

P&SN **Police and Security News**

JULY/AUGUST 2023
VOLUME 39 ISSUE 4

Serving Law Enforcement & Homeland Security

**How Long Does
DNA LAST on
Different Surfaces?**

NEW
SWAT/TACTICAL
EQUIPMENT

**BALLISTIC
ARMOR
UPDATE:
2023**

**How to Best
Combat the
FENTANYL CRISIS**

Four Lessons of Caution Emerge from the Breonna Taylor Case



A circular inset image showing two police officers in uniform standing on a bridge, talking to a man with his hands behind his back. A white SUV is parked in front of them, and a police car with flashing lights is behind it. The background shows trees and a city skyline.

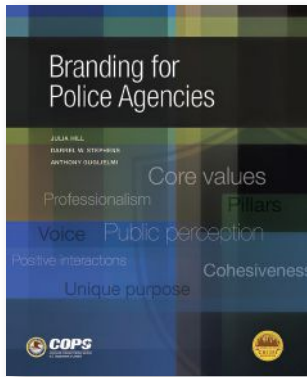
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Branding for Police Agencies

This guide was prepared by the Major Cities Chiefs Association to help law enforcement agencies understand the relationship of organizational imagery to public perception and develop meaningful and consistent brand identities. It discusses the importance of public trust in the branding of law enforcement agencies in particular and provides step-by-step guidance to help agencies determine whether their existing brands need a minor adjustment or a major ground-up overhaul.

A copy of the guide can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/4pverz3y>

Responding to Current Public Safety Challenges in Cities

The COPS Office recently released this publication summarizing a leadership meeting between local government and law enforcement.

In March 2022, 50 mayors, police chiefs and other representatives of law enforcement executive organizations met at the Winter Leadership Meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors to discuss the cooperation necessary between local government and law enforcement to keep cities safe.

Topics included ordinances, technology options, and community interventions and other initiatives to respond to and reduce gun violence; officer recruitment and retention issues; the use of co-responder models to improve response to people experiencing behavioral health crises; and police reform initiatives. This publication is a summary of that session.

A copy of this publication can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8pd3u2>

Security Integration – Using Our Collaborative Expertise to Prevent Violent Crime and Build Trust



Published by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, this article discusses an event held earlier this year in which representatives from a select group of law enforcement agencies came together from across the country in Tampa, Florida. This event was a peer-to-peer learning opportunity cosponsored by the Tam-

pa Police Department, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the US Secret Service. The meeting's purpose was to provide practitioners with an opportunity to learn from one another regarding the responsible use of technology, deployment of field operations, and development of modern analytical methods to improve public safety. Over the course of three days, presentations and discussions focused on interrupting retaliatory violence generated online and in social media environments; leveraging social media to effectively communicate with different audiences to build trust and reduce victimization; utilizing social media to proactively identify threats; and identifying public safety resources available to assist with planning and preparing for a large-scale event.

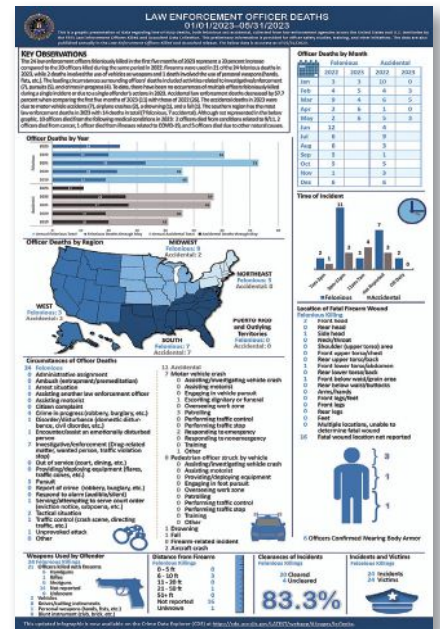
The full article can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/4m43n2ny>

A MEETING OF Mayors and Police Chiefs

Responding to Current Public Safety Challenges in Cities



NEWS



FBI Report on LEOs Killed in the Line of Duty

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has released a report on law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, including data on felonious deaths from 2022. The FBI continuously releases this data through the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Program. The program's statistics provide information which law enforcement can use to protect officers and prevent future incidents. LEOKA adheres to a general set of law enforcement officer criteria when gathering data.

According to the report, the number of law enforcement officers who were feloniously killed in the year 2022 totaled 59. This indicates a decline from the previous year's figure of 73 officers who lost their lives due to criminal acts. Fifty-eight law enforcement officers were killed accidentally in 2022 while performing their duties. Officers killed in 2022 had an average age of 39. At the time of the fatal incidents, each officer had served an average of seven years. Of the 59 officers feloniously killed, six were killed in unprovoked attacks. Forty-nine officers were killed by firearms, three by offenders using vehicles used as weapons, and eight by use of personal weapons (fists, hands, feet, etc.).

The data can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/54dhfvss>

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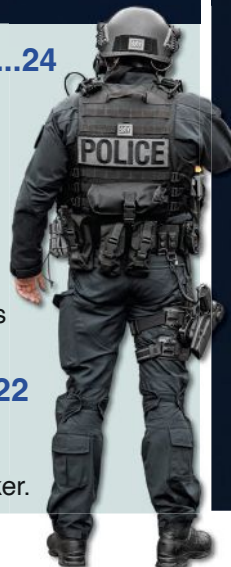
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ON THE COVER

Hundreds of demonstrators move through the streets of Manhattan on March 13, 2021, to mark the one year anniversary of Breonna Taylor's tragic demise.

PHOTO BY GRAY MATTER ON UNSPLASH

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...AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

RAMESH NYBERG

Perhaps the more appropriate title for this column should be, “Will You Be There?” because there is sure to be another one. The revolution I’m talking about occurred in the mid to late 1980s and is marked by sudden growth in the fields of forensics and computer technology. I’m lucky enough to have worked in law enforcement before this explosion and the reason I want to write about it in this issue is because I think we are poised for another one.

Here are a few scenes from police work in 1985:

My partner and I are in the car on our way to do an area canvass when my pager – a small rectangular box clipped to my belt – emits a rapid beeping tone and displays a phone number on its LCD screen. It’s the Homicide Office. There’s something they can’t, or don’t want to, say over the radio, so now we pull off the expressway and into a shopping center to find a pay phone. You see, we haven’t been given these new mobile phones which some of the supervisors and brass have. Those big Motorola jobs – nicknamed “The Brick” – can make phone calls without being wired to anything. It’s remarkable.

In another scene, I’m working on a new case at the office. I have a suspect I need to do a background check on. I’ve already given his name and DOB to our analyst who will run him through FCIC/NCIC. I’m trying to find out where he lives, so I ask her to conduct a check through the state’s new drivers’ license program which allows her to pull up a DL photo in a matter of an hour or two. Then, I’ll go down to the ID section and thumb through boxes of photos of males who look similar to the subject and put together a “six-pack” photo display to show witnesses. Before I do that, I’ll call the State Attorney’s Office and get subpoenas for BellSouth (for phone records) and Florida Power and Light to see if he has active service in his name somewhere. I’ll drive to the State Attorney’s Office, pick up the subpoenas and go the Subpoena Compliance offices of BellSouth and FPL to serve them. They should be able to get me results in two to three days. I’ll study my lead sheet first, so I can coordinate all of this driving prior to leaving. Efficient time management is important here!

Before I leave, I get a call from the



The Criminal Justice Revolution – Were You There?

crime lab – my results from the testing of the bloodstains we collected at the crime scene three days earlier are in. They will give me a blood type and hopefully a few enzyme groups to narrow it down and then we’ll need to get a blood sample from the suspect to see if they line up.

Scenario three: I just finished dictating my report on the first two weeks of the investigation. I pop the cassette out of the recorder, wrap a cover sheet around it, secure it with a rubber band, and walk it back to our steno pool. How lucky we are to have these incredible girls who put their headphones on and type up our reports with blazing speed on their IBM Selectric typewriters! Do you know that they now have white correction ribbon, so they can back up to an error and type over it and then type in the correct word? No more messy Wite-Out®. By tomorrow – unless they get really busy – I should have my report back. If there are errors, or something they feel should be changed, my sergeant or lieutenant will catch it, circle it with a red pen and give it back to me. Then, I walk it back to the steno pool for correction.

The work involved in all three of these scenarios will undergo drastic changes in the next two years. By 1987, we will all be issued cellular phones with which we can actually call each other and discuss case information *without* paging anyone or having to find a pay phone.

In that same year, all of the secretaries in our building will be trained in the use of desktop computers with big, heavy TV-like screens called *monitors*. This will stream-

line writing memos and reports. (It will take our department a few months to hit themselves in the head and say, “Maybe we should give those to the *stenos*, too, huh?”) I was fascinated by computers. My cousin worked for an advanced think tank segment of IBM and he got me an employee price on a brand-new IBM desktop computer. I started learning about software and all these other very cool things it could do. I went to work one day and wrote up a memo, explaining what a *database* was.

“You know,” I told my lieutenant after he read the memo, “we could keep track of case information with it. Let’s say someone’s name sounds familiar. We can run it against the records we have in our databases – street names, license plate numbers, all of that stuff.”

He looked at me funny. “We’ll think it over.”

A year later, a sergeant wrote a memo identical to mine and the brass was doing cartwheels over it. Databases are the future! Let’s do it!

It pays to have stripes.

But, back to 1987. Late in 1986, we attended a briefing put on by the Serology section of our crime lab. A new technology developed by a scientist in England was starting to be used: DNA. By mid-1987, we were no longer discussing blood enzyme groups. Now, we could get a profile from a drop of blood the size of a dime or from a substantial amount of saliva or other body fluids which could be matched with a suspect with the certainty of a fingerprint. All we had to do was package it up and send it to a



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...AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Continued from page 6

lab in New York. A couple of months later, we had our result. (That was a game-changer, of course, but we now know how DNA has evolved. The dime-sized drop of blood very quickly got smaller and smaller and now we need nothing more than several skin cells to get a profile.)

Things were changing all around us. Those computers? By 1987, we could send something called an *E-mail* to the State Attorney's Office, to request our subpoenas. We could do the same thing with drafts of warrant affidavits. Our stenos were now typing reports on computers and they were being saved electronically. By late 1988, our crime scene personnel were taking digital photos at crime scenes – no more 35mm film development. No more thumbing through boxes of booking photos – photo displays were being put together electronically, too. (We were just a little late to the party in most of these things; the first spacecraft to take photos of Mars was sending the photos back to NASA digitally in 1976).

In 1989, our department was visited by a company called AutoTrak. They had developed an incredible program which collected and made available massive amounts of public records. With a few keystrokes, a detective could get a background check – complete with vehicle records, address history, real estate ownership, and phone numbers for a subject in a matter of a few minutes. This phenomenal system later evolved into Experian's TLO.

You know – and may have lived – the rest of the story. In fact, this revolution of technology in police work which suddenly

made things so much faster and easier for us only accelerated. I was able to put a general box around the era in which I saw – and learned to use – so many new tools; 1986 to 1990 seemed to be that magic window. After that, I'm not sure anyone can point to a specific set of dates which stand out as a pivotal time in law enforcement technology because the advancements have become exponential and now all run together. Just as we marvel at the abilities of drones and the breadth of cyber investigations, AI has come to dazzle us – and cause plenty of concern as well.

