

# **48 Tenets of Officer Survival**

***PRECEPTS FOR THE MODERN WARRIOR***

HOWARD WEBB

AMERICAN COUNCIL  
ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRAINING

## *48 Tenets of Officer Survival*

*"Despite what your mama told you, violence does solve problems."  
-Ryan Job, Navy Seal, April 2009*

*48 Tenets of Officer Survival  
First Edition*

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*48 Tenets of Officer Survival*

*This book is dedicated to the following:*

*To the modern warriors*

*The men and women of law enforcement and corrections*

*Deputy Joshua Thomas Rutherford  
Blaine County, Montana, Sheriff's Office  
End of Watch: May 29, 2003*

*Nick Flores, USMC - Retired  
10th Dan, Okinawa Kenpo Karate and Kobudo  
Sensei Flores taught me the way of the warrior*

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## **Introduction**

For cops, this is the most dangerous period of time in the history of American policing. Over the last five years, there have been more officers shot or killed in the line-of-duty than at any other time in the history of American law enforcement. The most underreported statistic regarding officer assaults is that over 3,000 American law enforcement officers are shot annually. What I find ironic about this period of time is that law enforcement officers have received the best training, wear the most technologically advanced soft body armor, are armed with the most lethal weapons, and deploy the most advanced nonlethal weaponry in the history of policing; yet, officers are being assaulted, shot, stabbed, and killed at an ever increasing rate. The elusive question is why? The contemporary explanations offered come from case studies conducted by college professors and other academics with very little or no law enforcement experience. These explanations are the equivalent of offering a firsthand account of what the Donner Party experienced because the purveyors had eaten beef jerky.

The *48 TENETS of OFFICER SURVIVAL* provides an explanation and solutions derived from over two decades of law enforcement experience, a review of hundreds of officer assaults and fatal shootings, and insights gained from teaching officer survival to thousands of officers at two state academies and to national and international criminal justice audiences.

Based on my experience and research, I have concluded that the increase in officer assaults and deaths is not due to a lack of training or technology. But rather, the pacification of America. Through the denigration of what has been traditional American virtues (athletic prowess, military service, self-reliance, toughness, and all round manliness) by liberal academics, progressive politicians, urban yuppies, peace niks, and a nation of victims our natural survival instincts have been systematically erased. Just as our agrarian ancestors, domesticated wild cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs to make them more docile and easier to control.

One does not have to be a genius to conclude that officers who are enculturated by a nation wherein the public schools dismantle playground equipment because someone may be hurt, expel grade school children for using their fingers as guns, prohibit the playing of dodge ball, promote non-violent activities like chess, soccer, and musical chairs (where everyone gets a chair), and teach revisionist American history - would be devoid of innate survival instincts. Nor should we be surprised that officers who re-

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side in a county that rewards victimism, laziness, irresponsibility, superficial fame, and government dependency do not possess a survival mindset.

How could we have predicted that officers who are influenced by a society that preaches moral relativity (a belief that executing convicted murderers is the moral equivalent of what the murderers did to their innocent victims), is anti-war and nuclear weapons, demonizes contact sports, and prosecutes parents for the use of corporal punishment and then laments about America's out of control youth - are not emotionally, mentally, or physically equipped to survive in a violent world.

Who would have believed that when law enforcement administrators embraced community policing and, as a result, recruited kinder and gentler people with college degrees in art, education, gender studies, music, and social work and retooled their psychological examination criteria to weed out aggressive applicants who played contact sports or who had volunteered for military service that there would be an increase in officer assaults and in the line-of-duty deaths. Even more disconcerting, these same law enforcement administrators habitually fail to recognize that their murdered kinder and gentler officers were ill-suited to survive in a dangerous profession.

