



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT
TACTICAL CONCEPTS
Tactics Training Overview

Tactical Concept No. 8

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FOOT PURSUITS

PURPOSE

Chasing a fleeing suspect on foot represents an instinctive but inherently dangerous activity. Pursuing suspects without a plan may result in deadly consequences. From the initiation of a foot pursuit, officers should continually assess the tactical situation, consider their options and decide on a course of action to facilitate the suspect's apprehension. This document will discuss the general tactical concepts to aid in decision making during foot pursuits to reduce the risk to officers and the public.

PROCEDURES

At the beginning of each watch or assignment, partner officers should discuss tactical issues to prepare them for their shift or their specific mission. Such discussions may include officer safety issues such as contact and cover responsibilities, foot pursuit tactics, and other tactical considerations related to their specific assignment.

Initiation of a Foot Pursuit

Officers must be able to articulate the reasonable suspicion for their detention of a fleeing suspect. Officers should realize that flight alone does not provide reasonable suspicion to detain. Rather, flight is one factor in the totality of the circumstances that a court considers in determining whether reasonable suspicion to detain existed. If the detention evolves into an arrest, it is the arresting officers' responsibility to articulate the probable cause to support an arrest (e.g., possession of a weapon or narcotics.)

Tactical Considerations

- Whether the suspect is armed
- Seriousness of the offense committed
- Location
- Ability to apprehend the suspect at a later time
- Number of officers vs. number of suspects
- Age/size/strength

When officers have reasonable suspicion to detain a suspect and the suspect flees, the involved officers should make a quick assessment of the situation. They should evaluate the risk to themselves, other officers, the suspect, and to the public versus what will be gained by engaging in the pursuit.

Note: Generally, single officer foot pursuits are discouraged.

Initial Radio Broadcast

Effective communication is essential during foot pursuits. Due to the rapidly unfolding situation, officers may not be able to include complete information in the initial broadcast. Additional information may be provided when tactically sound to do so. Following the “Four W’s” concept will help officers broadcast the initial information:

1. **Who** am I (unit designation)
2. **Where** am I, (unit location/direction of travel, i.e., Code Six)
3. **What** I have (type of crime/suspect)
4. **What** I need (additional resources)

Additional Broadcast Information

- Updated location/direction of travel
- Number of suspects
- Suspect description
- Type of weapon if armed
- Type of crime
- Where additional units should respond

Officers should broadcast the progress of the pursuit to Communications Division on their base frequency. Unless dictated by the tactical or environmental circumstances (e.g., communicating with the airship), officers are strongly discouraged from communicating regularly in “simplex” mode because this function cannot be monitored by Communications Division.

Tactics During a Foot Pursuit

The rapidly changing nature of foot pursuits requires that officers develop a flexible tactical approach to each situation. During a foot pursuit, the suspect may have an initial advantage over pursuing officers, such as age, clothing, knowledge of the area, etc. When in apprehension mode and attempting to immediately take the suspect into custody, officers should not separate and remain alert for potential ambush. Every time an officer loses sight of a suspect during a foot pursuit, the danger to the officers increases significantly. Suspects have been known to lie in wait or turn and fight without warning. Barriers such as walls and fences are ideal locations for a suspect to turn and attack an officer.

Tactical Considerations

- STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN
- Avoid going over obstacles/barriers at same location taken by suspect
- “Slice the pie” when rounding a corner or at the end of a fence
- Utilize a “quick peek” to provide a glimpse to what is on the other side of an obstacle/barrier
- Be aware of hazards such as dogs, swimming pools, or clotheslines

Use of Force: State and Federal law, as well as Department policy, allow an officer to use objectively reasonable force to effect a detention, effect an arrest, overcome resistance or prevent escape. Such force might include the use of a strong push to the upper back of the suspect in an attempt to cause the suspect to lose his/her balance

and fall forward. In all cases, officers should maintain their tactical advantage over the suspect.

Apprehension versus Containment

There are two pursuit modes officers may use when a suspect flees on foot, apprehension mode or containment mode. Some factors that will influence an officer's decision to operate in the "apprehension" or "containment" mode are the suspect's actions, officer's experience, training, physical fitness level, location and available resources.

