

P&SN

**Police
and
Security
News**

Serving Law Enforcement & Homeland Security

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023
VOLUME 39 ISSUE 5

Social Media Misconduct and the First Amendment

**Key Steps to
MANAGING A
CYBERCRIME
SCENE**

**MODERN
TRAFFIC SAFETY
AND
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**SELECTING A HOLSTER
FOR CONCEALED CARRY**

**The Bad Guy with
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A circular inset image showing two police officers in uniform standing on a bridge, talking to a man in a dark hoodie who has his hands behind his back. A white pickup truck 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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2023 Law Enforcement Fatalities Report Reveals Overall Reduction in Line-of-Duty Deaths

NEWS

The number of law enforcement professionals nationwide who have died in the line of duty in the first half of 2023 decreased a dramatic 66% compared to the same period last year, according to preliminary data provided by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), the leading authority on officer fatalities.

While much of the decrease is driven by substantial reductions in COVID-19 related deaths, line of duty deaths are down across the board. As reported in their official "2023 Mid-Year Law Enforcement Officers Fatalities Report," the NLEOMF data shows that 52 federal, state, county, municipal, military, and campus officers have died in the line of duty in the first half of 2023, representing a 66% decrease compared to the 153 officers who died in the same time period in 2022.

"There is no good news in reporting the death of even a single police officer," said National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund Interim CEO Bill Alexander, "yet, based on this preliminary data, we are cautiously optimistic that conditions may be improving for our law enforcement professionals who willingly put themselves at risk to serve and protect."

Firearms-related Fatalities

Twenty-five officers were shot and killed during the first six months of the year, compared to 33 during the same period in 2022, a 24% decrease year over year. Firearms fatalities are the leading category

of law enforcement deaths so far in 2023.

Of the 25 firearms fatalities, six were handling domestic disturbance calls; five were investigating suspicious persons or circumstances; four were killed during traffic enforcement; three were investigating disturbance calls; two were attempting to make an arrest; two were responding to robbery/burglary in-progress calls; one was killed during a tactical encounter; one was serving a felony warrant; and one was ambushed.

Traffic-related Fatalities

Eleven officers were killed in traffic-related incidents during the first half of 2023, compared to 30 over the same period last year, a 63% decrease.

Two of the 11 officers were struck and killed deploying Tire Deflation Devices (TDD). Both officers were from the same law enforcement agency, killed in separate incidents. These struck-by fatalities represent a decrease of 82%, from 11 in 2022 to two in 2023.

Of the 11 traffic-related deaths, five were automobile crashes; three were single vehicle crashes; one officer was killed in a motorcycle crash; and two were struck-by fatalities.

Other Causes and Fatalities

The "other" category in this report contains a variety of health-related deaths and other line-of-duty fatalities. Sixteen officers are represented in the other category. In the first half of 2023, only two officers have been reported as having succumbed to complications from COVID-19, compared to 72 such

officers in the same time period in 2022. Fourteen additional officers died of other causes during the first half of 2023, compared to 18 similar fatalities last year during this same period.

Of the 16 "other" causes-related deaths, eight were fatal medical events; two were due to aircraft crashes; two officers fell to their death; two were related to COVID-19; one officer died assisting in a fire incident; and one officer died by drowning.

States with the Largest Number of Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities

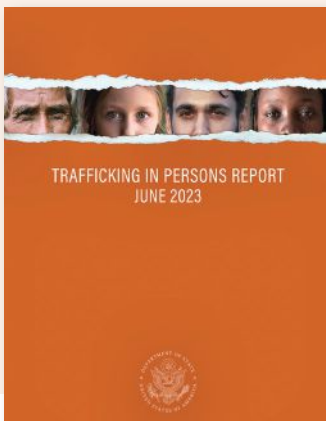
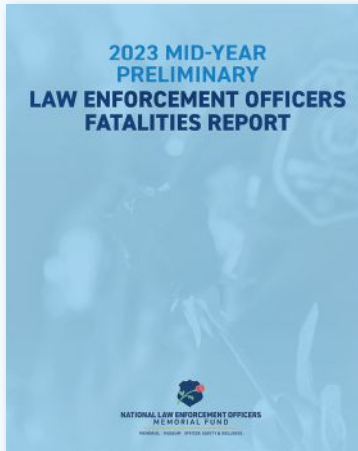
Louisiana has experienced the largest number of law enforcement officer fatalities of all US states so far in 2023, with six line-of-duty deaths. Wisconsin and Pennsylvania had the second highest number with four officer deaths each. California, Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, and Oklahoma had the third highest number with three officer deaths each. Illinois, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee had the fourth highest number with two officer deaths each. Twenty-six states; Washington, DC; the US Territories; and Tribal Nations have not lost an officer so far in 2023.

Additional Demographics

There were 47 male officers and five female officers killed in the line of duty during the period. The average age of the fallen officers is 40, with an average of 12 years of service. On average, officers left behind two children.

The statistics released in the mid-year report are based on preliminary data compiled by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund and may not represent a final or complete list of individual officers who will be added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in 2024.

For a complete copy of the report, go to <https://tinyurl.com/m5sm6ct5>



2023 Trafficking in Persons Report

Published by the United States Department of State, this report offers a thorough summary of the global situation regarding human trafficking, as well as the strategies employed to strengthen the response and cooperation. This year's report features a special section, "Survivor Insights: Perspectives from Those with Lived Experience of Human Trafficking." Survivors of human trafficking share their stories of overcoming cultures of victimization and their journeys to success.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/44febrxj> to read the full report.

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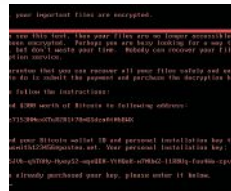
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Carl Mazzanti, eMazzanti Technologies

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Photo by Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

ON THE COVER

Despite having a strong organizational culture and active participation in the community, it's possible that a small percentage of officers may persist in engaging in inappropriate social media communication. Is it possible to take disciplinary action against these officers for their alleged misconduct, or is their speech protected under the First Amendment?



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RAMESH NYBERG

For the last several days, our sisters and brothers in blue have joined with various rescue task forces in Maui in the grim task of recovering human remains in the wake of the devastating wildfires and hurricane there. Some of those people will be found drowned and many more burned beyond recognition. From the last estimate I read, some 800 people are still missing. This will be a grueling; exhausting; and, ultimately, heart-wrenching task.

When you consider that we willingly launch ourselves into those operations, and that we just as willingly subject ourselves daily to extreme physical danger and verbal abuse for comparatively low pay, it does beg the question, “Why?” doesn’t it? I remember when I started applying to police departments in early 1979, all I could think about was the excitement; the thrill of being out there and enforcing the law; and being “the man.” People look up to us (yes, even today, many people still do). They envy our position and they envision us as their protectors and saviors. That’s a big responsibility – and a fairly sizable ego boost as well.

Running parallel to that aspect of law enforcement, though, is an important component which I never consciously thought of until much later in my career. I suppose the first time it became apparent was after Hurricane Andrew hit South Florida and shredded a good portion of southern Miami-Dade County, including my own neighborhood. We went on “alpha-bravo” in the aftermath of the storm – two 12 hour shifts and all sworn personnel had no days off. Many roads were blocked with fallen trees and debris. There was no electricity for much of the county for a good month (my power didn’t come back on for three and a half weeks). The water table was contaminated and there were scalpers coming in and selling water for five dollars a gallon – and people were lined up to buy it. It was a bizarre, crazy time. Amazingly, we had only 37 deaths attributed to the storm. Unlike most hurricanes, it was a dry, fast-moving storm. The damage which was done was due to sustained winds of 150 plus miles per hour. We spent a great deal of time



“Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.”

– Albert Einstein

helping citizens get to shelters; working to clear our own homes so that we could get cars out of driveways; catching looters; and, basically, trying to make the community livable again. It was exhausting work, but I also remember this great feeling inside every day when I went home to the whine of my generator. I was doing what we’ve heard so many times it had become schmaltsy: I was helping people. I think sometimes police work gets so busy and so intense that we don’t have time to reflect on that simple concept. We got into this line of work because something deep inside of us wants a different paycheck – the one which says you made life better for another human being.

The next time that really hit home was in May of 1996, after the crash of ValuJet flight 592 in the Everglades. After hazardous materials were inadvertently placed in the baggage compartment of the plane and ignited seven minutes after take-off, the plane went down in flames and plunged into four feet of mucky swamp water, killing all 111 aboard. We were sent out initially for a rescue/recovery effort, but in the first ten minutes of arriving in the debris field, we knew there was no rescuing to be done. The next three weeks were spent in airboats, methodically picking up the remains of the victims, most of whom had been traveling for Mother’s Day between Miami and Atlanta. We worked with fire and rescue to create a “forward base camp” on a narrow, dirt levee road. It took us about 45 minutes to drive out to the staging area, then a 20 minute ride on a boat which ferried us out to the base camp which was outfitted with

air-conditioned tents where we rested between relays on the airboats. After the first two days, the telltale scent of decomposition began to rise from the saw grass. While luggage and clothing bobbed in the water around us, we fished the remains out of the water and into bags which all went into a large body bag. We brought the body bags back to the base camp where they were transported to the medical examiner’s office for the long process of identification. It was extremely hot, tiring, nasty work.

And, who were we “helping,” after all? They were all dead.

The answer to that question came one afternoon about a week into the operation. A large bus came lumbering slowly down the levee road and we were told that these were the crash victims’ next of kin who wanted to come and see the area for themselves. We halted the relay process as they arrived. We lined up on the roadway and saluted them. They returned the salutes. Some of them cheered, waved and blew us kisses. As you may imagine, there was not a dry eye anywhere at Forward Base Camp 592 that afternoon. Just writing this now, 27 years later, makes me tear up.

A representative from the families on that bus placed a large flower wreath in the water and we passed it each time we went out on a relay. We *did* make a difference. Our work assured those family members that every effort was being made to recover their loved ones so they could give them a proper goodbye, rather than leave them to deteriorate in a lonely, forgotten corner of the Everglades. Those

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...AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Continued from page 6

people remembered us – and we remembered them.

That feeling never goes away. Five years ago, Hurricane Michael slammed into the Florida panhandle, destroying all of coastal Panama City and leaving 74 people dead. It was one of the worst hurricanes in history. My wife was puzzled when I told her I wished I could volunteer, go up there and help with the recovery effort.

"You're sixty years old," she reminded me. "I'm sure they have plenty of people up there working on it."

She was right, but the urge to be a part of something like that never goes away. It is still with me today. Decomposed bodies? I've seen and handled hundreds of them. Let's go to work.

Reading this, you might be reflecting on a recovery effort your agency was involved in. You might be one of those involved in the immense search and recovery effort in Maui and, if so, I pray for your physical safety, as well as your emotional well-being. You'll never forget

the horrors which confronted you during that effort. Don't ever forget, however, the difference you make for someone and, mostly likely, that will be someone you'll never meet.

But, that's what it's all about, isn't it? We pinned on that badge because – whether we realized it or not at that moment – we wanted to live a life for others, not just ourselves. **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 written a book, The Ten Must-Haves to Be a Great Detective, which is 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



AXIS Body Worn Live

Axis Communications recently launched **AXIS Body Worn Live** which delivers live data streaming in the form of video, audio and metadata from Axis body-worn cameras.

Wearers can activate the data stream simultaneously with recording. The operator can be notified in his/her management system to view GPS location data and follow along in real-time in the cloud-based application. Some of the key features include 24 hour data retention; end-to-end encryption; and data gap retrieval.

AXIS Body Worn Live works independently of the end users' video or evidence management system. The data stream can be viewed on computers or mobile devices, and can be streamed to one or more viewers. Data is accessible for 24 hours and buffering ensures that no data is lost, even if transmission temporarily drops out.

axis.com/bodyworn

Axon's New Body 4 Camera

Axon has recently introduced its next generation body-worn camera, the **Axon Body 4**. A number of important upgrades include:

- Bi-directional communications between officers and their support teams, enabling multiple viewers who have access to the live stream to communicate in real time with the camera wearer. A new "Watch Me" button empowers officers to signal for additional support, with location and critical alerts displayed on Axon Respond.
- The **Axon Body 4** also offers the option to connect an additional Point Of View (POV) camera module. This camera can attach to an officer's head or shoulder, used handheld, or affixed to the brim of a hat or sunglasses to allow for alternative perspectives which more closely mirror the officer's own POV.
- Additionally, sharper images, improved visibility, a larger field of view, and better camera capabilities enable the wearer to capture more of every moment.

axon.com



BODY-WORN AND IN-CAR VIDEO SYSTEMS

Intinsic Body-worn Camera and Evidence on Cloud®

Wrap Technologies, Inc. has recently announced the acquisition of Intinsic, a digital evidence management and body-worn camera provider.

Central to Intinsic is the **X2 Intinsic body-worn camera**. Its capabilities include capturing high-resolution, 1090p30 real-time video; photo grabs for still images without disruption; and the ability to record audio-only evidence as needed.

A central component of this solution is Intinsic's Evidence on Cloud platform which streamlines evidence management without necessitating additional staff, technology investments or integration services. Evidence on Cloud comes with unlimited storage and seamlessly and securely integrates with existing technologies, including CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch). By consolidating various forms of digital evidence into a user-friendly Windows®-based electronic case file, Wrap Technologies' Intinsic solutions foster efficient and secure evidence management.

wrap.com/intinsic



New In-Car Video System License Plate Recognition Module

Safe Fleet in-car video systems with ALPR functionality provides important live alerts and seamless license plate recognition as part of their normal operational workflow. Safe Fleet's in-car video system and ALPR module, **FOCUS H2 with ALPR**, interfaces with back-end application hotlists for real-time vehicle and license plate comparisons. If a match is made, officers are visually and audibly alerted for seamless and responsive law enforcement action.

Live alerts, mission adjustability and operational data gathering occurs without affecting in-car video system performance. This new system features ease of use and the inherent intelligence which comes from an integrated system – one hardware platform for in-car video, audio and analytics. One dedicated, internal ALPR camera delivers simpler system installation and deployment, and lower cost of maintenance.

The ALPR back-end system runs completely in the cloud, providing all the data security inherent with cloud technology: protection from theft, leakage and deletion.

safefleet.net

Sensor Activates Body-worn Camera

The **Sentinel Metal Sensor**, designed only for Sentinel Camera Systems' PROTECTOR II Body-worn Camera, wirelessly activates an officer's body camera when he/she is unable to do it manually. The **Metal Sensor** pairs to a body-worn camera and attaches to a holster. When the sensor detects that the weapon was unholstered, it automatically activates the body-worn camera. It operates using a 65mAh battery and functions from about -4° to 130°.

sentinelcamerasystems.com



Protecting Body-worn Camera Evidence

The importance of body-worn camera video being completely trusted as authentic is essential and establishing this from the point of capture is key.

To achieve this, Axis body-worn cameras include **Axis Edge Vault**, a security hardware component which protects the Axis device ID.

The inclusion of the **Edge Vault** hardware component in Axis body-worn cameras enables signed video to be added to the latest Axis firmware. Signed video adds a cryptographic checksum into each video frame which is then signed by a unique key in **Axis Edge Vault**. This allows video to be traced back to the Axis camera from where it originated and it's possible to verify that the footage hasn't been tampered with since it left the camera.



Furthermore, reducing or completely removing the need for human intervention in the transfer of video minimizes the risk of video being altered, either deliberately or by innocent mistake.

axis.com/bodyworn

New Body-worn Camera with the Power of AI

Kustom Signals has recently released the **Argus Body Worn Camera** which offers advanced features and capabilities which are powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI).



The **Argus BWC** will respond automatically to key phrases or detect events happening in real time, and will begin recording once it hears common first responder phrases, their rapid movements or a firearm discharge.

The **Argus BWC** is built with IP 67 and MIL-STD 810G construction, and is also equipped with a 12 hour battery which is hot-swappable. It also features 4G LTE connectivity for live streaming and real-time event alerts while in the field.

Also new is the **Argus Data Vault (ADV)**, an evidence management system. **ADV** makes it easy for users to classify and share evidence and features a one-touch facial video redaction powered by AI. Administrators will be able to monitor the location of all **Argus** devices in the field, as well as live stream footage from those cameras.

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LEGAL UPDATE

Larry E. Holtz, Esq.

True threats of violence are “outside the bounds of First Amendment protection and punishable as crimes.” *Counterman v. Colorado*, 600 US ____ (2023). Historically, “true threats” of violence have been an unprotected category of communications. See *Virginia v. Black*, 538 US 343, 359, 123 S.Ct. 1536 (2003).

The “true” in that term distinguishes what is at issue from jests, “hyperbole” or other statements which, when taken in context, do not convey a real possibility that violence will follow (say, “I am going to kill you for showing up late”). ... True threats are “serious expression[s]” conveying that a speaker means to “commit an act of unlawful violence.”

In *Counterman*, the United States Supreme Court addressed the question whether the First Amendment addition-



True Threats of Violence

ally requires proof that the defendant had some subjective understanding of the threatening nature of his statements. The Court held that “it does, but that a mental state of recklessness is sufficient. The State must show that the defendant consciously disregarded a substantial risk that his communications would be viewed as threatening violence. The State need not prove any more demanding form of subjective intent to threaten another.”

