

The Case Head

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts Law Enforcement
Firearms Instructors & Armorers Association

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Every person owes some of his time to the improvement of the profession to which he belongs.

Pres. Theodore Roosevelt

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The Fallacy of "It Can't Happen Here"

In the fall of 2004, two teenagers were arrested in Marshfield (MA) charged with planning to kill school officials, students and police officers. The story has been reported in detail elsewhere but to summarize, four Marshfield teens reportedly called themselves the Natural Born Killers and were allegedly plotting a Columbine style shooting at the Marshfield High School. Their list of victims included fellow students whom they felt deserved to be punished, school officials including the principal and police officers. According to available information, they intended to carry out this attack with homemade explosives, napalm and firearms. They would use bicycle cable locks to lock the exit doors to prevent their victims from escaping and to deter responding officers from entering the school.

Two of the leaders may have had a falling out which led to one threatening to expose the

plan. The other, apparently, took the threat seriously and preemptively went to the police implicating his buddy. Both were eventually arrested and the legal outcome is pending at the time of this writing.

A tragedy was averted but was it because of good communication between school officials and students as the local authorities and the media have asserted or was it a 'falling out among thieves'? Regardless of which was the cause, the real issue is IT CAN HAPPEN HERE! If the fact it almost happened in our own back yard is not enough to convince you, the school shooting in the quiet Amish village of Nickel Mines, PA should ring your wake up bell.

As firearms instructors, we are often ahead of the curve in recognizing the type of training our departments should receive. Convincing our superiors that we need to be addressing this type of threat in addition everything else we may encounter on

the street seems to be the hard part.

The truth is, and pardon me if I am preaching to the choir, it can happen here and does each and every time an incident of this type happens. If our administrators and town officials refuse to acknowledge the obvious or provide adequate funding, we need to come up with creative ways to include this type of training into our curriculum.

We may not be able to conduct the full spectrum that we desire but some training is better than none. We may need to break up the training into smaller blocks and accept that it will not be completed as soon as we would like. No instructor likes to compromise with their training plan however we may have to in order to achieve our ultimate goal. One thing we should not compromise on is the quality of our training. If you are only allocated 2 hours for each officer this quarter, be sure that (Continued on Page 2)

2007 Executive Board Nominations

Nominations for the MLEFIAA Executive Board were accepted at the December meeting held at SIGArms Academy. The by laws provide for the nomination of any active or retired member for a position on the E-Board which consists of President, 3 Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and Master-at-Arms. Nominees must be members in good standing.

On a motion by Kevin Cooley, the membership nominated the current board en masse. The slate includes:

President - Chief Bert DuVerney, New Braintree P.D.

1st V.P. - Lt. Edward O'Leary, Randolph P.D.

2nd V.P. - Officer Todd Bailey, Duxbury P.D.

3rd V.P. - Officer Bill Peterson, Wayland Aux. P.D. (ret.)

Secretary - Officer Joe Picariello, Princeton P.D.

Treasurer - Martin Michelman

Master-at-Arms - Officer Bruce Klinger, Boxford P.D. (ret.)

The annual election of officers will be held at the January meeting at S&W Academy in Springfield.

Mass. State Police New SIG P-226R DAK Recall Info

The 12/7/06 edition of the Boston Herald ran a front page headline which reported the SIGArms P-226R DAK service pistol issued to Mass. State troopers, was recalled after problems were found during testing. The article stated the pistols "jammed during firing".

The Double Action Kellerman (DAK) trigger provides the attributes of a double action only trigger system with a reduced trigger pull (~6.5 lbs.).

The State Police website states they were in the process of transition training. The new weapons were being broken in and troopers familiarized with

the new trigger system. Four weapons experienced malfunctions during this range session. The MSP Armorer examined the weapons and it was determined they were not within factory specs. The problem was identified as "a recent modification to the trigger bar".

A SIGArms source confirmed the problem was with the trigger bar dragging on slide causing some friction which prevented the slide from going into battery. The problem was attributed to the outside contractor's specs on the part.

The MSP immediately pulled the weapons from the

street as a precautionary measure. SIG engineers inspected the 400 new weapons that were delivered and any trigger bars out of spec were corrected. A State Police spokesman stated the agency will continue issuing the P-226R DAK service pistol.

This illustrates the importance of range testing every new duty weapon before placing it in service. Our duty weapons must function reliably 100% of the time. Anything less is not satisfactory and endangers our officers and public.

Hats off to the MSP Firearms Training Unit for picking this up in a timely manner.

The Fallacy of "It can't happen here" (cont. from Page 1)

they are the best two hours you can put together. Rather than one drill around use of cover and another around movement, create a drill combining the training objectives of both. Be careful not to make it too complex thus counterproductive.

Some agencies have received the cold shoulder from the local school department when planning for active shooter scenarios. For some reason, having a PhD or multiple masters degrees in education does not necessarily mean they can see the forest for the

trees.

If your municipality has a Multi Hazard Plan, consider orienting the training around a work place shooting. While there will be differences in the location, the tactics for the initial responding officers should be similar. The more commonality in tactics and training that you can develop, the more your officers are likely to retain in the long run.

We will never have enough training hour or dollars allocated to us. Good instructors have to be creative enough to

use what they have to achieve the best results possible. If you keep your material fresh and the content realistic, your officers will see the training as a benefit rather than another department mandated exercise they have to complete to work. Run exercises that hone your officer's practical skills. Do not be satisfied with maintaining the bare minimum.

