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Strategos Active Shooter

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by Paul Pawela

While the term Active Shooter is a relative new term in law enforcement that particularly centers around shootings that take place in school settings, the truth of the matter is, an active shooter situation can take place almost any where.

In fact a significantly higher percentage of active shooter incidents occur in the workplace and or areas where there are a high number of potentially accessible victims, consider these workplace violence statistics.

- Around two million Americans are victims of workplace assaults each year
- More than one thousand people are killed in the work place each year
- Forty thousand people are victims of aggravated assaults each year
- One point five million people are victims of simple assaults in the workplace each year
- Fifty one thousand people are raped and or sexually assaulted in the work place each year
- Work place homicides account for one out of six fatal occupational injuries
- Firearms were used to commit more than eighty percent of the work place homicides.



However, because of the attention and focus given as a result of school shootings, there has been more attention and research in the designated areas credibly related to school violence. To date there have been over forty (five and rising) recorded incidents of active shootings and despite all that has happened, many

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jurisdictions have still no planning or training for a crisis situation. Many agencies are now aware they must start preparing for just such an event ahead of time because it is too late to plan, practice and execute a plan when the incident is already in progress.

Armed with the knowledge that statistically, shootings have killed more children at schools more than fires and yet hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on decisively protecting school children from the threat of fire when the average school will run twelve fire drills a year with no reported fires and maybe run one active shooter scenario a year the average person would in fact tend to believe the United States seems to have its priorities mixed up considering school children are at risk from angry school children who carry weapons to schools to Al Qaeda leaders and followers who consider American schools prime targets.

While there is no exact science to the active shooter dilemma and no one really has all the answers of how to deal with the current situation exactly, law enforcement has a wide variety of different training programs throughout the nation to aid and assist them to develop a program for their perspective department's. Many programs will run a two day program and generally every active shooter program will more than likely cover the following topics:

- Historical overview of events
- Active shooter vs. barricade/hostage situation
- Survival stress reactions
- Training to win
- Low light techniques
- Prevailing in low light conditions
- Rescue team tactics
- Building approaches
- Force on force practical exercises
- Video scenario debriefings



Some programs will have their own specialties added to the topics, like the use of improvised explosives or other breaching methods, still others will carefully place emphasis on treating the seriously wounded and how they would triage the victims. For the most part the fore mentioned topics will all most certainly be covered and of all the topics mentioned in the above probably the most important of all the topics are the force on force practical exercises. There are several reasons why force on force training is the most important topic, first it trains officers to engage thinking, moving and armed mock adversaries. Second it prepares officers to be on the offensive attack rather than the defensive and third and probably the most important it evaluates whether your tactics are sound or not.

By now it is understood that time is critical when responding to an active shooter, patrol no longer has the luxury of setting up a containment perimeter and wait for swat. If shots are fired, they must respond. Sadly all too often when force on force training is conducted it is often a one way training exercise where the good guys heroically storm in and shoot the bad guy and after the exercise they high five each other and their off to the local pub to celebrate their deeds and conquests. There is just one slight problem with that little scenario and that is what if the shooter actually starts shooting back?

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If your tactics are such that your team members are actually taking hits in training then maybe you should reevaluate your tactics because if you or your team members are getting shot in training then in real life that would constitute a seriously wounded officer or a dead one, perhaps more. And as far as force on force training goes, The International Training Company that has set the bar in this field is: STRATEGOS INTERNATIONAL, the founding member and President Ken Good is one of the most recognized and respected names in the military and law enforcement training world.

Ken, a former Navy SEAL, was responsible for directing several anti-terrorism programs for 10 years for the Department of the Navy. These programs were founded on a demanding force-on force training approach. Ken and his staff interacted with the best that military special operations units and highly selected elite police tactical teams had to offer to develop clearly challenging training in both day and night operations on one of the most difficult platforms one could negotiate, decommissioned warships. From this experience especially the fast knowledge of working with CQB tactics what worked and what do not work soon became rather apparent, this to can be said of operating in low light conditions as Ken and his training personnel would eventually form the genesis of what would become the SureFire Institute, which would give birth to Strategos International and as they say the rest is history.

As previously mentioned the Strategos Instructors covers the all important topics of the active shooter out line as various other companies do, however where Strategos starts to pull away from the pack is the extensive force on force drilling they do with three different venues of training.

Phase One: Airsoft

Utilizing mil-sim airsoft guns in real environments where police officers are more than likely going to engage a real live active shooter, Schools and Buses are perfect examples of this. Mil-sim Airsoft guns helps the officers evaluate not only their tactics but gives the officer a better mental image of the bigger picture. The responding officer not only has to focus on just the threat to the innocents, airsoft safely allows the interaction of using of real citizens in full force on force unscripted scenarios.

Why this is so vitally important when involving the general community who is more than likely to be on the receiving end of the rescue plan, people like high school students and the school faculty for example, to interact unscripted in a chaotic setting, allowing the most realism on both sides to appreciate the seriousness of the situation allows everyone involved how critical it is to solve the problem and get it right the first time. This not only replicates situations in real time but it allows for better public relations for the police interacting with the public in the long run.

Phase Two: Paint Ball

The use of Strategos realistic paint ball guns which totally eliminates the got you no you didn't child's play that too often creeps in on so called realistic training. The paint ball guns reinforce two things: One it takes any guess work out of who got shot and who didn't, two it reinforces that the notion of getting shot is no fun at all even with a paint ball because even with the proper safety equipment those paint balls have a propensity to find that one exposed area of your body that is exposed, and it smarts, then you have to admit to yourself you screwed up in your cover and concealment approach.

Phase Three: Live Fire

Strategos drills the team tactic concept of working in unison and to communicate with your partner both in verbal language and with the flash lights. The way Strategos instructors and students communicate with a flash light is a sight to behold. Many detractors might state that most active shooters are done in day light conditions, however there are occasions when active shooters go into dark locations looking for victims that are hiding as was the recent case with Asa Coon who just recently shot four people at his school before ending his own life.

Strategos continues to reinforce training in the modern techniques that they taught and are carefully applied in

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live fire training presentations done in both day and night conditions. By putting all combined techniques and tactics that were previously used in the days before with airsoft and paint ball officers can now safely put it all together on the live fire range.



While Strategos strength is clearly force on force as well as low light techniques they are also well versed in what they like to call Physical Conflict Resolution. PCR is a separate forty hour instructor course in it self, how ever a lot of time is dedicated to train the LE student techniques that deals with both defensive and offensive tactics relating to threats that become physically non-complaint or overly aggressive. An important examples of this would be a frantic victim that is complying with the entry teams verbal commands and needs to be dealt with quickly and forcefully but does not harm or injure the victims, the techniques taught by the Strategos Instructors may very well be the most effective techniques that are proven to work under extreme duress in the law enforcement community.

The Strategos International Active Shooter Instructor Course is five days in length which may be considered to long for the everyday officer to take away precious time from work (they do have a three day class as well) and it is rather pricey at \$795.00 plus food, gas and lodging and ammunition to boot, the obvious question is it worth it?

A far better endorsement comes's from the type and quality of the students who spent their own personal funds to attend the training than any writer ever could, this class was no exception as not only did it have students from around the country in it, but it had four from other countries as well. One from Greece and three from Germany, who just happened to be from their own very elite SEK teams considered throughout the world to be one of the best counter terrorism tactical teams in the world, when asked by this author on their expert opinion on Strategos's training the SEK operators simply stated it was the best training they ever had.

For more information on Strategos training go to their website at: www.strategosintl.com/.



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