The Debrief Mike Hillman Pt. 2

JON: My name is Jon Becker. For the past 4 decades, I've dedicated my life to protecting tactical operators. During this time, I've worked with many of the world's top law enforcement and military units. As a result, I've had the privilege of working with the amazing leaders who take teams in the world's most dangerous situations.

The goal of this Podcast is to share their stories in hopes of making us all better leaders, better thinkers, and better people. Welcome to The Debrief.

JON: This is the second part of a 2-part series with Mike Hillman. Mike is legend in the tactical community with a list of career accomplishments that would take a Podcast of their own. But as a brief bio, Mike was one of the original founders of LAPD SWAT, a deputy chief at LAPD, the assistant sheriff in Orange County, California, and an assistant chief of police for the Los Angeles Port Police. He was one of the founders of the National Tactical Officers Association, is nationally recognized as an expert on leadership, crisis management, critical incident management, special operations, and a wide variety of other subjects. In the first episode, we talked about the history and origins of SWAT and Mike's career at LAPD. In this second installment, we'll explore Mike's career after LAPD, his views on leadership, critical incident management, tactical decision-making, and the role of SWAT in the modern environment. Mike, I appreciate you sitting down with me again to have this conversation.

MIKE: Jon, thank you very much for at least inviting me and certainly what you're doing here with The Debrief program. I think it's just outstanding.

JON: Thank you so much. So, first time we talked about history. Today what I'd love to do is to get into kind of Mike's view, Hillman's view on leadership. Why don't we start with character of a leader personal conduct. Give me your view on what the essence of an effective leader is from a character's standpoint.

MIKE: Well, you know, leaders- Some people would say leaders are born. I think leaders are developed. And it depends upon the character, the competence of an individual, and the willingness to really develop themselves. And from the day that I became a Los Angeles police officer I learned a great deal about leadership. Because I worked with some really quality individuals, I worked with some that were what I would call *laissez faire* type. And I was able to extract the good and the pieces that I really didn't want to apply. And the focus that I've always tried to deal with from a leader's perspective is, "What does it look like through the lens of the police

officer? And if I'm the leader, I expect high performance. And I expect individuals to be accountable. And I expect people to look around corners and think ahead." And so that the components of leadership, which I've always subscribe to, have been at the essence of what I would call humility.

Whenever I've gone to a class and I listen to somebody identify themselves as an expert, I immediately want to get up and walk away. Because as I said in the first episode that you talked about, there are no experts in this business. We are the students of the problem. And in 50 years of law enforcement, what I've learned is what I don't know. And I pay attention and watch other people but along they way, there's been a lot of lessons learned. The complexities of decision-making, the impact of it, the political nuances of it, the right and wrong, the risk versus benefit, all of that comes into play in any of the decisions.

JON: It's interesting because the way you're speaking about, it sounds like introspection is a big part of at least your personal philosophy. And as long as I've known you, that is certainly- If you were to ask me, "Hey, what is the characteristic that sticks out most about Mike Hillman?" I do see you who, somebody who spends a lot of time looking at their own behavior, looking at their own responsibilities, and then trying to develop that. Do you think that's essential to develop? Or do you think that happens naturally?

MIKE: It doesn't happen naturally. You have to work at it because there is a time where leading from the front and having the experience in certain cases to where you have individuals that are of less experienced than you, to watch them have to go through the same things that you've learned the hard way. There's always a time where you want to say, "You know what? Stop what you're doing. Let me intervene here and put you on the right course." But if the situation is not a life endangering situation, that are going to result in some horrendous risk management issue, those people need to learn as well and so that I can try to help maneuver them. Rather than say, stop what you're doing.

I might say, "Did you ever stop and think about this?" I've always worked in the leadership area as a suggestion, "Have you thought about this?" I've never had to. You know, when you work your way up through any particular organization, you're positioned at various levels of responsibility. Just because you pin sergeant strips on or put lieutenant bars on, or captain, commander or deputy chief, or chief doesn't make you a leader. You have to earn the respect of individuals that you're dealing with. You have to be able to walk the talk. I've never worked a day in my life because I've always never forgotten where I came from. And it's important that leaders don't

forget where they came from. As I mentioned at the beginning, you've got to look at things through the prism of the officers or deputies' eyes. And you have to hold them accountable, you have to expect that they're going to make, good decisions.

You have to trust in your workforce, and you have to hire and be able to select into an organization competent and highly skilled individuals. And today in law enforcement, we talked earlier some of the SWAT selection process. We have some of the best operators that I'll put up against any of the military or any other agency within the world.

JON: But you know, it's interesting because you seem to have inherent guiding principles. Like one of the things that I talk about at our Cultural Center of Leadership Program, one of the things I talk about with my own people is the idea that there has to be a guiding principle to the organization. In our case, it's protecting tactical operators. When somebody's new, they start with us. You know, my first interaction with them, I tell them, "Do the right thing for the end-user. Everything else will follow." It seems that for you there is this inner compass of doing the right thing for the individual officer. It's kind of the core of what you believe.

MIKE: Well, it is. And to kind of address what you're bringing out here right now, leaders need to be visible. They need to be very competent and have demonstrated their competence. They need to be individuals that can react in a very decisive and reasonable manner during crisis situation. And they need to be able to handle complex types of decisions. They need to be able to make decisions that sometimes their competitive nature of things because of the complexity of an incident, and because of the time component. They have conflicting priorities. But that decision-maker has to be able to provide solid state decision-making, and guidance to subordinate elements who are in a crisis situation are looking to that person to put them on the right path.

