

AR-15



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PICATINNY'S DEATH BY KEYMOD

SCHOOLED ON VEHICULAR COMBAT

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ELCAN'S SpecterDR THE ULTIMATE BATTLE SIGHT?

MYTH VERSUS
REALITY WHEN
DEPLOYING AN AR.

VEHICLE

COB

BY JEREMY STAFFORD
PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY

FIGHTING AROUND CARS IS ONE OF THOSE THINGS

that people often see in the movies and therefore assume must be easy, as if it is an obvious extension of the fundamentals with which most armed professionals are already familiar. That assumption is just about 180 degrees from the truth, and this lack of understanding of the specialized TTPs (Tactics, Techniques and Procedures) that effectively fighting around vehicles requires has led to more than one good guy being injured, killed or failing to neutralize the threat that they faced. I could write a book on this topic, but since this is not a book, I'm going to keep it fairly brief and relevant to those using the AR platform.

DEPLOYMENT, OR LACK THEREOF

You'd think this goes without saying, but you can't fight with a gun that you can't get to easily and quickly deploy. Unfortunately, in my experience, many very experienced people fail to take this hard-learned lesson to heart. I've seen so many half-assed, lazy deployment options that I should have kept a notebook. Two of my favorite disasters waiting to happen are keeping the rifle on the passenger seat and stowing it under the seat. Both of these "solutions" all but guarantee that the rifle won't be where you want it when you want it. Any high-speed maneuvering done in a vehicle en route to trouble will move unsecured rifles all over the place. Also, in the event of a collision, that rifle will become a large, heavy projectile bouncing around in the passenger compartment.

A quick-deploying storage rack is the fastest and most secure option, but the semipermanent

nature and expense of these racks make them less than ideal for many. Also, the fact that the rifle is in plain sight makes them a no-go for my undercover brothers. A field-expedient solution is the humble bungee cord. I know several guys on a very busy big-city surveillance and take-down team who use a taut bungee anchored with hooks in the floorboard to keep their rifles where they want them. This is simple, effective and repairable, leaving two nearly undetectable holes as the only evidence that the system was ever there. The bungee is secure enough to keep the rifle from shifting around but quick enough to allow for very fast access.

Regardless of your preferred retention method, you have to practice with it. There are very few things in life that I promise, but I do promise you that a magazine, optic, flash-hider or stock will get hung up on something the first time you try to deploy your rifle under stress. As a pro-

bationary police officer in Central Los Angeles many years ago, I almost got myself killed because I couldn't get my shotgun out of the below-the-seat mount that my partner insisted on using in our ancient Caprice. I couldn't get it out because I never practiced with it, and all of the other cars had vertical, between-the-seat mounts. I took that painful lesson to heart and now practice deploying my rifle on a regular basis.

The need for practice came up again recently at a Solutions Group International High Risk Dignitary Protection course I was taking, as the excellent Daniel Defense MK18 SBRs kept getting hung up on the large, 40-round PMAGs that were mistakenly shipped instead of 30-rounders. With enough practice, all of the students were able to successfully get the rifles out of the cars, but the situation was not ideal. The fact that we had to train around the equipment on hand leads me to the next topic ...

SET UP YOUR RIFLE FOR THE TASK AT HAND

I know we all want a one-rifle solution, but it doesn't exist. If you live in the world of CQB and vehicle ops, your carbine should, too. One of the obvious advantages would be an SBR (Short Barreled Rifle) in the 10½- to 11½-inch-barrel range, ideally with a short can such as the Sure-Fire SOCOM556 Mini attached. As awesome as that setup is, it's simply outside of what's realistic, resource-wise, for many agencies and individuals. Taking that out of the equation, let's take a look at what we need to do with a standard-length carbine (14½ inches with a standard flash-hider). Don't get all crazy with the muzzle attachments. I guarantee that the first time you touch off a round from a compensated carbine inside of a vehicle will be your last. Even with a good set of hearing protection, it's painful. Like, eye-watering painful. Leave the comps for your



Students at a Solutions Group International class are taught the finer points of deploying around a vehicle with their Daniel Defense MK18s. Sometimes a less than ideal cover position is necessary to accomplish the mission.

VEHICLE CQB



Regardless of your mission or experience level, practicing your rifle deployment from the vehicle is a must. You can't practice this too much.

general-purpose gun; they have no place on a rifle that's used in close confines and inside or around vehicles.