If it does happen in your backyard, have the tools and techniques in place to meet and beat the threat. Remember - It can happen here.

MPTC Firearms Instructor Curriculum Changes

MPTC Firearms Training Coordinator Bill Leanos has advised MLEFIAA that he has eliminated the one day Patrol Rifle Instructor Course.

MPTC will only offer the 3 Day Patrol Rifle Instructor class as of Oct 2006. Bill added the 3 Day rifle class to the existing 5 day instructor certification to bring it to a total of 8 days. At this time, there are no changes in the curriculum, only time changes. Bill advised that may change in the future when he

implements more changes.

This change brings the MPTC more in line with the program MLEFIAA has been teaching for the past two years. As you may recall, we made the move to a 3 Day Patrol Rifle/Shotgun Instructor program after we noted the one day class just did not provide sufficient class time to achieve our training objectives.

The original one day Patrol Rifle course was written by

Maj. A. J. Belleville of the Essex County Sheriff's Dept. A.J. was a plank owner with MLEFIAA and was instrumental in getting the patrol rifle accepted here in Massachusetts back in the early 1990's.

By today's standards, the original course is very basic and simple but it provided a base on which we have built better courses of fire.

MLEFIAA will keep its members updated with any new changes.

Meeting Calendar

Dec 12, 2006
SIG Arms
Academy
(2007 E-Board
Nominations)

Jan 23, 2007
S&W Academy
(Elections)

Feb 27, 2007
Mass. State Police
Logan Airport

Mar 27, 2007
Open

Apr 24, 2007
Lancaster P.D.

May 22, 2007
Open

June 2007
HSC
Instructor Recerts

June 2007
HSC
Family Shoot fest

July/August 2007
No Meetings

Sept. 2007
Open

Oct 2007
Conference

Nov 2007
Open

Dec 2007
Open

Watch your E-mail for details

Can You “Qualify” Your Officers With A Single Course of Fire?

A local police department recently completed one of its quarterly training sessions. During the training, the question was raised, “Is this sufficient for qualification?” The service pistol course of fire that was being run involved response to a threat stimulus, engaging multiple threats, shooting while moving, muzzle discipline while moving around static innocent bystanders, target recognition, scanning and verbal commands. Shooters fired at distances varying from 12 yards in to contact distance. Total rounds expended was ten.

At issue was the fact that department had abandoned the MPTC Pistol Qualification Course in favor of their own program. The department’s instructors were looking for a program that more realistically reflected what an officer will do in a gunfight. The Chief questioned, “Does this course of fire qualify an officer with respect to liability?” After thinking about this for a moment, the lead instructor answered “No, however no other ‘qualification’ course does either.” “It is our entire training program and the individual officer’s successful participation

that protects us from liability.”

Typically a department may run quarterly training with the sessions being broken up into range time with the Service Pistol, Patrol Rifle & Shotgun, Judgmental Use of Force or Force on Force and a classroom session that may review the department’s Use of Force Policy and other academic material. None of these alone is sufficient to “qualify” an officer. The more forward thinking departments will include Integrated Use of Force where there people will need to utilize those authorized tools (OC, DT, Taser, etc.) which fall between voice and firearm.

If an officer has an on going problem, is there a remedial training program that extends beyond an immediate correction on that range day? In these days of shrinking budgets, limited range facilities and officers with no prior weapons experience, how many of our problem shooters actually get the additional training they really need? The fact the officer has the same problem every time they go to the range may be a good clue.

Beyond the actual course(s) of fire, what conditions do you train in? If you go back through your training records, will there be a common denominator - “clear skies, warm, daylight”? Do you cancel firearms training due to weather? When is the last time your troops had to worry about rain obscuring their vision, gloves to keep their hands warm and poor footing on muddy ground?

Given the above, I am not even sure we need a qualification course. By definition, a qualification course merely states the individual officer met a particular standard on that particular day. It is not a true indicator of how an officer will perform under any other conditions. Would it not be better to evaluate an officer’s performance over a wide variety of training exercises under varying conditions to determine if they are competent to carry a firearm in the course of their duties? You may want to ask yourself this question the next time you have your people standing static on the 7 yard line (with no cover) getting ready to fire ten rounds in nine seconds.

Conference Committee Begins Planning for 2007

The MLEFIAA Executive Board has begun setting the wheels in motion for the 2007 Firearms Instructor Development Conference. In response to member feedback, we have decided to expand the conference to four days in 2007. Set aside September 25-28 on your calendars for the best training bargain in New England.

In keeping with our proven format, the

first day will consist of classroom training and the product expo. Day 2 through 4 will be range training. The conference committee felt that the Devens Common and Springhill Suites provided excellent service and value. Negotiations with the facility will begin in the early spring. After a contract is available, we will determine the price structure. Members can look forward to some changes in the 2007 format. Details are not available yet but

due to the longer format, we are looking at new options for course registration.

If you are interested in presenting a training module, please contact MLEFIAA Secretary Joe Picariello. MLEFIAA is always looking for new blood with fresh ideas to keep our program current.

Watch your email, the Case Head and our website (www.MLEFIAA.org) for details and registration information.

Product Review

Brite-Strike Tactical Lights

Reviewed by Todd Bailey

A new player in the tactical light field made their product debut at the IACP Convention in October. Brite Strike Tactical Illumination Products is a local company started by a police officer to meet the needs of law enforcement.

