

Suspect Searches

INCIDENT DETAILS

A suspect was arrested after a foot chase for shooting a deputy. He was arrested by one of the many different agencies involved in the incident. The arresting Officer made a cursory search and placed him in his patrol vehicle; subsequently transporting him to the local Police Department where custody was transferred to the lead investigating agency. The receiving agency did not search the suspect upon accepting him into the processing area. He could have killed several individuals and Officers during the fingerprinting and photo process. The suspect was cooperative during the intake processing and was subsequently placed into one of the holding cells; again, he was not searched. While in the holding cell the suspect committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. It was determined through review of the cell closed circuit television (CCTV) that the suspect pulled from his waist band a firearm once he was inside the cell.

RISK ANALYSIS

The suspect had a fully-loaded and operational .45 caliber automatic handgun concealed in the front waistband of his pants during the interview. He was walked around an office fully staffed by sworn and civilian personnel, creating the opportunity for potential death of both Officers and civilians.

OFFICER SAFETY

During the transfer of the suspect neither department who maintained control of the suspect completed a proper search of the suspect which created a significant officer safety concern.

LESSONS LEARNED

Law enforcement agencies should have in place protocols and procedures for the transfer or receiving suspects to or from another agency. These procedures should be regularly communicated to officers within the agency and to outside agencies with whom the department interacts with on a regular basis

RECOMMENDATION

With the compact size of weapons and the easy ability to conceal these weapons, Connecticut Police Departments should implement a standard operating procedure in line with the Connecticut POST-C Accreditation Standard 1.3.17. The Standard is a written directive that establishes procedures for searching detainees and accounting for each detainee's property before entry to the holding facility.

Questions? Ask your Supervisor or contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant at (203) 946-3700.