JON: What do you think the root of that decisiveness in this?

MIKE: I think that's a good question because it's based upon experience, it's based upon your thought processes, and how individuals will make decisions. I think that when I look back on some of the supervisors that I've worked around that which have been just top-quality individuals, but there had been some that the lesser experienced individuals may not have the depth and the hard drive to be able to bring out some of the necessary elements to make good solid decisions. Because whatever decision you make, there's a consequence for it or several consequences, and it may take

you down the road in a rabbit hole that you don't want to be in. So, that the decisions that are made, you'd have to really think ahead. And I've talked about that; I've used that term a lot. And when I say to supervisors, "You have to think ahead. What's this going to look like tomorrow? What's it going to look like politically?" And some people would say, "Well you know, we don't make crisis decisions based upon politics."

Well, that's not true. We do. We make decisions all the time based upon politics. And then the other issue is, you have to start considering risk management. And some people will say, "Well, we don't make decisions based on hostage-rescue based upon if we're going to be sued. I get that, no question about it. But you can't be cavalier about it because we're based upon objectively reasonable the standard, and also the totality of the circumstances.

JON: Like Graham vs. Connor…

MIKE: So, all of those pieces have to be brought into play. And we can't just go out here and have somebody come up to you and make a recommendation to you as a leader that would say, "You know, hey boss, what I want to try is this thermo-nuclear grenade and see whether or not it's going to bring the hostages out."

JON: Yeah, probably not.

MIKE: Because if you don't have the experience to say, "What are you talking about? And why are we doing this?", that's a bad decision.

JON: Mike, as I listen to you describe that, the one thing that is missing in that whole thing, is the leaders of you of themselves. Like their role, their career, you know it's- I would say like, the difference between a manager and a leader. A leader does what's right. A manager does what's right for his career. I noticed that as you're talking about that, it's a very selfless approach. It's trying to get the right resolution; it's trying to manage risk. But there's no thought paid to the effect on the leader himself.

MIKE: Well, you know as I said, I've never worked a day in my life. Which means that I really enjoyed what I've done. There's been sad moments obviously, but there has been a very positive interaction that I've had with personnel that I've worked with. And I've never tried to become an individual that was self-consumed with their own abilities. You know, I always looked at my strengths as being able to bring people together. And I looked at my strengths as being able to listen and to engage people that were a lot smarter than I was; to be able to offer advice and direction, and

to listen to them, and then to be able to implement it, and then to reward them.

JON: Because in the end, one of my favorite sayings is, an effectively leader gets the right answer is not necessarily the guy that has the right answer.

MIKE: That's correct.

JON: Yeah. And it seems that's kind of also your view.

MIKE: It is, it's very much. The leader is there to be able to gather all of the information and to be able to accomplish the mission. And you never want to waste a good crisis. You know, if you've got a good crisis, then let's capitalize on that. And many leaders that I've seen always become consumed by, "Oh, my gosh. I'm going to finish my career in a negative sense by, if I make a bad mistake in this crisis." Well, if you think in terms of that, you're going to lose. But if you think in terms of, "My job is to focus on the mission, develop the people that come in." Listen to what the people have to say. And if people can give me good advice, and then I can basically make the decision on which path we're going to go on, then there's going to be a risk to it. But you can't be in fear of it, if you're going to be successful. You've got to make that decision.

In a crisis situation, people will always gravitate to the strong leaders that they see make a decision. I can think of many times where I've been in situations where there's been a lot of quote unquote, leaders. And that not much was happening. And I was blessed with the fact that I had good people that I was able to bring in and make the decision to be to proceed and accomplish the mission through them. And the workforce that I had suddenly started developing, taking people away from other leaders, and they wanted to join this group because we saw that we were making progress and the success. But good leaders never fall in love with their own decisions. They always want to listen.

JON: Yeah, that's an interesting point. You have to make decisions. Right? Like part of being a leader, is being decisive. You have to make decisions. It's very easy as a leader to spend too much time, especially, in your line of work. You don't necessarily have a lot of time to make decisions. But that means 2 things. One, you're going to make imperfect decision. And two, if you stay wedded to it, you're probably going to end up in the wrong place.

MIKE: You're going to end up down a rabbit hole. You have in a decision-making process; you know the Boyd Cycle. But in a decision-making

process, you have to allow room for flexibility. And some people would say, "Well wait a minute, he just said do this and now we're changing course." Well, you may have to change course and people need to understand that. And as a leader, if you're going to be a leader, you better declare yourself as a leader. I'm not suggesting that you declare yourself as the most significant individual in the world, but you are basically saying, "Alright ladies and gentlemen, this is the direction we're going to go in." Or declaring themselves as an incident commander, extremely important. I can think of numerous incidents that I've been involved in where there are complex incidents that involved a lot of moving parts. They're in a crisis situation where you have a lot of people coming in and trying to make decisions and influencing the workforce that are the higher level, that it becomes very convoluted and takes away from being able to accomplish the mission to any degree of success.

JON: You said something that is really key. You can't fall in love with your own decisions. Implicit in that, is you have to be willing to change your mind. And I think is that is something that we have lost in leadership. Right? Especially, when you look at political leadership and politicized environments. We've gotten into the point where like, "No, I made the right decision from the beginning." And they will ride that truck all the way back to the dump, even when they're wrong. Rather than saying, "I made a mistake," we need to go this way.

