

Fast Transients, Manipulating the Tempo of Conflict: Disrupting and Confusing Our Adversary via Full Spectrum Response

Are We Depending on, Good Luck...or Good Tactics?

By Fred Leland

"Boyd first used the term (fast transients) in his briefing "New Conception for Air-to-Air Combat," which he completed in August 1976. He defined them in terms of the ability to "both lose energy and gain energy more quickly while outturning an adversary." The significance of this statement was that until about the late 1960s, fighter aircraft designers had concentrated on the ability to gain energy — fly higher and faster, for example — but not to lose it. Boyd was suggesting that you needed both, and more important, the ability to transit between the two states quickly." ~Chet Richards

Chet Richards's new website, [Fast Transients](#), is up and thriving. In a blog post, Chet discusses fast transients and the ability to get inside your adversary's OODA Loop, as Boyd put it, *folding an adversary back inside himself*. Chet states, *"There are still plenty of unanswered questions, of which the most important is what does 'quickest rate of change' mean if you're not in air-to-air combat, where Boyd gives a precise definition?"*

So what does *"quickest rate of change"* mean in the law enforcement and security world? In handling dynamic encounters, the phrase *"time criticality"* is often discussed. In this discussion there is often a *misconception* that to swing the benefit of time to your side, you must force the issue or, force the subject into action and always advance your position by moving forward quickly.

"Speed is the essence of war. Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; travel by unexpected routes and strike him where he has no precautions". ~Sun Tzu's "The Art of War"

Speed is the essence of conflict, but speed does not always mean moving fast physically. It means preparing through quick and clear observations, and interaction with your adversary and the environment so you gain a position of advantage. This allows you to, in a sense, control, or manipulate time, and set the tempo, or rate of change.

Speed comes through positioning ourselves to our advantage and seizing opportunities as they present themselves. Positioning correctly and adapting based on the unfolding circumstances in an effort to, in Col. John Boyd's words, *"inhibit an adversary's capacity to adapt to such an environment, suppress or distort the adversary's observations."* Positioning actions are *fast transient* maneuvers that cause confusion and hence poor decision

making on the part of the adversary allowing the friendly side to gain superiority and the opportunity for an effective and safe tactical resolution.

The opportunities presented could range from the adversary realizing he has no chance of success on his terms and complying; negotiation to resolution; tactical set-up and response surprising an adversary into compliance; or if a dire life threatening set of circumstances, a tactical set-up that allows the opportunity for deadly force to be utilized in the most risk averse way possible.

Sun Tzu's definition of speed is often misconstrued and shown through quick responses such as doors being kicked in immediately upon arrival. You see knee jerk reactions to the report of a single gunshot and immediate entry made without knowing anything more than the fact that a gun went off. You see it in responses and approaches to various calls for service where the possibility of danger exists. You also see it in responders traveling at high rates of speed across cities and towns or running as fast as they can into an office in an effort to get to the scene quickly. Each of these examples show a *"just get there"* approach rather than thinking about what is taking place and what actions are needed to respond appropriately.

Responders frequently end up in the driveway or in a room without any critical orientation to the potential of escalating violence, or forcing the issue. In such scenarios, individual responders approach rapidly in circumstances where it's clearly understood the adversary has the complete advantage and is NOT actively engaged in deadly actions. Or worse case from my observations, respond in circumstances where not much thought at all has gone into who does or does not have the advantage, they just GO GET HIM!

I understand adrenalin and emotional responses to high risk encounters. After all, our goal is to protect those we serve from harm, and in an effort to do so we responders feel an overwhelming urge to rush. I have been there and responded emotionally myself. The problem is that rushing in recklessly is unnecessary and at times creates more of a problem instead of solving the problem. Rushing in is reinforced throughout the law enforcement community, as a positive option because we have succeeded solving the problem in many of these situations, mistaking *"good luck" for "good strategy and tactics."*

Rapid response and forcing the fight are viable options in our professions under the right conditions (usually as a last resort). There is a time and place for the strategy and tactics of dynamic response. They are not the sole options. Sometimes action required is holding a position or backing off a decision, repositioning ourselves, communication, negotiations, forcing change in tempo and hence disorder and confusion, friction within our adversary's mind.

There is a manipulation of time that needs to be understood if we are to be successful in our actions while reducing risk. Speed, maneuver, surprise, deception, interaction within varying tempos (*rate of change*) is what confuses and brings disorder to the thinking of our adversary. It isolates his state of mind and hence his actions, allowing us to seize the initiative and take effective action.

Boyd said, "*He who can handle the quickest rate of change survives.*" Manipulating time, the "rate of change," is a key factor to consider in effective full spectrum policing and in a full spectrum response.

Stay Oriented!

Fred