

BLOOD SPOOR AND LESSONS LEARNED

By Grant Lightfoot – Director of Operations, TTOS



There's something that I have been routinely sharing with students in both the Combat Tracking courses and Tactical Tracking Courses. This point of view is based my own experience in regards to blood spoor and how to track on it.



This article will be a bit shorter than the last few since these are simple lessons learned and can be shared easily.

I have said in previous articles how I am an expert at making mistakes, but also very good at learning from them and developing my personal expertise. As a trainer and professional tracker, I should also be very good at sharing those tough lessons learned toward the benefit of anyone needing such information.

To illustrate, or give the back-story, I will share with you one of my blood spoor tracks that generated the most lessons learned and made others easy.

On this particular track, I arrived at the ICP (initial commencement point) and noted blood on the ground from the central most

scene. This blood moved in a southwesterly direction from the incident location. We got onto the spoor and started moving, quickly. About an hour into the track the blood was harder to find and the lost spoor procedures took us from one set of blood droplets to the next. The distance between the drops was increasing as the time and length of the track increased.

Within an hour and a half of tracking, there was no more blood to follow. I had committed a cardinal sin that went against the basic rules of tracking. I did not correctly identify the tracks I intended to follow. I identified the quarry's blood and followed it, but I had not looked at or for a single impression on the ground until there was no more blood to find.



Luckily, we had pushed the quarry hard enough and quickly enough that he found himself in a predicament close to a roadway ahead and a pursuing force behind. Long story short, he rolled the dice and entered the danger area (roadway) and was interdicted by a blocking/containment force.

Briefly, this is what went right: we had pursuit based on spoor left by the suspect, pressure applied by the trackers as a result and interdiction by the larger force. We did not have PID (positive ID) though. TTOS's P3I doctrine, developed with the Army through Col. Bogart, mandates that you have Pursuit, Pressure, PID and Interdiction. That is the basis of P3I.

BLOOD SPOOR

- **Venous** – drips, drops and smears
- **Arterial** – spurts and splashes
- **Lung shot** – pink and frothy
- **Head wound** – grey matter, blood, mixed

Level of blood smears and splashes will indicate position and nature of the wound

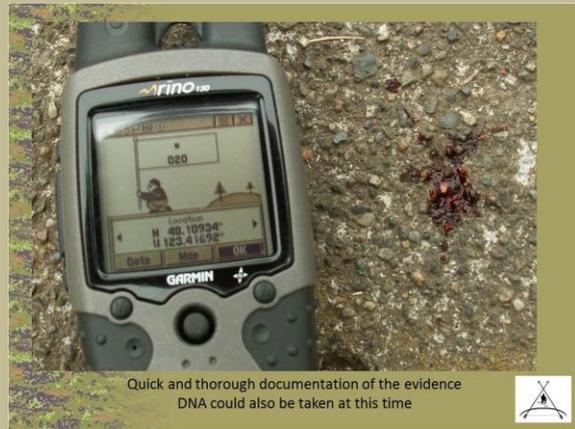
TRACKER

We got things right enough to effect the capture, partly because we followed our own doctrine of not starting a follow-up that we could not control or stop via blocking forces or containment. But, I was wrong for starting the track without the ability to PID the quarry. Had I correctly identified the tracks at the ICP, quickly recorded them and then started the follow-up, we could have had PID when he was interdicted and detained.

In this case, we had injuries consistent with the mechanism causing them, so PID was obtained, after the fact. What are the biggest lessons learned here? To me they are simple.

When tracking blood spoor from the ICP, trigger site, building, hide site, crime scene, etc., you still have to look for those key prints and correctly identify the tracks you wish to follow and record them quickly.

If you do not do this and start on blood alone, there are only a few things that can and will happen. You will either find a dead or incapacitated quarry on the trackline, run head-on into a close ambush by the quarry that is now immobile and cornered, or the bleeding will stop. Once the blood has sufficiently clotted after a dressing and/or tourniquet is applied, there will be no more blood to follow, or not enough bleeding volume to effectively track.



There is another variable though, you may find that the quarry that was once mobile enough to flee, is now being carried by other fighters/suspects. If this occurs you just go right back to the spoor pit of your mind, just like in day one of training; and use a deductive and inductive process to assess the actions based on the action indicators on the ground.



If the latter scenario has taken place, you have the upper hand as the time distance gap can easily be closed due to the slower

speed traveled by the quarries as a result of carrying a wounded comrade.



One more thing happens too: the quarries are now leaving an incredible amount of spoor to observe and follow-up on. You have a spoor rich trackline, slow moving quarries and high risk. You will close with and contact these quarries and there are any number of things that can occur.

Let your mind run wild and think of those things. I would like to hear what the plausible scenarios may be from any reader's point of view.

P3I,

Grant



"The Answer's on the ground"

Brief Writer's Bio: Grant started tracking at a young age while living in open range country in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. From a very young age he has been an avid hunter and outdoorsman.

This way of life continued after moving to the Pacific NW. Grant served with the 2nd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment (11B1P) and later cross-trained as a communications specialist (31C). His last duty assignment was with the 1st Infantry Regiment as an Intel NCO.

Grant served in Law Enforcement for nearly 20 years, holding positions as police officer, field deputy, task force officer, major crimes detective, narcotics detective, K9, cross-commissioned US park police officer, cross-commissioned US customs officer, tactical officer/trainer, combatives (DT) instructor, sergeant, staff sergeant and lastly captain. His time in LE was spent on a border county where tracking and interdiction operations were routinely conducted (100's of them) as regular duty, living the dream – getting paid to hunt.

He received formalized training in 2002 and 2004 through TTOS. In 2006 he became a lead instructor with TTOS, working with trackers and tracking teams all over the world. In 2011, he became a recognized subject matter expert (SME) and given the position of director of operations with TTOS, working there now full-time.

He is an instructor of Combat Tracking, Tactical Tracking, C-IED, Rural LE Operations, Rural Narcotics Operations, ISR, Unconventional Warfare CT, Survival, Escape and Evasion, Orienteering, Special Targeting, Search and Rescue and Combatives, among others. He is a grad student with a BA in Organizational Management (teaching, training, organizing, org phycology, curriculum design, human performance, adult learning/development, etc), and one semester left toward an MA degree.

He currently trains civilians in tracking, orienteering and survival on the side, as well as SAR units, when not teaching CT/TT as part of the TTOS SME cadre.

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My Tracking Buddy, Dodger