

RESPONSE TO MP-5 SAFETY EDITORIALS IN NTOA'S "THE TACTICAL EDGE"

I would like to weigh into the MP-5 mechanical safety debate with a few points. I read the original article written by Mike Odle, the response by Alan Brosnan and then Mr. Odle's reply. I must concur with the comments made by Alan Brosnan and I must add a few points of my own.

First, weapon safety applies to areas other than simply carrying the weapon. It impacts areas such as discrimination, multiple breach point operations, the human factor and finally levels of training.

Background

I began shooting the MP-5 in the mid 1980's, using the low ready and mechanical safety. As a new special operations student, we dry fired over 8 hours a day for two weeks, using the pistol, MP-5 and Car-15 before firing our first live round. When using the MP-5 in a low ready position, we either canted the weapon to activate the safety or had the armorers weld metal extension tabs on the then metal safeties, so our thumbs could reach it in a low ready position. All range fire and CQB training was conducted in this manner. The only time the weapon was placed on fire was when a target was engaged. During any movement, the weapon was placed on safe. I continue to believe in this procedure.

Why adhere to this policy? During my time as an operator and Special Operations instructor, I heard about and witnessed numerous instances of weapons not on safe, discharging during, movement, scuffles and administrative transitions. One involved a foreign national CT force conducting a live fire explosive breach demonstration. The point man, armed with an MP-5SD tripped at the breach point and squeezed off a burst full auto into the floor upon entry. Most spectators did not catch this because of the noise and smoke, but a few of us saw the stream of brass arc into the air. My point being is that a normal human reaction is to clutch and sometimes that clutch involves the trigger.

Discrimination?

I teach a five-point discrimination process that involves looking at the "whole person" first and then the hands. Why? Routinely we are being taught to shoot faster than we can think. The use of the mechanical safety adds one more step before taking a human life. This is important because I have many officers who look at hands first and then go to center mass and let the round fly, only to look at the whole picture a split second later, finding it was a friendly officer. In high stress situations, the safety can become a life-saver.

The Human Factor

It generally takes years to train a SWAT officer to perform safe multiple breach point operations. During my Advanced Hostage Rescue class, I build students up to multiple

breach point operations employing the mechanical safety. Routinely I have hostages surprise officers and sometimes they get shot. In most cases, officers have bypassed the mechanical safety and used the straight trigger finger as a safety and it has failed them. I call this "trigger creep." As the adrenaline goes up, the trigger finger moves closer to and sometimes on the trigger, attempting to make up for a perceived lack of speed.

Levels of Training

I would say that LAPD is almost a unique organization as is their level of training, probably in the top 5% of our nations departments. The problem is the rest of the world is not to their level. Some SWAT teams go for months without training, some only get 1-2 days a month. This is not enough to sustain the weapon safety skills. Also, the time between missions and call outs are more infrequent. Also, sadly enough, most don't dry fire enough to maintain their shooting skills.

Summary and Direction

I would gear the training policy of the NTOA towards the abilities of the 95% and not the top 5%. If LAPD wishes to continue this policy, it is their choice. But I would strongly suggest the average department with limited training time not use this policy.

Instead of putting the weight of NTOA into this policy, put it in the right direction and have H & K fix the problem. A slight design change in the lower receiver or injecting a bit more plastic into a mold would solve this problem. I don't think German thumbs are any longer or shorter than American. Instead of switching to dangerous tactics to accommodate a weapon deficiency, encourage the manufacturer to fix future weapons and provide aftermarket extended safety selector switches for older ones.