

TACTICS

Sometimes It's How To Think, Not What To Think.

Clint Smith

Bastogne, Seoul, Hue, Mogadishu and Fallujah. Spanning history and most of the planet over the last 70 years, what could these places possibly have in common? They are not all in deserts, jungles or mountains. They are not all hot, cold, wet or dry. These places were not always easily traversed by modern technology, tanks or armored vehicles. Yet all were plastered in a style typical of Old Testament Biblical fire and brimstone by mortars, artillery, air power and naval gunfire.

Want to know what two important things they have in common?

First of all, these places required an often young, dog-tired, dirty, hungry, tougher-than-a-tree-knot 11 Bravo or 0311 infantryman to clear ... then hold until hell freezes over or someone tells 'em different.

The second really important thing all these places have in common? They got stinking doors, blown-open windows, long narrow hallways, sharp dark corners and cruddy over-your-head stairwells. This is what they all have in common.

I won't go into the lack of initial training our troops get in this area as now it is improving.

I won't get into the fact that wars are often unpopular and, trust me, the many folks who step up to the plate to fight them for us are not always elated about the war or with the often hedging support from homebodies and political hacks. I won't get into the fact that street cops all over America — sans tactical supporting fire — are facing the same complex tactical issues facing our troops worldwide.

No, I won't mention all that stuff. So then, how about we discuss you? Do your personal tactics include an ability to clear buildings and structures? You say, "No way."

Good choice, you shouldn't learn tactics because you wanted to. You should in fact learn basic tactics in case you *have* to use them. A point of clarity, stay behind the bed, behind the locked bedroom door, call 911, let someone else solve the problem — all correct and probably smart ideas. Then again what if you had to solve your own problem?

Your kids are calling for help at the other end of the house, or the way to safety out of a gunfire-filled restaurant

lies down a hall and out a backdoor.

By Now You Get The Point

So what are tactics? Why could they be important to you? How would you acquire these skills — and trust me they are acquired. Do you have to know as much as a SWAT team or a Special Operations Trooper to survive an encounter? Probably not.

Tactics are a science of a sort but not rocket science. Tactics are a science of organization of mind and equipment to which the addition of physical movement is required to accomplish the tasks at hand. I teach that in its simplest form, tactics are based on one's ability to think of architecture and the game of billiards. Architecture is applied in the sense of looking at a building or structure, planning a way to clear said structure and implementing the plan without getting killed. The not getting killed part is important and remember most plans change if there is contact with a threat. Billiards are important to tactics because in this game of balls it is imperative to get the best angle or maneuver to get the ball in the pocket. Then you win.

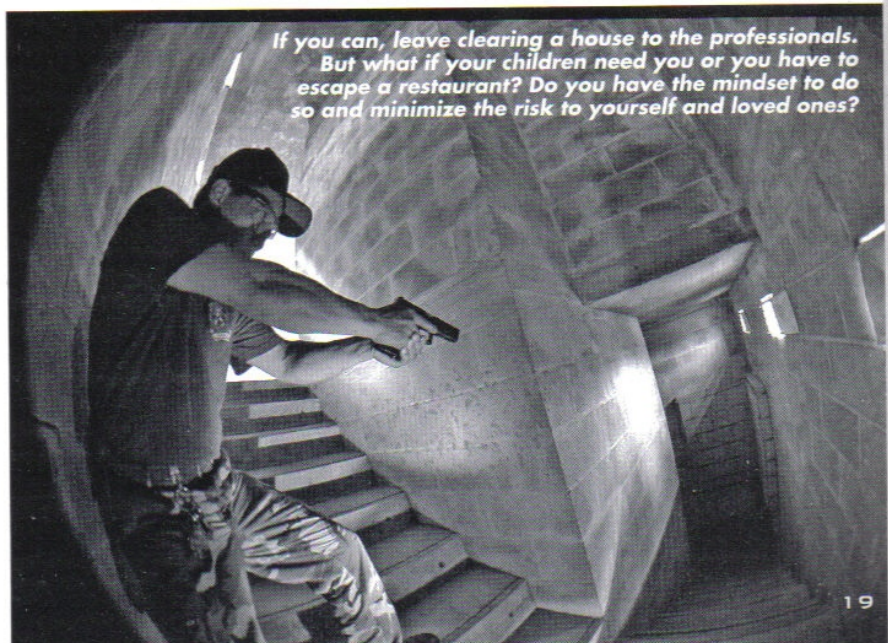
So now we come to the sticky part. Look at the structure and figure out the best angle to clear it while the least amount of you is exposed to possible return fire from a threat. By working

these angles, the thought is to clear the problem with your weapons and lights in support, maximizing the distance to the threat while minimizing yourself as a target. Tactics, no problem.

