

**APPREHENDING FLEEING  
SUSPECTS**

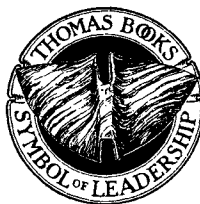


# APPREHENDING FLEEING SUSPECTS

Suspect Tactics and Perimeter Control

*By*

JACK H. SCHONELY



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## FOREWORD

Law enforcement is a dangerous profession interspersed with tactical challenges, adrenalin flow, teamwork and ultimately, the apprehension of criminals. There is nothing more satisfying for a police officer than to observe suspicious activity, investigate it and end up in a vehicle and/or foot pursuit where the suspect is safely apprehended. Apprehending fleeing suspects is one of the most difficult aspects of our profession. In this book, Jack Schonely addresses the basics of how to safely capture suspects who attempt to flee from the police.

During the reader's review, one will quickly realize that Jack is a seasoned and highly competent police officer whose intent is to clearly offer his experiences as a template for police officers from the smallest to the largest of departments to consider when faced with a situation involving, "fleeing suspects." His focus is on whether to chase or contain, how to set up perimeters, management of the incident, physical conditioning, use of airborne resources, canines, communications, tactical deployment, training, suspect tactics, and most importantly incident debriefing techniques.

This book is one of the most comprehensive and "to the point" manuscripts that I have had the pleasure to review in my 38 years of law enforcement. *Apprehending Fleeing Suspects* is the how to, nuts and bolts of field enforcement tactics and is not only focused on "suspect apprehension," but on officer safety. A must read for the professional police officer.

MIKE HILLMANN, DEPUTY CHIEF  
*Special Operations Bureau*  
*Los Angeles Police Department*



## PREFACE

The training of law enforcement officers has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. New policing techniques and technology have law enforcement agencies of all sizes changing how they do business on a daily basis. The officers of today receive training on modern equipment that existed only in the imaginations of their predecessors. Some of the training relates to officer tactics and survival and recently a great deal of emphasis has been directed towards vehicle pursuits. One particular area of police work gets little or no attention in the training realm, how to successfully and safely apprehend a fleeing suspect on foot.

Most officers learn about foot pursuits by being in foot pursuit. On-the-job training or “OJT” has been the technique used to teach young officers how to handle this inevitable event. Officers learn through trial and error as to what works and what doesn’t. In the meantime many of the criminals being chased easily get away. Unfortunately, some of these criminals are extremely dangerous individuals who must be captured for public safety.

There are excellent containment techniques that have proven success. These techniques are available to every law enforcement officer fighting crime. The success or failure of this tool depends on training and knowledge prior to the foot pursuit ever taking place. Not only must the officer in foot pursuit have this knowledge, but all of the officers responding to assist the primary officer must possess the same information. This technique truly requires a team effort from start to finish.

As important as learning and understanding “perimeter containment” techniques, is understanding what criminals

will do to avoid capture. The criminal element has learned how law enforcement operates and has updated the tactics they use to evade us. These tactics are constantly changing, but certain trends are very evident.

This book will introduce the reader to “perimeter containment” as a technique in apprehending a fleeing suspect on foot. It will also provide information on the tactics being used by criminals to avoid capture, working with airborne law enforcement, and K-9 search operations.

Whether this technique is used nightly, weekly, a couple times a year, or once in a career, it is vital to be prepared before the event occurs. This knowledge, along with training and practice, gives the advantage to the officer, particularly during critical incidents where the capture of the suspect is paramount.

J.H.S.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have had the privilege of working with so many outstanding police officers in the past twenty-four years. I have learned much of the information shared in this book working the streets in a patrol car with many of those officers. I am grateful for their tactical knowledge, street smarts, and their friendship. I am particularly grateful to the men and women of the Los Angeles Police Department's 77th Street Division to whom I owe so much. 77th Street is where I learned to be a street cop on the "morning watch" and where I first learned about how to capture a fleeing suspect.

I am also thankful to have worked with a small group of courageous officers in Metropolitan Division K-9. Thanks to all I worked with during those five exciting years, so much of this book's roots started during those perimeter searches for the most dangerous felons Los Angeles had to offer. A special thanks to Danny Bunch and Jim Hagerty for their friendship and shared passion on the subject of perimeter containment.

The information from this book was fine-tuned by working with so many outstanding officers at Air Support Division. Thanks to all of you for the countless scenarios shared with me as you fought crime from the air.

