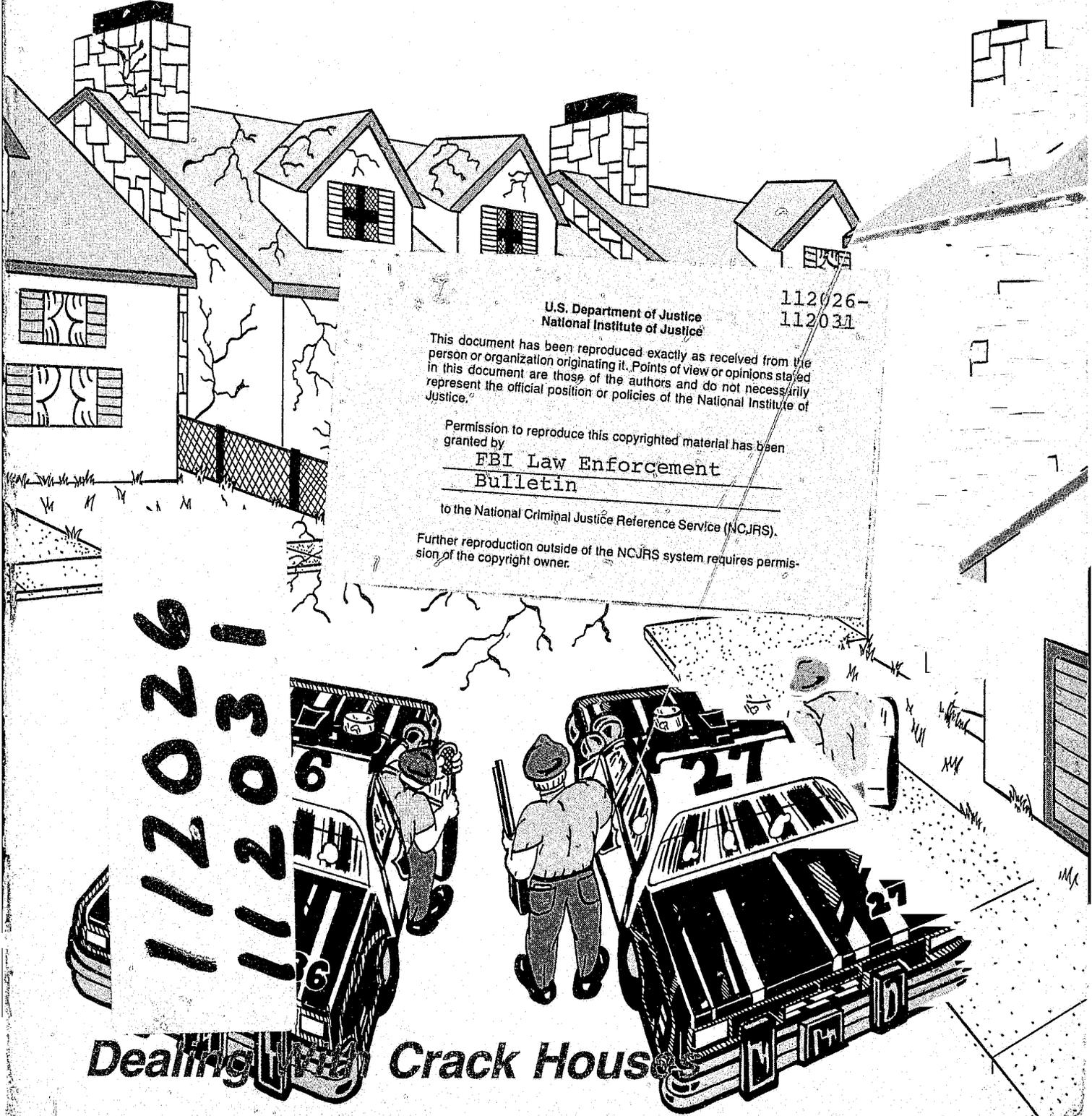




FBI

June 1988

Law Enforcement Bulletin



U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Dealing with Crack Houses

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Law Enforcement Bulletin

United States Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, DC 20535

William S. Sessions, Director

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of the Department of Justice. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through June 6, 1988.

Published by the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs,
Milt Ahlerich, *Assistant Director*

Editor—Thomas J. Deakin
Assistant Editor—Kathryn E. Sulewski
Art Director—John E. Ott
Production Manager/Reprints—
David C. Maynard

The Cover:

Houston's approach to the problem of crack house operations (See article p. 4.) Cover art by John E. Ott.

The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (ISSN-0014-5688) is published monthly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 10th and Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20535. Second-Class postage paid at Washington, DC. Postmaster: Send address changes to Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Washington, DC 20535.

ISSN 0014-5688

USPS 383-310



Firearms Training/Civil Liability Is Your Training Documentation Sufficient?

"The development of the documentation program provides the officer with the opportunity to view firsthand his skills and knowledge"

By

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Oftentimes, it is difficult to establish a valid and defensible goal of law enforcement training which withstands the scrutiny of the courts. This is especially true when it comes to the issue of firearms training. In an effort to reduce officer-involved shooting liability and increase training capabilities, the Anaheim, CA, Police Department has developed a documentation program that could be very beneficial to any law enforcement agency.

