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DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE REAL WORLD

Firearms Training Services

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

In the wake of the terrorist shooting at the Fort Lauderdale airport, several members of the Armed Citizens Legal Defense Network (ACLDN) had questions about mass shooter situations. Rangemaster owner/instructor Tom Givens serves on the ACLDN Network Advisory Board, which met at the SHOT Show in January. Gila Hayes of the ACLDN used that opportunity to interview Tom and get his take on some of the members' questions. The full interview appeared in the ACLDN's February e-Journal and is here re-printed with permission (edited for length).

THE INTERVIEW:

active shooters and You

by
Tom
Givens

eJournal: A question commonly asked by members deals with what to do in a mass shooting incident. Boiled down to its most basic, do I run, do I hide, do I engage the shooter?

Givens: Let's separate the different problems first. First off, I would say that whether you are going to engage or not has an awful lot to do with whether you are alone, with your family and so forth. If I had three or four small children with me, that would alter my decision from being alone or being with an armed partner. That would be my first concern: is it just me, or do I have other people for whom I am responsible? I may not engage voluntarily if I have children or

non-combatant dependents with me. If I have children with me, at the first opportunity, I am going to get the hell out.

A lot of times moving away is a viable option. If you do, don't be silly about things that say "Fire Exit Only," or "Employees Only." For years, I went to the National Tactical Invitational, and they would set up problems where you have twenty, thirty people in the room, like in a simulated meeting, and an active shooter would come in and everybody would just kind of sit there because the exit said "Employees Only", or "Do Not Enter", or "Authorized Personnel Only", or something like that. You need to scrub that out of your mind! People are so

accustomed to thinking, "Well, I can't go out that door." that people sitting literally four feet from a door failed to bolt through it and escape.

Absent something like that like that, my opinion is I would engage the guy at the first opportunity, because historically these people stop the instant they are actively engaged by somebody else. That doesn't even have to mean kill them. At the first sign of resistance by anybody with a weapon they tend to either surrender or suicide. I don't care which.

In the Clackamas, OR shopping mall food court, a man had shot several people. A concealed carrier pulled his gun and never even got a round off,

active shooters CONTINUED

because as soon as the guy saw the gun, he ducked around the corner and shot himself. That is a perfect example of engagement without gunfire to solve the problem. The first person who is able to, actively resists.

If you look at a lot of these, when the shooter hears the police enter the building, he shoots himself. Sometimes they suicide when the police start to engage them; sometimes they will when they just hear the police arrive; sometimes when a private citizen pulls a gun. The first active resistance almost always ends the event.

So unless I have some reason not to, my inclination would be to engage just as soon as physically possible. Let him know there is resistance. If for whatever reason—maybe there are too many people between us—I couldn't take a shot, I might draw his attention even if just let him see my gun. My response may or may not include actually shooting, depending entirely on the circumstances.

eJournal: You don't worry about that making yourself his next target?

Givens: No, the odds are the guy is going to kill himself. Most will kill themselves immediately, something close to a third are killed by responding police or armed citizens, and the remainder give up, like, "I'm finished now," or they are subdued physically. My plan, absent a child being in the way or something of that nature, is to engage the guy in whatever manner I can, and as soon as possible.

One thing I think you will find interesting comes from a police academy in Ohio, and Ron Borsch, who just retired recently after over thirty years in law enforcement. He made a very passionate study, a real personal crusade, of learning about active killers. Most people don't know this, but more active shooter events are aborted by citizens than by police. In fact, two thirds are aborted by private citizens, and only one third by police. When private citizens intervene, the average body count is

2.33 victims, but when the police intervene, the average body count is 14.29 victims—because the armed citizen with the gun is already there, but the cop has to come to the scene. In that time, what is the bad guy doing? He is shooting people. Gun free zones accomplish only one thing—they raise the body count!

The press is not going to tell you about the times that a private citizen with a gun stopped a shooter. That conflicts with their narrative so they are not going to tell you that. The fact is, more are aborted by private citizens than by police, by a two to one margin.

eJournal: Not only do those stories not make it into the mainstream news, but we are also discouraged from taking action by officials. As you take action against the shooter, do you have any concerns about being misidentified as part of the problem by law enforcement?

