

## **You HAVE TO Be A Sheepdog On The Plane**

By: Frank Borelli

This past week I enjoyed a conversation with a "Flight Deck Officer". That would be, as I understand it, a pilot who is armed. Why they don't just continue to call them "pilots" is beyond me. Why do they need a special name? Especially one that might point out the fact that they're armed to any bad guys paying attention? We'll leave that alone for now. The gist of our conversation was that - in his experience - contemporary Use of Force guidelines as well as defensive tactics are being taught to Flight Deck Officers. He felt that this was inappropriate since the risk is potentially so much greater in a plane, and because so much of the defensive tactics skills being taught today simply don't work in the limited space of airplane aisles. His comments got me thinking and here we go...

Dave Grossman, a well known speaker / trainer in today's warrior community, describes people as fitting into one of three categories:

**Sheep:** The average person. All they want to do is live their life and be left alone. They are peaceful and do no intended harm. If attacked, they will submit to demands and not fight back.

**Wolves:** The predators. These are the people who commit crimes against others. They prey on the sheep. Violence is their tool. Terrorizing is entertainment.

**Sheepdogs:** The protectors. The sheep don't really like the sheepdogs all that much. They don't trust the sheepdogs. After all, the sheepdog stays to himself on the outside fringes of the group. If he gets angry, the sheepdog snarls and bares his teeth, but if you leave him alone, he'll leave you alone and all is peaceful. If he is, or those he is supposed to protect are, attacked, he will fight back and fight back hard. He refuses to be prey.

The large majority of today's society - especially here in America I think - are sheep. They just want to live their lives in peace to pursue life, liberty, prosperity and happiness. Most of them don't tend to trust the sheepdogs. If you doubt that, take a look at any newspaper or newscast, or do a Google search on "police use of force". You'll most likely find some news article about how some police officer is being sued or questioned because of an action he took to defend himself or to protect someone else. The sheep would be perfectly happy if we sheepdogs just weren't around... until the wolf shows up.

As Dave Grossman says, "When the wolf shows up, the whole flock of sheep will try to hide behind that one sheepdog."

On September 11, 2001, a group of passengers on Flight 93 decided that they would not be sheep. The terrorists were the wolves. On three other planes, because of what they didn't know and what airline staff had been taught to do in response to hijackings, the passengers didn't resist or fight back. They did what nearly everyone would have done in their situation. They sat still and let the flight crew and flight attendants deal with the problem. On Flight 93, when they found out what the hijackers were doing with the planes, they decided to fight back. That decision changed them from being sheep to being sheepdogs. In today's post-911 world, I submit to you that every passenger on every plane needs to be a sheepdog.

Now we have to consider how to do that given the physical characteristics of a plane. I can't afford to fly first class, so usually my seat is just wide enough for me to fit in, and if I have a gun on my hip it's pressed into the armrest. The aisle is just wide enough to walk down, and not even do that without banging into every seat you're going by unless you walk on an angle to your steps. I ask you, How are we supposed to fight in such an environment using the typical skills we're taught?

Consider what defensive tactics training you've had. Think about it all: Kicks, punches, elbow strikes, knee blitzes, control holds, wrist locks, arm bars, brachial thumps / stuns, etc. How much of what you've been taught do you have time and space to perform in an airplane aisle? And then, once you have taken some positive action, what follow up action have you been taught to secure the subject after you've taken them down / incapacitated them?

Throughout our careers we've been taught specific Use of Force guidelines or Rules of Engagement (depending on what uniform you wear). If a person is making threatening statements but isn't displaying any aggressive behaviors (on the ground) there is a limit to what you can do to them: verbal commands, and maybe OC Spray if the person continues to be non-compliant. Now put that same person on a plane - it's a whole different story.

The risk presented by the person on the ground is limited. Unless he/she has a bomb strapped onto their body, they really can only do a limited amount of damage and harm. Even if they do have a bomb strapped on and ready to detonate, the amount of damage they can do is limited by the number of people within the necessary

proximity of them and their explosive device. But what about on a plane? Can ONE person cause enough harm or damage on a plane to affect it's safe operation? Since there are only two people on the plane who have to be killed to make the plane crash (the pilot and co-pilot) I submit to you that the person on the plane who presents any type of threatening posture should be viewed as a threat to EVERY person on the plane. How many lives is that? 200? 300? It depends on the model of airplane and how many tickets were sold - how many seats are filled.

