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SECURING SCHOOLS AGAINST ACTIVE  
SHOOTERS  
A MODEL FOR SUCCESS

# Securing Schools Against Armed Violence

4/18/23

## I. Introduction:

Acts of armed violence on K-12 campuses, commonly referred to as “active shooters,” are steadily rising. Statistics, adjusted for various purposes, are readily available through numerous sources so graphs, charts, and narratives addressing such are not included in this paper. Key to this paper is the fact that very few school districts across the nation have taken reasonable steps to dissuade perpetrators from exacting violence on schools. This lack of effort has created impatience among parents, teachers, and legislators. The famous Columbine High School shooting case, which occurred 24 years ago on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999, turned out to be the initiation of a new form of violence, a form which has grown dramatically in scope and scale. The fact that we are 24 years removed from the event and nothing has changed much in terms of school security, points to either an unwillingness to implement a shift in campus security philosophies or uncertainty on what to do.

Experts in the field of violence and in protection of “soft” targets find the lack of action frustrating. The fields of security, law enforcement, mental health, human behavior, and several others, are capable of working together to make “active shootings” on school campuses extremely rare. However, to do so requires a strong shift in the philosophies of education relating to campus environments. What is needed is a model from which to begin the process of shifting the philosophy.

SRW, Inc., has such a model, the model being based on SRW, Inc.’s trademarked logo, PREVENT – DETER – DETECT – DEFEND™.

This paper will outline how the model works to present a multi-faceted approach to securing a facility and/or persons against violence, using a multi-faceted approach. In protecting facilities, persons, or both, the model delineates the key phases of such protection.

## II. The Model:

- a. **PREVENT:** Prevention of acts of violence consists of those activities which would alleviate the stresses, anxieties, frustrations, anger, mental illnesses, and/or other emotional components which cause an individual to “target” a facility or persons considered to be the source of the emotional components, or considered key to the “message” being delivered by the perpetrator.
- b. **DETER:** Deterrence, in this model, is the “hardening” of the potential target, whether a facility or an individual or group. In the world of targeting by violent perpetrators, hardening means to make it so challenging or arduous to attack the target as to render success, in the mind of the perpetrator, highly unlikely. What then occurs is either selection of a “softer” target or attempts to further develop the plan, both of which exposes the perpetrator to a greater likelihood of detection due to an increase in necessary targeting activities. (See Attachment A: SRW, Inc.’s Security Model)

c. **DETECT:** Detection is the process of identifying that a perpetrator has targeted the facility or the person(s) and is currently somewhere in the attack phases. Detection uses human source activities along with myriad technological applications to identify ideations, behaviors, actions, and activities indicating that a perpetrator is in the process of planning an attack or is in the stages of initiating an attack. (See Attachment B: Phases of an Attack)

D. **DEFEND:** Defending includes the specific actions occurring once an attack has been initiated, particularly in the “Gap Time.” Ideally, this is a planned and organized response to the attack and involves physical facility interventions and protocols as well as personnel actions such as armed response or other emergency action measures prepared, trained, and directed by key organizational leaders. (See Attachment C: The Gap Time)

### **III. Example Components/Activities/Measures Within The Model:**

Caveat: these example Components/Activities/Measures are not all inclusive, there are many additional ones. The point is to identify an effective series of such in order to produce the desired impact of affecting the likelihood of effective targeting by a perpetrator.

a. **Prevention:**

- i. Enforced policies limiting derogatory behaviors, such as bullying, racial or other discrimination, which may cause a potential perpetrator to see the school or related individuals as the cause of their psychological crises or personal isolation.
- ii. Development of activities, events, and an atmosphere of contribution by all persons and which reduce the likelihood of increasing isolation of any one individual or like-minded group of individuals who may respond violently.
- iii. Early warning systems identifying struggling or troubled individuals and resulting in effective interventions which protect the school and students from risk.

b. **Deterrence:**

- i. The use of security science and its principles in order to secure a facility against an attack.
- ii. The use of visual indicators of vigilance sufficient to deter/disrupt an attack or provide sufficient warning of attack, enabling measures to be enacted which make the success of the attack unlikely.
- iii. The presence of, where deemed appropriate, armed and trained personnel to repel or end an attack.
- iv. Development of a publicly recognized Information Operation (IO) precluding the targeting of the school or person(s) for an attack.

