Crisis Management of the Siege/Hostage Situation

by

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and
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The Chairman of the meeting was Dr. John Silver.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. I am a Senior Sergeant attached to the Force Response Unit of the Victoria Police Department. I have been a member for 25 years now and during the last 15 years I've been involved in hostage siege negotiations. I commenced in 1985 and since then I've been involved fairly heavily in some very interesting and major incidents. I was involved at the Bendigo Prison siege where Dixon Jenkins held a number of people hostage for a couple of days and, shortly after that, the Hawthorn Kindergarten siege which was also a fairly traumatic situation to go to. Over the last few years I have become the Co-ordinator and I am responsible for the training of negotiators in Victoria. On a regular basis we train interstate people on national courses. I have been doing that for the last five years.

MS FULFORD. I am the Senior Police Psychologist with the Victoria Police and I've been with Victoria Police for almost two years now. I have been involved in quite a few incidents. I wasn't there for the Bendigo siege but I have been involved in quite a few sieges and a few hostage situations, so, I thought I'd let you know a bit about police psychologists in general and what sort of qualifications we have and what we do. We need to have at least a Masters Degree in clinical psychology and we usually need a minimum five years post-graduate experience. I spent five years working on a CAT team, a psychiatric crisis team. I'm sure some of you here would have had experience with CAT teams and some people's experiences haven't been as positive as we probably would have liked.

Most police psychologists have also had a lot of experience in dealing with policing matters, so through our contact with police members, we get a good handle on operational policing and we understand a lot more about operational policing than perhaps your average citizen might. Usually we say that people need to have had some experience in dealing with psychiatric disorders. We say that not necessarily for people dealing with police members, but in terms of going out to sieges and making some comment on offenders who have had a history of mental illness. A requirement is that the police psychologist completes the hostage negotiator's course, and sometimes that's a difficult thing to do because the last one that we held was a year and a half ago. I had been with the Victorian Police for just over a year and a half before I had completed the hostage negotiator's course. It's an interesting course; we go into the negotiator's truck and are actually part of the negotiating team. It always looks very easy when the person who is the primary negotiator sits in that seat, but on the two-day exercises that

we do there are always awful terrorists who are impossible to negotiate with and you often find that sitting in the interview hot seat is a really hard thing for people to do. It certainly increased my respect for people who do the primary negotiating.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Currently I have 22 members in Melbourne with experiences ranging from a couple of months - Megan did the course a couple of months ago- through to a similar vintage to myself, 18 years' experience. As you can imagine those members who are still attached to our office have a wealth of knowledge and experience. They've been involved in the simple things like someone going to suicide in a house, with a knife or gassing, to someone jumping off the Westgate Bridge. They have already had someone on the new City Link bridge over at Flemington, so that's another bridge we've got now, and armed offender situations including Mitcham and Bendigo Prison. 10 of the members at my office are currently trained to National Counter-Terrorist Standard. Twice a year we send two members interstate or to Victoria, depending on where the courses are, they rotate, and they are trained to deal with counter-terrorist or terrorist incidents. It's a one-week course, using international speakers and looking at international trends, terrorist situations overseas, and training as a group to a level that is much higher than is required in the United States. Only the experienced people get to go and they're the ones that would be responsible if there was a terrorist incident in Melbourne.

We have currently 30 members trained in the country. Until recently we had no one trained out of the metropolitan area. The police command has decided that in order to fulfil our needs and to give a better coverage we need to train people in country areas. By the end of this time next year we will have a minimum of 8 to 12 people in each of our country districts spread throughout the State, and there will be continuous training for all these people.

We work in a team and it's interesting that you have one person who gets all the kudos for resolving the situation by being the person who does the talking. Unfortunately it's not a one-person job. We use a four-person team and each person has their role. There is a team leader who liaises with the Commander from the Police Department and organises all the bits and pieces for the team, and you have three other people; the primary talker, and two others that are responsible for assisting him, and helping resolve the situation. We don't pat the bloke on the back that does all the talking - it's the team that gets the pat on

the back because it's the team that will resolve the situation, not just an individual. And of course the Police Department has had a policy for some time; to negotiate. I think the classic example was last year where we spent 42 hours at Lalor talking to a man instead of going in and grabbing him. That's still an option and it still needs to be an option because if we don't have that option then it's very difficult for us as negotiators to be able to convince someone that they need to come out. Obviously if you haven't got that option, we'd sit there for weeks and weeks at a time.

