

Officers Killed in 2005: Fatal Tendencies and Deadly Habits

Don't let this happen to you

Traffic Stops

A 26-year-old officer with the Columbia Police Department died on February 10 from injuries she received during a traffic stop a month earlier. The incident occurred shortly before 10 p.m. on January 10 when the officer, who had nearly 2 ½ years of law enforcement experience, pulled an individual over for an unknown violation. ***The officer approached the vehicle and obtained the driver's license. As the officer stood outside the subject's vehicle,*** the individual pulled out a concealed .380-caliber semiautomatic handgun and shot at her. The round missed the officer, who retreated between the suspect's car and her patrol car. The suspect pursued the officer as she attempted to draw her weapon. The individual fired a second shot from close range. The victim officer was wearing body armor, but the round struck her in the top of her left shoulder and continued into her neck area, resulting in severe damage to her throat and spine and leaving her immediately incapacitated. The suspect then moved directly over the victim officer and fired two additional shots, one into her rear upper left arm and another in the front of the victim officer's neck. The 23-year-old man, who had a prior record involving police assault, returned to his vehicle and fled. The incident, which was captured on the victim officer's in-car video, took less than a minute to unfold. Later, the suspect, who was known to use, possess, and deal drugs, was involved in a foot pursuit with officers. During that foot chase, he shot a second officer and then committed suicide.

Habitually examining the suspect's documents on the initial contact during a traffic stop leaves you without adequate reaction time. Practice drawing your weapon under stress. Habitually insist upon seeing the violators' hands and *watch* them.

-Around 10:30 p.m. on March 27, a 34-year-old sergeant with the Panama City Beach Police Department was shot and killed during a traffic stop. The 6-year veteran of law enforcement pulled over a vehicle for unspecified reasons and obtained the driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. A check of the information revealed that the man's license had been revoked. ***The officer returned to the vehicle to place him under arrest.*** However, as the officer approached the vehicle, the man produced a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun and shot the officer at close range twice in the chest; a third shot missed and hit a passing car. The two bullets that struck the victim officer penetrated his protective vest (body armor failure), and he died at the scene. The alleged shooter fled the scene in his vehicle. When he turned onto a street that dead ended at the beach, he drove onto the beach, where his vehicle got stuck in the sand. He then walked back to the road and hitchhiked to a bar, and from there he hitchhiked another ride to the vicinity of a hotel. During the ride to the hotel, the man made comments about having a violent confrontation with a police officer. The occupants of the second vehicle contacted the police after they dropped the man off and notified them of the man's comments and his location. The following

morning, officers located and arrested the alleged assailant, who was in possession of the gun used to kill the officer the previous night. The 22-year-old, who was on parole and had a prior criminal record that included police assault and weapons violations, was charged with First-Degree Murder, Fugitive from Justice, and Resisting Arrest.

Outnumber your opponent(s). Don't drop your guard once good (or minor crime) is perceived. Be in the habit of waiting for backup before arresting.

Put your opponent in a position of greatest disadvantage *habitually*.

-A 48-year-old officer with the Phoenix Police Department was mortally shot while executing a traffic stop just after 11 a.m. on May 10. ***The patrol vehicle's computer showed that the 22-year law enforcement veteran had run a license plate a few minutes earlier and found the car in question to be stolen. Shortly thereafter, the radio dispatcher began receiving 911 calls reporting an officer down.*** Responding officers found citizens giving medical aid to the victim. The officer, who was wearing body armor, had gunshot wounds to the front of the head and the neck, which were subsequently found to be from a .380-caliber semiautomatic handgun. Moments later, the stolen vehicle that the victim officer had observed was found 2 blocks away from the scene of the shooting, and two males had been observed walking away from the vehicle. Officers initiated a search for the individuals. The victim officer was transported to a medical center where he died of his wounds at 3:50 p.m. the same day. Two suspects with prior criminal convictions, an 18-year-old and 27-year-old, were arrested on May 12 and charged with First-Degree Murder.