Givens: Yes, absolutely. The first thing you want to do once the threat is over is get that gun put away. Get it out of your hands; have your hands visible. If you hear police radios, if you hear sirens, what not, get the gun out of your hands.

If you don't hear them approach and you hear, "Police! Drop the gun," drop the damned gun! If you don't immediately, you are going to get shot at. They don't want to hear you say anything, and odds are no one will be able to hear anything anyway.

One concern is that the current training in law enforcement is as soon as the first officers get to the scene, they are to move toward the sound of gunfire and try to stop the shooter, because as I said earlier the first resistance ends the problem. The primary goal is to stop the killing. Pre-Columbine, the answer was seal the place off and wait for SWAT, but the bad guys were walking around shooting people during that time, including going back to hunt down and shoot victims hiding under furniture. We can't just stand around outside and listen to the gun fire, knowing every one of those shots

means a person is being murdered. So now police move directly to the source. Unfortunately, I may be there at the source, too.

Cops coming into an active shooter event have been told that shots have been fired, people have been shot, and oh, look, there is a guy with a gun. So my gun has got to get back into the holster very quickly, or if I hear a police radio around the corner, or if I'm told to drop it, I will. I can put a foot on it if I need to. But I need to not be standing there pointing a gun at somebody as cops come around the corner.

eJournal: Yes, that danger was one of the specific concerns members expressed after the Fort Lauderdale airport shooting, when questions started coming up about stopping a terrorist shooting.

Givens: Well, the trouble with that particular environment is that the cops are already there. It's an airport; airport police are already there. They just weren't in the immediate area, but I guarantee that they were somewhere very close. If you are in that environment, it is not a matter of the police being dispatched and driving to where you are, it is a matter of them stepping around a corner. They just weren't right here. They were there within a few steps.

eJournal: One fear about being shot by police is that it will happen while the armed citizen is distracted giving the shooter orders. Folks imagine engaging in a negotiation of sorts with the shooter.

Givens: If someone is shooting innocent people right in front of me, I am not going to discuss it with him. You are under no legal obligation whatsoever to warn somebody that's shooting children in front of you! You have no legal obligation whatsoever to say, "Drop the gun," "Stop that," or anything else. The first awareness he has of you should be his being shot.

As far as giving commands, there was a mall shooting in Tacoma,

Washington, a guy standing on a balcony shooting people with a MAC90 (AK-47 variant). A concealed carrier in the store who came up within ten or fifteen feet behind him had a perfect opportunity to shoot him in the back of the head to make him stop what he was doing. Instead, he challenged the guy, said, "Drop the gun," and the guy wheeled around and shot him three times with the AK. Well, the CCW guy survived, but he is a paraplegic, in a wheel chair for the rest of his life. One of the AK rounds bisected his spine.

Again, there is no obligation whatsoever to speak to a guy that is mowing down innocent people with an AK47. If the citizen had shot him in the back of the head and said, "Bam, bam, stop that!" he would not have been shot. Challenging the shooter didn't do anything except turn attention to him. I cannot cite the source, but I believe in an interview the CCW guy said, "I couldn't just shoot him without giving him a chance to give up." That's because he watches TV and good guys always give bad guys the chance to give up.

Well, that's not required legally, and to me, it's certainly not required morally. If he is shooting innocent, unarmed people, make him stop! At very close range like this case, your only viable option may be to shoot the actor as quickly and effectively as you can.

eJournal: What is your experience about tachypsychia, tunnel vision, auditory exclusion, and any concerns that raises about not being aware of the police approaching?

Givens: There is no answer to that, because it is just completely individual. It has to do with what prior training and experience you've had. Some people will have one effect but not others; nobody has all of them. You can catalog them all, but they are all possibilities. In the same incident, one person may have a perception of time slowing down to a crawl and the guy standing next to him may say, "Man, everything sped up to the speed of light, it just went by in a flash." They are seeing the same event, but

their perception and their recall is entirely different.

I recall very early in my career, a couple of times where I had enough time in my mind to think odd thoughts. For instance, one suspect was pulling a pistol out of his pocket. All I could see was part of the butt of the pistol, and as I was implementing my draw stroke, I remember as my gun is moving to eye-line thinking, "I really hope that is a pistol in his hand, or I am going to look foolish!" It does not take me very long to present a pistol, but I had time to think that thought. I vividly remember that from over 45 years ago.

