

Tactical efficiency in the process of handling and usage of firearms – important security related precondition for carrying out the police duty

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Abstract: *The police, during the performance of its duties, bears a huge responsibility before the general public, in relation to the professional performance of their duties, without causing disturbance of the general security and violating the basic human rights and freedoms. Forming the public opinion on the quality of police services is directly related to the manner in which legal powers are exercised, and in particular, the part related to the use of means of coercion. Firearms as the most extreme form of coercion are of great importance for the police work, because its use can cause serious injury or death, so it should be used only when there are absolutely no other options to solve the conflict between the police and the citizens. Given the different circumstances and conditions under which firearms are used, the police officers have a tremendous responsibility to anticipate, understand and apply all legal, security and tactical procedures and rules for the reasonable use of firearms. That is the main reason why the focus on this paper is on the tactical and security related procedures, which include a number of activities related to the process of preparation and taking up arms, the process of immediate use of weapons and the final process of disarmament.*

Keywords: POLICE AUTHORIZATIONS, POLICE OFFICERS, USE OF FIREARMS, TACTICAL PROCEDURES, SECURITY ASSESSMENT

1. Introduction

The police, as a state body, is authorized and in charge of maintaining public order and peace. This position of the police arises from the established powers, which are necessary for the performance of its basic function, which is to maintain internal security and preserve the constitutionality and legality of the social order [1]. Among most of the police duties, the authorization to use means of coercion stands out by its weight, because their application directly restricts, and in severe cases violates the constitutionally guaranteed human rights and freedoms, and especially the right to freedom of movement, bodily integrity and of life. The seriousness of the consequences that can result from the use of means of coercion, and especially from the use of firearms, categorizes the police profession as a high-risk and responsible profession, in which the lives of people on the one hand and the lives of police officers on the other hand can be easily endangered [2]. Therefore, the use of firearms by the police should be seen as an exception in its conduct, and not as a rule, because it is an authorization whose use almost without exception has serious consequences.

Due to the great importance and significance of the use of firearms in everyday police work, the assumption is justified that the use of firearms is an extremely serious and responsible activity that requires professional experience, knowledge and skills, but also great concentration in crucial moments (stress control, fear). That is why many studies have been conducted in which firearms are analyzed from different aspects (sociological, criminological, psychological, legal, tactical-security, educational, etc.), and thus various theses and questions about its legality, justification, usability, proportionality, limitation, efficiency, etc. [3] [4] [5].

2. Legal basis for the use of firearms

Firearms, as the most severe form of coercion, have stricter legal restrictions on their use than other means of coercion. This means that during the performance of their official duties, police officers may use firearms only in cases when otherwise and by using other means of coercion is impossible [6]:

- to protect their own life or the lives of other people;
- to prevent the commission of a crime for which a prison sentence of at least four years may be imposed;
- to prevent the escape of a person who have committed a crime for which a sentence of ten years or a heavier sentence may be imposed or a person for whom a warrant has been issued for such a crime;
- to prevent the escape of a person deprived of liberty due to a crime committed from the previous point or a person for whom a warrant has been issued for escape from serving a prison sentence for such crimes, and

- To prevent an attack on a facility or person being under protection.

Taking into consideration the legal basis, it can be said that any use of firearms is considered potentially deadly, as it can kill or seriously injure the participants involved in the attack or the individuals who accidentally found themselves at the scene of an armed shootout. In such complex and uncertain situations, the police practice shows that the decision for its application is always difficult and complicated because at the same time care should be taken not to endanger one's own life, the lives of other colleagues, citizens, but also the lives of people who are conducting the attack.

Firearms, as the most severe form coercion, is a serious challenge to the expertise, ethics and ability of every police officer, and therefore it is in the interest of the state to define the legal basis as accurately as possible so that citizens can experience the police as a figure of security and protection, not as an immediate and direct threat to their lives [7].

