



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

## HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP: COMMUNICATION TO CUSTODY

**VirTra**



# MODULE 1: “INTRODUCTION TO HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP”

Module 1A



# WHAT IS A HIGH-RISK VEHICLE STOP (HRVS)?

- A modified traffic stop that uses tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to direct the movement of the vehicle's occupants.
- Typically occur at the end of violent or potentially violent events.
  - Used to mitigate the risk to general public, officers and the occupants of the vehicle.
  - May occur at the end of a pursuit or motor vehicle accident.
  - Good verbal commands are a critical component.

# GRAHAM VS. CONNOR



- Considered to be a seizure under the 4th amendment
  - Based on “reasonable and prudent” officer standard
  - Takes into account:
    - Severity of crime
    - Subject/s an immediate threat to officers or others
    - Actively resisting arrest or evading by flight
  
- Decision for HRVS should conform to agency-specific protocols



# PRE-STOP CONSIDERATIONS

- Reading the Scene
- Proper Communication
- Develop a Tactical Plan



# READING THE SCENE



- Know the Reason/s for the Stop
  - Is the reason for the stop reasonable?
  - No legally justified reason = no stop



# READING THE SCENE



- Proper Observation - Provides Tactical Advantage
  - Vehicle considerations
  - Allows for evaluation of potential threats
  - Allows for observation of vehicle occupants
  - Allows for observation of your surroundings (lighting, road conditions and potential escape routes)

# COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS



- Communication with Dispatch
  - Ensure initial transmission was received
  - Coordinate with back up officers
- Control Occupants
  - Ensure you leave no doubt what you want the subject to do
  - Escalate and de-escalate according to subject's level of cooperation





# DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN



- Assess what you see and the potential effects of your plan
  - Weather: hot, cold or icy pavement
  - Traffic patterns and flow
  - Terrain (ditches, barriers and embankments)
  - Population density
  - Backstops



# DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN

- Equipment Available
  - Shields
  - Chemical Agents
  - Impact Munitions



# DEVELOP A TACTICAL PLAN

- Escape Routes
  - Officer
  - Suspect
  
- Assistance/Special Requirements
  - K9
  - Air assets



# TRAFFIC STOP BECOMES A HRVS

- Additional Units
  - Should not be conducted with only one officer present
- Control Occupants
  - Appropriate commands
  - Appropriate force
    - Is less-lethal cover an option/available?
    - According to your Agency policies and applicable laws
- **One officer should not make a High-Risk Vehicle Stop without backup officers.**



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Primary
- Backup/Support



# PRIMARY OFFICER



- Primary Officer
  - Usually the Officer who initiated the stop
  - Their knowledge of vehicle or occupant
  - Responsible for overall control of the scene
  - Coordinate backup unit
  - Verbally controls clearing of the vehicle

# BACKUP OFFICER



- Support and Assist Primary as Needed/Directed
- Cover Suspect Vehicle
- Search and Secure Occupants
- Gather Intel
  - Who?
  - How many?
  - Weapons?
  - 360 degree security
- Physically Clear the Vehicle

# SPONTANEOUS ATTACK



- Use Appropriate Force
  - Less Lethal (bean bag, kinetic impact or chemical munitions)
  - Lethal
    - Back stop
    - Crossfire considerations - Know location of other officers
- Tactical Retreat
  - Position of Observation
  - Wait for Backup Officers to Arrive





# SUBJECT INITIATED STOP

- Appropriate Force
  - Verbal Commands
  - Defensive Tactics
  - Deadly Force
  
- Appropriate Tactics
  - Tactical Retreat
  - Create Space

# POSITIONING - VEHICLE



- Vehicle Distance
  - 25-50 feet or 2-4 car lengths
  - Distance = Time
- Position Patrol Vehicles at Slight Angle
  - Space between patrol units should be 8-12 feet at the front tires.
  - Both units should have doors open to aid communication between officers.
- Patrol vehicle lighting should be on and directed at the vehicle, day or night.



