

University of South Florida

From the Selected Works of Randy Borum

1993

Mental Training for High Risk Encounters in Law Enforcement

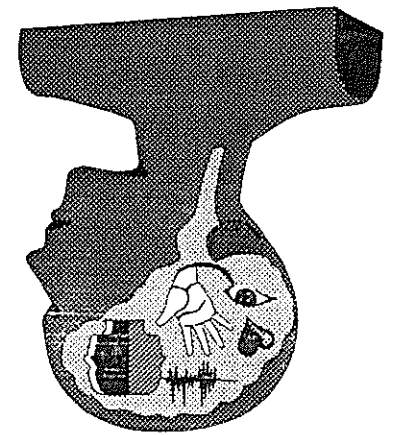
Randy Borum, *University of South Florida*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/randy_borum/36/

Mental Training for Use of Force Encounters in Law Enforcement

By Dr. Randy Borum



In recent years there have

been tremendous advances in use of force training for law enforcement personnel. Agencies have begun to evaluate, or in some cases to initiate, policies regarding the use of force; force-response continua are being integrated in training; and instructors are even using basic principles of motor skill learning and performance. However, despite these advances, insufficient attention is given to one area in use of force training: the mental and psychological factors involved in stressful confrontations (Borum & Stock, 1992). Officers can learn the techniques and physical skills of defensive tactics and shooting. However, if they panic, "freeze" or "overload" under pressure, they may not be able to apply these skills and, what is more important, they may not survive.

A thorough explication of all relevant psychological considerations is beyond the scope of this article. However, this paper will provide an overview of some key considerations. These are factors that use of force trainers can apply to their own programs and integrate into their existing training to better prepare their officers to perform well during high-stress encounters.

Performance Under Stress

Law enforcement encounters that require use of force are often stressful situations. Well-documented findings show that stress and anxiety, at extreme levels, can interfere with an individual's thinking and motor skill performance (Nideffer, 1985). Therefore, officers must learn about these psychological and physical reactions, and be trained to control and minimize their negative effects. It is important for officers to

realize that such reactions are normal, and that they can learn to control their responses and to perform effectively. During a confrontation with a resisting or attacking subject, an officer will typically experience a release of adrenaline as the body prepares to respond to the threat. This chemical release has many effects on the body including: a movement of blood away from extremities and toward the head, heart, and large muscles; dilated pupils; sweating/increased body temperature; tension in neck and upper back; increased heart rate; and shallow and rapid breathing. In addition, the officer may experience a narrowing of attention, decreased concentration, and negative thoughts about dying or his/her inability to cope with the confrontation.



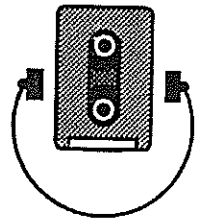
This suggests that incidents of high stress can influence the officer in two ways: physically (e.g., tension, rapid breathing, and heart rate) and psychologically (e.g., fear, poor concentration, distracting negative thoughts). However, there is a strong link between the mind and the body. A feedback loop may occur where the physical effects signal the mind that the body is stressed. In turn, fear and negative thoughts increase, making the officer more anxious, etc. To control these effects, the officer must learn to intervene in this cycle. Techniques can be learned to improve and control one's physical and psychological responses. These can be used to improve performance generally, and to minimize any negative effects during high-stress situations specifically. These have very important implications for use of force training.

Training the Body

Physical fitness (e.g., strength, endurance, proper nutrition) is essential for effective performance in high-risk law enforcement encounters, and is commonly taught in training academies. However, less emphasis is typically given to two other important physical elements of use of force training: motor skill fitness and controlling physiological responses. Motor skill fitness involves skills in six core areas: coordination, agility, power, balance, speed, and accuracy (Geier, 1990). These form the foundation of most defensive tactics and combat shooting techniques. They, too, can be learned. However, this section focuses on skills for the latter element of physiological control.