Brite Strike has three product lines at the time of this writing. The Blue Dot Series, Protector Series and a larger rechargeable line that is due to be released in January ‘07. This review will focus

on the Blue Dot Series which I received a prototype for evaluation for 2 weeks.

This line features a body which is CNC milled from a billet of aircraft grade aluminum which is then anodized with a Mil Spec Class III black finish. The light source is provided by a state of the art Luxeon® LED. Powered by a single or two CR123A lithium cells depending on the model, the result is a brilliant white light with no dark spots. The body design features what the manufacturer calls a “Tri Strike Crown” on both

the head and button end. The aggressive saw tooth projections are intended to inflict pain compliance in the event the light is used as a defensive weapon.

The light is activated via the button found on the end cap in the same style found on many other brands. The prototype furnished was stiff and a little difficult to operate especially in conjunction with shooting a handgun. The manufacturer indicated production models will be available with (Continued on Page 4)

Dry Fire Training Helps Develop Muscle Memory

One thing that gets put aside in the midst of an officer's daily grind is any type of regular dry-fire practice routine. This includes practicing a smooth weapon presentation from your security holster. As we all know, muscle memory is the key to being able to smoothly draw and accurately fire our weapon in a high stress situation with maximum accuracy and minimal fumbling.

Set up a target in your garage or basement where you have 3 to 7 yards of room. Be sure your duty weapon is unloaded. Double check it! Mistakes can be not only embarrassing but damaging to your home as well as your neighbors. Use snap caps if you have them. Practice with your duty holster and with your body armor on. Facing your target, practice smoothing clearing the weapon from the holster and coming up on target. Start slowly concentrating on the fundamentals of the draw: Grip, Draw, Together & Up

When the draw is smooth, work on obtaining your sight picture and the trigger press.

This can be the traditional sight picture or if you are a follower of point shooting, the use of a bore laser will be helpful. The Beam Hit system is an excellent product which will help the shooter develop these skills. Cost is \$330 and up depending on the model and options you choose.

In addition to dry fire practice which, by itself, will increase your accuracy at the range or in the field, you are improving your target acquisition skills and the timing of your first shot. Keep your sessions to about 15 minutes. This teaches muscle memory and keeps you from getting tired which can affect the end result. Be sure to draw from a fully secured holster. Don't cheat! Practice a few days a week, and you'll notice the difference, guaranteed.

S/A Alan Ferguson, Lead Firearms Instructor for the IRS CID recommends that his agents "use their reflection in the bedroom mirror as the target. In this manner the agent develops reactionary skills to a threatening movement as well

as target acquisition. Using empty magazines to perform reloads develops muscle memory and improves their reload technique. Though the slide is not locked back, you can depress the slide release simulating the emergency reload drill."

Experienced instructors will see a flaw in this technique. Relying on the slide stop may cause a problem when the adrenaline charged situation has caused a loss of fine motor skills and the shooter must fumble with the small slide stop. We recommend racking the slide as the preferred option.

The key to this drill is the repetitive drawing and bringing the muzzle on target for a first shot hit.

BEFORE CONDUCTING ANY DRY FIRE DRILLS, INSURE YOUR WEAPON IS UNLOADED. CHECK IT AGAIN.

Drop the magazine from your weapon and perform proper clearing procedures both physically and visually. Ensure that it is empty.

Do not cut corners with these safety measures.



Photo courtesy of Beam Hit, Inc.

"Muscle memory is the key to being able to draw and accurately fire our weapon in a high stress situation."

Brite-Strike Tactical Light Review (cont. from Pg.3)

an improved button that is unlikely to be inadvertently activated such as when worn in belt holster or carried in a pocket.

The activation button is available in two modes - Hi/Lo and Momentary/On. The two cell model puts out up to 90 Lumens for about 4 hours. If equipped with the Low setting, it will run for about 50 hours at 40 Lumens. These numbers are reduced to 2 and 35 hours respectively on the single cell version. I found this light will easily illuminate up your surroundings 20 to 30 yards away.

Like many other lights, these lights feature a pocket clip.

Brite-Strike has reversed the mounting location so the officer can clip the light to their jacket or shirt epaulet. The open design makes this easy even when wearing gloves or with the non-dominant hand. I found this feature worked as advertised and that I tended to use it as Brite-Strike intended.

Brite-Strike carries a line of ballistic nylon holsters suitable for use with your duty gear. The pouch fit easily onto my 2 inch nylon duty belt however the belt loop was too small for my 2-1/4 inch leather duty belt.

I used the 3 watt model for two weeks and found it more than adequate for patrol related ap-



Photo courtesy of Brite-Strike Technologies,

plications. Brite-Strike advises a 5 watt version is in the works and will be available in 2007. The construction is robust and the Class III Mil-spec finish is hard as nails. O-ring seals serve to make the light water and shock proof.

The Blue-Dot Series is only available to law enforcement officers and agencies. Pricing is very competitive and online ordering is available. The company offers a limited lifetime warranty on all its products and is definitely worth a look if you are looking for a new light. For more technical data and ordering information, visit their website at www.brite-strike.com.