So then we apply these thoughts, concepts and practices to corners, doorways, hallways and stairs. As we progress through this series of articles, always fall back on the commonalities of tactics while addressing all of these problems. Three things determine the outcome of all conflict. They are communications, communicating with the threat and among ourselves. Movement, moving to or away from the threat based on what the task at hand is. The last one is shooting. If you must shoot you must without question shoot well, or well enough to win. Worn out adages like, "he's so close I can't miss," must be replaced with logical thought and wise application like, "he's so close I'd better not miss." It is often to your advantage to maximize the distance and minimize yourself as a possible target. Wisely use available cover and concealment and know the difference between the two. Train on and dominate the ground were you live.

In the meantime remember you have the rest of your life to solve your tactical problem. How long your life lasts may depend on how well you solve your problem.

If you can, leave clearing a house to the professionals. But what if your children need you or you have to escape a restaurant? Do you have the mindset to do so and minimize the risk to yourself and loved ones?



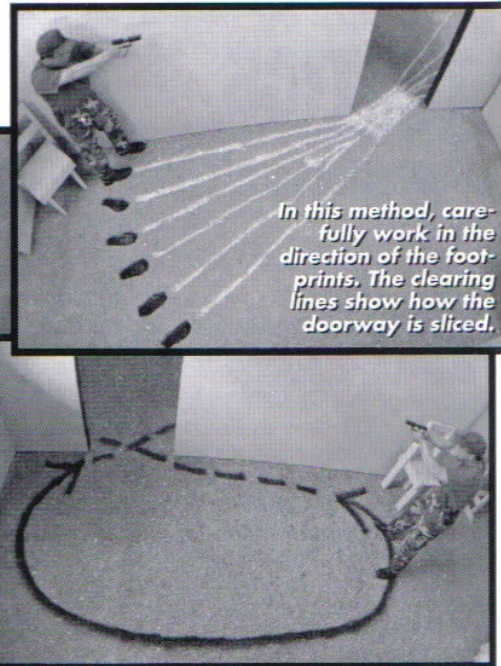
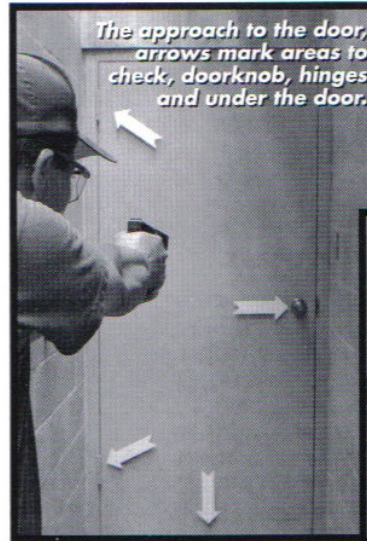
IN AND OUT THE DOOR

It May Just Be The Toughest Thing To Do.

Doors by nature and design are man-made funnels designed to constrict movement and the flow of traffic. This restriction of flow tends to make them both a bullet magnet and trap. The application of entry tactics though doors generally falls into two categories. First is the dynamic method that invokes the theory of speed and surprise to generate an overpowering presence. The second option is the covert or stealth mode that is a more systematic and methodical technique. Since it is often better to be conservative in tactics, I am only going to address the second method of covert or stealth mode even though some of the movements discussed may seem to be applied rather quickly such as the physical act of passing through the door.

The act of clearing the doorway can be divided into three parts: the approach, the search and the entry. The first part, your approach should include the application of the two "M's." "Maximize" the distance to the threat and "Minimize" yourself as a target. As you start part two of the search, stay as far away from the doorway as possible and work to one side of the door or the other to position yourself to look as far as possible into the room. Back away, keeping as much distance as possible with your muzzle between you and the threat area as you visually slice the open doorway moving as smoothly as possible.

Do not do this fast! Your movement should be arc-shaped similar to a rainbow curve, visually slicing the new area acquired with each lateral step of the curve until you reach the wall on the other side of the open door. By working to either side of the doorway you will be able to see as far into the room as possible. If, during this clearing movement, you see them or they see you, the fight may start. The walls and door between you and the threat are probably at best concealment — not cover. Move to whatever protection is available. The third and last part of the entry is going through the doorway. While conducting your search decide where you want to end up at in the room after you go in. A key point is to pass through the doorway smoothly, quickly and quietly. Put your back against what you feel is a safe area, for instance the last place you looked before you came



through the doorway.

