

COLUMBINE:

LESSONS LEARNED

The Active Shooter and Law Enforcement Preparedness

by Harry Humphries and Hugo Teufel

LITTLETON, COLO. — It's approximately 1115 hours, and you're patrolling a district in the suburb you call home. It has been a typical morning, full of routine traffic stops.

You pull into your favorite restaurant where you'll be meeting another cop from your agency for lunch. Then, you hear it. The auto alert tone goes off, indicating a major situation.

"Attention, all officers! Shots fired at suburban high school. Multiple students injured. Unknown suspects involved." Your daughter attends this school, and even though it's out of your jurisdiction, you and every other officer from your agency is responding.

Within minutes, you arrive at the school. There is no command post. There is no SWAT team ready to enter the massive facility, which holds more than 1,000 students and faculty. There is only you, and your fellow officers from neighboring jurisdictions, a few of whom you know none of whom you've trained with. You can hear shots, explosions, and screams. You have no idea where your daughter might be.

What do you do? What do you do?

Cops Were In The Building

This very situation happened last year near Littleton, a suburb of Denver. Two Active Shooters, bent on killing as many of their fellow students as possible and destroying as much of their school as possible, went on a rampage in Columbine High School. Fully equipped and coordinated SWAT teams did not enter the building for several hours.

Contrary to most media reports, however, cops were in the building within minutes of the first 911 call. Officers from various local agencies (Littleton, Lakewood, Douglas County, and Denver) formed ad hoc teams and entered the high school to find the suspects and save lives. Some were SWAT officers; others were regular line officers. Some were equipped with body armor and submachine guns, others had only their duty vests, and Remington 870s, Colt AR15s, or their duty pistols. Knowing they did not know what threat they might be facing, and knowing that they might very well die, these officers nevertheless went into the maelstrom. They did their jobs.

The metaphorical Mr. Murphy was also on the scene, doing his job well. Because of the improvised explosive devices that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold detonated, the school's fire detection system went off. In some parts of the school, up to 4 inches of water accumulated on floors, and throughout the building the ever-present fire alarm drowned out any voice or radio communication. Not that the radios would have helped much. Not all agencies had access to the other agencies' radio frequencies. Nor, for that matter, did many radios work inside of the massive school building. Accordingly, the ad hoc teams leap-frogged from room to room, and hall to hall, using hand signals, as they moved toward the threat.

Cops Engaged Harris, Klebold

Also contrary to certain media reports, law enforcement officers engaged Harris and

Klebold a few times. Of course, in the first engagement, the school safety officer expended all of the rounds from his pistol at the two shooters from a distance of 75 to 80 yards. There were other engagements, with law enforcement expending a total of 144 rounds, as compared to the 188 Harris and Klebold shot. And reports indicate that the quick thinking and acting of the ad hoc teams bottled up Harris and Klebold, stopping them from killing even more students and faculty, before they ignominiously ended their lives.

In spite of the valiant efforts of the many law enforcement officers on the scene, 12 students and one teacher died. Many have asked in the aftermath whether law enforcement could have done a better job in responding. Perhaps, but to say so risks demeaning the fine officers who gave their all, knowingly risking their lives when they entered a completely unknown situation. Why do these tragic events happen? What then can be done to combat such deadly outbreaks of violence?

To answer the first question, one must consider whether sales promotion or "good copy" media sensationalism influences vulnerable members of society, and those with a propensity to violence. One must also consider whether our society is heading down a slippery slope toward self-destruction. Doubtless, a multiplicity of causes have created this new class of killer. Indeed, loss of family structure, copycat syndrome driven by an insatiable desire to get recognition in any manner at any cost, psychological issues such as inadvertent kill condi-

tioning resulting from excessive time on action video games (which are nothing more than commercial, off-the-shelf combat simulators) all play a role. The list is endless and the cures are beyond the scope of this article and irrelevant to the officer who must stop such a killer.

