

The OFFICER'S GUIDE TO POLICE PISTOLCRAFT

**The Complete Guide to the Reality-Based
Tactics, Techniques, and Philosophy of
The New Paradigm of Police
Firearms Training**

Michael E. Conti



SABER PRESS

North Reading, MA

A Subsidiary of Saber Group, Inc.

www.sabergroup.com

The Officer's Guide to Police Pistolcraft
by Michael E. Conti

First Edition

Copyright © 2009 by Michael E. Conti

ISBN: 978-0-9772659-0-9

Printed in the United States of America

Published by Saber Press, a wholly-owned subsidiary of
Saber Group, Inc.

268 Main Street, PMB 138

North Reading, Massachusetts 01864, USA

Tel./Fax: (978) 749-3731

Direct inquiries and/or orders to the above address
or contact us online at www.sabergroup.com

Copies of this book are available at special discounts for
bulk purchase. Special editions or book excerpts can also
be created to specifications. For details, contact the
Special Sales Manager at Saber Press.

All rights reserved. Except for use in a review, no portion
of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any
means, electronic or mechanical, including photographing,
photocopying, recording or videotaping, or by any information
storage and retrieval system without the written permission of
the publisher.

Neither the author nor the publisher accept any liability
whatsoever for any injuries to person or property resulting
from the application or adoption of any of the procedures,
tactics or considerations presented or implied in this book.

All text, photographs, and illustrations by the author
unless otherwise noted.

On the cover: Background image is an example of a .31 caliber, Colt Model 1849 Pocket Revolver, believed to be the first pistol officially issued to the members of any U.S. police department. In the foreground is a modern, .40 S&W caliber, SIG Sauer P226 DAK semiautomatic pistol equipped with a Safariland RLS LED light.

This Book

presented to

by

Date

Dedicated to the families of those who serve

Table of Contents

A Note on the Use of Lethal Force	7
Acknowledgments	8
Introduction	9
CHAPTER 1 THE NEW PARADIGM	15
SECTION 1	The Development of Police Firearms Training, 17
SECTION 2	Training for the Real World, 36
SECTION 3	Psychological Manifestations of Stress, 39
SECTION 4	Physical Manifestations of Stress, 43
SECTION 5	Countering the Effects of Stress by Breathing, 47
SECTION 6	Integrated Duty Pistol Training Course Concept, 49
CHAPTER 2 WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT	59
SECTION 1	The Pistol: Basic Tool of the Trade, 60
SECTION 2	Ammunition, 69
SECTION 3	Carry Gear, 77
CHAPTER 3 SAFETY	85
SECTION 1	Everyone’s Responsibility, 86
SECTION 2	Safety On the Range, 88
SECTION 3	Safety Off the Range, 93
SECTION 4	Negligent & Unintentional Discharges, 106
CHAPTER 4 PISTOL HANDLING & OPERATION SKILLS	111
SECTION 1	On Becoming a Pistoleer, 112
SECTION 2	Gripping the Pistol, 114
SECTION 3	Loading the Pistol, 119
SECTION 4	Holstering the Pistol, 120
SECTION 5	Presenting the Pistol, 122
SECTION 6	Firing the Pistol, 128
SECTION 7	Reloading the Pistol, 131
SECTION 8	Unloading the Pistol, 140
SECTION 9	One-Hand Semiauto Pistol Refunction Technique, 143
SECTION 10	Semiauto Pistol Stoppages & Clearing Drills, 151
SECTION 11	Tactical Recovery to the Holster, 166
CHAPTER 5 POLICE COMBAT PISTOLCRAFT SKILLS	171
SECTION 1	Combat Stance, 172
SECTION 2	Point Shooting, 175
SECTION 3	Precision Shooting, 190
SECTION 4	Alternative Shooting Positions, 207
SECTION 5	Transition Drill, 214

