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ENGAGING VCA: A Training Model for Moral Decision Making

**“YOU MAY BE WHATEVER YOU RESOLVE TO BE!”
THOMAS J. JACKSON, GEN’L
CSA**

REVIEW

In our past meetings we have discussed encounters with VCA, largely from their perspective. We have looked at their thinking, overall motive pattern, their probable weapons skill level, their tactics and willingness to fight.

Today we will look at a training model designed to prepare you for engaging VCA while observing the rules of moral and legal decision making.

MOTIVE MODELS FOR VCA

Instrumental

- The violence offered is an instrument to acquire a goal.
- He wants your wallet.
- He may be establishing a reputation, especially when involved with a cohort group. This VCA is particularly dangerous.
- VCA with this motive model is most susceptible to forming a restraining judgment.
- His weapons skills are more likely to be poor. He must get close.
- He will have a strategy for getting close. The strategy will likely make use of his chosen attack venue.
- His weapons are more likely to be of poor quality and poorly maintained. Systems are not likely to be redundant. If armed with a firearm, he is not likely to have a supplemental ammo supply. The weapon may not be fully loaded.
- He is very unlikely to use a conventional weapons transport system.
- He is less likely to be interested in a fight.
- He plans on an escape and to be unharmed.
- Most likely for economic benefit.

Expressive

- Violence offered is an expression. It is to set the world right as the VCA sees it.
- He is particularly unlikely to be susceptible to forming restraining judgments.
- He is very likely to transfer his hostility to anyone he interprets as part of the wrong he is trying to right.
- There is a greater likelihood his weapons skills will be good.
- His weapons are more likely to be of good quality and well maintained. He will likely have multiple weapons and additional ammo. He may even have breaching capabilities.
- He is much more likely to fight.
- He is less likely to plan on escaping the venue uninjured or alive unless he has other killing venues planned.
- He is there about honor as he sees it.

Instrumental/Expressive

- The incident begins as an instrumental occurrence and shifts to an expressive incident.
- His interactive interpretive model will be primed to accept offense at your actions that do not conform to his view deference to him and his position. He is looking for an opportunity to see an affront to his “honor”.
- Throwing your wallet will get you shot. Such techniques, as written about by “experts” are based on looking at robbery reports, not talking to killers.

WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF EMPLOYMENT

The greater the intimidation factor of the weapons system, the less likely it is to be employed. The less the intimidation factor of the weapons system, the greater the likelihood it will be employed.

This observation applies predominately to the instrumentally and instrumentally/expressively motivated VCA.

- Firearms rate of use is in the single digits.
- Edged weapon employment is about 1 in 4.
- Impact weapons are about 1 in 2.
- Empty hands are almost 1 in 1.

In a recent medical study of assault injuries done in England shows that the extent of injury and permanence of injury is greater from the shod foot than from firearms and edged weapons.

The greater the number of antagonists, the more likely there will be an assault regardless of your cooperation. If there are three or more antagonists an actual attack is almost assured.

When confronted, you must operate on a Plus 1 premise. No matter how many confront you, you must assume there is another until you have proven otherwise.

KILLING vs. FIGHTING

FIGHTING

Civilization is defined as a constellation of laws, rules, customs, practices and behaviors that form a fabric of mores that decides who can and cannot be killed, how they can and cannot be killed and who can and cannot kill. It is a moral construct that defines a culture.

Men are motivated to fight out of

- Fear
- Honor
- Economic self-interest

The moral rules of fighting require that each party to the fight know it is about to happen.

- There is a period of posturing where each side publicly sets out his grievance.
- Challenges and demands are publicly aired.
- Hence, observers are aware there is about to be a fight and have fair warning to take such action as to remove themselves from the danger zone.
- Each party to the fight prepares himself for the fight. They may remove articles of clothing and jewelry and place cell phones in pockets. They may acquire weapons.
- Failure to engage in this process is a violation of the rules of fighting.
- When one side or the other is damaged to the point that they are unable to continue the fight they must not be injured any further.
- The prevailing party is obliged to make arrangements to assist the injured party.
- To do otherwise is considered savagery and outside the rules of fighting.

