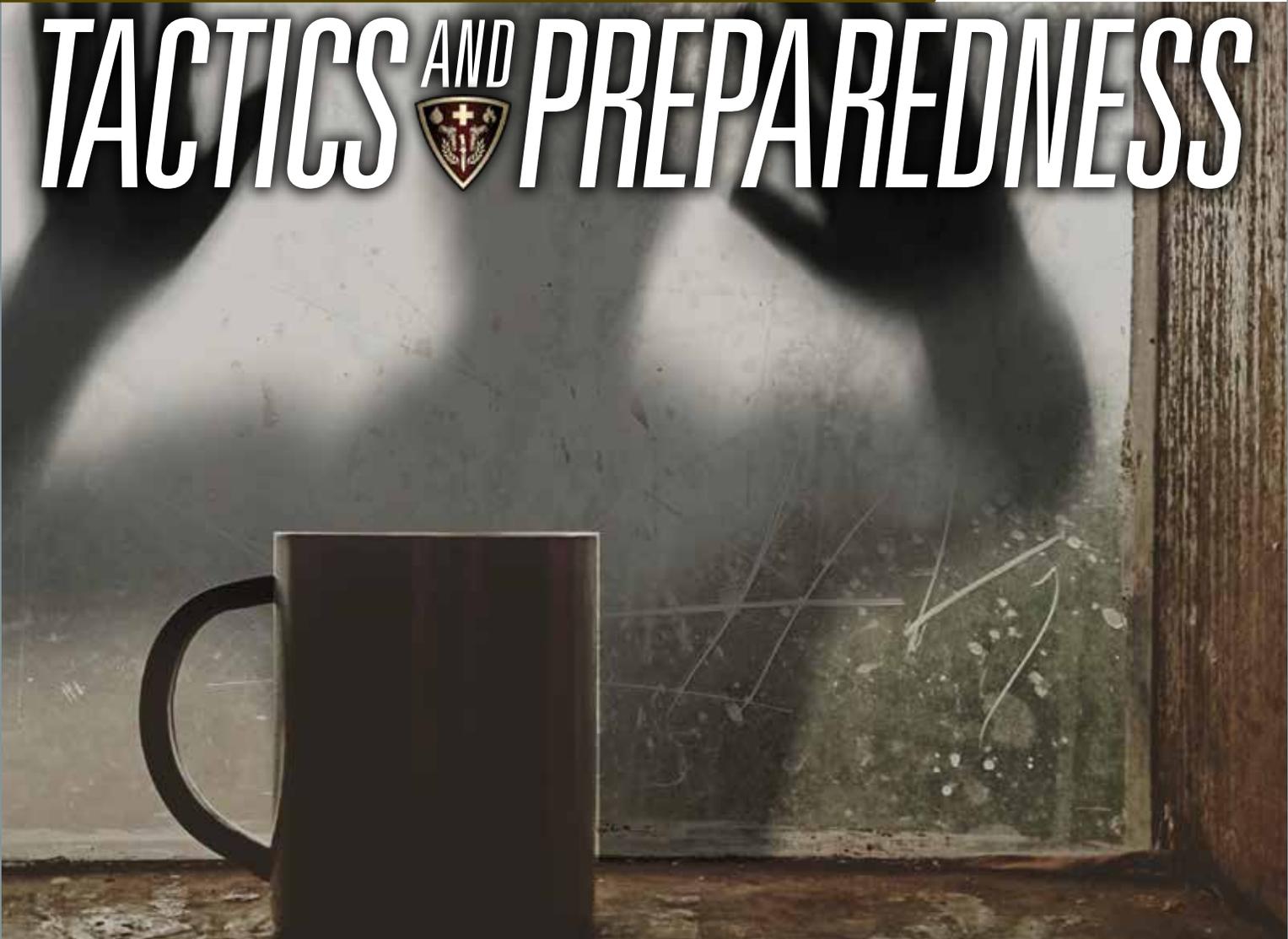


TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS



BE YOUR OWN PROTECTOR

BY FRANCIS M. DUFFY

These are dangerous times for individuals and families. Criminals are more active than ever. Madmen are shooting up malls, schools, and churches. Sharp and irreconcilable political differences are fueling hate-filled protests where people are battered and beaten. Given these times, it makes sense for individuals and families to apply principles of executive protection; the same principles used to protect high profile politicians, actors, and business men and women.

