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DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE **REAL** WORLD

Firearms Training Services
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Let's Talk **ANKLE HOLSTERS**

by Tom Givens

Many of us carry a small handgun as a second, or back-up gun, in addition to our larger, primary pistol. There are a number of solid reasons for this practice.

First, I teach all over the US, and everywhere I go I see good quality, well maintained handguns break during classes. By “break” I do not mean malfunction. I mean a part in the gun literally fails, putting the gun out of action. If your firing pin, extractor, takedown latch, etc breaks, the gun is a paperweight until you can procure and install a new part. If it happens in classes, it may happen in a fight. If your primary gun becomes non-functional, a second gun could be a literal life saver. Second, you can give the back-up gun to a trained but

unarmed companion. Sometimes when I pick up a colleague at the airport, I loan them my BUG until we get to the hotel and he can unpack and put on his own sidearm. Third, in a struggle a BUG may be more accessible than your primary gun.

There are several ways to carry this secondary handgun, and over the years I have settled on ankle carry for mine. Here are my reasons for this decision.

Pocket carry just has too many limitations. It is damn near impossible to draw a gun from a pocket holster while seated, whether in a car or at a desk or table. We spend way too much time seated, especially in the car, for this carry mode. In a tangled hand to

hand fight, pocket carry would be difficult to draw from. It is also very difficult to get a gun out of a right front pocket with the left hand, and vice versa.

Some people simply wear the back-up gun on the belt, on the support side, with the primary gun on the dominant hand side. My belt already has enough stuff on it, so I don't care much for this mode, either.

Carrying a handgun in a well-designed ankle holster solves many of these issues. The ankle gun is actually quite easy to access while seated. While driving, a gun on the inside of the left ankle (right handed person) is quite easily accessed by the right hand. Even on my back on the ground, I can get to my ankle gun with either hand if necessary. A well-made ankle rig is comfortable and discrete.


There are several very well-designed and well-made choices among ankle holsters. Over the years I have tried several, and have settled on some that are very comfortable, adequately

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secure, protect the pistol from the elements, and allow rapid acquisition. My favorites include the ankle holsters from Alessi, Ken Null, DeSantis, and Galco.

If I had to rank them in order of preference, the Alessi and Null rigs would be tied for first place. Both use Velcro fasteners to secure the holster to your lower calf. Both use precise molding to secure the handgun quite well, while allowing a very quick presentation. Both have a compressed felt backer on the holster to protect your leg. In one demo I often use in my classes, I'll set up a double feed in my primary

gun; and then on the buzzer I'll drop the drop the primary, draw a BUG from one of these ankle rigs, and fire a shot — all in under two seconds.

My next choice is the DeSantis rig. This is an elastic rig that closes with Velcro. In the revolver version, an ingenious bit of leather sits behind the trigger guard to keep the gun in place until you grasp it and pull firmly. This is a very comfortable and fast ankle setup. The Galco version has a thumb-break security snap and very lightweight construction. Both the DeSantis and Galco holsters have a sheepskin pad behind the holster to cushion your leg.

Ankle carry works best with handguns that weigh around one pound, or very little more. Among revolvers, the Airweight Smith & Wessons like the Model 642 and the Colt Cobra or Agent are perfect for this role. In autopistols, the S&W Shield and the Kahr P9 fit the bill quite well. Wear the thing for three or four weeks and you'll hardly notice it is there from that point on. You may never need that back-up gun, but if you do, you'll need it very badly. ■



The 2019 Tactical Conference was a huge success, despite the weather's efforts to dampen our spirits along with our clothing.

We had 235 attendees from literally all over the US, plus 43 professional trainers and SME's conducting training blocks, plus 22 Rangemaster staff (range safety officers, match personnel, and admin). Everything went smoothly and on schedule.

We had two pistol matches to allow attendees to test their defensive skills. Many of the attendees opt to stay in

classes and not shoot the matches, but 134 did shoot the Standards Match on Friday and Saturday. With a possible score of 200, we had a four way tie for Champion, with four perfect 200 scores, achieved by Brian Hill, John Johnston, Ryan McCann, and Jason Ryan. Congratulations on very good shooting! The top female shooter, out of 20 ladies, was Cindy Bowser, and Wayne Dobbs took the High Lawman honors.

