

Elite cops raid Oxford farmhouse

By Dan Shriner
Special to the Leader

An abandoned farmhouse in Oxford Township was the perfect place for two armed bank robbers to hide out recently.

Taking a woman hostage, threatening to kill her and barricading themselves inside the house placed an even greater burden on police.

Members of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department Special Response Team answered the call.

Arriving nearby in a special transport vehicle, members of the elite team clothed in camouflage, and carrying automatic weapons, snuck up on the building through some tall weeds in back.

As the officers approached the back door ready to break it down, an explosive went off.

Deputies quickly broke down the door and poured into the house to subdue the robbers, rescue the hostage and recover the stolen money.

All in a day's work for the members of the Special Response Team and actually part of a training exercise in order to keep several of the 28-members of the elite group sharp and effective.

The old farmhouse was actually donated for the exercise and will also be used by the Oxford Fire Department for training purposes.

The "bank robbers" were actually sheriff's deputies who were playing the parts of the bad guys and trying to challenge the participants.

One of those challenges included setting off an explosive as the deputies neared the back door.

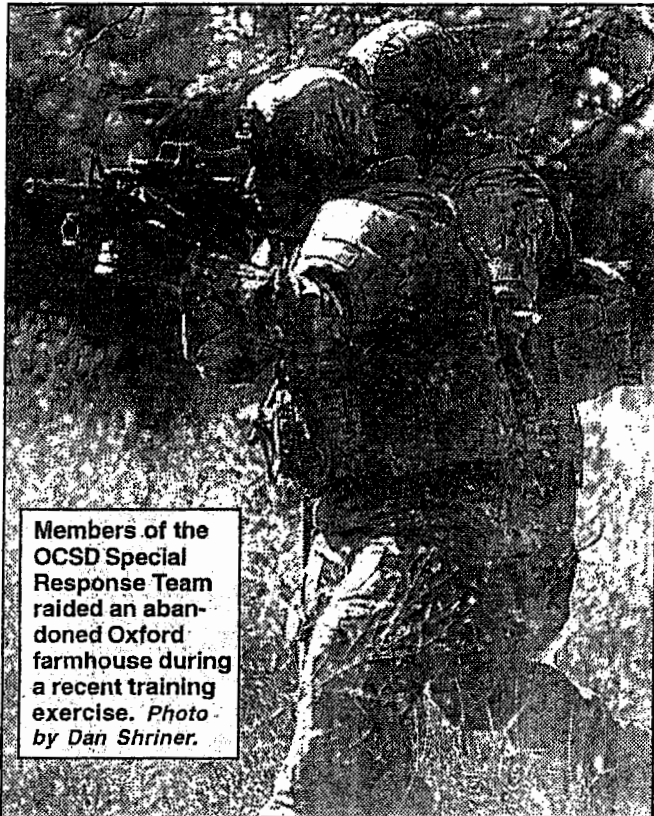
According to Lt. Larry Perry, of the Oxford Township substation and an assistant team commander of the group, the exercises are important.

"We conduct these training scenarios and then evaluate and improve tactics and techniques," Perry said.

The team commander, Lt. Tim Atkins, Perry and others evaluate and de-brief the participants, always looking for ways to im-

prove and keep everyone safe.

Perry said the Oakland County Special Response Team has become a leading group of its kind in the region. It has been called to assist police in Genesee and Lapeer counties who faced barricaded gunmen, as well as for incidents for police agencies in Oakland



Members of the OCSD Special Response Team raided an abandoned Oxford farmhouse during a recent training exercise. Photo by Dan Shriner.

County.

The group has some state-of-the-art equipment, including an armored troop carrier, a mobile command vehicle, a robot device that can be used to approach dangerous situations, and even use of an aviation team using helicopters to video downlink vital information to deputies on the ground.

Perry said Sheriff Michael Bouchard has led the way in helping the team to become the best of its kind in the region.

Perry said all of the equipment, and even special uniforms and equipment for the deputies who are part of the team, have been purchased without using taxes funds.

"All of our equipment, vehicles and uniforms were paid for by the drug forfeiture fund. No taxpayer funds were used," Perry said.

"It is important to do these kind of things," Perry said, while observing the exercise outside of the farmhouse. "It keeps everyone sharp and ready."