For a "dinosaur" like me, keeping up with the speed of new technology is a challenge, but I can't help but feel privileged to have been along for the ride. I'm glad I hand wrote reports; made phone calls from pay phones; and, as a rookie, had to memorize the streets by studying a hard copy of the city map. All of those things made me appreciate today's remarkable advancements that much more. **P&SN**

*Ramesh Nyberg retired from law enforcement in November 2006 after 27 years of police work. He lives in Miami and teaches criminal justice at a local high school. He also teaches regional law enforcement courses through Training Force, USA. He enjoys getting feedback from readers and can be reached at ramesh.nyberg@gmail.com. Also, Ram has recently announced his newly published book, *The Ten Must-Haves to Be a Great Detective*, available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle eBook. You can find it by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/hwc2xajm>*

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FOCUS ON TECHNOLOGY

BlueRidge Armor

BlueRidge Armor has recently introduced the new **VENGEANCE™ X7**, a hard armor ballistic, rifle-rated shield featuring the latest developments in armor technology.



The **X7** is the first hard armor ballistic shield independently tested to various RF1 performance requirements set forth in the recently released ASTM ballistic shield test protocol.

The RF1 rating requires rigorous ballistic testing against the 7.62x51 M80 NATO Ball, 7.62x39 MSC Chinese Type 56 and the 5.56 M193 NATO.

BlueRidge Armor sought input from law enforcement personnel for the development of this next generation shield which meets real-world requirements for routine deployment.

Manufactured from a high performance, lightweight ballistic composite, this new shield delivers both improved balance and center of gravity. The new **X7** features a streamlined design which curves around the user providing higher coverage. The patented **VENGEANCE** viewport provides a ballistic bezel system which allows wide field of view and it also features an Elzetta EZH-R integrated rifle LED lighting system.

blueridgearmor.com



SAINT® Victor 5.56 with Law Tactical Folder

Building on the solid foundation of the SAINT rifle, the upgraded SAINT Victor line of AR-style rifles delivers purpose-built performance. And, adding to that capability is the newest addition to the line – the **SAINT Victor with Law Tactical Folder**. The **Law Tactical Folder** features a simple one-button release which allows for compact transportation and storage of this 16" barreled 5.56mm carbine. The mechanism allows the buttstock assembly to fold alongside the left side of the rifle's receivers, automatically locking into place. As with all Victors, this model features Springfield's free-float M-Lok® handguard and performance upgrades for professional grade reliability.

springfield-armory.com

BRINC Ball – The Next Gen Throw Phone

The **BRINC Ball** is a unique device designed to enhance de-escalation capabilities through two-way communication. Referred to as the "next gen throw phone," the **BRINC Ball** serves as a tool for law enforcement officers to establish and maintain contact, facilitating peaceful resolutions.

Functioning as a ruggedized throw phone, the **BRINC Ball** can be deployed by agencies in hard to reach areas. By calling the ball, its microphone and speaker are activated, enabling any number of team members to join the call for negotiation or crisis situations. The ball is equipped with various preprogrammed text commands, allowing users to adjust settings, check battery life and even view its GPS location. Importantly, all of these features can be accessed through calling or texting, eliminating the need for a dedicated app.

The **BRINC Ball** is designed to withstand challenging environments, being water-resistant and durable enough to survive ten foot drops onto concrete. Additionally, its battery life is long-lasting, offering 24 hours of sustained talk time or over five days of standby time.

brincdrones.com



N·ear 360™ Flexo Dynamic™ Braided Fiber Cloth™ Single Ear Earpiece

The **N·ear 360 Flexo Dynamic** (in 22" and 48" configurations) now comes equipped with an optional Braided Fiber Cloth cord specifically designed for various tactical vest setups. Users can easily thread the durable Braided Fiber Cloth cord through VELCRO® vest straps without worry – it can withstand the strain. The cord rests comfortably on any clothing and remains tangle-free.

The **N·ear 360 Flexo Dynamic** securely bends over the ear and into the ear canal, eliminating ear fatigue and providing a comfortable fit. The Single model can be worn on either the left or right ear and is capable of handling push-to-talk applications with finesse.

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n-ear.com



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Streamlight® recently launched the **ProTac® 2.0 Rail Mount**, a new high-power, rechargeable tactical light. It has a lightweight design with a rugged rail clamp for secure attachment to MIL-STD 1913 (Picatinny) rails. The light offers a multifunction push-button tail switch and a remote pressure switch for momentary operation. It uses Streamlight's proprietary SL-B50 lithium-ion USB rechargeable battery with 4,900 mAh capacity. The **ProTac® 2.0 Rail Mount** provides three settings – high, low and strobe – delivering 2,000 lumens on high with a runtime of 2.5 hours. It includes a TEN-TAP® programmable switch for user customization. This versatile light is easy to mount and allows for one-handed operation of different modes using either the push-button or remote switches.

streamlight.com

Springfield Armory® 1911 Operator® in 9mm

Springfield Armory recently announced the release of the new **1911 Operator 9mm**. Previously released in .45 ACP, this new 9mm includes a Tactical Rack rear/tritium front sight set; rugged G10 VZ Grips®; an ambidextrous safety; two magazines with bumper pads with increased capacity due to the 9mm chambering; forward slide serrations; and more.

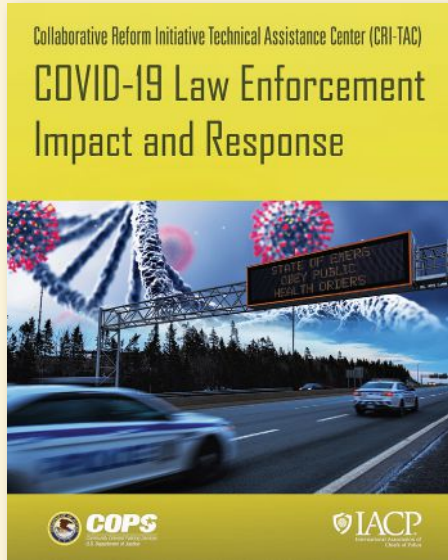
The pistol has a low-key black Cerakote® finish on its forged steel slide and frame. The frame also features an integrated Picatinny accessory rail on the dustcover which allows users to equip the pistol with a light, laser or combo unit of their choice.

The five inch, fully supported ramped match-grade barrel, made from forged stainless steel for the utmost in durability and ruggedness, is designed to deliver the maximum in both barrel life and downrange performance. To provide users with tool-free takedown in the field, the **Operator** features a traditional barrel bushing for ease and simplicity.

springfield-armory.com



COVID 19 Law Enforcement Impact and Response



The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) recently released the new report, “Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC): COVID-19 Law Enforcement Impact and Response.”

The COVID-19 public health emergency drastically affected law enforcement. The functions of law enforcement required in-person work and community interaction, and law enforcement agencies were challenged to maintain operational levels of service while keeping officers, employees and community members safe.

The COPS Office CRI-TAC monitored law enforcement pandemic response from March 2020 through the year’s end, sourcing data from public reports, meetings and forums, and personal correspondence.

The report synthesizes their findings into five themes, compiling challenges, promising practices, and lessons learned about administration and operations, community impact, crime trends, enforcement, and officer safety and wellness. Agency innovations and COVID-19 resources are highlighted throughout.

A copy of the report can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/2cw2y3ha>

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How Long Does DNA Last on Different Surfaces?

Recent NIJ funded research reveals how long DNA is detectable on various surfaces under different conditions.

This article is based on the grantee report, “Persistence of Touch DNA for Forensic Analysis,” by Meghan Ramsey.



Since the first use of DNA evidence in a criminal case in 1986, forensic scientists have considered biological material (such as hair, skin and bodily fluids) to be relatively reliable physical evidence.

While early technology required a substantial amount of biological material to extract enough DNA to build an individual profile for analysis, researchers have since discovered that they can obtain reliable DNA from more than just bloodstains or visible fluids; they can also obtain it from “touch DNA” which is left behind on surfaces or objects such as doorknobs,

window latches or steering wheels. Although touch DNA can be essential for forensic casework, it also comes with its share of issues, including those related to:

- **Low quantity** of useable DNA;
- **High variability** in the amount of DNA left by touch; that is, high variability in the amount that one person leaves and high variability in the amount left from person to person; and
- **DNA degradation**, including the many factors which can cause DNA to break down over time.

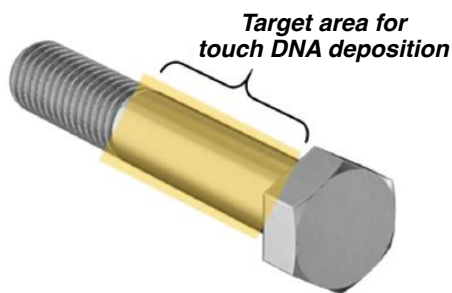
The results from rigorous analysis of these complicated factors have important implications for how touch DNA is collected, analyzed and interpreted.

In 2018, the Forensic Technology Working Group at the NIJ called for “comprehensive, systematic, well controlled studies that provide foundational knowledge and practical data about ‘touch evidence’ persistence in the real world.” That same year, Dr. Meghan Ramsey’s group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Lincoln Laboratory began quantifying how long touch DNA would persist on certain surfaces under specific conditions. Building on that knowledge, and in collaboration with Dr. Ramsey, scientists at South Dakota State University created predictive models of how DNA degrades on different surfaces under a range of environmental conditions.

TESTING FOR PERSISTENCE: DRY AND HOT DEGRADES DNA

The researchers addressed two central questions:

- How do surface type, environmental condition and exposure time affect the stability of touch DNA evidence?
- Does the stability of touch DNA samples differ from control DNA samples?



Images of the stainless steel bolts (left, partially threaded, three inches long) and cotton fabric squares (right, 1" x 1" cotton) used as substrates for DNA deposition



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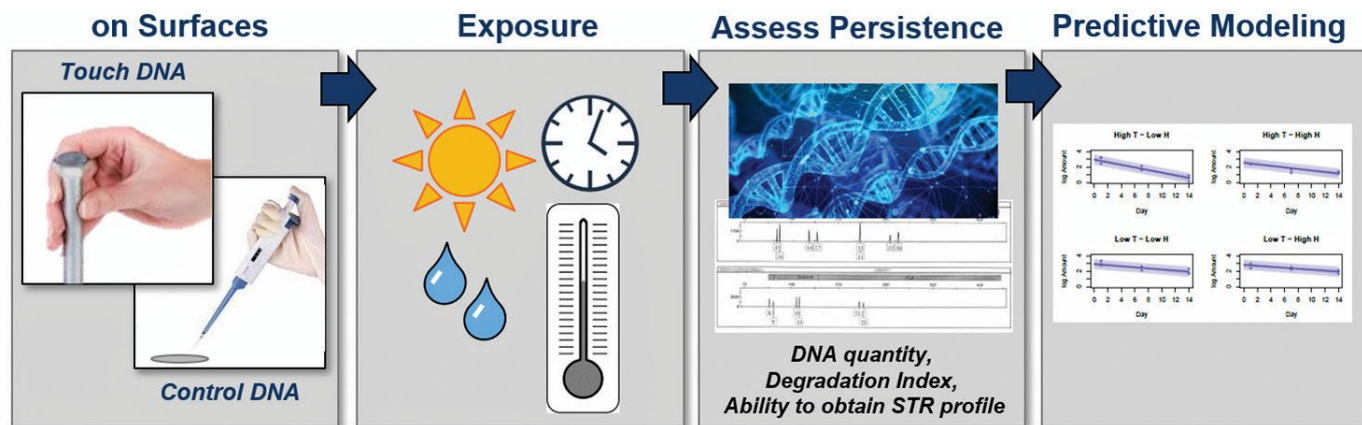


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HOW LONG DOES DNA LAST ON DIFFERENT SURFACES?

Continued from page 12



Overview of the research model, including DNA deposit, environmental exposure, DNA recovery and persistence, and predictive modelling of DNA degradation

To address these questions, scientists deposited control DNA and touch DNA samples onto steel bolts and cotton fabric swatches. The control DNA came from seven donors and comprised 220 samples, and the touch DNA came from eight donors and comprised 408 samples. Exposure time was 14 days for control DNA and seven days for touch DNA. Then, they examined the DNA residue over time, across varying temperature and humidity combinations and under UV light exposure. The UV light was set up to mimic natural UV light irradiance in the North-

ern and Southern Hemispheres.

