

Officer Safety and Extremists

An Overview for Law Enforcement Officers

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement is a hazardous profession. Officers voluntarily put themselves into potentially dangerous situations in order to protect and serve the communities in which they live. Consequently, they must constantly educate themselves about the dangers they might face and how to minimize those risks.

Officers face risks that range from undercover drug stings to volatile domestic disturbances. Unfortunately, ideological extremists have added to these dangers. Over the years, a variety of movements and groups espousing extreme ideologies and radical social change have accepted violence as a viable tactic to achieve their ends. Moreover, they have also shown a willingness to direct that violence at law enforcement.

For several reasons, law enforcement officers are particularly at risk for violence from extremists. First, it is the job of law enforcement to prevent crime and to arrest criminals; this includes crimes and criminals with an ideological motivation. Consequently, like other criminals, extremists willing to break the law already view the police as the enemy. Moreover, many people with extreme ideologies also view police as a symbolic enemy, as representatives of a government or a society they oppose. Lastly, a number of extremists, particularly those who adhere to various conspiracy theories, may believe that the police are deliberately targeting them because of their beliefs, and consequently may be unpredictable or violent in situations involving law enforcement, even when they have not broken any laws.

The focus of this officer safety overview is primarily on the dangers posed by those groups and individuals that are often called "right-wing" extremists, specifically members of hate groups (such as neo-Nazis or the Klan) or anti-government groups (such as militia groups or "sovereign citizens"). This is because there is such a well-documented safety risk from such movements. However, many of the general lessons here are applicable to extremists of other types, such as left-wing extremists or "single issue" extremists.

This overview contains information of use to any law enforcement officer. However, anybody using this material should pay particular heed to two important considerations.

First, the material here is designed to complement, not replace, the safety training that officers have already had. The overview provides information to help law enforcement officers recognize potentially dangerous situations so that they can apply the standard officer safety techniques and practices they have learned through training and experience.

Second, this overview is not intended as a "profiling" technique. No officer should target a person simply because he or she believes that person may have extreme views. Those views are protected by the First Amendment; they prompt law enforcement concern only when they motivate criminal conduct. This material is designed to help officers take additional precautions for their own safety when finding themselves in situations involving extremists. Under no circumstances should officers presume that a person has committed or intends to commit criminal acts solely because he or she is or may be an extremist.

WHY ARE EXTREMISTS A SAFETY CONCERN?

Law enforcement officers have many safety concerns, ranging from domestic disputes to belligerent drunk drivers, and they will likely face those situations far more often than situations involving extremists, who by their nature are a minority of the population.

Nevertheless, officers need to be alert to possible encounters with extremists and the safety issues involved. Even if members of hate groups are less common than spouse abusers, officers will eventually encounter them. Generally speaking, extremist criminals pose all the same risks to officer safety as other criminals. However, because of their beliefs, extremist criminals also pose additional risks and concerns.

Three particular factors underscore the importance of officer safety when dealing with extremists.

- First, law enforcement officers are often the people most likely to confront extremists who have committed criminal acts.
- Second, criminals motivated by extremism very often act in distinctly different ways than criminals motivated by traditional motives such as greed or anger.
- Third, for a variety of reasons, extremist criminals may often specifically target law enforcement officers.

The First Line of Defense

One of the primary reasons that law enforcement officers should be concerned about safety when dealing with extremists is very simple: it is the "street cop" who is most likely to encounter an extremist who has committed a crime or act of terrorism. Elite forces like the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Hostage Rescue Team will never be the first to confront an extremist criminal; they will always arrive on the scene after an encounter has already taken place. In all likelihood, the officer encountering an extremist criminal or fugitive will be a neighborhood patrol officer or a deputy sheriff.

The bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, provides a good example. Timothy McVeigh, the nation's most notorious domestic terrorist—responsible for 168 deaths and hundreds of casualties—was not apprehended by members of a Joint Terrorism Task Force. He was arrested at a routine traffic stop by Charles J. Hanger, a veteran trooper of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

McVeigh was armed, but chose not to offer resistance to Hanger. Not all officers have been so lucky. On the same day that Hanger arrested McVeigh in Oklahoma, an execution took place in neighboring Arkansas. The man executed was Richard Wayne Snell, a virulent white supremacist on death row for acts he had committed a decade earlier: the June 1984 murder of Arkansas State Police Trooper Louis Bryant and the November 1983 murder of William Stump, a pawn shop owner he mistakenly thought was Jewish.

In addition to being most likely to be first on the scene at an event or encounter, law enforcement officers are also most likely to discover the beginning or initial activities of new extremist groups. Local police with limited resources may have to cope for extended periods of time with large, highly motivated and well-organized groups.

The highly-publicized 81-day Montana Freemen standoff in Garfield County, Montana, in 1996 is a good example. For several years before hundreds of federal and state agents descended on the town of Jordan, the task of combating the Montana Freemen fell to a young sheriff, Charles Phipps, and his single deputy, with the assistance and guidance of county attorney Nick Murnion. The Freemen subjected Phipps to harassing liens and legal filings, a variety of threats, and even put out a million-dollar bounty on Phipps' head. Phipps asked one of the Freemen if he could turn himself in and get the reward; the Freeman replied that he could but wouldn't live to enjoy it, because Phipps would be tried, convicted, and hung.

Extremist Criminals vs. "Typical" Criminals

Just as no two individuals are exactly alike; so no two criminals are exactly alike. Nevertheless, criminals who share the same motivations and desires often respond or react in similar ways, giving police officers valuable tools to work with when investigating crimes or making arrests.

