

LIFE IN THE U.S.

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

SWAT squads:
Waging War
at home

By David Helvarg

A code 11 goes out on the radio. A SWAT team is needed in Oceanside where a 21-year-old "white male suspect" has barricaded himself in a house with a .22 rifle and three hostages. The San Diego sheriff's SWAT team arrives and sets up a perimeter. A green light is given, "shoot to kill if an opportunity presents itself."

The father of the hostages, three small girls, tries to explain to the police that the suspect is a friend and house-guest of his. He won't hurt the girls. He's just freaked out. If the police will just withdraw from the area he thinks that he can talk him out. But it's too late. Shots have been fired and the SWAT has been committed.

Neighborhood youths, friends of the suspect and the family, begin milling on the street behind the police lines. One of them, a 15-year-old "long haired hippie type" by the name of Leland Phelps manages to get onto the front lawn where he converses with his friend David Terrel, through the livingroom window.

Two of the girls leave the house as the siege continues into the afternoon. After several hours it begins to rain.

Phelps enters the house. Terrel tells him to go to the kitchen and get a cookie for the third girl. As he passes by a window he comes into the sights of a SWAT deputy who, mistaking him for the suspect, squeezes off a round from his AR-15 assault rifle.

Leland, hit in the chest, recoils, staggers through the front door, collapses on the sidewalk and dies. A moment later there is a second shot. The third little girl walks out the front door. "David shot himself," she says.

Charlie Terrel, trying to get to his brother's body, is wrestled to the ground and held at gunpoint by the SWAT.

Two days later 200 local teenagers form a car caravan to a nearby sheriff sub-station. There are riot-equipped deputies inside the building but they have been told to avoid a confrontation if at all possible. A young woman of about 16 or 17 walks up to the side of the building with a can of spray-paint. In large block letters she writes: "Leland Phelps would be alive today if not for trigger-happy pigs!"

That night a nervous San Diego sheriff John Duffy goes on TV to defend the SWAT. "You need SWAT units in law enforcement," he says, "specialized men who can go in and do the job, ahh... it's just like taking a hooch in a Vietnamese village."

►A product of the Vietnam war.

Police SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) units are a product of the Vietnam war. They got their start in Los Angeles in the summer of '67 at the height of the black insurrections. Assistant Chief of Police Daryl Gates, a retired Marine officer, first conceived of the idea of a special team "to provide protection for officers engaged in crowd control" and "neutralize guerilla and terrorist organizations through the application of military control models." Right-wing Chief of Police Ed Davis approved the idea. Recruitment priority was to be given to volunteers with Vietnam combat experience.

The men were trained at the U.S. Marine Corps Reconnaissance Commando (RECONDO) school at Camp Pendleton, Calif. It was here, in the heady days of

"search and destroy" that the Los Angeles SWAT officer-in-charge first began to conceive of themselves as a "counter-insurgency" elite within the larger "municipal" police force.

"We're primarily a cadre," explained SWAT lieutenant Bob Smitson in a 1975 *L.A. Times* interview, "each of our teams have received over 1,000 hours of instruction in subjects such as guerilla warfare, scouting and patrol, night operations, camouflage and concealment, combat in cities, first aid, ambush and chemical warfare."

In 1971 L.A. SWAT quit the Marine base after acquiring their own Hollywood back-lot, which they then converted into a life-size shooting gallery for monthly war games and training seminars.

►A military unit.

The basic unit in SWAT is the five-man team (although the Atlanta SWAT recently accepted its first woman member). Each team is made up of a team leader, marksman, observer, scout and rear-guard. The team leader controls all facets of the tactical operation. He is usually armed with an AR-15 (the semi-automatic version of the M-16). The marksman acts as sniper and carries a high-power bolt action rifle with scope. The observer spots for the marksman and provides cover. He also carries an AR-15. The scout, also armed with an AR-15, conducts advance reconnaissance work. The rear-guard covers the rear with a 12-gauge riot-pump shotgun. He also doubles as grenadier when gas is being used.

Each SWAT "soldier" is dressed in a dark military-style jump-suit, combat boots, black baseball cap, with a first aid kit, gloves and gas-mask. In addition they each carry either a service revolver or 9mm automatic in a shoulder holster. Other equipment—repelling ropes, grappling hooks, gas grenades, night-viewing scopes, machine guns and the like—is kept in a special armored van, which acts as the SWAT command center.

