Volume 9 Program 6

STRIP SEARCH TRAINING/
CINCO DE MAYO RIOT

DUTY SHEET AND LESSON
PLAN

Total Program Length  34:38

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The most distasteful task for most officers is a strip/body cavity search. However, it is also a most critical, life-saving chore. Every conceivable weapon, including handguns, can be hidden by a physical and mental suspect capable of doing such a thing. This includes men and women who secrete drugs and weapons in their body cavities. The hiding places are usually the armpits, rectum, vagina, the total groin area and in heavy set people the folds of their skin. These are perfect as they are ‘sensitive’ areas the officer does not want to/or is embarrassed to touch.

Suspects will go to extreme lengths such as inserting bottles in the cavity to stretch it out. Females, who are more prone to carry drugs, have more control over the groin muscles. This is versus men who carry drugs/weapons. Drugs are prominent in both male and female prisons. Visitors will try various means (and creative means) to smuggle contraband or weapons to an inmate.

When conducting a strip search common rules are not to violate a person’s civil liberties and conduct the search in a clean, quiet area. In the penal system, the officer is more free to conduct this search as the person is already a convicted felon.

Each agency has it’s own guidelines. Know and practice the guidelines for strip/body cavity searches at all times. In many cases medical personnel may be necessary to conduct the search. Know the rules before a hands-on search on the sensitive areas of a suspect’s body.

**Rules that apply** in all cases include being professional and maintaining your and the subject’s dignity, never touching the subject, having a cover officer present, following procedures without hurry, maintaining a commanding (not demanding) voice, stay focused on the goal no matter what the subject’s actions, use a nice, pleasant voice in a lower key than normal, focus in on what you have to say with no yelling or use of slang.

No matter how distasteful a strip search may be, the distaste must take a backseat to safety and the search must be complete. Work down the body in segments starting with the head. Determine where the inmate, the search officer and the cover officer stand. Always identify the inmate and check the subject’s medical condition so you are aware of any problems.

Be focused on the subject with no visual or verbal distractions. Have the subject remove all clothing and hand to the cover officer. Have the inmate hold hands out, palms up and palms down. Conduct the search head to foot. In an upper body search have the subject open mouth with fingers as he/she searches under the tongue moving the tongue around. Next, have the subject tilt head back and look in the nostrils using a flashlight, if necessary. Check the ears moving the ears forward to insure nothing is behind the ears. The subject should bend forward at the waist and run their fingers through the hair.

For a lower body search, if the subject is a male check the penis with his running fingers through the scrotum area including extreme pubic hair. Facing away, have the subject open the buttocks with feet spread apart and cough three times to make
sure there is nothing in the orifice. Lastly have the subject lift each foot and wiggle their toes which can hold small amounts of drugs.

For female subjects the upper body search is the same except they should lift their breasts. Remember not to touch the subject. If there are excessive folds, have her lift the folds for inspection. For lower body she will then open her legs and run her fingers through the vaginal/pubic areas. If the female is pregnant, do not have her squat and cough. A female’s vaginal muscle is stronger than a male’s. If not pregnant, have her drop straight down, hold buttocks open and cough three times. Check feet similar to males. During a search of a female, unless an emergency, (such as a yard riot) make sure an officer of the same sex is present.

Intimacy/friendship invites complacency, laxity on the part of the officer; fight it. Don’t be lackadaisical or too comfortable with an inmate. Take nothing for granted. Take your time and do not deviate from policy and procedure.

The cover officer is necessary to monitor the physical action of the inmate, the demeanor, stance, and the subject’s response to questions to determine the mindset prior to the search.