During apprehension mode, officers work as a team to pursue and attempt to overtake a fleeing suspect until apprehending the suspect. Officers may also decide to discontinue the foot pursuit or transition into containment mode. The pursuing officers should assess and communicate with each other before deciding on a course of action.

Officers may make the decision to discontinue a foot pursuit when the tactical situation deteriorates, either officer becomes injured, or effective communication ability is lost (lost or broken radio or "dead spot") or at either officer's discretion. If either of the pursuing officers feels it necessary to end the pursuit, the officer must alert the partner officer quickly to avoid separation.

Discontinuing a Foot Pursuit

- Tactical situation deteriorates
- Officer becomes injured
- Communication ability is limited or lost
- Officer discretion

Transitioning to Containment Mode

- Tactical situation deteriorates
- Suspect no longer in sight
- Suspect enters a structure
- Suspect is armed

If the suspect is no longer in sight or enters a structure such as a house, apartment, or business, or gains a tactical advantage, officers may make the decision to continue the pursuit in containment mode while coordinating the response of additional units to establish a perimeter. Containing a suspect in a specific area can decrease the opportunity for an ambush and will make it more likely that the suspect will be taken into custody.

When the decision is made to establish a perimeter, officers should act quickly to prevent the suspect's escape and broadcast the following:

- General location of an incident command post (the end of pursuit location). This location can be moved later.
- Boundaries for the perimeter. Remember it is easier to decrease a perimeter than increase one. Initially, even general locations or instructions will suffice (e.g., *2 blocks to South and North, 2 blocks to East and West of my location*).

- Request for air unit to assist in establishing or adjusting the perimeter. The presence of the air unit will also encourage the suspect(s) to remain within the perimeter.
- Request a supervisor and the necessary resources to safely handle the incident.

Pursuing Armed Suspects: When pursuing a suspect believed to be armed, officers should generally do so in **containment** mode while considering the available tactical advantages, including cover and concealment where available. The goal is to maintain observation of the suspect and the tactical advantage while coordinating the response of additional units and other resources for a perimeter with the objective of containing the suspect and taking him into custody safely. The decision to pursue an armed suspect in **apprehension** mode may be appropriate when the suspect is at a tactical disadvantage and an arrest can be accomplished with limited risk to officers or innocent parties.

Suspects Fleeing from a Vehicle: If a foot pursuit begins with a suspect fleeing from a vehicle, officers need to consider the possibility of additional suspects remaining in the vehicle. Therefore, officers should clear or cover the suspect vehicle before running past it unless other circumstances necessitate running past an uncleared vehicle. Additional tactical considerations may include:

- Taking the keys from the police vehicle
- Advising additional units of the location of the suspect vehicle
- Requesting that responding units secure any unsecured police or suspect vehicle

Running with a Firearm: Running with a drawn firearm can increase an officer's chance of having an unintentional discharge. Therefore, under most circumstances, officers will have their firearms holstered when involved in a foot pursuit. However, the drawing and exhibiting of an officer's firearm while running may be reasonable based on the officer's reasonable belief that the situation may escalate to the use of deadly force.

Parallel Foot Pursuit Tactics: Officers are discouraged from paralleling with one officer remaining in the vehicle and the other officer on foot, as such actions may result in a tactical disadvantage for both officers. Such tactics are presumed to be unreasonable unless sufficient justification is articulated (i.e. exigency, unavoidable, etc.). However, during apprehension mode, officers may make a tactical decision to employ parallel foot pursuit tactics. Prior to doing so, officers should balance the advantage of doing so versus the risk to officer safety. Tactical considerations include the awareness of partner and suspect location, the existence of barriers along with the consideration of any crossfire situation that such a tactic may create. The distance between the two officers should be close enough that one can still render aid to the other.

Perimeter Concepts

When establishing a perimeter, officers should be mindful of the following guidelines known as the “Tactical Four C’s.” The senior officer in the primary unit acts as incident commander until relieved by a supervisor.

Tactical Four C’s

- Control
- Communicate
- Coordinate
- Contain

Control: Officers should attempt to prevent the suspect from having any outside contact that would allow the suspect the opportunity to get help or take a hostage. To the extent practical, the affected area should be isolated from all pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Generally, any buildings, rooms, or adjoining areas that an armed suspect may have access to should be evacuated or secured.

