

Progress, Interrupt and Neutralize (P.I.N.) Swarming Techniques For The Tactician

A Tactical Option to Stop Ongoing Deadly Action

By Fred Leland

Tactics Both Science and Art

“In tactics, the most important thing is not whether you go left or right, but why you go left or right.” ~A. M. Gray

Tactics is the art and science of winning engagements and conflicts. Tactics refers to the concepts and methods we use to accomplish a particular objective. The essence of conflict has been defined as a struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other, or a “clash” between two complex adaptive systems! This “complex adaptive system” is a, walking, talking, submitting or confronting, interacting and isolating, persuading and forcing, running and gunning, thinking and acting, disrupting adversary(s).

Tactics is not a thing, but a process, especially a mental process. It’s a way of doing something. It is not just a certain type of attack or defense; it is also why you chose that particular attack or defense. Tactics is not just your decision; it is how you come to your decision, your method. This implies that tactical judgment and calculated risk taking is necessary in our approach to solving complex violent encounters, with armed and dangerous adversary(s). It also implies utilizing a unique approach and doing something unexpected by the adversary, considering the specific adversary, time, risk level and place. Keep in mind the unexpected tactic chosen may be conventional or unconventional. Just because a certain method/tactic has been around for a while does not mean it cannot be used in an unexpected way. Tactics are both science (Techniques) and art (education) not in what to do, but in HOW TO THINK! We should not respond without knowing and understanding the “WHY” behind the way we respond. This is an important aspect of tactics for all law enforcement officers to understand, especially those on the streets who deal with the complex problems and make the critical decisions found in every community.

Adversary’s we encounter have a say in the outcome of engagements, a fact we often forget when we respond and deal with calls and crises at the street cop’s level. Adversary’s train and prepare (Arquilla & Ronfeldt) i.e. fourth generation warfare techniques and methods is where we are evolving when it comes to potential threats. *New generations of terrorists and criminals, both at home and*

abroad, are also pursuing innovations as a result of the information revolution.
(Arquilla & Ronfeldt)

We are already seeing this methodology taking place with gangs, organized crime, drug cartels and even the untrained are attempting this. Remember Columbine and the 17 -18 year olds who had set up a secondary location with and improvised explosive device to disrupt the response system or conventional criminals using unconventional methods such as; the armed robber, using hoax or real explosive devices in one location as they rob a bank or business in another. Mumbai India is a powerful example of this at work. A small 10 man terrorist team split up spread out and swarmed over this city killing hundreds and wounding more keeping the city of Mumbai at bay for over 60 hours as those tasked with dealing with the crisis confused and hesitant in how to respond to such an attack.

They are organizing into loose, transnational networks that allow for increased coordination and cooperation among dispersed groups and individuals who are able to stay securely separated in case anyone is caught and incriminated. For example, inside the U.S. some leaders of the sprawling radical right in the United States subscribe to a doctrine of "leaderless resistance" that can motivate "lone wolves" to commit violent acts entirely on their own account.

There's a growing power of small units, groups, and individuals who are able to connect and act conjointly by adopting network forms of organization and related doctrines and strategies and technologies. These cases speak to the rise of "swarming" as a mode of conflict. In the future, we shall have to learn to fight nimbly against an array of armed adversaries who will likely do all they can to avoid facing us head-on in battle. (Arquilla & Ronfeldt)

Adversaries of the future will use elusiveness by mobility or concealment, and systems disruption through targeting multiple locations to test our emergency response systems. Superior situational awareness through planning and use of technology is part of their methodology and stand-off capability, by blending in or utilizing surprise to set up in an attempt to establish and maintain the tempo of conflict will be part of this as well.

P.I.N an Adversary

TRAINING...GOOD REALISTIC TRAINING that factor in the ability to think and act under pressure has always been important (although not focused on enough in law enforcement) and the need for it is even more necessary today as threats and those who threaten continue to evolve. Tactics we in law enforcement utilize must evolve as well. What techniques work and which ones fail? When do we use 4 men, verse one, two or three man concepts verses

SWAT techniques? The all important “WHY?” we choose a particular technique must be explored as well.

I have been researching and experimenting in training with *swarming tactics* also known as converging tactics and whether or not this type of technique has a place tactically in our response to an ongoing deadly action “active shooter,” multiple adversaries or multiple target situations. The two great resources I used were John Arquilla and Dave Ronfeldt *Swarming & the Future of Conflict* and Sean J.A. Edwards, *Swarming on the Battlefield Past, Present and Future*. Both resources are from RAND, National Defense Research Institute and cover the history of swarming tactics, how the methodology is utilized, the command and control structure necessary for successful swarming operations and the tactics strengths and weaknesses. Both are great resources, I recommend you read.

SWARMING is described as engaging an adversary from all directions simultaneously. The technique is nothing new. Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan use the techniques to outwit and outpace larger and more highly trained adversaries. Can we in law enforcement, when we encounter dispersed and maneuvering adversaries combat it; defeat it with this type of response? Will this type of technique work for the first responders, the street cops responding to ongoing deadly action where minutes if not seconds weigh heavily on the death and injured count?