From 2014 to 2016, Billy Counterman sent hundreds of Facebook messages to C. W., a local singer and musician.

The two had never met and C. W. never responded. In fact, she repeatedly blocked Counterman. But, each time, he created a new Facebook account and resumed his contacts. Some of his messages were utterly prosaic (“Good morning

Sensor Activates Body-Worn Camera

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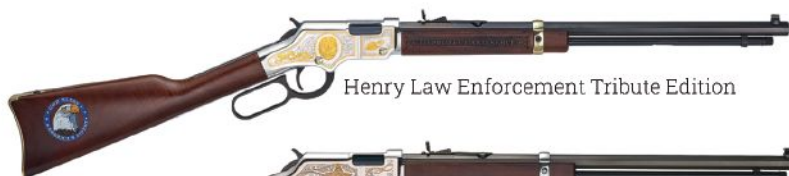
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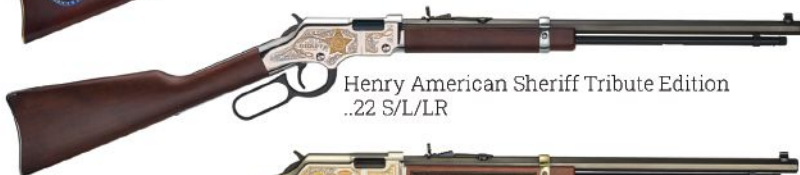
The gunmaker is proud to announce donations totaling \$200,000 to some of the nation's most impactful law enforcement support organizations including the Fraternal Order of Police, National Sheriff's Association, the American Association of State Troopers, the First Responders Children's Foundation, and Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.).

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sweetheart”; “I am going to the store would you like anything?”) – except that they were coming from a total stranger. ... Others suggested that Counterman might be surveilling C. W. He asked “[w]as that you in the white Jeep?”; referenced “[a] fine display with your partner”; and noted “a couple [of] physical sightings.” ... And, most critically, a number expressed anger at C. W. and envisaged harm befalling her: “F-k off permanently.” ... “Staying in cyber life is going to kill you.” ... “You’re not being good for human relations. Die.”

The messages put C. W. in fear; she believed that Counterman was threatening her life; was very fearful that he was following her; and was afraid she would get hurt. She had trouble sleeping; suffered from severe anxiety; she stopped walking alone; and canceled some of her performances, though doing so caused her financial harm.

Ultimately, C. W. contacted the authorities and Colorado charged Counterman under a statute making it unlawful to repeatedly “make [] any form of communi-

cation with another person” in “a manner that would cause a reasonable person to suffer serious emotional distress and does cause that person ... to suffer serious emotional distress.” *Colo. Rev. Stat. §18-3-602(1)(c)*. Counterman moved to dismiss the charge on First Amendment grounds, arguing that his messages were not “true threats” and, therefore, could not form the basis of a criminal prosecution.

In this appeal, the first dispute was whether the First Amendment demands that the State in a true-threats case prove that the defendant was aware in some way of the threatening nature of his communications. Colorado argued that there is no such requirement. *The United States Supreme Court disagreed*, holding that “the State must prove in true-threats cases that the defendant had some understanding of his statements’ threatening character.”

The second issue focused on “what precise *mens rea* standard suffices for the First Amendment purpose at issue. ... [The Court held] that a recklessness standard is enough.” Said the Court, “Given that a subjective standard here shields speech not independently entitled to protection – and indeed posing real dangers

– we do not require that the State prove the defendant had any more specific intent to threaten the victim.”

In this case, Counterman was prosecuted in accordance with an objective standard. “The State had to show only that a reasonable person would understand his statements as threats. It did not have to show any awareness on his part that the statements could be understood that way. For the reasons stated, that is a violation of the First Amendment.” Accordingly, the Court remanded the case for further proceedings. **P&SN**

Larry E. Holtz has served as a Detective Sergeant with the Atlantic City, New Jersey, Police Department; a Deputy Attorney General for the state of New Jersey, and an Assistant County Prosecutor. Presently, Mr. Holtz is the Managing Editor of Blue360° Media, the largest US provider of legal information which is solely focused on serving law enforcement.

Mr. Holtz is a certified police trainer and teaches on a regular basis. He is a member of the bar in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia and is admitted to practice before the federal bar in the District of New Jersey and the Third Circuit.



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PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT



DESANTIS GUNHIDE®

DeSantis Gunhide has introduced **four new holster fits for the Springfield Echelon™** – with or without red dot sights. One of them is the new #195 Veiled Partner™ which is an OWB precision molded KYDEX® holster. The exacting curvature allows for maximum concealment and it fits like a second skin. It can easily be configured for both height and cant using 1½" or 1¾" loop openings. Plus, it has adjustable tension and is optics compatible. This new holster is available in both right- and left-hand variants.

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The new **545 MRD** incorporates a low-profile Optics Mounting System™ and ships with two magazines, allowing for either 15 or ten rounds of .45 ACP ammunition.

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The Sightmark **Mini Shot M-Spec M2 Solar** features a 3 MOA red dot reticle for rapid target acquisition and automatic brightness adjustment for a crisp reticle and field of view in varying light conditions. A top-mounted solar panel, combined with CR1620 batteries, delivers up to 20,000 hours of battery life while the fully enclosed design and IP67 waterproof rating ensure years of reliability.

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Springfield Armory has just introduced the **Echelon™** 9mm striker-fired duty pistol with a revolutionary Central Operating Group (COG) at its core. This modular COG, a self-contained stainless steel chassis, easily transitions between grip modules. It fits into any **Echelon** grip module, providing a customized firearm. The pistol includes a standard medium grip module and three interchangeable backstraps, with separate small and large grip modules available. All controls are ambidextrous.

The COG-based trigger enhances performance, with critical components machined from polished tool steel for a smooth take-up, defined wall, crisp break, and quick reset. The **Echelon** surpasses SAAMI drop test standards and boasts an extra safety layer through a unique secondary sear design in the COG.



The new **Echelon** boasts the Variable Interface System (VIS), utilizing self-locking pins to create an adaptable optics mounting system. These pins, torqued to specification, prevent lateral movement on the optic's interior mounting surface, maintaining consistent point of aim/point of impact. They fit various optics footprints, offering a direct-mount fit between the slide and optic.

Buyers can choose between U-Dot™ tritium/luminescent or traditional three-dot tritium sights. The pistol's accuracy is supported by a hammer-forged 4.5" barrel, with a 5.28" hammer-forged threaded barrel option.

The **Echelon's** ergonomic slide features four engagement surfaces, including a trench cut for natural press checks, a flared rear for grip, and forward and rear serrations for a firm hold from any angle.

The **Echelon** incorporates a robust newly developed magazine with a scratch- and wear-resistant coating. The package includes two magazines, offering 17+1 capacity in flush fit and 20+1 with the extended base pad.

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Springfield Armory has announced the launch of a new **17 round magazine** for the Hellcat® Pro family of 9mm pistols.

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While the Hellcat Pro was launched with a flush-fitting magazine which holds an impressive 15 rounds of 9mm, this new extended **17 round magazine** enhances the handgun's already impressive performance. The result is a full 17+1 capacity with a minimally increased overall height.

The new Hellcat Pro **17 round magazine** is offered with either black or Desert FDE extended base pads which conform to the contours of the Hellcat Pro's grip frame and feature the same Adaptive Grip Texture as the pistol. The result is a seamlessly integrated extended magazine which enhances both ergonomics and ammunition capacity.

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Tufloc introduces the **Modubox®** series for secure firearm storage. These lockers and lockboxes utilize modular design with various sizes and shapes which can be interconnected. Locker modules have a standard size of 15.25" width, 18" depth, and heights from 12" to 60". Lockbox modules offer one, two, four, or eight compartments, with 7" or 14" heights, and 14" width and depth. Custom sizes can also be special ordered. These modules can stand alone, be desk-mounted or integrated into windows/walls. Crafted from 12-gauge steel, they feature padded interiors, Medeco® key cylinders and adaptable keying for safety in public settings.

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How to Avert the Severe Consequences of RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

CARL MAZZANTI,
EMAZZANTI TECHNOLOGIES

Public safety authorities have been grappling with a surge in criminal activity while contending with limited resources. Now, they are confronting an additional challenge: sophisticated ransomware attacks.

These malicious schemes initiate when hackers infiltrate and seize control of an agency's computer system. Subsequently, they threaten to either permanently block access to files or expose sensitive data unless a ransom is paid. The frequency of ransomware attacks has been steadily rising. However, agencies which team up with qualified external IT support can lower the risk of falling prey to such attacks.

A Prime Target for Hackers

As per publicly available reports, thousands of attacks are registered each week. Among these, a significant number are specifically targeted at law enforcement agencies and public safety answering points. In the first half of 2023 alone, notable breaches included an incident involving a county police department. Here, an employee apparently opened a personal E-mail on an official device, inadvertently introducing malware which paralyzed criminal investigative files and disrupted routine administrative functions. Other incidents featured a massive ransomware assault on a city hall, resulting in the exposure of internal police department files, including sensitive information

such as social security numbers, police assignments and legal settlements.

Hence, it's unsurprising that surveys indicate only about 20% of law enforcement professionals express "extreme confidence" in their departments' cybersecurity measures. This sentiment is reinforced by the fact that fewer than a third of agencies have a Cyber Incident Response Plan in place, despite the potential of ransomware to compromise critical information and disrupt vital public services.

David Kondrup, President of All Business Management, LLC, and an IACP Life Member with a rich law enforcement background, underscores the gravity of the situation. When vital services are disrupted due to hacking, citizens are left without essential resources, causing disorder. He points out that the primary mission of the police is to prevent crime and disorder, but ransomware creates a sense of chaos when it incapacitates crucial services.

Beyond the risks to citizens' safety and financial stability, the reputation of the jurisdiction is also at stake. City, county and municipal functions are compromised – computer aided dispatch, predictive policing, fingerprinting, and communication between

resources are all hindered. Recovery becomes a prolonged and expensive endeavor, with taxpayers ultimately bearing the costs.

Taking a Proactive Stance

With regards to ransomware and cyberattacks, Kondrup advocates for a proactive approach, emphasizing prediction, detection and prevention rather than a reactive mindset. Responding to ransomware incidents is inadequate, as the damage is already done. Prevention is crucial for upholding public trust and approval in law enforcement agencies and governments.

Combatting ransomware requires a systematic, consistent approach which is continuously reviewed and updated. Creating a strong defense against digital threats involves multiple layers of action. It necessitates agencywide commitment, ongoing efforts and 24/7 management. For instance, solely relying on antivirus software for digital endpoint protection is insufficient.

A robust plan encompasses multifactor authentication, thorough file backup solutions, incident response planning, stringent password policies, secure domain name system practices, cyber hygiene, and security awareness. Ran-

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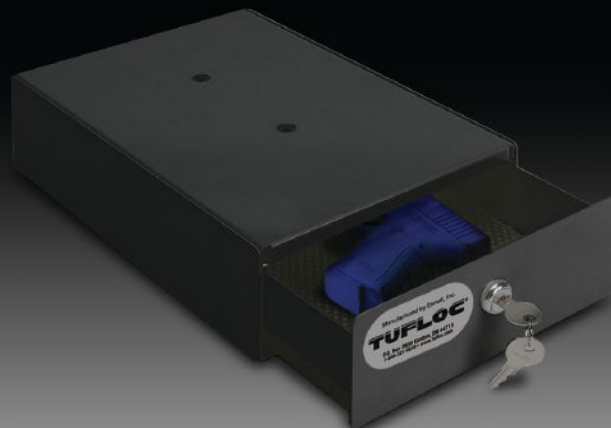
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LAW ENFORCEMENT & MILITARY

HOW TO AVERT THE SEVERE CONSEQUENCES OF RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

Continued from page 18

somware attacks often start with reconnaissance, leading to malware delivery, encryption and data blocking or public exposure. Even highly sophisticated threat actors leave traces which can signal an impending or ongoing attack. Hence, ongoing Security Incident Event Monitoring (SIEM) and a round-the-clock Security Operations Center (SOC) play pivotal roles in defense.

SIEM acts as a cybersecurity layer which gathers and tracks data, signaling potential threats for faster detection and response. Coupled with a well structured SOC, it ensures real-time automated monitoring alongside expert human analysis. Trained security engineers evaluate alerts, provide incident response guidance, and take proactive steps for threat mitigation. An effective SOC offers managed detection and response, safeguarding against ransomware and other threats.

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Web Site Provides Cybersecurity Resources from Across the Federal Government

In 2021, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) launched **StopRansomware.gov**, a collaborative Web site designed to combat ransomware threats. This central hub consolidates resources from various federal agencies, providing guidance, alerts and updates to individuals, businesses and organizations. Previously, finding essential information required navigating multiple sites, leading to potential information gaps. **StopRansomware.gov** mitigates this issue by offering a unified platform which includes reporting instructions, alerts and insights from all participating agencies, such as CISA, FBI and NIST.

Ransomware, a growing national security concern, demands cooperation among government, private sector and communities. The site also fosters collaboration and raises awareness. In 2020, over \$350 million in ransom was paid, marking a 300% increase from the previous year. To counter this, **StopRansomware.gov** helps to bolster network protection, aiding both simple steps and advanced IT measures. The site encourages individuals and organizations to enhance their cybersecurity by visiting **StopRansomware.gov**

Reducing Vulnerabilities

To shrink the attack surface, law enforcement agencies must proactively identify and address security-related issues. This includes comprehensive cyber risk assessments; robust endpoint security protection; strict password policies; timely software patch updates; and automated tasks such as backups, E-mail filtering and threat detection/response. Geo-blocking access to Web sites can also thwart nation-state hackers from infiltrating agency systems.

Security awareness training is a crucial aspect of a well-rounded cybersecurity program. By engaging employees with simulated attacks and behavior altering assignments, agencies can reduce risky IT practices which lead to security breaches. Furthermore, agencies may conduct penetration tests to simulate cyberattacks, identifying system weaknesses just as hackers would.

A holistic approach accounts for the human factor, delivering actionable training and tracking progress. Effective security awareness training minimizes employee behavior which poses security risks. By adhering to agency policies and best practices, personnel are better equipped to identify potential malware behaviors and report security threats.

The value of law enforcement agency data is on the rise, paralleled by the proliferation of ransomware and threats. By adopting sound security practices, learning initiatives and other protective measures, agencies can diminish their appeal to hackers and reduce the likelihood of falling victim to digital criminals. **P&SN**

Carl Mazzanti is President of eMazzanti Technologies in Hoboken, NJ, which provides IT consulting services for businesses ranging from home offices to multinational corporations, municipalities and police departments.



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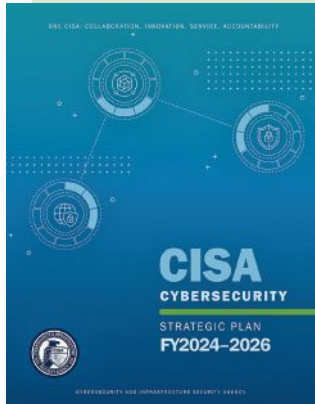
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NEWS

Cybersecurity Strategic Plan

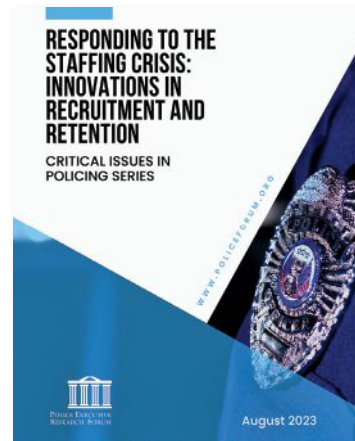


The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released its Cybersecurity Strategic Plan which describes how the nation will execute its cybersecurity mission over the next three years. The plan emphasizes the need for collaboration, innovation and accountability and highlights the importance of a whole government and whole nation approach to cybersecurity. The plan also highlights the need to expand and modernize cybersecurity capabilities and services and mentions initiatives such

as information sharing, the use of commercial tools and the importance of building a diverse cybersecurity workforce.

The full plan can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/mr92sf4a>

Responding to the Staffing Crisis – Innovations in Recruitment and Retention



Published by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), this report outlines the urgent staffing crisis which many law enforcement agencies across the country are experiencing. When PERF began examining this issue in 2018, a clear and worrying trend had already emerged in police recruitment and retention. That trend continued and the challenges increased over

the tumultuous 2020-2022 period, as the findings from PERF member questionnaires show:

- Officer retirements and resignations have increased. Sixty-five percent of agencies reported an increase in retirements between 2020 and 2022, and 66 percent reported an increase in resignations.
- Applications for open officer positions have decreased. Sixty-nine percent of agencies saw a drop in the number of applications for full-time officer positions between 2020 and 2022.
- Officer staffing levels are dropping. Overall, officer staffing levels fell by 4.8 percent between January 2020 and January 2023.

