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POLICEONE

Digital Edition

FIREARMS TRAINING

**GUIDE TO USING SIMULATION
AND FORCE-ON-FORCE
SCENARIO-BASED TRAINING**

INSIDE

- **3 DO'S AND 3 DON'TS FOR POLICE FIREARMS INSTRUCTORS TO IMPROVE OFFICER PERFORMANCE**
- **HOW TO CONDUCT SAFE AND EFFECTIVE FORCE-ON-FORCE SCENARIO TRAINING**
- **FROM THE STREET TO THE RANGE: TRAIN YOUR OFFICERS ON A REAL GUNFIGHT**

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EDITOR'S NOTE:



When officers receive insufficient training with their sidearm or long gun, the consequences can be tragic. Therefore, perhaps the most important training topic for law enforcement is firearms proficiency.

When officers need to defend their own lives or the lives of innocent civilians, they rely on

their training on the range, in simulators and in force-on-force scenarios in order to prevail.

In this PoliceOne Digital Edition, several of our contributors examine some of the best practices in how police firearms instructors can ensure that they are delivering the best quality training possible. Mike Wood writes about issues related to force-on-force training, Dick Fairburn explains how the square range can be made more realistic for live-fire exercises, and Ken Hardesty shares some lessons learned about how to get the most out of a department's use-of-force simulator. We also share some do's and don'ts for firearms instructors, as well as some helpful tips for cops gleaned from a civilian firearms training event.

Remember, when the time to perform arrives, the time to prepare has passed. Check out these articles, and get out there and train.

Doug Wyllie
PoliceOne Editor at Large

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EDITOR AT LARGE

Doug Wyllie
doug.wyllie@policeone.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Cole Zercoe
cole.zercoe@policeone.com

COPY EDITOR

Rachel Zoch
rachel.zoch@praetoriandigital.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Peter Shumar
peter.shumar@praetoriandigital.com

HEAD OF CONTENT

Jon Hughes
jon.hughes@praetoriandigital.com

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3 DO'S AND 3 DON'TS

for police firearms instructors to
improve officer performance



Police firearms instructors can do a wide variety of things to ensure that every minute spent on the range positively affects the students' performance

By Doug Wyllie

Providing excellent police firearms training consists of far more than simply having your students squeeze a trigger X times per year and achieve a passing score on an annual qualification target.

Police firearms instructors can do a wide variety of things to ensure that every minute spent on the range positively affects their students' performance.

Here are three do's and three don'ts that can help get you there.

1 Do as much advance work as you can in the use-of-force simulator.

Before you even go out to the

range, you should have taken full advantage of your department's use-of-force simulator. This technology has become so realistic that when it's properly used — ideally, leveraging units which are programmable with department-made video of scenarios and environments officers may encounter on the street — the training can produce critical stress levels far nearer to real-world than a square range can achieve.

Even if your department doesn't have a good use-of-force simulator, you have a couple of options. Find out what other agencies in your area have, and invite them to participate in your training in return for utilizing their equipment. Another option is to examine the use of laser-

simulator products like [SIRT Guns](#) and [CoolFire](#) conversion kits for your service pistols.

2 Do as much force-on-force scenario-based training as possible.

A well-rounded firearms training program will have a robust force-on-force component, utilizing [Simunitions](#) and appropriate safety equipment and apparel. Once all the gear has been purchased by the training department, the only limit to its capabilities is the imagination of the training cadre, and the availability of interesting places to set up scenarios.

When you're designing such training, remember that while these projectiles don't penetrate skin, they do sting, and will do



serious damage if the proper protective gear — helmets, eye protection, and athletic cups, for example — are not employed.

3 Do everything you can to replicate real-world environments.

Punching holes in paper from the seven yard line is a useful enterprise in warming up — starting your training day with the dot-torture drill is an outstanding use of paper placed in front of a berm — but don't let that be a student's primary memory of the effort.

You don't have to create a complete Hogan's Alley in order to increase the realism of your range training. Because many police gunfights happen at traffic stops, consider bringing a "beater" automobile to the range — have it towed there if need be — and do drills from within as well as around it.