Don't Forget Your Long Gun Training

Generally, the quality of service weapon training has made great strides in law enforcement over the past few years. The reasons for this include notable court cases such as *Canton v. Harris*, *Tuttle v. Oklahoma City*, *Popow v. Margate* and publications such as the one you are reading. No longer do we accept shooting from a static position in the traditional target shooter's stance. The greater majority of departments have introduced at least a combination of stress, proper use of cover, movement, verbal commands and shooting using the non-dominant hand. Budgets remain tight but it is not uncommon to see a creative instructor cram most of the essentials into a four hour training block. After giving their officers several hours of quality service pistol training and with time running short, they run a quick shotgun and/or patrol rifle (or carbine if you prefer) qualification course so they can kick their officers loose before overtime kicks in.

This does not make sense. Why do we take great pains to administer the best pistol program possible given budget considerations then run a quickie long gun course of fire which is almost an afterthought? It is a sad fact that many departments short change their officers when it comes to rifle and shotgun training. Is your training program in this category? If your long gun program does not include all the key elements which have become standard in a firearms training program, you need to think about revising your training.

USE OF COVER -

Even if use of cover is introduced into long gun training, it is often done with little or no thought to using it correctly. Inevitably, the shooter is too close to the object providing the

cover. This can provide an adversary the opportunity to grab the barrel from the off side as the muzzle protrudes beyond the corner. Even if the shooter's muzzle is back slightly from the barrier, there is the chance of the shooter being injured by flying debris created when a round inadvertently strikes the cover. Commonly referred to as spalling, concrete and other masonry barriers are notorious for this. This can be caused by the shooter failing to consider the offset between the sights and bore axis or rushing the shot without properly aiming. Our training program advocates being at least 3 or 4 feet behind cover. If possible, we suggest more is better. Just as we teach with the handgun, staying back from cover allows us to slice the pie more effectively. It also means we expose less of our body thus less potential risk provided our cover is adequate.

SHOOT FROM THE NON-DOMINANT SIDE -

Unless your program is really above average, you probably are not shooting from your non-dominant side with the long gun. I feel this is a critical training point for every department that has rifles or shotguns in their inventory. We do not have the luxury of choosing which side we will be able to shoot from. In the adrenaline charged seconds of a gunfight, our officers will be scrambling to find whatever safe cover they can so they can continue the fight from an advantageous position. Since Murphy's Law usually prevails in cases like this, the cover you find will require you shoot from your non-dominant side or expose an unacceptable amount of your body using your dominant side. Many of your officers will whine when you force them to use a technique they are

(Continued on next page)



(Above) MLEFIAA Staff Instructor Brian Neeley demonstrates the proper technique for shooting from behind cover. While difficult to see from this angle, the muzzle is about a foot behind the wall.

(Below) This photo shows the same situation from the front. The officer's elbow should be tucked in closer to his body to prevent it from being hit by hostile fire.



“Why do we take great pains to administer the best pistol program possible given budget considerations then run a quickie long gun course of fire which is almost an afterthought?”

Don't Forget Your Long Gun Training (cont. from Page 5)

not comfortable with. You need to make it clear that this can save their life. Shooting a patrol rifle or shotgun from your non-dominant side will seem awkward at first but can be easily mastered. Introduce this concept slowly from the prone or kneeling position. Have your shooters take their time with the goal of making each shot count. As they become acclimated to shooting "backwards", their confidence will grow and you can increase the training tempo. The transition to shooting from the non-dominant side is easier if you are fortunate enough to have optical sights.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

DRILLS - Your officers need to be able to manipulate all the mechanical functions of the long gun and they need to be able to do this regardless of which side they shoot from. Malfunctions occur with long guns so we need to be able to clear them and get back into the fight. Transitioning to our secondary weapon (service pistol) is the quickest way to get back into the fight albeit at somewhat of a disadvantage. Getting your primary weapon back into action will allow you to continue to go on the offensive without being at a disadvantage. Clearing the various types of stoppages and reloading when necessary should be second nature. This brings up another point. Have you equipped your long guns with spare ammo? Some officers carry spare long gun ammo however the use of a spare magazine pouch or shotgun side saddle carrier is more common. These are inexpensive accessories and provide a 100% increase in your available ammo. Once your officers become comfortable with this, have them do it in the prone position or while in a "tactical squat" to simulate the awkward shooting positions we sometimes find ourselves in.

GET THE LONG GUN INTO

ACTION SMOOTHLY - Another training point we often forget is having the officer access the long gun from the locking storage unit located in the cruiser. You will have officers question the need for this stating they know how to take the rifle or shotgun out. Once you induce some stress into the

equation, this all changes. People start to fumble with buttons and maneuvering the long gun from between seats or out of the trunk becomes more difficult. Including this facet into a course of fire also will induce some stress especially if they are being engaged with Simunitions® or Airsoft rounds. Don't forget to insure they know how to put it back correctly. If your rifle or shotguns are stowed in the trunk, do all your officers know it's there? This may sound ludicrous but I know of one occasion where an officer did not know the Mini-14 was stowed in the trunk above the spare tire shelf. This was despite an email being sent to all personnel two months prior and the cruiser equipment check required by department policy prior to each shift. While you are conducting this training, check the locking mechanism to ensure it is functioning properly. Does the release work as designed? Does the device securely hold the weapon? Chances are the mechanic won't include this with the oil and fluid change every 1500 miles!