A copy of the full report can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/ym7zrwkn>

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SROs Play a Critical Role in Combatting Human Trafficking

Published by the Office for Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), this article discusses how young people may be particularly vulnerable to human trafficking simply because they are young and may be less equipped to make informed and sound decisions. This is why School Resource Officers (SROs) are in a unique position to recognize and respond to potential victims. As an SRO, you may be able to notice signs that something is wrong in a student's life during your daily job duties.

The full article can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/bdfauk6k>



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Law Enforcement Social Media Misconduct and the First Amendment

The prevalence of social media scandals involving law enforcement is on the rise and appears to be widespread.

JAMES "JEB" BROWN, ESQ.; JOHN G. PETERS, JR., PH.D.; & RICK MUIR, PH.D.

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Instances have occurred in Antioch, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Torrance, CA; Wichita, KS; London, in the UK; and in many other locations. It's evident that these incidents are not confined to specific geographic locations. Regrettably, each subsequent scandal appears to be more severe than its predecessor.

Social media scandals usually involve officers texting or posting offensive language or memes over social media. Examples include posts which are racist or sexist in nature. These occurrences often signal an underlying issue within the organizational culture of the agency. In departments which prioritize officer accountability, such incidents are less prone to happen. Strong organizational culture generally finds offensive speech is not tolerated by fellow officers and those who engage in it are investigated and disciplined when confirmed.

In contrast, texting misconduct flour-

ishes where there is a lack of accountability and/or institutional control by command staff. While training, policies and discipline can address the symptoms, it is critical that the culture of the organization be addressed to fix the "cause" of the problem. Bear in mind that the top administrator and command staff create organizational culture.

After analyzing several social media scandals, it has been suggested that an "us vs. them" mentality develops among the involved officers and select groups. This mentality is damaging to any law enforcement agency because it shows implicit or actual bias toward particular members of the community which must be addressed. One evidence-based approach for addressing this is the development of training which recognizes and emphasizes the value of all communities and their residents (e.g., disabled, LGBTQ+, people of color).

Community Outreach

Engaging in police-community outreach, where officers interact with members of the community, can play a pivotal role in dismantling barriers, fostering mutual appreciation and promoting better understanding among all individuals involved. In fostering these relationships, administrators, officers and community members serve as a three-way conduit, creating understanding and reducing the chances of an "us vs. them" mentality from developing within a department and/or the community. The appropriate way to build these relationships can be explored and discussed, but a one-size-fits-all approach will not work because each community is different. Rather, departments should meet with community members to determine the best approach for developing partnerships with officers.

Officer Rights and Administrative Discipline

Even with sound agency culture and community involvement, there may be one or more officers who continue to engage in improper social media speech. Can these officers be disciplined for their alleged misconduct? Is this speech protected by the First Amendment?

Legal Standard

The seminal case discussing public employee free speech is *Pickering v. Board of Education*, (1968) 391 US 563. Marvin Pickering, a public school teacher, wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper complaining about a recently defeated school board proposal to increase school taxes. The letter complained about the board's handling of past proposals and the allocation of funds favoring athletics over academics. The school board mem-



(Photo credit: eyecmore/Mike Mozart)

Posting memes which are racist or sexist in nature may damage an officer's reputation—both socially and professionally—and, in some jurisdictions, sharing such content could lead to legal consequences or employment termination.



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Establishing employee expectations and offering explicit directives for appropriate conduct can serve as a potent strategy for overseeing employee behavior on social media platforms.

bers believed the letter was “detrimental to the efficient operation and administration of the schools” and opted to fire Pickering. Pickering sued in the Circuit Court alleging his letter was speech protected under the First Amendment. The court ruled in favor of the school board and the Supreme Court of Illinois affirmed.

On further appeal, the United States Supreme Court considered whether Pickering’s speech was protected by the Constitution. In an 8-1 majority opinion, the Court held that the speech was protected by the First Amendment. In reaching this holding, the Court provided a two-part test to analyze whether public employee speech is protected. The first question is whether the employee spoke on a matter of public concern. If the matter is not of public concern, for example, the speech deals with the failure to obtain a promotion, then the speech is not protected by the Constitution. If the matter is of public concern – for instance, a budgetary shortfall which will impact public safety staffing – then the analysis advances to the second question. The next step in the analysis is the balancing of interests between the employee’s right to free speech against the employer’s interest in an efficient, disruptive-free workplace.

This two part “Pickering Test” was further clarified in *Connick v. Myers*, (1983), 461 US 138. In *Connick*, Sheila Meyers worked as an assistant district attorney for just over five years when her boss transferred her to a different section of the criminal court. Meyers strongly opposed this transfer and made her feelings known to several supervisors, including District Attorney Harry Connick. Before the official transfer took place, Meyers prepared a questionnaire asking for her coworkers’ views on the transfer policy, office morale and the level of confidence in supervisors. When Connick learned of the questionnaire, he immediately terminated Meyers. He said he fired her because she refused

to accept her transfer. He also said that distributing the questionnaire was insubordination. Meyers sued, alleging that her termination violated her First Amendment right to free speech. The District Court ruled in favor of Meyers and ordered her reinstatement, payment of back pay, damages, and attorney fees. The US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit affirmed. It was then appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS).

In a 5-4 decision, SCOTUS reversed, holding that speech of public employees is generally only protected when they speak on matters of public concern. Here, Meyers’ speech only dealt with personal and internal office issues which were not matters of public concern. The Supreme Court also held that the District Court had erred in placing too high of a burden on Connick to show that Meyers’ speech substantially interfered with the operation of the office. It is sufficient to show that the employer reasonably believed Meyers’ speech would interfere with office operations.

Finally, in *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, (2006), 547 US 410, SCOTUS analyzed whether the speech of a public employee which was “job-related” was also protected by the First Amendment. Here, Richard Ceballos, an employee of the Los Angeles District Attorney’s office, found that a sheriff misrepresented facts in a search warrant affidavit. Ceballos notified the attorneys prosecuting the case stemming from that arrest and all agreed that the affidavit was questionable, but the DA’s office refused to dismiss the case. Ceballos then told the defense he believed the affidavit contained false statements and defense counsel subpoenaed him to testify. Seeking damages in federal district court, Ceballos alleged that DAs in the office retaliated against him for his cooperation with the defense which he argued was protected by the First Amendment. The District Court ruled that the district attorneys were protected by qualified immunity, but the Ninth Circuit reversed and ruled for Ceballos, holding that qualified immunity was not available to the defendants because Ceballos had been engaged in speech which addressed matters of public concern and was thus protected by the First Amendment.

In a 5-4 decision, SCOTUS ruled that that speech by a public official is only protected if it is engaged in as a private citizen, not if it is expressed as part of the official’s public duties. Ceballos’s employers were justified in taking action against him based on his testimony and cooperation with the defense, therefore, because it happened as part of his official duties. “The

fact that his duties sometimes required him to speak or write,” Justice Kennedy wrote, “does not mean his supervisors were prohibited from evaluating his performance.”

These three cases are the guideposts in determining whether the speech of a public employee is protected by the First Amendment. If the speech is not protected, then employers may discipline employees who violate policy by engaging in speech that is discriminatory.

Social Media Policies

Setting expectations of employees and providing clear guidelines of acceptable behavior can be an effective tool in managing employee behavior on social media. However, employers should be aware of certain restrictions on such policies. For instance, union activity online may be protected speech under the Constitution, state law, local ordinance, or MOU provisions. Further, information from social media in some circumstances may be subject to Freedom of Information Act or Public Records Act requests. This information may also be discoverable in civil litigation in federal or state courts.

Employers need to have a social media policy which prohibits employees from using social media which violates agency policies and/or laws. The policy needs to be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with any changes in the law. It is also critical that training be provided on the policy and that violations of the policy are consistently enforced.

Policies should take guidance from the cases discussed above and should be tailored to individual departments and jurisdictions. One example of this type of policy is from the Riverside (CA) Police Department:

Public employees occupy a trusted position in the community, and



The Riverside (CA) Police Department includes clear guidelines within their policy manual concerning employee speech and social media.

thus, their statements have the potential to contravene the policies and performance of this department. Due to the nature of the work and influence associated with the law enforcement profession, it is necessary that employees of this department be subject to certain reasonable limitations on their speech and expression. To achieve its mission and efficiently provide service to the public, as an example, the Riverside (CA) Police Department will carefully balance the individual employee's rights against the Department's needs and interests when exercising a reasonable degree of control over its employees' speech and expression.

A copy of the Riverside PD policy manual (835 pages) can be downloaded here: Riverside Police Department Policy – <https://tinyurl.com/2p939d7n> The specific section covering Employee Speech, Expression and Social Networking (1030) can be found on page 779.

Summary


This particular problem is both serious and continues to escalate. These controversies undermine the confidence which the public has in law enforcement across the country. It is important for law enforcement managers and administrators to understand the legal boundaries of First Amendment protection of public employee speech. This is the first step to holding officers accountable when they engage in speech which violates policy. Second, clear policies, coupled with training and enforcement of those policies, are critical to correcting this type of behavior. Establishing and maintaining accountability enhances the public's trust in law enforcement and fosters responsibility within your department.

Ultimately, this problem reflects department cultures which seek minimal accountability. Fostering a culture of accountability and a culture which values and nurtures public trust is of utmost importance. Simply put, agencies which have a positive culture and accountability will not suffer these scandals because this misconduct simply will not be tolerated by command and supervisory staff. Developing and maintaining this positive culture is the best way to protect law enforcement agencies from becoming entangled in one of these scandals which can create negative community image, community member-officer estrangement, and can result in large jury verdicts. **P&SN**



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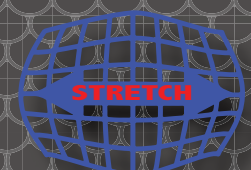


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James "Jeb" Brown, Esq., retired from Riverside County (CA) as Chief Assistant County Counsel and is now in private practice. He has represented law enforcement for over 30 years. Jeb serves as Assistant Executive Director of the Americans for Effective Law Enforcement, Inc. (AELE), a not-for-profit organization specializing in law enforcement and legal education.

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Dr. Rick Muir is Director of the Police Foundation, the UK's independent policing think tank. He has led the Foundation since 2015 and oversaw its work on the Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales. He was previously Associate Director at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), leading the Institute's research on public services, including policing and criminal justice. He has a D Phil in Politics from the University of Oxford. He is currently a Visiting Professor at Northumbria University and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

Selecting a Holster for Concealed Carry

MIKE BOYLE



No matter what your rank or assignment, just about all law enforcement officers have a need to discreetly carry a handgun.

Photo by Garrett Sitz on Unsplash

Clearly, investigative officers and agents would be ill-served to use a duty-style holster when wearing soft clothes while trying to conceal a handgun. Along similar lines, a great many officers choose to carry a firearm when off duty. In both of those situations, selecting a carry rig which keeps you under the radar is of great importance.

Today, there is a wide variety of holsters in different styles which are well-suited for concealed carry. While holsters made of leather are in wide use, other materials such as KYDEX® and Boltaron® have become very popular for the crafting of first-rate carry rigs. If you understand the criteria for selecting a proper holster, even a service-size pistol can be concealed when wearing plain-clothes.

An observation I have made over the years is that many individuals fret over the smallest detail when selecting a \$900 pistol for concealed carry, but settle for the first inexpensive holster which comes down the pike. Like many other commodities in life, you typically get what you pay for. Inferior holsters often raise concerns relative to safety and have poor concealment qualities. For many years, I have taught in an academy which trains plainclothes investigators and detectives and, very often, the holsters the recruits are issued are a very poor choice for their mission. This is

especially true for females as differences in body shape often require a different style of holster.

Qualities of a Good Concealment Holster

My dictionary defines the word conceal as “preventing something from being known or noticed.” If our goal is to blend in as best we can into polite society, effectively hiding the gun is a top priority. With that said, I make a distinction between a holster worn by a plainclothes officer wearing a windbreaker with “Police” stenciled on the back and a badge clipped to the belt and a true concealment rig. Under a heavy winter parka, almost any type of holster will make the cut. But, when our covering garment consists of a suit jacket or an untucked shirt, greater attention to detail is required.

Our next consideration is weapon security. With rare exception, most quality concealment holsters are cut for a specific brand and model handgun. The holster can have some sort of active locking device or be specifically molded to the shape of that particular firearm. Placing a pistol in a holster it wasn’t designed for is an invitation to disaster as any sort of violent movement can cause you to lose the gun.

Back when the Earth was flat and we all carried double-action revolvers, holsters which left the trigger exposed were very common. In the age of striker-fired



Traditional IWB holsters can effectively conceal a full-size pistol.

pistols with short trigger actions, that is a no go. Not only must the trigger and trigger guard be entirely covered, but the holster must be constructed in such a manner that sticks, twigs or even fingers can’t find their way inside and touch the trigger.

Your chosen holster must also provide ready access for a fumble-free draw. Can you achieve a firm and final shooting grip as soon as your hand hits the holster? If not, it’s time to move on as there is simply no time to adjust your grip on the draw stroke. If your holster is equipped with a retention device, release must be intuitive and not slow down the draw.

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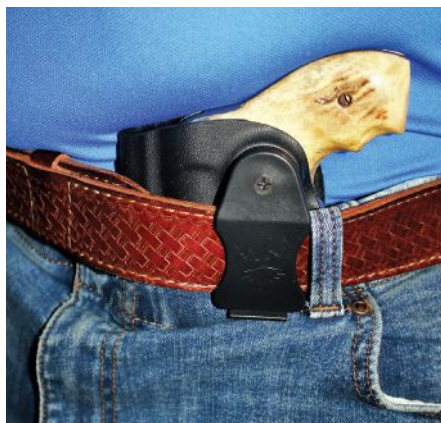
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SELECTING A HOLSTER FOR CONCEALED CARRY

Continued from page 28



Appendix IWB carry is very discreet and allows for fast access to the handgun.

clip-on IWB (Inside the WaistBand) holsters were very popular. Retention issues aside, one of my concerns is that, once you draw the gun, the holster collapses and a one-handed return is impossible. The harsh reality is that there are times when you have to reholster quickly and transition to another level of force or handcuff a subject. Many soft pan-

cake-style holsters often suffer from this defect and should also be avoided. The ability for the user to return the gun to the holster with one hand is critical.

The last element is user comfort. Quite frankly, if your concealment holster isn't comfortable, you need to find something else. Forty plus years of carrying a concealed firearm on my strong side hip have made me very particular about holsters. With rare exception, IWB holsters are out for me. Some officers have no issues at all with Appendix IWB (AIWB) carry and, while I can discreetly carry a small gun in this manner, a full-size service pistol is out of the question. We are all put together a little bit differently and that may very well dictate what sort of holster you can wear over the course of a long day.

Holster Construction

Any holster selected for a law enforcement application must be durable. For weapon security, it must maintain its form over the long haul and stand up to the hard knocks of police work. Inferior materials, poor stitching and compromised

security devices should not be utilized.

Leather holsters dominated the scene for years and, despite the increased use of synthetic materials, they still have much to offer. Most manufacturers use cowhide to craft their holsters and there are indeed some excellent concealment holsters available rendered from this classic material.

Holsters made of KYDEX were introduced about 30 years ago and currently command a huge part of the market. KYDEX is a thermoplastic acrylic polyvinyl material which is extremely hard and is resistant to water and solvents. Because it is thermoforming, it can be molded to just about any shape which makes it a good choice for holsters. Today, there are literally hundreds of firms, including major manufacturers and small cottage industry shops, turning out KYDEX holsters.

Boltaron is yet another thermoplastic material well-suited for holsters. Advantages of Boltaron include an even higher resistance to impact than KYDEX and it stands up very well to extreme cold and

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THE PHOTON HOLSTER FROM ALIEN GEAR



Alien Gear continues to be a true innovator in the design of holsters for concealed carry applications. Not content to follow in the footsteps of others, this Idaho-based firm has blazed their own path in a very competitive market. Best of all, Alien Gear turns out a very wide range of styles of holsters for just about all of the popular pistols which might be used for discreet carry and makes them available at a very reasonable price point.

New this year is the Alien Gear Photon, a design crafted from injection molded polymer which can be worn as either inside or outside the waistband. At the present time, it is available for popular small carry pistols from GLOCK®, SIG SAUER®, Smith & Wesson®, and Springfield Armory®, and I'm pretty confident that this list will grow larger in short order. Both light bearing and non-light bearing models are available. One of the dilemmas facing holster manufacturers is the fact the holsters must not only fit a specific gun, but also the light used. Placing your pistol – with or without a light – in a holster not specifically designed for it is

a dangerous practice which can compromise safety. With the light bearing models, the Photon is still cut for a particular gun; however, the holster will accommodate a variety of different weapon-mounted lights without compromising safety.

Being a wrong-handed user, I am happy to report that the Photon can be easily set up for either right- or left-handed operation. Very often, us southpaws cannot find a holster on the rack and we have to place a “special order”; however, the ambidextrous Photon resolves that issue. Both a paddle attachment for OWB carry or clips for IWB use are included in the package. Detailed instructions along with a provided hex key make exchanging the belt attachment an easy task.

