



TOWN OF MILLIS AFTER ACTION REPORT

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The Town of Millis: After Action Review: Seizing the Chance to Learn

Executive Summary

Synergy Solutions in cooperation with Town of Millis Officials, Police, Fire and School Departments facilitated an after action review on the September 2nd 2015 emergency response to a series of telephone threats and officer involved shooting, which disrupted the emergency response system of the town. Although the incident challenged those charged with public safety in the end it was learned that the crisis was a fabricated plan by a fellow and trusted police officer looking for attention. This report will focus on the response to and emergency management of the incident. The fabricated Millis shooting by an on duty police officer required leaders of many agencies scattered over numerous jurisdictions and with different authorities and priorities to rapidly respond together to an unknown and complex set of risks, decisions, and actions. This report analyzes the response and their leadership through the event. This review seeks to understand how first responders and community leaders were able to effectively lead an operation real to them initially but later discovered to be a deliberately fabricated series of events by a trusted police officer. The success of the operation is measured in lives affected, how quickly the suspect was identified, public confidence being shaken but maintained, and population resilience of a small town nurtured.

The leaders in Millis from the various departments (police, fire, and school departments, Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council, surrounding towns, and town of Millis administration) unified their efforts and were observed to exhibit implicit communication. This phenomenon is sometimes called swarm intelligence, in which no one person is in charge and yet, with all following the same mission and intent, leaders are able to accomplish more together than any one leader could have achieved individually. The factors influencing the ability to work together include:

- 1) Unity of mission and intent that unites all stakeholders;
 - a. Schools were threatened, a fellow Officer was shot at and his car burned. This was a crisis of extraordinary proportions, yet no one was overwhelmed. Everyone collaborated and searched for the best solutions of how to get the job done. Although the information came in fast and furious, they called on mutual aid and other resources. The Chief, Sergeant and School Superintendent asked questions, got answers and ultimately made decisions. They were also able to fill any voids needed on the ground level.
- 2) Esprit de corps: a feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular community.
 - a. The Town of Millis's children were threatened, their neighborhoods were under siege and one of their own police officers was reportedly shot at. The Police and Fire Departments collaborated at the highest levels of professionalism to get the job

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done and ensure everyone was safe. Even after the event was found to be a hoax they came closer together and were able to feel empathy for the police officer who fabricated the story. They also had the unity and strength of character to move forward with the investigation that led to criminal charges being filed against that same officer.

- 3) Respect for the responsibility and authority of others;
 - a. The First Responders realized the magnitude of the event and the climate of the times. They went the extra mile to get this right. They collaborated as a group and not in a vacuum. If they didn't know the answer they asked questions and listened. They utilized relationships and called on other Law Enforcement partners and looked for advice. The Sergeant sought out people who may have been in similar circumstances and asked what they did and how they handled it. The Fire Chief and the Sergeant acting as police chief never lost sight of their men and the community they were serving.
- 4) Refraining from grabbing credit or hurling blame (NO EGOS);
 - a. The humility demonstrated by all was not just evident during the incident but even more so in the De-briefs/ Interviews. They were candid and reflective. They gave credit and took responsibility. The Sergeant in charge and other police Sergeants and the fire Chief led by example and tackled the issues head on and never once pointed a finger or tried to grab credit.
- 5) A foundation of respectful and experienced relationships that garner mutual trust and confidence.
 - a. It was obvious that relationships have been fostered not only between the police and fire but also the schools and the town government. There was no one person in charge but a true collaboration. Together they searched for the best answers for the good of the Students, public safety officials and the town's people.

That confidence, both personal and systemic, encouraged these leaders individually and as a coordinated force over the 24 hours between the series of crisis events and the conclusion of the incident. The After Action Review found that over the course of the operational and investigative timeframe, they learned how to respond, investigate, share information organizationally and communitywide and lead better, so that by the time they reached the uncertain conclusion of the event, they acted as a coordinated and unified team of crisis leaders.

Establishing the Facts

The Town of Millis is a small town located in western Norfolk County, Massachusetts, along the Charles River. The total land area of the town is 12.16 square miles and the population of the town is approximately 8,000 people. Millis is bordered by Medway on the west, Holliston and Sherborn on the north, Medfield on the east, and Norfolk on the south. Millis is 26 miles southwest of Boston, 32 miles east of Worcester, and 32 miles north of Providence RI. Major roadways include Rt. 109 which connects east and west to state Rt. 128 (I-95) and I-495. Route 115 is the major north-south route through town. The center of town is located near the intersection of Rt. 109 (Main St.) and Rt. 115 (Plain St.).

The Millis schools consist of a high school and middle school that are housed in the same building. There is also the Clyde F. Brown elementary school located nearby in a separate building. The high school has 387 students, the middle school has 450 students and the high school has 515 students for a total of 1,352 students in the Millis school system.

The Millis Police Department is made up of 14 police officers, the Chief of Police, 4 sergeants, 9 patrolmen, 4 dispatchers and an administrative assistant.

The Millis Fire Department is a combination department made up of 10 career personnel and 17 call personnel. The Department is made up of a full-time fire chief, 3 full-time Lieutenants and 10 full-time firefighter/EMTs. The Call Department is made up of 2 Captains, 1 Lieutenant and 10 dedicated firefighters.

The surrounding towns mentioned above would provide mutual aid to Millis for the crisis that would unfold on September 2nd 2015. These towns and the town of Millis would soon find their emergency response systems overloaded and in need of more resources. The following resources were activated and assisted Millis in their response to this crisis.

The Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council (Metro-LEC) is a non-profit organization led by the chief executive officers of 41 law enforcement agencies and established for the purpose of promoting greater public safety by providing a working collaboration between law enforcement agencies that are located in the southeast/west region of Boston. These agencies recognize and acknowledge that certain critical incidents call for a police response that may exceed the capability of any single local agency.

The Massachusetts State Police Fire and Explosion Investigation Section (F&EIS) consists of thirty-two Massachusetts State Police officers who make up the Fire Investigation Unit and the State Police Bomb Squad. Each unit has a self-contained command and control structure and a specific jurisdiction to serve. **The State Police Bomb Squad** has 12 bomb technicians, including nine nationally certified explosive detection canine teams (dogs and handlers). These teams are deployed regionally across the state. The F&EIS has many specialized resources available to assist municipal fire and police to conduct fire or explosion investigations.

What Actually Happened?

The date was September 2nd 2015, the first day of school being back in session after summer vacation for the Town of Millis Massachusetts. The day started out calmly with parents, teachers and children excited about the new school year. This calm and excitement was soon interrupted for the schools, police and fire departments when at approximately 10:40AM a phone call was made to the school stating the **Millis schools are going to have a busy day**. As this call was being investigated a second call was made at approximately 11:32AM stating **there is a bomb in the school**. The combination of these two phone calls and the understanding that our children are our

greatest assets requires police, fire and school officials to take certain actions to ensure the safety of the public.

When a threat is received it is important that police, fire and school officials conduct a **threat assessment** and execute appropriate actions outlined in the bomb threat response plan. This takes planning and preparation which is something that Millis has been actively involved in over the years. This planning and preparation has included police, fire and school officials actively engaged in the planning processes. They all are also actively involved in training together over the years and have conducted individual and joint training sessions.

Here are some of the factors that had to be considered by those responding and those in leadership roles in assessing these two threatening calls:

Planning and preparation considerations involve coordinating with police, first responders and school officials to ensure smooth handling of a threat. Every school in Millis has an All Hazard Plan that includes Lockdown, Leave or Live protocols. Conventional and unconventional threats should be part of that plan as well.

Threat assessment is the most important step when responding to a bomb threat. It will determine what other actions to take including the level of public safety response, the scope of the search, whether or not to evacuate the building(s), or to dismiss school.

Each incident is unique and all circumstances must be evaluated by the police, fire, and school official's assessment team. All threats must be carefully weighed, based on the following options:

1. **Low risk threats** lack realism and pose a minimum risk to the victim and/or public safety. The probable motive is to cause disruption.
 - The threat is vague and indirect.
 - Information in the threat is inconsistent, implausible, or lacks detail.
 - The caller is definitely known and has called numerous times.
 - The threat was discovered instead of delivered (e.g., a threat written on a wall).

2. **A medium risk threat** has an increased level of realism and could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic.
 - The threat is direct and feasible.
 - Wording in the threat suggests that the perpetrator has given some thought to how the act will be carried out.
 - The threat may include indications of a possible place and time.
 - There is no strong indication that the perpetrator has taken preparatory steps, although there may be some indirect reference pointing to that possibility.
 - There is indication that the perpetrator has details regarding the availability of components needed to construct a bomb.
 - There is increased specificity to the threat (e.g. "I'm serious!" or "I really mean this!").

3. **A high risk threat** is specific and realistic and appears to pose an immediate and serious danger.

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- The threat is direct, specific, and realistic and may include names of possible victims, specific time, or location of the device.
- The perpetrator provides his/her identity.
- The threat suggests concrete steps have been taken toward carrying it out.
- The perpetrator makes statements indicating that he/she has practiced with a weapon or has had the intended victim(s) under surveillance.

During the Millis event, Decision Maker(s) in schools took the following actions:

- Mobilized the building emergency response team(s)
- Communicated with school personnel about bomb threat
- Limited access to building
- Decide, with threat assessment team, on appropriate action or combination of actions
- Searched: The scope of the search is dependent on the threat assessment
- Executed Lockdown, Leave, Live protocol
- Made Parental notifications

Public Safety Response is based on the threat assessment

- Police and fire respond to the school as part of the threat assessment team
- Notify State Police Bomb Squad
- The Bomb Squad arrived and assisted with the search and threat assessment
- Explosive detection canines were used to assess threats at the discretion of the threat assessment team and the Explosives K-9 handler

Once considering all these factors the acting *Millis police chief, who happened to be an experienced Sergeant, the Fire Chief, the State Police Bomb Squad and the Superintendent of Schools* all met, conferred and created a unified press release about the phone call threats, stating there was no credible threat to the schools. The schools remained in session and were soon to be released.

