Officer Safety – Detecting and Avoiding Ambush Situations
18-004
Philadelphia ISIS Video
Purpose

67 Officers died this year

Gun related deaths have risen 9%

Heightened level of AWARENESS

Remain VIGILANT
What is an Ambush?

Generally, four factors have come to define an ambush assault:

- Element of surprise
- Concealment of the assailant
- Suddenness of the attack
- Lack of provocation
Objectives

• Explain statistics compiled on police ambush situations

• Define Deliberate/Traditional ambushes

• Identify methods of awareness for Deliberate/Traditional ambushes

• Define Hasty/Spontaneous ambushes

• Identify methods of awareness for Hasty/Spontaneous ambushes
Objectives

• Compare and contrast pre-ambush indicators and pre-attack indicators

• Identify in-vehicle tactical performance

• Identify ways officers can stay alert

• Explain the importance of proper sleep habits

• Describe the importance of Mental Marksmanship

• Identify the below 100 training as it relates to ambush
Introduction Video
Statistics

135 fatalities in 2016 vs. 125 in 2015

Firearms-related incidents number one cause of death in 2016 – 64 officers shot

- 56% increase from 2015
- Officer safety through increased legitimacy
- Eight multiple-shooting death incidents claimed the lives of 20 officers in 2016, tied with 1971 for the highest total of any year since 1932
Statistics

- 64 firearms-related fatalities, 53%, or 34 officers, were shot and killed with a handgun
- In 2016, 21 officers were shot and killed without warning in ambush-style shootings
- Domestic calls accounted for 14 officer fatalities
- 13 officers were killed investigating suspicious person/vehicles
- 9 officers killed attempting to arrest suspects
The Officer

Researchers found that officers’ physical stature did not impact their likelihood of being assaulted.

Officers found to be older than the suspects.

Officers who were killed were between 30 and 39 years old.
The Officer

Police agencies may consider recruiting or training officers to be field independent and hardy.
Assailants or Ambushers

Around 30 years old

Have violent criminal record

Act alone
Three Factors of an Ambush

1. INITIAL CONTACT
2. KILL ZONES
3. FALL BACK LOCATIONS
INITIAL CONTACT

• First step in an ambush
• Can be anything from a vehicle accident to a dog barking
• Designed for target (officer) to go to a designated location
• Distractors are arranged
2 KILL ZONES

Are areas designed to place the target into a prearranged location within range and skillset of the ambushers to increase the percentages of kills and the likelihood of accomplishing the ambushers’ mission.
3 FALL BACK LOCATIONS

Vital to ambushers

- Places where targets will retreat
- Position for ambushers to return fire – given them tactical advantage
Types of Ambush

- Hasty/Spontaneous
- Deliberate/Traditional
Hasty/Spontaneous Ambush

Unplanned or Reactive.

Use generally low resources.

Frequently both the Actor and Target are surprised.
Hasty/Spontaneous Ambush Conditions

The primary purpose is to aid in the escape of the attacker

The secondary purpose is causalities or damage

The Attacker and Target are Frequently at close distances
Hasty/Spontaneous Ambush Video
Allentown PD
Deliberate/Traditional Ambush

Premeditated or “traditional” ambush type.

Offender lures an unsuspecting officer into a location to execute an attack.

**TWO PRIMARY GOALS**

1. Kill cops
2. Avoid arrest through violent resistance
Deliberate/Traditional Ambush Conditions

Armed, trained, and planned

Timing and place are random, however, the plan to attack is NOT

Escape identification

One or more assailants
Planned Urban Ambush

Convoys or small units are targeted.

Tools used:

- Explosives
- Snipers
- Small teams to attack, limit, or terminate movement

Example: Planned attack on a police officer on patrol in his/her vehicle
Deliberate/Traditional Ambush Video
Canonsburg PD
Pre-attack Indicators

What to look for before an attack occurs

Every attack on law enforcement is preceded by an action that provides clues of what may happen
Understanding the Concept of Left of Bang

If you were to picture a timeline, “bang” is time-zero and is in the middle of the line. Bang is whatever event you are trying to prevent from occurring.
Information Hoping vs. Information Hunting

- **Information hoping** means we are simply hoping criminals reveal themselves.

