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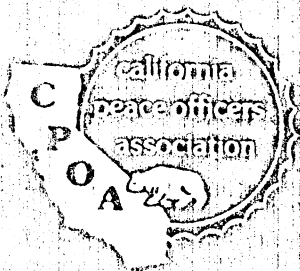
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PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973 - 1977 AWARENESS AND LEARNING POINTS SURVEY



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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The following article is an analysis of California peace officer murders during the period 1973-1977. Since 1972 the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) has maintained detailed records of the murders of peace officers in California as an integral part of the Officer Survival Course offered at Camp San Luis Obispo. Through the collection and analysis of such data, training needs can often be identified which can assist other peace officers in performing their duties in a safer manner based primarily on two significant factors: awareness (recognition of danger potential) and lessons learned training. It is with these two factors in mind, awareness and training needs, that this analysis and information is provided.

Inspection of an incident where a peace officer is murdered is valuable. Errors in judgment, procedures, tactics, and equipment or training deficiencies can generally be identified and developed into relevant training points or "lessons learned" to decrease the probability that other peace officers will be caught up in a similar set of fatal circumstances. But looking at one peace officer murdered incident is not as valuable as looking at the total incidents for a whole year, and an inspection of the incidents over a longer period of time, in this case, five years, is even more valuable because of the comparisons and contrasts that can be observed. Frequently homicide trends and "cycles" based on geographical locations or type of

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precipitating calls are observed occurring. If such patterns, trends, and common errors in judgment, procedures, tactics, and equipment or training deficiencies are noted, than perhaps the additional factors of awareness and training can disrupt those patterns and decrease the number of peace officers murdered. The period of time this survey will cover is the five years, 1973-1977, with which the author is knowledgeable based upon interviews with surviving and investigating officers as well as reviewing the agencies' reports involved in those peace officer murders.

SURVEY OF INCIDENTS

During the five year period, 1973-1977, fifty-five peace officers, all males, were murdered in California, an average of eleven each year (see Table 1). The most lethal year was 1973 when 17 peace officers were slain, while 1976 there were five. The following are the reporting categories precipitating the murders: robbery, burglary, disturbance, suspicious person/vehicle, traffic stop, transporting prisoner, ambush, and other miscellaneous crimes. The miscellaneous category includes any offense or crime not mentioned by the preceding seven categories, and was the leading killer of peace officers, accounting for 15 murders or 27% of the total. The other ratios are disturbances (12/22%), robbery 10/18%), suspicious person/vehicle (8/15%), traffic stop (4/7%), burglary (3/6%), ambush (2/4%), and transporting prisoner (1/2%).

The fifty-five slayings are tabulated in Table 2 by type of reporting agency and the precipitating call. Thirty-three different law enforcement agencies are represented which range in sworn personnel size from eight to 7200 and includes 20 city police departments, seven sheriff's offices, and three California Highway Patrol area offices. The "other agency" categories involved:

- US Park Service (1);
- California Bureau of Narcotics (1);
- California State Police (1);
- California State University System (2);
- Community College District (1)

With the exception of the community college officer killed by a suspicious person, the remaining five officers were killed by a deer poacher, attempting a drug arrest, a mentally deranged person (2), and an unknown set of circumstances. The 20 city police departments accounted for 34 (62%) of the slain officers; four of those agencies suffered multiple killings ranging in total numbers from two to eight. One large metropolitan agency had two double police homicides while a rural desert agency also experienced a double police homicide. Seven sheriff's offices suffered 12 (22%) peace officer slayings with three of those agencies experiencing multiple murders. The California Highway Patrol had 3 (5%) traffic officers murdered in unrelated incidents. Five agencies were represented among the 6 (11%) peace officers murdered from "other agencies" with the California State University system experiencing a double homicide (see Table 2 footnote).

By precipitating call the leading killers of city police officers were robbery (8), other crimes (8), and disturbances (7). The other crimes category included a stalled vehicle assist/weapons violation, prowler, drug arrest, stolen vehicle, mentally deranged, kidnapping, theft, and an off-duty execution style slaying. Among sheriff's personnel murdered, by precipitating call, the leading killers were disturbances and suspicious persons/vehicles. California Highway Patrol officers were murdered while involved in a traffic stop, transporting a prisoner, and a possible drunk driver call.

