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14. ABSTRACT Close quarters combat shooting is an issue of survival for both law enforcement and military communities. It is more relevant today in the military community because of the concurrent wars against irregulars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where our personnel have to go house to house searching for insurgents and weapons. The confined spaces where our troops now operate provide a special challenge that conventional firearms training may not prepare them to successfully face. Most present day law enforcement and military personnel are trained in the use of the Modern Technique/sighted method. For decades, statistics have shown that law enforcement officers do miserably when engaged in close quarters combat shooting incidents with rates of accurately hitting their adversaries at 15% to 19%. F.B.I statistics on police involved shootings show that most engagements occur at short distances of 0 to 10 feet and in low-light. These conditions most favor the Point Shooting method/unsighted method, which incorporates observed instinctive human reactions during close quarters combat, such as the use of a crouch and the focus on the threat. The analysis of the two shooting methods showed that in close quarters combat shooting situations, most people will instinctively use the shooting platform advocated by Point Shooting then as the distance from the adversary increases and time allows they will use of the Modern Technique. It is therefore important that we train our armed forces in the method that is most appropriate for the situations which they will most encounter, and that is Point Shooting.		

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Close Quarters Combat Shooting

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Executive Summary

Title: Close Quarters Combat Shooting

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Thesis: Point Shooting is the superior method for close quarters combat shooting.

Discussion: Close quarters combat shooting is an issue of survival for both law enforcement and military communities. It is more relevant today in the military community because of the concurrent wars against irregulars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where our personnel have to go house to house searching for insurgents and weapons. The confined spaces where our troops now operate provide a special challenge that conventional firearms training may not prepare them to successfully face. Point Shooting was developed and refined as a result of the close quarters combat shooting incidents of the Shanghai Police of the 1920s, and the Allied soldiers of World War II during which it proved its worth in combat. The Point Shooting method has fallen out of favor with the law enforcement and military communities in favor of the Modern Technique, which most of law enforcement personnel have been trained in. Statistics have shown that police officers do miserably when engaged in close quarters combat shooting incidents with rates of accurately hitting their adversaries at 15% to 19%. It is imperative that the Point Shooting method again become relevant if we want to give our personnel the tools to survive in close quarters combat.

Conclusion: F.B.I statistics on police involved shootings show that most engagements occur under the conditions that most favor the Point Shooting method. The observed instinctive reactions under stress have been incorporated into the Point Shooting method which makes it easy to learn and retain. For the sake of survival in combat it therefore behooves to train our personnel in it.

Preface

My reason for conducting this research is that I don't believe the firearms training of many of our law enforcement and military personnel is applicable to the environment in which they operate. The training's lack of relevancy to the operational environment is one of the reasons that I believe law enforcement officers do so poorly in gunfights and get killed. The issue of firearms training has been debated for many years in the law enforcement community. The debate has waged as to whether or not one form of shooting is more effective than another in close quarters combat. The debate has revolved around the two primary firearms shooting methods known as The Modern Technique/Sighted method and Point Shooting/Unsighted method, with the proponents of each method claiming primacy in combat.

I came into this research with my own thesis as to which method works best in close quarters combat and aimed to provide the evidence to confirm this thesis. I wish to thank all of the excellent instructors with whom I've interacted and learned from during my 15 year law enforcement career. They've provided me with the knowledge to be able to discuss this topic and the inspiration to question my own training in order to determine what's effective.

I am also especially grateful to the renowned instructors who took the time out of their busy schedules to speak with me about firearms training and help with my research. I was once told that one of the greatest gifts that a person can give you is their time because that is something they can never get back. So with this in mind, I'm thankful to the U.S. Marine Corps Instructors, U.S. State Department Diplomatic Security Service Firearms Training Chief Dave Pshak, Michael Rayburn, Craig "SouthNarc" Douglas and Kelly McCann. These gentlemen are subject matter experts, some of whom I've had the privilege to train with, and respect greatly. I am also grateful to Dr. Mark H. Jacobsen for his guidance throughout this process.

Close Quarters Combat Shooting

America's law enforcement and armed forces are on the frontlines of firearms combat. Law enforcement personnel put their lives on the line everyday in the conduct of their duty. According to the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund there were 48 officers killed by firearms as of December 28, 2009. This was a 23% percent increase from 2008. The military is fighting two wars against irregular forces in the urban and built up areas of Iraq and Afghanistan. They find themselves, in these conflict zones, conducting house to house searches for weapons caches while simultaneously engaging the local populations, as part of our strategic communications efforts, and inevitably close quarters combat shooting incidents occur. As a result the subject of close quarters combat shooting becomes an issue of survival for our armed forces unseen in recent conflicts that were conventional in nature, with the use of air power as the primary military tool. It therefore behooves us to train them in the shooting method most likely to ensure their survival in these close quarters engagements.

After 15 years of diverse law enforcement experience and training with numerous instructors, I believe that for close quarters combat the "Point Shooting" method, which was conceived from the observed instinctive reactions of police officers facing life threatening situations, is the superior method. Superiority is defined by the accurate and timely placement of shots on an adversary under life threatening circumstances so as to neutralize the threat.

The Significance of Close Quarters Combat Shooting in Today's Environment

What is close quarters combat and what is its significance for today's environment? For the purposes of this paper, the definition of close quarters combat shooting is a gunfight that takes place within a confined area where the participants' movements are restricted and they are anywhere from 0 to 21 feet apart. My purpose in conducting this research is that for decades,

law enforcement officers have been losing close quarters shooting engagements against criminal elements with the end result being the officers' deaths. An analysis of statistics on law enforcement involved shootings indicates that traditional law enforcement firearms training methods fall short in terms of the placement of accurate shots on the criminals and the officers' surviving the engagements.

Though they operate in different environments and under different rules of engagement, there is often cross training between the law enforcement and military communities. Today you have military and law enforcement personnel being trained by civilian instructors, so ineffective methods in the law enforcement community may spill over into the military community. The United States military is currently fighting two insurgencies, in mainly urban environments. In these urban operations our military personnel are frequently required to enter and search houses for insurgents, firearms and explosives caches which have often times resulted in them engaging the enemy in confined areas. It is therefore important that their firearms training result in an effective survival response in these circumstances.

