

~~was a .40 caliber. Unknown if he was shooting at me at this time, I took the only means of cover that I could think of at the time was to go underneath my dashboard and try to run the suspect over and get out of the kill zone. To put distance between him and I and keeping something between us for cover. I proceeded down the street approximately 100 yards and stopped my car when I felt I was out of the kill zone. I peeked up the side of the car to see where his location was. He was in the middle of the street, and he was pointing at me. During this whole time, I never knew he was firing his weapon at me. He jumped into his car.~~

~~After a brief pursuit, several officers apprehended the offender. The officer stated that he had received prior training and participated in scenarios where perpetrators attacked him. He advised, "They would set up ambushes and their main job was, and I'll never forget the words, 'get out of the kill zone'. Distance between you and them and cover. That's all I kept thinking as soon as I saw a gun."~~

~~COMMENTS: At the end of the tour of duty, officers should return home in the same condition in which they left. They will make tactical decisions during those working hours that will protect society from forces that threaten its safety. They also must make these same tactical decisions to protect themselves and return to duty the following day.~~

Answering Electronic Alarms

Experienced law enforcement officers realize that electronic alarms are usually false. In the cases examined here, however, officers were seriously injured when the alarm they responded to turned out to be real.

Case Review

An officer was in the dispatch center when a bank burglar alarm sounded. The officer responded alone. He later stated, "That same alarm went off last week, and the bank had never been broken into. I figured it was another false alarm, and, on the way out the door, I told the dispatcher to call the key holder." The officer drove by the front of the bank and did not observe anything unusual.

The offender in this incident advised that he did not believe the bank was alarmed. A short time after forcibly entering the bank, he observed a marked police vehicle in

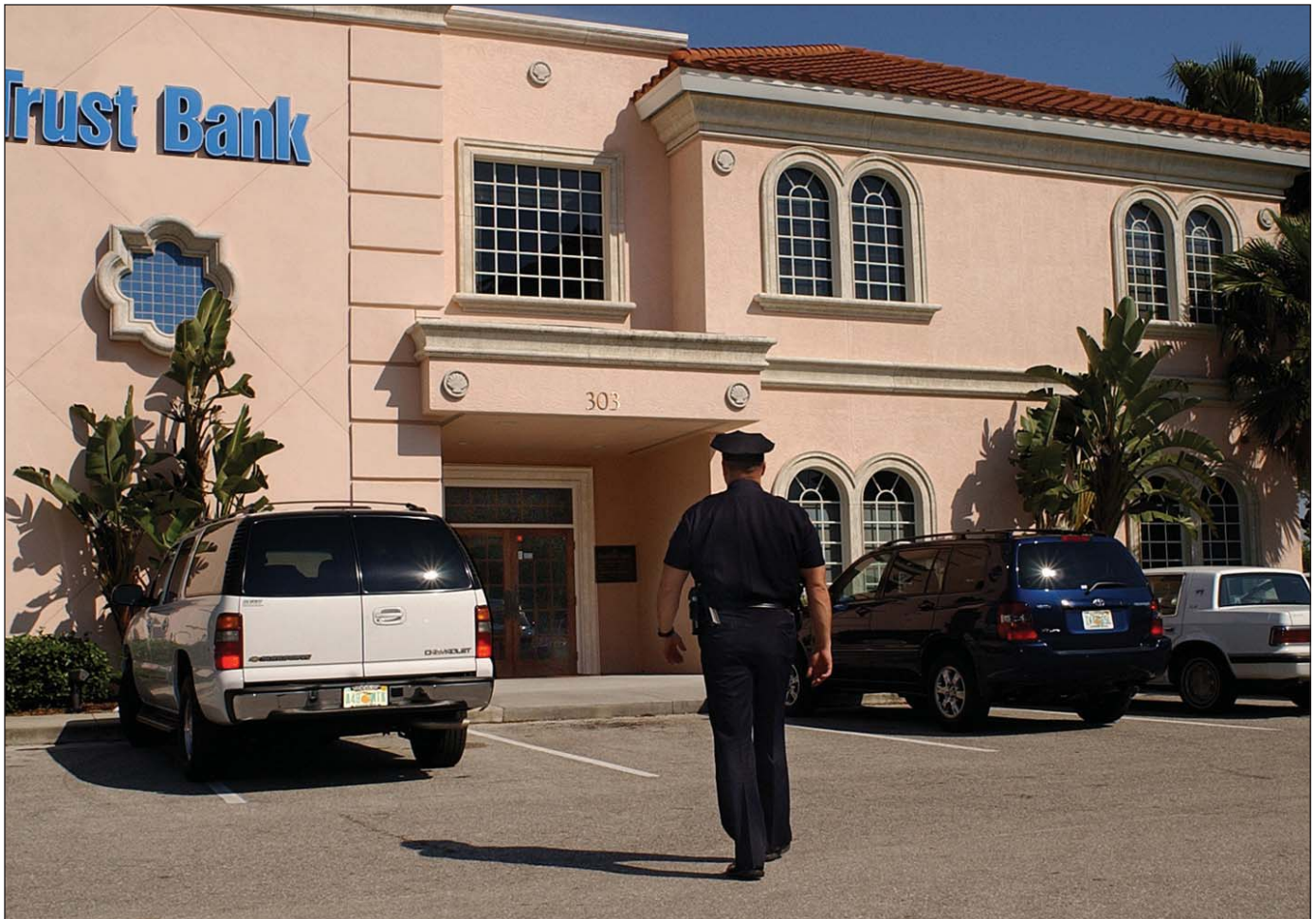
front of the premises. He later said:

