



August 5, 2016

Bob,

Looking into the future needs of the Lackawanna County SWAT Team, I took an inventory of equipment and personal protection gear that is in need of replacing. Our yearly budget does not come close to the equipment required to function as a full service SWAT team. Without the help of the Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Counter Terrorism Task Force, our team would not be able to sustain the level needed to protect the residents of Lackawanna County. The equipment received from the Task Force has saved lives and protected the community on numerous incidents. We currently lack the day to day items that are used in any high-risk situation that we respond to regularly. We have a great demand for tactical body armor for our operators worn on every mission. Some of the body armor being worn is eight years old but because of funding cannot be replaced. Another piece of protective equipment needed is our ballistic helmets that are currently being worn. I have operators purchasing replacement helmets on their own at four hundred dollars each. The new ballistic helmets have a mounting system that would incorporate our night vision directly to it. I also inventoried our personal APR/MSA respirators (gas masks) and find that they have been in service for quite some time now. I would like to see the replacement of these APR's in the near future for they have reached their service life. I also found that our Remington Electronic Surveillance Eyeballs no longer function. The rechargeable battery will no longer take a charge and has been currently placed out of service.

If not for the Task Force providing training, our operators and team leaders would not be at the level we currently are. Our team has received some of the best training offered which was funded by the Task Force. To meet the NTOA standards and maintain a full service SWAT team, training is of most importance. We have been trained in Basic SWAT, Hostage Rescue, Woodland Operations, Sniper Instructor, Active Shooter Instructor, Media Relations, and Less Lethal Instructor to name a few. This alone has saved my team tens of thousands of dollars over the years. Training that would not be possible without the Task Force. There is also a cost savings for travel and lodging if I had to send a member for a training outside of the area. We need to continue moving forward with training and bring in more specialized and advanced trainings. The Task Force should consider Advanced SWAT, Team Leader Development, Command Level Classes, Ballistic Breaching, and other advanced classes. I would like to also mention that if not for the Task Force all of the eight SWAT teams located within the region would not have the working relationship that was built. Teams now train together regularly, meet monthly, and use each other on tactical operations. The Task Force is the reason these teams have come together.

Thank You,

James Decker,  
Lackawanna County SWAT Team Commander