ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS

MODULE 13

Edged Weapons

OFFICIAL

College of Policing

PERSONAL SAFETY MANUAL

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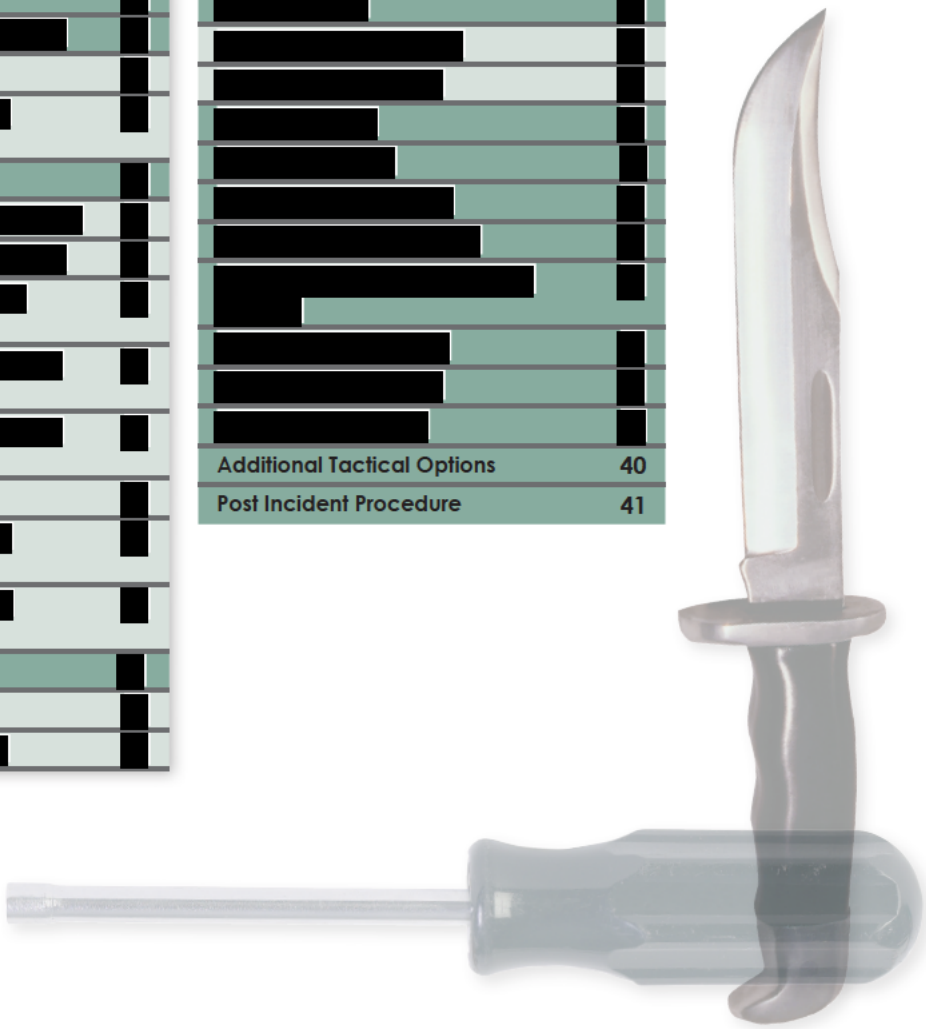

ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS

College of Policing

EDGED WEAPONS

Introduction

This section of the manual provides advice and guidance on spontaneous edged weapon defence; providing officers with options when they are confronted by a close range, surprise attack with an edged weapon.

SAFETY POINT

Please note; although officers may have been trained to deal with a subject with an edged weapon, an officer should only attempt to deal with edged weapons where they have no other tactical option.

The reality is that there is no empty-handed technique that is guaranteed against a determined individual using an edged weapon.

It is fair to anticipate that an officer dealing with an edged weapon may get cut. The main purpose of this advice is therefore to limit the severity of such injuries, thus increasing the officer's chance of survival.

Any use of force should be seen in the context of the National Decision Model (NDM) as a whole and its use viewed as one of the many tactical options that may be available to staff in the resolution of an incident.

The nature of policing is so diverse that it is impractical to document guidance to cover every encounter or eventuality. However action, including any force used, must be proportionate, lawful and necessary and individual officers must be prepared to account for their actions and show that they acted reasonably within the law.