Another nice touch is the fact that the Photon can be adjusted for cant and ride height. For OWB carry and traditional IWB carry, many users favor an FBI cant with the butt of the pistol angled forward and the muzzle to the rear. Personally, I prefer a vertical orientation of the holster or, when circumstances permit, a cant with the muzzle angled forward. The Photon allows me the ability to change holster angle to best suit my needs. Along similar lines, ride height on the belt for both IWB and OWB carry can be adjusted as well. By having this wide adjustment range, the Photon can be set up to fulfill a wide range of applications, worn with different types of clothing, and be equally suited for female and male agents/officers.

Many users who favor AIWB carry have come to favor a sidecar for the carrying of a spare magazine. Alien Gear offers a dedicated sidecar magazine attachment which can be easily mounted to the vacant

holes on the side of the Photon holster. This ensures that the extra magazine will be readily available and placed in the perfect spot for an efficient reload.

My sample Photon was cut for a Springfield Armory Hellcat® OSP™ and I was very eager to see how it all played out. I experimented with both inside and outside the waistband carry and the Photon does indeed deliver the goods. Although I am comfortable carrying a snub AIWB style, I prefer to wear a pistol behind my strong side hip in a more traditional IWB position. The fact that the end user can adjust ride height and angle to suit personal preference gives the Photon great versatility.

The light bearing version of the Photon will accommodate most of the small tactical illuminators made by Streamlight®, SureFire®, Viridian®, and others. My sample was matched up to a Streamlight TLR-7® Sub which proved to be the perfect companion. It is very important to recognize that the light bearing version of the Photon should only be used with the illuminator affixed to the pistol, as using it without, forfeits retention qualities. Once you insert your pistol with the light affixed, the exact degree of retention desired can be fine-tuned by adjusting the screws at the rear of the holster body.

Alien Gear has clearly hit one over the fence with the introduction of the Photon holster. A wide range of adjustments, ability for IWB or OWB carry, and the fact that it will harbor a wide variety of white lights place it squarely in the winner's circle. For further information on the Photon, check out aliengearholsters.com.



The Photon can be equipped with a sidecar for carrying a spare magazine.

SELECTING A HOLSTER FOR CONCEALED CARRY

Continued from page 30



Holsters with the muzzle angled forward and butt to the rear allow the user to draw very quickly.

chemicals and is highly abrasion-resistant. Companies using Boltaron to build holsters include Alien Gear Holsters and Safariland®.

Strong Side Belt Carry

While there are exceptions to every rule, strong side belt carry is best for most applications. This is especially true for uniformed officers who spend their working days wearing a Sam Browne duty rig and then switch off to an alternate handgun on their own time. Your firearm is in the same familiar location and draw mechanics are just about the same as the duty rig.

One quality often not considered when choosing the concealed carry handgun is the angle the holster secures the gun on the belt which is referred to as cant or rake. Most off-the-rack concealment holsters feature an

FBI cant where the butt of the pistol is angled forward and the muzzle to the rear. With an Outside the WaistBand (OWB) holster, it does indeed offer the best concealment qualities when worn under a light covering garment, but it comes at a price. Many users will find the draw stroke is awkward, particularly if the holster rides high on the belt. This can be especially problematic for female officers/agents who are best served by holsters specifically designed for women users.

Clearly, not everyone is handicapped with FBI cant holsters, but there are alternatives if that style does not suit your needs or physique. Straight drop or neutral cant holsters are a viable alternative. The pistol is carried vertically on the belt and, for many users, this makes for a more efficient draw stroke. Taking it one step further are holsters where the muzzle is forward and the butt is to the rear. When wearing this style of holster, I position my carry rig just forward of the strong side hip which makes for a very efficient draw stroke. On the downside, concealment can be just a little more challenging.

In addition to holster angle, you also need to consider how it rides on the belt. Lower riding holsters are the fastest to draw from, but may be inappropriate with business attire or most casual clothing. Holsters which ride high on the belt offer the best concealment qualities, but efficient weapon access can be problematic for some



Vertical shoulder holsters enable the user to carry a large handgun under a light covering garment.

users. Some manufacturers offer holsters where the end user can adjust both angle and ride height to best suit their needs.

Inside the Pants

Without question, carrying a firearm in an IWB holster strikes an ideal balance between weapon access and maintaining the lowest possible profile. Because the slide and/or barrel is hidden beneath the user's waistline, the casual observer will not be able spot the gun, providing of course that a proper covering garment is utilized.

Traditionally, IWB holsters were worn behind the strong side hip. Of late, AIWB holsters have become very popular. These holsters are worn for-



Cross draw holsters can be useful for officers/agents who spend a good part of the day in a seated position.

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ward of the hip, near body centerline. Both rapid access and the ability to retain your pistol in a violent, physical confrontation are superior to other modes of carry.

But, like all things in life, there is both an upside and a downside to IWB holsters. As long as the end user can wear such a rig in relative comfort, even a large full-size service pistol can be carried. With the right holster, I have been able to carry a full-size 1911 pistol in polite society and no one was any the wiser. The operative term, however, is comfort. For many users, worn body parts and physique may take the IWB option off the table.

Shoulder and Cross Draw Holsters

The most popular styles of shoulder holsters are vertical; the gun is carried straight up and horizontal with the butt forward and muzzle pointed to the rear. Although I don't consider shoulder holsters to be the best choice for most applications, they do fill some roles very well. They can be a good choice for officers/agents who spend a good part of the working day in a seated position or wearing certain types of clothing.

To my thinking, horizontal shoulder holsters are at their best with small- to medium-size handguns. For full-size pistols, a vertical shoulder holster is a better bet. A few of my associates wore large, service-size pistols in a vertical shoulder holster with their everyday suit and tie without putting up any red flags.

My concerns with shoulder holsters include weapon retention and drawing the firearm in extreme close quarters. With the gun worn on the support side, one has to reach across the body to draw and this could be problematic when the threat is inside your personal space.

Much like shoulder holsters, cross draw holsters can fill a useful niche. Again, should your mission require you to be in a seated position, such as a protective detail or on surveillance, a cross draw may be just the ticket. The key to success is moving the gun closer to body centerline as opposed to wearing it on the support side hip.



Ankle and pocket holsters are at their best for a backup, rather than a primary, handgun.

Less than Optimum

Throughout my career, I often used an ankle holster to carry my backup handgun. My rationale was that, if my primary gun goes down and I haven't been taken out of the fight, I may have been able to move to cover and access my final ring of safety.

When you consider that a great many armed confrontations unfold in close quarters, I feel that ankle holsters are a poor bet for a primary handgun. Quite frankly, even a world-class athlete cannot get down and draw fast enough to counter a threat in close quarters.

Pocket carry is yet another possibility. I will confess to carrying a snub revolver in this manner when visiting non-permissive environments where I can be legally armed, but want to stay under the radar. However, if there is an

alternate solution, I would explore that first.

Final Thoughts

For concealed carry, I utilize a pair of pistols and a snub revolver and have a few different holsters for each. Depending on the social setting, season, type of clothing worn, and what I expect to be doing, I select the holster which fits my needs. After many years of trial and error, I'm convinced there is no one holster which is going to make the cut for every conceivable situation.

Finding what works best for you may require a little bit of experimentation. But, if you find that holster doesn't hide your gun or proves to be uncomfortable, it's time to move on. A quality holster combined with a good belt will help keep you safe and go unnoticed as you go about your daily routine. **P&SN**

Captain Mike Boyle served with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Law Enforcement, and has been involved in firearms and use-of-force training for over 40 years. He has been a police academy director and rangemaster and remains active as an instructor providing basic, in-service and instructor level training. He is a member of ILEETA and NALEFIA. His book, Everything You Need to Know About Police Firearms Training, was recently published by Blue360 Media.

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There are endless debates – in magazines, on the Web, and in just about any discussion among gun people – about “stopping power.”

We are all legitimately concerned about it and many people have some pretty vigorous opinions about it. They cite gelatin studies, cadaver studies, animal studies, statistical analyses, and experience. In the end, of course, only actual experience counts, but the anecdotes which describe experience are as flawed a means to arrive at conclusions as any of the other methods. The reason is that no one has shot enough people in a controlled way with all of the thousands of variables controlled and normalized to arrive at a valid conclusion.

We have bullet weights, caliber, construction, materials, and velocities to consider in just the bullet itself. We have shot placement and the thousands of permutations that it and the damage it causes in the body takes. Of course, you have to also account for the differences in body type, composition, age, sex, health...and endlessly so on. Don't forget to also account for blood chemistry – adrenaline, drugs and the like. Then we have intermediate barriers like clothing to factor in. Do the math and the physical factors alone multiply out to an astronomical number of permutations. And, we haven't even considered the *unmeasurable* mental factors which vary by person: aggression, rage, attitude, willingness to fight, etc.

In short, it's impossible, from the physical evidence, to determine what constitutes “stopping power.”

And did I mention that no one seems to completely agree on just what “stopping power” means? Does the bad guy stop immediately? If so, can you put a time definition on “immediately”? One tenth of a second? Two tenths? And what do you mean by “stop”? He takes no more steps? Moves no further forward? Takes only one more step? What's a step, by the way? Also, how many bullets do you have to fire to achieve this result? And fire them in how much time?

Like I said, stopping power is impossible to define; impossible to agree on; and impossible to measure, both in theory and in practice.



There continues to be a lack of unanimous consensus regarding the precise definition of the term “stopping power.”

But, we all know that “stopping power” means something. It means, I think, to most of us that, if we shoot a bad guy, he becomes incapable of hurting us. “One shot stops” are desirable, but I think we all also know that handgun rounds are pretty anemic and that one shot stops will be the exception rather than the rule – no matter what caliber or round we pick.

The Magic Bullet Approach

Currently, there are two popular methods taught to achieve maximum stopping power from a handgun. The first is what I call the “magic bullet” approach. Following this method, we pick the biggest caliber gun which we can manage to control and we pick the “highest performance” round that we can to load into it. Adherents of this approach like big bore guns, preferably .45s. They pour over the latest studies containing the most arcane minutiae from non-reproducible and unauthenticated sources and draw hugely important dubious conclusions from it. If a certain round is somehow “rated” by some methodology to be two percent “more effective” than what they're now loading, they scour the Earth for caches of it.

Unfortunately, the “magic bullet” theory is more or less a waste of time because we all know as a matter of common knowledge that no handgun bullet is an effective



NRA

2022 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Deputy Mark Johns of the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office has been selected as the 2022 NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for demonstrating extraordinary valor in the line of duty while facing an armed suspect. Despite being critically wounded in a gunfire exchange, he continued to return fire, defending himself and fellow officers. Deputy Johns' actions that day are in line with the highest standards of law enforcement.

Last August, Deputy Mark Johns and other deputies of the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office were at a residence in their jurisdiction to serve a court order. Deputy Norton located the subject of the court order inside the front door, who then moved to the rear of the house, where Deputy Sergeant Swartz and Deputy Mark Johns were positioned.

While attempting to communicate with the subject through the backdoor, the suspect, without warning, began firing rifle rounds through the door, fatally striking Sergeant Swartz. The concealed gunman continued to move and fire, as Deputy Johns pulled Sergeant Swartz to a safer area to provide medical aid. Deputy Johns then relocated to a more defensible position to locate the suspect and inform other deputies where the suspect had moved to, simultaneously providing protection to Sergeant Swartz.

During this time, the shooter moved through the house and attempted to engage Deputy Norton, who was located at the front of the house. Next, the shooter exited the house and began to fire at Deputy Johns from another direction. During the gunfire exchange, Deputy Johns was struck and knocked down after a rifle round entered his thigh, damaging his femoral artery, sending shrapnel into his abdomen and winding up in his bladder. He was shot twice in total, both rounds hitting him in the upper groin area.

Deputy Johns continued to return fire as the gunman rushed back inside the home. The suspect suddenly exited the residence, jumped into a vehicle and hurried away while firing at the deputies and their vehicles. Oklahoma County deputies and Oklahoma City officers pursued until the suspect attempted to crash through the security gate at Tinker Air Force Base and was subsequently taken into custody.

Despite sustaining significant injuries during the incident, Deputy Mark Johns continued to return fire to protect Sergeant Swartz, Deputy Norton and himself. His actions are a credit to his department, the community he serves and in keeping with the highest standards of law enforcement.

The National Rifle Association of America honored Deputy Mark Johns for his bravery in the line of duty at the 2023 Annual Meetings and Exhibits in Indianapolis, Ind., during a special presentation at the NRA Board of Directors meeting.

Since 1993, NRA's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award has recognized exceptional acts of service by law enforcement officers. The NRA Law Enforcement Division administers the program. Additionally, Smith & Wesson, a longtime supplier of police firearms, supports the NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award by providing an engraved firearm to the recipient.

For more information about NRA's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award and its Law Enforcement Division, go to awards.nra.org/awards/nra-officer-of-the-year-award, call (703) 267-1632 or email le@nrahq.org.



Deputy Mark Johns

Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office,
Oklahoma

"Despite sustaining significant injuries during the incident, Deputy Mark Johns continued to return fire to protect Sergeant Swartz, Deputy Norton and himself. His actions are a credit to his department, the community he serves and in keeping with the highest standards of law enforcement."



Forms for nominating candidates for the NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award may be downloaded at <http://le.nra.org/documents/pdf/law/leoy.pdf>.

For more information about NRA's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award and its Law Enforcement Division, call (703) 267-1632 or send an e-mail to LE@nrahq.org.



Fundamentally, there are only three methods by which a bullet can halt an assailant.

stopper – they are *all* ineffectual! There are simply too many stories of people being shot by .45s to trust that picking the right bullet is the answer. The “magic bullet” theory is belief in magic, indeed.

If you want to stop someone right there right now, you need a rifle. Bullet considerations *do* make sense at small caliber rifle velocity and energy levels (such as a .223) because, at those levels, some rounds do function well and some rounds don't. But, once you get past a certain energy level, again, bullets really don't matter, because they all work. No one has debates over which .50 cal rifle round is a better man stopper than another.

The Shot Placement Approach

The alternate popular approach to stopping power is shot placement. Hit 'em in the head or the high upper chest, so the theory goes, and you have a real good chance of stopping your adversary...maybe. High chest shots, while usually hitting high-value anatomical targets, are certainly not sure stoppers. Ditto with head shots – the cranium is very thick and there are too many stories of bullets traversing the circumference of the skull under the skin to even trust head shot placement. The real problem with the shot placement theory, however, is that truly precise shots are all but impossible in the dynamic, chaotic seconds of a gunfight and everyone is often moving, making shot placement even more difficult. The shot placement theory seems to break down a bit in actual practice.

Note that I'm talking about responding to sudden, spontaneous attacks or, in any case, attacks your attacker initiates. Gunfights which are the result of something like entries by a SWAT team, in which the action is initiated and largely controlled by the good guys, do allow for precise shot placement in many cases.

So, What's the Answer?

Where does that leave us? Well, there are only three ways in which a bullet can stop an attacker: 1) It can destroy central nervous system function, but that requires very precise shot placement. 2) It can cause the blood system to depressurize, but that also requires either precise or lucky shot placement and, in any case, it happens slowly at best. 3) It can cause so much shock to the body that the body shuts down. How could a bullet cause a lot of shock to the body? It's actually pretty simple: Put a lot of bullets in a short amount of time into the bad guy. In practice, this translates to a multiple shot burst with hits anywhere on the torso. The good news is that you may get lucky with one or more of these shots and *also* cause some pressure loss.

Now, I'm not advocating that we spray and pray. I still believe in good, solid fundamentals and practicing center mass shot placement because we will perform worse under extreme stress in real-life situations. These conditions are often much more complicated and difficult than the static range drills which constitute most of what is practiced. An “A” performance on the range might give us “C” performance

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The Bad Guy with Body Armor Problem

The mass killer in a Buffalo supermarket was wearing a bullet-resistant vest. The store's security officer attempted to halt his progress and managed to strike the gunman with one of his shots. However, it proved ineffective in stopping the lethal spree due to the gunman's use of body armor. This raises the question of how an on- or off-duty officer can best deal with this situation. The issue is that, if their rounds are stopped by the bad guy's armor, then he can continue to kill until 1) the good guy figures this out; and, 2) goes to Plan B. So, we have two issues.

How do we figure out that the bad guy is wearing armor? I've written a lot in these pages about the fact that we shouldn't shoot any faster than we can assess what's going on in front of our muzzle. If a good guy is adhering to this tactic, then they should notice if, after a round or two to center mass, the bad guy hasn't dropped his gun or gone to the ground, this is a pretty good clue that body armor may be stopping the rounds. So, the answer here is to only shoot as fast as you can assess *and* to make sure you assess after each shot, both of which we should be training to do all of the time anyway. What's new here is to recognize the signs of body armor.



The solution could be called a "reverse Mozambique drill."