# POSITIONING – VEHICLE ADJUSTMENTS

- Avoid dangers in the area
- Backlight or overhead lighting should be on police vehicle location
- Consider the locations of cross-traffic and oncoming traffic
- Be aware of and factor in escape routes



# POSITIONING - OFFICER

- Maximize Communication
- Ensure Effective/Clear Fields of Fire
- Maximize Use of Cover and Concealment
- Access to Equipment



# POSITIONING - FORWARD OBSERVER

- Air Support
- If the environment allows:
  - Vehicle support
  - On foot



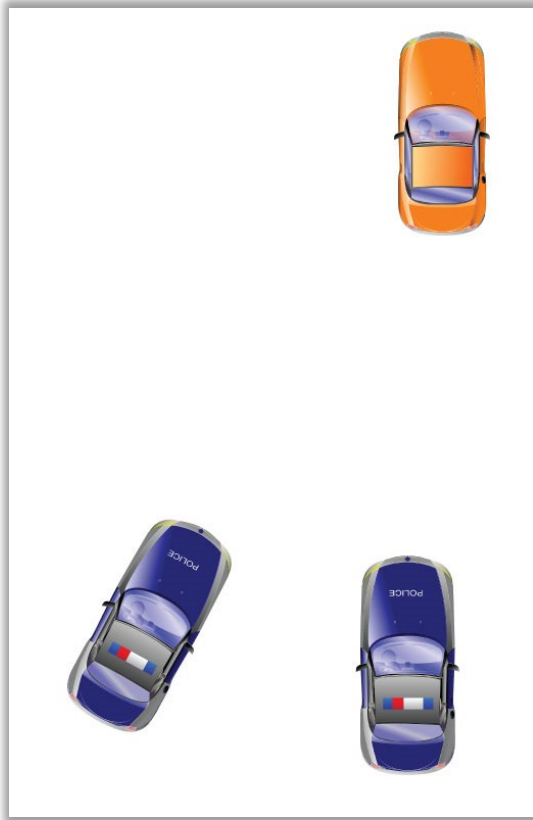
# FANNING TECHNIQUES – FULL FAN



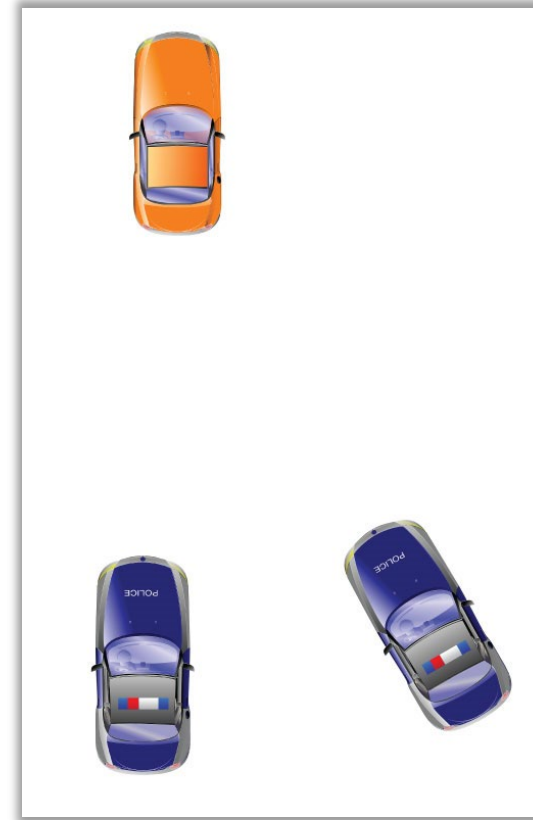


# FANNING TECHNIQUES – LEFT/RIGHT FAN

- Left Fan



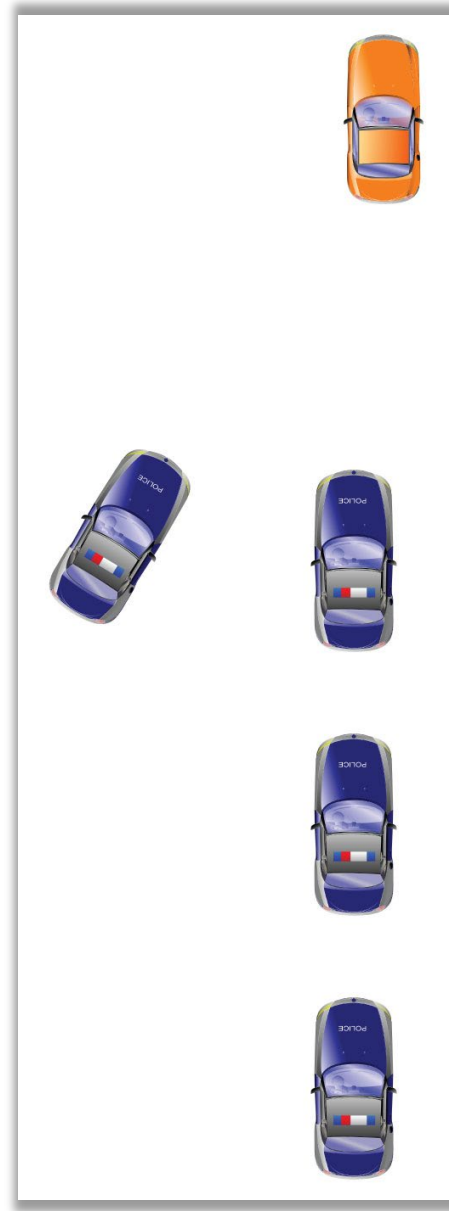
- Right Fan





# VEHICLE STACKING

- Environment may make it impractical or unsafe to use a fanning technique
- Forward facing lights on back up units should be turned off
- Leave enough room to allow for a tactical retreat if necessary







# OFFICER BODY POSITIONING



- Two Schools of Thought:
  - Seated inside patrol vehicle
  - Standing outside of patrol vehicle



# SEATED INSIDE PATROL VEHICLE

- Maximizes the Use of the Vehicle's Structure for Cover
- Principles Include:
  - Keep feet off the ground/or brace outside leg
  - Reposition hips to allow for visibility through open door and "A" pillar
- Weapon position should
  - Allow for rapid response to threat
  - Full view of the threat area
  - Does not pose an unnecessary risk to innocents



# STANDING OUTSIDE OF VEHICLE

- Allows for maximum mobility
- Use as much of the vehicle as possible that stop rounds
  - Engine block and
  - Canted wheels
- Look around patrol cars not over (lower angles)
  - Ricochet off
    - Hood
    - Glass



