



PRE-THREAT INDICATORS

How To Know When An
Attack Is Coming





CAUGHT YOU LOOKING

■ BY ED COMBS

BOLO PUNCH

ASK ANY COP and he'll tell you that successful career criminals follow patterns. Ask any big-city cop and he'll tell you that street criminals follow patterns to an even greater extent than other criminals, especially when it comes to victim selection.

In the February/March 2015 issue of *Concealed Carry Magazine*, our own Kevin Jamison, Esq. compared a criminal sizing up his victim to a shark giving something a “bump bite” — lightly nudging and maybe nibbling at something he comes across to see if it's worth taking larger bites of. Sharks do this simply

because everything they see in the ocean is potential food; the only question they really have is whether the number of bites necessary to move the item from swimming to digesting will be worth the effort. As you've probably come to expect, Jamison is absolutely correct. Violent criminals aren't like you or me; I hate to use

blanket terms like “you or me,” but since you're likely the kind of person who takes concealed carry classes and applies for permits, you've pretty well distinguished yourself from our criminal class. The outlaws of this country have literally zero empathy for you or others; if they did, they wouldn't make their livings threatening



“THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT YOU NEED TO LOOK AT EVERY PERSON AS IF HE OR SHE IS ABOUT TO KILL YOU. THIS IS TO SAY THAT IT IS MENTALLY POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO REMOVE THE BLINDERS THAT A LIFETIME OF PERSONAL ELECTRONICS AND A GENERAL LACK OF DANGER HAVE GIVEN YOU.”

strangers with death for cash and cell phones. They consider armed and strong-arm robbery honest trades, and they will think nothing of murdering you if it is to their advantage. Oh, they'll sometimes say they don't want to *have to* ... but that disinclination from murder is related to the longer prison sentence if apprehended, not because they think murdering people is wrong.

One of the anti-gun media's most successful weapons in their arsenal is their ability to portray self-defense-oriented gun owners as heartless psychopaths. They will literally exploit the corpses of children to do so. They will compare me, a private citizen who elects to carry a defensive weapon every day, to rapid mass murderers. This type of misrepresentation of defensive gun owners is compounded by the fact that one of the most common manners in which violent criminals execute muggings in this country is through faux panhandling. This leaves the armed citizen in an extremely dangerous bind — physically and socially.

In the previous issue, I ran down the most common ruses used by home invaders, and in this issue, I'll list the most common techniques used by muggers and street criminals to approach, assess and decide whether to move on potential victims. Now, as we so often say, situational awareness is the cornerstone of a Personal Protection Plan. If you're aware of your surroundings, that means you'll be scanning for potential threats,

which means watching all of the people in your general area. While this might sound daunting, it comes easily after conscious effort is applied. Not to compare life in the United States to wartime, but I once heard a Vietnam combat veteran sum up the human's natural abilities for survival quite well:

"One does not have to learn how to survive in the jungle; those things are already there. And when you're in combat and you're in the jungle, then those instincts come back. *They've always been there.*" This is not to say that you need to look at every person as if he or she is about to try to kill you. This is to say that it is mentally possible for you to remove the blinders that a lifetime of personal electronics and a general lack of danger have given you. After you begin to consciously watch and keep tabs on everyone in your immediate area, you'll find that less and less effort is needed as time goes on. Eventually, it's something that you'll do unconsciously. Attaining this level is easier for those who have lived in a large city for most of their lives and for those who are accomplished hunters. And I don't suppose I have to say that combat veterans and law enforcement officers usually possess the skills at higher levels than others.

TESTING, TESTING

Some muggings are simple

jumpings: You walk by a doorway, out jump your attackers and the fight is on. However, many attacks are first staged with an approach, verified through a test phase and then actuated after the predators decide you are an easy meal. Here are the most common of those test phases.