Researchers measured the amount of DNA; the quality of DNA using a degradation index; and the ability to obtain a DNA profile using Short Tandem Repeats (or STRs), commonly used in forensic genetic analysis.

The results indicated:

- As expected, the amount of DNA which persisted on the steel and cotton decreased over time.
- Of the varying environmental factors, UV light had the biggest effect on DNA degradation on both materials.
- The amount of DNA left by touch varied more than in the control samples.

To predict the amount of DNA degradation over time, Dr. Ramsey worked with her collaborators to fit the DNA degradation data (based on temperature and humidity exposure) to a linear, mixed effects model. In doing so, they found:

- The mixed effect model was able to predict the extent of DNA degradation.
- DNA degraded more in high temperature and low humidity.
- Conversely, DNA samples were more stable at low temperatures.

To further examine DNA degradation, Dr. Ramsey and colleagues compared the completeness – whether the DNA profiles could be submitted to a database for a potential match – of two DNA profiles: environmentally exposed touch DNA recovered from steel bolts and unexposed reference sample DNA from cheek cells.

Notably:

- For all samples exposed to UV light, the researchers could not determine the DNA profiles. In other words, DNA samples exposed to UV light were too highly degraded to be useful in a forensic analysis.
- Under most conditions, all samples deposited on steel were highly stable. A noteworthy exception occurred under UV light exposure.
- The completeness of the DNA profiles determined from the touch DNA samples compared to cheek swab samples varied substantially across all environmental conditions.

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IS THERE NOT ENOUGH DNA OR IS IT DEGRADATION?

Throughout the course of this research, low and variable quantities of touch DNA collected remained a challenge; the low quantities of the initial touch DNA which scientists could recover made it difficult for researchers to evaluate the level of DNA degradation properly. Future work aims to increase the initial amount of touch DNA collected to record its degradation more accurately over time.

Still, those in forensics and law enforcement can glean valuable information from this ongoing research regarding the persistence of DNA in certain environmental conditions. For instance, investigators are more likely to recover useable DNA in cool and dry indoor environments than hot and humid outside conditions. Moreover, they may have better success obtaining DNA from stainless steel objects than fabric.

"The results from the study have generated a number of recommendations for best practices that the forensic science community can use to interpret and evaluate touch DNA evidence in a laboratory setting," notes Physical Scientist Dr. Tracey Johnson of the National Institute of Justice.

Collectively, these studies provide the most comprehensive information to date on the persistence of touch DNA evidence.

A full copy of this report, "Persistence of Touch DNA for Forensic Analysis" (PDF, 24 pages), by Meghan Ramsey, can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/49zztec9> P&SN



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Look Sharp, Feel Sharp, Be Sharp!

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT



5.11 TACTICAL®

5.11 Tactical recently unveiled its new XTU uniform in the **V.XI Collection** which offers multiple pieces of apparel constructed to work together in layering systems. The initial offering of the **V.XI Collection** includes a new XTU uniform featuring a long-sleeve rapid shirt and pant.

The XTU Rapid L/S Shirt offers moisture-wicking and anti-odor performance, a Teflon™ finish and no melt/no drip fabrics for added functionality and protection. Dual pocket sleeves, adjustable cuffs, articulated pits, reinforced elbows, and bar tacking at key stress points ensures functionality.

The XTU Pant is constructed with Ortho-lite® foam support in the strategically offset comfort waistband, a gusseted crotch and seat, large cargo pockets, and no melt/no drip fabric to make it withstand the rigors of professional use. An internal vertical adjustment and horizontal external adjustment allow users to create a custom and secure fit.

511tactical.com



WATERSHED®

The **StormForce® Bravo Duty Pants** provide the ultimate waterproof barrier. Constructed with a 3-layer GORE-TEX® laminate, which is the leading fabric for waterproofing and breathability, these pants excel in the most challenging conditions. They are fully tape sealed to provide an impenetrable barrier against water, ensuring that you stay warm, dry and focused on your task.

The **StormForce Bravo Duty Pants** feature an elastic and adjustable waistband and waterproof side leg zippers which make it easy to pull them over your duty gear. Additionally, snaps at the pant hem allow you to secure them over your boots, providing extra protection against the elements. These pants are made in the USA and are Berry Compliant. With custom options and sizing available, they can be tailored to fit the entire department perfectly.

wearewatershed.com

UNIFORMS, BADGES AND APPAREL

ALIEN GEAR HOLSTERS



The new **Rapid Force LVL 3 Duty Holster for Compact Lights** optimizes the durability, security and performance of the Rapid Force™ Duty Holster to fit SIG SAUER® P320 full-size, compact and X-frame models with compact weapon lights.

This new holster includes the fundamental features of the Rapid Force line, such as versatility with AG's Quick Disconnect System (QDS) which allows the user to easily mount and dismount the holster on a variety of configurations. Using proprietary materials, this new holster is capable of withstanding temperatures between -40 degrees to 350 degrees F, and pressures of up to 500 pounds. The **Rapid Force LVL 3 Duty Holster for Compact Lights** delivers maximum trigger guard protection and a light channel optimized for compact pistol lights. Currently available for SIG P320 C/F models, with GLOCK® 17 and 19 availability coming soon.

aliengearholsters.com

BLACKINTON®



The lightweight **FlexBadge**, combined with a VELCRO® backing, is perfect for interchanging between carrier/MOLLE systems. In comparison to embroidery, **FlexBadge** has a very detailed 3-D design which helps departments maintain a professional public image. Similar to Blackinton's metal badges, **FlexBadge** can be personalized with the lettering, backing, seal, and finish of the department's choice, and the finishes available range from highly polished to subdued. The **FlexBadge** has become more and more popular with tactical units and, since there is no minimum with standard **FlexBadge** styles, it can be easily adopted by both small and large departments.

blackinton.com

STRATTON HATS



The **Campaign S40 hat** comes with a traditional four dent style crown and a three inch brim. The straw **S40** is a single brim with a slight upward curl; there are also flat brim versions, S40DB and S40TB. A single, centered badge hole comes standard.

Stratton Hats are available in four different head shapes – regular oval, long oval, extra long oval, and wide oval – and in a variety of colors.

All Stratton Hats are manufactured in the USA.

strattonhats.com

O-SUN COMPANY



The **Model #90 B-WB PS (Police Security) Shoe Polisher** is designed specifically for law enforcement professionals to maintain clean and polished shoes. With a simple twist of the handle, this shoe polisher activates its powerful ¼ horsepower motor, ensuring efficient performance. Its sturdy construction ensures durability and longevity. The device operates on 110 volt service, and it includes deep pile nap brushes and a 2.5 pound canister of black polish infused with silicone for waterproofing shoes. Daubers are also included for easy application. Additionally, the shoe polisher comes with a five year warranty, providing peace of mind to its users.

o-sun.com

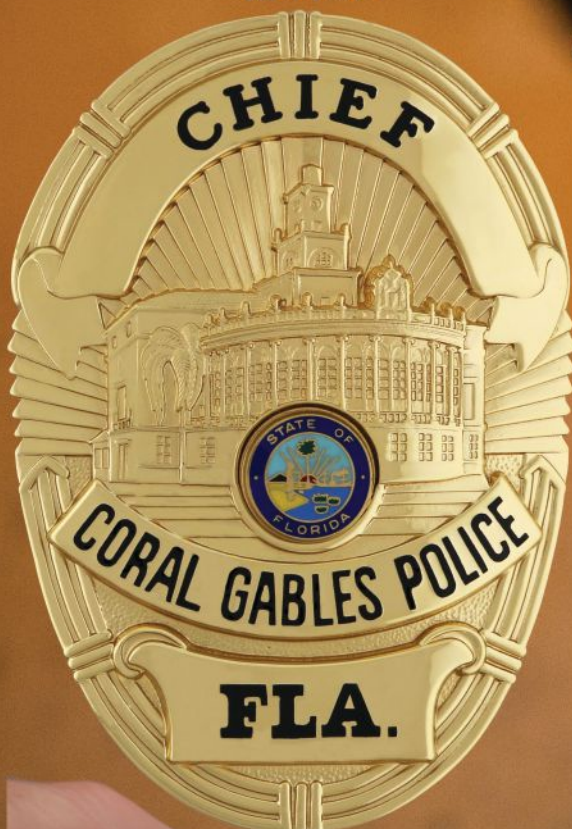
WATERSHED®

The **StormForce® Oscar** is a revamped version of the most popular StormForce garment which can be comfortably worn over body armor and a mid-layer or under an external carrier. The **StormForce Oscar** features rugged 3-layer GORE-TEX® laminate proven to outperform under the most strenuous conditions, keeping you warm, dry and focused on the task at hand. Designed to be worn above the duty belt to give you complete access to all equipment, it is also available as a full coverage jacket with custom lengths and an assortment of options available. It is made in the USA and is Berry Compliant.



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2023 Innovations in BODY ARMOR AND BALLISTIC MATERIALS

What are some of the recent developments and advancements in technologies aimed at enhancing ballistic protection?

JAKE GANOR



April 2023 marked the launch of Kevlar® EXO™, a product which DuPont heralds as the most groundbreaking aramid fiber innovation in over half a century. Currently, specifics about its performance characteristics are still under wraps, but, in an interview with one of its inventors, it has been disclosed that Kevlar EXO is a chemically modified form of aramid, with improved hydrogen bonding between the molecular chains of its fibers, improved transverse compressive strength, and a reduced defect rate – all of which should translate to superior ballistic performance.

This is a welcome advance, as aramid fibers haven't come close to hitting their performance ceiling and there ought to be considerable room for improvement. The tensile strength of Kevlar KM2® is roughly ten percent of its theoretical strength (i.e., its maximum attainable tensile strength, derived from its chemical structure). In contrast, the best grades of UHMWPE – currently used in Dyneema® and SpectraShield® – approach 40% of their theoretical tensile strength. Aramid is a material with more potential, but it seems to take a lot more effort to bring that potential out. Kevlar EXO is a step in that direction.

As of this writing, Kevlar EXO is available in rolls for soft armor applications. If it lives up to its “biggest advance in 50 years” billing, it should enable impressively light, thin and flexible soft armor panels. Even if it turns out to be nothing more than a marginal improvement over yesterday's aramid materials, its improved flexibility over unidirectional UHMWPE composites should make it an attractive option, especially for law enforcement of-

ficers who wear their armor for extended periods of time. Expect Kevlar EXO soft armor products to hit the shelves later in 2023.

NOVEL BALLISTIC PRODUCTS

Another noteworthy trend is the spread of ballistic materials into new product categories.

First, there's the ballistic fire helmet. Today, in their work as first responders, many firefighters are required to carry two helmets: one ballistic helmet and one fire helmet. This creates a logistical burden and can require firefighters to change helmets in the midst of their response to a crisis. The Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology directorate has seen this and, working together with researchers from Texas Tech University, is in the late stages of a much publicized ballistic helmet project for firefighters which should result in a prototype for fielding trials by mid-2023. What's more, several private companies are aware of this effort and the unmet need it represents, and are likely to throw their hats into the ring before the year is out.

The material construction of this ballistic fire helmet is no secret. Though the ECH, IHPS and most high-end military helmets are now made of UHMWPE composite materials, UHMWPE has poor thermal properties and degrades rapidly at elevated temperatures. Aramid is self-extinguishing, flame-retardant to ~790°F, and can operate for extended periods of time at 660°F, so the ballistic fire helmet of the near future is doubtless going to be made of an aramid laminate in a temperature-resistant resin. What's less certain, but likely, is that it will also incorporate advanced thermal mitigation strategies – e.g., layers of thermal conductors to spread heat across the en-



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2023 INNOVATIONS IN BODY ARMOR AND BALLISTIC MATERIALS

Continued from page 18

tire helmet shell and layers of insulators to prevent that heat from affecting the helmet's wearer.

