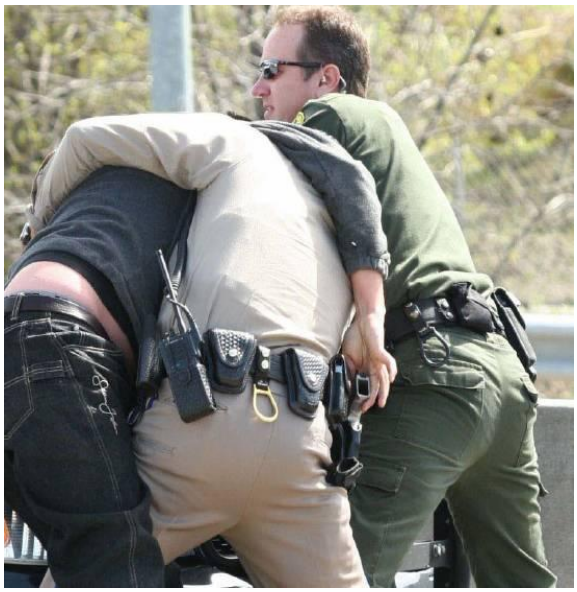
The Use of Less Than Lethal Force and Weapon Retention in Restricted Spaces



By L Rivera

Introduction

Law-enforcement and military personnel are government officials charged with protecting our citizens. These are dangerous and stressful professions that require them to perform hazardous duties, which often require the use of force. Many of these operations take place in restricted spaces where the combined presence of suspects/hostiles and innocent civilians is not uncommon, making it even more challenging for them to perform their tasks—the more populated the area, the more difficult it is to neutralize the threat and also put the officers and civilians at a greater disadvantage; for this reason, the use of force cannot be applied at random. There are strict guidelines for law-enforcement and military personnel regarding the use of force. The bottom line is that the amount of force that can be used by them must be proportional to the threat and can only be applied in the minimum amount needed to achieve a legitimate purpose. For example, the New York Police Department has five stages through which the use of force can progress:

1) Verbal persuasion
2) Unarmed physical force

3) Force using non-lethal weapons
4) Force using impact weapons
5) Deadly force.

As mentioned above the level of force used is determined by the level of the threat encountered; therefore, it is important to be able to estimate/assess the level of the threat or risk inherent to the operation, as well as identifying ways to mitigate risk prior to executing the assigned tasks, in order to minimize the danger to the force, as well as innocent civilians. For example; if the task calls for police officers is to service a warrant, or snatching a high value target by a military force; the level of the threat can actually be determined by learning about the suspect's or target history, by reviewing criminal records and, or recent intelligence information on the bad guy. Knowing what the person or suspect looks like is also important, ***"positive ID"*** helps make the distinction between the suspect and innocent bystanders and facilitates the application of discriminating fires.

However, sometimes information is not available and even if it is, the situation may not allow enough time for one to review intelligence data prior to the operation--such as with an emergency assault, or reacting to an Active Shooter Incident. In the case of active shooter's incidents officers may not know beforehand what the suspect or suspects look like, and still must act expeditiously in order to prevent loss of lives. In cases like this they can look for things like ***threatening or aggressive behavior***, as well as differentiate hostiles or suspects from non-hostiles by ***looking at the person's hands for weapons***. This include objects we traditionally consider deadly weapons such as firearms, explosives, and traditional edge weapons, as well as non-traditional ones, such as makeshift or other improvised weapons that may be available to a suspect—like plastic knives, or credit cards. Although these weapons have their limitations, as they must be aimed at vulnerable areas of the body not protected by clothing such as the eyes or the throat to be effective, in the hands of a trained criminal can be lethal. In addition, there is always ***the officer's or soldier's weapon*** which a determined person will likely try to take possession of, given a window of opportunity.

In this article the readers will be introduce to tactics techniques and procedures (TTPs) developed exclusively for tactical situations where the threat is at close proximity, in restricted spaces and surrounded by non-hostiles/innocent civilians. These TTPs have been developed for a specific scenario: *Weapon retention and control with non-lethal response in restricted areas.* In this—as in any other tactical situation—success, first and foremost, depends on the officer's ability to accurately identify, engage and neutralize the threat. These cannot be achieved unless the individual maintains control, and possession of his or her weapon.