On Sunday, we had a "man against man" tournament for the top 16 men, and a "woman versus woman" shoot-

off for the top 8 ladies. The men's champion was Rick Remington, and Cindy Bowser again reigned over the ladies.

Special thanks to Martin Hoffert, John Barb, and Aqil Qadir who headed up the range and match staff. Great job!

During the three days of the event, there were classroom blocks of instruction from 2 to 4 hours in length by Massad Ayoob, Lee Weems, Claude Werner, Darryl Bolke, Karl Rehn, Tiffany Johnson,

and many others. There were hands on medical blocks, including those by Caleb Causey and Dr. Sherman House, and hands on training in empty hand defense and weapon retention by Cecil Burch and Fletch Fuller. Chris Fry conducted small knife training, there was OC training by Chuck Haggard, and saps and blackjacks were covered by Larry Lindenman. Live-fire shooting classes included a lever gun class with Lee Weems, shotgun training with Tom Givens, pistol work with John Farnam, Paul Sharp, Brian Hill, Wayne Dobbs, Gabe White, and others, and a carbine block with John Hearne. Craig "Southnarc" Douglas provided a live scenario based force on force class with Simunitions gear. This is just a sampling of the many class segments that were available, with 7 or 8 training blocks going on simultaneously around the training complex. There were too many trainers to list them all here.

Big thanks to Brannon LeBouef and the NOLATAC crew for all their hard work keeping the ranges running and the food and beverages flowing throughout the event.

The 2020 event will be announced in May. Registration will open at that time. This event fills every year well in advance, and this year we turned away over 70 who waited too late to register. We'll have an announcement and a brand new Tac Con website with all the information you will need at that time. ■



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Feature Story:

HOW TO SPOT A BAD GUY



by
Greg Ellifritz
Active Response Training

It was day time on a crowded big-city street in a country far from home. It seems my girlfriend and I attracted the attention of a gang of bag thieves.

I noticed a guy on an opposite street corner talking on a cell phone. He caught my attention when he seemed to be pointing us out to some unseen other person. As soon as he pointed at us we picked up a tail. Two guys appeared out of nowhere and started following us very closely. The dude on the cell phone supervised from a distance.

I slowed down our walking pace. So did our followers. Not a good sign. The man on the phone paralleled us from across the street. I made a quick stop and forced our followers to walk past. They didn't like that at all and we could tell that it screwed up their plan.

It was quite the study in the criminal assault paradigm. The two men were obviously together but walking a half step apart to seem separate. They weren't talking. One guy was pretending to look at a cell phone in a very unnatural posture (trying to look inconspicuous). The other was giving off constant "grooming cues" touching his face, neck, and hair as he nervously kept looking over his shoulder to check our position.

They were obviously up to something. I warned my girlfriend and slowed the pace even more. The two guys slowed down as well, keeping the same distance between us. In between nervous strokes of his neck, I saw one of the men dart his hand into his pocket. He pulled it out and had something gold and metallic-colored in his palm. I couldn't tell what it was, but it looked like brass knuckles of some sort. Go time.

I quickly maneuvered between my girlfriend and the two men so that I could give her a chance to get away as I accessed my knife. She saw what I was doing (without knowing what had prompted my draw) and was astute enough to say "Hey! Let's check out this restaurant!" as she pulled me into an eatery we were passing. Smart girl. The crooks kept walking and I didn't have to stab anyone.



Pre-assault indicators are universal. It doesn't matter whether you are at home or abroad. Be alert when you start seeing any predatory movement patterns or deliberate approaches in a crowd. Pay attention to all of the following body language:

Hands

Hands above the waistline and or being clenched are a warning sign. Look at people who are calm and are not angry. Their hands will be relaxed and generally below waist level. When the hands come up, get ready for action. Any time a person is hiding his hands may indicate that he is in possession of a weapon.

Lower Body

Standing in a bladed stance with one leg (and the same side hand) back and out of view is a sign that the person has hostile intentions or is concealing a weapon. Standing on the balls of the feet indicates that the person is getting ready for rapid movement, which may also precede an attack

Arm Movements

Wide gesticulating outside the framework of the body is threat and posturing. It's the sign of a person who is trying to blow off some steam. Gestures inside the body frame and pointing are more closely associated with violent actions.