Shots Fired and An Atmosphere of Uncertainty

The time was approximately 2:26PM. The Millis schools are about to be released for the day. The acting Police Chief, Fire Chief and School Superintendent just finished the press release on the earlier threatening phone calls that indicated their threat assessment deemed the phone calls to be no credible threat to the schools.

An emotionally stressful event or situation involving an impending, abrupt, and decisive change is the definition given to what a CRISIS is. At this time an abrupt change occurred when the Millis Police Department received a radio transmission from an on duty officer, reporting shots fired at his cruiser. He also reported his cruiser is on fire! This information was heard by multiple officers on duty and all personnel were immediately dispatched to the officer's reported location at the intersection of Forest and Birch Street and the Millis schools.

As officers and first responders converged on Forest and Birch Street they observed the Fire Department already on scene setting up to extinguish the car fire. The officer reporting the shooting

appeared upset and out of breath. When asked for a description of events, he was unable to describe coherently what happened. He was however able to give a description of the fleeing vehicle, which he described as a maroon pick-up truck, heading eastbound on Forest road towards Medfield. Millis police and surrounding towns converged on the area and an extensive search was conducted. After a general broadcast of the incident, several surrounding towns joined the search with Mass State Police and MLEC, but were not able to locate the vehicle.

The Nature of Crisis

Unconventional crisis brings a high level of uncertainty and significant unpredictability about outcomes and what contingencies may result from the different courses of action. This is distinguished from more familiar or routine emergencies (conventional crisis) by the presence of significantly novel circumstances and different kinds of intellectual challenges. The main characteristics of an unconventional crisis is that it is exceedingly difficult to map and its ability to destabilize the entire community's emergency response system. The Millis Shooting Incident was an unconventional crisis because of the nature in which it was reported. It was a story fabricated by a trusted police officer and violated community and organizational trust. It takes adaptable communities and organizations that possess the ability to work together to reach a safe and effective outcome like the outcome reached here in Millis.

It's important to understand the nature of crisis to better understand the purpose of an After Action Review. The observations, orientation, decision and actions taken by all involved, the police, fire, schools, and town officials, METROLEC, and the state police to really understand the effects crisis has on decision making under pressure.

Crisis is an emotionally stressful event or situation involving an impending, abrupt and decisive change. While we all have a natural tendency to view a crisis as bad, a crisis is more precisely defined as a situation that can turn bad. Fundamental to the understanding is that these situations are inherently unstable and involve an abrupt and decisive change. For better or worse, things will not be the same afterwards. Thus, a crisis is best understood as a threat. Throughout our lives, each of us has experienced many types of crises. They are an inevitable part of life and involve our businesses, friends, family, or even our health. While crises tend to be relatively short-lived, they almost never get better by themselves. Even with our best efforts the outcome to a crisis is never entirely certain. We can, however, draw a conclusion: in a crisis, some type of intervention is necessary. (Heal, 2012) Police and first responders typically face one of three types of crises:

1. **Natural Disasters:** fires, floods, earthquakes, snow storms, hurricanes, tornados, etc.
2. **Mechanical:** car crashes, railroad derailments, airplane crashes, hazmat spills, etc.
3. **Adversarial:** active shooters, snipers, barricaded suspects, riots, hostage situations, terrorists, ambushes, etc.
 - a. *This incident falls under the adversarial type of crisis because the adversarial and competing nature is known as conflict. A conflict is any situation in which there is an irreconcilable clash between opposing human wills. While a crisis may result from whims of nature, such as fires, floods, or earthquakes or mishaps from traffic accidents and airplane crashes, conflicts always involve an adversary who is actively engaged in thwarting the will of the tactical commander. In this case*

despite the fact that it's a fabricated story, the responders do not know this and believe this to be an actual threat. This compounds the complexity and uncertainties in responding to this crisis. Consequently, conflicts are far more dangerous and complex.

There are five distinct factors in every crisis.

- 1) Crisis always entails **risk**. The risk can be personal, physical, or emotional harm. Career hardships are another form of risk. There is risk to others as in danger to subordinates or bystanders. There is organizational risk, as in loss of equipment, assets or even organizational prestige.
 - a. Because of the countless factors that impinge on tactical situations, a commander must accept some degree of risk. Risk is inherent in every tactical situation. Some risk is personal, such as when the decision maker is exposed to physical or emotional harm. There will also be risk to others, as when efforts to achieve a successful resolution will increase the peril of others; in this case students, teachers, neighbors and responders were all put at risk because of the nature of this situation. Nearly always, there is organizational risk. Organizational risk may involve a loss of equipment, assets or prestige. The community of Millis had done a very good job preparing their town for all types of hazards in both planning and training. Despite this, the human factor is always present and affects decision making under the pressure that leads to some short falls in the response such as untimely notifications to parents or confusion over whether or not to release the students from school. Commanders attempt to reduce risk by seeking better, timelier and more accurate information, but since this is never entirely possible, risk is unavoidable. Notwithstanding, it is an implied duty of command to reduce risk to the greatest practical extent. This was done in this response.
- 2) Crises possess an atmosphere of **uncertainty**; information will be incomplete, confusing, ambiguous, unreliable and sometimes even conflicting. The element of chance makes unpredictability a certainty! There are several factors to consider regarding uncertainty and how it affects responder's observation, orientation, decision and action cycles.
 - a. The Nature of conflict **makes certainty impossible**. Everything known at the time about this young police officer was that he was a person of good standing in the community and could be trusted. This trust created more confusion because at least initially as the circumstances surrounding this crisis were unfolding rapidly, responding officers believed his story despite the inconsistencies in that story. Why? Because they initially were biased in a positive way towards the reporting officer. *To be human is to experience cognitive bias. The foundations of our decisions are*

set before we are conscious that we are making decisions. Cognitive biases are wired into our brains. (Kahneman, 2011) **Anchoring** is one type of many cognitive biases and is the tendency to rely too heavily, or "**anchor**," on a past reference or on one trait or piece of information when making decisions (also called "insufficient adjustment"). If we are aware of our biases, these mental models can help us make long sequences of choices very successfully. If not, they can lead us astray. Cognitive biases were indeed present in the initial stages but as time went on and more information was gathered they were overcome by those responding and leading the operation.

- b. The dynamic interplay between the will of the suspect(s) and the will of those responding makes conflicts especially difficult and complex. **Uncertainty** is always present and pervades these situations because of a lack of knowledge regarding the suspect, terrain, weather, innocent bystanders, and even other police personnel. This **uncertainty** requires commanders to make decisions based upon probabilities for which they are invariably lacking accurate and timely data. This is one of the most pervasive attributes in these situations and is described by a concept called "**fog**."
- c. **Fog** is that condition which prohibits a tactical commander from obtaining accurate information in a timely manner. A complete and reliable view of any tactical situation is thus impossible. To a greater or lesser degree, fog is present in all crises, but especially conflicts. Consequently, the information needed to make reliable decisions will never be entirely satisfactory. In the initial stages of this crisis what we call in the emergency management world the "**golden hour**" is defined as the chaotic stage of an incident in which the crisis is still fluid, meaningful information is difficult to obtain and situational awareness seemingly impossible to establish. In this initial period, it is difficult to determine how to set multiple people, groups and agencies on a path towards resolution.
- d. Aggravating the lack of information is the uncontrollable element of **chance**. Chance consists of turns of events that cannot reasonably be foreseen and over which we (or an adversary) have no control. *As in this falsely reported incident.* Uncontrollable factors, accompanied by the inherent risk in trying to dominate them and compounded with the element of chance, create a condition called "**friction**." Friction is the force that resists all action. It makes the simple difficult and the difficult seemingly impossible. Friction may be psychological, as when a commander becomes overwhelmed by the amount of risk, or when chance favors the suspect. It may also be self-induced, such as when a commander suffers from indecision, fear of failure, or a lack of a clearly defined goal. It can also be physical, as when the suspect succeeds in some endeavor or the commander encounters an

obstacle. **Friction** clearly manifested in this case, as it does in all conflicts and crises. According to responders we interviewed and their reports there was much uncertainty about how what they were being told not matching what made sense. The experienced responders were anchoring on the trust of a fellow officer, which created friction in decision making, simply because they believed him. Again this was overcome but slowly over time and as the investigation developed.

- 3) Crises are time sensitive and may be, when the crisis is adversarial, time competitive.
 - a. Each episode in an operation is the result of a unique and temporary combination of circumstances. Unique, because each circumstance is dependent only upon those factors which are present at the particular time and place; and temporary, because an outcome, of any kind, affects the next set of circumstances. In a conflict, the opponent who can most quickly exploit circumstances to his benefit gains an advantage. Moreover, a decision and/ or action delayed is often rendered ineffective because the circumstances will have changed. Thus, all tactical operations are **time sensitive**. Further, when an adversary is involved, they are not only **time sensitive**, but also **time competitive**. Time or opportunity neglected by one adversary can be exploited by the other. The aggregate resolution of these episodes will eventually determine the outcome of the conflict.
 - b. The circumstances and timing of this crisis had some crucial implications that focused concerns on the schools. The school had already been under a threat during the day. The Millis leadership became worried it was a diversion to get kids out of the school. The schools were about to be released for the day and the Millis high school had already began to release their students but they were quickly told to get back inside and the school went into lockdown because of a timely and sound decision made by a frontline police officer on the scene.

4) Potential Severe Consequences

- a. There is always a **potential of severe consequences**. Because all crises are defined by an impending, abrupt and decisive change it is virtually impossible to achieve such definitive results without a potential of calamity. The significance of this single factor cannot be overstated. A timid and lackluster response will not provide the necessary countermeasures to thwart events that will ultimately lead to disaster without an effective intervention. Likewise, an intervention that is uncoordinated, disorganized, or unfocused is highly unlikely to avoid a catastrophe. While risk can never be completely eliminated, it is the responsibility of tactical commanders to reduce it to the greatest practical extent. The Millis Unified Command decision along with the initiative exhibited by frontline personnel clearly was designed to

prevent anyone from being injured. It also kept both students and teachers calm despite all the uncertainty they were experiencing themselves.