# MODULE 1: “INTRODUCTION TO HRVS”

## CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR

### Module 1B



# SIMULATION TRAINING



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
  - Pre-stop procedures
  - Reading the scene
  - Develop a plan
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Backup officer responsibilities
  - Vehicle and officer positioning/spacing
    - Distance, spacing, fan techniques, vehicle stacking, positioning in vehicle





# MODULE 2: “COMMUNICATING WITH VEHICLE OCCUPANTS” & “SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE”

Module 2A

# COMMUNICATING WITH VEHICLE OCCUPANTS



- Ensure subject can clearly understand commands
  - Use a PA system if necessary
  - Keep in mind language barriers and deaf/hard of hearing individuals
- Commands should be specific to the person
  - Position of the vehicle (e.g. “driver” or “passenger”)
  - Clothing description (e.g. “male in red shirt”)
- Commands in the affirmative
  - “Occupants, keep your hands out the window”
  - “Do not move until I tell you to”



# SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE

- Establish willingness to comply
- One occupant at a time
  - Obtain visual identification of threats; subjects are told to turn when removed
- Ensure subjects hear and understand commands
- Ensure commands are specific to the person



# SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE – COMMAND TYPES



- “Occupants, keep your hands ...” (On the roof, out the window, etc.)
- “Occupants of the vehicle, you are considered armed and dangerous ... Do not move until I tell you.”
- “Driver, remove the keys and place them on the roof of the vehicle”
  - If the vehicle has a cracked ignition, there may be no keys. Instead, tell the subject to turn off the engine.