MIKE: Well, yes and no. If you are in an extremist situation, which is life-endangering, and you set out a course of action, and you have nanoseconds to accomplish it, that speed, surprise and diversion sometimes will be able to be your best friend. And it's better to be lucky in some cases than with a real, real solid decision that you're going to have to be decisive and say we're going in this direction. But the majority of decision-making is made by leaders, involve time, they're not in a critical type of an environment. They're not in an extremist type of an environment.

And those are the kind of decisions that, sometimes leading from the front may not always be the best. There may be servant leadership. You know, you look at today's leaders and today's workforce, you're dealing with millennials that are much more, much more versed in social media and the meanings of how to be able to transmit information than I ever was. And I will listen to those individuals. Sometimes you have individuals who are much more competent in some particular area than you could ever be.

Now your role in that scenario is to guide those individuals and at some juncture where there needs to be a y in the road, that there has to be a

decision made, that's where you come in to play. But you have to be able to listen to what your workforce says. And the workforce may not always be right. But the good majority of the time, they may be. And you know, like General Powell said, you know, the forty seventy decision. "You either got 40 percent of the information, you're probably headed in the right direction, rather than waiting for 70 percent to make the wrong decision."

JON: Yeah, it's interesting because it is this balance of decisiveness and certainty in your decision. But yet openness to others and their information, and a willingness to question your own decisions retrospectively. And I think it's a very hard line to walk. What characteristics in a leader do you think are important in order to get there?

MIKE: Well, certainly character is the number one piece because you have to be able to have the character that gains the respect of the workforce. You have to have experience. The experience that you can't just walk into a particular environment and accumulate experience, because people look at you. And when they look at you as a leader, they look at you to see, does that person, you know "walk the talk." You have to be able to have respect for others and treat people with respect. You have to be an individual that is going to hold people accountable for their actions. You've got to be able to reward good work. You have to be able to discipline those that may not necessarily want to engage in good work. You've got to be able to motivate individuals. You've got to be able to mentor individuals so that, what I always looked at was that I wanted to make my workforce better than I could ever be. When I exited, and that all of those skillsets of being able to listen, to be accountable, to be humble. And to be humble to the point to where you don't walk around saying, "Hey, look at me." Just do it, like the Nike commercial.

JON: Yeah, it's interesting because the root of all of that is humility. Right? It is acceptance of the fact that you're not perfect, you're not necessarily going to make the decision. My view is as a leader, I am the least important person in the room. I'm the one with task when making a decision, but I am the least important person in the room, because I know the least about almost every discipline. I am a generalist as a leader. Right?

MIKE: You are. And you know, leaders are individuals that can bring about change. And change is very, very difficult to implement, especially in cultures, organizational cultures, unit cultures. It's interesting to look at some of the leaders that I've worked for that have come into an organization and made change and how they've done it. And anytime that you're in an organization and you have to experience change, it's not pleasant because

you may be pretty well set in your ways. And you may have a pretty much paradigm that you are focused on and all of a sudden somebody comes in and upsets the apple guard. But the good news is the change is good.

You know, I used to be in the organizations that I've been in. When you would promote from a police officer or a deputy to a sergeant, that they would relocate you in some other position within the department. So, they'd took you out of where you were at, expose you to another environment and other personnel. And I always thought, you know, when I was a police officer in Metro, and I got promoted to sergeant I had to go to a patrol division. "Well, why can't I stay there?" It probably was the best thing that happened to me because you learn other dynamics. And if you take someone out of a specialized assignment, there's some good things in there, that when they go to another assignment, they influence the rest of the department and things that they may not have been experienced in before. So, it's a positive thing. But change is very difficult to implement as a leader.

JON: One, throughout your career you have acquired a reputation as a fixer, as a guy who could take on very difficult problems, very complicated problems. You know, challenge the organizational cultures and make those resets. What is the essence to that when you- When you come into a situation that is maybe not correct and are tasked with resetting a culture. Give me your process there. What is the first thing you do? How do you think through that?

MIKE: Well, you know, since I left the Los Angeles Police Department, I've worked at 2 other agencies. And the first thing that I did when I went into each of those agencies was number 1, to be able to make sure that everyone knew that I was a guest there. And I said that *I'm a guest here*. And that I don't necessarily want to change any of the culture, I want to learn the culture. And I want you to share your culture with me so, that I can learn it. But I'm going to need your help along the way.

And I respect the culture that you have here. Now in that process as we go through the change element, that culture may not be the direction that needs to go for the community. And so that sometimes, you're faced with decisions that are contrary to the culture where you came in and introduced yourself and said, "Here, I'm not going to change this culture." So, now you're faced with either I discredit yourself or you're in a position to where you can help make change. And so, what I found to be very successful was that I found very competent individuals that I was able to work with, and I became visible within that workforce, and I did a lot of listening. And I

would work very closely with some cases the various labor organizations within the organization to determine just exactly what their needs were. And so, as we went forward, I made sure we had good communications up and down. And that as I started to think about things, we may want to move in a different direction that would impact culture.

I would always make sure that other people were brought into the decision-making process to see the direction I was going in. Now sometimes not everybody would subscribe to it but that's what leaders have to do. They can't be everybody's friend. They have to be able to accomplish the mission and change the course of things. You know, when it comes to personal appearance, I'm big into that for leaders. Because the community hires us to be representatives of the community, but also to be very professional. And when you look at some organizations that may not have a uniform appearance that has what I would call to the standard of impeccable, then a leader may have to influence that by bringing in other individuals and convincing them that, you know, it's not appropriate to walk around here with a Sam Browne belt that looks like you drug it to work instead to wore it, you know. And the standards of things like that, you are what you appear to be to other people. And you know, in a lot of ways, when somebody calls the police or law enforcement, they expect individuals that are going to be very professional in both, in appearance and in manner. And so, that if we have situations that involve disciplinary issues because people are mistreated, that's not a cultural issue, that's a disciplinary issue.

