



# FORCE SCIENCE<sup>®</sup> NEWS

Chuck Remsberg  
Editor-in-Chief

## In This Edition:

In Force Science News #325, we published a provocative article by Capt. Charles (Chip) Huth of the Kansas City (MO) PD, in which he criticized the labeling of police officers as “sheepdogs” and “warriors,” claiming such imagery creates an aura of superiority and undermines the professional interests of today’s LEOs.

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## Sheepdog & warrior criticism sparks robust reader response

We invited your reaction—and we got it! Letters long and short flooded into our in-box from throughout the US and from readers as far away as Spain.

Most agreed with Huth. But others vigorously defended the metaphors, literally as lifesavers.

Here’s a cross-section of the responses, edited in some cases for brevity and clarity.



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“Incredibly insightful”

Incredibly insightful and critically important for understanding the current and future police cultures.

Dr. R. Paul McCauley, Criminologist  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Indiana, PA

Mentality for a bad outcome

Huth’s comments sum up the personal feeling I’ve had for years about the warrior/sheepdog mentality. So many LEOs unfortunately believe they are better than the public we serve. This leads to mistrust and assumptions from the beginning of a contact and sets the tone for a bad outcome.

Park Ranger Nathan Plants  
Valles Caldera National Preserve  
Jemez Springs, NM

What does our society really want?

Have there been officers who have taken the warrior mindset a little too far? Sure. But do I believe for a second that the warrior concept is AT ALL an issue that any training or the culture of policing as a whole has misused to the point of damaging relations between police and the communities they serve?

Absolutely NOT! A “morally superior caste set above that society...”? Complete and utter nonsense!

If there is ANY law enforcement issue that needs to be written about it is the poor condition of our societal values and its dangerous effect on policing.

The real story today is not the idea of a rogue warrior police officer. It is not racism, as our President suggests, or the “killings of black

men by police.” It’s the lack of values, respect, and integrity in today’s society, politics, and media.

Take a look at what we place the highest value on today, as a society: professional sports. Players of games enjoy some of the very best salaries, equipment, training facilities, medical treatment, and fringe benefits in America—certainly better than any law enforcement position.

When is the last time a police department received a multi-million dollar sponsorship from Nike? When is the last time anyone paid \$75 - \$250 for a seat, riding alongside a cop for a shift, then paid \$10 for a soda, \$8 for a hot dog, and \$45 for a t-shirt with a police officer’s name on the back of it? I’m guessing, never.

Let’s say that a police officer trained for five days a week, with the best equipment, coaching, training facilities, and medical treatment at their disposal. All of this in preparation for one four-hour shift on Sunday, or maybe a night shift on Monday. Do you think maybe then, when placed in a life-or-death situation, an officer would be better prepared to take the BEST course of action available to him?

If we as a society want the best qualified, trained, equipped, and coached police officers, we need to start supporting them, financially. The question is, what do we as a society REALLY value?

Det. Richard Covello Jr.  
Connecticut State Police

Dave Grossman defends warrior, sheepdog concepts

I think people who would ban the word “warrior” when talking about US law enforcement might end up looking pretty foolish in the near future.

The definition of a warrior is: “One who is a master of war.” We are at war and our cops are the frontline troops in this war. We need our “warriors” now more than ever.

The “warrior” concept has always been part of US law enforcement. The shield (badge/star) carried on the left side is the symbol of a warrior in virtually every society, an immediate indicator that this is a warrior. Don’t like that word “warrior”? Then throw away that chunk of armor, all those badges and stars, on the left side.

Loren Christensen and I first outlined the sheepdog model in our book, *On Combat*. We said: “There is nothing morally superior about being a sheepdog; it is just what you choose to be. [A sheepdog] is always sniffing around on the perimeter, checking the breeze, barking at things that go bump in the night, and yearning for a righteous battle....”

“Here is how the sheep and the sheepdog think differently. The sheep pretend the wolf will never come, but the sheepdog lives for that day. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, most of the sheep, that is, most citizens in America, said, ‘Thank God I wasn’t on one of those planes.’ The sheepdogs, the warriors, said, ‘Dear God, I wish I could have been on one of those planes. Maybe I could have made a difference’....”

