



Volume 11 Program 1

Michelle Jeter Beating

Backup: What Would You Do?

WA Officer Removes Uncooperative Motorist by Her Hair

Backup: Bait Car

DUTY SHEET AND LESSON PLAN

Total Program Length 35:00

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The video training programs included in this video are designed to fit the four major POST categories for continuing education.

- **LEGAL STUDIES:** Concentrates on federal, state and local criminal law or issues.
- **INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVES:** Focuses on communication skills, cultural diversity training, ethics, conflict management, victim sensitivity and stress management.
- **TECHNICAL STUDIES:** Focuses on specialized studies or activities which directly relate to job description, including first aid and CPR training.
- **SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Focuses on activities that develop physical skill proficiency such as defensive tactics, firearms, driver training, first aid and CPR.

OVERVIEW:

This program uses video captured by the in-car recorder of Officer Michelle Jeter of the Carthage, Texas Police Department. Officer Jeter was brutally beaten and left for dead after a traffic stop. Here she describes the incident, the recovery, and the lessons learned.

ON PATROL (1:37)

The 1997 videotaped beating of Officer Michelle Jeter has left an indelible impression on law enforcement professionals since it made international news. It was and remains one of the most brutal officer assaults ever captured by camera

Officer Jeter is two years into her tenure on the 13-member Carthage, Texas Police Department. She is one of three officers on duty on a late Sunday afternoon in August. Of that day, Officer Jeter says she recalls starting her shift with a stop at a convenience store for a Dr. Pepper, before heading out to the business loop around her East Texas town.

The day has been typical so far, and she recalls hearing her colleague call out on a traffic stop on the Loop. As usual, Officer Jeter drives by and checks in with the other officer, whom she sees handing a driver's license back to the motorist. He spots Officer Jeter and indicates all's well. She drives on. And recalls nothing until she awakens in a hospital, six days later.

In the Line of Duty Technical Advisor Richard Simpher talks at length with Michelle Jeter about the attack and her recovery.

THE STOP (5:50)

Officer Jeter is running radar on Business Loop 59, and stops a blue Windstar van for speeding. As per department policy, she calls out on this stop, giving Dispatch the van's license plate number. Once she's made contact with the driver, and asks him to step out of the vehicle, she calls in his descriptors and driver's license number for wants and criminal history.

This motorist, Jorge Orozco, comes back wanted by the Texas Department of Public Safety on traffic warrants. With the driver standing behind the van, and his daughter coming to his side, Officer Jeter still does not call for backup. She says the other officer on duty this afternoon, who would ordinarily check up on her on his own or respond to her call for backup, is three-quarters of a mile away, also on a traffic stop at this time. She expects him to be unavailable for several minutes.

Officer Jeter makes conversation with Orozco while awaiting his background check. She casually asks if he's been to jail before, and he says that he has.

Meanwhile, the 8-year-old daughter is standing nearby, and Officer Jeter agrees that the girl's presence may have given the officer a sense of safety. She says looking back perhaps she is assuming a man would not do anything in front of his child that would traumatize the girl. On the other hand, Officer Jeter recalls other stops where the parent involves a child in some way, including an incident in which the father had concealed marijuana in a drawer under the child's feet. Clearly, the presence of family members is not always a deterrent to criminal behavior.

Knowing this driver has outstanding DPS warrants, and with his daughter present, Officer Jeter would normally have the man drive to the Sheriff's Office to take care of the warrants and he'd be free to go. In this case, however, she believes some cue she picked up as she initiated contact with Orozco has ruled out that option.

Asked why she has the driver step out of the van, she says she believes she had smelled the marijuana earlier on, and knows it's possible the driver could be carrying a firearm to protect his load. Orozco's van is packed with furniture and personal items. Without a clear view of the vehicle's interior, she says, she separates the subject from anything within arm's reach he might use as a weapon.

Orozco gives Officer Jeter permission to search the van. She does so, as Orozco and his daughter remain standing behind the vehicle. Having reviewed what she has now learned about the incident, she acknowledges that she has put herself at a disadvantage, not able to see Orozco's gestures and posture as she searches the van. In retrospect, it's clear to her that Orozco knows she will find the duffel of marijuana, and he has no intention of cooperating from that point.