The principal advice to officers in any situation where an edged weapon is involved is encapsulated in the mnemonic **CUT**; **C**reate distance, **U**se cover, **T**ransmit for assistance.

The advice provided in this section is primarily aimed at allowing an officer to achieve CUT whilst negating or reducing the potential damage caused by the edged weapon armed assailant.

C - CREATE DISTANCE
U - USE COVER
T - TRANSMIT (FOR ASSISTANCE)

Officers should at all times be making a dynamic threat assessment of the situation. They must consider the information/ intelligence that they receive. The officer should make an assessment of all the impact factors, subject communication and behaviour.

GO TO: **MODULE 02 - CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

SAFETY POINT

IMPORTANT!

Body armour is designed to protect vital organs from the front and the rear. Officers should not assume that body armour will always protect them, as some parts of the body will remain exposed.

Offences Involving Weapons

The British Crime Survey (BCS) provides an indication of weapons used in violent offences and an estimate of the trends in weapon use over time. Excluding homicide, the police recorded 37,830 offences involving knives in 2008/09, accounting for 7% of total offences in the selected serious violence categories. Weapons were used in about one in five (21%) incidents of violent crime as measured by the BCS in 2008/09, no change from the 2007/08 BCS. This proportion has remained stable over the past decade.

The most common types of weapons used were knives (7%), glasses or bottles (5%), and hitting implements. However as a sample survey, the BCS includes relatively few incidents of the more serious violent offences in which knives may be used, such as robbery, and does not cover the most serious violent offence of homicide.

As with firearms offences, information collected from the police can supplement the BCS data but is limited by the fact it covers only those offences that come to the attention of the police. The BCS record knives involved in an incident if they are used to stab or cut, or are used as a threat.

In 2007 it was documented that only 4% of offenders in central London were arrested in possession of a pointed or bladed article. (Source: MPS Use of Force Reporting Statistics 2007/City of Westminster Borough) As with all statistics this information has limitations. It identifies only what has been recorded and only by certain organisations, however it is fair to suggest that many more incidents occur where edged weapons have been involved. Due to the nature of their role, officers have high potential for attending situations where edged weapons are present.

For more information go to the Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 'Crime in England and Wales 2008/09; Vol 1 Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime.

GO TO: **http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109vol1.pdf**

Encountering Edged Weapons

Most people in the UK have no training in the use of a knife as a weapon and are uncomfortable with their use, although this demographic can vary between different social, age and cultural groups. This is good news as the untrained knife attacker is more prone to making mistakes, mistakes that can be exploited.

An officer may encounter an edged weapon in various situations; whilst standing, seating or in a prone position from 360 degrees. Opportunities to take pre-emptive action should be taken where it is safe to do so.

GO TO: **MODULE 03 - USE OF FORCE**

For example, although CUT is considered best practice in incidents involving an edged weapon the officer may move towards the subject to prevent the weapon being brought into the theatre of play:

- Officer observes subject reaching for suspected weapon
- Officer assesses options and moves forward to trap the subject's hand
- Officer re-assesses situation. This could be asking the subject what is in their pocket for example or removing the subject's hand from their pocket and handcuffing.
- Officer acts with appropriate response.

Types of Edged Weapon

Edged weapons come in all shapes and sizes and are only limited by the imagination of the user and officer involved.

Officers should not be lulled into a stereotypical notion of 'knife culture' and therefore assume all edged weapons are knives. Edged weapons can be categorised as weapons of speed, power, and ingenuity and opportunity.

Edged weapons of speed

These are items that are an extension of the subject's hand and are capable of being moved quickly.

The concept applies to anything that has a point and/or a cutting or serrated edge and can be used with speed.

Edged Weapons of Speed
• kitchen knives
• scissors
• screwdrivers
• trade knives
• combat knives
• lock and pocket knives
• syringes.

Please note: there are many derivatives of a knife therefore this list is not exhaustive and the ordering of this list does not reflect the frequency of use.

Edged weapons of power

Due to the size of some of these objects they may apply more range or power to a thrust or strike. They may also take longer to reach their intended target compared to a smaller item such as a knife.

Edged Weapons of Power
• machetes
• swords
• meat cleavers
• claw hammers
• axes.

Edged weapons of ingenuity and opportunity

This category may test the most subtle observational and perceptive skills of an officer. It may also take time to assess whether such an item is capable of such use, decide what to do about it, and then to act on that decision.