The characteristics of victim peace officers as to age, length of law enforcement experience, and rank are tabulated in Table 3 by type of reporting agency. The overall average age for the 55 slain peace officers was 33.9 years with the range varying from 21 years to 52 years of age. By type of reporting agency the average age for the city police was 32.7 years, the sheriffs was 34.9 years, the California Highway Patrol was 36.0 years, and other agencies was 32.3 years. The overall average length of law enforcement service was 8.4 years with the range varying from three months to 25 years. By agency the average length of

service for the city police was 8.0 years, the sheriffs was 9.4 years, the California Highway Patrol was 9.3 years, and other agencies was 7.3 years. By rank, 42 (76 %) of the slain peace officers were patrol officers or deputy level while six (11%) were agents or detectives, five (9%) were sergeants, one (2%) was a lieutenant, and one (2%) police chief was murdered.

Upon inspecting the weapon characteristics involved in the 55 peace officer murders, gunshot wounds accounted for 53 (96%) of the killings (see Table 4); one city police officer was crushed by a stolen vehicle and a deputy sheriff was beaten to death with a sawed-off rifle by a robbery suspect. In 34 (62%) of the slayings hand guns were the murder weapon with .357/.38 caliber guns utilized in 24 of those cases. Rifles were the murder weapon in 14 (25%) of the instances, and shot guns in four (7%) of the cases. In eight murders (six city police and two sheriff personnel) the weapon utilized was the victim's own service sidearm or other of his partner that had been forcibly taken from the peace officer; one such city police case, precipitated by a disturbance call, resulted in two officers being killed.

Data concerning time elements of the murders was tabulated. Chart 1, illustrating the hour of the murder on a 24 hour clock, is based upon 53 of the 55 total cases because two cases involved off-duty officers whose bodies were not discovered until a later time. The hourly chart shows the 2100-2200 hour period, with eight peace officers murdered, to be twice as lethal as the next most deadly periods, 0300-0400, 0500-0600, 1300-1400, 1500-1600, and 1600-1700 hours in which four peace officers were slain in each of those one hour periods. If the "hours of darkness" are accepted as being the twelve hour period 1800-0600 on a year around basis, 32 (60%) of the slayings occurred during "hours of darkness." Only one "hours of darkness" period, 0400-0500, was free of peace officer killings, while four "hours of light" periods, 0600-0700, 0700-0800, 1400-1500, and 1700-1800 were free of those killings.

Data tabulation of peace officers murdered by days of the week indicate a

considerable activity spread with Thursdays accounting for 12 (22%) slayings, followed by Mondays and Sundays with nine (16%) killings each, (see Chart 2). Tuesdays and Fridays were close behind with eight (15%) murders each. Six (11%) peace officers were murdered on Wednesdays, and three (5%) on Sundays.

By month of the year, August was the deadliest with eight (15%) peace officers murdered; May, October, and November were the next most lethal accounting for six (11%) slayings in each of those months (see Chart 3). While no single month was free of peace officer murders, April with two (4%), had the lowest total.

LEARNING POINTS

A step in the proper direction towards awareness, informing peace officers in a concise and accurate manner as to what is occurring in the way of peace officer killings, is accomplished through the simple tabulation and presentation of the incidents as depicted in the accompanying tables and charts. A more difficult step is to extract from that data training needs based upon learning points, but they are indeed identifiable. Examples of identifiable learning points are:

1. A peace officer can not relax in any arrest situation, as highlighted by the variety of offenses contained in the "other crimes" category and transporting a prisoner killings;
2. A constant review of procedure/tactics and in-service training is essential, in the categories of disturbance, robbery, and suspicious person/vehicle types of calls (this being particularly relevant to sheriffs personnel in disturbance and suspicious person/vehicle calls);