SECTION 6	Moving Target: Engaging One & Becoming One, 218	
SECTION 7	Cover & Concealment, 225	
CHAPTER 6	PISTOL RETENTION	231
SECTION 1	Pistol Retention Considerations, 232	
CHAPTER 7	THE PERSONAL SURVIVAL TOOL BOX	249
SECTION 1	All Else is Supplemental, 250	
SECTION 2	Understanding Reaction Lag, 254	
SECTION 3	Mental Preparation for the Lethal Force Encounter, 256	
SECTION 4	Aftermath of the Lethal Force Encounter, 266	
SECTION 5	Dangers of the Blade, 276	
SECTION 6	Police vs. Terrorist, 285	
SECTION 7	Respirators: The <i>Other</i> Body Armor, 293	
CHAPTER 8	LOW LIGHT CONSIDERATIONS	297
SECTION 1	How Our Eyes Work, 298	
SECTION 2	Challenges and Benefits of Lowlight Environments, 301	
SECTION 3	Flashlights & Pistols, 304	
CHAPTER 9	PLAINCLOTHES PISTOL TECHNIQUES	319
SECTION 1	Concealed Carry Considerations, 320	
SECTION 2	The Investigator, 322	
SECTION 3	The Undercover Operator, 330	
SECTION 4	The Off-Duty Officer, 335	
CHAPTER 10	THE LEFT-HANDED PISTOLEER	337
SECTION 1	Not Just for the Ten-Percenters! 338	
SECTION 2	Problems & Solutions, 339	
CHAPTER 11	THE FEMALE PISTOLEER by Donna Losardo	345
SECTION 1	Mindset, 347	
SECTION 2	Pistol Considerations, 351	
SECTION 3	Carry Considerations, 355	
SECTION 4	Pistolera Attire, 363	
CHAPTER 12	PERFECT PRACTICE	365
SECTION 1	<i>Perfect</i> Practice Makes Perfect, 366	
SECTION 2	Practicing Techniques: Dry and Live Fire, 367	
SECTION 3	Living as a Professional Pistoleer, 385	
APPENDIX A	The Revolver: A Primer	389
APPENDIX B	How to Load a Pistol Magazine	402
Index	403
Photo Credit Index	421
About the Author	423

WARNING

A Note on the Use of Lethal Force

The express purpose of this book is to present an overview of the New Paradigm Police Firearms Training Program to the trained police officer, military, or security professional. It is in no way meant to replace or contradict any department's or agency's current policies or procedures.

The justified use and employment of any type of weapon, regardless of its intended level of force, is a subject that must be addressed by each individual department or agency. Federal law, state law, departmental rules, regulations, policies, and procedures must all be satisfied.

Today, in the United States, the use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer is generally only permissible as a last resort, when in the reasonable and considered opinion of the individual police officer there exists an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to himself or someone else.

It is imperative that each officer operating in the field knows and understands both the meaning and the intent of all applicable standards regarding the use of any level of force option available to him. It is also imperative that he be able to clearly and reasonably articulate his actions, especially when those actions involve the employment of any level of force.

As civilian, military, and security professionals, we must also be familiar with various federal statutes and court rulings that have a direct impact on what actions we may take and how they may affect our liability exposure while performing our duties.

Your department, unit, or agency is responsible for your training in this area. Once properly trained, the onus of responsibility for adhering to this training is then placed squarely on the individual officer.

Neither the author nor the publisher is responsible for the use or misuse of any information contained in this book. It is presented for information purposes only.

Attention! Firearms training is a dangerous activity that can lead to serious injury or death if not properly and safely performed. All training must be conducted at approved ranges and under competent supervision.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my deepest thanks and gratitude to all who have assisted me in the production of this *Officer's Guide to Police Pistolcraft*.

I have been blessed and honored to have had the support and encouragement of a small circle of family, friends, and close associates for many years and through many interesting and often trying times. I will forever be indebted to you all for reasons too numerous to fully list here, though I would like to cite a few.

To my wife, Kathy, our children, Katie and Nick, and my parents, Margie and Jim, thank you for providing not only love and support, but also for your patience, understanding, and many sacrifices made on my and the work's behalf.

An additional word of thanks is also due Kathy and Katie Conti for all their assistance in proofreading and editing. You have made it a much stronger book through your efforts and I truly appreciate all the time you gave me.