Edged Weapons of Ingenuity and Opportunity
• drinking glasses
• ashtrays
• crockery
• cooking pans
• workshop tools
• pens and pencils
• hair combs and brushes
• broken and sharpened credit and phone cards
• razor blades and fishhooks
• crushed tin cans
• teeth
• martial arts supplies
• coins.

This is not an exhaustive list as anything that can 'cut, slash or tear' could be included. It does however illustrate what could be utilised as a made, adapted or intended edged weapon by a determined individual.

Basic Strokes

The following are basic strokes consistent with the use of most edged weapons:

THRUST is clearly the most dangerous because it could result in a puncture or tearing type of wound to vital organs. It is this stroke which has the highest probability of incapacitating an officer quickly.

SLASH should be considered the second most dangerous stroke. It is designed to be a set-up technique which might be followed by a thrust.

FLICK is a diversionary technique, usually delivered to the hands or wrists, by flicking the surface of the skin with the edge or tip of the weapon. It is designed to splatter blood causing the officer to look at the wound and giving the subject time to penetrate and deliver follow-up strokes.

TEAR attempts to literally rip portions of the skin and muscle from the officer's arms. It may be caused by an accidental application of the slash, where the tip of the weapon is inadvertently pulled through the skin instead of a clean slash.

HACK is considered a long blade technique and is actually a block. It is designed to cut and break skeletal structures.

BUTT is a technique that uses the end of the edged weapon as a striking implement. The technique is designed to stun or disorientate an officer to allow for follow-up strokes.

CUT - Create Distance, Use Cover, Transmit

The CUT mnemonic provides a three-stage response for officers when dealing with edged weapons. The order the stages are carried out is controlled by the situation that the officer finds themselves in. This should be considered as a tactical option.

The officer may also consider other tactical options such as use of a baton, incapacitants or TASER within the CUT principle.

Create Distance

Primarily this deals with creating or maintaining a reactionary gap from the individual.

This reactionary gap may be increased when faced with a subject armed or potentially armed with an edged weapon. The standard reactionary gap is 1.9 to 2.4 metres, however in edged weapon terms this may not be sufficient.

Officers therefore should increase their operating range where possible.

This establishes a survival principle that states 'the greater the distance between the officer and the subject, the greater the officer's reaction time to process and initiate a survival response'.

Some individuals may however be able to cover this distance with alarming speed therefore the officer must not become complacent whatever the distance.

This was re-enforced by the studies carried out in the USA during the 1980's*. These indicated that for the average officer a distance of 6.4 metres was needed for the officer to draw and fire one aimed round at a charging subject.

This highlights the difficulty an officer faces in rapidly accessing any carried equipment to deal with an attack.

It should be born in mind that this 'drill' was conceived as a court demonstration of action versus reaction and was carried out across an unencumbered landscape.

In real situations terrain and intervening items may impede the attacker's speed and progress.

***Sgt Dennis Tueller, Salt Lake City Police – March 1983 "How Close is too Close?"**

Use Cover

Cover can be divided into moveable and immovable. These options may provide complete cover for an officer or only partially protect them from an assailant's attack. However any object or item that reduces the ability of the assailant to strike or injure the officer conversely increases the safety of the officer.

Moveable cover may be issued equipment such as the baton, shield or helmet, or any item improvised for protection such as furniture or other objects close by.

Immovable cover can merely be cover from reach using vehicles or chain fence or may include cover from view such as a wall or door. Utilising any object that reduces the ability of the attacker to reach the officer or make the attacker's task harder may assist the officer in protecting themselves.

Whatever the environment the officer should consider their entry and exit routes in order to assist their application of CUT.

Transmit

Transmit or call for assistance in the conventional sense is the use of a personal radio to alert a control room to the current situation.

This would be followed by the dispatch of suitable and appropriate resources as back up to the officer. Transmit can also mean a verbal warning to colleagues or members of the public.

Historically a number of officers and members of the public have been involved in situations where they have not seen the weapon until after the incident or until they are wounded by it. The word 'knife' is a generic rather than specific warning that a weapon is in existence and should be seen to encompass all cutting or stabbing implements.

above and below: Use of street furniture and a car door to provide cover

CUT Summary

CREATE DISTANCE; increase your reactionary gap, tactically withdraw to a position outside the range of the subject's delivery system and try to observe and contain the subject.