Opening

The opening and clearing of a closed door is a little more complicated only in the sense of opening the door. Once the door comes open the search can be similar to the technique you used for the doorway.

On the approach check the hinges of the door. Hinge pins out means the door opens to you. No visible hinge pins means the door opens inward. Be aware of interior pocket doors, which have no hinges or doorknob. To open this type of door you will need to slide the door into the wall. If the door you are about to open has the knob on the right and the hinges on the left, this door is going to open to you from the right to the left. If possible set up on the right side using your left hand to open the door knob, keep your muzzle between you and the threat area, open the door and step back smoothly while going back to a two-hand firing grip.

Try not to fling the door open so hard it whacks the wall and rebounds shut. At the same time, don't open the door so slowly someone inside has a lot of time to get ready or have a large portion of your arm and torso to shoot at. If you have to open the same door, but in a hallway, you should check the door knob and hinges as you approach the door and place your left foot in such a position that if the door was kicked or pushed by the threat as you start to open the door, the door would strike your foot and knee not your head or torso. Keeping the muzzle between yourself and the threat area and out of the arc of the doors opening swing,

grasp the doorknob with your left hand and step back as far as possible as you open the door.

Many people are concerned the threat may shoot through the door as they stand in front of it. This is a legitimate concern, but very hard to defend against. Understandably, you would think if someone is shooting at you through the door you should just shoot back, which is a good concept, but a poor application. The people you are fighting are probably not worried about bystanders or hostages, but if you shoot one round and hit the wrong guy, it's get-a-lawyer-for-life time.

Basic Don'ts

There are some basic don'ts, including but not limited to: Don't stand in front of the doorway when opening it or while it is open. The backlight helps to promote you as a target.

Don't lead with your muzzle while searching or entering the doorway. The muzzle is a dead giveaway of where you are and if you are not careful it can, at best, cause you to fight over possession of your gun with the threat and, at worst, set you up to have it taken away to be used against you.

Don't stall in the doorway — either go in or stay out but don't stop in the funnel the doorway makes. Search, clear or engage and move on as needed. Set a dressing mirror in the room you are practicing on and in the mirror you will quickly see what kind of target you make for a threat. The clearing of doors and doorways can be difficult and demanding, but it can be done.

Clint's 6 Part Tactical Series: Part 3

HALLWAYS

A Dangerous Place To Face A Threat.

By definition hallways are walled corridors inside a building or structure. Hallways direct and restrict movement. They are generally found in conjunction with rooms, doors, corners and stairways. Continuing with our tactical series, let's address how we can defend ourselves against threats in hallways and what we should do to defend ourselves while working in hallways.

Threats In The Hall

In applying defense, there are notable assets to engaging your opponent in doorways. In the corners and definitely in the hallways, their movement is restricted and their exposure is great while their available cover is negligible. The length of your hallway or corridor of course dictates the potential exposure time you will have to engage the threat. Anything that could be added to slow the forward momentum of your opponent is helpful. For example, as in stairways, furniture, debris, gunfire or bright lights all serve to retard your threat's forward movement. Once movement is slowed or stopped the only deciding criteria in the hallway is who can provide the best base of accurate fire to hopefully stop and hold movement towards you.

"U" In The Hallway

When moving down the hall you have two options. One is to stay close to the wall to minimize outlining yourself as a target. Option two is to move down the middle of the hall to reduce the potential of being hit

by incoming rounds, ricochets and possible flying debris. When it is required to move in a hallway, you must approach open doors or corners with caution. Activate your training program as discussed earlier on doors and doorways. Visually slice the opening with your eyes keeping the muzzle of your weapon in support. Do not lead into openings with your elbows, feet or the end of your weapon's muzzle. Work from the right side of the hall to clear the left corner then back up. Next cross over and work from the left side of the hall to clear the right corner visually. Look as far into the area you are clearing as possible.

Silent Helpers

Use fixtures inside the room to help you clear it. Look at mirrors, windows or anything that would reflect or show the movements or location of possible threats. This brings us back to our ally, the practice mirror. Set it up and practice clearing your hallway. Tactical problems in your own home should be few and far between as you should address these issues in prior training. Clear your home now and practice as often as you can so you get it right. Set mirrors and furniture to your advantage to help you clear areas without having to enter any more than necessary. Proper placement of a permanent mirror in your home can help you look down a hallway before you have to stick your head in.

