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Ambush Survival: Increasing Officer Safety

By Det. Sgt. Jeff Johnsgaard | Mar 30, 2021



Engaging in an armed confrontation poses extreme challenges and being forced to suddenly defend yourself from an ambush attack while seated in your vehicle offers a myriad of complications on top of that. Although lower in frequency, the number of law enforcement officers ambushed while in their vehicle is on the rise. This unique situation has never been studied before on its own.

We are Advanced Force Science® Specialists and are currently analyzing data from officers all over the country regarding in-vehicle ambushes. We are looking to identifying trends and help increase officer safety through accurate knowledge. Specific training and tactics will be evaluated through evidence-based research and designed around human performance factors.

Unfortunately, it is not just law enforcement that face in-vehicle attacks. Civilian carjackings on the rise as well. NBC News in Chicago, for example, reported that carjackings in that city doubled in 2020 compared to the previous year and so far in 2021 there have been at least 144, possibly more, reported.

The article noted that there were typically groups of two to four offenders committing these carjacking crimes.

Multiple attackers present the increased challenge of defending on multiple angles simultaneously, all while being confined to a seat. This information augments our opinion that the ability to quickly and effectively rotate and aim a pistol in 360 degrees while confined inside a vehicle is becoming a necessary technique for law enforcement officers. Traditional Isosceles and Weaver style shooting positions have limitations for the speed at which you can manipulate your body to aim in the 3 to 9 o'clock positions. Covering the 4 to 8 o'clock positions are far more problematic.

There is only one known technique currently utilized to defend from inside a vehicle 360 degrees with aimed fire. It is called the *360° Close Quarter Defense* technique. The technique's origins were described in IALEFI's Journal, The Firearms Instructor (issues #61 and #62) and taught at their first virtual conference in January 2021. These unorthodox key concepts will be described in greater detail in future articles aimed to address some of the finer points and its unmatched weapon protection techniques.

Anyone who has ever sat seat-belted inside of a vehicle with their pistol out in their preferred Isosceles/Weaver presentation will tell you the limits of their ability to rotate to the sides and especially to the rear. There is little argument that the

ability for Isosceles/Weaver to offer 360 degrees of aimed fire from seated inside a vehicle is less than optimal. This is especially true for aimed, two-handed fire.

The 360° CQD method excels at this unique problem area offering two- handed fire. Due to it being closer to the body, it also offers an increase in stability during recoil. Once the technique is understood and the large muscles of the back are fully utilized, most students report a large reduction in “felt recoil,” allowing for faster follow-up shots. 360° CQD also has application in very close quarters situations like building searches or when someone has grabbed onto our pistol. For this reason, the officer will fluctuate in and out of the compressed vehicle firing position called the Combat Position, a muzzle on target version of position SUL we call the Close Quarter Position, and their Isosceles/Weaver when in a building search or crowd for example.



Close Quarters Position



Combat Position

There are two things necessary to perform 360° CQD optimally.

1. A modification of the supporting side hand to increase stability in recoil control: Called the “360 Grip” – Straightening of the support hand wrist and placing the firing hand’s knuckles into the support hand palm.
2. The ability to quickly switch hands with the pistol to cover areas you are unable to rotate to when utilizing your preferred pistol holding hand.

There is a specific way this hand switch is taught, both for safety and for economy of motion. An entire article will be published by IALEFI on switching hands in the 2021 spring edition of the Firearms Instructor Magazine.





There is one further point of importance dealing with how you sight the pistol. This slight change for the 360-degree environment of a vehicle allows for both the elimination of dual sight picture and the ability to rotate further behind you.

It is done by aiming with the eye on the opposite side of the body from the hand the pistol is primarily held in. Holding the pistol in your right hand, you will sight with your left eye and if holding the pistol with your left hand you will sight with your right eye. Since you are more bladed, there is no unnatural head positioning like there would be if square onto the threat and then rotating your head.

When in the drivers seat you can aim out the side window to the 9 o'clock position by holding the pistol in the right hand and aiming with the left eye. Then, with extreme economy of motion, switch hands and aim out the passenger side window to the 3 o'clock position holding the pistol in the left hand and sighting with the right eye.

Those with cross eye dominance will find the technique intuitive. Those with same-side hand and eye dominance will immediately find improved ability in using their "off-hand" to now sight comfortably with their dominant eye.

The reason cross hand-eye aiming like this eliminates dual sight picture is because you rotate your head just enough, so the bridge of your nose blocks your other eye from seeing the front sight. Thus, you have all the benefits of aimed fire with both eyes open with no possible dual sight focus and an increased range of rotation.

Although unconventional, the benefit of doing this is quickly understood by sitting in a vehicle with an inert pistol.

Using this cross hand-eye aiming in conjunction with the previously described 360 Grip allows for an increased range of motion in rotation to include covering your 6 o'clock position. After a brief training session, progressing from inert to live pistols, this technique becomes extremely quick. Students can fire multiple rounds to the 9, then 3, then back to 9 o'clock positions far faster than they were able to in their Isosceles/Weaver position in a pre-test. Adding the ability to rotate around and cover all the way back to the 4-5-6 o'clock positions while quickly changing directions in a safe muzzle upward position is the power of this technique for vehicle protection. This technique can even be utilized in the backseat with people in front or beside you all the while maneuvering the pistol safely to engage in multiple directions.

The technique adds to one's 'toolbox' because it works in harmony with Isosceles/Weaver. Whenever you are able to move into them you can immediately do so and if you cannot rotate around fast enough you can utilize 360° CQD.

If the threat is within an arc you can reach with a two handed Isosceles/Weaver you can use that position or be in 360° CQD the entire time. Though novel, we have found those training with the system to increase their competency and comfort with it quickly.

Several techniques for drawing the pistol more ergonomically are taught in 360° CQD by pressing into the foot well area. Pressing into the floor also helps you to rotate around behind you further.

A note on stability of the position; because you hold the pistol closer to the body it requires less effort for the muscles as holding the same weight out further from the body's center. Instead of relying on smaller muscle groups like the shoulder and forearm 360° CQD utilizes the biceps and the large muscles of the back to create isometric tension and stabilize the recoil of the pistol.

Another big benefit of the 360° CQD method is that the technique allows for unmatched weapon retention. The ability to keep the pistol in closer to the body when required and still being able to have accurate and controlled shots is a unique trait to 360° CQD. By placing the pistol across the chest, you effectively cheat the time-distance reaction curve when compared to traditional stances. It allows you the ability to utilize blocking and pressuring techniques with your elbow area to defend from a grab or take back control from an attacker's hold on your pistol. These techniques will be demonstrated in a video/webinar we will do for Caliber Press.

We hope you have found value in this brief introduction to 360° CQD. Our next article will discuss the common operator faults when using the system. If you have any questions or comments on this or our other articles, please do not hesitate to contact us. Stay safe and thank you for your service.

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