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"Police shown latest, greatest technology"

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## **Police shown latest, greatest technology**

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Unless you're in law enforcement, chances are you missed the tactical response show at the Long Beach Convention Center last week.

Too bad. There were some pretty cool things going on.

The conference brought together tactical response experts and the latest technology in emergency preparedness, from the lowest of low-tech to the highest of high-tech.

Downstairs in a small conference room, ex-Navy Seal Richard Machowicz was showing police officers how to take charge of a dangerous situation in the lowest-tech way possible.

For the last six years, Machowicz has taught what he calls Bukido, a focus training method for being ready to deal with unexpected situations. His business is in Santa Monica.

Machowicz's clients include corporations, military organizations, NBA teams and NFL players. His message is simple: You don't know everything, so be ready for anything.

"The hardest thing in the world is getting yourself up for every event. It's easy to get complacent," Machowicz told the 10 officers in his seminar. "Everyone says, 'Focus,' but no one teaches us how to focus."

He tweaks his training for a given client. For police, the message was obviously geared toward dealing with hostile criminals.

But whatever the client, he tells his students that there's a natural progression the mind uses to be ready: target, weapon, movement in that order.

For instance, if you are being attacked, the first thing to focus on is the target.

"The target will dictate the weapon, and the weapon will dictate the movement," he said.

So if someone is lunging at an officer, the officer should identify where the attacker is weak, then the mind will take over and determine the best weapon to use against that weak spot. And the movement to employ that weapon will also be natural.

He teaches officers that speed is not important as accuracy.

"You can only go as fast as it takes to hit the target," he said.

It's a lesson he's learned in his personal life.

Machowicz, 38, tried to set up a business teaching executives the mindset of the Seals after his 10-year stint with the elite military unit ended. It never got off the ground. He went to Washington, D.C. and tried to develop a security business.

"I failed yet again," he said.

Then, on a late night walk in Washington, he decided he'd move to Los Angeles, and just try to teach what he knew to one person at a time and see if it would catch on.

It worked. He started off charging \$25 a month. Now people call him to pay \$1,500 for a three-day course.

"I was patient enough to see this through," Machowicz said. "I always believed that if this was worth something, it would grow."

### Training by TV

While Machowicz was teaching focus, on the main conference floor upstairs, a video game developer was unveiling a ground-breaking new police training product.

VirTra, an Arlington, Texas- based firm, introduced a 360-degree virtual reality simulator that will allow officers to train more effectively.

The system surrounds the trainee with three to six enormous television screens that show pre-filmed scenarios. But it's not just like watching a movie. The filmed characters respond to the voice of the trainee (for instance, they might put their weapon down if told to do so) and go down if shot.

And a teacher, watching the trainee on a computer screen, can manipulate the scenario.

"Clearly officers deal in a 360-degree world," said VirTra CEO Kelly Jones. "There are threats all around."

Jones said that 28 percent of all officers killed on duty are shot from the rear, possibly because they aren't as cognizant of their periphery in current training programs.

Current technologies (the industry leader is FATS) only have one screen straight ahead, which Jones said can subconsciously train officers to look ahead.

VirTra's technology is not cheap - anywhere from \$75,000 for three screens to \$250,000 for six screens and the true 360-degree experience.

Seven systems have already been sold abroad, though Jones expects to sell domestically soon since Tuesday was the first time the product was shown to the industry.

"Some departments won't have the funds to buy this, but the larger the agency, the larger the chance they have money to purchase our system," Jones said.

The system currently has 15 different scenarios, but filming only started six weeks ago. Jones said scenarios can be customized depending on what the subscribing agency wants.

"Anything that can be filmed can be a scenario," he said.

That includes military and terrorist applications, since VirTra was initially encouraged to develop the product in the wake of 9/11.

"We were approached by agencies that now work within the Department of Homeland Security," Jones. "We were working on something ourselves, but they asked if we could expedite it into the market."

The initial designs for the 360-degree system used a headset helmet, but 18 months ago, VirTra switched focus to a projection-based system.

The program uses real weapons outfitted with lasers, not bullets. And there's even an air recoil system, so trainees feel the kick of the gun when they shoot.

The whole session is filmed, so trainees can see for themselves how they reacted to certain situations.