



P O S A JOURNAL OF TACTICS & TRAINING

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Police Sniper Team Deployment

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The concept of a two-man police sniper team, although not a new tactical concept, is one of the most frequently violated tenets of professional sniper deployment.

As a profession we often try to “*make do*” with the number of police sniper personnel we deploy. Because agencies often “*make do*” with numbers of personnel deployed, those charged with the actual mission often seem to “*get by*”. The alternative of course to “*making do*” and “*getting by*” is failure, which is something no agency or its officers will allow to happen.

To fail in a tactical venue will have unacceptable and disastrous consequences. Lives will be in jeopardy; people will get hurt or killed. So sometimes we stretch our resources to the limit and beyond in order to try to make it “*work*”. As a result we sometimes end up “*succeeding*” on a tactical callout in spite of ourselves and simply because we were lucky. Sound familiar? Good results reinforce poor practices.

The fact is sniper/observer teams who train as a “*team*” and start out a callout as a “*team*” all too often are directed to deploy alone or are split up to cover an operational area that is beyond their capability to adequately cover.

Consequently when tactical officers want to staff two-man sniper teams or train additional personnel for this purpose the response often is “*we always seem to get the job done without them*” and “*they are not necessary*”. Limited training dollars can be best spent “*somewhere else*” for something else.

The military on the other hand learned this lesson a long time ago. A military sniper/observer element consists of at least two cross-trained personnel. Team members never leave each other except under extraordinary circumstances. In the case of hostage rescue, it’s not uncommon to see a three-man team, consisting of an observer and two snipers. The US Military verses even a large law enforcement agency has much greater resources to draw upon. If the military needs additional personnel for specific mission additional slots are authorized, selection and training takes place, and additional equipment procured and issued.

Police departments on the other hand often find themselves with limited resources in terms of the number of sworn personnel and equipment with which they can respond. During critical incidents these resources can all too often be stretched out razor thin.

POSA Training Programs

POSA offers the following programs, most of them free of charge, upon request, in our local area. Other programs are in development. Details of current programs are on the POSA website, www.posai.org.

To request or host a program, simply email the POSA Training Director at: rmroz@posai.org.

Handgun Retention, Disarming and Recovery (Video available)
Tactical Knife Skills for Law Enforcement (Video available)
Emergency Empty Hands Tactics
Law Enforcement Officers Flying Armed
Force-on-Force Simulation Instructor (Video available)
Close Quarters Shooting (Video available)
Empty Hand Against A Knife (Video available)
Patrol Response to an Active Shooter Concepts
Crisis Intervention, De-escalation, and Control
Taser Command Demonstration
Taser Instructor
Active Shooter / 4th-5th Generation Warfare (CD-ROM available)

About POSA

The Police Officers Safety Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that offers free and low-cost advanced education and training to increase the safety and effectiveness of law enforcement officers.

Receiving no state or federal funding, POSA's only support comes from concerned citizens and businesses.

POSA's training services are delivered in three formats: 1) video training programs, 2) the quarterly *POSA Journal of Tactics and Training*, both available free to every law enforcement officer in the country, and 3) hands-on classes offered free in our local area to help develop and refine our curriculum.

Sworn officers from all local, state, federal, police, sheriffs, marshals, correctional and university police departments throughout the country are invited to participate in all hands-on training programs.

Our training schedule is published in each quarterly issue of *POSA Journal of Tactics and Training*, and on our web site: www.posai.org. New classes are being added often, so check our web site regularly for the latest schedule.

Class offerings and schedule are determined by demand and availability. POSA is focused on offering use-of-force training, since this is both the area of greatest potential liability to the department, and is also typically the most difficult and expensive training to obtain.

To host a POSA class or to find out more information, call us at: 413. 774. 3512, or you can reach us by e-mail: rmroz@posai.org.

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Notwithstanding, the causes for tactical responses be they criminal, or terrorist threats of domestic or international origin, are not dependent on these aspects of the law enforcement response. Criminals do not adjust their acts based on the number of members on an agency's SWAT team. They do not concern themselves with how many snipers are deployed or what their positions are. They do not consider if the team is a part or full time team; they do not care about the quality or quantity of their training. They don't care when their last qualification session was. They assume the response is going to be nothing less than 100%. If it is something less, then it is favorable for them.