I once saw a training range with a fire hydrant and an old mailbox (one of the big, blue USPS ones)

affixed to wheeled dollies. For safety reasons, you'd obviously need to be very specific about how those metal objects may be incorporated into training — you don't want a ricochet off one of those items — painted Styrofoam replicas would probably be better, but you get the idea: adding such elements of realism to your training environment can be a relatively easy enterprise.

Just like making your surroundings as realistic as possible, your students should at the very least have a full duty belt (even if it's loaded with inert replicas for OC, TASER, etc.). Too often we see range day look more like a day off than a day on the street. Unless your class works undercover detail when they're on the job, wearing jeans and sneakers is not the right attire for a day on the square range.

And remember: Gunfights don't get rained out, and they don't get cancelled because of a snow day. Some of the best training you can do is when the weather is utterly

miserable, so pray for rain. Be aware, however, that sub-optimal elements can also require extra safety precautions.

Now, for the don'ts.

1 Don't let the class get too big.

Some firearms instructors allow an unmanageable — and therefore, potentially unsafe — instructor-to-student ratio. While this is rare in police in-service or academy training, it happens altogether too often with for-profit firearms instructional institutions.

A good rule of thumb on numbers is one instructor for every five or six students. This frequently necessitates an assistant instructor or two. In addition to the primary and assistant instructor, there should always be at least one — and ideally, more than one — range safety officer (RSO) present. This individual is not shooting, and is not teaching. Their only mission is watching for the safe operation of the tools on the range.

One solution for when a class is bigger than it should be is to split the group into two, with one half doing a course of fire while the other half tops off magazines, drinks water to stay hydrated, and does visualizations and mindset exercises.

Using “down time” for visualization exercises and other non-shooting techniques is enormously valuable in addressing the mindset training required to produce a complete, well-trained firearms operator capable of winning the deadly-force encounter for which your training day is preparing them.

2 Don't let your class devolve into social hour with guns attached.

It's shocking how many times instructors who put on a training day with the intention to do good, hard work on life-saving skills get a small set of participants who are not only not taking the training seriously, but are talking about totally unrelated topics (sports scores or the cute female attendant at the gun rental counter, for example). These individuals can poison a good day of training, so as an instructor it's your job to keep them in check.

A good chuckle can reset the mood of a group that's stressed out or tired, but the instructor needs to be the driver of that, not the two or three class clowns in attendance.

One way you can help manage the balance of levity and learning is to have a set of class objectives



that every student must achieve in the class, and display that list on a whiteboard or on handout sheets.

3 Don't ever (ever, ever, ever!) forget safety.

Attend enough firearms training and eventually you're going to see something that scares you, pisses you off, or both — most likely both. Even professional trigger-pullers have the capacity to lapse into complacency, and complacency on the firearms training range can result in death or great bodily harm.

Signs posted at every decent range in America declare:

- Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger and outside the trigger

guard until you've made the conscious decision to shoot.

- Know your target, what's beyond it, what's beside it, and what's before it.
- Know how to operate your firearm.
- Wear hearing and eye protection.

But operating a safe police firearms training session requires much more than this.

One very effective way to ratchet up everyone's attention to safety is to tell every participant that they are essentially a deputized RSO.

The instructor needs them to be thinking like an RSO, and to tell them that they are required (not requested) to report any unsafe behavior they witness.

If you get them thinking in this manner, they are also far more likely to police their own behavior more diligently. *PD*

Doug Wyllie is Editor at Large for PoliceOne, responsible for providing police training content and expert analysis on a wide range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community. An award-winning columnist — he is the 2014 Western Publishing Association “Maggie Award” winner in the category of Best Regularly Featured Digital Edition Column — Doug has authored more than 900 feature articles and tactical tips.

HOW TO CONDUCT SAFE AND EFFECTIVE **FORCE-ON-FORCE** SCENARIO TRAINING



Personnel who engage in scenario-based FoF training must always consider and address planning, safety and communication

By Mike Wood

On Christmas Day in 1993, two California deputies used a little quiet time between radio calls to conduct impromptu vehicle stop training in the field. Using the patrol car as a stand-in for a suspect vehicle, one deputy played the role of the stopped driver, while the other made his practice approach.

