

THE
FIREARMS
INSTRUCTOR

The Official Publication of The International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors®



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NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

We encourage you to submit articles and photos for publication, as well as letters and comments on articles which have appeared in previous issues. We can also use short "Training Tips" and "Safety Tips," cover photos, and news items of interest from a training perspective. Please refer to the Editorial Guidelines below for details on format for your submission. Take advantage of this opportunity to share information with other instructors, and see your work in print!

Editorial Guidelines

IALEFI® actively solicits the submission of articles to be considered for publication in THE FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR, and encourages members to share their ideas, experience, and expertise with others. Neither IALEFI®, nor THE FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR, endorses any specific techniques, training programs, trainers, products, or manufacturers.

Members are urged to provide us with input on the style and content of THE FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR. Submitted articles should conform to these rules:

1. Articles should be submitted in Microsoft Word. Please have your article free of spelling and grammatical errors. We encourage you to support your article with photos and/or illustrations, if applicable.
2. A photograph of the author, along with a brief biographical sketch, should be included.
3. Any photographs submitted should include captions. Photos will be returned on request. For optimal print quality, digital photos should be a minimum of 6 megapixels.
4. Submitted manuscripts will not be returned. The author should retain a copy of the manuscript.

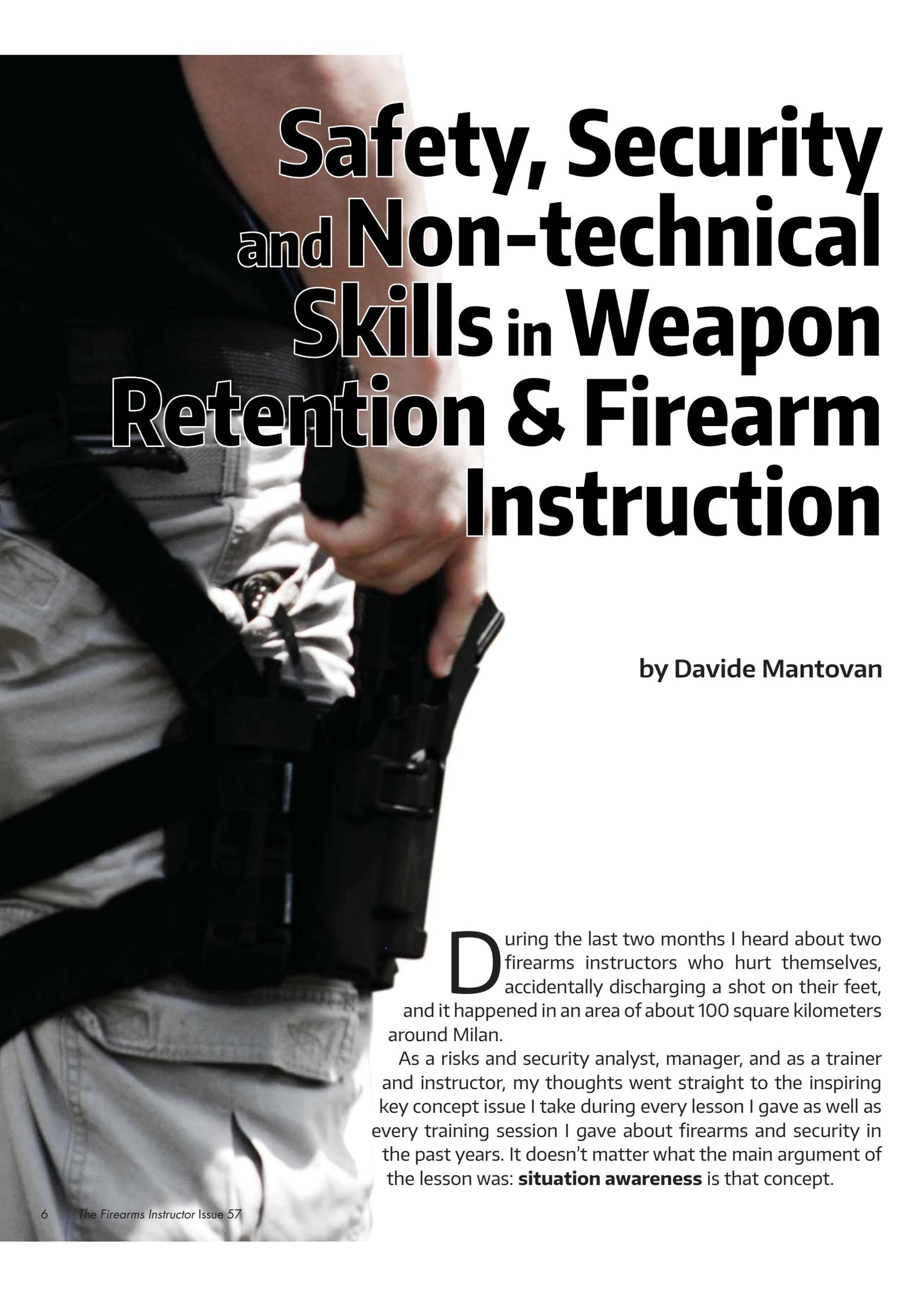
Articles should be directed towards law enforcement firearms training, trainers, instructional methods, and officer survival. The specific techniques and practices proposed in the article may be original, unconventional, or controversial, but should reflect sound training and safety principles. IALEFI® does not publish product reviews, evaluations, or endorsements. Articles on other subjects may mention and discuss the use of specific products, including limited professional critique of the products, but the thrust of the article must be one of training methods, firearms techniques, and officer survival.

