



*CONTACT: Captain Tom Hoover
Harrisonburg Police Department
540-810-7632
tom.hoover@harrisonburgva.gov*

Harrisonburg Police Department S.W.A.T. Attends International Training

Members of the Harrisonburg Police Department SWAT team recently completed a week-long advanced training program and competed in skills demonstration events at the 33rd annual SWAT Roundup International conference in Orlando, Florida.

The HPD officers were invited to participate and received scholarship support to attend the prestigious event that involved 60 other U.S. and foreign SWAT teams.

Over the seven-day period police officers attended a variety of SWAT-related classes designed to enhance their skills in dealing with extreme events. Sessions spanned a wide variety of topics ranging, for example, from tactical medical skills, to counter-ambush techniques, mechanical breaching, field-expedient tactical rope ascending, and linear assault and advanced armored vehicle tactics.

In addition to classroom sessions, officers benefitted from detailed analyses of several high-profile violent incidents, such as the Boston Marathon bombing, that were presented with lessons learned by officials who were involved in each of the cases.

The conference concluded with a series of individual and timed team events that allowed participants to demonstrate their SWAT skills and vie for honors.

Members of the Harrisonburg team took 1st and 2nd place honors in individual shooting competitions and ranked No. 35 in the field of 61 teams, which included U.S. teams and SWAT units from Sweden, Hungary, Kuwait, Brazil, the Dutch country of Sint Maarten, and Puerto Rico.

Lt. Rod Pollard, the HPD SWAT team leader, says programs like this one help departments to improve their operational capabilities.

“It’s not often that a team like ours has the opportunity to train side-by-side with highly-skilled units from other departments and top-tier international groups. These events help us identify strengths and any weaknesses in our operations and give us a realistic picture of how we compare to other highly-trained SWAT teams,” Pollard explains.

Harrisonburg
VIRGINIA



POLICE DEPARTMENT
101 North Main Street
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802
Emergency 911
Non-Emergency 540-434-4436
Chief Stephen P. Monticelli

Capt. Thomas Hoover, commander of the HPD SWAT team who led the Harrisonburg contingent, says that in light of recent events advanced training is critically important for local officers.

“I am extremely proud of our officers’ performance in what is one of the most challenging competitive events in the world. They demonstrated that they can operate at the same level as some of the most professional teams in the country and across the globe.”

Both Hoover and Pollard note that the Harrisonburg SWAT team’s performance is especially impressive because it is not a full-time, stand-alone unit, but is composed of officers from several HPD divisions whose special training and operations are in addition to their day-to-day law enforcement duties.

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