-At 11:30 p.m. on September 28, a corporal with the Waynesboro Police Department was killed by a shotgun blast after he initiated a traffic stop. Responding to a call about a van that reportedly had been stolen from the parking lot of a local bar, the 31-year-old corporal, who had over 2 years of law enforcement experience, ***spotted a vehicle matching the description of the stolen van. He called another responding officer and reported that he was attempting to stop the vehicle. The corporal then advised dispatch of the stop location and the vehicle's license plate number. When the assisting officer arrived at the scene, he found only the victim corporal lying dead near his police vehicle.*** Based on footage from the video camera in the victim's police vehicle, the corporal had approached the suspect vehicle, and a shotgun blast from within the vehicle shattered its window and struck the corporal fatally in the front of the head and in the neck. The van then pulled away. That same evening, officers from the Waynesboro Police Department and the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation located a 31-year-old male who had a prior conviction for criminal behavior and was a known drug user. Upon being questioned, the man confessed to killing the officer and led investigators to the location of the murder weapon, a 12-gauge bolt-action shotgun. Police arrested the man and charged him with Capital Murder, Possession of a Firearm by Convicted Felon, and Grand Larceny.

Wait for backup prior to initiating the stop. Use a high risk vehicle stop technique. ASSUME THE WORST CASE SCENARIO.

Building Search

-The Chief of Police of the French Camp Police Department was shot and killed in an ambush at 10:20 p.m. on February 4. The 32-year-old chief, a 6-year veteran of law enforcement, was assisting an officer in the pursuit of a vehicle that had begun in Ackerman. An officer with the Ackerman Police Department had attempted to stop the vehicle, but the driver refused to stop and sped out of the town. The French Camp Chief of Police and a Choctaw County deputy joined in the chase, which ended at a residence in Millsprings. Two occupants remained in the vehicle, but the male driving the car and a female passenger got out and ran into the house. The chief and the deputy ran into the house after the pair.

The deputy went into the kitchen chasing the female, while the chief, who was wearing body armor, went to the dining room and questioned the woman who owned the house about the whereabouts of the male. A 16-year-old male, who had a prior criminal record and was under supervision at a halfway house, walked up behind the chief, and from less than 5 feet away, shot him in the side of the head with a 16-gauge pump-action shotgun, killing the chief instantly. The deputy arrested the male, who was charged with Capital Murder.

Don't leave your partner's back uncovered. Assume the worst.

-The 42-year-old sheriff of the Greenwood County Sheriff's Office was shot and killed on January 19 while attempting to execute an arrest warrant. At 9:44 a.m. , the sheriff, along with two deputies, arrived at a single-family residence and found two individuals present, who indicated that the subject of the warrant was not at the house. The sheriff sought and received permission to search the residence. ***The two deputies secured the outside of the dwelling while the sheriff, who had 26 years of law enforcement experience, searched the inside.*** The sheriff called for the subject to come out. While the sheriff was standing near the staircase, the subject, who had hidden himself, reportedly emerged without warning, placed a .44 magnum revolver to the sheriff's chest and fired twice. The deputies heard the shots, entered the residence, and dragged the victim sheriff from the house. They were unable to return fire as they removed the victim officer. The deputies directed the other two individuals in the residence to flee, leaving the 23-year-old male, who was on parole and under the influence of narcotics, alone in the residence. The victim sheriff was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead. Several hours later, after unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with the alleged offender, a Kansas Highway Patrol Special Response Team forced entry into the residence. The offender fired at the troopers, who carried a ballistic shield, until the revolver and a .22-caliber semiautomatic handgun were empty. He fought while being arrested, but was eventually subdued and charged with Capital Murder.

Do not search a building, room, or area alone. 360° Coverage, contact-cover. The only ways to defeat an ambush is with speed, surprise, violence of action, relentless forward motion, and multiple, diverging stimuli.