Later on, drawing a gun under very similar circumstances, that did not happen, because I had already experienced that. The same person may experience different effects at different times in their career or in their experience.

The odds are, you will not hear the cops, not because of auditory exclusion, but because of fire alarms, screaming people, and that sort of



Bright Ideas ☀

We see all sorts of arguments about this type of flashlight or that, weapon-mounted light versus handheld light, this flashlight assisted shooting technique or that one, and so on, ad nauseum. For the *private citizen*, I suspect this is all a moot point. (Requirements are quite different for military and law enforcement folks.) I have never found a civilian shooting outside the home that involved the use of a light, whether handheld or weapon-mounted. Of our 60+ civilian student shootings, only six or seven occurred in or around the home, the rest were on the street. In not one of those debriefs did the student indicate the use of a light would have been beneficial, or even possible. One of my objections to a WML for private citizens is that they add bulk and weight to the handgun. The hardest thing to get students to do is get them to carry their sidearm on a routine daily basis. So, let's make the gun bigger, heavier and harder to conceal—that should help.

Inside your home, you should be able to control lighting to a degree not possible when away from home. At my home, the entire exterior perimeter and the yards are illuminated at night by lights with motion sensors and solar panels. The solar panels charge all day, so the lights are standing by

The photo below is from the scene of an armed robbery. Note the amount of ambient light. It would not be hard to see a robber, his weapon, or his intentions in this lighting.



ready to go all night. The solar panels do away with the need for any wiring, so the lights can be positioned on exterior walls, atop fences, and anywhere else you'd like them. I have quite a few around my property.



Solar powered motion detector security lights can be placed around the home's exterior to enhance security. There is no wiring, the units are completely self contained. They charge all day and are ready all night.

Inside, I have several lamps with spiral fluorescent bulbs, which are on timers. This allows them to come on automatically and stay on all night, every night. They cost a few pennies a day to run like this, and at a service life of 10,000 hours, they are good for 3.4 years of continuous use. With the timers, the lights are on all night, every night, whether I am home or teaching on the road.

Finally, in case of power outage, I have battery operated lanterns available on both floors of my home. With a bit of forethought and management, one can pretty much preclude having to use a gun in real darkness. ■

by
Tom
Givens



www.Rangemaster.com

thing. It is going to be general chaos. If you are in the food court at the mall, somebody is probably going to trip some sort of alarm, it will be ringing. I guarantee people will be screaming and running around, furniture getting knocked over, and with the gunfire added to that, don't count on hearing much of anything. That's why I would say, if the guy has either run away or if you have put him down, you want to put your gun away. Get it out of your hands. My preference is to put it back in the holster, so if I need it again, then I can produce it, but I don't want it in my hands when the cops come around the corner.

eJournal: You mentioned training as a factor that can mitigate perceptual distortion somewhat. What about the kinds of skills we are working so hard to master on the range like seeking and using cover?

Givens: It depends on where you are. It appears pretty strongly that while concealment won't stop bullets, it may keep people from shooting at you. People shoot at what they see. So if you step behind a rack of clothing and the guy can't see you any more, it is not bullet-proof, but you don't get shot. If I could engage him from where he could not turn his head and see me, that would be gravy, but you're counting on something you can use for cover, and that is going to depend on where you are.

[Givens gestures to public walkway in front of public seating area we occupy.] If we were to be standing down there, we would have nothing to move behind, but if we were sitting right here, there is something to move behind. The only thing separating these two worlds is this one-foot wide shelf.

eJournal: What level of training do you see as necessary in light of these possibilities?

Givens: The typical guy who took whatever class is required for a permit in his state, which is usually like a driver's test, and a five-shot J-

frame revolver in his pocket is going to have to have a different consideration than someone who is trained to a very high level and has a more competent pistol and is of a higher skill level. That is going to alter the equation. For the typical untrained/minimally trained person carrying a gun, their best option probably is to get the hell out.

eJournal: Now, your training operation, Rangemaster, has different levels of training. For the dedicated armed citizen who wishes to prepare, what do you recommend from your own curriculum?

