



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Thursday, June 5, 2008
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Emergency negotiators train for returning warrior issues

Riverside, CA -- Riverside Police Department hosted a training session Thursday, June 5, for nearly 50 officers from six Inland law enforcement agencies dealing with post-traumatic stress issues pertaining to return veterans of war.

“Early in my career, in the 1980s, we encountered a lot of these issues of stress, addiction and violence, with Vietnam veterans. We want to be prepared as these issues arise with returning Iraq war veterans,” said RPD Emergency Negotiations Team Sgt. George Masson.

Nearly 40 percent of returning combat veterans will suffer some sort of post-traumatic stress disorder upon returning home, which can result in extreme and dangerous behavior, domestic violence and crisis situations police will be first responders to, said William Rider, co-founder and president of American Combat Veterans of War, a nonprofit support group working with vets at Camp Pendleton.

ACVOW volunteers, themselves Vietnam combat veterans, and five young Iraq war veterans, worked with police officers from Riverside, San Bernardino, Corona, Chino, Murrieta and deputies from the Riverside County Sheriff, on combat-related stresses and scenario training on how negotiators can respond to vets in crisis.

The training -- initiated by Masson and Riverside Officer Phil Fernandez, who is a former U.S. Marine -- was ACVOW's first collaboration with law enforcement agencies. The Riverside County Department of Mental Health - Emergency Treatment Services (ETS) coordinated the training.

ACVOW volunteers called the initiative “refreshing.” Veterans with post-traumatic stress often put family members and innocent bystanders at risk, Rider said. “This (training) goes right to the heart of what needs to happen,” helping first responders deal more safely and successfully with returning combat veterans in crisis.

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