These rules apply to a school yard fight, bar room brawl or war. The rules are an exercise in morality. They are an exercise in discipline and self-control.

VCA are killers.

- Killers do not honor the rules of civilization.
- With the exception of the current war in Iraq, American casualties in every other conflict were predominately from small arms and indirect fire weapons. Since May, 2003 the majority of American casualties in Iraq have been from IED's, suicide killers and snipers. American forces face killers as opposed to fighters.
- Killers are referred to as uncivilized, savage and ruthless.
- It is why they are reviled in developed civil society.

Engaging VCA is an act of fighting.

- As a fighter you are required to practice the rules of civilization lest you slip into savagery and are a reviled subject.

FIGHTING: A TRAINING MODEL FOR MORAL DECISION MAKING

As a person who carries weapons about in society you have decided that you are a moral arbiter.

- You are obliged to prepare yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and morally for the role as a moral arbiter.
- You are obliged to train your body, mind and spirit for your role as moral arbiter.
- Failure to accept and exercise these obligations is an exercise in immorality. It is a failure of discipline and self-control.

“NEVER TAKE COUNSEL OF YOUR FEARS!”
THOMAS J. JACKSON, GEN’L
CSA

In order to be an effective fighter, morally and physically, you must first develop the discipline and self-control to master your fears.

Notice that Jackson presumed the existence and operation of fear. He understood that discipline and self-control was the only vehicle to rejecting their effect on needed action.

Self-mastery is to be practiced daily in the ordinary affairs of life in order that they become instantaneous and second nature. You must learn to make decisions without regard to fear of the consequences.

This is a different concept than “fearlessness”. It is the recognition of fear and the skill to use it to your value.

The role of training discipline is to prepare the body to accomplish a constellation of physical and mechanical techniques instantly and with seamless transition without conscious mental enunciation of each component of the action.

TRAINING TO GO FROM UI TO UC

The goal of UC training is to imbed a sufficient number of physical and mechanical skills into your response system that they occur without conscious thought and more particularly without the need to mentally walk yourself through the technique.

The ability to perform these mechanical operations frees the mind to monitor other environmental factors for clues about what is happening and how best to respond to them.

The best example of this is operating a motor vehicle. The example that best illustrates this process is operating a motorcycle as compared to spending \$10.00 worth of quarters.

It is fundamental that you learn these skills with positive self-talk. Hence, you tell yourself to press the trigger, not “don’t jerk the trigger”.

As each component of a skill set is imbedded to the degree it is done without conscious mental talk through, move on the next skill set.

The practice of positive self-talk has the added advantage of preparing you to engage in that mental activity during any incident where stress is operational. As an imbedded habit, it will take over in crisis circumstance.

To test the level of imbedding increase the “background noise” by using a weapon platform with which you are not familiar and by using a dynamic environment to distract you.

We use the “mystery gun” stage for this form of testing. We also use a darkened venue.

PRIMARY COMPETANCY SKILLS

Commonly referred to as the Gunsite 4 Rules, it is PRIMARY that you have these rules firmly embedded. As a moral arbiter it is incumbent upon you to understand they are Rules, not suggestions or Recommendations.

Rule # 1

All guns are always loaded.

Rule # 2

Never allow the muzzle to cover anything it is not your full intent to destroy.

Rule # 3

Never place your finger on the trigger unless your sights are on something it is your full intent to destroy.

Rule # 4

You are completely responsible for each projectile you fire from ignition to terminus.

The purpose of these rules, which are redundant and dovetailed, is to avoid unintended discharges, especially those which lead to injury.

They also create behavior that that complies with the dictates of the law.

The practice of these rules gives rise to some techniques that must be incorporated into your repertoire of fighting skills.

There may be instances where you must deploy a weapon and immediately engage a VCA. In such instances you will pass through Rules # 1-3.

There may be other occasions where a threat seems apparent but the “need” to engage is not manifest. In order to comply with the “4” Rules you need a “contact ready” position. From “contact ready” you can gather sufficient information to determine the need to move to “engage ready”.

