



Approach to Control

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Following on from the last issue of *Security Oz Magazine* in which we discussed the tactical considerations of responding to an alarm call out, this article, in 2 parts, will address the factors surrounding subject approach and control. Part 1 will address key factors relevant to officer safety. Part 2 will focus on the tactical considerations of approaching and controlling subjects.

Part 1 - Officer Safety

It is important to acknowledge that there is a distinct difference between tactics and technique. Tactics are concerned with the circumstances in a situation which occurs, such as seeking cover under fire, whilst technique relates to physical skills, such as striking with a baton. We employ tactics so our technique has the best possibility of success. Both go hand in hand and should be addressed equally in your training.

Preparation

Coping effectively with violence involves prior preparation, on a mental and physical level. Being

prepared is all about planning. Remember, Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance. If you are mentally and physically prepared for the reality of the environment in which you place yourself, your confidence and assertiveness will increase.

The correct mental state is essential for a successful outcome in a confrontation. You must have a 100% win attitude. Maintaining a calm awareness is crucial and can be harder than you think. Being mentally calm requires practice and experience and stems from confidence in your ability to protect yourself and control the situation. Assertiveness is another key element and is also dependent on confidence and experience. Correct use of verbal and non-verbal communication is essential for maintaining assertiveness and can often defuse aggressive situations without the need for resorting to physical control options. You must also be prepared physically for the confrontation. This means being fit and healthy, as well as being equipped to handle the situation physically before it happens. Furthermore, frequent is required and the training must be both realistic and appropriate - factors which many officers overlook.

If you are going to operate in low light conditions, make sure your training incorporates low light conditions so that you have prior knowledge and experience in managing situations under these adverse conditions. Practise patrolling in dark buildings...this can be done as simply as leaving your lights off at home and learning to navigate in the dark with caution and tactical awareness. If you carry equipment, practise with it regularly. You should be so familiar with your gear that use of it becomes a smooth, practised, conditioned response. Incorporate into your training tactical indexing, which involves being able to use technique without looking at it. This allows you to focus on the task at hand...officer safety and subject control. Remember that in all likelihood, you will be operating under stress. Therefore, ensure your drills simulate the stress of street encounters. Consider the following phrases in relation to your operational skills:

- "How you train...is how you work"
Realistic, appropriate training
- "If you don't use it...you lose it"
Regular, consistent practise

- “Fast is slow...smooth is fast”
Relaxed, practised application

I recently attended the annual ASP Instructor Trainer program in the USA, and had the opportunity to network with tactical trainers from law enforcement, military and government agencies from around the world. Two Spanish tactical trainers presented what I thought was an excellent way to view training for operations under stress. Their theory is that tactics can be categorised three ways:

- What you would like to do - ‘The Hollywood Syndrome’
- What you must do - Situation control with officer safety
- What you will do - Your natural, instinctive responses under real life stress situations

Their point was that many people (agencies included) focus on the first category, which tends to concentrate on the acquisition and application of skills that are often untested and unrealistic and therefore impractical and dangerous. The focus of training should be to combine what you must do with what you actually will do, as closely as possible. This means simple, effective strategies tested under stress realism.

Stress Response

A key factor that is commonly ignored or misunderstood by officers is the critical issue of stress in a street encounter. The stress response is the body’s natural defence mechanism and put

succinctly, when the body perceives a threat to its wellbeing, it gears up to fight or flee (hence the common term ‘fight or flight’), with both these reactions aimed at survival. No one can debate the importance of this innate response in determining the outcome of a stressful situation. Once skill acquisitions has occurred to an acceptable level, law enforcement and military training, to a large degree, focuses on training the individual to understand and manage the physiological and psychological factors that occur as a result of this response that WILL be present. It serves no purpose to fight against this battle induced stress. However, you can learn to adapt to it and even use it in your favour. Without going into too much detail, the effects of stress on performance are:

Motor performance

As heart rate increases under stress, fine motor skills deteriorate rapidly, which also affects complex motor skills (Inverted-U Law). For defence responses to be effective under conditions of stress, they should utilise gross motor skills as much as possible.