Breathing

As adrenaline spikes, the criminal's breathing rate will increase. If you notice someone who appears to be "panting," it should be a warning sign. Likewise, it should also be a warning when you see or hear someone take a big, deep, breath or audibly sigh. The criminal may be taking these actions to consciously slow his breathing rate and calm down so that he doesn't prematurely alert you to his plans.

"Thousand Yard Stare"

Be especially alert if you see someone with an empty stare who isn't responsive to his environment.

Other Signs

If the person is mentally ill or exceptionally angry, you might see clenching or grinding the teeth. Occasionally you'll see the contemptuous snarling of lips. Their face will flush red. They will also be breathing more rapidly than normal. Angry people and the mentally ill are often unpredictable and it's best to avoid them, even if they aren't posing an obvious immediate threat to you.

Obvious Danger Signals

Beyond mere body language, there are other indicators to watch for that may give you an early warning that you are dealing with a potential criminal. Look out for these indicators as well:

Masking Behaviors, Pacifying Actions and "Grooming Cues"- One of the really obvious pre-assault indicators is the unnecessary touching of the face, neck, or upper body. Described using different terms depending on the expert cited, these actions all have the same purpose, to "hide" psychological discomfort.

As criminals are evaluating you as a victim or planning their attack, their stress levels rise. The criminals don't want to get hurt and they don't want to get caught. The idea of pain, death, or imprisonment amps up the criminal's fear and baseline level of stress. They know this is happening and



subconsciously fear that you will pick up on their nervousness and do something to prevent their successful commission of the crime.

The criminal doesn't want you to see his psychological stress reactions, so he subconsciously "masks" them by covering his face, eyes, or neck. It is very common to see criminals do the following immediately before their attack:

- Touching the face or neck
- Wiping at the nose or mouth
- Rubbing the eyes
- Smoothing the hair
- Rubbing the neck
- Scratching the head
- Rubbing the arms or chest as if shivering



Or making any other gesture that partially conceals the criminal's face/neck area from view

These cues occur very late in the game. If you are seeing them, the attack will happen within the next couple seconds. Get ready to act.

"Target Glancing"- When a criminal wants to steal something from you, he has to figure out how to physically remove it from your protection. Sometimes that takes time. While the criminal is figuring out his plan of action, he will likely be staring at what he wants to take. This is called this "target glancing."

Any time someone stares intently at some item (especially a valuable item) in your possession, assume that he is planning on stealing it. Immediately implement countermeasures to ensure that he won't be able to proceed with the criminal activity he is planning. If you take immediate action, there is a good chance the criminal will become frustrated and move on to another victim.

"Looking Around"- Immediately prior to his attack, the criminal has to make sure that there is no one in the immediate area who can frustrate his plans. The criminal will take a quick look around to ensure there are no cops or security guards in the area. He may also be looking for cameras or escape routes. This indicator almost always occurs. If you are being approached by someone who displays a grooming cue and then looks left and right in a furtive manner, get ready. You are about to be attacked.

While we are discussing the direction that a criminal may look, I should also mention criminals often "check their tail." They look behind themselves to see if anyone is following or watching. If you are observing someone and you notice frequent looks to the rear, you can safely assume that the person you are watching is a criminal, a cop, or a spy. You don't want to have contact with any of those people.

Predatory Movement Patterns- Criminals targeting you will regularly move in a predictable fashion. Anyone attempting to correlate their movement with yours (following, paralleling, directly approaching in crowds) should be viewed as a danger. Running directly towards you is an obvious threat cue.

People who turn or look away when you notice them are worthy of your attention. A conspicuous lack of movement should also ping your radar. People who are sitting in parked cars without getting out should be watched suspiciously.



A sudden change in status (focusing of attention) - If someone is watching you then suddenly looks away, he is probably trying to hide his attention. Likewise if someone "locks in" on you with his eyes, you should be ready for a potential attack.

The display of any one pre-assault indicator or body language cue is not enough to instantly brand the person who displays it as a serial killer. "Normal" people sometimes make these gestures as well. Look at clusters of signs. When you start seeing two, three, or four different indicators, recognize that you are likely being groomed for a criminal attack.

