



IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Volume 7 Program 5

Friendly Fire Kills Undercover Cop/ Centurion Stick

DUTY SHEET AND LESSON PLAN

Total Program Length 32:00

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THE INCIDENT (3:41)

Undercover Officer William [Willy] Wilkins of the Oakland [CA] Police Department was part of a countywide narcotics team. He was a seven-year veteran of the department. This night, he was pursuing on foot, a suspect in a stolen car that had just sped by. The suspect jumped out of the car and ran behind some houses.

Officer Wilkins in street clothes gave chase.

As Officer Wilkins drew his gun in order to detain the suspect, two uniformed Oakland officers arrived on the scene. The officers mistook Wilkins for a car thief. Without recognizing the officer and seeing the drawn gun, the officers fired their weapons at him.

When other officers arrived on the scene, they recognized Wilkins as an undercover detective. Later 11 shell casings were found in the driveway of a residence. It does not appear Willie Wilkins ever fired his gun. The two uniformed officers were rookies with less than a year on the department.

Wilkins was rushed to the hospital where the 29-year-old died approximately two and one-half hours after the shooting.

UNDERCOVER CONSIDERATIONS (11:06)

- The uniformed officer is always boss.
- Always comply with the uniformed officer's commands.
- Do not do anything whereby the uniformed officer can perceive you or your actions as a threat.
- Make yourself known – it is the undercover's responsibility – communication is critical.
- If the uniformed officer(s) perceives you as a threat; they will react.
- If time, communicate via air to your dispatcher.
- If time does not allow for radio communication, verbally shout identification information.
- If armed, keep yourself in a position to see the responding officer(s), so you don't make any sudden movements.
- Learn the various ways to identify yourself to other officers and prevent suspects from knowing you are an undercover officer.
- Advantages of a department having a 'standard procedure' for undercover operations, i.e. colors, clothing, vehicle, etc.
- Disadvantages of a department using a 'standard procedure' that has too many variables that are not kept to a minimum.
- There is nothing wrong with being a great witness rather than actively engaging in an arrest. Often, the final results will be the same.
- You can always catch the 'bad guy' at a later time.
- Understand rookies need to learn. They do not have the experience of veteran officers.
- Often, responding nighttime uniforms are less experienced officers; veterans are more often in undercover ops.

EPILOG 1:13)

The death of Officer Wilkins still hangs heavy at the Oakland P.D. There was considerable division in the ranks over the shooting.

The department's investigation determined the officers did not violate any policies or procedures.

The district attorney's office found there was no criminal liability on the part of the two rookie officers.

The two were placed on administrative leave for several months after the January 11, 2001 shooting. They returned to duty late in 2001.

Three to four extra counselors/chaplains were called in to help officers deal with the tragedy.

QUESTIONS (1:38)

1. Does your department have regular dialogue among uniformed and plainclothes officers? Does it include updates on undercover ops and, as much as possible, who will be conducting them?
2. As a uniformed officer, are you always aware where undercover ops are taking place in your jurisdiction? If not, how could or should that communication be improved?
3. Do you know the undercover officers in your department?
4. Have you strategies with undercover officers regarding crimes in progress?
5. Do you feel undercover cops should, for example, always be wearing something uniform officers could instantly recognize?
6. Do you agree with San Francisco's policy of photographs of undercover officers at each district for easy identification?
7. Since undercover ops can take many forms, what ideas do you feel will work best to avoid possible tragedy by "friendly fire"?
8. Have you had any personal experiences involving undercover ops that could have led to "friendly fire" tragedy?
9. What would you do to avoid it the next time?
10. Since many police actions can take split seconds, do you feel there are common plans all agencies can implement to lessen the chance of "friendly fire" tragedy? What are they?

BACKUP (10:18)

When an officer is attacked by a subject or when a subject refuses to exit a car, what is an officer to do? Batons, pepper spray etc. are often ineffective.

A new 'less-lethal' has been introduced called The Centurion Stick. At the St. Louis Police Academy, the inventor Ron Teeters, a 25-year police veteran, conducted a demonstration of the effectiveness of this device. The Centurion is a 6½ inch control stick of solid aluminum with no wires – no chemicals – and is cone-shaped at either end. It is a pain-causing, compliance device.