That said, I view a threat to those 200+ people as far different from a threat to a handful of people. On a plane when a person gets belligerent and makes any kind of threat or causes any kind of disturbance, I believe that an accelerated use of force / rules of engagement protocol needs to be approved, and indeed mandated. Now, I have to say up front that I'm not familiar with much of the Air Marshall program. What rules they operate under are not known to me, but given that our country is governed by the Constitution, Federal Laws, State, County and Local laws, I'd be willing to bet that their rules aren't much different from the cop on the ground's. But let's even take cops out of the picture. What if there is no Air Marshall on board and a person is getting stupid? I would hope that the Flight Attendants have been sufficiently trained to intervene properly, but if they aren't or don't? Then it's up to the passengers - any sheepdog on the plane - to step up and put the potential predator down. I don't mean kill them necessarily. Depending on circumstances I believe that a warning should be given. At that point the Wolf knows a sheepdog is there and approaching. His choices are simple: stand down or be put down. No other option exists or should be discussed. No nice, "Please would you be so kind?" The warning should be simple and straight to the point: "Sir (or Ma'am), you represent a threat to the safety of this plane. Sit down and shut up or be put down and locked up." Arrest powers don't matter. If a Wolf gets put down on a plane by Joe Average Citizen, the pilot will let the other end know and Air Marshalls or local police will be waiting when the plane lands.

Once the warning has been given, two options exist: the Wolf sits down and shuts up, or the Sheepdog puts him down - and down hard. Think about it: the Wolf has expressed his desire to do harm and then has ignored his only warning not to. To me, that indicates his intention to move forward with his stated goal of doing harm. We simply cannot allow that to happen. Too many lives are at risk. Time to act and act definitively.

Now, I ask you: If the threat you face is a potentially lethal threat, then what options are open to you? The answer is ANYTHING. Sure, a nice brachial stun might be effective if you can get positioned and have the room to do it. A wrist-lock takedown and then roll him over into a nice arm bar for holding onto him would be great if room permitted. But that's what cops might do - not the average citizen. What can the average citizen do?

Well, if Mr. Wolf can't breath, he can't fight (for long). If he can't see, he can't fight. If he can't stand, he can't fight (effectively). So, I submit that Mr. Wolf should immediately find himself under attack from Mr. Sheepdog, and Mr. Sheepdog should be attacking in such a fashion as to:

- 1) Remove Mr. Wolf's ability to breath by attacking his throat (yeah, he might die, but he HAS presented lethal force)
- 2) Remove Mr. Wolf's ability to see (accomplished in a number of ways and some of them won't even permanently blind him)
- 3) Remove Mr. Wolf's ability to stand (it doesn't take a whole lot to break a knee and broken knees tend to be rather distracting to the person who owns the knee that is broken)

Does that sound rather harsh? Too bad. The Sheepdog doesn't typically worry about limiting the amount of damage he does to the attacking Wolf. In fact, I'm pretty sure that the Sheepdog would be perfectly happy to have the Wolf lying dead at his feet, no longer a threat and a warning to all others of his kind: leave this flock alone. THIS Wolf thought he'd get an easy meal and all he got was dead. Care to join him?

I know. We're human. We're supposed to be compassionate and caring and not blood thirsty. Remember me, the Sheepdog: If you leave me alone, I'll leave you alone. Let me and my flock live in peace to pursue prosperity and happiness. Mess with me or my sheep and I will show absolutely no mercy in defending myself or them. If you die in the process, that's the price you pay for having been so stupid as to have attacked THIS Flock on my watch.

THIS is the attitude every citizen must strive to have on every flight. I know they can't. I know some are simply unable to perform acts of violence. Then again, if 5% can, that's 15 Sheepdogs on a flight of 300 people. 10 on a flight of 200. 5 on a flight of 100. Against one or two wolves? We should be able to stomp them into the deck and the sit on them until we land. Think about it...