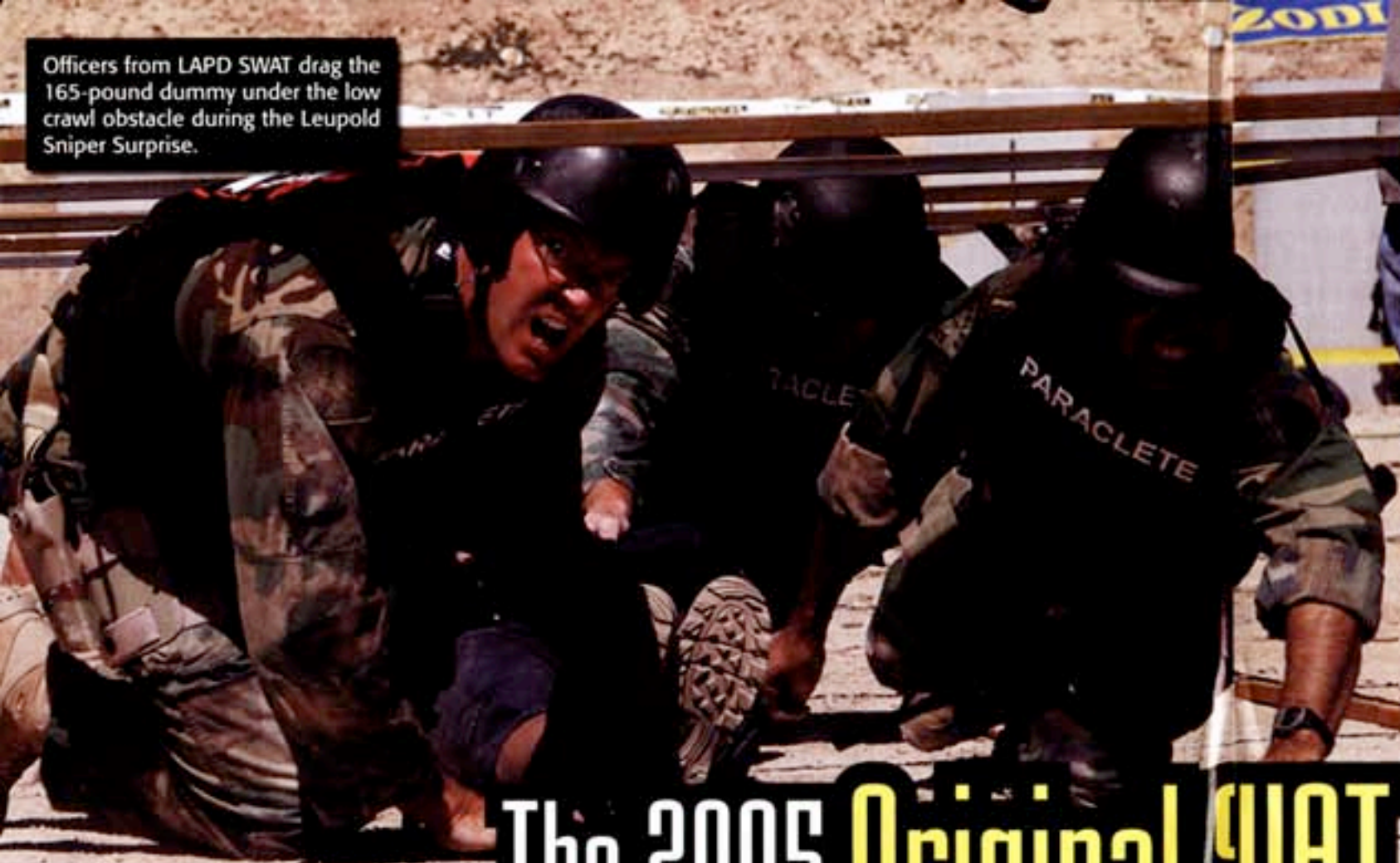
