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Foreword

By Massad Ayoub

The slaughter of four young California Highway Patrol Officers at Newhall, in 1970, was a watershed experience in the history of American law enforcement. It was the slap in the face that awoke the profession to the fact that its training, collectively, had stagnated. Newhall became the dawn of officer survival training for modern police.

Many lessons were learned in the sacrifice of those four brave men at the hands of two classic examples of feral homo sapiens. Lessons of risk assessment and tactics. The realization that there is a time to approach and a time to fall back and contain. The importance of adequate weapons and of reality-based training and policy.

CHP's honest self-assessment led to sweeping changes in the way police were equipped and in the ways high-risk policing was accomplished. We will never know how many police lives have since been saved by the lessons that grew from the martyrdom of Patrolmen Alleyn, Frago, Gore, and Pence.

Time went on. Memory dimmed. This writer became a law enforcement trainer two years after Newhall, when the tragedy was fresh in the collective mind of the police establishment; CHP's training film on the incident was practically mandatory viewing for cops nationwide. By the twenty-first century, though, we had a generation of young officers for whom Newhall had dropped from the radar screen.

One observer who recognized this was Mike Wood. Not wishing to see the lessons of the tragedy blurred, he began to dig. His fresh eye uncovered details that had not been widely known. Mike reached far beyond the crime scene and into politics and mores of the time. He uncovered salient points that helped us gain a fresh understanding of why four productive lives had been cut so tragically short that night in Newhall.

Mike Wood's book is, I think, the best and most comprehensive analysis of the incident yet. It reminds us that the keys to surviving violent encounters must be in place long before they occur. That, in macrocosm, institutional policy must stay focused on reality and not be shaped by "political correctness." That in microcosm, those whose duties take them into harm's way must be prepared early and constantly to face the worst, and must be trained and equipped to neutralize the most violent and well equipped human adversaries a dangerous high-tech world can produce.

Mike's analysis of the evidence resolves at least one controversy about the issue. It also gives us a better look at the histories of the four victim officers and the best profile yet of "the face of the enemy," with his in-depth reconstruction of the background of the two cop-killers. And, thanks to Mike Wood, another generation of America's finest has a better opportunity than ever to learn from the sacrifice of those four young state policemen.

Alleyn. Frago. Gore. Pence.

Remember.

Massad Ayoob has been teaching firearms and officer survival tactics since 1972. He served 19 years as the chair of the Firearms and Deadly Force Training Committee of the American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers, serves presently on the Advisory Board of the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association, and for more than 30 years has been Law Enforcement Editor of American Handgunner magazine. He may be reached through <http://massadayoobgroup.com>.