IMMEDIATELY REACHING OUT FOR A HANDSHAKE

This technique is extremely dangerous and is most common when the street person in question intends to physically feel out his possible victim in an attempt to discern whether it's worth the risk of him and his associates initiating the attack. This is an especially common tactic in high-stakes muggings during which a group of men target adult males who, though typically more difficult to overpower than the elderly or females, usually have a larger quantity of cash on their persons.

There are several reasons why these high-stakes muggers will try their hardest to shake hands with you. For one, as soon as the handshake begins they've immediately tied up your dominant hand and, even worse, have a hold of your dominant hand with *their* dominant hand. (They usually run on the assumption that everyone is right-handed, as the vast majority of the population is.) The next step in the process is to squeeze and see what kind

of pressure they get back. If the hands of the target feel strong and rough, they are much less likely to engage or, if they do, the violence will be significantly swifter and more intense.

The last time I experienced this old chestnut was in Las Vegas. A group of four men simultaneously stepped out from a bus shelter of sorts and asked if I knew how to get to a hotel. The first man to make contact immediately stuck his hand out to shake mine as the other three fanned out to my two sides and rear. Under most circumstances, this is what doctors refer to as "being royally screwed." Unarmed, I got my hands up, pulled my elbows in toward my sides and quickly moved to my southwest, breaking the plane formed by the rear and left-side men and turning in to face the group I could sense I was likely about to get to know a lot better. They began to reposition for the same plan of attack: One man at each compass point. Fortunately, I'd continued walking ahead of a group of three friends who then walked around the corner and immediately closed on the group of strangers. This resulted in said strangers' vociferous denial of intentions no one had accused them of having and their quick dispersal. I played it off to my friends as nothing, but the fact is I knew just as well as the four criminals

“DESPITE THE ROLLED EYES AND DISAPPROVING STARES FROM OH-SO-COMPASSIONATE INDIVIDUALS IN THE AREA, NEVER FEEL BAD ABOUT BACKING AWAY FROM PANHANDLERS AND CLARIFYING YOUR SITUATION.”

did that I was about a second away from one of the longer minutes of my life.

THE PRESENT

Since the vast majority of times when someone hands us something it's something we want, we average Americans will readily accept anything offered to us. (The next step is that we look down at it, studying it in an attempt to understand why we want it.) Tricking you into physically taking and holding something draws your attention to whatever you've just been given and gets your eyes down, off of your attacker. Depending on the size of the object, it might also occupy both of your hands, thus leaving you exposed to an attack.

The first time I experienced this ploy was in Puerto Vallarta. I was sitting at an outdoor bar on the beach when a disheveled, shirtless man approached the couple at the table next to me. The shirtless man was holding a small bouquet of flowers with a note attached to the bound stems. He handed the flowers

to the seated man — who had the table between himself and the beach — and speaking very quickly in broken English, he asked the guy for a cigarette. As the man at the table simultaneously tried to get hold of his cigarettes with his left hand, accept the bouquet with his right and read what was on the attached note with his eyes, the shirtless thief simply scooped up the man's phone, sunglasses and what appeared to be a small stack of peso notes and fled about as quickly as I've ever seen a barefoot human run. (Ironically, the victim's smokes were unharmed.) Now, in this case, the attack was nonviolent, but stop and think for a moment: As completely occupied as he was, how vulnerable to assault was the tourist who was lucky enough to only lose his phone and shades that day?

I'll tell you how lucky. Handing someone a note or other attention-grabbing device is as old as premeditated violent crime. I've even seen cops fall for this trick. They approach an



individual who they suspect is breaking the law (usually alcohol- or drug-related), and the individual tells them, “Ah yes, I have something I need to show you. Thank God you're here, officer.” Then he hands the cop a note, and in the split second the LEO is no longer focused on the suspect, he's off like a shot. (I will refrain from naming the two different agencies I've seen this one work on, as I am certain there were rather intense shift meetings the next morning.)

BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE IT ALL?