Acts Without Waiting For Backup:

A 27-year-old police officer with the Louisville Metropolitan Police Department was shot and killed while investigating a suspicious person shortly before 7 a.m. on March 23. The officer, who had 2 years of law enforcement experience, responded to a call of a vehicle that had left the scene of an accident. Witnesses called dispatchers to report that the vehicle was abandoned nearby and that it was on fire. The callers also indicated that two young males had walked away from the vehicle and were still in the area. **Shortly after he arrived in the area of the incident, the officer informed the dispatcher that he was going to get out of his vehicle to speak with two persons that matched the descriptions of the suspects. The officer, who was wearing a protective vest, took a bag from one of the young men and placed it on the trunk of his patrol vehicle.** When the officer turned his head to look at the contents of the bag, one of the youths pulled out a .22-caliber revolver and shot the officer in the neck, fatally wounding him. As the victim officer lay on the ground, the suspect shot him three times in the head and unsuccessfully attempted to take the officer's weapon. Two additional officers arrived at the scene and saw the suspect holding a gun. The officers drew their weapons and ordered him to drop his weapon. The suspect then placed the revolver to his head and pulled the trigger, killing himself. The assisting officers then went to the aid of the victim officer, who was transported to a local hospital where he died during surgery. The 17-year-old suspect was a known drug user who had a prior mental disorder and was on probation. The male who was with the suspect surrendered and was charged with crimes unrelated to the murder of the officer.

-A 36-year-old patrol officer with the Boiling Spring Lakes Police Department was shot and killed after initiating a traffic stop on January 18. At 1:15 a.m. , **the officer, with over 6 years of law enforcement experience, stopped a vehicle with two male occupants and one female occupant. The officer found a small amount of marijuana in the vehicle. He ran a license check on the driver and was notified that the driver was wanted in another county for a probation violation.** As the officer attempted to arrest the man, he retrieved an empty liquor bottle from his vehicle and struck the officer in the head; they both fell to the ground. The officer pulled his weapon, but the suspect gained control of the officer's .40-caliber semiautomatic service handgun. The suspect then fired one shot into the officer's shoulder and two fatal shots into the officer's head. A back-up officer from another agency arrived, and the suspect fired four shots at the Southport officer before fleeing the scene in the vehicle he had been driving. Officers from two other departments located the suspect's vehicle and gave chase. When the suspect stopped and exited his vehicle, he fired shots at the officers and fled on foot. He was found a short time later hiding under a mobile home. The 19-year-old suspect was arrested and charged with First-Degree Murder, Assault with Firearm on Law Enforcement Officer, Attempted First-Degree Murder, Assault with Deadly Weapon with Intent to Kill, and Robbery with Dangerous Weapon.

Secure the scene FIRST. THEN investigate. Wait for a backup unit to frisk/search/get subjects out of a car. Don't rely upon the suspects' cooperation for your safety. Control the subjects so they can't kill you.

Uses Less Force/Later Force Than Peers:

A 51-year-old deputy sheriff with the Livingston County Sheriff's Department was shot and killed while answering a disturbance call in Ledbetter shortly after 11:30 p.m. on June 2. The veteran deputy, who had 5 years of law enforcement experience, arrived at a home where a man was involved in a physical domestic disturbance with his wife and daughter. Shortly after entering the home, the deputy was confronted by the husband, who was armed. The deputy ***tried peacefully to disarm him, which included using pepper spray***, but the offender began firing at the deputy with a 7.62x39 mm semiautomatic rifle, one of two weapons with which the offender was armed. A round wounded the deputy's right hand, and two rounds entered below the deputy's protective vest but were deflected by his leather gun belt and accessories. Another round of bullets struck the deputy in the front of the head, fatally wounding him. Prior to succumbing to his wounds, the deputy returned fire, using his service weapon, a 40-caliber semiautomatic handgun, and shot the 48-year-old offender in the chest, justifiably killing him. The offender, who had a criminal record which included drug-related crime, was under the influence of alcohol and drugs at the time of the incident.