Add to this the fact there are many administrators and commanders who really don't understand the role of the police sniper and the reasons for the fundamental tenet of operating in two-man teams. Having a partner in the field should not be considered some sort of luxury; rather it is in reality a necessity. There are a number of quality sniper supervisor training classes occurring nationwide, but until the time training makes a difference officers in the field will experience a variety of command and supervisory actions and reactions.

An observer on a sniper/observer team should be a fully qualified second sniper. They should be similarly trained and equipped and work together as a team. Most active police snipers who have utilized a partner understand the importance of operating as a two-man team and the fact duties can be shared while on a callout. Operating in this way increases team safety; it's effectiveness and efficiency and ultimately increases the probability of a successful tactical outcome.

Now lets take a look at some of the duties and responsibilities of police snipers/observers teams and the reasons why they should remain a two-man team when deployed.

OBSERVATION


One of the primary responsibilities of any sniper/observer team is to observe and report in detail. The snipers are the eyes and ears of the tactical response, utilizing superior optics from a position of advantage while remaining concealed. They report in real time those detailed observations and information critical to the overall successful conclusion of a tactical callout. They are critical in terms of any tactical planning and when considering other tactical options. Command personnel, supervisors, negotiators, entry teams and indeed hostages and innocents all rely on what these trained observers are able to report back to a command post in real-time information.

Observers can assist with gathering information and in describing predictable target areas in detail. They can utilize additional equipment specifically designed for observation such as high quality spotting scope, binoculars, night vision and other observation specific equipment. Trained observers can gather information such as the location of door hinges, window hasps, locks, location of animals, and possible approach routes for entry/reaction teams.

Observers can report movement of hostage(s), location of entry/reaction teams, and target reaction should a shot become necessary. They can communicate the effectiveness of the shot to the sniper who may not be able to see the result due to the temporary loss of sight picture as the rifle recoils. They can communicate the team's intent to immediately deliver a follow-up shot(s) to command staff and waiting entry team members. The fact is one shot usually ends a situation, but not in all situations.

COMMUNICATIONS

Arguably the number one problem on any tactical callout is that of communications. Invariably it seems personnel are often not able to communicate effectively with each other for a variety of reasons. Snipers who are alone are additionally disadvantaged by having to try to maintain observation of a predictable target area with a scoped rifle system and also try to communicate by radio. Snipers should be concentrating on all of the tasks required and related to providing precision ballistic coverage. They should not be dividing their attention with the additional duties of reporting information and controlling communications. It has been proven in the field to be



Snipers who are alone are additionally disadvantaged by having to try to maintain observation of a predictable target area with a scoped rifle system and also try to communicate by radio.



nearly impossible to deliver accurate fire under stress, on a moving target, from a less than perfect position, while trying to communicate those observations to the command center. The job of handling communication is best left to the other sniper who is the acting observer. Teams may operate with one officer on the rifle while the other handles communications on the radio.

SECURITY

Not all police sniper operations occur in safe and friendly surroundings. And target subjects are not obligated to stay where they started. Observers can provide team security by providing vigilance for anyone walking up or trying to acquire the team from any direction. The sniper will have a limited field of view through a riflescope. An observer may be able to see more by using his peripheral vision and other optics that provide a greater field of view, communicating this information to the shooter. Observers will also often have immediate access to a backup light rifle and pistol while performing these tasks.

DOCUMENTATION

Observers can maintain a chronological operational log relative to the mission. This can include amongst other things the suspect(s) facial and body descriptions, initial briefing and rules of engagement, any commands authorizing the use of deadly force, suspect attempts at escape or actions and behavior during surrender, etc. Information like this can be crucial to an investigation that may arise from dealing with a critical incident.

FATIGUE

An Observer may have to relieve his partner by exchanging duties with the primary sniper as often as every 15-20 minutes on an operation. Looking through a riflescope, binoculars, spotting scope or a night vision device is extremely fatiguing and can cause blurred vision, headaches, and general fatigue over time.

In one case from the Northeast, a police sniper sustained an injury to his lower back by remaining unrelieved in position for a long period of time. This injury was so substantial it ultimately resulted in his inability to continue working as a police officer necessitating that he retire for medical reasons. He remains injured to this day, years after the actual incident, his first callout becoming his last.