SLINGS - One of the most important accessories you can fit to your long gun, be it rifle or shotgun, is the sling. Simply put, the sling is to the long gun as the holster is to the handgun. If you have an administrator that can not seem to understand the importance of having slings, ask them if it's permissible to discard the empty rifle when the officer has to transition to handgun or go hands on because the threat level de-escalated. The thought of a patrol rifle laying around on the ground and most likely disappearing by the time the officer returns to retrieve it usually gets their attention. Include long gun to hand gun transition drills into your program. Depending on the skill level of the user and whether you have common weapons (weapons that are assigned to a particular cruiser and whatever officer that happens to be

driving it), there are a number of good choices. For simplicity, I recommend a jiffy or hasty sling. If your department's policy is to assign long guns to individual officers, let them use the sling type that works best for them. Rule #1 is put a sling on the long gun and be sure everyone knows how to use it.

POINT SHOOTING - This may be controversial depending on which side of the topic you adhere to. I am a firm believer that point shooting has a place in our training. It is not the end all solution to every situation but for fast, in close shots, the shot taken by aiming the weapon without establishing the traditional sight picture is quicker. Your people need to know how to do it. Active shooter situations are a common training scenario these days and an excellent place to conduct this type of shooting. Induce movement into the equation - forward, backwards and pivoting. Multiple targets, especially those which depict friendly or "no shoot" images will make your training more realistic.

The patrol rifle and to a lesser extent these days, the traditional police shotgun are key tools for us. They are force multipliers which allow us to extend the effective range of our service weapon. Unfortunately, the long gun training for many departments has not kept pace with what they have done with their service pistol training. This needs to change. We need to bring long gun training beyond an annual rehashing of the fundamentals. Be creative with your courses of fire. The MLEFIAA Instructor's Course Manual (www.mlefiaa.org/manual.html) is a great place to start if you are looking for ideas. If you are making improvements to your service pistol program, examine your long gun program to see if similar upgrades are needed there as well.

"If you are making improvements to your service pistol program, examine your long gun program to see if similar upgrades are needed there as well."

Is Your Department Sending Your Dues & Payments to the Correct Address?

Association Secretary Joe Picariello has advised that a few departments continue to send dues and other payments to the old Holliston address. Please double check to insure that your department is using the correct address for all correspondence and billing to the Association. Mail sent to the Holliston address does not get forwarded to MLEFIAA. This problem has caused Joe considerable time and effort to chase down the wayward payments and get checks reissued after they have expired. The correct address is included here.

PLEASE DIRECT ALL CORRESPONDENCE & PAYMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

**MLEFIAA
P. O. Box 253
Princeton, MA 01541-0253**

Ammo Failure Reported by Somerville P.D.

MLEFIAA Secretary Joe Picariello recently received an advisory from fellow firearms instructor and member Lt. Carmine Vivolo of the Somerville P.D.

Lt. Vivolo reports that while using Federal's 165 grain Hydra-Shok 165 grain duty round, his department experienced what appears to be a "squib round" which became lodged at the muzzle of a SIG Sauer P229 DAO pistol after being fired - see accompanying photo.

Lt. Vivolo stated that this occurred during the department's annual firearms qualification. His policy is to have his officers expend their current duty ammo during the qualification and then to issue new at the end of the training.

At a second session at the range, another round became lodged in the barrel of a Glock 23. In this case, the weapon cycled properly chambering the next round. He reports two additional instances where the bullet barely left the barrel and the weapon did not cycle.

The subject ammo was purchased from Four Seasons in Woburn and carries a Lot # of 3 48R635. Lt. Vivolo has contacted both Federal Ammunition Co. and Four Seasons. As of this writing, no reply has been received from Federal.



The symptoms appear to indicate insufficient powder was loaded in the cases. The obvious danger here is that if the weapon cycles and the shooter fails to recognize the muted report or recoil, they could very well fire a subsequent round into the obstructed barrel. This can yield anything from a bulged barrel to a catastrophic failure with possible injury. In the event you encounter such a failure, remove the magazine and insure the chamber is empty. Dismount the slide from the frame and remove the barrel from the slide. A hard wood dowel or cleaning rod may be used to dislodge the bullet. With a mallet and the dowel, carefully tap the bullet out from the chamber end. When it is clear, thoroughly inspect the barrel for damage including a bulge or cracks. Usually, if you run your fingers down the sides of the barrel, you can detect a bulge. A dark ring side the barrel can also be an indicator of a bulged barrel. The weapon should not be fired until this inspection has been made by a qualified armorer or gunsmith. Instructors need to be alert for inconsistencies such as this to prevent mishaps and officer injuries.



The Case Head thanks Lt. Carmine Vivolo of the Somerville Police Department for submitting this information and photos. Lt. Vivolo has been a member since 1996.

Contagious Fire - Fact or Media Hype?

The Nov. 27th edition of the New York Times newspaper ran a headline, "50 Shots Fired and the Experts Offer A Theory". The author, Michael Wilson, would like his readers to believe that police officers fire their weapons because it is contagious - "like laughter or fear and it spreads like germs." "The 49 shots that followed the detectives first (shot) may have been contagious shooting", said one former police official who insisted on anonymity because the investigation is continuing." The article also states that "the officers have not yet been interviewed by police investigators or prosecutors to give their account."

