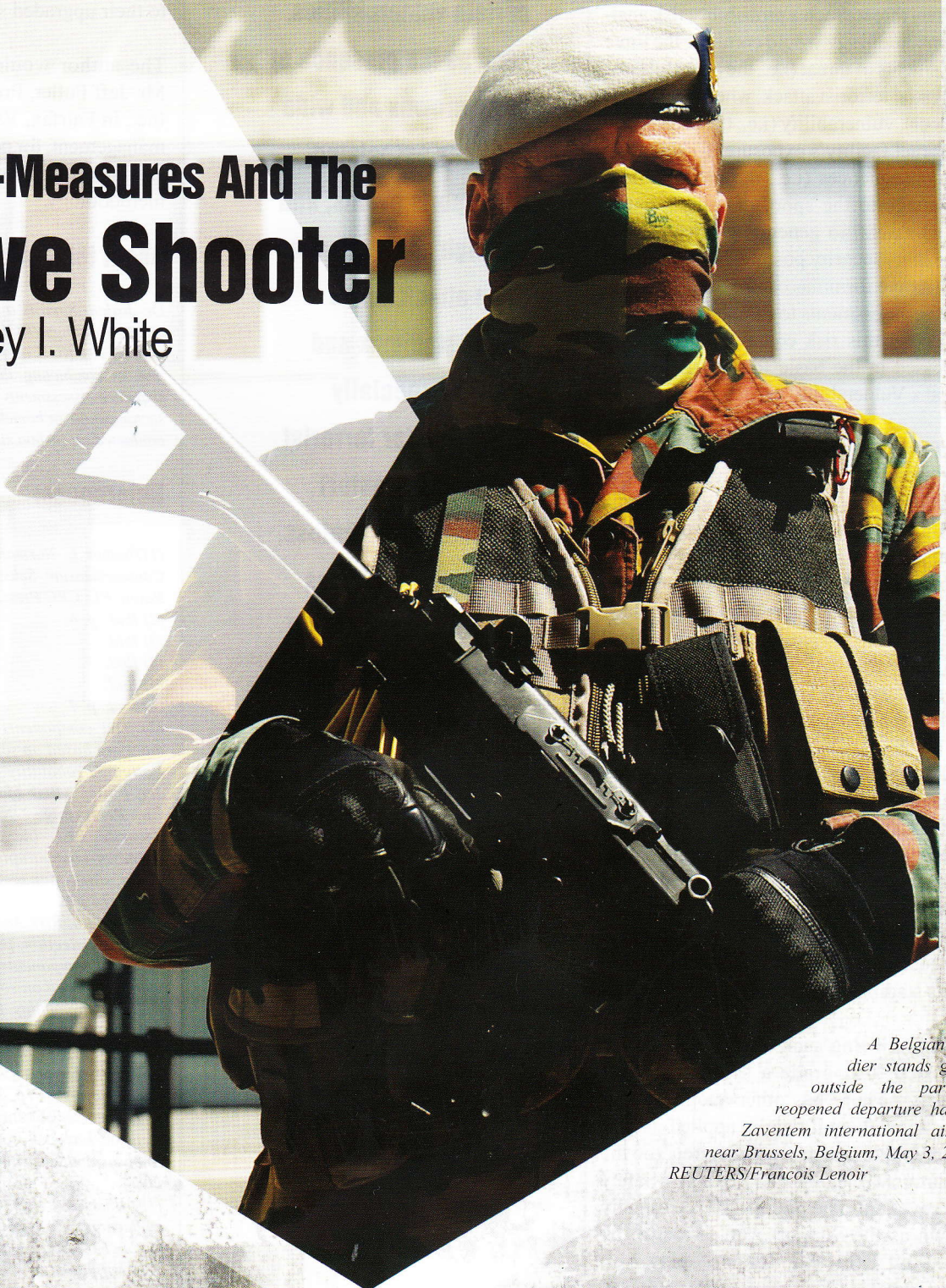




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# Counter-Measures And The Active Shooter

