

TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS



SHOOTING
AND THINKING

THINKING
AND SHOOTING

BY: KEN JAVES / PHOTOS BY OLEG VOLK www.a-human-right.com

I have seen a sizable number of shooters who can consistently hammer the X-Ring, but fall apart when faced with a scenario that required problem-solving with a gun.

I also hate to admit that I was once counted among their number. There is a common misconception among both individuals and organizations, that accuracy is the only way to measure proficiency with a firearm. An example of this can be found in the United States Marine Corps where “every Marine is a rifleman.” The Marine Corps has traditionally outperformed all other branches in the instruction and maintenance of marksmanship fundamentals, but outside of the more

elite units that have had the opportunity to cross-train and seek instruction beyond the confines of the Corps, individual abilities are notably lacking in the areas of weapon manipulations, awareness, mindset, stress management and problem solving. Progress has been made in the last ten years through the development of the Combative Marksmanship and Combat Hunter programs, but the shortcomings still surface during force-on-force training exercises and in urban combat.

The Marine Corps is not the only organization that suffers from an inflated sense of ability based on a narrow view of what constitutes competence. If you are part of a group that emphasizes a singular skill as a measure of capability you may want to explore outside training opportunities and the standards of others to get a wider understanding of your capabilities and limitations. A wider evaluation will be a better measure of your potential combat performance.

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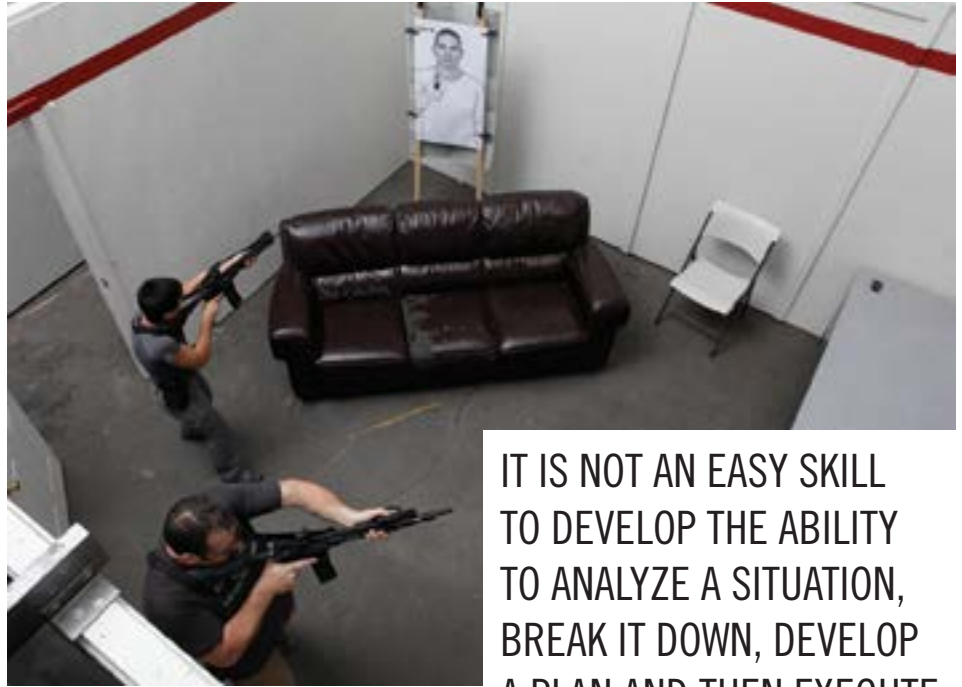
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IT IS NOT AN EASY SKILL TO DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO ANALYZE A SITUATION, BREAK IT DOWN, DEVELOP A PLAN AND THEN EXECUTE THAT PLAN WITH THE STRESSORS OF TIME CONSTRAINTS AND IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE.

Let's take a look at some of the factors that influence our ability to think and solve problems during time-compressed and stressful evolutions. The summation of these factors is referred to as a *cognitive load*, an individual's ability to absorb, process and react to information in their operational environment. In a computer processor, the more programs (tasks) or inputs (information) you subject it to, the more the system bogs down. Eventually the overload may even result in a crash. The mind can be overwhelmed in much the same way causing fixation on a particular task, blocking of outside stimuli (tunnel vision or audio exclusion) or even a complete meltdown (freezing / choking.) Stress, or more specifically an individual's inability to control stress, also increases cognitive load and reduces problem-solving performance. Unlike a computer though, we can't just go out and upgrade the processor or install more memory, so we are left with the option of trying to make our mental processes more efficient within our individual limitations.