Another example of this spread is in riot armor. Today, riot armor is much like football armor or motocross armor in that it's only rated for blunt impact protection and is not intended to hold up against bullets, knives or spikes. The newly released Adept Armor NovaSteel Breastplate is a riot armor torso and shoulder protector – and a drop-in replacement for existing riot armor torso/shoulder parts – which is rated for blunt impact, NIJ Knife-3, NIJ Spike-3, and ballistic performance to NIJ IIIA/HG2, with a light up-armor ballistic plate which brings it up to III+/RF2.

NEW RESEARCH

Though it is unlikely to result in new products for 2023, there has been much recent research into soft armor design strategies. There are two trends, distinct but very closely related.

First, there's a push towards sustainable composites made of natural materials – particularly those derived from kenaf, flax, bagasse, and pineapple leaf. These high-strength natural fibers can be combined with aramid or UHMWPE lay-

ers in laminate armor systems and these hybrid systems purportedly perform quite well. What's more, high-strength natural fibers can be as much as 95% cheaper than the high-tech synthetics they replace. (Bagasse, in particular, is an industrial waste product.) Natural fibers have already made inroads into the automotive market – the BMW i3, among other makes and models, utilizes kenaf fiber composite panels – and it is increasingly likely that the armor industry will follow suit with low-cost Level II and IIIA body armor panels partially or wholly derived from natural fiber composite materials.

The other trend follows studies from PEO Soldier and Purdue University. Their research program found that the top few layers – i.e., the threat facing side – of laminate soft armor panels don't necessarily contribute to the ballistic performance characteristics of those panels. In one experiment, they compared prototype soft armor shoot packs against a variety of FSP threats. Their baseline "traditional" soft armor panel was made of 22 layers of aramid; one of their competing test systems was made up of eight layers of cotton fabric over 14 layers of aramid. Those two systems performed identical-

ly. (The performance difference between them against 9mm steel fragments at common handgun velocities was less than one percentage point.)

The discovery in question isn't new; it's a few years old – but 2023 has seen it tested and advanced, with different research groups replacing UHMWPE or aramid layers in soft armor panels with everything from polycarbonate (five) to a wide range of natural fibers, including some of those previously mentioned.

All told, we're on the threshold of potentially significant innovations in soft armor systems.

Another safe prediction is that as ballistic materials get lighter and thinner, they're going to become more ubiquitous. 2023 brings ballistic fire helmets and ballistic riot armor, and it'll be interesting to see how Kevlar EXO is implemented by armor designers in 2023, 2024 and beyond. **P&SN**

Jake Ganor is a materials scientist, armor engineer and a designer of ballistic shields. His company, Adept Armor (adept), is pioneering next generation armor systems. His book, Body Armor and Light Ballistic Armor Materials and Systems is now available on Amazon.

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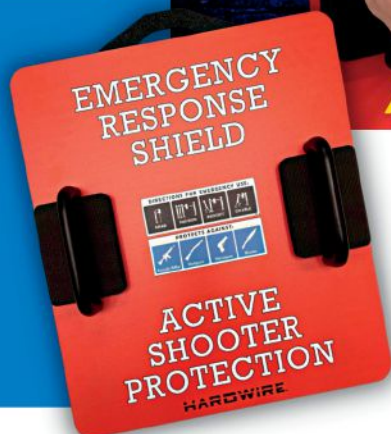
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"The Emergency Response Shield (ERS) is the fire extinguisher for gunfire and should be placed with other emergency tools for ease of access." -Hardwire CEO, George Tunis

From SWAT to schools, Hardwire offers optimized armor protection. With government contracts from the FBI and SOCOM to U.S. Army and Marines, Hardwire's military-grade technology has been crafted into affordable school protection. These ballistic products, which can already be found in schools in every U.S. state, work with the Department of Homeland Security's recommendation to "Run, Hide, Fight" and ALERRT's "Avoid, Deny, Defend" protocol. These products empower students, faculty, and staff to defend themselves, buying critical time until first responders arrive, and ensuring that proper ballistic shield technology is already on site for law enforcement response. Similar to its tactical shield product line, Hardwire's ERS comes in both NIJ Level IIIA (handgun/shotgun) and Level III+ (rifle) protection options. The ERS steel option stops Green Tip rifle rounds.

IMPLEMENTS LIKE FIRE CODE

Remember the days when fire was fought with buckets of water and a line of humans? Then someone invented the fire extinguisher, the smoke detector, and Smokey the Bear to promote fire prevention. The same is needed for active shooter prevention and protection. Emergency Response Shields are the fire extinguisher for gunfire. Distributed throughout schools and public facilities, they stop bullets and are easily available in an emergency. Teachers today face the problem bare-handed. The ERS is a tool to help – a tool that empowers survival until first responders arrive.

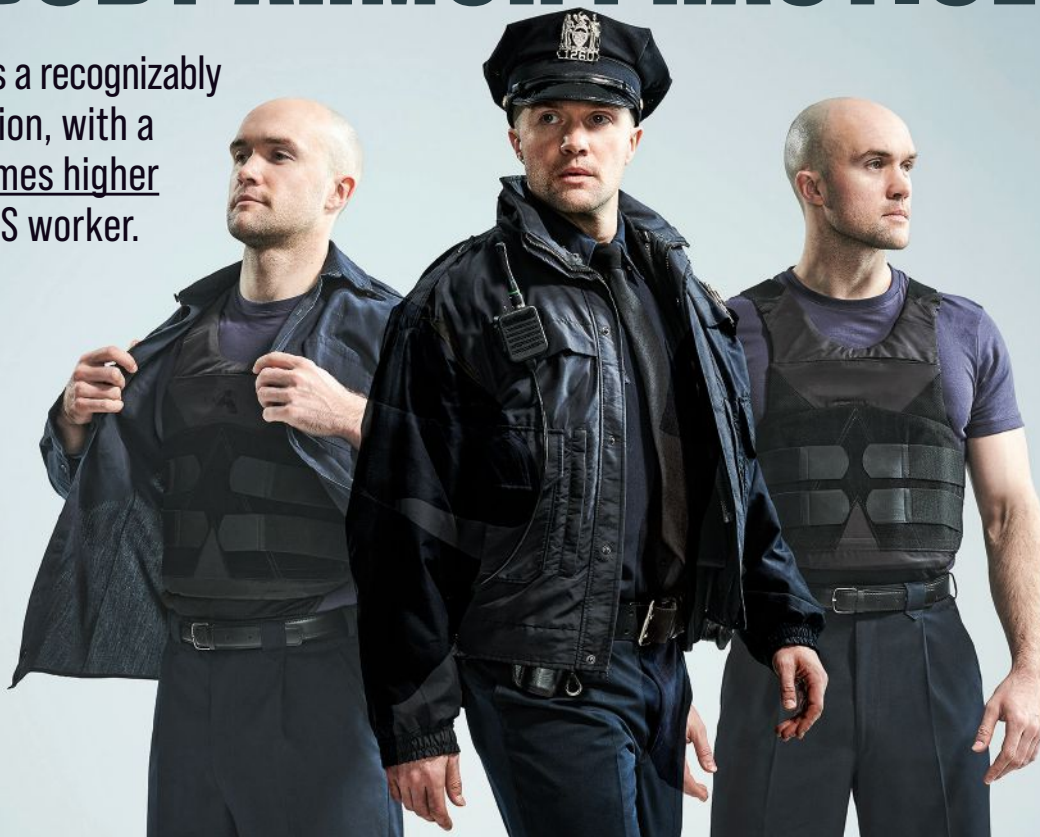
PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

Mass shootings are community-shattering events. That's why Hardwire donated 1,600 shields to their tri-county schools on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland. If you'd like to see this protection in your community, scan the QR code above and contact us. It is our mission to protect every school in America.

BEST BODY ARMOR PRACTICES

Law enforcement is a recognizably dangerous profession, with a fatality rate five times higher than the average US worker.

MATT CRAIG



To help mitigate these occupational risks, most law enforcement agencies have mandatory policies in place for wearing personal protective equipment, such as soft armor vests, hard armor plates and ballistic helmets. The use of body armor has saved the lives of more than 3,000 officers in the last three decades, according to the National Institute of Justice.

If officers are bearing the weight of this equipment, it is important that it be properly configured for its purpose – ready to stop the threats officers face any given day on the job. Departments must complete a threat analysis and consider the task of each wearer to determine the best armor type needed for each officer. After this, the armor must be properly fitted, worn and maintained to ensure maximum effectiveness.

What does this require? How do we enable officers to feel confident in their armor and ensure their gear is performing effectively?

IT ALL STARTS WITH THE PROPER FIT

After being sworn in, officers are generally provided new vests every five years. Getting these vests custom fitted ensures officers receive both maximum comfort and protection.

When getting fitted, it is best to wear a complete uniform. This ensures that the vest doesn't interfere with an officer's duty belt while still providing full coverage. Straps should be tight enough to be secure without showing signs of rippling or buckling. When too tight, the straps cause the vest to sit too high which may leave the midsection vulnerable. The proper tightness also prevents unnecessary wear and tear on the outer carrier and the inner panels.

Oftentimes, academy graduates will be fitted at their peak physique, but gain weight back shortly after. If this is likely, it is important to let the person conducting the fitting know. If this happens unexpectedly and the vest no longer fits properly, it's time to get a new vest.

Female officers have their own unique challenges when it comes to being properly fitted for armor. Shorter torsos and busts can cause armor to ride up or lay incorrectly. While there are options to have a carved out section for the bust, this is not necessarily more comfortable and correct placement is challenging. Because of this, some women prefer the typical vest fit. As women have children or their bodies change, it is again crucial to communicate these needs to your department's uniform committee or representative. While asking to be refitted can be awkward, it can po-

tentially be the difference between life and death.

Understanding the responsibilities of an officer and their daily tasks and activities helps to inform the performance weight, flexibility, cut, design, and area of protection.

Beyond protection, proper fitting and armor type provides wearers with the maximum comfort available – which 74% of recently surveyed law enforcement officers ranked as the most important quality of their armor (<https://tinyurl.com/3c83jbvv>).

The importance of comfort when purchasing body armor has been trending upward for quite some time. In the 2009 study performed by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Police Executive Research Forum (<https://tinyurl.com/3skxhx27>), comfort ranked as the fourth most considered factor following only behind defending against rounds from the weapon of the officer, safety level and NIJ compliance.

CARE AND CLEANING HELP PROLONG EQUIPMENT LIFE

When you have a proper fitting vest, it is important to care for it correctly in order to maintain the fit. Upon receiving a vest, officers should be sure to read the manufacturer's care instructions included which

NIJ BODY ARMOR POSTER

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has recently created a poster which provides critical information concerning the care of law enforcement body armor, including where to check for NIJ compliance certification and essential pointers for the proper upkeep of body armor.

The NIJ will be making full-size printed copies of this poster.

The NIJ – the research and development arm of the US Department of Justice – is accepting orders from law enforcement agencies for this body armor poster which highlights critical information for care. **The poster and shipping are free for agencies.** You also have the option to print the poster.

Officers will be reminded to visually inspect ballistic panel covers; notify an agency representative if the integrity of the panel cover is compromised; never attempt to repair armor panels; consider replacing any armor panel or label which shows damage or excessive wear; and check the armor label to make sure it bears the “NIJ Mark.”

This safety resource is brought to you by the NIJ which maintains voluntary minimum performance standards for body armor and certifies body armor through the NIJ Compliance Testing Program.