In addition, just as a police officer's duties include engaging and assisting the public, the United States military's functions now include humanitarian assistance and nation building, requiring closer interaction with the local populace, which increases the possibility of close quarters shooting engagements due to the intermingling of civilians and insurgents. With these issues in mind, our nations' firearms instructors must provide our police officers and armed forces with the tools required to be successful in engaging the threats that they currently face. Due to my law enforcement experience at the city, federal and international levels, I've been privileged to participate in various forms of firearms training. Through this training, I've experienced the evolution in firearms instruction from the static square range training that I

received as police cadet in 1994 at the Palm Beach Community College Criminal Justice Institute of Lakeworth, Florida to the more dynamic force-on-force, realistic scenario training common in the more progressive law enforcement agencies presently. I recall my initial firearms training, standing on a line facing a target while being told to focus with my dominant eye open as I line up the gun sights on the center of the target, then to slowly squeeze the trigger and to not anticipate the gun going off. These were the methods in the academies in those days and they focused strictly on giving the students the basics. The other aspects of firearms training were expected to be learned when the cadets arrived at their parent agencies. I don't recall being taught about developing a combative mindset, or the stress of a gunfight and how that stress would affect my ability to shoot effectively.

Following my graduation from the academy, I was employed as a police officer in south Florida where as a relative novice with firearms I felt confident that my instructors would provide me with the additional tools necessary to do my job and survive.

In actuality the firearms training that they provided me with was the minimum required for me to be given the "opportunity" to do my job as a police officer. The training as it turned out wasn't meant so much for my survival as it was meant to meet the requirements set forth by the state of Florida to qualify me as a police officer to carry a firearm. It wasn't until much later in my career that I realized that, through no fault of my prior instructors, I wasn't being trained to survive or win a potential gunfight. My initial training as a cadet until that present time, I believe, had been aimed more at protecting the concerned agencies against potential lawsuits. I came to this realization after taking it upon myself to open my mind, conduct research, and seek external training opportunities. Though much progress has been made in the firearms training of

our law enforcement and military personnel, there is still some misinformation out in the firearms training community and faulty training that if uncorrected may cost lives in combat.

The Effects of Stress During a Close Quarters Combat Shooting Engagement

We begin our discussion with the identification of what physiological reactions are likely to occur during the course of a gunfight. Research has shown that certain physiological reactions occur when people perceive a direct threat to themselves. These responses are from what is known as the “Body Alarm Reaction” and begin with an adrenaline dump of chemicals in the bloodstream, which increases the heart rate.¹ The increased heart rate results in altered breathing sometimes to the point of hyperventilation.² Research dating from the 1970s through the mid 1990s indicates that at a heart rate of 115 to 145 beats per minute (BPM) motor skill performance and cognitive processing is optimal.³ A heart rate below 80 BPM or above 175 BPM results in poor performance of fine and complex motor physical skills as well mental skills. We can assume that in a life threatening stimulus the person’s heart rate will increase greatly, which in turn will affect the performance of the fine motor skill like shooting. There may be body tremors affecting the hands and the knees while strength and pain tolerance could increase.

The person will most likely face the threat and look at it with both eyes open in order to gain as much information as it needs to prepare a course of action.⁴ The person will lower his center of gravity by bending the knees and waist so as to prepare to engage the threat or run from it which is known as the “fight or flight reflex”.⁵ This bending facilitates movement which in turn is essential for survival.⁶ The person will instinctively bring his hands up and out between his face and the threat to protect the head.⁷ This is a natural reaction of the startle flinch response to an unexpected threat.⁸

The person will also suffer from tunnel vision which means that the eyes will automatically focus on the threat as a result of the blood flow being directed there by the brain.⁹ Tunnel vision, unless consciously broken, can limit the ability to view other dangers on the periphery. Another response that occurs during a violent confrontation is Tachypsychia. It is a distortion of time that leads the person to perceive time as either slowing down or speeding up as a result of the chemicals dopamine and norepinephrine being dumped in the blood stream.¹⁰ I experienced Tachypsychia during a terrorist attack against a convoy that I commanded in the Gaza Strip in October of 2003. During that incident I recalled how everything during the attack, which killed three of my American security colleagues, appeared to occur in slow motion and how I lost track of the time elapsed. Finally there is the loss of fine motor skills, a result of the blood supply being diverted to major organs and muscles to permit running or kicking.¹¹ These automatic responses will dictate a person's actions during a gunfight. An effective close quarters shooting method with officer survival as its goals must account for these stress induced natural reactions.

The History of the Two Methods: Point Shooting and the Modern Technique

The Point Shooting of Fairbairn & Sykes

The first major approach to firearms training is the Point-Shooting/unsighted shooting method. The original point shooting method was created by two British Police Officers stationed in Shanghai, China from the 1910s until the 1930s named William Fairbairn and Eric Sykes. Shanghai at the time was a British colony and China's principal seaport and metropolis. It was considered to be one of the most dangerous cities in the world because it was full of brazen, well armed criminal gangs that had no hesitation in engaging the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) in gunfights.¹² Fairbairn, who was responsible for the survival training of his fellow police officers,

began to research why his officers were losing their lives in their almost nightly gunfights with criminals. He soon recognized that his officers were good target/bull's-eye shooters but weren't challenged, by their training, to deal with the realities of the conditions in which their gunfights took place.¹³

Fairbairn wanted to further test his theory, so from 1910 until 1919, he followed his fellow Shanghai police officers on their patrols to learn what occurred during the course of their gunfights. Fairbairn's aim was to obtain as much information on gunfighting as possible in order to develop a shooting system for his officers that would increase their survival. During this period, Fairbairn and his partner Sykes observed and participated in over 200 violent incidents.¹⁴ In 1920, Fairbairn, to further his research, was attached to the New York City Police Department where he participated in police raids and patrols in order to observe its shooting methodology.¹⁵ In 1921, he also travelled to the British Army's small arms school for the same reasons.¹⁶ Fairbairn concluded that most gunfights occurred with the participants in close proximity, in low light conditions (night, dark alleys, etc) and lasted only seconds. Fairbairn also observed that in most gunfights the participants were crouched down, facing square to their adversaries with the gun pointed with one hand and shooting was done without use of the gun's sights. Fairbairn further surmised that with time permitting and at longer ranges, police officers could use a two-handed stance and use their gun's sights for more accurate placement of shots.¹⁷ Normally, however, they did neither.