Several years ago, I completed a training program taught by the Executive Protection Institute. The short training was a useful combination of theory and role-playing opportunities that took place in the community of Winchester, Virginia. Although the training focused on a protection specialist providing protection services to clients, I quickly intuited that the same protection theories and practices could be modified to protect families.

EXECUTIVE PROTECTION

Five core executive protection skill-sets that can be easily developed and used by individuals and families are: Breaking out of the normalcy bias, assessing threats, assessing vulnerability, mitigating vulnerability factors, and managing responses to stress.

The basic model for executive protection has three skill-sets: Prevention, preparation, and responding.

Prevention is accomplished by first iden-

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Paying attention to what is going on around you reduces your vulnerability. Spotting what is abnormal is a key factor.

tifying and assessing potential threats to you or your family. Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Cooper's "color code of awareness" is a useful tool for doing this. Another useful tool is the OODA (observe, orient, decide, act) loop concept created and implemented by Colonel John Boyd and others. The core skill underpinning both tools is "paying attention" to what's happening around you.

Although the probability of being a victim of an attack or home invasion is low for most people, becoming a victim is still possible. Preparing for the possibilities, not the probabilities, instead of falling into the normalcy bias trap is important. Preparation includes physical fitness, firearm training, security lights on the exterior of your house, and other precautions.

Being in a responding mode means you are about to become a victim or you are already in a fight for your life. Clearly, you don't want to be responding, so focusing on prevention and preparation seems like a smart thing to do.

Naïve or arrogant people believe that no harm can come to them. They think that because they live a good life in a nice neighborhood, train in martial arts, lift weights to be strong, carry a concealed firearm, and so on, that evil will never come for them—and complacency sets in. Predators are always on the look-out for victims. Train for the possibilities, not just the probabilities.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

The range of threats people face vary ac-

ording to the specifics of their careers and lifestyles. Visible wealth makes you attractive to home invaders. Firearms collections, coin collections, and other kinds of valuable collections can make you a target. An expensive car, SUV, or truck can attract the attention of thugs who want take it from you. Attractive children could become kidnapping targets. Other factors include:

- Fame or notoriety
- Public image (What are you known for? Are you a political candidate?)
- Involvement in controversial activities or programs
- Associates
- Lifestyle
- Expressing controversialized opinions in social media

Gary Quesenberry created a tool you can use to assess your vulnerability. I call it a "threat assessment star."

VULNERABILITY

There are four key vulnerability factors: predictability, accessibility, insufficient resources, and poor planning.

If you follow the same route to work every day, you are predictable. If you go to the same restaurant every Friday night, you are predictable. Predictability is a dangerous pattern of behavior, especially if you are a target. A 3rd Special Forces Group veteran I know became predictable in his behavior while in Afghanistan. He was a medic. He treated local civilians on the same day every week. The Taliban noticed. They set an ex-

Attacks sometimes happen in transition spaces while moving from one location to another.



plosive device next to a 2½ ton truck. On that “same day,” the medic was treating Afghani children on the other side of the truck when the explosion went off. The truck flew over the top of him and the kids. He was severely injured. Some of the children were killed. His mistake, to which he admitted, was becoming predictable.

How easy is it for people who want to hurt you or your family to get close to you? Is your personal information widely available in social media venues? Are you working with the public on a daily basis without a way to identify potential threats? Are you taken by surprise when someone approaches you from behind while walking across a parking lot?

Unless you are independently wealthy, you probably do not have the financial resources to pay for private security officers. Resources that are more likely available to you are martial arts training, firearm training, emergency medical training, and home security systems. If you don't train in martial

arts, I strongly recommend Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Muay Thai, or boxing. If you don't own a firearm that you can carry, you might consider purchasing a firearm, training to use it, and carrying it concealed. If you don't have a home security system, you should consider installing one.

