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Blue Knights

Relaxing too soon must be resisted

Be aware of these 12 circumstances that might cause you to drop your guard

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A deadly error often made by police officers that can increase their susceptibility to a sudden assault is relaxing too soon. Mounting an effective defense to an assault, when the suspect is ready but you are not, is like running a race from a recliner when your opponent is poised in the starting block. You may not lose, but you will certainly be off to a bad start.

The difference between being relaxed and being ready is that ready is being mentally aware something bad could happen right here and now so you pay attention. Being relaxed is when you possess the notion that nothing bad is going to happen to you here and now.

Both conditions might lead to an assault, but the mentally ready officer will see indicators of that impending assault more readily and be better prepared to effectively respond to the threat than an officer who is mentally relaxed.

A way to avoid relaxing too soon is to be aware of the conditions that might inspire officers to relax. Here are 12 circumstances to consider:

1. A FRIENDLY SUSPECT.

When a contact is hyper-friendly there is a natural tendency for officers to breathe a sigh of relief and relax, which is why it is a tactic used by criminals in the hopes the officer will not delve into their activity too deeply and discover the drugs or body in the trunk. When you see someone who is hyper-friendly respond in kind but proceed with wide-eyed caution.

2. "I KNOW THIS GUY."

A rapport from prior contacts can have a positive effect on expanding an officer's ability to gather information and even prevent situations from escalating. However, officers must resist the temptation to relax in the presence of suspects with whom they have a past working relationship.

3. "THE SUSPECT IS GONE."

Whether you are arriving at a domestic disturbance, a robbery, or looking for a wanted suspect, don't let someone saying, "He's gone," cause you to relax. Often the person is saying this to cover for a friend or relative who is present, or nearby. Sometimes the person saying it is the person you are looking for.

4. THE SUSPECT IS IN CUSTODY.

After placing a suspect in handcuffs there is a tendency to relax, however, this should not be the case at all. A suspect can still pose a danger to the officer if not thoroughly searched, is not properly handcuffed, or not watched while in custody. There is also the possibility in the case of a building search that accomplice(s) are nearby.

5. THE WEAPON IS FOUND.

Remember the "plus one rule" when you find a weapon. People who carry weapons often choose to carry more than one. When you find one, be sure to look for another. From incident to arrest, conduct a complete and thorough search of the suspect and the lunge area and then check your work again prior to entering the jail.

6. "I SEARCHED THEM."

If you are asked to transport someone another officer arrested and you hear, "I searched them," search them again.

7. "I'M SEMI-RETIRED ON DAY SHIFT."

Officers who finally make day shift often feel like "I made it." Dangerous people do not crawl into a casket during the daytime and only come out at night. Be as day-cautious as you were night-cautious.

8. IT'S EASY OVERTIME.

There are no easy assignments. Almost anything can happen anywhere at any time.

9. YOU ARE ON THE PERIMETER.

Even some tactical team members have a tendency to relax on the perimeter in a tactical situation. However, I have always said the action is often found on the perimeter. From a sudden escape attempt to a sudden assault, the perimeter can offer just as much intense drama as going through the door. It is no place to relax.

10. "FALSE ALARMS."

"Respond to the Stop and Rob. There is an alarm. Be advised this is the seventh alarm in the last three days." This call almost beckons you to relax and take it easy; no worries.

Assuming an alarm is false without confirmation and driving up to the scene of the alarm could mean that officer is driving head first into an ambush. When you receive an alarm, don't relax. Be alarmed.

11. YOU HAVE BECOME RETIRED/RELAXED ON DUTY.

There is a condition I have talked about a great deal as a field training officer, a trainer and a writer. That condition is called "[Retired on Duty](#)," which can translate to "Relaxed on Duty." This is when an officer has a willful intent to avoid problems and skate to the end of their career doing as little as possible, whether that means they have seven months or seven years left until actual retirement.

Even those who are aggressively trying to avoid the problems and dangers of the profession discover the problems will eventually find them. However, someone who is permanently retired/relaxed on duty often will not see those problems coming.

12. THE BARKING DOG, A NOISE COMPLAINT, A PARKING COMPLAINT.

Instead of relaxing when approaching these calls, consider this. A dog may be barking because someone is killing its owner (as in the case of Nicole Brown-Simpson.) A noise complaint may be an argument between two warring gangs (a regular occurrence). A parking complaint may be over a car owned by a serial killer (as was the case in the Son of Sam). Approach all calls with due care.

CONCLUSION

The problem with bad tactics like relaxing too soon is they become bad habits because you get away with them until you don't.

As always, stay safe, stay strong, stay positive and **PAY ATTENTION OUT THERE!**

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About the author

Lt. Dan Marcou is an internationally-recognized police trainer who was a highly-decorated police officer with 33 years of full-time law enforcement experience. Marcou's awards include Police Officer of the Year, SWAT Officer of the Year, Humanitarian of the Year and Domestic Violence Officer of the Year. Upon retiring, Lt. Marcou began writing. Additional awards Lt. Marcou received were 15 departmental citations (his department's highest award), two Chief's Superior Achievement Awards and the Distinguished Service Medal for his response to an active shooter. He is a co-author of "[Street Survival II, Tactics for Deadly Encounters](#)," which is now available. His novels, "The Calling, the Making of a Veteran Cop," "SWAT, Blue Knights in Black Armor," "Nobody's Heroes" and "Destiny of Heroes," as well as his latest non-fiction offering, "Law Dogs, Great Cops in American History," are all available at [Amazon](#). Dan is a member of the Police1 Editorial Advisory Board.

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