



FORCE SCIENCE® NEWS

Chuck Remsberg
Editor-in-Chief

In This Edition:

- I. John Farnham on “Deanimation”: A dicey challenge where anything can happen
- II. Lewinski briefs federal attorneys on Force Science research
- III. New Oregon State University study: What happens in your bedroom lingers on the job
- IV. 1 columnist’s approach to getting civilians to walk in cops’ shoes

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John Farnam on “Deanimation”: A dicey challenge where anything can happen

I. John Farnam on “Deanimation”: A dicey challenge where anything can happen

Officers have long been advised to “expect the unexpected” in armed confrontations. That admonition certainly holds true when it comes to “deanimation,” a threatening subject’s cessation of movement after he or she has been shot.

The venerable firearms trainer John Farnam addressed the issue of “rapid and permanent deanimation” in a recent issue of his popular newsletter Dtiquips.

Even with shots to the heart, Farnam wrote, “most cardiologists agree with the ‘five-second rule.’ When blood pressure drops [suddenly] to near zero, most people will still remain animated for at least five more seconds before becoming comatose. And ‘five seconds’ is the minimum. Some cardiologists insist the real figure is closer to 10 seconds or more”—an eternity in a gunfight.



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Individual physiological and psychological factors enter the equation, Farnam noted. Some people fall down when shot (even in non-vital places) for no reason other than that they want to. They literally 'act out' what they think they're supposed to do, absent any external physical compulsion."

Then, too, there's "the nebulous issue of 'neural-shock paralysis.' Sometimes it's there," Farnam said, "and sometimes it's not, all for reasons no one really understands. [It] cannot be predicted nor produced on demand."

Readers responded with dramatic anecdotes attesting to the erratic nature of "shootee reactions."

A private investigator and firearms consultant recalled a case he'd handled that involved a 6-ft. 4-in., 220-pounder who, thanks to his constant workouts in state prison, "was built like an action-figure doll." He was shot in the upper shoulder with one .25-cal. semi-auto round. "Witnesses reported that upon the single shot being fired this giant fell as if he had been pole-axed!"

In contrast came this, from an attorney and frequent expert witness in shooting cases: In one of his cases, police fired over 60 rounds at a PCP suspect, "and the autopsy detailed 45 separate wound paths through [his] body. The suspect, with pistol in hand, took 11 steps toward police, while being simultaneously struck by a hail of police handgun bullets, until a shotgun slug that struck his spine between T6/T7 dropped him to the pavement.

"Even then, his upper body remained functional, as he tried to point his handgun at police with his right hand, while he held

a cigarette [in his left]. It took a 40 S&W round to the brain stem to finally stop this threat.

"In another recent case, the [suspect], shot through his heart with a 9mm and also hit in the thigh and arm, subsequently walked down a hall, down a flight of stairs, across the stair landing, and halfway down another flight of stairs before he collapsed, and thereafter died. The medical examiner and I, without speaking with one another, both noted in our reports that a man shot through the heart can subsequently remain upright, mobile, and aggressive for 30 seconds or more!

"While stopping effects [of ammunition] seem to be better now than a few decades ago, there is still no certainty, and two suspects of the same size and physical condition, hit in the same part of the body with the same rounds, may well behave dramatically differently.

"We must train to keep firing accurately, creating distance, using cover and obstacles, reloading, and getting out of the kill zone when possible, until the threat is stopped."

Farnam added: "We must be mentally prepared to confront nearly any eventuality, from the felon turning and running away, to the felon falling down immediately (albeit sometimes reanimating seconds later), to the felon continuing his attack while displaying scant discomfort."

And "we need to be cautious about believing glowing reports about 'wonder bullets.' "

John Farnam, president of Defense Training International, can be reached at:JSFarnam@aol.com.

II. Lewinski briefs federal attorneys on Force Science research

Last week Dr. Bill Lewinski addressed 30 senior and mid-level attorneys from the Dept. of Homeland Security and its affiliated federal enforcement agencies during their two-day annual training conference in Washington, DC.

Lewinski, executive director of the Force Science Institute, briefed the group on Force Science principles and research findings about human performance under stress that could impact policy-making, investigations of officer-involved force encounters, and subsequent litigation.

“By overwhelming consensus, the attorneys found Dr. Lewinski’s insightful and comprehensive presentation to be thought-provoking, inspirational, and helpful,” says program organizer Steven Kaufman, deputy associate general counsel to DHS’s National Protection and Programs Directorate.

Other subject-matter experts instructed the group on immigration issues, violent extremism, drones, body-worn cameras, cybersecurity, state disaster relief, terrorist watch-listing, and other urgent topics relevant to today’s tense and uncertain world.

III. New Oregon State University study: What happens in your bedroom lingers on the job

Want to increase your job satisfaction?

More sex may help, according to a new research report.

A study team headed by Dr. Keith Leavitt, an associate professor at Oregon State University’s College of Business, analyzed brief daily diaries kept by 159 married men and women, including government employees, over a two-week period.

They found that after having sexual intercourse at home, participants “unknowingly gave themselves a next-day advantage at work, where they were more likely to immerse themselves in their tasks and enjoy their work lives.”

