M4 are both coated with a Sniper Grey Cerakote finish applied by Fit for Duty.

CLARITY OR C

Over the years, flashlights, including weapon-mounted lights, have become smaller, brighter and more reliable.

They are being produced in greater numbers and being used by an increasingly wider spectrum of armed professionals. With that, the staffs of Strategos International are on a mission—to educate those who go in harm's way in the proper use of light as a force multiplier.

Light can and does set up all your other options, positively or negatively. We state in our training curriculum, "Win the light fight and you will probably win the gunfight."

General speaking, white light tools are used to clarify the situation. In a tactical setting, they can assist in gaining a greater awareness of the situation so that accurate assessments, decisions and any number of potential actions can be taken.

For this article, I would like to briefly address the other side of the equation; that is, using light to create chaos from the threat's point of reference. Let's take a short journey into the world of using today's modern visible light tools to disorient, distract or deceive opponents.

Most law enforcement shootings take place in the dark, yet training regimens simply do not address this undisputed fact. Screaming from the mountaintop is the reality that light, or lack thereof, plays a critical role in the outcome of these engagements. Yet more often than not, officers are left to fend for themselves to select the best light tools and to obtain appropriate training to maximize their use.

While some departments are looking at the actual construction of the flashlight, (which is no doubt an important consideration due to litigation concerns) the foundational concepts of white light deployment are simply "missing in action."

Yes, there have been a variety of technical approaches and solutions presented; that is, hold the flashlight and pistol this or that way while engaging a target on the square range. This limited knowledge base does not answer the weightier questions:

What types of tools are now available and really required? What can or cannot a good lighting tool do for me in a low light confrontation? What are downsides of illumination? When do I use any given technique, for what reason and in which circumstances? What are the advantages or disadvantages of any given particular technique?

These questions have not been adequately explored as the overall framework of low light doctrine is still in its infancy.

In a nutshell, meaningful doctrine has been notably absent in many circles. In fact, at this time I can say safely that most law enforcement departments simply do not have policies or Standard Operating Procedures related to the procurement and use of illumination tools. Officers are issued a flashlight, fire a few rounds in the dark in a relatively static situation and sent on their way. In the grand scheme of things, little attention is paid to reduced-light situations. When attention is given, it has been given to individual applications of white light tools. Almost nothing has existed in terms of addressing the use of these tools in a multiple adversary environment populated with multiple friendly forces.