Givens: Our basic pistol course addresses all of the skills that would likely come into play. The problem for most people is that all they have had is the test of a permit class and that does not establish that you can do anything. I would like to see them have enough training to recognize what shot they can make and what shot they cannot make. Frankly, most of these shots are not that daunting because in the real world, the marksmanship problem is not that high if you have some skills and knowledge. But you take the person with no training whatsoever, and substandard equipment, they are probably best served just getting the hell out.

eJournal: One of the best aspects of training, is learning the limitations of current skill and definitely where equipment falls short. Perhaps by you modeling reasonable handgun selection for one who thinks he or she may use it in a mass shooting situation, the equipment problem can be resolved before the problem ever comes up.

Givens: We get into that pretty solidly in class.

eJournal: Your shooting drills and exercises would also rather quickly show how substandard a tiny pocket gun is against a fighting-sized pistol, too. I see this as a very good reason for readers to go to www.rangemaster.com and look for training with you and your wife, Lynn, because you travel all over the country these days and teach in a lot of different states.

eJournal: Getting back to surviving the situation, people are worried about the murderer having associates that may attack the armed citizen who intervenes or even as we try to flee the area. Any reasonable grounds for that?

Givens: Up to this point, in this country, these have been primarily the lone individual. In 160 active shooter events the FBI studied, 98% were lone individuals, and 97% were male. I can only think of three cases where it was two people—Columbine being one, Jonesboro, AR school being another; and the couple in Las Vegas. Those make only three, out of hundreds. Historically, it is one guy.

Now, that paradigm could change dramatically if we start having more true terrorist events here. The threat right now is the lone, deranged individual who for whatever reason says, “I want to rack up a bunch of people, I am probably going to die before the day is over, but I am going to take a bunch of people with me.”

If I see a guy right there with a gun, right there, HE is my problem. If we start having Mumbai-type events here with five or six or more people armed with rifles, that’s a different issue entirely, and we’d have to modify our behavior to meet that danger, but that is not the threat right now.

eJournal: This introduces a good opportunity for us to define differences between domestic mass shooters and a terrorist effort that kills a number of American citizens.

Givens: Historically, the person who just goes off and starts shooting people can be called a spree killer, a rapid mass murderer, or an active shooter. These terms have morphed over the years. The definition the Federal government uses is an event in which four or more people are murdered within a twenty-minute span in a public place. So, if I kill four family members in our home, that doesn’t count. It is in a public place, within a specified time, at least that is the current government definition.

eJournal: When you say, “over the years,” are you indicating that spree shootings are not a recent problem?

Givens: There is nothing new about this phenomenon! We have seen that over and over again, even going back to the 1940s. In 1949 a guy named Howard Unruh killed a 13 people with a German Luger P-08, which has an eight-round magazine, so he had to reload it over and over again. Of course, all his victims were unarmed. When police arrived, he ran into a building and barricaded himself.

At the first armed resistance, Unruh quit shooting people and barricaded himself and eventually surrendered to police. We see that over and over again. This goes back to the 40s. There is nothing new about it.

Here’s something else interesting: in the past when people had a real telephone instead of just a cell phone, you had a phone directory, but you also had what was called a reverse directory. Well, when Unruh barricaded himself in the house, an enterprising reporter got a reverse directory, looked up the address, got the phone number, called it, and the guy actually answered the phone and had a conversation with the reporter. The reporter asked him, “How’s your day going?” He said, “Oh, great! I’m doing well, so far!” The reporter asked him, “How many people have you killed?” He said, “I don’t know. I can’t answer that yet, but it looks like a pretty good score.” The score is a recurring theme. They’re after a bigger score than the last guy.

eJournal: Outside of 9-1-1, have we had many true terrorist attacks?

Givens: Yes, the most recent would be the Ft. Lauderdale airport shooting, the facts have come out within the last day or so that said he was ISIS directed. The club shooting at Pulse in Orlando in which one man

IT’S RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER...