Plan your trips to increase your personal safety. Rotate your daily routes to and from work so that you don't follow the same route every day. Complete a security assessment of your house (security cameras, alarm system, escape routes).

EXERCISE #1: VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

The strength of your vulnerability assessment can be improved if you involve other people in this exercise. Use your “range of threats” to start your thinking. Avoid falling victim to the normalcy bias while answering the following questions.

Why would someone want to attack you? If someone attacks you or your family, what

would they want? How would they attack? When would they attack? Executive protection specialists know that attacks sometimes happen in transition spaces where you are moving from one location to another.

Using a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), rank order the risks you and your family face. Add-up the rankings to get a total score and then divide by the number of risks you potentially face; for example, your total risk value is 36 and the number of risks you face is 12. 36 divided by 12 equals 3.0 risk level. Next, also using a scale of 1 (not well known) to 5 (very well known), assess how well known you are in your community, state, or nation-wide; for example, you may be a fairly well-known business person in your community and you assign level 4 to that perception. You can plot those results on a chart. The intersection of both values (3.0 and 4.0) creates a representational threat zone. The larger the threat zone, the more vulnerable you are.

MITIGATING VULNERABILITY

A key way for reducing your vulnerability is to pay attention to what's happening around you. A retired Special Forces Warrant Officer friend said, “More lives are saved by practicing situational awareness than by using a firearm”. You need to learn how to practice informed situational awareness. The “Marine Corps Combat Hunter Program” described in the book *Left of Bang* distills such lessons from masters into simple concepts. We teach *Left of Bang* concepts in our Spartan courses. Two of those concepts are:

First, Van Horne and Riley (authors of the book) provide a mental shortcut for as-

You may consider purchasing a firearm, but get trained on how to effectively carry it and use it.





Some signs of forced entry may be less evident than shown here.

sessing potential threats: baseline + anomaly = decision. The baseline is what's normal for any given situation. The anomaly is something that has been added or removed from a situation. The decision is what action you take in response to the anomaly.

Second, Van Horne and Riley believe people who are intending to harm others display observable behaviors. The key behaviors come in three sets: dominant versus submissive, comfortable versus uncomfortable, and interested versus uninterested. You need to assess these behaviors in relation to the baseline.

According to Van Horne and Riley, the most important factor in the mental shortcut is the baseline. Once you know what is normal for any given situation you will be able to spot those people or events that stand out as abnormal. Once you know what is abnormal then you can pay attention to that and decide what to do about it. Exercise #2 helps you identify baselines in your daily routine.

EXERCISE #2: BASELINES

Make a list of the activities you do throughout a typical day; for example, leaving the house in the morning, arriving at

work, going to your favorite restaurant, and so on. For each activity, write down what would be "normal" for each activity. A real estate agent in one of our wear and carry courses gave us an example. She said her company checks on empty houses for which they are responsible. I asked, "What's normal." She replied, "When I walk around the back of the house the door is locked with a lock-box attached with a key inside. I open the lock box, get the key, unlock the door, and go in." I then asked, "What would not be normal?" She said, "Strange you should ask. This just happened to me the other day. I walked around back and the door was slightly ajar." I asked, "What did you do?" Her reply, "Oh, I went in to check on the place." Everyone in the class gasped.

Once you find "not normal" pay attention to those factors and decide what to do in case the "not normal" becomes dangerous.

MANAGING RESPONSES

The literature on threat response is clear that when facing a dangerous threat your body's sympathetic nervous system is normally activated. When activated, our brain dumps a cocktail of chemicals into our blood stream that coincides with four typi-

cal responses: flight, fight, surrender, and freeze. If you train regularly to develop and refine self-defense skills (especially in the martial arts or with a firearm), you should be able to adopt this mind-set offered by Lt. Colonel Jeff Cooper: When facing a threat think: "I knew this could happen one day and I know what to do about it."

CONCLUSION

Executive protection is not just for the rich and famous. Individuals and families can also benefit from applying executive protection principles and tactics. Of course, full-fledged executive protection is a complex and multi-faceted endeavor. Yet, there are several EP skill-sets that can be learned and applied by individuals and families. ✓

BIO

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