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Safety, Security and Non-technical Skills in Weapon Retention & Firearm Instruction

by Davide Mantovan

During the last two months I heard about two firearms instructors who hurt themselves, accidentally discharging a shot on their feet, and it happened in an area of about 100 square kilometers around Milan.

As a risks and security analyst, manager, and as a trainer and instructor, my thoughts went straight to the inspiring key concept issue I take during every lesson I gave as well as every training session I gave about firearms and security in the past years. It doesn't matter what the main argument of the lesson was: **situation awareness** is that concept.

So, thinking over the above mentioned incidents, and a lot of previous incidents, I immediately started to wonder: What causes? What mistakes? Why did they make those mistakes?

Let's make clear that my concern is to try to learn something from those incidents, as well as understanding that the things we say in this article do not concern the way in which those events happened in reality. I was not there, and actually, I am not interested in the historical and factual reconstruction of the incidents. Here, we will just try to learn something from them.

Anyway, for sure those incidents did not happen because of mechanical or instrument failure. It's obvious that a human error took place. Like it happens in the largest part of the incidents – especially in high risk fields – the “human factor” has been decisive among and above all other causes.

Then, analyzing human failures, I feel free to consider that those incidents, like many others, were absolutely not caused by technical incapability or incompetence of participants, both expert and skilled shooters. In other words, it was not a technical skills failure.

So what?

Let's start to analyze the scenarios, trying to figure out the causes. This way, we can try to find an answer to the basic “WH questions:”

Where: Both firearms instructors accidentally discharged one round, hitting their right feet. Both the instructors were right handed.

When: Both of the incidents happened during the same time frame, while they were holstering the gun, immediately after ending a drill.

The third, most important one – What: Both of those incidents happened in some kind of a “grey zone of time and space:” the moment in which the shooting drill, with all its danger, was supposed to be over and in all likelihood also the attention of the shooter...

The pistol, unfortunately, was not in the holster yet.

This critical “grey zone of time and space” is when (and where) we feel totally safe, because we are very close to our safe condition. But we are not safe yet: the gun was not in the holster yet and many potential risks were not over!

In self-protection techniques and tactics we always consider the risks hidden in this

grey zone: it is so easy to be surprised by a threat in that zone because we are no longer focused on the drill/threat but we are still out of our totally safe condition.