MULTI-TASKING

There is a common misconception that we, as human beings, can perform multiple conscious acts at the same time; referred to as *multi-tasking*. Unfortunately, the brain isn't structured to allow splitting concentration between two or more separate tasks. The illusion of multi-tasking exists because the brain can rapidly switch between tasks; there is however a time-lag involved. Increasing cell

phone use and proliferation corresponding with an increase in traffic accidents appears to be evidence of this phenomenon since formulating a thought and communicating it while reacting to an ever-changing environment in front of a moving vehicle are both conscious actions. So how is it we can walk (an extremely complex motor-function) and talk (conscious act) at the same time without falling over? First, the environment isn't changing as rapidly; the ground has been scouted by the brain in advance and requires fewer "updates" and second, the act of walking has been programmed into the sub-conscious mind. Programming common tactical tasks into the sub-conscious is one method to reduce the overall cognitive load, thus freeing up processor power to concentrate on solving the problem at hand. This is typically done through practice and repetition. Sight alignment, trigger control, shooting position, footwork, reloads, malfunction clearance and follow-through are all tactical tasks that should be trained to the point that they can be performed at the sub-conscious level, resulting in automatic performance given the proper stimulus. If you have



EXPERIENCE IMPROVES EFFICIENCY. A NOVICE WILL TYPICALLY FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THE ENVIRONMENT AND NUMBER OF TASKS THAT NEED TO BE PERFORMED AND WILL PROCESS THE SITUATION MUCH MORE SLOWLY. ←

read any of Steven Covey's books on leadership and management, you will recognize the similarity of this concept to what he calls "unconscious competence." Diligent practice and conscious effort is required in order to build the automatic response we are looking for over time. Sustainment training must also be performed at regular intervals (minimum of once a week, preferably more) to maintain proficiency. Even walking must be relearned by those who have been in a coma, as all physical skills atrophy over time. It is also important that your training program provide the appropriate stimulus for the desired automatic response. An inappropriate pairing is what we refer to as a "training scar" and we should seek to eliminate as many potential scars as possible.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Next is the amount of information or input that the brain has to process for a given problem. In a close-quarters environment

the speed at which a room can be successfully taken down is not a function of physical movement, but one of information processing. If you still have to think about your individual position in the room, proper sight picture, footwork, etc. those tasks use up valuable processor speed that could be better utilized for identifying threats, analyzing the room, communicating with teammates and predictive analysis. Again, offloading certain tasks onto the subconscious improves our ability to think clearly. Experience and the study of threat tactics are other methods to improve efficiency. The novice practitioner will typically feel overwhelmed by the environment and number of tasks that need to be performed and will process the situation much more slowly than an experienced individual can. Experience allows the brain to break down complex environments into basic patterns that a standard and practiced response can be applied to. This allows the individual to prioritize and focus on solving one problem at a

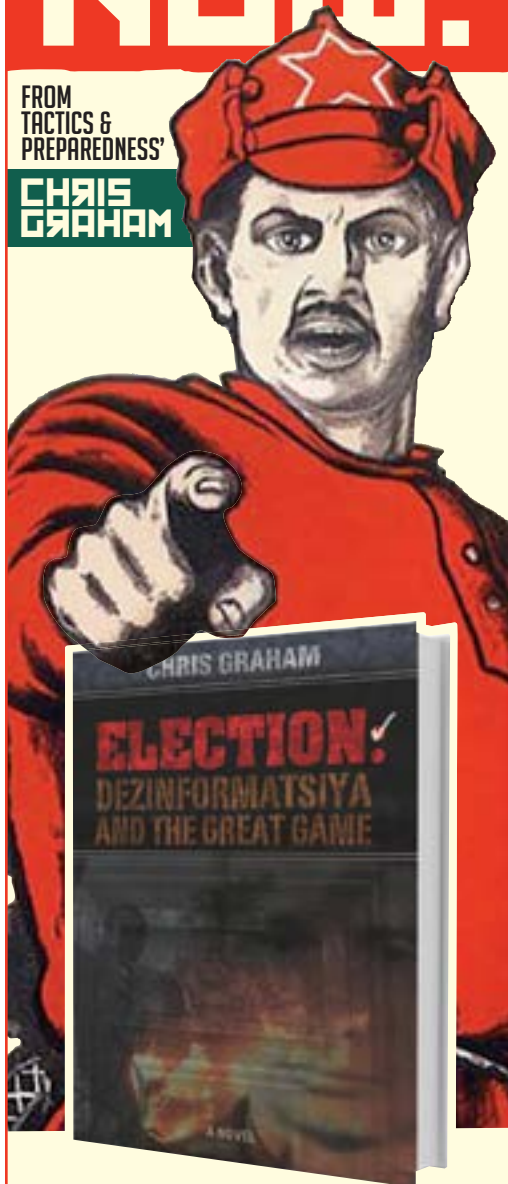
time. Experience and study also allow you to focus on what is important and better identify and deprioritize extraneous input. Knowing what to look for and where to look for it dramatically reduces the amount of information you have to process.

