

TACTICS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES (TTP)

By Sid Heal

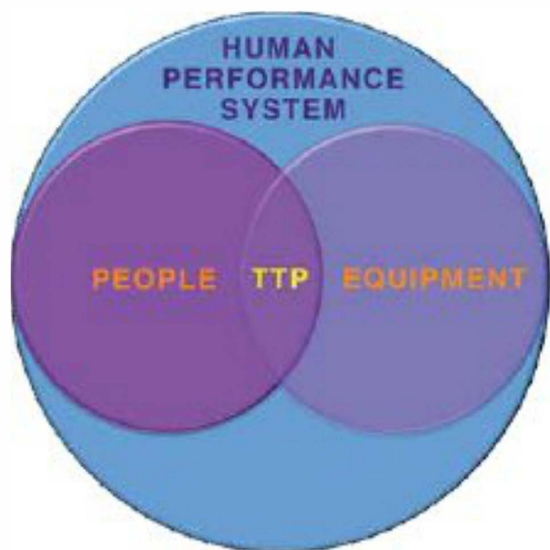
A good tactical team is often described as a finely tuned machine. While the components of any machine are quite different in size, shape and function, they must work smoothly together in order to function. Tactical “machines” require both people with specialized knowledge, skills and abilities, and the appropriate weapons and equipment. Moreover, the better the tools and the more skillfully people wield them, the greater the likelihood of success. This interface between people and tools is as critical as either the people or the tools themselves. Together they make up a “human performance system.”

When failures occur, this connection between people and equipment is frequently a cause. Understandably, both the business and military communities have devoted much study to understanding and perfecting this interface. The military, in particular, has spent considerable effort in trying to identify and explain the nuances and refers to this interface as *tactics, techniques and procedures*, or, more often, just the acronym TTP. In the simplest terms, TTP refers to the policies, methods and practices for integrating equipment and/or weapons into a human performance system.

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Tactics: Tactics may be defined as the methods and concepts used to accomplish particular missions. Tactics are tightly focused on specific, near-term objectives and involve the organization, distribution, placement and/or maneuver of personnel and equipment. Tactics are highly contextual in that what works in one situation may be disastrous in another. Accordingly, tactics, especially in the context of TTPs, are descriptive rather than prescriptive, and need to be adapted to fit a particular set of circumstances. Moreover, they are often revised on the fly to accommodate changes.

Techniques: A technique is simply a procedure or process for performing a specific task or function.¹ Techniques are comprised of both actions and sequences. Two common techniques familiar to most law enforcement officers are “sight picture, sight alignment, trigger squeeze” when firing at a target and “tap, rack, bang” to clear a malfunction of a semi- or automatic weapon. Some techniques will also involve intervals. An interval is simply a period of time between two events. Intervals are generally one of two types: lead time or lag time. Lead time refers to a period of time that precedes an action or event. Typically, lead time begins with an initiation of some type and ends with an execution or implementation. Conversely, lag time is that period that follows an action or event. It is the delay between an action and reaction. Perhaps the best known example of lead time in a law enforcement context is the legal requirement for knock and notice, which includes waiting a reasonable amount of time for compliance before entering a residence. Similarly, an example of lag time is the necessity of waiting after tear gas is inserted for it to fully saturate the area and have an effect on the occupants.



Procedures: A procedure is a series of practical or mechanical acts designed to bring about a desired result. They are standard and detailed steps for performing specific tasks. Like techniques, procedures often involve sequences and may be a subroutine for a technique. Unlike techniques, however, procedures are far more detailed and frequently standardized. For example, there are only so many ways of inserting a magazine, wearing a sling, ramming a door or sighting through a gas mask.

While each of these components refer to a different aspect, they are more alike than not. Distinguishing one from another in practice can be nearly impossible because they differ in degree rather than kind. Nevertheless, the application is singular in that they all refer to the interface between people and their tools. Accordingly, the military merges them into a single concept and refers to them with a single concatenation. Thus, whenever the term TTP is used, it always implies the context of all three in conjunction with one another.

A useful description of the role of TTPs is in making an omelet. The preparation begins with identifying and gathering the ingredients, the functional equivalent of tactics. Understandably, it makes a difference whether your omelet is going to be bacon, vegetarian or chili-cheese. So it is with tactics. Moreover, how hot the fire, how long the eggs are cooked, in what order the ingredients are added, how much seasoning, and the like, are tantamount to techniques. Likewise, neglecting to provide enough time for the ingredients to

cook or failing to consider how long it takes for the cheese to melt after being added, adversely affects the outcome. Finally, the procedures for folding the omelet and sliding it onto a plate must also be considered. These are aspects that are more easily taught than studied. Some, in fact, defy precise procedures and instead rely on the knowledge and experience of the chef. The aggregate of these tricks of the trade is commonly known as “tradecraft.”² In the business world, tradecraft refers to skill sets that are acquired from experience and instruction in a particular craft. As such, they are passed from masters to apprentices as part of their training. So it is in law enforcement.

Using the same analogy, consider the implications of repeating the process but with an omelet pan instead of a frying pan, cooking over an open fire instead of a stove or using a new recipe. The importance of TTPs in tactical operations should be equally apparent, especially considering that no situation will ever exactly duplicate a previous one. Ignoring the implications of TTPs can be a recipe for disaster. ■

ENDNOTES

1. For more information on tactics and/or techniques, see “Strategy, Tactics and Techniques: Three of a kind,” *The Tactical Edge*, Winter 2011, p. 58-59.
2. The term “tradecraft” is a relatively recently coined term (circa 1961) that is more commonly understood in espionage and clandestine operations. Nevertheless, the term has gained acceptance in describing skills, knowledge and abilities in many other disciplines.