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**A TRAINING SOLUTION FOR
SEARCHING FEMALE SUSPECTS**

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A TRAINING SOLUTION FOR SEARCHING FEMALE SUSPECTS

"In an era where we're trying to do more with less, females are still being called to conduct female searches"



Male officers can be heroically accepting of the sometimes thankless roles women cops take on. Often, she is tasked with handling more than her fair share of sexual assault cases, and dealing with victimized children. And the same male cop who'll dismiss his sister officer as a "skirt who couldn't find a felon in San Quentin" will have no qualms asking her to roll 10 minutes to conduct a female search and consume time otherwise available to do her own work.

But then, female searches can be problematic for cops of both genders. Male officers are hamstrung by an inability to conduct such pat-downs, and female officers by their male counterparts' need to bring them to the scene to do the job.

"In an era where we're trying to do more with less, females are still being called to conduct female searches," says Betsy Brantner Smith, a noted police trainer and retired patrol sergeant. "Departments are notoriously behind and overly sensitive when it comes to dealing with female suspects so that female officer is probably going to have to take it upon herself."

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In those instances where female cops roll up to find an uncontrolled, unsearched female standing outside a male officer's car, Smith trains them to position their vehicle in such a way as to afford themselves protection prior to verbally and then physically controlling that female. She emphasizes the need to see female subjects' hands prior to engaging them, but also the need to address concerns with their brethren so as to make sure history doesn't repeat itself: Just because a male officer may not be able to search a female doesn't mean he can't control her.

"If there's a policy that says that a male officer can't pat down a female, there should not be a policy that says that he can't at least get her controlled—at the very least handcuffed—in the meantime," notes Smith, who is a lead instructor for Calibre Press's "Street Survival" seminars. "FBI studies bear this out: Who's being given the gun to carry? Females. And a woman can kill you just as quickly as a male. We better be teaching male officers how to search female prisoners and detainees."

Smith speaks highly of the Washington State Patrol Academy, which she regards as one of the best when it comes to dealing with female searches.

"They teach their recruits how to conduct female pat-down searches," Smith explains. "They start with multi-dimensional targets and move onto mannequins that they place bras on replete with prosthetics on them. Finally, they get female volunteers—primarily FTOs and supervisors who've signed waivers—from within the agency that allow themselves to be searched by both male and female recruits."

The volunteer "suspects" are key to the training, according to Smith. "This allows the recruits to receive live real feedback from the people being patted down such as, 'Whoa, that wasn't a pat down, that was a grope!' or 'That's the proper manner to do a search.'"

"This is an excellent program response to an important matter. Many Washington State troopers can't request female officers to roll on every female arrest and at the same time they don't want to place an unsearched female in the back seat of a car."