However, criminals primarily motivated by ideology rather than greed or anger may act or respond quite differently than most of the criminals a police officer encounters. There is no firm line distinguishing an extremist criminal from a "typical" criminal; in some cases, their actions may be indistinguishable. However, the differences manifest themselves often enough to merit attention and concern, especially since these variations may mean the difference between life and death in certain situations.

One of the most striking ways extremist criminal behavior may be different from more common criminal behavior is that extremist criminals are often focused rather than opportunistic, and committed rather than ambivalent. For example, a "typical" criminal may look for an opportunity to assault someone who looks well-off and vulnerable, or may look for an open window in order to commit a robbery. The

identity of the victim doesn't really matter; one person is as good as another. Similarly, if a house is locked, perhaps the next one will not be. An extremist criminal, on the other hand, may have a very particular focus and may plan a particular criminal act in great detail. He or she may labor to surmount obstacles, rather than let an obstacle deter them from committing the particular act they envisioned. Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, went to great lengths to build elaborate letter bombs targeting identified individuals.

Another way in which extremist criminals may differ strikingly from most other criminals is that they are often cause-oriented rather than self-oriented. In extreme cases, this cause-orientation may be so strong that the extremist embarks upon a suicide mission of some sort; self-preservation is no longer a factor. The shooting spree of World Church of the Creator member Benjamin Smith in the summer of 1999 offers a telling example. Smith went on a three day shooting rampage, targeting Jews, African Americans, and Asian Americans. He killed two people and wounded nine more before killing himself as police closed in. While few extremists approach Smith in their willingness to sacrifice their lives to their "cause," many more will exhibit less extreme versions of the same sentiments, often including a reluctance to inform on others, even if it will mean more severe consequences for them.

Extremist criminals are also much more likely to be attack-oriented than defense-oriented. When a planned criminal act goes wrong, a typical criminal is much more likely to choose "flight" over "fight." The same cannot necessarily be said for extremist criminals, for some of whom a battle with law enforcement may be practically as desirable as the planned act itself. The so-called "Phineas Priests" who in 1996 robbed a Spokane, Washington, bank twice and attempted the robbery of a bank in Portland, Oregon, provide a good example. Four members of the group were eventually convicted (Charles Barbee, Robert Berry, Verne Jay Merrell, and Brian Ratigan). In each of the successful bank robberies, the extremists rigged incendiary devices to their abandoned getaway vehicles in order to harm law enforcement officers. In fact, after one robbery, they first backed their getaway van onto the on-ramp of a parking garage, waiting to ambush law enforcement officers. Luckily, no officer followed them to the garage.

People motivated by extreme ideologies are as varied as any other group of people. Extremists who commit criminal acts, like typical criminals, may be lazy, careless, stupid, or cowardly. Yet because their ideology motivates them differently than more common motives such as greed or anger may motivate typical criminals, police officers cannot afford to assume that extremist criminals they encounter are going to act or react in familiar ways.

Extremists Targeting Law Enforcement

One of the most important reasons law enforcement officers should take safety precautions when dealing with extremist criminals is that, for a variety of reasons, extremists will often target law enforcement officers with violence. Because extremist criminals are criminals, they may react to law enforcement in all of the ways a typical criminal might. Because they are ideologically motivated, some typical criminal motivations may be enhanced by their ideology. Moreover, unlike typical criminals, extremist criminals may also lash out against law enforcement officers for reasons specifically related to their ideology.

Non-Ideological Motivations

Fear of Getting Caught. Few criminals desire to be caught or arrested by police. Except for those few who choose "suicide by cop," people who break the law generally want to escape the consequences of doing so. This is not always true for extremists. No police officer is likely to encounter a suicide house burglar, but they might one day run into a terrorist suicide bomber. Other extremists, however, may commit a crime then give themselves up, hoping that their trial and incarceration will further enhance the "message" they wanted to send.

However, even among extremists, such motivations are the exception. Most extremist criminals do not wish to get killed or caught, even if for no other reason than they may wish to strike again. As a result, extremist criminals often become extremist fugitives. Some hide remarkably well, often sheltered from authorities by sympathetic allies. Some of the left-wing extremists who committed bombings and other serious crimes in the 1970s are still fugitives today. More recently, the career of suspected bomber Eric Rudolph, wanted in connection with bombings of abortion clinics, gay bars, and the 1996 Olympics, demonstrates how well extremists may be able to elude authorities.

Some extremist criminals may choose violent means to help them escape pursuit. For example, in the spring of 1998, three anti-government extremists (Robert Mason, Alan Pilon, and Jason McVean) stole a water truck in southwestern Colorado near the Four Corners area (their motivations are still obscure). Officer Dale Claxton of the Cortez, Colorado, police department spotted the stolen truck and began following it. The truck pulled over and the occupants leapt out, spraying Claxton's patrol car with automatic

weapons fire, killing him almost immediately. After murdering Claxton they continued their flight, shooting up various law enforcement vehicles that tried to stop them—wounding two officers in the process—before disappearing into the desert. Since the shooting, two of the fugitives have been discovered—dead—while the fate of the third remains a mystery.

Revenge or Retaliation. Any criminal may harbor a grudge against a law enforcement officer who arrests, investigates, evicts, or in some other way irritates him or her. Extremist criminals, most of whom have ideological reasons to hate or fear the government as well, are even more likely to attempt some act of retaliation or revenge.