Based on the information that he obtained from his personal experiences and research, Fairbairn formed his combat shooting system and continued its refinement by instructing it to the Shanghai Municipal Police Force. The system was so successful that during a twelve year period

in Shanghai, in 666 armed encounters with criminals, 260 criminals were killed as compared to 42 police officers.¹⁸

Fairbairn's shooting method was so impressive that his reputation quickly spread and by the late 1920s his method had been adopted throughout the British colonies to include places including South Africa, Burma, Guyana, Kenya, Iraq and Palestine.¹⁹ At this time Fairbairn also popularized his methods in America in magazine articles that he wrote.²⁰ In 1931, the United States Marines adopted the Fairbairn shooting method. Fairbairn's shooting methods were directly transmitted to the allied countries in 1942, during World War II, when he was sent by the British government on a training mission to the United States. Fairbairn's system was chosen by the allies because it had been effective in combat and was easy to teach and retain.²¹ Fairbairn taught his method to secret agents and military officers of the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S), which was the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A). During his liaison stint at the O.S.S, Fairbairn instructed a young U.S. Army Lieutenant named Rex Applegate.

Applegate's Instinctive Point Shooting

Applegate had been sent by Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan (the first Director of the O.S.S) to be Fairbairn's assistant and to learn everything that he could about both armed and unarmed combat from Fairbairn. After a year of training with Fairbairn, Applegate was charged with passing his knowledge to the United States soldiers at the Military Intelligence Training Center (MITC) at Camp Ritchie Maryland (today known as the presidential retreat Camp David).²² The covert O.S.S operatives Applegate trained used the handgun as their primary weapon and needed a shooting system that was easily learned and effective. Applegate conducted studies on the mechanics of the Fairbairn shooting method.²³ Applegate used slow

motion cameras and blow stills to see precisely how his methods worked.²⁴ He further developed and modified the Fairbairn shooting system slightly by raising the aim point of the gun to eye level, a technique now employed throughout the United States military and police circles.

Colonel Rex Applegate's Point Shooting techniques were further refined by instructors from the MITC who used his techniques in combat during the war while on intelligence missions. Applegate wanted to ensure that his Point Shooting techniques worked in combat so he required that his MITC instructors rotate through operational positions.²⁵ The MITC instructors were involved in numerous campaigns including Africa, Sicily, Italy and the Pacific. These instructors were then able to return and report on what worked in combat and they endorsed Point Shooting as having worked.²⁶ It was estimated that more than 10,000 United States military personnel were trained in Applegate's shooting method. From the 1940s until 1960s, the Applegate Instinctive Point Shooting was used by the US Army, US Marines and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.²⁷

The Modern Technique/Sighted Shooting

The second major firearms training approach is the Modern Technique/Sighted method which was founded in the 1950's by a Marine Lieutenant Colonel named Jeff Cooper who had served in World War II and the Korean War.²⁸ Following his discharge from the military, Cooper began to study and experiment with different shooting techniques through competitive shooting matches that he held in California.²⁹ The matches were quick draw, man-on-man competitions in which two shooters vied to pop twelve 18" wide balloons set up 21 feet away; whichever shooter burst all the balloons first won the bout.³⁰

During the early years of these competitions it is reported that the majority of the competitors used the FBI's "Hip" shooting method which was a modified version of Point

Shooting popularized by western movies. A Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputy named Jack Weaver began competing with a two-handed technique in which the dominant hand held the handgun and the support hand wrapped around the dominant hand. The dominant arm's elbow was nearly straight with the support elbow noticeably bent straight down. The shooter pushed forward with his dominant hand while the support hand exerted rearward pressure. The resultant isometric tension was intended to control muzzle flip when the gun was fired.³¹

Weaver utilized this technique to draw the handgun quickly to eye level, use the weapon's sights to aim more accurately, and to shoot successive shots with minimal time lag due and better control of the gun's muzzle. He began winning against opponents who used the unsighted FBI hip shooting method.³² Due to Weaver's success, Cooper who at the time was also a gun writer and firearms instructor named it the "Weaver Stance" and made it one of the core concepts of his "Modern Technique" of handgun shooting.³³ Though attributed to Jack Weaver, John Henry Fitzgerald, an American shooting author and enthusiast, is documented to have used a similar stance in the 1930s. As Jack Weaver's popularity grew and his exploits began to spread, so did the use of the Weaver stance and the Modern Technique by most of the shooting competitors.

Cooper's Modern Technique of shooting emphasized the stylized upright 45 degree canting Weaver stance with a two-handed grip, flash sight picture/sighted shots and a surprise trigger break for almost all close quarter shooting engagements.³⁴ The Modern Technique's use quickly became a part of the popular pastime of shooting in America. The winners of these shooting tournaments and Cooper's top students often times went on to open their own firearms training schools, and further propagate the merits of the modern technique.³⁵ As a result, the Modern Technique, following the 1950s replaced the Applegate method and was taught exclusively to military and law enforcement personnel throughout the United States.³⁶

The Contrasts between Point Shooting and the Modern Technique

Based on the FBI's 2008 Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) report, which gathered statistics on the circumstances surrounding police officers killed from 1999 until 2008, most police shootings generally occurred in low light conditions and at distances of approximately 0 to 20 feet. According to the LEOKA 486 law enforcement officers (LEOs) were killed by firearms from 1999 until 2008. Of those killed, 247 were killed at distances of 0 to 5 feet from the offenders. 91 LEOs were killed at distances of 6-10 feet, and 58 were killed at distances of 11 to 20 feet. In summary, 70% of officers killed were killed at distances of 0-10 feet and 80% were killed at distances of 0-20 feet. The deaths occurred often during attempts to arrest individuals and during traffic stops. Statistics from the New York Police Department, with their 40,000 police officers, have shown that in gunfights their officers were successful in shooting their adversaries an average of 15 % to 19% of the time.³⁷ These statistics and the lack of success in law enforcement's performance suggest that something is lacking in the firearms training that our law enforcement personnel have received.