Teen Active Shooters

To answer the second question (how to combat such deadly violence?), it is necessary to understand who and what the two shooters at Columbine were: *Active Shooters*. The term "Active Shooter" is defined in a recent Illinois Tactical Officers Association newsletter as, "one or more subjects who participate in a random or systematic shooting spree, demonstrating their intent to continuously harm others. Their overriding objective appears to be that of mass murder, rather than other criminal conduct such as robbery, hostage taking, etc." Importantly, Active Shooters are not just adults. They can also be adolescents, or pre-adolescents.

The Active Shooter is neither a serial killer, nor a spree killer. Rather, he's a hybrid. His actions are often organized, as are those of a serial killer, and his intent is the death of multiple victims. The Active Shooter does not go through phases leading up to killing, with cooling off periods. Rather, he kills, often over a period of hours, until his "mission" is accomplished. Often, he expects not to survive the spree of killings. But unlike more traditional serial or spree killers, such as Ted Bundy or Charles Starkweather, the Active Shooter works on a grander, more dramatic and public tableau of violence and death.

History Of Active Shooters

Active shooters are not new, any more than school shootings are. Examples of high-

profile Active Shooters include:

- Charles Whitman at the University of Texas, Austin, clock tower in 1966.
- James Huberty at the San Ysidro McDonalds in 1984.
- Patrick Sherill at a U.S. Postal Service facility in Edmond, Oklahoma in 1986.
- School shooters include:
 - Brenda Spencer at San Diego's Cleveland Elementary School in 1979.
 - Patrick Purdy in Stockton, California, in 1989.
 - Marc Lepine at the University of Montreal in 1989.
 - Harris and Klebold at Columbine High School in 1999. Again, these incidents are fundamentally different from other high-

as an example, it took the Los Angeles SWAT team nearly an hour to arrive on the scene in heavy traffic. Even when SWAT team members do arrive on the scene in a timely fashion, as happened at Columbine, their full complement will be unavailable, as will the majority of their equipment. What then to do?

Time, Talk, Tear Gas

Law enforcement has always been a step or two behind societal trends. The importance of tactical teams was not self-evident to police administrators until after Charles Whitman, in Austin, Texas, and Mark Essex, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Black Panthers and Symbionese Liberation

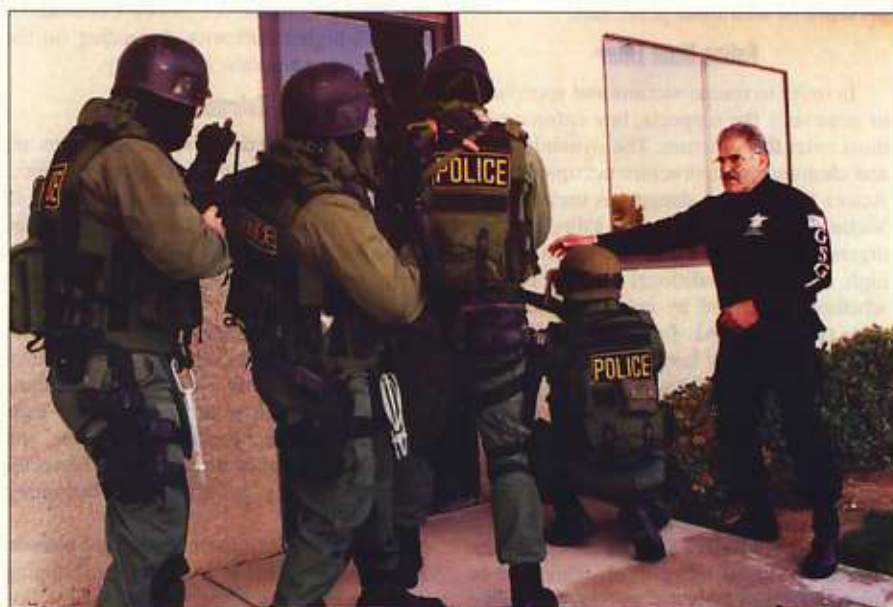
“Attention, all officers! Shots fired at suburban high school. Multiple students injured. Unknown suspects involved.”

profile criminal incidents, such as the Nor-Co shootout in 1980 or the North Hollywood shootout in 1998. They're fundamentally different because murder is the objective, not some other criminal act, such as robbery. Notwithstanding, the results often are the same: Law enforcement must confront and quell a very fluid and deadly, very chaotic incident.