SUSTAINMENT

Callouts can continue for long periods of time. Team members can provide the ability to allow each other the opportunity to access hydration, field expedient high-energy foods, insect repellent, sunscreen, and to attend to other personal needs while in the field while maintaining a viable operational vigilance.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT


The observer can carry additional equipment into the position. A sniper/observer team can only utilize what they have brought with them. A single sniper is limited as to what he will be able to physically carry into an area while actively seeking to become operational with a scoped rifle.

TEAMWORK

Observers can and do assist their teammates in many ways. Teammates can assist with hide selection and camouflage, help in creating shooting platforms, team positions, ensuring ballistic paths are clear to the target area, equipment and ammunition management, range confirmation, adjusting for environmental conditions, or a variety of other tasks and is only limited by their experience and training.


SURVIVAL

A sniper/observer team can assist each other in their personal survival. They can help each other in achieving and maintain a 100% camouflage condition. They can help each other setting up on roofs and in negotiating obstacles and fences while on the way to an operational area. Should one or the other sustain an injury or come



Rifle systems are mechanical devices and as such are subject to failure.

There is a documented case in Florida where two snipers engaged a target with coordinated fire. At the crucial moment one of the rifles fired while the other failed to do so.



under fire and be wounded, they can provide immediate first aid and assist in their personal survival, reveal the exact team location and request assistance and/or extraction for each other.

POSITIVE TARGET IDENTIFICATION

A police sniper must have absolute positive target ID prior to delivering the shot. A sniper will want to be able to distinguish actual permanent facial features prior to taking a shot. Observers literally provide a second set of eyes and can assist with additional optically enhanced observations. Having another officer to assist in confirming absolute positive target identification in a deadly force situation may be in and of itself the most important reason for maintaining a two-man team.

COORDINATE ENGAGEMENT

Having the ability to provide coordinated engagement can increase the capabilities of any tactical team response. Should a target be behind an intermediate barrier such as a glass window, coordinated shots can increase the probability of an effective hit. The recent advent of applied film technology has the potential of making shots through intermediate barriers even more difficult for a single shooter.

There is yet another reason the observer is sniper trained and has the necessary equipment. Rifle systems are mechanical devices and as such are subject to failure. There is a documented case in Florida where two snipers engaged a target with coordinated fire. At the crucial moment one of the rifles fired while the other failed to do so. The single shot was effective and proved to be a life saving shot for two hostages. Had there not been two rifles deployed on this incidents there may have been different results.

MORAL SUPPORT

The job of a police sniper is not an easy one. There are many difficulties to overcome on an "average" callout, it is not a job that everyone wants or is capable of performing. It is physically demanding and mentally stressful. Having another officer present can provide significant psychological and moral support during callouts, which can range from very long protracted observations to dynamic, chaotic and horrific situations.

CONCLUSION

Sending a sniper out alone or splitting up a sniper / observer team is a not a preferable method of deployment because it may increase individual risks and incur additional liabilities. Sending a sniper out alone or splitting up a sniper/observer team is a bad idea and may work against achieving a successful tactical resolution.

It is the position of Crosshairs Inc. and the American Sniper Association that in so far as possible and practical a police sniper response should always consist of at least a two-man team. The reasons stated in this position letter, while not all-inclusive should highlight good reasons and support a strong argument to do so. It is our sincere hope that more agencies will adopt this as a standard operational concept reflected in agency policy and procedure and during police sniper training and deployment.

Additional Active Shooter Material

A little while ago we announced our Active Shooter and 4th/5th Generation Warfare program, available for free, as are all of our programs. Recently the Beloit, WI PD has generously provided us with additional materials on that subject. They are first-rate and address a much-neglected area of Active Shooter training.

Contained Threat Escort Tactics is a 160 slide presentation that describes the procedures that the Beloit, WI police and fire departments jointly developed to bring professional rescue personnel (firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, etc.) to injured persons in a facility when the threat has been contained elsewhere, but not necessarily neutralized. Also covered are extradition procedures, and the theory of operation of Contained Threat Escort Tactics. This file is available for download from the POSA website under the Publications and Downloads link. (Note: this file *not* included on the CD-ROM.)