There is the thought your opponent can see you in your mirror, too, but you would rather they see you in the mirror than

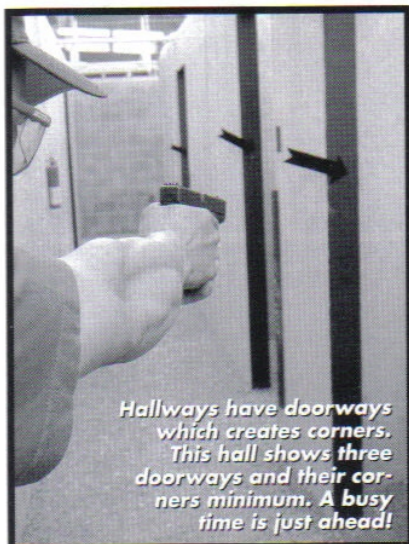
shoot you in the head as you attempt to clear an area. As before, when you start down a hallway remember the last safe place that you cleared in case the hallway becomes untenable. There will be a hallway that can't be cleared safely by going straight ahead and you had better consider it. You may have to either back up or be stuffed in a bag. Don't think, "Well, they may get me, but I will take them with me." The bottom line is the same — you'll be in the bag.

There are two choices as mentioned before. First going fast or slow, but whatever speed you're moving your muzzle should be between you and the threat area so you can protect yourself. If you can move with someone covering your movement to give you supporting fire, do so.

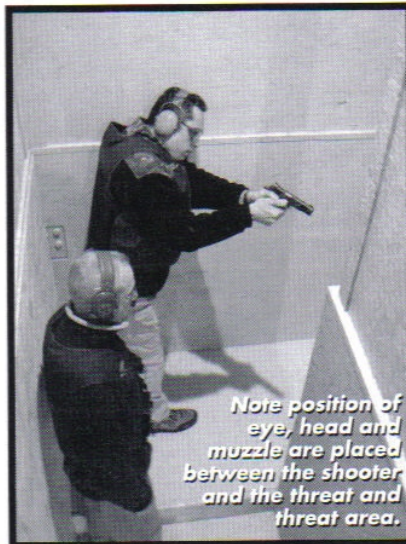
Worst-Case Scenario

You should practice backing up or withdrawal drills while shooting as a method of preparing yourself for the potential of having to back up while firing at a threat. Movement in a hallway is constricted and dangerous. Minimize exposure time in the hallways by avoiding them or, if you must move through them, do so quickly or slowly as is required. As in the application of all tactics, hallways are dangerous, but they must often be cleared whether we like it or not. Go down your hallways in life well trained, physically prepared and with a mental will to win.

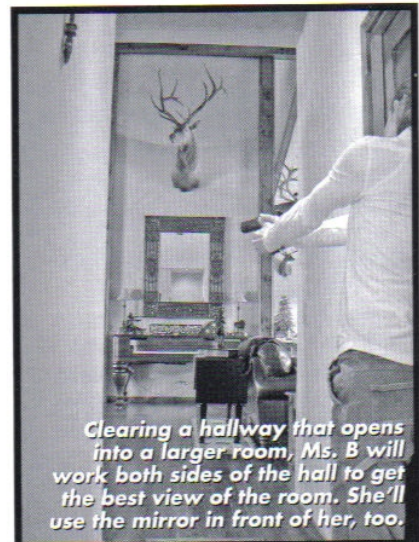
You can win.



Hallways have doorways which creates corners. This hall shows three doorways and their corners minimum. A busy time is just ahead!



Note position of eye, head and muzzle are placed between the shooter and the threat and threat area.



Clearing a hallway that opens into a larger room, Ms. B will work both sides of the hall to get the best view of the room. She'll use the mirror in front of her, too.

Clint's 6 Part Tactical Series: Part 4

STAIRWAYS

A Most Dangerous Place.

