

FATS. . .

A firearms training system that brings firing range facilities into the convenience of a small room has proved so successful for the AFP that plans are well in hand for the purchase of a second.

In the past 12 months, the Firearms Training Simulator (FATS) has become part of the AFP training syllabus, according to Sergeant David Ford, OIC Firearms Training Unit at AFP College, Weston.

"Recruits, firearms training instructors, special operations team members and detective training course participants all have been tested on it," he said. "It has proved a very valuable training aid."

The unit is housed at the Indoor Firing Range, Weston, but is mobile enough to be taken to Eastern and Southern Regions, where as many members as possible have been given the opportunity to train on it.

"In recent years, firearms training has consisted mainly of aimed accurate shooting at stationary paper targets from a static position, usually standing. Although this provides the basics for target shooting, it does not prepare the member for what he or she is likely to face in a confrontation situation.

"The FATS system helps train members in the decision-making process relating to the use of lethal force."

Live ammunition

Judgemental shooting is not a new concept. Several 16mm films have been produced over the years depicting 'shoot/no-shoot' situations but this type of training had to be conducted on an indoor firing range using live ammunition, Sergeant Ford said.

The critique on the student's performance relied on the firearms instructor correctly evaluating the member's judgement and accuracy, a system which was open to human error.

The FATS system combines the latest developments in simulation and laser technology, providing a hard copy of the student's results, displaying information on judgement, accuracy and reaction time, and so removing the human error factor. These records can, if required, be produced in court, he said.

The unit is portable and self-contained and can be set up in any room with



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adequate ventilation. Its main component is a low profile 80cm console which contains a dual disk drive computer, colour television projector, laser video disk player, VHS video cassette recorder, and a video camera.

Other components include a 3.5metre diagonal free-standing screen, four-speaker enhanced sound system, remote operation console containing a laser printer, a 30cm colour TV monitor and a standard Smith & Wesson model 10 .38 revolver with a laser retrofitted barrel.

Operating the system

The system is set up in front of the screen and the speakers arranged for the best acoustics. When it is turned on, the date and time are double-checked and a menu is displayed covering introduction, a random selection of 40 scenarios in the handgun mode, a random selection of 10 scenarios in the shotgun mode, and a silhouette mode allowing for practice of draw-and-fire from the hip and other handgun familiarisation techniques.

A gunsight mode sights the laser retrofitted revolver to the system and its camera, while a print-out facility covers the shooting results for up to 99 previous shooters.

A manual mode selects individual scenarios by numbers.

Sergeant Ford said a number of laser discs were available, containing 40 scenarios on armed robberies, response to silent alarms, VIP escort details, search warrants and various other patrol situations that can escalate into potentially dangerous situations.

"In many of the scenarios, the action starts the same but ends differently," he said. "This makes it more difficult to discern a pattern and thus 'second guess' the outcome of a particular situation."

The Smith & Wesson uses plastic practice shells to provide the shotfire and supply a flash of light to activate the laser in the barrel. The member fires the weapon in the standard manner, placing one to six shots, resulting in the laser in the barrel emitting a beam or beams which strike the screen.

The reflected light is detected by the sensor camera and the computer instantly stops the action and records the strikes. The 'bullet' holes are then displayed on the screen, each shot marked in a different colour to indicate the sequence in which the bullets would have struck the target.

Lethal hits

The computer then calculates the reaction time from when lethal force would have been justified to the first

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as community policing, which need to be factored into the police vision of the future.

"However, the value of the vision will be diminished if your own officers do not identify with it," he said. "The ranks also have to identify with the vision otherwise they will not do the things which are necessary to action the plan.

"There is also no value in having a vision if it is not articulated and actioned. There must be an action plan to give life to the vision. It must be a plan which will survive the short-term political time frame of three years; it must also be a plan which will not change direction as a straw in the wind, but focus, and keep focusing on the needs of the community even if those needs change with time.

Accountability

"Unless you go to the government with an accurately costed 10-year plan which addresses the key policing areas, the Future of Policing will indeed be more of the same because you will again be re-acting and not pro-acting by not determining the police agenda on behalf of the community."