1. **<u>First Teaching Point</u>**: Trigger safety and Muzzle Awareness;

Trigger safety. Keep the trigger finger poised alongside the weapon's magazine well (if a rifle) or the slide (with a pistol) and off the trigger until the threat is actually identify or anticipated.

Muzzle awareness. Firearms are very unforgiving; therefore, one must ensure the muzzle of the weapon is never pointing directly at anyone as one moves among the populace.

2. **<u>Second teaching point</u>**: Re-educating response and reflexes.

People have conditioned their response to attackers in a way which help them get away from the threat. When someone reaches and grab a person by the shirt collar, hair, arms etc. one tend to pull away and make room between oneself and the threat in order to muster a counterattack. However, these same actions when someone is attempting to take possession of one's weapon will more than likely result in assisting the bad-guy in taking it away. I.E. if an attacker reaches from behind and grab the gun by the handle or pistol grip, and one's reaction is to pull away from the attacker, the pistol will most likely come out of the holster, leaving the victim staring down the barrel of his or her own gun.

In order to modify one's reflexes, one must re-condition them by performing specific ***flow drills*** over and again to develop muscle memory and move to more advanced drills as one re-learn how to react—repetition is the key for success.

The first Flow Drill is called ***"Go with the flow"***—this drill requires two participants, a defender and an attacker. The defender is blindfolded—for the

purpose of developing automatic response: The attacker approaches and grabs the defender's shooting arm just above the wrist. Once contact is made, the attacker moves in the direction he would go if he was attempting to take the gun from the defender. The defender must then—without effort and or resistance—walk in the direction the assailant is pulling "***going with the flow.***" This drill should be performed with the attacker approaching from every direction imaginable.

Attack from the side

Attack from the rear

3. Fourth Teaching Point *React-Drills*—these drills are also performed blind folded and without a blindfold. Once the person's reflexes start to change, it is time to progress to react-drills. The react drills in this document are very basic ones, as the intent is not to teach some secret martial arts trick, but to provide a starting point from which the individual can build instinctive responses and further develop functional defensive skill. An important thing to remember is that although *"Go with the Flow Drills"* are performed in a very slow and deliberate manner, *React-Drills*—on the other hand—should be performed slowly at first to avoid injuries and as one becomes more proficient, the drills should become more intense and aggressive. Another point of interest is that one is training for another form of close quarters combat (CQC), therefore; the principles of CQC—***surprise, speed*** **and** ***violence of action***—also apply.

For example:

Once an assailant has made the commitment to disarm a person, and begin to make his move, he is mentally prepared to deal with resistance, therefore; not resisting, will cause the assailant to have to deal with an unexpected reaction—the element of ***surprise***. The counter-attack must be as fast as possible to exploit the few seconds of uncertainty created by the unexpected response—principle of ***speed***. The counter-attack must consist of multiple strikes to vulnerable parts of the body. These strikes must be delivered with full power and with the intent to disable the assailant as quickly as possible—this amount to ***violence of action***. These TTP's focuses on "Weapon

retention and control through the use of less than lethal means in restricted in areas while standing.

(1) Weapon retention and suspect control (front attack standing). The intent is to allow one to maintain control of the weapon, while controlling the environment—the attacker may not be a singleton (alone), therefore, it is imperative that once one has assumed control of the initial attacker or immediate threat, one must also remain alert and aware of the surroundings by not becoming fixed on that one suspect—target fixation is a common problem with inexperienced personnel. The following are some examples of weapon retention and suspect control:

Grab the assailants wrist and hand, As he pulls, push his hand away from the weapon

step in the direction of the pull and push him away

draw the weapon and <u>keep a look out for other bad-guys</u>

As the attacker reaches and grab the weapon. Grab the arm just below the elbow, slide both hands towards his wrist and hand. Move slightly forward and establish a base. Secure the arm, begin striking maintain control of the subject while <u>looking out for other bad-guys</u>