- c. **Detection:**
  - i. The use of technology to identify when a perpetrator is approaching the facility or person(s) for the purpose of initiating an attack.
  - ii. The development of trusted sources and informants who provide early information in reference to a perpetrator planning an attack or engaged in the initiation of an attack.
  - iii. The development of an atmosphere wherein a student will feel comfortable approaching a person in authority and providing information or discussing concerns about a person who may be considering an attack or is in the process of planning an attack.
  - iv. The legal use of media and internet monitoring to identify when attack ideation and/or planning are occurring.
  
- d. **Defense:**
  - i. Active personnel measures and countermeasures for disrupting the effectiveness of an attack and/or defeating an attack during the GAP TIME and before the attack can achieve success in the mind of the perpetrator.
  - ii. Development of Communication Systems which enable the rapid use of **SRW, Inc.'s Four-Step Response Model, i.e., FLEE – BARRICADE – HIDE – ATTACK**. These communication systems would allow for multiple instructions, based on the model, to be issued simultaneously throughout the facility and resulting in effective application of the model.
  - iii. Development of systems for rapid notification of First Responders in order to reduce the GAP TIME as much as possible.
  - iv. Use of defensive access controls, mobility barriers, secure door closures, ballistic materials, and other related items to limit, disrupt, and/or prevent access to students or staff by the perpetrator.

#### **IV. Priority Phasing:**

Effectively securing schools requires a long-term, multi-phased approach driven by the availability of funding. Given the continued increase in school shooting events, utilizing an effective model such as the SRW, Inc. model, will result in proper planning processes and effective prioritization of specific action-based steps, such as follows:

**Phase 1.** Development and application of Risk Assessment principles and matrices for identifying school districts at high, medium, and low risk for violence.

**Phase 2.** Site Survey and Risk Analyses for specific, designated campuses. The Site Survey, using an approved format such as SRW, Inc. uses, identifies strengths and weaknesses in terms of the security model and prioritizes sustainment of the strengths alongside solutions to the weaknesses, and includes recommendations for change, enhancement, redesign, etc. The recommendations include cost estimates in order to assist in budgeting. The Risk Analysis for each campus would provide a reasonably objective look at the potential for an act of violence on campus, as well as identify some subjective evaluative mechanisms for ongoing monitoring.

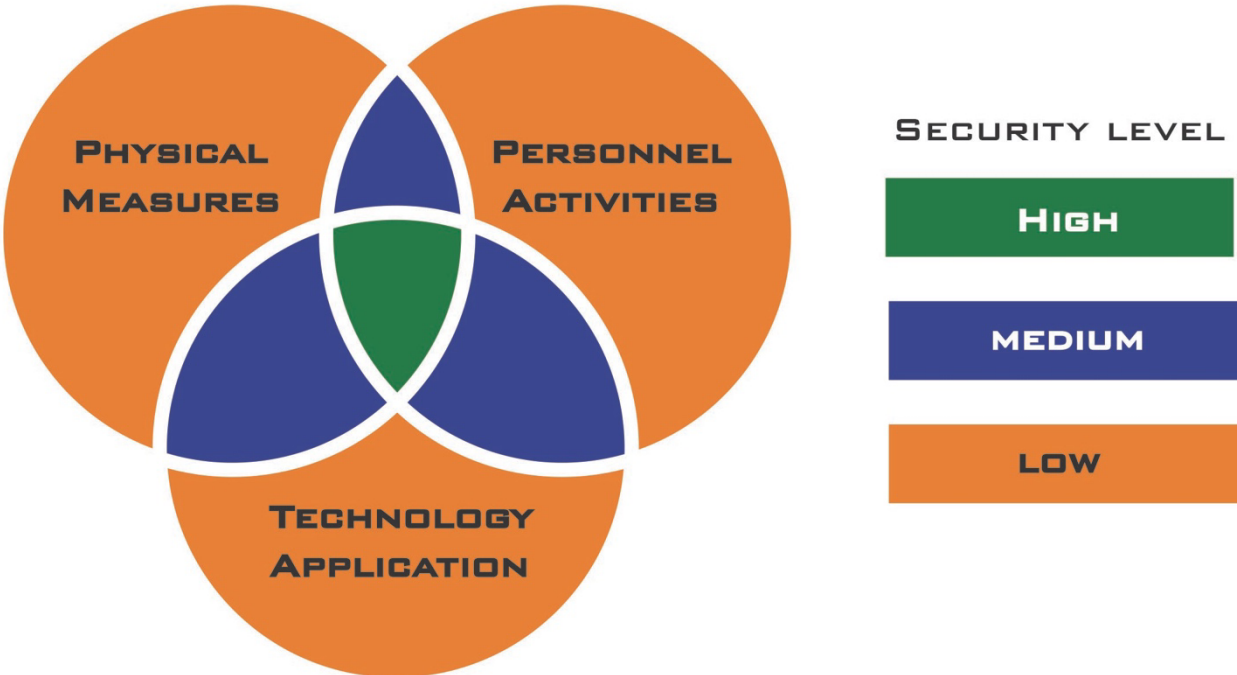
**Phase 3:** Development of short-term Active Measures and Countermeasures to violence, including the training of students (grades 9-12 recommended, lower grades not recommended) staff, teachers, security officers, SROs, local law enforcement, emergency medical providers, and others, on coordinated responses to violence. This would also include the incorporation of ballistic materials, communication systems, alarm systems, and other rapidly deployed technologies to supplement security, as well as violence response.