The disturbing truth is that many of the police officers who are killed or assaulted lack inherent survival instincts and, as such, suffer from an ill-formed professional identity that prevents them from recognizing the inherent dangers involved in policing an ever increasingly violent society. The *48 TENETS of OFFICER SURVIVAL* was written to address this crisis. Other officer survival books focus on tactics. Although in the *48 TENETS* tactics are discussed, this treatise primarily addresses officer survival on a philosophical level, similar to Sun Tsu's "The Art of War." This philosophical approach acknowledges that officers possess all the tactical knowledge and skills necessary to survive on the street or in the correctional facility, but they routinely fail to deploy those tactical skills. This is a survival mindset problem that only a philosophical approach to officer survival can address. Consequently, if you embrace and internalize the following tenets, it is guaranteed that you will develop and maintain a survival mindset that will sharpen your warrior's edge.

*Note: In this treatise, the terms cop and officer are used as generic titles for all criminal justice personnel. Other titles or descriptions are accurate representations.*

**Tenet # 2**

**Law Enforcement Cynicism Is Good For Your Health**

*Officers who go on shift with rose-colored glasses put themselves in jeopardy. When you're on-duty everyone is a potential threat. Some more, obviously so, than others.*

The writer and poet George Bernard Shaw penned: "The power of accurate observation is often called cynicism by those who do not possess it." All babies are born optimists. It is experience that makes us cynical. And no one needs to be cynical more than cops. Consequently, you should develop and value cynicism. Cynicism makes you expect the worst in all people and in all situations. This dour outlook on life is more important to your survival than officer safety knowledge, tactics, and training. Because knowledge, tactics and training are worthless if you don't possess the mindset that motivates you to use them.

A belief that people are inherently bad, dangerous, dishonest, evil and (if given the opportunity) they will kill you will keep your mental edge razor sharp.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation developed an innovative approach to analyzing in the line-of-duty deaths. At the time, the conventional methodology was to scrutinize the officer's tactics. Realizing that all officers make mistakes, the FBI desired to learn why some mistakes were fatal and others were not. Consequently, rather than focus on the mistakes themselves, the FBI focused on the personality traits of the fallen officers.

As a result, the FBI's study identified a specific profile of the officer who is likely to be killed in the line-of-duty. Not surprising to us cynics, the study found that the officers who are most likely to be killed are the ones who view themselves as being kinder and gentler. They were warm and friendly and had a tendency to use less force than other officers. However, one trait was identified as being responsible for the officers' deaths more than any other: **"They trusted people."**

As an officer you must be suspicious of everyone, at all times, in every situation. A cop cannot trust anyone. Everyone at some point will intentionally or unintentionally betray you – this is a universal truth. There are a number of civilian naysayers who constantly tell cops that being cynical is unhealthy. All these individuals are on the outside of the law enforcement window with their noses pressed up against the glass. They choose not to

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be cops because they do not possess the mettle to brave the dangers or endure the hardships, but they feel entitled to criticize us. Their intentions maybe noble, but they don't truly understand who we are and what we do. They can't because they're not cops.

Like the mental health counselor who tells you it is unhealthy to be so cynical. Really, it is that unhealthy cynicism that allows an officer to safely respond to the 911 call and save the shrink from the sadistic rapist who is breaking into her house. Her civilian perception of police work prevents her from understanding that if you respond to her cry for help with a trusting outlook on life and get killed you can't save her.

I had this conversation with a therapist while conducting a series of self-defense training sessions with a group of mental health professionals. On our first break, a therapist came up to me and said: "I conduct a group counseling session on anger management on Tuesday nights. I believe this training would be of value to you." "Why? I have good emotional control; I haven't popped a cork and kicked your ass, yet," I told her with a grin. "Anger is not an emotion. It is a behavior," she replied with a tone of intellectual arrogance. It was clear that this intellectual taffy pull was going to be a waste of time, so I gracefully excused myself from our conversation.

The following week I came back to teach the same group of misguided intellectuals. Again, as in the previous class, the therapist came up to me and said: "I did not see you at my Tuesday night session." "I really wanted to go, but I had a root canal scheduled without Novocain," I quipped. "Well, I offer another clinical session on Thursday nights that I believe you may benefit from - the development of belief windows." As she said this, she formed a window with her index fingers and thumbs.