Following “engage ready” and, in some instances, “contact ready” you need to have a “360 ready” position in your skill sets.

EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT

If you are going to carry weapons about in society you have presumed that there may be an occasion where it will be needed.

If that is the case, you are presuming a critical incident may occur without warning.

The imperative is the weapons system. Every consideration defaults to the consideration of the weapons system.

CLOTHING

The primary purpose of clothing is protection. Critical incidents often have broken glass, twisted debris and flame associated with them.

In addition, critical incidents often require rapid movement across uneven and debris strewn ground.

Clothing should not identify you as someone who is likely carrying a weapon or someone who might cause a problem if an incident starts.

E.g. Shorts, T shirt, and shower shoes. E.g. If you feel you must wear a “gun” vest, put a Nikon patch on it.

Clothing should be selected for its ability to protect you and to conceal and provide an adequate support system for the equipment you have chosen to carry.

Pants must have belt loops that will allow for an adequate weapons transport system.

Cover garments, including suits must allow for the weapon to be carried with “printing”.

TRANSPORT SYSTEM

The belt is the foundation of the transport system. It must be constructed in such a way as to support your equipment.

The holster and transport devices for other equipment must fit the belt and remain in place.

EXCESSIVE EQUIPMENT

Many carry much more equipment than they need.

Besides a firearm and supplemental ammunition, it is important to have a sturdy blade and a light source.

TRAIN WITH ALL EQUIPMENT IN INTERGRATION

Some part of your training must include the integrated use of all equipment you have on your person.

We see instances where people forget they are carrying a second gun or blade.

TRAIN WITH AN EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Having a cell-phone on the belt in a fashion and location where it interferes with access to other equipment.

Having a light in the magazine well is a result of carrying it too close to the spare magazine.

Relying on the ability to see the witness holes as a means to confirm onboard ammo supply implies you will always have sufficient light available and your eyesight will always be good enough to make that discernment.

Use your tactile senses and your equipment management system to inform you of your equipment status, not just your vision.

Train and discipline yourself to see everything that is on your person is part of your crisis management system. If it is chosen otherwise it is likely to be an impediment to your performance.

HAND SKILLS

ACCURACY

The purpose of shooting is to hit an intended target.

Accurate fire can only be accomplished as fast as you can see.

In a confrontation with a VCA that must be terminated with gunfire each shot fired must be of sufficient speed and accuracy to terminate the encounter at the earliest possible moment.

This skill must operate at the UC level. Hence, you must employ a training regimen that coordinates visual cues with tactile sensory response.

Additionally, you must train to “see” no more than is needed to “see” to make the shot required. That is, you must train the eye to recognize the relationship between the size of the intended target and the required “sight picture”.

Assuming adequate tactile weapons indexing skill and the target is large enough and close enough, the back of the hand in the center of the target may be sufficient to accomplish adequate “aimed” fire. “Seeing this relationship between the target and the alternate “sight picture” should instantly communicate the form of trigger finesse required to make the required shot.

Seeing the relationship between the sights and a 6” target at 25 yards should communicate to the tactile senses the amount of trigger finesse required to make that required shot.

UC in accuracy is attained when the trigger finger “knows” the amount of trigger finesse required based on the relationship between the “aiming system” and the target.

EMERGENCY RELOADS (Slide-lock)

UC in weapons manipulation skills is attained when you can “feel” that the weapon is not ready to fire the next shot.

You must develop a training regimen that allows you to not only know the weapon is not in battery, but what state of out of battery it is in. The regimen should include operating the weapon in much reduced light.

Remember, if the slide is not moving, you must be moving. Get off the line of force at a minimum and to cover if possible. You must be able to do this instantly upon the weapon failing to fire.

LIA RELOADS (Lull in Action)

LIA reloads is just that.

MALFUNCTIONS

Reducing malfunctions must employ a non-diagnostic system. Remember that even if you can do a 1 second reduction drill you will be out of action for 2.5 seconds or more from the time you initially recognized the need to make a shot, recognized the weapon malfunctioned, reduced the malfunction and reacquired the target sufficiently to make the required shot. That is a long time to be in one place.