Training is a permanent part of every job and certainly a lifelong development process designed to meet and anticipate changing times. Firearms training for law enforcement officers is no exception.

Firearms Courses

Realizing that a great deal of liability attaches to officer-involved shootings, the Anaheim Police Department began several years ago to evaluate its range training. For many years, the firearms training consisted of a "standard" course, that is, an officer shot a specific number of rounds at a target which had a set distance and height. This type of training taught mainly marksmanship and neglected such factors as decision-making, stress, attitude, knowledge, and skill.

Given the fact that the individual law enforcement agency is responsible for the firearms training of its officers, the decision was made at the Anaheim

Police Department to create precise/realistic shooting courses. The range-master of the department was tasked with the responsibility to transform Anaheim's firearms program by using realistic scenarios. As a result, his innovative and creative approach to firearms training has become widely known throughout California.

Justification and logic were the prime concerns in the development of each course in the four-position, 25-yard range. The training involves not only the use of the officer's primary duty weapon but also the shotgun and any backup weapon the officer may carry.

Officers are required to move around, talk to suspects, shoot while

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Lieutenant Schrader



*Martin Mitchell
Chief of Police*

moving or at moving targets, and at the same time, use flashlights and police radios. They are also required to shoot six different courses each year. The only course that remains the same is the first course, which is a qualifying course—all others are different.

Courses are created based on officer-involved incidents that have occurred throughout the United States. They are developed to simulate actual situations that the officer may confront, whether assigned to patrol, detectives, traffic, or an undercover assignment. The courses require responses from the officer that are based on ongoing training, combined with experience and the ability to think logically under stress.

Realism, decisionmaking, stress, and the psychological aspects of shooting the wrong person, or even being shot, are underlying factors in the design of each course. Courses also encompass the use of props, such as sirens, flashing lights, no light, radio transmissions, or people yelling and screaming, all while the officer is determining the course of action to take in the given situation. The bottom line of this type of training is obviously to prepare all officers for a time when immediate action is required in the use of a firearm.

Documentation

To further demonstrate the police department's commitment to a comprehensive firearms training program, a documentation system has been adopted. The Training Bureau now maintains a computerized record of each officer's range score. The system allows the individual officer to obtain a

printout of his/her shooting record for all courses fired since January 1987.

The printout indicates not only the date the course was fired but also whether the officer passed/failed the course, the type of weapon fired, the serial number of the weapon(s), and whether a safety inspection of the weapon was conducted by the range-master. This information applies to all weapons fired by an officer while on the shooting range.

Added to the officer's individual range record is a course description, which lists the objective(s) of the specific course, as well as the scenario the officer was given during preshooting instructions. Also included are the amount of ammunition for the particular caliber firearm used by the officer and the number of times reloading was required.

The scenarios are developed to require the officer to perform such functions while getting out of a squad car or using a unit spot light, an exterior speaker on the police unit, a flashlight, hand-held radio, citation book, etc.—all functions or items with which the officer might be involved during a tour of duty.

Video Documentation

Realizing that it is difficult to create a mental picture for people, specifically for jury members during a trial, the Anaheim Police Department went one step further and started a video library of all the firearms training courses developed since January 1987.

Each firearms training course is videotaped by the department's Media

"Documenting firearms training not only reduces liability for the city and department but is an excellent training medium."



A four-camera video taping system is used to show the good and bad points of an officer's actions during the course.

Services Detail and then kept in the master video library. A tape of each officer is made as he is trained on each new course; thus, actual conditions of training are recorded.

Videotaping allows the department not only to describe the conditions of lighting, sound, props, and instructions but to show the actual reactions of an officer as he/she is being trained.

Only one officer is videotaped for the library copy. However, each officer is taped on a four-camera system so that he/she can then be shown the good and bad points of his/her actual responses/actions during the course.

Three cameras have been installed on the range at fixed locations; a portable camera is used to tape individual officers from four different angles. This is an asset to the

rangemaster and officer when playing back the tape to determine whether additional training is needed.

Documenting firearms training not only reduces liability for the city and department but is an excellent training medium.

Summary

Officer-involved shootings are constantly scrutinized by individual agencies, the public, and the courts. These facts have dictated that the precise content of firearms training be documented.

Because of the innovative firearms training program adopted by the Anaheim Police Department, officers are better prepared to confront the life-or-death situations involving the use of their firearms. As such, they can deal

more effectively with the issue of deadly force.

The development of the documentation program provides the officer with the opportunity to view firsthand his/her skills and knowledge, while allowing the department to evaluate the firearms training and adapt its procedures accordingly. This constant evaluation and modification of firearms training helps to greatly reduce Anaheim's liability involving the use of a firearm.

It has been said many times that "the world hates change—yet it is the only thing that has brought progress." Anaheim's firearms training and documentation program certainly has been a significant step forward in the development of the professional police officer.

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