

Defensive Strategies



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What's the difference between strategy and tactics, and why should you care? Why is this column called "Defensive Strategies" and not "Defensive Tactics"?

Both terms have very particular meaning and application in various branches of the military. Both terms are also used by law enforcement, and often by people who are just regular folks like us. What do they mean?

John Farnam, a former military guy with an impressive amount of military and civilian training on his teaching resume, says, "Strategy" is a behavioral outline, a blueprint consisting of general rules and fundamental goals. Agencies and groups work with strategy, necessarily via consensus (or autocracy) that drives thoughts, that drive actions. Innovation and intellectual advance are not on their agenda, because constitutionally, they can't be."

Strategies and Tactics Combine for Self Defense

Simply, strategy is a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a specific aim. Militarily, it is the art of planning and directing overall military operations. Both imply comprehensive, long-term activities that set the direction and scope of some activities.

Strategy also implies, and requires, a goal. If your goal is to retire early, a financial strategy to achieve that goal might involve saving and investing far more money in growth securities than your friends who intend to continue working for most of their lives. If you are responsible for marketing a new product, your strategy might involve using social networks to generate a favorable buzz about your product. If your goal is to keep yourself safe when you move to a new job in a new city, part of your strategy might be to evaluate potential apartments with security at the top of your criteria list, and be prepared to pay more in rent for a dwelling that can be secured. If your goal is to be able to keep yourself safe any time, anywhere, your strategy might include always having your defensive firearm within reach.

Strategy is an ideal, not a specific action plan. It is your thousand foot view of your plan for the future.

Over time, things change, and so must strategies. Sometimes this is because your goals change. Switching from a job you hated (and wanted to retire early from) to one

you love could make you change your early retirement goal, and hence your investment strategy. Sometimes strategies have to change because they aren't working. If your new product isn't getting the buzz you hoped for, maybe your strategy should change to a more traditional advertising campaign. Strategies might have to change if the world changes. If you suddenly have to spend a lot of time in a place where you can't carry a gun (and they would find out if you tried), you might need to modify your safety strategy to include things that don't require a firearm.

Strategies can be developed by individuals, or by groups, hence the popularity of "strategic planning" in organizations. Lots and lots of time and effort can go into formulating group-acceptable goals and strategies for achieving them. The process is usually quicker for individuals.

Now let's move on to tactics.

Tactics, is the military/police science that deals with securing objectives set by strategy, especially the technique of deploying and directing troops in effective maneuvers against an enemy. It means a procedure or set of maneuvers engaged in to achieve a short-term goal.

It means a plan for actually, actively doing something. It is the specific, expedient method or procedure for carrying out a strategy, here and now.

Tactics are the specific actions,

sequences of actions, and schedules you use to fulfill your strategy. If you have more than one strategy you will have different tactics for each.

Farnam has pointed out that while strategies may be set by groups, only individuals or small groups can employ tactics.

Massad Ayoob, another luminary in the firmament of lethal force instructors, says that tactics comprise applying common sense, with a knowledge of relevant disciplines, to personal security issues, as they present themselves.

Police defensive tactics usually involves training in the use of tools or one's own body for fighting.

Personal tactics depend on what is happening in the moment. Your strategy might have been to avoid trouble with a stalker by always going to and from work with another person, but that person is sick today, you are on your own, and he shows up. What are your tactical choices now? You might avoid him, or try to placate him, but physical confrontation, if it can't be avoided, must be won.

Your strategy for dealing with a panhandler might be to throw some money on the ground for him as you make a quick getaway. But if you are wearing clothes without pockets for throw-down money when you encounter a potentially aggressive street person, what are you going to do now? You might need to throw him some money from your wallet, or even the whole wallet, to keep him occupied as you make a speedy retreat. If he comes after you instead of the money, your tactics might switch again to drawing your gun and telling him to "Back off!"

Strategy is what you expect, and plan and train for. Tactics is what you have to do in a real situation. No matter how good your strate-

gic planning, things will never happen exactly the way you expect them. You must be prepared to try a different tactical approach, and another different one if the first doesn't work. If what you planned for isn't working, you might even come up with something new to say or do. It is at the tactical level that new methods and techniques are invented.

Real life challenges always present issues that you didn't exactly include in your strategy. Forgive yourself for tactics that didn't work. Celebrate what did work, especially if it is new. Learn from what did not work the way you hoped and expected, and revise your plans for future situations.

This PDCA cycle of Planning, Doing, Checking on the results, and Acting to make revisions is a

process that in business is called "continuous improvement." In the military, After Action Reports (AARs) are supposed to help perform the function of determining what worked, what didn't, and what should be changed.

But you don't have to be a military strategist to use these concepts. How long has it been since you re-evaluated your strategies for personal defense? Do you need more training or practice to ensure that your tactical skills will be there when you need them? Take any tactical experience you have had, and ask yourself what could have gone better, and how you could change your tactics to enhance the probability of a good outcome next time.

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