What is Plan B? The traditional answer is the Mozambique tactic (two to the body/one to the head) or transition to head shots if center of mass shots aren't working. I've never been a fan of this tactic. While the Mozambique drill has value on the range as a target and target-size transition drill, I've always thought it had little application in the real world for the vast majority.* The head is too small a target and, in the real world, it's moving around. It's an even smaller target at angles, smaller still at distance and, in an active killer situation, you will probably be shooting at a distance. Because these things by definition happen

in crowded spaces, if you miss the head, you are likely to strike an innocent person because a head shot will be aimed at head level...where a lot of other people's bodies will be, right behind the bad guy. That bullet's going to stop somewhere after all.

The second answer I hear is to simply shoot whatever piece of the bad guy you can get to, thus diminishing him (or her), and use that opportunity to get closer or to take the time for a neutralizing shot. This is a great strategy, but recognize that it requires running towards the shooter. You have to make that mental commitment before you consider anything else.

Now, hits anywhere can diminish the shooter and all hits are good. Hit him anywhere you can – given his exposure, the distance, your weapon, your skill, and your composure. Even hits on the vest will have some effect (taking a round on a vest feels like a hard punch). But, to the extent that you can manage to have some sort of aiming focus, I suggest that the pelvis is the place to aim. It's likely to be the largest exposed, unarmored piece of real estate; in other words, the pelvis likely becomes center of mass once you discount the armored chest.

Yes, many people dismiss pelvic shots as ineffective, but they also do have a record of success, especially in pairs or threes. It's going to be hard for someone to take two or three pelvic shots and remain standing. As an atypical example, LAPD officers aimed at the exposed *foot* of one of the bad guys who was behind cover in the infamous North Hollywood bank robbery shoot-out and was successful in diminishing him to the point where they could close and neutralize him. Compared to the head, the pelvis is much easier to hit at distance: It's bigger and doesn't move around as much. Also, if you miss a pelvis shot, it's probably *less* likely to kill an innocent person because of the more likely downward angle (misses still represent a very real danger, of course). If you are aggressively closing with the bad guy as you shoot, you may be able to make more precise shots if you wish, including the head.

The way to train for this might be a reverse Mozambique drill – let's call it the Buffalo Drill – two to the body / assess / two to the pelvis / assess. I'm suggesting that a controlled pair instead of a single shot before assessing would be perfectly justifiable in this kind of extreme situation.

** Of course, I do believe that it has real application for highly trained shooters who have also had a lot of experience in realistic simulations. We're talking in the realm of 50,000+ rounds per year coupled with serious force-on-force simulations. We're also probably talking rifles with optics.*

for real, but “C” is still passing! And I’m not advocating shooting so fast that we can’t assess what’s going on in front of our muzzle, as I’ve written many times before.

I’m just saying that we put as much hurt on the bad guy as possible until he stops trying to kill or maim us...at which point we have to stop immediately.

What I don’t like to see in training, though, is an emphasis on the “all but impossible to make in real life” head shots or an overemphasis on a too small group size. If your groups are the size of your fist, I’d suggest that you are shooting too slowly, with too much emphasis on seeing your sights. You are doing what I’ve best heard described as “intellectual shooting” which for sure you won’t be doing on the street. I’d suggest that you shoot faster or with more target focus until you achieve consistent six or eight inch groups at normal handgun defense distances. You still need to practice good marksmanship, though, because you may not have a full profile target available to you, or you may, in fact, have to make a distance shot. So, practice shooting at small targets and at a distance with your handgun, too – just

don’t make it your only practice.

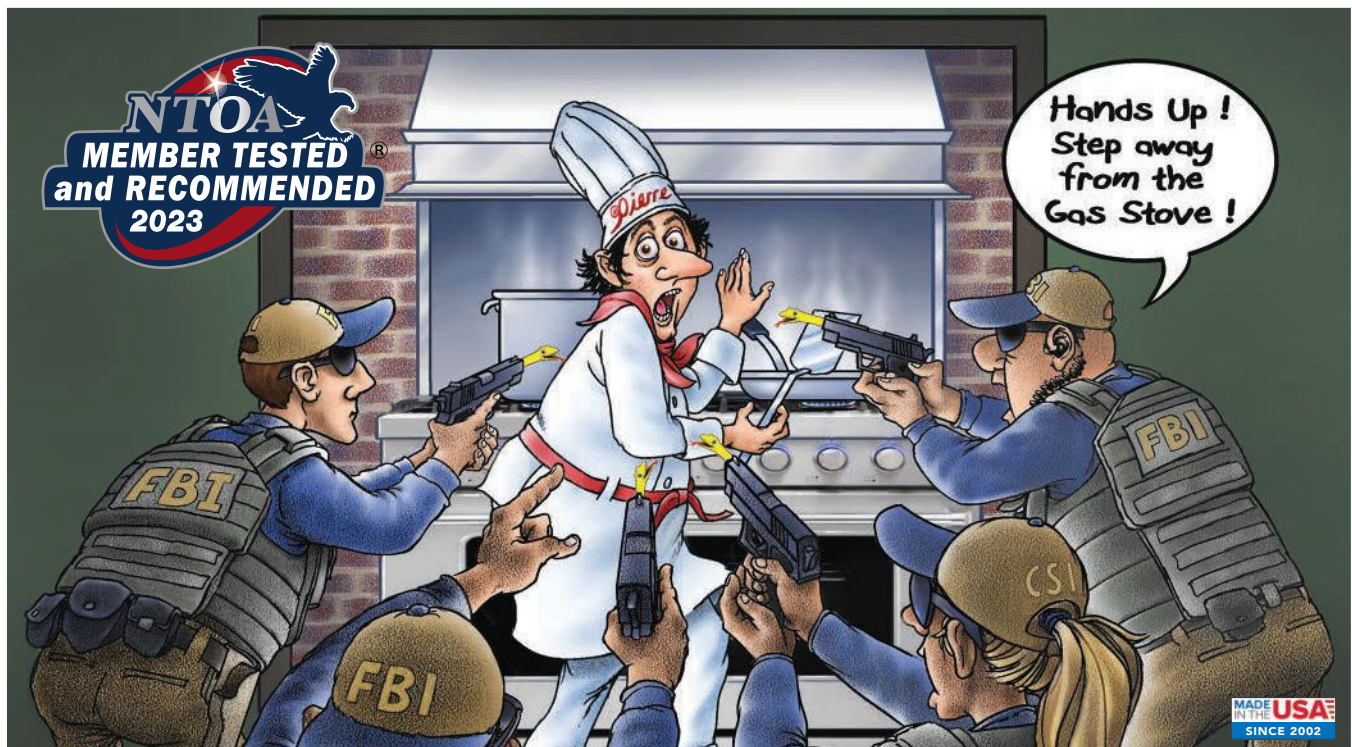
On the street, any bullet which hits anywhere on your assailant is a good hit. They all cause some shock and even extremity hits – the leg, arm, head, or foot – will cause both some shock and some incapacitation. And, any shot which hits will cause some sort of reaction – buying you a half a second or so to assess and maybe make a better shot, if need be. Of course, I’m not advocating that you aim for the extremities; you should still be aiming for center mass. But, on the street, it’s only misses which do us no good and, in fact, cause us harm because of the liability they represent.

So, do pick a high performance bullet to carry in your handgun. I’m not saying that hardball is as good as modern hollowpoint designs. Take advantage of the studies and shooting results out there. Use that information to pick one of the top four or five rounds you feel performs best under the conditions in which you will have to fight...and then forget about it. Don’t get your knickers all in a twist every time some new opinion surfaces. Re-check your logic and data every couple of years to take into account new shoot-

ing results and new designs and you’ll be making very efficient use of your time.

You can use the time you used to spend on the Web looking for that magic bullet to practice true survival shooting. If you can’t help but bear down on your front sight and getting anything more than an inch spread drives you crazy, then learn to shoot in a more street realistic way. If, on the other hand, you keep ’em all on the target – but also all over it – at five yards, then learn to make a head shot at 25 yards. That skill isn’t likely to be needed, but neither are you likely to win the lottery. But, someone does, every day. **P&SN**

Ralph Mroz was a police officer (part-time) in Massachusetts for 20 years, seven of which he was assigned to his county’s drug task force. He has taught at a number of national, regional and international law enforcement conferences. Ralph now has three books available on Amazon: Street Focused Handgun Training (Volumes 1, 2 and 3), as well as two republished books, Defensive Shooting for Real-Life Encounters and Tactical Defensive Training for Real-Life Encounters.



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THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE



COPS, CRIMES, CRASHES, AND CRUISERS



Welcome to the latest installment of "The Wheels of Justice," originating from the hot, hot Ozarks (I know, it's hot everywhere). Sit down, pour yourself a cool anything and take a break while you catch up on the latest in our world of the four Cs.

Crime and Crashes

We've talked before about the huge problem across the US of catalytic converter thefts. Despite numerous federal and local agency task forces making arrests of organized gangs, many of these thefts are more critical as they have resulted in serious injuries to the victims and even murders, including that of a brother officer.

In Houston, TX, an off-duty officer encountered three cretins stealing the converter off his POV in a parking lot and they exchanged gunfire. The officer was hit and later died at a hospital. In Oakland, a car owner was shot and killed during a theft and, in Dallas, a car owner standing on a third floor balcony was shot and killed after he yelled at thieves below stealing his converter. In fact, a simple Google search of (innocent) people shot by catalytic converter thieves in the 2022 calendar year revealed 38 victims which is likely an underestimation.

High clearance vehicles, such as SUVs, pickups and vans, are the favorite targets

since they are easier to crawl under and most thefts occur after dark when the cats are cooler. LE vehicles – like prisoner transport, SWAT and CSI vans, pick-ups, Tahoes, and Utilities – certainly are prime targets for criminals, particularly those parked overnight.

I worked a pawn shop detail when gold and silver prices were sky-high and shops buying both seemingly sprung up overnight all over the city. Simultaneous to this, we had a huge increase in residential burglaries and many folks lost their precious family heirlooms. But, the value of converters makes what those street corner entrepreneurs were paying for gold look like chump change. Converters require three precious metals in their construction: rhodium, palladium and platinum. For the purposes of a recent comparison, gold was selling at \$1,645 an ounce, while rhodium was selling for \$12,763 per ounce, palladium at \$2,135 per ounce and platinum was valued at \$1,028 an ounce. Plus, not all converters are created equal, as bigger engines generally require larger cats and

some high performance V8s even have two cats!

The replacement cost to a vehicle owner (without insurance) can really be a shock, with a price range of \$1000 to \$3700.

I always fondly reminisce about being lucky enough to have been a car owner in the 60s when all we had to worry about was someone stealing our hubcaps.

Distracted Driver Crashes

Another current worldwide phenomenon is fatal accidents caused by distracted drivers. It seems like the popular use of cell phones while driving has quadrupled these incidents. In fact, using cell phones (talking, texting, E-mails) is the number one cause of distracted driver fatality accidents in the US today. However, other factors, such as being distracted by someone or something (second), reaching for an object (third), using vehicle controls (fourth), adjusting the radio/CD/HVAC (fifth), and eating or drinking (sixth). Other driver actions such as applying makeup, daydreaming, sleeping, and smoking made the list.



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Several jurisdictions have aggressive distracted driver enforcement programs with hefty fines, particularly involving cell phones. Despite the best enforcement efforts, distracted driving accidents continue to be a chronic problem in America. In 2021, this careless behavior took the lives of 3,522 people according to NHTSA. This is such a serious problem that we now even track the percentages of fatal accidents caused by distracted drivers and list them by state.

The top ten states for distracted driver fatalities are led by New Mexico with the highest (40.75%); Hawaii ranks second (28.72%); Kansas is third (21.26%); Louisiana (19.5%); New Jersey (19.28%); Washington (16.75%); Illinois (16.36%); Kentucky (16.35%); Virginia (11.81%); and Idaho (10.66%). Male drivers are far more likely to die in accidents than female drivers, the NHTSA also reported.

While distracted drivers are responsible for a record number of traffic accident fatalities, we would be remiss not to mention other causes, such as drunk or drugged drivers, speeding or careless driving, faulty tires or equipment, and sleepy or medicated drivers.

However, fatal accidents caused by cell phone use can be mitigated somewhat. Of course, the simplest solution has been provided by the automakers – “hands-free” telephone technology which operates through the audio system is included on most late model vehicles. On later models (and police cars) not so equipped, the solution is readily available for less than 20 bucks. Aftermarket companies offer cell phone holders which mount on dashboards or ride in cup holders. While these still require activation (off/on) by a driver, they are certainly better than handheld.

Reducing the Risk of EV Fires

With the number of agencies either testing or purchasing EVs for LE duties, it is imperative that both fleet personnel and individual operators are aware of fire dangers inherent with lithium-ion batteries. It is well known that these batteries are affected by heat, age, usage, and external impacts like a collision. All of these conditions are common in police work and occur more frequently than in civilian use. EVs are 0.3% likely to ignite when compared to a 1.05% chance for ICE vehicles, the NTSB reported. The latest data from the NTSB ranked fires in hybrid, gas-powered and EVs, with hybrids being the most susceptible to fires and EVs the least.

Lithium-ion batteries are made up of thousands of cells, so fires rapidly spread between them. The EV fires burn at a higher temperature than gasoline fires and are

more likely to reignite. They don't need outside oxygen to burn which means they are harder to extinguish...water has no effect and the fire fumes are toxic.

Overcharging a battery can take it to an extreme which could lead to a battery being less stable and more susceptible to a fire. Degraded batteries can also pose a threat to officers assigned to EVs and hybrids and mechanics servicing them should be made aware of these hazards.

Recalls, Alerts and Other Bad Stuff

In every column, we provide recent recalls and alerts which can impact both your fleets and/or your officer's safety, presented by the make of the vehicle.

Ford® announced recalls of certain 2022-2023 F-150® Lightning® pickups because the rear lightbar might be inoperative due to microcracks in the lens which can leak, increasing the risk of an accident. Other recalls from Ford involve the 2020-2023 Escape® Hybrids and 2022-2023 compact Maverick® pickups due to oil and fuel vapors which could be released into engine compartments due to engine failures which could ignite.

If you utilize Ford Transit® vans for prisoner transports or CSI, over 31,000 2022-2023 units were recalled due to issues with the HVAC systems which could cause the controls to become inoperative, affecting both defogging and defrosting.

Ford has also now recalled 870,000 2021-2023 F-150 pickups for potential fire risks involving parking brakes mounted too close to single exhausts. This could cause the electric parking brake to activate unexpectedly, resulting in loss of control of the vehicle and increasing the risk of a crash.

Daimler Vans are popular for prisoner transport, CSI and SWAT and approximately 20,000 2021-2023 Sprinters have been recalled because their fuel pumps may shut down which can cause a sudden loss of power.

RAM® Trucks recalled certain 2014-2019 vehicles powered by the 3.0L diesel engine because the crankshaft position sensor wheel can delaminate, causing the engine to fail.

Knapheide supplies several pickup makes with Remote Control Circuit Boards which control optional WARN winches and they have been recalled because of corrosion. The recall involves 2023 Ford F-250®, F-350® and F-550; 2023 GM 2500 HD; 2023 GM 3500; and 2022 RAM 3500 equipped with optional WARN winches.

What recall list would be complete without Tesla? They are recalling certain 2021-2023 Model S and Model X vehicles because the front seat belts may not

be connected properly to the pretensioner anchors which can cause seat belts to detach, resulting in death or injury. Additionally, Tesla is recalling certain 2023 Model S, Model X and Model Y because the forward-facing camera may be misaligned, causing some of the active safety features (emergency braking, forward collision warning, lane assist) to be unavailable without alerting the driver.

EV News

It seems every article I write anymore concerns news about electric vehicles and today is no different as we'll bring you up-to-date on all the EV news, good and bad, and we'll list the latest departments adding EVs to their fleets or testing them. We also have breaking news about charging stations and we'll announce the newest electric cruiser coming at you.

New Purchases

NYC's electric fleet has now surpassed 4600 EVs, aiming for 5000 by the end of this year, as they march headlong towards an all-electric fleet. They now have 207 fast chargers operating across 12 city departments. The 50 KW fast chargers can charge a vehicle's battery from 20% to 80% in an hour or less. (The article failed to mention what percentage of the 4600 vehicles or 207 fast chargers were assigned to the NYC Police Department.)

The South Pasadena, CA, Police Department is the first California department to replace their entire fleet with Teslas. In partnership with Southern California Edison, they have leased ten Model Y and ten Model 3 vehicles for 60 months and they will be deployed (after upfitting) for a mix of duties, including patrol, K-9 and detectives.

Bellevue, NE, Police Department has unveiled its first electric patrol vehicle, a 2022 Mustang Mach-E which will be tested on road patrol for the indefinite future. The department has no plans to replace its current fleet of hybrid and ICE vehicles at this time.

Charging Stations

In a first ever collaboration, seven automakers have formed the North American Charging Standards to build at least 30,000 high-power charging stations using federal, state and private funds. The first stations are expected to open in the US in the summer of 2024 and, in Canada, at a later date.

The stations will be built in convenient locations, with canopies wherever possible, and amenities such as restrooms, food service and retail operations. They will be located in metropolitan areas and along major highways, including con-

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necting corridors and popular vacation routes.

