



SURVIVAL PAPER #SP04-4

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House Entry and Clearing Survival

By Jim Jones

Introduction

House entry and clearing is one of the most hazardous activities anyone can undertake. Once initiated the potential for the unexpected and fatal scenario is high. Even the most well trained military and police personnel are frequently wounded or killed while storming a building. The military and police only undertake this activity after extensive planning and use a very well trained and equipped team. Building assault by one or two untrained individuals would be extremely hazardous and should be a last resort.

Alternative Tactics

Before you commit to an assault consider every alternative tactic.

1. Can you afford to wait till they come out in the open? Can this be done without risking harm to the personnel or property you need to rescue?
2. Can you drive them out with smoke, gas or other methods? Can this be done without risking harm to the personnel or property you need to rescue?
3. Can you deceive or lure them into leaving or surrendering?
4. Can you reduce their numbers or effectiveness through sniping etc.? Can this be done without risking harm to the personnel or property you need to rescue?

Keep in mind that tactics 3 – 4 will give away any advantage of surprise you may have.

Identify Your Objective

If you must go in you want to clearly identify the object and select tactics and plans that will achieve the objective with the minimum of risk.

1. Do you need to drive them out (leave an escape rout) or do you need to trap and eliminate them?
2. Do you need to clear the whole building or just get in and out with the person or item you need?
3. Do you need to hold the building after it is clear or keep moving?

Reconnaissance

Before you go in you must gather as much information as possible through observation. Try to do this without giving away your presents. Good reconnaissance and planning is the only hope for a successful operation. Be able to answer as many of these questions as possible before planning.

1. How many hostile personnel are in the building?
2. What kinds of weapons do they have?
3. Where and when do they sleep?
4. Do some of them come out or leave for supplies etc.?
5. Do they have radios, phones ,etc. to contact outside support?
6. Are they alert and expecting trouble?
7. Do they have lookouts and/or patrols?
8. Are there others in adjoining building or terrain that could come to their aid?
9. How many doors are there?
10. What is the layout of the house?
11. What cover and concealment can you use in your approach?
12. Are there background noises that could help conceal your approach?
13. Are there innocent people in the building and if so where are they located?

You need to do two types of reconnaissance:

- Area Reconnaissance: this should include a thorough check of the 360 degrees surrounding the target building. All adjoining buildings and terrain that could be used by you or hostile personnel should be observed and inspected.
- Target Reconnaissance: this is a 360-degree in-looking reconnaissance of the target building to gather information.

Night vision and infrared equipment is highly desirable. A good pair of binoculars is a must. Be careful not to be observed or leave signs that may tip-off the hostile personnel of your presents. Be especially cautious to avoid sunlight reflecting off binocular lenses or other shiny objects. Obviously your vehicles should be parked well out of sight and hearing of the target.

Planning

After you have completed your reconnaissance and secured the surrounding terrain and buildings you need to carefully plan your assault. While no combat plan ever survives the first few seconds of contact you are doomed without one. Make your plans carefully and consider everything that can go wrong because it will. Keep your plan simple and be sure that everyone understands it. Be sure you have some basic hand signals established before you start. A few questions you need to ask in making your plans are:

1. Do you need to block escape routs or leave them open?
2. If you cannot approach undetected can you use smoke, distractions or covering fire to reach the doors?

3. Is a night assault practical? Between 3 and 5 AM is best.
4. How can you make the best use of available weapons and personnel?
5. Can you use diversions such as lights, fireworks, etc. to divert attention away from the point of attack?
6. What situations would cause you to abort the attack?
7. Is there a clear chain of command in case the assault leader is incapacitated?
8. Your plan must avoid any chance of accidental encounters with other team members in this environment. There is a great danger of friendly fire casualties in this kind of operation.
9. Is there a clear follow-through plan to secure or evacuate the building after the attack?

Going In

Every building is different and every situation is different. Every doorway, stairway and hall will offer unique hazards. There is no way to predict how hostile personnel will react or where they will be positioned. The tactics for entry and room clearing are subject to debate among various police and military organizations. To cover every conceivable situation would fill a book. Good planning and quick thinking plus some luck will be required to survive and succeed in this situation. If you have to think about it you are probably already dead. Here are a few general rules to keep in mind as you go in:

1. Your main advantage is shock (surprise and speed) to paralyze the hostile personnel before they can react. Shock will only last a few seconds before they start to react. Crash in with the maximum noise and clear as much area as you can in 15 to 20 seconds. If the house is small and there are enough team members you may be able to clear the whole house in this time. After having secured the entry use a careful and methodical approach to clearing the remainder of the building.
2. Consider how the doors hinge and plan to get your entry team inside and clear of the doorway as fast as possible.
3. The entry team should be against the wall on either side of the door looking 180 degrees (or more) and up and down (cutting the pie) for threats.
4. The entrants must observe for locations that could conceal hostile personnel, doors and entrances that could be sources of threats, loopholes in walls or ceilings that hostile personnel could fire through, and booby traps.
5. Once the room is clear and any doors into the room are covered the team calls "Clear" and additional team members (if any) can enter.
6. If the above is completed in a few seconds' teams can begin clearing the adjoining rooms fast but if the initial assault was delayed you must assume that each room contains an armed and ready opposition and more cautious and methodical approach may be required.
7. As you move through the building be sure you do not leave any uncleared room or stairway behind you.
8. If you cannot clear a room block the door with wedges or furniture until you can clear it.

9. In rooms and hallways with multiple doors one team member must cover them while the other one clears each room.
10. If you do not have anyone outside to secure the exterior, keep in mind that hostile personnel could go outside and fire in at you from windows
11. Do not poke you weapon around corners or into doorways where hostile personnel could grab it or knock it out of your hand
12. Stay close to walls and low when possible.
13. A quick (very quick) peek into a room prior to entry can give you important information on what to expect as you go in.
14. Consider mirrors and shadows that could give you away before you enter a room.
15. Be sure to avoid entering a dark room from a lighted one making you a blinded silhouette as you enter.
16. Consider wearing earplugs to avoid being temporarily deafened by any gunfire inside a building.
17. Keep in mind that concealment may not be cover. Most modern construction wall (paneling, plaster board, etc.) will not stop bullets so its only "concealment". Older (over 50 years) construction walls of lath and plaster will stop some bullets and are better "cover". Heavy furniture, appliances will stop most light caliber bullets but only brick walls offer reliable cover.

Conclusion

The most valuable lessons you may gain from the above considerations may be in knowing what to expect from those who could assault your home or business. In those nations where privet gun ownership has been restricted or eliminated there has been marked increases in home invasions and gang activities. Once assured that the home and business owner has no effective means of defense, gangs and terrorists are free to assault these locations and rob, rape and murder at their leisure. Obviously if the occupants know what to expect and are prepared they can have some hope of a successful defense.



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