

# TACTICS PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

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GOOD, BAD  
OR UGLY?

## POINT SHOOTING

*Everything old is new again. —Peter Allen*

BY: ERIC LEID

This is a phrase I like to use often, especially when I see or hear something posed as a new or revolutionary idea. Firearms and tactical training are no exceptions. Recently I had a discussion about the relevance of point shooting in modern firearms doctrine. With the evolution of premium tritium sights and even slide mounted red dot sights on pistols it would seem that quick aimed fire is within the capability of even mediocre shooters, but

is it possible to make substantial hits on target quickly without using your sights? Are there advantages to this skill? How much time will it take to develop?

"Point shooting" is described in Chapter 2, Section II, US Army Field Manual 23-25, *Combat Training With Pistols & Revolvers* as follows:

*When a soldier points, he instinctively points at the feature on the object on which*

*his eyes are focused. An impulse from the brain causes the arm and hand to stop when the finger reaches the proper position. When the eyes are shifted to a new object or feature, the finger, hand, and arm also shift to this point. It is this inherent trait that can be used by the soldier to rapidly and accurately engage targets.*

This is a pretty general description, and one can only assume that it *continued on next page*

# 8 SKILLS FOR THE URBAN SURVIVOR

BY: KEVIN REEVE

STRICTLY ENFORCED  
CUSTOMER  
PARKING ONLY  
VIOLATORS WILL BE TOWED  
AWAY AT OWNERS EXPENSE  
ONE BREXTON CROSS  
NORTH A ST. (THIS SIDE)  
WALK TO THE CITY PARKING LOT

THE BIG EARTHQUAKE  
HITS, YOUR CAR  
IS TOTALLED, THE  
ROADS ARE BLOCKED,  
AND YOU NEED TO  
GET TO YOUR FAMILY.  
WHAT DO YOU DO?

Imagine you are in L.A. when the “Big One” hits...an 8.0 earthquake.

**Y**ou live in Pasadena, but you work near Los Angeles International Airport (LAX); a distance of about 20 miles. It's late in the afternoon and your family is home and apparently safe for now, but you must get to them. Between you and home is a maze of collapsed freeways and high crime neighborhoods. The streets are jammed and sirens are blaring.

Imagine there is a major terror attack in New York City where you work. Your office building on the Upper East Side is one of dozens that has been evacuated. Law enforcement officers are warning of other potential attacks. You live in Brooklyn across the East River. You have to get home with each of the standard transportation systems shut down.

Imagine you are in Atlanta when a major event occurs that causes a loss of civility. There are masses of rioters in the streets, some with weapons. Fires rage. The police are obviously outnumbered. You have to get home from work to rural Cobb county where your family waits.

The keys to survival are like a three legged stool. You must have the skill, the will and the tools to prevail. If any of the three are missing, your chances of survival diminish greatly. Some people gather gear and supplies with the idea that just storing them will save them. The fact that they have them stored is an indication of will, but without the skill to use the gear, and the ability to survive without the gear should it be lost, gear alone will not do much for you. The focus needs to be shifted towards skill.

Over decades and through vast amounts of trial and error by myself and thousands of students, I've developed and honed eight primary skills which can save your life in an urban disaster. While there are a host of other skills, these basic eight are the foundational ones upon which more advanced skills are based:

## STRESS INOCULATION

The ability to endure stressful situations is essential to survival. There are people who not



FEMA / JOCELYN AUGUSTINO

Hurricane Katrina survivors. Fundamental urban survival skills can help prevent you from being helpless and reliant upon questionable assistance.



only maintain calm under pressure, but seem to get into a flow state that allows them to function at their highest level. The film *Metanoia* about famed climber Jeff Lowe provides an example. His friends all said that the more intense the situation on a climb became, the calmer Jeff was. I have a friend that is a military tier one operator. He is the same way. Cool and calm under fire. The more dangerous the situation, the calmer he becomes.