By Stanley I. White



*A Belgian soldier stands guard outside the partially reopened departure hall of Zaventem international airport near Brussels, Belgium, May 3, 2016.  
REUTERS/Francois Lenoir*

**The threat of the next active shooting in this country often glides under the consciousness of the common citizen and even some of those in government tasked with our security. We as a society move from proactive to that of a reactive society between tragedies that occur on our soils. Presidential debate antics, the Grammys, Oscars and other current events will occupy the minds of the masses until another deadly tragedy for whatever reason takes the lives of innocent individuals.**

Our society can easily be broken into three basic character persona, they are:

**Sheep-** those who follow the rules and function in their own sphere of family, friends and associates. These individuals go along to get along and comprise the masses of our society. They are generally good people, but unfortunately, they comprise the majority of the victims of a terrorist attack.

**Wolves-** those who have an agenda and place it above the safety of others. They use and feed off the sheep to obtain their desired results both literally and figuratively. In the most extreme circumstances, these individuals are the abusers, criminals and terrorists of in society. Lying, cheating, stealing, maiming and killing are a means to an end.

**Sheepdogs-** those who protect the sheep and maintain the rule of law. They are fewer in number than the sheep and will sacrifice their well-being and lives for the flock. The sheepdogs in our society range from the common citizen to the highly trained special operations officer and everyone in between who looks to protect vulnerable and defenseless.

Sometimes in the aftermath of a tragic event, the sheep in leadership become sheepdogs only to transform back into sheep when the cameras and media have gone. The main audience for this article

are the sheepdogs of all stripes who must stay engaged and vigilant. Like it or not, another active shooter incident will unfold again on our soil with either a disgruntled worker or a terrorist (be it foreign or domestic) found at the root. One school of thought maintains that some violent individuals without terrorist ties or extremist beliefs, are motivated and even pushed over the line to commit shootings because of other highly publicized acts of violence.

Before some basic countermeasures can be explored, some facts regarding the active shooting incidents should be brought to light. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) released a 2014 study titled "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013." These are some of the findings:

- Approximately 160 active shooter incidents occurred between 2000 and 2013. The 160 incidents accounted for 1,043 casualties (not including the shooters) with a breakdown of 486 individuals killed and 557 wounded.
- Active shooter incidents in this study occurred in 40 out the 50 continental states and the District of Columbia.
- 44 of the shootings recorded ended in 5 minutes or less with 23 incidents ending in 2 minutes or less. An exact time frame was not determined for the remaining incidents studied.
- All but 2 incidents studied involved a single shooter with the subject being

male approximately 97% of the time.

- 2% of the shooters brought IEDs to their attack sites.
- 23.1% of the time the shooter(s) committed suicide.
- 60% of the shooting incidents recorded ended before police arrived.

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) commissioned a study on active shootings in 2010 in response to the Newtown shootings in Connecticut. This study was revised and updated in 2012. The report analyzes 230 active shooting incidents from 1966 to 2012. Some of the key findings are as follows:

- The NYPD study found in 8 of the 230 cases reviewed only 3% of the shooters were found to be female.
- The average age of the shooter(s) was approximately 35 years old.
- 98% of the shooters were documented as males.
- A majority of the shootings were found to involve detail planning by the shooters while the remaining incidents had little to no planning at all. (Some active shooters have been found to use information and tactical methods used in previous shootings).
- Attackers and victims were found to have some form of relationship in a majority of the cases studied. These relationships ranged from family, business/professional, academic to no association whatsoever.



- The subject study concluded that in 36% of the cases the shooter used more than one weapon.

The general public more recently has been exposed to the details of the Paris attacks and more recently the Brussels attack which started in the Brussels Airport with an attacker firing an automatic weapon while shouting “Allahu Akbar” prior to detonating his suicide vest; the list continues with Newtown, Columbine and others. However, active shootings have been occurring in the US for some time. Below are some incidents that have occurred the past 50 years:

August 1, 1966- Charles Joseph Whitman, an engineering student opened fire on the campus of the University of Texas in Austin, Texas. The subject attack resulted in the killing of 13 people and the wounding of 31 others. The incident ended when Whitman was killed by police. Whitman utilized two high powered rifles, a sawed-off shotgun and a hand gun in his assault.

