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I. "Current training may leave officers more vulnerable": Early highlights from forthcoming FSI assessment project

- The average officer within months of leaving an academy will be able only to *describe* how a given suspect-control technique should be used but will have "little ability" to actually *apply* it effectively in "a dynamic encounter with a defiantly resistant subject."
- At the rate academy and in-service training is typically delivered, it could take the average street cop up to *45 years* to receive the number of hours of training and practice in arrest-and-control and officer-safety techniques that a student athlete gets in competitive sports during the usual high school career.
- Many police training programs are not employing modern research-based methods of successfully teaching psychomotor skills, a shortcoming compounded by the fact that current record-keeping fails to capture even the most elementary relevant information about the dynamic nature of real-world assaults on LEOs.

These are but a few of the findings that will be included in an assessment of police training in the U.S. and the United Kingdom that has been conducted across the last 3 years by the Force Science Institute.

Last month, FSI's executive director Dr. Bill Lewinski shared selected highlights from the study with nearly 2,000 officers at a conference sponsored by the Police Federation of England and Wales, which commissioned the training evaluation. He is now completing a comprehensive final report on the project to be delivered within the next 30 days.

"Our assignment specifically was to evaluate the foundation of training paradigms, the curriculum, and the teaching methodologies for officer safety and arrest-and-control performance in use-of-force situations within the United Kingdom, and to offer recommendations for improvement," Lewinski explains.

"But to put that in a meaningful context, it was necessary also to assess the status of training in the U.S. and to some extent in Canada. Policing practices across western societies are generally very similar.

"Wherever they are based, if officers are unprepared to meet the various threats and levels of resistance and violence they face, it can impair their ability to make good judgments, to effect control, and to avoid injury or death to themselves and to innocent civilians."

The research team led by Lewinski included internationally recognized authorities in biomechanics, kinesiology, exercise physiology, forensic psychology, and other relevant disciplines.

Their bottom-line conclusion: Time and cost concerns are "so restrictive that they significantly compromise the suitability and sufficiency" of current physical force training.

"An unintended consequence is that current training may leave officers more vulnerable, despite the best attempts by police trainers and their agencies to deliver an effective training package."

We'll have full details in a future edition of *Force Science News*, drawing directly from Lewinski's forthcoming report to the Federation.

II. New nat'l reports underscore Taser safety for cops, suspects alike

Two new reports from the National Institute of Justice emphatically confirm that Tasers are overwhelmingly safe for suspects and significantly reduce injuries to officers.

Despite efforts by Amnesty International, the ACLU, and other activist groups to link Tasers to in-custody deaths, the NIJ's final report on its exhaustive "Study of Deaths Following Electro Muscular Disruption" asserts:

"There is no conclusive medical evidence...that indicates a high risk of serious injury or death to humans from the direct or indirect cardiovascular or metabolic effects of short-term [Taser] exposure in healthy, normal, nonstressed, nonintoxicated persons."

Indeed, the report says, the risk of death in a force incident involving a conducted energy device "is less than 0.25 percent, and it is reasonable to conclude that CEDs do not cause or contribute to death in the large majority of [even] those cases.... [C]urrent research does not support a substantially increased risk of cardiac arrhythmia in field situations, even if the CED darts strike the front of the chest.

"Law enforcement need not refrain from using CEDs to place uncooperative or combative subjects in custody, provided the devices are used in accordance with accepted national guidelines and appropriate use-of-force policy."

The conclusions were reached by a medical panel composed of forensic pathologists, medical examiners, and experts in cardiology, emergency medicine, epidemiology, and toxicology. Their 60-page report can be accessed in full free of charge by [clicking here](#) or by visiting www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/233432.pdf

A 19-page companion document, "Police Use of Force, Tasers and Other Less-Lethal Weapons," is available free by [clicking here](#) or by visiting www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/232215.pdf.

This study looked at injuries that occur to LEOs and subjects during use-of-force events and found--not surprisingly--that the use of physical force and hands-on control "clearly" increase the risk of injury to officers and suspects alike. "[O]fficers, rather than suspects, face the most increased injury risk when suspects resist more vigorously," the report states.

Among agencies studied, use of pepper spray "reduced the likelihood of injury to suspects by 70%," but its use *increased* injury risk to officers by as much as 39%--a finding that was "unexpected" and begs "more research."

Analysis of more than 24,000 use-of-force cases "showed the odds of suspect injury decreased by almost 60% when a CED was used." Compiling reports from multiple agencies, the researchers found that Taser use also tended to result in a significant decline in officer injuries.

More than 15,000 law enforcement and military agencies now issue Tasers, the report notes. "They are rapidly overtaking other force alternatives."

[Our thanks to use-of-force instructor Tom Moy of the University of Delaware Police Dept. for alerting us to these reports.]

III. Survivors speak: A different view on police suicide

A different perspective on police suicides is the novel theme of a haunting new book by Sgt. Clarke Paris of the Las Vegas Metropolitan PD.

Instead of probing the psyches and personal demons of officers who commit the ultimate act of self-destruction, he gives voice to those left behind, the friends and family members who often are caught by surprise by their loved one's deliberate death.

Paris, who conducts a traveling seminar called "Winning the Battle" for law enforcers on detecting and controlling stress, has spent more than a quarter-century on the job in Vegas. At one point, he himself suffered a breakdown that he says could easily have led to suicide, after years of "stuffing down" the stress and psychological scars of what he had experienced.

In his book *My Life for Your Life*, Paris and his wife Tracie recount his personal ordeal, which eventually reached a positive outcome after he acknowledged that he needed help. He also includes a chapter on the effects of cumulative stress written by psychologist Dr. David Joseph. But the bulk of the 200-page volume is devoted to what the survivors of 8 LEOs who committed suicide have to say.

