

## Marietta, Georgia, Police Department - SWAT

# Saving Lives on Tactical Operations

**M**arietta, Georgia, is a busy urban city of 60,000 people located just northwest of Atlanta.

Sergeant Jake King has been with the Marietta police department for 11 years and a member of the SWAT team for eight years. In early 2009, just a few months after he was appointed tactical commander, Sgt. King tested and evaluated the Recon Scout® IR miniature reconnaissance robot. It didn't take him long to see how it would fit into their tactical operations.

"The very first time I used the Recon Scout IR I thought 'this is a piece of equipment that will single handedly save lives,'" says King. "You know, body armor is great as long as you get shot in the armored portion of your vest, but the Recon Scout is something that can save lives simply by providing critical information to our tactical team. It can keep us out of very dangerous situations."

### A 3 A.M. Wake Up Call

The Marietta PD purchased a Recon Scout IR almost immediately after their evaluation, but their first use of the robot took place even before their robot was delivered. "We had already ordered our robot and were awaiting delivery when we had a specific call out involving a guy with a rifle inside a gas station and convenience store," says King. "We did not feel safe barging in there and we needed more information about the suspect's location, so we called up our ReconRobotics rep. He got out of bed at 3 A.M. and delivered one of his robots to the scene."

When the robot arrived the tactical team threw a hostage negotiation phone and the Recon Scout IR into the store. For the next few minutes as negotiators were attempting to make contact with the suspect using the phone, another officer was using the robot to search the aisles, counter area and bathrooms inside the store. King then positioned the robot to watch two closed doors at the back of the store and introduced gas. When no suspect emerged, the team breached the back door and cleared the two remaining rooms, finding no suspect.

"The beauty of the Recon Scout was that it was watching those doors throughout the entire operation, so if one of them moved or was opened we would be able to immediately notify the entry team," says King.

### Are His Hands Empty?

In June 2009, Marietta took delivery of its own Recon Scout IR and the tactical team began bringing it with them on all high-risk warrant operations, making it a primary part of the entry team's gear. Just a few weeks after delivery of their robot the team received a call out involving a home invasion suspect who had been shot



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Marietta PD SWAT

and was now in his own residence. "We knew the suspect was inside the home, so at the same time we launched CS gas through the windows, we threw the Recon Scout through another window," says King. "We were then able to search the house with the robot, and because the robot is so small and quiet he never saw it. When we located him in the bedroom we backed the robot underneath a table outside the bedroom and we watched him move in and out.

"After a few minutes the suspect hid his pistol and the robot watched as he walked to the front door with his hands up. The officer who was watching the video on the monitor alerted the team that the suspect was coming to the door and his hands were empty. You can't put a value on that information. It reduces risk to everyone involved," says King.

Since that time, the Marietta PD tactical team has used their robot on additional tactical call outs, and it has become routine for them to throw the robot into an environment at the same time that they introduce gas or use a flash bang or other diversion. "Once we get the robot inside, it gives us a big advantage, especially when its dark and the infra-red optics kick in" says King. "We can use the robot to scout for us and identify doorways and clear rooms. When the team moves in they already know what to look for and where the threats might come from."

Above all, the team finds the one-pound robot to be extremely simple to integrate into their operations. "What our team really likes is that it can be easily carried in an entry team backpack and when you need to use it, you simply grab it, pull the pin and throw in the robot," says King. "We even hook it to our 26-inch batons and use them to get a 360-degree view into attics. In any situation where we are uncertain about what lies ahead, we use the robot. You know, we're SWAT guys with body armor and fully automatic

weapons, but we take a few seconds to send our robot ahead to make sure there's not a guy in the corner with a gun. We do it every time we can. I don't want anyone on our team getting hurt."

### Using Two Robots Simultaneously

Soon Marietta PD will also take delivery of a new SWAT truck. When that arrives, the tactical team will also be able to use its Recon Scout command monitoring station, which allows the robot video to be viewed simultaneously in the command truck and by the tactical officer directing the robot using the hand-held operator control unit. This will allow real-time coordination of tactical team operations using video reconnaissance from inside the environment. "Our commanders will be able to see what the robot sees, and coordinate the movement of the tactical teams," says King. "In time we also hope to get a second Recon Scout that operates on a different frequency so we can use two robots simultaneously on the same operation. This will help us clear a structure much more quickly."

### Summary

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| <b>Agency</b>    | • Marietta Police Department<br>Marietta, Georgia, Population: 60,000            |
| <b>Sector</b>    | • Police Tactical  |
| <b>Challenge</b> | • Protect tactical team members during searches and high-risk warrant operations |
| <b>Solution</b>  | • Determine location and status of suspects                                      |
| <b>Benefits</b>  | • Recon Scout IR mobile reconnaissance robot and command monitoring station      |
|                  | • Robot is used to identify and locate threats                                   |
|                  | • Tactical team is able to act with greater confidence and safety                |
|                  | • Most suspects do not know the robot is in the environment                      |

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