Moreover, because extremist criminals are generally part of a movement and perhaps belong to a particular group, they may have followers or associates willing to strike back for them when they themselves are imprisoned (or even dead). In this way, they may be similar to some organized crime groups or gangs. The retaliation may even come years after the event which spurred it. In 2001, nine years after the standoff at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992, white supremacists and anti-government extremists still direct so much anger at Lon Horiuchi, an FBI sniper involved in the standoff, that the agent will probably have to live in conditions of extreme security for the rest of his life.

Sometimes, however, the officers who are targeted have little warning. The case of Missouri State Highway Patrol officer Bobbie Harper is a good example. In June 1994, Harper was one of several officers involved in the arrest of a white supremacist named Robert Joos (for resisting arrest and carrying a concealed weapon) following a traffic stop in Missouri. Several months later, an associate of Joos, Timothy Coombs, allegedly shot Harper from outside the trooper's house while Harper was in the kitchen in front of the refrigerator. Harper later died of complications partially related to the shooting. Coombs remains at large.

Spontaneous Anger. Extremist criminals are often very angry; in fact, it is their anger—against the government, people who are different from them, creditors, spouses or relatives—which may attract them to extreme ideologies in the first place. These ideologies exacerbate their anger, while providing a rationale for its existence and targets for its expression. Thus while almost any criminal, from a spouse abuser to a drunk driver to a drug dealer, may react violently out of spontaneous anger, extremist criminals are often more likely to do so.

One example of such anger involved Kim Lee Bonsteel, a "sovereign citizen" from North Carolina. In 1994, Bonsteel was pulled over at a traffic stop, but refused to produce a driver's license or to get out of his

truck. When a police officer broke the window of his truck to get in, Bonsteel reacted by driving away, leading several law enforcement officers on a chase through three counties that destroyed several patrol cars, injured three officers, and caused a sheriff's deputy to die of a heart attack. Bonsteel was sent to prison, where he described himself as a political prisoner of the New World Order, until his release in early 2001.

Ideological Reasons

Anti-Government/Authority Ideology. Most far right-wing extremists (and many left-wing extremists as well), whether they are members of the militia or "sovereign citizen" movements or are members of white supremacist groups, adhere to an extremely anti-government ideology. Some believe that the government is completely illegitimate. Others would like to overthrow existing authority and establish a whites-only or "Aryan" nation.

Unfortunately, law enforcement officers are highly visible symbols of government and as a result frequently become the target of extremist anger. Groups as different as Earth First! on the left and the Posse Comitatus on the right have used similar language over the years to incite resentment among followers against law enforcement agencies and officers. In the 1980s, former Ku Klux Klan leader and Aryan Nations "ambassador" Louis Beam promoted a theory of "leaderless resistance" that remains very popular today. In an essay explaining his theory, Beam devised a "point system" for would-be white assassins. Killing an FBI agent or an IRS agent, for instance, was valued at a tenth of a point. The goal, he said, was to amass a whole point, which qualified the assassin as an "Aryan Warrior." The implication was clear: anybody who wanted to become a true Aryan warrior should consider targeting law enforcement officers.

New World Order/Jewish/Other Conspiracies. Members of many fringe movements, whether right-wing or left-wing, are susceptible to belief in one or more conspiracy theories. Many such theories describe shadowy, behind-the-scenes figures secretly manipulating and ruling the entire world.

The most common conspiracy theory among anti-government movements such as the militia and "sovereign citizen" movements is the New World Order conspiracy, which involves an imminent takeover of the U.S. by the United Nations in order to establish a socialist, authoritarian, one-world government. White supremacists, who tend to be extremely anti-Semitic, often believe that Jews conspire to take over

the world. Many white supremacists refer to the U.S. government as ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) or JOG (Jewish Occupied Government). Other popular conspiracy theories are anti-Catholic, placing the Vatican at the heart of the conspiracy, or antimasonic, targeting Freemasonry. Many extremists mix and match among these differing theories.

The relevance of these theories to law enforcement is that many extremists believe that law enforcement officers (especially federal agents) are no more than tools, witting or unwitting, of these various conspiracies.

Hatred/Hostility towards Minority Law Enforcement Officers. Members of hate groups or anti-government groups are likely to view most law enforcement officers with hostility or suspicion, but minority law enforcement officers are especially likely to be hated. Louis Bryant, the Arkansas police officer murdered by Richard Wayne Snell, was African American; this was probably not a coincidence.

In their writings in print and on the Internet, members of white supremacist groups have frequently and openly complained about being pulled over by or in other ways encountering "subhumans" such as Latino or African American law enforcement officers.

Government Cannot Interfere with Travel/Home. Many extremists adhere to ideologies so anti-government in nature that they believe that the government has virtually no legitimate authority over them at all. They insist that they have "constitutional" or "God-given" rights to do virtually anything without any interference from the government. When the government does try to interfere, anti-government extremists can become extraordinarily hostile.

Traffic stops are one of the most common situations in which these sorts of feeling arise. Many members of the "sovereign citizen" and militia movements believe that they have a legal or biblical right to travel completely unregulated by the government. In practice, this can include driving without a license, license plates, tags, registration, or insurance. Many believe too that they cannot be stopped by police for traffic infractions such as speeding or even driving while intoxicated, as long as no one has been injured. Some believe that they must follow traffic laws if driving a commercial vehicle, but not if they are driving a "private" vehicle. Others may simply claim that the Bible gives them a right to travel unhindered. Such people can become extraordinarily confrontational when pulled over for a traffic stop.