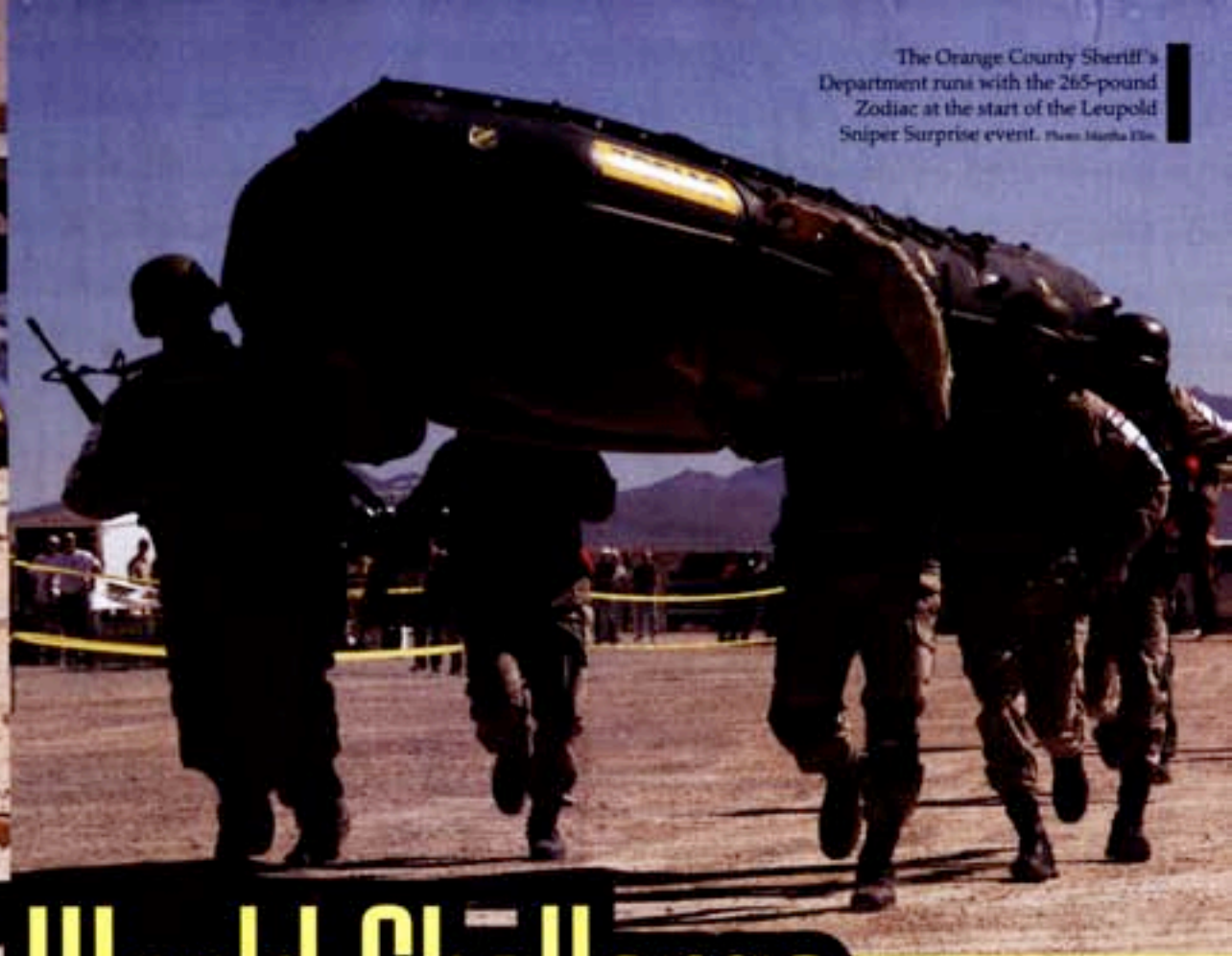


