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How NOT To Get Shot By The Police

By Gabe Suarez



We discussed this at the Active Shooter Interdiction Class in Virginia and there was a great deal of work done on it in class. The concern is that the good guy CCW, or off duty LEO for that matter, taking out the bad guy might be misidentified by responding police and shot. Police shoot one of their own every 18 months around the nation so it is a very plausible event.

Contributing factors seem to be as follows -

You are more likely to be mistakenly shot by police in areas where the carry of weapons by citizens is not common. Places like New York or Los Angeles immediately come to mind. The notion seems to be that only cops or criminals have guns. This is not the attitude I see nationwide but it is prevalent enough to be aware of it.

You are more likely to be shot if the first thing the police see is the gun....specially if it is pointed in their direction. Understand that not all officers are well trained by their agencies and some may over react to the obvious sight of a weapon, not stopping to think of who is holding it or why.

You are more likely to be shot by police if, when challenged, if you are challenged, you begin to turn toward them. This is problematic as it is a natural reaction for humans to turn toward the sound of yelling. Specially the case if it is behind them.

Solutions - Well clearly we can't just stop carrying guns because of that risk, but it is a risk that cannot be ignored. The solutions seem to be found in creating a moment of indecision for any responding officers about your misidentification as a bad guy. This is dangerous for them as hesitation kills, but from your perspective, hesitation born of indecision, also saves you.



First, forget low ready. Shoot the bad guy when you need to shoot him, and then do what you can to hide the image of the gun. That means you use Sul, or the Covered Sul we are now teaching as well. This brings the pistol in close to the body and in effect hides it from view. You can certainly still shoot additional bad guys if needed but it is not obvious that you are armed.

Two, you do not need to cover the bad guy at gunpoint as you stand over him like TJ Hooker. Shoot what you need to shoot, and until you no longer need to shoot, then haul ass to cover and hide. Hopefully with a good view of the area.



Finally, if possible, it would be an advantage to carry a weapon similar to what police officers are using. That nickel plated 1911 with General Patton Ivory grips may be the cat's meow at the church picnic, but unlikely to be seen as the "typical" cop gun. Like it or not, police in 2010 are carrying black semi auto pistols by Glock, S&W, Sig, etc.

If challenged, something we learned from friend, student, and current SWAT cop Mike Lessman ([DSM Safety Products](#)) is to grip the barrel/slide of the pistol with your support hand and yell back loud as possible. "I am a good guy....I am a good guy. Don't Shoot. I am a good guy. Don't Shoot" with an emphasis on DON'T. Very slowly raise your empty hand over your head and the barrel/slide gripped pistol in the other over your head. Alternatively you can also simply let the pistol fall.

In several events, an off duty officer that attacked an active shooter looked like what he was. He sported the tight haircut and handled his weapon in a way befitting a pro. That created doubt in the responding officers' minds about whether he was the bad guy. It also gave the off duty officer the opportunity to identify himself. Had he looked like an Undercover Dope Dealer one can imagine the possible alternate endings.

Nothing is free. You dress like a cop, you get shot by thugs. You dress like a thug, you get shot by cops. Me, I keep a tight haircut because I like it that way. I still get asked if I am in the military. Considering I am scratching the surface of 50, the XO gets a laugh out of it every time.

Still, an additional consideration - it is common for officers to raise the ID overhead to show they are LEOs. ID is not a badge. I stopped carrying badges way back in 1993 when a cop in SoCal was shot during a robbery when his badge was found on him. I began, as many others did, carrying just the ID card.

Ever try to read an ID card from 10 yards away? Is it a Police ID, or a CCW card....or a driver's license...or a membership card to the Space Invaders Club?

Remember - the idea is to create a moment of doubt about your predetermined status as bad guy. Maybe holding an open wallet overhead with an ID card showing is a good idea...a plus if its your CCW.

Then do as you are told. It will all be sorted out, but you will be alive.