⇒ *Officer Jeter now recommends awaiting backup before searching any vehicle. She says an arrest can wait until a cover officer is available to observe all parties, and those few minutes are not crucial enough to justify compromising an officer's safety.*

Reviewing the video, Officer Jeter Orozco's location in relation to the van and the patrol car is a red flag. As she walks from the van's passenger side across the front of her cruiser to her driver's door, she is vulnerable to attack. She sees now that she would position Orozco further from her, or would take a different path to add distance between them.

After leaving her sunglasses in the patrol car, Officer Jeter walks to the van's driver's door, and continues the search. At this point she spots the duffel and moves toward Orozco, directing him to place his hands on the hood of her car. She refers to his "abba-dabba-abba-dabba" stammering as further indication that he's decided not to cooperate, that he is not going to jail.

⇒ *This is the most critical point in any encounter, says Officer Jeter: the point at which the officer moves to secure the subject. If the individual does not comply, she says “take a step back...” Consider other means of control at your disposal and use them.*

THE ATTACK (3:29)

Officer Jeter corrals Orozco toward to patrol car, simultaneously calling for backup, and readying her handcuffs. Her manner has become brisk and efficient, and Orozco backs up against the cruiser’s hood, and leans back on his right hand as Officer Jeter reaches to turn him to be handcuffed. At this moment, Orozco swings his right arm around and smashes Officer Jeter’s face, sending her to the pavement. He drops to his knees and straddles her legs and continues punching her in the face and head.

After several blows, he is seen groping for her Glock 9mm. The holster, a Safariland Threat Level II model, doesn’t give easily and Orozco gives up. Calling to his daughter to get back in the van, he repeats “I can’t go back to jail, Baby.”

⇒ *Even now, Michelle Jeter is surprised at the speed with which Orozco moves and strikes her to the ground. She says she’d assume she’d have seen the fist drawing back, she’d have time to react, but that’s not the case. Seeing the move being made does not assure an effective response.*

As Michelle Jeter lies battered and unconscious, Orozco drives off and strangers stop to help. One man, Dino Iusa, a Houston teacher, stops and immediately checks the fallen officer, then uses Officer Jeter’s shoulder microphone to radio for help. Meanwhile, another driver sees that she’s attended to and takes off after Orozco, calling 911 with the van’s location until other officers are able to stop Orozco and take him into custody.

Mr. Iusa and other Good Samaritans remain with Michelle Jeter as another officer arrives. Soon an ambulance is at the scene and evaluates her condition. Repeated blows leave her with a crushed left eye socket, smashed and displaced left cheekbone, jaw and nose. She has a concussion and struggles to breathe as her windpipe swells nearly shut.

Officer Jeter is transported by ambulance to the local hospital, but when her condition proves too critical for the ER staff, she is Life-Flighted to a trauma center in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her long recovery begins when she awakens six days later to her husband’s vague explanation of events. She sees her bruises and stitches but realizes that she has survived mostly intact.

LESSONS LEARNED (7:16)

Many elements of the stop and assault serve as lessons to other officers. Richard Simpher identifies several:

- Don't stereotype a situation or subject:
It's not safe to assume that the presence of a child or other family members will prohibit violent behavior from a determined subject.
- Do ONE thing at a time:
Take any procedure one step at a time. Officer Jeter has divided her focus between her shoulder radio and her handcuffs, losing concentration and ultimately control of the situation.
- Wait for backup:
Officer Jeter has called out on the stop, and almost from the beginning of the encounter, she expects to make an arrest. She faces a male subject taller and heavier than she is, but holds off calling for backup. She acknowledges that she would have benefited from the presence of a cover officer, and having a colleague on the scene may have prevented the assault.
- Don't stand between vehicles:
Throughout most of the encounter, Officer Jeter, the suspect and his daughter are standing between the patrol car and the back of the van. Too often, accidents happen that result in injury or death to those standing in that location. It is a safer practice to move all parties as far as possible out of the likely path of even a parked vehicle.
- Don't search vehicles by yourself:
It is impossible to both search a vehicle and maintain control of a subject without an additional officer. The officer is vulnerable when he or she attempts to conduct two activities at once.
- Slow down:
In this situation, a traffic violation quickly becomes complicated. Once it's determined that an arrest is imminent, it's important that the officer take the process a step at a time, and avoid calling undue attention to his or her intent. Here, stalling tactics, including casual conversation, would be useful in gaining additional information. The officer has the tactical advantage while keeping the subject's cooperation, until backup arrives and the arrest can be carried out safely.
- Use safe and sound tactics:
When arrest is imminent, the officer is vulnerable until the subject is secured. Continued training reminds officers of the safest ways to secure and search the subject.