A similar source of anger that may cause extremists to lash out at law enforcement officers involves children. Many members of hate groups and anti-government groups argue that the government has no

right to interfere in any way with the family. In the past, many conflicts arose when members of such groups tried to take their children out of the school systems in violation of state laws. Today, home schooling is much more widely permitted, thus reducing chances of conflict over this issue. However, extremists may still respond with anger when confronted with court orders involving the custody of children or with conflicts with child protective services agencies. Law enforcement officers attempting to enforce court orders or accompanying child protective services personnel may sometimes be at risk when visiting the homes of such people.

Government Has No Authority. Some extremists go so far as to claim that no government has any authority over them whatsoever. Many will claim that they will follow only "God's laws," not "man's laws." Some may even call themselves "Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven" and claim diplomatic immunity. Not surprisingly, people who acknowledge no governmental authority over them at all have the potential to react violently when a representative of such a government attempts to assert authority over them in some way.

COMMON OFFICER SAFETY SITUATIONS INVOLVING EXTREMISTS

Any time law enforcement officers encounter people with extreme ideologies, safety issues potentially arise. However, for a variety of reasons, certain circumstances pose a heightened threat of violent confrontation. Some situations, for instance, are particularly stressful for extremists, increasing the chances that they may lash out or overreact.

Six types of situations probably pose the most danger to law enforcement officers from members of anti-government or hate groups. These include:

- Traffic Stops
- Residence Visits
- Confrontations/Standoffs
- Rallies/Marches
- Incident Responses
- Revenge/Retaliations

Traffic Stops

Traffic stops are potentially some of the most dangerous situations that law enforcement officers can face when dealing with extremists. Numerous officers have been killed, wounded, shot at, or attacked during traffic stop incidents involving extremists during the past twenty years.

Some of these confrontations have been well-publicized. In 1997, television audiences across the country watched a police car video of a shootout in Ohio between two white supremacists, Cheyne and Chevie Kehoe, and local police officers. Yet some of the more incredible incidents have received remarkably little publicity. In one recent case in March 2000, three anti-government extremists (Lloyd Burrus, his son Jeff Burrus, and Cheryl Kate Maarteuse) were stopped for speeding by a Nevada highway patrol officer about sixty miles north of Las Vegas. The officer spotted a shotgun in the vehicle and radioed for backup. While he waited, the extremists sped off. During the ensuing chase, they shot at police vehicles from both Nevada and California, then turned off-road, where their BMW became stuck. Burrus and his accomplices abandoned the vehicle but took their weapons and ammunition, which they used to shoot down a

California Highway Patrol helicopter that had arrived on scene. Eventually, after a twelve hour standoff involving over a hundred law enforcement officers, they gave themselves up.

Traffic stops are particularly dangerous for several reasons.

- *The law enforcement officer is isolated.* This is especially true for rural areas, where backup may be a half hour or more away. Law enforcement officers involved in a traffic stop may be outnumbered by the extremists involved. Some extremist groups have even adopted the habit of riding in two cars, so that law enforcement officers stopping the first car may be unaware of the following one.
- *The extremist is in a heightened state of suspicion/anger.* An officer may pull a car over for a very routine violation such as a broken taillight or missing license plate tags. For the extremist in the car, however, it is a much more tense situation. That person may view the incident as the "last straw," the last time he or she will accept government "interference" in his or her constitutional rights. This nervousness or anger will, of course, be increased if the extremist has illegal items in the vehicle (such as weapons or explosives) or has been engaging in illegal activity. Thus a situation that may appear routine to the officer is highly charged for the extremist.
- *The extremist may be extremely well-armed.* Law enforcement officers involved in traffic stops with extremists may find themselves significantly outgunned. It is not at all uncommon for extremists to have multiple weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition in their vehicles. To give just one example, in early 1996 a militia and "sovereign citizen" activist named Larry Martz assaulted an Ohio State Highway Patrol trooper during a traffic stop. In his vehicle Martz carried a pistol, two assault rifles, a shotgun, other weapons, and more than 5,000 rounds of ammunition. This is not unusual.

Residence Visits

Another potentially very dangerous situation involving extremists is the residence visit. Police officers may have to visit the homes of extremists for a variety of reasons, but they are unlikely to find a welcome mat.

Residence visits are potentially dangerous for numerous reasons.

- *The officer is on the "home turf" of the extremist.* Especially if the officer is at the home merely for a

routine visit, he or she may have little or no knowledge of the layout of the property or the interior of the home. The extremist, on the other hand, will have extensive knowledge, and in remarkable cases, may have made extensive preparations. In rural areas, homes are often located so that they cannot be observed from roads or other vantage points. Observation posts, gun slots, and even escape tunnels have all been reported.

- *The extremist may call out for reinforcements.* While a law enforcement officer may be at the door, an extremist may be at the telephone, unbeknownst to the officer, calling for his or her own backup. Thus reinforcements for the extremist may arrive, perhaps angry or armed. What started off as a routine visit may end up as a standoff or confrontation.
- *The home may be armed/fortified.* Some extremists turn their homes into virtual fortresses. The grounds around the residence are cleared in order to have unimpeded fields of fire. Windows are sometimes boarded up and walls and doors reinforced. Officers have discovered houses where extremists had placed loaded firearms in every room for easy and immediate access to weaponry. Some extremists also design elaborate booby traps.