Understand and train for the appropriate use of deadly force as *police officers* understand it, not as *citizens or Hollywood* understands it. Assume the worst case scenario. Understand your reaction time and your opponent's reaction time.

-A corporal with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), Pittsburgh, was shot and killed following a high-speed traffic pursuit well before dawn on December 12. The 45-year-old corporal began midnight-shift duty for the PSP-Pittsburgh station at 11 p.m. on December 11. About 1:55 the next morning, he contacted the PSP dispatch center to report his pursuit of a vehicle for a traffic violation and to request assistance. After the vehicle crashed onto the curb at a motel entrance, the corporal ordered the two passengers, who had gotten out of the car on the passenger side, to show their hands. He also commanded the driver to move to the trunk area on the driver's side of the car. ***The driver reportedly became verbally combative and refused to comply with the command. According to one of the passengers, when the corporal tried to place the driver's hands on the car, the driver attempted to attack the corporal physically. The corporal then sprayed the suspect with pepper spray, but the suspect grabbed the officer's arm and hand. During this struggle, the suspect allegedly took the corporal's service weapon, a .40-caliber semiautomatic handgun, and shot him multiple times.*** The victim corporal, who had nearly 24 years of law enforcement experience, suffered wounds to the neck and throat. The fatal bullet entered his chest through the armhole or shoulder area of his body armor. The passengers fled the scene on foot before the shooting began but later reported hearing gunshots fired in rapid succession. The suspect left the scene in his own vehicle. Assisting officers discovered the victim corporal at 2:05 a.m. on the ground of the motel parking lot entrance. The emergency lights of his marked PSP vehicle were still flashing, and the driver's door was open. He was

taken to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 2:26 a.m. Later that day, with the help of a confidential informant, officers were able to locate the suspect driver and the two passengers. One of the passengers reported receiving a cell phone call from the suspect, who allegedly referred to the shooting during the call. The suspect reportedly placed a second call requesting that the passenger return to the scene and retrieve a Glock handgun. The passenger refused to do so. The passenger reported that he had observed the suspect attempting to conceal the Glock under the driver's seat prior to encountering the corporal. Members of a PSP forensic services unit subsequently found the fully loaded Glock in shrubbery near the motel parking lot. The 30-year-old suspect, who was under supervised parole at the time of the incident, had an extensive criminal history record, including prior convictions for weapons violations and drug-related crime. He was not licensed to carry a firearm. He was arrested on December 14 and charged with Criminal Homicide, Disarming a Law Enforcement Officer, Resisting an Arrest, Violation of Use of Firearm, Theft, and Fleeing the Police.

Use the high risk vehicle stop technique. Use the appropriate level of force. If a suspect physically attacks you, he/she is trying to kill you. Assume the worst case. If you are within lunge range and don't have both of the suspect's hands secured, you are at a fatal disadvantage.

Drops Guard When Good Is Perceived

-A 43-year-old veteran sergeant with the Kirkwood Police Department was killed on July 5 at 7:35 p.m. when an assailant ambushed him. The sergeant, who had nearly 21 years of law enforcement experience, was responding to a fireworks complaint when he stopped his patrol car to speak to some young people. ***With both front windows rolled down, the sergeant remained seated in the patrol car, talking to the youths, as an assailant approached from the rear passenger side of the vehicle and reached inside to fire several shots with a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun,*** wounding the sergeant and one of the young people. The sergeant accelerated the vehicle, moving several hundred feet forward away from the attacker. The vehicle struck a parked car and came to rest against a tree. Neighbors called for assistance and helped the sergeant get out of his patrol car. As the sergeant lay wounded on the ground, the assailant approached and shot the sergeant several more times at close range injuring the front and side of his head, and wounding him fatally in the back of his head. The assailant then took the sergeant's service weapon and spare ammunition and walked away from the scene. The alleged assailant, a 19-year-old male who was on probation at the time of the incident, remained at large for 3 days before surrendering to police. The suspect, who knew the victim officer through a law enforcement relationship, was charged with First-Degree Murder. A known drug dealer and user, the alleged assailant had a criminal record that included police assault and weapons violations. The youth also wounded in the attack was expected to recover fully.

