VOLUME 5 PROGRAM 7

Low Light No-Light Shooting
Backup: Sniper

DUTY SHEET & LESSON PLAN

Total Program Length: 37:10

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LOW-LIGHT SHOOTING (6:01)

Chances are overwhelming that when an officer uses his weapon in anger, it will be used in low-light-no light conditions. There are a number strategic, tactical and equipment issues to deal with. The most fortunate officers are equipped with night sights which afford a much better target picture than weapons which are not so equipped.

Practicing under available light, low-light, and no light conditions is invaluable for officers.

FLASHLIGHTS (3:11)

Flashlights are critical equipment in dark conditions. Although the light also presents the officer as a target, practice, working with partners, and minimizing flashlight use can help avoid that problem. However, the light is essential for target identification.

Officers should practice various techniques for using the flashlight while shooting.

USING COVER (4:49)

Use of cover is as critical in a low-light-no light situation as it is at any other time. Special care should be taken not to “bounce” the light off of your cover so that the shooting officer is illuminated.

IDENTIFYING TARGET (2:01)

Identifying the target is essential. Enormous liability issues can be raised if officers fire at muzzle flashes, through closed doors, or without properly identifying the target.

TEAMWORK (1:42)

Officers should practice working with partners or teams in low-light conditions with special regard for covering each other and using each other’s light. Practice should include a method of communicating when officers are reloading, when they are experiencing a malfunction, or when there is other important information which needs to be communicated.

LESSONS LEARNED (1:42)

Among the lessons learned by the instructors at the Fairfax (VA) Training Academy, is the need to learn how to use and hold the flashlight, especially for positive identification of the target. Handling of equipment, such as the flashlight, should be practiced so that all equipment can be handled effectively in the dark and while on the move.

Target identification presents itself as a must.

QUESTIONS (1:02)

1. How often do you practice low light or nighttime shooting?
2. What is your most effective means of using your flashlight in low-light shooting scenarios and do you practice it?

3. Discuss the effective use of cover.

4. Do you have an effective communications system for working with a partner or fellow team members in a low-light situation and do you practice it?

5. While on patrol, do you ever set up “what if” scenarios at your location to determine what cover or escape routes would be available to you if a crisis developed at that moment?

6. Do you have specific criteria for target identification?

7. What is your policy for shooting through doors or at muzzle flashes?

BACKUP (9:29)

The Backup segment deals with sniper recruitment and training. Again, working with the Fairfax County (VA) Sniper unit, we have brought many of its lessons to the fore in this segment.

They espouse use of the Ghillie Suit, a camouflage which is effective for concealment. Snipers do more than shoot. They are used as eyes and ears, and with their telescopic sights, can often describe a situation which can not be seen by other officers.

Sniper units may not be practical for every department. Some are just too small. However, there should be one unit in every region which various departments can take advantage of.

It takes a very special personality to be a sniper. Marksmanship is a key qualification. But there are certain personality characteristics which are important too, not the least of which is the ability and willingness to shoot to kill. In some cases, that happens after you have spent hours watching the target and, ironically, may have bonded with him or her. The sniper should approach the job not as being prepared to take a life, but rather to save a life such as in a hostage situation.

While a designated authority will determine when the sniper will take a shot, the sniper is the final decision maker and will take it only when he feels satisfied he can make it.

Snipers should train under realistic conditions in rain, snow, sleet, hail, low light conditions or perfect weather. Any of these conditions can alter the shot and they should keep records to know variations caused by such things as heat, humidity or wind. Practice is important. The scope used by snipers is very important and only the top quality scopes should be considered. At Fairfax they say you take the gun out of the equation if you do not use a quality scope.

EPILOG (:35)

Fairfax County uses the Remington Model 700 Short Action .308 caliber rifle for sniper work.

The Ghillie Suit is used by military snipers, law enforcement snipers and hunters. It was initially designed by Scottish game keepers, called Ghillies, as a means of running off poachers.
LESSON PLAN

SYNOPSIS: This course illustrates low light-no light shooting techniques, and the basics for setting up a sniper unit.

TIME: 1 Hour

OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of the course, officers should be able to

Obj. A Understand a number of strategies and techniques for shooting under low light-no light conditions, including the use of flashlight, using cover, identifying targets, and teamwork.

Obj. B Understand the basics of establishing a sniper unit and whether it is advisable for all departments. Also to understand the type of personality necessary to be a sniper, and the equipment necessary to perform that function effectively.

INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES

Obj. A.

I. Chances are that an officer who uses his weapon in anger will fire in low light-no light conditions, either at night, or in a low light situation inside during the day.

A. Acquisition of night sights advisable for these conditions.

B. Flashlights are a key tool. There are various methods for using them effectively the weak hand holds the light and supports the weapon; the weak hand parallels the strong while holding the flashlight (thumb to thumb).

C. Care must be taken not to use the light in such a way that the holder is identified as a target.

D. Cover is as important in the dark as it is during the day. Care must be taken not to bounce your own light off your cover. It will illuminate you and offer your adversary a lighted target.

E. Target identification is critical. The liability issue is high. The ID must come before firing. Firing at muzzle flashes or through closed doors is discouraged.

F. Practice teamwork. In working with a partner, or a team, a form of communication should be worked out which will not be understood by your adversary. This means can be used to advise a partner when you are reloading, experiencing a malfunction, or on the move. You can also use the light from a partner to identify a target without having to activate your own.

G. Practice is advisable until you are comfortable with your flashlight. Officers should also practice handling equipment in the dark because fine motor skills can suffer under a stressful situation.

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BACKUP: SNIPERS

Obj. B

II. A sniper unit is probably not advisable for every department because of size or cost, but every department should have access to at least a regional unit for hostage situations and other times when a sniper is required.

A. Camouflage, such as ghillie suits, is advisable to enhance the sniper’s ability to move into and maintain position undetected.

B. Marksmanship is a key quality for snipers, but they often provide value without firing a shot because of their ability to provide intelligence information. Their telescopic sight is advantage in gathering information.

C. Special care should be taken in selecting snipers. A specific personality is best suited for the job. Best suited is someone who can work alone, remain motionless for long periods of time, and understand he may have to take a life in an instant

D. Above average marksmanship is a given.

E. He has to have the ability to decide if he can make the shot when given the order to do so by a supervisor.

F. Snipers should practice in all kinds of weather and conditions. Rarely are they offered a shot under optimum conditions.

G. They should keep records of their shots in these conditions so they can adjust accordingly when faced with them.

H. While effective sniper rifles can be purchased “off the shelf,” snipers should use the highest quality scopes. The poorer the quality, the less effective the weapon becomes.