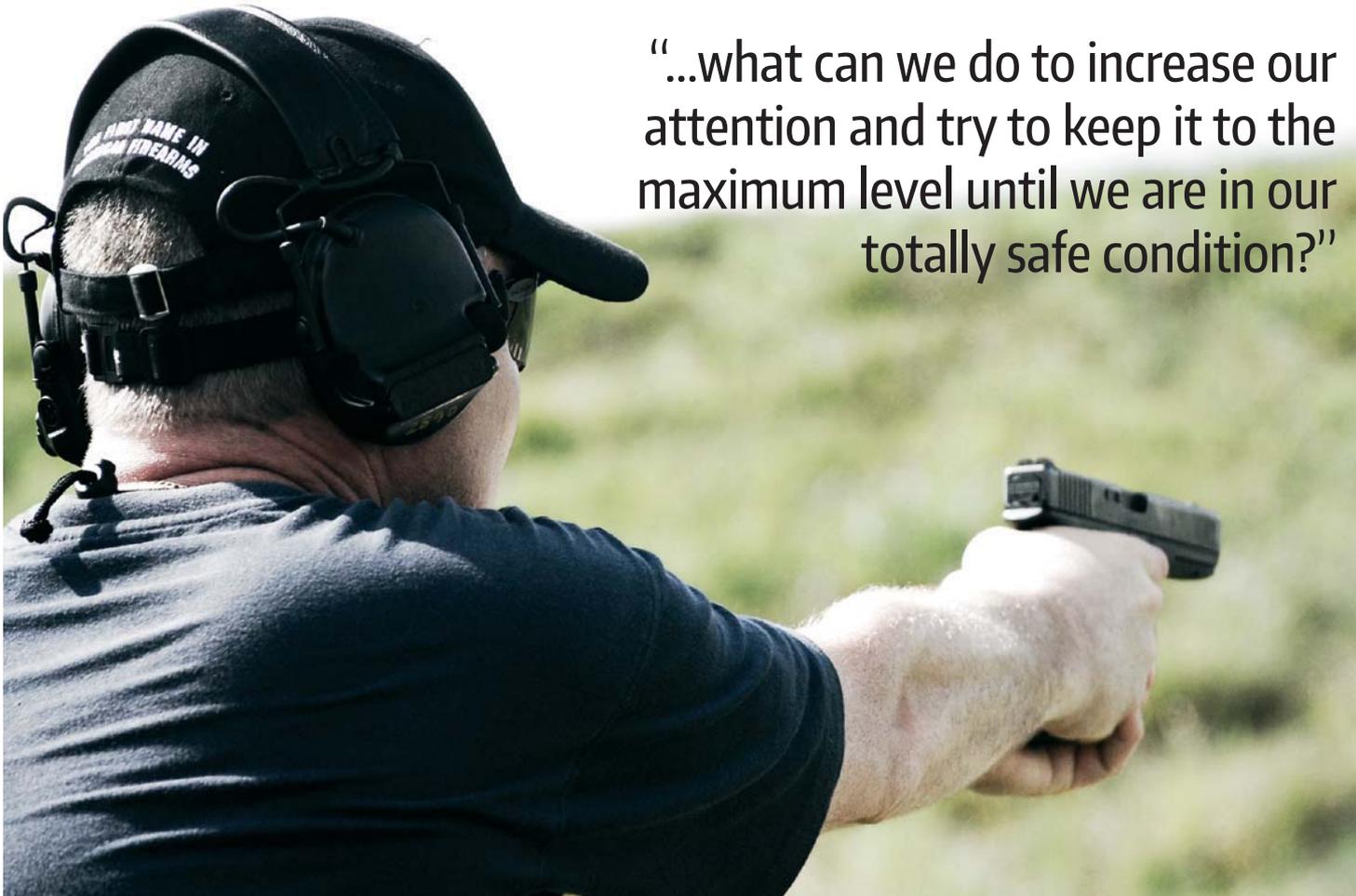
To persuade ourselves about that, we can recall what happens when a victim is assaulted just outside the doorstep of their home. The victim feels safe at home, while they are still out of that safe place. That's the reason why many attackers (particularly sex offenders) wait for their prey just out the prey's door.