Trigger Weight Recommendations

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One of the many important facets of a supportable Police Sniper rifle system is that of trigger pull weight. What trigger weight is an acceptable one for safety and reliability and yet won't hamper the proper application of marksmanship skills and precision shot placement? What is the trigger pull of your duty rifle?

Having a supportable rifle system requires some serious consideration in terms of the trigger sub-system. This applies to production and custom-built rifles if used by a police officer.

If a police sniper is required to actively engage a target, he/she always prepares, plans, and trains for a successful outcome. In most cases the tactical intervention by a police sniper is very successful and often the tactical solution that saves human lives.

In those cases where a police sniper related shooting results in the injury or death of an intended and authorized target, the resulting criminal investigation will most likely have a limited scope. The investigation most certainly will focus on the officer's belief that deadly force was reasonable and necessary given the totality of the circumstances and knowledge at the time. Additionally there may be a question

of whether or not the officer using the deadly force was properly trained in making a reasonable decision.

Most post-shooting investigations of this nature are often swiftly concluded and where substantiated found to be justifiable and closed via legal authority.

In those rare cases where a police sniper related shooting results in collateral injury or death to an unintended target, the resulting investigation will analyze all aspects of the incident. In addition to the above, the scope may be broadened to include amongst other things, all facets of the tactical plan, involvement and interaction of others, communication issues, command decisions, and the rifle system used.

If a "bad" shot is somehow attributed to the intentional or unintentional manipulation of the trigger, the trigger weight may become a significant issue. A rifle system that has a trigger pull that is too light can result in increasing the possibility of a premature shot or one that is initiated prior to the proper application of the fundamentals or perfected aim. Likewise a heavy trigger can result in an officer struggling with the proper execution of the trigger pull and may result in a "pulled shot".

A trigger weight that is unreasonably light or one that is excessively heavy is a liability to the mission, the individual officer, the department and the municipality. A trigger weight that is unreasonably light or excessively heavy increases the possibility that it will result in tragedy for all involved.

In terms of marksmanship, the most important fundamental for precision shooting is the proper execution of pulling the trigger. The skillful manipulation of the trigger is critical in applying all of the other fundamentals during the integrated act of precision shooting. If the officer has done everything else correctly, and executes an improper trigger pull, then it will adversely effect the accuracy of the shot downrange.

Police snipers are not competition shooters when they're on a call-out. Police snipers however can learn lessons from any source; including competition shooters. Some of the finest shots in the world involve themselves in the CMP program and National Match competitions. For this type of competition shooters are required to have trigger weights of not less than four and a half pounds (4.5 lbs.) set on their rifles. Each rifle is carefully checked on the line for trigger weight standards prior to National level competition.

The course of fire "across-the-course" involves position shooting with slow and rapid-fire stages over distances of 200, 300, and 600 yards. Competitive shooters are consistently able to achieve minute of angle accuracy or better under these standardized conditions. The trigger weight of 4.5 lbs. is not a deterrent to achieve this level of marksmanship excellence.

Many officers are under the misconception that a very "light" trigger pull will help them shoot better – somehow make them more accurate. This is not true; the fundamentals are the fundamentals. In terms of the shooter, the potential for an accurate shot will be determined in their ability to properly apply the fundamentals or not on each shot.

Trigger weight is dependent on the type of design that it is based upon. Typically precision rifle triggers are either single stage or double (two) stage. The Remington 700 series is an example of a rifle with a typical single stage trigger.

Crosshairs Inc. and the American Sniper Association (ASA) recommends that a police sniper rifle with a single

stage trigger design have a preset factory trigger weight of no less than three and a half (3.5) pounds and no more than four and a half (4.5) pounds.

Manufacturers of high quality police sniper-grade rifles should be capable of setting their trigger pull within these weight limits. Equally important to the shooter is that the trigger breaks cleanly with no perceptible slack, creep or drag.

Remington claims their police sniper rifle triggers are set at the factory in a range from three and a half (3.5) to five and a half (5.5) pounds. There is a factory sealant used on the trigger assembly that enables factory workers to determine if the trigger weight adjustments have been changed. Every rifle that is received into the plant is specifically checked to see if original factory settings have been maintained or altered.