As the investigating officer neared the driver's door, the "suspect" suddenly and unexpectedly drew a small handgun from behind the sun visor, pointing it at him. The surprised deputy reacted by drawing his duty weapon and pulling the trigger. Sadly, the weapon had not been cleared before the exercise, and the deputy shot and killed his partner before he realized the error.

As a trainer, I understand the value and necessity of conducting realistic, scenario-based training, involving live role players. This kind of interactive

training is particularly important for professions like ours, where high-stakes decisions must be made quickly and accurately in stressful conditions. There is no other method which can better simulate the speed, chaos, stress and unpredictability of these dangerous situations in training.

However, this kind of training, and particularly training which involves the use of force, must never be undertaken without comprehensive preparation. Personnel who engage in scenario-based, Force-on-Force training must always consider and address the following three principles: planning, safety and communication.

Planning

Successful FoF training begins with defining learning objectives that clearly state the focus and intent of training efforts and the desired outcome for the student. It's important for these learning objectives to be narrowly focused, because they will guide the construction and execution of the training scenario.

As an example, "make a vehicle stop" is not a good learning objective because it's too broad and doesn't identify specific areas of performance to test and evaluate. A better learning objective might be, "the student will demonstrate his or her ability to make an appropriate use-of-force decision and



execute an appropriate response after the driver produces a gun during the initial approach on a traffic stop.”

A sharp focus like this will aid construction of scenarios that channel role players and students into the specific action that we want to test and evaluate. Absent this kind of precision, an FoF scenario is apt to spin wildly out of control, turning into an unscripted free-for-all that wastes time and fails to accomplish our objectives.

Scenarios should be based on these specific learning objectives and should usually test previously trained skills. It’s not normally beneficial to put students into a scenario for which their training hasn’t prepared them.

Objective performance standards should be established before training starts to help identify students that need additional training. Logistical details (training site, required equipment and personnel, etc.) need early attention as well.

Safety

The most critical attribute of successful FoF training is that it needs to be safe for all participants, instructors and bystanders.

This begins with selecting the training location. A good location should offer privacy so that uninvolved people won’t view or hear the training and mistakenly believe that the simulation is a real emergency. Similarly, it should be a secure location that restricts access to participants only.

The training site should be suitably lit, free of unnecessary hazards (such as low-traction surfaces that might encourage slips or falls, or obstacles that might cause injury) and should offer a relatively forgiving surface if a participant hits the ground.

A clearly marked observer should be assigned to monitor the exercise for safety issues and violations. Make sure this person is highly visible so that he or she is not overlooked by instructors who are more focused on scenario execution and student performance.

Only participants, instructors and safety observers should be allowed in the immediate training area. Non-participants should be kept at a distance where they won't interfere and will be safe from accidental injury.

All participants, instructors and observers should be equipped with protective equipment that fits properly and is appropriate for the scenario, to include headgear, gloves, safety goggles, pads, hearing protection, "red man suits" and suitable clothing. Players and non-players should be clearly identifiable.

All duty weapons and ammunition should be inventoried and secured outside of the immediate training area to ensure that no participants, instructors or observers bring a live weapon into the scenario. Multi-layer inspections should be conducted, with personnel checking themselves first, then checking each other and finally having instructors or dedicated safety observers check for the presence of unauthorized weapons and ammunition.

The training area should be secured to prevent unauthorized entry by personnel carrying live weapons once training is underway.

Suitable training weapons should be issued to all participants — faux impact weapons, "blue" guns, non-lethal training ammunition firearms, etc. It's critical to use dedicated training weapons that are inert or modified, rather than using unloaded duty weapons, to prevent the firing of live ammunition.

Suitable first aid equipment should be immediately available and personnel with advanced emergency medicine training identified. An emergency communications and transport plan should be briefed in detail.

Communication

All participants should be thoroughly briefed on safety protocols (including prohibited techniques or targets) and the commands that will be used by instructors and participants to terminate the scenario and suspend all action. Administrative issues like training area boundaries, designated

entries and exits and "out of play" safe zones also deserve attention.

Supporting role players should clearly understand the intent of the exercise and how their roles will encourage the desired student response. Students should understand how radio communications, backup and other elements of the scenario will be handled by instructors and who the non-players will be.

