Room Entries Study – Officer Side

Problem Statement

Police officers must often search rooms for armed suspects in the course of their daily work. This is an inherently dangerous task as police officer cannot see the entire room before entering; whereas the suspect can see the doorway through which the police will enter. This gives a potential advantage to the suspect in both speed and accuracy of fire should he or she decide to fire at the police. The basic solution to this problem involves using more than one officer when conducting a room entry. This brings a second person into the situation who can act if the first officer is shot upon entry.

While the use of more than one person to conduct room entries is universally agreed upon in the tactical policing community, the way in which the police officers enter is not. Currently three methods of entry are in use. The known method has the first officer move into the area of the room which can be seen from the door. In the figure below, this is represented by position A. The second officer would move to position B. In the unknown entry method, the first officer moves to position B, and the second to position A. In the hybrid entry method, the first officer moves to position C and the second to position B.

Figure 1. Room Entry Diagram The proponents of various techniques have various arguments about why one should be preferred over the other. This study will explore the effects of the different entry styles on the speed and accuracy with which the entering officers can fire.

A

B

C

Suspect

Method

Design

This study will feature three conditions. These are the known, unknown, and hybrid entry techniques.

Sample

Police officers attending the Active Shooter Conference will be recruited. Recruitment will be accomplished by making an announcement at the conference. No incentives will be offered for participation. It is expected that approximately 100 police officers will participate.

Method

The study will be conducted at Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training’s (ALERRT) Bowie Facility. Upon arrival, the participants will participate in the standard ALERRT safety preparations. This includes searching the participants to insure that no weapons are brought into the facility and a briefing on the safety rules for the use of Simunition FX Marking Cartridge weapons. During this briefing, the participants will be issued and instructed in the use of the safety equipment. Both the searches and safety briefing will be conducted by certified ALERRT instructors who are either full time police officers or retired police officers. Biographical Information will also be collected at this time (See Bio Form). Participants will be told that their task is to search for an armed gunman who shot someone and then ran into the building.

Following the briefing, participants will be randomly paired and assigned to conditions. Each pair will be taken into the practice hallway to practice their assigned entry technique 5 times. When this is complete, a safety officer will escort the participants to the hall in which the study is being conducted and placed in the care of the safety officer for that hallway. This safety officer will verify that the study area is ready, inspect the participant’s safety equipment to insure it is properly attached, and issue the Simunition weapon. The participants will then begin searching the hallway for the armed suspect.

The suspect will always be placed in the corner of the second room that is searched. The suspect will be played by an ALERRT staff member who is wearing safety equipment and using a Simunition weapon. This staff member will be instructed to fire at the police officers when they enter the room and continue to fire until the police officer’s shoot the suspect twice. These exchanges will all be recorded.

After the engagement, the safety office will call cease fire, collect the weapons, and inspect the officers and participants for hits. He will then escort the participant out of the study area to the safe room, thank him or her for their time and dismiss them.

Analysis

The hit information will be reviewed to determine how accurately the officers fired in each contion. The videotapes will be reviewed to determine how long it took for each shot to be fired.

Risks

The participants will be using Simunition FX Marking Cartridge weapons. These fire a colored wax projectile at a high rate of speed. These projectiles can leave welts similar to those created by paintballs. Simunition FX Marking Cartridges are the industry standard in law enforcement and military training used during force-on-force training exercises. To minimize the risk of injury, participants will be instructed to wear long sleeves, pants and gloves to the session. We will additionally keep long sleeved shirts, pants and gloves on hand in case participants fail to wear their own. The participants will also be placed in safety equipment that protects their head, face, and neck. Additionally, each participant will have a limited number of rounds in his or her weapon which will limit the number of times that they might be hit.

ALERRT has conducted this type of training for 10 years and has not had a serious injury during that time. In the event that a serious injury does occur, EMS will be immediately contacted, the IRB will be notified, and the experiment will be stopped until the IRB has reviewed the situation and given permission for the experiment to resume.

Benefits

The participants will get to participate in the research process and learn how quickly and accurately they can fire.

The information generated will fill a critical gap in our knowledge about room entries. It will also be integrated into the ALERRT training programs and may serve to save lives.