



FORCE SCIENCE[®] NEWS

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Editor-in-Chief

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A Blank first round? Our readers' choice: Forget that insanity!

I. A blank first round? Our readers' choice: Forget that insanity!

In Force Science News #300 [12/29/15] we reported on the publicly advocated proposal by Illinois law professor Arthur Acevedo that officers carry a blank round as the first bullet in their handguns to allow time to better "assess" a confrontation and ultimately "save lives."

Our readers quickly set him straight on this bizarre suggestion. A representative sampling of their responses, edited for brevity and clarity:

OOPs! Writers call out the concept's core flaw: It won't work!

The professor apparently has no idea how a semiauto pistol functions. A blank will not cycle the action. In effect, there is no second round.

Lt. Steven Gibbs (Ret.)
Indianapolis Metropolitan PD/Marion County (IN) SD



Virtually all handguns currently carried by law enforcement are semiautos. These depend on the recoil (blowback or gas) of the first round to cycle the second round. A blank does not produce enough recoil to cycle the weapon.

If we weakened the recoil spring to facilitate the blank, the gun would not withstand the live ammo. Thus the officer would have to cycle the second round manually while taking fire, assuming that everything works to eject the blank casing.

I'll leave it to Force Science to calculate the number of rounds an officer would take before he could fire a live round, after having already made an assessment of the situation and discharged a blank cartridge.

Dpty. DA Jim Yontz
Pueblo County, CO

The professor's idea is insane, given that an officer must manually cycle the action before being able to deliver live fire. If an officer in this situation survives the attention-drawing (of the bad guy) waste of time of firing a blank, his/her survival odds become greatly diminished in the attention-drawing (of the officer) manual recycling and re-presenting the firearm.

Lt. Nick Gaudio (Ret.)
Chicago PD

Test him against an imminent threat of death. Someone should stand 2 meters from the professor with a (rubber) knife and after informing him that they are going to plunge it into his chest, see how well he responds with a blank bullet.

As a weapons trainer, disturbing comments like his do nothing to create a protective mind-set for our officers, who more often than not are faced with a life-saving decision within the initial seconds of conflict.

The professor no doubt can be contacted at www.ihavenoidea.com, where a growing number of "experts" are becoming professors.

Macka MacKenzie
Western Australia Police

There may not be a second chance

That first round could be the difference between life and death for the officer!

Most police shootings occur in close quarters. Officers may not have the chance to fire a second, live round in such combat situations. If the officer's weapon jams or the magazine inadvertently ejects, that chambered first round may be all that is available. That's why the NYCPD requires all its officers to have one in the chamber with 16 in the magazine.

Capt. Edward Mamet (Ret.)
New York City PD

"Warning shot minus a projectile"

Acevedo's idea sounds like a warning shot minus a projectile. My experience is that warning shots do not work. I cannot see how a blank first shot would work any better.

Since deadly force is not justified until serious bodily injury or death is a potential outcome of a suspect's actions, would Acevedo's idea allow officers to use firearms (discharging only the blank) before DF is justified? When the warning fails would the

LEO then be required to holster the firearm and go to another force option?

If the goal is to shoot fewer bad guys and get more cops hurt, this is one way to achieve it. I think it's ironic that people who have never carried a gun and badge know so much about how to improve our profession.

Training Dir. Jerry Staton
Affordable Realistic Tactical Training
Certified Force Science Analyst
Del Valle, TX

Wrong lives saved

Prof. Avecedo is right, this would save lives-namely criminals prepared to use lethal force against officers in order to escape or continue with a crime. I recommend this man take his next vacation on Planet Earth and feast on a diet of reality tablets.

Dave Oliver
Formerly, trainer of trainers
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Certified Force Science Analyst
Prossat, Ltd.
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Wrong for so many reasons
First I thought that surely anyone with the intelligence to teach at John Marshall Law School could never seriously consider a blank first round as a viable way to save lives. Then I realized that education does not equate to common sense.

Why is Prof. Acevedo wrong? First, because many times the first shot is the most important one in a gunfight. To take away this advantage is placing an officer's life on the line.

Second, modern police training encourages officers to shoot until the threat is neutralized, not to fire one or two rounds and then assess. Therefore, the blank round would quickly be followed by multiple live rounds until the officer perceived there was no longer a threat, thereby making the concept of a blank round basically null and void.

In the long run a blank round would not reduce police misconduct. Misconduct is addressed first at the hiring stage with proper vetting, and then in continuous in-service training and supervisor oversight where interaction with the public is scrutinized. Mentorship programs teaching department policies and expectations of conduct would also reinforce positive expectations.

Inv. Larry Melton
Montgomery County (TX) DA's Office

Lost time = attack time
Once you draw your weapon, you have already assessed the situation and decided that lethal force is necessary. The time lost in racking a round or firing the blank is time the bad guy has to attack you. The blank-round proposal is even stupider than carrying a sidearm without a round in the chamber.