In the last decade, a plethora of tools

CREATING VISUAL DISTORTION

BY KEN J. GOOD

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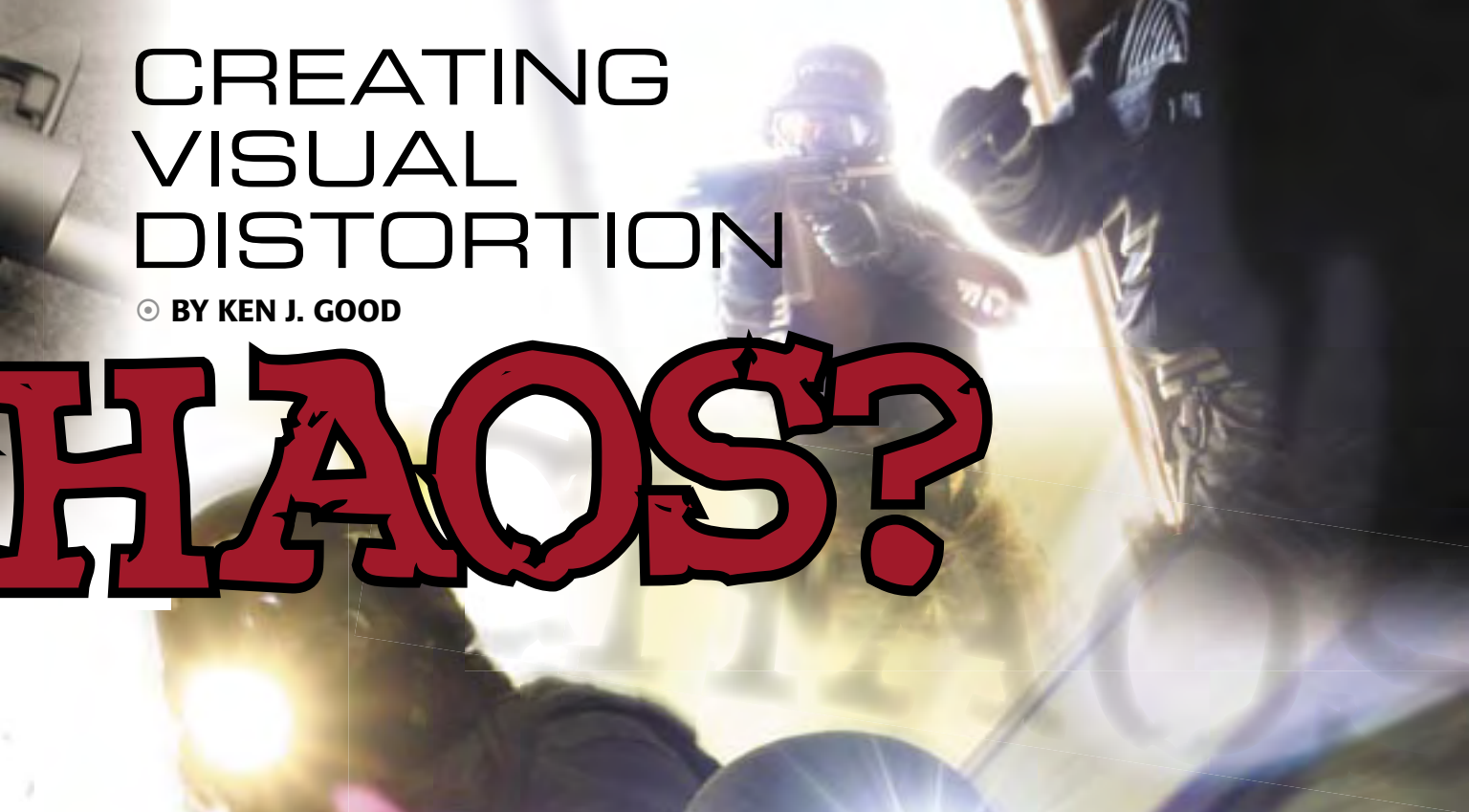
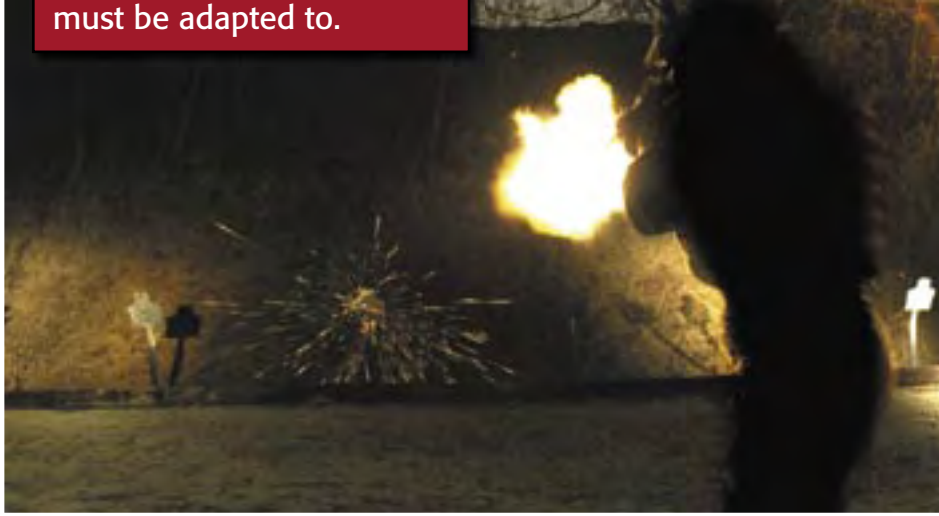


have emerged, some notably better than others. Simultaneous with the development of better, smaller illumination tools, has been the rise of a new approach to training, now known as Force-on-Force training (FOF) or Reality Based Training (RBT).

As fate would have it, I was fortunate enough to be close to the starting point of these intertwining pathways. For almost twenty years I have been involved personally and heavily in training, experimenting and codifying doctrine specific to the low-light environment. It has been a fascinating journey, to say the least. Much has been learned, and there is much more to learn, no doubt.

A core concept that has emerged from the sheer volume of repetitions in a FOF environment is the consistent ability to temporarily gain an often-decisive advantage by overwhelming the opponent's visual sense with high intensity light. I cannot count the number of times I have had somebody tell me, "As soon as you turn on the light, I will shoot you". Well, they got the easy part over with—the talking. When they find themselves not being able to execute their strategy so easily against someone who is capable of painting a false picture with light, the internal questions should formulate and hopefully bring them to

must be adapted to.



a better understanding of what can be done.

One of our instructors calls this false picture one can paint "*visual distortion*." I love the connotation of the phrase!

The concept is certainly not new, in the general sense, as officers regularly deploy the idea during nighttime vehicle stops. Through the use of various vehicle lights, the officer creates a white wall of light from which to operate. It is not a physical barrier, but a barrier nonetheless. Timing, routes and numbers of officers are somewhat hidden from the occupants of the vehicle. This stationary barrier coupled with proper tactics can serve to gain an advantage.

But, what is relatively new is the concept of tying this idea directly to the deployment of handheld or weapon-mounted lighting tools. Over the years we have presented this simple, yet often-overlooked option to officers during FOF scenarios conducted in low light situations.