**Phase 4:** Long-term changes focusing on secure and protected campus practices, procedures, and protocols. This includes development of future design and architectural changes employing CPTED principles, early intervention educational practices, and a community-based whole-of-government approach to violence.

END

**ATTACHMENT A: SRW, INC.'S SITE SECURITY MODEL**

**SRW SITE SECURITY CONCEPT**



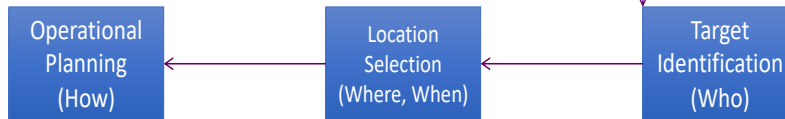
# ATTACHMENT B: PHASES OF AN ATTACK

## PHASES OF AN ATTACK

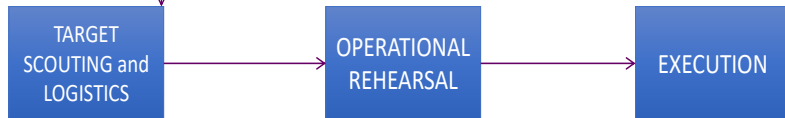
### Formulation Phase



### Preparation Phase

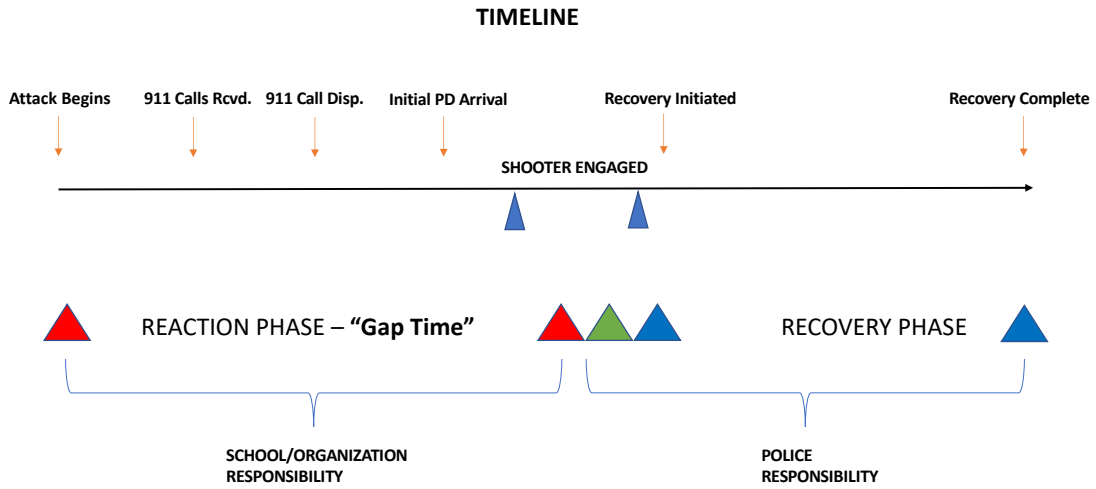


### Action Phase



# ATTACHMENT C: THE “GAP TIME”

## L.E. RESPONSE CAPABILITY VS. REALITY OF THE GAP TIME





**APPENDIX 1: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RANDY WATT FOUNDER AND  
PRESIDENT OF SRW, INC.**

Steven R. Watt (Randy) is the President of SRW, Inc., ([www.srwinc.us](http://www.srwinc.us), [www.warriorcreed.us](http://www.warriorcreed.us)), a training and consulting business he started in 2008. SRW, Inc. provides Leadership, Business Development, Safety/Security, and Special Operations training and services to select client organizations. Randy holds a Master of Strategic Studies Degree from the U.S. Army War College, a MBA from the University of Phoenix, a Bachelor of Police Science Degree from Weber State College, and is a graduate of Session 191 of the F.B.I. National Academy.

Randy retired as Chief of the Ogden, Utah, Police Department on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, after serving the Department for 36 years. Chief Watt is a recipient of various medals and commendations, including the Department's Medal of Valor (twice awarded). A long-time member of the Ogden/Metro S.W.A.T. Team, Chief Watt has extensive experience in tactical operations, ranging from high-risk warrant service to hostage rescues. Chief Watt was also a long-time firearms and tactics instructor for the Department, as well as for Utah P.O.S.T.

Chief Watt is a nationally recognized expert in the field of law enforcement special operations and counter-terrorism. He has been involved with projects supporting the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). He is an expert witness on Law Enforcement use of force and counter-terrorism. He is a regular contributor and speaker on Active Shooter Response for a variety of clients, and has been the keynote speaker at the annual Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Conference, the lead DHS training entity for unified Active Shooter Response headquartered at the University of Texas, San Marcos. Chief Watt has assisted school districts around the country with advice and guidance on how to secure their schools and be prepared for active violence on campus. He is a former lead instructor for the National Tactical Officers Association (N.T.O.A.) in a variety of S.W.A.T. Leadership and Terrorism courses, and was the presenter in the first national-level Active Shooter Response training video produced in 2000 after the columbine incident.

