

Power of SWAT team can be impressive

By Ted Long

The SWAT team gave its presentation this week and it was impressive. That is to say if you are impressed by firepower.

Once again the presenters were young, friendly and obviously love their job. Both of them said so repeatedly. I guess it takes a certain sort to do it, with all the danger and everything, but there is also the element of liking to be on the chase, seeing fun in it and both of them definitely do.

They demonstrated the bombs they use for entry and the various guns they carry. The vehicles were dark and scary and looked very uncomfortable to ride in; part of the role to be played.



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As a citizen, I am constantly tested on my desire to be protected and my fear of the power of the state. I do not consider myself a conspiracy type or paranoid, but in the course of my years as a lawyer I have seen abuse and the great potential of it, by the guys with the guns and with the power to remove us from society. It is clear that I am in a minority in our group. Some of the participants, in my view, overplay their excitement about the show of force, and the bad guy notion. There is an attempt at balance by the checks and balances of the justice system; the Constitution and I hope my

some deep seeded sense of fairness in those entrusted to protect us. However. all deals seem to be off when you are shot dead and the SWAT team is a front line example of that possibility.

There is also the issue of leadership. The police are a paramilitary operation, heavily trained to just react and to follow orders. So while the majority may be sound, what if a leader goes astray? Kind of like that great movie "Doctor Strangelove". The boys talked about the controls, the need to account for every bullet, etc. I am not so sure all that process is public, and it would be easy to hide facts in the bureaucracy.

All that said, the presentation was great, the officers forthright and the overall tone of the group was go get'em. And while I very much appreciate the community support for our law enforcement personnel, I continue to waive the flag of caution, and of a great public awareness of those who protect us. Let us never forget lessons from history and what can be done with power gone bad. As citizens it is our job to keep the fox from guarding the hen houses.

Ted Long is a South Lake Tahoe resident participating in the El Dorado County Sheriff's Citizens Academy.