3. Not only general peace officers authority agencies (city police, sheriffs) need advanced and survival training, but specialized law enforcement agencies personnel also must be adequately and constantly trained as exhibited in the slaying of members of the California Highway Patrol, State Police, State University Campus Police and others;
4. Victim peace officers are from all sizes of agencies, the very large, middle, and small, and from rural as well as metropolitan areas (no one is immune);
5. While peace officer murders encompass a wide range of victims, considering age and length of law enforcement experience, the overall averages of 34 years of age and 8.4 years of experience highlight the need for continual in-service training;
6. Though patrol officer and deputy level personnel suffer the highest incidence of slaying, the need for in-service training at other employment levels, particularly detective and supervisory personnel, is necessary;
7. Situations involving firearms are extremely dangerous for peace officers, particularly those in which handguns (easily concealed) are utilized;
8. There is a steady increase in the number of peace officers murdered through the use of rifles, specifically on disturbance calls in the approach and containment movements;
9. With one of every seven peace officers being killed with his own service sidearm, a concerted training effort on weapon retention must be included in any peace officer training program;
10. Caution should be exercised in thinking any hour out of 24 is safer than

another, however, the majority of police murders occurred during the "hours of darkness."

11. No day of the week or month of the year can be considered safe as peace officers were killed every day and every month.

SUMMARY

Every peace officer and particularly those with training responsibilities should assess their own "bank" of knowledge and experience in view of this data and perceived learning points in order to identify job functions they could perform in a safer manner. In addition to the agency's responsibilities for imparting training and job skills, such as firearm practice, night shoots, reloading under stress conditions, building approaches, response to robbery and other crimes in progress, arrest and control techniques: individual officers must address personal factors such as physical conditioning, and complacency. Law enforcement, while voluntary as to each person's choice of his or her vocation, is a highly dangerous and frequently unforgiving occupation in which awareness and training must be continuous and constantly updated. If the author or the California Specialized Training Institute can be of further assistance in providing information in officer survival training please contact by writing to Camp San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 or phoning (805) 544-7101.

In closing, the author and the Institute wish to publicly thank those agencies who cooperated in the collection of the data contained in this survey. The awareness factor, learning points, and other items of training value, which the reader finds in this article, are dedicated to the memory of those peace officers contained in the survey with the sincere hope their deaths will in some way enhance your survival.

¹ "Service Sidearm Retention — A Matter of Life or Death," *Journal of California Law Enforcement*, April 1978, pp 161-164.

Table 1
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
YEAR AND PRECIPITATING CALL

Year	Robbery	Burglary	Distur- bance	Suspicious Person/ Vehicle	Traffic Stop	Trans- porting Prisoner	Ambush	Other* Crime	Total
1973	5	1	1	3	2	—	—	5	17
1974	1	—	4	—	1	—	1	3	10
1975	1	—	4	3	1	—	—	3	12
1976	2	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	5
1977	1	1	3	2	—	1	—	3	11
Total	10	3	12	8	4	1	2	15	55

*Other Crimes

1973: Murder suspect (2); Drug arrest (2); Deer poacher (1)
 1974: Stolen vehicle (1); Off-duty unknown (execution style) (1); found at guard post (1)
 1975: Mentally deranged (1); Kidnapping (1); Stolen vehicle (1)
 1976: Drug arrest (1)
 1977: Mentally deranged (2); Theft (1)

Table 2
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
TYPE OF REPORTING AGENCY AND PRECIPITATING CALL

Type of Reporting Agency	Precipitating Call								Total
	Robbery	Burglary	Distur- bance	Suspicious Person/ Vehicle	Traffic Stop	Trans- porting Prisoner	Ambush	Other Crime	
City Police	8	3	7	3	3	—	2	8	34
Sheriff's Dept.	2	—	5	4	—	—	—	1	12
California Highway Patrol	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	3
*Other Agency	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	5	6
Total	10	3	12	8	4	1	2	15	55

*Other Agency

California State University — 2 (Mentally deranged)
 California Community College (Suspicious person)
 California State Police (Unknown)
 • California State Bureau of Narcotics (Drug arrest)
 • U.S. Park Service (Deer poacher)

Table 3
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS BY TYPE OF REPORTING AGENCY

