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GROUP

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# LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY



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By Carole Moore

# Q&A *with Ken Good*

*LET talks with an expert about the issues and advances in low-light training and technology*

**K**en Good's resume is impeccable. A former commando of SEAL Team One, Good has an operational background in demolitions, small unit tactics, parachuting, scuba diving, firearms and other disciplines. Good has trained for and with the military, both in this country and on foreign soil, and has designed many programs for law enforcement.

In June 2002, he cofounded Strategos International, a company that concentrates on providing training to military and law enforcement agencies, with a specialization in reduced-light operations. Good presently consults for the company, both in training and curriculum development.

Good was formerly the director of the SureFire Institute, which specializes in low-light tactical training. A respected authority on light control, Good now heads up Polarian-USA, which has developed some of the most innovative searchlights deployed today.

Good says his interest in managing light in combat and special

operations was first piqued when he was at fleet training in San Diego with the U.S. Navy and found himself in the dark — literally. The watertight ships provided a pitch-black training platform. The utter blackness prompted Good to think about light — and the lack of it — in new ways.

*Law Enforcement Technology* took advantage of a few of Good's minutes of downtime — which are rare — and asked his opinion on some key law enforcement light-control training issues. Here's what he had to say.

**LET:** When I hear the phrase "light control" in relation to law enforcement, the first thing that comes to mind is an officer with a flashlight and a gun. You say it's a whole lot more. Could you explain?



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**Good:** I would say 10 years ago, even 15 years ago, the prime directive for using a light was to identify what you had in front of you, and that hasn't changed. Most of your information comes through the portal of your eyes. Until you can't see or you don't have a light, you don't really appreciate how important that tool is. But because of the nature of the use of light, we tend to look at light or use of a light as, "What can I see?" In other words, it's only from one angle or one side of the coin: What do I see. However, if you step back for a second and say, "What does *he* or *she* see when I energize this tool?" it becomes a potential target indicator for you, as well as a distraction or a tool that you're actually using to put yourself in a more dangerous position than if you didn't use it at all.

**LET:** So you need to think about light in more than one way?

**Good:** Absolutely. You must learn to use light as a tool to paint a false picture or to overwhelm [your opponent's] senses, rather than let them have good, clean information about what you're doing and why you're doing it, your timing and all the things you can't put on a square range. Timing is one of those things you can't really simulate well on a square range. We boil it down to interrupting their OODA Cycle. The key thing is when you have a potential threat in front of you, you need to do everything you can to disorient them, so you can press your plan. And it turns out when you have a bright light and use it correctly, i.e., if you're in a threatened situation and you can temporarily disorient the threat, you have a much greater probability of moving through the situation and coming out in the prevailing position. The next logical step is, "How do I use this to put myself in a better situation?"

**LET:** We'll bite: How do you answer that question?

**Good:** The analogy I use for police officers is a vehicle stop, something that they can relate to immediately. Why does everything you have in terms of illumination end up flooding into that vehicle? And when you answer that question, you answer the question as to

why I would want to do that with my handheld or why would I want to do that with my weapon-mounted light, as well. You want to control what that person [in the vehicle] observes. If it's nothing but white light or nothing but dark, that's a whole lot better than letting them get a good clear picture or perception of what's going on. That's the art — and some people don't like that word and that's OK — of fighting with a light. Sometimes it's appropriate to turn on your light, sometimes it's not.

**LET: How does good training address this?**

**Good:** I wish I could have a clear spreadsheet for everybody and say this is when and where [to use lights] but it's only determined through experience; through real-world experience and through realistic simulation training. In that regard, what I am attempting to do beyond seeing to increase my own orientation, I am endeavoring at all times to disorient anybody on the receiving end of my light. That can be consistently done once you understand the concept and some basic techniques.

**LET: How about holding a flashlight center mass or in some less clearly thought-out position?**

**Good:** There is a very strong voice out there that says there are no statistics that prove holding a light in the center of your body is a bad thing to do. And my counter is this: Nobody collects those statistics. Nobody is going around asking, "What flashlight technique did you use or why?" And it turns out there's been some cases where people have been shot shortly after the flashlight came on, and I say — absent good data collection — let's look at 20 years of force-on-force simulations. Simulations aren't perfect replications of a gunfight. Nobody is saying that. But I can point out to you hundreds upon hundreds — if not thousands — of engagements, that I've seen with all different skill levels, from very, very skilled people to a person who had a few days of training. They're out there throwing projectiles in a low-light environment, and it's an amazing number of flashlights that are shot within moments

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of them turning on. Or if the flashlight's not hit, 3 or 4 inches [near] it is hit, which happens to be their face or their throat or their hands. I learned very, very quickly to get that flashlight off my centerline when I don't know what's in front of me, and I don't know where my threat is. I'm not saying I don't keep it on my centerline ever, I'm just saying I generally tend toward off-the-body flashlight techniques when I am trying to assess the situation for good reason: People naturally shoot at the most prominent thing in the environment. Period.

