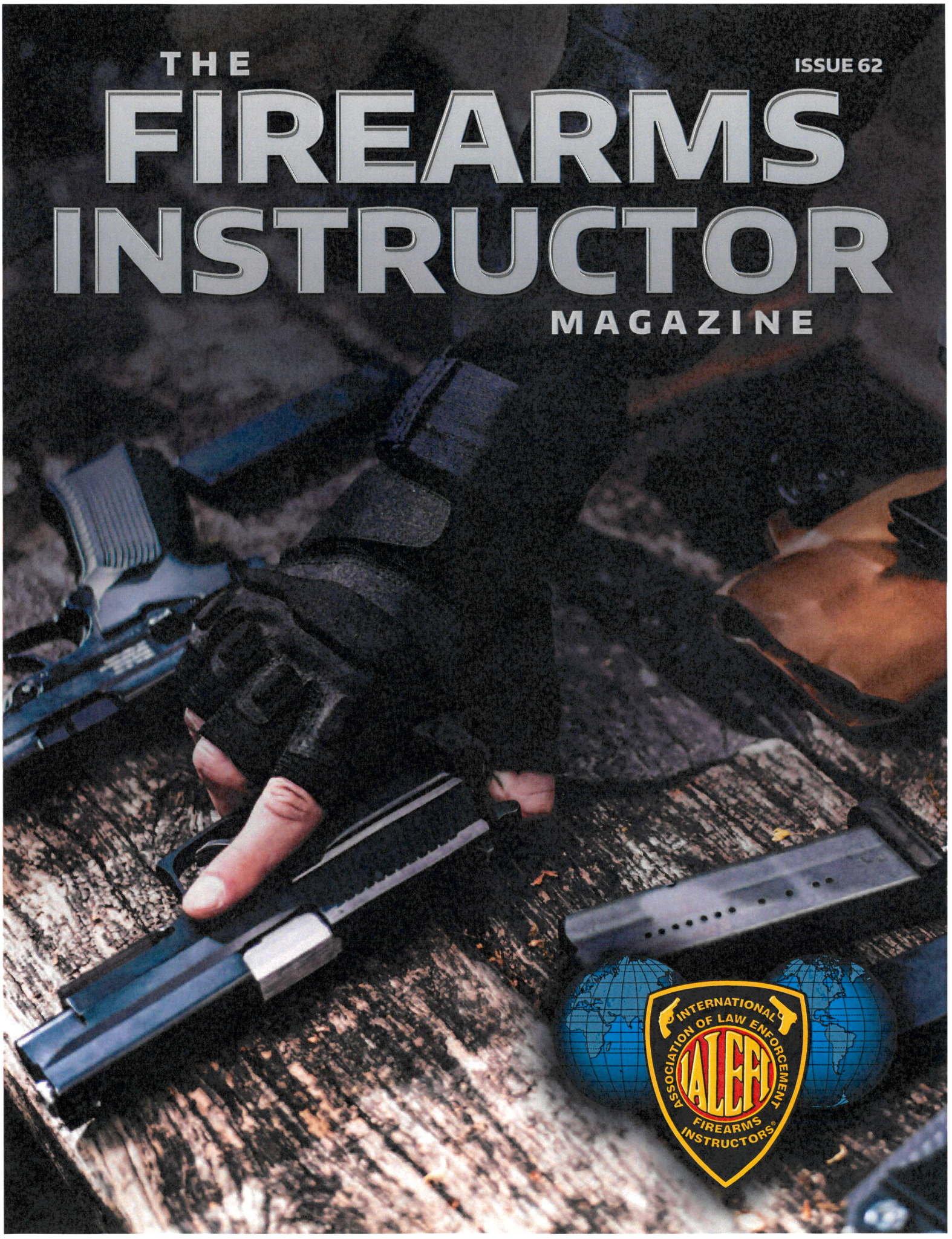
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FEATURES