Confrontations/Standoffs

Extremist standoffs occur when extremists who are suspects or fugitives refuse to give themselves up from a barricaded situation. The Montana Freeman standoff in 1996, in which about two dozen extremists wanted on numerous federal and state charges held off authorities for 81 days in remote eastern Montana, is a good example of an extremist standoff.

Extremist confrontations occur when extremists unexpectedly show up at a scene involving law enforcement. The scene could in fact be an extremist standoff, or it could be something else entirely, such as a foreclosure or eviction.

In both of these situations, law enforcement officers will be faced with armed extremists, either on the "inside" (e.g., in a house surrounded by police), the "outside" (e.g., protesting or interfering with a standoff), or both.

Standoff and confrontation situations are particularly difficult situations. They may be protracted and complex, and are likely to attract media attention.

Several factors make them particularly risky for law enforcement officers.

Extremists do not always act with restraint. Some standoffs have been essentially peaceful operations, resolved without violence or harm, but this has not always been the case. In 1988, for instance, a group of extremists belonging to a fringe Mormon sect bombed a Latter Day Saint religious center in Marion, Utah, creating a standoff once authorities traced the bombing back to the group. During the standoff, members of the group repeatedly shot at law enforcement, in part because they believed they were engaged in an apocalyptic situation in which their dead leader, John Singer, would rise from the grave to help them. Members of the group killed one law enforcement officer when authorities tried to end the standoff.

The "Ruby Ridge" Factor. The well-known standoffs at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, in 1992 and Waco, Texas, in 1993 significantly agitated and galvanized the extreme right-wing in the United States. There has not, however, been any event of similar magnitude since then. Some extremists have expressed a desire for another such event to re-energize the extreme right. Consequently, there is a danger during any standoff or confrontation, perhaps even those not involving extremists, that one or more extremists on the outside might attempt to precipitate "another Ruby Ridge."

The Dangers of Loose Cannons. Any sort of standoff or confrontation in which two armed parties confront each other poses the risk that even one unstable or uncertain individual might precipitate violence. For instance, in a related sort of incident, one angry extremist in 1998 took shots at a police command post in western North Carolina that was overseeing the manhunt for fugitive Eric Rudolph. The very nature of standoffs is that they are high tension situations; not only do they run the risk of a person intentionally or unintentionally committing an act of violence, but any such act would pose escalation risks as well.

A good example of the risks posed to law enforcement officers by even minor standoff situations can be found in the case of Mary Schipke. In November 1998, Child Protective Service employees from Pima County, Arizona, attempted to visit Schipke's trailer home after receiving some strange mail from her. Schipke, an adherent of an anti-CPS movement, refused to let them enter. Several days later they returned to try again, this time with sheriff's deputies to assist them.

The deputies attempted to persuade Schipke to let them enter her residence, but she met them with a gun and forced them to back off, thus setting up a standoff situation. The Sheriff's Department set up a nearby command center to handle the event, while Schipke in the meantime got on the phone to various

local militia and extremist groups. While SWAT negotiators tried to talk to Schipke, their offices were being bombarded with phone calls from extremists, many of them threatening. Meanwhile, other extremists began showing up at the scene of the standoff, some circling the area in vehicles, others hanging around the command center. Some verbally threatened police officers and made references to Ruby Ridge.

Luckily, the next day SWAT officers persuaded Schipke to let two officers into the trailer to talk to her. During the conversation, the officers saw an opportunity when they noticed her gun was holstered, and successfully seized her, thus ending the standoff with no injury. However, the chance that some sort of serious tragedy might occur, whether during the initial confrontation when Schipke brandished a gun at officers, or during the ensuing standoff when various extremists attempted to intimidate law enforcement, was very real.

Rallies/Marches

Certain types of extremist groups specialize in holding rallies or marches. Aryan Nations and various Ku Klux Klan groups have been among the most visible in recent years. Such rallies and marches often receive widespread publicity.

Groups like the Klan generally hold rallies and marches for three main reasons:

- To generate free publicity
- To cause fear/upset in minority populations
- To generate recruits and support

Given these goals, only one of which involves the possibility of overt acts of intimidation or violence, marchers usually do not plan or intend acts of violence. Rather, they generally hope for violence or overreaction on the part of community members or counterdemonstrators. This often makes them look like martyrs or valiant defenders to potential sympathizers. Thus one of the major implicit goals of such rallies and marches is to provoke attacks rather than engage in an attack.

Hate groups can succeed in such tactics because there have evolved over the years a number of groups that specialize in openly confronting Klan and other such marches and rallies. Some of these groups themselves are extremist, either left-wing or otherwise (such as the Jewish Defense League); some of them explicitly condone violence against extremists or their sympathizers. Although conventional wisdom

strongly suggests that such confrontations are counterproductive and actually may help the hate groups in question, counterdemonstrators disagree strongly and will usually refuse requests to stay away from a rally or march.

Many members of counterdemonstrating groups get a visceral pleasure out of confronting hate groups; some show up prepared to fight. Police routinely have to confiscate weapons from counterdemonstrators; arrests for assault or similar crimes are not infrequent. As a result, law enforcement officers are often more likely to face risk of violence or injury from counterdemonstrators rather than from members of the marching or rallying hate groups themselves.