So, what can we do to increase our attention and try to keep it to the maximum level until we are in our totally safe condition?

I personally found my own answers some years ago, when I was introduced to the field of non-technical skills.

Non-technical skills are generic skills that underpin and enhance technical tasks, improving safety by helping people to anticipate, identify and mitigate against errors. Non-technical skills refer to general skills, generic skills or life skills that are outside the formal education syllabus. These skills are not specific to any particular job, position, or workplace environment, but can be used widely in all jobs and tasks assigned.

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“...what can we do to increase our attention and try to keep it to the maximum level until we are in our totally safe condition?”

LINE OF DUTY DEATH BENEFIT INCREASES



The National Rifle Association is increasing its Line of Duty Death benefit from \$25,000 to \$35,000. This benefit is automatically available to any current NRA Member, who is also a public law enforcement officer and is killed in the line of duty.

"America's brave law enforcement officers get up every day, strap on a gun, and put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities and families," said Wayne LaPierre, EVP and CEO of the NRA. "They are the good guys who are there for us. The 5 million men and women of the NRA proudly stand with them and their families."

Started well over 20 years ago, the Line of Duty Death benefit is extended to the survivor(s) of the officer's family. It requires no additional effort on the part of any officer, as employment as a public law enforcement officer will be validated at the time of the claim.

"I hope we never lose another law enforcement officer in the line of duty," said NRA Law Enforcement Director Glen Hoyer. "God forbid it happens, but if it does, the NRA wants to be there to help the family of the fallen officer."

NRA's Law Enforcement Division was launched in 1960 to provide the law enforcement community with a means to certify law enforcement firearms instructors. Since then, their activities have expanded to include competition, as a direct extension of training, as well as, other assistance to law enforcement and military.

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According to Dr. Endsley's model, **situation awareness** is the perception of environmental elements with respect to time and/or space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status after some variable has changed, such as time, or some other variable, such as a predetermined event. It is also a field of study concerned with perception of the environment critical to decision-makers in complex, dynamic areas from aviation, air traffic control, ship navigation, power plant operations, military command and control, and emergency services such as fire-fighting and policing, to more ordinary but nevertheless complex tasks such as driving an automobile or bicycle.

It's a discipline started from the analysis and study of several incidents in high-risks fields like aviation to the energy services.

We are strongly persuaded that carrying, retaining and even using firearms is a really high-risk field, and we found deep benefits

applying **situation awareness** studies to the firearms world.

First of all, we have to consider that safety has to be our first concern when handling and carrying a firearm. In the timeline of events, handling and carrying a firearm safely should come before security. That which is most important in my way of thinking is it's useless to prepare ourselves to survive an external attack or threat if we are the first threat to ourselves due to our conduct.

As **situational awareness** teaches to identify and take care about several elements from the environment, we have to consider that when firearms are on the scene, the first element about which take care is to properly manage ourselves. So, if we look at the firearm as the dangerous element, we first have to take care about what the shooter does. Our attention must be at the maximum level until the danger is really over, which is when the weapon is properly holstered!

Last, but not least, remember that it is often a human factor – lack of attention and awareness – that causes incidents. Let's protect ourselves from any kind of risk, including ourselves, among the elements that require attention and focus until a weapon is handled.

Take care! **TFI**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Davide Mantovan is a lawyer, teacher and self-protection I firearms instructor. He is Security Manager and instructor for A.S.S.&T. S.r.l. company, in Milano (www.assetsrl.com). Davide is also President and founder of Take Care Safety Solutions (www.safetysolutions.it), an association promoting the research and public teaching of self-protection skills for women, from criminology theory to self defense skills.