Relaxation Training: To properly learn defensive tactics and to manage physical manifestations of anxiety under stress, it is essential for officers to be able to identify muscular tension and arousal, and to learn how they can control it. Relaxation training provides an excellent conduit for this learning (Jacobson, 1938). Officers can begin by practicing this skill in a quiet distraction-free environment. These exercises involve a progressive focus on different areas of the body, with identification and relief of tension in those areas. One typically begins with the head and moves gradually down toward the feet. This is often facilitated by having an audiotape, which paces and directs the individual through the exercise. These tapes can be purchased, or the officer can make his/her own once the basic principles of relaxation training are learned. Although an officer will not be doing formal progressive relaxation exercises under fire, this training will be the foundation for other skills (such as mental rehearsal). It also helps the officer to learn how to identify and relax areas of muscular tension, even under stress.

Breathing Training: Learning to control breathing is one key to controlling one's physiological stress response. This is easily learned through practice. During these exercises, one focuses only on the breathing or relaxation,



inhaling deeply from the diaphragm, then exhaling slowly. When inhaling, the stomach should expand, instead of the chest. When exhaling, focus on the release of tension as the air is expelled. These techniques can be helpful even during periods of sudden and intense stress. Because there is a powerful connection between the mind and body, deep breathing will send "calming" rather than "stimulating" signals to the brain, which will reduce anxiety. In addition, by doing this one can gain control of at least one increased physiological function, and the others may follow. There have been many research studies documenting the use of relaxation and breathing techniques to alter vital signs, such as heart rate and blood pressure. In effect, one can begin to reverse the physical effects of anxiety.



Training the Mind

Improving Concentration: Concentration is a skill, not a just state. It can be learned, controlled, and understood. To understand it, we must consider that concentration is not one state; it varies in scope and direction. It can be BROAD or NARROW in its scope of focus, and INTERNAL or EXTERNAL in its direction of focus (Weinberg, 1988). So, during any given encounter, an officer's concentration could be at any one of four levels. For example, if she was assessing a large area of potential threat. If she was at a BROAD-EXTERNAL level, she might be focusing on her own negative thoughts about dying (the other two levels are BROAD-INTERNAL and NARROW-EXTERNAL).

To improve concentration, one must be able to identify which type is appropriate for a given situation. One must also be flexible enough to alternate between the levels as the situation changes. There are selective attention exercises that one can use to practice sustained concentration, and one can also follow some basic principles in high-stress encounters: don't get overwhelmed by trying to attend to too many things at once; stay focused in the present (don't

be evaluating past mistakes); don't get too "bogged down" in analyzing a situation - assess and respond; and avoid a NARROW-INTERNAL focus during these encounters because it may cause you to focus on fears and increase anxiety. **Positive Self-Talk:** A major psychological effect of anxiety is negative thinking. These thoughts disrupt concentration and increase anxiety (through the mind-body feedback loop). Distracting, negative thoughts may focus on fear of dying or being hurt, of the subject getting away, or on one's own inability to cope with the situation. These thoughts interfere with concentration and diminish the "survival mind set" that is essential to facing an attacker. However, they can also serve an important function -- a reminder to redirect attention to the zone of responsibility and to one's own ability to respond to the danger.

Positive self talk is more than just "looking on the bright side" or thinking "things aren't really so bad." Positive self talk involves brief messages to oneself about surviving the encounter and being able to deal with the threat. The word "try" should be replaced by the word "can." These should be used before (routinely) and during high-stress encounters (to replace and reverse the negative thinking). Of course, it is necessary to actually have proficiency in the skills, but one's perceived likelihood of success will determine their actions. Inaction or "paralysis" from lack of confidence brought on by negative thoughts could have fatal consequences.

