

BOLO

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The Newsletter for the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association



www.laapoa.com

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

MARCH 2014

A Year After Dorner: Are You Committed to Training?

By Doug Wyllie, PoliceOne Editor in Chief

This article originally appeared on PoliceOne.com, the online resource for law enforcement, and is reprinted by permission of the PoliceOne editorial team. Visit PoliceOne.com to access articles, information and resources that help officers across the United States protect their communities and stay safe on the streets.

One year ago, Christopher Dorner died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound as a cabin in the Big Bear area of the San Bernardino Mountains burned to the ground around him. On February 10, the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office issued its final report on the incident.

The San Bernardino D.A.'s report confirmed what anyone who had looked closely at the incident had already concluded: that the lethal- and less-lethal force used by police against Dorner was legally justified, but ultimately was not the deciding factor in his demise.

Dorner died of a "gunshot wound of the head," which "traversed across the temporal and parietal aspects of the hemispheres of the brain bilaterally ... consistent with a right-to-left direction of travel for the projectile."

Your Own Time, Your Own Dime

I would bet a waist-high stack of green money that at the outset (if not before) of his 10-day rampage, Dorner had decided that he would eventually die by his own hand.

But not before — as he stated in his "manifesto" — bringing "unconventional and asymmetrical warfare to those in LAPD uniform whether on or off duty."

By the time he finally committed suicide, the disgraced and dismissed ex-LAPD cop had claimed the lives of four innocent people (two of whom were law enforcement officers), injured several other officers, held an elderly couple hostage, carjacked another man, and led dozens of police agencies on a 10-day manhunt which extended into Mexico and several neighboring states.

I'm not going to attempt to debrief the details of this incident here. First and foremost, I'm not the right guy for that job, but furthermore, I want to view the Dorner incident (at least for the purposes of today's discussion) through a very personal prism.

As I indicated in my February 7 column on the topic, I think the primary training value we can derive from reflection on the

Dorner incident is that agencies, trainers and individual officers need to double down on time spent training. Notice I said time, not money spent. This is an important distinction ...

That is *not* to say that the LEOs involved in the Dorner manhunt were in any way in need of more training.

Quite the opposite, in fact, because while some things may be judged — with 20/20 hindsight — to have had "another way" to be done, the decisions made and actions taken in real time at that moment were the correct ones in that moment.

The San Bernardino D.A.'s report confirms that statement beyond a shadow of a doubt, in my opinion. A February 12 column by Glenn French (posted on *PoliceOne.com*) further buttresses that view.

I believe, however, that we can use the Dorner incident as the launching pad for a new (and higher) level of commitment to police officer training. It has been my observation — and I'm not alone in this — that this opportunity has not yet been seized.

Many departments struggling with budget woes have had to continue to cut back on training. Meanwhile, dangerous adversaries — from rare (but totally unhinged) ex-cop and ex-military folks like Dorner to survivalist "preppers" and hardcore anti-government extremists — are ratcheting up their training.

The D.A.'s report offers an example of the severity of this type of threat.

"Dorner was intent on maximizing the lethal carnage that he had promised in his manifesto," said the D.A.'s report. "Dorner continued to escalate the situation into an all-out war zone."

What You Can Do

I believe that if you're reading this column — and if you read recent columns on the Dorner incident by my friends and PoliceOne colleagues Dick Fairburn, Dan Marcou, Ken Hardesty and Glenn French — you're one of the hard-charging coppers who regularly seeks out as much training as you can cram into your schedule.

The cops who (before Dorner) were true 5%ers doubled down on getting the training and equipment — on their own time and their own dime, if necessary — that they need to win in a

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confrontation against an adversary who possesses a skillset more dangerous than the “average asshole” on the street. While attending live-fire and classroom training such as those presented by my friend and PoliceOne colleague Ken Hardesty, I’ve seen those cops sharpen the sword physically, mentally and emotionally.

But I’ve found there to be very few “new faces” in those training sessions, leading me to conclude that those who (before Dorner) were sitting on the couch at home remain there. The cops who really need to be reading our training columns are the same ones who don’t attend training. They’re just not seeing this commentary. You are. And turning an old adage on its end, if you’re not the problem, you might be the solution.

So, what can you do to get your colleagues more involved in the training you love to participate in?

You cannot drag a colleague (kicking and screaming) to training, but you can set an outstanding example (and possibly get others to join you) by doing just 10 minutes of training a day right there within their view. If they don’t go to PoliceOne, bring PoliceOne to them!