Sensory - Binocular vision dominant, loss of night vision/depth perception/peripheral and near vision; auditory exclusion

Cognitive Performance - Increased reaction time (Hicks Law); loss of cortex accessing (short-term memory is effective, so you only remember what is very familiar and reflexive); hyper-vigilance

Be S.A.F.E. under stress:

- Slow down and resist the urge to rush.

- Adapt consciously to the physiological reactions rather than fight against them.
- Feel fear but acknowledge that you can still perform during stress situations.
- Evaluate yourself constantly by participating in training that simulates real conditions.

Legal Parameters

The legal factors relevant to the circumstances in which you find yourself will always of consideration in determining your course of action. Without going too deeply into law (and also because all officers should be aware of the legal parameters surrounding their operational duties and localities), the key considerations are arrest and use of force; two areas that all officers should be extremely familiar with and yet, two areas that many officers do not understand and frequently get wrong on the street.

Before someone can be arrested, there is a logical sequence to work through in determining whether or not an arrest both justified and warranted. The first and overriding factor is officer safety...if it is too dangerous or may become too dangerous, consider other tactical options such as tactical disengagement and “cordon and contain”. Having said that, the sequence is as follows...

- Determine Offence/s - points of proof
- Identify Subject/Offender – visual/verbal identification
- Find committing - links person/s to the offence/s
- Powers of arrest - why do I arrest (CAPS)

If we can satisfy these four criteria in sequential order, then we have identified an offender who has committed an offence and we know why we are arresting them. The next phase is actually affecting the arrest, safely and lawfully. In Victoria, the Crimes Act 1958 section 462A states simply that “We may use force that is reasonable and proportionate to stop an offence or affect a lawful arrest”.

The ability to use force against the public is a primary factor that distinguishes agencies such as law enforcement and security from the rest of society. As a result of this responsibility, the use of force comes under close scrutiny by both the public and the courts. The amount of force used to control a subject will depend largely on their cooperation and compliance, or lack thereof, and those tactical options available to you at the time such as empty hand skills, use of a baton, firearm, handcuffs, back-up and so on, as well as your own experience and skills.

Threat Awareness

To manage and control situations effectively, you must make a quick and accurate assessment of the threat involved. Threats can be classified according to the number of people involved and whether they use weapons or not. If they are using weapons, a further consideration also involves what type of weapon. Note - the threat levels of low, medium and high are relative attributes. All threats should be considered serious.

Attack Types	Unarmed	Armed
Single	Lowest	Medium
Multiple	Medium	Highest

When a person decides to attack you, they will employ their own strategies to ensure a successful outcome for them. However, most attackers present valuable information regarding their impending actions. Often they will try to distract you from reading their intention. This process of distraction is called engaging the brain, where your antagonist will provide misleading information which will grab your attention, either subtly or fully, thereby distracting you from their intended purpose. Three common strategies used to engage the brain are:

Strategy	Distraction	Example
Aggression	Obvious	Threaten or intimidate
Disarm	Sneaky	Ask for time
Incidental	Subtle	General chat

Officers should develop an automatic awareness of such actions combined with the ability to carry out an accurate threat assessment of the person they are engaging. Awareness and evaluation is a practiced skill. If you do not practise it, do not expect that it will just ‘happen’ on the street under stress. You are more likely to get caught unawares or make an inaccurate assessment, resulting in

potentially disproportionate and unreasonable actions on your part.

Awareness	Response
Threat Avoidance	Employ countermeasures to avoid, escape or control
Threat Evaluation	Plan strategies, tactics, countermeasures
Threat Awareness	Conscious perception of environment
None	Vulnerable to ambush and attack

Consider the following factors:

- Work off triggers, not decisions. For example, do not ‘decide’ to act. When they make an aggressive move, use that as a cue to act.
- Consciously choose your strategy- negotiate or take action
- Create a perception (how they perceive you) to match your strategy - the way you look, talk and your posture and body language. Assertive and confident is always preferable to submissive and scared. These two perceptions can be linked to adrenalin switches. ■

In the next issue, we will focus on the tactical considerations of approaching and controlling subjects.

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