

Crisis (Hostage) Negotiation: Current Strategies And Issues In High-Risk Conflict Resolution

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This paper looks into the process and efficacy of crisis (hostage) negotiation that has developed over the past few decades. Exploring three different areas, G. Vecchi et al. first discuss the states, stages, and intervention dealing with crises. The second part explains the Behavioral Change Stairway Model (BCSM) utilized by the FBI's Crisis Negotiation Unit (CNU). Lastly, the article discusses the effectiveness of role-playing in preparation for crisis (hostage) negotiation.

In describing crises, the paper emphasizes the lack of rational thinking involved with the problematic party. Thus, the stages one must use in dealing with intervention involve bringing the person to a more normal, rational state before anything negative actually happens. In order for this to occur, whoever is intervening needs to (1) establish communication and develop rapport, (2) buy time, (3) defuse intense emotions felt by the person involved, and (4) gather intelligence on how dangerous this person really is.

To help with the negotiation process, the FBI's CNU created a relationship building process that helps lead the person in a crisis to a more rational state, identify what triggered the situation, and begin to problem solve. The article goes in detail about the steps involved in this Behavioral Change Stairway Model: (1) active listening, (2) empathizing with the person, (3) creating better rapport, (4) gaining influence, and finally (5) creating behavioral change in the individual.

Using data from another survey, Vecchi et al. note that role-playing with the utilization of the above information has been found effective with SWAT and Field Force Units in preparation for actual events. The CNU itself focuses on role-playing in family-domestic, workplace, and suicide scenarios. There was also discussion concerning online role-play via instant messaging on chat rooms. This allows a better method to track and record negotiation training.

Overall, the purpose of this paper was to explain the stages of crisis negotiation and intervention as well as to emphasize the importance of training and using an established system. Vecchi et al. conclude by noting the need for further research into the results of training and negotiation processes. Furthermore, the authors mention the need for more openness to the public on these issues, so non-law enforcement professionals can better understand how to deal with potentially dangerous individuals.