Total
17
10
12
5
11
55

Victim Characteristic	Type of Reporting Agency				Total
	City Police	Sheriff's Department	California Highway Patrol	Other Agency	
Total by Reporting Agency	34	12	3	6	66
Age					
21-25 years	3	1	—	3	7
26-30 years	10	1	1	—	12
31-35 years	12	3	1	—	16
36-40 years	3	5	—	1	9
41-45 years	3	2	1	2	8
46-50 years	2	—	—	—	2
51 yrs. & over	1	—	—	—	1
Length of Service					
0-1 years	2	1	—	3	6
2-5 years	12	2	—	—	14
6-10 years	11	3	2	—	16
11-15 years	6	6	1	3	16
16-20 years	1	—	—	—	1
21 yrs. & over	2	—	—	—	2
Rank					
Patrol officer/Deputy	26	9	9	4	42
Agt./Detective	4	1	—	1	6
Sergeant	3	1	—	1	5
Lieutenant	—	1	—	—	1
Captain & ABOVE	—	—	—	—	1

Total
34
12
3
6
55

Table 4
 PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
 MURDER WEAPON CHARACTERISTICS BY TYPE OF REPORTING AGENCY

Weapon Characteristics	Type of Reporting Agency				Total
	City Police	Sheriff's Department	California Highway Patrol	Other Agency	
Rifle	8	3	—	2	14
Shotgun	3	1	—	—	4
Handgun	21	6	3	4	34
Unknown Firearm	1	—	—	—	1
*Other Weapon	1	1	—	—	2
Shot with Own or Partner's Weapon	6	2	—	—	8
Handgun Caliber					
.22	1	—	1	—	2
.25	2	—	—	—	2
.32	—	—	—	—	—
.357/.38	14	5	2	3	24
.44/.45	1	—	—	—	1
9mm	1	1	—	1	3
Unknown	2	—	—	—	2

*Other Weapon

Crushed by vehicle (city police officer)

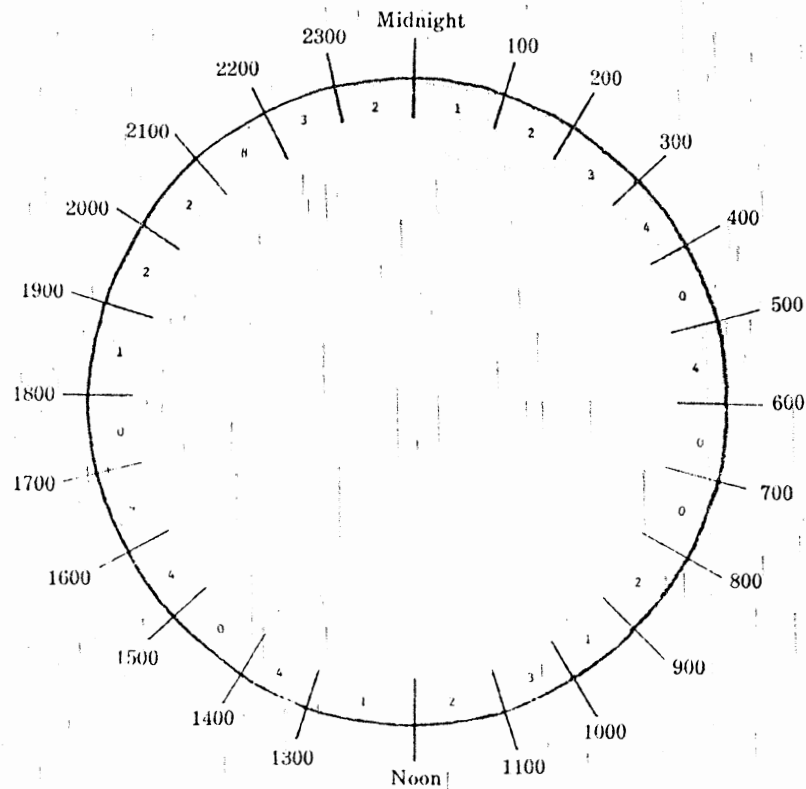
Beaten with sawed-off rifle (deputy sheriff)

*Figure

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Chart 1
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
BY HOUR OF DAY*



*Figures are based on a total of 53 peace officers murdered, as precise time of killing of two officers is unknown.

Chart 2
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
BY DAY OF WEEK

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3	9	8	6	12	8	9

Chart 3
PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA 1973-1977
BY MONTH OF YEAR

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
4	4	4	2	6	4	4	8	3	6	6	4