



Module 1

VirTra – Virtual Interactive Coursework Training Academy™ (V-VICTA™)

***ATAK:
ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER***

VirTra



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1A: Importance of Training

ATAK RESPONSE

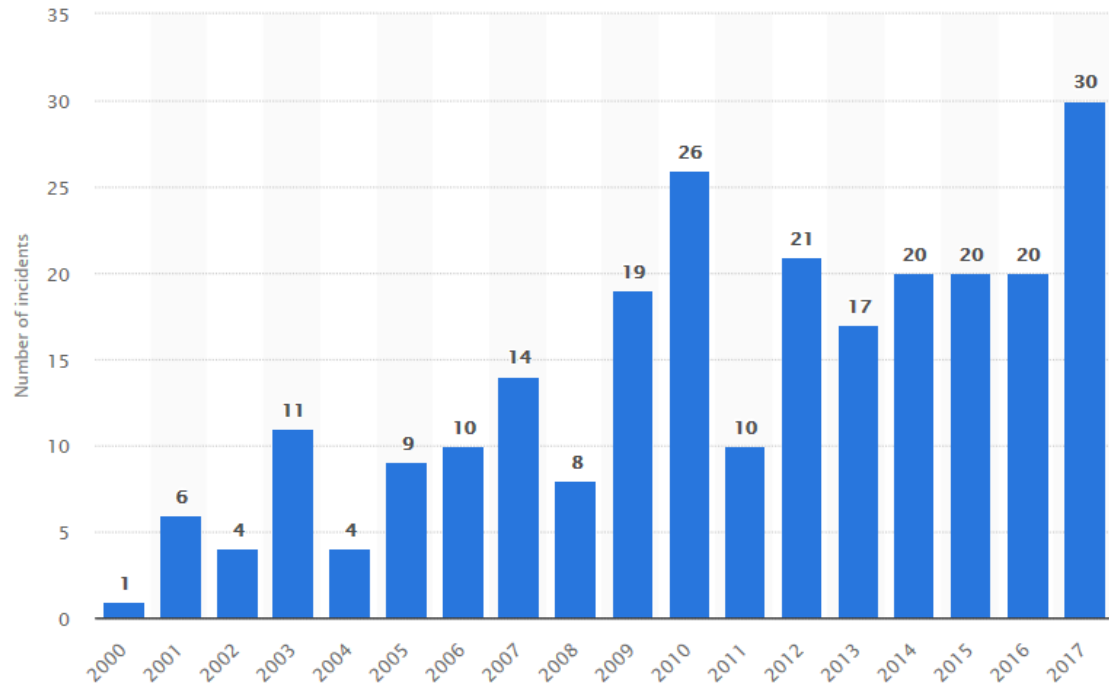


- ATAK response is a critical tool that must be part of first responder training.
- There has been an upward trend of ATAK incidents since 2000.¹

¹ "Active Shooter incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017" The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERT) Center at Texas State university and the U.S. Department of Justice FBI April 2018.



- Active shooters in 2016 totaled 20 incidents.
- 30 reported incidents in 2017.



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/324995/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us/>

ATAK RESPONSE



- Law enforcement must prepare for these challenges to mitigate the loss
- ATAK events are always lose-lose, but it is up to us if we will lose a little or a lot.



This course will refer to any incident where a subject(s) is **killing or attempting to kill people** and there is an **ongoing supply of potential victims** as an ATAK.



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1B: Course Goals

COURSE GOALS



- Provide the opportunity for first responders to mentally prepare to respond to active threats.
 - Legal justifications
 - Mental preparation for a potential lose-lose event
 - Decision making
 - Exposure to chaos

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- Define an active threat
 - What is an active threat / active killer?
 - What is a hostage barricade?

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES



- Actively identify the difference between an active threat and a hostage barricade.
- Actively identify when to move to the indication of an active threat.
- Demonstrate when to make an entry on a valid ATAK.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES



- Use appropriate room entry and clearing tactics.
- Demonstrate proper weapon handling skills to mitigate. accidental shootings.
- Demonstrate proper use of deadly force on active threat subjects in a simulated environment.



