

- **NEGOTIATOR CENTRAL**

News Editorial By Gary Noesner re Sydney Hostage Event

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Outstanding Police Work

This week (mid-December) brought terror to the heart of Sydney and showed the world that deranged fanatics can threaten even the most civilized and peaceful of cities. Watching this tragic incident unfold from afar, it was plain to see the high level of professionalism and appropriate restraint shown by the New South Wales Police Department. Their outstanding efforts in responding to this life and death situation brought great credit to NSW and all of Australia. I had the pleasure of working with the NSW police negotiations and tactical teams through the years, and I can attest to their dedication, skill, and professionalism. Simply put, no one does it better.

While the gunman rationalized his behavior on his warped political ideology, he nevertheless was correctly assessed by the NSW police as more a troubled individual than a hard core terrorist.

This made him no less dangerous to hostages and law enforcement alike. Based on their accurate understanding of his motivation, the police patiently contained the incident to avoid further exposure to others, and undertook efforts to open a dialogue to convince him to surrender peacefully. This approach is in keeping with worldwide crisis management practice and standards.

Through the time gained by this thoughtful approach, circumstances developed in which some of the hostages were able to escape. This not only saved them from harm, but provided

police negotiators with important insights as to events inside the stronghold. Patient negotiations efforts reportedly continued for almost 16 hours until one of the hostages undertook an effort to grab the gunman's weapon. As we know, this led to gunfire which left police with no choice but to attempt to rescue the remaining hostages. The loss of two innocent lives is tragic, but this can in no way be laid at the foot of the police, who did everything within their ability to resolve this peacefully in order to save lives. Any premature storming of the stronghold might have resulted in far more tragic consequences.

The citizens of NSW, and all of Australia should rightfully be proud of the training, dedication, and preparedness of their police to act responsibly and professionally in this and other incidents.

The preservation of life is their unswerving goal. Sadly, outcomes are almost always determined by the behavior of the perpetrator, and in this case the deranged gunman's unreasonable and threatening behavior alone led to the tragic outcome.

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