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Dave Arnott has been with the Orlando Police Department for 19 years, and a member of the SWAT team for 11 years. He is also the director of operations for the Florida SWAT Association. Currently an assistant SWAT team leader in Orlando, Arnott has used a lot of new technology over the years in an effort to protect his team and the public from harm. In December 2007, he had his first opportunity to use the Recon Scout mobile reconnaissance robot on a call involving a barricaded gunman.

“We first saw the Recon Scout in January 2007 at a National Tactical Officers Association training event that we hosted here in Orlando,” says Arnott. “This event gave us an opportunity to train with the Recon Scout and see how we could use it in common tactical situations.”

According to Arnott, he and other members of the team immediately thought the Recon Scout could be a useful tool in helping them gain inside information about dangerous situations. “The first thing we noticed was that we could use this robot in a very mobile fashion,” says Arnott. “It is very small and you can easily carry it with you, and it won’t slow you down. The other thing that appealed to us was that it was durable – you could throw it over a wall or through a window or door, and it would be ready to go. But the most important thing was that once you got the Scout into a situation you could, from a safe distance, use the controller to move it through the

Summary

Agency Orlando Police Department
Orlando, Florida
Population: 900,000

Sector Police Tactical

Challenge

- Assess a potentially dangerous situation without placing officers in harms way
- Obtain real-time inside information on barricaded suspects or hostage situations

Solution

- Purchase and deploy a Recon Scout mobile reconnaissance robot.

Benefits

- Affordable and can be used in many tactical situations
- Robot is small; can be carried in a pocket or on a vest
- Can be thrown through a window or door, or over a wall
- Can be driven remotely to explore an environment
- Able to transmit clear real-time video through walls up to 50 yards

For more information about the Recon Scout throwable reconnaissance robot, please call 1-866-697-6267 or visit ReconRobotics.com.

environment and send back real-time video. We have used video-equipped robots that you can throw, but they stop when they land and you can't explore other rooms. We have also used robots that move, but they are too large to carry or throw so they are ineffective on most calls. It was the multi-use capability of the Recon Scout that really appealed to our team – not only could we carry it and throw it, but we could also then guide it through the environment to learn more about a given situation.”

Orlando SWAT purchased a unit in November 2007, and immediately trained all team members in its use. It wasn't long before they had a chance to put it to the test.

In January 2008, the Orlando SWAT team was called out to an apartment complex where an armed man was barricaded in his apartment. It had been reported that the man had shot at his spouse and was armed with semi-automatic rifles – including an AK-47. According to Arnott, much of the complex was being held hostage just by the mere fact that the suspect could easily fire into any of the nearby apartments.

“We set up a perimeter and neutralized the situation so he couldn't get out, but we couldn't get in either,” says Arnott. “It was a two-story apartment and we felt that we needed more information about the situation – including the exact location of the suspect – so we breached a 2nd story window and threw the Recon Scout through the window. It went in fine and landed on the floor. From a safe distance away we used the Recon Scout's video camera to scan the room, but we did not see the suspect. Using the controller we then drove the robot into another room where we found the suspect lying on the floor between the bed and the wall, trying to conceal himself from a nearby window. We were also able to scan the rest of the apartment to make sure that no one else was with him – either a hostage or an accomplice. This was very good to know because your tactics change dramatically if there are hostages or other adversaries present. At no time did the suspect give any indication that he noticed the robot, that's how quiet it is.”

At the time that the robot was moving through the apartment, the officer controlling its movement was more than 50 yards away on the opposite side of the four-unit building. “What was remarkable, was that we were able to get very clear video even though it was being transmitted through several concrete block walls over a considerable distance,” says Arnott. “Once we had a clear picture of the situation, we felt that the time was right to tactically introduce gas into the apartment. We threw in gas canisters, and even with the gas in the room we were able to use the Recon Scout optics to see the suspect stand up and move towards the stairs. Seeing that he was unarmed, we alerted the team, which arrested him as soon as he exited the building.”

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– Dave Arnott, Assistant Team Leader Orlando SWAT

According to Arnott, the versatility of the Recon Scout helped resolve this situation quickly and safely. “There are so many camera systems out there that you put through the wall or under the door, but their views are restricted and you have to get very close to the situation to use them. With the Recon Scout we were able to throw it in, drive it around, and clear the entire second floor. Once inside we were able to determine exactly where the suspect was, that he was un-armed when he stood up, and that he was coming out by the stairway. Without the robot we would not have determined any of that information and this situation might have lasted several more hours or ended differently. This robot enabled us to learn at a distance what's going on and keep our officers out of harms way.”

Today, Orlando SWAT takes the robot on just about every call, including search warrants. “The Scout is very affordable and easy to use. We use it in any situation where we will need to clear rooms,” says Arnott. “Its mobile eyes allow us to accomplish this task very quickly.”



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