Stress inoculation is achieved by realistically simulating stressful events in training for the real situations. First skills must be practiced and learned, then they must be executed while under stress. That is why the third day of my Urban Escape & Evasion class is a daylong immersion exercise that introduces stressors and requires students to overcome them. When military operators are trained, stress inoculation is often provided in the form of sleep deprivation, food deprivation, coldness, wetness, darkness, extreme physical exertion, confrontation of personal fears and uncertainty. These can be great tools to strengthen, but they can also be tools to break people if they are wielded without expert care.

### MENTAL TOUGHNESS

The big question is whether mental toughness is innate or learned. I have a friend who is as tough a person as I know. He has been that way his whole life. I know another person who as a teen seemed very...*vulnerable*. He developed greater strength after a series of challenging events because he faced tough



FEMA / GREG HENSHAL

Homes burning in arson fires after Hurricane Katrina. Compounded problems can break a person who has not been conditioned with stress inoculation.


challenges and met them. To me, mental toughness is a combination of resilience and relentlessness. Social sciences have on occasion called this “grit” or “hardiness.” “Hardiness” is comprised of three parts: “(1) the belief one can find meaningful purpose in life, (2) the belief that one can influence one’s surroundings and the outcome of events, and (3) the belief that positive and negative experiences will lead to learning and growth.” (see *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, Andrew Zolli, and Ann Marie Healy).

The only way I know of to achieve this is a combination of personal decision and experience. I am motivated by the need to take care of my family. I’m confident in knowing I can alter my surroundings and events because I have done so in the past. The experience portion comes from doing hard things. I have a friend who runs in “tough mudders,” another who does 100 mile plus adventure races, and another who climbs big walls. These guys intentionally put themselves in situations that require them to persevere in tough situa-

Marines with 2nd Law Enforcement Battalion attempt to dispel a crowd during a riot control scenario at Fort Pickett, Va. The riot control drill was part of a two-week exercise designed to increase the battalion’s proficiency in policing operations.



SGT BOBBY J YARBROUGH



## PLANNING AHEAD CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AVOIDING THE PROBLEM OR GETTING STUCK NECK DEEP IN IT.

tions, and they become greater athletes in the process. Hardiness, or “antifragility” as I mentioned in a previous article (see *Antifragility* by Nassim Taleb), is as crucial for urban survival as it is for wilderness survival, yet urbanites, accustomed to modern conveniences and comforts, often tend to have a much steeper learning curve.

### AWARENESS

The ability to monitor one’s environment and observe changes in the baseline is perhaps the most important skill one can develop. I have found myself in undesirable situations that could have been avoided had I been more aware of my surroundings. Avoidance is always better than reaction. Awareness requires that one focus on the here and now.

Many of us get into a state of mind where we daydream about future events or past conversations. We get absorbed in our electron-

ics, or numbed by drugs and alcohol. These altered states cause us to lose our present focus.

Present Focus means that we monitor the sounds, sights, smells and activity level around us and look for variations. Those variations, like the noise of an approaching car as we walk or footsteps close behind us, represent an event that should usually be avoided. How many times has a witness said, “I thought it was fireworks,” and yet they failed to notice that the context of the event was less likely to support the use of fireworks than crime?

While dining with a friend in Philadelphia, we were startled by loud popping noises originating from the sidewalk immediately outside the window. We hit the floor. It turned out, they really were firecrackers, which are routinely part of the baseline in Chinatown during the New Year celebration. We laughed at the irony, and created a bit of a scene, but were both glad to have been safe, rather than

sorry by defaulting to our awareness training in an urban environment.

At another event held in a grand ballroom, the people around me started looking in one direction; toward someone yelling from a far corner. The crowd surged forward toward the cries, some standing on tip toe to see, even raising their phones to get video. My response was to stifle my curiosity and move toward the fire escape door. All of a sudden, the gawkers turned, and started running and shoving away from what turned out to be a fight, as one of the parties involved in the altercation drew a weapon. It nearly became a stampede. I was ahead of the game and out the door before the crush of people started to squeeze through the bottleneck. My awareness training had made the difference.

Skills designed to monitor the baseline and recognize disturbances are essential to avoiding trouble. Awareness skills allow us to anticipate incidents while they are starting to unfold, rather than being forced into responding blindly to a potentially dangerous situation. It’s the difference between beating the crowd out the door vs. competing with the masses. The difference is sometimes only seconds.