Those production trigger mechanisms that have been "readjusted" to something other than factory settings will result in a voided warrantee, with a resulting loss of product liability and a manufacturer who will not stand behind that rifle trigger in a court of law. A good rule of thumb is to "stay stock" when utilizing a production factory rifle.

Remington's armorer school and their accompanying student manual relates the following on the trigger housing assembly - "NOTE: FACTORY SERVICE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL TRIGGER HOUSING ASSEMBLY RELATED PROBLEMS. RETURN TO THE FACTORY FOR SERVICE." It is made clear that the armorer's school does not teach students to adjust the trigger assembly in any way.

Mr. Ken Nickerson, a veteran Remington Police Armorer Instructor, has indicated that those agencies utilizing older Remington police sniper rifles may request that they be adjusted to the factory minimum. The rifles need to be shipped to the plant for factory adjustment, with a written request for this work to be completed. A nominal charge will be made for the adjustment.

Those agencies interested in taking advantage of this service can contact the Remington Arms Co., Inc. at P.O. Box 700, Madison, NC 27025-0700. Telephone 1-800-243-9700 FAX: 1-336-548-7801. Law Enforcement point of contact is Mr. Ken Nickerson (Ext# 8783).

In order to assure a trigger weight that is conducive to precision shooting and police sniper applications, law enforcement agencies may also want to consider specifying the acceptable trigger weight in their bid specifications when purchasing new rifles for their police snipers.

If the department has chosen a rifle that is custom made, check that the trigger settings are within recommended standards and ask the manufacturer in writing if they will stand behind their product should liability be incurred. If an officer discovers their custom service rifle has a trigger weight less than 3.5 pounds, or heavier than 4.5 pounds, that officer or agency wishing to adopt ASA recommended standards should send that rifle back to the manufacturer for adjustment accordingly with a written request.

As of 2007, Remington has a newly redesigned trigger mechanism for use in the 700 rifle, which comes standard with current production. Presently the Remington armorer's school instructs police armorers in the replacement and adjustment of these new components. The one-day class not

only instructs the armorer to change out older triggers to the new generation but also certifies them to adjust trigger weight. Remington recommends that the new generation trigger be set at 4 pounds for service use.

When a police sniper must take a shot, he/she will always be under stress and tremendous pressure to ensure that it is precisely placed on an authorized, pre-selected and positively identified target. Police snipers must be able to make that shot while under these extreme pressures and the stress of trying to save a human life. Hence the need for a trigger that is neither unduly light nor heavy.

With any shot there will be a variety of facets and degrees of “compounding error” that will work against the accuracy of the shot. Having “doubts” and a lack of confidence in one’s trigger need not be one of these factors. With the proper training and equipment officers can succeed in these difficult tactical situations.

A rifle with a trigger weight that is measured in ounces rather than pounds can only invite disaster. A premature shot, made prior to the officer perfecting his/her aim could have serious consequences. Conversely, struggling with an excessively heavy trigger works against properly applying the most important fundamental, proper trigger control. Consequently consistent precision accuracy will be adversely effected.

An officer’s confidence in his/her system and ability to consistently apply the fundamentals may be adversely effected from either of these undesirable conditions. Having the proper weight and sear engagement factory-set on the trigger assembly can help to establish a supportable duty system, instill shooter confidence and ensure consistent accuracy.

Every police sniper knows that precision matters when lives are on the line. Call-outs are neither a competition nor a time to be struggling with or doubting a trigger pull. Once the shot is out, there is no calling it back. What is the trigger pull of your duty rifle?

Are You a Firearms Professional?

1) *...professional [describes] people who do a particular thing to earn money rather than as a hobby.*

(Collins Cobuild Student’s Dictionary, online edition)

2) **pro-fes-sion-al:** Having much experience and great skill.

(Webster’s Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd edition)

3) *Professional is often used to mean having the qualities that you connect with trained and skilled people.*

(Cambridge International Dictionary of English, online edition)

4) *A professional piece of work is of a high standard.*

(Collins Cobuild Student’s Dictionary, online edition)

The word *professional* gets used a lot in field. Writers refer to “gear that the professionals use”, “professional behavior”, just plain “professionals”, and so on.

But what does the word professional really mean? And what are we trying to convey when we use it?