What is law enforcement to do? Unlike Israel, in which a high percentage of the citizenry is armed, it cannot expect lawful use of deadly force from citizens to immediately put an end to an Active Shooter's efforts. Nor can it expect to have highly-trained and motivated SWAT teams on the scene to neutralize the threat. Using North Hollywood

Army, in California. Belatedly, law enforcement agencies added SWAT or tactical teams, but adhered to the "Time, Talk, Tear Gas" approach to crisis resolution.

With the proliferation of drugs in the United States, and the increasing need to engage in hostage rescue from barricaded suspects, American law enforcement turned to the techniques of elite counterterror organizations for dynamic building entries. Law enforcement would enter a building, if not at a time of their choosing, then at a time in which nearly all variables in the violent equation of entry had been accounted for (locations of suspects and hostages, physical layout of the structure, suspects' weaponry and intentions).



(above) Humphries prepares entry team to tighten stack at the door. (Note high port weapons and shotgun breacher kneeling low and out of direct line of fire from within.) (right) Humphries watches as hall boss, behind door covering long, calls for first entry team "Need two ... door left."





Instructor Jack Furr (kneeling) and instructor Chris Mathews (standing), polish rapid team movement, offering minimum exposure as next entry team is set up and executed.



Humphries observes as entry team moves up for next room entry. Hall boss covers long from behind most recently cleared room as the team passes nothing until it's cleared or covered.



Sequential clearing continues as Chris Mathews coaches clearing teams moving from cover of cleared spaces down the hall to the next room entry.

Some agencies saw the future of crime and knew that individuals bent on mass death or injury could strike at public structures. The lucky agencies that prepared for such contingencies and trained in schools and government buildings were ahead of the curve. Many did not, however, because of bureaucratic indifference and the "it can't happen here" syndrome. Columbine brought home to agencies, administrators, and elected officials across the country that it can, and indeed, is likely to "happen here."

Confronting Active Shooters

When confronting the Active Shooter, the goals of law enforcement are three-fold: 1) contain the suspects; 2) rescue victims; and 3) apprehend or neutralize the suspects. It is likely that the situation will dictate that law enforcement pursue these goals concurrently.

First is containment. Ideally, law enforcement should limit the suspect to one floor, or one room of a floor. The less mobility, the fewer victims, the less likely the Active Shooter will escape, and the less likely that the Active Shooter will gain the assistance of confederates. There may not be enough time or personnel to set up a sufficient outer perimeter. In this case, containing the methods of ingress/egress to the building may be all that is possible. Important information for law enforcement at this stage is: 1) the number of suspects; 2) the suspects' weapons; 3) the suspects' ability to maneuver in the structure; and 4) the numbers of victims and potential victims.

Second, is the rescue of victims. Law enforcement, working in the hot zone with emergency medical personnel, must evacuate the victims. Emergency medical person-

nel will have to establish triage stations.

Third, is apprehension or neutralization of the suspects. Knowing what the threat is and where it is located is key to its neutralization.

The problem law enforcement faces is determining which takes precedence in a given situation and at a given moment: victim rescue or suspect neutralization. A very difficult judgment call. And whatever the officers decide will be second-guessed. Columbine amply demonstrated this point. Factors to consider include the number of suspects and their locations; whether additional victims are in the structure; and the presence of additional personnel.

Police Must Enter

In order to rescue victims and apprehend or neutralize the suspects, law enforcement must enter the structure. The dynamic entry and clearance of a structure occupied by an Active Shooter is a dangerous undertaking. Victims are being injured or killed and the urgency to enter and stop the threat is very high. But unlike traditional dynamic entries, whether performed by crack counterterrorism units (such as SEAL Team 6 or GSG-9), or special operations law enforcement units, there is a dearth of knowledge of the suspects' capabilities, or locations and, likely, a dearth of specially-trained operators.

And who might "law enforcement" be at the scene of an Active Shooter incident? SWAT? Not likely, at least initially. This is the paradox of Active Shooter incidents. The Active Shooter is a live threat who must be stopped immediately by any lawful means necessary. This requires men and women of determination and specialized training ready to enter a high-risk, high-threat environment.