For example; Instead of responding and massing at side 1 of a location under attack and entering as a group, 4-man diamond formation and then move to contact to stop the threat, the first responder enters solo and back-up responds to side 2, and enters, then next responder enters on side 3 and then side 4 (*not necessarily in that order*). In other words we respond and engage the threat by dispersing and then converging on the threat, cutting off the shooter(s) mobility and hence his access to more victims until we stop the threat. Or another option is we mass on side 1 for example, enter and then disperse and converge on the threat?

Just 3 weeks ago in an ongoing deadly action “active shooter”, workshop we conducted with police department we experimented with this technique and found it to be very effective response. This workshop was all force on force; free play exercises workshop utilizing simmunitions. The swarming/converging tactic allows those responding options to **progress** towards and engage and adversary quickly from multiple directions **interrupting** and cutting off the adversary’s ability to move about and accessing victims at will. We found it confuses and **neutralizes** an adversary, at least momentarily, and long enough to change the tempo, allowing responders to gain the advantage and stop the threat. Converging from multiple directions towards and adversary disrupts adversarial plans and actions as they become surprised. Their decision making process slows down as they attempt to figure out “what’s happening.”

In the training, adversaries (full time law enforcement officers roll playing as the red team) were stopped by an officer converging from another direction with deadly force as the adversary(s) became engaged with a responder from another. Once the adversary(s) became aware the technique was being used (we ran the exercise several times), the adversaries (red team) became prepared but still confused as they attempted to attack and defend simultaneously, as responders converged on their location.

Another positive factor we found is when you respond and converge from multiple directions, you also cut off possible escape routes and you encounter victims and potential victims quicker. This allows responders to quickly point out evacuation routes for those attempting to escape or cover/lockdown positions as the circumstances uncertain as they are may dictate. You also encounter downed seriously injured victims quickly where you can either make a mental note of their locations for rescue teams and emergency medical treatment when the threat is stopped or communicate the location to tactical emergency responders (TEMS) (something we need more of), as you continue to maneuver towards the threat. This does require superior situational awareness and rapid threat recognition. Tactical judgment is crucial as you attempt to way a friendly victim from a potential foe.

There is heightened risk to responders as they enter solo and maneuver through the environment alone but the circumstances in an active shooter type situation warrant a rapid and evolving response. Crossfire or friendly fire concerns is another risk in using swarming/converging tactics is a concern, but this is always a concern in any evolving tactical situation and is prevented through ongoing training and cops who think and maneuver tactically and possess the critical skills necessary. The level of training (currently not enough) most police departments give their officers, the 4-man diamond formation, 3-man 2-man techniques, present the same problem once contact with an adversary is made, does it not? Communications is also a crucial factor when utilizing swarming/converging tactics. Explicit communications are critical as you maneuver and progress to locate the adversary(s) and once an adversary is engaged implicit communications to coordinate fields of fire is even more crucial. This implicit communication and tactical judgment can only be obtained through force on force training that creates and nurtures cohesiveness, trust and adaptability under pressure.

With training and adaptive leadership we are more than capable of utilizing this method. In my view it's an option we can we apply to an ongoing deadly action, situation, where we have the element of surprise. Surprise not in the fact that we are coming or are there, but instead, surprise in the methods we use, as the adversary knows we are coming.

Training full spectrum street cops, those officers responding to the scene first, will be the key in accomplishing this. I feel we must explore this more deeply as

an option especially for police departments with smaller numbers of officers working the street.

"Knowledge must be so absorbed into the mind that it almost ceases to exist in a separate objective way." ~Carl von Clausewitz

Interaction with your adversary(s) allows you to gather actionable information to utilize in your efforts to solve whatever strategic and tactical problem you face. Information you have gathered only becomes actionable if you have the ability to take what you know and apply it in a way that accords with the circumstances and your overall intent. You must always keep in mind that it is impossible to control exactly how the adversary(s) will respond to your actions. So the goal is to control the adversary's mindset with both direct and/or indirect action which takes thinking and adaptability.

Insight and imagination is needed to adapt tactics and apply them in an innovative way to the particular problem at hand. The ability to apply these attributes in a violent encounter puts you in a position of advantage. You can then seize the initiative on your terms. You control the tempo of things with interaction--moving in, tactically loitering, communication, deception, force options, etc., and focus your efforts to prevent or resolve the problem.

This is known as "operational art" a much needed concept to explore and understand if we are to connect our endgame (strategy) with how we play the game (tactics).

Winning these deadly types of engagements requires knowing many things, including an understanding of the environment, the climate of the situation, psychology, physiology, decision making, combative skills, firearms skills, leadership and the overall mission or intent. In an engagement all these factors combine in a synergistic way and require interaction with your adversary(s), fellow officers and the community. Tactical Options and knowing how and when to apply, along with the "WHY" we have chosen a particular tactical options is the key.

Stay Oriented!

Fred