



SOUTH METRO SWAT
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Special Operations Training Association Awards Committee,

The members of the South Metro SWAT Team are proud to nominate our commander, Sgt. Adam Tschida, for SOTA's 2020 Commander of the Year Award. Through this letter, we aim to demonstrate why Commander Tschida deserves recognition for his efforts as a SWAT commander during the tumultuous year of 2020.

Every executive law enforcement leader faced enormous challenges in 2020. As if the global pandemic was not challenging enough, mass protests lead way to wide-spread looting and rioting throughout the Twin Cities metro in May 2020. As emergency groups were formed to create mobile field force units, SWAT teams were tasked as Chemical Agent Response Teams and with overwatch responsibilities in ways that had largely only been discussed and practiced in theory. As the danger, confusion, and persecution of policing mounted, South Metro SWAT Commander Adam Tschida stood steadfast and led his team through.

South Metro SWAT is a multi-jurisdictional team sourced from 13 member-agencies that span Rice and Dakota counties. Balancing the priorities of 13 different CLEOs is difficult under normal circumstances, but under the emergent conditions present during May 2020, Commander Tschida's diplomacy was tested to say the least. Nonetheless, the stressful demands and constraints imposed on Commander Tschida were never apparent to the team members. Commander Tschida maintained his composure throughout the multi-day operational period that engaged the team in prolonged events in Dakota and Rice Counties, Oakdale, St. Paul, and at the Minnesota State Capital building. Commander Tschida's ability to insulate the team from administrative stresses allowed operators to focus on their mission night after night.

As the summer pressed on, reports slowly introduced hope about the outlook of the COVID-19 pandemic and the July-4th holiday presented a welcome opportunity for operators to unplug. So, when the SWAT page came for a hostage-rescue event on July 2nd, Commander Tschida knew he would be incredibly short staffed and would face the challenge without the benefit of advice from either of his assistant commanders who were out of town. To compound staffing issues, the mid-day heat and humidity led to numerous operators being hospitalized for heat-related injuries throughout the day. Fortunately, through purposefully formed relationships within the tactical community, Commander Tschida was able to call directly for help from Washington County and Ramsey County SWAT teams. Fourteen hours into the event, one hostage remained captive. After exhaustive effort, Commander Tschida made what is likely the most stressful order for a SWAT commander to give, a deliberate hostage rescue entry. Fortunately, around 0200 hours on July 3rd, deliberate entry led to the rescue of the final hostage without significant incident. Weeks later, during a critically self-reflective debrief involving all three SWAT teams, numerous team leaders and operators cited Commander Tschida's calm and clear voice as instrumental to their ability to remain focused and confident as they prepared to make entry.

As 2020 came to a close, preparation for the presumed 2021 spring riot-season began, requiring Commander Tschida answer questions from CLEOs and mutual-aid groups that he could not possibly know the answer to. Despite that enormous task, Commander Tschida focused on securing the long-term health of South Metro SWAT through unfamiliar strategies.

Commander Tschida's first step in effecting his initiative was to secure greater "buy-in" from member-agencies. Through directed meetings and luncheons, Commander Tschida connected with each CLEO in a way that had been missing for many years. Though that may sound trivial, Commander Tschida's effort grabbed the attention of the agencies who in turn aided in the success in the following acts of his vision. In an attempt to improve recruiting, member-agencies were encouraged to include South Metro SWAT as a mandatory day in the FTO process, allowing the team to make its own impression on new officers as opposed to through word-of-mouth. Additionally, a SWAT open house event designed to include patrol officers, directly resulted in one of the largest operator applicant pools the team had seen in many years and led to the prospect of a new agency joining the consortium. While strategizing how to retain current operators and succession plan, Commander Tschida recognized the team needed to increase the value member-agencies were receiving from the team in order to convince them to invest their personnel for longer tenures. Born from that was the creation of numerous team-led trainings directed at improving traditional line officers, investigators, and supervisors. The team also invested significant effort in connecting with the community through events such as meal packing at Feed My Starving Children, delivering toys in the Bearcat during Toys for Town, attending neighborhood potlucks in the MRAP during National Night Out, and creating SWAT-themed obstacle courses for children during numerous different community events. Finally, while considering how to improve the equipment and training of the team, Commander Tschida identified significant shortcomings in the team's Capital Equipment Plan which had existed for a decade, an error that would eventually have left the team unable to replace vital equipment as expected. Through a comprehensive explanation of the error and its remedy, Commander Tschida secured a marked increase of member-dues that greatly improved the financial health of the organization while allowing it to invest in more training for operators. He also oversaw the completion of South Metro SWAT's armored Bobcat, a tool that exponentially increased the team's capabilities. Though these administrative accomplishments do not necessarily meet the "high speed/low drag" standard that SWAT operators like to boast about, they are noteworthy because Commander Tschida's recognition of them will surely benefit the South Metro SWAT team for years to come.

In closing, every tactical team commander deserves recognition for leading their teams through the challenges of 2020, it was a difficult year. That said, we strongly believe Commander Adam Tschida stands apart. Commander Tschida's fortitude focused his team during the 2020 riots, his composure reassured weary operators as they initiated a deliberate hostage rescue, and his administrative vision evolved the South Metro SWAT team in ways it did not know it was lacking. Commander Tschida gives a great deal and wants little in return, but more importantly he never expects recognition for any of his efforts and is therefore incredibly deserving. Please consider him for the 2020 SOTA Commander of the Year Award.

Respectfully,



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Assistant Commander



Andrew Van Dorn
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Adam MacDonald
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