**LET: How do you get this across in training? Can you give an example?**

**Good:** I do this in the classroom. I literally put the flashlight in my mouth and I say, "How many people would want to use a flashlight technique like this?" and of course, they laugh. Then I simulate putting a miner's light or a hiker's light on my forehead and ask, "How many people would like to maneuver through the environment like this?" And they laugh again. Then I simulate taping it on my chest and they all say "There is no way I would do that!" And I simply put a flashlight in those three positions as it relates to my handgun and they go, "Oh. Wow." What difference does 12 inches make to a bullet that's traveling 1,400 to 3,000 feet per second? It's still in the same vector. That's the issue we're facing when we illuminate. The good news is we can see. The bad news is he can see. You

can do some things immediately to switch the balance of percentages and that's kind of what we explore through our training.

**LET: Besides positioning of light source, what's the biggest mistake you see?**

**Good:** The No. 1 killer in close-quarters situations is target fixation. In other words, you spend too much time looking at what's directly in front of you. This holds true in the daytime and even more so in the dark. Why is this? Because the most prominent thing in the environment is what? [It is] what your flashlight is illuminating. So you have a very, very powerful tendency to turn on your light and look forward down that cone and that becomes your world.

**LET: How do you resolve this "target fixation?"**

**Good:** Good training, good experience, knowledge, simulation; you learn to see in reverse. Projecting yourself downrange and seeing for yourself how the potential adversary sees you. That is the biggest thing you can do: Learn to see yourself as an opponent would. If you haven't been in good training or good simulation, that's impossible. We can talk about it all day long and we can mentally ascend to it. [For some it takes being] shot in the back, in the side, or in the front and having the opportunity to ask, "How did that happen and why? What were my assumptions just prior to this engagement?" Undergoing the analysis process

in which you chip away [at what you did] to learn to inculcate that capability and answer the question, "What do I look like in reverse?" I want you to get out of yourself and your own world and see it from a more global viewpoint. Ultimately, the biggest mistake is only seeing the world through that tube that represents the light cone.

**LET: How do you assess the current state of light training in law enforcement agencies?**

**Good:** I'd say there's been an upward trend to pay a whole lot more attention. I've heard the horror stories that, "We don't get any training," and I've heard the success stories that, "We've implemented this and it's made a difference." I know of several major departments that have implemented additional or reprioritized training and brought in some low-light doctrine.

**LET: So you think the word is getting out?**

**Good:** You see more articles about it. There wasn't any of this a decade ago. Nobody was really even interested in it. Yet, countless incidents occur in the dark, obviously due to the nature of the people you're dealing with. I think people are starting to wake up. I'm sure there are still departments that don't have a clue, but I'm also hopeful that there are a lot of departments that do, and they're actively looking for ways to improve.

**LET: You're the creator of some very successful combat light sources. What do you think about emerging technology, both in the hands of criminals and police? What's up and coming?**

**Good:** I would imagine some of the smart criminals would take advantage of the new technology, but I haven't seen that as a big problem yet. As far as the use of light: That takes discipline to use it right. Just because you give someone an excellent flashlight — without good training — it's probably going to hurt them more than it's going to help. I see technology tipping the scales toward law enforcement with the caveat that they need to work with it. Specifically, LEDs are improving dramatically. There's a very strong upward curve where these LED lights are much more powerful than they were even a year ago, which gives an officer a much more reliable tool that is going to last tens of thousands of hours, as opposed to 20 to 60 hours on an incandescent lamp. So I think the biggest jump in technology is the use of digital lighting and LEDs, and those are going to continue to improve. ■

*A 12-year veteran of police work, Carole Moore has served in patrol, forensics, crime prevention and criminal investigations, and has extensive training in many law enforcement disciplines. She welcomes comments at [carolemoore@ec.rr.com](mailto:carolemoore@ec.rr.com).*



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