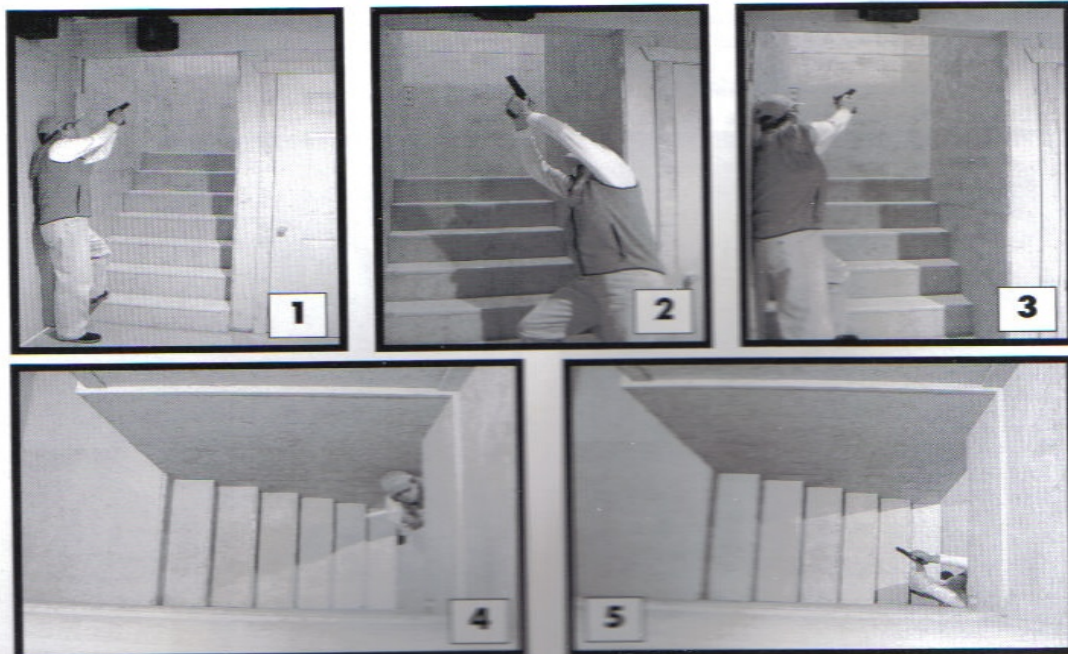
Tactically speaking, a stairway is really nothing more than a hallway that goes up or down. It can have corners, so to speak, that are vertical or horizontal with regards to overhangs and possibly corners at the top of the stairway. Remember that a stairway is a funnel and it can restrict the flow of movement. Your physical presence on a stairway can project three target indicators: Sound, movement and outline. The last two, contrast and reflection, can come along quickly in the form of dark clothes in a white stairwell or reflection from glasses, guns, face or hands.

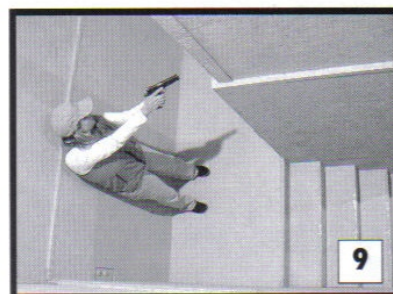
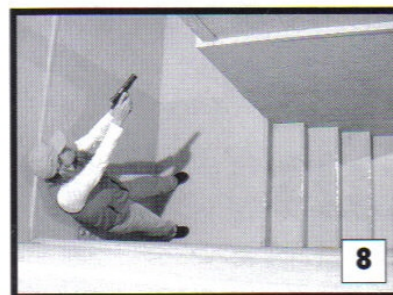
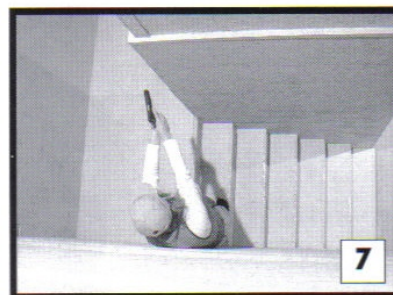
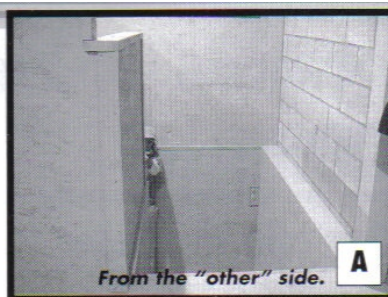
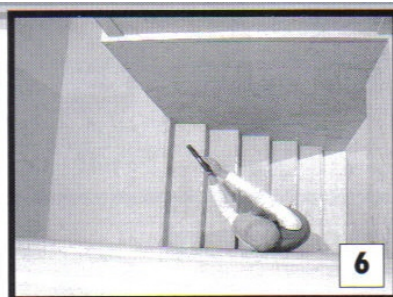
Basic guidelines apply. Keep the muzzle between you and what you feel threatened by without leading with the muzzle either in overhangs or corners. Keep the muzzle down in tight areas. Don't put the muzzle near or around your face and head. If a retention fight for your weapon begins and your muzzle is down, you will have better leverage to raise the muzzle than lowering it from a raised position. If someone attempts to take the weapon, step back, use the leverage of the lower muzzle position and if appropriate, shoot to get your opponent off of the end of your gun.

Going Up?