However, such officers often are not available immediately. Accordingly, this very difficult task falls to patrol officers, detectives, and intermediate supervisory officers.

Generally, emergency deployment requires a pragmatic, step-by-step approach from the initial stages of alert through establishment of TOC, assembly of tactical operators, operations briefing, team assignments, mission specific equipment issues, communications and finally, actual deployment to crime scene. These steps are required to maintain order and control of the operation by some central authority, such as the SWAT Commander, Scene Commander or even higher authority depending on the agency's bureaucratic complexity.

Urgent, Extreme Measures

In contrast, Active Shooter situations are acts of extreme and immediate violence, and require urgent and extreme measures in order to stop human carnage in progress. There simply is not enough time to implement traditional emergency deployment procedures.

The scenario is similar to one posed to all law enforcement academy cadets: You respond to domestic violence report, shots fired, et cetera. Upon arrival, you hear gunshots and the screams of victims. Do you wait for back up, or do you enter the building and possibly get ambushed, becoming another victim?

In the academy, there is no right answer. In the real world, at a school, a shopping mall, an office building, or a postal facility, with dozens or even hundreds of victims, there is no time for philosophical musings. Entry is a foregone conclusion. And with

victims down, and possible hazardous materials or improvised explosive devices employed by the Active Shooter, you probably will not go in alone. The EMTs, Tactical Trauma Medics, or Hazardous Materials personnel will be joining law enforcement.

The responding officers must be prepared to aggress into the hot zone with trauma medics, set up internal triage sites and containment action, locate and remove injured victims to triage where injuries can be prioritized and stabilized as rapidly as possible, and mass evacuate/martial personnel within the scene. Halting the primary action at rescue and containment, while waiting for the tactical team to close and apprehend, is probably the best possible scenario one could hope for.

If Slaughter Continues ...

What if shots continue and more people are being slaughtered? There can be no question; individual officers must, side by side, continue to aggress into the hot zone in order to stop the killing. Not a pretty picture considering the lack of training these line officers are given, not to mention the appearance of a Wild West, shootout mentality, the very image that police administrators throughout the Nation fight to prevent.

One final point to consider: All the training, tactics, and weaponry, all the multi-jurisdictional cooperation, and all the scenario running you can think of, will not save lives.

Training and tactics will dictate much in what is an already no-win situation. Overlaid are the liability and public relations concerns of agency administrators. An agency must adopt reasonably controllable emergency contingency tactics, if police officers are to effectively stop ongoing killings and rescue wounded victims under fire. There are a few different techniques that operators have used with success in the past to enter and clear a building. Though each has its relative merits, there are two worth mentioning.

LAPD, having faced more and more varied situations than perhaps any other police department, has developed the Diamond formation dynamic rescue technique. The technique depends upon relatively large numbers of trained officers who comprise "Rapid Response Teams." Each unit is a four-officer team — one in front, one in back, one on either side — that surrounds the EMT or Haz Mat specialist. When the team has found a good triage area or potentially dangerous hazardous material, it will drop off the specialist, and continue in search of the suspects. These units are always on duty, ready to respond to a crisis situation.

The other technique is one based upon the work of Naval Special Warfare as a shipboard-clearing technique for cabins and large areas connected to a common passageway. In principle, the concept provides maximum unit control and cover during large team

entries into halls with connecting rooms. Nothing is passed until cleared or covered by an assigned shooter until it can be cleared; team members are minimally exposed to hallways unless stacking to enter a room.

Hall Boss Technique

As taught by Global Studies Group, Incorporated (GSGI), this dynamic rescue entry method, the "Hall Boss technique," is ideal for multi-ported and multi-storied public structures, such as hotels, offices, hospitals, administrative buildings and schools and can be taught to Rapid Response Teams, as well as line officers.

Under GSGI's approach, the key person is the "Hall Boss." The Hall Boss, known as "HB," whether a Rapid Response Team leader, sergeant, field training officer, or senior officer on-site, reads the hall remaining behind cover of corners or doorframes, in complete control of a large team compartmented into sub-teams of three or four conducting simultaneous search and clear operations.