MS FULFORD. I thought I'd tell you about the role of a police psychologist because our role is fairly broad. One of the big roles that we have is in recruiting and selection. All people who apply to join Victoria Police are required to jump quite a few hoops and some of those hoops are psychological hoops. We require all people to complete an MMPI, the old Minnesota Multi-phasic Personality Inventory, and they hate it. It has about 557 questions and a lot of the questions don't seem to make much sense to people who are very practical. They include statements such as "I wanted to be a florist" and "Sometimes I worry about the colour of my faeces" and people don't like answering questions like that for obvious reasons. We get them to complete the MMPI and the results are sent back to our office. We have a look at the profiles and if anything shows up on the MMPI that we're a little bit concerned then a psychologist will sit on the Police Members Recruit Board and try and draw out any potential problems that there may be and have quite a large role in deciding whether that person is a suitable person for Victoria Police.

The major reason why a psychologist would sit on a Recruit Board is if the "L" scale is fairly high. The "L" scale is the lie scale. We expect that with anyone using the MMPI for any job applicants, because people are trying to present themselves in the best possible light and this bumps up their "L" scale – it is not because they are liars. We also do quite a bit of testing of specialist squads. We do a lot of testing with the Special Operations Group or "Sons of God." I didn't find out they were called that until I went on a camp just recently with them. We don't give them the MMPI because we assume by that stage that they're not mad, although some people think they probably are for wanting to join the SOG. We use a few other personality tests because we're looking at things such as, what is their thinking style like? Are they people who can operate independently or are they group players and how will they go in the group? We also go along to their camp

and see how they perform at the camp. Some people say if we bring a psychologist along it will freak them out a bit more and put them under a bit more stress.

Another major area of Victoria Police where police psychology is involved is in recruiting undercover police. For obvious reasons they're people who have an incredibly stressful job, and need to have particular personality characteristics.

We do a lot of lecturing and training. For instance, during the hostage negotiator's course, we go along and talk about the psychological aspects of hostage negotiation. We also talk to undercover police about issues involved in undercover policing such as Stockholm syndrome, which I'll talk about further on. We provide operational assistance to Victoria Police members. We operate during office hours but also we have an on-call roster, so there is always a psychologist who is on call for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Unfortunately for the last six months that's largely been me, so I'm looking forward to a holiday. We are available for sieges, so the local police will respond and when necessary they will call the negotiators out. The negotiators will often give me a call on their way out to a job and say, "We're on the way out there, we'll get out there and see what it's like and then give you a call back," or sometimes they'll call me when they've arrived there and they'll say, "Look, would you mind coming out."

We also get involved in forensic matters, so police members will ring up the Psychology Unit and say, "I'm prosecuting a case and I need some advice about what the best way is to go about it" and they'll often send us reports and things like that and say, "Can you just have a look through them and see whether they're useable or what would you do with them? " We also provide referral information externally.

Probably our main role is in psychological counselling. As we said, we don't see every member of Victoria Police for psychological counselling because most don't need it. They are very psychologically robust people and we take some credit for that and say we've chosen them to be incredibly robust. We see a lot of people for work related issues - it's an incredibly stressful job, policing, particularly in this day and age when there are increasing pressures on people and there is less staff than we normally would have. We see a lot of people for personal issues and relationship issues, so, they don't have to come and see us about work related issues.

A large part of our work is also critical incident debriefing. There are certain incidents where it is mandatory to see the police psychologist

and one of those is firearms incidents. I remember first arriving on the job and I said, "What sort of things do we have to go out for when we're on call?" Having come from a CAT team it was, often things like "I've had six stubbies and now I want to die" and I thought I don't really want to have that again. That doesn't happen in Victoria Police, I'm happy to say, but they said, "You go out for firearms incidents" and I said, "Okay, so if someone gets shot" and they said, "No, no, no, firearms incidents is broader than that."

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. The local police will attend first and then if it gets out of their control or it's difficult or they are not happy talking to someone, then the option is to call us. Our office gets notified by our communications of any incident involving a siege or barricaded suicide situation. If it's during the day we put a team on stand-by or get them ready, or after-hours they monitor it and see whether we are required. We will attend anything to do with a person either attempting or threatening suicide. They are the ones that we get barricaded in a house or they get on the Westgate Bridge and they think they're going to jump, or they soak the house in petrol and sit in a car with petrol – there is quite a variety. There are lots of ways that you can suicide of course, as we all know.