Watch your footing. Check the depth of

the step with your foot to confirm your footing for balance on the stairs. Be aware of overhangs and corners at the top of stairs or on landings. As you go up the stairs, keep your back to a solid wall, if there is one. Don't drag or rub the wall since sound created by rubbing the wall is one of the target indicators. As you go up the stairs, the top of your head will show before your eyes see the floor, especially if you have a hat or helmet on. If your opponent simply lies on the floor, he can see your head before your eyes and gun and can be in the clear to see or shoot. If working a stairwell with a flat floor at the top of the landing, mentally project when your head will be a target. Squat lower as you progress up the stairs so that you can keep your head from becoming a target any sooner than necessary. With the weapon at ready, raise your body up to look just enough to see the floor area ahead while keeping the muzzle in support of this move. Your head is still a target, but you have the ability to see and fight compared to the slow motion, jack-in-the-box movement of climbing each step. Clearing overhangs or overhangs is accomplished by staging yourself on the stair below the point of exposing yourself. Don't expose your muzzle, elbows, knees, or shoes. Bracing against a solid wall helps, if it is available. It can and may be uncom-





fortable, but roll out the least amount of your head and eyes with the muzzle in support to visually clear the area.

Going Down?

Several problems exist here and they are all dangerous. Is there an opening under the stairs setting up the potential for your foot to be grabbed as you go down? What medium are the stairs made of: wood, metal or concrete? Can you be shot in your feet, legs or groin as you go down the stairs?

Depending on room design, you may expose your feet and legs to a threat across the far side of a room. Ever back up a set of stairs quickly? If the stairs allow, you can try and lay flat to look into the far part of the room showing as little of yourself as

possible. If you don't know the stairway, put your back to the solid wall and start down using the toe of your shoe to "feel" if the stairway is freestanding and the back of the steps are open. You could attempt to peek under the stairs before going down. Be prepared to back up while under fire.

As always in tactics, the simple equation is to show the least amount of you to see the most amount of the threat. M&Ms — maximum them, minimum you. Then the answer to the question of stairwells looking dangerous or getting you killed is: Yes, it's a distinct possibility. Then again, you have the rest of your life to solve this problem. How long your life lasts depends on how well you do it. It is dangerous, but it can be done.

Clint's 6 Part Tactical Series: Part 5

CORNERS

Don't Be Too Eager To Move Forward.

The basic construction of doors, halls and stairs create corners. As a result, these corners restrict flow or movement. Clearing corners generally causes us to compress into areas of close proximity to potential threats or areas they might occupy.

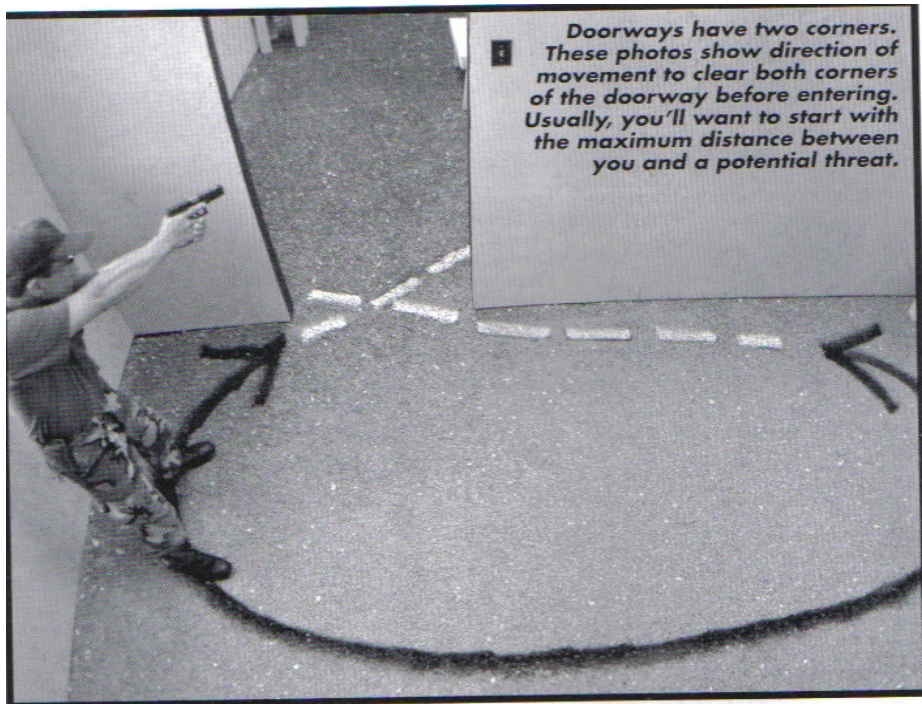
Corners can come singly or in pairs in the forms of a 90-degree turn or in the form of a 180-degree format as in a hallway entering a main room. Corners are most often found in vertical planes, but can be in the horizontal as well (in the case of a stairwell overhang).