Taking definition 1) above—*professional* in the sense that something is done for pay or to make one’s living—it is readily apparent that **this** isn’t what we mean... at least I sure don’t. We all know full-time cops and LE instructors whose jokes are racist. We have all been subjected to firearms teachers whose minds are closed. We’ve all seen men and women who make their living with a gun and who put their pocketbooks above the soundness of the techniques they teach. No, just making your living as a police officer or with firearms doesn’t make you a LE or firearms

... professionals have thoughtfully considered the responsibility that the gun carries, they have sought out competent and responsible training, and they carry their weapon with discretion. They have become appropriately skilled with their gun. And they take heavily the responsibility that is commensurate with that gun’s power.

professional, despite self-serving claims to the contrary.

Looking at definition 2) — identifying professionals by their level of skill—doesn't strike home either. This definition doesn't address the positive mental attributes and discerning behavior that come to mind when we think of a real professional. We've all watch as shooters of great skill become abusive of students or competition judges. We've all been embarrassed by highly skilled gun handlers as they gossip about or demean another shooter. We've all come across fast and accurate shooters with bad attitudes. And frighteningly, we've probably all seen patently unsafe gun handling on the part of otherwise highly skilled shooters. No, there's more to being a genuine professional than just a high level of skill.

Definitions 3) and 4) above come closest to what I—and I assume most others—mean when we use the word *professional*. We mean: knowledgeable, skilled, discrete, polite, humble, open-minded, caring. We mean someone whom you admire, to whom you look up to, someone that you want to emulate. Someone with a low-key—not a boastful or attention getting—disposition. Someone who's always seeking to learn, whose mind is always open. We mean a person who, when they teach, put the survival needs of their students above their own opinions or doctrine. We envision a person who is open, friendly, and sharing with their knowledge. We picture a person who is competent, knowledgeable and self-controlled. Yes, they should have some degree of skill, but it doesn't have to be world-class. This professional may or may not get paid for their work, but they always treat the work (and the weapon) seriously. And—it goes without saying—they are always safe with their guns.

Certainly, not all cops or gun owners meet this standard. These are the ignorant and unsafe hoi polloi. There are the idiots who “been shooting all ma' life—know all 'bout it.” These are the fools who give illegal and downright stupid advice about the use of deadly force. These morons are usually identifiable by their distinctive gun fumbling and unsafe gun handling.

Sadly, neither do all firearms instructors, LE or otherwise—meet this standard. There are “instructors” who are instructors only by virtue of their having held a class at some time or other, or by having been appointed to the position. These are the macho dolts who don't understand why a female student sometimes can't shoot her male counterpart's full-sized pistol well. There are the blockheads who continue to teach fine motor-skill techniques that simply can't work under stress. These are the imbeciles who confuse “I'm tellin' ya how to do it” with training.

And frankly, neither do all of the self-appointed public experts meet this standard. There are men and women in this category who have lied about their experience. There are those who have written boastfully about their exploits in which life was taken. There are some that continue to teach that which is known to be invalid. There are men and women in this area who engage in political and financial power games instead of searching for and promulgating the truth—the facts and techniques that will save people's lives.

And then there are the professionals. Some of them write for publication. Some of them teach at or run schools. Some of them teach at agencies. Most of them, though, you never heard of. These professionals have thoughtfully considered

the responsibility that the gun carries, they have sought out competent and responsible training, and they carry their weapon with discretion. They have become appropriately skilled with their gun. And they take heavily the responsibility that is commensurate with that gun's power.

One of them might be you.—RM

Close Quarter Core Skills

At POSA we teach a course called Close Quarter Handgun Core Skills. It is a course focused on just what the title suggests: fundamental skills and drills for close quarter lethal force encounters. I usually like to start this course by lining up the participants at seven yards, facing an IPSC or IDPA target. I ask them to perform two reasonably standard handgun drills. Drill number one is to fire a magazine into the A zone as fast as they can make the shots. Drill two is to put two into the A zone and one into the head, on command, repeating until the magazine is depleted. Then I ask the class, “What relationship to real-life street encounters did either of these two drills have?”

A surprising number of the attendees have the correct answer on the tips of their tongues: “Almost nothing.” That's right. They were all standing in a row, facing a designated direction. They fired on command. They were at least four times the distance that they were likely to have to fight at with a handgun for real. They were using sighted fire. They didn't move. They were placing their shots carefully. The targets weren't moving. The targets were all facing them head-on. And most important: the targets weren't shooting back.

