

DOORS AND CORNERS FOR THE TWO-MAN TEAM

By Max F. Joseph



For outward opening doors, the opener may have to lean across the door to pull it open.

The tactical approach into any high-risk situation taken by two men must be methodical and cautious. The men must be aware of maximizing each other's cover potential, while not crossing into each other's arc of fire. It seems that there are two separate and distinct skills possessed by most police officers in this country today: individual skills (i.e. lone officer) and dynamic team drills such as those practiced by tactical officers.

Somewhere between these two lies a neglected area of police operations—

the two-man element. There are a wide variety of situations that a two-man element may encounter. The whole spectrum of possible scenarios must be thought out and rehearsed in order to become proficient at the proper counter measures. These situations range from vehicle stops to structure clearing.

The mission of this particular article is to attempt to discuss two of the more hazardous areas for the two-man team to negotiate inside of a structure—doors and corners.

DOORS

Going through doors is one of the most dangerous aspects of police work. No one desires to be in the "fatal funnel" longer than one has to be. The method in which the team approaches and effects entry through the door may dictate their survivability. We must remember that most doors and usually their adjacent walls are only concealment, not cover! Any compromise of our position may be met with hostile fire. Therefore, during the approach we must be certain that all of our gear is secured, radios turned

down and that we don't accidentally initiate the pressure switches on our lights to avoid any violation of noise or light discipline.

We classify doors by which side hinges them, and the direction that they open. If we can see the hinges, then we know the door opens towards us. The general rule is that exterior residential doors open in, and commercial doors open out. One exception is some areas of Florida that require some of their residential doors to open out for hurricane codes. The direction the door swings will of course, dictate where we position the cover man and the opener. Each member has a distinct job at all times. These jobs may change back and forth or change entirely. It is important that each man is aware of what his job is during every stage of the operation. This is the beauty of having a partner with you—one man, one job.

If the door opens in, the cover man may choose to position himself on the knob side. If the door opens out, the

opener would position himself on the hinge side, and would have to carefully reach across the door to access the knob, and open it.

If you encounter a commercial door that opens out, chances are that it is equipped with a pneumatic closer. It is important for the door opener to prop it with his foot after opening it so that the door doesn't close on his partner. Rubber doorstops are always superb tools for slow and deliberate entry when outward opening doors are involved.

The cover man needs to have the fullest field of view of the interior of the room as the door is opened. The opener's job is to attempt to have the door swing as wide open as possible and to stay clear of the cover man's field of fire.

Who goes through the door first is the call of the men on the spot. It does, however, make most sense for the cover man to initiate entry, since he should already have a mental image of the interior of the room.

For open doors, the cover man may opt to prop and maintain a static cover position while the number two man now assumes the job of slicing across the door, visually clearing all that he can, over to the other side. The men are now in a very favorable position—one on each side of the door. From this point, they may use either the standard button hook or crossover method to effect entry. A quick and fluid entry through the door is important. Who goes through first needs to be decided and confirmed with hand and arm signals or other means.

Some will inevitably ask: "What if the door is locked?" If the door is locked, refer to the triad of forced entry, which are the Mechanical/Shotgun/Explosive Entry techniques of which we have no room for discussion here.

CORNERS

There are two basic types of corners encountered in most structures. They are inboard and outboard corners. For a



Closed doors necessitate a static cover man and a door opener.



Thought should be put into where the long gun is placed in the order of movement.



Having a man on each side of an open door is most advantageous.

is a rapid and deliberate clearing of the corner with the first man assuming a kneeling position as he quickly presents the smallest possible exposed area of himself around the corner. Simultaneously, the second man props above him with his knees in contact with the low man's back. It is critical that both muzzles clear the corner as close in time as possible. The low man should only get back up when the top man pulls him up. This is important to avoid the very permanent shot to the back of the head. All too many personnel are presently on duty station in the

of "Guns Up!" states the need for the suppression weapon up with the point. Big bore usually leads the way.

This maxim of the big gun up front is relative, however, and dictated by the situation. When a two-man element is clearing an outboard corner, it may be advisable for the smaller weapon to maintain a static cover position while the large bore slices around. If the space and distance become restricted the longer weapon may choose to hold static while the more maneuverable man assumes the mobile status.

COVERT

When conducting a covert entry either for a barricaded suspect or a burglary call, speed is not of the essence. The hold and slice method is the best option. While we strive to never become trapped in an open door, remember that during a covert search, we do not have to leap through doors like gangbusters! Maximize all tools available for your safety. Mirrors attached to a baton or broom handle can be lifesavers for deliberate clearing of outboard corners and sometimes doors.

