

BOLO

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The Newsletter for the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association



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VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

MAY 2014

On Combat

By Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, U.S. Army (ret.)

Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman retired from the military after serving in the U.S. Army as a sergeant and platoon leader, parachute infantryman, ranger and teacher of psychology at West Point. Worldwide, police officers know and respect him as an author, guest speaker, educator and highly qualified expert on the physical effects of stress created by violence. In support of LAAPOA and all LAX police officers, he has generously granted permission to publish the following excerpts from his book *On Combat*, which is available at www.killology.com.

Facing the Predator

There are two types of aggression on the battlefield: defensive and predatory. The zebra is always on the defensive, always living in a constant state of stress. The lion feels no stress. The lion is the stress. Which are you: the zebra or the lion?

The lion's only real enemy is another predator: man. Our worst enemy is also the human predator. Fortunately the true predator, the sociopath who feeds without remorse on his own kind, is rare. Still, you should never assume that he is not out there. Usually, the predator does not give any verbal cues; he stands calmly and then attacks violently, forcing you to react to his action. It is quite possible he will get off the first shot and the odds are that you might get hit. Should that happen, *never* believe that the fight is over. Your warrior mindset will replace the shock and fear and you *will* go on; you *will* continue to fight. When sheep get bit they go "Baa," roll over and die. When a sheepdog gets bit, he gets pissed off and bites you back. A warrior meets the predator and survives.

Consider a police-involved shooting that happened in Portland, Oregon, as I was writing this very section. A uniformed officer responded on a radio call to a check-cashing store regarding a 16-year-old male passing a bad check. As the officer was applying the handcuffs, the kid spun around, pulled a pistol from his waistband, and fired into the officer's face. The bullet struck the officer in his left eyebrow, traveled under his skin, and exited behind his left ear. Two subsequent rounds whizzed by his face.

Shots were exchanged in the lobby, and then a running gun battle ensued in which several more rounds were fired. The suspect eventually collapsed in an adjacent driveway with bullets in his pelvis, chest and abdomen. The shot officer kept him covered as he called for backup, and not until other officers arrived on the scene did he collapse. Later, when asked by the press how the officer was

doing, the chief said that his head was sore but he was really angry with the kid for shooting at him.

Whether you are a peacekeeper in Bosnia or a police officer on the street, you go where the predator is. When our soldiers go into a cave in Afghanistan, they go into *his* lair, which means *he* has the home court advantage. When our police officers go into a predator's house and into *his* bar, they are going into *his* lair. In nature the predator in his lair almost never loses because he is going up against predatory *and* defensive aggression. That is why the lion tamer goes into the cage before the lion. If he did it the other way around, the crowd would be paying to see an entirely different show.

Thus the mission is hard and the deck is stacked against you. But a *warrior*, with proper training and mindset, *can* and *will* survive.

Complacency Is the Enemy

You must train to fight with intent and will, not fear and panic, and *never* with complacency. Consider what happened in a West Coast city to an experienced warrant-delivery team, trained officers who in the past had delivered a hundred no-knock drug warrants a year. In preparation to serve a warrant on one drug dealer, they first met at a local fire station, loaded into the SWAT van, pulled into the suspect's backyard, and streamed up to the back door. To their surprise, the door was unlocked, so the officer with the ram just stepped inside, an action that might have confused the rest of the formation. Their regular number-two man was in court that morning, which also added to the confusion.

As they shouted, "Police! Search warrant!" the number-one man went in to the left, the new number-two man, Officer B, went right and the number-three man moved in to back up the number-one man. The number-four man should have been covering Officer B, but he went in the wrong direction. Thus Officer B was moving alone down a hallway when a teenage kid, naked and clutching a high-capacity pistol, stepped into the hallway and began firing.

Now, the SWAT team had all been issued Kevlar helmets, but since some of the officers thought they were awkward and bulky, they had been made optional. So Officer B, minus his helmet, crouched in the narrow hallway as the naked teenager's bullets punched through the officer's skull, ripping through his forebrain, midbrain and hindbrain.