On accountability, Mr Hughes said one way to provide it was to have appropriate yardsticks against which to measure performance. Under the stimulus of the Financial Administration and Audit Act of 1985, the WA Commissioner had adopted modern corporate planning concepts that outlined objectives and strategies which were measured by regular reporting of performance indicators. His reports were informative and a far cry from those of previous commissioners.

Mr Hughes saw a lack of flexibility as preventing implementation of the strategic vision and action plan which was so essential to the Future of Policing.

"Involve the whole force in the process of change," he said. "Once the strategic directions of the plan are known from external and internal market research, the strengths and weaknesses of the force would be determined by analysis of its internal systems.

"Internal analysis is also the first step in designing a participative approach to implementation of the objectives defined by the plan. Here 'participative' means getting the support of the ranks to implement the changes. They are the ones who will execute the plan, and if it does not have their support, nothing will happen."

The police force was no different from any other organisation or business which

needed to market itself to the public.

"You, as Commissioners, have a selling job to do," he said. "You have to sell to the community and you have to sell to the members of the force. You have to sell them on the merit of what you need to do in order to give substance to the Future of Policing. Your vision and your plan must be sold like any other product.

Effective policing

"Your own efficient, dynamic and enthusiastic public relations units are essential and they should work closely and actively with top management. They have a vital role in helping to forge public perceptions and therefore must be selected carefully and paid commercially competitive salaries to help you get the best."

However, public relations should not be restricted only to professionals, he said. Each member of the organisation had a part to play, particularly those with leadership responsibilities, and especially Commissioners.

Every police force also needed ongoing market research to monitor its PR program and to provide the basis for decision-making for future programs.

"In business, the results of a marketing program can be measured in terms of increased sales," he said. "The results of public relations programs are less easy to measure. Yet knowing the outcome is important in reviewing cost and benefits and will assist in designing future programs.

"Qualitative measures can come from unsolicited views expressed through the mail or on community access radio, and are two examples of results which should be carefully assessed.

"More precise measures can be established by professionally conducted market research which quantitatively measures responses to a carefully prepared and tested series of questions asked before and after the implementation of a marketing program," he said.

In conclusion, Mr Hughes said effective and ethical policing was of fundamental importance in maintaining a free and democratic society and should continue to be the foundation of all policing in the future. Commissioners should continue to protect their forces from political interference in operational and organisational matters.

"You will be neglecting your duties and responsibilities to your teams and to the public at large if you fail to develop (action) plans and do not use your best endeavours to persuade your governments to adopt them," he said.

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strike on the screen. It also calculates the accuracy; did the 'bullet' strike the offender or miss?

The system operates on the principal of centre mass aiming area which is taught to all AFP members and in which all shots above the waist are recorded as lethal hits. Hits below the waist or in the arms or legs are recorded as non-lethal hits.

Scoring is very similar to the current system used for the AFP Standard Qualifying Test and the results are displayed on the screen.

A camera facing the student tapes his or her actions and at the end of a scenario, the situation can be replayed with the member's performance displayed on the screen in synchronisation with the scenario, providing excellent training reinforcement.

"The system is designed to get the member thinking about survival and, in fact, a large number of officer-survival techniques are employed during the use of the system," Sergeant Ford said. "For example, 'voice commands and appropriate verbal challenges', 'the use of cover and concealment' and 'weapon handling skills' are used and provide the closest example to an actual confrontation situation that can be achieved during training.

"FATS is not designed to replace the 'Standard Qualifying Test' or live firing practice, but is a natural progression of training designed to equip a member with the knowledge and skills required where a decision relating to the use of lethal force is involved.

"The system has a three-pronged effect; it increases officer awareness, maximises training, and, most importantly, it reduces liability to both the member and the force," he said.

"Civil actions against police alleging misconduct in the use of firearms and the lack of proper training are becoming more frequent.

"The type and amount of firearms training which should be given to police officers has been the subject of discussion for many years but one thing that cannot be argued is that there is an obligation to provide every member of the force with the best training possible," he said.