A brief profile of one group that specializes in counterdemonstrations may illustrate the attitudes involved. The Anti-Racist Action Network is a large, loosely-organized group with chapters in a number of cities in the United States and Canada. ARA chapters are usually far left-wing; many members are anarchists; some are non-racist skinheads. Animal rights activists and "straight edgers" are also common. The newsletter of the de facto "headquarters" chapter, in Columbus, Ohio, is titled Mob Action, which gives some indication of their tactics. ARA members are often virulently anti-law enforcement as well as anti-racist. From the group's main Web site, one can purchase bumper stickers stating sentiments such as "Cops are Assholes" and "I [image of handgun] Cops."

In addition to situations involving counterdemonstrators, law enforcement officers also face safety risks from potential riot situations if especially large crowds show up at hate group rallies, particularly if such rallies are deliberately held in provocative environments such as minority neighborhoods or the scene of some past racial or other similarly charged incident.

One final danger that law enforcement officers must consider is the possibility of diametrically opposed, armed extremist groups confronting each other during a rally or march. The potential for violence is illustrated by an infamous and still controversial incident in November 1979 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Following a series of previous incidents earlier in the year, a group of people from the Communist Workers Party organized an anti-Klan rally at a black housing project. Klansmen and Neo-Nazis showed up and the confrontation eventually became violent. However, the Nazis were better armed, as weapons had been prohibited for the ralliers. Five anti-Klan demonstrators were killed, while seven others were wounded; one Klansman was wounded. More recently, in 1998, armed members of the New Black Panther Party, a racist and anti-Semitic black separatist group, and members of a Ku Klux Klan group confronted each other in Jasper, Texas, following the highly-publicized incident in which three white supremacists

murdered James Byrd, Jr., by dragging him to death. Panther Party members repeatedly tried to assault Klan members, who had to be protected by the police. Unless law enforcement officers successfully handle such extreme situations, they face the possibility of finding themselves in a dangerous confrontation.

Incident Responses

Law enforcement officers sometimes face dangers not only in ongoing situations such as standoffs, but also when responding to incidents such as bombings that have already occurred.

Much of the risk is due to increased sophistication on the part of some extremists. Secondary explosive devices are a good example of such sophistication. Where, previously, an angry Klansman or neo-Nazi might only have bombed a black church, a synagogue, an abortion clinic or a gay bar, some now understand that they can strike at other foes by placing a second bomb on the scene, designed to detonate after emergency crews and police have arrived at the scene. In this way, extremists strike not only at their primary target, but at police as well, whom they also hate. Eric Rudolph is alleged to have done this several times, but such secondary devices have been used for decades. Few bombings involve secondary devices, but they are more likely in situations involving extremist criminals because extremists may dislike law enforcement as much as their primary target.

Revenge/Retaliation

Unlike most criminals, extremist criminals are fairly likely to attempt to retaliate against law enforcement officers who arrest, investigate, or otherwise interfere with them. Moreover, because extremists are at the very least members of a movement and quite possibly members of a particular group or organization, law enforcement officers who encounter them sometimes face the possibility that friends or supporters of extremists may attempt some sort of revenge or retaliation.

Because officers may not actually realize they have been dealing with an extremist, they may not be alert to the possibility of retaliation attempts. One early clue is a "phone wave." Often, when an extremist is arrested, supporters of that extremist will use the Internet and shortwave radio to publicize the arrest and to encourage sympathizers to bombard the agency, the courts, and any other related body or individual with waves of phone calls. Sometimes the tactic is designed merely to put pressure on a law enforcement agency or judge; occasionally people are urged to create "phone waves" in order to completely swamp an

agency's phone system and shut it down. Because ordinary criminals rarely have support networks that can generate these sorts of tactics, phone waves are an important indication that the law enforcement agency is dealing with an extremist and should take appropriate precautions.

Retaliation is in fact quite common among right-wing extremists, especially adherents of anti-government groups. Retaliation most often takes forms that are harassing rather than violent, but unfortunately this is not always the case.

Paper Terrorism. Paper terrorism is a tactic perfected by the "sovereign citizen" movement. It involves the use of bogus legal documents and filings, as well as the misuse of legitimate legal documents and filings, in order to harass and intimidate law enforcement officers, public officials, and sometimes private citizens. The most common of these include filing bogus liens against the property of law enforcement officers, filing frivolous lawsuits against them, filing bogus IRS 1099 and IRS 8300 forms in the hopes of raising IRS suspicions about officers, and issuing bogus arrest warrants from "common law courts" or similar bodies.

Intimidation. Extremists engage in a wide variety of intimidation tactics that range from following officers around to actually posing as "civil rights investigators" in order to interrogate the spouse or family members of the officer in question. Law enforcement officers should understand that not only they but also their family members may be potential targets.

Violence. Extremists have on occasion violently retaliated against law enforcement officers, most notably in the shooting of a Missouri State Highway Patrol Officer.

Sometimes extremists may also retaliate generally in response to an incident rather than against the particular officers involved in an incident. Thus an extremist in North Carolina angry about an arrest of another extremist in Texas may decide to retaliate against police locally rather than in Texas. In the past, IRS agents and forest rangers, among others, have been attacked simply because they were convenient targets, rather than because they were the specific agents or rangers who had previously angered the perpetrators.

EXTREMIST IDENTIFIERS

A law enforcement officer needs to take safety precautions when dealing with situations involving members of extremist groups or movements. Sometimes the officer will be lucky enough to know in advance that he or she will be encountering such individuals, but this is not always the case. Many such encounters are unplanned and spontaneous; moreover, extremists are unlikely to explicitly identify themselves to officers as belonging to fringe movements or groups.