5) Human Factor is always present and influential.

- a. **A human factor** is always present. In fact, without an impact on humans, it is impossible to experience a crisis. Millis students, teachers, parents, neighbors, and other community members were all affected by the stress and anxiety, the fear of the unknown this crisis manifested. Those first responders charged with dealing with this crisis experienced these same stressful factors. Moreover, because interventions are always human activities, human characteristics such as training, experience, maturity, emotion, prejudice and discipline, deeply affect individual and collective efforts. Because the most fundamental factor in conflicts is the irreconcilable disagreement between adversaries, these situations are especially susceptible to, and will be inflamed and shaped by, human emotions and personalities.

These **five characteristics** manifest themselves in countless ways and combinations in this crisis response. Commanders who recognize that they are intrinsic in each and every crisis are not as likely to be surprised or discouraged when they are experienced. In the ever-changing and confusing environment of uncertainty, frustration, ambiguity and risk, tactical situations inevitably gravitate toward disorder. Since the situation is continuously changing, a commander is forced to improvise again and again. Often the final actions frequently have little resemblance to the original scheme. This is an evolving process that was experienced by the Millis Unified Command and quickly overcome due to their ability to focus their efforts on a common mission and intent which was to keep people safe and get to the bottom of who and what was creating this threat.

To help responders more effectively respond it is important to understand the competing views of crisis. Some see it in simple terms as if the encounter and the environment represent a closed mechanical system. This "**deterministic**" view argues that crisis (conflict) is predictable. Among the advocates of this view are theorists who seek prescriptive rules for handling crisis and analysts who predict outcomes based upon force ratios.

This **deterministic or technical** view of crisis takes a centralized approach which advocates remedies such as adding more personnel, another command post, faster computers, and the like. Operational skills are viewed as a science where results are highly predictable.

The second view takes a **probabilistic or adaptive** approach towards crisis which advocates a decentralized approach requiring the acceptance of more uncertainty and ambiguity. Operational skills are viewed as more of an art in which participants interact with one another and respond and adapt to their environment.

There is a more modern approach which seeks to understand complex systems, how they interact and respond and supports a position somewhere between the deterministic and probabilistic views. This **adaptive challenge** approach understands that crises are **time sensitive** and **time competitive** observation, orientation, decision, and action cycles. Operational skills are seen as both art and science and utilize lessons learned from history of crisis and the foundational principles of crisis response, while at the same time, possessing the ability to respond with unconventional and

adaptable approach when required. This view employs a highly professionally trained staff to gather and analyze data and make informed decisions and recommendations in a timely manner based on the situation unfolding in real time.

The **adaptive challenge** view of crisis (conflict) understands that the essence of conflict is a struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, trying to impose itself on the other. Conflict is fundamentally an interactive social process. Conflict is thus a process of continuous mutual adaptation, of give and take, move and counter move. It is critical to keep in mind that the adversary is not an inanimate object to be acted upon but an independent and animate force with its own objectives and plans. While we try to impose our will on the adversary, he resists us and seeks to impose his own will on us. Appreciating this dynamic interplay between opposing human wills is essential to understanding the fundamental nature of conflict.

It's important to understand that in real-time (*not 20/20 hindsight*) when you are dealing with adaptive challenges, which are what crises are, there is no obvious answer to the question **“What is going on here?”** **Trying to define the problem at hand is a contentious act in itself, let alone when it's a made up story that has first responders looking for things they believe are there, but in reality, there is nothing there. Because the reported crisis is fictitious!** Leading through this uncertainty requires courage, tenacity, and an experimental mind-set: you try things out, see what happens, and make changes accordingly. (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009)

The overwhelming focus of those responding in the Millis Crisis was to gain control of everything possible in order to bring order to chaos. Control the first responders; police, fire, EMS and by-standers who take initiative to help in the response. We attempt to control the victims and the innocent by-standers, while at the same time we attempt to seek out, control or stop the bad guy(s). We make efforts to control the media response that are intent on getting the story. We wish to control the response from families and friends, who are overwhelmed with emotion and fear as unknowns about their loved ones weighs heavily on their minds. We attempt to collect and gather information from every possible direction that may shed some light on the situation. We then analyze the same information and distribute it to those we feel essential, controlling who needs to know what. We attempt to control everything in an instant even as we are maneuvering initially to mobilize our resources and setting up our long term responses and command and control systems. As you can see the nature of crisis is complex enough and only compounded in complexity when the information is relayed by a trusted source (*a fellow police officer*) who later admits to making it all up!!! In the **golden hour** of crisis an organization that tries to be in control of everything will not be successful in crisis. It took the Millis unified command structure to establish a common outlook, a mission and intent for frontline responders to work with. The overall guidance and the intent were provided by the leadership, but the frontline personnel wouldn't depend on intricate orders coming from the top. They were to use their own initiative and be innovative as they went forward and focus their efforts on establishing real time situational awareness.

If we don't know what's happening, how do we fix it? Exploring Situational Awareness

Finding ways to train to improve situation awareness has become a key goal in many arenas. This includes the crisis response arena. The basic definition of situational awareness is that of Endsley's which is defined as: *'the perception of elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future'* or in other words **“This is what's happening and what's important now!”**

“While the first and best approach for improving situation awareness lies in developing effective system designs that convey the right information in a manner that is easy to rapidly comprehend, in some domains there is a limited opportunity to present such displays. Policemen, for example, must gain much of their situation awareness directly from cues in the environment. While some displays can be provided to them to relay information that is known, they are also highly dependent on their ability to gather the information “on the ground” in the real world environments in which they operate. Similarly doctors will gather many of their cues directly from the patient through tests, through interviews, and through examination of physical status on a variety of factors. While these professionals can gain some SA through the design of better information displays to augment these tasks, their SA is also highly dependent on their ability to gather and understand information in the world.” (Endsley, 2011) As Napoleon said “*A general never knows anything with certainty, never sees his enemy clearly, and never knows positively where he is. When armies are face to face, the least accident in the ground, the smallest wood, may conceal part of the enemy army. The most experienced eye cannot be sure whether it sees the whole of the enemy’s army or only three-fourths. It is by the mind’s eye, by the integration of all reasoning, by a kind of inspiration that the general sees, knows, and judges.*” In order to effectively gather the actionable information as it’s unfolding in real time we must possess the explorer mentality. We must be able to recognize patterns of behavior. Then we must recognize that which is outside that normal pattern and act. In an unconventional crisis like the **Millis Incident** we have already established that confusion and uncertainty are paramount. The novelty of the situation: *a fabrication by a fellow police officer!* This fact is unknown to the responding officers who believe the fabricated story to be real! This implies that there is less than complete understanding of the circumstances or even of which circumstances are important. Responders do not necessarily know which facts and observations are relevant and, therefore, which to collect. The fact they believed the story to be true had them all looking and searching for things that did not happen. Situational awareness is therefore lacking and must be obtained.

Unconventional crises trigger enormous discomfort among those in charge of response. As soon as crisis erupts, collective intelligence somehow finds itself paralyzed; and accurate communication becomes very difficult. Leadership struggles. (Lagadec, 2006-2007) Faulty judgments result from a breakdown in situation awareness and assessment; that is failure to attend to, and integrate appropriate sources of information, compounded by receiving misleading information about the crisis from a trusted source, which violated that trust. This was part of the problem in Millis initially in gaining actionable understanding once the **shots fired call** came in. Think about the ambiguity of two threatening calls focused on the schools, full of kids and teachers. Think about the threat assessment and search of and the lockdowns the schools were in. The decision that there was no credible threat to the schools and NOW! An officer involved shooting is underway? The ambiguous information and the need for situational awareness create anxiety and stress because responders can’t have all information before needing to make decisions. This incident and how it unfolded illustrated many competing priorities and objectives, (*look for suspect, stop the threat, render aid, lockdown or evacuate schools, hell we just cleared the schools with a no credible threat, is this shooting a diversion to get kids out of the school, notify town administration, notify parents in a timely manner, political consequences, fear of innocent people including children being hurt or killed, fear of failure, what we are being told don’t match the patterns of conflict of our experience, etc. etc. etc.*). These competing priorities create friction in decision

making (*slows decision making down*) and hence the inability to act quickly. In the heat of a rapidly changing set of circumstances where risk is high it is imperative we process information implicitly via the observation, orientation decision and action cycle if we are to gain the edge and seize or regain the initiative.

Deciding Under Pressure...and Fast

“Decisions without action are pointless. Actions without decisions are reckless.” ~Col. John Boyd

To understand human nature, you must appreciate the power of situations. What does the science of situations teach us? That many of our intuitions about human nature are wrong. Though we come to believe at a young age that we have a pretty good handle on what makes people do what they do, many of these assumptions turn out to be misplaced: individuals' personalities, yours and mine included, are not as stable as we think they are. We're more influenced by those around us than we'd like to believe. Even our private sense of identity is highly context-dependent. The **Millis** crisis situation was unique in the sense that it was made up by a trusted police officer. As mentioned above this trust of a brother police officer had a major impact on the decision making process. Responders intuitively trusted the police officer and hence trusted what he was saying. Although there was friction and their perception of the situation was clouded momentarily they also knew there was more to this situation.

When we look at situations objectively, detaching ourselves from the emotion and bias that often cloud our vision, we're better able to pick up on the clues that allow us to understand other people and achieve the outcomes we seek.