Prison searches may be more thorough than a search conducted in a local jail facility. These subjects are convicted felons. To a degree a felon has certain rights, but never forget safety comes into play first. You cannot allow the felon to dictate the environment. If the subject refuses to comply for a strip search, do not confront the subject. You can restrain the subject or put them in a temporary holding cell until they are ready to comply. Never allow an inmate to intimidate you or talk you out of the search. Just keep your mind focused on carrying out the search in the most safe manner for your safety, that of the inmate and the prison

The basics of a strip/body cavity search are:

- Secure the area
- Have a contact and cover officer present
- A professional attitude
- Give the subject the reasons for the search

Different agencies have different policies.

- the policy as described above
- allow touching the subject during the search
- officers searching the subject themselves

No matter your agency’s search policies follow them remembering that male searches male; female searches female.
LESSONS LEARNED

- Always have a cover officer present during a search.
- The search area must be secure to save embarrassment to the subject.
- While it may be distasteful, a thorough search ensures safety of all concerned.
- When conducting a search work down the body.
- Stay focused on the subject with no distractions.
- Keep a professional attitude. Do not yell or use slang.
- Do not allow the subject to dictate the environment.
- Do not become lackadaisical, complacent; take nothing for granted.
- The basics of a strip/body cavity search.
- Not only drugs, but every conceivable weapon can be hidden in a body cavity.
- Know the rules and guidelines before conducting a hands-on search.
- Do not hurry; be thorough.
- Do not deviate from your agency’s policy and procedure.
- The way visitors may try to smuggle contraband or weapons to an inmate.
- Be aware of any medical problems the subject may have prior to the search.

QUESTIONS (2:00)

1. Have you ever conducted a strip search or body cavity search?
2. Did you ever locate weapons, drugs or other contraband as a result of a strip search, body cavity search? What did you locate?
3. Where on the subject’s body did you locate it?
4. What have you found are the most creative places inmates have tried to hide weapons or contraband on their bodies?
5. Are you fully aware of department procedure and protocol in the event you may someday be called upon to do a strip or body cavity search?
6. What behavior or actions may lead you to recommend a strip search or full body cavity search?
7. Do you agree that treating inmates with as much respect as possible during such searches is important?
8. How important is an officer’s demeanor towards an inmate who is being strip searched? Why is it important?
9. Are you always careful to conduct strip searches in areas with most possible privacy, yet areas where your safety is never compromised?
10. How important is the task of the cover officer in a strip search?
11. As a cover officer in a strip search or cavity search, what do you feel are your most important duties? Be specific.
12. Do you agree with the experts who say the distasteful nature of doing a strip search can lead to officers hurrying and/or laxity and complacency?
13. What’s the worst that can happen if you missed a weapon during a strip search?
14. Having answered that question, how important does that make the absolute necessity of thorough strip and body cavity searching?
**Cinco De Mayo (7:04)**

This annual impromptu street party celebration of Hispanic residents in Santa Rosa, CA erupted into a bloody evening in 2002 when rival gangs spurred on by the noise, crowds and adrenalin assaulted cars, each other with fists, guns and knives.

In 2003 the mission for the Santa Rosa Police Department, the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department and the California Highway Patrol was traffic and crowd control. Arrests were minimal. Although there was no violence, when this mission failed, the officers moved in to disperse the celebrants.

Efforts of the combined agencies resulted in 2004 with the addition of mounted units, K-9 units and a helicopter to observe crowd activities. The sidewalk crowd was some 1,500 with hundreds of automobiles on the streets.

When the crowds failed to disperse, the celebrants resisted law enforcement efforts throwing bottles, rocks etc. at the officers and vandalism became rampant. Afterward merchants whose establishments were damaged were critical of law enforcement; however, videos of the evenings' events clearly demonstrated the issues the officers had faced.