To search a database of compliant products, visit <https://tinyurl.com/44kwz466>

To order a copy of the poster or to download and print one, visit <https://tinyurl.com/d68ywfk5>



explain how to store and clean your armor.

Of course, as it is worn daily for physical activity in any weather, the vests must be cleaned. Outer vests can typically be washed on delicate, but the panels should be washed by hand using water, mild soap and a washcloth. Excess moisture should be wiped away and all of the armor's components should be laid out flat to dry. This protects the straps and prevents them from overstretching.

While it may seem like a good idea to spray the vest with deodorizers, it is best to avoid these chemicals which can damage the material. Wearing a moisture wicking shirt is recommended to avoid chafing and bad odors.

If a vest is made with a polyethylene material like Dyneema®, it can be washed with detergent in a washing machine. For those who are unsure what their vest is made of, it is best to refer to the body armor manufacturer's materials you received with your vest.

While a majority of officers in the 2012 US Department of Justice funded study on the usage of body armor were aware of the recommended care and storage techniques for armor, large numbers of participating officers also reported that they did not maintain their armor according to manufacturer recommendations.

It is important to refer to the specific vest manufacturer's storage instructions, but these will typically recommend that a vest be stored flat rather than hung on a hanger and in a cool location when not in use. Hanging a vest can stretch out the straps, leading to an incorrect fit, and fold-

ing a vest can cause the panels to bunch. Long-term exposure to extremely hot, cold or wet environments can degrade certain materials as well.

PROPER INSPECTION TECHNIQUES

The cleaning process provides a great opportunity to inspect body armor for damage. While most departments require body armor to be worn, only nine percent conduct inspections to ensure proper maintenance, according to the same United States Department of Justice funded study. This means that the responsibility of proper inspection lies with the officer.

Signs of unusual or excessive wear include holes, tears and any visible “raw” ballistic material. Other indicators of damage include separations in stitching, discoloration and denting in the vest. If the equipment has any of these, it is imperative to contact the manufacturer so that it can be properly repaired.

Do not attempt to repair the vest alone as it may cause more damage and will void the warranty. Always keep the paperwork provided when your vest is issued so that you can easily provide the serial number, proof of purchase and purchase date.

Body armor matters, but wearers must prioritize proper fit and care techniques to ensure its effectiveness. These prolong the life of the armor and ensure officers have the protection they need when they need it most. **P&SN**

Matt Craig is a Senior Engineer of Application Development & Technical Services for Dyneema and has 12 years of

experience in developing military and law enforcement protective equipment.

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BALLISTIC ARMOR UPDATE: 2023

The 30th Annual Report on the Latest Advances in Ballistic Armor Technology and Design

P&SN STAFF

Although major technological advancements and groundbreaking product developments are infrequent across industries, incremental improvements in existing product lines and the introduction of new products with innovative features occur annually. The ballistic protection industry is no exception to this pattern, as the past 12 months has witnessed numerous minor modifications which hold the potential to enhance the design and effectiveness of ballistic armor. To follow are some of the new advances in the ballistic protection marketplace.

AARDVARK Tactical

The new External Patrol Vest (XPV) from AARDVARK Tactical's PROJECT7 Armor is built to reimagine how police officers are armored. Featuring a four-panel design similar to a tactical vest, it offers a better fit and greater coverage, all without sacrificing mobility. Compared to traditional two-piece armor systems, the XPV's four-piece platform and cummerbund mitigate the risk of coverage gaps due to misaligned panels, small weight fluctuations or poor fitting vests.

The XPV consists of an external carrier, an optional internal concealable carrier and four soft ballistic panels. The vest offers multiple configurations to fit the mission of the individual officer. The XPV can be worn with its external carrier and ballistics alone or for missions which require concealment; when wearing a Class A uniform, the optional internal concealable carrier can be worn with soft ballistic panels alone.

This platform features internal radio



The new External Patrol Vest (XPV) was designed to provide better protection and comfort.

channels for cable routing and a concealed magnet pouch for simple attachment of an Axon® body-worn camera. (project7armor.com/xpv)

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY.



SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

BALLISTIC ARMOR UPDATE: 2023

Continued from page 24

Adept Armor

Most riot armor primarily focuses on providing protection against blunt impacts rather than knives, spikes or bullets. It shares similarities with football armor, as its main purpose is to safeguard against blunt force. However, the recently unveiled Adept Armor NovaSteel™ Breastplate offers an innovative solution. Designed to replace existing riot armor torso and shoulder components seamlessly, this advanced riot armor provides not only blunt impact resistance, but also meets the standards for NIJ Knife-3 and NIJ Spike-3 protection. Moreover, it has been tested to achieve ballistic performance up to NIJ IIIA/HG2 level and, with the inclusion of a lightweight ballistic plate, it is capable of reaching III+/RF2 protection. (ade.pt)



The Adept Armor NovaSteel™ Breastplate is a riot armor torso and shoulder protector which also provides ballistic and knife/spike protection.

Armor Research Company (ARC)

Later this year, ARC will be “reintroducing” its legacy, Level III, articulating, rifle-defeating ballistic body armor with numerous NextGen innovations in construction. Aside from being flexible and formfitting, it allows ease of movement, is ultralightweight, and incorporates human factor-centric ergonomics.

ARC’s NextGen body armor is positioned to be introduced to law enforcement SWAT teams in high risk jurisdictions. (armorresearchco.com)

BlueRidge Armor

BlueRidge Armor has recently introduced the VENGEANCE™ X7, a hard armor ballistic shield which incorporates the latest advancements in armor technology. This shield is the first of its kind to undergo independent testing for various RF1 performance requirements outlined in the recently released ASTM ballistic shield test protocol.

The RF1 rating necessitates rigorous ballistic testing against the 7.62x51 M80 NATO Ball, 7.62x39 MSC Chinese Type 56 and the 5.56 M193 NATO rounds. To ensure the shield meets real-world requirements for routine deployment, BlueRidge Armor actively sought input from law enforcement personnel during the development process.

Constructed from a lightweight, high-performance ballistic composite material, the new shield offers improved balance and center of gravity. It features



The new VENGEANCE™ X7 rifle-rated shield provides both improved balance and center of gravity.

a sleek, curved design which envelops the user, providing enhanced coverage. The shield also incorporates the patented VENGEANCE viewport which includes a ballistic bezel system for a wide field of view. Additionally, it is equipped with the Elzetta EZH-R integrated rifle LED lighting system. (blueridgearmor.com)



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BALLISTIC ARMOR UPDATE: 2023

Continued from page 26



The Savior utilizes a shoulder sling which allows for rapid deployment.

Covered 6

In response to requests for a compact, lightweight and discreet solution for crisis response, Covered 6 has developed the Savior MTS (Multi-Threat Shield). This purpose-built product is specifically designed

to address situations such as active shooter scenarios. The Savior MTS weighs 6.5 pounds for the Level IIIA option and ten pounds when equipped with the optional rifle-rated Level III plate. Its (patent pending) one-piece folding design ensures a

seamless and cohesive structure without any seams or overlapping components.

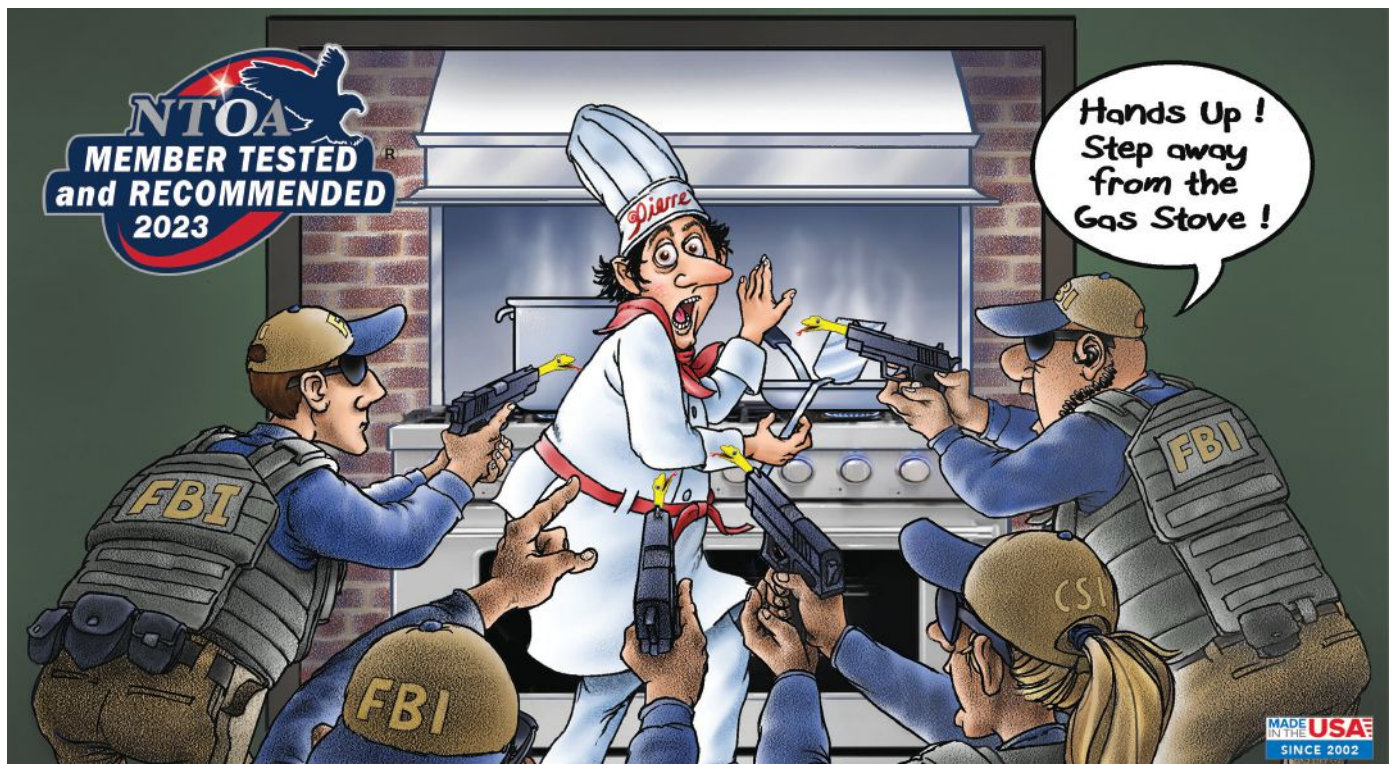
Once deployed, the MTS provides protection against pistol and rifle threats; however, blunt and edged weapons are effectively mitigated as well. The Savior is donned using a shoulder sling which allows the user to keep the shield slung on his/her body in preparation for rapid deployment and allows the user to go hands-free to perform additional vital functions.

Covered 6 conducted their own extensive ballistic and puncture testing with 100% success; the tests exceeded the NIJ standard for ballistic testing.

(covered6.com)

DARKMATTER™

DARKMATTER Energy Dispersal Pads reduce kinetic energy transfer and minimize behind armor blunt trauma injuries by up to 94%. They outperform traditional trauma pads in dissipating impact energy effectively. These pads also minimize Back Face Deformation (BFD) upon projectile impact. In tests, standalone hard armor showed a BFD of 39 millimeters (1.5 inches), posing risks. DARKMATTER pads remained resilient and effective after



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BALLISTIC ARMOR UPDATE: 2023

Continued from page 28



The new Ballistic Burrito from Hardwire is a ballistic neckline protector which offers advanced protection.

multiple hits, unlike other trauma products. When used with DARKMATTER pads, hard armor achieved a significant 27% reduction in BFD, surpassing competitors' results of one to four percent. Manufacturers can now directly integrate DARKMATTER materials into ballistic plates through Direct Armor Integration. (darkmattersciences.com)

Fiber Brokers International, LLC

In 2005, Fiber Brokers began specializing in the secure destruction and sustain-

able recycling of body armor; the methods depend on the purity of the material. Now, they have created new methods to recycle items which are typically nonrecyclable such as used/aged helmets, shields, and several other coated ballistic materials, in addition to body armor. If they are unable to reclaim/break down the material for recycling purposes, they also have destruction services to crush the items or destroy them in another way. The unwanted material is disposed of in an ecologically friendly way.

