

# TRAINING STATION

## School Shootings:

### What are we doing to protect our children?



■ BY JOHN KRUPA III

The Sandy Hook school shooting shocked the very psyche of this nation. I was numbed by its impact, and as a father of two grade-school children, it was heartbreaking to even imagine what those parents had to endure.

As the nation mourned, my feelings quickly turned to anger as I began to analyze the incident. As an Immediate Action/Rapid Deploy-

ment (IARD) trainer, I began to visualize what possible law enforcement response solutions could have resolved this situation without loss of life.

Since the shooting, school administrators and law enforcement agencies across the country have become overwhelmed with the task of developing more effective measures to prepare school personnel on how to respond to active shooter incidents.

#### What have we learned from previous incidents?

In analyzing previous school shooting incidents – particularly Columbine, Virginia Tech and now Sandy Hook – unarmed teachers, professors and faculty members on scene at the initiation of these incidents, were summarily executed when they attempted to resist or confront the shooters.

So the question that needs to be asked is: “Who really is the first responder?” Is it the officers arriving on scene minutes later to handle the situation, or is it the adults capable of taking action that are actually on scene when the incident initiates?

Maybe law enforcement officers need to reevaluate their IARD strategies and reconsider other solutions in defining who the first responder should be.

In retrospect, what if these very same teachers, professors and faculty members that ran to the gunfire in these incidents were armed and properly trained for personal defense? What if these “first responders” were trained in basic IARD concepts so they could react accordingly and take the appropriate actions to stop the active shooters before they can inflict casualties?

Something has to change. People can't wait anymore for 911 to receive and dispatch shots fired in a school, then have it take precious minutes for officers to respond while the shooter indiscriminately fires at victims.

Thousands of officers across the country, including myself, have been trained in IARD tactics. I run our officers at my agency through an eight-hour, in-service IARD training program annually, and it's just not enough. The time has come where we need to look beyond reacting to school shooting incidents and find a way to have first responders on-site, ready to go when an incident initiates.

#### Where do we go from here?

Since Sandy Hook, I've had many discussions with other officers and trainers from various agencies about how to resolve this issue and here are some of the solutions that have been brought up in these conversations:

**School Resource Officers (SRO):** The knee-jerk reaction after a school shooting incident is always to put police officers in the

schools or hire campus police. The problem with this solution is budget cuts and man power shortages just won't allow agencies to provide enough personnel to adequately cover all the schools in all the districts.

Schools will be lucky if they have one officer assigned per school day. Keep in mind that the SRO will only be there during regular school hours; there won't be coverage for after school functions or evening sports events.

**Off-Duty and Retired LEOs:** This is a great idea to resolve the manpower shortage issue, but again, where is the money going to come from. We still have to deal with the coverage issue as discussed above.

**Security guards:** In addition to the previously expressed concerns, now we're looking at a cheap deterrent, and the question is, will they be armed? Having unarmed security guards responding to a shooting incident will have the same results as unarmed faculty.

**Armed teachers:** Arming teachers has caused much controversy. While this is nothing new to some school districts in Texas and Arizona, the overall concept, in general, has been met with rigid opposition.

It makes sense. School districts can have a select group of teachers and faculty members trained in the use of handguns for personal defense as well as basic IARD tactics in how to respond to and deal with active shooters and how to interact with officers arriving on scene.

#### Advantages of using armed teachers and faculty:

- There is no need to hire extra personnel, but instead use existing school personnel with more responsibilities.
- There is no need to seek funding or create new budgets, but instead rely on the use of school personnel already on salary.
- School districts can rely on select teachers and sports coaches to provide coverage during after school activities, sports events (home & away games) as well as field trips.
- Having more than one armed teacher in a school, possibly two or three at a time will allow for coordinated first responder engagements of active shooters.
- Allows for use of school personnel that have extensive knowledge of the facility they work in and have a better chance of controlling and dominating terrain.

Armed teachers may not be the answer to every scenario, but having the advantage of trained school personnel on-site and ready to take immediate action is the true definition of First Responder.

Ultimately, it's not a question of if another school shooting is going to happen, but when and where? Will we be ready?

As always, stay safe, remain vigilant and Fight to Win! ♥

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