If there is someone barricaded in a house for whatever reason, we'll turn up and we'll bring our people with us and come along and talk and convince them why they need to come out and do the good thing for everybody. These sort of situations go that little step further - over the top of the situation that the normal divvy van driver and his crew can go and talk to them and say, "Listen, come on mate, you're being a bit stupid, let's go home and we'll go down the police station and talk about it, " or "Can you go to bed and have a sleep and everything will be right in the morning." The trouble is when we get there we have been known to give a half an hour briefing to someone for an incident which took five minutes. We have got the gift of the gab and we will talk, and we'll talk, and talk, and talk, so there's a bit of reluctance sometimes to call us out because they know that once they do get us there, it's going to be hours before we leave. The other thing is, it always happens in the middle of the night. I can probably count the number of times that it hasn't happened at about 10 past two in the morning. And the hail and the cold and the rain. We're all locked up inside our truck and everyone else is standing outside. The only good part about it is the boys get some overtime out of it - we're not mercenary of course. We get pretty quick notice about armed offenders where the hostages are involved.

We will go, the SOG will go, they'll surround the place and we'll ring them up, we'll talk to them, we'll call out to them or use a PA system. You can imagine what it's like at two o'clock in the morning with the police with a big PA trying to tell this person to come outside - what happens? Everybody else comes out, don't they, because they want to have a look and the dogs start barking and away we go.

Negotiators could be considered to resolve the incident when it involves a mentally disturbed person. I went to one last year in Doncaster. A bloke had barricaded himself in the house, the CAT team had gone to get him, they had certified him, and they needed to pick him up. He said, "I'm not going - no, not getting in that car." Now Section 10 of the Mental Health Act says that the police shall assist in removing this person from his home to the hospital. Well, this person is obviously sick, so do we physically force him into the back of the police car or the back of the van and take him down to the hospital? Well, we're not like that any more, we're all warm and fuzzy, so we'll talk to him and we'll talk, and talk, and talk, and talk. We don't like them going to sleep on us though, we throw bricks at them if they go to sleep. So that's what we do, and we'll talk them out of their house or bore them out so they come out and talk to us.

MS FULFORD. They can talk, I'll vouch for that. One of our roles is to address issues related to mental illness. It is not true that a large proportion of people in sieges have a mental illness, but often what will happen is that the person will be registered as having some kind of contact with Psychiatric Services because often they are people who have had drug or alcohol issues or a personality disorder. We often go there to liaise with mental health workers. The CAT team were out at the incident that Mike was talking about at Doncaster. Sometimes we act as an interpreter, so I'll go up to the CAT team and they'll say, " Long history of anti-social personality disorder and he's been prescribed benzodiazepines" and the police are saying, "Oh, what does that mean? " So I'll have a chat with them and then I'll go over and say, "The guy's a bit loopy and he's on a bit of medication." The CAT team will give us some information that may be helpful in some way in the negotiations and we can use that to our best advantage.

Many times we'll go out and a person won't have had any prior contact with anyone from Psychiatric Services but they will have had problems along the way or there will be something that the person may be diagnosed with, so we'll give advice about that. Often it will come down to the person probably having an anti-social personality disorder.

We are also there to monitor the negotiating team although they say, "We don't need monitoring, we're fine." We are considered to be part of the team but we're actually a little bit separate from it. We're in the truck with them or we're in the room where they actually do the negotiations. The truck sounds awful but it looks like a huge ice cream truck without the ice cream signs on the side. Inside it's divided into two sections and there is a heavy glass panel in between and soundproof doors. The primary negotiator is talking to the person. The secondary negotiator will sit in the first section, the team leader will be in the other section so they can liaise with the bosses and I'll be in the squishy section which gets very hot and stuffy after a while. I was at the Lalor siege and we were doing 12-hour shifts, and I couldn't wait to get out of the truck after we had left. It has no windows either, so you can't tell whether it's night or day outside. I think I got there at about midnight and left at nine o'clock the next day. I had gone in and it was totally dark and there were a few police around and a few SOG in black, so you can't see them anyway, you're more likely to step on them in the grass accidentally, and I stepped out of the truck and it was broad daylight and the sun was shining and I was all squinty and the media were everywhere. It was an amazing experience. I think being in that truck is like being in another world. We monitor the negotiating team and monitor their level of fatigue. Sometimes people will become very tired and will start to make more mistakes. Police are the first people to tell you that they'll never give up on a job but sometimes they are not very good at saying, "Look, I'm tired, I want to go home now." It's not considered the done thing, so we might say to the team leader, "It seems that so and so is getting a bit tired, it's probably a good idea if we give them a break in an hour or two."

We are also there to monitor the team dynamics. In general the teams are excellent - people operate very well together and if one person is fulfilling one role and they have to leave for some reason, then somebody else will jump in. The other thing that we do is monitor transference. Often people who have sieges are very, very angry, so sometimes the first part of the siege will be someone yelling and screaming and insulting you for a long period of time. In general police members are very good at copping that sort of thing because they're used to people doing that to them, but when you're stuck in a truck and you've been at it for hours on end and it's 2 a.m. in the morning and this person is still yelling and screaming and calling you a stupid copper, sometimes there can be a bit of transference, in terms of getting

a bit angrier or a bit snappy back. We're there to monitor those sorts of things and we'll have a strategy meeting and say, "You need to tone it down a bit and take a more gentle approach." I'm not sure that "warm and fuzzy" goes down too well with most police, but according to Mike it's okay.