Prior to the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, then-Lieutenant Watt, was co-chair of the Tactical Response Sub-Committee and spent three years studying terrorism, writing the tactical response plan for protection of the Olympic Games, and conducting security assessments for Olympic venues. In 2005, Chief Watt was selected by the Embassy RSO for Brazil as part of a team to go to Brazil and train the Brazilian National Police Counter-Terrorism Unit leadership in protecting the 2007 Pan-American Games. Chief Watt has taught hostage rescue tactics and techniques to foreign military and police units and is a consultant to myriad local, state and federal tactical units. He is a Commissioner for the International Academy of Public Safety and is an instructor at Gunsite Academy in Paulden, AZ.

Chief Watt has extensive military experience and retired in September, 2015, as a Colonel in the Utah Army National Guard, with 34 years of Active duty and National Guard service. Colonel Watt served the majority of those years with the 19<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), commanding at all levels, including the Group. A Special Forces and Infantry branched officer, he is a graduate of numerous Special Operations courses and schools. Colonel Watt is a Master

Parachutist and Military Free-Fall Parachutist. Leadership schools include the Infantry Officer's Basic and Advanced Courses, Special Forces Qualification Course (Enlisted and Officer) Combined Arms Service and Support School, Command and General Staff Officer's Course, and the resident U.S. Army War College.

Colonel Watt's combat service includes year-long tours of Afghanistan, 2001-2002, Iraq, 2006-2007, and Iraq again in 2010 through 2011. All assignments were leadership and key staff positions of Special Operations units. As a result of his service, he received the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device, three Bronze Star Medals for meritorious service, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the G.W.O.T. Expeditionary and Service Medals, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two stars, the Iraq Campaign Medal with three stars, and the Joint Meritorious Unit Award.

Colonel Watt is an expert in Terrorism for the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Military Prosecutions, providing expert testimony for court purposes as well as for investigation of terrorist tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). He has testified at trials and hearings in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on behalf of the United States Government.