. One day a week devoted to maintaining perishable skills such as fast roping; explosive breaching; photography, or specialized skills such as mobile assaults; manhunt and rural operations; maritime operations; helicopter operations; weapons of mass destruction (WMD) training (provided by the US Department of Energy); and cold weather operations. Three days are spent honing sniping or CQB skills on the various training ranges available to the team.

During a routine week of training it is not unusual for HRT operators to fire 1000 rounds of ammunition to keep their shooting skills honed. In an effort to boost its already formidable array of skills, the HRT opened a state of the art Tactical Firearms Training Center (TFTC), known as the "shoot house". The facility, which opened in April of 2000, is an \$11 million structure enclosed in a specially built warehouse type building. The facility replaced the old "fire house" that was previously used by the team, along with various military and civilian training sites. Inside, the facility's walls are on specially designed tracks allowing it to be configured to reconstruct virtually any building layout. This allows the HRT to conduct dry runs prior to actually running an operation. The facility's most unique feature is the life-size mockup of a Boeing 767 fuselage. It allows for hostage rescue training in an aircraft environment. The aircraft mockup, which is equipped with a sound system, can simulate a number of conditions including a simulated aircraft fire, gunfire and the sounds of screaming panicked hostages.

One day is set aside for team members to develop individual skills (such as mountaineering and urban climbing) or to work on special projects. Additionally the team has also made extensive use of the mothballed aircraft stored in the Airplane Graveyard located at Davis Monthan Air Force Base; they have rehearsed maritime operations by boarding ships of the James River Reserve Fleet; and practiced their mountaineering and climbing skills on exercises in the Rockies. HRT operators are also trained in conducting freefall parachute operations and the use of ram-air parachutes, as well as SCUBA and closed circuit diving operations. Team members have received training the US Army Combat Diver Qualification Course (CDQC), and have attended portions of the US Navy's Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training course.

In addition to its own extensive training regimen, the HRT routinely conducts joint training exercises, and exchange programs with similar US law enforcement and military units including the US Capitol Police CERT, the US Border Patrol's BORTAC tactical team, the US Army's 1st SFOD-D, US Navy's DEVGRU (formerly SEAL Team Six), and foreign units such as the British 22 SAS Regiment, and France's GIGN.

The past decade has seen the team routinely participating in joint training exercises sponsored by the European Union's Atlas Network, such as Black Tulip 2007. The Atlas Network is an association of specialized law enforcement units of the 27 member nations of the EU. The goal of the training exercises is to improve cooperation and skills among the various units.

TEAM ORGANIZATION

When the team was first formed, it was broken down into two separate sections designated "Blue" and "Gold". Each section consisted of two assault teams and a six-man sniper team. The assault teams were sub-divided into four-man assault elements, with each element specializing in a particular type of operation (aircraft takedowns; mobile assaults; maritime operations; and strongholds/sieges).

At some point the sections were re-organized, with each section having two (2) seven man assault teams and an eight man sniper team. In 1995 the team underwent another re-structuring. This time two additional sniper teams were added and the teams were organized so that each would have two (2) seven man assault teams and two (2) seven man sniper teams consisting of snipers, a sniper Assistant Team Leader and sniper Team Leader.

After conducting an extensive review of the team's performance at both Ruby Ridge and Waco, it was determined that the size of the team was inadequate to handle the number and duration of operations it was being expected to conduct. The DOJ and FBI authorized the team to double its size to approximately 100 operators, who were split between Blue Unit, Gold Unit and a small command staff.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The FBI has equipped the HRT with the best equipment and weapons money can buy. When the team was founded, HRT operators used the 9mm FN-Browning HP Mk 2 pistol, which was later supplemented by the 9mm SIG-Sauer P226 pistol. In 1995, 250 - .45 ACP Les Baer SRP Bureau pistols, built on a high-capacity Para-Ordnance frame, were acquired for use. The most recent issued pistol is the Glock 22 .40 cal. semi-auto.

HRT armories are also stocked with a variety of specially modified H&K MP-5 series submachine guns, primarily the MP-5/10A3 10 mm, and 9mm MP-5 SD6 models, that have been outfitted with Laser Products Sure-fire tactical lights, and forward pistol grips. Rifles in use by the team previously consisted of Colt M-16A2, Colt CAR-15A2 Model 777, and M-4/M-4A1 5.56mm carbines, M-14 7.62mm, H&K HK-33E 5.56mm assault rifles, which have now been replaced by HK-416 5.56mm rifles.

Sniper rifles consist of the Remington M-40A1 .308 sniper rifles outfitted with Unetr1 scopes, as well as Barrett M-86A1 "light fifty" .50 caliber anti-material sniper rifles, 7.62×51 mm H&K PSG-1 sniper rifles. Other weapons in use include modified Remington-870 12-gauge shotguns, single and multi-shot 37 mm grenade launchers, M-79 40mm grenade

launchers, "flashbang" diversionary/distraction devices, and a variety of other less lethal munitions. In situations where heavy fire support is needed the team has several FN Herstal M-249 SAW 5.56mm and M-60 7.62mm machineguns at its disposal.

Optics in use by the team consist of Aimpoint red dot scopes, EOTech holographic scopes, and Trijicon ACOG telescopic scopes. A number of night-vision and thermal imaging systems are available for use as well.

On the uniform front, HRT operators typically wear either OD Green or Multicam military style tactical uniforms with integrated knee pads; plate carriers with integrated Kevlar body armor and ballistic plate inserts; flame resistant Nomex gloves and balaclavas; some type of ballistic eye protection; and a wide variety of footwear. Helmets consist of both Ops-Core ballistic helmets, as well as synthetic Pro-Tec style helmets for training. In addition to their standard "ghillie suits", HRT snipers wear uniforms that are appropriate for the terrain on which they are operating. All team members are also issued a military issue Gortex water resisting and cold weather clothing for operations in extreme weather conditions. Each team member is also outfitted with a complete set of protective clothing for conducting operations in chemical environments. Personal radios consist of Silyn S4OPS Tactical Communications Headsets and C4Grip wireless PTT radios.

For transportation the HRT has access to a small fleet of vehicles including modified Chevy Suburban 4X4 SUVs, Chenoweth "dune buggies", modified Chevy dual-axle pickup trucks, and other vehicles with Patriot3 a Mobile Adjustable Ramp System (MARS) "assault ladders" attached to them, High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs), and modified DDGMC LAV-APC Bison 8x8 light armored vehicles. The LAVs are capable of withstanding 7.62 mm rifle fire and would be deployed in situations where HRT operators have little cover available to them.

Also at their disposal are the three Bell-412 "Twin Huey's", three Hughes MD-530 "Little Bird" and eight converted Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk tactical transport helicopters, of the Tactical Helicopter unit, or THU, a sub-unit of the Tactical Aviation Unit. They also make use of other aircraft belonging to the CIRG's Aviation Special Operations Unit (ASOU).

The MD-530s are similar in configuration to the MH-6 "Little Birds" used by the US Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (at one time the HRT "little birds" were also painted black, but FBI HQ ordered them repainted to a new color after all of the media hoopla about government commandos zooming around the night skies in black helicopters). The HRT also maintains agreements with the US department of Defense that allows the team access to military transport aircraft for rapid deployment of its personnel and equipment.

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