No more "accidents"

If all this sounds like a lot of work, then you're catching on. It's critical for us to spend the time and effort up front to prepare safe and effective FoF training and resist the temptation to take shortcuts.

It's not normally beneficial to put students into a scenario for which their training hasn't prepared them.

In the past few years, we've lost and injured far too many officers and cadets in preventable training "accidents" that were actually cases of negligence. Shockingly, some of the fallen were even shot by their own instructors — the people most responsible for ensuring their safety.

Every one of these incidents could have been prevented with proper planning, communication and a disciplined safety culture, so let's pay attention to those things and avoid adding more names to the wall through negligence. 

Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Mike Wood is an NRA Law Enforcement Division-certified Firearms Instructor and the author of "Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis," available in paper and electronic formats through [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) and [GunDigestStore.com](#). Please visit the official website for this book at [NewhallShooting.com](#) for more information.

FROM THE STREET TO THE RANGE:

TRAIN YOUR OFFICERS ON A REAL GUNFIGHT



One powerful way to train an officer's combat mindset on the live-fire range is to recreate an officer-involved shooting

By Richard Fairburn

I have yet to find a lawsuit alleging an officer's improper deadly force actions were the result of a failure to qualify. Instead, the lawsuits revolve around a failure to train – yet many agencies are stuck in the qualification rut when it comes to firearms training. My recommendation is to “qualify” once each year. Every other deadly-force session should be training.

A training session can be devoted to developing standardized skills like marksmanship or mechanics (reloading, malfunction). The third gunfight training element I describe in my book “Building a Better Gunfighter” is mindset.

One powerful way to train an officer's combat mindset on the live-fire range is to recreate an officer-involved shooting.

The debrief

A training session based on a real-world event should begin with a debriefing of the incident. Our goal is to learn from an officer's incident and possibly improve on that officer's performance, not judge him or her. We go into our re-creation with the massive advantage of time to analyze what happened. The involved officers had to tackle the problem cold, so we must give them wide latitude in our analysis.

Each group should take a few minutes to review the incident and come up with their “best” solution. Perhaps they would choose to move to a cover point rather than duke it out with an adversary on open ground. Perhaps a more alert officer could have had his or her weapon in hand sooner, before the threat took them by surprise. Often, more than one possible solution will be developed.

The live-fire exercise

Moving to the live-fire range, duplicate the event as closely as possible in terms of distance, target(s), available cover and lighting. Pre-planning a response trains the officers to think on their feet, and their [subconscious mid-brains](#) will record the event as a possible solution to something they may face in the future.

Once all officers in the training class have run the live-fire exercise a couple of times, they will naturally come up with new solutions based on their performance in the first runs. Give the officers as many repetitions through the event as possible, within your time and ammunition budget. Each run lays down an ever deeper memory track on their brain's "hard drive," conditioning their mindset.

Example: "Dozier Drill"

An example of a recreation is Jeff Cooper's famous "Dozier Drill." On December 17, 1981, U.S. Army Brigadier Gen. James L. Dozier was the deputy chief of staff for NATO's Southern European land forces, stationed in Verona, Italy. Despite being warned of kidnapping threats against NATO officers by the Italian Red Brigade (Marxist terrorists who had previously kidnapped and killed an Italian prime minister), Dozier had no firearms in his apartment.

That evening, at about 1800 hours, eight terrorists arrived at Dozier's apartment posing as plumbers. Four or five of the terrorists entered the apartment, where one removed a submachinegun from a tool bag to effect the capture. In other words, a few seconds elapsed before the terrorists had a fully ready firearm, giving Dozier a chance to engage them — had he been armed.

Cooper's recreation used five steel pepper popper targets on-line abreast, spaced about one meter apart. In the original version, a role player on-line with the shooter would remove a handgun from a tool bag and load the weapon as a measure of the time available to deck all five targets. Putting down all five targets in under five seconds with a handgun, starting holstered with both hands held shoulder-high in the surrender position, is good performance for cops.

The distance to the targets has grown from the original 7 yards over the years in practical pistol competition to avoid ties among the very best shooters. Top competitors can easily do it cleanly (five hits for five shots) in under three seconds, which is why the distances are often extended to add difficulty.