Mental Rehearsal: This is perhaps the most fundamental and powerful tool for mental training. Mental rehearsal is also called "crisis rehearsal" or "mental practice." It has been defined as "the systematic mental repetition of some image, activity or behavior with no observable movements" (Kazoroski, 1987, p. 30). Through imagery and visualization, one learns to practice skills and to create and respond to scenarios. As with any skill, mental rehearsal requires training and practice to master. However, the results can be well worth the effort. One's competence and confidence in a skill are directly related to the number of times one has successfully performed that skill in the past.

The goal of mental rehearsal is to prepare one's mind and body to respond appropriately and automatically to the kinds of situations that have been practiced.

Therefore, mental rehearsal can significantly improve performance and increase rates of learning. An officer can use mental practice more often and in more situations than actual physical practice. This allows for several opportunities for repetition. Repetitive practice is the key to making skills reflexive and automatic, which is the goal in defensive tactics and combat shooting.

An extensive body of research has shown that mental practice eases motor learning (Feltz & Landers, 1983). When the officer mentally rehearses a skill, he/she is using, and by that strengthening, neural pathways similar to those used in actual practice. In fact, muscles move and respond at a micro-level during mental practice. The muscles are being programmed and the body is being prepared to respond to actual situations. Besides training the body, one should also be attending to mental states so that practice includes a sense of confidence, competence to handle the encounter, proper concentration, and positive self talk. The goal of mental rehearsal is to prepare one's mind and body to respond appropriately and automatically to the kinds of situations that have been practiced.

However, mental rehearsal alone is not sufficient. It is most effective when combined with actual physical practice. There are also several other guidelines for maximizing its effectiveness including: regular practice, combining mental rehearsal with relaxation, using as many senses as possible, "feeling the performance," and picturing successful practice of the skill or scenario (Kazoroski, 1987a). The procedures for mental rehearsal are easy to learn, but do require some training and practice.

General Training Considerations

Use of Force Continua: Many use of force training programs have adopted a use of force

applied. This does not just include environmental conditions, but also conditions of physical and mental states. For example, target shooting skills acquired in a distraction free indoor range, practicing at a relaxed pace, may not generalize well to an actual armed encounter because the conditions (internal and external) are dramatically different.

This points out the importance of "dynamic training" or simulation scenario training under "real life" conditions. An officer must be trained to respond under stressful conditions where the adrenaline is pumping, there are distractions in the environment, and there is a threat to which one must respond. This type of training is called "dynamic" because it changes. The scenario is not set or predictable. The officer must assess and respond to an ongoing situation (Chaney, 1990). Circumstances in this training are much more similar to actual law enforcement encounters. The officer can gain a sense of confidence in his/her ability to respond and survive, and, where necessary, can analyze mistakes without having to suffer the actual consequences. Recent advances in the technology of Virtual Reality show tremendous potential for these types of law enforcement training applications.

Two other points on scenario training should be noted. First, a series of "no-win" scenarios cannot improve confidence; training scenarios should correspond to realistic encounters. Second, criticism should always be supplemented with instruction. Simply telling an officer that he/she "would have been killed," without any input about what should be done differently, will train a fearful response rather than a competent response.

Conclusion

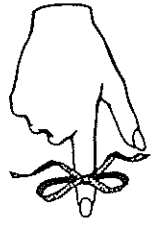
A separate book could be written on each topic mentioned above. It was not possible to provide a "how to" procedure for each of these areas. Rather, the purpose of this article was to provide an overview of some key psychological considerations in use of force training and high-stress encounters. These are factors for use of force trainers to consider and, if appropriate, to learn more about so that they can be used to

continuum that offers guidelines for officer response depending on the level of subject resistance (Faulkner, 1992; Graves & Conner, 1992; Kazoroski, 1987b). From a mental training perspective, these can be valuable because they provide a cognitive framework that the officer can use to evaluate and plan his or her response. However, their success depends on two key variables: defensibility and applicability.