As you approach a single corner, "slice" the area visually ahead of you in small increments so as to maximize the potential of getting an edge on the threat by seeing them first. If an encounter takes place your first option could be to smoothly back away from the threat. Your second option could be to smoothly back up while asking for compliance from the threat. Option three, hold the ground you have, and ask for compliance. Last option: move forward. Be guarded about moving forward. The single biggest training mistake people make on corners is to see a partial or potential threat and ask for compliance. They still move forward into the fight without verbal compliance from the threat. The question I always then ask is, "How much of the threat can you see?" Then, "How much of you can the threat see?" Don't trade gunfire with anybody at arm's length. Most often no good comes of it.

The 180

Two opposite corners, or what is referred to as a 180-degree problem, present a corner on each side, at the end of a hallway, for example. Clear as much as you can of one corner without over-exposing yourself to the opposite corner. Once done, withdraw a few steps as may be required and repeat the process for the other side. On 180s there is often a "blind spot" on each side in the extreme corners. Remembering the architectural part of tactics, you should probably clear the side





Doorways have two corners. These photos show direction of movement to clear both corners of the doorway before entering. Usually, you'll want to start with the maximum distance between you and a potential threat.

that puts a potential threat closest to you, after rolling in smoothly with the least amount of you exposed. Clear, for example, the right side corner then, muzzle down, rotate the 180 and clear the opposite corner. This is a Las Vegas gamble at best. If you should get any target indicators, sound, movement, reflection, contrast, outline or any visual clues as to which side the threat might be on, clear that area first, then clear the reverse side of the 180. After "paying" for the room with your life, in a fashion, move smoothly to the last safest place, which is most often what you cleared last.

The muzzle-down gun handling application mentioned before brings up the issue of muzzle control in these compressed areas. The Hollywood version of elbows bent and muzzle near your head or face is a poor place for the muzzle to be, period. Your arms are designed ergonomically to lift up, not down. Keeping the muzzle down can provide — when used in conjunction with a rearward step — the ability to lift the muzzle direction onto a threat should they grab your hands or muzzle. Often there are demonstrations in magazines of the muzzle and arms being withdrawn in a close body mode near the body or, even scarier, near the shooter's head. Cool technique in the magazine. Go to the range, put on *good* glasses, sunscreen and ear protection and discharge the gun from the position shown by Tommy Tactical, wiznurd. Your fun meter will be quickly pegged. And remember you did it all with protective equipment. Imagine being bare-

eared with no eye protection. There are many weapon retention and close-range firing techniques. Many are good and helpful in a fight but they are an acquired skill — not acquired from reading magazine articles or watching a video. Forthrightness comes to the forefront here.

Muzzle Control

When clearing these problems search with your eyes aligned with your weapon's muzzle in support. Your muzzle will most often be depressed while in this alignment so as to not break the plane of the corner you are clearing, thus giving you away to possible threats. Where your muzzle is located is based on your current environment, not a technique.

If you were going up a flight of stairs, your muzzle may be pointed up, if you were going downstairs it may be pointed down. Clearing a corner the muzzle could be depressed yet be aligned between you and the closest threat area. The idea is to make them come though your muzzle, so to speak, to get to you.

Good tactical rules must be applied. First apply the tactic of maximizing the distance to the corner and minimizing yourself to expose the least amount of you while trying to see the most amount of the area to be cleared.

- You are not learning tactics because you *want* to use them.
- You are learning and practicing tactics in *case* you have to use them.
- You can get *killed* applying tactics.
- Corners can quickly validate this last thought.

Clint's 6 Part Tactical Series: Part 6

TACTICS: THE LAST WORD

Don't be too Gung-Ho.

I have tried to logically cover most of the structural issues in the application of tactics. It is easy to see that many of these issues are not black and white in application, but in fact a smoky gray based on environment and reality. I'll close the series with a cross section of information detailing what goes wrong when tactics are applied based on following thousands of people through tactical simulators and applying them myself on occasion.

