

MCSO introduces emergency response team

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 August 2016 03:51



Team trained by CCSO

Lt. Pat Salazar of the McKinley County Sheriff's Office informed the McKinley County Board of Commissioners Aug. 16 that the MCSO now has a certified emergency response team.

The announcement by Salazar, which included introductions to commissioners of members of the ERT team who were dressed in response gear, took place at the regular county meeting.

"Things went well," Salazar told board members. "As I understand it, it was eight days of some very tough training. [ERT] members are called in when an incident presents significant risk to law enforcement officers and the public."

Salazar noted that the training certifies the ERT members to respond to emergency situations, generally.

"The team now meets and exceeds the McKinley County Sheriff's Emergency Response Team Standard Operation Policy," Salazar said.

McKinley County hasn't had such a team in about 15 years, Salazar and ERT team leader and MCSO Investigator Joey Guillen said. Guillen participated in the training.

Salazar said trainees become members of a highly trained paramilitary unit that tackles

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situations beyond the capability of a conventional police force.

“These elite professionals use their advanced training in weapons, teamwork, discipline and strategy to resolve a crisis,” Salazar told board members. “To a large degree, it’s akin to putting one’s life on the line depending on the nature of the emergency.”

Seven McKinley County deputies participated in the training, which took place over the course of eight days starting Aug. 7, Salazar said. The training was conducted by members of the Cibola County Sheriff’s Office, where Tony Mace is sheriff.

The normal cost for such training is \$42,000, but the Cibola County sheriff’s jurisdiction waived that amount, Salazar said.

“That was a cost-savings to us,” he explained. “We are thankful to Cibola County and Sheriff Tony Mace [for] the fee waiver.”

A 20-plus-year veteran of the MCSO, as well as a U.S. Navy veteran, Guillen said the McKinley County team went through daily exercises in physical training, flash bangs, tactical shoot-and-move maneuvers and the breaching of doors.

“No amount of words can describe the caliber of training that we went through,” Guillen said. “It was grueling to say the least. It took place for an average of 12 hours a day almost.”

The eight tactical squad members received certificates and pins at the culmination of the training. Each of the MCSO trainees has been a member of the Sheriff’s Office for some time.

“I appreciate the hard work that each of you go through to keep our community safe,” Commissioner Genevieve Jackson said.

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“The community as a whole appreciates what you do,” Commission Chairman Tony Tanner said.

The members of the McKinley County Sheriff’s Office who participated in the ERT training were Guillen, Sgt. Eric Jim, Deputy Monty Yazzie, Deputy Nacona Clark, Deputy Garylle James, Deputy Johnson Lee, and Deputy Arnold Noriega.

Combined, the eight members possess about 75 years of law enforcement experience, Salazar said.

“I am proud to stand next to these men, as they worked very hard to earn this title, and I commend them for their hard work and dedication,” Salazar said. “As you know, crime will never go away. It’s only getting more dangerous as suspects start acting out their dangerous intents, targeting the public and law enforcement officers.”

***By Bernie Dotson
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