Defensibility is primarily an issue for the administrative body that adopts the continuum. A law enforcement officer's actions must be consistent with that of a "reasonable officer on the scene" (Graham v. Connor et al., 1989, p.1871). Therefore, the agency has an obligation to show that responses from the continuum correspond to the judgments of the "reasonable officer." Applicability is an issue for the trainer and officer. The most elaborate continuum is worthless if it is not easily understood and applied by officers in use of force situations. Complex geometric figures or intricate matrices may be difficult to remember and apply under stress.

There is one continuum that has sought to systematically address these two important issues. Samuel Faulkner (1991) from the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy has developed an Action-Response Continuum that is based on research with over two thousand law enforcement officers and trainers. He also has data on responses by members of the community and civil rights protection groups. This enhances its defensibility. The research has been placed in a continuum where areas of subject resistance and officer responses are conducive to images and are easily remembered. Therefore, this type of continuum can be easily used in mental practice and is more easily recalled and applied in actual confrontations.

Dynamic Training: There is a principle of learning called "state dependent learning" that is important to consider to use of force training. This principle suggests that it is easier to recall and apply a skill when the conditions under which it was learned are similar to the conditions in which it is to be



improve existing training. The point is simple: It is necessary to consider mental as well as physical factors in use of force training so that officers can learn to respond properly and to survive high-risk encounters.

References

- Kazoroski, R. (1987b). Use of force: A model for the real world of modern policing. *The Florida Police Chief*, August, 32-55.
- Kazoroski, R. (1988). The relationship of imagery and mental practice to learning law enforcement skills. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 3, 29-34.
- Nidetter, R.M. (1985). *Athlete's guide to mental training*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Parsons, K. (1988). Use of force tactics and non-lethal weaponry. *ALERT*, No. 3, 1-8.
- Weinberg, R.S. (1988). *The mental advantage: Developing your psychological skills in tennis*. Champaign, IL: Leisure Press.
- About the Author: Dr. Randy Borum is a Fellow in Forensic Psychology at the Forensic Training and Research Center at University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He is also a sworn police officer and certified police instructor in Florida, and has written extensively on applications of behavioral science in law enforcement. He welcomes comments and input regarding the above ideas and his research in this area. Dr. Borum may be contacted at (508) 793-1550.*
- Borum, R. & Stock, H.V. (1992). Excessive force prevention programs. *Corrections Today*, 54 (4), 26-30.
- Chaney, R. (1990). Judgment training in the use of deadly force. *The Police Chief*, July, 40-44.
- Faulkner, S. (1991). *The action-response use of force continuum*. Unpublished Manuscript: London, OH.
- Felz, D.L. & Landers, D.M. (1983). The effects of mental practice on motor skill learning and performance: A meta analysis. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 5, 25-52.
- Geler, M.J. (1990). Training to win: Police-specific physical conditioning. *Law and Order*, September, 50-56.
- Graham v. Connor, et al. 109 S.Ct. 1865 (1989).
- Graves, F.R. & Connor, G. (1992). The PLETC use-of-force model. *The Police Chief*, February, 56-58.
- Kazoroski, R. (1987a). The application of imagery and mental practice in the law enforcement environment: An inexpensive alternative to physical training practice. *The Florida Police Chief*, April, 55-65.

Training Tip:

HOW TO TEACH BASIC SKILLS

Training programs that aim to teach employees basic skills should include three things, according to an 18-program study by the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation.

The three are:

- A "kinship" ground to provide emotional, psychological and even spiritual support. The group should consist of owners, managers, supervisors, teachers, counselors, personnel staff, and co-workers.
- Short units, usually one to two weeks, to allow for a quick sense of accomplishment.
- Course content built on common company words and phrases, product and process names, safety terms, etc.

Source: Richard G. Zalman, writing in *HRMagazine*, 606 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

MENTAL PRACTICE IN DEFENSIVE TACTICS TRAINING

by Randy Borum, Psy. D.
University of Massachusetts, Department of Psychiatry, Worcester, MA.

practice, the muscles involved in executing the skill actually move at a micro level. Thus, the neural pathways utilized during the skill are used and strengthened in much the same way as they are in actual physical practice.