# EXITING THE VEHICLE



- Driver Commands:
  - “Driver, from outside the vehicle, open your door slowly and step out of the vehicle”
  - “Driver, face away from me with your hands in the air”
  - “Driver, with one hand reach behind your neck and pull up your shirt”
  - “Higher!”
  - “Driver, turn around until I tell you to stop”
    - You and your partners should be looking for weapons while the subject is turning 360 degrees. Have a plan for the subject should you see a weapon.

# SUBJECT CONTROL



- Avoid having subject count steps
  - Example: “Move left 3 steps” or “Move back 5 steps”
- Affirmative commands take away the subject’s ability to “game” the officers commands and position himself where he feels safe
- Always place your subject in position that is most advantageous to you, according to policy and training

# DIRECT OCCUPANTS INTO A PRONE POSITION



- Careful consideration should be given to directing occupants into a prone position in certain environments
  - Officers have the right to use force during HRVS, but the intrusion must be balanced against the subject right to not be harmed and governments interest
  - Take care not to have subjects prone on extremely hot or cold asphalt



# KNEELING OR STANDING

- Similar to the prone position, kneeling may not be possible depending on clothing and the environment.
- When standing, subject should:
  - Spread feet wide apart
  - Hands out like an airplane
  - Bend forward at the hips
- The subject can then be moved into a position where the cuffing/securing officer is able to use cover.



# WHEN CUFFING...

- Is there probable cause for arrest?
- Is there reasonable suspicion to detain?
- Question the subject based on officer safety considerations:
  - Are there any weapons in the vehicle?
  - Who else is in the car?
    - What are their names, what type of clothing, where they are in the vehicle



# WEAPON DISCOVERED IN VEHICLE

- There are multiple schools of thought on how to handle the subject if a weapon is discovered upon exiting the vehicle. VirTra does not endorse any position concerning this topic.
- Go with department SOP where this is concerned
- Consideration needs to be made for:
  - Does the subject remove the weapon?
  - Where is the weapon placed?
  - Does an officer disarm the subject?
  - Optimum position of disadvantage (prone or kneeling)

# CHILDREN IN VEHICLE



- Option 1: Verbally direct adults to bring children back to your patrol vehicle.
  - Carefully observation of the adult's hands is paramount. Weapons and contraband can be easily concealed in blankets and clothing.
- Option 2: Leave the children in the vehicle
  - Be aware that some adults may absolutely refuse to leave their child's side in spite of your verbal commands.
- Option 3: Give the children verbal commands to come to you
  - Probably the least attractive option as scared children can be unpredictable.



# SUSPECT FLEES



- Maintain a Position of Cover
  - The vehicle has likely not been cleared yet
- Maintain Cover and:
  - Consider repositioning further away from suspect vehicle to open up fields of vision/fields of fire
  - Scan - Continue to scan your threat area and the periphery to avoid being flanked by the suspect



# FOOT PURSUIT CONSIDERATIONS

- Are there enough resources available to...
  - Clear the vehicle
  - Back up pursuing officer/s should they need support
- Consider Air Support
  - Broader field of view
  - Much better low-light capability than officers on the ground
  - Nightsun Spotlight or FLIR



# AFTER ALL SUBJECTS ARE REMOVED

- Issue an additional verbal challenge
  - “You, still in the vehicle we know you are there”
  - “Come out now with your hands up or we will send the dog”
  - “This is your final warning or you will be bit”
- This is your last opportunity before officers go forward and clear the vehicle. Take a second to gather your thoughts and decide upon your responsibilities upon approach to the vehicle.
- If there is reason to believe that the vehicle contains subjects who refuse to come out, treat it as a barricaded subject