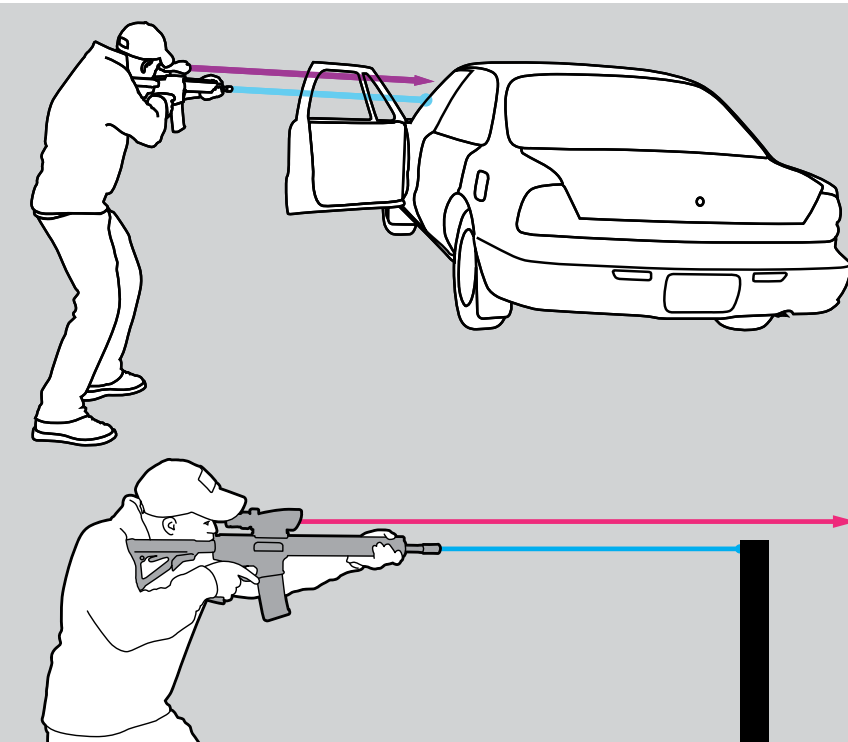
The same is true for all those cool gadgets and gizmos. The more things attached to your rifle, the more likely something will get hung up as you're trying to E&E from a car that's attracting enemy fire like a damn magnet. Keep the rifle as slick as possible, and keep in mind the most likely engagement distances. My general work rifle has a TangoDown stubby vertical hand grip, a Trijicon TR-24, a SureFire M600 Scout and a SureFire 60-round magazine hanging from it, all supported by a padded VTAC sling. My CQB/car gun has a SureFire M300 Mini Scout, an Aimpoint Micro T-1, a Colt 20-round magazine and a Blackhawk bungee one-point sling that's held flat to the stock with one of my wife's black elastic hair scrunchies. Is there an operational difference in capabilities between the setups? Sure there is, but I'm willing to give up some of my 200-meter effectiveness on my car gun because I know that the vast majority of time I'll be using it in the zero- to 25-meter range. I was a carpenter before I came on the job, and the hammer I used to frame structures was not the same hammer I used for finish work. Different tools for different jobs.

This need for specific performance also goes for ammunition selection, especially in the 5.56 NATO platform. If you're going to be shooting into cars, the only thing that I can predict about your projectile performance is that it's going to be

unpredictable. I've seen bad guys' cars take 100 rounds into the driver's-side door and the bad guys walk away. Conversely, I've seen good cops felled by a magic 9mm round that penetrated the trunk and two seats before striking them in the back. It's an unpredictable business, and the best you can do is use a bonded, barrier-blind-type round such as the excellent Federal 5.56 load with the 62-grain Trophy Bonded Bear Claw. There's nothing magic about it, but it will hold together better than most others and still provide adequate penetration after passing through glass



VEHICLE CQB



or sheetmetal, which is more than can be said about most thinly jacketed 5.56 offerings.

All of the great bullets and equipment in the world won't get the job done without a properly trained professional behind the gun, which brings us back to ...

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Bullet performance aside, the only bullet that's going to work is the one that goes into the bad guy. I used to run the training cadre for my department's special surveillance section, and I was astounded by the number of hard-charging, seasoned guys who would forget about line-of-sight/line-of-bore offset on the AR platform and launch three or four rounds into the hood of whatever junker car we happened to be using at the range that day before catching their mistake and adjusting their fire. Thinking about offset doesn't come automatically.

Sights are usually 2 to 2½ inches above the bore of a carbine barrel, meaning that the chance exists of unintentionally striking a close-range object lower than what you see in your sights.

It needs to be drilled and trained rigorously.

Another issue that pops up is the tendency of shooters to crowd the car for cover. Not only does getting too close to the vehicle restrict the shooter's ability to move freely, it also cancels out some of the vehicle's effectiveness as cover. Incoming rounds that impact the vehicle at a shallow trajectory will skip off the surface and are most dangerous exactly where people like to crowd and peek over the top like a "whack-a-mole." Don't silhouette yourself; stay back from the cover; move often; and rely on angles, not sheetmetal, to protect you.

Practice shooting from unconventional positions. If you've never practiced the rollover-prone or reverse-kneeling position from behind a car, they're not going to magically happen when the air is full of lead and your partners are shot up and screaming. This is also where the parallax-free

A student practices shooting from a very unconventional position that allows the heavy rear axle and tires to provide a measure of cover. Positions like this don't come easily or naturally, and they must be practiced to exhaustion in order to be successful.



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and cheekweld-forgiving Aimpoint Micros really shine. Some of these positions make it very difficult to obtain a traditional mount, so being able to hold the rifle away from your body a little bit and just use the red dot to track your targets is a real advantage. I've also recently begun working with a prototype SureFire X-400 G with the green day-visible laser. While I'm not completely sold on it yet, some of my preliminary results have been positive. I need to see the laser in some more bright and varied lighting conditions before I'm ready to jump into that particular deep end.

Training to fight effectively in and around cars isn't fun. You're going to get filthy, your elbows and knees are going to get banged up, and your firearms and gear will be more dirt-crusted than usual, but like most difficult things, it's worth it. I've invested in some snivel gear to make it a little easier. My Arc'teryx Knee Caps are never far from me, and I've finally resigned myself to wearing gloves. Even in a training environment, the broken glass and chunks of debris left over from shooters who forgot their offset can be dangerous.

If you are an armed professional or civilian who is looking to be as prepared as possible, invest the time and money in a good vehicle-assault class. Scott Reitz at ITTS and the gang over at Solutions Group do a great job, and I'm sure others have similar classes on their calendar. Also, don't discount your local 3-Gun match as a training possibility. Sometimes they'll bring in a junk car for a prop, and this is a great way to get training and make friends at the same time. Train hard, and train smart, but most of all, train like your life depends on it. ✪

“

KEEP THE RIFLE AS SLICK AS POSSIBLE, AND KEEP IN MIND THE DISTANCES THAT YOU ARE MOST LIKELY TO ENGAGE FROM.”