It is important to note that mental practice is a supplement, not a substitute, for physical practice of defensive tactics. Mental practice is most effective when it is used in combination with physical practice. However, one can mentally practice a skill many times in almost any environment. This expands the opportunities for repetition which facilitates the ease of performance.

Mental practice also offers another advantage in defensive tactics training. It allows one to rehearse the skill in the context of scenarios which are likely to be encountered on the street. The officer can imagine a variety of encounters in which defensive tactics skill may need to be applied, and rehearse the use of force continuum into training. The officer can develop appropriate responses to offender resistance which are consistent with the guidelines from the continuum. Thus, the officer is conditioning him/herself mentally to think and respond quickly with appropriate levels of force.

This raises the final point that mental practice can help to train the mind, as well as the body, to respond to stressful encounters and situations which require use of force. Mental conditioning is often overlooked in use of force encounters. If an officer panics or is overwhelmed by stress during a confrontation, his or her judgement is likely to be affected.

image, activity or behavior with no observable movements" (Kazoroski, 1987). An extensive body of research exists supporting the use of mental practice for learning motor skills (Feliz & Landers, 1983), although relatively little of this research has been applied specifically to law enforcement. My colleagues and I are currently planning a study of these applications, however, the present literature suggests that the benefits of mental practice should apply to defensive tactics.

Mental practice requires two basic skills: relaxation and imagery. Relaxation skill is the ability to systematically identify and relieve physical (muscular) tension and to clear one's mind of distracting thoughts. Many techniques have been proposed, and many research studies have been conducted on relaxation training. It has been shown consistently that one can learn to relieve muscular tension and even alter vital signs (e.g. lowering blood pressure and heart rate) through relaxation exercises. Imagery is the ability to make mental pictures - visual imagination. For example, through imagery it is possible to mentally go through a takedown and to see, hear and feel what occurs. These skills may come more readily for some than others, but with practice they can be learned easily.

In mental practice, one rehearses the skill repeatedly in one's mind. It may be necessary to begin by imagining the skill as if watching it on a television monitor, however, once the imagery becomes easy and vivid, it is better to imagine from the perspective of the one actually doing the skill. During this type of mental

It is often said that individuals under stress will react according to their training. This is not entirely true. Under conditions of extreme stress, it is not necessarily the "trained" response, but rather the dominant" response that emerges. The goal of training in use of force is to make the trained response the dominant one. That is, to train the skills so extensively that the officer's responses become reflexive and automatic.

Training at this level requires extensive practice, so that the officer's mind and body become "programmed" to respond in a certain way. During practice of motor skills, neural pathways are developed and strengthened, and muscles "learn" how to perform. Ultimately, this is the mechanism by which motor behavior/responses become automatic. However, this is only acquired after one has been taught the movements; "talked" oneself through the movements; and has successfully and repeatedly practiced the motor sequence. The more extensive the practice, the more facilitated the skill.

Since officers and agencies are limited in the amount of time that they are able to devote to defensive tactics training, the use of mental practice can serve as an effective supplement to physical practice and training. Mental practice or mental rehearsal has been defined as "the systematic mental repetition of some



Editor's Note: Dr. Borum is a certified police instructor in Florida. He is currently a Fellow in Forensic Psychology at the Forensic Training and Research Center at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He welcomes comments and may be reached at 508-793-1550.

Feltz, D. L. & Landers D. M. (1983). The effects of mental practice on motor skill learning and performance: A mental analysis. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 5*, 25-52.

Kazoroski, R. (1987). The relationship of imagery and mental practice to learning law enforcement skills. *Journal of Policy and Criminal Psychology, 3*, 29-34.

References

In conclusion, it is clear that mental practice can facilitate the learning of motor skills such as those required in defensive tactics training. Officers should be instructed on the basics of mental practice and encouraged to set up a regular mental practice schedule. This technique then can be used to enhance learning of new skills, eliminate bad habits or poor technique, and to enhance their mental preparation for use of force encounters.