Planning for 2005 the agencies have taken into account the lessons learned previously and have a coordinated plan which includes:

- Officers on rooftops to monitor the crowd
- Deployment of flanking squads
- Use of flash bang devices
- Shin guards
- Debriefing
- Preplanning
- Bilingual public relations efforts
- Video of events
- Working with community leaders and the media

**Weapon Retention Email (1:21)**

In response to our training video on weapon retention, we received an email from Chuck Habermehl, Director of Training for Volusia County, FL, pointed out, in his opinion, the one-hand technique was not adequate. He stated that two hands were needed to push your weapon back in the holster. Weapon retention is achieved through leverage, joint manipulation and violence of action, not strikes. The main thing is to practice, practice, practice.
The newest innovation in hidden weapons is available via the web on www.autoweapons.com. It is a 22 calibre long rifle revolver with double-action firing capabilities which fires six shots incorporated in a handle designed around a professional briefcase. It is the Enigma Briefcase Gun. It is available to ‘qualified individuals’, security services and law enforcement agencies. It is touted for executive protection and security with a price tag of $1,695.

Don and I welcome your feedback. We invite you to bookmark our website at: www.lineofduty.com which is updated seven days a week with vital law enforcement news and information

Sincerely and in Officer Safety,
Ron Barber and Don Marsh, Executive Producers
IN THE LINE OF DUTY
1-800-462-5232
VOLUME 9, PROGRAM 6
LESSON PLAN

SYNOPSIS: This program features the basics of conducting a strip/body cavity search which may vary from agency to agency and points out the fact that safety must be the first consideration for the subject, the officer and the agency.

TIME: One hour

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

Obj. A Discuss personal feelings in regard to conducting a strip/body cavity search

Obj. B Conduct a thorough strip/body cavity search

Obj. C Determine the actions that may lead you to recommend a strip/body cavity search.

Obj. D Know body cavity locations which may contain contraband/Weapons.

Obj. E Understand that respect for the subject is important

Obj. F Understand the importance of a cover officer being present

Obj. G Know your agency’s policy and procedure for strip searches

Obj. H Know the basics of a strip/body cavity search

Obj. I Learn the methods used by visitors to smuggle contraband/Weapons to the subject

INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES LAB GUIDE

Obj. A Discuss personal feelings in regard to conducting a strip/body cavity search

1. Is it repulsive to you to touch the sensitive areas of the subject such as the groin area?
2. Are you embarrassed to examine these areas?
2. Do you feel different when conducting the search of a female rather than a male?

**Obj. B**  
Know how to conduct a thorough strip/body cavity search
0. Do not become complacent/lackadaisical because of familiarity with the subject
0. Know the various areas and cavities where items can be secreted
0. Do not hurry; be thorough
0. Be aware of any of the subject's medical problems prior to the search

**Obj. C**  
Determine the actions that may lead you to recommend a strip/body cavity search.
0. The subject's stance
0. The subject's response or lack of to questions
0. The subject's demeanor

**Obj. D**  
Know body cavity locations which may contain contraband/weapons.
0. Hands, armpits, ears
0. Hair
0. Rectum/vagina
0. Fingers, toes

**Obj. E**  
Understand that respect for the subject is important
0. Do not confront a subject when they object to being strip searched; use other methods as restraint or a temporary holding cell
0. Use a commanding nice, pleasant voice
0. Do not yell nor use slang language

**Obj. F**  
Realize the importance of a cover officer being present
0. The cover officer can observe the body language of the subject
0. This allows you, as the search officer, to focus on the subject without visual or verbal interference; with no distractions

3. Safety

**Obj. G**  
Know your agency's policy and procedure for strip searches
0. Never deviate from your agency's strip search policy and procedure.
0. Each agency may have differing procedures
0. Practice, practice the agency's procedure and be prepared to change the procedure with another agency should you switch agencies
Obj. H  Know the basics of a strip/body cavity search
    0. Secure the area
    0. Have a contact and cover officer
    0. Maintain a professional attitude
    0. Give the subject reasons for the search

Obj. I  Learn the methods used by visitors to smuggle contraband/weapons to the subject
    0. Secreting contraband on their own person
    0. Secreting contraband within their own person
    0. Passing the contraband by kissing the subject