**MODULE 2: “COMMUNICATION WITH OCCUPANTS”  
“SUBJECT REMOVAL FROM VEHICLE”  
CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR  
Module 2B**

# SIMULATION TRAINING



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
  - Clear and functional commands
  - Specific to person - “driver,” “passenger”
  - Removal of occupants
  - Directed to desired positioning
  - Dealing with weapons
  - Subject flee
- The following simulations will be used:
  - “High-Risk-Clown Car: (Argue and Comply Options)
  - “High-Risk-Driver with Gun”
  - “Advanced High-Risk - Run Double Back” (Fleeing subject)



MODULE 3: “OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING”  
“CLEARING THE VEHICLE”  
“CLEARING THE TRUNK”  
“UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES”  
Module 3A

# OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING CONTINGENCIES



- Use Appropriate Force
  - Based in policy
- Re-evaluate Priorities and Establish a Plan
  - Injured subject does not automatically mean risk exposure of the officers to render aid
  - Aid is provided when it is first safe to do so



# CLEARING THE VEHICLE

- This procedure can be problematic due to:
  - Little cover available
  - High level of exposure to approaching officers
- Officers should consider the use of a K-9 or a ballistic shield
- Multiple officers can cover multiple angles and deliver more rounds on target to eliminate a threat should one arise
- Some agencies allow for last subject in vehicle to open all doors (consider local protocols)
  - Have the last occupant open the trunk slowly with the key, then have him close it and leave the key in the lock.





# FLANKING PROCEDURES

- 90 degree approach to direction the vehicle is facing
- Allows for multiple officers to cover multiple angles
- Allows for flexibility based on vehicle type, vehicle position and vehicle construction
- Allows officers to choose either side based on tactical advantages and disadvantages
- Mitigates the casting of shadows from headlights and overheads of the patrol vehicles
- Better visibility into vehicle

# DIRECT APPROACH



- Passenger side rear approach if feasible
- Allows officer to clear from the rear of the vehicle and work their way forward
- Allows for low angle of approach
- Care should be taken concerning light and noise discipline as officer's approach could cast shadows from the patrol vehicle's headlights and overheads



# ADDITIONAL OBSERVED OCCUPANTS

- If possible, have clearing officers retreat
- Provide intel to primary officer about what they saw
- Clearing Officer should avoid providing verbal commands
- Primary Officer should avoid giving additional verbal commands until clearing officer is back behind cover



# CLEARING THE TRUNK

- Clearing the trunk area should be done only after the passenger compartment of the vehicle is confirmed to be clear
- Critical tactical considerations include:
  - Noise discipline
  - Muzzle discipline
  - Crossfire situation



# CLEARING THE TRUNK

- Consider how the trunk is going to be opened and who will be responsible for opening it
- If possible, use the key fob to allow officers better positioning



Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

# UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES



- RVs, vans, large SUVs and semi-tractor trailer rigs can present multiple challenges
  - Limited visibility into the vehicle
  - Multiple exits
  - Areas that can easily conceal weapons, people and contraband



# TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Officers should allow for longer stopping distances
- Right fan or full fan is considered safest vehicle positioning depending on terrain and environment
  - Extended offset
  - Allow 70-80 feet of separation between patrol vehicles and suspect vehicle



# TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Do all that you can to light the interior of the vehicle up to and including having occupant turn on interior lights prior to approach
- Monitor the roof of the suspect vehicle
- Driver can be directed to open hatches, tailgates and rear doors





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“CLEARING THE VEHICLE”  
“CLEARING THE TRUNK”  
“UNCONVENTIONAL VEHICLES”  
CONDUCTED IN VIRTRA SIMULATOR  
Module 3B**



# SIMULATION TRAINING



- Topics to be covered within the simulator:
  - OIS protocols
  - Clearing vehicles - Modeled by Actors
  - Clearing trunk- modeled by actors
  
- The following simulations will be used:
  - “Advanced High-Risk - Run Double Back”
  - “Advanced High-Risk - Vehicle War”