Thanks to Patrick McNamara, Kris Owen, Bruce Hunt, Bob Green, Rick Lawin, Mike Grossman, Leslie Judge, Chris Warren, and Jim Weigh for their unique skills, never-ending support, honest opinions, and most of all their friendship.

Many thanks to Deputy Chief Mike Hillmann for contributing the foreword to this book. His leadership and tactical knowledge are appreciated by all of us in the LAPD.

Glenn Grossman and Los Angeles Daily News photographer Hans Gutknecht contributed the photographs for the book. They are both very talented photographers and I am fortunate to feature their work in the pages to follow and even more fortunate to call them friends.

A special thanks to my entire family for their unwavering support of all that I do. I am forever grateful for having an incredible wife and children. Tracy, Ian, and Megan, I love you.

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Foreword</i> .....	vii
<i>Preface</i> .....	ix
 <i>Chapter</i>	
1. FOOT PURSUIT VS. CONTAINMENT .....	3
2. DECISION TO CONTAIN .....	11
3. RESPONDING OFFICERS .....	25
4. PERIMETER MANAGEMENT .....	31
5. WORKING WITH AIRBORNE ASSETS .....	41
6. K-9 SEARCH OPERATIONS .....	55
7. SUSPECT TRENDS AND TACTICS .....	63
8. EXISTING CONTAINMENT TACTICS .....	75
9. HIDING LOCATIONS .....	83
10. TRAINING TO MEET THE CHALLENGE ...	103
 <i>Index</i> .....	 113
<i>About the Author</i> .....	115



**APPREHENDING FLEEING  
SUSPECTS**



## Chapter 1

### FOOT PURSUIT VS. CONTAINMENT

**F**oot pursuits of criminals can be one of the most hazardous situations that an officer can encounter. They are extremely unpredictable and contain many challenges and hazards in addition to the suspect. Many officers over the years have found themselves chasing a suspect through a back yard only to find themselves flat on their backs seconds later from an unseen clothesline. The list of hazards is endless particularly during hours of darkness. The unseen clothesline could just as easily be the unseen pit bull, open trench, barbed wire fence, or empty swimming pool. Officers have received serious injuries from hazards such as these as the suspect runs off into the darkness.

Every foot pursuit is unique, but every officer must be realistic when evaluating the situation. During foot pursuits many tactical decisions are made quickly by the officer. One of those decisions will be whether to continue to chase or attempt to contain the suspect. Some of the factors involved in this decision are listed below.

- Age of the suspect.
- Nature of the crime.
- Is the suspect known to be armed?
- Location of the foot pursuit.
- Time of day.
- Physical fitness of the officer.
- Available resources.
- Number of suspects.

### **AGE OF THE SUSPECT**

Many suspects are younger than even most rookie officers on the street. This is significant for obvious reasons, speed and fitness. A quick look at a suspect as he bails out of a vehicle will make it clear to the officer what kind of effort is going to be required to chase, catch, and handcuff the suspect. Evaluating the suspect and yourself at the same time is a must for officer safety in this situation. What are the realistic chances of my chasing down this suspect?

### **NATURE OF THE CRIME**

This factor is not always clear to the pursuing officer. Most officers have experienced capturing a shoplifter only to find out hours later that the suspect is wanted for a more serious offense in another jurisdiction. Because this is such a common occurrence in law enforcement, officers should be on guard and use extreme caution during every foot pursuit. Rarely, do you know *exactly* what you have in front of you.

If the crime is known at the time of the chase, it should be evaluated from not only an officer safety perspective, but overall public safety perspective as well. Did this suspect attempt to steal a car or did the suspect shoot someone? The suspect's actions and desperation will certainly be different for these two crimes and the risk to you and the public are different as well. Containment is oftentimes the better choice with a more serious crime.

### **IS THE SUSPECT KNOWN TO BE ARMED?**

This factor can have several forms. One is that the officer pursuing observes a weapon on the suspect as the foot pur-



suit ensues. Second, was a weapon used during the commission of the crime as reported by a victim? Third, is the suspect known to the officer and has that suspect been armed in the past? All of these possibilities put officer safety at risk and must be part of the decision process on “foot pursuit vs. containment.” All foot pursuits have some risk involved. A foot pursuit of an armed suspect is dangerous and should be avoided if at all possible. There are certainly times when we in law enforcement are required to take risks to complete our duties. If given a choice between entering a dark rear yard where a suspect with a gun just turned the corner or setting a containment, the containment is in most cases the best choice.