We also do assessment of third parties. Sometimes at a siege the person will demand to speak to somebody else. Often that will have started before we have got there, and some people who have had a lot of contact with the police will have a favourite policeman and they won't speak to anybody else. I think it's fairly common in country areas. I can remember going to a siege in Mirboo North and this person was very angry and saying, "I'll only speak to Senior Constable so and so." We're wary about putting people on the phone if they are a third party, largely because they're not trained in negotiator's tactics. With family members there are often issues about the relationship with the person, in terms of them having had an argument. We usually try to talk to people beforehand to make some sort of assessment of what the relationship between them was like, what is the person likely to say to them, do they have a good level of self-control so that they can keep themselves under check and not say, "Go ahead and top yourself then, I don't care," because that's the last thing we want to have happen.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. I'll give you an example of that. We had a person on the Westgate Bridge, the bloke that held it up for hours and hours and hours. They shut the Westgate Bridge and the traffic was bedlam. They brought a brother of the person up and they had his Mum there. They flew her in the police helicopter from the Western District. The negotiators took one look at her and put her back in the car. She had come out of the hills, I think, that was the best way to describe her. They found his brother who had a reasonable job at a television station so they thought he couldn't be too bad. The negotiators sat down and had a chat to this bloke and said, "He seems really good, we won't use him right at the moment." They put him in the back of a police car with a member to keep him company and said, "You have a think about what you're going to say to your brother to get him off the bridge, we really want you to have a chat to him." About 20 minutes later they thought they were going to have to put this bloke on, and he says, "Yep, no worries, I know how to solve this. I can talk him out of this. I want you to get a policeman in uniform, we'll go up the bridge, the policeman will put his gun to my head and I'll tell him if he doesn't come down they're going to shoot me." Now, that is

ridgy didge. You may think it's a story, but I can produce half a dozen policemen who can corroborate that story. Needless to say we didn't use him.

MS FULFORD. We also liaise with family and friends. An interesting process that I have noticed over the period of time that I've been going to sieges is that we'll go and talk to family members or friends who have arrived at the scene to get a little more information from them about what's going on or to assess whether they may be suitable as a third party. I'll go along with the team leader or someone from the negotiating team who is usually in plain clothes, but is known as a police member. We did this at a Pakenham siege, and we had a long extended discussion about what the problems were and what had been going on and it was basically a domestic dispute over the youngest son. We had a chat and everyone went their own separate ways. I went to the truck, and I came out a few minutes later to get a cup of coffee and I heard "Psst, psst," and I thought, where is that coming from, it's not an SOG person is it? And a woman pulled me over to the side and said, "Look, I wouldn't want to tell you this in front of the police members, but" and then told me this whole other story that had gone on between the two of them and said, "He's never going to get that son, that's never going to happen." When we had spoken to her with the police member she had said, "I'll tell him anything you want me to tell him. If you want me to tell him that he can have the son, I'll tell him that." Because you're a psychologist it's probably safer for them to tell you those sorts of things, so it's often useful for me to go under cover, if you like, and get that information from people.

We are also useful in terms of liaison with senior police. It's often difficult for the negotiators because often they are of Senior Constable rank and they're trained in negotiation strategies but they are coming up against bosses who are running the scene who are of Superintendent or Inspector rank and above. There is an issue about giving advice to someone who is of a much higher rank. I think most people of a higher rank respect the negotiator's advice but we have had a few situations where they have come back and said, "The boss isn't too keen on that, can we do anything about it? " If one of us goes over there as a psychologist and says, " I know you've had a discussion about this but if we do this then I really think there is a good chance that the situation will significantly deteriorate and I'd find it really hard if we went to the Coroner's Court to actually defend that." You see their faces and they say, "Oh, no, no, we won't be doing that then."

Hostage negotiation is a lot of sitting around talking about strategies. You'll often talk to the person but because people are generally very, very angry, particularly at the start of the negotiations, they will often say their piece and give you no chance to say anything whatsoever, and then they will hang up. That process changes over the period of time that you negotiate with the person and there will often be quite a distinct change when people are more willing to actually talk. During those times we'll have a discussion with the person which could go from two minutes to half an hour and then the whole team will have a strategy meeting. It's useful to have us there because we can say, "Given that this person is a fairly paranoid person, I think it's unwise for us to say this, or to go down that path." Sometimes in negotiations you'll also reach a stalemate, so it's often a matter of saying, "We've been stuck on this point for some time, it's time for us to bring something else in." Sometimes you have to say to the people, "Just settle things down a bit, we're not getting anywhere because we're too angry." Other times when the offender's calmed down a bit we might say, "It's time to get this person going again because he's in a comfort zone and if this keeps up we could be here all night and that's something that everyone wants to avoid."