3. Tactical and security procedure during the use of firearms

3.1. General tactics and safety rules

When using firearms, the legal regulations should be well known. Furthermore, the police officers have a huge responsibility to anticipate, understand and apply all security and tactical procedures and activities as long as they are conducted reasonably and adequately. This implies the application of an appropriate tactical approach that is in accordance with the prescribed security procedures, as consequences can easily occur as a result of improper and inadequate use of firearms [8]. In practice, this means that in a very short period of time they have to perform a number of tactical activities and actions related to the process of preparation and taking up arms, the process of direct (physical) manipulation of weapons, the executive process of disarmament. While carrying out these three interrelated processes, police officers need to maintain a high level of concentration and demonstrate motor skills to quickly, efficiently and safely execute all crucial elements of the overall tactical process [9]. Depending on the conditions and the reasons why the firearm is used, one should always strive for the final outcome to be favorable, i.e. not to allow unnecessary damage, because the bullets can cause severe bodily injuries or take human lives. To prevent this from happening, police officers must make logical judgments and make decisions that are consistent with the current security environment, and therefore must strictly adhere to certain rules for the safe handling of firearms. We are talking about the application of four basic safety rules [10]:

Rule 1: Treat each weapon as if it were loaded. There should be no exceptions to this rule whatsoever, as it is always assumed that the weapon is loaded. If you come in contact with the weapon, you should check if there is ammunition inside. The check is performed

by removing the frame (charger), pulling (blocking) the cover in the rear position and inspecting the opening of the tube. In case you need to check a weapon that is unfamiliar how it works, it should be done only in the presence of a person who is trained to handle that weapon.

Rule 2: Never point a firearm at something you do not want to destroy. You should never allow the tube opening to pass through any part of your own body or any other body. Basically it is very difficult to find a completely safe direction, except maybe the back of the shooting range. In other words, firearms should be aimed at something that will absorb and retain the bullet in the case of an accidental firing.

Rule 3: Do not put your finger on the trigger until you intend to shoot with a firearm. Many police officers think that the finger should be constantly on the trigger so that they can fire the weapon faster, which is not true, because it can be fired equally quickly if the finger is outside the trigger frame. This rule is often violated in situations when the weapon is returned to the holster and therefore causes wounds and injuries to the body.

Rule 4: Be always sure about your target and what lies behind it. Before the weapon is used, the target must be clearly visible and positively identified. This rule requires police officers to be firmly convinced and confident that there are no random observers in the area around the threat and behind it, i.e. citizens. In most cases when firearms are used, the reaction time is very short, so it is crucial to properly assess the situation before making a final decision on action.

3.2. Preparation, pulling out, using and returning the weapon in the holster

Police officers carry weapons while performing their professional duties [11]. Firearms (semi-automatic pistol) as well as other equipment are on the service belt. The holster in which the weapon is placed is always on the side of the hand with which the shot is fired, while the holster with a spare frame is carried on the opposite side of the belt. This placement of the gun and the spare frame at all times should ensure their availability and the possibility of quick use regardless of the conditions in which it operates. When starting the procedure of pulling the weapon out of the holster, the main priority is to bring it to the firing position, i.e. to aim at the final target. To achieve this, several consecutive steps are required through which the tactical task will be performed efficiently and safely (Fig.1) [12]:



Fig. 1 Pulling out a gun from the holster

First step. The hand that shoots covers the handle of the gun, the thumb unbuttons the holster, and the finger that shoots is straight along the outside of the holster. The other hand comes in contact with the service belt to facilitate the extraction process. While performing these initial interventions with the gun, a preparatory firing position is taken and the threat is identified with both eyes.

Second step. The firing hand lifts the pistol out from the holster, then immediately directs the opening of the barrel at the auxiliary hand to make a firm grip with both hands. While establishing a proper grip with both hands, the gun is aimed at the ground at a 45-degree angle. In this position the auxiliary hand grabs the cover and pulls back (repeats) to charge the gun.

Third step. The hand that pulls the trigger and the other hand together point the gun directly at the target, i.e. to a position of complete alignment of the front and rear sight. During this process,

the finger that is supposed to pull the trigger is placed outside the frame of the gun.