If the slide is not moving, you must be moving.

ENVIRONMENT CONTROL SKILLS

VCA, regardless of category, seeks to control the environment in which they operate. You must reduce or overcome that control.

PHYSICAL PRESENCE

Physical presence and bearing will carry you through most encounters. The single most important attribute to develop is that of being comfortable in any situation. You must actually understand that no matter what happens you will be able to handle the current circumstance and the aftermath.

All other expressions of physical presence are merely techniques you use as tools to accomplish specific momentary goals. Demonstrating passiveness, assertiveness, aggression and dominance are calculated demonstration designed to manipulate the moment to moment ebb and flow of the situation. If you are comfortable you can call up each of these behaviors as needed and modulate their duration and intensity. Being comfortable means you are in control of you. The situation is not in control of you.

You can not fake being comfortable. VCA are very adept at spotting anxiety and discomfort and exploiting it.

VERBAL

During any form of confrontation verbalization will either underscore your comfort level or immediately reveal your anxiety.

The purpose of verbalization in a confrontation is to communicate. Communication takes two forms. One is to give another person direction. The other is to gather information for an incomplete decision making process.

Verbalization that is confusing, contradictory, indecisive, timid, pleading or yapping will embolden those who are making decisions about what they will do next.

Some Practitioners advocate imbedding a “tape loop” of instructions to be used when involved in a confrontation. The tape loop concept is developed through advanced speculation on the form of confrontation you may encounter. If that speculation is accurate the technique may work. If it does not fit the circumstance as you encounter it you may merely embolden the VCA.

Silence and a smile can be more unnerving than invective filled screams.

Verbalization in a confrontation should enhance your communication of comfort with the then existing circumstance.

If you are still in the decision making/information gathering phase, verbalization should be designed to get you the information you need to make the decision.

Yapping is counter-productive to this process.

MOVEMENT

Movement allows you to control the environment and conveys you are in control of the environment.

Movement is dictated by the then existing imperative. If within reactionary distance movement gets you off the line of force and provides additional time to implement a response.

If you are moving through an environment movement allows you to minimize your exposure to hazards while implementing your response to the situation or deciding what response is immediately called for.

ENVIRONMENT READING SKILLS

Environment reading skills have two categories. The first is the physical environment and the second is the people that populate the environment.

When reading the physical environment your goal is to see how you can use the physical setting to your greatest benefit and to deficit of the VCA while accomplishing the current mission imperative.

You must train to quickly account for the features of the physical structure and what it suggests could be hazards. You must train to quickly account for portals and places of cover.

You must account for noise and light discipline.

You must learn to move quickly and under control from place to place.

You must recognize clues in the environment that point to alternate escape routes.

Learn to recognize means by which to clutter the progress of VCA and provide you with warning of their approach.

You must recognize clues that indicate something is amiss require further exploration to decide the action needed.

You must keep in mind the Gunsite 4 Rules, especially Rule 4.

Unless you are a member of a special unit of a governmental entity, it is very unlikely you will have to search a building for a VCA. You may, on the other hand have to quickly exit a building that is under attack by VCA. The skills sets are similar though the mission imperative is different.

JUDGEMENT

You must train to push your judgment skills. You must train to do threat assessment in real time. You must put in place responses that allow you to, if possible, acquire sufficient time to make reasonably accurate judgments about the apparent threat you encounter.

Your training must include regular instances of failure. You will learn from your mistakes. The training scenario should regularly, though not always, have a means to solve the problem without a mistaken judgment.

RESPONSE TO A THREAT

You must learn and practice “on demand” skills that include the acquirement and use of cover, distance, weapons retention, vigilance, follow-through, plus 1, escape and evade responses.

LIVE FIRE TRAINING

SHOOTING SKILLS AND HANDSKILLS

Regular live fire training should include accuracy drills at speed, presentation drills, stoppage reduction drills and the other hand-skills needed to efficiently operate your weapons system.