To wrap up Gen. Dozier's story, he was rescued by an elite Italian SWAT team after 42 days of captivity. All of the terrorists were captured, Dozier suffered no serious injuries, and not a single shot was fired.

Diversify your training

Once you have successfully recreated a couple of officer-involved shootings during your live-fire training, kick it up a notch. Do it with multiple officers and a mix of handguns and patrol rifles. I can think of a couple recent ambush incidents in Dallas and Baton Rouge that would tax your best operators. [PD](#)

Richard Fairburn has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience in both Illinois and Wyoming, working patrol, investigations and administrative assignments. Richard has also served as a Criminal Intelligence Analyst and as the Section Chief of a major academy's Firearms Training Unit and Critical Incident training program. He has published more than 100 feature articles and two books: "Police Rifles" and "Building a Better Gunfighter."



4 KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SETTING UP A FIREARMS SIMULATOR PROGRAM

Today's firearms simulator training tools are cost effective and can be easily integrated into commonly delivered police training

By Ken Hardesty

With recent added emphasis on the quality, duration and frequency of law enforcement training, many agencies are looking inward to ascertain how to better prepare their officers for modern threats. Force Options Simulators, when used properly, add the spice of reality to commonly conducted deadly and non-deadly use-of-force training. These life-saving, decision-making tools are easily integrated into commonly delivered training and extremely cost effective.

One of my favorite adages is, "I never lose. I either win or learn." Like all lessons, I learned a few the hard way as an agency lead Force Options Instructor.

Here are four considerations to keep in mind as you set up your program:

1 System integration

Trainers and students alike realize that these tools are not meant to replace hands-on, live-fire training. When combined with a range program, the syllabi complement each other. When possible, the instructors of each program should at a minimum collaborate, if

not be one in the same. In a training system, contradictory information and methodology is quickly recognized by students, and valuable training is lost.

2 Reality-based training

Three years ago, due to a state contractual issue, my agency changed simulator vendors. The installation included one thousand pre-installed scenarios. Several of these, however, were filmed and produced in the Midwest. As an agency trainer in the Bay Area of California, it didn't make sense to place officers in scenarios that contained snow. The initial visual image projected to participants sets the stage for the remainder of the immersion training. No amount of verbalization or "stage setting" changes what an engaged student perceives or how they respond.

The ability to film and embed local scenario scenes is a tremendous boon to the use of the simulator. Absent this ability, generic is better.

3 Errors and omissions

Credible simulator programs include use-



of-force case law discussions. Trainers must be fluent in the most commonly used court decisions, and project this confidence to students. A key component in officer injuries and mistakes is rooted in a lack of confidence. Simply stated, officers are not confident in what they may or may not do. Impressive trainers who infuse case knowledge in their students build confidence, which can reduce injuries and libelous situations.

4 End on a win

All training, regardless of method, should be completed with a debrief. Feedback in both directions, and a complete understanding of what occurred and why is imperative to the learning process.

Mistakes made in a training environment are not only acceptable, they are encouraged. This is the time we want students to make them, and learn from them. Belittling, or worse, infusing personal opinion to berate a student is destructive and contagious.

A quick debrief complete with a review of tactical considerations or applicable case law is extremely beneficial. Let them err, fix it, and run it again. Remember, students never lose, they either win or they learn. 

Ken Hardesty served seven years in the U.S. Marine Corps before deciding to pursue a career in law enforcement. He has served continuously for 14 years in large California agencies. Ken is California POST certified to teach Firearms, Defensive Tactics, Chemical Agents, First Aid/CPR and Patrol Response to Active Shooter. He is a court-certified expert in Illegal Weapons, and serves as a subject matter expert for the State of California in the areas of Firearms and Chemical Agents. Ken teaches Incident Response to Terrorist Bombings for the Department of Homeland Security as well as Leadership and Firearms/Chemical Agents Program Evaluation for the California Commission on POST.



Sponsored Content

Need grant funding for your firearm training program?

A grant to fund your simulation- and scenario-based firearm training program is just a click away

By *PoliceOne BrandFocus Staff*

Law enforcement agencies are under constant scrutiny to get it right, especially when it comes to officers discharging their firearms during an incident.

That's why agencies and their LEOs need access to a cutting-edge firearms training program that include simulation and live fire.