- Use radio traffic discreetly:
Officers should remove themselves from the subject's earshot before transmitting or receiving information via radio. The dispatchers' response literally broadcasts to the subject what action the officer is likely to take.
- Protect your weapon:
Officer Jeter is unconscious as Orozco tries to take her weapon from the holster. Here, her Level II holster likely saves her from being shot and she lies there.
- Relieve the mental anguish:
Despite her husband's encouragement and the department's recommendation, Michelle Jeter refuses to seek professional help to relieve her of the ongoing effects of this trauma. Finally she meets with an FBI critical incident team, and begins to understand that the emotional strain she has suffered is typical for officers seriously injured in the line of duty. She accepts that getting help is not a sign of weakness, and now advocates mental health intervention for officers who have been through traumatic events.

Michelle Jeter now has a better understanding of Orozco's motivation that day, and is fully aware of how close she has come to having her life ended by a desperate man. Her advice to officers:

- Do everything you can to prevent an assault.
- Wait for backup.
- Position suspect on his knees before handcuffing.
- Keep subjects separated.
- Don't set yourself up.

QUESTIONS (1:44)

1. At what point in the traffic stop Michelle Jeter made would you have called for backup?
2. If you'd seen the subject Jorge Orozco making gestures to his daughter to stand aside, what would have gone through your mind?
3. If you had seen Orozco's gestures towards his daughter, what action would you have taken?
4. Where would you have positioned Orozco while you searched his vehicle?
5. Have you ever searched a vehicle alone? Should you? Will you do it again? If necessary, can it be done in a tactically sound manner? Discuss in detail.
6. Exactly what position would you have had Orozco take? On his knees, on the ground, sitting, on his stomach?
7. Under what circumstances, if any, would you have searched the vehicle without backup?
8. Exactly at what point would you have patted down Orozco?

9. During a pat down, what position do you assume? What position do you have the subjects assume?
10. Officer Jeter agreed she's allowed herself to get too close to Orozco more than once. Looking back, when do you feel she had compromised her area of control?
11. What body language did Orozco display that would or should have caused you concern?
12. Seconds before being attacked, Officer Jeter got on her radio, but had her back turned to Orozco. Tactically, at this point, where do you think she should have been?
13. What strategy or tactics do you employ if you have no backup and absolutely have to handcuff a subject?
14. What are the lessons learned, do you believe, are most important in this incident? Verbalize them, and be specific.

EPILOG (2:56)

- Officer Jeter joined the department as a reserve in 1995 at age 21.
- Her assailant, Jorge Orozco, was 37 years old at the time of the 1997 assault.
- He is 5'10" and weighs approximately 220 pounds. Officer Jeter is 5'5" and 125 pounds.
- Her lengthy facial reconstruction included titanium plates around her left eye socket, left cheek and part of her jaw.
- Her nose had to be reconstructed. She woke up six days later in the hospital, after a drug- and trauma-induced coma.
- After two months, she returned to work, despite nagging physical discomfort, headaches and nightmares.
- She left the department in August of 1998, brokered cars for a time, and had a baby.
- Returning to the department five years later, Mrs. Jeter patrolled the same part of town where the assault occurred.
- As of this taping, she works plainclothes Narcotics.
- Her husband is Chief Deputy David Jeter of the Panola County, Texas Sheriff's Office. It's in that jail that Orozco was held after the beating.
- Orozco, a Cuban national, received 60 years for assault on a peace officer. He was denied parole at his first hearing in the winter of 2005, and doesn't come up for parole for four years.
- Good Samaritan Dino Iusa, who stopped and used Officer Jeter's radio to call for help, was a teacher. He was headed back to Pennsylvania after a family visit in Houston.
- About the incident, Officer Jeter now says "...the physical recovery was the easy part; the mental recovery was the tough part..."
- She is a big advocate of post-traumatic counseling for officers.

Because In the Line of Duty believes that Officer Jeter has so many valuable insights about post-traumatic stress, we're making a CD-Rom of her entire interview available at no charge to any department who has purchased this program.

For a copy of the complete Michelle Jeter interview, please contact us at: lineofduty@aol.com or 1-800-462-5232.

BACKUP - What Would You Do? (7:38)

An Auburn, Washington officer makes national news when he forcibly removes an uncooperative woman from her vehicle during a traffic stop. In-car video captured the incident.