January 1, 1972- Mark Essex executed multiple shooting attacks in New Orleans, Louisiana over a one week period that resulted in the killing of 9 people and the wounding of 13 others. One of Essex’s targets was a New Orleans Police Station. Essex went on to attack several other targets and was killed by police. Essex utilized a rifle and a handgun to commit the attacks.

July 18, 1984-James Huberty opened fire in a Mc Donald’s restaurant in San Ysidro, California, killing 21 people and wounding 19 others. Huberty was killed by a police sniper. Huberty utilized a sub machine gun, shotgun and a handgun to commit the attack.

April 3, 1995 - James Simpson a former employee of the Walter Rossler Company located in Corpus Christi, Texas opened fire at the facility killing five individuals with no one else being injured. The incident ended when Simpson committed suicide. Simpson utilized two handguns to commit the attack.

The above incidents illustrate that an active shooter attack can occur on college, at the restaurant, movie theater, a police station, workplace or at any venue you may find



**On November 13, 2015, Islamic extremists representing the Islamic States in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) conducted a series of well-coordinated attacks that blindsided French intelligence agencies. The attacks began outside the Stade de France (a large soccer stadium) in St Denis with three suicide bombing attacks that were later followed by mass shootings at cafes, restaurants and a live music concert in the center of Paris. The attacks claimed 130 lives and injured approximately 368 people.**

yourself. The next parts of this piece will first examine the mental state you need to prepare and survive an active shooting incident. The first component will entail understanding what constitutes a state of aggressive awareness followed by the Escape- Conceal -Engage (ECE) tactical methodology.

Aggressive awareness is a developed state of mind that has to be trained over time. The more an individual trains, the easier it becomes. This state of mind goes beyond noting things and moves into the realm of questioning why they are and concludes with a form of resolution. If there is an unfamiliar vehicle driving up and down your street, a sense of aggressive awareness should activate and you then note the color, make and model of the vehicle, license plate as well as any information regarding the occupant(s). In short you should obtain as much information as possible. This information then would be passed on to the local authorities. The subject process basically consists of three components:

1. Something does not look right and/or feel right
2. As much information is collected on the circumstance and its actors
3. Situation is addressed and not just left hanging for another party to stumble upon it and some form of resolution is deployed

A common school of thought in anti-terrorism and crime prevention involves understanding the three components of attack. These are opportunity, desire and ability. If one of these are removed from the equation, the success rate of the action in question is diminished greatly. As stated earlier, many active shooting attacks are planned and shooters are often studying past attacks in preparation for their assaults. An attacker may have a great skill level and the desire to attack, but if he strikes at the wrong time chances are he will fail. This usually involves the attacker losing the element of surprise. Opportunity can be removed with the aggressive awareness of the general public combined with action. However, when aggressive awareness regarding the acquisition of valuable intelligence is not utilized, the price is costly and purchased with innocent lives.

Aggressive Awareness is not profiling, prejudice or being judgmental. It is a



premises to conduct its attack or, if the inner security perimeter is sufficiently hardened, to attack the crowds attempting to enter the stadium or arena. This was the case in the attack against

the national stadium in Paris, where the tightened security measures prevented the suicide bomber from entering the stadium, forcing him to detonate his explosive outside one of the entrance gates, thereby substantially reducing the number of potential casualties.

In calculating a sport facility's level of vulnerability, a six-point scale can be used to estimate the effectiveness of the facility's security department's interdiction of an attack.(8) In this formulation, the degree of a sport's facility's vulnerability is represented as none (0), very low (1), low (2), medium (3), high (4), and critical (5).

Conducting a sport's facility vulnerability assessment will therefore provide a baseline understanding of at least two of the crucial components in determining its risk potential.