I remember trying to look everywhere all the time, 360 degrees, up, down and through during my first combat deployment. The result was rapid mental exhaustion and degraded vigilance. Over time, experience and learning the enemy's tactics, I learned that I was best served by looking where the enemy was most likely to appear, shoot from or emplace an IED. This allowed me to prioritize my attention focus where it was needed. This resulted in a much more relaxed and sustainable mental state and improved overall reaction time and problem solving ability. Having a training program that incorporates realistic scenarios based on current threat tactics for the environment you plan on operating in is the closest substitute to operational experience.

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FROM
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CHRIS
GRAHAM



После развала Советского Союза и превращения КГБ в СВР, организационные наследники успешно продолжили активность в Америке. Что, если президент США был избран в результате дезинформационной компании начатой десятки лет назад? Был ли обвал финансовых рынков 2008г случайностью? Какова роль подрывной деятельности в сегодняшних войнах с исламским терроризмом? Что будет дальше?

"Chris Graham writes the way he flies: low, fast and hair raising. He's one of the best brightest and bravest Marines I've ever known. Now he's proven himself to be a sharp-edged master of suspense. All who savor a thrilling ride will get one in Election: Dezinformatsiya and the Great Game." - Oliver North

DEZINFORMATSIYA

STRESS

Excessive (not chronic) stress/fear/anxiety and an inability to manage it reduces cognitive ability as the body and mind shift into basic survival mode. While this may have been an advantage when people were whacking each other with clubs, it tends to become a disadvantage in the complex combat environments we face today. The optimal stress level to maximize performance is an individual characteristic best analyzed and trained through a human performance program such as those offered by Human Ventures Group. You can gain some stress inoculation by pushing beyond your comfort zone during training sessions. If you have become comfortable doing the same drills or qualifications, change them up. Select more difficult drills, incorporate communication, reduce the par time for the drill, incorporate movement, calculation, etc. Expose yourself to tasks and problems that are more difficult than what you expect to face operationally. This allows you to build comfort and confidence in your abilities that you can draw upon in future confrontations to reduce the amount of stress/fear/anxiety that you feel, so you can focus on the highest priority element of the problem at hand.

Outside of multi-million dollar training programs and facilities, some of the best training opportunities I have found that are open to the general public are action shooting competitions such as USPSA and 3-Gun matches. I know this flies against what many tactical trainers would recommend, but there is a lot to gain from using competition as a training tool as long as you avoid a few shortfalls and apply the skills you are trying to develop to the problems presented. First, it will let you know very rapidly what areas need improvement; physical or mental. It is also very difficult to perform well, even at a local match, if the majority of your marksmanship fundamentals and weapon manipulations haven't been programmed into your subconscious. Getting smoked by the 14 year-old in your squad that first match will typically provide the motivation to buckle down on the dry fire training you've been avoiding as well. Outside of standardized classification stages, you will very rarely encounter the same stage or course of fire twice. This constant variation keeps things fresh and aids in developing the mental ability to evaluate a situation, break it down and apply the appropriate solution to the problem without being overwhelmed by the totality of the course of fire.

One mistake I made when I first started competing in USPSA was refusing to "game" the courses of fire by viewing the stage of fire and formulating a plan. I had convinced myself that reacting to the targets and taking them as I encountered them was more "tactical" since in combat I didn't have time to plan out how I was going to shoot the enemy and in what order. It was only later that I realized I was missing out on a huge mental training opportunity. It is not an easy skill to develop the ability to analyze a situation, break it down, develop a plan and then execute that plan with the stressors of time constraints and in front of an audience. Once I made the decision to start planning my stages, I found I was only able to stick to my plan through the first couple of targets and any hiccup, like a malfunction or missing a shot, would completely throw me off. Over time and with practice (experience) I am now able to develop a plan, execute it and modify it on the fly to deal with any unexpected occurrences during the course of fire. I find it hard to argue now that "gaming" a stage is not a path to development of a critical tactical skill. Competition is also a good method to develop stress management skills that allow you to focus on the execution of your plan and block out unnecessary distracters. Maintaining internal calm and focus while waiting for the timer to go off, while you're standing in front of a crowd where you know that fourteen-year-old that took your lunch money last week is waiting to do it again, is a challenge in itself.

So, if your training program or organization only focuses on development in one specific area, I would challenge you to take a hard and honest look at your personal capabilities in the areas outlined above. Improvement can be made by varying your training and courses of fire, pushing outside of your comfort zone and regularly testing your skills in realistic scenarios or competition. ✓

BIO

Ken Javes has over 19 years of military and security contracting experience to include multiple combat and contract deployments to South West Asia. He has served with Marine Infantry and Force Reconnaissance units. He possesses instructor certifications from multiple agencies and organizations, and has trained with some of the top military and competitive shooters in the country. www.sbibumitactical.blogspot.com.