Communicate: Officers should give direction to responding units to seal the perimeter. Officers on the perimeter should be given regular updates including when officers are searching or evacuating areas within the perimeter. Additionally, when appropriate, a tactical frequency should be requested.

Coordinate: Officers should establish a command post (CP) far enough away to be out of the line of sight or fire, but close enough to exercise control over the situation and provide for the safe arrival of personnel. The CP location and any changes to the location should be broadcast. In the event that the K-9 unit will be used, officers should avoid entering the perimeter to prevent contaminating the scent in the area.

Contain: All sides of the perimeter should be covered, with officers being placed in a position to see the suspect if there is an attempt to escape. Once the perimeter is set, officers should maintain their position to ensure the integrity of the containment and alert the command post if a possible suspect is seen. Officers on the perimeter should not give chase, rather communicate their observations via the radio. During containment operations, good cover is critical to ensure the safety of officers on the perimeter. Cover offers protection from gunfire and allows an officer to safely observe the suspect’s probable position. Also, it is important to ensure that no crossfire situation exists.

Evidence

During the course of a foot pursuit, officers should be vigilant for evidence or contraband that is discarded by the suspect. Officers should broadcast the location where such evidence was discarded to allow assisting officers to secure or recover the item. Additionally, after the suspect is taken into custody, the route of the pursuit should be retraced to locate any discarded evidence.

DEFINITIONS

Apprehension Mode: A pursuit of a suspect(s) when the intent of the pursuing officers is to take the suspect(s) into custody as quickly as possible and without delay.

Barrier: Any object that would cause officers or suspects to alter their direction of travel.

Concealment: Any object that will not stop a bullet but will hide the officer from view of the suspect.

Containment Mode: A pursuit of a suspect(s) where the intent of the pursuing officers is to maintain observation of, and tactically contain, the suspect(s) for later arrest.

Cover: Any object that is believed to be capable of stopping a bullet. Cover may include large trees, block walls, or parked cars.

Parallel Foot Pursuit Tactics: The tactic of one officer on foot, or on rare occasions in a vehicle, choosing to pursue parallel to the other officer who is on foot, while remaining close enough to observe the partner officer and render aid when necessary. Generally, this tactic is discouraged as such actions may result in a tactical disadvantage to both officers.

Perimeter: The containment of an area, large or small, with the intent of preventing the suspect's escape.

Primary Officer: The officer whose primary responsibility is to focus on the threat posed and direction of travel of the suspect. The primary officer is usually the officer in front and closest to the suspect and in a position of advantage to assess any threat posed, give commands, and direct the tactics of the pursuit. The role of the officer may change during the course of a foot pursuit, and the primary officer may become the secondary officer.

Secondary Officer: While the primary officer focuses on the suspect, the secondary officer focuses on the safety of the primary officer and responding personnel. The secondary officer broadcasts location and direction of the pursuit, requests additional resources, and coordinates their response and direction of travel. The role of the officer can change during the course of the foot pursuit, and the secondary officer can quickly become the primary officer.

Separation (Splitting Up): Separation occurs whenever the distance between the two officers is so great that one cannot render aid to the other when confronted by the suspect or barriers exist that would unreasonably delay the partner officer from being able to render aid.

Note: While in containment mode, partner officers may separate a reasonable distance for the limited purpose of setting up a perimeter, as long as they have

line of sight of each other. When separated, officers should not normally transition back into apprehension mode and attempt to take the suspect into custody alone.

CONCLUSION

Foot pursuits are a necessary part of police work but can be dangerous and should be approached with the same amount of planning and caution as any other tactical situation. Pre-planning with a partner, proper radio communication, and constant assessment can aid in apprehending the suspect while maintaining the Department's guiding principle of reverence for human life. The concepts of apprehension versus containment as well as the Tactical Four C's (Control, Communicate, Coordinate, Contain) can help guide officers to a safe and successful conclusion to a foot pursuit.

Points to Remember

- Work as a team
- Use available cover/concealment
- Communicate regularly (broadcast updates)
- Continually assess the foot pursuit mode, either **apprehension or containment**
- Consider the options
- Take appropriate action at the termination point (remember the Tactical Four C's)

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force policy.

This Tactical Concepts – Tactics Training Overview replaces Use of Force – Tactics Directive No. 3.2, Foot Pursuit Concepts, October 2013.

Field Training Services Unit
Police Training and Education

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