Some people would attach it to culture, but it's a disciplinary issue. When you have members of an organization that are supposed to be in law enforcement and public service that come in and treat people with disrespect, then that's where the leader has to either go through some training or through some disciplinary process.

JON: So, then Mike, that kind of takes us into leading in this current like the modern environment. How do you maintain high standards in this environment?

MIKE: Well, you've got to look at what is the modern environment. You know, when I started law enforcement, modern environment was the Los Angeles Police Department just come out of a corruption era. And that the standards of appearance were actually very, very high. And that Los Angeles Police Department was always known for very high standards in the uniform appearance end of it. And as things start to evolve, a lot of this has to do with culture of an organization but it also has to do with the leaders that were at the top. And in leading the modern-day law enforcement

professional, they've gone through the academy, individuals have. They've learned a great deal about culture sensitivity.

The nuances of the law of use of force, and today, much different than when certainly I came on, the requirements of the law in terms of use of force are much more stringent. We have a social media network now where information moves at light speed. We have such a distrust of law enforcement by the community as a result of things that have happened since actually Ferguson. And even before to where that there is a sense of distrust for law enforcement working in the community so that leaders in the community have to be able to collaborate number one, with the community. And be able to showcase their law enforcement agency as being sensitive to all of the nuances that we have today. All of the unhoused population or the homeless, all of the mental health issues that we have to deal with, all of the use of force issues, all of the body-worn camera and in-car video that recounts every action of police officers that now has become very public. So, how do we deal with that type of an environment? Well, you get what you select. And so, that being very careful as leaders when we, as a police chief or someone in charge of hiring, you want to bring in individuals that are willing to follow the rules and bring in solid individuals that are of character that you can trust on or off duty.

The biggest problem that law enforcement faces today, I think, is some of the off-duty conduct of some of our law enforcement officers. And I think that begins with the leadership and what we demand of our work force. When I was on LAPD, I was known to be very hard on officers that got involved in DUI situations and were involved in off-duty traffic collisions and things of that nature, because that affects us all. Everything that is done in another agency in this modern-day environment, everything that's done by another police office in another agency impacts us. George Floyd, how does that impact other law enforcement agencies- It had a huge impact. It's changed all of how law enforcement does their business today. You know, in all of the actions that had been taken by individual law enforcement officers, individual law enforcement officers need to understand that whether they're from LAPD or some other agency that what I may do in LAPD could impact someone from Washington, DC, or Ferguson, or Minneapolis, or any of those other agencies. And so, the leader has to inculcate within the organization and understanding that we work for the community. And it's not all about me, it's not all about our pay, it's about what we could do for our community. Now you take all of that and you lay over the top of it, because of the lack of trust and the defunding movement that has taken place. And the ideology of some of our prosecutors in coming in and going after law

enforcement for use of force situations, has put a chilling affect on law enforcement going out here and doing their job on a day-to-day basis.

So, as an individual leader, it's important that we go out and we work with our individual police officers be visible, show them that we care. When you get in a police chief position, it's very easy to become isolated from the workforce, because you become more politically oriented. You become involved in dealing with the County Board of Supervisors, you become involved in dealing with the Police Commission, you become involved in Citizen Action groups and all of that. But when you forget the workforce, and you don't go to briefings and to roll calls and communicate with your police officers and actively listen, you're not going to accomplish anything. A good leader is highly visible. And like I said at the beginning, don't ever forget where you came from and look at the situations of the eyes of the police officer. But you also have to be able to balance that with what the community needs are. And so, this modern-day leader has got to take all of these factors and motivate our police officers to go out here, not only answer radio calls but respect the people that we deal with. And when I hear situations to where police officers really don't spend the time that they should of communicating with the public when they go to a radio call or some type of thing like that, I want to make sure that we focus on that because that's what we have to do.

That's our job because when somebody calls the police, it's because they need the police for some reason, either in an emergency or some type of a cat is up a tree. Well just because a cat is up a tree doesn't mean that we just slough off the radio call. And I'm using this as just an example. The idea is we need to spend the time as police officers being able to help individuals. You know, I've looked at a lot of the actions that what took place during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in a lot of the different cities. And when you look at some of the accusations against our police officers for being discourteous and so forth. You know, when you take and the assaults on police officers right now, which I don't have the statistics.

But in my time, when you make a traffic stop on an individual, you can expect that the individual is probably going to not only be scared but would probably be in a position to where you would have to explain to him it's going to be alright. Today, when a police officer goes up here and makes a stop, they're subject to that individual getting out of the car and going right to guns and shooting him. The assaults on police officers right now are horrendous. So, you're taking a modern-day leader that's dealing with the threats against police officers, the community engagement that is anti-

police, the political engagement that doesn't trust police officers, and we wire them up with body cameras, and we put them in a police car where they can't even carry on a conversation with themselves and be able to really communicate amongst themselves in a cosset way.

Personally, because I'm retired, I think what we've done is gone overboard. And I think that we need to come back and to really start to take a look at our workforce, and to be able to support these men and women that are out here putting their lives on the line every day. It's very, very frustrating. And but the modern-day leader has got to take all that into consideration, be visible, be a good leader, expect high performance, don't tolerate any nonsense off-duty, hold individuals accountable, and be out there with the community, and balance that with the workforce. That's a modern-day leader.

