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PATRIOTIC PARENTHESIS

Everyday patriotism becomes an ironic solace under the shadow of national sorrow.

Though the event had been planned for several months, the day that 12 SWAT teams from around the country came to Memphis, Tenn., to participate in a competition and demonstration at Case dealership United Equipment Inc. turned out to be far more sobering than anyone could have anticipated.

Organized by the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, the Sept. 12 competition featured half-a-dozen obstacle-course-type rescue drills designed to test teams' skills and speed.

As they watched, the spectators were poignantly aware that these were the men and women who "come in and take out the bad guys in a hostage situation," says dealership president Tom Wilson. "The event of Tuesday made both the participants and the viewers take this much more seriously."

United Equipment is one of four Case dealerships that comprise Equipment Support Services (ESS), which conducted a fund-raiser across its four-state region for the New York relief effort.