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1C: Critical Lessons

COLUMBINE SHOOTING



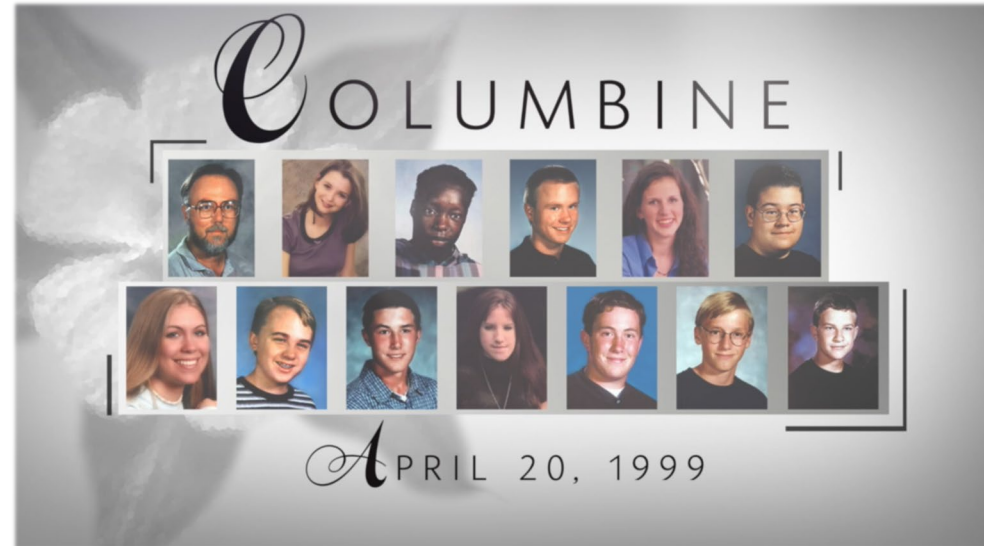
- The event on April 20, 1999 in Littleton, Colorado was a catalyst that changed law enforcement tactics.
- Two heavily armed students entered their school with the intent to kill as many people as possible.



COLUMBINE SHOOTING



- Responding agencies established the accepted protocol at the time – “Contain and Call SWAT.”
- At the end of this event, 12 students and 1 teacher lost their lives.
- The suspects’ names should be forgotten, but the lessons to law enforcement should be remembered.



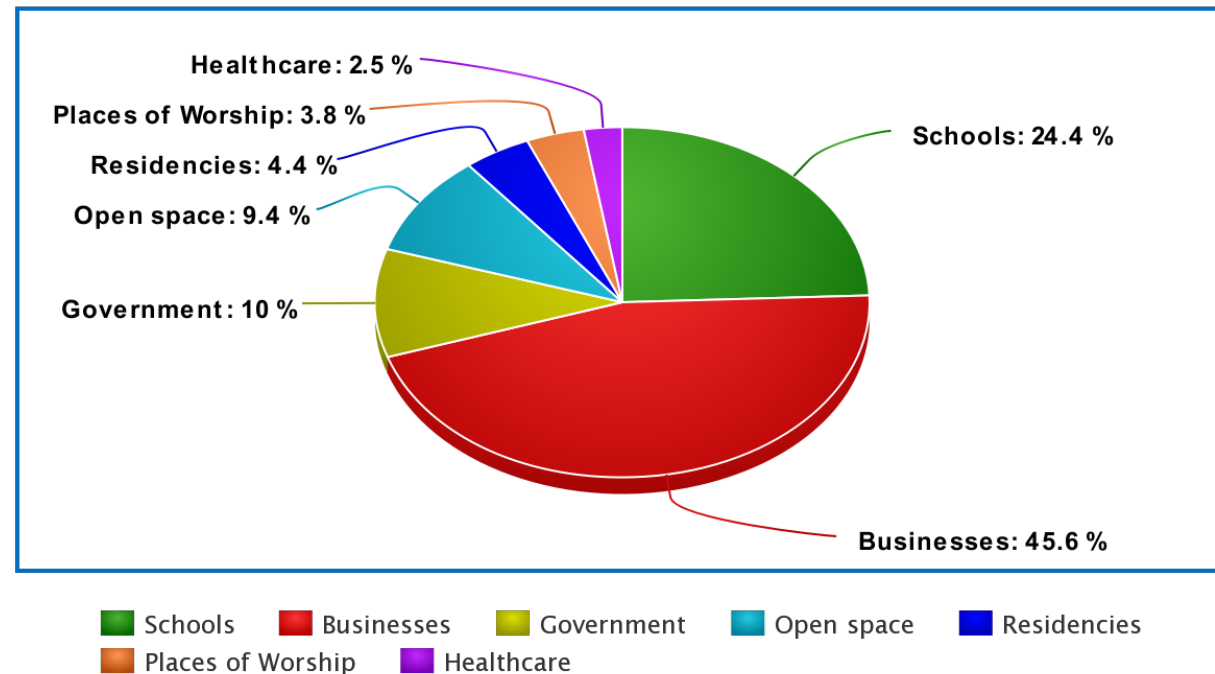


- Officers must be prepared mentally and physically.
- The targeting of children in schools has been repeated since this attack and will continue throughout the U.S. and the world.





- Schools are not the only target of mass killings.
- These events that take place at schools make up only 24.4% of all active threats.
- A majority of ATAKs historically occur at businesses— 45.6%²
- To only train for a school event does not prepare officers for the challenges they will face.