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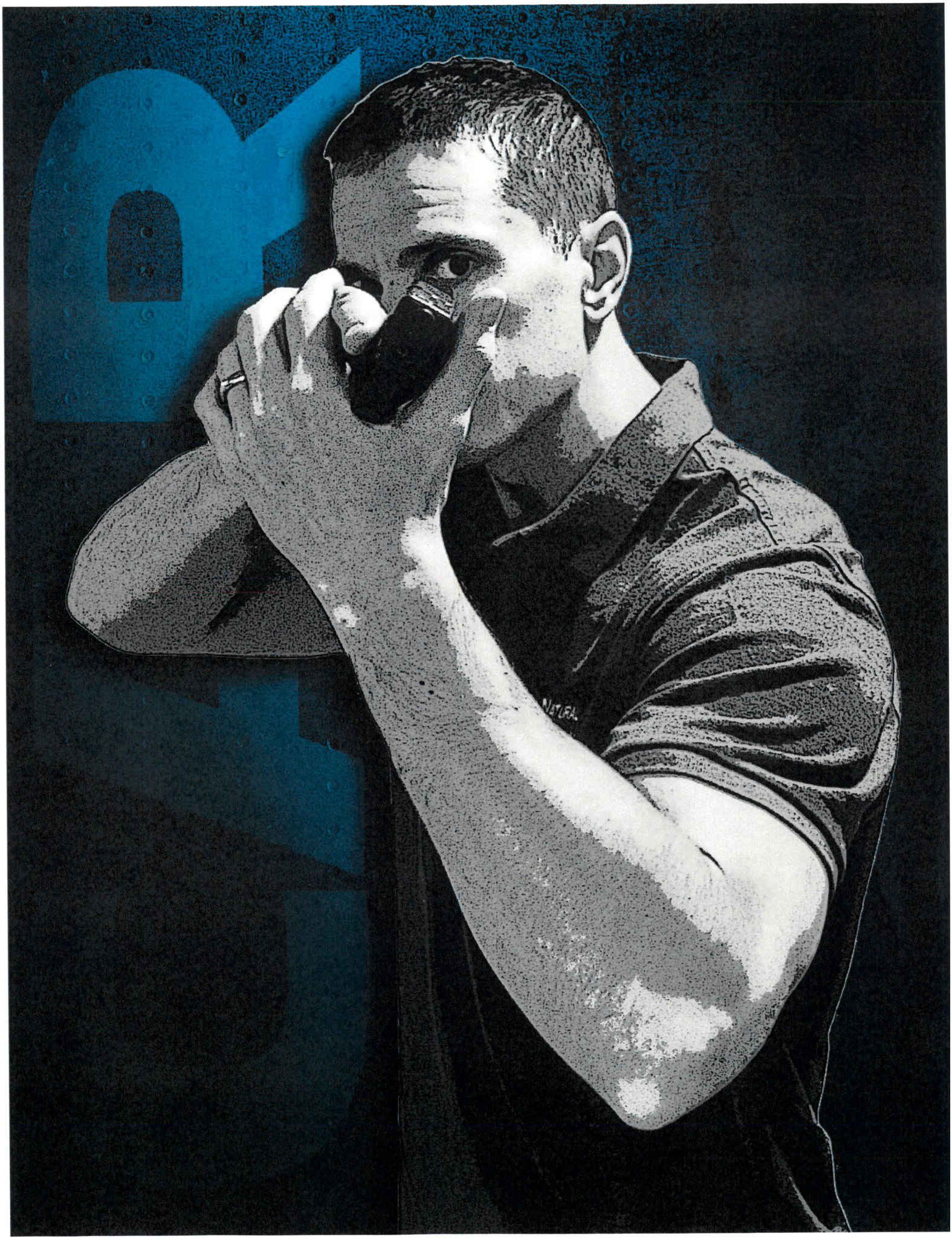

THE CENTER AXIS RELOCK (CAR) SYSTEM: THEORY AND PRACTICE (PART 2)

GREGORY M. VECCHI, PH.D.
AND JEFFREY B. JOHNSGAARD

In Part 1 of this article, we provided a reintroduction and overview of the CAR System with an emphasis on dispelling some of the common misconceptions of the CAR System and providing evidence of its efficiency and effectiveness in close quarter deadly force situations. In Part 2 of this article, we discuss the core components of the CAR System including the concepts of Reacting, Reducing, Reloading, Recovering, Returning, and Retention. Of special note is the emphasis on the CAR Systems' unique methods of handling the firearm with regards to grip, support, and presentation; lessening risk to oneself; the CAR System's unique method of "throwing" spent magazines; the "Slap-Rack" concept regarding stoppages; recovering from a deadly encounter using the "4Cs Checklist" and the "Z-Scan"; and defensive tactics application of retention.

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE CAR SYSTEM

The CAR System provides a superior level of stability, which is achieved by harmonious body placement during high stress. With the use of this stability, a high degree of readiness can be achieved, even when an officer is experiencing the Body Alarm Response (BAR). Readiness is obtained through a matrix of the six components: Reacting, Reducing, Reloading, Recovering, Returning, and Retention (6 Rs) (Johnsgaard, 2016; Sabre Tactical, 2015).