## Consequences

The consequences of a potential terrorist attack (whether physical or cyber, including an active shooter event) against a sport's facility in terms of its possible survivability represents the third component of risk management. The consequences of an attack may be primary (e.g., the destruction of a sport's facility's property, human casualties, loss of continuous functioning of a facility that is critical to its local jurisdiction's economy, as well as the recoverability costs to restore its infrastructure, the provision of temporary living assistance to employees, etc.) secondary (e.g., the loss of business reputation as a facility to be used by sports teams, higher insurance premiums, and undermining consumer and investor confidence in the local economy), and in terms of response (increased costs of security systems, expanded counterterrorism regulations over sport's stadiums and arenas, and the costs in terms of expenditure on the response resources that are required to mitigate the impacts of a future potential attack).(9) Thus, the consequences of an attack need to be assessed at both an individual level (i.e. the primary and secondary impacts on a targeted facility) and at a collective level (i.e. the secondary impact on a local, regional or national economy



**System security, is based on the adequacy of the sport's facility's protective equipment and response forces as part of its overall physical security measures to deter a terrorist adversary from entering its premises to conduct its attack or, if the inner security perimeter is sufficiently hardened, to attack the crowds attempting to enter the stadium or arena. This was the case in the attack against the national stadium in Paris, where the tightened security measures prevented the suicide bomber from entering the stadium, forcing him to detonate his explosive outside one of the entrance gates, thereby substantially reducing the number of potential casualties.**

and the government's overall response to an increased threat level).(10)

Assessing the consequences of attacking a potential sport's facility and its potential survivability is also based on determining its importance and criticality as a potential target. Certain sports stadiums and arenas, for example, such as Yankee Stadium or Madison Square Garden in New York City, are inherently vulnerable as they are considered to constitute a significant component of a country's critical infrastructure, since attacking and, in the worst case, destroying them, would result not only in massive physical damage and human fatalities, but would generate the widespread media coverage terrorists seek, as well as substantially reducing the targeted stadiums' and arenas' customers' confidence in the ability of their security departments to protect them and their immediate surroundings. Given such assumed vulnerabilities, one can presume, as a result, that both Yankee Stadium and Madison Square Garden are appropriately well-protected against potential attacks.

As with the previous two assessment components, a six-point scale can be used to estimate the consequences of a terrorist attack: none (0), negligible (1), low (2), medium (3), high (4), and extreme (5).

## Conclusion

As relatively soft targets, certain vulnerabilities, such as the presence of large crowds and wide publicity associated with sports events, and the high consequences of an attack, make sports stadiums and arenas especially attractive for terrorist (or active shooter) attacks. Nevertheless, such vulnerabilities are not similar for all sporting events, since national special security events (NSSEs) are generally accompanied by extensive and comprehensive security measures by federal, state, and local security forces, making them far more difficult to attack than regular sporting events. Moreover, sport stadiums and arenas in cities that represent high terrorism targets, such as New York City and Washington, DC, are likely to be regularly provided additional levels of security, even for their "regular" games and other events. Nevertheless, successfully attacking NSSE's or regular sporting events at high profile cities, would elevate the terrorist attackers into "world-class"

tactical tool that provides the user a buffer to react and thwart a potentially harmful outcome. It is anchored in looking for what is out of place on a person or location followed by action. It is better to be wrong and apologize than be correct about suspicions and become a victim due to inaction. This is especially true for environments where you work with individuals you barely know (i.e. the workplace). The FBI study referenced in this piece documented 44 of the 160 incidents studied occurred in business environments which the general public had access. This means paying attention, observing and if warranted, reporting it to management. For example:

- Associates who are aggressive, argumentative, making threats
- Individuals who speak of radical ideas and are very defensive about their beliefs almost to the point of violence
- Individuals who openly display violent behavior and have little regard for the safety of others and themselves
- Pay attention to vandalization of private and corporate property as well as graffiti at you work location. What does it say? Does it support violence?
- Keep an ear open to hear words that may be spoken, within reason as it relates to potential violence, such as an associate has a violent partner and a restraining order is in place
- Generally odd and suspicious behavior
- Reports of associates breaking established security protocols

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On March 22, 2016 Islamic extremists belonging to ISIS conducted three bombing attacks with the first two attacks executed at the Brussels Airport in Zaventem, Belgium and the third executed at the Maalbeek train station in Brussels. These attacks claimed the lives of 35 people and injured over 300. Although the airport incident is classified