By the end of the '60s the SWAT concept had traveled east across the country, fueled largely by inter-departmental jealousies and the availability of big money grants for military hardware through the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA).

The FBI established SWAT teams in all its major offices and initiated a SWAT training program at its national police academy outside Washington, D.C. The Army provided SWAT officers with training in weapons, tactics and civil disturbance suppression at its Research Institute in Fort Belvoir, Va., and its Military Police School at Fort Gordon, Ga. The U.S. Marshal's office established a SWAT-type paramilitary group known as the Special Operations Group (SOG) in 1971, which saw action during the second battle of Wounded Knee in the spring of 1973 where it helped fire off over half a million rounds of government ammunition at the encircled AIM forces.

►Los Angeles "battles."

L.A. SWAT's first "battle" with the "enemy" took place on the morning of Dec. 9, 1969. At 5:30 in the morning 140 police surrounded the Black Panther party headquarters at 41st Street and Central Avenue, allegedly to serve a warrant. With SWAT snipers providing cover, four officers in flak jackets and helmets broke

down the door with a battering ram. Confronted with the invasion force, the people inside either opened or returned fire (depending on the version).

In the shooting that followed, three Panthers and three SWAT officers were wounded. Over the next four hours police mobilized over 500 men, borrowed an APC tank from the National Guard and tried to blow holes in the roof of the building with dynamite. At 9:45 a.m. 13 Panther men and women surrendered to police. Two years later, a Los Angeles jury acquitted them of all serious charges arising out of the shoot-out.

Over the next five years L.A. SWAT received over 100 call-ups, but none of these matched the intensity of the '69 Panther shoot-out until "Operation SLA" on May 17, 1974.

It was this confrontation, televised live and in color on the West Coast, that brought SWAT into public consciousness. Within six months there was a TV serial (that police condemned for presenting SWAT as "too violent") with a theme song that went on to become a top disco hit. There were magazine articles, action dolls, toy guns and board games.

►Black community considered hostile territory.

One of the interesting aspects of the SLA shoot-out was the attitude of the police toward the black community of Southeast Los Angeles in which the shooting occurred. Although the police had helicopters and SWAT units in the area for over an hour before the shooting began, they never considered evacuating the area. "If we'd started a mass evacuation, there's no way someone wouldn't have tipped off the SLA," admitted one police officer.

Like the troops in Vietnam, the cops in L.A. do not like to get caught in hostile territory after dark. The first surrender order was issued at 5:44 p.m. A few minutes later the SWAT opened up with gas and the shooting began. Although there were "only" 29 L.A. SWAT and 7 FBI SWAT engaged in actual weapons fire against the SLA, over 400 additional police were needed to provide crowd-control on the perimeter of the siege area.

Thousands of black area residents were in the streets during the course of the 90-minute battle. "Unidentified people in the crowds were throwing bottles and rocks at police personnel on perimeter control... There were many officers requesting assistance," according to the LAPD report on the shootout. Clearly, fear of the community in which the shoot-out occurred was a motivating factor in the decision to go for a quick kill.

In the wake of the shoot-out Captain Frank Britnell, of the Metro Division that oversees SWAT tried to shine up his commandos image a bit by saying: "That six to nothing score has to be attributed to something more than luck, because [the SLA] had us outgunned and the advantage of being inside."

Despite the denial of a SWAT request for fragmentation grenades, SWAT had been able to arm itself that day with two M-16 machine guns, two MP-40s (the "Schmeisser," a favorite of the Waffen SS during World War II), 17 Armalites, two .243 sniper rifles, a dozen shotguns, gas guns, etc. It had fired off over 5,000 rounds of ammunition and 80 tear gas canisters into a house measuring less than 30x80 feet. It was the tear gas canisters that caused the fire that incinerated the bodies of the six Symbionese Liberation Army members killed that day.

►A "viable" model?