The advantages of the Centurion are:

1. Effective applications mean increased officer safety.
2. Control tactics
3. Suspect removal
4. Suspect escort
5. Suspect takedowns
6. Suspect handcuffing

The Centurion requires training prior to use. There are 21 techniques from basic to advanced. Some of these include:

- a. Countering a frontal attack or bear hug
- b. Countering a choke attack
- c. Vehicle extraction
- d. Passive resistance
- e. Resisting subjects

Best of all the Centurion is easy to carry in your hand and can be thrown down or quickly transferred to your other hand in the event you need to draw your weapon. And it is media friendly; it does not break the skin; it does not cause injury; it can protect you and your department from press intimidation and lawsuits. **Again, training required prior to use.**

Don and I welcome your feedback. We invite you to bookmark our website at: www.lineofduty.com which is updated seven days a week with vital law enforcement news and information.

Sincerely and in Officer Safety,
Ron Barber and Don Marsh, Executive Producers
IN THE LINE OF DUTY
1-800-462-5232

VOLUME 7, PROGRAM 5
LESSON PLAN

SYNOPSIS:	This program highlights the importance of the recognition of an undercover officer by uniformed officers. It will guide you through the steps uniformed and undercover officers need to take to protect themselves and the public.
TIME:	One hour
OBJECTIVES:	Upon completion of this course, officers should be able to:
Obj. A	Realize an undercover officer <u>must comply</u> with what the uniformed officer says to do.
Obj. B	Know that you must put yourself in a position to see the responding officer(s) if you have a weapon drawn or on your person.
Obj. C	Understand that most of the responsibility is on the undercover cop to make him/herself recognizable to uniformed officers no matter the type of operation.
Obj. D	Discuss the ways for an undercover officer to make him/herself known to other officers and prevent the bad guys from knowing.
Obj. E	Determine if your department has a standard procedure for undercover operations that work or do not work.
Obj. F	Understand that there is nothing wrong with being a great witness rather than actively engaging in an arrest.
Obj. G	Realize that rookies do not have the experience of veteran officers.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

LAB GUIDE

Obj. A	Realize an undercover officer <u>must comply</u> with what the uniformed officer says to do. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Drop your gun2. Hands up3. Don't move4. Move away (from suspect)5. Get down on the ground
Obj. B	Know that you must put yourself in a position to see the responding officer(s) if you have a weapon drawn or on your person. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. From the front you have to watch the bad guy

2. From the back you have to watch your own people
3. You are in a hyper situation and if you turn your body, you will be perceived as a threat

Obj. C

Understand that most of the responsibility is on the undercover cop to make him/herself recognizable to uniformed officers no matter the type of operation.

1. Make yourself known
2. Often there is little or nothing to identify an undercover
3. Communication to uniformed is most critical
4. If time allows, communicate by radio
5. Shout identification information:
 - a. I'm a cop
 - b. My ID is in my back pocket
 - c. I'm an officer out of XYZ division
 - d. I work in narcotics, vice, etc.

Obj. D

Discuss the ways for an undercover officer to make him/herself known to other officers and prevent the bad guys from knowing.

1. Code words
2. Insignia on person
3. Clothing color
4. Belt badges often prove too dangerous
5. Neck chains or other ID should be used

Obj. E

Determine if your department has a standard procedure for undercover operations that work or do not work.

1. Plan ahead
2. Make sure everybody knows beforehand the type of operation and the location
3. Uniformed officers should have a facial description and clothing description of the undercover
4. If feasible, have photographs of undercover officers unless they are 'deep cover'
5. If there are too many variables in your department's standard procedure, they should be cut to a minimum

Obj. F

Understand that there is nothing wrong with being a great witness rather than actively engaging in an arrest.

1. You have to make the decision to be involved or not
2. You need to consider an emergency or a critical threat to someone's life
3. Use your radio to give a physical description of the suspect and a physical description of yourself.
4. You can always catch 'the bad guy' later

Obj. G

Realize that rookies do not have the experience of veteran officers.

1. If a uniformed perceives you as a threat, he/she is going to stop that threat
2. If a uniformed sees a gun, he/she is going to react to that gun, not totally react to the person
3. Rookies don't always listen; they will make sure they are safe