Continued on page 2



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ON COMBAT

Continued from page 1

Officer B's first shot blew off one of the kid's testicles, and then the officer kept pulling the trigger as he spun down to the floor, putting one bullet into a wall and another into a door. His last dying shot struck the family television.

When the other team members heard the gunshots, they literally tripped over each other getting out the door. When they realized that Officer B was not with them, they grabbed a shield and streamed back into the house, finding the suspect standing over Officer B's dead body. A spray of bullets dropped the suspect.

The suspect's mother had been in a back bedroom and came out when the shooting ended, screaming, "My son is a cop! What are you doing? My son is a cop. Why is this happening?" Although the suspect's big brother was a law enforcement officer on the same department as the warrant-delivery team, the team had a legitimate and lawful reason to go in after the suspect. They got their man, but two law enforcement families were shattered that day. Let's examine what they did wrong.

First, they did not rehearse. U.S. Army evaluation standards require that combat patrols *always* conduct a rehearsal, no matter how many times similar missions have been conducted. Warriors are required to rehearse two things: actions on the objective and actions on enemy contact. If the team had spent just 30 seconds rehearsing their entry in the fire station prior to going out to the scene, the operation would have gone more smoothly. Yes, 99 times out of 100 the team had performed problem-free entries, but this was the one time when things went wrong, a time when there had been no rehearsal.

Nor did they rehearse their actions on enemy contact. So when shots rang out from a back hallway, everyone banged into each other getting out the door, leaving a fellow warrior inside dying on the



floor. Always rehearse actions on the objective and always rehearse actions on enemy contact.

Warriors always inspect their equipment prior to a mission. If you are a leader, you check your people to ensure they have all the equipment they need to stay alive, including their helmet. A Kevlar helmet will stop pistol rounds all day long, but only if you are wearing it. If not, it is useless. A warrior will not be caught without his equipment, and a warrior leader makes his people do the right thing.

Warriorhood is infectious — it is communicable. And effective warrior leaders transmit it to their people. When I look back on my years as a military leader, there are a couple of instances that make me shudder. We are all human and complacency tries to seduce us all. Sometimes we fall short of the warrior standard. Fortunately, I had some magnificent warrior leaders who put a boot in my rear whenever I slipped off the warrior path.

Sometimes your warrior peers can transmit a sense of warriorhood. The expectations of your brothers in arms and your responsibility to them can help you do the right thing. Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, said that as a warrior, you should “Train half for yourself and half for your partner.” Since warrior comrades and even warrior subordinates hold you to a high standard, you never want to let them down. When you surround yourself with such individuals, they help pull you up the warrior path, and you help each other fight complacency.

Complacency is the enemy, and we must help each other in the battle against this deadly foe. We do our rehearsals. We do our inspections. We are prepared every day. General Peter J. Schoomaker, the U.S. Army chief of staff, put it this way: “Real warriors never take their eyes off the horizon. You’re like a wild animal in the woods. You pay attention to your instincts. You’ve always got your rifle within reach.”

To be transformed into a warrior, you must study warriors. Now, John Wayne might be an appropriate warrior model, but you must not internalize the Dirty Harry philosophy or any other out-of-control nutcase we see portrayed by Hollywood. These are whackos and avengers. They are great subjects for television and movies, but they make poor warriors. You must dedicate yourself towards doing your job with righteousness and decency.

Dr. Paul Whitesell quotes from a letter by an ancient Greek warrior leader who was writing from the front lines to the city fathers. In it he said this: “Of every 100 men that they send me, 10 should not be here. Eighty are nothing but targets. Nine are real fighters, they the battle make. Ah but the one, he is a warrior, and he will bring the others back.”

To bring the other 99 back is your job as a warrior. That is what your society calls upon you to do. While every other creature flees from the sound of the guns, you move toward them. Draw from the tradition and the heritage of the past.

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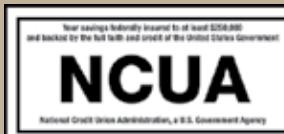


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