

# TACTICAL CONCEPTS

## Topic Area: Planning (Emerging Multi-Organizational Networks — EMONs)

By Sid Heal

**L**ike any other business establishment, law enforcement agencies are comprised of a number of components organized around functions and systems. The divisions, bureaus, details and units that comprise a law enforcement agency are interchangeable with the departments, offices, wings and branches that make up a corporation. All organizations are designed to distribute power, affix responsibility and allocate resources. The fact that some of these institutions have been in existence for hundreds of years attests to their utility. However, none of these organizations is temperamentally equipped to function well during periods of intense pressure. The “business as usual” mentality makes them too lethargic to respond well in crises. Specialty units, such as canine, SWAT, detectives or explosive ordnance disposal, are tasked with handling special tactical situations and almost always have distinct chains of command. In fact, the first common senior officer for all the assigned units involved in even a small operation may well be the sheriff or chief of police. This is not practical.

The ability to resolve a tactical problem becomes even more difficult when multiple agencies are involved. This often occurs when a suspect flees across jurisdictional boundaries. He is wanted in one jurisdiction, but the resources for his capture belong to another. Furthermore, any extraordinary occurrence that interferes with normal operations is inevitably given less attention.

The solution becomes apparent. If the organization cannot effectively handle a particular situation, it is necessary to construct a temporary one with its own command and control framework — one that places essential units under the command of a single authority. The temporary organization is specifically designed for one purpose, that of resolving the issue. After this purpose has been achieved, it ceases to exist. Although it serves the parent organization and depends upon it for resources, it has a “life” and “personality” of its own. These temporary organizations are such an essential part of handling crisis situations that they will evolve without human intervention or prior planning. Sociologists identify these “self-evolving” organizations as EMONs — Emerging Multi-Organizational Networks. These organizations are used to direct the actions and efforts of personnel assigned to assist during crisis situations and are always task oriented

and temporary.

### **EMON Characteristics**

EMONs are characterized by six distinct factors. First, they are crisis driven. This means that the nature of the situation defines the intensity, tempo and composition of the organization that attempts to control it. Even with organizations that commonly handle emergencies, such as law enforcement, fire services or military units, EMONs change according to each particular emergency.

Second, they are task oriented. Routine duties and normal operations cease for persons assigned to handle an emergency. The entire focus centers on resolving the crisis. Further, there are no “collateral” responsibilities. While EMONs will certainly have supporting roles and functions, as a whole, they are solely concerned with solving the problem at hand.

Third, they are self-evolving. EMONs evolve without conscious effort on the part of the management or executive functions within an organization. Although conscious effort will certainly influence the ultimate configuration of EMONs, their existence cannot be prevented. Accordingly, it is in the best interests of everyone to develop and implement protocol and procedures to make these temporary organizations more effective when they do become necessary.

Fourth, all EMONs are time sensitive. Because all tactical situations are time sensitive, it follows that the organizations that are called upon to deal with them are also time sensitive. Even an ineffective EMON will change over time in its attempts to achieve a successful resolution. As the intensity of the operation ebbs and flows, so too does the organization attempting to influence it. Darkness, shift changes, and inclement weather are only a few examples of factors that may require an EMON to be reduced, enlarged or reconfigured. Thus, an EMON at the end of an operation will almost always look considerably different than what it did at the outset.

Fifth, all EMONs are a composite. This means that they are comprised of various individuals, units, agencies and disciplines that are required to work together to achieve a successful resolution for a given problem. Units as disparate as a canine detail, traffic detail and a bomb dispos-

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al unit may work side by side on the same problem. Furthermore, particularly complex or unique situations may require consultants, experts or disciplines not found within the "parent" organization but who have been recruited from other agencies or disciplines to assist in the endeavor.

Sixth, EMONs are temporary. They cease to exist as soon as they are no longer needed. Even agencies regularly called upon to handle emergencies do not have the ability to have a "standing" organization because each situation will require a different set of skills, personnel, agencies or functions. Although EMONs evolve without conscious effort, they are most often canceled by a decision. The "return to normal operations" or "break it down" are com-

## EMON Characteristics

Crisis driven

Task oriented

Self-evolving

Time sensitive

Composite

Temporary

mon expressions familiar to law enforcement and military professionals alike, and describe the end of these temporary organizations.

## Planning for EMONs

Once the necessity and inevitability of EMONs are recognized, an agency should plan for them. This requires a command and control architecture, a design or system to provide for the interaction of the essential components and assure that all efforts are directed toward achieving a common goal. The United States Marine Corps Command and Control Master Plan describes this framework as a "set of associated command and control elements arranged in a command structure and communication network to enable a commander to plan, direct, coordinate and control the operations of his forces."

The operating requirements of such a system must allow multiple components or agencies to work together, be able to expand in a rapid manner from an initial response to a major incident, utilize common elements in organization terminology and procedure, and cause the least disruption to the parent organizations. Moreover, the system must not only be effective in fulfilling all the requirements but be simple enough to ensure ease of understanding. An agency that ignores these critical elements abandons its ability to influence an EMON and the organization which ultimately evolves will be chaotic, disorganized and ineffective. ■

*Editor's Note: Our Tactical Terminology Department was changed to Tactical Concepts to better reflect the content of the column.*



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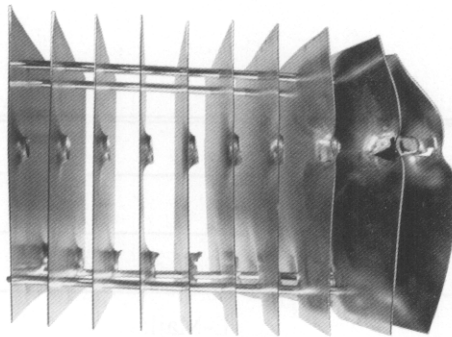
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