The new “guardian” model of policing does have an important point. In law

enforcement, our mission is never to kill: we are shooting to save lives, and once the person we are shooting at is no longer a threat, we try to save that life like any other. Our strength comes from that. Our purity comes from that. And we should never lose track of that.

I think the best answer is to draw from both sides of the warrior/guardian debate. It is an evolutionary step forward. Thesis. Antithesis. Synthesis. Thus, is progress ever made.

Dave Grossman

Lt. Col. US Army (ret.)

Author, *On Killing, On Combat, Assassination Generation*

“Enemies exist, but they aren’t everywhere”  
Kudos to Capt. Huth for challenging an aspect of police culture that maintains an “us v. them” mentality. If we approach every situation believing we are sheepdogs who must keep others in line, we will find someone to keep in line; if we approach every person as an enemy in a warrior battle, we will find an enemy to fight.

Every officer needs to be ready to defend him- or herself (quite possibly violently) during each shift. Enemies exist, but they aren’t everywhere. There are heroic cops, but there are heroic citizens as well. Understanding that we walk beside each other and not over each other means that we build confidence and trust with the people who need us the most.

Lt. Pamela Starr

Domestic Violence Unit

Dallas PD

Unflattering true purpose of a sheepdog  
I agree with the objection to the sheepdog comparison with LEOs. A sheepdog's greatest contribution is to ensure that the sheep can be shorn and slaughtered at the time and place of the shepherd's choosing. That has, in fact, been a primary function of the police and military throughout history and even in much of the world today. Fortunately that is not true in this country.

Yes, "sheep/sheepdog" is just an analogy. But it's not a flattering one for anyone involved.

Rangemaster John Stewart  
Lake County (CO) SO

"People who serve are different"  
I take personal umbrage at Huth's theory. As a 21-year police veteran with a military background, I've spent my entire career teaching and being taught the exact stuff he believes to be a detriment to our profession. I am decorated with medals and certificates that represent my dedication and service to the public and profession. I like to think that my "warrior" mentality has not only saved my life, but possibly the lives of fellow officers as well as lives among the public I serve.

I believe that people who are willing to serve their country are on a different level.

Det. Sgt. Robert Ciancio Jr.  
Criminal Investigations Unit  
New Carrollton (MD) PD

Intellectual precision wanted  
Capt. Huth is asking that we become more intellectually precise about how we make meaning of our work. I agree! Our mental, spiritual, and physical health and wellness

depend on it. Our communities' mental, spiritual, and physical health and wellness also depend on it.

Dr. Rodger Broomé  
Asst. Prof., Dept. of Emergency Services  
Utah Valley University  
Provo, UT

Need to remind officers of their "servant's heart"

I have seen and also preached the ideas that Capt. Huth espouses for many years but find them most observable in confinement settings. To overcome the dangerous mentalities there, I frequently advocate to my teams the need for personal maintenance of their "servant's heart." It's important to frequently remind officers of the reasons they got into the business and nurture that mentality.

Lt. Ronald Harvey  
Detentions Watch Commander  
Douglas County (CO) SO

Motivated as a sheepdog, and yet...

At a time when law enforcement is scrutinized, over-criticized, ambushed, and threatened, I welcome the comfort I find in knowing and believing I am a sheepdog. Embracing that role motivates us, protects us, and drives us to stay in the profession for all of the right reasons.

However, Capt. Huth hits it on the head with his assessment. We can't form partnerships with the public, or collaborate to fix problems, or trust them to work with us to create a healthier culture of safety in society if we approach them, talk to them, or treat them as if they were inferior. We are very much an equal part of the very communities we have sworn to protect.

I believe his assessment on this topic is a must read. I intend to share it with all my officers.

Lt. Jill Weisensel  
Marquette University PD  
Milwaukee, WI

Finally, common sense  
As a weapons trainer, I always found the metaphor of “lambs and sheepdogs” inappropriate. Finally, I see an article that makes common sense in this regard. I totally agree.

Francisco Tórtola  
Cuerpo Nacional de Policia  
Madrid, Spain

“Any tool I can muster to get me home”  
Presently there is a big push to make police “play nice” with everyone. Sorry, I am old school. There are people out there who want to kill law enforcement officers. My contract does not say I cannot adopt a “warrior” attitude to survive. Any tool I can muster to get me home, I will.