²"A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013" U.S. Dept. of Justice FBI. September 2013.

MUMBAI, INDIA TERRORIST ATTACKS



- This event spanned 4 days—Nov. 26-29, 2008.
- 174 people killed and over 300 people injured.³
- 10 terrorists utilized a “scoot and shoot” methodology, making them difficult to pin down.



³ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Mumbai-terrorist-attacks-of-2008>

MUMBAI, INDIA TERRORIST ATTACKS



- The terrorists targeted highly populated areas including the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station.
 - This attack alone lasted 90 minutes and resulted in 58 deaths.⁴
- Luxury hotels and hospitals were also targeted.⁵

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/18/world/asia/mumbai-terror-attacks/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/site-by-site-breakdown-of-mumbai-attacks-1037430.html>



- The guerilla-style attacks in Mumbai were coordinated and left the response by authorities off-balance.
- Due to the disbursement of the attacks, the response personnel were spread thin.
- The importance of ensuring the ability to muster an additional response to multiple locations must not be overlooked.
 - This is known as MACTAC (Multi-Assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities)



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1D: Hostage Barricade vs. Active Threat / Active
Killer

WHAT IS AN ATAK?



- An individual or group actively engaged in killing for attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.
- Most killers use firearms (explosives and edged weapons are also used).
- Typically no discernable pattern or method to the selection of victims.⁶

⁶ “Active Shooter How to Respond”, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Washington, DC.

WHAT IS A HOSTAGE BARRICADE



Hostage – A person being held by force or fear by a hostage taker as security that a specified term will be met.⁷

Barricaded subject – An isolated subject who comes into armed conflict with LE, poses a danger or threat to themselves or others, and is confined to a relatively fixed position. The subject may create circumstances that warrant LE intervention.⁸

^{7, 8} “Tactical Response and Operations Standard for Law Enforcement Agencies” (2015), National Tactical Officers Association.

HOSTAGE BARRICADE MOTIVATIONS



Motivations can vary widely in these events. (Not a complete list.)

1. A failed criminal attempt that morphs into a subject creating a stronghold for protection or wrestling for control from authorities at the expense of a hostage.
2. A domestic disturbance that escalated due to emotions (fear, rage, etc.)
3. There is NOT an ongoing supply of victims.



ATAK CHARACTERISTICS



- High concentration of potential victims
- Intentions are usually an expression of rage or political agenda as opposed to the furtherance of a financial agenda
 - An argument for why the traditional “contain and negotiate” are inappropriate to deal with these situations⁹

ATAK CHARACTERISTICS



- Active threats often have a detailed plan.
- Often better armed than the initial police response (usually patrol units).
- Usually familiar with the chosen location.
- Location is often chosen for some territorial/tactical advantages or personal meaning.
- Willing to die or commit suicide once confronted.⁹

⁹ Tennessee Tech, “Characteristics of an Active Shooter”. <https://www.tntech.edu/police/dealing-with-an-active-shooter-situation/characteristics-of-an-active-shooter>

ATAK MOTIVATIONS



- The goal of an ATAK does not vary. It is to create as much lethality as possible with any method in a short time.
- Firearms are the most common weapon used, but knives, vehicles and explosives have also been used.

ATAK VS. HOSTAGE BARRICADE



- Some may confuse an ATAK with a hostage barricade.
- A barricade subject with little or no access to potential victims does not automatically establish an ATAK event.
- Agencies must decide how their personnel will respond to a hostage barricade event where shots are fired.
 - The response will be dictated by SOP, training, personnel and equipment.

ATAK REQUIREMENTS



Requirements for ATAK to be successful once the decision to carry out the attack is made:

- Effective methodology for harming innocents.
 - Guns, IED, knives, fire, cars
- There must be access to a supply of victims.



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1E: Prevent & Mitigate



Law enforcement response to decrease the success of the attack – the ATAK can be either **prevented** or **mitigated**.



If an ATAK is identified in early in one of the 5 phases, the attack can be thwarted.¹⁰

