

**The Bill Blackwood
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**Patrol Rifles:
Adequate Preparation for Higher Education**

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, violence has occurred in the workplace, places of public gathering, and in American schools. Increasingly, these episodes of violence involve the use of high powered rifles. Responding officers must be equipped to meet force with equal force in order for law enforcement to combat these societal menacing occurrences. Statistically, in these instances, the first responding officers arriving to the scene could have immediately quelled the incident and stop the needless loss of additional life but for the fact that they were inadequately equipped with sufficient armament to address the perpetrators of these acts.

This problem has gone unaddressed in American schools and colleges, largely due to the perception of administrators and society on a whole, that rifles or long guns present an aggressive look and is not conducive to a good learning environment. This perception has, in fact, been disproved throughout the world in countries that have faced these occurrences and have equipped their first line officers with rifles in order to effectively combat those that would do harm. Likewise, American schools, more so colleges and universities, must follow suit to be better prepared to address these instances when they occur and ensure the safety of those seeking an education. American colleges and universities should immediately incorporate the use of rifles and long guns to protect the future leaders as they undertake their educational endeavors. The only way American colleges and universities can have peace of mind in the event these heinous acts occur is by equipping the first responding officers with rifles or long guns, so they may be able to meet this ever growing challenge and effectively neutralize these threats and stop senseless loss of life.

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INTRODUCTION

More and more in recent times, it has been seen that increasing acts of random violence has occurred on college campuses and of institutions of higher education within the United States. As of April 4, 2013, there have been a total of 13 school shootings at college campuses according to (Kingkade, 2013). While these acts have been mostly perpetrated by US citizens, it has been noted through intelligence information that institutions of higher education are highly desirable targets for terrorist organizations that wish to cause major disruptions in the US infrastructure (Barmeier, 2003). Terrorists can be described as being in two distinct forms: foreign born terrorists and domestic born terrorists. For the purpose of this discussion, the focus will be on the domestic born terrorist. This individual is commonly known as an “Active Shooter” within law enforcement. An active shooter may be described as an armed individual who is actively engaged in shooting at large and is likely to continue his rampage even when confronted by police. This individual may be stationary or moving from location to location and will not hesitate to shoot innocent civilians or police alike (Williams & Martin, 1999).

In the vast majority of these acts, it has been noted that high powered, high capacity assault type rifles are being utilized. The American public has an innate right to feel secure in their person and freedom against such acts of violence, as well as feel assured that those they entrust with the protection of those rights and freedoms are competent and capable of meeting that challenge. To that end, law enforcement is obligated to do everything within their power to assure that they possess and employ the appropriate resources to accomplish these goals.

Conversely to the threat of potential active shooter incidents, it has been asserted that the service sidearm, and in some cases, shotguns, are more than adequate tools to efficiently address any threats of violence that may occur on a college campus. Traditionally, college administrations and Higher Education Law Enforcement (HELE) have taken the stance that it cannot or will not happen here, and that guns (patrol rifles included) are not conducive to the promotion of a good academic setting, and could possibly be disruptive to the learning environment (Harrison & Bender, 2013). This mentality is liken to that of an ostrich with his head in the sand; if it cannot be seen, it does not exist. It has additionally been inferred that the potential of unintended shootings of innocent by-standers or possible bullet over penetration will increase with the use of long guns in an academic setting.

With the ever growing potential of the occurrence of active shooter incidents on college campuses and in considering the type of weaponry being utilized by those that carry out these types of attacks; the “ostrich mentality” is denial of the world Americans live in, and it is incumbent upon HELE to take the necessary measures to ensure that they are equipped to respond to and squelch these incidents. In doing so, HELE will need to make sure that each of their first responding officers is equipped with the type of weaponry needed to adequately repel the aggressors and neutralized the threat the shooter poses. The duty weapon may be used as a secondary weapon when confronted with an active shooter situation. The reason for using the rifle as the primary weapon in active shooter incidents is because it is more accurate than a pistol at increased distances. In most active shooter scenarios, suspects are armed with more than one weapon and more often than not, a long gun or the rifle (Oldham, 2008).

Jacobs and Cavaliere (2012) stated, "The NYPD's analysis found that 36% of active shooter attacks involved more than one weapon" (para. 3). HELE should incorporate the use of patrol rifles in their daily carry to be better prepared to respond to any incidents of violence that may arise.