Reacting

Reacting is the ability to perceive a threat which you then act upon to buy time and gain opportunity. Gunfighting is an action/reaction problem. The more time there is to act upon it, the better chance of neutralizing the threat (Johnsgaard, 2016; McKinney, 2012). Any reaction will always be slower than the action initiating it. Hence, efficient and effective reaction techniques without any extraneous movement are critical. In reacting to a deadly force situation, there are four key movements to complete. Also known as the four stages of the draw, they are: Key Grip, Key Clearance, Key Support, and Key Presentation (Johnsgaard, 2016).

- **Key Grip** is obtained through the correct hand placement on the handle of the pistol choking as high up on the handle as possible with the tang of the pistol in full contact with the webbing of the shooting hand while gripping the handle mainly with the middle and ring fingers.
- **Key Clearance** is important at close quarters and in extreme conditions. It is obtained by immediately rotating the pistol towards the threat after it clears the holster and is positioned up as high as possible under the armpit.
- **Key Support** is the first stage during which both hands will hold onto the pistol. It is accomplished by moving the non-shooting hand to the pistol grip safely from underneath the muzzle to join the shooting hand. During this stage, further stability is added through isometric tension.
- **Key Presentation** is the preferred position from which to discharge the pistol. The CAR System uses three shooting positions: Low, High, and Extended (e.g. Isosceles, Weaver, etc.). Each of these positions have a non-shooting ready position: Low Ready, High Ready, and Extended Ready.
  - → *Low Position* is primarily a weapon protection position which can be shot from contact distances out to approximately five feet from the threat.
  - → *High Position* (previously described in Part 1) is the primary shooting position where the pistol is held at the Natural Focal Point (NFP) of the officer. It is used at distances from approximately five to 30 feet from the threat.
  - → *Extended Position* is held out at the natural arm length of the officer. It is used at distances over 30 feet or when the officer has time to aim and take slow, controlled shots at closer distances.

Reducing

Reducing is lessening risk to yourself. Risk can be reduced by efficiently and effectively getting your pistol out of the holster and on target by optimally executing the four stages of Reacting (see above). Moreover, by blading your body, you reduce your target profile. In addition, assuming proper CAR shooting positions reduces felt recoil and muzzle flip. Also, the system allows you to shoot effectively with both eyes open thus reducing the negative consequences associated with closing one eye and it eliminates dual sight picture (Hubel, 1995; Johnsgaard, 2016).

Reloading

There are two basic types of reloads for a semiautomatic pistol: Emergency or Forced Reload (aka: the "Gotta Reload") and the Retention or Planned Reload (aka: the "Wanna Reload") (Furr, 2018; Johnsgaard, 2016; NRA, 2012). For fastest retrieval of fresh magazines, it is recommended that you use a vertical magazine holder with two magazine pouches placed on your Reaction Side. The front pouch holds the "primary magazine" and is used for Emergency Reloads as it is closest to retrieve; the rear pouch holds the "secondary magazine" and is used for Retention Reloads. When removing fresh magazines during either reload, it is important to obtain a "Key Grip" on the magazine by gripping the magazine so its base is flat into the palm of your Reaction Side hand with the index finger lying along the side of the magazine body with the fingertip covering the bullet head (Johnsgaard, 2016).

- **Emergency Reload** (Johnsgaard, 2016; NRA, 2012): The Emergency Reload is used when the pistol runs out of ammunition and locks back. The CAR System uses the concept of bilateral coordination to optimize this technique (Kelso, 1984).
  - → Obtain a Key Grip on the primary magazine from the front pouch with the Reaction Hand as you drop your Weapon Side elbow while rotating your palm upward and depressing the magazine release with your thumb.
  - → While depressing the magazine release, flick the pistol outward to "throw" the empty magazine out of the pistol away from the officer while simultaneously using the other hand to remove a fresh magazine from its pouch.
  - → Bring the pistol back to its original position while bringing the full magazine into the same angle of presentation.
  - → The index finger of the hand holding the fresh magazine is then used to feel for the "hole" created by the removal of the empty magazine. Once the "hole" is located the fresh magazine is inserted and seated by slapping it with the palm of the hand. This is done close to the body and reinforced by proprioceptive senses (Proske & Gandevia, 2012).
  - → The slide can be released either by depressing the slide stop lever or by gripping the rear of the slide and "punching" forward with the pistol.
  - → All reloads and clearance of stoppages should be executed in a workspace close to the body, which provides stronger manipulation of the pistol and less chance of having the pistol taken away.
- **Retention Reload** (Furr, 2018; Johnsgaard, 2016; NRA, 2012): The Retention Reload is used when there is a lull in the gunfight, and you are behind hard cover or being covered by other officers.
  - → While keeping your eyes on the threat and scanning the environment, obtain a Key Grip on your secondary magazine.
  - → Switch to a "Cigarette Grip" where the

magazine lies flat on the base of the palm with the top of the magazine protruding up between the index and middle fingers (this frees up your thumb in order to take the existing magazine out of the pistol).

