CQB: DIRECT THREAT OR POINTS OF DOMINATION?

Generally speaking, there are two types of close quarter battle (CQB) entry techniques: *direct to threat* and *L-shaped* or *linear*. As long as both systems have existed, the type-A personalities on tactical teams have argued over which is superior and why. The *direct to threat* method calls for the officer who identifies an obvious threat to close on that threat no matter where it is in the room. In the *L-shaped* or *linear* method the team deploys to positions in the room, allowing them to neutralize the threat using multiple officers from multiple angles. Both have been employed during tactical operations, but I believe that the *L-shaped* or *linear* method is superior. It is easier to learn, simpler and safer. More importantly, it enables the officers to mass their fire, visually pick up threats faster and more efficiently collapse a room.

SAFETY
One of the core safety rules that I teach in any tactical course is that the lead shooter has the priority of shot. This means you do not shoot past other officers. You either get on line or move ahead of them to make a shot. Four out of five times you will get away with shooting past your partners, but the fifth time you will shoot one of your own. In the past two years, there have been at least two instances in which officers were struck by friendly fire during shootouts with bad guys. In both cases, officers in the rear of the formation shot officers in front of them.

In the *direct to threat* method of CQB, the lead assaulter who identifies the threat closes and neutralizes the threat. This means that it is a one-on-one gunfight, and no one else in the rear can engage the threat (if you are abiding by the above rule.) I believe as you close on a threat, you make the bad guy's accuracy better. Walking into a muzzle may help you test your new vest and chicken plate sooner than you wanted to. Occasionally, closing on a threat will be inevitable, such as one in your corner. In these instances you can always stutter step and engage the hostile vs. walking directly into their muzzle.

In *linear* or *L-shaped* entries, assaulters move down the walls to a point of domination. This allows them to scan/sweep the rest of the room to within one yard of their partner's muzzle. In this fashion every shooter in the formation can engage threats in the room without sweeping their partners. It also enables them to see that their partner in the far corner is still standing and alive.

VISION AND SCANNING
I often ask individuals if they see first or shoot first in a tactical situation? Of course the answer is simple, you must see first before you can shoot. Seeing and processing the information faster than your opponent is the key that determines whether you are involved in a *shooting* or in a *gunfight*. Following that logic, the more eyes you have scanning, the faster you will pick up threats throughout the room.

I teach a primary scan from your corner to one yard off your partner's muzzle and then back again to your corner. In effect, you look at the room twice. With four officers, the

room is scanned eight times in rapid succession. Since the team is spread out in a *L-shaped* or *linear* fashion, the scanning process is generally rapid and uniform because the entry is conducted the same way each run. Also, utilizing multiple angles you can see more of the room and use the same reference points to ensure that all areas are checked.

In *direct to threat*, you have a husky honcho assaulter in front of you heading to the threat thus blocking your vision, discrimination process and shot. Who will dictate the final formation in this room? In this system, the threat will. No two positions will be the same nor will your points of domination. So, you are changing your system each time with each threat and each room.

SIMPLICITY IN TEACHING/LEARNING
There are generally two types of rooms encountered when conducting CQB. They are *L-shaped* or *center fed*. In *L-shaped* room you should go right or left off the person in front of you. If you enter with two assaulters, you then proceed halfway down the wall to a position of domination. With a team entry, you would move to the corners so that three and four will have room to make it down their respective walls. Generally 90% of the rooms in the U.S. are *L-shaped* and so we now have a system that we can practice.

The other room type is the *center fed* and the assaulters will simply enter in an alternating fashion ending up in a linear formation. We have now narrowed our CQB system to two types, keeping it simple. If we can clear one room, we can clear a thousand rooms the same way. Simplicity is extremely important in high risk/stress tactical situations.

MASS OF FIRE
I don't believe in one-on-one gunfights or shootings, especially if I am already bringing a whole team into the room. I want everyone to get some trigger time if they are in a safe spot to shoot and can see and articulate the threat. More guns and bullets make bad guys go away faster, which in turn makes everyone in the area safer. Further, the threat in *linear* or *L-shaped* CQB will, in my opinion, be more mentally overwhelmed seeing four to five officers addressing them than a single officer closing the distance.

Also, should the bad guy get lucky and drop the first officer charging in a direct threat scenario, where is the following officer in relation to the first officer and the subject's sights? If they are right behind the first officer, then no transition of the weapon sights is needed for accurate follow on shots. The bad guy simply keeps pulling the trigger and hits will follow. If the second team member is covering another threat, then he is focused elsewhere and may not know his partner is down until he gets hit in the back. I like the idea of spreading my forces out. I do it outside on the street and also in rural environments. Why not in a room?

COLLASPING A ROOM
While we are setting up for a gunfight when entering each room, the reality is that we are going to have to control multiple subjects in one or more areas. This can be just as dangerous as CQB, as subjects may have guns on them or prepositioned weapons in the immediate area.

With *linear* or *L-shaped*, the room takedown procedures are the same each time. If you end up in certain position in the room you are either a cover officer or a hands officer. Because this is an open source document, I will not get into too many details. You collapse a room in a manner, that should you have to shoot a subject you are attempting to take into custody, you can do so safely without endangering fellow cover or hands officers. This is just as important as your initial CQB. Again, the system and the procedures are the same for every room.

FINAL POINTS
I am often asked how to handle immediate threat targets, or a threat that an officer observes that needs to be dealt with immediately up entering the room. In years past, the solution has been to shoot the threat twice and continue to your corner. I now teach officers to commit right or left out of the doorway and put the threat down. I promote servicing the target until it falls, while stepping right or left and creating an air gap that allows three or four to pick up and clear your corner while you are preoccupied.

While no system is perfect, you must choose one system that provides safe and rapid takedown of the threat areas.

KEY POINTS
- I believe that an *L-shaped* or *linear* method provides better visual scanning of the threat areas; if you can see faster you can shoot faster.
- I believe that this system provides better control over subjects once the shooting has ceased and/or it is time to put hands on.
- *L-shaped* or *linear* gives you two systems to address virtually all the rooms you may encounter, keeping your options simple.
- Finally, you can mass your fire on a threat safer and more efficiently than the *direct to threat* method.

BIO:

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