The facts, as reported by the Times, are as follows. An undercover officer posted inside the Club Kalua, a site of frequent drug, weapon and prostitution complaints in Jamaica, overheard an exchange between a stripper and a man that led the officer to suspect the man was armed, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said on Saturday. The undercover officer alerted the officers acting as backup outside — there were seven officers in all — at about 4 a.m., setting into motion the events to follow later. Eight men left the club and argued briefly with another man. One from the group saying, "Yo, get my gun," Mr. Kelly said. The eight men apparently split into two groups of four, with one group piling into a Nissan Altima driven by Mr. Bell, Commissioner Kelly said.

As an undercover detective who had been following the group on foot approached the vehicle, Mr. Bell drove into him, striking his leg, before plowing into a minivan carrying two backup officers, the commissioner said. The Altima reversed, mounting a sidewalk and hitting the lowered gate of a building before going forward and striking the van again. The officers opened fire, striking Mr. Bell, 23, twice, in the right arm and neck, Commissioner Kelly said. The critically wounded man, Joseph Guzman, 31, was struck 11 times, and the third man, Trent Benefield, 23, three times. Mr. Kelly said it was unclear whether there was a fourth man in the car and what became of him.

Most of us will look at this situation and see Assault & Battery on a Police Officer with a Dangerous Weapon (to wit an automobile) and the officer's logical response to the situation. If you are like me, you would

have pulled out your calculator and figured out that 50 rounds fired by five officers at three suspects (in motion) comes out to a little more than 3 rounds fired at each suspect by each officer. On face value - not an unreasonable amount.

According to the Times, police reported one officer fired 31 rounds. Apparently he emptied one magazine, reloaded and emptied the second. Another officer fired 11 rounds. The others fired four rounds, three rounds and one round respectively.

The reporter cites "police experts" who stated the number of rounds is high and that it is a symptom of "contagious fire". He cites several other shootings in New York, including the Diallo shooting in 1999 where a high number of rounds were fired by police officers.

The presence of Anti-Crime and other specialized units in the area will result in a larger police response to a situation. Logic states if there are more officers at the immediate scene, there will likely be more officers firing at the threat. In this case, the undercover officer believed at least one of the individuals had a gun. A subsequent argument between the individuals escalated the situation. When police approached the vehicle, the suspects hit the officer with the car and then struck a vehicle carrying other officers. If that was not enough, the suspects then rammed the police vehicle a second time.

There is little doubt that deadly force was justified in this situation. The officer's lives were clearly in danger and the correct response was to stop the threat. At issue is the 31 rounds fired by one officer and the 11 fired by a second. But is this an excessive number?

I think we can successfully argue that it was not excessive. While I am not intimately familiar with the training given to NYPD officers, I will presume they are taught to "shoot to stop" and that they may employ an appropriate level of force until the suspects lethal actions are stopped. It would be entirely reasonable to consider a 4000 pound vehicle driving at you to be a

lethal threat. It could also be considered reasonable to fire at the operator until the operator stopped his threatening actions. We know that the 9mm round can be ineffective against tempered glass windshields especially if they are angled back like many new cars are. If NYPD trains their officers like we train ours, they shot to stop the threat. When the threat didn't stop and the pistol ran dry, they reloaded, as they were taught and continued to fire. Most likely, this all happened in a matter of seconds.

The idea that the response of the officers was "contagious" is pure unadulterated bunk. Each officer evaluates the situation based on their perception of the events. Response time to a deadly force stimulus will differ from officer to officer. This means one officer may not have time to fire as many shots as another before the threat is stopped. The officer who is in front of the approaching vehicle may well feel in greater danger than one to the side. This perception may induce a greater sense of urgency (rightfully so) to stop the threat and thus they may fire faster and more often until the threat is stopped.

According to Bill Lewinski and the Force Science Research Center, officers generally are not aware of the response of other officers in their periphery. Their decision to shoot is based on "the individual perception of threat by each individual officer and the belief by that officer that their response was needed to stop the threat." These were the chief reasons why the officers started shooting, stopped shooting and fired as many rounds as they did.

In the course of your training, emphasize that a deadly force response needs to be based on the threat - not on the response of another officer. Document this aspect of the training. We can't control what the press prints but we can stress to our people to exercise their right to remain silent when questioned about topics they have no expertise in.

"According to the Times, one officer fired 31 rounds. He emptied one magazine, reloaded and emptied the second. Another fired 11 rounds."

New Bedford City Councilman Proposes Statewide Air Gun Regulations

An article in this month's issue of the OUTDOOR MESSAGE caught my eye. It seems a proposal has been drafted by a member of the New Bedford City Council to request the local state representative and senator to file legislation to ban the sales of air guns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

According to the paper, this was prompted by an incident where local police shot and killed a 38 year old man who pointed a pellet gun at them in a crack house. Lamont Cruz was a recovering drug addict who was on parole for a 1990 manslaughter conviction.

The proposal would require air guns be turned in or painted a bright color. It would also ban the sales of air guns without a license.

It is not the intent of this publication to get into the politics of anti-gun legislation but rather to raise the awareness of certain implications this legislation may have on law enforcement and us as firearms instructors in particular.

The first concern is the misconception that painting air guns a bright color will prevent tragedies like this from happening. Anyone with half a brain can envi-

sion the bad guys painting real guns bright colors to deter police from shooting at them. This poorly thought out proposal does nothing but endanger police officers. Sadly, it is a good example of the mindset of some politicians. The last thing the officer on the street needs to worry about is whether that pink pistol is real or not. Anyone who uses a firearm, be it real or a replica, in the commission of a crime, should face the full consequences of the law for that unlawful use of a firearm. What happened to good old fashioned common sense?