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Between the Paris and Brussels attacks, Islamic extremists flew under the radar of US intelligence while authorities in Washington stated there were no eminent threats to the US. However, on December 2, 2015, a two person team consisting of shooters Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik (both husband and wife) conducted an armed assault on the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, CA. Their attack killed 14 and injured 21 individuals on US soil. (Note: At the time this piece was being written the FBI has not officially concluded that the subject incident only involved 2 shooters) These individuals were found to be self-radicalized Islamic extremists executing a terrorist attack on the US homeland. However, their actions did not only confirm the present dangers of Islamic terrorism at home, but also brought the issue of active shooters back to the forefront of security discussions nationwide. Whether it be a disgruntled worker(s), a mentally unstable individual or a domestic/foreign terrorist(s), an active shooter can be found just about anywhere; a movie theater, a school, a clinic, a church, a music concert etc., thus driving home the need for a personal plan of action that starts with the individual. This article will mainly focus on the workplace, however, a personal plan should be flexible and able to be adapted to any venue. No one is better equipped to protect you than you in a time of emergency. If you have no idea how to protect yourself, you will be of no use to anyone else.

Interviews with the neighbors of the San Bernardino and Brussels attackers stated they observed suspicious individuals and activities ongoing at their residence at all hours of the evening. However, they were hesitant to report these activities to the authorities due to the fact they did not want to be labeled Islamophobic. Even reports from neighboring foreign intelligence agencies confirmed that warnings were given to Belgium authorities of an impending terrorist attack and still they were caught by surprise. Moreover ABC Channel 7 News reported on March 31, 2016 that NYPD Intelligence Officials warned Dutch authorities about the two Brussels suicide



bombers (Khalid and Ibrahim el Bakraoui) prior to the Brussels attacks. The Dutch agency relayed the intelligence to Belgium authorities however, it was not acted upon. This

illustrates an example of not deploying aggressive awareness.

One present day school of thought states that you have a better chance of being struck by lightning than being killed in an active shooter or a terrorist attack. However, after the Paris and San Bernardino attacks, it seems lightning is moving closer and closer to home every day. The key to engaging any challenge, especially a life or death experience, depends on a survival mindset. One method that allows an individual to work toward this needed mindset is to ask one's self hardcore questions and look deep inside for truthful answers. Before one can begin to train for surviving an active shooting incident, an individual should ask themselves how far they will go to survive. Some hard questions should include:

- Can you quickly move through an area with the bodies of wounded and dead colleagues?
- Can you block out the sounds of gunfire as well as moans and screams of fellow workers as you flee to safety?
- Can you conceal yourself and remain silent while an active shooter moves nearby searching for additional victims even when wounded yourself?
- Can you lay motionless on a blood stained floor and play dead among the bodies of your colleagues?
- Can you use the dead body of a colleague to shield yourself from incoming bullet rounds?
- Can you break and jump out of a window to safety?
- Can you engage an active shooter with an impromptu weapon (a coffee pot, fire extinguisher, umbrella, stapler, chair, etc.) and use lethal force?

No one can guarantee fully how they will react when a life or death crisis comes into their world. However, if you search yourself and evaluate your possible responses, you will be way ahead of the individual who ignores such introspection. These are the hard questions that you should ask yourself and meditate on to establish a survival mentality if God forbid you find yourself



**The right mind set is key to preparing yourself prior to a crisis as well as during. The next area of preparation involves understanding what options are available during an active shooter attack. These options are escape, conceal and engage (ECE). The backbone of each of these three options are based on knowing your work area and performing a thorough assessment; this will allow you to maximize your surroundings to survive the shooter's assault.**

in an active shooter situation. Through the 1950's and 60's we saw public school students performed "duck and cover" exercises for a nuclear bomb attack by getting under their desks. Every public school and many businesses conduct fire drills. Since Columbine, large numbers of public schools have adopted active shooter programs. The thrust of this paper is directed towards what the individual can do to increase their odds at surviving an active shooter incident. A personal protective plan should not replace an agency or corporate active shooter plan but work in conjunction with it. It should also be noted that having a personal plan for yourself and loved ones may be of great value if you find yourself in an active shooter incident outside the workplace at such venues as a mall, concert, sporting event etc. The right mind set is key to preparing yourself prior to a crisis as well as during. The next area of preparation involves understanding what options are available during an active shooter attack. These options are escape, conceal and engage (ECE). The backbone of each of these three options are based on knowing your work area and performing a thorough assessment; this will allow you to maximize your surroundings to survive the shooter's assault.