Officers from LAPD SWAT drag the 165-pound dummy under the low crawl obstacle during the Leupold Sniper Surprise.



The Orange County Sheriff's Department runs with the 265-pound Zodiac at the start of the Leupold Sniper Surprise event. Photo: Martha Ellis



The 2005 Original SWAT World Challenge

BY JOHN S. O'CONNOR II, Ph.D.

When Deputy Chief Darrel Gates, Lt. John Powers and Sgt. Dave McGill activated the world's first Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) unit for the Los Angeles Police Department in 1966 they probably had no idea their response to increased criminal violence and firepower would eventually spawn SWAT competitions.

The Jordanian team rescues the dummy during the Paraclete Warrant Service events that was done in gas masks.



However, that is exactly what has happened and today there are a number of SWAT events around the country where teams can test their skills against their fellow officers.

The Original SWAT World Challenge (OSWC), now in its second year, has raised the bar for SWAT competitions by bringing them to the world stage. The objective of the OSWC, and the World SWAT Symposium that precedes it, is to provide a world-class training experience for the SWAT community and an opportunity for interaction between the top law enforcement special operations teams. The competition is designed to test the fitness and skills of the competitors as well as team organization.

The 2005 OSWC took place in Pah-

rump, NV at the Front Sight Resort. Front Sight has some unique facilities that include underground tunnels, an elevated obstacle course and a variety of ranges and terrain, making it an ideal location for high level, live-fire competitions and weapons training of every type.

THE COMPETITION

The Original SWAT World Challenge is like other competitions in that it is a competitive platform that demonstrates to the public the high level of skill and professionalism SWAT officers possess—something the public rarely sees. The 2005 field was composed of 15 American teams, including the top five teams from the 2004 competition. There were three international teams, one each from Canada, Germany and Jordan. To keep the playing field level, teams were not allowed on the courses

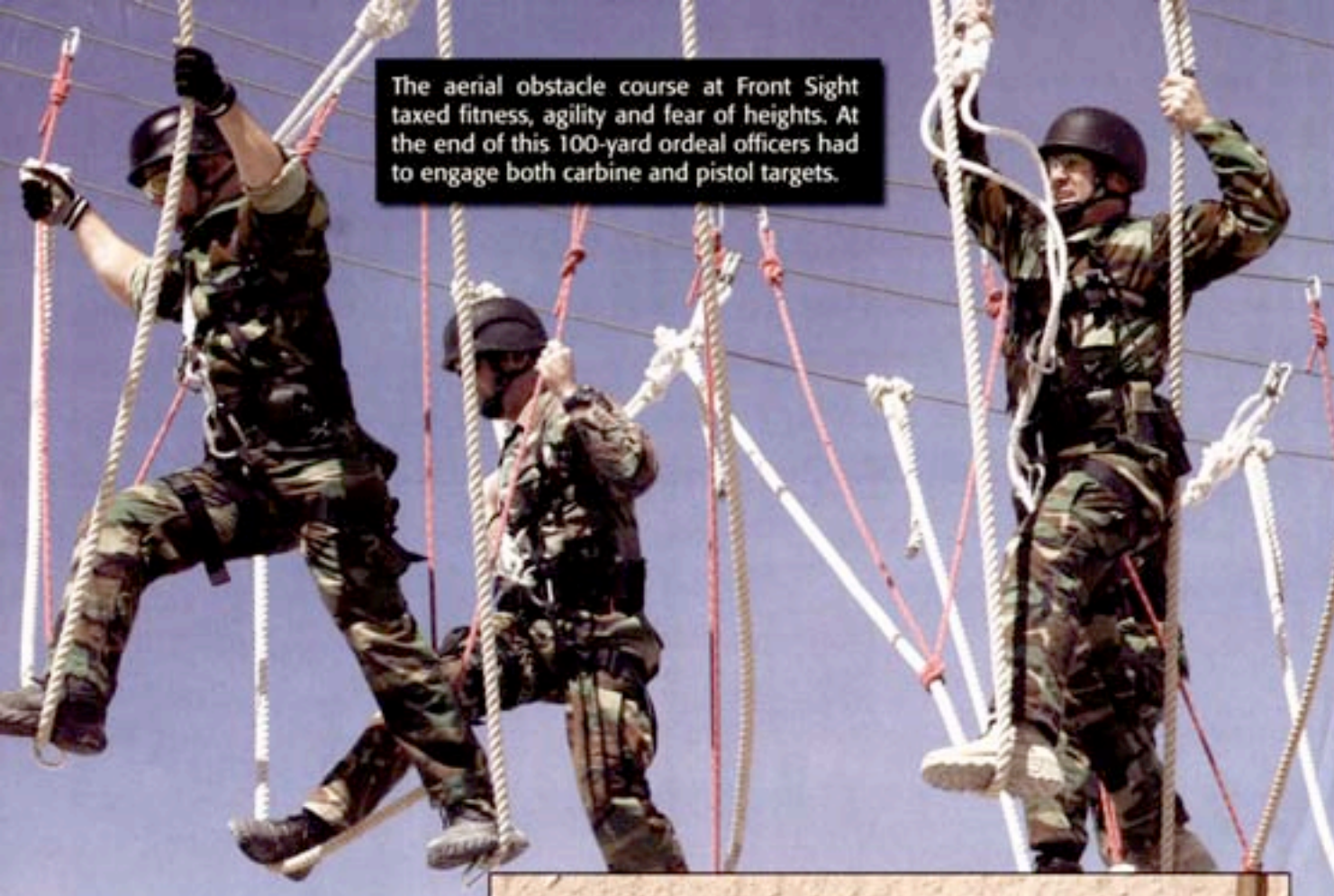
until the walk-through and the host team from Henderson, NV was not allowed to participate.