How Do We Make Difficult Decisions **With Incomplete and Sometimes Contradictory Information?**

Col John Boyd discovered that conflicts are time competitive *Observation, Orientation, Decision, and Action cycles*. The *OODA Loop* divides understanding into four processes, 1) what we see through all of our senses, including our sixth sense (called Observation), which leads to developing an understanding of, 2) what's happening now (called Orientation), which leads to, 3) what do we do (called Decision), that leads to, 4) behavior, doing what we decided to do (called Action). The idea of the OODA loop holds that significant advantage will increase to those that can complete the decision cycle in the shortest time span. It stresses that situation awareness gives a decisive advantage allowing you to set the tempo that creates friction in our adversary(s) decision making cycle. This suggests that disrupting an adversaries thinking process and improving one's own, is the crux to winning. The notion of the loop, the constant repetition of the OODA cycle, is the essential connection that is repeated again and again. Because our actions would have changed the situation, the cycle begins anew and repeats itself throughout the tactical situation. Simply the OODA Loop gives first responders the advantage through better real time situational assessments. By observing the obvious and the all-important subtle signs and signals that manifest themselves in an adversary's behavior patterns, body language, facial expressions, what they say and how they say it, etc. we can reasonably predict outcomes and act accordingly. By being alert and aware of the information exchange between “us and them” and our environment, helps us outpace the “action versus reaction curve” in the mental dimension of conflict allowing us to outmaneuver an adversary with sound tactics.

The goal as Col. John Boyd put it is the “ability to operate at a faster tempo or rhythm than an adversary enables one to fold adversary back inside himself so that he can neither appreciate nor

keep-up with what's going on. He will become disorientated or confused. Unless such menacing pressure is relieved, adversary will experience various combinations of uncertainty, doubt, confusion, self-deception, indecision, fear, panic, discouragement, despair, etc., which will further: Disorient or twist his mental images/impressions of what's happening: Thereby disrupt his mental/physical maneuvers for dealing with such a menace: Thereby overload his mental/physical capacity to adapt or endure: Thereby collapse his ability to carry on." In a simple word we "confuse" him with the unexpected. And when the timing is right you move in and reshape the situation. Make no mistake, like any other skill; outmaneuvering an adversary takes focus of effort to achieve. *It's very important to keep in mind and very much related to this specific crisis situation to never lose sight of the fact that while we try to impose our will on the adversary, he resists us and seeks to impose his own will on us.* In this case our adversary, a trusted fellow police officer, did this by using deception.

Deception is defined as everything done to manipulate the behavior of the other side, without their knowledge of the friendly intent, for the purpose of achieving and exploiting an advantage. The "what" of deception is the manipulation of behavior, the "why" is to exploit the advantage achieved.

I feel it's important to touch on deception for the purposes of this After Action Review because it was such a crucial piece of the perpetrator's plan and it created fear, anxiety, and stress in the community that required a large scale emergency response.

Research on deception has shown:

- Deception is about influencing behavior in order to gain and exploit an advantage.
 - This is a unique case and all we know of the advantage the perpetrator was trying to exploit was ATTENTION!
- The outcomes of deception operations are not assured.
 - The perpetrator planned and plotted to exploit the trust he had gained in the Millis Police Department that led to initial uncertainty and confusion. He did not think everything through clearly and ultimately his original story conflicted with the facts of the situations allowing for a fast closure to the crisis.
- It is about manipulating behavior. Falsity, tricks and fooling people are tools and tactics.
 - Two threatening phone calls and then an officer involved shooting call. Trickery was used in a phone call where the description of the vehicle was given by a supposed witness. In the shooting itself, the subject fired rounds from his duty weapon into his own patrol car to make it look as though he was the target of a shooting.
- The payoff to success may be great, but the payoff must be related to the intended exploitation and the achievement of the operational objective.
 - The only reason given by the perpetrator as to why he did what he did was ATTENTION! That was his motive and intent. That was his payoff which was important to him.

The impact of deception comes from one-sidedly reducing the level of uncertainty that afflicts all competitive relations. The deceptive techniques that are used, whether head fakes in basketball or

option plays in football or as in this case phone calls and shots fired are all intended to decrease one side's—our side's—level of uncertainty by getting an adversary to cooperate against his own interest. The perpetrator initially accomplished this but because of the strength of character and dedication of a unified command with a sound mission and intent the plot was ultimately uncovered.

Frontline Responders Working Together

The benefit of **working together** is to create new and unexpected solutions, options, and interpretations, drawing on the experience of all the team members to generate ideas that are beyond the capabilities of any single individual. Working together develops basic competencies and routines, forms a clear identity, manages the flow of ideas, and monitors it to adjust its thinking when necessary. Those tasked with responding to this crisis situation demonstrated the understanding and ability to apply the concept of individual action equals collective power. Good teams manifest these traits:

- Experienced teams - Integrated identities, there are no egos and teams focus on mission and intent. They take joy in responsibility and see things through.
- Situation understanding shared to high degree
 - Major effort to anticipate problems
 - Keeps track of gaps and ambiguity
 - Manages uncertainty
- Flow of ideas managed
 - Able to detect strains in the other competencies
 - Understands that the purpose of the concept of a team mind is to *“help us see the team and not be distracted by the individuals.”*

This ability to work together takes superb competence or intuitive understanding. It takes the ability to sense when the time is ripe for action. This working together climate is built through years of progressively more challenging experience. This requires:

- **Common outlook towards problems.** Superb competence and intuitive understanding at the organizational level. Connotation of "mutual trust" built through shared experience. Without a common outlook superiors cannot give subordinates freedom-of-action and maintain coherency of ongoing action. The implication is that having a common outlook possessed by a team represents a unifying theme that can be used to simultaneously encourage subordinate initiative yet realize superior intent.
- **Stated mission and intent** concept for our efforts. In ambiguous situations, answers the question, "What do I do next?" Key function of leadership.
- **Responsibility** conveys what needs to be accomplished, gets team's agreement to accomplish it, then takes joy in responsibility for doing it - but doesn't prescribe how. This requires a very strong common outlook.

Encompassing Concept: Leaders Working Together (Unified Command)

Unified Command is a structure that brings together the leaders of all organizations involved in the incident in order to coordinate an effective response while at the same time carrying out their own jurisdictional responsibilities. The unified command links the organizations responding to the incident and provides a forum for these entities to make consensus decisions. Under the unified command, the various jurisdictions may blend together throughout the operation. The unified command is responsible for overall management of the incident. The unified command directs incident activities, including development and implementation of overall objectives and strategies, and approves ordering and releasing of resources. Members of the unified command work together to develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations. This command approach must be generally oriented to producing collaboration that works for directing both the development of understanding, and also the design through invention and improvisation of a new approach followed by an adaptive yet authoritative approach during the execution phase.

Each episode of crisis is the temporary result of a unique combination of circumstances, presenting a unique set of problems and requiring original solution. Nevertheless no episode can be viewed in isolation. Rather, each episode merges with those that precede and follow it, shaped by the former and shaping conditions of the latter, creating a continuous, fluctuating flow of activity chock-full with fleeting opportunities and unforeseen events.

Because crisis and conflict are fluid phenomenon, response to crisis and conflict requires flexibility of thought. Success depends in large part on the ability to adapt to proactively shape changing events to our advantage--as well as to react quickly to constantly changing conditions.

Before applying the ICS structure, first responders can help resolve or minimize the crisis by gathering real-time information that reduces uncertainty and disorder, and that attracts the right course of action. Beyond that, first responders can create and nurture adaptability throughout the organization. Not everyone has the skill set to do that, but it can be developed and influenced with the right training and education and adaptive leadership.

Organizations and how they solve problems should evolve. The preparation and planning cannot take into account the silent evidence, the thoughts and motivations going on in the mind of an adaptive individual with his own ideas and plans. Personal development needs to include training in the Boyd Cycle. This leads to situational awareness and adaptation as long as the plan is allowed to evolve. So you must be prepared to adapt to the changing circumstances, only in this case will you have all the tools and personnel on scene and ready to take whatever action is necessary based on the subject's response. This is the combination of explicit and implicit information gathering and both decision making models in an effort to give you every advantage in setting up the environment and individual for your success.

Although with the proper command structure in place, that is about leadership and developing the ability to make good decisions in extreme conditions while applying intuitive, sensible strategies aimed at working through chaos and toward the implementation of productive operational incident command. In other words, they develop first responders who are indeed problem solvers by preparing them how to think instead of telling them what to think. These first responders gain very good outcomes in crisis situations. Take into consideration the actions of the unified command structure in this incident upon learning of shots fired and police cruiser on fire:

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- Fire Chief puts in for a full recall
- Fire Chief requests Mutual aid to Medway to help with school dismissal
 - Felt he may have over stepped his bounds

Due to Town and department sizes the Fire Department takes a more activate roll in how incidents are handled. Frankly in small towns such as Millis they share responsibilities. The Fire Chief sensed that the Sergeant and now acting Chief of Police was caught in the *response mode, versus the command role* he needed to be in. This is not uncommon for an active patrol sergeant who is use to going to and handling calls and reporting up the chain of command to the Chief. In our interview with the sergeant he candidly talked about this *player versus coach effect* having hold of him. He stated once he and the Fire Chief met and had conversation as to specific rolls and responsibilities he was able to settle in to his role at the command level and focus on the critical tasks:

- Establish Command and Communications;
- Identify the “Crisis Point”;
- Establish Inner Perimeter;
- Establish Outer Perimeter;
 - Provides for crowd and traffic control points
 - Controls access/egress to and from the scene
- Establish Scene Command Post;
 - Initially is the supervisor’s vehicle
- Establish Staging Area;
 - Direct resources to respond to this location
- Identify and Request Additional Resources;
 - Assess needs early and order to stand-by, at staging area for movement to scene as required

One of the reasons for this ability to adapt during the incident is there were no egos and open lines of communication remained open throughout the crisis situation. The town administration, the school officials, the police and fire departments, Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council (METROLEC), and surrounding supporting towns all discussed the ego free leadership climate and felt it was instrumental in everyone being able to make more effective situational assessments and develop a more fluid response. When something or someone created a void in the response someone took the role. The fire chief stated he felt “*he may have over stepped his bounds*” but with 20/20 hindsight his and the sergeants strength of character led to their ability to discuss specific roles and responsibilities and then adapt them as needed.

This is so because this type of unified command climate reduces friction. “Friction” is “*the force that makes the apparently easy difficult*” and is a distraction. Therefore a crucial issue of recognition in preparing leaders must be prepare leader teams to confront the unknown, tackle complexity, and not to be paralyzed or stunned by it. One essential means to overcome friction is the will; we will prevail over friction through persistent strength of mind and spirit. Organizations that create a climate such as this will naturally experience an acceleration of their observation, orientation, decision and action cycles (OODA loops).