We are also trained to be able to assist in any of the team roles, if required. It's unusual for a police psychologist to be the primary negotiator because our role there is quite different, but I think my counterpart, Gary, has been involved in a situation where he was primary negotiator.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. The Mitcham siege at the office of Wainwright & Ryan happened at 9.25 a.m. on Wednesday 12 June 1996. I was sitting in an office in St Kilda Road with a group of other people in a discussion exercise, and five pagers in the room went off indicating the SOG was wanted; the technical people and the negotiators and a couple of other command people. There were six females locked in the upstairs back of the office, and one hostage in the ground floor with the hostage taker. The office was on was on the southern side of the Maroondah Highway, Mitcham, to the west of Mitcham Road. The road carries a lot of traffic during the day and you can imagine what it was like at 9.25 in the morning. The peak had gone in but there was still a lot of traffic.

The office was a couple of doors up from the post office on the corner, and the police command post was around here, and that's where all the police were. You can imagine the chaos that it was causing.

Trains weren't allowed to stop at the Mitcham Railway Station. The public had to get off at stations at either side and they were bussed to Mitcham. So it was pretty much contained in that area. But it did cause a lot of inconvenience. The shops on the other side of the road had to be evacuated. The offender had a pump action shotgun with a number of cartridges. He had a beef with Wainwright & Ryan's office because they'd been involved in a divorce and a property settlement, and he claimed that they'd dudded him out of considerable amounts of money.

When we arrived, the local police had been talking to him for a short period of time. We established telephone contact with him and started to talk to him at about 11 o'clock. He didn't really want a lot. Just wanted his money. His name, Peter Evan John Morris didn't help us a lot. He was of an Asian or Indian extraction and this is why some of the tactics that were used didn't have a particular effect on him. Our main problem was that we had six people upstairs who didn't know what was going on. He had one man down the front but he didn't appear to be in a lot of danger. He was able to walk, he was smoking, obviously concerned for his own safety, but when he escaped a little bit later on, the offender just turns around, watches him leave and shuts the door.

Now obviously a major concern was how to get the six females upstairs out, and for them not to become hostages. The SOG had to do a lot of work, in order to gain entry to the building quietly, to remove them from the premises and to keep the offender either at the front of the building on the first floor, or downstairs talking to us.

The incident concluded at quarter to ten that night, and one of the considerations was that he'd stated that he was going to be there for three days. We were concerned about the traffic the next morning and the inconvenience to the public.

We faced difficulties with communicating with the person. He had telephones in the building but the phone lines that we were trying to use all went through a telephone Commander type system and the girl who answers the phones wasn't there. So instead of ringing, the phone just buzzed, and of course he didn't know how to work the switchboard. We eventually tracked down an outside line that went to one of the partners' offices, and we used that line to talk to him. He had a mobile phone and he was making a considerable number of phone calls to other people, and one of the problems we had was being able to shut the mobile phone down. We didn't need him talking to other people. We were the only people we needed him to talk to. Finally he ran out of batteries

and that solved the problem, but certainly, we tried to have it shut down and we were unable to do so. This has been amended now through consultation with the service providers and legislation has been enacted which helps us out.

We had assistance from everybody who knew him. We had all of his friends, relatives, mates and workmates coming to give us advice and assistance. We certainly received a lot of assistance from the firm. They were there to provide us with the advice as best they could, without looking at their files. He had lost three properties, estimated by him as being worth over a million dollars. He had to sell all his properties and businesses that he'd been running, and he said he had a raw deal from the solicitors' office. He'd been conversing with the solicitors for some considerable time but was obviously having no joy.

He had prepared himself well. We found that he'd purchased his firearm and then had lessons on how to use it. He joined a gun club and was a reasonable shot with that particular weapon. A shotgun, depending on what cartridges are used, can have dangerous and catastrophic effects. Some of the premises from which they were trying to evacuate the people didn't have back doors. So that made it even more difficult. Some just had to stay there, and were told to go to the back of the shop where they were as safe as they could be and to remain there until darkness. Once darkness came, we were able to extricate them from the buildings.