The second concern is how this will affect the availability of Airsoft guns. As many readers of the Case Head know, Airsoft is a viable training tool which has become extremely popular in the past few years. The fact they can not chamber or be converted to chamber a live round makes this an ideal training tool. Airsoft is also a much more economical alternative to other tools such as Simunitions®.

We have seen a decline in the availability of certain high end brands due to trade mark infringement. Ironically, the attention to detail that makes these products so useful to us is also the reason

some can not be imported into the U.S. While the realistic stampings are of no concern, replicating the exact dimensions of the firearm in question has allowed us to use them with more success in Level III holsters and to fit the weapon mounted lights and accessories we carry on our duty weapons.

Hopefully the provisions of 15USC76 will apply and preempt this proposed legislation. Section 5001 reads:

(g) Preemption of State or local laws or ordinances; exceptions

The provisions of this section shall supersede any provision of State or local laws or ordinances which provide for markings or identification inconsistent with provisions of this section provided that no State shall -

(i) prohibit the sale or manufacture of any look-alike, non-firing, collector replica of an antique firearm developed prior to 1898, or

(ii) prohibit the sale (other than prohibiting the sale to minors) of traditional BB, paint ball, or pellet-firing air guns that expel a projectile through the force of air pressure.

Time will tell. Stay tuned.

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What's new about the 6th Edition?

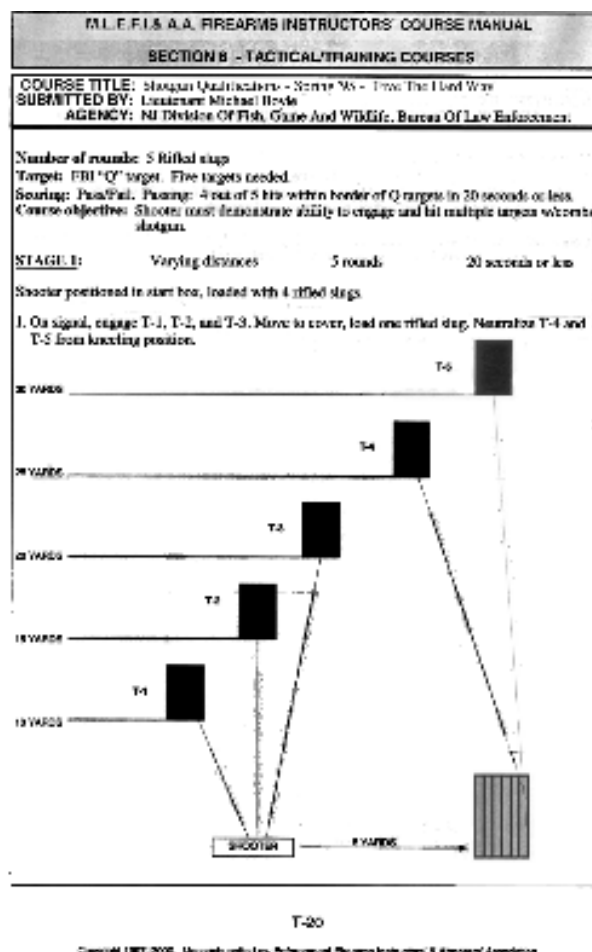
Start with over 900 pages of courses, lesson plans, diagrams, forms and reprints of interesting articles for the progressive firearms instructor. The manual is now in electronic format and can easily be downloaded to your computer or run directly from the disk. With courses of fire for everything from back up guns to SMG's, this manual ideal for the instructor who finds it difficult to come up with new material each time they go to the range. Here's what our users have to say about the MLEFIAA Firearms Instructors Course Manual:

"Well worth it at twice the price and the CD format makes it so easy to find and use what you read." - Sgt Rich Verdi (Holmdel, NJ PD ret.) IALEFI Board of Directors

"I am impressed" - Dennis Carroll reviewing for ILEETA

"What a remarkable job putting this together! I have already placed it into our resources area and have directed staff to start using it. I hope you and others realize what a valuable tool you are providing and how many officer's lives it may save." - Chief Jeffrey Beahen, Elk River (MN) P.D.

"This is must have reference material for every firearms instructor" American COP Magazine Nov/Dec 2006



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Go to www.mlefiaa.org for more further info

The Importance of Rotating Your Ammo

One of things we have seen recently with the budget constraints is a trend towards not replacing an officer's ammo load out on an annual basis. There are a couple of reasons we are seeing this -

First is the requirement to use non-toxic and/or frangible ammo on certain ranges. This means range masters are having the officer remove their duty ammo prior to the training or qualification to load the "green" ammo. Since the duty ammo was not fired, the natural thing is to load it back into their magazines and continue carrying it on duty until the next range session.

The other reason is financial. The firearms training budget in many departments has been reduced down to a point where the instructor's annual budget is less than his monthly grocery bill. Departments are not replacing the duty ammo on an annual basis as in the past. They are purchasing low cost ball ammo for range training rather than purchasing new duty ammo (at about twice the cost) each year. Considering the nature of the training we are trying to conduct, this is a recipe for disaster yet it continues across the state.

In and of itself, this would not be a problem. Ammunition if stored properly will last for years. So where is the problem? Ironically, it is with the safety conscious officer.