"I knew something was wrong."-When speaking to crime victims, they almost universally tell me about a "sixth sense" or "bad feeling" that they experienced immediately prior to the attack. I firmly believe that this intuitive sense that something isn't right is your subconscious mind alerting you that it has noticed one or more of these pre-assault indicators. Don't try to deny or rationalize the feeling. It's your own body's early warning system.

Perhaps the best use of this list of behaviors is to provide a conscious structure to what your subconscious mind already understands. When you get a "creepy" feeling combined with obvious pre-assault indicators, you must act without hesitation. Flee the scene, call for help, or access a weapon and prepare to fight. Implement whatever self-protection plan you have devised. If you don't, you too will join the ranks of the thousands of people who are victims of crime every year.

Other Potential Danger Signs

Tattoos- Numerous studies have shown that the presence of visible tattoos is far more prevalent in criminal populations than people who have never been arrested. This holds true across almost all cultures. It doesn't mean everyone with a tattoo is a criminal; but most criminals have tattoos. Look at tattoos (especially on the face, neck, or hands) as one of many possible warning signs.

"Branding" Style of Dress

People use clothing and accessories to communicate their association with certain gangs or cultural elements. A common type of "branding" is the wearing of "colors" by street gangs. Each gang has a particular color each member wears to show alliance or solidarity. You may not know which color signifies which gang, but you should be extra alert when you are approached by groups of people all wearing the same dominant color. There is a good chance that those people belong to a criminal gang.

Beyond colors, other "branding" efforts can include wearing the same style of clothing (like oversized T-shirts), clothing created by the same company, similar tattoos, the same style of jewelry, or the same kind of hat. When you notice "branding" be extra cautious.

Facial Expressions

A person's facial expressions are another reliable indicator of potential threats. Fortunately for us, Paul Ekman, the world's foremost authority on facial expressions, has determined that certain key expressions are universal. That means the expressions are the same no matter what geographical area of the world or culture a person comes from. In his book *Emotions Revealed*, Dr. Ekman categorizes these universal facial expressions and describes their significance.

We don't have to learn all of the expressions, just the ones we need to keep ourselves safe. People displaying facial expressions involving anger, hatred,



contempt, and disgust are most likely to have bad intentions. These are the people we want to stay away from.

What does an angry facial expression look like? The easy way to find out is to look at yourself in the mirror while imagining a situation that makes you mad. Take note of what happens to your face: your eyebrows are pulled down so that their inner corners move towards your nose, your eyes widen, and your lips are pressed closed. The eyebrows are the big indicator. When they are pulled down, you should consider it a danger cue.

Other worrisome facial expressions are those of contempt or disgust. According to Ekman, these emotions can be identified when we see someone combine a wrinkled nose and a raised upper lip. People showing open contempt for you may be planning on doing you harm.

While we are discussing facial expressions, it's important to recognize what your own facial expressions may mean to an attacker. Displaying fear and surprise may embolden a criminal. Ekman states "An attacker looking for an easy victim may interpret a fearful expression as a sign that we won't fight back and will be easily overcome." Even if you are scared, it's important not to allow the fear you are feeling to show on your face.

We all easily recognize the look of surprise or fear on a person's face. The scared or surprised person will have wide open eyes and may have an open mouth. Practice getting used to changing fearful expressions into angry expressions. The wide open eyes are common to both emotions. The difference is in the eyebrows. When the eyebrows are pulled down, it signifies anger rather than surprise.

Here's a drill for you to practice in the mirror. Start with a surprised expression with eyes wide open and mouth agape. Then simply pull your eyebrows down and press your lips together. You've changed a fearful look into an angry look. When a criminal predator sees that change in facial expressions, he may move on to find a victim who isn't as likely to fight back. Practice changing fear into anger at every opportunity you can. It needs to be a reflexive act if you want to be able to depend on it in a crisis.

Other Odd Appearance Cues

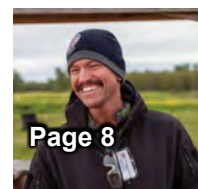
Any obvious signs of drug abuse should be considered warning cues. Metallic spray paint around the mouth and nose, the presence of lots of scabs on the skin, itching motions (crank bugs), needle tracks, and small bruises on the extremities all indicate drug use. While not all drug users are predatory criminals, many predatory criminals are drug users. It pays to be alert to these indications of drug abuse.