As noted, from the 1960s through the mid 1990's the Modern Technique dominated firearms training. Therefore for what LEOs faced on the streets of America, their training was insufficient. How could this be? Why did the aforementioned success of competitive shooters not translate into the same success for law enforcement?

One possible answer may be that competitions do not provide the same stress level as a street gunfight, so success in competition may not correlate to success in a gunfight. Another answer may be that the successful professional competitors had developed their advanced skill levels in the Modern Technique because of extensive practice time, which the average police and military personnel will never be afforded.³⁸ An average police officer working in a typical police

agency has to qualify at most semi-annually in order to lawfully carry his weapon on duty. According to the Marine Corps Weapons Battalion/Marine Security Guard instructors that I interviewed; this is also typical of most Marines. In order to develop the skill level required of the Modern Technique the police officer would have to be motivated, and at his own time and expense seek out the training required to develop and maintain these skills.

In contrast, Point Shooting was adapted for military personnel who had very limited training time available and required simplicity in technique. As explained to me by renowned Point Shooting instructor Mike Rayburn, once learned Point Shooting is a non-perishable skill that requires very little practice because the foundation of the method is based on natural movements that a person would instinctually revert to if confronted with a life threatening situation.

What makes the Modern Technique more complex to learn and apply in combat than Point Shooting is that certain aspects of its technique tends to counter what would be the natural reactions of a human being during a close quarters shooting engagement. The first aspect is the side canting "Weaver" stance that some of the proponents of the system continue to teach today when data, to include videos of actual police involved shootings captured on police dashboard cameras and training scenarios, has shown the isosceles/square stance to be more instinctive. Video evidence and testimonials from officers involved in shootings continue to show that when startled and faced with a lethal threat a person will most likely turn to face that threat in order to gather more information. There are circumstances where a Weaver type stance could and should be used. One example is when a right handed shooter is seated and has to engage a threat to his/her left side or to his/her rear. A Weaver type of shooting platform would be most practical in this scenario because the ability to square up and face the target in a timely manner would be

hampered. In an interview, firearms and tactics instructor/law enforcement officer Craig "SouthNarc" Douglas explained to me that the use of the Weaver stance would also be applicable in a scenario where an officer had to remain behind limited cover or concealment yet still engage a threat. He added that for most engagements, the officer would be using an isosceles or square stance to the target.

I believe that the majority of police officers when confronted with an imminent threat would instinctively turn to face it. This would probably apply to most people. Imagine walking down the street and hearing a loud noise coming from behind you. The initial reaction would most likely be to turn your head in that direction then completely turn to gather as much information as possible while being as comfortable as possible. I don't think that in such a situation you'd contort your body in a non-natural fashion. Kelly McCann told me that in his experience, Weaver stance shooters when startled will instinctually go into an isosceles stance before recomposing themselves and assuming a Weaver stance. In my experience I've always assumed an isosceles type stance when I've perceived a threat. It was instinctual and I'll humbly add that I've received advanced training. To expect a police officer or military person with minimal training to, contrary to his instincts, turn sideways into a stylized stance against a threat isn't practical or realistic.

The Modern Technique advocates the use of the gun's sights during a close quarter confrontation where the adversary may be armed with a knife or handgun. Though trained in the use of the gun's sights it has been my experience, in training scenarios, that when unexpectedly confronted with an armed adversary I automatically focused my vision on the hand holding the weapon. I recall one training scenario at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia, when I engaged a role player who had unexpectedly drawn a (training) gun. My

adversary was approximately 25 feet away but my vision immediately focused on that weapon as he drew it from his waistband. I remembered raising my gun to my line of vision and shooting without referencing my gun's sights, which I couldn't see at that time anyway due to my protective face mask fogging up and the stress of the situation. My adversary, in the scenario, later reported to me that I had shot him in the weapon hand though I don't recall pointing my handgun at his hand. The occurrence of criminals being shot in their weapon hand has been documented in training and actual police shootings, and is attributed to the officers experiencing tunnel vision on the threat/weapon. Again the focus of the eyes on the immediate threat isn't something that was trained into human beings; it is something that is innate.

I'm not discounting the fact that many officers involved in actual shootings have reported having looked at their gun sights during the engagements because I do believe that under the appropriate circumstances, and with advanced training and sustainment the gun's sights can and should be used. What's of note is determining what the circumstances were surrounding the shooting, which allowed the officers to use their guns' sights? Was the threat imminent and directed at them (i.e. gun pointed at them)? Was it prior training that indoctrinated in the officers that they should always look at their sights, which made them believe that they'd use the guns' sights when in actuality they hadn't?

It has been documented that during some training scenarios, police officers have reported engaging threats with the use of their guns' sights when in actuality the guns' sights had been removed or taped over, without the officers' knowledge, thus rendering their claims inaccurate. This speaks volumes about the mental conditioning that we law enforcement officers receive during training about the required use of the gun's sights during shooting engagements. The reality is if I'm faced with a threat where I'm not startled or I subconsciously perceive that the

distance doesn't allow my adversary to be an immediate threat then I may be able to remove my gaze from the adversary and direct it to my gun's sights.

The Modern Technique's advocacy of the use of a two-handed sighted firing method is undoubtedly the most accurate method for shooting at extended distances. Unfortunately, when faced with an unexpected threat at a close distance the brain will determine that time is of the essence and will result in the officer likely drawing and firing his weapon with a single hand because the mind will perceive it as being quicker than shooting two-handed. Again this has been documented on dashboard camera videos captured of police shootings that can be seen on internet sites such as Policecrimes.com. Point Shooting advocates the one-hand method until the time and distance, as determined by the brain, allows the shooter to use two hands.