The seven partners in this first ever exciting venture are: BMW, GM, Honda, Hyundai, KIA, Mercedes, Nissan, Stellantis, and Tesla. (No indication why the automotive giant, Toyota, has not joined this collaboration.)

According to the US Department of

Energy, as of July 2023, there are 32,000 publicly available fast chargers in the US being used by 2.3 million electric vehicles (at a ratio of 72 vehicles per charger) and it is estimated that 182,000 DC fast chargers will be needed to support 30-42 million EVs on the road by 2030, so the seven car makers have undertaken an ambitious task. **P&SN**

James Post is a retired veteran of 27 years of police service, as well as stints with the US Marshals Service, private security and as a fire chief. He is an avid police car collector and restorer. He lives in the picturesque Ozark hills of Arkansas and always appreciates reader's comments and suggestions. He can be reached at copcars@arkansas.net.



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40th Anniversary Celebrated

Assembled Products™ Corporation (APC) recently commemorated 40 years on August 30, 2023, at the Metroplex Event Center. Their journey began in 1983 with the creation of the first Mart Cart™ in an Arkansas garage. This pioneering mobility scooter, tailored for shopping, found its first home at Chester's Market in Connecticut, sparking a movement towards shopping independence for those with limited mobility. Thus, Assembled Products Corporation emerged, dedicated to "Products That Make Life Better" in Northwest Arkansas.

What originated as a solution for an elderly family member's shopping needs blossomed into four decades of innovation and manufacturing excellence. Erin Kiefer, APC's President and CEO, stated, "This 40 year milestone isn't just about products; it's a celebration of our journey, our employees' contributions, and the continuous development of products and services for our customers."

Assembled Products Corporation now comprises three distinct brands: Mart Cart pioneered electronic shopping carts; Spray Master™ Technologies introduced central pressure washer systems; and Jotto Desk™ equipped law enforcement patrol vehicles. Their united team, representing all three brands, is a family working under the Assembled Products Corporation banner.

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Safeguarding Night Vision for Enhanced Work Conditions and Safety

The convergence of scientific knowledge and engineering expertise takes center stage at SoundOff Signal, particularly in the realm of illuminating solutions aimed at preserving night vision for optimized performance during low-light situations. While the company is primarily recognized for its focus on safety through external vehicle signaling lights, the significance of internal vehicle lighting, both in terms of type and intensity, cannot be underestimated.

Adequate lighting within enclosed workspaces plays a pivotal role in facilitating adaptable vision, empowering individuals to carry out their tasks efficiently and respond promptly to emerging emergency scenarios.

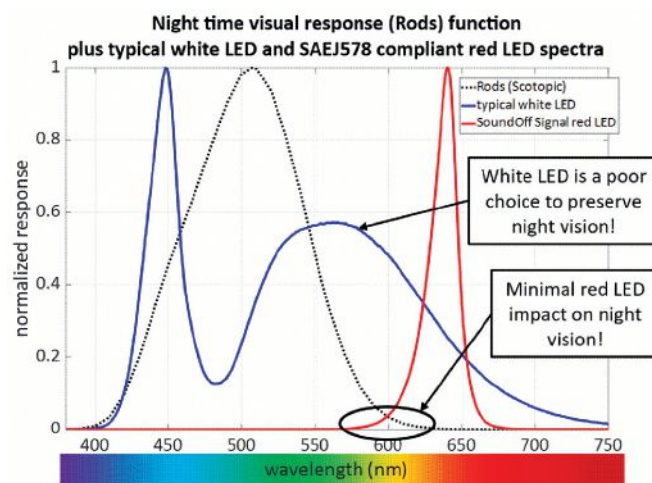
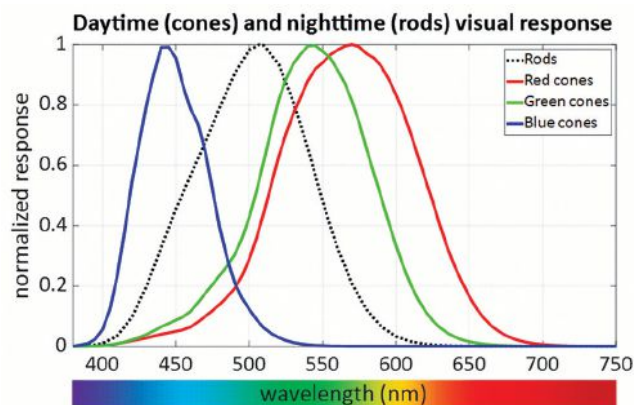
Doug Baker, Senior Vice President of Technology and Chief Innovation Officer at SoundOff Signal, unveils the science behind the company's in-vehicle lighting solutions for nighttime use, emphasizing the preservation of night vision, also referred to as scotopic vision. He simplifies the concept by explaining that "utilizing a low level of red light is the key to safeguarding night vision."

The human eye undergoes a gradual adjustment after being exposed to white or intense visible light. This adjustment can impede the ability to perceive objects and information when lighting conditions shift rapidly. However, exposure to minimal amounts of red light enables the eyes to swiftly adapt to dark conditions, facilitating the seamless operation of emergency personnel and civilians as they transition from well-lit workspaces to areas with reduced light. Scenarios like cockpit lighting in an aircraft or interior vehicle lighting in police cruisers demand the ability to perform tasks within the vehicle while quickly adapting to low-light external conditions.

To comprehend this science, Baker offers a brief anatomy lesson. He explains that our vision relies on both chromatic (color) and light/dark distinction sensors in our eyes, known as cones and rods. Despite coming from distinct optical sensors, our brains seamlessly integrate this information.

Human vision's color perception is achieved through a combination of different cones sensitive to red, green and blue. The visible light spectrum ranges from 400 to 700 nanometers (nm) wavelength (Figure 1) which is a small fraction of the broader electromagnetic spectrum. In daylight conditions, the brain prioritizes signals from cone sensors for high resolution color vision while disregarding signals from ultrasensitive rods. In low-light conditions, only signals from these ultrasensitive rods are processed, resulting in grayscale visual perception. This explains why nighttime vision allows us to perceive objects without much color differentiation.

Recognizing that rods are pivotal for night vision, the strategy becomes clear: preserving these sensors for when we require heightened vision in the dark without waiting for the eye's photochemical adaptation delay. Any sudden overstimulation of the rod sensor can temporarily diminish its responsiveness (low-light night vision). This is exacerbated by



the fact that scotopic vision is most sensitive to low to mid wavelengths (from blue to green wavelengths). For instance, abruptly switching from a well-lit room to darkness or vice versa causes a delayed response in vision adjustment.

Due to this effect, minimal amounts of red light don't excessively stimulate the rods, as depicted in Figure 2 by the slight overlap between the energy of a red LED and the rod sensitivity curve. In contrast, "white" light contains energy across blue, green and red regions. Even in low quantities, white light stimulates the rod sensor. A prime example of this issue occurs when working at night under the conventional white dome light in a vehicle, followed by straining to see outside into areas with low light. This explains why many special service vehicles feature a red dome light option, preserving the individual's rod sensor and thus enhancing rapid "night vision."

Grounded in scientific principles, SoundOff Signal's lighting solutions include controllers which enable custom management of LED lights. These include the bluePRINT® family of controllers, specifically the 500 Series and Central Controller which are designed to facilitate effective and safe job performance for law enforcement.



RON LAPEDIS

While many local departments might consider traffic safety and enforcement to be the bread and butter of the state police or highway patrol, it is an important topic for every jurisdiction.

Traffic encompasses a broad range of topics. While speeding might come to mind, it also encompasses traffic calming; street and lane closures; special event and temporary parking layouts; construction zones; parking zone and meter enforcement; funeral processions; checkpoints; and first day of school confusion. It doesn't matter if the traffic is due to a scheduled event; a VIP visit; a small, medium or large disaster; weather; an accident; or simply enforcing speed limits – the basics are the same.

Like a sidearm or patrol rifle, possessing the tools of the trade is useless without proper training and practice. And, there are a lot of tools of the trade, including the flashing lights on top of a cruiser. The two most important tenants of traffic are: (1) Keep yourself safe; and, (2) Do no harm.

The 2019 FBI LEOA report states that 11 pedestrian officers were struck by vehicles that year and six of these incidents occurred during traffic enforcement or while assisting a motorist. You may know exactly what you want the traffic to do, but do the drivers?

BACKGROUND

Not including firearms, what piece of LE

gear uses technology invented almost a century ago, yet still is in daily use to help keep your community safe? Give up? It's your RADAR gun – and LIDAR isn't that much younger.

RADAR (Radio Detection and Ranging) was developed prior to World War II and LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) was developed in the 1960s. If RADAR and LIDAR systems use decades-old technology, what possibly could be new?

Choosing the right technology for your traffic program depends on your agency's mission and staffing. From least to most manpower intensive, these missions are: Determining if you have a problem or developing a baseline; automated detection and traffic calming; and finally, citing offenders. With literally hundreds of options available, should your agency choose RADAR, LIDAR, or something else – and what specifications should you be looking at?

FIRST STEPS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says that speed detection operators must be certified, and part of that is that the operator must be able to estimate a vehicle's speed before

using the RADAR or LIDAR unit to reinforce and document his estimate.

Manned systems cost a lot in hardware, staff time and training, while automated speed detection devices are available for as low as a few thousand dollars and don't need training. But, which ones are right for your agency?

For writing citations, the main difference and the advantage of LIDAR is that the beam divergence (how fast the beam spreads with distance) is much lower than RADAR. The divergence at 1,000 feet from the average RADAR unit is 250 feet (76 meters) versus three feet (one meter) for LIDAR. This means that you can target a specific vehicle with LIDAR, while RADAR could be capturing multiple vehicles in every lane, including those preceding or tailing your target.

UNMANNED RADAR SYSTEMS

Before you can address a problem, you need to determine if you have a problem. Citizens who constantly call to complain about speeders in their neighborhood might be overly sensitive, or it could mean you have an accident waiting to happen. Your choice is to do nothing or send one

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TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT FUNDAMENTALS

Continued from page 48

or more officers to stake out the area and report back, but doing so takes them away from other duties, spreading your resources even thinner.

Automated systems are perfect for this mission. And, because you are not targeting a specific vehicle, but want to watch vehicles over a broad area, a RADAR-based system is the best choice due to its high divergence which allows it to “see” all the cars on the road.

Installing and configuring a RADAR system – either by po-



sitioning it on a trailer or by strapping a box to a streetlight or utility pole – can be done in seconds. How do you decide on using a covert or overt speed detection device? Again, it depends on the mission.

If baselining is the objective, use a covert system. If all you have are signs with speed displays, disable the display and flashing lights for a few days so that you don't slow down drivers while you are baselining.

Ensure the size of any speed display or mes-

If your goal is to establish a baseline, opt for a discreet system. In cases where only speed display signs are available, temporarily deactivate the display and flashing lights for a few days. This will prevent drivers from being influenced to reduce their speed during the baseline assessment.

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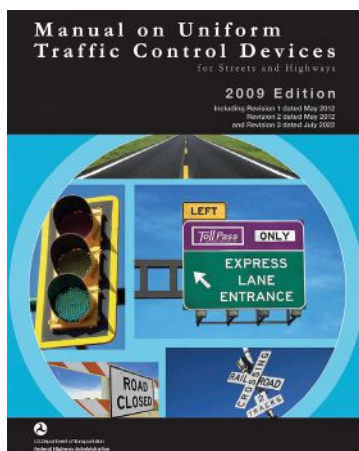
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A valuable source of information is the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices available from the Federal Highway Administration.

sage sign is appropriate to the speed of the roadway on which it is being used. Does the sign need to be readable from 450, 600 or 1,000 feet? Higher speed means that you need a longer reading distance and, therefore, a larger display. A good reference is the United States Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (<https://mutcd.info>).

Maybe you want a sign which displays the driver's current speed. Or, you might want to add text like "Slow Down" or have a "First Day of School" alternate with silhouettes of children.

Whatever system you choose, ensure that it offers calibration which includes "aiming" the beams, setting up multilane detection, or single- or multi-direction data capture. Your officers will thank you if the device can be calibrated remotely from their patrol car using Wi-Fi or Bluetooth® on a laptop rather than forcing them to balance on a ladder next to it.

MANNED RADAR SYSTEMS

You can purchase convertible hand-held/vehicle-mounted units which support stationary use, stationary/moving use, or both. For handheld use, look for units which can be powered and charged by the vehicle or operated from internal regular or rechargeable batteries.

Some units can be handheld in the morning and dash mounted in the afternoon, while others allow you to mount RADAR antennas on multiple vehicles and swap the base unit between cars as needed. This flexibility allows agencies to save money by dynamically repurposing units for the mission at hand. If it is important to your agency, units are available with anti-detector technology so that you can measure speeds without alerting the detectors.



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If the unit is vehicle-mounted, ask if the vendor offers a rear-facing unit which can project a "safety zone" behind a cruiser or motorcycle to warn officers that a vehicle is coming up fast and might be in a place to hit him – warning your officer to get out of the way. You also might want additional features which are not obvious when you start shopping, so keep an open mind.

LIDAR

Because LIDAR systems have a very small spread, they need to be aimed with a viewfinder. Speed estimation takes less than half a second which, together with the

narrow, targeted beam, results in offending vehicles having little warning even when using a LIDAR detection device. Some LIDAR units can measure the distance between vehicles to allow for *following too close* citations to be issued.

An electronic viewfinder allows for a lot of information to be displayed along with the image. Units are available with customizable aiming reticles, speed, distance, and other operational information which can help make the officer's enforcement job easier. Some units can capture an image of the vehicle including the license plate and upload it into an LPR (License

Plate Reader) system.

Do you need a speed detection unit which can capture and store images? It depends. United States courts have ruled that photographic proof is not required because the officer can testify to the use of a pinpoint laser. However, certain EU countries require video or photos.

If you do purchase a unit with a camera, ensure that there is an approved end-to-end chain of custody system which will prevent or detect image alteration. Most of these will implement some kind of image signing and encryption so that the image only can be accessed by appropriate personnel and cannot be modified.

SOFTWARE

Two of the strengths of modern RADAR and LIDAR systems are the functions built into the units for data collection and tagging and the PC-based software used for transferring, collating and reporting on the collected data.

Many automated signs can keep a database of incidents which can be downloaded through a secure Wi-Fi connection

via a laptop. Companion PC software teases out the traffic patterns, letting you show minimum/maximum speeds and the number of speeders. Timestamping allows officers to know exactly when there is a problem and what the problem is so that command staff can make intelligent use of limited resources.

If drivers **are** actually behaving themselves, you can use the reports to prove that to the review panel. If drivers are slightly over the limit, you may want to move to automated traffic calming. If drivers are reckless, you may want to jump directly to citations. The baseline measurements will allow you to objectively assess whatever solution you decide to implement.

SUMMARY

There are hundreds of choices which allow you to run a baseline, perform unmanned detection and warning of speeders and finally to issue citations to bring them under control. Which product or products to buy depends on your missions, training and purchasing budgets.

Advanced software and LPR support

can act as a force multiplier, lowering manpower requirements which can help justify your traffic programs. Don't just ask what software is available, but insist on an ease of use demonstration, perhaps with dummy data.

Vendors should be able to provide you with success stories when their product was used to lower the average speed, reduce collisions and fatalities, and make officers more effective enforcers. Also ask vendors for the names of several agencies where they succeeded (or failed) to make a sale. Every agency is different with different skill sets and different needs, and asking why a specific solution did or didn't work for another agency should be a large part of your own acquisition process. **P&SN**

Ron LaPedis is an NRA certified Chief Range Safety Officer; NRA, USCCA and California DOJ certified instructor; a uniformed first responder; and frequently writes and speaks on law enforcement, business continuity, cybersecurity, physical security, and public/private partnerships.

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Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) has emerged as a valuable asset in promoting traffic safety and reducing accidents caused by speeding. But, it remains limited in scope as legalities differ by state. Eighteen states and the District of Columbia have passed laws permitting speed cameras, while nine states have passed laws which prohibit their use. The landscape is continuously changing as legislation is proposed and challenged. But, there is one speed camera which is legal on any road, anywhere, and it is making inroads in protecting American streets.

ASE operates by capturing images or by recording data of vehicles surpassing the speed limit. This allows for continuous monitoring and enforcement of traffic regulations without the need for direct human intervention. Ultimately, the goal of ASE is to deter speeding violations and save lives.

Permissible Usage: A Complex Landscape

The implementation of ASE varies across different jurisdictions and road types, with various laws and regulations dictating its usage. While some regions have embraced ASE as a tool for enhancing road safety, particularly in school or work zones, others have imposed restrictions or even banned its deployment altogether. The decision to adopt ASE depends on local traffic safety goals, with policymakers evaluating its impact and effectiveness.

The Benefits of Automated Speed Enforcement

By capturing violators' images or data and issuing fines, ASE acts as a powerful deterrent, encouraging drivers to comply with speed limits and decreasing the likelihood of collisions.

Unlike manual enforcement methods which are resource-intensive and limited in scope, ASE offers round-the-clock monitoring of traffic conditions. This allows law enforcement agencies to allocate their resources strategically, focusing on areas where speeding is prevalent and ensuring safer roadways for all.