- → Bring the pistol to the same angle of presentation as in the Emergency Reload.
- → Press the magazine release and grab the partially spent magazine out of the pistol with your thumb and index finger and remove it from the magazine well.
- → Insert the fresh magazine and slap it into place to seat it.
- → Place the partially spent magazine that was removed from the pistol in your rear pouch.

If necessitated by agency policy or preference of the officer, a variation of the Retention Reload can also be used where the officer holds only one magazine at a time rather than two magazines.

Recovering

There are four stages of operation when discharging a semiautomatic pistol: Feed – Fire – Extract – Eject (NRA, 2012). Recovery is necessary when an officer experiences a stoppage or malfunction affecting any of the four stages. A stoppage is any unintentional interruption of fire and which can be caused by any of the following conditions (Johnsgaard, 2016):

- The pistol has discharged all its ammunition,
- The ammunition fails to detonate,
- The ammunition fails to feed into the chamber, or
- The spent casing fails to properly extract.

A malfunction is a mechanical breakdown of a firearm that can only be corrected by an armorer. A way to ensure less stoppages and malfunctions is to maintain your firearm and ammunition. "Checks" should also be built into your everyday drills such as the

WEAPON PROTECTION FEMALE

"Push-Pull-Sweep": upon holstering your pistol, push then pull on the magazine to ensure it is seated then sweep your hand between your holstered pistol and your body to ensure no clothing is entangled with the pistol that would disrupt the draw or unseat the magazine (Johnsgaard, 2016).

There are two primary drills used to recover from stoppages: Phase 1 Stoppage Drill ("Slap-Rack-Assess") and Phase 2 Stoppage Drill ("Rip-Work-Slap-Rack-Assess" or "Lock-Rip-Work-Slap-Rack-Assess"). When performing either of these drills, it is important to bring the pistol back to your "workspace," close to your body.

Phase 1 Stoppage Drill ("Slap-Rack-Assess") (Johnsgaard, 2016; NRA, 2012): This is always the first drill used when a stoppage occurs.

- "Slap" the base plate of the magazine with force.
- Cant the pistol so the ejection port faces down and "Rack" the slide by gripping it palm down over the back of the slide with your non-shooting hand and punching the pistol forward with your shooting hand, so the slide moves fully to the rear.
- Release the slide so it slams back into a closed position.
- "Assess" the threat to determine if further shots are needed.

Phase 2 Stoppage Drill ("Rip-Work-Slap-Rack-Assess" or "Lock-Rip-Work-Slap-Rack-Assess") (Johnsgaard, 2016; NRA, 2012): This drill is executed if the Phase 1 Drill fails to clear the stoppage.

- "Rip" the magazine from the pistol (if the magazine is bound up, "Lock" the slide open and then "Rip" the magazine out of the pistol).
- "Work" the slide by gripping it palm down over the back of the slide with your non-shooting hand making sure not to cover the ejection port and forcefully rack the slide three or four times.
- Insert and "Slap" a fresh magazine into the pistol.
- "Rack" the slide by gripping it palm down over the back of the slide with your non-shooting hand and punching the pistol forward with your shooting hand, so the slide moves fully to the rear.
- Release the slide so it slams back into a closed position.
- "Assess" the threat to determine if further shots are needed.

In the event of a malfunction, transition to another firearm, other weapon, or tactically withdraw. If this is not possible during a close quarter confrontation, then use the malfunctioning handgun as a blunt edged weapon by using the barrel to forcefully "punch" the face, throat, or sternum of the attacker.

BRANCH 1

1 Close Quarter Ready or Position Sul
2 From Close Quarter Position, officer rotates and deflects offender's gun grab
3 Officer decides to shoot from Low Position
4 Officer decides to shoot from High Position

BRANCH 2

5 Offender grabs gun and pulls it away from the officer's body
6 Officer brings gun back into center with violence of action getting body into position and contact for next movement;
7 Officer aggressively sinks (keeping her foot planted on offender's foot) and turns....offender's grip is broken
8a Officer decides to pistol punch straight into offender OR
8b Officer stands and half steps back
9 Officer depicted in High Position as she chooses to shoot offender

Returning

Returning is a process enacted after the threat has been initially addressed and the body is attempting to resolve the fight or flight response (BAR) known as parasympathetic backlash:

> *When one's "fight or flight" response is triggered, the sympathetic nervous system begins shutting down things like salivation and digestion while increasing the production of epinephrine (adrenaline). Once the action is over it is followed by a parasympathetic backlash, the body attempting to calm down.* (McKinney, 2012, p. 3).