BRITISH DEFENSIVE TACTICS

(continued from page 1)

Florida Criminal Justice Institute at Orlando, and with great kindness and professional assistance in accomplishing my assignment. During my month stay, I witnessed and experienced many concepts that do not appear to have been considered by the British Police Service, such as a use of force/levels of resistance matrix, including officer presence, verbalization and non-verbalization skills in the escalation and de-escalation of force, to name but a few.

My complete report, together with recommendations, have now been forwarded to my Chief constable (Sheriff) and other senior officers and members of the fellowship committee for their perusal.

Upon arrival back in England, my new found knowledge and material has begun opening many doors for me. I recently lectured to the Superintendent's Association (Bureau Commanders) National representatives on the analysis and evaluation methods appertaining to baton use, particularly the English Truncheon, PR24 and ASP (information courtesy of Rick Flesch and Willie G. Owens).

The presentation went extremely well and has resulted in me being asked to present the information again to my own and other agencies, and most recently to the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. I have also recently passed an instructor's course enabling me to instruct and certify other defensive tactics instructors.

Last but by no means certainly least ... my sincere and profound gratitude is once again sent to Mr. Ron Kazoroski, Dr. E. Leslie Knight, Mr. Rich Flesch and all the other members of the Academy staff, Orlando Police Department staff, families and friends, for permitting me to contribute to the *Defensive Tactics Newsletter*, and for allowing me to experience the dedication, energy and commitment to improved law enforcement I found in America.

As the old saying goes "... from small acorns mighty oaks do grow ..." Over the forthcoming issues of the *DTN* I hope to illustrate how, from my American visit and relationship with the Central Florida Criminal Justice Institute at Orlando, I am able to establish a working DT department and implement an effective strategy. Hopefully, this will result in all operational officers within my force receiving adequate and updated training, together with appropriate rehabilitation and counselling for injured officers and constant appraisal and collation of information, data and research.

As a result of this, I am currently campaigning for the Lancashire Constabulary to adopt its own defensive tactics department.



Subscribe Today to The DTN

Defensive Tactics Newsletter Order Form (cost: \$24.00 per year, published quarterly)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: () _____

Please send completed form along with a check for \$24.00 made payable to: ISC P.O. Box 8798 Lakeland, Florida 33806 (813) 686-8934

Excessive Force Prevention Programs

An Essential Tool to Properly Train Staff and Protect Against Litigation

by Randy Borum and Harley Stock

In February the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Hudson v. McMillian* that unnecessary force by a corrections officer against an inmate violates the inmate's Eighth Amendment right against cruel and unusual punishment even if the inmate does not suffer serious injury.

While it's unfortunate the reputation of all corrections personnel should suffer from the inappropriate action of the few officers involved in this incident, the case points up a serious problem. The decision should serve as a reminder that jail and prison administrators are responsible for taking action to prevent incidents of excessive force in their facilities.

Civil litigation verdicts on excessive force claims suggest that government employers may generally be held liable when they hire an officer whose past history should have signaled a propensity for violence or instability. This means employers have an obligation to exercise reasonable care in hiring and retention practices. Clearly, this is an area of high liability for correctional facilities and administrators.

Administrators must therefore develop formal systems designed to prevent incidents of excessive and unnecessary force. Three subjects in particular—administrative concerns, training and remediation—can serve as a starting point for facilities wishing

ing to set up new prevention and remediation programs or to enhance existing programs.

Administrative Concerns

Establish clear policy. Every facility should develop a written policy directive on the use of deadly and non-deadly force. Such a policy should contain clear definitions of levels of force, what standard is used to judge the appropriateness of an officer's action, and the conditions under which force or restraint may be used.