The first thing he [the officer] did wrong was that he pulled in front of the bank. That was the first mistake. Letting the police car be seen. If there's anybody in the area of the bank doing anything, they're gonna see the police car. I drop the money and the envelopes that I had and I took my gun out. I was looking to try and see which door he was going to come to first. I know he's coming, but I don't see him. I ran to the little office where I knocked the window out and I stand right there at the window. I see him shining the flashlight at the window. It was up high. It was about 9 feet off of the ground. If he sticks his head in the window, I'm going to shoot it off. It's real simple. But, he never did. He left. So, I run back out of the office and I'm looking for him, but I don't see him. At this time, I'm in the panic mode to the tenth power. I don't even think about the money anymore. The money is irrelevant. I left the money right there. I grab a chair and pull it out about 6 feet from a wall. I take a running start, hit the chair, and dive for the window. I hit the ground. I'm running. I'm off. I run right past the police car and the officer who was bending down with his foot on the running board talking on the walkie-talkie. I guess he heard the noise and looked up and saw me running past. "Hey, stop," but it's too late, I'm gone.

Case Review

An officer and his partner were dispatched to a holdup alarm at a retail establishment. Upon their arrival, they saw a subject running from the front of the building. His partner pursued the subject while the officer approached the side of the store. He later related:

I went to the corner of the building. I looked in the window that was away from the door. My body was basically behind a concrete wall and I looked into the window and it looked like business as usual. There was a lady conducting a sale, and there was a couple of customers in front of the cash register. So, it looked like it was okay, and I walked in the front door. Peaked my head in the front door and asked everybody if it was okay. The cashier nodded yes. She didn't say anything, but she nodded yes, so I stepped into the door. As I stepped into the door, a man tried to push his way past my left side and I held him up.



“I should have never entered the bank without backup.”

This individual was the second holdup man. The officers did not know the number of subjects involved. In the ensuing struggle with the offender who was trying to exit the store, the officer was seriously wounded by a gunshot to the head.

When questioned about the incident, the offender responded, “I think when it came down to it, if he would have come in with his gun out, I’m no fool, I ain’t gonna try no officer with his gun out. If he would have come in with his gun out asking questions, then I think it would have been different.”