-Two patrol officers with the Albuquerque Police Department were shot and killed about 9:40 p.m. on August 18 when they attempted to transport an allegedly deranged person who was slated to receive a mental evaluation. ***Upon arriving at the designated area, the two officers talked to the subject for several minutes to secure a level of his cooperation.*** However, the man produced a .45-caliber revolver and began shooting. One round struck the 50-year-old patrol officer, who was wearing body armor, in the back of the head, killing him instantly; the victim officer was a 21-year law enforcement veteran. The 46-year-old patrol officer, who was also wearing body armor, returned fire, striking a tree where the shooter had taken cover. The officer then took cover behind the patrol vehicle. During the following exchange of gunfire, the man struck the officer, also a 21-year law enforcement veteran, in the upper and lower back. Another shot entered the victim officer's ballistic vest through the armhole or shoulder area, mortally wounding him. The shooter then fled the scene on his motorcycle but was apprehended a short time later. Police discovered that the man, who had a history of mental disorders, had allegedly been involved in three homicides earlier in the day. The 48-year-old man was arrested and charged with five counts of Murder on August 19.

-One police officer with the Newtown Township Police Department was fatally shot and another was assaulted while handling a prisoner around 6:20 p.m. , on September 29. A man in custody for possibly driving under the influence had been transported to a medical facility where he was to provide blood and urine samples as the two officers and a medical technician monitored him. ***After exiting the bathroom, the suspect was directed to turn around so that one***

of the officers could handcuff him. As the 31-year-old officer, who had nearly 5 years' law enforcement experience, reached for his handcuffs from under his jacket, the suspect suddenly turned and disarmed him. The officer reached toward the suspect; however, the suspect blocked the officer with his hand and fired one shot from the officer's .357-caliber revolver. The round went through the suspect's own hand and struck the officer in the chest, knocking him to the floor. The suspect then shot the 46-year-old officer, who had over 2 years of law enforcement experience and was wearing body armor, in the abdominal area, knocking him to the floor as well. The gunman then shot the medical technician, walked over to the second victim officer, and fatally shot the officer in the left temple. Reportedly, he stood over the officer, made a derogatory remark, leaned down, and fired another bullet into the lower left side of the officer's head. The gunman walked back over to the first victim officer, who was still lying on the floor. He aimed the gun at the officer's head and pulled the trigger five times. However, the gun was out of ammunition. Next, the man ran down a corridor toward the emergency room waiting area, where he dropped the victim officer's gun on the floor before exiting to an attached parking garage. Officials placed the medical center in a lockdown status, and police SWAT teams searched the facility. A SWAT officer discovered the gunman sitting in a vehicle that he had apparently broken into on the top level of the parking garage. When the man refused to get out of the vehicle, officers deployed a flash-bang and broke out one of the vehicle's windows to gain access to the man. After a brief struggle, officers arrested the 38-year-old man, who was under the influence of alcohol and had an extensive criminal record including police assault. Charges against the offender include First-Degree Murder, Aggravated Assault (4 counts), Robbery (4 counts), Terroristic Threats (2 counts), Recklessly Endangering Another (10 counts), Escape, Former Criminal Not to Own a Firearm, Criminal Attempt at Murder (2 Counts), Simple Assault, Unlawful Restraint, DUI, Resisting Arrest, and Disarming a Law Enforcement Officer. The wounded officer has since returned to duty.

Assume the worst case. Don't rely solely on your perceptions or information from dispatch to set your level of officer safety. Don't contact people from a position of disadvantage. Don't rely on a subject's cooperation for your safety. You will not have time to react if you are within lunge range. Don't be caught off guard by the perception that the crime is 'minor', or that the subject just is 'off his medication'. Control the subject(s) first, *then* investigate.