To my friends and staunch allies, in addition to loyalty, honesty, and dedication to the mission we have all embraced, I would like to thank you for the trust you each have given me. It is one of the things I truly value. Your trust has also inspired me to try my best to live up to the expectations we have all placed on one another. I believe I have become a better person as a result, and owe that to you as well. This is especially directed to Paul Wosny, Donna Losardo, Paul "Yoda" Damery, Richard Lane, Pat McAdam, and Bill Burroughs, six of the most hard working, dedicated, and professional individuals I have ever known. I am privileged in your friendship.

To those very special members of our circle who have gone on ahead, thank you for all you taught us. You are greatly missed, but your presence is felt always.

To all the police officers, service members, and security personnel who have participated in training programs, operations, or otherwise contributed time, energy, and experience to assisting us with moving our efforts forward, thank you.

Know that our thoughts are with you wherever you may be.

Introduction

The “New Paradigm” of police firearms training is a reality-based approach to firearms training first developed in the early part of the New Millennium. It was created because the long-entrenched, sight-oriented, marksmanship-based approach employed by the police industry for decades hadn’t been working.

This opinion was based upon data regarding actual police-involved deadly force encounters that had been collected and analyzed for more than thirty years. The result of this analysis indicated that the average officer missed with more than 80% of the rounds he fired at real-world threat subjects.

This poor performance record was compounded by the fact that the vast majority of police-involved shootings have always been, and continue to be, close-range affairs, with more than 80% occurring with the officer and offender twenty feet and closer, and more than half taking place within a distance of *five feet*.

How “New” is the New Paradigm?

The New Paradigm program is—in many ways—the latest rebirth of a system of combat pistol shooting and training that reached its apex more than sixty years ago! How can this be, you may ask?

In Chapter 1 we will take a brief look at the history and development of police pistol training. When looked at in this context, it becomes apparent that two distinct approaches to this subject—one marksmanship-oriented, the other combat-oriented—have been struggling for dominance since the beginning of the twentieth century.

One of the main reasons the struggle has gone on for so long is because, like the two entwined snakes in the illustration on the following page, both approaches appear similar at first glance. Closer examination, however, reveals that one is better suited for mortal combat than the other.

Since the occupation of the law enforcement officer inevitably brings him or her into contact with dangerous situations and people, the need for a system of weapons training that allowed officers to develop reliable, life-saving skills with their most commonly available firearm—the *handgun*—was imperative.

And, as these skills overwhelmingly need to be employed against other human beings during terrifying instances of close quarter violence,

logic demanded that the combat-oriented training approach be embraced as the only sane choice.

Untangling the Snakes

Incredibly, the argument between marksmanship-oriented and combat-oriented training approaches has been fought and won in a repetitive cycle throughout the past century and into the new.

One of the primary reasons for this constant struggle has been because prior to the development of the New Paradigm program, there had never truly been a system of pistol training designed exclusively for the members of the civilian police profession. Police officers' training programs had always been derived from, or at least heavily influenced by, outside sources.

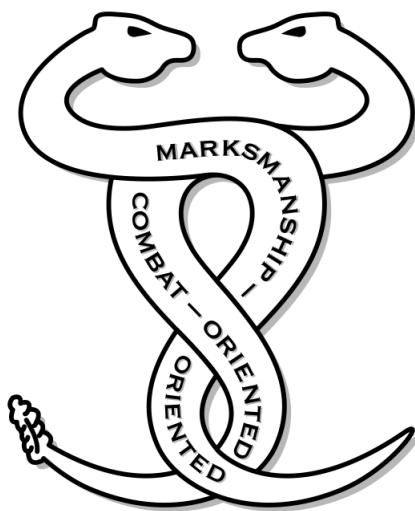
Both military and non-police civilian influences, while well-meaning, have generated a great deal of confusion in this regard.

This confusion has also undoubtedly been compounded by the tremendous volumes of work produced by numerous authors, trainers, pundits, and gurus, all extolling the universal virtues of their own particular brand of pistolcraft.

As a result of all these influences, and in the absence of a needs-driven, police-specific training approach, what had generally occurred over the years had been the adoption of a variety of training methodologies based upon individual police trainer's *beliefs*.