When I heard the concept of 10-minute so perfectly articulated by my friend and PoliceOne colleague Brian Willis, it struck a nerve with me, because just about everything you read on PoliceOne will take no more than five minutes of your time. Same is true for watching our video tactical tips.

This is not an accident. This is so you can read a training column (or watch a training video) and still have five minutes to think about it by yourself, discuss it with your patrol partner, or share it with everyone on your shift at roll call.

The columns and tips on *PoliceOne.com* are available for free, but I would be remiss if I failed to mention that there is also a tremendously low-cost PoliceOne resource to which you can subscribe. The PoliceOne Academy is available to agencies, of course, but also to individual officers willing to trade the cost of about a single cup of Starbucks coffee a week for 24/7 access to more than 600 high-definition training videos as well as full-length block courses from some of the most renowned instructors in law enforcement.

That little commercial message over, I want to close by letting you know there are countless other training resources — from California Tactical Officers Association to Illinois Tactical Association to the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association — providing low-cost and no-cost options you can use and tell your colleagues about.

The Dorner incident has not yet changed law enforcement training, tactics, mindset and methods to the extent that I believe it could (or should!) and it’s on us — you and me — to make that change happen.

I’ll keep writing if you’ll keep reading.

You can bet your bottom dollar I’ll be training right beside you, too.



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BOLO is a publication of the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association (LAAPOA). Opinions expressed by individual Board members or contributing authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the entire Board.

The Board of Directors meets quarterly on the third Thursday of January, April, July and October at the LAAPOA Headquarters. Additional meetings and/or times are subject to change and will be posted as they occur.

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The Story Behind Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis

By Doug Wyllie, PoliceOne Editor in Chief

The following is an excerpt from an article that originally appeared on PoliceOne.com, and is reprinted by permission of the PoliceOne editorial team.

During “Doug Day at the Booth” at SHOT Show 2014, I was fortunate to finally meet Mike Wood, who has written several PoliceOne first-person essays and has become one of my email “pen pals.” I was delighted when Wood gave me a signed copy of his book. I’ve already read it in electronic form, but I collect books, so having the print edition is important to me on a personal level.

“The shooting is described in minute detail,” Mike told me when we met up in Las Vegas. “I had unprecedented access to the files of the detectives who investigated this case, and conducted numerous personal interviews with officers who participated in the gunfight.”

I first learned about Mike’s book from my friend and PoliceOne colleague Mark Schraer, whose article about it almost two years ago caused rather a big stir in the comments area. Having read Wood’s book and looked at some other available “open source” materials, *Newhall Shooting: A Tactical Analysis* is, in my opinion, the most comprehensive and thoroughly researched account of this shooting available. In fact, you likely will not find a more thoroughly documented account of the Newhall incident.

On April 6, 1970, four California Highway Patrolmen were murdered in the town of Newhall, Calif., in the most deadly law enforcement shooting of that era. That gunfight spurred law enforcement agencies nationwide to review their tactics, training, equipment and operations.

Over the years, Newhall had achieved a certain cult status among serious students and instructors of armed self-defense tactics.

Newhall was frequently referenced and used to “prove” various points.

“It was necessary to figure out exactly what happened — to the best of our ability — before we attempted to draw conclusions from it that would be used as the basis of training,” Wood said.

He wasn’t sure that we’d achieved that level of understanding.

In fact, Wood was growing increasingly worried that in some corners of law enforcement, “we had missed the boat on Newhall.”

It seemed to him that some agencies had failed to identify the core lessons of Newhall and got distracted by other, less important issues.

“Some of the most progressive agencies properly focused on the critical lessons about mindset, training and tactics from Newhall,” Wood said, “but other agencies focused too much on equipment issues and ignored those other, more important areas.”

It was Wood’s intention to go back and analyze the Newhall shooting with a fresh eye and the benefit of 40-plus years of learning about the physical, mental and emotional changes that occur when someone is fighting for their life. He wanted to distill the core lessons from Newhall, and shift the emphasis away from equipment issues and back onto what he felt were the critical areas: mental preparation and awareness, tactics and training.

He succeeded, in my opinion. In doing so, Wood gave us what is perhaps one of the best officer survival books I’ve read since Remsberg’s *Blood Lessons*.

It’s a must-read. PoliceOne will be posting a handful of excerpts for you to sample this excellent new book. To read the first of those installments, visit PoliceOne.com.

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The advertisement features a blue background with a white star on the left containing two police badges. On the right, there is a black hoodie with 'LAAPOA' printed on it, a black baseball cap with a logo, and a silver travel mug. A white airplane icon is positioned between the text and the merchandise.



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