Alignment Plane

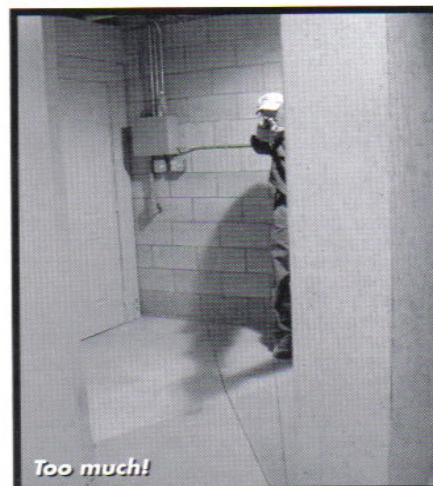
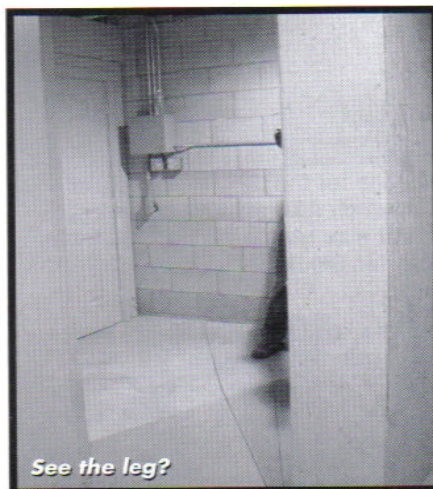
There is a physical plane that should be considered when applying tactics either in the vertical or horizontal that works on the premise that no part of the moving gun platform (you) should break the plane being cleared before the correct time. As an illustration, a right-handed shooter should keep the plane in mind, so that no part of the gun platform enters the plane before another. If, while moving to clear a vertical corner, the foot of the gun platform breaks the plane first, the shooter, in projecting his foot into the area being cleared before he is in fact ready to clear the corner, creates a life-threatening problem.

In layman's terms the muzzle or body part exposed "leads" into the area being cleared giving your opponent time to prepare for the arrival of a target — you. This alignment plane of eye, muzzle and body should keep 99 percent of the body behind available cover and allow the eye behind the weapon's muzzle to roll into the area to confirm the area is clear or engage the target as may be required.

Stepping In

I am not exactly sure where this comes from, but after many years I think the enemy may be the one-dimensional target-range drill. The problem: When visual contact is made with the target the shooter often steps more deeply into the threat area than is required to make the shot, hence making them more of a target to the threat.

A couple of points. Most folks want to square up with the target because they shoot that way on the range in training. Targets at oblique angles often seem to cause more trouble for shooters than the straight-on ones do. I also think when we are in trouble the inclination is to step in and go for it, most often because we are not programmed in training to understand the threat can — and will — shoot back. A



standard verbal response from me is, "How much of the target can you see?" The student answers, "All of him." Then from me comes, "How much of you can the target see?" The student answers, "All of me ... #@&*!" "Duly noted."

Threats shoot you because they see you. They see you because you let them. I *know* I can be shot, but should I help the threat?

Eyes Off

This is what I call the rowboat and the battleship mode. As you are clearing, you let your battleship eyes overload your rowboat muzzle. By rolling the head in peeking or otherwise while the muzzle is off the aforementioned eye and muzzle plane, your eyes find the threat and your muzzle is not in a place to support your newfound threat with gunfire. Trust me, the relationship of your muzzle and your eye is an issue that can cost you your life if applied incorrectly.

Keep your eyes positioned so that you are looking over the top of the weapon, lowering the muzzle as required so as to not lead into doorways or corners, or so you can see under furniture or to get visual acquisition of the threat's hands, all of which are good ideas. You want your eyes to find the threat and your muzzle to be in a place to support you with gunfire if required. You know you are going to die — probably not today — and if today is the day, then make the threat come though your muzzle to get to you.

A concept revolving around Architecture and Billiards is a primary training track I teach. Look at the architecture of what you are clearing. The offset walls do not match, the depths of the walls in a room do not match. All these things could mean offsets, and offsets mean potential places for threats to hide. I am leery of these. Architecturally, I should have no issues in my own home because I live there and I should have addressed ways to clear them prior to a potential fight.

Billiards is a game of balls that evolves around the concept that whoever has the best angle places the most balls in the pockets. A simple game — whoever has the most balls in the pockets wins. Play the angles to get the best access to the threat while making yourself the least likely target possible.

M&M

Maximize the distance to the threat. Another simple truth: The more distance I have, the more time I have to respond. Are there exceptions? Yes, and they are all dangerous. Distance creates time and the potential for better or more marksmanship as may be required.

Minimize yourself as a target. Carry a gun and two would be better. Carry spare ammunition, the more the better. Carry a flashlight and two would be better. If you think there is going to be a fight — leave.

And remember you do not learn tactics to apply them. You learn tactics in case you have to apply them. And that is logical.