- **Command Climate** is a sub set of a larger culture, and usually short-lived, it can reflect the larger principles and beliefs of the culture, or can counter some of these due to the fact that the leaders are closer to “the action” and adjust performance measures and command philosophies to enable success.
- **Command Culture** is to be understood as how an officer considers himself to be in command, i.e., does he command as a visible person close to the action or rather through orders by his staff from his command post? It also means the way an officer tackles the turmoil and chaos of crisis—whether he tries to make sense of it by the application of doctrine or rather utilizes the pandemonium to make bold moves. This strategy will therefore also deal with the question of whether the command culture of a police department emphasizes personal initiative or playing by the rules and regulations. (Muth, 2011)

So the question becomes how to create and nurture command climate and culture? Boyd suggested, in his briefing “*Organic Design for Command and Control*,” that it will grow naturally if the senior management sets the proper conditions. He defines the two essential elements necessary for running any human organization rapid OODA loop lines as:

- Leadership implies the art of inspiring people to enthusiastically take action towards uncommon goals. It must interact with the system to shape the character or nature of that system in order to realize what is to be done.
- Appreciation refers to the recognition of worth or value, clear perception, understanding, comprehension, discernment, etc. It must not interact nor interfere with the system, but must discern (not shape) the character / nature of what is being done or about to be done."

A mutually agreed understanding is a wonderful device for fostering a sense of **responsibility** among the people in charge of public safety. Because they have to consider, think, and agree, rather than acquiesce, you will sense increased morale and improved dedication. All of this, of course, reinforces mutual trust and implicit communication, which, as we have seen in this incident, are critical elements in increasing your OODA loop speed.

In a nutshell, the aim is not to increase our capacity to perform command and control. It is not more command and control that we are after. Instead, we seek to decrease the amount of command and control that we need. We do this by replacing coercive command and control methods with spontaneous, self-disciplined cooperation based on:

- Low-level initiative
- A commonly understood commander’s intent
- Mutual trust, and
- Implicit understanding and communications.

In this sense, the command and control we are speaking of seems more closely aligned to leadership (rather than command) and to some kind of monitoring ability (rather than control) that permits leadership to be effective.

In other words, leadership with monitoring, rather than C&C, seems to be a better way to cope with the multi-faceted aspects of uncertainty, change, and stress. On the other hand, monitoring, per se,

does not appear to be an adequate substitute for control. Instead, after some sorting and reflection, the idea of appreciation seems better. Why? First of all, appreciation includes the recognition of worth or value and the idea of clear perception as well as the ability to monitor. Moreover, next, it is difficult to believe that leadership can even exist without appreciation.

Pulling these threads together suggests that **appreciation and leadership**, which were exhibited here in the golden hour of this Millis Incident, offer a more appropriate and richer means than *command and control* for shaping and adapting to abruptly changing circumstances.

What Areas Can We Improve Upon?

There was a lot done right in handling the crisis in Millis. The seven critical tasks (*establish command, identify danger zones, establish inner perimeter, establish outer perimeter, establish command post, identify resources and establish staging areas*) were adhered to. Communications amongst police, fire departments, school and town officials and all other first responders was explicit and implicit and help to accomplish the mission and intent of the overall operation which was resolved peacefully and with no injuries. We discussed at length the positive and ego free command climate throughout the community that was most beneficial in reaching the outcomes sought after by those in charge of public safety. However despite all these positive factors there is always room for continual improvement.

Without insight and vision there can be no orientation to deal with both present and future. Without focus and direction, implied or explicit, there can be neither harmony of effort nor initiative for vigorous effort. Adaptability implies variety and rapidity.

- The insight and vision to unveil adversary plans and action as well as to foresee your own goals and appropriate plans and actions.
- The focus and direction to achieve some goal or aim.
- The adaptability to cope with uncertain and ever changing circumstances.
- The safety to remain unpredictable.

When you are dealing with adaptive challenges, which are what conflict and crisis are made up of, there is no obvious answer to the question: “What is going on here?” Trying to define the problem at hand is a contentious act in itself. Leading through this uncertainty requires courage, tenacity, and an experimental mind-set: You try things out, see what happens, and make changes accordingly. When you adopt an experimental/explorer mind-set, you actively commit to an intervention you have designed while not becoming wedded to it. That way, if it misses the mark, you do not feel compelled to defend it, and instead you are adaptable. This mind-set also opens you to other unanticipated possibilities or other tactical options to reach the outcomes you sought. Affective learning is a product of both education and training. It’s a change in behavior as a result of experience. Learning clearly includes training and education. How we perceive is highly related to how we think and learn and to what we know. Evidence shows we have preferences for using one mode of apprehension, thinking, and evaluation over others and that such preferences are ‘hard-wired,’ but not beyond our control.

Because crisis (conflict) is a clash between opposing human wills, the human dimension is central. It is the human dimension which infuses conflict with its intangible moral factors. Conflict is shaped by human nature and is subject to the complexities, inconsistencies, and peculiarities which characterize human behavior. Since conflict is an act of violence based on irreconcilable

disagreement, it will invariably inflame and be shaped by human emotions. Conflict is an extreme trial of moral and physical strength and stamina. Any view of the nature of conflict would hardly be accurate or complete without consideration of the effects of danger, fear, exhaustion, and privation on the men who must do the fighting. However, these effects vary greatly from case to case. Individuals and peoples react differently to the stress of conflict; an act that may break the will of one may only serve to stiffen the resolve of another.

Having the human dimension in mind should make it clear that in the complex nature of crisis that no response will be flawless and mistakes will be made. The focus of this After Action Review is to not only identify strengths but to also identify areas we can improve upon. We do this through what has been defined as double loop learning.

- **Double Loop Learning** is a higher-order form of awareness. It bypasses the single feedback loop of the top-down approach. Double-loop learning requires a multiple lens strategy that facilitates “knowledge of several different perspectives and forces the organization to clarify differences in assumptions across frameworks, rather than implicitly assuming a given set.” (Sabatie, 2004) The Town of Millis has already been exposed to this type of learning through the extensive emergency and school response training they have conducted that has involved all community wide departments that will be affected by a crisis in the town.
- **Single Loop Learning** is where the leaders and the organization observe the consequences of action (e.g., experimenting with a leadership competency map) and then ask for feedback to gain knowledge as to its effectiveness (e.g., whether it helped in developing leaders). The organization then adjusts its subsequent action to avoid similar mistakes (or deviations from what an ideal list or map should do) in the future. Examples are policy, regulations or laws created to prevent the problem from occurring in the problem. According to organization behaviorist Chris Argyris of Harvard University, single-loop learning appears to solve problems, but ignores the issue as to why the overall solution was sought in the first place (e.g., What problem were we trying to solve when we decided that leadership competency maps would solve it?). (Argyris, 1985)

Having double looped learning method in mind some of things we as a community can improve upon, learned from this crisis are:

Equipment

There were some equipment related issues involving school public announcement systems and reverse 911 systems that created delays in proper notifications to parents that created anxiety and stress which is understandable. Yet the equipment related issues are easily remedied with money to purchase and continually maintain the equipment necessary. It is also important to think about equipment in terms of its effectiveness and as to whether or not what we think the equipment is of value for and versus the outcome we seek. An example in this incident was the public address system in the schools that initially malfunctioned and first thought to be a major problem that may have jeopardized lives of the faculty and school children. However in hindsight during the review process school officials came to the conclusion that “in this case” because the public address system failed and they had to resort to email and word of mouth notifications to lock the schools

down, this helped create a calmer approach that had little effect on the children in schools. They felt no fear and calm was kept in this case. Situations matter and obviously the public address systems should be maintained properly because if it turned out to be a real threat the need for a speedy notification to take action due to a threat takes precedence.

The schools had a delayed response with the emergency ROBO Call and school messenger because the timeline of the shooting started at the same time school was being dismissed there was some confusion on whether or not to lockdown or release the children from school. Initially the children were released and started to leave the buildings. A police officer arrived on scene of the schools and quickly orders the lockdown. This created more confusion and hence the delayed response with the notifications although the notifications were put out.

People and Ideas on How to Handle Crisis are Based On Values

First responders cannot respond to crisis if it is separated from its values. The existence of strong bonds of mutual trust, confidence, and understanding among members of the public safety professionals are built on core values we all identify and believe in. Because of the cohesion that springs from a values based ethos, members of the communities enjoy simplified communications, moral understanding and implicit decision processes within their organization that spills over into the community. A set of values we all believe in induces all to act “as one” in accord with our mission that represent the values and motivations - the wants and needs, the vision and expectations - of the community, the department, and all its members.