The quality of the field and uniqueness of the competitive events are a magnet for worldwide media coverage. This year there were three television programs shot at the competition that included an ESPN program, an A&E documentary and an independent production on weapons training. In addition, press coverage included journals from Taiwan, Spain, Canada, Germany, Mexico and the U.S.

There are several factors that make the OSWC unique. First, the competition is by invitation only. Team selection is based on performance in other SWAT competitions as well as team reputations for excellence and professionalism. Another factor is that competitors are in full tactical gear for every event (BDU type uniform, boots,



For the Paraclete Warrant Service event a designated carbine shooter had to engage two steel poppers while wearing a gas mask before the assault team could advance.



The aerial obstacle course at Front Sight taxed fitness, agility and fear of heights. At the end of this 100-yard ordeal officers had to engage both carbine and pistol targets.



A Gilroy, California officer fires at pistol targets from behind a door. He had six rounds for six targets and was required to do a combat reload at this station.



Officers from Bruce Power's NRT engage carbine targets from a kneeling position behind a barricade during the Safariland Three-Gun Challenge.

these "sentries" illuminated the route out of the tunnel. Their time of 3:33 was forty-six seconds ahead of second place Bruce Nuclear who ran 4:19. These were also the only two teams that didn't miss a shot.

The Safariland Three-Gun Challenge took place on day two and was a good example of the OSWC range events. For the Safariland 3-Gun the six-man teams were divided into pairs of two officers who fired shotguns (OO-buckshot) from a standing position at twenty-five-yard targets, carbines from a kneeling position at seventy-five yards and pistols from the prone position. However, each two-man pair had to negotiate a five-foot wall to get to their firing position and return over the wall before the next pair could proceed. Surprisingly, a high percent of the shotgun targets were missed. Out of 72 shotgun targets (6-inch clay pots) 30 (42%) were missed. This suggests that many of the officers were unfamiliar with the aim point and buckshot pellet spread at this distance. This identified a training requirement to be addressed.

Once again GSG-9 showed its skill and fitness with a 2:26 time and no misses.

Fayetteville was second with 2:39 and one miss (which cost them the win) and Gilroy, CA hit all twenty-four targets, but had a run time of 2:41, placing third.

The other four events were similar in style and design. They required the use of multiple weapons, engaging targets from uncomfortable positions and simulating victim rescues. The physical requirements for each event clearly

impacted shooting skills. Performing in front of other SWAT teams, a crowd and against the clock created a psychological stress that had significant impact on individual officer performance. Lt. Bob Owens of Dallas probably summed it up best, "We participate in these competitions because it causes us to really hone our skills. Next to having someone shoot at you, these types of events are the best

way to evaluate how someone performs under stress. These competitions result in our whole team training harder and having improved readiness with the citizens of Dallas ultimately becoming better served."

THE RESULTS

GSG-9 dominated the 2005 Original SWAT World Challenge relegating the other teams to fight it out for second place. As one of the east coast teams put it, "they came, they saw, they conquered." The Germans swept the competition winning all seven events. They hit 98% of their targets and showed a level of organization and fitness that was the envy of the competition. While several of the events were close, the Germans pulled it out when they had to. The commander of the German team said their strategy was to "shoot well, but always keep moving." A seemingly simple strategy, but not as easy as it sounds on the long and demanding courses. He was laudatory towards the competition, explaining the events were much more physically difficult than they expected. The German team also liked the fact that

none of the teams had a chance to see the courses before the team walk-through which made the playing field level for everyone.

San Antonio placed second in the competition followed by Dallas with LAPD and Beaumont, TX tied for fourth. Bruce Power NRT held down the fifth spot and demonstrated that they are a top international team.

Without a doubt all of the teams were winners, exhibiting high skill levels and the drive that separates the real contenders from the pretenders. There is little doubt that the Original SWAT World Challenge is where the big boys come to see who gets the bragging rights to that mythical title "best of the best." But ultimately it is their communities who can be proud and feel reassured of the quality of their police departments. ☺

SOURCE:

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