The annual Tactical Conference takes place later this month at the Direct Action Resource Center (DARC) in Little Rock. This event sold out last October. The 2018 event will be announced soon. Don’t miss out this time.



killed 50 people, is another. He had posted ISIS propaganda on his Facebook page just prior to that. There were the jihadi pair in Texas, Hassan at Fort Hood, and several others.

eJournal: That was a good synopsis of both dangers. From your studies, what poses a more likely danger?

Givens: What we have had more of in this country, especially in the last ten to fifteen years are just the home-grown active killer, spree killer, what ever you want to call it, mentally-deranged persons like the Aurora, CO theater shooter, Holmes, or mentally ill kids like Klebold and Harris in Columbine, CO. These are not terrorists, these are just people who want to kill a bunch of

people. It is not a politically-motivated statement; it is, "I just want to kill a lot of people!" So far, in this country, that is what a lot of it has come down to.

eJournal: Can you sum up the key lessons we should take away from this discussion?

Givens: The first thing to understand is that it happens everywhere. You know this already! I run into so many people who say, "Well, I carry my gun when I go here, or I carry a gun when I go there. I won't need it here; I won't need it there." Well, bullshit, how do you know that?

Where have these things occurred? Movie theaters, airports, churches, malls, schools, hospitals, office buildings, universities: so, name me a place where it hasn't occurred!

eJournal: Well, you shared with me the study the DOJ put out a three or four years ago [<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf/view>] and based on it, I'd be hard pressed to name a venue that has not seen that kind of attack.

Givens: I am not going to lock myself in my bedroom for the rest of my life to avoid going to one of these places. What I simply do is go there armed and prepared. What you have to do is acknowledge that life entails risk. You cannot live in a risk-

EAST *meets* WEST



Real gunfighter's gear, circa 1984. Two approaches to the same problem. At the top is a S&W Model 64 with a four-inch barrel, the East Coast solution. Beneath that is a S&W Model 68 with six-inch barrel, the West Coast solution. Both are chambered in .38 Special.

If you expect the world to be fair with you because you are fair, you are fooling yourself.

That's like expecting the lion not to eat you because you didn't eat him.

-Anonymous

free environment. You can't live life and eliminate risk from it; that is not possible.

If you cross a street, you take a certain amount of risk. When you drive your car down the street with people hurtling by at 50 miles an hour on both sides of you, you do not know if they know how to drive or not. You are assuming everybody does. But you have to go from here to there, so you assume the risk. Same thing here: we are sitting in Las Vegas, we are in a place right now that to me, is a fairly high-risk environment, because to a radical Muslim it perfectly represents the decadence of the West. But I can do something about it. I don't have

a .32 in my pocket; I have a pistol I can make a shot across the open space we are sitting in without too much difficulty.

But that would be the first thing: recognize that different shooters are going to pick their targets for different reasons. Someone with a religious motivation may pick a church, so do I wear a gun to church? Of course! I have got to get there; I have got to get back. Who knows what is going to happen while I am there?

Theaters? Are you going to wear a gun there? Yes, that is where there may be a problem. By definition a mass shooter needs to go where there

is a mass of people. You do not get to pick and choose.

Restaurants, churches, businesses, a GMAC office—I can't think of a place where a mass shooting hasn't occurred, except maybe at the SHOT Show. You need to understand that you have to learn to mitigate risk. You can't remove it. Learn to mitigate it to manage it.

Tom also recommends further reading on active shooter trends and research. Ron Borsch, a now-retired 30-year law enforcement veteran who managed the South East Area Law Enforcement Regional Training Academy in Bedford, OH, conducted extensive research that was analyzed and published by the Force Science Institute (available online; [click here](#)). Another 30-year police veteran, Lt. Chuck Haggard (Ret.), confirmed that Borsch's data aligned perfectly with Chuck's own first-hand experience engaging not one but two active shooters in his law enforcement career (available online; [click here](#)). ■

Pop Quiz

"The semi-automatic AR15 carbine is likely the most ergonomic, safe, readily available and effective firearm for civilian self-defense...."

This 2017 quote came from what source?

- A. A Fourth Circuit dissenting opinion
- B. A Fifth Circuit majority opinion
- C. A Supreme Court oral argument
- D. A Virginia public defender



The first person to post the right answer on the Rangemaster Facebook page will be crowned this month's

Quiz Champion!

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