- **Information hunting** means that we execute this observation process deliberately and in a way supports how we make decisions.
BASELINE is the normal environment

BASELINE Normal Behavior + ANOMALY Abnormal Behavior = DECISION

ANOMALY is the deviation
Three Questions to Ask

“What is going on here?”
Define what is happening.

“What would make someone stand out?”
If you were the criminal, think about how your behavior would cause you to stand out from the baseline that you just established in step 1.

“What are you going to do about it?”
For any pre-planned anomaly, decide how you would respond to that assessment.
Elements of Tactical Performance

1. 540-degree Awareness
2. Superior Positioning
3. “Attack-the-Attack” Ferocity
Elements of Tactical Performance

4. Clear Mental Triggers
5. Personal SOPs
6. Commitment to Movement
Elements of Tactical Performance

7. Uncomfortable Training
8. Unsparing Debriefing
Other Prevention Tactics

- Communication
- Identify yourself as police
- Avoid the kill zone
- Don't create cross or "blue-on-blue" fire
- See in the dark
- Keep Low
Other Prevention Tactics

- Slow down
- Stabilize
- Buddy up
- Breathe
- Control the scene
- Set your perimeter
Gear to Survive With
Vehicle Ambush

1. Complete paperwork in a secure location
2. Know your escape plan
3. Check mirrors
4. Observe if being followed
5. Avoid using the same routes
Vehicle Ambush

6. Scan parking lots

7. Make eye contact/pay attention

8. Be cautious when cars stopped suddenly

9. Suspects exit vehicle and leave door open indicator of an attack

10. Never let someone approach you while sitting in your car
## Vehicle Ambush

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintain focus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach is critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an escape route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always have a purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make room in your vehicle for cover</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Retreat

• Crouch down to use engine block for cover
• Create distance
• Get away from the kill zone
• Call for back-up
Run Over the Suspect

WARNING

THE FOLLOWING VIDEO CONTAINS GRAPHIC CONTENT THAT MAY BE DISTURBING TO SOME VIEWERS DISCRETION IS ADVISED
Get Out and Fight

You are ambushed and the suspect is coming toward you while firing his handgun.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

• Unlock the doors
• Get out
• Take a shot or two at the suspect
• Get some distance between us and continue the fight
Recovery
Critical Stress Management

Debriefing

Most common reactions

What to do after

Stress and the Department

Additional Help

Prevention
Critical Stress Management

Debriefing

- Essential after traumatic events

**Two fundamental reasons for debriefing:**
  - Analyze what went wrong and what worked well
  - Attempt to deal with memory loss and cognitive distortion
  - No one should be forced to participate
  - Take place as soon as possible, after the event
  - Part of a longer program
  - De-linking emotions from memories
  - Present breathing exercises
Critical Stress Management

Most common reactions

- Anxiety
- Fear for safety
- Preoccupation about the event
- Avoidance
- Flashbacks
Critical Stress Management

Most common reactions

Physical symptoms:

- Muscle tension, fatigue, headaches, bowel problems

Other symptoms:

- Decreased interest in usual activities
- Sadness and loneliness
- Insomnia
- Increased started response
Critical Stress Management

Most common reactions

- Concentration problems or memory
- Misperception of time
- Guilt
- Self-doubt
- Anger or irritability
Critical Stress Management

What to do after

Immediately After the Event

• Be around people
• Talk with others
• Remind yourself that the event is over and you’re now safe
• If possible, exercise
• Restrict caffeine
• Try to eat
• Avoid alcohol, depressants, and sleeping pills
• Can’t sleep, do something that makes you tired
Critical Stress Management

What to do after

The next few days:

• Embrace your feelings
• Remind yourself your reactions are normal
• Try to get back to a normal routine
• Take deep breaths
• Be kind and patient with yourself
• Engage in enjoyable and relaxing activities
• Talk with family, friends, and colleagues
Critical Stress Management

What to do after

The next few days:

- Accept support from others
- Work on your stress levels
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Be cautious, accidents are more common after severe stress
- Allow yourself time to deal with the memories
- If your actions seriously disrupt your life, seek appropriate help
Critical Stress Management

