

HIGH-RISK PATROL

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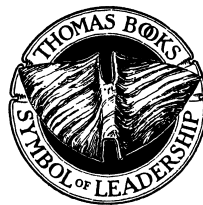
HIGH-RISK PATROL

Reducing the Danger to You

By

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*Dedicated to the officers
Who have died,
And in their dying,
Taught others to live.*

SPECIAL NOTE

This book presents practical, proven, commonsense suggestions for responding to the dangers that threaten police officers. They work. But there are alternative means for handling these hazards that under certain circumstances may also work. As a result, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for harm to persons or property resulting from utilization of tactics and procedures suggested in this text.

PREFACE

- A big-city uniformed patrolman, 15 years on the job, stops a vehicle containing a known robbery suspect. He saunters up to the driver's door and is fatally shot for his carelessness.
- A sheriff's deputy in a rural Texas county chases down a speeder on an isolated country road. After contacting the driver, he turns to get his summons book from his patrol car. This momentary lapse is all the wanted fugitive needs to shoot the deputy in the back. The officer dies.
- Two officers—longtime car partners—take a drunk into custody and place him, unsearched and unhandcuffed, in the car seat behind them. Each relies on the other to do something neither actually does. And both die needlessly when the drunk produces a handgun.
- A rookie officer stops by the corner drugstore for a quick purchase. Her mind in neutral and her thoughts of officer safety suppressed, she walks into a robbery in progress. Stunned, she draws her weapon without clear-cut plan or purpose. She is subsequently killed by a shotgun-wielding lookout she never even saw.

American police officers killed—murdered—in the line of duty. Officers have been dying with frightening regularity on the paved streets, dirt roads, cluttered apartment landings, and spotless living room carpets of the nation for a long time now. They were dying violent deaths long before anyone thought about formal, organized training in something called officer survival.

Unfortunately, they are still dying violently today even after the last three decades' long-overdue emphasis on police field survival skills. It is obvious that more work—a lot more work—will be needed if the nation's peace officers are to reach their potential as guardians of the public while they simultaneously protect themselves from criminal violence. Fortunately, it is a job that *can* be done. It must be.

This book goes a long way toward helping the individual police officer do that vital job. It is designed and intended to help him or her *survive*. It provides a general orientation for survival, and it details the specifics the intelli-

gent police professional must master to survive the many types of potentially risky situations he will be exposed to over a career. As it must if it is to be really helpful, the book delves into the down-and-dirty, nuts-and-bolts details of everything from searching a prisoner to searching a building; arresting a 300-pound outlaw biker or a surly teenager. The volume is painstakingly thorough in its approach to officer survival. The officer who reads it can afford to be no less thorough as he applies its practical information to the street situations he encounters.

But a printed narrative, no matter how careful and comprehensive, can only do so much. It can emphasize important principles in such areas as firearms use and self-defense, but it cannot teach complete physical skills, and it cannot instill nearly automatic motor responses. As a result, the wise student of officer survival will supplement this book with personal exposure to skilled, hands-on training in such areas as marksmanship, pursuit driving, come-alongs, and other physical tactics and techniques. By meshing that experience with what he reads here, the safety-conscious police practitioner can become the skilled professional he must be to survive and stay healthy, both physically and emotionally. He can, in sum, drastically reduce the personal risks of high-risk patrol.

G.W.G.

INTRODUCTION

This book has a singular purpose: helping the contemporary police officer hang onto his or her life in a world that can turn suddenly deadly. It shows the reader what high-risk patrol really is and then spells out exactly what he must do to counter those risks successfully. It discusses his personal preparations for risk reduction, including mental attitude as well as physical skills and training.

Nineteen chapters show the safety-minded police person how to do everything from handling traffic stops to surviving felony encounters; getting out of a domestic violence call alive to surviving an ambush attack. Some “special” dangers are also discussed, including off-duty confrontations and the emotional hazards of the job.

The practical police officer should find the book’s layout of particular value. At the end of each vital chapter, a quick and concise “Risk Reduction Checklist” is presented. These chapter summaries are excellent for review and merit rereading by the police professional intent on surviving to a healthy retirement.

The book includes ample evidence of what can go fatally wrong when officers meet danger. Culled from the “Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted” reports put together by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, these tragic but sadly informative accounts of police deaths are found throughout the text. Every account is true. These anecdotes accompany each chapter and contribute to an Appendix at the end of the book. Each one makes a point by way of grim example. Yet every tragedy described can help to save the life of an alert police reader who might otherwise have become one more statistic.

Key points on officer survival appear in more than one chapter. This is as it should be, inasmuch as something as central to officer safety as “obtain needed backup” is quite relevant to the safe handling of more than one kind of risky assignment. The repetition is both intentional and reinforcing to the careful student of field survival skills.

The information contained in this text is as current as the morning's headlines and as relevant as the obituary for a fallen comrade. This, then, is HIGH-RISK PATROL. Its purpose for existing is REDUCING THE DANGER TO YOU.