Incorporating both disciplines results in a well-rounded firearms training program that can help officers be best prepared when they encounter an incident where a firearm may be used.

The obstacle to getting the best simulation and live-training equipment in front of LEOs is the lack of money in an agency's budget. That's where government and private grants can help.

Meggitt Training Systems' grants assistance program

Meggitt Training Systems is one of the most well-known simulation and live-fire training providers in the world.

This is because the company has been first to market on many technologies, whether that is [the new bullet backstops](#) or the world's [first 360° wireless target carrier](#).

Meggitt Training Systems wanted to ensure every agency had access to a robust, multiple discipline firearm training program that was cutting edge. So the [company partnered with PoliceGrantsHelp.com](#), a LE grant assistance team, to help agencies find funding for their firearm training programs.

Meggitt Training Systems with PoliceGrantsHelp in partnership now offers a [grants assistance program](#), said Sarah Wilson, founder of PoliceGrantsHelp. The program assists any LE agency or LE training facility in developing a successful grant application for Meggitt Training Systems products, said Jon Read, VP Live Fire Systems.

"We want to make sure LEOs get the best firearm training," Read said. "It's essential so officers can respond with force when necessary and accurately. That's why the grant assistance program is so important: It puts funding in LE agencies' hands."

Specifically, Wilson said the grants assistance program includes a comprehensive package of

helpful resources specific to firearms training products. For example, grants are available for Meggitt's LE live fire (indoor and outdoor) training systems and LE simulation training systems.

"Our staff of grant consultants has teamed up with Meggitt Training Systems to assemble a comprehensive package of helpful grant resources specific to simulation- and scenario-based firearm training programs," Wilson said.

How to get funding

There are several ways LE agencies can get funding for a live fire or simulation training program.

This includes providing crucial grant data, including a customized grant search that is specific to your department's funding needs. Wilson said this comprehensive list will include searches for local, regional, state and federal resources as well as private funding through corporate and other organizations.

In addition, the agency has access to grant experts who know all the different types of grants available and their annual priorities.

Having unlimited, personalized grant consulting from [specialized grant consultants](#) lets you ask all the questions you need to be fully informed about the grant, its priorities and how your agency may be awarded funding for your Meggitt Training Systems' products, Wilson said.

"Our expert grant team work to find the best grants available to law enforcement who deserve the best equipment to help protect lives," she said.

Meggitt Training Systems knows the importance of simulation and live fire training for LE agencies across the world. The company is showing its commitment by ensuring agencies can get the grants they need.

For more information [about getting a grant for your Meggitt Training Systems' products](#), email us at expert@policegrantshelp.com. 