The officer repeatedly warns the motorist to “stop resisting” or he will drag her from the car. Panelists from In the Line of Duty’s video podcast, CRIMETIME, discuss the stop, the officer’s actions, and what it means for law enforcement.

Retired St. Louis Homicide Detective Sgt. Mike Guzy points out that Americans get the idea from television and film that people are adept at fighting, that every encounter is cleanly choreographed. In reality, fights are messy, confused and look terrible on tape. The officer clearly advises the driver to cooperate but to no avail. He resorts to physical force - but not excessive force - to gain compliance.

Dr. Angela Wingo, Clinical Psychologist, sees it from the female driver’s perspective, and acknowledges that we don’t see into the vehicle or understand completely what precipitated the stop. But she agrees that the officer is clear and professional in his actions. She says that some female motorists may expect to be treated deferentially by male officers, though that does not excuse this driver’s refusal to follow commands.

Rich Simpher, LOD Technical Advisor, sees this video as a good example of the officer’s self-control and tactical proficiency. Tactical trainers would be wise to use such examples to illustrate the many practical ways to gain compliance from a non-compliant individual, regardless of gender.

Mike Guzy observes that women display a wide range of behaviors on traffic stops, but he has never had occasion to remove a female driver by her hair. He adds that “there’s a reason that it’s called the Police FORCE and not the Police Debating Society.”

Rich Simpher emphasizes that whatever choice the officer makes, he or she must move decisively in taking control of an unruly subject.

EPILOG:

-The woman, a 55-year-old retired nurse, had been stopped for speeding 11 miles over the limit.

-The Auburn, Washington officer said she refused to sign the citation. In Washington, that’s an arrestable offense.

-The officer opened the door and pulled her out either by the collar or by her hair. It’s unclear in the tape.

-However, many law enforcement agencies say pulling the hair is an acceptable pain compliance technique, leaving no permanent injury.

-The woman claimed she did sign the ticket but in the video it appears the officer takes the citation book back from her and lays it on the roof of her car. It's not clear whether it's been signed.

-The woman is suing, claiming the officer used unnecessary force because she said she already signed the ticket.

-The case had not gone to court as of this taping.

Again, if you were this officer, what would you do?

The CrimeTime video podcast is available at no cost through Apple's iTunes Music Store, or at www.lineofduty.com.

BACKUP - Bait Car (1:00)

Communities across the US and Canada are tackling auto theft with the use of "Bait Cars." In Glendale, Arizona, a female subject is trapped when the car shuts down and locks up, and she's busted.

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LESSON PLAN

Synopsis: This program uses the videotaped assault on Officer Michelle Jeter of Carthage, Texas Police Department. Officer Jeter observes in retrospect tactical errors and how they may have been avoided.

Time: One hour.

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

Obj. A: Identify tactical decisions officers might make that leave them vulnerable

Obj. B: Discuss ways in which these vulnerabilities may be avoided

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES / LAB GUIDE

Obj. A: Identify tactical decisions officers might make that leave them vulnerable

1. Stereotyping a subject or situation sometimes creates a false sense of safety
2. Trying to do several things at the same time results in inadequate attention to important elements
3. A single officer tries to manage two subjects, a vehicle search and an arrest without backup
4. Officers and subjects standing between vehicles risks the safety of all parties
5. Conducting a vehicle search without a cover officer compromises the officer's safety
6. Rushing through tasks reduces attention to critical information
7. Officers get into routines that put them at risk
8. Conducting radio communication in the subject's presence cues the subject to the officer's actions
9. Inadequate equipment may allow a subject to disarm an officer
10. Refusal to get appropriate mental health assistance after a traumatic incident compromises all aspects of an officer's performance

Obj. B: Discuss ways in which these vulnerabilities may be avoided

1. Understand that a determined subject may take advantage of any opportunity to avoid arrest, and could become violent regardless of the presence of children or other bystanders
2. Concentrating on one task at a time reduces distractions
3. When available, wait for backup, regardless of the expected delay
4. Officers and others should move as far from possible from the possible path of any vehicle, moving or parked
5. A cover officer, whenever available, reduces risk to the contact officer by containing subjects while the contact officer searches the vehicle
6. Knowing procedure and following the steps systematically helps officers maintain the tactical advantage in any encounter
7. Take advantage of continued training to improve defense and arrest tactics
8. Communicate with Dispatch away from the subject to avoid broadcasting intent
9. Carry the best available equipment to ensure weapon retention
10. Take advantage of de-briefing opportunities to work through whatever lingering effects may present themselves following a traumatic incident