Currently, para-aramids are one material for which the company is interested in expanding recycling solutions. The Fiber Brokers team is also scaling its operations to procure and effectively recycle additional types of ballistic and non-ballistic materials in higher volumes. (fiberbrokers.com)

Hardwire®, LLC

Hardwire offers a new edition to its soft body armor line-up – the Hardwire Ballistic Burrito, an adhesive neckline protector which quickly and easily attaches to any soft armor panel. It offers advanced protection for high obliquity shots to mitigate skipping of the projectile. It has been independently tested and catches the bullet at high obliquity angles. (hardwirellc.com)

Instant Armor, Inc.

Designed and engineered for First Responders, the Spartan Shield™ is a two-piece, lightweight, rigid, ballistic shield which can be deployed in under five seconds. This ballistic shield is well-known for providing anytime/anywhere Level III protection. Law enforcement agencies can also choose from a variety of 4" x 10" ID nameplates (Police, Sheriff, S.W.A.T., FBI and more) attached by VELCRO®.

The Spartan Shield meets or exceeds NIJ Level III (rifle) or IIIA (handgun), defeating high-powered rifle rounds and providing 19" wide by 34" tall protection when deployed. It easily fits behind seats or in a niche in the truck when folded – only measuring 19" x 19", and its lightweight form allows extremely fast deployment at only 16.3 pounds. (instantarmor.com)

Point Blank Enterprises, Inc.

The ORIGIN body armor system is scalable, modular and designed to cater to different levels of protection, ranging from concealable to full tactical. It offers easy configuration to meet specific mission requirements. With interchangeable components, ORIGIN allows for adaptation to immediate threat levels. These components provide maximum adaptability and incorporate state-of-the-art ballistic technology.

The Guardian Series is characterized by its modular design, providing a seamless integration of various components. This design not only allows for customization and adaptability, but also offers a wide array of options. These design features allow users to create a vest which aligns with their specific requirements in terms of appearance, fit and functionality. The Guardian is also engineered to ensure maximum freedom of movement without compromising on protective coverage.

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The Spartan Shield™ is a two-piece ballistic shield which can be deployed in under five seconds.

Through the Armor Smart Custom Vest Builder available at pointblankenterprises.com/armorsmart/, individuals can design their own custom Guardian vest.

The Vanguard series offers Level III rifle threat protection and comes in three distinct shapes. Each shape is designed to cater to different preferences and operational requirements. The Vanguard features a large rectangular ballistic viewport which provides ample visibility to the operator. Additionally, it is equipped with weapon index platforms on both sides, allowing the user to position their handgun or long gun for precise deployment. (pointblankenterprises.com)

Swift Shield™

In addition to the foldable versions which can be carried in a computer bag or backpack, Swift Shield has some of the lightest and thinnest rifle-rated shields available on the market today.

The new Swift Shield RF1 MAX is 30" high, 20" wide, .45" thick, and weighs only 12 pounds. The RF1 PRO MAX is also .45" thick, but is longer to provide more protection at 20" x 36" and still only weighs 13.5 pounds. The thin, lightweight ballistic material is an innovative, proprietary plate technology.

These rifle-rated shields are equipped with a unique proprietary handle which is easily gripped; allows for multiple carrying positions; and is virtually indestructible. They are also coated in LINE-X® which reduces glare, makes them waterproof and is quieter if they bump into anything. (swiftshield.info)

TacMed Solutions™

TacMed Solutions provides armor protection solutions for emergency professionals engaged in rescue task force operations, with an emphasis on supporting the mission of law enforcement. They have recently expanded their offerings by incorporating various new options from RTS Tactical.

Their new Premium Plate Carrier is extremely adjustable; one size fits most up to a 52" waist and it can support either Level IIIA soft panels or Level III rifle plates. It is manufactured from 500D



RTS Tactical's Advanced Sleek 2.0 is designed specifically as a covert mission plate carrier.

MIL-SPEC Cordura® with in internal lining of 3DX Mesh for enhanced comfort.

The new OPSEC Plate Carrier has a lengthy list of features including a quick release system, interchangeable loadout system, 360 degree laser cut MOLLE, and a 32" drag handle tested at 960 pounds. The internal portion of the OPSEC has a breathable mesh spacer for comfort and comes in a wide variety of sizes to support up to a 65" waist. The OPSEC is also capable of supporting either Level IIIA soft panels or Level III rifle plates.

Their final newest system is the Advanced Sleek 2.0. This carrier is primarily a discreet, low-profile system, but is also capable of supporting both Level IIIA soft panels and Level III rifle plates. The Advanced Sleek 2.0 is made of 8mm thick, closed-cell EVA foam and has the unique feature of side straps which double as both pistol and rifle magazine holders for a self-contained system. (tacmedsolutions.com) **P&SN**



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TARGETING CARTEL MONEY LAUNDERING IS ESSENTIAL FOR COMBATING

US FENTANYL CRISIS

MICHAEL BROWN



To effectively undermine the cartels and curtail the flow of fentanyl, it is crucial to disrupt their financial supply chain.

In 2022, there was a slight increase in drug overdose deaths in the US following two significant spikes during the pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials report that the numbers remained stable for the majority of the year. It is uncertain whether this indicates that the deadliest drug overdose crisis in US history is approaching its peak, or if it will resemble previous periods of stability followed by new surges in fatalities.

According to the CDC's latest data, an estimated 109,680 overdose deaths occurred last year which is approximately 2% higher than the 107,622 overdose deaths in 2021.

Throughout the year, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids continued to be the primary cause of most overdose deaths. Furthermore, authorities highlight that inexpensive fentanyl is increasingly being mixed into other drugs, often unbeknownst to the buyers.

Narcotic-related law enforcement efforts are largely focused on stopping fentanyl from being sold on the street, coupled with arresting gang and cartel members involved in the process. But, the best way to degrade the cartels and

put a dent in the fentanyl trade is to disrupt their money supply chain and seize financial assets.

For every fentanyl sale which occurs, someone is being paid. The money is not going into local bank accounts. It is being "laundered" using a number of digital and physical methods to hide it. According to the US State Department, an estimated \$154 billion in illicit funds pass through China alone each year as part of money laundering.

Unfortunately, efforts to disrupt the cartel money laundering supply chain, and, thereby, disable the relationship with fentanyl precursors and distribution networks, has had spotty success.

To change that scenario, law enforcement needs to aggressively adopt advanced technologies which can better collect relevant financial and other data, analyze it and drive action on it. The key phrase to describe these efforts is "actionable intelligence."

The Supply Chains Which Bring Fentanyl to American Users

For the fentanyl trade to yield its millions in profits, the narcotic and the precursor chemicals which constitute it must

move through two separate, but interdependent, supply chains. These include the precursor supply chain and the distribution supply chain.

Fentanyl begins its journey in the precursor supply chain which starts in China. This is where the elements which go into the manufacture of fentanyl are produced. When Mexican cartels reach out to their organized crime contacts in China to help with producing more fentanyl, those contacts in turn work with the proxies in Mexico to receive shipments of chemical agents needed.

The base elements are then shipped to Mexico, usually through international parcel cargo or on container ships. They are gathered at centralized locations, sent out to various labs and manufactured as fentanyl in either pill form or as powder. From there, the drugs are smuggled across the border, entering the US in modified vehicles, by small plane or boat, or with human "mules." Fentanyl is then distributed to various dealers for sale to "consumers."

Once fentanyl has been sold, the proceeds of the sale move down the money supply chain.

How the Chinese Money Operations Work

In order for the cartels to get paid for their fentanyl production and distribution, they now typically operate large money laundering operations involving Chinese Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) groups in the US and in China.

Small cells of Chinese criminals have largely displaced the Mexican and Columbian money men who have dominated the trade in the past. These groups move millions in hard currency without one dollar actually crossing an international border. They digitally transfer drug proceeds using encrypted apps on their burner cell phones.

Typically, they make one call and then throw the phone away. Even if investigators do get a bead on a burner phone, it can take up to two weeks to obtain a warrant to go after the phone's "owner."

TOC actors have perfected the art of mirrored remittance. This involves breaking large payments down to small amounts and distributing them to many individuals

who then transfer the funds directly to numerous overseas accounts in China. From there, the business owners will wire money transfers to Mexican accounts from which the cartels will get paid.

These steps mirror a traditional movement of large sums of cash, but do so without going through the US banking system and activating anti-money laundering safeguards. Such safeguards typically look for large sums changing hands and frequent sending or receiving of sums of money by individuals or organizations.

Bypassing money laundering regulations is fairly straightforward. For example, if the Latin Kings or Crips gangs purchase fentanyl from the cartels in Mexico, all the cartels need to do is to make payments in the US at a business which will launder the money. The gang members would take the money they owe, say \$100,000, to an establishment which would break the large amount down into small allotments and spread payments out through numerous criminal contacts within the local Chinese community. These contacts typically have

legal establishments, such as dry cleaners, hair salons or restaurants, as part of their network.

The money laundering actions of these TOC groups have definitely gotten the attention of law enforcement, with such activity said to be a major threat to global economies. The Chinese role in both providing precursor elements used in the manufacturing of fentanyl, as well as in laundering money critical to the trade, has also added to political tensions between the United States and China.

Keeping Supply Chain Payments Out of Sight, if Not Out of Mind

One of the primary reasons cartels work closely with Chinese organized crime units is simply to avoid the prying eyes of US law enforcement. DEA efforts to investigate drug trafficking operations had improved, especially with the wide scale use of undercover agents. So, the cartels took their distribution and money laundering efforts offshore – where it was largely out of

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sight, if not out of mind.

Chinese brokers are very effective in avoiding US and Mexican formal banking systems and, thus, avoiding anti-money laundering measures. Unfortunately for investigators, the more steps in the process – or supply chain – which happen in China, the harder it is for US officials to know about it or interdict.

Cartels are also returning more to face-to-face interaction in order to protect transactions. Before they will do business with someone, they want to see with whom they are dealing. One favorite way of doing this is to direct a dealer to a contact in New York, for example, who will collect payment. The dealer will be given one half of a \$100 bill and the contact in New York will have the other half. Only when the two meet, and they confirm that the two halves match, will they continue the transaction.

Data Sources Provide a Treasure Trove of Leads for Investigators

Because drug dealers are getting more

careful with whom they do “live” transactions, law enforcement is relying more heavily on crime statistics analysis and financial intelligence from a few sources to generate leads to degrade the money supply chain. Relevant financial data can be obtained from the IRS and other records and from wire intercepts. The IRS can target suspicious organizations in the US owned by Chinese corporations or individuals and review offshore transactions with a fine-tooth comb. The IRS obviously has access to enormous amounts of financial information and can often spot irregularities.

Bank alerts of large wire transactions can be helpful, especially if a single account holder sends or receives many \$9,999 transfers. When a financial institution receives suspicious activity reports, it can examine who wire remittances are going to and from. They would check if a suspect account holder has a business; the days and times when transfers are done; and if the transfer amounts seem appropriate for the type of receiver on the

other end.

Human sources remain the best source of data intelligence. They typically have direct knowledge of criminal activity and can identify key players; how operations work; and, sometimes, how money changes hands. Human sources are often key providers of intelligence during plea deals. In order to avoid or reduce potential prison sentences, many will provide incriminating information on others.