The directives should be consistent with current case law in the jurisdiction and the standard from *Graham v. Connor, et al.* (1989) known as "objective reasonableness"—whether the actions were reasonable, regardless of the officer's motivation and intent. This is imperative because such a standard outlines the facility's expectations about officer conduct in use of force situations and provides a consistent standard by which to judge an officer's action in any given situation.

Maintain a rigorous screening process. Personnel interviews, written tests and careful background investigations may reveal a history of impulsive behavior or poor emotional control. Most correctional institutions also use psychological screening as part of their selection program. Select-

ing a psychologist familiar with corrections should be a priority. Administrators should be aware that the Americans with Disabilities Act, which takes effect July 26, may change when the psychological evaluation is administered in the selection process. The Act may force agencies to rely more heavily on other screening factors to identify potentially problematic or unstable applicants. Nevertheless, this component of the screening should be retained.

Develop a monitoring system. A strong monitoring system demonstrates the institution's awareness and concern regarding unnecessary force. Facilities should maintain an administrative record of excessive or unnecessary force complaints filed against officers and should review the file to examine trends in the facility and highlight individual officers.

One component of this system might include formal reviews of officers whose history of complaints or disciplinary action could indicate a problem. You may want to establish a set number or pattern of complaints that would signal a need for the review. In this process, it's necessary to consider the rates and types of complaints typically found in the facility. The review process would involve a close examination of the officer's

complaint and disciplinary record; the review could be conducted by administrators or by a designated peer review panel. It might also include interviews with the officer involved.

The review's goal is to identify problem areas and to make recommendations for correction where appropriate. For individual officers, such recommendations could include re-training, specialized training, psychological counseling or referral to a psychologist for a fitness for duty evaluation.

Set up employee assistance programs. We all know corrections can be a highly stressful occupation with the potential for family difficulties, alcoholism and other stress-related problems. Correctional institutions today are well-advised to provide access to psychological services for their employees.

Some facilities have a consulting psychologist who handles referrals for counseling or evaluation, and many others have moved toward more formal programs for employee counseling such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAPs usually involve a group of mental health providers who contract with a facility to provide counseling or referral services. In some institutions, the EAP is managed in-house by psychologists employed at the facility.

Typically, these programs offer individual, marital and family counseling, and may also include substance abuse treatment and prevention seminars on topics such as stress management or communication skills. These programs serve as a first-line preventive defense against the development of behavioral or job-related difficulties.

Training

Once a facility has established a clear use of force policy, all corrections personnel should receive policy guidelines and training. The training should include a review of crucial definitions, the written policy, and relevant statutory and case law. There also should be

a group discussion—ideally in the presence of a legal expert in use of force—to answer questions and review likely scenarios involving force in light of the current policy.

In many corrections academies, training in the use of force doesn't go beyond skill-based instruction in firearms or defensive tactics. While these are important, there are many additional factors to consider in this area of training, such as legal, moral and ethical judgments, stress performance influences, and contextual variables that factor into officers' decisions to use force. All these areas must be included in training.

Officer use of force is an area of high liability for correctional facilities. Administrators must therefore develop formal systems designed to prevent incidents of excessive and unnecessary force.

A force continuum that provides a matrix by levels of subject resistance and officer force should be integrated into all use of force training. An officer should always be aware of these levels in any confrontation so he or she can know the appropriate range of responses available. In-service training to supplement academy instruction is also necessary.

Performance under stress has traditionally been neglected in use of force training. It is critical for officers to know the psychological and physiological effects of stress and how to reduce its impact on performance. This relatively new area of study is drawn primarily from the fields of psychology—specifically sports psychology—and motor behavior.

In addition to a review of stress effects, officers should be trained to condition themselves mentally and physically for high-stress confrontations.

This includes incidents where multiple officers are involved and the situation has escalated beyond necessary levels of force.

Some agencies are now using a "mob mentality" training block in which a recruit enters a training scenario where fellow officers are engaged in excessive force. The recruit must take appropriate action to intervene and deal with the situation. These types of scenarios and general training in performance under stress serve to improve judgment and performance during stressful incidents involving force.