If the trainer's beliefs were influenced by a champion IPSC pistol competition shooter, then that trainer would most likely be a staunch proponent of highly stylized positional shooting stances and demand that the shooter's focus always be on the pistol's sights while firing the weapon.

Should the trainer's beliefs have been formed based upon the teachings of a proponent of the combat-oriented, point shooting school, then that trainer would just as avidly demand that the training emphasis be on the



Untangling the Snakes

development of close combat pistol fighting skills that disregard the sights.

For many, many years, the divide between these two camps had been unmistakably clear, and the basis of never ending arguments and controversies.

Over the last few years, however, a third camp has been established. The folks in this camp share beliefs from both the sighted and point shooting schools.

“Can’t we all get along?” seems to be the mantra, and to a great degree I concur with the sentiments expressed by the members of this group.

However... the specific matter of *police* firearms training demands that we don’t simply agree that the symbolic, entangled snakes are similar enough to justify our ignoring their differences. It demands that we untangle them, recognizing and appreciating both for what they are, and then, after careful determination of our mission-specific needs, *that we choose one or the other.*

Then and only then will our training philosophy be based upon actual, objective need, not simply a subjective belief system rooted in limited exposure, incestuous training practices, or the guru-based cult of personality.

As noted previously, after careful analysis, the combat-oriented approach was selected for use in the development of the New Paradigm police firearms training system.

Defining the Combat-Oriented Approach

When defining the combat-oriented approach to police pistol training, most people naturally and understandably focus on the physical techniques that are used to aim and fire the pistol at the threat.

While this is a critical and intrinsic component of the combat-oriented approach, it is far from the most important!

Of even greater importance than the techniques used to aim and fire the pistol are the techniques used to prepare the officer to operate effectively in the “element of danger,” and to assist in the *development of sound judgment and decision-making skills.*

These aspects of police firearms training—while often acknowledged as the most critical components—often receive the least amount of actual training attention!

The hallmark of the reality-based, New Paradigm combat-oriented training approach is that the training emphasis is focused on preparing our officers as thoroughly as possible to know *when* to use the pistol as well as *how* to use it effectively when needed. This focus on mental preparation as opposed to pistol aiming technique is absolutely critical, for being trained to respond and act appropriately when operating with a pistol in your hand

is the hard part of the equation. The development of the actual physical skills required to aim and fire the pistol accurately and effectively is much easier to achieve.

In regard to the specific aiming and firing techniques best suited for combat-oriented police firearms training, I wish to make something clear: while many have interpreted the adoption of the combat-oriented approach to be a condemnation of sighted shooting techniques, this is *not* the case.

Both sighted shooting and point shooting techniques are intrinsic components of the New Paradigm training system.

In fact, in a perfect world, both techniques would receive equal time and emphasis during training iterations.

The reality, however, is that the world is far from perfect.

Most of us rarely get to participate in training programs as often as we should. When we do get to the range, the actual amount of training time is often less than ideal, and very often the emphasis is placed on training activities that don't actually prepare us to do with the pistol what our duties will require us to do.

That is why the New Paradigm program, being based on the realities of our world and our profession, places the physical skills training emphasis on the development of the close quarter point shooting skills that statistics indicate we will most likely need while performing our duties.

Though statistically less-likely, since we may also be required to employ the pistol to display precision-aimed and fired rounds at threat targets under certain circumstances, we also need to understand how to employ the pistol using sighted aiming and shooting techniques.

Unlike the traditional marksmanship-oriented approach to this aspect of police pistolcraft, however, our focus is on developing both of these skills to prevail over human threats in actual situations, not simply to pass a competition-inspired target shooting course.

Police Pistolcraft and The Officer's Guide

The textbook, *Police Pistolcraft: The Reality-Based New Paradigm of Police Firearms Training* was first published by Saber Press in September 2006.

The intent of *Police Pistolcraft* was to provide the professional law enforcement firearms instructor with a comprehensive textbook detailing the concepts, approaches, tactics, and techniques of the New Paradigm training system.

In the short time since its release, *Police Pistolcraft* has been widely hailed by many in the professional police training community. Numerous

positive reviews have been published in commercial magazines and professional journals.