The presence of speed cameras encourages drivers to exercise caution and responsibility, leading to a culture of safer driving within our communities. With a recent House Bill passed in Florida which allows ticketing

for speeding in school zones, the Winter Garden Police Department took charge and acquired two speed trailers with cameras.

Addressing Legal Limitations

Despite the many benefits of speed camera usage, legal limitations prevent their use as a universal safety solution. One company, Traffic Logix, located in Spring Valley, NY, has created a solution which can be deployed in any city on any street.

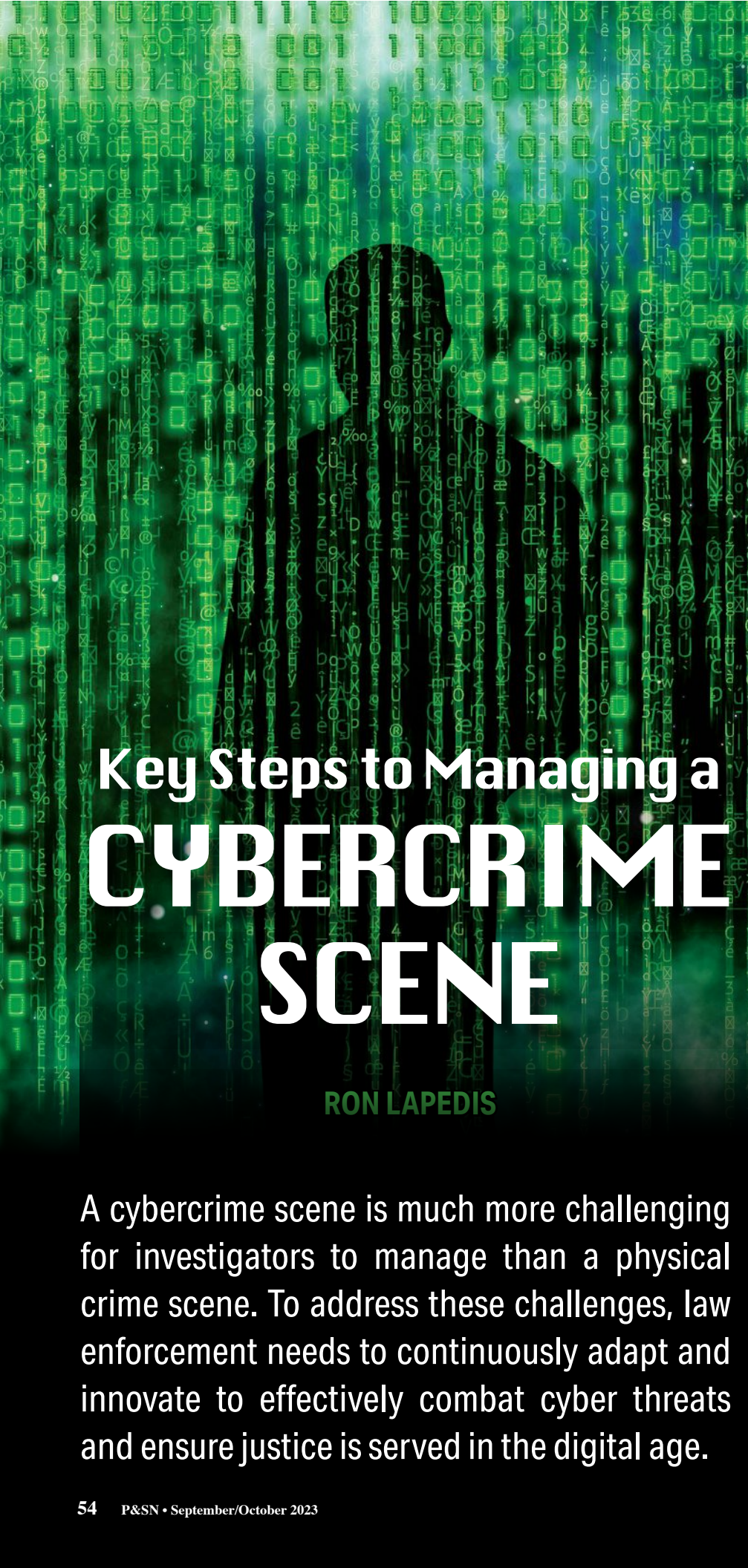
The Guardian Enforcer warning-only camera offers many of the benefits of ASE, simply without the enforcement aspect which invokes legal issues.

The warning cameras capture images of speeding vehicles and gives jurisdictions the ability to mail speed violators automated warnings. However, drivers do not incur any fines, but are simply warned with the images of their infraction and the fee they would have incurred if a police officer was present. These warning cameras have proven a powerful tool to encourage safer driving. The Captain of the Mendota Heights (MN) Police Department has commented that the vehicle owner often isn't the one driving the car and has received numerous callbacks from parents thanking the police department for the information.

The company also offers traditional ASE cameras, but these can only be deployed in jurisdictions or street types where permitted by law. Providing every city – regardless of location – the choice of a camera which can work on their roads helps to bolster accident prevention measures and foster a culture of responsible driving. Further information on the Guardian Enforcer speed camera can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/3enf57kp>



In contrast to penalty-based cameras which are only permitted in certain states, the Enforcer camera enhances driver attentiveness without requiring penalties or issuing tickets.



Key Steps to Managing a CYBERCRIME SCENE

RON LAPEDIS

A cybercrime scene is much more challenging for investigators to manage than a physical crime scene. To address these challenges, law enforcement needs to continuously adapt and innovate to effectively combat cyber threats and ensure justice is served in the digital age.

Cops receive training in the academy, as well as guidance by their FTO and senior partner on how to handle a physical crime scene. For example, before entering a suspected bomb builder's lair, you already know to watch out for possible booby trapped doors, drawers, etc. However, except for staff trained by the dozen FBI Regional Computer Forensics Laboratories (RCFLs) across the United States, or an equivalent facility, very few, if any, cops know what to do when faced with a suspected cyber-crime scene.

In addition, computers which belong to a hacker, a suspect storing or sharing child pornography, or other cybercrime, these suspects may have placed digital booby traps as well.

Hackers excel in their activities due to their comprehensive understanding of computers. It is possible to booby trap a computer system so that any evidence of a crime is destroyed as soon as a single key is pressed. With that, it's necessary to know the appropriate steps to take when you must gain entry to a computer which is under suspicion of being utilized in a crime.

The RCFLs were chartered to cultivate working relationships between law enforcement, the private sector, academia, and other government agencies by serving as a national clearinghouse for the exchange and dissemination of information.

Time is critical when investigating a crime and law enforcement personnel not have the luxury to wait for someone from the RCFL to show up on site to render assistance. Additionally, if a computer is powered down, you may lose essential information and may not be able to power it up again or log in.

Save Time in a Bottle

The absolute first step is to photograph anything and everything around the suspect computer. That includes the screen, keyboard, case, cables, peripherals, and power connections. This is done in case there is a time triggered software booby trap or the next steps trigger a booby trap. Ensure that every photo is well lit without shadows so that it is obvious where everything is connected – or not connected (figure 1).

Before touching the keyboard, you may want to dust it for fingerprints. Be



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KEY STEPS TO MANAGING A CYBERCRIME SCENE

Continued from page 54

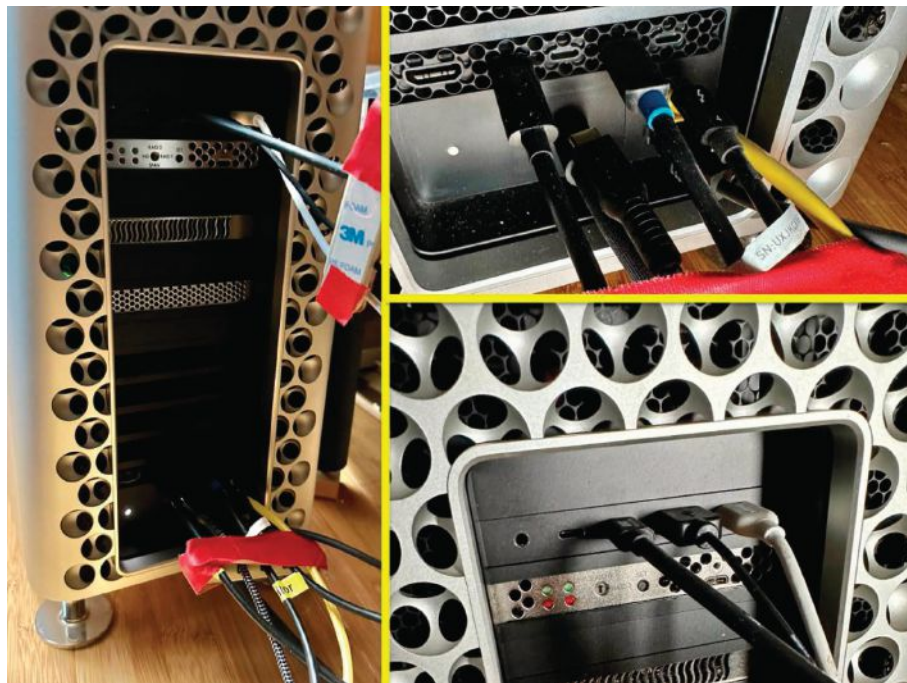


Figure 1 – The image on the left is useless. While the images on the right side are better, they are still not perfect due to the shadows. Can you see the disconnected cable in the top right photo?

very careful of putting downward pressure on the keyboard keys lest you trigger a booby trap.

Memory analysis is essential to recovering valuable evidence for almost any PC investigation. While the system is powered up, its memory contains running processes and programs, active network buffers, registry hives, passwords, encryption keys, and decrypted files. Many Web apps, like Gmail, or private/incognito browsing modes only store data in memory.

A loss of information in memory, or triggering a booby trap, can delete critical information needed for your case, including proof of links to dark servers or TOR networks, both of which are popular for criminal use. Whether you're working a malware infection, intrusion incident or IP theft, there is bound to be evidence found in memory which could be vital to your investigation.

Coming upon a cybercrime scene is not the right time to be sourcing, evaluating and learning to use memory capture tools. Just like a sniper has honed his skills over many hours of range time, a cyber inves-



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tigator must have practiced teasing out evidence on dozens to hundreds of configurations.

The raw memory capture data is set aside to be used as input for any one of dozens of tools which will help investigators to scan for evidence encoded as memory artifacts. Storage is available which physically can prevent writes to the storage media to preserve the contents.

The final step before moving on to storage is to label both sides of every cable and whatever each end is connected to and rephotograph. You need to know where every cable starts and ends so that the environment can be reconstructed if needed. Label all cables and take notes where they connect, then take photos.

Since cables could be directional, use A and B for each side. Simple 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, labeling is fine and you will need two of each number/letter combination – one for the cable and one for the device to which it is connected.

A P-touch or equivalent labeler with extra strong adhesive labels, masking tape or gaffer's tape will work.

Capture Storage

Even though you have memory captured, you still need to tread lightly as the tools and techniques used to create forensic images of running storage such as hard drives (HDs) and solid-state drives (SSDs) could also trigger a booby trap.

There are two ways to create a storage image. Do it live on the suspect comput-



Figure 2 – A forensic drive adaptor: At the top is a junction box which will connect to many 2.5" and 3.5" drives. To its right is a SATA adaptor with power input connector. Below are cables used to connect the adaptor to a host computer and a ribbon jumper cable.

er or disconnect the drive cable (doing it while the machine is running is preferable) and use a hardware duplicator (figure 2) to take forensic images of the drives which will preserve the files and status of the machine as a snapshot in time.

Two of the most popular formats used for creating forensic images of running storage are E01 (Encase Image File Format) and DD (Data Dump). Both preserve the files and status as a snapshot in time. The E01 forensic image file format is the default imaging option for many computer forensics tools and has become a de facto standard of sorts. It also creates a hash or checksum of the drive and embeds it into the file. You can retrospectively prove the evidence has not changed by recalculating the hash value (essentially, the unique digital fingerprint of the file).

While somewhat lesser known, the raw image file format produces a bit for bit copy of the contents of a drive. This format is often referred to as the DD format due to the tool which originally generated such images. Depending on the tool used to create a DD image, you may need to enter a command to verify the images

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KEY STEPS TO MANAGING A CYBERCRIME SCENE

Continued from page 57

after they are created which will calculate hashes of the acquired image. Two options are the MD5 hash and the SHA1 hash.

Whichever format you decide upon, you need to make multiple copies and put one aside as your master copy. This master copy becomes your baseline and, if a booby trap is triggered while working with it, you can copy the master to another disk and try again. The creation and use of a true forensic hard drive image is a highly detailed process. If you do not have it performed by a trained professional, you may severely compromise your chances of obtaining admissible evidence because of your discovery efforts.

Suggested protocols for digital forensic analysis can be found within guidelines standardized by institutions and organizations like the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

If you come across a potential suspect computer which is already powered down, label the cables, take photos, dust the keyboard, then bring all the pieces to a cyber forensic lab to be investigated by qualified, professional forensic practitioners. Except for memory capture, most of the steps are the same as when you find a running machine.

Storage Volumes and RAID

A data volume, colloquially called a disk, used to be the same as, or a subset of a physical device. That is, if you held an HD or a SSD in your hand, you had what you needed, except perhaps the encryption key, to start forensic analysis of the contents.

With a Redundant Array of Independent Disks (RAID) volume, this no longer is true. While RAID was developed for speed and redundancy of data stored on physical

devices, it also can be used to hide data from law enforcement.

On a RAID 1, or mirrored volume, the information is duplicated on two physical devices, so possession of either one gives you access to all of the data.

But, on every other type of RAID volume, the data is split across two or more physical devices (figure 3). If you are missing one of the physical devices in a RAID 0 volume, or two of the physical devices in a RAID 2 through 6 volume, the data may be unrecoverable. And, not only do you need the devices, but you also need the software which was originally used to create the array – along with the “map” which describes how the data was distributed when it was written.



Figure 3 – Top: At the top is a simplified schematic of a RAID 5 volume using four physical storage devices. Blocks of data are written to each drive in sequence. The data can be reconstructed even if any one device is missing. Bottom: Even with all devices, the data is unintelligible without the RAID map.

Think of the data stored in a RAID array like a jigsaw puzzle where all the pieces are identical grey squares. Each physical device represents a column, but which one? And, what about the rows? That information is hidden in the volume map

which only the RAID software can decode.

Additionally, there could be a chicken and egg predicament since the RAID software might be on a RAID volume. The computer's boot process normally would resolve this, but is moot if a booby-trapped computer destroys the boot process. You will need to use other methods to determine the software in use, such as questioning the suspect or looking at purchase records.

The key to hiding data on RAID volumes is that there is nothing in the RAID specification which says that the physical devices need to be the same type of storage device nor contiguous.

That is, a RAID volume can be split across a few or up to dozens of storage devices – both inside and outside of the computer case. They can be in an enclosure or perhaps on a circuit board with a cable.

Whether internal or external, storage devices could be SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) HD, SATA SSD, or NVMe (Non-Volatile Memory Express) M.2 “blades.”

RAID volume recovery should only be done from your copies and never from your forensic masters. If there is any question as to how the volume components were connected, you can refer back to the photos you took of the computer, peripherals and cabling before it was disassembled.

Virtual Machines for Forensic Analysis

A virtual machine, or VM, is an application which runs on a computer and is the virtualization or emulation of a computer system. The VM software “tricks” the Operating System (OS) and apps into thinking that they are running directly on a computer when, in reality, they are running on a simulated computer.

Think about a firearms simulator for a moment. There are virtual targets on the screen and you are holding a firearm which communicates with the simulator. If you are on target and pull the trigger, a “hole” shows up in the target – just as surely as a piece of lead going downrange would make a hole in a paper target. You are inclined to believe that you made that hole.

If the OS or application can perform an action on a real computer, it can perform the same action on a VM. With a little finesse, you can recreate the suspect's entire computer as a VM which in turn will allow you to recreate the entire digital crime scene in an accessible, virtual environment.

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AVAILABLE RESOURCES

There are several no-cost resources available for law enforcement agencies and personnel to enhance their knowledge and capabilities in dealing with cybercrime. These resources offer training, information, tools, and collaboration opportunities. Here are some options.