1. **Adaptability** is an effective change in response to an altered situation.” Adaptability is not speed of reaction, but the slower, more deliberate processes associated with problem solving. As we discuss, speed in problem solving may come after adaptability-related skills are learned, but speed is a secondary, not a primary, characteristic;
2. **Character** is the bedrock of all decision making. Strength of character is the heart of good decision making. Character is what you are really like, not the façade you allow others to see. Character is what guides your actions and produces the words you speak. Character is your unique identity, the sum total of your individual characteristics. A person strong in character is someone who stands for what is right, who has the “backbone” to express and live out his or her convictions;
3. **Critical Thinking** is the use of cognitive capacity, skills and strategies to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. “Critical thinking skills are becoming especially important now as our world is changing at an ever-accelerating rate...Critical thinking skills are needed to adapt to a changing environment;
4. **Creative Thinking** is different from critical thinking, and equally important. Contests between and among open or organic systems are won through creativity rather than through the application of formulas. Experts disagree about how creativity occurs, but they agree that it is something that improves with practice and experience. One can be creative in a familiar field and not in a new field. Experts also agree that creativity is something that humans will do better than computers for some time to come. Trainers and educators must pose problems and dilemmas that challenge creativity. Tactics, organizational design, and operational art all require creativity. It is not magic. It is a learned way of thinking;

5. **Experience** is a reliable guide when it is relevant to the contemporary and future operating environment and missions, and when it is filtered, processed and stored in the brain using enduring principles and useful, reliable thought models. When key elements of the operating environment, opponents, technology and missions change rapidly, how experience is translated into intuition is even more important;
6. **Intuition** is the way leaders translate experience into action. It enhances decisions at all levels, provided experience is a reliable guide, because it enables rapid decision making without conscious awareness or effort. It describes a great situational awareness, and the ability to respond most appropriately and tactfully. It can also be applied to diplomats, bearers of bad news, or to describe a superior ability to respond to an escalated situation.
Developing Intuition: Requires learning the decision requirements of the job in various relevant mission contexts; practicing decision-making in such situations, repeatedly and in a variety of contexts; and reviewing and obtaining feedback on decision-making experiences with the help of expert coaches. Teachers help the learner detect and solve problems. They help them become aware of relevant factors in the environment, make sense of information, anticipate or detect problems that require options or solutions, identify potential internal failures, and develop “work-arounds” to correct disruptions and breakdowns. Moreover, most importantly, they continually reinforce the enduring principles and useful, reliable thought models at the foundation of an adaptable doctrine. The premium on quality coaching both during unit training experiences and during institutional education is now very high, and will only increase;
7. **Learning Organization (“Culture of Innovation”):** a culture of innovation as one in which people at all levels proactively develop and implement new ways of achieving individual, unit, and institutional excellence and effectiveness. A culture of innovation is typified by an environment within which every single person in the organization is invested in the organization’s success and feels a responsibility to implement new and better ways to achieve organizational objectives. People are encouraged to try alternative paths, test ideas to the point of failure, and learn from the experience. Experimentation and prudent risk taking are admired and encouraged. Experimentation is not a destination to be reached, but an unending process of trial, feedback, learning, renewal and experimentation again. The organization as a whole is agile, ready to learn, continually changing, and improving. It is fast, flexible and never prepared to say “we have finished getting better.” Innovative organizations depend less on forecasting, planning and control and more on scanning, agility and feedback. Innovative organizations embrace uncertainty, recognizing that an uncertain future potentially holds as many opportunities as it does threats;
8. **Social Skills** enhance interpersonal adaptability and build on self-awareness. Social skills are essential for working with diverse cultures and groups. Social skills include appreciating diversity, effective listening, conflict management, and developing others. They facilitate effective communication with broader audiences; assist in building collaborative networks;

enhance consensus building and enable conflict resolution. The key is not to have specific lesson blocks on these subjects, but for faculty “coaches” to develop these skills throughout the curriculum and especially during role playing case studies with focused and deliberate coaching and feedback;

9. **Self-awareness** is an understanding of ones strengths & weaknesses. Knowing oneself enhances flexibility. You gain interpersonal agility and improve awareness of how best to contribute to a situation. “Self-aware and adaptive leaders are the basis for success in full spectrum operations. The greater self-awareness gained by assessment against measurable standards, the more adaptive the leader” (Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2001). Self-awareness assessments must become integral to the curriculum. Schools must provide self-assessment tools and reinforce self-awareness efforts with comprehensive feedback --360 degree assessments, mentoring, coaching, and development plans.
10. **Selfless service** those who demonstrate selfless service put the welfare of the community, the department and others before their own. Always striving to sustain team morale and gives credit for success to all involved and accepts responsibility for failure themselves;
11. **Strategy** how to shape or influence events so that we not only magnify our spirit and strength but also influence potential adversaries as well as the uncommitted so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic towards our success. Strategy is that which persuades an individual or group. Strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate; Helps see opportunities to seize the INTIATIVE!
12. **Tactics** is the art and science of winning engagements and conflicts. Tactics refers to the concepts and methods we use to accomplish a particular objective.

The truth is values drive commitment. You can only fully commit to organizations and other causes like this crisis when there is a good fit between what you value and what the organization values and what the community values.

What’s The Parental Role When Schools Respond to Crisis?

In the Millis incident parents were notified that the schools were in lockdown mode. However, many parents said they understood the nature of the situation, but still felt they would have like to have been more informed. As a parent this is very understandable. The effects of crisis do not just affect those in the crisis point. Parents, other family and friends become very fearful and stressed when crisis strikes a community. The same unknowns, uncertainties, disorder and chaos that plague first responder’s hits loved ones in the same way. The need to know and the need for control outpace good decision making. This is especially true if parents have not been properly prepared about what to expect in the time of crisis. Below is an example of notifications made to parents distributed by schools in an effort to make parents aware of the precautions the community and schools have taken to keep their kids safe. It also lets parents know what they need to do when crisis comes to town. An example draft of a letter to the parents is below:

As a school district, we are committed to the safety of all students who attend our schools. We want to share with you what we have in place to provide for the safety of our students. We have fire

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drills to practice what we would do if there was a fire on campus. We have storm drills to prepare the students for what they should do if a major storm (snow, thunderstorm) occurred while they were at school. We have intruder drills to lock down a campus if someone enters who should not be on the campus. We have also trained principals and teachers and discussed with students what they should do if an active shooter enters a campus. As hard as this is to even think about, we know it is very important to be prepared for any type of emergency that may occur. It is important to talk to your child about safety at school. It is also important to discuss each of these emergency situations with your child.

*We have coordinated each of the drills with the different community associations and have a collaborative team approach to keep our schools safe. We have worked with various police departments and with safety consultants to assist all schools in planning and preparing all staff for an intruder or active shooter situation. Procedures on how best to keep children safe during a crisis have changed. Federal, State and local law enforcement officials have moved to the three-pronged approach **Lockdown ~ Leave ~ Live** to respond to an Active Shooter situation.*

There are many resources available to parents and community members:

- *Federal Bureau of Investigations: [“Event Reference Guide”](#) (fbi.gov)*
- *Department of Homeland Security: [“Active Shooter –How to Respond”](#) (dhs.gov)*

Conclusion:

Millis is a small town but it's a town who understood the mission and intent of seeking and stopping a threat. It understood the nature of crisis is full of risk, unpredictable and rapidly changes. It understood the ambiguities involved. This crisis lasted over a 6-7 hour time frame from 10:40AM to approximately 5:30PM when the schools finally released the children from school. The approximately 150 responders who converged in Millis continued to learn and adapt as the circumstances dictated, coming to this safe conclusion to a fabricated but thought to be real crisis that disrupted the emergency response system of the community. The first responders determined with dedication and a high level of professionalism adapted and in the end resolved the situation peacefully and with nobody hurt. They did this because they checked their egos at the door and instead all focused their efforts on an overlapping and having a common outlook that centered on doing what needed to be done. Not flawlessly. Not without mistakes or gaps. But they did so adapting successfully as needed. Their willingness to critique their decisions for this After Action Review is another illustration of a community culture centered on learning and continually improving.

This incident was a tragic situation fabricated by a police officer who would only say he did it for **attention!** This After Action Review will not discuss the why behind this officer's motives and intent, because we don't know the why. I will say that the complexity of crisis was compounded by the unknowns that this false report created. Responders driving rapidly to an officer involved shooter and potentially more sinister plot a possibility on the minds of all responding put lives in jeopardy. Put fear in children and teachers, family and friends and all members of the community of Millis Massachusetts. The suspect description provided by the officer was broadcast to officers all across the state. Numerous vehicle stops were made on vehicles fitting the description. Many of the stops were made with the tactic police call **a felony stop**, guns drawn and very careful and methodical procedure for stopping cars occupied by potentially dangerous people. It does not take a lot of imagination to think about how one unintentional movement by an occupant of these vehicle stops could have ended in another tragedy because of this fabricated story.

I would like to mention the leadership of the community, specifically the police department sergeant who had the overall responsibility of the investigation while the Police Chief was away. He was quick to be transparent with the community once the true nature of what had unfolded had been learned. This is a true testament to his character and his dedication to the community.

Appendix 1: Seizing The Opportunity To Learn

Why Facilitate an After Action Review?

Experience is a powerful teacher, but experience by itself is not the most efficient way to learn. The process can often be painful and time-consuming. (Klein, 2004) The after action review (AAR) is a critical component to developing decision makers and helping communities get to a more effective level or preparedness and readiness in responding to both conventional and unconventional crisis. How can agencies create the individual and organizational conditions to help promote reflection, action, and learning both during and after crisis situations to improve the overall emergency response? Crisis-induced learning triggers tell organizational members that they need new routines and procedures to manage the events at hand. These acute crisis characteristics make intracrisis learning more difficult than intracrisis learning which happens when there, is in general, more time to contemplate.

Distinguishing between single and double-loop learning is important. Double loop learning is “considered to be of higher quality because effective solution of some problems requires the examination of sensitive undiscussable issues, and the reframing of assumptions, values and goals.” Whereas single loop learning is more interested in a quick fix, double loop considers the larger context and works to shift organizational culture (values, beliefs, assumptions, etc.) when necessary to truly implement a lesson, and more importantly, change individual and organizational behavior. For example, the creation of the ICS can be considered an example of intercrisis double-loop learning, as it shows practitioners and policy makers questioning basic approaches to crisis response, and developing a new framework for future responses. These lessons learned come from effectively conducting decision making critiques also known as after action reviews. (School, 2013)

The After Action Review (AAR) is conducted after the decisions are made and actions taken after an actual event officers handled on the street. A candid, frank and open discussion takes place amongst the group involved to bring out lessons learned- both strengths and areas in need of improvement.

The goal of the AAR is to focus on key aspects of the incident, such as, were the decisions made in a timely manner? What was the rationale of the individual or group in making their decision? Could we have done something better, safer, and more effective? Focus is on every aspect from communications (both friendly and adversarial), tactical response and approach, and perimeter set up and containment you may have used to help you gain the advantage. You should also examine arrest, investigation and search techniques and anything else you or other members who responded feel was a strength or weakness that lessons can be learned from.