Case Review

A uniformed police sergeant answered a call for a holdup alarm at a bank. Prior to arriving at the scene, he had learned from the dispatcher that she had contacted the bank by telephone and was verbally advised that no robbery had occurred. The sergeant told her that he would respond and confirm that the alarm was false. The ser-

geant parked his vehicle in front of the bank and entered the front door. Immediately, the offender, in the process of robbing the bank, fired upon the sergeant with a handgun. The shots missed the sergeant who retreated from the bank and took up a position of cover outside. The offender exited the bank while simultaneously exchanging gunfire with the sergeant. Wounded by gunfire, the offender was apprehended at the scene. The bank teller had told the dispatcher that there was no robbery in progress because she could not see the offender’s interactions with the teller he was robbing.

The sergeant said, “You can never assume any alarm is false. You have to also be aware that the dispatcher may not receive all of the necessary information that enables you to make good decisions. I should have never entered the bank without backup.”

COMMENTS: Officers must remain vigilant and proceed to each alarm with caution and never assume that a call is false. Officers also must realize that they cannot fully rely

on information received from the dispatcher or third-hand information passed from citizens to dispatchers. Officers who become complacent, decide to take shortcuts, or rely upon inaccurate information place themselves and their communities in unnecessary danger.

One-Shot Drops

Over the years, the media has criticized and condemned officers for shooting suspects numerous times. The public and the press have a false image of the capabilities of police officers' handguns. The only certain way to immediately stop an individual with handgun fire is to sever the spinal cord.¹ The following excerpts from actual cases highlight the problems. One case demonstrates a rare officer-involved shooting wherein the officer incapacitated the offender with a single shot fired from a handgun.

Case Review

Two plainclothes officers responded to a location known as a high-intensity drug-trafficking area. The officers parked their vehicle in an alley and began separately to search for a suspect matching the description of a person observed making drug sales in the area. One officer located the offender, identified himself as a police officer, and attempted to conduct a pat-down search of the offender. However, before the officer could do so, the offender produced a .357-caliber handgun and shot him in the chest. The offender immediately attempted to flee the scene on foot while continuing to discharge rounds at both officers who returned fire, striking the offender numerous times. The offender later related:

The gunshots began to rain coming from both directions. Him and his partner began shooting. As I continued to run, I'm being hit as I'm running. I was so scared that I just kept running [two city blocks]. So, I made it to this house for safety. I was shot between ten and thirteen times. I felt my leg buckle when I was running, but I just kept on running. I didn't realize that I had been shot until I got to the house and someone told me to lay down because I was bleeding. I figured I was shot then, but there wasn't no pain. I was so nervous and scared that I was just trying to get away. My mind wasn't on no pain or none of that.

One of the officers reacted to the incident stating, "After me knowing that this person was hit ten to thirteen times and might have been in a wheelchair for a couple of

months, I didn't have much confidence in the ammunition, in grain or in power. I mean, you would assume getting hit ten times in the body by gunshots would have at least knocked him down."

Case Review

An intoxicated offender charged at several officers with a knife raised above his head. The officer who had been closest to the offender later related:

He was about ten feet away when I fired my first two rounds. Where they struck I don't know. We carry the Glock 21. It's a .45 caliber. Myself, I was using Black Talons in it. He hesitated for a second and continued moving forward. I fired what I thought was one more round and then my gun jammed. It turned out it was two more rounds and my gun jammed. It just seemed to p— him off even more.

As the officers fled the apartment, backup units arrived and observed the offender, who had the knife and was still threatening the officers on the scene. A backup officer discharged an additional .45-caliber round, which struck the offender in the sternum. The officer stated:

The last round was right in the middle of the sternum. You could hear air, so I know it hit a lung. He dropped the knife and leaned against a wall. It was only then that we were able to move the knife from the area. The offender was still leaning against the wall, and I was amazed that he didn't go down.

The offender was apprehended and transported to the hospital for treatment. He has since fully recovered from his injuries. When asked what he felt at the time of the shooting, the offender replied:

It felt like a bee sting. It enraged me to where I lost all control after that because now it said to me, these people are going to hurt you. So I figured, now I'm going to hurt you back. After the final shot, I don't really remember anything. I know I had gotten really drunk, and I was really mad. I'm glad the cops didn't let me get close enough to hurt them. What kept me on my feet? Rage.

Case Review

An officer who was interviewed for the current study discussed a prior incident that involved the use of deadly