JON: It's interesting because you raise the point. The government regulates, the government governs by consent. Right? We empower the government to regulate our behavior and to take our rights away when it is legitimately done under the scope of the constitution. And so, there's always this tension between constitutionality and safety, between permission being granted by the community and government overreach. And you look at the modern environment where so much is recorded, so much is public, there is no hiding anything anymore. It's, I think, very challenging for a law enforcement leader to balance all of those plates at the same time. And try to maintain the- I mean, there is a constant tension between law enforcement and the 4th Amendment. We could be very effective at preventing crime. We could be very effective in honoring people's rights. But there's this tension that has to be walked between protecting us and respecting our rights.

MIKE: But that's a good thing.

JON: Yes, absolutely.

MIKE: That's a good thing. Because when you say tension, it is not- I would like to describe it as, there is a collaborative nature and a balance, and a- I'm trying to look for the right word. But an ability to be able to synthesize both the 4th Amendment and the actions of what the police officer has to do to keep society safe. And the ability of the leader or the person at the top or the people all the way up through the chain of command, you need to go back over that constantly with our workforce. Because what happens is when you take a police officer that's faced with negativism everyday in the community, how do you take that and be able to shift him or

her back to the mindset of, "You know, I'm out here to serve the community." And you know, not every conflict with the 4th Amendment, if we have a use of- And this is what I learned as a leader very early on. That every- Let's take a use of force situation for example, the use of the baton. And the use of a baton on an individual, is alleged that the officer used an excessive amount of force with the baton.

He used a pool cue jab, he used a power stroke, and that the individual is stopped for grand theft auto. Well, what did the individual do that precipitated the actions of the officer. Well, that's the actions that the officer has to be able to articulate. Ok? And that the officer has to be able to articulate that the reason of the fatality of the circumstances dictated the fact that this individual was attempting to either get away or to assault the officer which caused him to have to use the baton. Now, somebody in the evaluation of that, meaning that in the department says, "You know what? That's out of policy. And we're going to take that out of policy and we're going to discipline that officer." Well, that's correct, if that's the case that they come up with. But not every situation that a police officer that have involved in, that involves in negative use of force is a disciplinary issue. It may be a training issue.

JON: Yeah, for sure.

MIKE: And if we can train the officer not to do something like that again, that is a way to bring about change. And I mentioned that change is very difficult, but the modern-day leader has to balance how we discipline our workforce, if we have to, so that we can bring about change. Because we want to use your description, which I think is good. It's just friction between the 4th Amendment and the officer's actions. There has to be a level playing field in there. That's why we call the Objectively Reasonable standard and the totality of the circumstances that the officer has to make that decision on. And when you use force, nobody likes how the use of force looks, period.

JON: Yeah, and nobody wins.

MIKE: No, it just doesn't look right. And it looks bad, but sometimes that's the only way that you can use force to overcome resistance, to prevent escape, and affect arrest. You know, depending upon what the subject does. So, the upside of the body worn cameras, is it's able to show what the officer was face with. He or she in trying to deal with an individual that was in conflict with the 4th Amendment, and hopefully it turns out to the point where, "See, I told you that the officers did what they were supposed to do."

JON: Yeah. That's interesting because body-worn cameras, initially everybody thought, "Oh, this is going to be terrible for law enforcement." It's actually been very good for law enforcement; I think in a lot of ways because it has shown the public that the actions taken are legitimate. And in the end, like if you look at the Founders in 10 in the Constitution, they were distrustful of government. They restricted the power of government. Right? And they wanted that intentional responsibility to justify the actions. And I think that that's kind of created the environment where you can demonstrate legitimacy.

MIKE: It has. And just a few minutes ago when I was talking about that the body-worn cameras, you know, the gotcha type of attitudes at some departments with body-worn cameras to me is wrong. Because there is- What comes out of a body-worn camera is training issues, and certainly the behavior of the officers, and behavior of the public, and what the facts and circumstances were that the officer was faced with. Now, it's not something where you take a body-worn camera imagery, and you just look at the imagery and decide, "Oh my God, the officer used the F word." Well, that was probably discourteous, but you know in the grandeur scheme of things-

JON: It may have prevented a shooting.

MIKE: Yep, but that also might be a training issue.

JON: Yeah, for sure.

MIKE: And not necessarily discipline.

JON: Yeah. You have to balance the actions against the intent. And I think we've kind of lost a little bit of that. We are implying and assuming negative intent so often in law enforcement now. And when we're, you know, when the public are holding-

MIKE: That's a media-created issue.

JON: Yeah, a hundred percent.

MIKE: That's a media-created issue. People in the public need to understand that, and that continues on. The whole concept of what we have in this modern-day environment. With the social media right now is to so dissention everywhere we can, and distrust of the law enforcement community. Certainly, what happened in Minneapolis, I certainly don't condone, nobody else condones. And what happened there created a tremendous negative affect on law enforcement that's going to take us years

to grow out of. But this whole media concept of the negative piece that you had just pointed out is what is so destructful.

JON: Well, I think part of the problem too is like we- Across the board our evolutionary biology has been hijacked. Right? Human beings are evolutionarily predisposed towards validating negative information and seeking negative information. Right? You think about, like if I said, "Hey, your neighbor's kid is going to Harvard." And you go, "Hey, that's great." If they go, "Your neighbor's kids got COVID." The dopamine system in your brain's like, pay attention to that, "that's dangerous." Right? "That tree's has good oranges" is no way near as affective as "that tree is poisonous." And we have allowed ourselves to be victimized by that in the food industry and in media. We want to be fed negative information and we tend to ignore positive information. And so, what we've ended up with is an environment where everybody is just screaming about everything that's bad. And it creates this perception that the world is coming to an end.