The problem I see at the range when I inspect the weapons and ammo of each officer prior to beginning the training is with what is called "bullet set-back". Bullet set-back is caused by repeatedly chambering the same round over a period of time. This is most commonly caused by the safety minded officer that unloads his weapon each time he goes off duty. Routinely they will remove the magazine, eject the chambered round and place the single



(Above) The cartridge on the left is a normal .40 S&W round. On the right is a round that was taken from an officer at a recent training session. Note the bullet has been set back into the case about 1/10th of an inch.

round back into the top of the magazine. They then safely store their duty pistol until they are going to go back on duty at which time the magazine is replaced back into the pistol and the round chambered. Multiply this cycle by the number of days the officer works in a year and you begin to see the beginning of a problem.

The repetitive contact with the feed ramp as the round is pushed from the magazine and up into the chamber will eventually push the bullet back into the case. This reduces the space in the case for the powder to burn. The result is the chamber pressure increases dramatically. While this happens in any caliber, it seems more pronounced in the .40S&W round. The normal chamber pressure in the .40 is about 35,000 c.u.p. (copper units of pressure). Setting the bullet back a mere tenth of an inch can increase this pressure to in excess of 50,000 c.u.p. This can lead to a catastrophic failure of the handgun.

Inspect your officer's duty ammo on a regular basis in addition to their weapons. Instruct your officers to rotate their ammo so that they are not loading the same round each time. Replace your duty ammo on a regular basis. Always wear eye protection at the range.



Glock 22 (.40 S&W) with Federal ammo that suffered a catastrophic failure that was attributed to bullet set-back. The Glock is an extremely strong pistol and will withstand a great deal of abuse however a 50+% increase in chamber pressure exceeds even the Glock's inherent strength. (Top & Middle photos) Note the longitudinal stress fractures below the crack where the breech block ultimately failed and the separation of the case head from the body of the case.

(Bottom photo) The primer has been blown out and primer hole has been enlarged about 30%. The pistol was a total loss as there was significant damage to the slide and frame rails. This is why checking your officer's ammo and wearing quality eye protection is important.

Photos from author's collection

Upcoming Training



There will be a Taser instructor class held in Peabody, MA, at the Peabody PD, on Monday & Tuesday, February 5 & 6, from 8-5 each day.

At this class, both new instructors will be certified, and existing ones can re-certify. This is a good opportunity for Mass instructors to re-certify, since many of you are approaching your two-year limit on your initial certification. The cost for new instructors is \$225, and for re-certification the cost is \$80. The instructor will be Ralph Mroz.

All registration and payment is handled through Taser International--not through Peabody PD or the instructor. Go to www.taser.com then to the law enforcement training section to access the right forms, or contact Jami LaChapelle at Taser at 800-978-2737 ext. 2016, or email her at Jami@TASER.com

Location:
Peabody Police Department
6 Allens Lane
Peabody, MA 01960
Contact Lt. Joe Berardino, rosie41692@msn.com
978-538-6315 for local info if needed.



Massachusetts Law Enforcement
Firearms Instructors' & Armorer's Association

Firearms Instructor Development & Certification Course

Date: *Tentatively Late Winter*

Location: *To Be Announced*

Cost: *Minimal to cover expenses*

MLEFIAA will run a Firearms Instructor certification class this winter if there is sufficient interest. Any department interested in sending officers to this program should contact MLEFIAA Secretary Joe Picariello at secretary@mlafia.org for more details. Tentative date will be January or February depending on what arrangements can be made with the host range. As before, there will be a minimal charge to cover our expenses and we will request certification approval from the Municipal Police Training Committee. Additional details will be published as they are firmed up.



Massachusetts Law Enforcement
Firearms Instructors' & Armorer's Association

2007 Firearms Instructor Development Conference & Training Product Exposition

September 25-28, 2007

Devens Common Conference Center
Harvard Sportsman's Club

Details will be released in the spring



Armorer's School Mini-14 and PC Series Carbines

Westminster Police Department
6 South Street
Westminster, MA

May 1-3, 2007

Cost: **FREE**

Advanced Registration Required

Contact: Secretary@MLEFIAA.org

*This class is sponsored by
Ruger, MLEFIAA and the Westminster P.D.*

2006 Instructor Development & Training Conference Photos



*Massachusetts Law Enforcement
Firearms Instructors' & Armorers' Association*



As the state's premier firearms instructor organization, MLEFIAA has led the way for better firearms training since 1987. If you are not a member, you are missing out on one of the best deals available for a police firearms instructor. For \$30 a year, you can be a part of the most active instructor's organization in New England.

If you have let your membership lapse, now is the time to renew. Membership information and applications can be found on our website www.MLEFIAA.org or by contacting MLEFIAA Secretary Joe Picariello at secretary@mlefiaa.org.



www.MLEFIAA.org

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The Case Head Wants Your Input

If you have a training tip or article you've always wanted published, or you just want to sound off about a topic you saw in the Case Head - this is your chance. We welcome reader submissions but as with any other publication, there are a few rules. Articles should be no more than 750 words in length and in MS Word (97 or later) format. Any photos should be in JPEG format. If there is enough input, we will start a Letters to the Editor column where you can write in and tell us all that we are doing wrong (or right). Submissions should be sent to casehead@mlefiaa.org.

MLEFIAA encourages a healthy discussion of training issues but we must insist that you keep it level headed and respect opposing views. We will not publish articles that are inflammatory or will tarnish the reputation of the Association.

The Case Head can be
found on the web at
www.MLEFIAA.org

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