Meggitt Training Systems: Related PoliceOne Resources



WHY ONE COMPANY DOMINATES WHEN IT COMES TO FULL-SERVICE RANGE DESIGNS



HOW NEW BULLET BACKSTOPS PROTECT SHOOTERS AND REDUCES RANGE MAINTENANCE



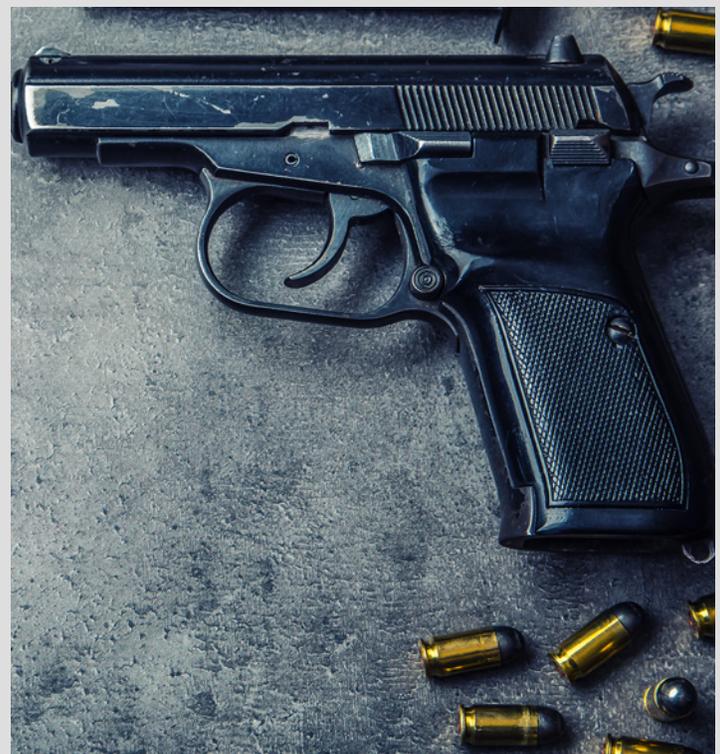
Q&A: NAVY VETERAN AND INDUSTRY EXPERT ON LIVE-FIRE TRAINING, FUTURE TECH



PREPARING FOR SPLIT-SECOND, CRITICAL DECISIONS



3 RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN BUYING A SIMULATION WEAPONS TRAINING SYSTEM



WHAT COPS CAN LEARN FROM CIVILIAN ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE TRAINING



In a live-fire active shooter response training presented by Mike Wood, participants worked to be mentally, emotionally and physically ready for the very worst

By Doug Wyllie

A few months ago, I participated in an excellent active shooter response training presented by PoliceOne Contributor Mike Wood. Wood — a retired USAF Lieutenant Colonel (26 years of service) who used to drive KC-10A refueling tankers through the skies — is an NRA Law Enforcement Division-certified Firearms Instructor and the author of “Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis.” The training Wood presented was largely for civilians, but many of the lessons are equally applicable to police — particularly off-duty cops.

In some of the civilian-focused live-fire training currently out there, participants burn through 500-600 rounds of ammo. This “turning money into sound” training does not necessarily lead to an increase in skills or abilities — in fact, it can do more harm than good.

In Wood’s course, we spent a significant portion of the day with our pistols holstered. In fact, for the first 90 minutes or so, we stood in a semicircle listening to important information Wood had gathered in his research into active killer events, as

well as doing some mental calisthenics to prepare for a life-or-death fight against an active killer.

Knowledge and mindset

Wood underscored the fact that there sometimes are other ways you can contribute to the successful resolution of an active killer event than hunting the attackers. Particularly for civilians and off-duty officers not wearing body armor or carrying a police radio, one could summon help, provide intel to arriving responders, help others to escape, provide first aid, and the like.

“I can’t stress it enough that we can choose to freeze, fight or flee in these events, and the hardest one for some of you is probably going to be the flee option, because it goes against your nature. However, this is probably the best option in many cases. Going up against a rifle- and grenade-armed team of attackers by yourself with your single stack 9mm pistol is not a great way to reach retirement. And if you have family with you, there should be no question what your primary responsibility is — get them to safety,” Wood said.

“If you choose — or are forced — to fight, then fight like a cool-headed predator. Be stealthy, use cover and concealment, plan your ambush carefully, and use every advantage you have. Hit them when they’re weak — during reloads or malfunctions or when their back is turned to you,” Wood said.

Wood also reminded us that there are distinctions between the types of active threats we might face — the motivations of a tango are different than a criminal, and their skill levels may be dissimilar. Further, we may encounter a single attacker with limited weapons and very little pre-planning or a pair (or a group) of hardened attackers with enhanced weaponry who had conducted some degree of pre-planning. Our tactics — up to and including our decision to engage at all — may be affected by all those variables (assuming we have access to that information as the gunfire is happening).

Wood pointed out that a mentally ill or criminally motivated gunman will probably behave differently than a determined terrorist faced with armed resistance — whether that be from uniformed officers, off-duty officers, or concealed-carry citizens.

“Know your enemy,” Wood said. “The more you know about the people who do these kinds of attacks and the tactics they use, the more you’ll be prepared to take them on. It’s helpful to know that 40 percent of the rapid mass murderers in one study ate their own gun when resistance was encountered, or that intervention by a single citizen stopped eight out of ten rapid mass murders. Don’t overestimate, nor underestimate your enemy. Take them as you find them — and take them out.”



The favored rifle of choice for terrorist attackers is the AK-47. We were asked, “Would you rather continue the fight with your pistol, or pick up this rifle to even the odds?” The answer, obviously, is a no-brainer.

Is the line ready?

