

# TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY Planning (Expressed and Implied Threats)

By Sid Heal

All tactical operations involving adversaries are resolved through some application of force. Since ancient times, mankind has attempted to increase the amount of force which can be applied to achieve victory. The first weapons were probably rocks. These could be thrown or used as clubs. Later, spears, knives, bows and arrows, swords, and eventually guns continued to increase the amount of force an individual could wield. These weapons are referred to as "force multipliers." A force multiplier is anything that increases the amount of force which can be applied.

One of the most powerful, and most misunderstood, of the force multipliers is a threat. Threats come in two varieties, "expressed" and "implied." An **expressed threat** is the most well known and occurs when a commander makes known the consequences of defiance. Two familiar expressions from early cops-and-robbers TV programs were "Come out or we'll come in and get you!" and "Stop or I'll shoot!" and serve as good examples of expressed threats. Nowadays, these threats have a hollow ring to them. Suspects know that no one is going to go in without first expending great effort to have a suspect surrender. No one is going to shoot a suspect for not stopping. Thus, expressed threats may not provide sufficient intimidation to achieve success as an effective force multiplier.

An **implied threat** is one in which the nature of the consequences are left to the imagination of the suspect. A barricaded suspect who is told that he is surrounded and escape is no longer an option creates a condition in which the suspect must examine his predicament and evaluate his options. Not knowing what the SWAT team is going to do stimulates his imagination, and he fantasizes on what might happen. Even absurd and bizarre options are possible in our imaginations. Because of this, the implied threat is far more powerful. This is because what a SWAT team can do and what it is willing to do is usually farther apart than a suspect realizes. Even the mere presence of law enforcement officers creates this force multiplier because it causes the suspect to contemplate his actions. Thus an implied threat is implicit in virtually every encounter and should be exploited to the maximum extent possible. ■

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