



## ILEETA USE-OF-FORCE PANEL FAVORS SIGHT RELIANT SHOOTING

At the recent 2010 ILEETA conference (International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers), a use-of force panel discussed Point Shooting vs. Aimed Fire.

An article by David Griffith about the discussion, is in POLICE Magazine. [This is a link to it.](#)

"The panel, which consisted of firearms trainers, law enforcement officers, a physician, an attorney, a physician, and a psychologist, discussed the issue in terms of training and officer-involved shootings. And it concluded that point shooting may be what happens in a gunfight but to point shoot well under stress officers need to aim when they train."

"Point shooting well under stress is all about muscle memory," said New Braintree, Mass., chief of police Bert DuVernay. "And the way you achieve that muscle memory is by learning to align your sights."

DuVernay said that training officers to point shoot without training them to aim was a "shortcut." "There is no instinctive ability to shoot. So we need to teach our people to use the sights under realistic conditions. That's the answer, not point shooting."

"Firearms trainer Vicki Farnham\* said point shooting allows shooters to put a lot of shots downrange very quickly but the results are less than spectacular. ... You better be able to use both of your sights and to hit what you want to hit."

Sgt. Brian Stover of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said "I was trained the old-fashioned way. And I've only been in one shooting. I fired three rounds and hit him once. I can tell you that an accurate shot ends the problem."

John Farnham\* said "We trainers have to persuade our students to do what works best in most circumstances and that is use their sights."

Physician and gun trainer James Williams argued that trainers should keep an open mind on the issue. "What we need to do is find out what the agencies that really are doing a good job hitting the bad guys are teaching their officers and copy them," he said.

And Dr. Alexis Artwohl said that "This is a life-and-death question. So we need to ask ourselves, 'What does the research show?' That's a huge problem in law enforcement: A lot of the training is

based on myths, assumption, and personal opinion. We need to know what works."

[\* The spelling should be Farnam.]

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When I read the article, I was almost knocked out of my chair, as the information presented was the long standing traditional clap trap that has resulted in countless Police casualties over the years.

No one doubts that when the sights are used, you can hit a target.

But, the studies and stats on Close Quarters Battle situations have established that Sight Shooting is not, and can not be used in most all of them. And it is in those situations where there is the greatest likely hood of an Officer being shot and/or killed.

As a result, Officers are being trained to use, a shooting method that is neither practical nor effective for use in most all Close Quarters Battle situations. And without such a means of self defense, only luck separates them from injury and/or death.

To send Officers into harms way, when this is now commonly known, is to me a tragedy.

And particularly so, as there are simple, and easy to learn, and easy to retain Point Shooting methods that are practical and effective for use in Close Quarters Battle situations.

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The topic was introduced by moderator Massad Ayoob, who also wrote a Jan, 2001 American Handgunner article titled: Aimed Vs. Point Shooting.

In the 2001 article, Mr. Ayoob said that he set up a "scientific test" to see which method was better accuracy and speed wise. Targets were set up at 4, 5, 7, 12, and 15 yards. And roughly 100 shooters participated in the event.

The conventional wisdom said everyone should be faster but less accurate when they weren't using sights. In fact, while this was the single most common result, a very significant number of the shooters did better with the unsighted pistol.

The test clearly shows that within five yards, if the gun is at eye level and can crudely be seen to be superimposed on the target, it can hit as well if not better than a pistol aligned with a conventional "sight picture."

## **THE PANEL**

Given that the table loaded with gun professionals who by their own quoted words, favor the use of the sights, it was not a big shocker to read that the panel "concluded that point shooting may be what happens in a gunfight but to point shoot well under stress officers need to aim when they train."

And, as to the questions: What does the research show? And what works?

Apparently the Sight Shooting advocates were not asked about any research or evidence in support of their claim that Officers "to point shoot well under stress officers need to aim when they

train," as there is no mention of any scientific evidence in support of that in the article, nor in shooting literature in general.

What the scientific studies and stats have shown, is that Sight Shooting fails to be used in most all close quarters life threat situations, either due to poor lighting, the dynamics of the situations, or the automatic activation of our Fight or Flight response and its effects, one of which can be the loss of the ability to focus on near objects like the sights.

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Now, it is a given that Close Quarters Battle studies have established that some form of "instinctive" shooting (not Sight Shooting or Aimed Point Shooting), is defaulted to in Close Quarters Battle situations.

And it's also a given that to be effective, any shooting MUST BE AIMED either via use of the sights, or via a method of Aimed Point Shooting. And particularly so with pistols, because of their short length.

But unless one trains in Aimed Point Shooting, their defaulted to Point Shooting will be un-aimed Point Shooting. And the Police hit rate of less than 20% attests to its ineffectiveness.

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## **ARTICLE COMMENTS**

Two comments were included at the bottom of the article. Both were dated 9/10/2010.

They are included here as they present a sensible and forward looking rebuttal to the panel discussion and its conclusions.

1.

"No attack to the writer or the participants but a shockingly, lopsided, simplistic and misleading "debate". The moderator Ayoob, the Farnhams and DuVernay may be great and experienced trainers all but over many years have been strong proponents of sights and sighted fire in defensive shooting if not openly averse to point shooting or true threat focused shooting. WHERE ARE THE POINT SHOOTING ADVOCATES? As Dr Williams, Dr Artwohl and Scarry mention or allude to find out what works and then use it. WHERE'S THE DATA TO PROVE IT? FBI UCR on officers killed and assaulted has a lot of great and valuable info, but it doesn't have number of rounds fired/number of hits/location of hits for hit ratio and location effectiveness at all or consistently addressed. There needs to be a fair and open comparison of many agencies large and small and their HIT RATIOS to determine if sights or point shooting work or not. 2 anecdotal stories and an analogy about card games is not data or proof and hardly objective."

2.

"To offer positive alternatives instead of just pointing out the deficiencies in the article/debate here are other ways to OBJECTIVELY cover it. Gather a larger panel of experts or knowledgeable, experienced trainers FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE. Get point shooting advocates such as Mike Rayburn, Lou Chiodo, Matt Tempkin, Chuck Klein, Jim Gregg, Rob Pincus and others, as well as those that changed from sights only advocates to a mix or point shooting such as Mike Conti, Gabe Suarez etc.. Keep the sights advocates already included in the article and add the doctors/psychologist/psychiatrists and ergonomic/human kinetics experts such as Bruce Siddle, Lt

Col Dave Grossman, Dr Bill Lewinski etc.

Then have a detailed discussion and debate while presenting evidence, data by all the panel members as objectively as possible. The panel could also devise some experiments that could help clarify issues to be done force on force with Simunitions or airsoft and possibly with eye tracking systems such as Setcan's Eyelock system to accurately determine where shooters are looking sights or threat in simulated combat scenarios at least.

Careful interviews of officers involved in shootings as well as review of training officers participated in (department and outside) should be compared with hit ratios and results in actual shootings( many shootings, many officers over time) to get enough information to determine what trends exist in support of or against sights or point shooting.

What should be clarified is that there isn't all or nothing issue as at contact distance to a few feet point shooting is the only way and at distances out beyond 7-10 yards almost everyone will need sights to get hits. It is in the non contact non longer distances that the issue between sights and threat focus becomes controversial.

Lets use clear thinking, objectivity, science, data and results from actual shootings to settle this issue properly for the good of every officer."

End.