The Modern Technique in Law Enforcement Today

The Modern Technique still has its proponents in law enforcement. The Anchorage Police Department in Alaska is one agency whose entire curriculum is in the Modern Technique and they've reported a hit rate of 90% in street gunfights.³⁹ It should be stated that the Anchorage Police Department is unique because of the level and frequency of firearms training that it provides its officers. The firearms training, starting in the basic academy is twice as much as those found in other agencies and continues through in-service, which may be one explanation for the high level of proficiency. There is also the pedigree of the department's recruits who come pre-dominantly from military and prior law enforcement backgrounds. The department also incorporates realistic force-on-force scenarios in its training, which may also contribute to their success in gunfights.⁴⁰ The Modern Technique with the Weaver stance is still taught by

some excellent and much respected instructors in the firearms community though I believe it to be in the minority today.

John S. Farnam, a Vietnam veteran, retired US Army Major (reserve), author and police officer is one such instructor. Farnam, among others, maintains that Point Shooting does have a legitimate place in a training curriculum, but that it must be seamlessly integrated into the shooting regimen rather than being treated as a separate issue.⁴¹ Farnam states that based on his experience with his own Point Shooting students he doesn't believe that the method produces accurate shots.⁴² He also argues that the extension of the weapon away from the body found in the Point Shooting isosceles stance makes it easier for the shooter to be disarmed while also making it difficult for the shooter to pivot at close ranges.⁴³ Farnam argues that the Weaver Stance is more secure against disarming techniques because it keeps the weapon closer to the shooter's body but does acknowledge that the isosceles stance is inherently more accurate because the gun is pushed away far enough from the body to allow for a more precise use of the gun's sights. He doesn't teach the isosceles stance because he doesn't believe that it would be effective in a real fight. He also argues that the stance directs the shooter's vision too much in one direction and restricts the ability to scan in all directions for threats.⁴⁴

Point Shooting in Law Enforcement Today

Due to its effectiveness in close quarters shooting, Point shooting has been adopted by numerous agencies around the country and the world. According to Point Shooting Instructor Mike Rayburn, a Point Shooting curriculum has been officially adopted by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) the largest State Police agency in the country. Mainly due to the efforts of former CHP firearms instructor Lou Chiodo, it's been reported that the hit rate in gunfights for

the CHP increased from 15% to 90%.⁴⁵ The State of Michigan with its 19,000 officers has also adopted a Point Shooting curriculum as have the Fort Wayne, Indiana and Brockton, Mass Police departments. Internationally, the New South Wales Police department in Australia with its 15,000 officers has also changed its training and qualification curriculum to Point Shooting.

The Point Shooting curriculum adopted by some of the aforementioned agencies focuses on close quarters shooting of 10 yards and in. This is a dramatic departure from the 15 to 25 yard sighted fire qualification courses that is still seen today in many law enforcement agencies. Rayburn explained that these agencies have done their own research and come to the conclusion that for their needs Point Shooting is best. For the military, whose primary weapon is the rifle, Rayburn also believes Point Shooting to be applicable. He has trained his Police students to shoot rifles accurately at distances of 25 yards without the use of the rifle's sights, which he removes or tapes over.

The Combative Mindset and Stress Inoculation Training

An important aspect of close quarters combat that the Point Shooting methods of Fairbairn and Applegate addressed was the development of a combative mindset through what is today called "stress inoculation". Stress inoculation training is the gradual exposure of a trainee to deadly threat situations in order to develop the trainee's confidence in being able to survive lethal confrontations and results in greater control over his physiological reactions. This was an aspect of training that the traditional static line firearm qualification courses didn't address, which contributed to the poor showing of LEOs in actual gunfights. Fairbairn and Applegate realized the importance of an aggressive and focused mindset, which is why their methods

included the use of what was sometimes referred to as the "House of Horrors". They are reported to have used the house of horrors since the 1930s.

In the house of horrors, the police and military trainees had to navigate through a house, accompanied closely by an instructor, and address issues similar to what they faced in the street or in combat. The house included the use of minimal lighting, mirrors, pre-recorded sounds (i.e. screams, enemy soldier voices), ground debris, armed targets, mimicking an attacker, as well as unarmed targets, which forced the trainee to quickly decide on whether to shoot or not. The sophistication of the tactical problems these trainees faced in these scenarios was only limited by the imagination of the instructor(s). These methods put great stress on the trainee but developed his decision making ability, and fighting spirit.

The influence of these training methods can be seen presently where there is a shift in focus from strictly physical techniques to the incorporation of combative mindset development. With technological advances such as the use of simunitions (non-lethal paint cartridges shot from a modified firearm), realistic force-on-force training against a live and thinking opponent has become the norm. Theories are now able to be tested in conditions that are as close to actual combat situations as possible. Most firearms training courses today, including those conducted by the proponents of the Modern Technique, include force-on-force scenarios as a way of inducing the stress and realism that Fairbairn and Applegate advocated in their methods more than 80 years ago. All of the instructors that I interviewed for this paper use stress inoculation techniques in their training. They incorporate time limits, student vs student competitions, armed opponents and the inducement of exhaustion, which when all combined closely resemble the realities of combat.

Conclusion

I began this project with the belief that Point Shooting was the superior method for close quarters combat because its method was more conducive to the stressful conditions of a close in gunfight, where speed and accuracy are equally important. I believe that my research confirmed that. This research was not meant to advocate the use of one method at the exclusion of another but rather to look at the data and from that data to determine which method was most appropriate for which situations.

What I learned from this research is that having a combative mindset was just as important as the physical techniques themselves. As counter-terrorism expert Kelly McCann told me, too often our law enforcement officers carry their firearms without any conscious expectation to use them. The firearm is almost looked at as a prop rather than a tool. This means that when a situation arises that requires the use of the weapon the officer is unprepared and hesitant, which results in him losing the fight.