One challenge which impacts the quality of leads for investigators is the growing number of “Jack and Jill” dealers working out of their own homes across America. They are not visible to police because they are not dealing on the streets which means there is a lower arrest rate against this “market sector.” This growing cottage industry is also an active contributor to the illicit money supply chain and, in many cases, investigators would need to receive a tipoff from human sources to commence an investigation.

Using Data to Drive Action in the War on Drugs

One of the most effective strategies for curbing the fentanyl drug trade in this country is digital technology. Advanced analytics tools and artificial intelligence can enable law enforcement to spot suspicious activity; make assessments of who is involved at each step in the narcotics journey wherever they may be; to track shipments of base elements used in manufacturing narcotics; and to monitor how and where money transactions related to the sale of drugs are happening.

Human investigators can't reasonably deal with all of the data which is potentially available. Advanced analytics tools are definitely needed to do the job. Data analysts can use advanced analytics tools to seek needles in haystacks when it comes to drug trafficking information. They can help identify key individuals and networks and provide organizational “flow charts.” Such flow charts will identify in graphic terms the links and nodes which make up a drug trafficking network. Nodes refers to a specific task which is done at any point in the network. Links are all of the other nodes which are interconnected to it and to other nodes. Taken as a whole, this would map out the fentanyl journey from China, to Mexico, and then to the US, and who is involved at each step along the way.

Network mapping is very important in an investigation since it identifies all

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potential targets and (hopefully) cooperating witnesses. Most importantly, these tools enable investigators to gather and monitor key financial data which provide predictions as to where money laundering is taking place.

Equally important are gathering data related to illicit drug operations and sharing that data with other law enforcement agencies. Federal, state and local police need to work together and with state attorneys general to share resources and assets. There is definitely strength in numbers.

The sharing of this data is especially important in the current political and social climate, when there are often calls to “defund the police.” Law enforcement agencies will have a difficult time making many large-scale technology investments. The solution is to combine efforts and obtain shared digital resources.

All of these groups typically see the same types of drug use and, often, the same people. Because of this, shared

tools and information become important for targeting the upper level of drug trafficking organizations, understanding what they are doing, and dismantling their operations.

Conclusion

Despite the best efforts of all law enforcement agencies, drug manufacturers, distributors and dealers always seem to be one step ahead. Human resources alone won't turn the tide in this war.

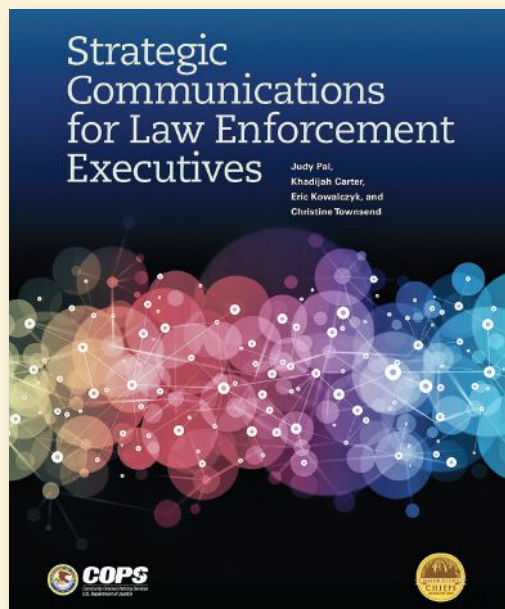
Advanced analytics and AI can provide investigators with the tools they need to greatly degrade the Mexican cartels and Chinese money launderers. Law enforcement agencies should embrace these technologies and work together to enable the means of acquiring and acting on them.

As they do, it is important for law enforcement to incorporate new metrics which reflects their ability to degrade the digital aspect of trafficking in conjunction with drug seizures and arrests. Fewer

low level street dealers are being arrested, but the more significant impact on the cartels will be made through targeting their digital money supply chain. **P&SN**

Michael W. Brown is the global director for counter-narcotics technology at Rigaku Analytical Devices. He has a distinguished career spanning more than 32 years as a Special Agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Most recently, he was the DEA Headquarters staff coordinator for the Office of Foreign Operations for the Middle East-Europe-Afghanistan-India. Prior to that, he served as the country attaché in India and Myanmar providing foreign advisory support for counter-narcotic enforcement. He also spent ten years in Pakistan as a special advisor to the US Embassy on various law enforcement issues. Michael is a graduate of the United States Ranger Training Battalion and has a master's degree in Interdisciplinary Technology and Management from the University of Eastern Michigan. Contact him at michael.brown@rigaku.com

NEWS



Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement

The purpose of this guide is to help law enforcement agency leaders and strategic communications advisors develop the necessary knowledge and skill to create strategic communications plans to help build and maintain community trust. This guide is a revision and expansion of the *Strategic Communications Practices Toolkit* published by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Major Cities Chiefs Association in 2012. It expands upon the tenets of best practice communications planning to provide law enforcement executives guidance and assistance in the creation of four distinct communication planning tools: the strategic communications plan, the tactical communications plan, the crisis communications plan, and the interview plan. Templates and samples are included at the end of the toolkit to help with implementation.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/3kexbhtx> to download a copy of the guide.



Four Lessons of Caution Emerge from the Breonna Taylor Case

JON BECKER, ESQ.

To my surprise, I discovered that my previous understanding of this case, primarily shaped by news coverage, was largely inaccurate.

In preparation for recording Episode 18 of "The Debrief with Jon Becker" on the Breonna Taylor case, I dedicated myself to studying all available information about the incident. To begin my research, I found a valuable resource on the Louisville (KY) Metro Police Department's Web site: the Breonna Taylor Investigation page (<https://tinyurl.com/3wjz38a4>). This Web site contained a wealth of information and photos related to the case. I meticulously examined reports, complaints and news coverage. I scrutinized the pictures and videos of the scene, post-event interviews and the protests. Additionally, I engaged in extensive conversations with individuals directly involved in the events to gain their firsthand perspectives.

Many events I believed had occurred turned out to be false. Moreover, I came

to realize that the people involved and the unfolding events were strikingly similar to those I have encountered throughout my years of work. Rather than being the racist monsters portrayed in some narratives, these individuals were ordinary narcotics detectives who found themselves thrust into a highly publicized controversy which devastated the lives of everyone involved.

What initially appeared to be a routine search warrant in pursuit of documents; money; and, potentially, drugs related to Breonna Taylor's ex-boyfriend's case quickly spiraled into a tragedy of monumental proportions. Regardless of one's perspective on this case, it is indisputable that nobody emerged as a winner on March 13, 2020. Every person involved in the event suffered negative and permanent consequences. The execution of this seemingly "simple" warrant resulted in the

loss of Ms. Taylor's life, the near-fatal injury of Sgt. John Mattingly, criminal charges against several officers, the termination of careers, retirement of others, death threats against police officers, widespread protests, destructive riots, property damage, multimillion dollar settlements, and a significant catalyst for law enforcement reform. Regrettably, amidst the chaos, the valuable lessons from this "cautionary tale" became obscured by false narratives, accusations of racism and a fervent search for a scapegoat.

Throughout my research, four recurring issues demanded attention: agency transparency, dispelling false narratives, implementing effective knock and notice procedures, and employing dynamic tactics. These four issues highlight what could potentially be the most crucial lessons derived from the Breonna Taylor case.



The LMPD Public Integrity Unit has a Web page which provides extensive information concerning the Breonna Taylor investigation.

1. The Imperative of Agency Transparency

On March 13, 2020, when the Breonna Taylor case unfolded, it received minimal media attention due to President Trump's declaration of a national emergency for COVID-19 which prompted the country's shutdown and quarantine measures. Consequently, the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) managed to avoid immediate national scrutiny and chose to remain reticent about the case, possibly in an effort to prevent further escalation. However, this silence inadvertently fueled the narrative of a government cover-up and set the stage for subsequent events. Two months later, civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump took up the Taylor case and his prominence, coupled with his involvement in the Ahmaud Arbery case, resulted in near-daily media coverage. Employing a carefully selected version of the facts, he directed the spotlight on specific actions taken by the LMPD, potentially without providing proper context, to amplify pressure and prompt a settlement. Just ten weeks thereafter, the George Floyd case occurred, further amplifying the global narrative of unarmed black individuals being unjustly killed by the police.

Throughout this onslaught of attention, the LMPD released very little information about the case. In fact, some of the information they did release, such as the incident report, was blatantly inaccurate. This perpetuated the perception of a police cover-up and, a few days later, Louisville erupted in riots. While it is impossible to determine the precise impact immediate transparency might have had in diffusing the subsequent events, an age-old adage holds true: Bad news does not improve with time. This sentiment is particularly relevant in law enforcement. The government operates with the consent of the people and police officers are entrusted with special powers to infringe



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FOUR LESSONS OF CAUTION EMERGE FROM THE BREONNA TAYLOR CASE

Continued from page 37



The relatively short time span of approximately ten weeks between this case and the George Floyd case reinforced the belief that there was an attempt by the police to conceal the truth.

upon citizens' rights when necessary. Consequently, they are held to a high standard of conduct. When an incident arises which raises doubts about the legality of police actions, anything less than full transparency fosters perceptions of misconduct and cover-ups. While it can be argued that, regardless of their actions, police will face such accusations, that should not serve as a justification for arming critics by concealing or delaying crucial facts which ought to be disclosed. If anything, the adoption

of body-worn cameras has demonstrated that transparency works and can effectively diffuse attacks from critics. In the future, agencies confronted with similar circumstances should prioritize swift and transparent responses as best practices.

2. Challenging False Narratives Is of Utmost Importance

In addition to transparency, it is crucial for agencies to actively and assertively counter false narratives with factual information. The Breonna Taylor case stands as one of the most flagrant examples of selective facts and misleading narratives in recent memory. While the media narrative simplifies the event as "racist cops shooting an unarmed black woman in her home," the reality is far more complex. Not only were the initial reports of the incident inaccurate, but they were also widely disseminated, taking on a life of their own. Even today, many people still believe that the police executed a no-knock entry at the wrong address and shot Breonna while she was asleep in her bed after her boyfriend fired a warning shot. This misperception

partly stems from the case becoming a "cause célèbre" due to its close proximity to the George Floyd case. Despite the stark differences in facts, the two cases were quickly conflated into the same narrative that "white cops are senselessly killing unarmed black citizens." Moreover, influential figures such as Kamala Harris, Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, LeBron James, and others repeated inaccurate information (e.g., the warrant being served at the wrong house, Breonna being shot in her bed) to the national media, further cementing these false initial facts as the prevailing story.

However, even a cursory examination of the physical evidence dispels these conclusions. For instance, although the warrant had a no-knock endorsement, no one disputes that the police announced their presence by banging on the door before entering. It is evident that both Breonna and her boyfriend, Walker, heard the knocking, as they were in the hallway with a gun. Contrary to popular belief, Breonna was explicitly named in the warrant due to her relationship with the target, Jamarcus Glover. Furthermore, Breonna was not found in her bed; she was discovered in the hallway and Walker himself admitted to



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being in the hallway when the shooting occurred. Perhaps most crucially, the “warning shot” fired by Kenneth Walker was not a shot fired into the air, but a near-fatal shot which struck a police officer’s femoral artery, prompting the officers to return fire in self-defense.

The majority of these facts were known to the LMPD and city leadership from the outset. Yet, the city adopted a conciliatory approach, attempting to appease activists (and, at times, even supporting them) in an effort to prevent further unrest. Regrettably, this created the impression that the LMPD had made a mistake and bolstered the narrative that the officers’ actions were entirely unjustifiable. In hindsight, this was an incorrect course of action which serves as a cautionary tale for future incidents. If the city had actively challenged the false narratives and acknowledged the existing facts, it could have undermined some of the misconceptions earlier and potentially averted the subsequent condemnation.