The New Paradigm program is also in use, in whole or in part, by training entities in the United States, Europe, and Canada. As of this writing, the book is being used as an instructor manual for programs being conducted at the Massachusetts State Police Academy, Hocking College, and Penn State University, among others.

Calibre Press and the Law Enforcement Training Network (LETN) also produced and released a three-part video training series based on *Police Pistolcraft* in the Fall of 2007.

Please understand that I am stating this bluntly here neither as a boast nor in an attempt to stroke my ego. I try not to take myself too seriously, for I have seen just how slippery a slope that can be. However, for me and those with whom I associate, the *work* is *everything* and we take *it* very seriously.

I cite the reception the book has received only to emphasize that the research, materials, philosophy, and approach imbued in the New Paradigm program have been vetted by a diverse array of professionals in the training and educational fields. (A complete listing of peer reviews and readers' comments can be found on our website, www.sabergroup.com.¹)

As for this book, *The Officer's Guide to Police Pistolcraft* has been produced in response to numerous requests from police firearms trainers, supervisors, and line officers.

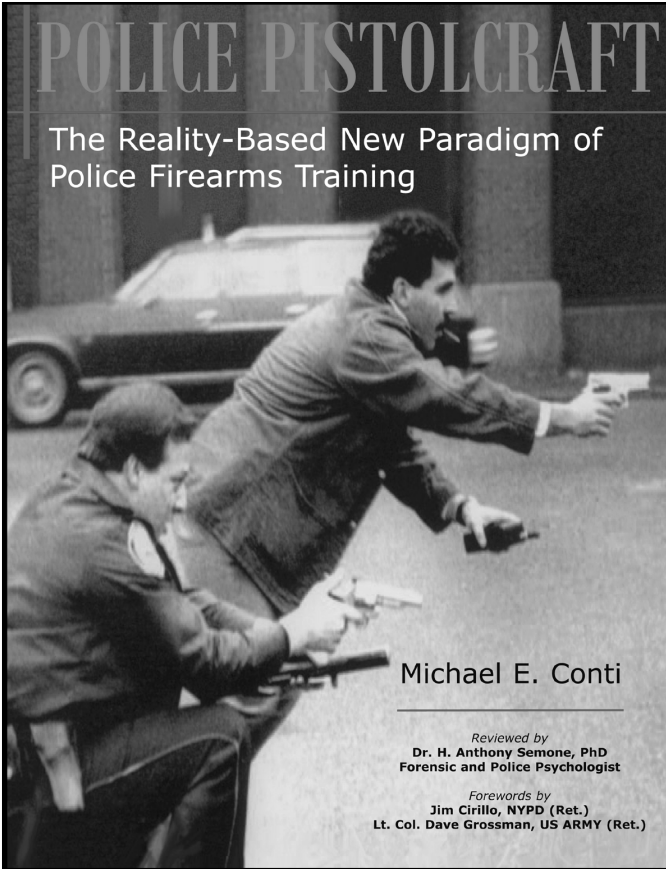
Many trainers and supervisors have expressed a desire to have a manual that can be issued to those they train, a manual that does not include all the instructor-level information found in the original *Police Pistolcraft* textbook.

Many individual officers have written or called requesting a distilled (and physically smaller) version of the book that illustrates the tactics and techniques used in the system, while allowing for easier transport, storage, and use at the range.

It is in response to these requests that I have formatted and produced this "Officer's Guide." I hope it is of use to you.

Mike Conti
Andover, Massachusetts
July 2009

¹ Additional information and training materials are also available on the website.



Police Pistolcraft. Published by Saber Press, 2006.

“Too many people will see this book in the context of the ‘sighted shooting versus point shooting’ controversy. That view misses the point. Though there is a point shooting component to the approach of the author, there is also an equal emphasis on sighted shooting.

The real message of this book is that police firearms training must be based on the requirements of the job, rather than the various forms of competition upon which nearly all police firearms training is based.”

- Gilbert DuVernay

Police Pistolcraft Book Review

ILEETA Review, October/November 2006²

² International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association. (www.ileeta.org)