POSITION

HELE should adopt the practice of incorporating patrol rifles in their daily carry because it gives the first responding officer(s) the ability to address any active shooter incident immediately with force-on-force. It has been shown that whenever most active shooter incidents arise, there is a high probability that actors will use or have high powered weaponry in their possession. It is also a high probability that the encounter will be at distances that are beyond the effective reach of the sidearm or the shotgun. Lightfoot (2013) stated, "Long guns, especially patrol rifles or carbines, have become much more prevalent in today's police arsenal. A long gun is a force multiplier that allows a trained single officer to put accurate fire into targets at greater distances than those afforded by handguns" (para. 4). The three most common calibers of sidearm pistols carried by law enforcement are the 9mm, the .40 caliber, and the .45 caliber. The average distances most law enforcement agencies train to shoot from with the duty sidearm are 7, 15 and 25 feet; and a maximum of 50 feet with the 12 gage shotgun using a Sabo slug. With this given distance, the likelihood of hitting a target beyond that distance is minimal at best. In contrast, the average distance of firearm training for law enforcement with the NATO .223 rifle round is 100 to 150 yards. The use of the patrol rifle increases the distance of accuracy that the responding officer can achieve. It then is a given that with the extended length of some building hallways on college and

university campuses, as well as other open areas, the responding officer can potentially be more effective in an active shooter incident with the use of a patrol rifle.

The traditional law enforcement response theory for an active shooter incident has been that of isolating and containing the scene and holding for specially trained personnel to arrive on scene and deploy their special tactics. This response action is no longer what is expected of the first responding officer. Glick (2001) stated “these priorities should not be confused with incident-response priorities, which provide clear direction as to the actions first responding officers or deputies should take to resolve the incident” (para. 8). Glick (2001) went on to explain that since the inception of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams and due to the prolific influx of active shooter situations, officers are now being taught to capture or to neutralize the suspect as soon as possible. This has now become the focus of priority in order to protect the lives and safety of citizens and responding law enforcement officers. Nicoletti (2012) stated, “The average active shooter incident lasts 12 minutes, while 37 percent lasts less than five minutes” (p.1). In consideration of the minimal overall time of active shooter incidents, the initial responding officer must engage and neutralize the actor(s) as soon as possible. The chance of the incident extending to a time in which SWAT can respond and end the event is not likely; meanwhile innocent lives will hang in the balance.

HELE specifically needs this because other law enforcement jurisdictions have understood the need for and have incorporated the use of patrol rifles in their daily carry. However, it has been shown that the average response time for an outside jurisdiction agency to arrive on location and assist HELE can be in excess of ten minutes, not taking into account other factors that may have an adverse effect on

response time, such as heavy vehicular traffic on roadways, which may further delay the actual arrival times. Notwithstanding the unknown factors affecting assistance from other law enforcement entities, HELE needs to be self-sufficient and capable of responding to and handling these incidents of violence from within their own individual agencies. HELE must incorporate the use of patrol rifles to be able to efficiently and effectively mount a competent response to decrease the chances of further loss of life in an active shooter scenario.

One active shooter incident that illustrates this point is the North Hollywood bank robbery scenario. While the North Hollywood bank robbery incident was not a school shooting episode, the incident demonstrates the ever increasing use of high powered weapons in active shooter occurrences, and in that particular case, heavy body armor was also used by the perpetrators. The patrol rifle would have given the initial responding officers a greater chance of stopping the threat before the possibility of injuries or loss of innocent lives could have occurred. On February 28, 1997, in the North Hollywood bank robbery, it took law enforcement in excess of 44 minutes to neutralize the incident and numerous innocent civilians and responding officers were needlessly injured in the encounter. It was only due to the lack of training of the suspects that there was no loss of life (other than that of the suspects) in the incident. This encounter brought to light the inadequate arming of street level police officers when confronted with such a deluge of high powered weaponry, which far surpassed that of the responding officers. It became widely known that the only way law enforcement was able to gain the upper hand on the assailants was through the arrival of SWAT officers to the scene, as well as the commandeering of stronger weapons from

nearby pawn shops and gun vendors within the community. Orlov (2012) cited, "In the middle of the gunbattle, five officers went to the B&B Gun Shop, which has since closed down, and borrowed weapons and ammunition" (para. 31).