**ESCAPE-** is the first option to pursue during an active shooter event. You need to have at least two routes of exit from scene of the attack. Preparation prior to an active shooter event will rely on the following:

- Know how long it takes to move from your work area to a pre-designated safe zone
- Know your physical level of fitness as it regards to being able to run or crawl to safety
- Know areas of concealment vs. areas of cover. (Areas of concealment will provide visual shielding from a shooter but will not provide ballistic shielding. This means if you are behind a wooden door, cubical partition, window with closed blinds, the shooter can shoot through these barriers and kill you. Areas of cover provide visual shielding and partial to complete ballistic shielding these area include but are not limited to concrete pillars/walls, engine blocks of vehicles, dumpsters etc.)
- Locate all windows that can be opened or broken to provide a means of escape. (Some large windows cannot be bro-



ken from a direct center mass impact and have to be broken from the lower corners)

- Be familiar with all fire doors and fire escapes
- Know the areas inside

your workplace where you can and cannot receive cell phone reception.

When the shooting begins, leave your personal effects except your cell phone (turn your phone to vibrate). Locate where the shots are coming from and move away to safety. Time is of the essence, move quickly, stay low and help those you can. Individuals you cannot help advise them to remain quiet and that you are going to get help; this will probably be one of the hardest decisions you will have to ever make. You also must realize when the police and tactical team members arrive, they are not there to render first aid to the wounded, answer questions or personally escort you out of the building; their first and foremost duty is to stop the shooter. When you encounter them during your evacuation (i.e. escape), keep your hands up and visible and follow their directions.

**CONCEAL-** refers to hiding on location due to the fact you cannot safely leave the scene or because you are wounded. Preparation for such an option requires some of the following steps. Know your work place by identifying:

- Areas of concealment and areas of cover you can completely hide behind
- Know what nearby rooms contain doors that lock from the inside
- Familiarize yourself with items that can be used to barricade doors (especially rooms with doors that do not have locks) such as tables, chairs, sofas, copy machines, vending machines etc.
- Find out if you can fit under office desks and conference tables. Determine what office furniture can be overturned and used as a source of shielding

If you find yourself in the middle of an active shooting incident and have to conceal yourself, first turn your phone to vibrate, locate the direction where the gunfire is coming from, and seek cover in a room if possible. Turn off lights, lock/barricade the door, draw the blinds, remain still and if possible quietly call the authorities for help and instructions. Visually scan the room for



**The combative engagement of an active shooter is a last option and has to be taken with the utmost conviction. This is your last chance at survival and you have to make it count. If the truth to be told , if you are a trained individual and armed with impromptu weaponry, your odds still remain slim if you engage an armed gunman by yourself. Surprise and extreme force are key. If you are by yourself, you must control the attacker's firearm and direct it away from yourself while continuing attacking him or her. The use of blunted and or edged weapons to vital areas such as the eyes, throat, groin, knees etc. are crucial if the attacker is wearing some form of body armor.**

any impromptu weaponry to engage the shooter if he or she attempts to breach the door. (Note: If you find yourself in an open space or outside with little to no cover and the shooter is moving amongst his fallen victims you may have to lay prone on the ground and pretend to be dead.)