That does not mean I am rude, condescending, or mistreat people. It is time for the public to grow up and stop being offended so easily.

Sgt. Jeffrey Phillips  
Pinellas County (FL) SO

“We are wired to combat evil”  
Capt. Huth is spot on. As an FTO, I have always preached to my recruits that we are a part of the community, no different than a doctor, lawyer, cook, or ditch digger. All of the jobs are equally important, but some of us are just wired to combat the evil that

wants to prey on people who are not equipped to defend themselves. Just because someone cannot or will not protect themselves does not make them weak or unworthy of our respect. These fellow members of society have skills and abilities that we do not. It’s like a big puzzle: the picture is not complete without all the pieces.

Dpty. Tim Essig  
Training Coordinator  
Kent County (MI) SD

“Our own worst enemies”  
How refreshing it is to see a fellow cop being objective and brave enough to tell it like it is within the inner sanctum of policing and talking about such things as noble-cause corruption and the warrior mentality that so often illustrate our ability to be our own worst enemies.

I hope cops who read his work take heart and instead of circling the wagons, as they often do, recognize that it’s fundamentally their job to wear guardian hats, but to know when it’s time to put on their warrior hats.

Chief Dan Montgomery (ret.)  
Professional Police Consulting, LLC  
Arvada, CO

Mental protection against the job’s toxicity  
I would suggest that feelings of moral superiority are a mental protection mechanism against the toxicity of policing. Constant exposure to the stresses of the profession can result in depleted spirituality and burnout. A component of burnout is depersonalization or dehumanizing, where officers see the people they interact with less as people and more as objects.

Agencies have historically done an abysmal job at caring for the spiritual and emotional health of their officers and need to start considering these if they want officers to really provide the best service to their communities over the course of their careers.

In doing so, officers may be less apt to consider themselves warriors and sheepdogs, and more as officers who serve and protect.

Dr. Richard Martin  
Asst. Prof. & CJ Program Director  
Keuka College  
Keuka Park, NY

“Being a warrior has kept me alive”  
All I can say is – wow! – apparently Capt. Huth doesn’t like himself, his coworkers, or his profession very much. It is amazing how the minds of people can be wired in such different ways that allow us to take in the same information and come to completely opposite conclusions.

It is true that the sheep dog snarls and nips at the sheep as well as the predator. But a member of the herd can misbehave without being one of the predators. Issuing a citation for speeding or running a red light, for example, is nipping at a member of the herd but if consequences are not applied then society will fall apart.

Capt. Huth’s take on the warrior attitude indicates to me that he has never been in a desperate fight alone with a perpetrator where survival was the goal and custody was secondary. Being a warrior on guard on every car stop and every contact has kept me safe through literally hundreds of physical confrontations.

Capt. Gregg Ahlers  
Hall County (NE) SO

“Timely, on-point message”

While I recognize the importance of being ready for dangerous encounters, I also recognize the need to adopt Capt. Huth’s timely and on-point message. Those of us in the training profession must incorporate the message of “respectful policing” to obtain the respect we expect and to encourage a sense of partnership within our communities.

David O’Laughlin  
Force Science Analyst & Director of Training  
Municipal Police Institute  
South Grafton, MA

Respectful policing is safer

It is common in our profession that we will encounter the same individuals on multiple occasions. When officers are condescending and disrespectful, it only makes the next contact with that person even more challenging.

In my years in patrol, I found it particularly rewarding to be able to change the mind of a person who had experienced many negative police contacts in their past just by being respectful while still being safe and in-control with my tactics. When I would run into these people in subsequent situations, the contact was easier, smoother, and safer because of the trust I had built. I see this as working smarter and not harder.

I’ve heard fellow officers complain about training classes where an instructor spoke of being guardians instead of warriors and how dangerous they felt this “new trend” is to law enforcement. I argue that we have many roles in our profession. While any officer

may encounter that moment where they need to be a warrior to survive a deadly encounter and should be prepared for this through training, we are guardians, protectors, counsellors, peace-makers, and public servants the vast majority of our working hours and our training needs to address how to be effective in all these roles.

Sgt. Sandra Labinsky  
Henderson (NV) PD

Written by Force Science Institute  
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