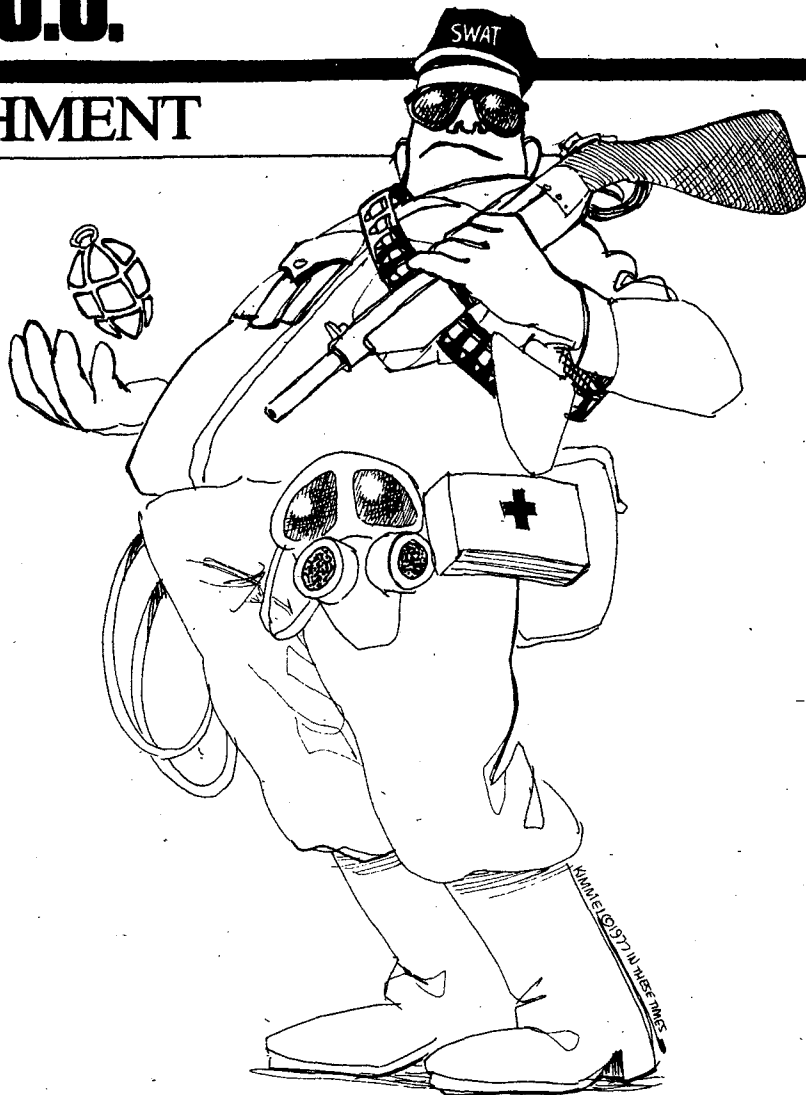
Today over 1,500 law enforcement agencies, from Montana county sheriff's departments to small town Kansas police departments, can claim their own "SWAT capability." Despite occasional embarrassments like the August 1975 shoot-out in the Casablanca section of Riverside, Calif., where armed Chicano vets forced L.A. and Riverside SWAT units to retreat under fire after downing one of their helicopters, the SWAT model is still considered "viable" among the movers and shakers in the criminal justice biz.

"The goal of SWAT is to protect lives and property" says the Special Weapons Manual of Organization, Operations and Training. "SWAT achieves this goal through the merger of police and military strategies under those conditions which require specialized tactics."

Some might question how this corresponds with the vision of the nation's founders who talked of separating military and police functions. Nor does it jive with the Kerner Commission report on Civil Disorders, which, among its recommendations to law enforcement personnel, suggested that, "automatic and military type weaponry has no place in built up urban areas."

In the wake of the SLA shoot-out, the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners commended the SWAT for its ability to "engage and neutralize hostile forces in an all-out fire fight." The only question that remains is this: Do we want our police engaging in "all out fire-fights" on the streets of our cities?

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BUSINESS

Waging guerilla war for business on the campus

Merchandizing the capitalist gospel is hardly a novel aim. What makes this effort different is the target, the liberal campus community.

By Jacqueline Thompson
Pacific News Service

Smarting from scandals involving everything from foreign bribery to illegal campaign contributions to environmental disasters, American business in the post-Watergate era has watched its popularity plunge dramatically in major opinion polls. Now groups of concerned businessmen are attempting to polish up their tarnished image with a unique solution. They are underwriting "chairs of private enterprise" at colleges and universities.

Prof. Michael H. Mescon, chief drummer for the movement, says the purpose is to enlist college professors like himself as "articulate spokesmen for basic economic, political and moral principles... to conduct guerilla warfare with those who propagandize against the system."

Mescon, who holds the original chair of private enterprise, at Georgia State University in Atlanta, calls his campaign to create such chairs from coast to coast "a national capitalist revolution."