One of the things that has happened in recent years is the support that has come from the mental health area in Health and Community Services. When the siege at Bendigo Prison happened, and I was involved in that, there was very little support and there was a fair amount of criticism about the level of support and back-up the hostages got. That changed very dramatically after Bendigo. The next one that happened of any major consequence was the Hawthorn Kindergarten siege, and as a result of Bendigo, Hawthorn Kindergarten had one of the most dramatic support systems that I've ever seen put in place. The Royal Children's Hospital set up a complete triage and emergency operating theatre in the hall at the back of the church. There were psychologists, psychiatrists and care workers. Whenever major incidents occur nowadays, the support services including all of the health services have really got on track and are doing a very good job. It is getting better and better as time goes on.

We decided to end the situation at Mitcham when he stepped onto the balcony. He placed his firearm by the door. We used a spray of OC

spray and Capsicum spray. He got a pretty good dose but he was still able to put the filing cabinet back, to stop the police getting in the door. That's one of the problems; that no two people are affected by OC the same way. We then used teargas to overpower him.

QUESTION: Senior, what do you do if the fellow won't answer the phone?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Well, we make a lot of noise. We've got a number of items that we can use. We've got a PA system which is the same as on the top of a divvy van. We've got a box that goes for about eight hours and we can stand around a corner and call out to them and just convince them to talk to us. That's what we've got to do. Or make some noise. He came out on that first occasion when they used the OC on him because of the banging and crashing going on downstairs.

QUESTION: A psychologist talking about a hold-up in America said psychologists have got certain rules in relation to talking to the perpetrator; there are certain things you must not do and certain things you must do; certain things you can say yes to, and certain things you must say no to. Can you tell us a little about them?

MS FULFORD. It's not necessarily a psychologist thing; it's a negotiating thing. The negotiator's course goes for two weeks and in that time, we talk a lot about the types of things that you can and can't say. There are a few rules that can't be broken in any situation. One of the things that we do say is, "For Heaven's sake, don't lie." The golden rule of police negotiating is that we don't lie to people, and that can sometimes cause us quite a few difficulties. For example, a person says, "If I can do such and such, then I'll come out and we'll end it now," and when you're 25 hours into a siege, you think, "Let's just agree with them and get them out and we can all go home." But then we have the issue of people who may re-offend. The primary interaction between negotiator and offender is one of trust, and if we tell people lies about what will happen to them if they come out, and then they do come out and find that that trust has been broken, if that person then reoffends, we have a huge problem.

We are also bound by certain things in regard to what we can offer people and what's sensible to offer people. Some will ask for firearms, medication or drugs. We say no for quite obvious reasons

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Negotiators aren't in a position to accede to requests, purely because the negotiation role is a "we" versus "them." As in "we" being "me and the baddy", versus

"them" being "the boss." Negotiating is all about developing a bond, a rapport with the hostage taker or just the person, whoever he may be, in order to resolve the situation. My concern as a negotiator is for the person who is inside. I say, "I want to get whatever you want, but I can't give it to you, I've got to get the boss to say, yes." And that's what we do. We play against the boss. The boss is always the baddy; therefore, we can never put the boss on the telephone. No matter how the boss says, "I want to get on the telephone," he doesn't get on the telephone. It's like in any negotiation, you always have someone negotiating for the Head Office versus the employees, and they go back to the Head Office and say, "Look, we've agreed to give them half a day off a month, but they're going to take a thousand dollars less pay." And the boss says, "No, I want a full day for a thousand dollars," so you go back in and negotiate. This is exactly the same sort of thing. They might want a car; they might want water, gas or electricity. They might just want food. Now food is a bit different because we will give food in certain circumstances, because that does build up a rapport. "We've been able to help you, been able to give you this." But, normally everything they ask for has got to go to the boss, so there's no agreement about what's going on.

QUESTION: One of my patients who I was treating for a nervous complaint had a row with his girlfriend. He barricaded himself in his car outside her house and threatened to shoot anybody that came towards him or he would shoot himself. He did eventually shoot himself and I wondered if he'd asked to see me, would I have been able to help in the situation? I gather third parties are screened and advised.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Yes, there is certainly screening of third parties. You see a patient in a clinical environment. We see them on the other side and they are a different person. We can tell if they're sad, they're depressed, they're mad, they're crazy, or if they're just bad. There may not be a Mental Health Act clause that fits them. It's the same as relatives coming up to us to say, "Look, I've talked him out of this before. I can talk him out of this. I know I can do this. We've been down this track before." Well, my argument to them is that, "If you've been able to do it before, how come we're in this situation now?"