So why is so much of our current so-called “training” so much like these two drills?

Theory of Operation

The answer to that question is “because this kind of training is challenging for students and safe for the instructor to teach.” But that begs the critical question. That is starting from an answer, not from a question; from a conclusion, not an analysis.

Before we can design an effective training curricula, we have to answer the question: “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” And the answer to that is that we are trying to keep people alive in close quarter, spontaneous violent assaults that our adversaries usually initiate. Our training drills therefore need to instill skills that contribute to that objective—not achieving some artificial “range standard.” *Which means, of course, that we need to use drills that mimic close quarter, spontaneous violent assaults that our adversaries initiate. That's curricula design criteria number one.*

The other thing that we need to understand to design an effective training regimen is what resources we have to work with, or in this case, what the capabilities of ourselves and our equipment are. Our own capabilities under severe, close-quarter stress, are well known: target focus, loss of fine motor skill, etc. *Curricula design criteria number two is therefore*

to accommodate target focus and gross motor skills in our training.

Our handgun's capabilities are also well known, but often ignored. Essentially, there are really only three ways that bullets stop someone: 1) central nervous system hits that prevent the brain from directing the body, 2) loss of blood pressure, or 3) such overwhelming pain and shock that the body shuts down. Further, all handgun bullets are all extremely ineffective. None of them (even .357s and .45s) are reliable one-shot stoppers. Now, the "shot placement" school of handgunning advocates central nervous system (CNS) shots or center-mass shots to accomplish either 1) or 2) above. But brain stem or head shots are all but impossible to realize in the violent chaos of a real-life encounter, while hydraulic pressure loss occurs too slowly to be of reliable use, even with major blood vessels hit. That leaves 3) above – inflicting massive shock or pain. Accomplishing this is done with many shots placed on the adversary as fast as possible. They don't all have to be center-mass or CNS shots — just lots of hits quickly. And so this is our theory of handgun "stopping power": **Put a lot of hurt onto your enemy quickly.** Caliber is not very important—any significant caliber will do. Just hit 'em often and fast. *So curricula design criteria number three is to train in multiple shots delivered quickly.*

To review, our curricula design criteria are: 1) train at close quarters, 2) employ target focus and gross motor skills, and 3) deliver multiple quick shots.

Making it real

What follows are descriptions of three of the basic drill sets we currently use in the Close Quarter Handgun Core Skills course. We are always adding, and sometimes dropping, drills as we continually develop the course. Some of these drills employ airsoft technology. If you aren't training with airsoft, you need to be—if you are concerned with self-defense. Airsoft is far less expensive than other projectile-firing simulated firearms technologies, and more reliable, to boot. It is widely available and easy to obtain. Little protective gear needs to be worn, and as a non-marking technology, you can train in your actual tactical environment: in your house, in your car, in your business, and so on. **WARNING: About two police officers a year are currently being killed in simulated force-on-force training, because a live (real) firearm was introduced into the training area. It is imperative that you get proper training in running simulations safely.** The Massachusetts Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors & Armorers Association offers the leading airsoft simulation instructor course, and it's open to firearms instructors with certifications from recognized bodies (NRA, state POSTs, etc.) See their website, <http://www.mlefiiaa.org/index.html>, for more information.

Drill #1—no time to draw. *Situation:* a deadly force attack that comes so close and so fast that you don't have time to draw your gun. Since most such attacks occur spontaneously and at very close distance, this is a typical attack. **Drill 1A:** Face the target, 1 yard away. On cue (such as the command "danger") drive towards the target and strike it with an effective, devastating empty hand technique. (Don't know any? Learn some. Also, you'll need sturdy target stands for

this one.) While maintaining forward pressure on the target, draw your gun and fire several shots onto the target with your gun hand's fingers touching your ribs (sometimes called a "gun retention position".) **Airsoft version:** Two participants face each other, 1 yard away. The bad guy launches a simulated deadly force attack on the good guy, who responds as above with his/her airsoft pistol. Note: without protective equipment such as a FIST suit, the instructor will have to compensate by mandating less than full power strikes, and strikes to non-sensitive areas (e.g., the chest instead of the throat.) **Drill 1B:** If the bad guy in the airsoft version of this drill chooses to go for or present an (airsoft) gun as his deadly force attack, then fouling his draw or presentation first, and then striking and then drawing(s) your own gun, is a valuable skill to learn.