3. **Effective Knock and Notice Procedures Are Crucial**

The requirement to provide a “knock and notice” during the execution of a search warrant is a constitutional mandate. Its purpose is to grant occupants of a location the opportunity to voluntarily open the door and submit to the search without the use of force. However, in the Breonna Taylor case, knock and notice was not legally obligatory. The LMPD possessed a valid search warrant with a “no-knock endorsement” which allowed them to enter without prior notice. Nevertheless, the LMPD chose to execute the warrant with a knock and notice approach because they believed Breonna Taylor was alone in the residence and their objective was limited to finding documents, money and, potentially, drugs.

Contrary to initial narratives, it is now evident that LMPD officers knocked on Breonna Taylor’s door for approximately 45 seconds before breaching it. This is not only supported by the officers’ testimonies, but also by the accounts of at least one witness and the actions of Kenneth Walker. However, the dispute lies in whether the officers adequately identified themselves as the police executing a search warrant. In essence, the effectiveness of the notice provided by the police and whether Walker and Taylor were aware that it was law enforcement at the door become crucial factors in this case. One narrative, pre-

sented by Benjamin Crump, suggests that Walker believed it was Breonna’s ex-boyfriend (Glover) at the door and felt his life was in danger. This is used to argue that Walker’s actions align with this belief. For instance, he fired a single round and retreated to the bedroom, leaving Taylor behind in the hallway. These actions do not align with someone intending to engage in a shootout with the police. If this narrative holds true, it could indicate a case of mistaken identity on Walker’s part which then compelled the LMPD officers to respond forcefully, ultimately leading to Taylor’s tragic death. While most witnesses at the

scene claim they never heard the police announce themselves, there is at least one witness who is not directly involved in the case stating otherwise.

This raises the question: Could a more effective knock and notice procedure have potentially prevented this tragedy? According to reports, LMPD did not have a marked patrol car stationed in front of the house, the officers were dressed in plain clothes despite wearing tactical armor and they did not use a loudspeaker to amplify their announcements. Many law enforcement agencies commonly place a marked unit with lights on in front of the target lo-

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FOUR LESSONS OF CAUTION EMERGE FROM THE BREONNA TAYLOR CASE

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To ensure the effectiveness of a knock and notice procedure, many law enforcement agencies position a visibly marked unit with lights in front of the intended location.

cation and combine it with a loud and clear announcement over a Public Address (PA) system to ensure that the knock and notice is effective. Some agencies even record their announcements from a different side of the house to ensure that everyone inside is aware that the police are present and executing a search warrant. While it is impossible to determine definitively if a loudspeaker or visual notifications would have made a difference in this particular case, it serves as a warning to other agencies to ensure that their announcements are heard by everyone involved in future incidents. Implementing such measures not only minimizes the risk of occupants claiming they never heard the announcement, but also prevents the potential misuse of self-defense claims to justify violent actions.

4. **Reevaluating Dynamic Tactics for Evidence Gathering**

Much attention has been given to the LMPD's intention to employ dynamic entry tactics during the execution of the warrant in the Breonna Taylor case. Although the shooting occurred immediately after breaching the door, dynamic entry was part of their plan. Dynamic tactics are designed to be swift and startling, aiming to provide officers with the element of surprise and place suspects at a tactical disadvantage, increasing the chances of surrender and protecting officers from potential threats. While this may hold true in situations like hostage rescues where speed, unexpected entry and diversionary tactics are critical, the use of dynamic tactics for search warrants has raised concerns.

In recent years, the utilization of dynamic tactics for search warrants has faced criticism for potentially heightening

the dangers faced by both officers and occupants. Critics argue that these tactics compress decision-making timelines and increase the likelihood of errors. They point to numerous examples of unarmed occupants being shot by police and officers being shot by occupants who mistakenly believed they were being targeted by criminals. These errors have led to scrutiny of dynamic tactics not only from civil rights advocates but also from law enforcement organizations themselves.

In the Spring 2022 issue of *The Tactical Edge*, the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) took a firm stance against the use of no-knock warrants and dynamic tactics in cases where the preservation of evidence is the primary objective. The NTOA emphasized that evidence falls lowest on the hierarchy of safety priorities—below the well-being of hostages/victims, innocent bystanders, public safety personnel, and suspects. The association argued, “No-knock search warrants, though well intended, no longer align with tactical science, risk mitigation practices, and liability conscious decision-making.” While this statement was influenced by the Breonna Taylor case, it is worth noting that many agencies had already abandoned dynamic tactics for search warrants in favor of a “contain and call-out” approach, where the location is surrounded and all occupants are verbally summoned to exit the premises before entry is made, long before this incident occurred.

It is impossible to determine with certainty whether using a contain and call-out approach at Breonna Taylor's apartment would have altered the outcome. However, cases like this raise significant doubts about the effectiveness and appropriateness of dynamic tactics for search warrants. Law enforcement agencies may be wise to carefully consider alternative approaches before employing such tactics, taking into account the potential risks and consequences involved.

The Bottom Line

In conclusion, when I took on the task of covering the Breonna Taylor case for *The Debrief*, I understood the sensitive nature of the issue and the need for careful handling. It is undeniable that strong opinions exist surrounding this

case and, unfortunately, some of those opinions are not rooted in the actual evidence. However, the undeniable reality remains that a young woman lost her life at the hands of the police, an officer's life was nearly lost, and countless lives were adversely affected during a search warrant for documents which warranted a Critical Incident Review.

To say that my expectations differed from what I discovered would be an understatement. This was a tragic event that impacted everyone involved. There were questionable actions taken by the police both before and after the incident, ranging from potential misconduct to potential illegality. These actions are now the subject of federal criminal charges which will unfold in the coming months and have already resulted in a conviction.

Surprisingly, the aspect I anticipated to be the most contentious – the shooting of Breonna Taylor – proved to be relatively straightforward to explain. Simply put, Breonna Taylor became an unintended victim caught in the crossfire as the police returned fire at her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, who had just shot a police officer while standing next to her. This explanation, however, does not in any way excuse the tragic loss of Breonna Taylor's life. It was an utterly devastating event.

It is all too easy in cases like this to retreat to our political corners, shouting at each other, as it allows us to avoid engaging in difficult discussions and avoiding the discomfort of self-reflection. Yet, in doing so, we fail to learn the vital lessons from the events of March 13, 2020, and risk repeating similar tragedies in the future. As the old adage goes, if we do not learn from history, we are destined to repeat it. Such a repetition would be yet another tragedy which we must strive to prevent.

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JAMES L. MCCLINTON, PH.D.

Is this the new kids meal?... A routine traffic stop in Picayune, Mississippi, led to a surprising discovery for a local police officer. Officers had stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation. During the traffic stop, the passenger hid a handgun inside of a folded quesadilla in a Taco Bell® bag. Officers then carried out a search of the vehicle and found a distribution amount of methamphetamine, liquid heroin and drug paraphernalia. The passenger was taken into custody and charged with numerous narcotics and firearms charges. (*Try the new fully loaded quesadilla!*)

This should be a tactic taught at every police academy... A Stafford County deputy traded a 7-Eleven Slurpee® for information which helped resolve a case involving packages which were stolen from the porches of several Virginia homes. Video from one of the residents showed a juvenile suspect wearing a hood and distinctive shoes. The deputy then stopped at a nearby playground where he was able to speak with children who helped identify two suspects – after the promise of a Slurpee. The deputy located the suspects, both juveniles, at their home. Both confessed and led the deputy to the stolen items. The deputy delivered the Slurpees and some candy for the other children on the playground. Police say the case was handled informally without any charges. (*A \$10,000 reward offered for tips which led to an arrest? Not in this neighborhood...*)

Now, he's a candidate for the Witless Protection Program... A man in Redwood City, California, was observed scrambling over two fences and then climbing through a second floor door. So, what's unusual about that? The fact that the building he entered was the Maple Street Correctional Center. Yes, you read correctly – he was breaking INTO the jail. When officers found the man, he was relaxing in a lobby area inside the building usually reserved for inmates. He explained to jail officials that he was fleeing a man with a gun. He was found to be in possession of stolen credit cards and appeared to be under the influence of meth and alcohol. He was arrested and charged with misdemeanor breaking and entering. (*Hey, there's always room for one more!*)

I'd hate to be behind them at the Coinstar® machine... Philadelphia police are looking for a group of six suspects who are responsible for breaking into a tractor-trailer and stealing \$200,000 worth of dimes. The dime-laden tractor-trailer was parked in a

REAL STORIES OF GENUINE ABSURDITY



A Canadian man recently opened “The Drugs Store,” a mobile shop, in Vancouver. The man, who sold heroin, meth, cocaine, and ecstasy, was arrested for drug trafficking less than 24 hours after launching the business. He said he wanted to give people a safe supply of drugs which have been tested to ensure they didn't contain fentanyl. Police said they started gathering evidence “after the suspect started selling cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, and heroin out of the mobile trailer.” The “store” had bright yellow sandwich boards featuring a price list for all the drugs which ranged from \$10 for a point (one tenth of a gram) of meth to \$250 for 2.5 grams of crack. (*Yes, but are these products gluten-free?*)

Walmart parking lot with about \$750,000 worth of dimes packed inside. When officers first arrived at the scene, dimes were found scattered from the Walmart parking lot to a nearby road. The truck driver picked up the dimes from the Philadelphia Mint on Wednesday, but then went home to get some sleep before a long drive to Florida. The truck driver parked the big rig in the Walmart parking lot and, when he came back the next morning, he found the trailer door was open. “They were trying to cross-load the dimes into other things. There are dimes all over the parking lot.” The investigation is ongoing. (*Everyone in Philly knows that you can't leave change in your parked car!*)

Game over!... A major league drug dealer, who had set up his headquarters in Novi, Michigan, ran an organization which distributed fentanyl, heroin and cocaine across the US, as well as a large-scale money laundering operation. So, what was his downfall? The man had shipped heroin to a customer in a Sony PlayStation® box. When the recipient of the package was busted by the police, an enterprising officer decided to scan the UPC code on the box and, sure enough, he discovered that the drug dealer had registered the PlayStation. Police traced it to his stash house where the game was set up and in operation when they raided the place. (*The warranty period will likely end before his jail term does.*)

“Eh, what's up, Doc?”... A mall security guard in Pennsylvania got dragged by a fleeing pickup as he tried to apprehend

the thief of a giant foam carrot. Police say that the suspect ran after stealing the carrot from the Easter display at the Clearview Mall. Pennsylvania State Police troopers responded to the mall after the security guard stated that he had chased the suspect into the parking lot. When the security guard tried to open the door of the suspects' truck, he was dragged for about a quarter of a mile at speeds of up to 35 mph. Police eventually tracked down the stolen item at a home in Chicora, Pennsylvania. Officials say that two males, aged 20 and 18, confessed to taking the carrot. (*The security guard cared too much and the perpetrators didn't carrot all.*)

He should have offered to give the deputy Boardwalk or Park Place to look the other way... During a traffic stop in Chisago County, Minnesota, a driver surprised law enforcement by presenting the officer with a “Get Out of Jail Free” card from the board game Monopoly. The Chisago County Sheriff's Office posted on social media about the unusual encounter a deputy had on a Friday night. “Last night, a deputy did a traffic stop and the driver handed him this card, along with his driver's license,” the sheriff's office said. “Unfortunately, the state of Minnesota does not recognize this as a valid document.” The sheriff's office did not say why the driver was pulled over or whether or not he was given a citation, but did say that he got “points for the effort and humor.” (*I wonder if he'll try to pay the ticket with Monopoly money!*) **P&SN**

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