It is a very difficult situation to get someone in these agitated states. The stress levels for the people involved are extremely high. They are not relaxed and calm and even. They are normally in a house which they may have doused with petrol, or may have a firearm, and if they make

a mistake, then they could blow themselves up. A lot of it is attention seeking, I suppose. We also find that if someone's going to suicide, they just go and do it. It's the ones who cry for help, that police attend to every day of the week somewhere - someone rings up the police, a friend or relative and the police go around and talk to them. They're all right, the situation's calm, they take them off to the doctor, maybe, or it's just resolved. Unfortunately, our resources aren't great enough to be able to do much more than that. That's the problem of society, I suppose. You can only say, "You need to go and talk to someone," or get someone to take them to see someone, but if they don't want to go, then there's another problem with getting treatment.

MS FULFORD. Sometimes we're concerned that people will ask to speak to a third party, so that they can kill themselves in front of that person as a punishment. They're quite aware that it is an enduring image that that person will have.

QUESTION: When and who would make a decision to bring in a sharp shooter?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Every individual situation has to be judged on the circumstances. We do scenario training in counter terrorist incidents, and we look at what sort of casualty rate the government will allow before they take some affirmative action. As far as the Police Department is concerned in Victoria my understanding is that if it was an incident where no one had been killed before, but there was a high likelihood of someone being killed at an incident, then that action would be considered. Even if there has someone been killed however, we will still try and talk that person out. I've been to an incident in the southern suburbs where someone had been killed and another one had been injured. The person was still alive inside the premises and we talked him out. There was no thought of going in and getting him. Even though he had already killed one person the policy is to try and negotiate. The policy is to negotiate the safe release of hostages and hostage takers within the guidelines as laid down by the police Commander.

QUESTION: Given that these people are obviously stressed, they're often angry and they want attention, to what extent can you give me an outline of the likely personality profile

MS FULFORD. Most of the people that we see would have a diagnosis of an anti-social personality so they're people who would have a long history of offences. We look up their police records before we get there and they have often had a history of domestic violence or

offences, assaults or firearms incidents. We do have quite a few people who are mentally ill. For instance, the Doncaster siege that we went to where a young man had barricaded himself in the house. He was quite psychotic at the time. Trying to negotiate with someone who is psychotic and actively hallucinating is a great problem, particularly if they've got another voice telling them not to go out and not to do things. We see quite a few people who have some sort of paranoia. For instance, the Lalor siege which was the longest siege we've had in Victoria was a situation where the person had a history of being very paranoid for most of his life. He was Romanian and I guess the question for me is to what extent do we have some cultural differences there? He also was a heavy alcohol abuser and he had taken a Panadol overdose before we got there. He also had a long history of domestic violence towards his partner, and he also was saying things throughout the siege. He was saying, "I've got magic mushrooms in here" and we thought that was highly unlikely. He was in the middle of a flight path, so he was saying that we were sending in the choppers and the SAS. He was someone who had a paranoid personality and because of his recent stresses had flipped over into a more of a psychotic episode. You often get to sieges and people will say, "Oh they're depressed" but they are not clinically depressed because most people who are clinically depressed are probably lying flat out on their couch crying, not having a siege and threatening to shoot people. Often these people will have had a period where they have had lowered mood or they have been angry so you'll often hear they have been depressed but I tend to think it is more of a long-term personality issue. Having said that, we've also been to sieges where we've said, "What have we got on this bloke?" And they've said, "Absolutely nothing" because there has been no contact with the police and no contact with any Psychiatric Services.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Up until a few years ago we'd go to incidents and we'd spend four or five hours talking to someone and eventually get them to come outside, and when the police looked at the statutes to see what they could charge this person with, there was absolutely nothing. They hadn't really done anything wrong except maybe a minor firearms offence. You take them down to the hospital, they'd have a look at them, talk to them, assess them and say, "No, they're fine" and off they'd go again. It makes it pretty difficult for everybody all round.

QUESTION: What if the person doesn't speak English at all? What resources do we have?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. At Lalor the gentleman spoke some English. However, it did create some dramas because we have to use interpreters from the Legal Interpreting Service or police who are fluent in the language, and we ended up with only one person who was accredited and he got the greatest buzz of his life. We couldn't get rid of him. We tried to send him home to get some sleep and he just wanted to stay. But he was invaluable, he had been used by the Police Department in other areas for other jobs and he was very good. At one stage the wife said, "What did he say?" and the interpreter said, "Squeeze was what he said," and she said, " So, when he comes out he wants to squeeze me and give me a hug and everything's going to be fine." After his wife had left, the interpreter said, "No, that's not what he meant. What he meant was he's going to squeeze the life out of her."