Training in firearms, defensive tactics and restraint techniques should include training exercises that parallel actual situations officers may confront. These exercises force officers to think quickly under stressful conditions where the outcome is not easily predictable, increasing the likelihood they will respond according to training in actual on-the-job confrontations. This phase of training should be implemented after basic skills are mastered.

The first step in providing comprehensive psychological services is to offer training programs that teach officers how to identify and manage stress-related symptoms. With stress management seminars now common in corrections, it is easy to find good training in this area. A key part of a successful stress-reduction program is training supervisors to identify officers who may need assistance.


Anger management is another area of training with tremendous potential for reducing excessive force incidents. These programs help build basic stress-management skills for all officers and help them realize when they may need further assistance.

Like performance skills to deal with stress, verbal skills are typically given very little attention in corrections training. Instruction in crisis intervention and de-escalation procedures should be given strong emphasis, since these skills are actually used more frequently than physical force. Developing these skills will

ing in any of the areas we have discussed, referral for re-training may be a logical course of action. For example, officers may need verbal skills training to help them de-escalate confrontations or physical skills training because they were not competent to apply force properly. In addition, re-training could be mandated for psychological skills such as stress or anger management.

Psychological counseling. An officer's personal or family problems can interfere with performance and judgment. If the officer's response is related to such situational factors, counseling may be beneficial. This option should be voluntary, since mandated counseling is often ineffective.

Fitness for duty evaluation. When an officer's behavior calls into question his or her ability to adequately perform job requirements, the facility may request a fitness for duty evaluation to provide additional information and a psychological opinion on the officer's current ability to perform correctional duties. These referrals may be made through the psychological services unit or the consulting psychologist.

Although incidents of excessive force are relatively infrequent, facility administrators must be aware of potential problems and take steps to prevent misconduct. The corrections community must be vigilant in eliminating unnecessary force not only to reduce liability, but also to preserve the rights of the incarcerated and the reputation of the correctional system and the dedicated officers who serve it well. 

REFERENCE

Grenstone, H.E. 1967. Liability of police officers for misuse of their weapon. *Cleveland-Marshall Law Review*, 408.

Randy Borum, M.S., is a consultant with Police Management Consultants Inc. in Palm Bay, Fla. **Harley Stock, Ph.D., ABPP,** is diplomate, American Board of Forensic Psychology, and is consulting psychologist with Seagfield 911 in Davie, Fla.

The primary goals of any action should be to provide a remedy or consequence if necessary and to prevent the occurrence of a similar incident in the future. Formal disciplinary action, such as letters of reprimand, suspension or termination, may be used according to policy and administrative discretion. However, there are three other remedial options—retraining, psychological counseling and fitness for duty evaluation—that may supplement these formal measures.

Retraining. If an officer's response was the result of deficient training



“Don't worry. We'll work with you!”

There are a lot of things you can't count on in construction projects. One of them is a handshake.

But you can count on Arkhon. Bring us in early. We'll review your contract... establish specific schedule requirements... prepare a detailed project management manual.

When work is underway, we'll help you maintain control. By assuring compliance with contract schedules and terms... defusing delays... solving little problems before they become big ones.

And if claims arise, we're by your side. Analyzing the facts... assessing your position... working with your attorneys toward settlement or trial... testifying as experts. In short, doing whatever it takes. Before you read the fine print in your next contract, read our complete capabilities brochure. Just call 1-800/989-7770.



The best people between you and trouble.™

Consultants in Program Management and Claims
1810 Chapel Avenue, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08002, 1-800/989-7770
Atlanta ▲ Newport Beach ▲ Washington ▲ Denver ▲ London

Continued from page 28

SPEAK OUT

help officers resolve confrontations without using force.

Remediation

When an officer's use of force is found inappropriate, the facility must respond promptly. Several options are available depending on the severity of the incident and institution policy.