MIKE: Well, that's true. But the social media piece that we have right now- If you look at any of the DHS and FBI bulletins that are coming out right now, and you look at the disinformation that's been spread about COVID-

JON: Yeah, for sure.

MIKE: And you look at disinformation that's being spread about rumors involving law enforcement, and the fact that you can get on a blog and absolutely castigate someone and use Facebook and Instagram to destroy someone. And in our modern-day world, you know my grandkids, they look at that. They look at that every day. And when you see that type of negativism that comes out of that, and I get asked questions by my grandkids all day long, "Hey papa, what about this particular aspect?" And I say, "Don't believe it. It's not true. It's disinformation." And you know, I don't want to get into the politics of it, but in this last administration, we saw a lot of that flourished.

And the actions of social media, being able to bring together large numbers of people in flash types of mobs is huge. And how does law enforcement deal with that? And law enforcement gets criticized for going into the social media world and monitoring that because it becomes an invasion of the 1st Amendment and their privacy. And now we have a situation where if we can't position law enforcement in a fashion to be able to deal with preventing large numbers of people coming to a particular area to do destructive things, like in Santa Monica during 2020, how do we deal with that. And in

monitoring that, we get criticized, law enforcement gets criticized for that. When in reality we should be looking at it and saying, "You know what?

We're leaving at the front end of this and we're trying to prevent something bad from happening in the community." You know, and I don't mean to take just Santa Monica here, but this is an example of that particular group that came to Santa Monica in May of 2020 that ended up down in the promenade and ravage that whole entire area. That was an organized effort by social media. The individuals didn't know each other necessarily but when you look at the facts of that, there is a whole series of stolen vehicles that took place in Northern California that were brought down here and essentially individuals that were attuned to committing this type of criminality of smash and grab types of things went to those stolen vehicles ended up in Santa Monica. Well, how do I know that? Because of social media. Because of social media, but by the same token, how do we get into the front end of that to prevent that from happening? And I mean, that's happening all over.

You look at what happened to Colleyville in Texas. You know, that was livestreamed on Facebook for the first 40 minutes of an individual taking hostages. And in the situation in Poway with the individual, I think his name- I forgot his name now, but the synagogue that was basically taken over by a 19-year-old that shot several people inside there, he was attempting to livestream that. Look at what happened in Christ Church New Zealand, where they livestreamed all of the execution of those people in the mosque. That's social media that impacts the ability of us in law enforcement to deal with that every day.

JON: One, it's interesting because it's created this kind of movement and flare or this kind of fixation with militarization of law enforcement.

MIKE: Well, that's a whole another issue.

JON: I'm kind of interested of what your thoughts are on that.

MIKE: Well, you know, first of all this militarization of SWAT was brought about post-Ferguson. And when you look at some of the things that were brought out by a particular author that authored the book on militarization, I don't necessarily disagree with some of the things that he said in terms of, you know, police are used for warrant service operations on inappropriate types of operations where they should've done more due diligence. Or they have used military equipment to the point to try to intimidate or harass individuals. Well, you know, since obviously in Iraq during the- With the 1033 Program that we have right now, I mean, and all the military surplus from the AMRAPs to all of the other armored vehicles that we have, has

been a good thing to law enforcement. But it's the application of it in this modern-day environment.

The leaders need to know when to apply a hammer and when to apply a screwdriver. And they need to know that not necessarily everything is going to include showcasing an armored vehicle with an individual in the top with an AR-15 or an M4. That there may come a time where it might be something that where law enforcement would be pretty much in the shadows, but yet have some in presence to be able to communicate with individuals to try to soften some of that. Now you look at probably what happened in- back in the 2017 era to where I'm looking at Phoenix. Well, I'm thinking of Phoenix right now to where Phoenix PD had to deal with the president and several other cabinet members that came to the Phoenix Convention Center, that obviously created a situation to where there was a large number of people, and they were very factionalized. They were factionalized, they were the pro-Trump, and that they were the anti-Trump, and then you had the Antifa that was in the middle of it trying to manipulate the rest of that crowd.

So, how does law enforcement balance that 4th Amendment with the use of force and to be able to deal with trying to deal with crowd control issues when the majority of the crowd are peaceful but yet they're incited by a group of smaller individuals. And people would say, "Well, law enforcement should go in and remove those individuals." Well, wait a minute. If they have 1st Amendment right just like everybody else, and so it's not quite that easy. And then you go into that group, and you try to remove those disturbers, if you would, and all of a sudden now you have a situation to where the rest of the crowd now has become against the police because you tried to remove these individuals. And now you have a much larger problem. So, those are kind of decisive issues that a modern-day leader has to deal with because everybody's watching. Everybody is watching internationally.

JON: Yeah, and there is this constant tension like looking at a crowd control scenario. There you have a tension between the 1st Amendment and safety. Right? And the 4th Amendment is certainly in play there but there's tension between 1st Amendment the ability to, you know, to protest government, which is constitution protected. And specific groups that are targeting those kinds of events as an opportunity to loot, to break things, to destroy stuff.

MIKE: Yeah, but that's not a 1st Amendment issue.

JON: Right. Well, it- But you're balancing the 1st Amendment against public order.