With our minds filled with information and motivation, we topped off our magazines and made our way to the line. We had targets positioned at different distances — a staggered pair of lines

with one about five yards behind the first. Some target stands also had a secondary target — a paper plate extended on a small piece of cardboard away from the leg of the stand — to simulate shooting at a gunman in a prone position.

Because of the use of highly unstable TATP explosives — especially within vests in places like the Middle East — head shots are preferred to avoid accidental detonations. This was

starkly demonstrated during the ISIS terrorist attack on Ataturk Airport in Turkey. One of the attackers was shot in the leg by an officer, who approached him and then quickly ran away. The terrorist was left to detonate the explosive device. Had the officer delivered a shot to the cerebral cortex, that explosion probably would not have happened.

In addition to encountering a suicide vest — a common tactic used to ‘up the body count’ is to blow yourself up with a suicide belt when capture is imminent — attackers here in the United States also have used body armor. Although the majority of rapid mass murderers don’t actually use body armor or wear suicide vests, we worked headshots almost exclusively in our exercises. Prepare for the worst was one of the themes of the day.

Consequently, we were shown the best places on the skull for immediate deanimation. There is a ring around the skull that begins right between the eyes, goes around both sides to the top of the ears, and meets in back where the round part of the head meets the very top of the neck. In essence, imagine putting a headband on and pulling it over

your eyes and down slightly in the back — that’s the target area we worked with. However, Wood also explained that in a gunfight, you may not always have a great shot at that zone.

“Upper center mass is still a good primary target area if there are no contraindications — no armor, explosives, LBE, etc.,” Wood said. “Take what you can get. An upper center mass shot is easier to pull off than a good head shot on a moving target. Remember, not all head shots are created equal.”

In the debrief, Wood added, “If you found it difficult to make a clean head shot on paper from ten paces with your pistol, just think how much more difficult it would be to make that shot in the chaos and confusion of a real incident — with the target moving, the smoke, the gunshots, the explosions, and a swirl of no-shoots moving through your line of sight. This is no easy task, and it’s just as important for you to know the shots you can’t make as the shots you can make.”

Rising to real-world challenges

In terms of the shooting, two specific drills were the highlights of the day because they forced you to solve a problem that most of the participants had probably not previously encountered.

1 First aid: Especially if you are off duty, it’s more likely you’ll need your first aid skills than your gunfighting skills. This is as true in caring for others as well as self-care if you engage the gunman and are hit. Consequently one of the scenarios dictated that one of our arms had been badly hit. We had to apply a tourniquet to the wounded arm (support side) and then re-engage the target one handed.

“Don’t forget, you’ll be on your own in the ‘hot zone’ for a long time before you get medical help — more than long enough to bleed out,” Wood said. “First aid — including self-aid — is critical.”



2 Battlefield pick-up:

The favored rifle of choice for terrorist attackers is the AK-47 — and to a lesser extent, its variant, the AK-74. In one scenario, we assumed that we’d defeated a gunman with our pistol, but were still faced with additional attackers armed with AKs. We were asked, “Would you rather continue the fight with your pistol, or pick up this rifle to even the odds?” The answer, obviously, is a no-brainer.

For those who had never fired an AK, Wood briefed us on

its operation and we took turns putting hits on a steel target roughly 30 yards downrange. This helped hammer home how important it is to know how various weapons work — particularly systems favored by the enemy.

Inspiration in perspiration

Perhaps the most important lesson I learned that day was when I looked around during a break — it was a reinforcement of the idea that American warriors are everywhere. In addition to the feeling of brotherhood I felt with the men and women in attendance, I was inspired by the fact that these law-abiding, pro-Second Amendment folks had taken a day off — which they could have spent doing countless other things — to train to be prepared for the worst day imaginable.

The statistical probability that an active killer will strike in presence of this group of men and women is pretty remote — but we all are now better prepared to make the decision to flee or fight. If it is flee, we know what we can still do to help solve the problem. If it is fight, we are more ready to move to contact, find the killer, neutralize target, and render aid to the wounded.

Mentally, emotionally and physically, we all had a good workout that day. *PD*

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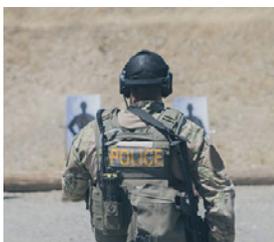


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