As the line of officers moves toward a hall entrance, the HB, third man in the group, allows the first two men to clear the corner or entrance to the hall and hold long, behind corner cover down the hall. The HB

then moves up and reads the hall for doors, corners, alcoves, skylights or anything that would offer a hiding spot for perpetrators. He will sequentially have each potential hiding space cleared by assigning small teams to one or two areas at a time.

For instance, the HB sees a series of room doors attached to the hall. The first and closest is on the left, so he commands verbally or hand signals "three — door left — go." The first two men move to enter the last of the two states "last man need one," the man behind the HB moves on the stack and squeezes the man in front, they breach and enter the first room, clearing closets, blind spots behind structures, and furniture. The HB moves up to and behind the door frame of the first room while the team continues securing the area. He reads the second room on the right across the hall and commands, "need three — door right 'stand-by' or 'go'." The next three men in the queue stack at the door and enter, so he has two sub-teams operating. The HB continues to gain ground as each room is sequentially cleared stepping behind door frames and reading the hall as he brings the team down the hall. This sequence continues pulling people from the waiting queue until the last man is pulled, he indicates "last man" and the first team to enter now roles into action, covering the assigned clearing mission.

In cases of Active Shooters firing shots

exposing their location, the team goes into a high-speed, leap-frog action where they cover and move as partner pairs, sequentially covering or clearing suspicious doors or hides as the team moves rapidly to the gunshots for contact and apprehension. Here there is heavy emphasis on point alert and rear security as there is a large potential for being "sucked in" and attacked from both sides, a problem with the "Diamond" technique.

Principles of Hot Zones

GSGI first covers principles of unit movement or patrolling to the hot zone. This, too, is critical for responding officers. Too often teams moving toward the stronghold from the transport vehicle through exposed entry routes, danger areas, in a tight entry stack. This is insane as one "golden" bullet can fell multiple officers. The principle of controlled interval is covered, as are basic principles of patrol order and field movement and tactics.

GSGI next covers close quarter conflict resolution, preparing the officer to deal with surprise encounters within 10 feet, or contact distance. And finally before moving on to team clearing of halls, rooms, stairwells, etc., GSGI covers the basics of dynamic entry techniques in great detail. While GSGI has its views of what works best here, it does not espouse any one technique, but instead covers all entry methods as commonly used today throughout the world, giving the pros and cons of each; the teams and agencies decide which works best for them.

Getting to the "micro" level, first responder training, is critical. But it's not the only necessary step agencies must take to counter the Active Shooter. The agency must look at the "macro" level. Mr. Murphy is an equal opportunity meddler, interfering in the efforts of operators and administrators alike. Agencies should run scenarios in as many likely venues for the Active Shooter as possible.

For example, the Beloit, Wisconsin, Police Department recently ran a school-shooting scenario to determine proper response procedures. Five months in planning, Beloit PD learned a number of important lessons.

School Hostage Scam

The scenario involved an emotionally disturbed father and an accomplice who seize a multi-storied school, taking hostages and killing the school resource officer. Some of the lessons Beloit PD learned include the following:

- First, it is important to have a multi-agency command hierarchy. Each agency may do the same things, but use different terms. Having common points of reference is critical to effective communication.

- Second, determine who the critical personnel are for a given situation. Beloit did not realize how important the school principal was. Had they not sent her home, the agency would have been able to clear the

Continued on page 73

in modern history, specifically the Colt All American 2000 and the Beretta Cougar, have not set sales records or even acceptable standards of performance, in the case of the defunct Colt 2000, the Mauser M2 promises better accuracy than that seen with previous examples.

Upon grasping the Mauser M2 prototype one is reminded of the older Smith & Wesson Model 469 compact 9mm pistol with its square corners and slab flat grips. The Mauser M2 we handled suffered from the same deficiency. We did not appreciate the somewhat sharp and hard corners at the rear of the grips.