When an officer is not effectively perceiving and processing the environment due to the BAR, Returning must include specific techniques, tactics, and procedures to regain a normal physical, psychological, and emotional state. The CAR System emphasizes the Z-Scan and 4C's Checklist to assist with Returning (Johnsgaard, 2016). The Z-Scan extends the follow through and the concept of "finishing the fight" by scanning, breathing, and observing the threat directly after the officer thinks the threat is stopped but before scanning for additional threats. The Z-Scan breaks tunnel vision and assists during the Plateau Phase of the BAR by delaying the parasympathetic backlash. The Z-Scan is completed by maintaining a High Ready Position and using the barrel to trace a "Z" pattern across the primary threat area using forced, slow breaths (Benson & Klipper, 2000; Johnsgaard, 2016).

The 4C's checklist is a guide to use in Returning from a deadly force encounter (Murray, 2006). It should be noted that the checklist should be completed from a position of advantage or the most advantageous position that expands the time, distance, cover, and confidence equation.

- **Cover**
  - Anything that stops, impairs, or impedes direct or indirect fire
  - If nothing available, use other officers to cover you or use your own awareness and readiness to use your firearm
- **Controlled Breathing**
  - Breath in through nose counting 1, 2, 3, 4
  - Stop and hold breath counting 1, 2, 3, 4
  - Exhale through mouth counting 1, 2, 3, 4
  - Repeat as needed
- **Communication**
  - Alpha commands to subject
  - Partner(s) at scene
  - Radio
  - Witness/bystanders
- **Condition**
  - Self
  - Subject
  - Victims
  - Witnesses/bystanders
  - Your weapon system (operation and tactical reload)

An officer should never be in a hurry to holster his or her pistol as the threat may not be neutralized (NRA, 2012); however, this must be balanced with the ability to holster quickly and transition tools when the situation changes (Johnsgaard, 2016). A thorough Z-Scan should be completed as well as conducting the 4C's Checklist prior to holstering when possible.

Retention

Retention is the ability of an officer to retain his or her pistol against an attack under severe stress when, due to close quarter proximity, it is ineffective or inappropriate to initiate traditional defensive tactics. The Low Shooting Position and Low Ready Position are retention positions, as they keep the pistol close to the body and provide a durable base from which to create power (Johnsgaard, 2016). Using specialized striking and elbow "swatting" methods, the CAR System retention drills provide an excellent defense against grabs, lunges, and other tactics used to gain control of the officer's pistol (Johnsgaard, 2016; Sabre Tactical, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The CAR System of gunfighting was born out of the need to survive and win deadly force encounters while the body is in a "fight or flight" state resulting from involuntary and uncontrollable physiological processes. The CAR System is designed primarily for close quarter confrontations where most gunfights occur. It allows the officer superior weapon retention over other shooting platforms as well as speed and accuracy while moving and the ability to engage 360 degrees. As a result, the CAR System has wide application for vehicles and other environments while enabling officers to engage across all use-of-force levels using the same platform. Lastly, the CAR System is not a replacement for the Isosceles or Weaver platforms nor is it in conflict with them. Rather, it is a functional platform that may be used to bridge the gap from the holster draw

at close quarters out to a more comfortable distance where there is time to take more measured shots. **TFI**

About the Authors

Gregory M. Vecchi, Ph.D., is a retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent with over 29 years of combined service in the military and as a federal agent. During his career, Dr. Vecchi investigated Russian organized crime, international drug trafficking, international and domestic terrorism, and violent crime. Dr. Vecchi was formerly Chief of the FBI's legendary Behavioral Science Unit and an FBI crisis negotiator.

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Jeff has completed numerous other firearms tactics and instructor courses outside of his agency including several NRA LE schools and other US agency firearms programs. Jeff is the official heir to the CAR System and its official certifying authority. Jeff continues to further CAR itself both in tactics and instructional method.

Jeff works on contractual bases for several other companies and agencies in the USA and Canada through his company, Natural Tactical. Contact Jeff at Jeff@NaturalTactical.com

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