USE COVER; cover can be movable or immovable. Issued equipment (baton, police vehicle, etc.) or improvised items (a wall, tables, chairs, etc.). Any shielding object will increase the number of variables a subject must overcome to successfully assault an officer.

TRANSMIT (FOR ASSISTANCE); recognise the potential danger you are in, verbally warn colleagues shouting 'KNIFE' as loudly as you can. Use your radio to gain assistance as soon as you are able.

- **Eyes;** if you want someone to look at something look at it. If you want someone to look at you, look at them. Once good eye contact has been made, the officer's look may be used at the appropriate time to divert the attention of the subject.

- **Verbal communication;** the officer's voice can be used to divert the subject's attention.

This may be achieved by talking to the subject and presenting specific areas as interesting, or not, through what is said. This may be achieved by:

- addressing the subject by their name.
- asking the subject a question.
- requesting the subject to do something.
- addressing any third parties (involving them as a audience

- **Non-verbal communication;** the officer can convey non-verbal messages to the subject via their body language.

In this context, body position may divert attention in much the same way as the eyes do and would normally complement use of the eyes.

Some physical gestures, such as pointing, are direct non-verbal statements that can be used to attract the subject's attention.

Body tension draws attention and relaxation induces relaxed attention. This may be used to create areas of primary and secondary interest.

A tense part of the body will draw attention. This is important to consider in terms of how equipment is held.

Finally, body contact may also be used to divert attention.

External sources of diversion

The officer could use an external source of diversion, such as:

- the actions of an additional officer
- the assistance of a third party to the incident
- the assistance of a member of the public
- a staged occurrence.

Additional Tactical Options

These principles are based around using either issued equipment or improvised items against a subject armed with a weapon. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Issued equipment

Issued equipment may be used to protect officers against a weapon. Consideration should be given to the appropriate range in which the equipment can be used and time, speed and distance factors.

Incapacitants

Although the use of an incapacitant spray may be a viable option for officers it must be remembered that, because of its chemical properties, it may not work fast enough in a spontaneous attack upon an officer.

Police vehicle
The use of a police vehicle can give protection to officers.

Torch
A torch may be used in exactly the same way as a baton or to shine in the eyes of a subject as a distraction.

Shield
The use of issued shield equipment is dependent upon availability, size and training. A long or intermediate shield may be used for containment, as can a short or round shield.

Spotlight/sunlight
The use of a powerful hand-held spotlight can be used to temporarily 'blind' and disorientate the subject, thereby destroying their day or night vision. Although this may be more appropriately used in low light conditions, it can also be used in normal lighting conditions and effectively makes the officer invisible.

Police firearms (including TASER)
The attendance of police firearm officers or specially trained officers with TASER will be dependent upon individual force policies and specialist tactical advice and requires the appropriate authority.

Dog
The use of a trained police dog may be psychologically intimidating to a subject. Use of a police dog is subject to the availability of a specialist officer and appropriate use of the animal.

Multiple officers – tactical positioning
The mere presence of an array of confident and well-trained officers strategically positioned can be psychologically overwhelming to a subject. The clock system of positioning can be utilised.

Improvised items
An officer could consider using any object that can be placed as a barrier between the officer and the subject. The officer may also use objects to throw at the subject in order to create distance and use as cover. Barrier type items may be used to enhance the reaction time of the officer and impede the progress of the subject.

Basically anything that is not secured can be picked up or thrown. The human body's natural reaction to a threat is to evade danger.

In the same way that an officer may demonstrate a startle flinch response, a subject may also flinch or try to evade the object(s) thrown at them. Doing so may give the officer vital time in which to escape from the situation or use an appropriate response.

Post Incident Procedure

Welfare
In addition to physical injury the welfare of all police personnel is of vital importance if an efficient service is to be provided to the community.

Personnel who have been involved in a serious incident may suffer from anxiety as a result. The responsibility for welfare in the first instance may lay with supervisors/line managers who can seek assistance from staff associations and occupational health representatives.

Debriefing
Many events that police personnel are involved in are outside the range of perceived normal human experience. In many cases the experience may be particularly distressing. The most appropriate, sensitive and correctly thought out practices and protocols should be followed.

A critical incident debrief model exists to allow for personnel who have been involved in an incident to be sensitively debriefed.

GO TO:
MODULE 05 - PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

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