Let me say in addition, that this idea has been "over-hyped" by some marketing folks much to my personal dismay. Nevertheless, do not discount its relevance immediately as it is extremely important when used in the proper context and backed up by effective actions. In a fight, any gap in the opponents' situational awareness will tilt the encounter

in your favor—that is a good thing.

Let's start with a couple relatively close range situations.

It is dark, and an officer encounters a verbally non-compliant individual who appears to be under the influence or highly agitated. The officer projects forward mentally and anticipates a hands-on encounter or some type of less-lethal tool deployment. For the most part, unless trained otherwise, an officer under duress will place the "hot spot" of the flashlight beam on the chest or hands of the subject and keep it there. Officers are rightfully trained to observe the hands and it is a critical priority.

Nevertheless, in many cases something as simple as moving the light twelve inches up into the subjects' eyes will have a dramatic effect on your ability to resolve the situation decisively. What you have done is disrupt the flow of useful information to that subject. For those of you familiar with Boyd's OODA loop, you have got inside by cutting off the opponents' observation and orientation capacity temporarily. With a good light, you will still be able to see hands and upper body detail exceptionally well even when the hot spot is placed higher on the body.

A more deceptive, disruptive practice to close the gap safely with non-compliant opponents is to oscillate the light across the threat's eyes. That is, take a small, handheld flashlight and loosen your grip on it. Just prior to the takedown, rapidly move the light horizontally across the subjects' eyes and maintain this oscillation all the way through to contact. From your perspective, not much is happening. However, from the opponents' point of view, you have deployed a rapid electronic strobe. This is really a close range application and of not much use at ranges outside of ten to fifteen feet. This application is amazingly effective and best used with a partner. Think: cover, contact.

A new option has just emerged for the officer. That is the deployment of an electronic strobe contained in a handheld flashlight. The tool is the Gladius™, produced by Night-Ops™, a division of BlackHawk Products Group™.

With the Gladius, the officer can select a powerful strobe option not available until recently. It is not only quite useful at close range, but also the medium ranges during takedowns or building searches.

At close range, simply put, when subjects are dark-adapted the effect is overwhelming. More often than not, eyes close immediately, heads turn, hands come up and balance is disrupted. We affectionately call it a "Kodak Moment."

Your eyes store images for 1/25 of a second. They also have a complex, built-in light level adjustment system (light-dark & dark-light adaptation) that essentially functions in an analog manner. Both have different reaction times and it varies from person to person. Rhodopsin (visual purple) is the substance in the rods responsible for light sensitivity. When subjected to a strobing light, your eye/brain image generation capability is seriously degraded. You will have an extremely difficult time formulating an accurate picture of reality. Entertainment folks and those who create haunted houses have been using this phenomenon for years to alter your perception of what is actually happening.

Sports trainers use strobe lights to help certain athletes gain proficiency by allowing them to see only a limited amount of information, and forcing them to act in spite of the diminished sensory input.

Strobing light will alter the subjects' spatial orientation and depth perception. Strobing light can cause loss of peripheral vision and create auditory exclusion. The overall effect can be anywhere from mildly irritating to very dramatic. It is much like any less-lethal option. You're attempting to keep things down to a lower level of force, but there are no guarantees.

During building searches, officers deploying this strobing tool properly, in an intermittent, constant angle and duration change manner, give themselves numerous advantages not possible previously. The effect of the strobe light from the officer's point of view is minimal in the sense that he can still see the entire picture quite well and engage threats if required. The idea that

continued on page 92

the officer, with strobe in hand, will be confused and disoriented is unfounded, based on practical experience.

This type of deceptive movement is part of the larger strategy of "Light and Move" when attempting to locate threats. "Light and Move" can be compared to jabbing in boxing match. You are not committing too much until you have successfully ranged/located your opponent. Once this has been accomplished, you can transition to the next phase of your low light strategy, which is "Power with Light". After you have locked down observation angles, limited your opponents movement and retaliatory options, you can now safely emit from one or more locations with constant, hopefully overwhelming, levels of light.

Subjects who lie in wait under the cover of darkness will have a much more difficult task accurately determining the position and movements of the searching officers. The effect is dramatically compounded when multiple officers use strobing light in this fashion.

If you do a bit of homework you will find that having an "Optical, Stroboscopic Device" for less-lethal applications has been on many a list for devices to be had in the future.

In this case, the future is now. With the advent of high-intensity LEDs and miniaturized circuitry contained in a small hand-held device, new horizons have been opened.

A warning though, having the tools alone is simply not sufficient. It is akin to starting a martial arts dojo, stocking it with all the training accoutrements and related equipment, attracting students, and then teaching them without a qualified instructor who uses a battle proven curriculum. One can virtually guarantee a negative result.

The use of these low-light strategies and techniques should be propagated only with a formalized training curriculum and established standard operating procedures within your department. ⊙

[Ken Good is a former Naval Special Warfare operator, President of Strategos International LLC and the Brand Manager for BlackHawk Product Group Night-Ops tactical lights.]