### ESCAPING FROM UNLAWFUL CUSTODY

Avoiding capture is the first choice, but being able to escape handcuffs, rope, duct tape, flex cuffs and other forms of restraint will serve you well. In kidnapping and hostage situations, the ability to escape restraints gives you options you won’t otherwise have. There are basic principles that will make escape possible. The application of friction will be useful in escaping duct tape, wire, rope and flex cuffs. Handcuffs can be picked with a proper understanding of the mechanics of the cuffs. It is surprising how easy this is.

### THE ART OF BLENDING

The ability to blend into the local population will allow you to move without detection. This requires monitoring the baseline and learning to blend into it. What look do the locals cultivate? Look at the speed people are moving. Note the volume of their conversations. Note social distancing and hand gestures. All of these things make up a baseline. If you can adapt your movement to the baseline, you will find movement in that environment much easier. These skills require practice.



## THE ART OF ACQUISITION

Everything you need to survive is in the city around you. You do not have to travel great distances to get what you need. In the situations described at the beginning, you may need more equipment than you have on hand. You may also need to get through certain facilities to make your escape. Lock picking is a crucial urban survival skill. It allows you into places to hide and it allows you to access areas and supplies that would otherwise be unavailable.

Lock picking is an easy skill to learn, and once learned is never forgotten. It does not require much more than a couple of picks and a tension wrench. During a crisis, it's astonishing how much your perspective changes once you know you have the option of access. Obviously, legal and social constraints must be kept in mind.

## OBTAINING TRANSPORT

The need to get back to my family trumps just about everything else. During a worst case event, being able to find a suitable vehicle for acquisition is going to make that task immeasurably easier. This might be anything from a car, to a bicycle or a canoe. Car acquisition is a skill I developed in a local wrecking yard. I've spent hundreds of hours practicing on junked cars, learning to defeat the door locks and ignitions. I have applied that to many situations where people have locked themselves out of their car. One situation occurred when a young mother locked her keys in the car with her baby in the back seat. Time was of the essence. The problem was I had never successfully defeated this particular type of door lock in fifteen years of trying. But when the need was great, Providence smiled upon me and after about five seconds, I had the door open. Success is where opportunity meets preparation.

## KNOWLEDGE OF TERRAIN

There is a huge advantage in knowing your terrain. It allows you to choose escape corridors that others will not have considered. Careful planning allows you to avoid the common routes of predators and likely ambushes. Know the roads. Know the locations of needed supplies. Identify primary, secondary and tertiary routes from work to home, and practice traveling them. Know the neighborhoods where you will blend in and those where you will not blend in. Pick routes that do not require you to pass through choke points, like



New Orleans, LA, August 31, 2005 - Evacuees wait for water and other services provided by volunteer agencies.

over bridges, through more densely populated areas and higher crime areas. Know the terrain better than anyone else does.

## REFUGE OF LAST RESORT

Following hurricane Katrina, thousands of desperate people fled for their lives to the Superdome, in New Orleans. That proved to be as big a challenge as the hurricane itself. The government was not prepared to adequately shelter 30,000 people for seven days, in a structure with minimal electricity. Plumbing and toilets failed, and hundreds of freezers and refrigerators were filled with rotting food. The stench of the food and toilets was making people sick. With no air conditioning in 80 degree weather and 90% humidity, the Superdome turned into a sweltering sewer of tortured humanity. Security broke down and National Guardsmen were assaulted by gang members. Panic and chaos took over. It was too complex a system supporting too many people, with too little preparation to have succeeded. Plan your own evacuation destination before it is needed.

You must learn to take care of yourself if you intend to survive and care for your loved ones. That commitment requires a combination of will (desire to survive), skill (ability to survive) and tools (equipment to survive). If any leg of the stool is missing, then you will end up in the same refuge of last resort. I have told many students over the years, "Never go to the Superdome". That is a euphemism, of course, but turning over responsibility for yourself to someone who can't possibly care as much about your fate as you do doesn't make much sense. ✓



New Orleans, LA., August 28, 2005 - Residents bring their belongings and line up in front of the Superdome in advance of hurricane Katrina.

## BIO

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