

# Covert Surveillance of Barricaded Subjects

Situated on the banks of the Zumbro River in southeastern Minnesota, the city of Rochester is now the third largest in the state and home to the Mayo Clinic, which draws more than two million visitors every year.

Sergeant James Evenson is a 22-year member of the Rochester Police Department. For the last 15 years, Evenson has also served on the area's Emergency Response Unit (ERU) – a joint 18-operator team formed by the Police Department and the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office.

Evenson first saw the Recon Scout® micro-robot in 2009, and was involved in the department's acquisition of their Recon Scout XT when they took delivery in early 2011. From day one, he was intrigued by its ease of use. "The Recon Scout XT is very simple to use and it's incredibly durable," says Evenson. "But the beauty of this particular robot is that it's also very compact. There's no reason why you can't throw it in your cargo pants pocket and take it with you on virtually every operation, whether you end up using it or not.

"And where the XT really makes a difference is that it delivers a great deal of inside information that our team could otherwise obtain only through a much higher level of risk or with the expenditure of a great deal more time. In other words, this little robot saves lives and time."

In 2011, the Rochester Police Department deployed their Recon Scout XT on several callouts, all involving barricaded subjects. In June 2011, Sergeant Evenson served as the XT operator on a callout involving the Fillmore County Sheriff's Office, which had attempted to arrest a man on a warrant. When the subject refused to exit the home, the Sheriff's Office determined that four other adults and a couple of kids were also inside, and that it was likely that those in the house possessed firearms. Evenson's ERU was called for assistance.

## Watching the Subjects The Entire Time

Upon arrival, the officers set up a perimeter and tried to make contact. When they received no response, they breached a side door and deployed the Recon Scout XT. With Evenson at the controls, the team used the XT to clear the entire main floor, including all the bedrooms. He then drove the robot down the basement steps. After taking the robot around a corner in the basement, Evenson spotted the subjects.

"We knew the upper level was clear so our team made an entry into the kitchen, which was at the top of the stairs," recounts Evenson. "As the team made entry, I watched the individuals in the basement, reporting their movements to the team. When the subjects realized we were in the house, the operators began calling for them to come up the stairs. Using the robot, I watched them the entire time and reported to the first contact officers everything they were doing – 'their hands are in the air, they're carrying nothing in their hands, and they are walking up the stairs'. I was sharing a live report of what I was seeing before the entry team actually made eye contact with them."

In recalling this incident, Evenson observes that the Recon Scout XT had a significant impact on reducing the level of risk they encountered and the time it took to resolve. "There was a lot of information we received in a relatively short time," says Evenson. "We deployed the Scout at about 1800 hours, and within 30 minutes we had cleared the entire upstairs. About thirty minutes later



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subjects were in custody. To do a slow, limited penetration, methodical search would've taken much longer and exposed us to much greater risk."

Evenson compares this callout with a similar barricaded subject operation that occurred the year prior to acquiring the Scout XT. "In that situation, we were operating in a two-story residence and we had no way to get up the upstairs to search for the subject without exposing our operators to great risk," says Evenson. "If we had owned the robot back then, we would have breached an upper window and thrown in the robot. As it was, we ended up deploying gas in the residence, and the cleanup and remediation was a very expensive proposition. We probably could have bought two Recon Scout XTs for how much that one cleanup cost our agency."

Going forward, Sergeant Evenson plans to "incorporate the robot into our standard procedures" and take the Scout on every call. "One operator will be assigned to the less-lethal gun and another will carry and deploy the Scout," says Evenson. "Time and again, the XT demonstrates its value – in lives, time and money. The benefit of seeing the situation before actually making eyes-on contact is invaluable to the safety and success of our team."

## Summary

<b>Agency</b>	Rochester Police Department - Rochester, Minnesota
<b>Population Served</b>	106,000
<b>Objective</b>	Obtain a tactical robot that the Emergency Response Unit could take on every callout
<b>Solution</b>	Purchase the Recon Scout XT kit <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1.2-lb robot is extremely compact - fits in a pocket or small pack</li><li>• Provides valuable situational awareness</li><li>• Lowers risk to operators, and saves lives and time</li></ul>