MIKE: Ok. The 1st Amendment applies to individuals being able to voice their opinions if they want to speak out against the government, they can. And they have the freedom of the press, and they have freedom of speech. But when you have individuals that would like to hijack that 1st Amendment and become protesters, that now go out here and start to not only protest but to become looters. They move into the category of riotous. And so, when you move into the category of riotous, those are individuals that are beyond that 1st Amendment. But in that group that turns out to be the 1st Amendment peaceful group, you have some of the anti-government individuals, if you would, or leftist groups that like to be able to commit uncivil discord. They start to now interact with them, and you have police that go in and try to remove them, or at some point try to remove them on the perimeter. Now you've taken that entire crowd and basically it was peaceful and turned them into almost a riotous crowd.

JON: Yeah. It's interesting because there does seem to be a growing discussion around the tactics of law enforcement and the result that occurs. Whether it's dynamic entry for search warrants or it's intervention in crowds, there seems to be this difficult balance between acting early and decisively or being the catalytic event that starts the problem.

MIKE: Yeah, that's true. And you look at certainly what's taking place in Oregon and Seattle here in the last year and a half to 2 years. To where that Oregon was completely taken over by a bunch of left-wing individuals. And that we have now a group of individuals that have become riotous, raped villages, plundered and burned. And that you have the government that's come in and tried to be able to defend the federal property while law enforcement has tried to be able to deal with all of those issues. And they've had to use force. And they had to use kinetic energy projectiles and chemical agent. And now all of a sudden there's injuries that have happened. Well yes, that's true.

There are injuries because nobody likes what the consequences use of force are. And so, now that because there's been injuries that we now have the media and social media creating an atmosphere in this modern-day environment, that we need to get rid of them, we need to put a moratorium on them. And that we demand from the leaders of the organization to put a moratorium on the use of kinetic energy projectiles and any type of protest. You cannot use chemical agent; you cannot use kinetic energy projectiles. Well, look what happen in certainly in Oregon. Because now over the last 6

months, they had because of the moratorium Oregon, Portland in particular was faced with a situation where in downtown Portland that a group of individuals came in and ravaged the community and resulted in a lot of property damage. And of course, the community now says, "Where were the cops?"

JON: Yeah. We as a species, we are very prone to wanting black and right rules. And none of these situations are subject to black and white. Right? So, really the complaint- Like if you look at kind of the modern environment for law enforcement, you know, "Oh, there's too much militarization. There's too much kinetic energy. There's too much chemical agents. There's too much all these things." Because it's easy to identify the technology and say, "Oh, the technology is bad." When really what they're complaining about is the application of technology.

MIKE: That's what I was trying to explain. Instead of, you know, where they used a hammer, they should've used a screwdriver. They may not call for being able to front an MRAP. They may not call for having a SWAT individual will helmet it up and essentially kit it up along with an M4. They may not call for that.

JON: But I think one of the challenges especially in the modern tactical environment with there not being- There is no national standard. I mean, the NTOA has a standard but not everybody follows it. But there is no national standard as to what constitutes a SWAT team or a SWAT mission. And I think that that creates this gray zone just to somebody who deals with thousands of teams. One of my friends has the expression, "My daughter has a drivers license, I have a drivers license, Mario and Duarte has a drivers license. We don't all drive the same." I think one of the challenges of the modern environment is the term SWAT has taken on such a broad connotation that now the mission set is not clarified.

MIKE: Well, that's going to be agency specific. You know, and I think back to when we first defined what SWAT missions were because we had to educate the workforce and LAPD as to what the SWAT missions were. And essentially, we said that if an individual has committed a criminal act, is suspect thereof, is possible armed, secreted in a position of advantage of forwarding covering and concealment, and refuses to submit to an arrest, those are the criteria that we use on LAPD to say, that would call for a SWAT type of component. Now forget about the negotiations piece, but that was early stages. So, in some agencies now, SWAT is a much smaller component. FEMA has tried to type it like they would in a-

JON: A fire truck.

MIKE: Yeah, into a fire can with 4 types. And when you don't have SWAT agencies that work together all the time in smaller entities, even some of the regional teams, it's doomed to failure. Because you have to be able to define clearly what the capabilities of them are. In some cases, you know, the FBI local field offices, they can use sound and flash diversionary devices, but they can't use chemical agent. And they can't use aviation assets to support them, HRT can. So, that limits some of the capabilities of them. Well, some of the smaller agencies may not even have any type of capability of that.

When I look at some smaller agencies that have maybe a 10-person SWAT team, that have a small municipal airport, and they're out trying to train at a large international airport on tubular assaults for aircrafts. Why are we doing that? That's not within their mission set. And what are we going to use them for in terms of warrant service. We have low risk, medium risk, and high-risk warrant types of services. And if you can avoid having to do any of the high-risk type of warrant to where you can contain a callout or to set up a surveillance and to be able to wait for the individual to come out, then lock it down and go in and secure the location, take the suspect into custody, that avoids confrontation. And when you look at the statistics of LAPD in terms of their use of deadly force, what is it, less than one percent or one percent of the time of the number of incidents that they've had over the years, that have resulted in any type of use of force. That's the type of thing that we want to engage in.

That's the responsibility of the modern-day leader, is to oversee those types of decisions. What are we training in? And why are we training in that particular area? What's the mission set that we need for this particular agency? So, a small agency that has maybe 60 police officers, and maybe 10 or 12 SWAT operators, you know, do we need to have a coordinated target selection? Do we need to have a hostage-rescue capability? Probably not. Probably not if we're dealing with a residential environment. But if we have to do a contain and callout, or a breach and delay, and a warrant service to be able to surround and callout, that's probably what the capabilities of them are to provide special weapons and tactics to support whatever the mission is.