The powerful lessons that are learned from reviewing and critiquing a crisis situation you were personally involved in is a better than most formal training you can get. Why? Because you were there and experienced the circumstances first hand and then sat down and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the response. From these lessons learned you develop a better plan for next time. A key component to conducting an AAR is a candid open dialog; with anything less you are only fooling yourself.

The after action review technique is relatively straightforward. It bears a striking resemblance to “Chalk Talks” in sports, where players and coaches gather around a whiteboard shortly after a game to discuss the team’s performance. Both chalk talks and AARs are designed to make learning

routine, to create, “*a state of mind where everybody is continuously assessing themselves, their shifts, and their organizations and asking how they can improve.*” In practice, this means that all participants meet immediately after an important activity or event to review their assignments, identify strengths and areas in need of improvement, and look for ways to perform better the next time around.

The process maybe formal or informal, may involve large or small groups, and may last for minutes, hours, or days. But discussion always revolves around the same four questions:

1. What did we set out to do?
 - a. Establish the facts
2. What actually happened?
 - a. Facts can be slippery under stress.
 - b. What did we actually do?
 - c. Once facts established diagnosis can begin
3. Why did it happen?
 - a. Cause and effect
 - b. Analysis and synthesis
4. What are we going to do next time?
 - a. Is often inseparable from diagnosis
 - b. Focus on the things we can fix, rather than external forces outside our control

The unique nature of crisis situations requires new thinking to learn and adapt to ever changing situations. The thing to do, when you don't know, is not to bluff and not to freeze, but to learn. The way you learn is by experiment or by trial and error. In a world of complex systems, it is not appropriate to charge forward with rigid, undeviating directives. “Stay the course” is only a good idea if you're sure you're on course. Pretending you're in control even when you aren't is a recipe not only for mistakes, but for not learning from mistakes. What's appropriate when you're learning is small steps, constant monitoring, and a willingness to change course as you find out more about where it's leading.

To learn as quickly as possible, we must be more deliberate, more disciplined, and more thorough in our approach in order to squeeze as much as possible from each experience. As with everything else about mental conditioning there is no magic here. Most valuable things we can do are to take this natural tendency and refine it and discipline it. But instead of passing judgment about whether it was a good decision or a bad decision, we should focus on understanding the decision process. Why we decided what we did and how we made the decision.

This type of feedback lets you revise and improve on your intuitions. When you don't have many chances to encounter challenging situations, you have to get the most out of the incidents you have.

Appendix 2: Recommendations

1. Follow through on areas of improvement is crucial

- If areas of improvement are agreed upon stakeholders should follow through on addressing these issues.

2. Create a town wide safety committee

- Per the Governors School Safety Task Force recommendations the town should develop a town wide safety team that works together regularly on school safety issues. This would alleviate some of the communication issues during a critical incident. It also builds confidence in department heads when crossover decisions need to be made for the betterment of public safety.

3. Develop a mutual agreement with surrounding agencies

- By creating agreements with other communities it allow responders to quickly act without the need to burden the on-scene supervisor who may be overwhelmed with information from the ongoing incident.

4. Mutual aid training annually

- Develop annual training agreements with joint mutual aid responders (police, fire, town & ems) this will bring all stakeholders together and provide a level of comfort working together during critical moments. Choose different events each year such as Hazmat, Natural Disaster, Active Shooter or Missing Child.

5. Department heads need to delegate

- When possible use available resources to assist you in decision making and executing orders.
- Such as:
 1. Communications
 - a. Social media
 - b. Media
 - c. Parents
 - d. Town Officials
 2. Public information
 3. Inter-Department

6. Town wide message and strategy for critical incidents

- Create a town-wide message to be used during critical incidents, this could be a generic message to start stating you're dealing with an ongoing incident. It asks people to please be patient as information is currently in a state of constant flux. If there are any specific details they will be released as needed in the interest of public safety.

7. Practice Incident Stabilization Verse ISC

- Incident stabilization can be viewed as pre-ISC. During this timeframe the goals are to:
 - i. Contain the scene
 - ii. Create inner and outer perimeter
 - iii. Inform responders of goals
 - iv. Provide scene safety

- v. Start establishing command
- vi. Create staging areas
- vii. Identify Tactical Operations verse Incident Command
- viii. Delegate roles needed to start the process of investigation or intervention.

8. Public Safety should supersede public pressure

- In situations where any risk to public safety exists the absolute focus should be on safety. Regardless of external pressures for information or action first responders should make decisions based on real time risk rather than to appease public pressures. Often information and communication can quell some of this pressure but ultimately public safety is priority.

9. Scene awareness and safety

- Responders did a great job being constantly aware of the risks based upon the incident. Consider keeping permanent security assigned to the Fire department rather than simply relying on police presence on scene. There were times when police were occupied and not be available for immediate protection of the crimes scene responders.

10. Outside agency challenges

- It was discussed and recognized the MSP was a helpful resource for specialty units but there were instances where they were asked for help with incident stabilization duties such as traffic which they would not provide. There were also moments where they were asked to leave areas or clear from the scene, they for undisclosed reasons either openly refused or failed to acknowledge the Incident Commanders requests.

11. Need for designated trained PIO

- The town should employ a PIO or train stakeholders in media relations.
- Contact MetroLec about using their PIO in critical incidents

12. Police debrief

- A professional departmental debrief is always recommended after any critical incident.
- A helpful tool is to conduct regular informal smaller scale debriefs as part of regular practice so it becomes part of the departments culture.

13. Family reunification plans

- A family reunification plan should be developed for Student-Parent reunification.
 - i. Include rosters process
 - ii. Sign off sheets
 - iii. Location plans
 - iv. Annual review of plan
 - v. Consider annual informal safety team review of the process
 - vi. Consider incorporating this process into a training session to ensure the plan works.

14. Develop increased trust and accountability with teams before major events:

- An important component for reducing competing interests is mutual respect between personnel within and across agencies along with trust that each seeks to accomplish the same overarching goal. Building such respect and trust is difficult to address

amidst a crisis event. As many of the individuals interviewed for this incident noted, trust has to be built before these events.

- i. *Pre-event opportunities can be accomplished through joint training exercises, such as a multiagency police, fire, schools, department of public works, town official's disaster response exercise. These exercises create the opportunity for the development of familiarity and interpersonal links across organizational levels. The town of Millis who has been participating in ongoing training exercises suggests that they are a foundation for developing agency links and this type of training needs to be ongoing and frequent.*

15. Develop faster decision making execution in the golden hour:

- In the initial stages of a crisis the time it takes to establish the foundation for incident resolution (good or bad), there is a huge gap in the area of critical incident decision making. How do we give people that we need to put into positions of command responsibility, the experience they need to respond? Experienced incident commanders rarely arrive at situational assessments through an explicit conscious process of deliberation, as researchers of many stripes and colors were long wont to assume. Professional commanders of this kind have developed a rich store of experience and a repertoire of tactics upon which they draw when confronting a critical incident.

- i. *The act of taking in facts and information from your surroundings (observing), making sense of those facts and considering the context surrounding them (orienting), making a hypothesis about what you can do (deciding) and testing that hypothesis (acting) known as recognition-primed decision-making model that has provided a great deal of insight to the way first responders recognize patterns and make decisions in uncertainty. (Klein, 2004) Crisis response training must develop their personnel frontline and leadership in the ability to decide under pressure. These skills are crucial to develop and are perishable therefore continuous training is required.*

16. Develop the ability to read confusing, conflicting and uncertain information:

- This crisis situation was confusing, conflicting and uncertain because it was a fabricated story by a trusted and vetted source. We must learn to respond to a crisis in an environment of uncertainty, which we can do by developing simple, flexible plans; planning for contingencies; developing standing operating procedures; and fostering initiative among frontline personnel. The benefit of this was seen clearly in this situation as the town of Millis had planned and readied their first responders with sound tactical crisis response training, which led to the ability to adapt, decide and lead as circumstances changed. The ability to recognize a baseline crisis helps in our ability to recognize novelties or anomalies is crucial to decision making and reshaping circumstances so responders have the position of advantage.

- i. *The Baseline + Anomaly = Decision structure is designed to support the “orient” phase of the OODA Loop cycle. By forming a definition of the norm for the area and the people being observed through conscious and deliberate effort, we can improve the speed at which a trained observer can recognize the pattern for the area (the baseline) and identify the person who has broken from the pattern (the anomaly). By making the process of establishing a baseline explicit, we can quickly and accurately provide context to the behaviors and facts collected during the observation portion of the process in a way that is often left to a protector’s tacit understanding of the area. By making it explicit and articulable, we can also shorten the time required for people new to an area establish the baseline by providing that information in a simple, communicable, format. This process enhances the toolbox by structuring the pattern-matching function of our brains instead of simply waiting simply more years of experience to develop this ability naturally. (Vanhorne & Riley, 2014)*

17. Be ready for crisis leadership at any moment:

- One can hardly predict when a crisis will hit. Ever since Columbine, Millis emergency response officials pondered and planned for the possibility of an “Active Shooter” attack against one of their schools. Every one of the leaders we interviewed attested to the value of the planning and preparation that preceded the events of September 2nd 2015. The Incident itself demonstrated the individual resilience against the odds and it became characteristic of how the town of Millis itself would endure through the fears, stresses and anxieties of that day. What are the key crisis leadership lessons for senior officials and executives? Do not begin basic crisis leadership readiness and planning after the crisis hits. It is too late.
 - i. *Invest time and attention before a crisis to get yourself and your organization ready. While you cannot be prepared for every misfortune, if you have the basic technical protocols and materials in place, and if you have mastered the human factors that will put them into action, you will have the agility and tenacity to meet and overcome what could hit you. This will empower leaders within the community to seize opportunities and react to threats as they emerge. The need for strong, composed, and decisive leadership during the initial response. A well- coordinated and effective response often hinges on the leadership managing the on-scene efforts. The leadership of the response in Millis serves as another example of that important element.*

18. Mutual aid training and development must be ongoing and consistent:

- Neighboring law enforcement agencies, both state and local, should conduct collaborative, inter-agency training exercises. By training together, officers from different agencies are able to develop trust and mutual understanding prior to responding together to an incident that may require a multi-agency response.

