

“Real World Tactical Training”

By: Tom Perroni

I was training a group of officers with an agency I had never trained before. I was going over the “Range Safety Brief” and told these officers that we run a 360° degree HOT range. They all looked at me as if I was from Mars. I was and wasn’t surprised. As Law Enforcement / Private Security Contractor / Military Firearms Instructors it is our duty to give our students the tools they need when encountering unexpected, complex circumstances, especially in the context of deadly force confrontations. Quite often that doesn’t happen for a variety of reasons.

Let’s face it as Firearms Instructors we continually train and emphasize accuracy over speed. Many is the time I have said *Smooth is fast, speed is fine but accuracy is final*. Yet if you are not providing additional training which combines accuracy with speed are you doing a disservice to those students by ignoring the realities of what they will encounter in a “Real World Tactical Situation”? I say yes.

While we must teach static drills as part of the agency or state requirements this teaches the student the skills necessary to excel on a qualification course and is necessary as a foundation. It in no way prepares the officer for the sudden encounter when the threat comes from the side or from behind; or if you have more than one bad guy.

I feel that once the student demonstrates a solid understanding of the fundamentals and can deliver accurate shots from a static platform they must be taught to incorporate those skills with movement that will promote successful outcome despite the unexpected situations that can evolve in the “real world”.

I tell my students that when they qualify on the static range I expect a perfect score because the target is not moving or shooting back at them. Not only do we have the civil liability of every round that leaves our handgun. The FBI U.C.R. tells us that most shootings occur at a distance of 3-10 feet. 80% of those shootings happen in low or reduced light, and that of the average of 10 rounds fired in a gun fight only 2 hit the intended target. So under the duress of a gun fight a 100% shooter falls to about 70% accuracy. If you are at the minimum compulsory training standard of 75% then you fall to 45% accuracy.

So what should we be teaching our students?

Traversing is the lateral movement of the weapon to address a threat (or threats) not presenting itself directly in front of the student. It can be accomplished by rotation of the upper body, much like the movement of the turret on a tank, without the necessity of moving the feet or without changing the direction that the

student is already moving. While the range of motion is determined by the flexibility of the student, this action can usually include more than a 90° traverse to either side.

Pivots can be used to pick up where the ability to traverse stops. This is accomplished by the movement of the feet to allow the weapon to effectively address the threat which cannot be achieved by traversing alone. This would include a threat directly behind the officer. Combining both traversing and pivots provides the flexibility necessary to address threats in the reality of a 360° world.

90° pivots (left or right): As a general rule, when the student is turning and stepping *towards* the assailant, the foot that is closest to the threat becomes the pivot foot and the foot farther away is the one that takes the step. When turning and stepping *back*, away from the assailant, the foot that is farthest from the threat becomes the pivot foot and the one closest is the one that takes the step. The length of the step will vary based upon stature of the officer and whether they are left or right handed.

180° Pivots (turning to the left or the right): While the argument could be made that “ideally” a pivot towards the support side would be advantageous by immediately moving the holstered handgun away from where it would be accessible to an assailant in close proximity, the fact still remains that environment (obstacles, walls, terrain, etc.) may nonetheless dictate which direction the pivot is made. Again as a general rule, if the first step is *away from the threat* (forward and to the outside the support foot), the dominant side foot steps and the support side foot is the pivot foot. When the first step is *towards the threat* (back and to the outside of the dominant foot), the support side foot steps and the dominant side foot pivots. Whether stepping forward or backward, prior to the pivot, the head and eyes must look over the shoulder corresponding to the direction of the turn.

How do we move in a 360° world with a loaded handgun to check our rear and be ready to put that handgun back into the fight? We use position “SUL”.

If the “SUL” position is the objective, the *support hand* is moved to the centerline of the chest. The *dominant hand* moves the weapon forward and towards the centerline of the body and the *support hand*, as it rotates the muzzle down to point between the student’s feet. The thumb of the *dominant hand* is extended away from the grip of the weapon to make contact with the tip of the *support hand thumb*. The barrel or slide of the handgun rests against the back of the extended *support hand* fingers. The trigger finger remains indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver.

The ability to turn and fire accurate shot(s) on a threat relies upon the *efficiency* of the movement. Taking one step with one foot and pivoting on the other will be quicker than taking two or more shuffling steps with both feet.

The stance created by simply pivoting on both feet deteriorates the balance needed for a stable shooting platform as well as recoil recovery, and hinders any subsequent movement of the student. No matter what methods the trainer uses to impart this skill to the students, they should not lose sight of the *end product*; that being the ability of the student to fire as many accurate shots as needed, from as balanced and solid a shooting platform as possible, without sacrificing recoil control and mobility.

The information for this article came from several Firearms Instructor courses and manuals as well as Brad Naylor, Greg Tyree and Chris Pick who are Adjunct Instructors at my Academy and Lead Instructors at their respective agencies.

I could talk forever about "Real World Tactical Training" but this is all the room I have for this article. If you want to learn more come to class and I will teach you what you want to know.

Stay Safe & Shoot Straight!

Remember "Conflict is inevitable; Combat is an option". Stay in condition yellow and stay in the fight.