MS FULFORD. Most people here have probably heard of the Stockholm Syndrome which was named after an incident in 1973 in Stockholm, where an offender broke into a bank and held some people hostage and demanded that his companion be released from prison. The Swedish authorities in their infinite wisdom let his companion go and join him, so then we had two hostage takers. It was a very long siege - I think it went for about five days, and during that time one of the hostages developed a very close relationship with one of the hostage takers, so much so that they eventually had sexual relations during the time of the siege. Her feelings for him continued on after the siege was over and she refused to testify against him at the trial and actually made some statements that defended him.

We talk about Stockholm Syndrome to the police negotiators so that they have some understanding of this process. It's a three- step process. Firstly there are positive feelings on the part of the hostage toward the captor. We don't really know what the dynamics of that situation are but most people seem to theorise that it's a self-protective mechanism. Sub-consciously or consciously you are aware that your life is in this person's hands and that it would be in your best interest to develop some sort of a positive feeling toward them. Secondly there are negative feelings on the part of the hostage toward the authority figures. We often have people who will come out and say, "Why the hell didn't you get us out sooner? What were you doing?" All they can hear is the hostage taker saying, "If you just send in two bullets, I'll let these people go," and then the answer comes back as, "No", and the hostages become very angry about that and feel that we should have believed

the hostage taker. Thirdly the captor has positive feelings towards the hostage, and that's a fairly reasonable part of the process where if you show someone some positive feelings, they'll often show them back.

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. There was a train incident in Holland, where the train had been taken over and they were in the process of executing people and dumping them from the train. One of the Americans who was on the train was the next to be taken to be shot and they took him up to the door of the train where they were going to shoot him and he asked if he could write a letter to his wife and then hopefully someone would be able to give it to his wife after the incident was over. He sat down and wrote that he was sorry that he had left his wife in such circumstances, that debts would be mounting up, that he wasn't able to say goodbye to her and the kids. With that, the hostage taker picked him up, took him back, put him in the seat, took someone else out and shot him. Unfortunate for the second person, but it demonstrates how quickly that the bond was created. The man saw that the person who was writing the letter was human, that he had some feelings

QUESTION: Is there a basic sequence to the events in any siege situation?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. There's an angry stage where you're just trying to calm them down, let them vent. You let them go as long as you can. After they've vented then you try and sort the problem out and get them to do little tasks for you. For example, not point the gun at anybody, if they've got a gun, turn the gas off if the gas is on, stop spilling petrol around if they've got petrol, stop holding a knife to someone's throat. In Victoria, if no one has been killed after ten minutes, then the likelihood of anybody being killed is extremely remote. So realistically, once the police get there, the chances of someone being killed, are extremely remote. After they've done that, the third stage is the surrender stage, and when we talk about surrender, we talk about surrendering with dignity because that's very important to anybody to have some form of dignity left when the situation ends. I suppose when you consider that a lot of these people we're dealing are down and out to start with, we don't need to kick them any further down the ladder when we get them out.

QUESTION: What is the role of the media in a hostage situation? Can the media be of help or is it always a hindrance?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. No, the media can certainly be of help. At Bendigo Prison, they were excellent. One of our Police

Department failings for years was to put the media in the corner and tell them nothing. As soon as you do that to the media, what do they do? They go and find the story, or they'll go and get themselves in a position where they can get good footage. My argument with any command that I deal with is make sure you brief the media and keep them informed of what's going on because then they are not getting stories from other people, they are not making it up. At Bendigo one of the whole things was that the initial report said four hostage takers had taken seven staff hostage, when in actual fact one hostage taker, Dixon Jenkins, had taken everybody hostage. There were three prisoners in there with him, but they were hostages. We got onto the local radio and asked for the statement to be retracted and it was. Sometimes it doesn't work well. One of his demands in particular was not to be known as the mad bomber but front page of the Age was "Mad Bomber Takes Hostages." We live in a democratic society where people are allowed to print what they like and say what they like to some degree. The media have been pretty good over the years. They will try and get their footage, that's their right, I suppose. We don't have a lot of problems with them. We try to short circuit what they can pick up from us. They have all got scanners; as soon as they hear the job go down, they are scanning it, recording it, using it. We get a bit sneaky now. We used to use the same equipment that they used on the back of their cameras for their remote mikes for their reporters. Unfortunately as soon as they see you walk out with it, they know that there is a set range of frequencies, so they get their scanner out and they listen to you. Now we have had to employ some different gear and we use coded radios.

QUESTION: Are there any women in the Special Operations Group?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. Not in Victoria. There is no bar to a female being in the Special Operations Group; they have to do the same training as the men.

QUESTION: How many situations have you had where the woman is the captor?

SENIOR SERGEANT ANDREWS. The hostage taker - one. I've been to one, and that was in a prison for women.