Stress and the department

- Departmental physical and psychological exam and counseling
- Request time off
- Purpose of the department's incident debriefing is to assess the total response to the incident by the team
- Find a partner or peer support officer to process the debriefing afterwards
Critical Stress Management

Additional help

Signs:

- Uncomfortable in your own skin
- Chronically afraid or hypervigilant
- Unwilling to leave your safety zone
- Obsessive thoughts/compulsions
- Feel profoundly depressed/hopeless
- Guilty
- Thoughts of suicide
- Behavior changes
- More argumentative
Critical Stress Management

Additional help

Signs:

- Engage in fights
- Abuse alcohol/medications
- Take unnecessary risks
- Mind cannot relax
- Repeated horrific nightmares
- Frequent intrusive explicit flashbacks
- Feeling disconnected
- Negative thoughts about the future
- Unable to remember significant information about the incident
Critical Stress Management

Prevention

- Pre-incident stress education
- Develop healthy coping skills
  - Stress management
  - Exercise
- Maintain supportive network
- Seek out humor or laughter
- Healthy lifestyle
- Think positively about yourself
- Continue to make time for activities/hobbies
- Maintain social commitments
- Find additional support as needed
- Try to avoid daily stressors
Training and Preparation
Training and Preparation

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

Benjamin Franklin
Sleep

Sleep plays a vital role in good health and well-being throughout your life. Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety.
Sleep

Healthy Brain Function and Emotional Well-Being:

• Sleep helps the brain work properly

• Sleep deficiency leads to:
  • Trouble making decisions/solving problems
  • Controlling emotions/behavior
Sleep

Physical Health:

• Sleeps heals and repairs your heart and blood vessels

• Sleep maintains healthy balance of hormones and immune system

• Ongoing sleep deprivation linked to:
  • increased heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, and obesity.
Sleep

Daytime Performance and Safety:

- Less sleep, lower reaction time and more mistakes
- Effects of “Microsleep”
The goal is to have police officers “prevail” in encounters with subjects, not just “survive” the encounter.

- Never let your guard completely down
- Do not become complacent
- Use common sense
- If you feel uncomfortable about a situation, change it
- Upon reporting for duty - review all sources of information:
  - Speak with patrol officers and departmental detectives
  - Review daily activities log
  - Check all telecommunication
  - Review circular and notices posted
  - Review pin maps or crime statistics
Scene Awareness/Mental Awareness

AVOID COMPLACENCY!!!

Officers should realize the mind and body operate as a partnership and must strive to maintain both components.
Mental and Physical Preparation

Police officers responding to the challenges of daily police work bring many attributes:

- Training
- Experience
- Attitude
- Equipment
- Physical and mental state

Attributes \(=\) Competence \(+\) Confidence
Confidence and Competence

**Confidence**

Confidence is defined as assurance in one’s abilities.

**Competence**

Competence is defined as having knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge.
Mental Awareness

**GREEN** - A nice place to be while off duty, but never while on duty.

**YELLOW** - This is where you should be at all times when on patrol. Operating with caution, but mentally prepared for a critical incident.

**RED** - Stressed out of control occurs when you are not prepared for a critical incident.
Training

- **Training** is fundamental and ongoing

- **Training** can be accomplished by:
  - Reading literature
  - Practicing learned skills
  - Working and training with other officers
Experience

• Learn from positive experiences and from mistakes

• As situations occur, be willing to analyze the following:
  • What happened?
  • What went right?
  • What went wrong?
  • What have I learned about myself through this experience?
Attitude

Is critical to performance

Many things affect attitude

A “can do attitude” better chance of survival vs. a “can’t do attitude.”

Your attitude depends on your ability to adjust and still get the job done.
BELOW
100

WEAR YOUR BELT
WEAR YOUR VEST
WATCH YOUR SPEED
WIN—WHAT’S IMPORTANT NOW?
REMEMBER: COMPLACENCY KILLS
Conclusion Video
Dedicated to all who made the sacrifice
Officer Safety – Detecting and Avoiding Ambush Situations

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