

Deciding Under Pressure...and Fast: You Need to Understand the Concept of “Coup d’oeil”

By Fred T. Leland Jr.

"This facile coup d'oeil of the General, this simple art of forming notions, this personification of the whole action of War, is so entirely and completely the soul of the right method of conducting War, that no other but this broad way is it possible to conceive that freedom of the mind which is indispensable if it is to dominate events, not be overpowered by them."

—Carl von Clausewitz

The success of officers on the street or leaders overseeing operations often centers on our ability to read situations as they are unfolding in real time. Our ability to observe and exploit weakness in an adversary's position or decision making is an attribute many in law enforcement strive to develop, in an effort to improve on their ability to maneuver, in an effort to position resources and, set up future tactical options. This ability is known in the world of tactical science as “Coup d’oeil” (pronounced koo doy or koo dwee).

Carl von Clausewitz in his book *On War* describes coup d’oeil in the section of his book titled “Military Genius” “This type of knowledge... can only be gained through a talent for judgment and by the application of accurate judgment to the observation of man and matter.” Today this ability, to recognize the truth, instinctively, using all your senses as you accord with an adversary in uncertainty and the ebb and flow of conflict

vary, is also known as Napoleons glance, strike of the eye, strategic or expert intuition and today experts such as; Gary Klein and Don Vandergriff among others, use the term, recognized primed decision making. The idea of coup d’oeil translates well into the law enforcement world and combines the strategic and tactical mindset, and the explorer mentality, enhancing the ability to see openings and exploit opportunities. Understanding “coup d’oeil” can do wonders in enhancing real time decision making under pressure.

In his book “Field Command” (an outstanding resource, written by a veteran cop for cops), Sid Heal, states, “coup d’oeil” is a French expression which loosely translated means strike of the eye or the vision behind the eye. The closest English translation would be that of “intuition.” Intuition is defined as “perceptive insight” or the power to discern the true nature of a situation. It explains the commanders ability to see what the terrain looks like on the other side of the hill, or the floor plan of the inside of a building, coupled with and understanding of the impact they have on an operation. When time is a factor, it might involve envisioning situations which cause the suspect to react in some predictable manner which can be exploited.”

This implies that officers will be effective in handling crisis situations if braveness to march towards the sounds of the guns is supplemented by good tactics and initiative

"This type of knowledge... can only be gained through a talent for judgment and by the application of accurate judgment to the observation of man and matter."

A.T. Kulovitz & Associates, Inc.
Sales and Training



Alan T. Kulovitz
13714 Wilrose Court
Orland Park, IL 60467-7606
Phone: (708) 460-1090
Fax: (708) 349-4795
Cell: (708) 977-4868

FBINA-169
Email: atkarmor@aol.com



SERVING ALL OF YOUR LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND
TACTICAL NEEDS



BTI Tactical
www.bitactical.com

Brian Tencza
22754 Stanford Drive * Frankfort, IL. 60423 * Phone: 708-417-1657
Fax: 815-806-2004 * Email: btencza@bitactical.com

and the willingness of leaders and street officers to act independently. This also implies all of us in law enforcement must be experts in our field if we are to reduce the chaos crisis brings. There must be a high degree of self-confidence so we must develop officers who consider themselves experts, leaders who are proud to be part of their organizations and possess a willingness to trust and be trusted so decision making can be fluid and timely.

Sid Heal goes on to say; "While a commander who possesses coup d'oeil might be considered gifted, it is more likely that his abilities have been developed. Coup d'oeil involves judgment and judgment can be enhanced by a thorough knowledge of the three "Ts" Tools, Troops and Tactics. The tools of the trade for tactical operations extend far beyond weapons and would include breaching devices, vehicles, communications equipment, diversionary devices and so forth." In addition to these team tactics the street cop, should consider some other tools; tactical response and approaches to include, ongoing deadly action, domestic violence, robbery calls, etc. Vehicles stop tactics, contact cover, subject and prisoner handling, and searches. A deep understanding of conflict and how humans respond to it is crucial as well, so the street cop must also possess sound social skills and the ability to apply them tactfully and tactically.

Coup d'oeil is developed through experience. Experience leveraged from both training and the real world.

Coup d'oeil is developed through experience. Experience leveraged from both training and the real world. We must harness every lesson possible taking advantage of tactical critiques in

the form of debriefs and after action reviews. We must study tactics with real effort if we are to increase our effectiveness in deciding under pressure. Insight and imagination lead to initiative only if we have the knowhow and are able to gain an understanding of what's going on and have some understanding into how it is to be resolved. Coup d'oeil comes from, understanding these tactical concepts and how to apply them.

"The most formidable warriors are students of their profession."

—Al Gray, USMC GEN (Ret.)

Stay Oriented! ☛

About the Author

Fred T. Leland, Jr. is the Founder and Principal Trainer of LESC: Law Enforcement & Security Consulting (www.lesc.net). In addition to his work with LESC, Fred Leland is an active Lieutenant with the Walpole (Mass.) Police Department. He previously worked as a deputy with the Charlotte County (Fla.) Sheriff's Department and before that spent six years with the United States Marines, including as a squad leader in Beirut, Lebanon.

Leland is an accomplished trainer with more than 28 years experience teaching law enforcement, military, and security professionals. His programs of instruction include handling dynamic encounters; threat assessment; non-verbal communications; decision making under pressure; evolving threats; violence prevention; firearms; use of force; officer created jeopardy and adaptive leadership. He is also a 2004 graduate of the FBI National Academy Class 216, and a current instructor for the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee. Outcomes based training and education (OBTE) is his approach to creating and nurturing decision makers to observe, orient, decide, and act while considering consequences.

Gun Blast!



150+ Decibels

Destroys Hearing Nerves Instantly.

Custom Fitted Earplugs...

Simply The Best

Hear Everything Better With Custom Earmolds

- Complete Comfort
- Stays In Place
- Directs Sound Into Ear For Best Clarity



Available For All Listening Devices...iPod, MP3, Two-Way Radio, Blue Tooth... And More

See Us At The ITOA Conference In November



CAA The Hearing Place
(800) 869-0522