Treating all suspects during a foot pursuit as if they were armed is a good practice. During the foot pursuit the suspects’ actions should be watched carefully. If the suspect is reaching for or holding their waistband, officers should consider this when deciding to continue to pursue or contain. Extreme caution should be used at every turn and every obstacle.

### LOCATION OF THE FOOT PURSUIT

How familiar with the area is the officer who is in foot pursuit? This can be important when it comes to those hazards discussed earlier. You can be sure that if the suspect has chosen this location to bail out and run that *he* knows what hazards are ahead. Most jurisdictions have “problem locations” that are well known to officers. If the suspect is running in one of those areas, the officer should consider that as an increased risk of continuing to pursue.

During vehicle pursuits, how the pursuit terminates is a factor to consider with regards to location. Did the suspect choose to bail out at a particular location or did he crash his vehicle? Suspects who choose to bail out tend to be very

familiar with where they are about to run. Officers should take that into consideration and evaluate the risk.

A second part of the location factor is this. Are you running down a sidewalk or are you going into rear yards hopping fences? These are two very different locations with regards to the risk to the officer. Even if the officer decides to contain rather than pursue, it is often a good idea to chase and keep the suspect in sight as long as possible and then contain when the suspect turns into the houses. The risk is minimal running down a sidewalk and knowing exactly where the suspect turns into the houses will benefit the containment later.

### **TIME OF DAY**

This is a simple concept; darkness increases the risk of *all* of these factors and must be considered tactically.

### **PHYSICAL FITNESS OF THE OFFICER**

This factor is seldom discussed but could be the difference between success and failure and more importantly life or death. Knowing your personal limitations is the key. An officer who stays in good physical condition not only has a better chance of catching the suspect, but is also better prepared for an altercation that could ensue. It is one thing to chase a suspect for two blocks and catch him; it is another to have to fight him for several minutes after the chase to get the handcuffs on. Are you physically prepared for that scenario? If you choose to chase rather than contain, consider the consequences.

## **AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

This factor can in some ways be one of the most important in determining whether to chase or contain. Resources vary greatly from agency to agency. Many metropolitan police departments have large numbers of officers on patrol at any given time and some have aviation units quickly responding to assist. Response to an officer in foot pursuit will be swift and decisive. Other agencies are spread very thin where the nearest back-up is ten minutes or more away.

Every officer must have a realistic assessment of how long it will take for the first backing officer to arrive on scene. An officer who knows that the response will be very fast has a little more discretion in choosing to chase or contain. It is certainly a more difficult decision for the officer who knows that help is on the way, but that it will take some time to respond. The risk is greater for that officer. Thousands of brave officers deal with that reality every day when they put on the badge.

Available resources with a reasonable estimated time of arrival play a significant role when containing an area. This will become more evident later, but for now it is important to know that this factor must be considered in realistic terms when making tactical and officer safety decisions. Officer safety should always be a primary concern, capturing the suspect is second.

## **NUMBER OF SUSPECTS**

This should be common sense but is certainly worth mentioning. Going in foot pursuit of multiple suspects with only one officer should be avoided. The officer should attempt to keep the suspects in sight from a safe distance and set perimeter containment when the opportunity arises.

All of these factors must be evaluated in seconds while chasing the suspect. It is a lot to think about in a short

amount of time. It is vital to think about these factors ahead of time, talk about them with fellow officers, and train for these inevitable scenarios. Thus, the factors will become second nature and the tactical decision-making process will be smooth and fast. Be prepared, have a plan, execute the plan.

## COMMUNICATION

Even with all of this going on, we haven't even talked about communication. A clear and concise radio broadcast is oftentimes the key to a successful foot pursuit and or perimeter containment. This is always challenging for officers. The heart is pumping, adrenaline is flowing, and the respiratory rate is through the roof. Now, should we expect the officer to make a clear radio broadcast? Absolutely, it's a must. This is the only way any help is going to get to where they need it.

The location is the priority. Even if nothing else gets out, *the location is vital*. Without that, all the help in the world is meaningless. But don't settle on that because success and safety are going to be determined by the information broadcasted over the radio. The fact that an officer is in foot pursuit followed by the location and direction of travel is a great start to success. An example of a concise first broadcast might look something like this.

**“Unit One is in foot pursuit, Westbound Oak Street approaching Main.”**

Many times officers try to say too much when only basic information is required. What information does the officer responding need to know to assist the officer in foot pursuit? A description of the suspect is secondary to location and direction of travel. Keeping it simple is best. This also allows the officer to breathe between broadcasts. A long drawn-out broadcast with too much information takes a lot of air and