



## SHOOTING DISTANCE AND SURVIVAL.

The shooting distance is a critical element to survival in Close Quarters shooting situations, so I was surprised recently when I read some comments made on a major Police site by two noted Police trainers that were totally out of line with reality.

One comment was the "most trainers believe in a flash sight picture up close and more precise sighted fire at 15 yards and beyond."

Another was: "I encourage point shooting for deadly encounters inside 12-15 yards....and....if the officer's grip includes thumbs pointed forward and they have indexed correctly there's little difference between pointing with their index finger and aiming the gun in a similar manner. The trick is making sure the trigger press / manipulation doesn't move the barrel off the target..."

IMHO, discussing shooting distances and methods that don't jibe with FBI shooting stats and Police study findings, present misleading notions about Close Quarters Combat shooting. And if accepted as fact, can set up Officers and civilians alike to be killed.

They also can perpetuate the continued use of shooting qualification standards that are not data and science based. Qualification standards prescribe shooting distances, and as such, dictate the training one needs to do, to qualify. And if not reality based, they can become prescriptions for failure in real life or death situations.

The FBI statistics on Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed with firearms, set out the shooting distances that Officers and civilians should/must be trained in to give them the best chance of survival in real life or death situations.

Here are the FBI's 1988 - 1997 stats on Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed with firearms with details on the distance between victim Officers and Offenders.

Total Officers killed --- 633

Contact to 5 feet -----	337 --	% 53
6 feet to 10 feet -----	132 --	% 21
11 feet to 20 feet -----	73 --	% 12
21 feet to 50 feet -----	53 ---	% 8
over 50 feet -----	38 ---	% 6

86% were killed within 21 feet.

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Here are the FBI's 1994 - 2003 stats on Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed with firearms with details on the distance between victim officer and offenders.

Total Officers killed --- 568

Contact to 5 feet ----- 286 -- % 50  
6 feet to 10 feet ----- 122 -- % 22  
11 feet to 20 feet ----- 60 -- % 11  
21 feet to 50 feet ----- 47 -- % 8  
Over 50 feet ----- 43 -- % 8

Distance not reported 10

83% were killed within 21 feet.

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The following data is from the 1970'S (old but still good), NYPD SOP 9 study of over 6000 Police combat cases that reviewed cases from 1854 to 1979.

Total Officers killed --- 254

Contact to 3 feet ----- 86 -- % 34  
3 feet to 6 feet ----- 119 -- % 47  
6 feet to 15 feet ----- 24 -- % 9  
15 feet to 25 feet ----- 12 \_\_\_ % 5

90% were killed at within 15 feet.

The shooting distances where Officers survived, remained almost the same during the SOP years (1970-1979), and for a random sampling of cases going back as far as 1929. 4,000 cases were reviewed. The shooting distance in 75% of those cases was less than 20 feet.

Contact to 10 feet --- 51%  
10 feet to 20 feet --- 24%

In 70% of the cases reviewed, sight alignment was not used. Officers reported that they used instinctive or point shooting.

As the distance between the Officer and his opponent increased, some type of aiming was reported in 20% of the cases. This aiming or sighting ran from using the barrel as an aiming reference to picking up the front sight and utilizing fine sight alignment.

The remaining 10% could not remember whether they had aimed or pointed and fired the weapon instinctively.

Also, Officers with an occasional exception, fired with the strong hand. That was the case even when it appeared advantageous to use the weak hand.

The value of placing heavy emphasis on weak hand shooting during training and qualification is subject to question.

IMHO, shooting training and qualification standards should reflect the reality of the above statistics.

Further, shooting beyond the 21 foot kill zone, requires learned behaviors which conflict with those needed to shoot effectively in the kill zone. And if ingrained, they may/will cause confusion and conflict as to what to do in a real life or death situation, and that may/will result in the death of both Officer and Civilian victims.

The recognized and continuing atrocious hit rate in CQB situations of less than 20%, attests to the need for administrators and trainers alike to wake up, and discuss, develop and implement shooting qualifications and skills that deal with the realities of CQB.

Some encouraging news on this subject has been provided by John Buol, who is an adjunct instructor for the AARLEA (Alamo Area Regional Law Enforcement Academy).

During the firearms portion of every class, students shoot a qualification that exceeds TCLEOSE (Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education), standards, and is a requirement for graduation.

A 50 round qualification has been used for the last several years for all classes.

88% of shots are fired at 21 feet or less, and 20% are fired at three feet from retention and incorporate movement. Everything at nine feet and less is shot one handed, and all shots within potential contact distance of the target are fired from retention.

[Here is a link to John's site.](#)

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I sent a link to this article to Dan Danaher of Tactical Encounters Inc., and here's his response.

Thanks for the article.

I couldn't agree more. It amazes me that the argument continues today on sighted vs non-sighted shooting given the facts. Our agency converted our course of fire about 10 years ago and we thank God we did.

Unfortunately there are too many agencies across the Country that are still firing prescribed courses of fire that do little, by way of cqb, to prepare them for a gun fight.

Anyhow, great information, glad to see others feel the same way and are getting the word out.

Best Regards,

Daniel Danaher

<http://www.tacticalencounters.com>

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[This is a link to more info on the SOP 9.](#)

[Here is a link to a closely related article on this subject area that deals with: How you will shoot in a "real" CQB situation.](#)

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