Those who “prioritized” sex “reported more positive moods the next day,” leading to more sustained job satisfaction throughout the work day.” Specifically, they ranked higher in feeling “inspired, alert, excited, enthusiastic, and determined.”

The effect “appears to linger for at least 24 hours,” is “equally strong for both men and women,” and prevails regardless of “marital satisfaction and sleep quality, which are two common predictors of daily mood,” Leavitt says.

An expert in organizational behavior, Leavitt explains: “Sexual intercourse triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with the reward centers in the brain, as well as oxytocin, a neuropeptide associated with social bonding and attachment. That makes sex a natural and relatively automatic mood elevator, and the benefits extend well into the next day.

“Making a more intentional effort to maintain a healthy sex life should be considered...a potential career advantage.”

Given the positive impact on employee mood and productivity, a town councilman

in Sweden recently proposed that local municipal employees be allowed to use an hour of their paid work week for sex.

As a cautionary reminder, Leavitt points out that his study also shows that “bringing work-related stress home from [the job] negatively impinges” on one’s sex life. Work strain-based conflict, he says, “significantly reduces the likelihood of engaging in sex at home.”

Leavitt’s full study, “From the Bedroom to the Office,” published by the Journal of Management, can be accessed free of charge by clicking here.

IV. 1 columnist’s approach to getting civilians to walk in cops’ shoes

A newspaper columnist’s perspective on a shooting in Florida may be helpful to officers conducting citizen police academies, town hall meetings, and other events where they try to get civilians to empathize with LEOs’ use-of-force decisions.

In Charlotte County, FL, sheriff’s deputies responded to a 911 call of a residential domestic disturbance in which a male voice could be heard in the background making threats against law enforcement. As three deputies cautiously approached the house on foot, a man rushed from an adjacent woods, brandishing two knives.

He angrily advanced on officers and refused commands to stop. A deputy fired multiple rounds at him, inflicting fatal wounds.

Among the public reaction, a retired military veteran telephoned Tom Lyons, a columnist for the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, insisting that there “had to be a non-lethal way” the

deputies could have stopped the attack-in-progress. A Taser, perhaps, or shooting the man in the legs, or at least firing fewer rounds.

In a resulting column, Lyons took an approach that officers might find useful in their own communications with civilians. He asked, “well-meaning concerned citizens to imagine that their 20-something son or daughter is the cop” involved in the knives confrontation, “facing an apparently drunk and bizarrely upset man behaving so aggressively that people who know him had locked themselves in their rooms in fear.”

Now, “imagine you are magically there to advise...your police officer son or daughter who is now a dozen feet away from the out-of-it and angry man who is raising two knives and advancing.

“Keep in mind that an irate or deranged or drugged-up guy with a knife can cover the length of a living room in less than a second. So talk fast.

“Want to urge your kid to try a shot with the stun gun? [That] might just stop him before he can slash your kid’s neck.

“If not, your kid now has a spurting arterial wound, or a blade in the gut. And the action has just started. Remember, no do-overs.

“Maybe your cop-kid is so fast and cool in the face of danger that if the guy starts slashing right and left, your kid might be able to kick butt and disarm him like they do on TV when the scriptwriters are in charge of the action, and not get a scratch. Want to urge him to have a go at that?

“How about just telling your kid to just shoot once or twice. Sure, it is really hard to hit an armed and moving target when you are scared and dodging. Your kid might miss or just injure the knife guy and make him all the more frantically irate and aggressive. Even a good dead-center shot might not stop the attacker until after several knife slashes....

“[By instinct,] your kid will likely pull the trigger until the bullets are gone or the knife-wielder is on the ground. He’s not likely to hear a word you say. But you could try to urge him to worry about how too much shooting might look to people who have never dealt with such a situation and who might sincerely question why he fired so many rounds.

“Heck, people watch TV. They know a good cop has no fear and usually gets the job done with one coolly fired, perfectly aimed shot.... In the old days the good guys could even shoot a gun out of a bad guy’s hand. How about trying that?...

“I don’t want my sons to be cops unless it is on TV with scriptwriters calling the shots. But if one ever does wear a badge and gets in a spot with a deranged drunk advancing with a knife, I’ll hope he remembers what trainers teach: Shoot for dead center and keep shooting until the armed guy is down.”

In his column, Lyons noted: “I’ve never gone through police training in any real sense, but I’ve been educated by training officers over

the years. Nothing those demonstrations and training scenarios taught me ever led me to think I’d have done the job well during any real encounter with an armed and aggressive person in close quarters.

“What they did teach was how fast bad things can happen and how easy it is to totally underestimate the dangerous difficulty of trying to use non-lethal means on an armed and irrational attacker who has no such concern.”

With all the beefs cops have about the media these days, it’s refreshing indeed to find a media guy who “gets it.” And here’s a smart salute to those trainers who took the time and patience to educate a reporter who was willing to learn.

Tom Lyons can be reached at: tom.lyons@heraldtribune.com. Our thanks to Lt. Glen Mills, president of the Massachusetts Assn. of Crime Analysts, and his father, Sgt. (ret.) Gerald Mills of the Burlington (MA) PD, who alerted us to Lyons’ work.

In-box extra: That’s what we’re striving for!

I find your work incredibly informative. Thank you!

Written by Force Science Institute
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