**ENGAGE-** refers to physically confronting the shooter with lethal force. The combination of surprise and aggressive force are needed when using this option. The shooter must be countered with an incapacitating assault to stop his or her advance. Preparation for this option involves locating common items that can be used as weapons in a hand to hand combative situation these may include:

- A fire extinguisher which can be used as a blunt force weapon to attack the head, face, arms, knees and lower back region.
- A glass vase, coffee cup or coffee pot can be used as a blunt force weapon to impact the head and face. Once broken the sharp glass can be used to attack the eyes and throat of the shooter. (Hot coffee or water to the face can also be used to temporarily blind/distract the shooter)
- Any type of furniture on wheels or that can be slide across the floor can be used to ram the attacker's legs and knock him or her to the floor.
- A desk paperweight, letter opener, stapler, ink pen, sharpened pencil, wall mounted picture in glass frame, packaged ream of copy paper and other typical office equipment or supplies can be turned into a weapon.

The combative engagement of an active shooter is a last option and has to be taken with the utmost conviction. This is your last chance at survival and you have to make it count. If the truth to be told , if you are a trained individual and armed with impromptu weaponry, your odds still remain slim if you engage an armed gunman by yourself. Surprise and extreme force are key. If you are by yourself, you must control the attacker's firearm and direct it away from yourself while continuing attacking him or her. The use of blunted and or edged weapons to vital areas such as the eyes, throat, groin, knees etc. are crucial if the attacker is wearing some form of body armor. If a number of individuals swarm the shooter, someone must


take control of the firearm and direct it away from the group. (Note: During the struggle, the weapon may discharge; keep control of it and keep fighting.) This makes the strong case for receiving some form of reality based self defense instruction that teaches the use of fists, elbows, knee and leg strikes, grappling and the usage of modern weapons (i.e. firearms). You don't want to get into the fight of your life and find out you don't know how to fight.

One point that should be mentioned is ECE tactics such as cover/concealment and escape can also be modified to assess a venue in-case of a bombing attack. Past terrorist attacks have combined the use of firearms and improvised explosives. No one except the attacker will know what method of attack he or she will deploy. So once again a state of aggressive awareness is needed when away from the safety of your home. The following recommendations should be deployed when at work, shopping or recreation:

- When entering a venue locate a second ingress/egress point, this can be a fire-door or window
- Locate structural areas of cover concrete walls, structural pillars, vending machines, parked automobiles, dumpsters etc. Avoid positioning yourself next to large sections of glass windows if possible
- Be observant of suspicious individuals entering the area, keep track of the people in your group as much as possible especially the children and the elderly
- What features whether indoors or outdoors can I conceal myself behind
- Do I have good cell reception in the area
- Ask yourself how long will it take to go from point A to B.
- Visualize what would you do if an active shooting, bombing or any other type of emergency were to occur

All too many people today, as well as agency and corporate management, feel we are in our secure facility; we have a written shooter plan, armed guards, police, state of the art security systems etc. In 2014 two Pennsylvania State Troopers were ambushed in front of their barracks by Eric Frein. This assault claimed the life of Cpl. Bryon Dickson and caused seriously injuries to Trooper Alex Douglass.

In 2009 and 2014 active shooters ( military



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personnel Major Nidal Hasan and Army Specialist Ivan Lopez) who in separate incidents launched attacks on the grounds of Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas. Hardened targets and soft targets are all the same when determined terrorist, disgruntled employees and mentally unhinged individuals become active shooters. Like I have said, the best person for protecting you in an emergency is you.

Due to the fact we live in a very dangerous world that is ever changing, it is better to have an emergency or back up plan for any series of emergencies you may encounter. These plans are as simple as carrying an aspirin in case you get a headache. Headaches are not scheduled but usually occur out of nowhere and can turn a good day into a bad one. This is the same for the possible victims of an active shooting.

Few of us have such an event penciled in our daily lives, so a state of aggressive awareness is key, supported by a personal or corporate plan to defend and counter a surprise attack involving an active shooter or reaction to any other conceived emergency. Unlike a headache, which can pass without incident, an active shooting event can make a good day your last day. Proper mental preparedness and training takes a victim from sheep to sheepdog at the time of crisis. It is far better to be prepared with a plan of action and not need to execute it than to need such a plan and not have it. Increase your odds for your survival start PLANNING and TRAINING today.

### **About the Author**

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### **Resources:**

*Counterterrorism Bureau of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013 (pdf), (fbi.gov,2014)*

*New York City Police Department , Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, (NYPD Printing Section, 2012)*

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