Engaging in stress induced scenario based training is another aspect of firearms instruction that is vitally important. All of the instructors that I interviewed expressed how stress in training will result in better performance in combat. The Marine instructors talked about the inclusion of strict time limits, which push the shooter to perform continually faster, that provide a stressor which simulates combat where speed and accuracy are crucial. Craig "SouthNarc" Douglas in his courses incorporates the realities of a close-in gunfight where quick movement is emphasized and students engage their adversaries in armed and unarmed combat to the point of exhaustion. Mike Rayburn incorporates drills in his courses where the student, with his handgun in its holster, is attacked at minimal distances by an adversary with a knife. The student has to move, draw and accurately hit the adversary several times and avoid being stabbed. Kelly

McCann is famous for his grueling training methods and continuously "pushes the envelope" to challenge his students. The aforementioned training philosophies expose the students to the stresses of combat and instill in them the confidence to win.

Sustainment of these skills through continual practice was another aspect of firearms training that was emphasized during my interviews. As noted earlier, most police and military personnel qualify at most bi-annually. Regardless of the shooting method used without consistent training our law enforcement and armed forces cannot maintain their proficiency.

Regardless of where one stands in this argument it behooves us to maintain a high level of proficiency in both methods, which all of the firearms experts that I interviewed agreed on. As a Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent with dignitary protection as a primary responsibility I see the utility of both the Point Shooting and Modern Technique methods. Point Shooting with its isosceles stance and one-handed shooting would allow me to use my body to shield my protectee while simultaneously engaging a threat at close distances. Sighted fire would be applicable in the example of a suicide bomber or an attacker wearing body armor or at a distance requiring a precise head shot. The environment that I most operate in is in close proximity to potential threats, for this reason I emphasize point shooting in my personal shooting regimen.

The challenge for both the law enforcement and military communities is to decide how much of their limited training resources and time to dedicate to the shooting method that will best prepare them for the environments that they most often operate in without losing proficiency in the other method. This is a microcosm of the larger predicament faced by the U.S. military as to how to prepare for today's irregular warfare while maintaining proficiency in conventional warfare.

Endnotes

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- ¹³ William L. Cassidy *QUICK OR DEAD* (Colorado: Paladin Press, 1978), 56
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- ¹⁵ William L. Cassidy, *QUICK OR DEAD* (Colorado: Paladin Press, 1978), 59
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- ²² Col. Rex Applegate and Michael D. Janich, *BULLEYES Don't Shoot Back: The Complete Book of Point Shooting for Close Quarters Combat* (Colorado: Paladin Press 1998). X

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- ²⁴ William L. Cassidy, *QUICK OR DEAD* (Colorado: Paladin Press, 1978), 106
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Appendix A

U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service (D.S.S)

I interviewed Dave Pshak, the Chief Firearms Instructor for the United States Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, which is charged with the protection of foreign dignitaries in America and American diplomats and diplomatic facilities overseas. During my conversation with Mr. Pshak he stated that with his experience, as a retired Marine Sniper/Instructor and current law enforcement firearms instructor, he believed that the fundamentals of shooting with the sighted approach, trigger control, presentation of the firearm towards the target and an "isosceles"/square stance should be taught initially to new students in order to build a good foundation for the shooter. These fundamentals, as he explained, are especially important in the civilian law enforcement environment because of the liability issues associated with ensuring that innocent people are not unintentionally shot. He also pointed out that when you have the distance and the time, sighted fire would be the preferred method to address the threat of an armed adversary but this isn't the case in close quarters combat.

Once the foundation with sighted fire had been built, he would then train the shooter in Point Shooting. He submitted that for close quarters combat situations, from contact distance out to approximately 21 feet, at which statistics say most law enforcement gunfights occur, the Point Shooting/unsighted method would be the preferred means to quickly and effectively deal with a threat. He also stated that with the appropriate training a person could use Point Shooting effectively up to a distance of 15 yards. He added that the key to effective Point Shooting was the student building up the muscle memory, acquired from the repetitions of the fundamentals of sighted shooting, so that the presentation and locking out of the weapon in the

line of vision on target became automatic, which meant that the weapon's sights would not need to be referenced at close distances.

The interview concluded with Mr. Pshak recalling that in his experience as a Marine on mission overseas in the mid 1990s, he and some fellow Marines were involved in a gunfight with their adversaries at a distance of approximately 20 feet. He did not recall having looked at or aligning his rifle's sights prior to or while firing at his adversaries. He described himself as having pointed his weapon at the threat(s) and shooting. The gunfight ended with a number of the enemy shot and no Marine casualties.

Appendix B

Marine Corps Weapons Battalion/Marine Security Guard Instructors

I interviewed two active duty Marine Corps Weapons Battalion/Marine Security Guard Instructors with diverse backgrounds and certifications from numerous of the leading firearms instructor courses to include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I). My conversation with them yielded that both believed that new shooters should all be trained in the sighted method at close distances, with a gradual increase in that distance and emphasis on presentation, trigger control and a modified isosceles/non-Weaver stance as proficiency improved. Once these fundamentals were established and the muscle memory developed then the shooter could naturally progress to Point Shooting, which according to both instructors was the preferred method for the shorter distances of close quarters combat.

The instructors explained that one advantage of the isosceles stance used in Point shooting in contrast to the Weaver stance of the Modern Technique was that a shooter wearing body armor would have that armor facing the threat whereas the Weaver's side canting stance would expose the sometimes unprotected armpit/ribs region of the shooter's body. One instructor stated that the only advantage of the Weaver stance was its stable platform which is good for target shooting but that it lacked mobility and did not work well in dynamic close quarters combat. The instructors explained to me that one of the reasons why police officers trained in the Modern Technique do so poorly during shooting engagements is because most of these officers aren't trained in the technique under stress, which would show them that when faced with a close threat their instincts would not allow them to focus on the sights of their firearms as taught. The lack of training experience in stressful situations and the lack of exposure to the resulting physiological reactions to the stress cause their shooting abilities to

deteriorate. Additionally, it was mentioned that the fact that most police officers and military personnel qualify with their weapons maybe once or twice annually and don't do any refresher training in between contribute to the low rate of success during gunfights as defined by well placed shots on an adversary. One instructor added that in his firearms training courses once the fundamentals have been taught at short distances he forces the shooter to shoot as fast as possible with strict time limits, which stresses the shooter and brings him to the realization that there isn't time to look at his sights during a close quarters gunfight.