While HELE do routinely carry handguns and shotguns, in the event of an active shooter incident, their only option would be to brazenly enter into the direct line of fire, placing the lives and safety of the responding officers in undue jeopardy, all while innocent citizens' lives still hang in peril. Consider the following scenario; if an armed gunman wielding a high powered rifle were to take up position in the middle of an open and unobstructed major intersection and began randomly shooting at by-passers, HELE (using the duty weapons currently being carried) would not be able to respond to and stop this incident without the possibility of loss of life to both nearby citizens and responding law enforcement officers alike. Given this particular scenario and considering the type of weapons carried by HELE (a pistol and/or a shotgun), HELE would not have the capability to accurately and effectively neutralize this threat from a safe distance and with the use of effective cover. Glick (2001) further stated, "Officers should have immediate access to a shoulder-fired weapon that allows the officer to engage a suspect with accurate fire at distances from 50 to 75 meters" (para. 16). Lt. Col. Dave Grossman concurred with this assessment when he stated "Handguns do not have this capability....cops need rifles, right now. The school murderers often use rifles; sending cops up against them with only handguns is a bad idea, and waiting for SWAT is an even worse idea" (as cited in Naese, 2013, para. 8).

Another historical active shooter incident that spotlights the need for HELE to incorporate patrol rifles in their daily carry is the University of Texas, Austin sniper

shooting incident. In the UT Austin shooting incident on August 1, 1966, an armed gunman shot and killed 16 (and wounded an additional 31) students and innocent bystanders in a shooting rampage from the 28th floor observation deck of a clock tower. The shooting incident, which occurred before the inception of SWAT, lasted in excess of 90 minutes before it ended. Although the amount of time that it took to bring the UT Austin shooting spree to an end is far longer than what is seen in today's active shooter incidents, the only way this event was brought to a close was by responding police officers climbing the clock tower to access the gunman, thus shooting and killing him. Even though the UT Austin active shooter incident occurred more than four decades ago, it has become quintessential when examining factors of school shootings in the United States, just as the first active shooter incident that brought the school shooting phenomenon to light.

A more recent active shooter incident that hits home the need for HELE to incorporate the use of patrol rifles in their daily carry is the Virginia Tech University shooting incident. On April 16, 2007, in the Virginia Tech University mass shooting incident, 32 innocent people were killed and another 15 were wounded by a lone gunman. Reports indicated that in some instances, the gunman lined people against walls and shot (executed) them in the shooting rampage. The two separate and distinct shooting episodes by the gunman occurred in two different locations; a school dormitory and a classroom building on the Virginia Tech campus and lasted for more than two hours (Hauser & O'Connor, 2007). And while this incident was ended by the gunman taking his own life after having killed and wounded numerous victims, the initial incident was known by officials well before the beginning of the second episode. The focus of

this thesis is not on the response actions and decision making process of the Virginia Tech officials and their administration; however, it can be argued that if law enforcement had responded to and confronted the gunman with the use of patrol rifles, the second episode (and further loss of life) could have been averted. Lightfoot (2013) stated, “In all of the incidents I have researched, once the shooters were confronted by an armed response, no other innocents were killed” (para. 5).

There have been numerous active shooter incidents, both before and since the occurrence of the Virginia Tech University shooting that can demonstrate the increasing potential for the occurrence of another school active shooter incident in the future. The following are some sobering statistics of active shooter incidents in the US that should be taken into consideration when contemplating the need for better law enforcement armament: May 4, 1970, Kent State University (four killed); July 12, 1976, California State University (seven killed); January 29, 1979, at a San Diego California elementary school (eight wounded and two killed). The aforementioned instances occurred during the 1970's; however the occurrences of active shooter incidents has increased dramatically through the 1980's and 1990's: January 17, 1989, Stockton, California (29 wounded and five killed); November 1, 1991, University of Iowa (five killed); May 1, 1992, Lindhurst High School, California (10 wounded and four killed); March 24, 1998, Jonesboro, Arkansas (nine wounded and four killed); May 21, 1998, Springfield, Oregon (22 wounded and two killed); April 20, 1999, Columbine, Colorado (13 killed). To further illustrate the increase in the number of school active shooter incidents that has occurred in present times, these recent occurrences should be noted: October 28, 2002, University of Arizona (three killed); March 21, 2005, Red Lake Indian Reservation,

Indiana (five wounded and nine killed); October 2, 2006, Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania (five wounded and five killed); February 27, 2012, Chardon, Ohio (three killed) and April 2, 2012, Oikos University, California (seven killed) (Geiger and Collier, 2012). Another school mass shooting incident occurred on December 14, 2012, at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where, while wearing a military style vest, gunman Adam Lanza shot and killed 26 people (20 students and six adults). It was also believed that Lanza killed his own mother (in her home) prior to coming to the school and initiating the shooting spree (Candiotti & Aarthun, 2012).