Critics of the movement claim it's yet another propaganda war on socialism and communism. But Mescon, objecting strongly to the "anti-approach," emphatically denies the charge. He wants the campaign to accentuate the positive side of capitalism, which he defines as "a culture, a style, a way of life."

"In the field of sales and salesmanship, it is relatively easy to spot the amateur," Mescon explains. "He spends 90 percent of his time berating his competition because he lacks, or just can't communicate, basic knowledge of his product."

"What is true for selling things is also true for selling ideas. The product, be it private enterprise or automobile tires, cannot be sold by simply running down the competition. It must be sold on its own merits."

► Responsive chord in conservative areas.

Mescon contends that too many of today's young adults are "economic illiterates" who think "profit" is a dirty word. He blames the American educational system. Through the chairs, he hopes to convince young people that "being an entrepreneur is just as challenging as being an astronaut."

The idea seems to have struck a responsive chord, particularly in the more conservative regions of the country. So far, professorships have been funded at 13 schools—eight in the South, four in the Midwest and one in the East. Over 10 more chairs are in the works, but they will not have much effect on the geographic mix.

The chairs are typically sponsored by a consortium of local business and professional associations, fraternal groups and corporations. They are generally awarded to tenured economists, history or business professors whose personal politics happen to coincide with the traditional outlook of the sponsoring organizations.

The existing chairs carry names like the Goodyear Executive Professor of Business Administration at Kent State University; the Executive Directorship of the Southwest Foundation for Free Enterprise at Southern Methodist University; and the Justin Potter Distinguished Chair of American Competitive Business at Vanderbilt University. Aside from a few large state universities, most colleges with such professorships are small or medium sized.



Merchandizing the capitalist gospel is hardly a novel aim. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and Junior Achievement here at home, and the U.S. Information Agency abroad, have been hawking their ideological wares for years.

► Target: liberal professors and students.

What makes the current effort different is the target: liberal college professors and their students.

As early as 1971, Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell gave the movement its rationale in a memo to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Referring to the assault on the private enterprise system, he wrote, "Although its origins, sources and causes are complex and interrelated, there is reason to believe that the campus is the single most dynamic source."

Local, regional and national polls have supported Powell's view. They have indicated that, aside from Ralph Nader, the most influential critics of capitalism, as it is now practiced in the U.S. have been left-wing academics.

Alarmed by the drift on campus, the country's more conservative professors are ripe for monetary offers from business to "tell the other side of the story."

"The disdain for business frequently found in the academic environment and the depicting of the businessman as a vulgar purveyor of goods and services is more than a little disturbing," says Dr. Mescon. What he and those supporting the movement find most disturbing of all is the prospect of these "misguided" ultra-liberal professors imbuing a whole generation of young Americans with their own prejudices and distrust of the capitalist

system.

The "misguided" professors, their ideological opponents, also have some apprehensions, but of a different nature. They see a conflict of interest in the funding scheme, likening it to a Faustian exchange. To them, the chairs symbolize the erosion of academic freedom and integrity.

Mescon and his colleagues disagree. They think it's about time corporations had a voice on campus. "I think there's been a certain popularity, especially among academic people, quite frankly, to bite the hand that's been feeding them," he points out.

► Atlanta origins.

The seed of the free enterprise chairs was planted in 1963 when a group of Atlanta entrepreneurs decided to back a chair at Georgia State University. They found the perfect capitalist crusader in Dr. Mescon. The short, stocky, cigar-smoking young professor came to the job equipped with a crew cut, an A.B. and M.A. from the University of Miami and a Ph.D. in human relationships from New York University.

But the idea got off to a slow start. For years, Mescon's impact was purely local. Then, three years ago, word of Mescon and the chair began to spread via a publicity campaign that included the distribution of a bimonthly newsletter to interested schools and potential sponsors.

The exposure, coming at a time when radical politics was dying out on campuses but a new generation of radical professors educated in the turbulent '60s was emerging, set in motion a bandwagon effect from which Mescon still hasn't recovered. He now delivers several hundred lectures a year to groups all over the country, has seen his articles published in nationally circulated magazines and has hosted two Chair of Private Enterprise conferences, which are now convened annually.

The last conference attracted more than 80 representatives from schools intending to establish chairs and from corporations, business groups and foundations willing to finance them.

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Private property: who can celebrate?