Drill #2—Shooting after falling. *Situation:* you are knocked to your knees or onto the ground as a deadly force assault initiates. If you think this doesn't happen much, you haven't been in many fights. **Drill 2A:** Face the target, 1 yard away. On command such as "falling", draw your gun as you fall to your rear knee. Keeping the gun close to your body, cant it up to the target, achieving either a "normal" angle of the gun, or a sideways "gangbanger" angle, and fire multiple shots on the target. **Drill 2B:** Face the target, 1 yard away. On command such as "falling", fall to the ground, and onto your back. (Again, don't know how to do fall safely? Learn!) Kick violently towards the target *using a bicycle pedaling type motion.* At some point, plant your feet on the ground, draw your gun and put multiple shots onto the target. **Airsoft versions:** same drills as above, but with role players using airsoft weapons. The bad guy actually pushes the good guy to the ground. **Note:** using mats for this exercise will cause you to want to practice it more than otherwise.

Drill #3—hooded drills *Situation:* you are surprised by the sudden bad turn of events as the people right next to you launch an attack. Remember—attacks occur suddenly! This drill protocol is nothing more than the use by firearms students of the common hooded drills that martial artists and reality fight trainers have used for centuries. **Drill 1A:** With the shooter not able to see the range, set up several target stands in realistic positions. Staple a human picture shoot/no-shoot target to each. Place a hood over the shooter and lead him/her into the middle of the targets so arranged. Standing in a direction away from any target, pull the hood off and let the shooter deal with the problem presented, making the necessary shoot/no-shoot decisions. **Drill 1A-1X:** Any number of variations of this drill can be done, using different human representational targets and props. **Variation:** Also place objects of cover or simulated cover in the training area, and let the shooter use them. **Airsoft variation:** same drills as above, but using airsoft weapons and real people instead of targets.

In conclusion

The above three drills should give you some idea of how realistic training is conducted. You can design your own drills using our curricula design criteria, which are, once again: 1) train at close quarters, 2) employ target focus and gross motor skills, and 3) deliver multiple quick shots. —RM

Crosshairs Training Schedule

Occasionally POSA will pass on information about another organization's training. We do so when we consider the organization to be top-notch, and the training well worth the investment. This issue we are publishing the training schedule of Crosshairs, Inc., one of the top sniper schools in the nation. Many of their courses are in New England, and their annual Sniper Summit is in October just outside Boston. If you are a sniper, get involved!

Law Enforcement Scoped Rifle Training Professional Police Sniper Training since 1990 2008-2009 Schedule

Basic Police Sniper

- Keene NH May 12-16, 2008 Course Code 8512B
- Binghamton NY May 19-23, 2008 Course Code 8519B
- Scarborough ME May 26-30, 2008 Course Code 8526B

Intermediate/In-service Police Sniper

- Bristol CT Sep. 15-19, 2008 Course Code 8915N

Advanced Police Sniper

- Keene NH July 7-11, 2008 Course Code 8707A
- Syracuse NY TBA

In-Service Police Sniper Instructor

- Camp Hill PA June 23-27, 2008 Course Code 8623I
- Keene NH Aug. 4-8, 2008 Course Code 8804I

SWAT Sniper Supervisor

- Sunapee NH May 1-2, 2008 Course Code 8501S
- Syracuse, NY July 15-16, 2008 Course Code 8715S

Remington 700 Armorer (1-day factory certification)

- Keene NH Sept. 30, 2008 www.remingtonle.com
- Keene NH Oct. 1, 2008 www.remingtonle.com

Cold Weather Police Sniper

- Keene NH Dec 8-9, 2008 Course Code 8128C
- Keene NH Feb. 2-3, 2009 Course Code 9202C

2008 Police Sniper Summit - Harvard MA

- Prof. Development Seminar Oct. 19, 2008
- Live-Fire Training Oct. 20-21, 2008

Register at:

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email: crosshairs@ne.rr.com
www.crosshairs.org