Reaves (2008) cited that the US Department of Justice conducted a survey of 750 four-year institutions of higher education with student bodies of 2,500 or more during the 2004-2005 school year. They found that 75% of those institutions employed commissioned police officers; and out of those 75%, only 67% (equating to 9 out of 10) employed armed police officers. That leaves 33% of four-year institutions of higher education law enforcement agencies that do not have armed police officers on their campuses. In as late as June 2013, the Oregon Board of Education and the University of Oregon passed legislation allowing UO police officers to carry firearms. With the increasing realization of governing entities across the United States realizing the need for armed police officers on college and university campuses, the next step in that evolution needs to occur, and that is the incorporation of patrol rifles in the daily carry of HELE police officers.

COUNTER POSITION

It has been argued that the sidearms, as well as shotguns that HELE routinely carry as duty weapons are sufficient to engage most perpetrators. While this may have

a certain amount of truthfulness to it; the daily encounters are not the focus of this discussion or the subject that HELE and the higher education community should be solely concerned with. The focus of this discussion is on the instances of active shooter incidents; and as it has been previously stated, these incidents usually involves the use of or availability to high powered rifles and other assault type weapons.

Another fallacy that has been offered as reasons why HELE should not incorporate the use of patrol rifles in their daily carry is that the possibility of bullet over-penetration and the chance of unintentional shooting of innocent by-standers increases with the use of patrol rifles. A Rand study has indicated that officers involved in gunfights typically hit their intended targets only 18% of the time. The study showed that New York City police officers fired 16 shots at an armed man outside the Empire State Building in a shoot-out and shot 9 bystanders, shooting the suspect 10 times. It suggested that officers involved in shootings go through sensory distortions causing tunnel vision and a loss of hearing (Ripley, 2013). In rebuttal of this claim, Glick (2001) cited, "Concerns about over-penetration with the .223 caliber weapons have been exaggerated. Studies have shown that there is far less penetration using a high-velocity, small-caliber round, such as the .223 caliber" (para. 16). As with any type of firearm utilized by law enforcement, rigorous and continuous training is paramount to assure proficiency in the use of that weapon. This creed is synonymous to practices of SWAT teams as well as other Special Response Teams (SRTs).

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the fact that law enforcement has been entrusted with the protection of individual rights and safety of their citizenry, HELE should invest in the preparation

and equipping of their own officers, to include issuance of patrol rifles and the proper training in their accurate deployment and usage. Several college and university police departments were polled in research for this discussion, to determine whether or not they incorporate the use of patrol rifles in their on duty weapons. It was learned that some do in one way or another, however, not in a manner conducive to effective active shooter response. The majority of HELE agencies polled reported that they have access to long guns (that may be locked in a secure location within their agency) for deployment in the event of an incident where their use may be needed. While this may be a start, the delay of having to obtain the weapons from that location, transport them to the active scene, and then deploy them would cause unnecessary delay and could result in needless loss of lives. These weapons should be in the possession of the on duty officer, whether carried in the passenger compartment in a lockable rifle mount or in a secure and locked strongbox within the patrol vehicle trunk, to be effective in the event of rapid deployment needs. Only one HELE agency that was polled reported that their agency did carry the patrol rifle within their patrol vehicles and has developed a written policy on the training requirements, carry and deployment of the weapon, via their department's General Orders on Patrol Rifle Deployment.

The interjection of college and university administrations that handguns and/or shotguns is adequate arming for HELE police officers and that patrol rifles or long guns are not conducive to a good learning environment is a position that has been posed. However, when the realization of the potential for harm is considered, this mentality is not acceptable when the safety of the higher education community is at stake. Understandably, there may be some justifiable budgetary concerns related to the

purchase of adequate numbers of patrol rifle; however, there are other procurement options available for these acquisitions. There are federal grant programs that may be sought through the US Department of Homeland Security, as well as other governmental assistance programs such as the Governmental Surplus Program 1033. The critical topic of this discussion illustrates the immediate need for HELE agencies across the country to institute a full daily carry practice of patrol rifles. Only then will responding officers better able to adequately address active shooter incidents and be able to stop needless loss of human life.

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