JON: So, Mike, it sounds like a lot of time it's not technology. It's not concepts of special weapons that creates the issues, it's mission set definition. It's what kind of mission should we deploy technology or tactics on. And that mission creep and mission confusion kind of creating these

events that then create bad law. If you were a chief of a smaller agency, how do you avoid that?

MIKE: Well, let's go back to your statement. And I totally agree with what you're saying here. But there is a- The hierarchy of that goes to the leader of this small agency that has to be able to define and need for that particular discipline. Ok? So, if an agency had a series of domestic disputes have ended up in barricaded suspects, and that they don't have the resources of being able to have maybe the county sheriffs or some other allied agency that can come in and help them, then they may have to develop a mission set that would go to dealing with a barricaded subject type of situation. And so, then you get into if there is a need then what do we need to do to fill that need and what are the limits of training to meet that need.

Do we need to get into tubular assaults, do we need to get into aviation operations, do we need to get into bomb squad operations? Probably not, but sometimes the issue that comes up is that leaders will forget there is a specific need versus a nice to have. And you'll have some people that will try to influence the leaders to say, "Hey boss, it would be nice if we could have a SWAT team. And that we can be able to stand on our own and do what we need to do as a SWAT unit." When in reality, the leader needs to say, "I don't think so. And as much as you'd like that, number one, I don't see the need. And I don't see that we need to train to that particular level. So-" I get into this situation to where the leader needs to define the need, and then to design the mission, put together the policy statement that says, "This is what you will do to be able to resolve this issue. This is the amount of training time that I'm going to give you to build the skillsets necessary to do that." And then- Wait a minute. Then the leader needs to be able to influence the community as to this is the capability that exist, and why.

JON: So, it's interesting because all of that takes place on the frontend of that problem and not on the backend of the problem. And you know, one of the things we talk about in my job is requirements. It's very easy to find technology and apply technology and go looking for a place to run that technology. You saw that initially when taser first came out. It was like, "Oh my God, it's the new tool. Everybody's got to have it. We're going to use it." And all of a sudden you started seeing bad law being made. Because they were using it in applications, you know, people in swimming pools, and on roofs, and other applications where you're like, "Ehh, that probably wasn't the best plan." And what you see in the military actually and they way they think programmatically, is they define a requirement. So, out of the gate they say, "We need to be able to do X, Y and Z.

MIKE: Well, that's what that's referring to with the need. That needs to be done by the leader. They need to find what the need is, or as you said the requirement.

JON: And then I guess from a leadership's standpoint, you also have to then be willing to defend the scope of the requirement and not allow it to creep. Which in a case of a tactical situations can lead to unpleasant results, like having to pull your team off and call another team, having to bring somebody else to complete a mission, you know, those kinds of things.

MIKE: Well, when you defend the requirement or the need, and you identify that there's an anomaly that these guys have gone beyond that, then you need to put a stop to it. That's why leaders- You know, this whole military 1033 program with the military acquisition of equipment really got out of hand because leaders were not paying attention to the screeners from these various agencies. They were getting various equipment from the military. I mean, it's fine to be able to get you know, a couple of Ranger Polaris types of off-road vehicles to be able to use for parades and things of that nature but do we need to have M14s? Do we need to have M203s? Why? Because in the modern-day environment we don't need that type of capability that comes from the military. Well, I'm being general in my statements here.

Because you know, a lot of the sophisticated weaponry that we have now are, do not include the M14s. M14s a great weapon but that's not what I'm referring to. But some of the equipment that is getting traction within the demilitarization of SWAT includes the MRAPs. Well, the thing that people forget about the MRAPs that it's a high-profile vehicle. And it's an armored vehicle. But what happens in California if we have an earthquake? That becomes one of the most valuable assets that we can come up with. Especially when you have collapsed buildings to be able to protect officers that are going in and providing rescue. So, it has that type of application and that needs to be put out by the leader. It doesn't need to be put out necessarily by the media that says, "Ok, here's another example of an over militarization of a local law enforcement agency."

Because that leader needs to define that requirement or that need for that particular piece of equipment. And one of the things we got to tell our young SWAT officers about, is that the technology is not an *end all and be all*. It's certainly, you've got to have communications, you've got to have optics, you've got to have all of this. But by the same token, you've got to be able to operate off the trunk of your Crown Victoria or your Ford Explorer when everything quits. And all of a sudden, all you have is the good old

ingenuity of the tactician and the ability to be able to maneuver, and to be able to get to where the suspect is. Technology is not an end all and be all. It's a great enhancement and it's a force multiplier but it's not everything.

JON: That's fantastic. I think- I'd like to go through a couple of quick rapid-fire questions with you. Just kind of one-sentence thinking, you know, off the cuff. What do you think your most important habit is?

MIKE: Consistency.

JON: Give me a little more on that one. What do you mean?

MIKE: Leadership. Consistency and leadership, be fair, impartial, and do the right thing at all times.

JON: What do you think the difference between a leader and a manager is?

MIKE: A leader is somebody that's out-front working with their individuals and has earned their respect from the workforce. The manager is a positional piece.

JON: What's the best book you've read on leadership?

MIKE: I haven't read a book on leadership.

JON: What is you most profound memory of your career?

MIKE: Attending 76 funerals of police officers that made a mistake or their lives were taken without due cause.

JON: What keeps you awake at night?

MIKE: Knowing when I was on the Los Angeles Police Department, that I had 7000 police officers that had guns.

JON: And that you were responsible for it.

JON: I think that's a fantastic place to stop. Mike, I so appreciate you doing this with me. I learned so much. And again, thank you so much.

MIKE: Oh, thanks Jon, very much. Thanks for everything you're doing. Alright, I appreciate it.