Some, or all, of the aforementioned techniques will be used in conjunction to execute the robbery, but until the first order is issued or blow is landed, it will look to the untrained eye as though nothing more nefarious than

panhandling is happening. Americans are a generous sort, and since we as a people have been forcibly socialized to never turn a blind eye to a beggar, violent criminals have done what they always do: exploit the good nature of honest citizens to their own ends, maiming or murdering in the process if they deem it necessary.

Faux panhandling is the preferred method of affecting a robbery because it begins with a “defensible honest question,” meaning if violent criminals decide to abort the attack at the least second, they can tell police that they were simply panhandling or asking for a short-term loan to get back to community college. If they decide to continue, the “panhandling” might manifest itself in a request for money, a cigarette, a light or a ride. More importantly, it will likely be a combination of all of the abovementioned techniques. The biggest factor in the panhandling ploy is that if the exchange turns violent and you are able to effectively defend yourself, attackers will tell responding police that they were just minding their own business asking strangers for money, and some crazed, gun-wielding madman drew on them. (This is why we here at CCM are so adamant that if you ever, under any circumstances, have to draw your weapon, you need to call 911 and report the incident as soon as possible; the first

to initiate police contact will almost certainly be viewed by the legal system as the victim.) Since it is extremely important that you establish what’s happening for what it is — a violent crime in progress being perpetrated on you — vocalization is very important. Tell panhandlers that you are not interested in anything they have to offer and will not be giving them any money. If they continue to press you, keep moving away from them and state in no uncertain terms that you feel threatened and that they need to get away from you immediately. As with any other potentially violent encounter, it’s far better to avoid it than to win it, and with luck, your assertive refusal to be involved in the goings-on will be enough to get them to try their luck with a different victim.

Despite the rolled eyes and disapproving stares from oh-so-compassionate individuals in the area, never feel bad about backing away from panhandlers and clarifying your situation. If they’re friendly, you can make up for it later. If they’re not, you might have just saved your own life. Whenever strangers who aren’t uniformed law enforcement officers approach you in public, there’s a series of actions that you must take in order to be able to avoid a violent confrontation and, failing that, stay alive:

1. Get off the X. Don’t be a stationary target.

2. Turn to see everyone else in the area. Watch for someone watching *you*.

3. Say you don’t have any money. Keep saying this as many times as you have to.

4. Tell them you’re in a hurry. Keep moving.

5. Be ready to defend yourself. Mentally prepare for the possibility for violence.

Whether or not to give money to destitute beggars is entirely up to you. More often than not, religious beliefs and obligations dictate an individual’s behavior when panhandlers ask for a handout. Regardless of how you feel about alms for the beggars, remember this: If the individual initiating contact with you is healthy and energetic enough to approach you quickly for a handshake and dexterous enough to move so swiftly as to never really seem to be in the same place for more than a second or so, what’s kept him or her from getting work? More importantly, what seems more likely: He or she is in an honest-to-God tough spot, like the man or woman sitting nearly motionless next to a cardboard sign that reads “STARVING,” or that this person is bump-biting you ... and seeing if you’re worth the effort?

Stay alert, stay focused and stay safe.





**“I was thinking
I literally may
have just cost
us everything...”**

Charged for Defending Himself
With Pepper Spray...

Brad Ensign, USCCA Member

Brad was forced to defend himself with pepper spray during a road-rage attack. But when the police arrived, HE was the one charged with assault! That's when the USCCA stepped in to help...

USCCA Membership provides you with the education, training and legal protection you'll need in the aftermath of your use of ANY legal weapon in self-defense. Arm yourself with a USCCA Membership today to unlock lifesaving information, top-notch training and complete peace of mind. Because, after all, ***doing the right thing shouldn't cost you everything...***



Join USCCA Today to Get Complete *Peace of Mind...*

www.USCCA.com/Join

Or call our Wisconsin-based team at 877-677-1919

Self-Defense SHIELD Protection Plan Benefits are subject to certain terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions. See Membership Agreement for details.