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HIGH-RISK PATROL

Chapter 1

WHAT IS HIGH-RISK PATROL?

Just what is a high-risk patrol assignment? Simply put, it is one in which the potential for you to be injured or killed is high. High, that is, if you fail to take some practical, commonsense precautions and apply sound officer safety tactics of the kind described in these pages.

The average police officer would have little trouble identifying certain calls or assignments as obviously hazardous ones:

- The reported sniper on a downtown roof.
- The man with a gun in the neighborhood bar.
- The shots fired call in a crowded shopping mall.

But would that same, average officer also recognize as potentially dangerous the following situations:

- An elderly man acting strangely in a local park.
- A stoned, teenage kid sitting on a bus bench.
- A reported argument between a landlord and his female tenant.

Each of the last three scenarios described here is potentially hazardous. Each *has* resulted in the violent death of a police officer. Each represents a real-life threat to you.

Just how dangerous is your world out there? Dangerous enough, according to some very reliable, revealing, and sobering statistics. Each year the Uniform Crime Reports Section of the Federal Bureau of Investigation produces a comprehensive report of violence and mayhem directed against American law enforcement officers. It is called “Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted,” and that is exactly what it reports on an annual basis.

WHAT THE STATISTICS SAY

It makes it a bit easier to understand what high-risk patrol really is when you take a look at police officer fatalities and how those officers died. In the sample year of 2008, for instance, 41 police officers were murdered in the United States, according to the FBI report. Twenty-two of the murdered officers were employed by municipal police departments. Of that total, 12 worked for agencies serving cities of 250,000 people or more.

In 2008, line-of-duty deaths occurred in 19 states. The South, the nation's most populous region, saw 20 officers killed. Nine officers were slain in the West, nine in the Midwest, and three in the Northeast.

Of the 41 officers killed in 2008, 37 were male and four were female. Some 30 of the victim officers were White, nine were Black, one was an American Indian or Alaskan native, and the race of one was not provided. The average age of the officers killed was 39 years, and the average length of service was 10 years. Of the 41 officers murdered in 2008, 27 were assigned to vehicle patrol.

What were the officers doing when killed? Nine were fatally attacked during arrest situations. Eight died during traffic stops or pursuits. Seven were slain while handling suspicious persons or circumstances, and seven were murdered while involved in tactical situations, such as a barricaded offender. Six officers died in ambush scenarios, and two died while doing investigative work, such as surveillance or interview. One officer was killed while handling a prisoner, and one died after responding to a disturbance call.

In 2008, 35 of the 41 victim officers were killed with firearms. Of these, 25 were shot with handguns. Four officers were killed with their own weapons. Of the 41 murdered, 32 were wearing body armor at the time of the fatal attack.

When did these officers become victims? More died in January than any other month. The deadliest day was Friday. The most dangerous time period in 2008 was between midnight and 4 a.m.

The FBI figures make it plain that making or attempting arrests and handling traffic matters are definitely big parts of what contribute to high-risk patrol for you. There is more to it than that, however. As any veteran law enforcement officer will tell you, life-threatening, gut-wrenching, heart-stopping danger can turn up anywhere and at any time. A grave threat to your life really can materialize in the form of the stoned kid on the bus bench or the little old man "acting weird" in a local park. Either of these troubled people may attempt mightily to kill you, the rescuer. Whether he succeeds will greatly depend on how prepared you are to face danger when it arrives with little or no warning. That success will turn to a considerable degree on the mental and physical preparations you have made in advance to defend your

life with every reasonable means at your disposal. In the end, your success (or your opponent's) may depend on who is best prepared to win the struggle at hand, whether that struggle amounts to a matching of wits and street savvy, a contest of survival tactics and techniques, a test of physical strength and agility, a match of skills with deadly weapons, or all of these.

CAUTION VS. PARANOIA

At the same time, you must see to it that your survival conditioning as a competent street cop never strays into *unrealistic* fears of impending destruction. Being careful does not mean the same thing as being hopelessly paranoid. The former is just good street sense; the latter will make you dysfunctional. No normal person can live sanely while seeing threats everywhere, every moment. Being survival conscious does not require that you see a cop killer behind every tree. Being survival smart DOES require that you recognize the fact that there are people out there who are willing, even anxious, to hurt you. It requires that you realize that these threats to your well-being can materialize when you least expect them.

Condensed into a concise formula for street survival, your motto for reducing the danger of high-risk patrol might look something like this:

I will be prepared.
I will be alert.
I will win.
I will not give up.
I will survive.

High-risk patrol, then, can be found in virtually any call you respond to, any contact you initiate, any individual who approaches you. High-risk patrol tactics are appropriate for you to initiate when you pick up a chronic drunk from the corner bar. They are entirely in order when you retrieve a runaway, teenage hitchhiker off of the interstate. They are absolutely a must when you transport the town's "harmless old crank" to the mental health facility.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

But exactly what are these high-risk patrol tactics, anyway? Just what procedures and techniques should you rely on when the chips are down and potential danger looms? It might be helpful to first examine what sound