

Perception vs Reality

I know it has been a while since I have posted, been really really busy, but I still lurk from time to time.

I wanted to share with you in this posting a topic that is often under discussed in self protection training; perception vs reality and how one's perception will:

- a) Dictate one's response
- b) Differ from person to person

Last night while on a call for service, my fellow sergeant and I heard a male's voice yelling and screaming from a low cost housing complex. Being the good cops we were, we decided to investigate, and proceeded to walk into the housing complex, where we located a male in a small semi-enclosed patio with his back to us. As we proceeded into the patio area, we could observe that this male was in some kind of distress, but due to the fact that his back was turned away from us, we could not ascertain what was wrong. It was dark, but the patio was partly illuminated with a small patio light.

We engaged the male verbally and upon doing so, he stood up and turned to face us, from approx 5-6 feet away, at which time I observed the following:

- Male had a knife in his right hand that he was holding against the left side of his neck
- Lots of blood, and I mean lots of blood, was coming from his neck and throat area from self inflicted wounds
- Male stated several times that he wanted to die

Seeing this, I immediately drew my service revolver (Glock 40cal), pointed it at the male, and gave him several verbal warnings to get onto the ground.

My partner pulled his Taser and also proceeded to give verbal warnings

The male next proceeded to remove the knife from the left side of his neck, held it up above his right shoulder in a combative posture, and then proceeded to step towards myself and my partner.

At this point I had reasonable grounds to believe that the male was about to attack us with the knife (deadly force situation), so at that moment, I moved my trigger from the "index position" on the frame of my glock, placed it on the trigger, and applied steady pressure to the point where the trigger safety was now disengaged, and the trigger was being pulled back. Just as I was waiting for the "Bang", the suspect threw the knife towards my left shoulder. The best way I can describe what I did next, was the "Matrix" manoeuvre; I angled my left shoulder backwards, which caused the knife to miss, and I immediately came off the trigger preventing my weapon from discharging.

The male then stopped his forward movement, and then obeyed verbal commands and placed himself in a prone position, where he was then handcuffed by myself, and emergency first aid was rendered until paramedics attended.

As I was treating the male, I advised my partner just how close I came to shooting the male, to which he stated, "why". I then stated, "Didn't you see the knife", to which he stated, "what knife, all I saw was the blood". When I shared with him the above, he looked at me in total disbelief, and in fact went back to find the knife, which he could not locate. He again asked me if I was sure he had a knife, to which I stated 100% sure.

After the paramedics transported the male to hospital for his self inflicted wounds, we began to search for the knife, at which time our K-9 officer located it approximately 50 feet away, covered in blood.

Although I perceived reality, my fellow sergeant, who was basically right beside me, and to my left did not. His perception:

- He saw an unarmed bloody male that he thought had been stabbed in the throat by someone else on the patio
- During the entire encounter, he had the Taser energized, in fact I could see the laser sight on the male's chest, but he did not fire because he saw no threat other than the male being verbally non-compliant.
- My partner confided in me that if I had shot the male, he would have stated later that he saw no knife which would have brought my actions into question, especially when he first tried to locate the knife, but was unable to do so.

One situation, with two perceptions of threat, that resulted in two different tactical response options. Why is this important ?????? Because your actions in a self protection situation will be based upon what YOUR perception of threat was. From a legal perspective however, this can become potentially problematic when others have a differing perspective than yours. This is why it is soooooooooo important to conduct post confrontational debriefs, when conducting scenario based training, as to the who what where why and how.

Remember there is much much more to self protection training than just the physical !!!!!!!!!!!

Proper Pre Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance

Darren