His approach is to present a "biographical portrait" of each officer, composed by a close relative, and then to reproduce letters that he asked spouses, children, parents, or friends to write to the deceased.

From these intimate communiques, some powerful themes emerge:

- In contrast to the bitterness one might expect, the survivors express essentially happy memories of the dead officers alive, frequently citing specific positive influences that they had on those around them.
- Inevitably, the suicide ruptured the lives of those left behind, wrecking families and inflicting awful pain for which there seems no explanation or justification.
- Still, love for the suicidal officer endures; it's a bond, certainly with the parents who write, that even the willful act of seemingly senseless desperation can't break.
- Equally enduring is a sense of regret, felt over what the dead officer is missing because he turned his back on the possibility that life would get better.
- And there is often expressed a lingering, eternal question: "Why didn't you ask for help? I would have helped you if only you had trusted me enough to reveal your pain."

Paris told *Force Science News* that he believes every officer should be aware of the "eternity of pain" suicide inflicts on survivors. "I believe that 99.9% of cops who take their lives never thought they would earlier on. I know I felt that way. But we all have a big pot of 'cop stew' simmering on the stove inside us.

"If an officer begins to struggle, I hope he'll remember from reading this book how a self-inflicted death affects others. You may think they'll be better off without you, but they won't.

"I also hope that no matter how deep or dark or lonely the place is that you're in, you'll understand that help is available that works." He lists some of these resources in the book.

More information (including ordering) for Paris's book and his seminars is available by [clicking here](#) or by visiting <http://www.thepainbehindthebadge.com/proddetail.asp?prod=book>.

IV. Long working hours again tied to heart disease in latest study

The association between long working hours and coronary heart disease (CHD) may be strong enough to warrant adding hours worked to the traditional list of risk factors for predicting heart problems, according to British researchers.

A study group headed by Dr. Mika Kivimaki of University College London tracked nearly 7,100 civil service workers across more than a decade and discovered that those who worked 11 hours per day or more had a 67% higher risk of developing CHD than those who put in "normal" full-time work of 7 to 8 hours daily.

This jibes with multiple earlier studies from "diverse populations" showing a strong correlation between extended work time and coronary problems, including heart attacks and premature death.

If long working hours, which are considered a "psychosocial stressor," had been included in patient evaluations, along with such conventional risk-assessment factors as blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and smoking habits, accuracy in long-range screening for potential development of CHD would have been "modestly" improved by about 5%, the researchers concluded.

More research is needed to confirm this finding, to adequately weigh the benefits of adding work hours to evaluations, and to determine how marking that information might impact preventive care.

The study did not include police officers, but Kivimaki told one science reporter, "People who work long hours should be particularly careful in following healthy diets, exercising sufficiently, and keeping their blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood glucose within healthy limits."

An abstract of the study appears in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. To read it, [click here](#) or visit www.annals.org/content/154/7/457.abstract.

V. Verbal Judo founder Dr. George Thompson dies at 69

Dr. George "Doc" Thompson, a groundbreaker in communications tactics for law enforcement and founder of Verbal Judo training, died unexpectedly on June 7. He was 69.

Across 27 years, a global team of instructors led by Thompson, has trained more than 1,000,000 professionals in crisis communications. He wrote 4 books on the subject and served on the Technical Advisory Board of the Force Science Institute.

FSI's executive director Dr. Bill Lewinski termed him "a great pioneer who made major contributions to law enforcement on the international scene through his skills in teaching nonviolent methods for defusing and resolving potentially dangerous conflict situations. His positive impact on police training and officer safety has been remarkable."

His work will continue under a bifurcated arrangement. His heirs now manage training abroad through the Verbal Judo Institute. Domestically, Thompson-based courses are provided for professionals in public safety, corrections, education, mental health, corporate security, and other disciplines under a new brand, Verbal Defense and Influence, managed by the Vistelar Group. Among Vistelar's directors is Gary Klugiewicz, a certified Force Science Analyst and a principal aide to Thompson in recent years. (For more information, [click here](#) or visit www.vistelar.com.)

A public memorial service will be held for Thompson from 1000 to 1200 on July 9 at the White Chapel, 197 South St., Auburn, NY. To view or contribute to an online memorial page, [click here](#) or visit www.verbaldefenseandinfluence.com/doc.

VI. Additional clarification on reaction-time study

In Transmission #178 [5/20/11], we reported a Texas State University study that measured the reaction time required by officers to shoot a suspect who attempts to shoot them when the officers already are drawn down on the offender. In our last transmission [6/6/11], a

reader commented that the hypothesis of the study seemed to be "that an officer has to wait until a gun is pointed at him before shooting" and noted that "overwhelming case law" does not impose this restriction.

Dr. J. Pete Blair, lead researcher on the study, responds:

Our hypothesis was *not* that an officer must wait until a suspect points a gun at him or her before shooting. We do, however, think that many civilians believe this. Our hypothesis was that action is faster than reaction. We wanted to test that truism in a scenario where civilians might suspect otherwise.

Our results clearly show that even when an officer has his gun pointed at the suspect, the officer cannot reasonably expect to be able to fire before the suspect does if the suspect decides to shoot.

There is an important distinction between case law and what a jury decides. Imagine that you are a police officer who shot an armed suspect who took no overtly hostile action, but did not comply with your commands. You are now called upon to testify as to the rationale behind your decision to shoot. You say that action is faster than reaction. The defense says prove it. You can point to our study, in a peer-reviewed journal, as direct support for your actions. This should be a much more comfortable position than relying upon a jury to correctly interpret the vagaries of case law.