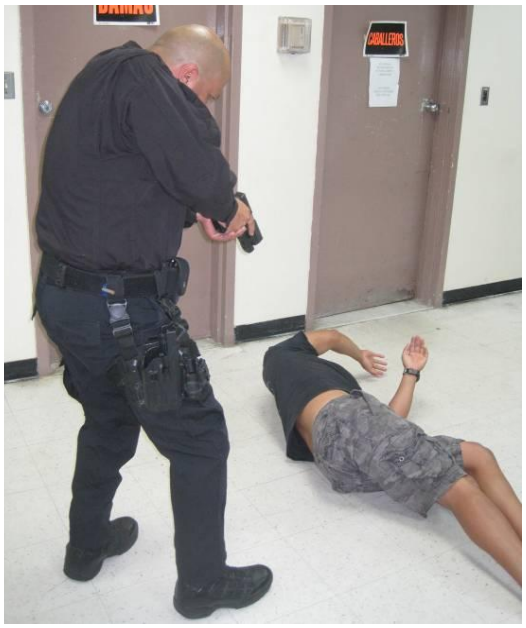
(2) Weapon retention and suspect control (rear attack standing). The most important thing to remember is that when attacked from the rear, ***one must go with the flow***. However, going with the flow doesn't mean falling backwards—leaning backwards excessively will leave one without a solid base and consequently the technique will have little or no leverage. The base, however, is going to be limited by the restricted space. Therefore, in order to have a good enough base, one must take a step backwards, and bend at the knees rather than just spreading the legs into a horse stance like position.

As soon as contact is made grab both wrists while simultaneously forming a solid base by stepping towards the assailant with the firing foot.

Bend forward at the waist, while continuing to move behind the assailant. Here one may apply an arm lock, or any other control technique.

One may also push the assailant away and draw the weapon <u>while looking out for other potential threats.</u>

(3) Weapon retention and suspect control (side attack standing)



When attacked from the side, grab the assailants arm, follow his lead and flow keeping control of his hands and wrist.

Step towards the assailants back with your non-shooting leg—move behind him—while simultaneously applying a modify headlock and force the assailant to the ground.

All efforts must be made not to go to the ground with him; however, if one do go down, one must keep control of the weapon, push and stand up, step away from the assailants' danger zone and draw the weapon. <u>Keeping a lookout for other bad-guys</u>

(4) Weapon retention and suspect control (front attack ground 1)

(5) Weapon retention and suspect control (front attack ground 2)

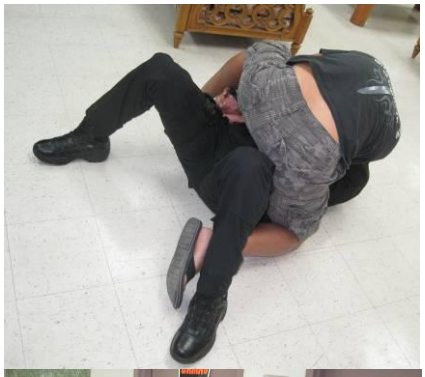
If unable to keep the assailant from falling on top, bring him inside your open guard. As this position would not allow one to move in the direction of the pull, control his arm by placing both hands above his elbow and pull towards the ground. Slide your hands down his wrist and hands. With the non-shooting hand push his face towards your non-shooting side by slapping the ear and swinging the hips in the same direction. Swing the shooting leg over his back and head, secure the arm and sit-up … And slide both feet away from the opponent by bending the knees.

(6) Weapon retention and suspect control (front attack ground 3 and 4)

Another technique that may be used is the arm bar. This technique is very effective when the opponent uses both hands to try to gain control of the weapon.

The steps are the same as in the last technique except that the opposite leg (non-shooting side) is brought over his head after pushing the face and swing the hips.

Once the arm-bar is applied one must push up with the hips for more leverage and keep a sharp lookout for other potential threats.



Trap the assailant's wrists with your hands, and the foot opposite to your shooting side with your non-shooting legs--simultaneously. Plant the shooting foot and push straight up with your hips. This will force your opponent to roll over on his or her back.

Push the hands away from the gun and draw it. Place the bottom of the pistol grip (handle) against your side—this will let you know that the gun is pointing towards the assailant—get up and move away from the assailant's danger zone and <u>keep a sharp look out for other bad-guys</u>