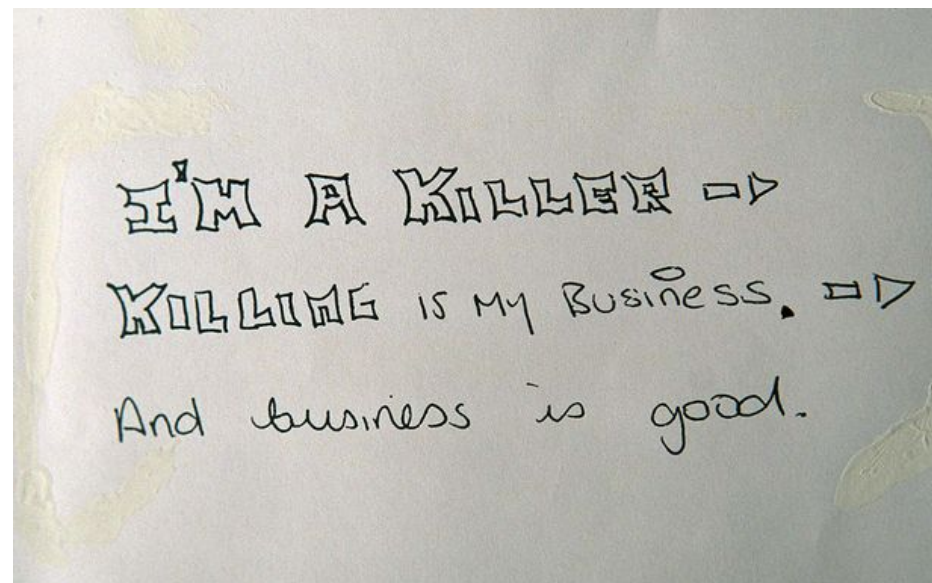
1. Fantasy phase
2. Planning phase
3. Preparation phase
4. Approach phase
5. Implementation phase

¹⁰ Marcou, D. (2015) 5 Phases of the Active Shooter: A Tactical Reload. Policeone.com <https://www.policeone.com/active-shooter/articles/15149006-5-phases-of-the-active-shooter-A-tactical-reload/>

FANTASY PHASE



- The conceptional portion.
- The would-be killer writes, draws or posts their desire to cause harm.
- They often will share these thoughts with others, creating an opportunity for intervention.



PLANNING PHASE



- The who, what, when, where and how are developed.
- The planning phase has shown to vary significantly.¹¹
 - <24 hours – 12% of the incidents
 - 1-7 days – 12% of the incidents
 - 8-30 days – 15% of the incidents
 - 1-2 months – 26% of the incidents
 - 3-5 months – 18% of the incidents
 - 6-12 months – 9% of the incidents
 - 13-24 months – 9% of the incidents

¹¹ Silver, J. Simons, A., and Craun, S. “A Study of the Pre-attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States 2000-2013” FBI, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20535.

PREPARATION PHASE



- The gathering of resources and intelligence to facilitate the attack.
- Surveillance of the location may occur.
- Gathering of weapons will occur.



APPROACH PHASE



- The point where the killer is en route to the attack location.
- This includes from leaving their home all the way to the arrival at the location and entry.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE



- Regardless of motivation, the trend has been to establish a bigger and bigger body count.
- What is needed at this point is an immediate, effective and efficient act of bravery to take the fight to the killer.





- If early intervention is not possible, then loss mitigation is required.
- A delay in response only increases the risk to the innocents.
- Loss mitigation can occur with:
 - Quick neutralization of the threat
 - Eliminate the access to or effectiveness of the methodology (gun, knife, car, explosive)
 - Eliminate the access to additional victims

CONTACT, RESCUE, RECOVER



- **Contact** – The contact team is solely focused on eliminating or mitigating the deaths caused by any active threats.
- **Rescue** – Saves the lives of the injured. Takes place once the violence has stopped or is somewhat contained. Includes triage and first aid. These are additional skills to be covered in training.
- **Recovery** – Bodies are recovered well after the injured are taken care of.



- Once the threat has been neutralized, the response must shift to preserving the lives of the injured.
- Until the threat is neutralized, first aid application could allow the killer additional access and time to harm more innocents.



These critical measures can make a huge difference in the preservation of life:

- Tourniquet application (see VirTra “Tourniquet Application Under Threat” for additional training)
- Chest seals
- Wound packing

Remember, **the threat must be neutralized or contained first!**



MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVE THREAT / ACTIVE KILLER

Module 1F: Prevent & Mitigate



- The attached documents are records obtained via open source and government databases.
- The names of the killers are only provided to allow students to look up the incident for further details, if desired.
- The names of the killers are unimportant. Only the victims and lessons learned really matter.

HISTORY OF ATAK



- Where most of the events are based on shootings, many others are not.
- To establish the mindset of “active shooter” may create a training scar and is not always accurate. For this reason, this course is called ATAK (Active Threat/Active Killer).



HISTORY OF ATAK



- In the Columbine massacre, the subjects had explosives that were supposed to be the initial threat. When the explosives failed, the killers entered the school and began shooting.¹²
- Focusing on “active shooter” may not establish the proper mental framework.
- Edged weapon and explosives have been used across the world in multi-casualty attacks.



¹² Official Report on the Columbine High School Shootings, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Colorado, may 15,2000.
<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2000/columbine.cd/Pages/TOC.htm>



- Understanding and evaluating past attacks helps to prepare for future attacks.
- They should always be looked at as lessons learned.
- To honor those what were lost we must always strive to become better.
- These events are chaotic and confusing; the more we can learn about them, the better.



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