METROLEC Emergency Response Team and the local area agencies' are very familiar with one another's teams, tactics, and response plans.

- i. *Crisis response training should include different types of locations, including not only schools but other town offices and area business and workplaces. The personnel from different agencies should receive education and training, which results in a consistent understanding of tactics, communication, and approach to crisis situations. Collaborative training is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of a coordinated response by all involved. Ultimately, all personnel who arrive on scene should report to and be deployed by the incident commander.*

19. Need for a true Unified Command post away from incident location with all major stakeholders.

- The command post consisted of Metro Chiefs, Acting Police Chief, and the Fire Chief. It is very important that everyone knows their role. Policemen, fire fighters, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, chiefs, school officials, selectman, and town administrator all must possess a high level of professional knowledge in crisis response and how to apply and coordinate that knowledge to the crisis at hand. Despite the effectiveness of the leadership and execution exhibited during this crisis, some of the pitfalls during the incident when it came to communications and decision making may have been improved if the unified command post was set up away from the scene.
 - i. *For example: Town felt they could have been better briefed on the ongoing situation, particularly around the locking down of the schools. Town would have liked more involvement in the decision to close schools the following day. Felt they were told not consulted on the decision. School release verse school lockdown was not clear and not done equally at all schools. Although they did feel inside it was handled very well once the decision was made. A more effectively established unified command post would have helped alleviate some of these issues. Ongoing training and education is the key to more effective performance in this area.*

20. Need for a Tactical Command Post at the scene.

- This was not a major problem however it did add to the confusion and could simply have been avoided by separating the unified command post from the tactical command post.
 - i. *The tactical command post is set up in an effort to effectively deal with the threat. It's made up of the players or those first responders who are actively engaged with the threat element. Those in command of the tactical command post design operations for the immediate threat and to render aid to the*

injured as opposed to the unified command post which is responsible for the overall logistics of the larger scale operation.

21. A clearly established Commanders Intent is necessary:

- An effective operational plan focuses the efforts of each individual toward a common objective. This unity of effort is the most crucial aspect of any tactical operation and the responsibility falls squarely on the senior commander. Because most tactical operations in crisis response are spontaneously reactive to an unfolding set of circumstances, the response is oriented, initially at least, to tried and true procedures rather than a detailed plan crafted specifically for the particular circumstances. In these cases, the principal objective for a response to a foot pursuit, robbery in progress or officer requesting assistance can be reliably inferred from the nature of the incident. When an operation is more complex, however, the precise objective may be neither clearly understood nor universally shared. In these situations it is essential that everyone fully comprehends what is required. The method used to express this concept is called the commander's guidance, or more formally, **commander's intent**. Simply put, the commander's intent may be defined as a concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired end state. It provides the essential focus to concentrate activities and facilitate coordination. Accordingly, it serves as the initial impetus and provides a foundation for the planning process to follow. Even when changing circumstances render a plan or concept of operations no longer appropriate, the commander's intent provides a direction for what needs to be done to achieve a satisfactory end state and subordinates can improvise, adapt and overcome obstacles without burdening superiors with endless details.

- The unified command structure set up in the Millis incident exhibited this ability in setting the overall guidance and the intent were provided by the senior leadership, but the frontline personnel wouldn't depend on intricate orders coming from the top. They were to use their own initiative and be innovative as they went forward. This type of leadership and execution takes ongoing rigorous joint training in crisis response using scenario based exercises and experiential learning. Tactical decision games, decision making exercises, tabletop exercises, full scale exercises are all forms of the type of training necessary.*

22. Concern by leaders a mixed message was being sent out to the general public and the parents.

- Parent notifications and information was slow and unclear initially. This is not uncommon in a critical incident as life threatening and lifesaving actions are being prepared for, however there is definitely room for improvement and that parents and the general public concerns are indeed valued and considered in all planning

- i. We suggested a minimum of annual parent notifications on emergency procedures and what to expect. “Train the parents with information” before the incidents ever happen.*

23. The importance of a Press Information Officer:

- Keeping the media informed so they can inform the public is a necessary factor to be considered in all serious crisis situations. There were two press releases: one on the two threatening phone calls to the schools and the second was a live press conference that took place the day after the incident.
 - i. This report only covers the approximately 6 hour operational period of the crisis response however the transparency exhibited by the public information officer and those who help draft the release which informed the public that the crisis was indeed the result of a made up and fabricated story by a police officer. It took strength of character and integrity to lay out the facts as they had been learned over the course of 24-26 hour timeframe that included a crisis response and a parallel investigation which ultimately disclosed this scheme.*

24. Be sure to maintain and know how to use equipment:

- *There were some equipment related issues involving school public announcement systems and reverse 911 systems that created delays in proper notifications to parents and the public that created anxiety and stress which is understandable. Equipment related issues are easily remedied by ensuring we have the resources to purchase and continually maintain the equipment necessary.*

Selection and Hiring Process of a Police Officer

The crisis described in this report was fabricated and put into action by a trusted police officer. The circumstances and behavior exhibited by this officer not only create the climate of fear and uncertainty within the town of Millis and its surrounding communities, the behavior also could have led to injuries and other misfortunes, intended or otherwise. His suitability to perform as a police officer was most justly brought into question. This brings to the forefront questions about the selection and hiring process the Millis Police Department uses or should have used to ensure the proper people are being selected for the job, be it a fulltime or part time position.

Police agencies focus their recruitment efforts where they can find the best candidates that would be suited for a career in policing. We look to places where people of the highest moral character are looking for employment. Often times these people come from our hometowns. When this is the case it is very important not to bypass any of the hiring process to include the application, psychological, and background screening necessary in ensuring only people with character, reputation, and suitability for appointment is clearly consistent with the best interest of the Town and the Police Department.

Definitions

- **Character**: Character is a trait, or sum of traits, which serves as an index to the essential or distinctive nature of an individual. It is the aggregate of distinctive mental and moral qualities that have been impressed by nature, education and habit upon the individual.
- **Reputation**: Reputation is the opinion or estimation in which one is generally held. Character is what a person is; reputation is what a person is reported to be.
- **Suitability**: Suitability refers to the character, reputation and fitness of those under consideration for service with a Police Department.

Just making out the application can be a very lengthy process that can take days or weeks to complete. The effort required to completely fill out the application is a test of sorts in determining the degree of commitment of the applicant. Usually the application has to be submitted with certain supporting documents or copies, such as High School diploma, College degrees, Military transcripts, birth certificate, Driver's License, credit report, and so on.

Once the application is submitted a background investigator will begin scrutinizing the application, in an attempt to filter out candidates who by what they have put on their application, automatically would not qualify to continue the process.

The role of the Personnel Background Investigator is a collector of facts, both positive and negative. The determination as to the suitability of the applicant for employment rests with the appointing authority. This decision is partly based upon the facts obtained by the Background

Investigator. This can only be accomplished if the background investigation is complete and thorough.

The background investigator should have an initial interview with the applicant. Armed with the information on the application, the investigator will be on the lookout for discrepancies or any indication the applicant is not being completely honest and forthright. Prior to interviewing the applicant, the background investigator will have contacted every police agency where the applicant has lived. Every, campus police department, where the applicant went to college or took a course will be contacted. The background investigator will find out if the applicant was ever arrested, cited, or otherwise detained by the police.

When possible, background investigators will physically visit the neighbors of the addresses provided by the applicant, as current or former residences. They will also visit places of employment, and talk with coworkers and supervisors. Investigators will talk with family, friends, spouses, and ex-spouses, all in an attempt to make sure only the best candidates of the highest moral character are chosen.

At some point during this process, the applicant will be required to take some type of physical agility test, which will indicate they have the basic physical ability to perform the job of a Police Officer. The applicant will now have to take a complete medical exam, which will be conducted by medical professionals contracted by the agency.

One of the next phases of the background investigation, is the psychological. Candidates will have filled out extensive psychological questionnaires, which will later be reviewed by a Psychiatrist or Psychologist. The candidate will then be interviewed by the Psychiatrist or Psychologist. If the report comes back from the interview that the recommendation is not to hire the candidate, the agency will follow that recommendation. No police agency is going to take on the civil liability of hiring a candidate who has not been psychologically cleared.

Report Development

The Background Investigation Report shall also include summary statements regarding the positive and negative employment aspects uncovered during the background investigation. The Background Investigator will not make any recommendation as to the suitability of employment of the applicant. Rather, the summary statements are the indicators that enable the Oral Board and/or the Appointing Authority to determine the character, reputation and fitness of the applicant for service with this Department. The Personnel Background Investigations Report must include the following:

- Any behavior, activities, or associations which tend to show that the individual is not reliable or trustworthy
- Any deliberate misrepresentations, falsifications, or omission of material facts;
- Any criminal, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, or drug addiction;
- Any facts which furnish reason to believe that the individual may be subjected to coercion, influence, or pressure which may cause him/her to act contrary to the best interests of the Town;

Anywhere along the way, a neighbor, a co-worker, or former spouse could give concerns about an applicant's suitability as a police officer. If the issue is serious enough, that one concern may be

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enough to cause the applicant not to be chosen. Police agencies do not want to take a chance on an applicant who may cause them civil or criminal liability after being hired. The issue may be totally false or a blatant lie, but a police agency can't take a chance that later the officer is involved in a questionable shooting or incident, and it is discovered that the agency was put on notice of a potential problem during the background investigation, but hired the person, in spite of the information.

The hiring process is not an easy thing to go through. As you can see, a lot goes into trying to hire the right people for this job, and it should not be taken lightly by anyone involved.

Key Points:

- Strong Background Checks.
- Comprehensive field training program.
- Honest evaluations and remedial training when required.
- Probationary period to allow for proper vetting and evaluation.
- Follow up on any discrepancies, questionable acts or reported issues.
- Provide adequate and continued training.
- Administrative collaboration and support of the process
 - Everyone must agree to the process and follow through
 - When a decision is made administrative is vital to future success
- Look to other agencies for successful models and policies.

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