- 1. Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) Cybercrime Courses:** FLETC offers various cybercrime training courses to law enforcement personnel. These courses cover topics such as digital evidence collection, cyber investigations and cyber threats. (<https://tinyurl.com/342ryrxx>)
- 2. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity Training and Resources:** DHS provides a range of cybersecurity training and resources, including the Federal Virtual Training Environment (FedVTE) which offers free online courses on cybersecurity-related topics. (niccs.cisa.gov)
- 3. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Cyber Crime Resources:** The FBI provides numerous resources, including the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) which collects and analyzes reports of cybercrimes. The FBI also offers online training courses through the Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP). (<https://tinyurl.com/bdzh99d2>)
- 4. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework:** NIST offers a comprehensive Cybersecurity Framework which law enforcement agencies can use to improve their cybersecurity posture and response to cyber threats. (nist.gov/cyberframework)
- 5. International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Cyber Center:** The IACP's Cyber Center provides resources and guidance for law enforcement agencies to address cybercrime, including training, research and best practices. (<https://tinyurl.com/ycxv4h3e>)
- 6. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Cybercrime Resources:** UNODC offers resources and tools to support law enforcement agencies in dealing with cybercrime at the international level. (<https://tinyurl.com/mv5ykdan>)
- 7. Cybercrime Support Network:** This organization offers assistance to law enforcement and victims of cybercrime, including resources for reporting and responding to cyber incidents. (fightcybercrime.org)
- 8. InfraGard:** InfraGard is a partnership between the FBI and private sector organizations. It provides information sharing and collaboration opportunities for law enforcement and other stakeholders to address cyber threats. (infragardnational.org)
- 9. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA):** CISA offers various cybersecurity resources, including alerts, guidance documents and training materials aimed at enhancing the cybersecurity posture of government agencies and organizations. (cisa.gov)
- 10. Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) Tools:** There are various open source tools available for law enforcement to gather intelligence from publicly available online sources. Examples include Maltego for data mining and analysis, and Shodan for searching Internet connected devices. (<https://tinyurl.com/mst822ru>)
- 11. Local Cybersecurity Groups and Communities:** Many local cybersecurity groups and organizations offer free resources, workshops and networking opportunities. These groups can provide valuable insights and connections within the cybersecurity community.

KEY STEPS TO MANAGING A CYBERCRIME SCENE

Continued from page 58

Using a virtual machine saves money by reducing the amount of hardware required – multiple VMs can share the same physical computer and access the same storage, putting processing power to use that otherwise might be idle while waiting for a human to respond.

Standard forensic principles often deny an investigator the opportunity to turn a computer back on once it has been powered down. The use of a VM lets the forensic examiner fire it back up and poke around it without affecting the original, unchanged evidence.

In the same way that a body from a physical crime scene can give up clues and evidence to a medical examiner as to who the perpetrator was and how the crime happened, use of a forensic VM from “dead box” storage (or an image of that storage) can offer up clues and powerful evidence to the digital examiner which are not available via standard forensic software. The VM enables a virtual autopsy of the suspect's computer.

Finally, since the VM is divorced from the hardware, they are portable and can be moved from real computer to real computer or can be accessed from almost anywhere, even over the Internet.

There is a lot of documentation on the Internet about how to build and use a forensic virtual machine.

Being able to access an identical, but virtual, replica of the suspect's machine means that you can interact with the files and the software on their system without fear of making a mistake which will modify or destroy it. If you experience a malfunction, you can just go back to the previous image (called a snapshot). And, because the VM is just a piece of software, it can be moved from place to place or can be sent to the RCFL or a vendor specializing in forensic work.

Creating a VM from a computer allows you to lock all of the original hardware and software to the time when you first came upon it. It will let you search for evidence without altering evidence and will let you

go back to that time if required. If you need additional expertise, you can send the VM to the person who has that knowledge.

All in all, a VM can help you find elusive evidence and present it in court in a non-technical manner.

Summary

Investigating cybercrime scenes presents a set of unique challenges which surpass those of traditional physical crime scenes due to the virtual nature of the crimes, the global scope of the Internet, the technical expertise required, and the constantly evolving tactics employed by cybercriminals. **P&SN**

Ron LaPedis is an NRA certified Chief Range Safety Officer; NRA, USCCA and California DOJ certified instructor; is a uniformed first responder; and frequently writes and speaks on law enforcement, business continuity, cybersecurity, physical security, and public/private partnerships.

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NINE REASONS WHY CYBERCRIME SCENES PRESENT GREATER CHALLENGES FOR INVESTIGATORS

- 1. Invisibility and Anonymity:** Cybercriminals can operate from anywhere in the world, making their actions difficult to trace. They can hide behind proxies, VPNs and other anonymizing technologies, making it challenging to identify their real identities and locations. This contrasts with physical crimes, where suspects' movements are more constrained.
- 2. Virtual Nature:** Cybercrime scenes exist in the digital realm which means that investigators must have specialized skills to gather and interpret digital evidence. Unlike physical evidence, digital evidence can be easily manipulated, deleted or concealed, requiring investigators to use advanced techniques to recover and preserve it accurately.
- 3. Global Jurisdiction:** The Internet transcends national borders and cybercriminals can target victims in different countries without ever physically crossing those borders. This raises complex jurisdictional issues and legal challenges for law enforcement agencies which need to collaborate across international boundaries.
- 4. Rapid Evolution:** The landscape of cybercrime is constantly evolving with new attack vectors, tools and techniques emerging regularly. Investigators need to stay up-to-date with the latest trends in cybercrime to effectively combat these threats which can be more challenging than investigating traditional crimes which may have more established patterns.
- 5. Scale and Scope:** Cybercrimes can affect a large number of victims simultaneously and on a global scale. Investigating such incidents requires dealing with a vast amount of digital data, potentially spanning across multiple jurisdictions, systems and networks, making it much more complex compared to a single physical crime scene.
- 6. Technical Expertise:** Investigating cybercrimes demands a deep understanding of various technologies, including networking protocols, encryption, malware analysis, and digital forensics. This technical expertise is often required on top of traditional investigative skills, setting a higher bar for cybercrime investigators.
- 7. Non-physical Traces:** In physical crime scenes, evidence is often tangible and visible. In cybercrime investigations, evidence consists of digital footprints, log files, network traffic, and other intangible elements which require specialized tools and techniques to identify, preserve and interpret.
- 8. Evidence Tampering:** Cybercriminals can tamper with digital evidence more easily than physical evidence. They can manipulate timestamps, modify logs and cover their tracks in ways which are not possible in the physical world, making it challenging for investigators to establish a clear chain of custody and authenticity.
- 9. Resource Allocation:** Investigating cybercrimes requires significant resources, including skilled personnel, advanced technology and ongoing training. Law enforcement agencies need to invest in these resources to effectively combat the ever growing threat of cybercrime.

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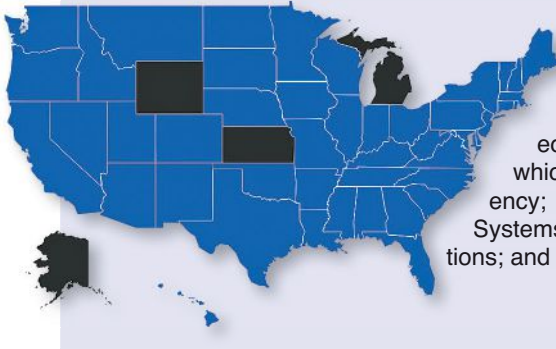
NEWS

Free Online Guide to Legislation Affecting Police

In the past few years, there's been a significant increase in state bills which impact law enforcement agencies. Bills have included everything from the procurement of new early intervention systems to de-escalation training to new data transparency laws. It can be hard to keep up with what's been approved, what's pending, and what the bills include.

Vector Solutions is now offering a free online guide to recently approved law enforcement legislation in each state which can be accessed at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/26h8kzmp>

The online guide is an interactive Web page where law enforcement professionals can click on their state and see law enforcement legislation which has been approved in their state in the last few years. In the map, users can find curated information on newly passed bills which influence Training; Data Transparency; Peer Reporting; Early Intervention Systems; Use of Force Measures; Investigations; and much more.



Global Extremist Symbols

Published by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, this database contains a compilation of global hate and extremist symbols. Extremist groups collaborate with each other across countries, sharing hateful narratives, tactical playbooks and symbols to represent their cause. This database is a tool for identifying the whereabouts, narratives and violent acts of these extremist groups and is intended to be used by law enforcement, tech companies, policymakers, media, advocates, as well as the general public. Various information is listed regarding each symbol in the directory, including photos, descriptions, associated ideologies, and the location(s) where the symbol was found. So far, the database contains symbols from over 40 different countries and over 20 associated ideologies. It should be noted that this database does not contain a comprehensive list, as new extremist groups are constantly emerging.

To view the full database, visit <https://tinyurl.com/52mv79v2>.

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P&SN Police and Security News

Serving Law Enforcement & Homeland Security

PUBLISHER: Al Menear

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Toni Saturno

MANAGING EDITOR: John G. Stephenson

ART DIRECTOR: Jeanne Daubner

GENERAL MANAGER: Cindie Bonsall

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Bill Zadlo

ADVERTISING:

Al Menear
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Performance Publishing, LLC

145 Main St., Ste. B-1

Pennsburg, PA 18073-1372

Phone: (215) 538-1240

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Police and Security News is published bimonthly by Performance Publishing, LLC, 145 Main St., Ste. B-1, Pennsburg, PA 18073-1372.

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Standard Rate Postage Paid at Bellmawr, NJ (permit #1239).

POSTMASTER: Please send form #3579 to Performance Publishing, LLC, 145 Main St., Ste. B-1, Pennsburg, PA 18073-1372

All subscriptions and editorial should be directed to: Performance Publishing, LLC, 145 Main St., Ste. B-1, Pennsburg, PA 18073-1372

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Was she interviewing for the DUI trainer position?... A 39-year-old Indiana woman was arrested for driving under the influence during an employment meeting with the Marshall County Sheriff's Department. The Plymouth woman came in just before 9:00 a.m. for a scheduled meeting related to her inquiry into employment with the department. While speaking with her, a captain observed slurred speech along with an alcohol smell on her breath. She admitted to driving to the Sheriff's Office and consuming alcohol that morning. A detective lieutenant then obtained a certified breath test which showed a result of .158, nearly twice the legal limit. She was taken to the Marshall County Jail for operating a vehicle while intoxicated and given a cash bond of \$1500. (*"Hey, aren't you even going to check my references?"*)

Order a hot dog and get a free coke!... As society continues to debate what are the best condiments for hot dogs (Relish? Mustard? Ketchup?), a 54-year-old employee at an Espanola, NM, restaurant customized a patron's order slightly beyond what she wanted. As the female customer bit into her hot dog, she discovered a plastic bag filled with a white powdery substance. The woman notified the local police department who tested the powder and found it to be cocaine. It turns out that, as the employee was preparing her order, he allegedly dropped his stash; video surveillance showed that the man began to frantically search the area "as if he had lost something." He later admitted to police that he had bought the dope from someone in the restaurant parking lot. (*That's one dog that will bite back.*)

"This zone is for backhoe parking only"... Officials say a Southern Illinois man has been charged with theft for allegedly stealing a backhoe to drive about ten miles to an airport to catch a flight. The Williamson County Sheriff's Office said security camera footage showed a Carbondale man arriving at Veterans Airport of Southern Illinois atop a backhoe and leaving it in the airport parking lot. Footage revealed the man walking across the street from the lot to the airport lobby carrying a guitar case. The owner of the backhoe arrived at the airport a short time later and identified the equipment as belonging to his company. The owner said the machine, typically used to move large debris, had

REAL STORIES OF GENUINE ABSURDITY



I'm glad the officer quickly worked out who was a good boy and who wasn't...

A Colorado man is in the doghouse for attempting to switch places with his pooch after he was pulled over on suspicion of drunken driving. The Springfield Police Department posted on social media that the suspect was pulled over after allegedly driving 52 mph in a 30 mph zone. Police stated, "The driver attempted to switch places with his dog who was in the passenger seat as the SPD officer approached and watched the entire process." Police said the man showed signs of intoxication. When confronted by the officer, he attempted to flee. The suspect, who was certainly not a greyhound, was apprehended about 20 yards from his vehicle. The dog was not cited. (*I bet that dog doesn't even have a license!*)

been parked at a job site. (*When apprehended, he was quoted as saying, "I was going to miss my flight; can you dig it?"*)

"This is a stickup. Give me all of your cash and a motorized scooter."... A 63-year-old woman who tried to rob a bank in New Orleans while clinging to her walker didn't get far. "Your bank is being robbed; put money in bag or people are going to get hurt," read a note which she allegedly passed to a teller at the bank. A security camera captured her waiting in line while gripping a four-wheeled walking aid. The teller complied and surrendered \$500 to her, who didn't make it far, the complaint states. A bank security officer escorted her back inside the branch where New Orleans Police Department officers soon arrested her. The woman appeared less mobile than in her last failed bank robbery attempt in 2014, when she offered a teller a note – "Put money in bag now!" – at another New Orleans bank. (*That's one way to get long-term care for free.*)

Congratulations on your bouncing baby bag of cocaine... Two people were recently accused of trafficking more than 1,500 grams of cocaine through South Carolina after the drugs fell out of a fake pregnancy belly being worn by one of the alleged smugglers. The Anderson County Sheriff's Office said deputies first pulled a man and woman over during a "proactive patrol" on Interstate 85. Police said suspicions arose when the officers asked about the apparent pregnant woman's due date and the two suspects provided "conflicting information." The woman realized the officers weren't buying their story and immediately fled the vehicle. The drugs she was hiding inside her fake rubber stomach fell out when she sprinted away. Both individuals were arrested and are facing cocaine trafficking charges. (*Making license plates may be the only labor she's going to experience for a while.*) **P&SN**

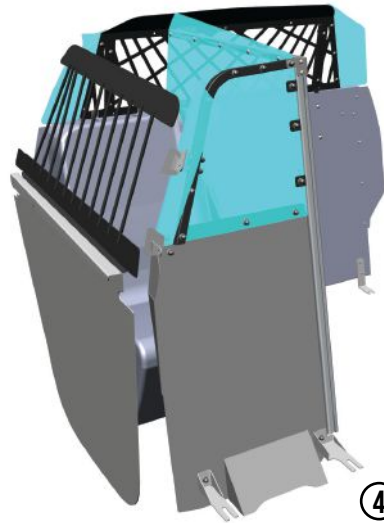
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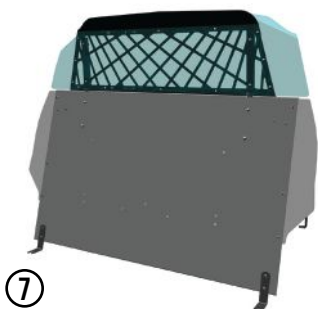
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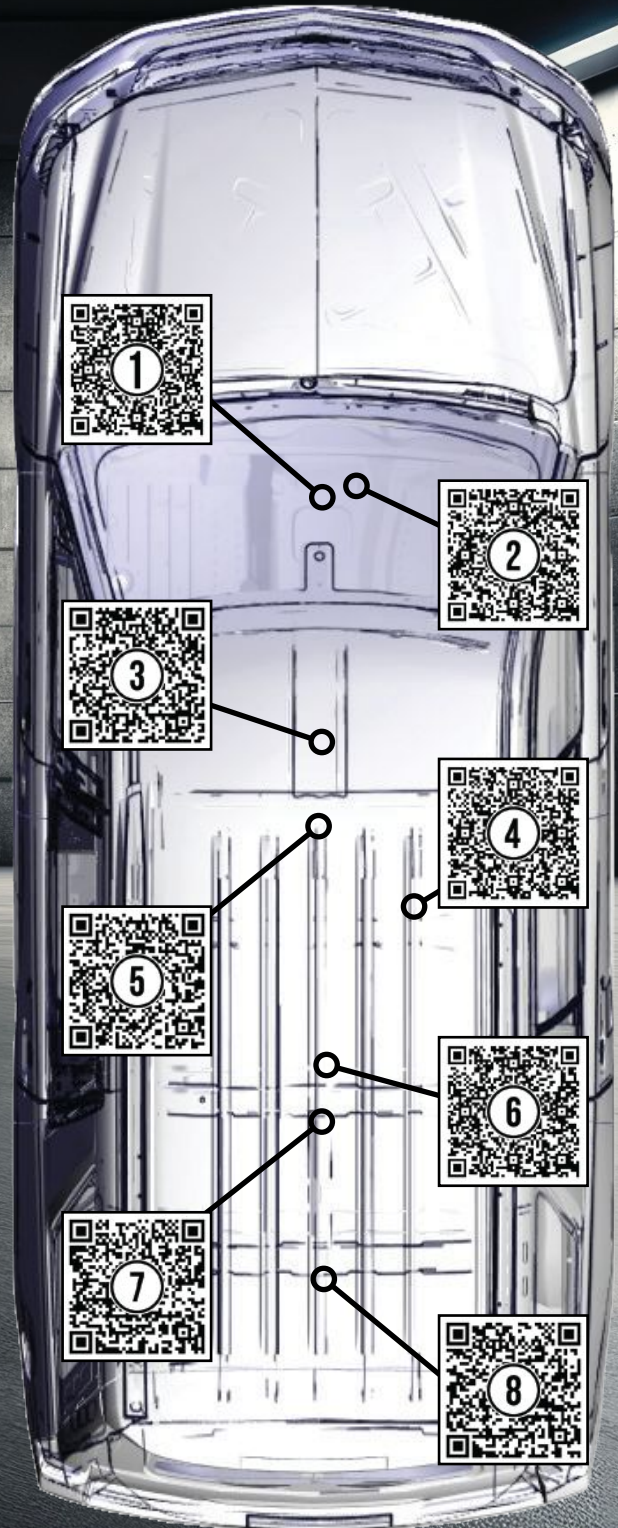
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