DYNAMIC

The mission of the initial penetration into the room is for each man to clear his sector of the room all the way to his corner. The corners of rooms are classified as "inboard corners" The majority of officers shot upon entry have taken fire from perpetrators in the corners. Some teams clear from the center of the room to their corner. I personally feel that quickly clearing the corner first, then sweeping toward the center of the room is the way to go. This is referred to as "digging your hard corner". The men do not need to penetrate deeply into the room to accomplish this. By penetrating too deeply into the room the men limit and cut off each other's arc of fire and reduce the ability to back each other up.

Getting through, picking a distinct direction and getting your body clear of the doorway is about as far as men need to go for the initial clear. Maximum use of all available distraction devices should be employed. Furniture and other obstacles are to be dealt with as the tactical situation dictates. Keep in mind

cemetery as a direct result of that fundamental error.

MOVEMENT

By far, the most dangerous aspect of working multiple operators in a live fire environment is the chance of one man crossing into the other's arc of fire.

Many an officer has been hit by "friendly fire" from their rear. Fire isn't friendly if it is coming at you, regardless of which direction it's coming in from. Common sense dictates that your heaviest weapon belongs up front where it can lay down a base of fire if needed. For military combat units, the command

stealth search situation, your safest bet with outboard corners would be for the cover man to maintain a static position while the second man slowly slices out and clears the corner. This is called "Hold and Slice."

For a more dynamic movement you may opt to execute a high-low cut. This



"Flash-banging" before entry is the best possible scenario.



It may be advisable for the door opener to assume the kneeling position to lessen his exposure to the cover man's possible fire.

A high-low cut can be utilized for dynamic clearing.

the basic rules of keeping your distance from uncleared outboard corners and always make sure that you clear all the way to your inboard corners.

WEAPON SELECTION

In its most simplistic form, the classification of which weapon you employ will fall into one of two categories. That is either Long Gun, or Handgun. It may be advantageous for one team member to carry a long gun while the second man employs his pistol for greater maneuverability. Everything in life is a tradeoff. Remember that greater maneuverability means loss of firepower and vice versa. Opening doors, deploying from vehicles or cuffing a suspect is made much less cumbersome when you don't have to sling or pass off your long gun. Additionally, taking tight corners is less risky when that long muzzle does not have to make the turn.

For two-man elements where neither officer has a dedicated light mount system on his weapon, the man armed with the handgun can possibly provide light into the threat area. Employing a hand-held light with a long gun is a difficult proposition at best. This is an important consideration that is often overlooked since, unfortunately, most training is overwhelmingly conducted under full light conditions.

Appropriate carry positions while

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working in close confines with each other is very important. Anytime that your partner must cross in front of your sector, your muzzle should be pulled inward and downward to what we refer to as very low ready position (or Position SUL, see *S.W.A.T.* December 2000). *Never* allow your muzzle to cover any part of you or your partner's body.

COMMUNICATION

Numerous hand and arm signals should be incorporated into the teams SOP. These should include all manners of both movement and entry. Once we choose to go dynamic, all communication is obviously verbal with the recommended use of brevity words. Subtle nods and facial gestures may work well in the daylight, but the team should have more distinct signals at night.

PIVOTING ARCS

As the team members become more perceptive to their partner's movements, there should be an unspoken understanding of their arcs of coverage/fire. As one man moves, the other perceives the direction, automatically shifting his arc of fire. This is termed pivoting arcs. Ingrained, immediate reaction to situations must be rehearsed over and again by two partners that work together. There is not time, nor should there be need to discuss in detail, what you are about to do, because you have already worked out what needs to be done together either verbally or at the range.

CONCLUSION

Going through doorways and dealing with corners where there is the possibility of taking fire is one of the more hazardous aspects of the job. These situations need to be thought out and the tactics used must be safe and viable for the operators. Your training time is valuable and should not be wasted practicing simplistic square range drills that burn up all your allotted ammo. If you don't have a live-fire shoot-house at your facility, then practice dry fire or employ Simunitions in any available structure.

Take your training time seriously. Don't train at what you already know: Train at what you don't know! ●



For deliberate clearing of open doors, one man should hold, while the #2 man slices the pie.



High/low cuts provide maximum firepower around suspect outboard corners.