How to Avoid Looking Like a Victim

We've talked about criminal pre-assault indicators, now it's time to discuss "victim indicators." What makes a criminal choose a particular person as a victim?

The authors of the book *Left of Bang* describe behavioral clusters that they have named "submissive clusters" and "uncomfortable clusters." These behaviors are universal across all cultures and nations. When several of these behaviors are seen together in the same person, it signals that a person is overly submissive or extremely uncomfortable with their surroundings. Uncomfortable and submissive people are victimized more often than calm and confident people. The following behaviors form the submissive and uncomfortable clusters:

- Bouncing feet
- Feet oriented towards a door or escape route



- Legs crossed while seated or feet wrapped around chair legs
- Torso leaning away from a potential threat
- Torso rotated towards exits or escape routes
- Arms across the chest or pulled into the chest
- Arms or hands covering the groin
- Shoulders raised
- Darting eyes
- Any body posture that makes you appear smaller
- Wrists or palms exposed
- Failing to make eye contact



(Van Horne and Riley. *Left of Bang*. pp 80-88)

These clusters are difficult to detect by yourself. Give the list to a friend and have the friend evaluate you one day when you are out in public. If you or your friends notice any of these behaviors, work to stop displaying them. If you seem less like a victim, you won't be victimized as often.

Besides the behavior clusters identified in *Left of Bang*, we can also look at some other victimology research to learn what we shouldn't be doing. A well-known study showed videos of people walking down the street to incarcerated prisoners. The prisoners were asked to subjectively rate each person as a "good" victim or not. There was wide agreement between all of the prisoners about who exactly they would attack and who they would avoid.

The prisoners looked primarily at the physical characteristics of the victim and the victim's relative awareness. Among the physical characteristics they evaluated, they looked primarily at gait patterns, body type, sex, and relative fitness levels. Fatter and less fit people were chosen more often than fitter-looking folks. Women were chosen more often than men. Anyone from either sex who had a gait abnormality (was walking funny) was chosen. All of these factors indicate relative weakness. In any predatory system, the weak get eaten. Don't display characteristics of weakness.

The prisoners assessed relative awareness by looking at whether the people were paying attention to their surroundings or not. They also assessed whether the person appeared "clueless" or seemed to understand what was happening around him. Unsurprisingly, criminals chose the least aware people as victims. In total, the crooks tended to pick those people who were weak, alone, and not aware of what was going on. Do your best to avoid fitting into any of those categories when out in public. ■

ACTIVE RESPONSE TRAINING





**Christopher
Harold**

The March Drill of the Month was the Hackathorn Standards, and our winner is Christopher Harold. Chris shot the drills cold with a stock Gen 2 Glock 17 for a total score of 275 (excellent). He also has an uncanny talent for drawing interesting faces on his targets. Congratulations, and keep up the good work. ■

Drill ^{of} the Month:

Rangemaster Advanced Bullseye

Throughout 2019, we'll be running a Drill of the Month in each edition of the newsletter. The goal is help motivate folks to get to the range and actually shoot their defensive weapons, and to have some fun in the process.

Each month we'll post a drill or a short course of fire. You are encouraged to go to the range, shoot the drill, then post your thoughts and a photo of your target on the Rangemaster Facebook page. Each month I will randomly select one of the posts and award the shooter a \$25.00 discount certificate to use toward the purchase of a book, DVD, or training course.



For April 2019, the Drill of the Month will be the Rangemaster Advanced Bullseye course. All stages are fired on an NRA B-8 Repair center, scored as printed. Hits outside the 7 ring are counted as misses. Overtime shots deduct 10 points per shot fired over time limit.

At Five Yards...

Note: This is Justin Dyal's 5-Yard Round-Up Drill

- From concealment, draw, fire 1 shot (2.5 secs)
- From ready, both hands, 4 shots (2.5 secs)
- Dominant hand, from ready, 3 shots (2.5 secs)
- Non-dominant hand, from ready, 2 shots (2.5 secs)

At Ten Yards...

Start at ready, 5 shots (5 secs)

At 25 Yards...

Start at ready, 5 shots (one minute)

This quick drill only requires 20 rounds. A perfect score is 200 points, and 180 or more is passing. Best of luck, and don't forget to post your results on the Rangemaster Facebook page for a chance to win! ■

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