M/Sgt. Michael Wirz (Ret.)
US Army Counter-Intelligence
York, PA

Let him demonstrate

Let the professor become a law enforcement officer and be the first to demonstrate that his idea has merit.

Sgt. Mike McGowan
Rangemaster/Community Services
Oconee County (SC) SO

Trigger-pull speed makes blank irrelevant
As any Force Science Analyst knows, an officer facing an imminent threat of death and fearing for his or her life will fire an average of five rounds per second. Having a blank round as the first is irrelevant in light of that fact.

Stick to income tax and contract law, Prof. Acevedo. Leave law enforcement and use of force to those of us who understand it!

Training Sgt. Todd Wrage
Certified Force Science Analyst
Oshkosh (WI) PD

Wishes for the professor

Great idea, Professor! So when an armed intruder forces entry into your home, I hope your gun is loaded with blanks! Better yet, when officers arrive to protect you (because you probably live in a "gun free zone"), you'll know that their first rounds will mean nothing!

Ofcr. Chad Burden
Broken Arrow (OK) PD

II. And on other topics...

Readers also voiced reactions to other items in FSN #300, including our report of a cellphone app that allows off-duty officers to be alerted to active-shooter incidents

underway near their location and research on the problem of "mass incarceration."

Don't forget this potentially life-saving item
A reminder to off-duty officers responding to an active-shooter emergency: Have in your Go Bags something that will readily identify you from all sides as an officer. It would suck if an officer bravely responded, only to be shot in a blue-on-blue tragedy.

Sgt. Mark Ruffolo
Training and Education Bureau
York Regional Police
Use of Force Unit
Maple (Ont.) Canada

The reality of mass incarceration
One very important point about the "problem of mass incarceration" that's usually not discussed is how badly the inmate wants to be in prison. Prison is an exclusive club, and you have to really want to be there to get in.

Think it through as an officer or prosecutor. When is the last time you saw an actual first time offender go to prison? I'll bet you haven't, ever.

As a street cop, you know when you arrest Billy-Bob Badass he will be out on bond in a day or two to continue where he left off. The case you made today will be disposed of in a couple of years. He will get a fine and probation/suspended sentence which he won't pay and/or complete and you start all over again. After you've personally made maybe 15 cases on him, he actually goes to prison.

That is the reality of mass incarceration.

Master Ptl. Nate Jacobs (Ret.)
Ponca City (OK) PD

III. Free! Unique WINx training content now going up online

The team of Force Science Analysts who created the innovative WINx training program we described in FSN #293 [9/30/15] is now making digital recordings of that event available without charge online.

Every two weeks across the next few months, according to co-producers Brian Willis and Roy Bethge, video of a different speaker's delivery will be posted on two websites until content from all nine of the 2015 WINx instructors is accessible. To watch, visit: www.experiencewinx.com or search "The Virtus Group" on YouTube.com

At this writing, two 18-minute presentations have been posted: Willis, speaking on critical decision-making and the development of a "culture of leadership" to address problems in today's hostile environment, and Patrick Van Horne, author of the incisive book *Left of Bang*, explaining how to detect pre-event cues that can help officers avoid potentially fatal catastrophes.

Those ahead in the queue include subject-matter experts on international terrorism, crisis communication, policing with respect, and other urgent topics calculated to provoke "thinking about law enforcement issues from a new perspective," Bethge says.

Meanwhile, Willis and Bethge have announced that a new WINx program for 2016 will be held Nov. 16 in Lisle, IL. You can explore the lineup of new speakers and

register for that event at www.experiencewinx.com

By entering the code WINFS when you register, Force Science News readers will receive a \$20 discount, courtesy of the WINx organizers.

WINx, modeled on the popular TEDx productions, which present unique technology, entertainment, and design content for civilians, was developed by Force Science graduates Willis, president of Winning Mind Training Inc., Bethge, deputy chief of the Buffalo Grove (IL) PD, and Tim Janowick, chief of the Mt. Prospect (IL) PD. Some presenters are certified Force Science Analysts as well.

IV. Lewinski speaks on memory impact of critical incidents

Dr. Bill Lewinski, executive director of the Force Science Institute, was in the Toronto area recently, briefing officers of the Peel (Ont.) Regional Police on the impact of critical incidents on memory.

Among other things, he reviewed the findings of a study by a Force Science research team, comparing the memory of officers involved first-hand in a simulated life threat vs. those who merely witnessed such an encounter. The testing revealed significant memory deficiencies among many of the active officers, including misbeliefs about whether a suspect's gun remained in his waistband throughout the experimental confrontation or was actually drawn and pointed threateningly.

This study was published last fall in Law and Human Behavior, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Psychological Assn. [see Force Science News #290, 8/20/15 for highlights or [CLICK HERE](#) for free access to the full study.]

In his Peel presentation, Lewinski discussed the implications of those findings for

investigators who may be comparing an officer's stated memories after a shooting with his or her actions as recorded by a body camera, dash cam, or surveillance footage.

Written by Force Science Institute
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