Fourth step. Direct the opening of the gun straight towards the target (aim at the target) and pull the trigger with your finger. After firing, the gaze is kept on the threat for a short time to provide a realistic insight into the shot, and then the finger is removed from the trigger.

After pulling out the gun from the holster, the procedure for safe return of the weapon follows. In order to facilitate the process of putting the gun back in the holster, it is necessary to perform the sequence of steps in the opposite direction. When returning the pistol, it is very important to remove the finger with which the trigger is pulled at the same moment when the target is no longer a threat and to activate all safety mechanisms.

3.3. Tactical views on the use of firearms

The specific manner and conditions in which firearms are used impose the need to establish appropriate tactical attitudes for firing. To achieve accuracy and ensure timely feedback, police officers must have a stable and balanced firing position. This means that before the weapon is aimed at the target, police officers must involve the whole body, i.e. provide skeletal support (simultaneous involvement of multiple groups of joints), muscle contraction (synchronized work of multiple muscle groups), full body kinesthetics (harmonized work and body function) and natural target point (alignment and centering of targets after a shot) [13].

When firearms are used, tactical attitudes can be formed for shooting in a standing, kneeling and lying position. Which of these shooting positions will be used at a given time depends on the security circumstances and situation in which the police officers are. In a standing position, the most acceptable for tactical and combat shooting are the positions "isosceles triangle" and "vivar position" because they provide good stability, balance and maximum involvement of the whole body (Fig. 2) [14].



Fig. 2 Standing positions for shooting "isosceles triangle" and "vivar"

Tactical attitude shooting in the kneeling position can be from a low and high kneeling position. When a low shooting position is applied, then positions are formed on one or both legs by leaning on the knee with the arm, sitting on one or both heels, and when a high shooting position is used, then the body is kept upright all the time, regardless of the position of the shooting legs (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Squatting positions for shooting in low and high position

When the body is brought to a supine position, shooting positions can be performed by lying on the abdomen, side and back (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Lying postures for shooting the abdomen, side and back

3.4. Tactical movements with firearms

When the legal requirements for the use of firearms are met, police officers apply a variety of tactical movements in space in order to quickly, efficiently and safely overcome the resulting danger. If we take into account that when performing police tasks, most of the time is spent in tactical movement with firearms and less in shooting, then these movements must be well practiced, because it will enable a timely and quick reaction (taking a safe shelter, running, lying down, twisting, changing running direction, etc.). When performing a tactical movement with a firearm, the position of the body is constantly changing and adjusting depending on the configuration of the terrain, the degree of danger, weather conditions, equipment and in such changing circumstances, the movements are usually performed in a standing or lying position [15] [16].

If the tactical movement with a firearm is performed in a standing position, then it is performed with a straight line movement forward, backward and sideways and with alternating change of direction of movement in one side and the other (Fig 5). During the whole time this process is repeated, the weapon is raised to shoulder height and it is ready for use.



Fig. 5 Tactical movement with a firearm in a standing position

In the supine position, the tactical movement with a firearm is performed in several ways, with crawling lowly on the abdomen, side, back and crawling of the forearms and palms (Fig. 6). When crawling in the supine position, the weapon is held with the stronger hand in the direction of the determined target.



Fig. 6 Tactical movement with a firearm in a supine position

4. Conclusion

In most of their work, police officers use their powers to act in police interventions in cases where there are reasons for suspicion that a crime has been committed or the public order has been disturbed, and it often happens that in those interventions they use means for coercion. Due to the nature and severity of these situations, which can be extreme and extremely tense, the need to use firearms inevitably arises. Given that this means of coercion directly endangers the rights and freedoms of all human beings, proper and professional action should enable the narrowing of the space for discretionary decision-making, and increase the tactical and security efficiency that is crucial to exclude illegality and criminal liability of the police. Therefore, in the daily police action, the knowledge of the legislation regarding the use of firearms should help for a timely tactical response that includes the

application of a number of activities and actions with weapons in order to protect the personal safety of police officers and protect the life and health of the policemen and citizens.

5. References

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