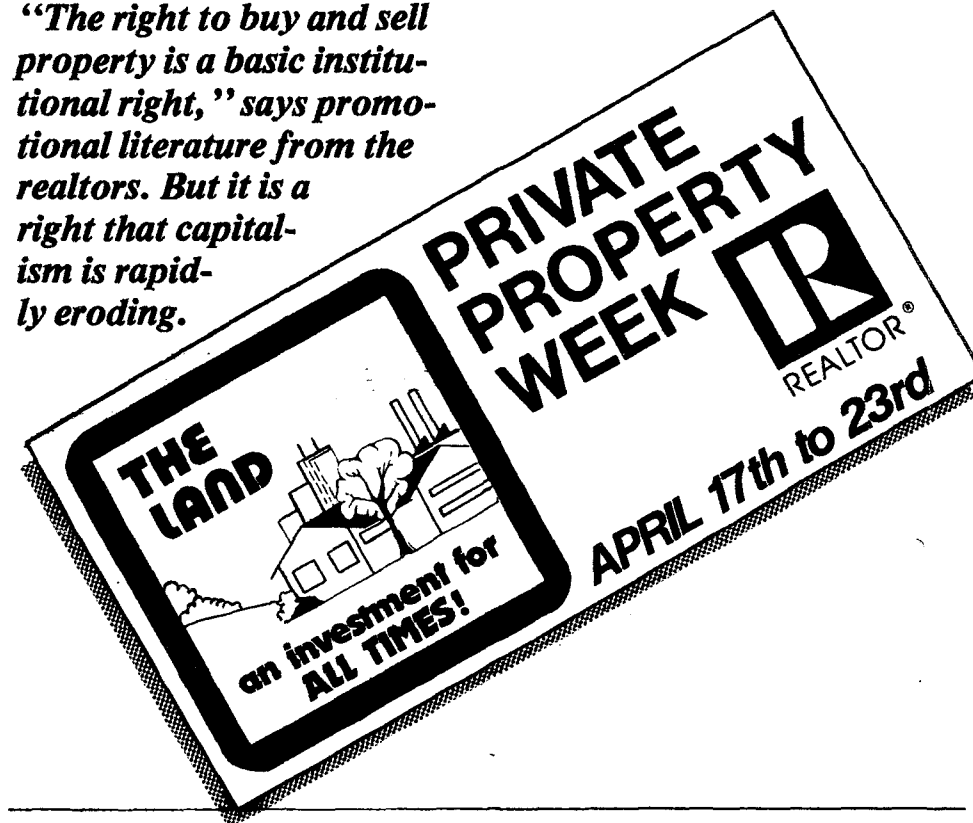
April 17-23 is Private Property Week and celebrations will be going on around the U.S. sponsored by the 500,000 members of the National Association of Realtors. "The right to buy and sell property is a basic constitutional right," says promotional literature from the realtors.

It's a right that a capitalist economy is rapidly eroding, according to a recent study of housing by the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies. That report predicted that by 1981 the price of an average new home would go up to \$78,000—out of the range for the majority of Americans. By that time "only the most affluent American families will be able to own a new house," said the study. Even today, only 27 percent of Americans can afford to buy a new house, as compared to 46.6 percent just six years ago, the study pointed out.

As for other kinds of private property, four percent of the U.S. population now owns 37 percent of the wealth of the population. At the other end of the scale, 80 percent of the population makes do with only 25 percent of the wealth of the nation; and at the bottom half of that group, 40 percent of America has only 2.3 percent of the wealth.

What's really dear to the heart of every realtor, of course, is not so much the owning of property but the right to buy and sell it, and that's what the association is actually asking us to celebrate. It's an American tradition, they say. "Many famous early Americans, including George Washington, engaged in land speculation, which was not considered

"The right to buy and sell property is a basic institutional right," says promotional literature from the realtors. But it is a right that capitalism is rapidly eroding.



an unworthy occupation," they point out.

They also invite America to join in celebrating such events in the annals of private property as the federal government grant of 47 million acres of land in 1864 to Philadelphia financier Jay Cooke as an "incentive" to build a railroad linking Minnesota with the West Coast. By 1917, Cook's railroad, North-

ern Pacific, had made \$136 million from land sales, while railroad construction had cost only \$70 million.

Although realtors regret that Private Property Week comes but once a year, they are pledging that they'll "continue to celebrate this right" in their work, "every day of the year."