However, perceptive officers may often be able to detect visual and verbal clues that help them recognize that the person with whom they are dealing may adhere to an extreme ideology. These identifiers, especially if several are recognized, can act as important warning indicators.

It must be stressed that extremist identifiers should be used only to alert officers to take safety precautions. They are not indicators of criminal activity and should not be treated as such.

Visible extremist identifiers are often observed on motor vehicles and may be noticed at a person's residence as well. Verbal identifiers may present themselves during conversations with such persons.

Vehicular Identifiers

Vehicles belonging to extremists often display clues as to the ideological convictions of their owners or drivers. These include, but are not limited to, the following identifiers.

Bogus license plates or driver's licenses. Many anti-government extremists do not believe the government has the right to require items such as license plates or driver's licenses. Some even view such items as "contracts," the use of which implies consent to the authority of the government. As a result, many extremists create their own license plates, either to make a political statement or simply to fool law enforcement officers. These homemade plates range from crude cardboard plates sporting terms such as "Militia" or "UCC1-207" to realistic looking metal plates with fictitious countries on them such as "Washitaw Nation" or "British West Indies." Many extremists may also have fake vehicular documents such as bogus licenses and registrations. Another identifier that sometimes appears on driver's licenses is the use of strange phrases or abbreviations following someone's signature. Common terms used in this way include "UCC1-207" and "TDC" (the former indicates that they are not giving up their rights by signing; the latter indicates that they have signed under "threat, duress, or coercion"). Similarly, the complete absence

of plates, license and registration might also be a sign.

Bumper stickers, placards, stickers. Many people use bumper stickers to indicate their political or cultural beliefs. Extremists will often do this to an unusual degree, displaying so many that they turn their vehicles into what some call "ideology-mobiles." They might also have offensive or simply very unusual bumper stickers, such as "White Power" or "Americans Don't Wear U.N. Blue."

Unusual modifications to their vehicle. Officers should pay attention to strange or unusual modifications to vehicles. Some extremists have been known to turn the whole tailgate of their pickup truck into the equivalent of a huge bumper sticker; others paint their vehicles with homemade camouflage patterns. Some vehicles may even display warnings to "government agents." Any drastic and odd modification to a vehicle, especially in order to express some political view, ought to be a warning sign.

Residential Identifiers

Just as extremists sometimes adorn their vehicles with items that serve as warning signs to law enforcement, they can also do the same to their residences. Officers who approach such homes or apartments should be appropriately careful.

Signs directed at law enforcement. Some extremists display "No Trespassing" signs on their property that are noticeably different from normal "No Trespassing" signs: they are directed specifically at law enforcement officers or government agents. Sometimes these notices are homemade, but several places sell manufactured versions of these signs. Officers have also observed signs and placards that included warnings to burglars that the residence is protected by the "militia."

Unusual banners or flags. Obviously, Klan flags, Nazi flags, "white power" flags, and similarly blatant displays serve as clear warning signs. Sometimes, however, the banners or flags may be a little more subtle. Extremists may display a sign with a red line through a United Nations logo or an upside down American flag. An upside down flag is traditionally a sign of distress and extremists sometimes use it to indicate that the country is in distress.

Signs of "fortification." Some extremists go so far as to turn their residences into miniature fortresses. They may reinforce walls, store weapons in every room of a house, or in other ways prepare for some sort of violent conflict. Many such measures will not be visible from the outside, although some might be. Boarded up windows in an occupied house, slits that could be used to fire weapons through, cleared

"fields of fire," metal plating on walls—these are all possible signs of homemade fortifications.

Verbal Identifiers

Conversation with extremists, particularly during situations such as traffic stops in which an extremist might contest an officer's authority, may provide clues to officers that they are dealing with a member of an extremist group or movement.

The extremists who are most likely to offer identifying verbal clues are those involved in anti-government movements or groups. Members of such groups have evolved a wide variety of verbal and other tactics to use against police officers during traffic stops.

Asking for "Oath of Office." Some anti-government extremists will demand to see a law enforcement officer's "oath of office." Some may demand to see other documents during a traffic stop such as "arrest warrants."

Giving particular documents to officers. Some extremists have produced warnings, questionnaires, and other items designed to be handed to police officers who have pulled the extremist over. These include special "Miranda Warnings" for officers as well as "Public Servants Questionnaires" that list more than twenty leading questions officers are ostensibly supposed to answer and sign their name to. People who ask that officers read or sign certain documents before agreeing to speak or answer questions may be giving verbal clues that they adhere to extreme ideologies.

Unusual/Inapplicable references to Bible/Constitution. Many anti-government extremists have developed elaborate religious or political justifications for why they can ignore traffic laws and regulations. A person without a valid driver's license or registration who gives unusual Biblical or Constitutional rationalizations for his or her actions, such as "this Bible is my driver's license," may be identifying themselves with verbal clues.

Use of strange/pseudolegal language. Members of extreme anti-government groups believe in a plethora of unusual pseudolegal theories. Officers who are subjected to a torrent of language about the Uniform Commercial Code, "martial law," "emergency war powers," the common law, or similar topics should consider it as a warning sign.

Contesting authority or jurisdiction. Many extremists will simply tell an officer who has pulled

them over or is at their front door that the officer simply has no authority or jurisdiction over them. Members of extremist groups are often taught to refuse to roll down windows for officers, or only to roll windows down an inch. Extremists may demand that an officer provide some sort of "proof of jurisdiction" before the extremist will cooperate.