However, the grips are a small problem compared to the location of the manual safety. It makes no sense at all unless you read the new laws governing handguns in the state of California. Everyone knows that America is the market for handguns in the world and California is often the future — whether the subject is science, automobiles, environmental standards, or other trends for the rest of the United States. Sig's concern is the recent laws passed in California will be the coming wave in what is permitted in firearms sold to the civilian consumer market. California in its most recent legislation regarding handguns mandates a need for a manual safety, but why Sig put it exactly at the rear of the Mauser M2 frame proved beyond a reasonable explanation. Even the Sig engineers who were present at the press briefing were unable to give a satisfactory answer as to why it was located where it was. It fails all logic, unless of course you are a governmental bureaucrat.

The Mauser M2 manual safety takes two hands to take the gun off SAFE whether you are drawing it from a holster or picking it up from a table. The obvious solution for the worldly wise would be to take a Dremel tool and cut the stupid lever off with the thing in the "FIRE" location, but two things are wrong with this option: The first is it could always move unknowingly back to SAFE when you would really need it to FIRE. And the second deals with the liability situation in the United States. If you did this modification and you did have to use this gun to save the lives of those close to you, the unauthorized modification could be used to imply criminal or negligent intent.

The Mauser M2 has a lot of potential if the manual safety thing can get straightened out. The reason why is Sig announced they expect the retail price point to be around \$425 USD.

Even without all that, however, is the fact the Mauser name has returned to a manufacturer who promises to guarantee its integrity and quality. The future remains unknown at this point as to its final design, or even its final retail price, but the Mauser M2 represents a valid attempt to resurrect a legendary name in the sporting small arms trade. ✕

building more effectively and communicate better with the students.

- Third, know the limitations of your communication equipment. Murphy sees to it that radios always go down when you need them. Frequencies vary among departments. Better to figure out what the issues are with respect to communication and resolve them or work around them, than wait until Murphy points them out. Further, fire and EMT personnel should have access to the police frequencies in use at the scene.

- Fourth, be prepared to treat the victims. "Treatment" includes emotional as well as physical injury. Psychologist and counselors, hospitals, and EMTs should be standing by.

- Fifth, expect varying weather. Was the last gunfight you were in under optimal weather and lighting conditions? Probably not, and so expect that the weather will not cooperate when confronted with an Active Shooter.

- Sixth, prepare for traffic and crowd control. In high profile Active Shooter situations, expect that family, friends, and onlookers will swarm the site. This will exacerbate the problems that arise from the high number of law enforcement and medical personnel, as well as media, on-site.

- Seventh, debrief after the training exercise. This seems self-evident.

- Eighth, and last, train often, and under varying scenarios. If you train hard for the unexpected, when it arises it will neither be hard nor unexpected.

- One final point to consider: All the training, tactics, and weaponry, all the inter-agency, multi-jurisdictional cooperation in the world, and all the scenario running you can think of, will not save lives. Nor will these variables stop an Active Shooter. Above all else is mindset. If the first responder, whether the individual line officer or a member of a Rapid Response Team, is mentally unable or unwilling to go into the hot zone, confront mass carnage, and use deadly force to quell an Active Shooter, he or she should not be engaged in a dynamic entry rescue. At best, that officer should be positioned on the perimeter, to allow other, better, men and women to do the necessary work of saving lives and stopping threats.

Former Navy SEAL Harry Humphries, a longtime SOF contributor, specializes in tactical training for military and law enforcement personnel, and provides security consulting and services to businesses and individuals.

Hugo Teufel is an attorney in Colorado who represents military and civilian contractors and small arms manufacturers. He's the former Deputy Solicitor General for the state of Colorado and a law enforcement academy graduate who is P.O.S.T.-certified. ✕



When the elite units of the U. S. military searched for high quality sleeping bags, they found the very best.

The Navy Seals demanded a sleeping system that would function in a temperature range of summer conditions to -40 F. The Special Forces Group needed the same protection. Both found what they were looking for in Wiggys Flexible Temperature Range Sleep System or FTRSS.

Today, Wiggys FTRSS has been assigned a National Stock Number and is the most widely purchased sleeping system in the U.S. armed forces.

Compact, durable, machine washable, and available with a lifetime guarantee, Wiggys bags are today's choice for the professional soldier. Make Wiggys your choice, too.

For more information and a brochure, call toll-free today

Wiggys

Wiggys, Inc. • P.O. Box 2724
Grand Junction, CO 81502

1-800-748-1827
www.wiggys.com