

Philome, John <john.philome@nmbpd.org>
To: "Philome, John" <john.philome@nmbpd.org>

Tue, Jan 13, 2015 at 1:39 PM

Good Day Everyone,

"I am forwarding this email to you at the request of Chief Dennis"

Greetings Officers, Staff, Officials, and Friends;

Tomorrow evening the NMBPD will be the subject of a media expose'. This is surrounding an incident that occurred as a result of Sniper Training that was held December 5, 2014. The media, in this case Willard Shepard of NBC-6, will show that our snipers trained using an old photo array (line-up from the early 2000's) featuring six mugshots of black male arrestees. It should be noted that in the sniper target inventory there were numerous targets featuring a similar array of white/Latin males, Osama Bin Laden, a little girl (hostage), computer generated male and female, and a myriad of other targets. In the case at hand, officers completed the training and threw away the targets in the dumpster at the Medley Range, the following day the range was leased to the National Guard. A Guard reservist came across the discarded targets and recognized one of the pictures as her brother which was taken 14 years earlier when he was arrested by NMBPD.

Despite attempts by the Sniper Team Leader to console the woman by earnestly expressing his/our apologies for any negative feelings this may have caused her or her family. He assured her that the pictures were generic and utilized as a target identification drill. Furthermore, he assured her that her brother's photograph would never be used again and reiterated that he had no idea of the identity of her brother's picture nor any of the other photographs. They ended the telephone conversation believing that the woman was satisfied with the Team Leader's explanation and no further action was needed other than to apprise his supervisor of the results. Unbeknownst to the officer and supervisors the woman had already contacted a local media outlet prior to contacting her (within a couple of hours of the incident) and eventually legal council.

On or about December 22, I learned of this incident by way of the pending media story. I ordered a suspension of all sniper firearms training while a review was conducted. Additionally, I made contact that evening with world renown sniper trainer, Mr Stuart Meyers. Mr. Meyers, author of books on the subject and having trained over 1,000 police agencies, is considered an expert in this field. Mr Meyers assured me that this target identification drill using mugshots is a "best practice"

He reiterated a lesson: There is a direct correlation between the more intense and realistic the training the greater the chances of a positive outcome.

I ordered the procurement of commercially available. "Real face" targets only to learn that these products still do not meet the needs of this particular training drill. We are in search of alternatives to include the use of out of area mugshots. The drill requires that the shooter or spotter identify the target from a group of similar looking targets, a photo array allows for such a scenario.

It is important to realize these real face targets are ONLY used for this highly specialized training attended by only 2 of our officers and not for routine police training nor qualifications

The same sniper target inventory has been in use longer than any of the team members have been on the Department. The City Attorney was asked to opine if any laws had been broken and he stated that mugshots are public and there are no laws prohibiting their use for any purpose other than a commercial enterprise. There was no violation of Departmental policy, and FDLE standards are silent on the issue of long gun (rifle) targets

In review, our standard policies will include the destruction of any "real face" targets utilized for target based training. We must all remain cognizant that our job as law enforcement is to prepare for the worst but hope for the best and train for missions we will not need. The current events of Paris should go as a reminder that there is evil in this world, evil that knows no geographic nor moral boundaries and it is our duty to be prepared to battle it.

Sincerely
JSD

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