DEFUSING AND SAFETY TECHNIQUES

Officers who quickly recognize that the person with whom they are dealing may be a member of an extremist group or movement can take safety precautions near the outset of an encounter. Often, however, law enforcement officers may not realize the nature of the situation until it has already escalated to some degree.

Because of their beliefs, extremists have the potential to transform a minor situation into a major one. They may react out of fear, mistrust, or simply anger. They may act in ways that would appear to be self-destructive or self-defeating. Their beliefs may provoke them into confrontations that under ordinary circumstances would never occur. Officers are often at risk when this happens.

Defusing Techniques

There are some strategies that may lessen risks to officers and help insure that no one is hurt or injured in a confrontation. Most of these involve *defusing techniques*. Defusing techniques are methods commonly used to manage anger in a variety of circumstances. Typically they are designed to help halt increases in anger and to allow angered individuals an opportunity to vent some of their rage relatively harmlessly. Some of them can work well when used with extremists in high tension situations.

The two key defusing techniques are ventilation and active listening. Ventilation essentially involves letting the other person speak, giving him or her a chance to "ventilate" and discharge their anger. When engaging in ventilation, one should not argue with the individual, offer advice, or defend oneself; the purpose is to let the other person "blow off steam," thus decreasing their anger because they have been given a chance to express it.

Active listening can occur after ventilation. Once the other person has calmed down somewhat, it is possible to use active listening techniques to further disarm the person. Active listening techniques include *validation*, whereby the listener lets the speaker know that he or she understands the speaker is upset or distressed; *verification*, by which the listener indicates to the speaker that he or she understands what the speaker is saying and how the speaker is feeling; and *reflective questioning*, whereby the listener asks the speaker questions about what he or she has just said, in order to draw the speaker out and get the speaker to slow down and consider what he or she is talking about.

For law enforcement officers, the goal in using defusing techniques is usually to slow the pace of an encounter down and keep the situation under control. Often this can be accomplished simply by giving extremists an opportunity to vent their anger and suspicion rather than have it build up uncontrollably.

Officers can usually develop a variety of such techniques to be used in these circumstances and in other circumstances involving stressed individuals.

Safety Techniques

In addition, there are other safety techniques that can help insure an officer's safety during an unexpected encounter with a person with extreme ideologies.

Call for backup. If an officer realizes that he or she is in a potentially dangerous situation involving an extremist, one of the first things to do is to call for backup. There is no point in proceeding with an encounter when the officer may clearly be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the extremist. Moreover, once an officer has made the decision to call for backup, that officer should wait until that backup arrives before proceeding. Several violent encounters have occurred where officers called for backup during a traffic stop involving an extremist, but did not wait for the backup to arrive before confronting the extremist.

Don't get confrontational/Don't argue their beliefs. When an extremist spouts outlandish theories or makes outrageous statements, it is entirely natural to try to argue against those views. However, this is almost invariably counterproductive, as there is little chance that the extremist will change his or her mind, and a much greater chance of raising the agitation level of that person. Similarly, even though extremists may well act very disrespectfully towards law enforcement officers, becoming confrontational in turn is counterproductive and may worsen the situation.

Act dumb. This is a specialized defusing technique. Rather than argue with extremists, officers can simply hear them out or respond with noncommittal answers such as "I never thought of it that way before" or "that's a little too complex for me right now." Officers should always accept literature offered to them by extremists.

Distract their attention/change the subject. Sometimes an officer may spot an opportunity to distract an extremist or derail their train of thought. If an extremist hands literature to an officer, the officer can start asking questions about the literature and the group or movement that promotes it. An officer can ask a person where he or she learned his or her beliefs or theories. Anything that can cause an extremist to

explain rather than *argue* will probably help lower the confrontation level to some degree.

Humanizing. Because extremists often view law enforcement officers more as symbols of authority or oppression, officers may have some success in lowering confrontation levels by "humanizing" himself or herself. If the extremist can come to see the officer as an individual, perhaps just a person "doing his/her job," rather than simply as a symbol of oppressive or tyrannical government, then the individual may be less confrontational.

Get them to postpone oppositional tactics. One of the key strategies in confrontation avoidance is to convince the extremist to decide not to pursue confrontation at that time and place. If an officer, for instance, can convince an extremist that the real place to argue his or her theories is in the courtroom, not on the side of the road, then the officer may have eliminated the chances for confrontation at that moment.

Back off. In the final analysis, if a situation looks too risky for the law enforcement officer to proceed, then the officer should simply decide to pursue the matter at another time. An officer gains nothing by needlessly placing himself or herself at risk; whenever possible, it should be the officer who chooses the time and place for a confrontational situation, not the extremist.

DEFUSING AND SAFETY TECHNIQUES

Law enforcement officers always face particular problems when dealing with extremists. They must make sure they do not infringe on the First Amendment rights of people who have unpopular political or social views but who have not committed any crimes. At the same time, they must recognize that people who have extreme views are sometimes motivated by those views to commit criminal acts.

In these instances, law enforcement officers will find that not only must they protect the community from criminal acts committed by extremists, but they must make sure as well that they protect themselves, because officers are themselves often the targets of extremist criminals. Thus officers need to be able to recognize when they are in potentially dangerous situations involving extremists and how to deal with such situations or at least extricate themselves from them.

If law enforcement officers are to uphold their oath to "protect and serve," they must be able to protect themselves as well.