SCENARIO BASED SHOOTING

Train with associates. Set up scenarios that require practice of line of force movement skills while engaging hostiles. Enforce follow-through techniques and plus 1 drills.

Create challenging confrontation judgment drills. Have armed non-hostiles appear in the scenario. Do not joke about shooting a non-hostile. Review the scenario to see what opportunities to create more time to make a shoot decision were missed. Create scenarios that should put the Practitioner on alert to the real potential of armed non-hostiles in the environment.

Have training partners perform the role of the various “people” confronted in the scenario. Practice your verbal interaction skills of communication within the scenario.

SHOOT HOUSES

If you have a shoot house available for live fire, use it regularly. In addition to placing targets distribute clues about the premises that should provide information the Practitioner can use to evaluating the problem in real time. Create situations that re-enforce the importance of observation of the Gunsite 4 Rules.

Above all else, avoid scenarios that create “see gun shoot” responses and do create scenarios that require the Practitioner to manage his way into gathering sufficient information to discern hostiles from non-hostiles, particularly those who are armed and resistant to instructions to disarm.

INTER-PERSONAL CONFRONTATION SKILLS TRAINING

Inter-personal confrontation skills’ training involves interactive interpretations skills. It is role playing. The first step in role playing is for each Practitioner to learn the roles.

DRONE WEAPONS

It is important to learn how the VCA thinks. Practitioners must learn to see any environment in the fashion that the VCA will see the role of the environment to aid in accomplishing his task. At this stage in the training only drone weapons are used. E.g. Red Guns Using drone weapons at this point focuses all parties to the scenario on the thinking and interpretation of the evolving scenario and away from the desire to shoot the gun.

To do so the Practitioner decides what his goal is and he will accomplish it. It may be a straight robbery. It may be the expressive act of killing a third party and anyone near by. With that goal in mind the Practitioner/role player evaluates the venue for the most use it can be put to accomplish his goal.

If the scenario calls for multiple role players they should discuss and practice their strategy for accomplishing their task.

When the role players have decided how they will accomplish their task a Practitioner is introduced into the scenario. At the end of the scenario the role player is asked to describe what he heard and saw that caused him to take the actions he performed. The role players then describe their interpretation of what they observed and how they responded. They should also describe what would have changed their response should the Practitioner made different choices.

At the end of that particular Practitioner's iteration of the scenario he remains in the environment to watch at least two iterations performed by other Practitioners. On the third iteration of the scenario the Practitioner replaces one of the role players and performs the role of a role player.

Time and experience will develop a cadre of role players and will also help all participants learn to read an environment, read the motives of VCA and practice the various skills associated with confrontations.

It is important that role players pay attention to their own reactions to the conduct of the Practitioner and the other role players as the scenario unfolds. Behavior exhibited by each person party to the scenario that emboldens or chastens the role player should be noted and described. This information will help all understand what effect any action within the scenario has on shaping the response of all parties. The lessons should help all participants to understand the ebb and flow of events and how to manipulate them.

The goal of this part of your training is to give you an understanding of how the VCA will use the environment to his advantage and your disadvantage as a means of preparing you to read any environment. It also prepares you to read the VCA as he interprets your responses to his confrontation and to know how to avoid behavior which emboldens him as well as manipulate his actions to your advantage.

PROJECTILE FIRING SIMULATED WEAPONS TRAINING

EMBEDDING WEAPONS EMPLOYMENT TECHNIQUES

Projectile firing simulated weapons training has a two-fold purpose. The first is to embed particular weapons employment techniques on actual human targets that will respond as people do.

This form of training involves selecting a particular weapons employment technique and executing it as you would in live fire practice with the exception that a simulated weapon is used (AirSoft guns) by the Practitioner and the role player.

The role player makes his attack. The Practitioner executes his technique response. The exercise is repeated until the Practitioner can execute the technique while dealing with an animated target.

SCENARIO BASED STRESS INNOCULATION

The second use of projectile firing simulated weapons is in scenario based interactions designed to inoculate the Practitioner to the stress involved in confronting VCA.

The process is the same as that used in the drone gun scenario system with the added component of employing accurate fire in a rapidly moving scenario.