The interview concluded with both instructors agreeing that for close quarters gunfights Point Shooting is the method that is most likely to be naturally used and the most effective. They both mentioned that even with rifles, which most military personnel carry rather than handguns, Point Shooting has been shown to be effective. One instructor mentioned that fellow Marines serving in Iraq have reported to him engaging and killing insurgents in gunfights, during house clearing operations, at distances of 3 to 4 feet without the use of their sights. They described their technique to him as pointing the rifle at the enemy and looking over the barrel at the target then shooting.

Appendix C

Interview of Law Enforcement Firearms and Tactics Instructor Mike Rayburn

I interviewed internationally recognized Firearms and Tactics expert Mike Rayburn. Mr. Rayburn has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience and has authored four books on law enforcement tactics and a video on Point Shooting. Mr. Rayburn explained to me that his introduction to Point Shooting came in the 1990s after his study of police involved shooting statistics compiled by Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I) and the study of videos caught on police vehicle dashboard cameras. Mr. Rayburn explained that these videos showed that during the course of the gunfights the officers involved did certain things in common to include: squarely facing the adversary in an isosceles stance, pointing the handgun with a one-handed grip with both eyes focused on the adversary or threat. During the conduct of his research, he also participated in recreational paintball games and realized that he had the ability to shoot his adversaries at distances of 30 to 35 feet without the use of the gun's sights. He incorporated these observations into his personal firearms training regimen and did further research on the subject upon which time he became familiar with the works of William Fairbairn and Rex Applegate. Their approach provided further validation of what his own research had already proven to him.

Our conversation yielded that Mr. Rayburn like most law enforcement officers was initially trained to shoot with the Modern Technique's sighted method, which he stated was a good way to teach a new shooter the basics of shooting. Mr. Rayburn's issue with the sighted method is that he thinks it is a perishable skill that requires extensive training time and money to maintain proficiency. He also thinks that entirely too much, of often limited, training time is being spent training officers in this method and too often at the extended distances of 15 to 25

yards when research has shown that a great majority of gunfights occur at close distances that physiologically don't allow an officer to focus on his gun's sights. He did say that there is a time for the sighted method, which is when officers are at long distances and the threat isn't imminent, meaning the officers aren't being shot at.

In contrast, Mr. Rayburn believes that Point Shooting is a non-perishable skill that once learned requires little if any maintenance because it incorporates the instinctual reactions of a person in the stress of a gunfight. What this means to most law enforcement agencies is the more efficient use of training time and minimal cost, which are always issues. Mr. Rayburn advised me that after conducting their own research, numerous agencies nationally and internationally have switched from sighted shooting to primarily Point Shooting curriculums with minimal if any sighted shooting at distances greater than 10 yards. Some of these agencies include the Massachusetts State Police, the New South Wales police department in Australia and its 15,000 officers, the State of Michigan with its 19,000 officers, the California Highway Patrol and the Fort Wayne, Indiana police department and the Brockton, Mass police department.

Mr. Rayburn is absolutely convinced of the superiority of the Point Shooting method for close quarters combat. He's received numerous testimonials of officers involved in gunfights validating the effectiveness and techniques of Point Shooting/unsighted fire. He states that for the military, whose primary firearm is the rifle, Point Shooting is also applicable. Mr. Rayburn teaches rifle Point Shooting and states that his law enforcement students have shot accurately at distances of 25 yards without the use of the rifle sights, which are often times removed or taped over. Mr. Rayburn currently teaches numerous courses at the Smith & Wesson Academy and certifies Point Shooting instructors around the country. He has certified 180 Point Shooting Instructors in the state of Michigan alone.

Appendix D

Interview of Law Enforcement Officer/Instructor Craig" SouthNarc" Douglas

I interviewed renowned law enforcement instructor Craig" SouthNarc" Douglas, former Army Ranger and current law enforcement officer. He has twenty years of experience in assignments ranging from Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T) Team Leader to undercover drug agent.

Mr. Douglas' method for instructing close quarters combat shooting is the use of the modern isosceles/square stance with a two-handed grip and the weapon at eye level to use as a visual reference to the target. He considers this to be the stance and weapon presentation used for consistent and accurate hits on a target during an engagement that is further than arms length distance where the likelihood of being disarmed is less likely. He does believe that the gun's sights can be used during a close quarters gunfight and points to reports from his own students confirming this occurrence in their own gunfights. He does not advocate the use of the bladed "Weaver" stance because it isn't conducive to mobility, which is crucial in close quarters shooting. He does state that the Weaver stance can be used when the shooter is trying to use limited cover which does not allow for an isosceles stance.

Mr. Douglas stated that he believed both Point Shooting and the Modern Technique to be viable shooting techniques but the determining factor for their effectiveness in combat had more to do with a strong grasp of the fundamentals to the point of muscle memory and the inclusion of the appropriate stress levels during training. In his courses, he incorporates fatigue inducing exercises in low light situations that require quick decision making to replicate the stress of real world combat. Working successfully through the stress, in training, will develop the officer's belief in the shooting system and empower the officer to such an extent that

when an actual gunfight does occur the training will take over. Mr. Douglas does not believe that shooting is instinctual, it must all be taught. This means that a shooting method, whether it be the Point Shooting or the sighted method, that is properly and continuously practiced under stressful conditions will be effective in combat.

Appendix E

Interview of Counter-Terrorism Subject Matter Expert/Instructor Kelly McCann

I interviewed Kelly McCann an internationally recognized counter-terrorism expert and instructor. He is a former Marine Corps Special Missions Officer for the III Marine Expeditionary Force Special Operations Training Group (S.O.T.G) and a former security analyst for CNN. He is the author of numerous books and videos on firearms and high risk environment tactical training.