"My belief window works very well for me. In fact, it is people with your belief window (I formed a window with my fingers and thumbs) who call the people with my belief window (again I formed the finger & thumb window) to kick the violent rapist's ass when he breaks into your house." She stared at me with a "deer in the headlights look" for several seconds while she searched for a clinical rebuttal. Then without a word, she abruptly spun around and trotted back to the other like-minded ivory tower peaceniks.

In addition, cops get hammered for being cynical by our non-law enforcement spouses, significant others, civilian friends (if you have any – it's doubtful, but it could happen), and family members. "You think everyone is a worthless piece of crap" and "You think everyone is out to get you" are the two most common complaints cops hear from their non-law enforcement loved ones. Although it is true that not everyone is a "piece of crap,"

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there are - however - enough crappy people out there to make this generalization, practically speaking, true. Also, not everyone is out to kill you, but it only takes that one person to blow your brains out and, ironically, he or she will be one of those crappy people.

There is not a better example of what a lack of healthy cynicism will produce than what happened to those officers who were killed sitting in a coffee shop with their noses stuck in laptops. With all due respect to the officers and their families, when their murders occurred, did you objectively look at that situation and ask yourself: Why did that happen? Not tactically, that's obvious. But why would cops sit in a public place in a state of total environmental unawareness?

Now, I admit that I started my law enforcement career at a time when cops were steel and ships were wood. But the first thing my crusty old FTO taught me to do when frequenting a coffee shop was to sit in a corner booth, with my back against the wall, and eye @#\$% everyone in the establishment and anyone who walked in. Furthermore, while we sat there staring down people from our corner booth he told me: "Webb, everybody out after midnight is an asshole – remember that son and you will stay alive in this job." Now, that cynical point of view may not be politically correct, sensitive, or in sync with community policing values, but my cynical FTO retired after thirty years of active police service. I wish those officers could have lived to do the same.

So when you're told how horribly cynical you are, just ask your complaining loved one this poignant question: "Is it better to love a live cynic or have loving memories of a dead optimist?"

### **Survival Lesson**

If you believe that every person and situation you encounter has the potential to kill you, your survival edge will remain razor sharp: Your tactics will be properly executed. Your environmental awareness telescopically clear. Your response to any threat will be Zen like (without thought). Being cynical will lengthen your life.

## **About The Author**

Howard Webb is the Executive Director of the American Council on Criminal Justice Training (ACCJT).

He is the former director of the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. As the academy director, he received commendations from Montana's Governor and Attorney General for providing survival skills training that saved the lives of Montana's law enforcement officers.

Prior to his appointment as the academy director, Howard held the rank of lieutenant at the Oregon Department Public Safety Standards and Training (Oregon Academy). At the Oregon Academy, he managed the basic police training program, the survival skills training program, and the defensive tactics training program. In addition, he was the academy's chief defensive tactics and survival skills instructor.

In addition, Howard was the director of training for DHB Armor Group. DHB Armor was the parent company of Point Blank and P.A.C.A. soft body armor companies. As director of training, Howard designed the Hitman Training Suit and developed and taught survival skills training programs for DHB.

Howard developed the first nationally recognized scenario-based use of force training program for use with the Redman Suit. As a result, he was appointed to Macho Products' first Redman Advisory Board. This advisory board was created to make improvement recommendations for the Redman training equipment.

Howard has over twenty-five years of law enforcement and criminal justice training experience. He is a nationally and internationally recognized survival skills and use of force expert, who has testified as an expert over 300 times in city, state and federal courts and labor relations hearings.

Howard has over forty years of continuous martial arts training, holding the rank of 6th degree black belt in Okinawa Kenpo Karate and Kobudo (weaponry). He was the second black belt instructor licensed to teach Okinawa Kenpo Karate and kobudo in the United States by the Okinawa Kenpo Karate and Kobudo Association, Okinawa, Japan. He has successfully used his martial arts skills, on countless occasions, in performance of his law enforcement duties.

## **Acknowledgements**

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