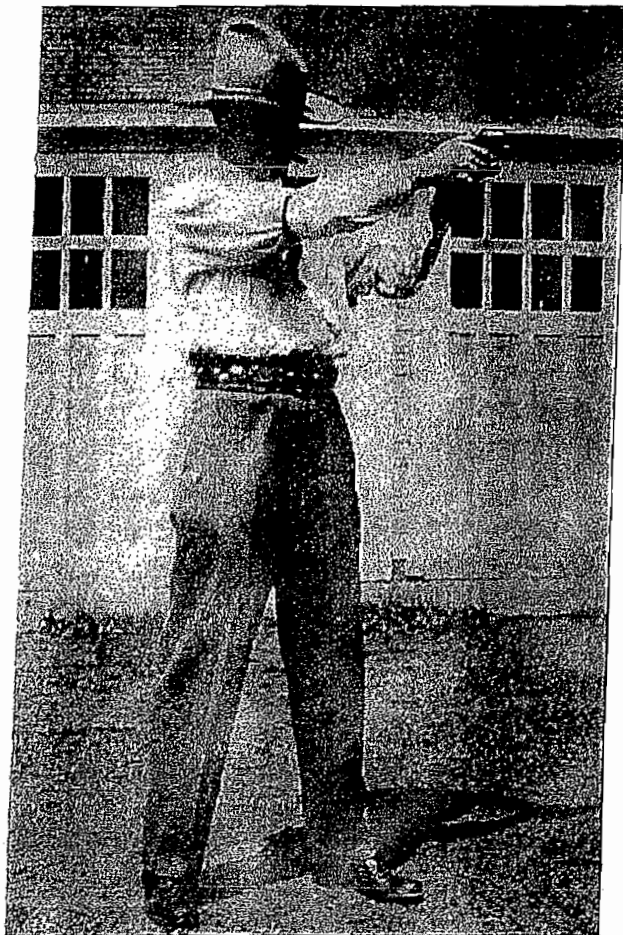
Mr. McCann is a proponent of the use of a two-handed grip, isosceles stance and sighted fire. He does not adhere to the Modern Techniques' use of the Weaver stance, which he thinks is unnatural. He points to his experience with training Modern Technique shooters who when startled initially assumed an isosceles/square stance to deal with the threat then after conscious thought would revert to the Weaver Stance.

Mr. McCann believes that the determining factor in which shooting method is effectively used in a gunfight will depend on the level of training in the method. Shooting requires motor memory, which requires conscious thought. According to Mr. McCann correct action equals proper result but correct action requires extensive training. Mr. McCann as he described it "pushes the envelope" by training his students under the stressful conditions that they will encounter in combat. Unfortunately, most police and military personnel are not trained to this level due to limited budgets and training time, and as a result may not be able to overcome their natural tendencies under stress to, for example, focus on the threat instead of their gun sights. He stated that in his experience he's always used his gun's sights regardless of the threat unless in extremely close quarters combat where extension of the firearm wasn't an available option. He attributes his ability to use the sights under the stress of attack to his extensive

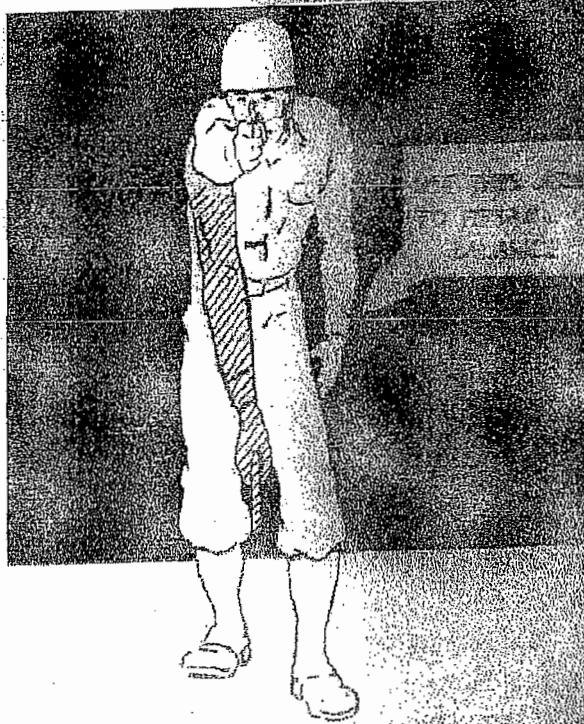
firearms training (of many hundreds of thousands of bullets expended) which would not be the same for the minimally trained majority of officers and soldiers that make up our forces.

Mr. McCann acknowledges the effects of stress in a gunfight and the value of Point Shooting at close distances, which is why he familiarizes his students with the method. He points out that due to liability reasons arising from an officer not using his sights then shooting an innocent bystander, instructors have to advocate the use of the gun's sights as is recommended by the guns' manufacturers. He added that the use of sighting aids such as holographic sights on guns and rifles, which project a red dot on the target, would remedy this issue because it allows the moderately trained shooter to follow his natural tendency to watch the threat while providing the accuracy of sighted fire.

Mr. McCann concluded our interview by stating the importance of developing a combative mindset in our law enforcement officers. He stated that too many officers carry their firearms without mentally preparing for the possibility of using them so that when the moment does arrive to act they are unprepared and hesitant. He advised that officers need to develop a culture of expectation of using their firearms on duty in order to develop the aggressive mindset needed to win gunfights.



While credited to California Sheriff Jack Weaver, the man who popularized it, the two-hand hold and bladed stance can actually be traced back to at least 1930 and a New Englander named John Henry Fitzgerald. "Fitz" as he was known, was an influential force in American pistol shooting for many years. Shown here from a photograph from his book, *Shooting* (G.F. Book Co., Hartford, CT., 1930), Fitz demonstrates a shooting position remarkably similar to the much later-dubbed "Weaver".



Point Shooting Illustrations excerpted from *Kill or Get Killed*. (Courtesy of Paladin Press)