



wear body armor. Why protect the heart, lungs, liver, and other organs in the chest and abdominal cavity and not the brain?

How many motorcycle police officers wear riding helmets? The answer is every single one of them. If the motorcycle goes down, or is hit, the head is protected. In a worse case scenario an impact to the head will be at high speeds. For motorcycle police officers helmets make sense. Still, there are countless police officers who will go into high risk situations with the possibility of taking a subsonic or supersonic bullet to the head and they don't wear any head protection at all. It's foolish to go into these situations without a helmet. One might as get rid of the vest if that's the mentality.

I have trained thousands of police officers in firearms, tactics, and defensive tactics in the past 12 years: federal,

state, local and military police. I am always shocked when police officers don't have ballistics helmets. They show up with the rest of their gear, but not the helmets. Do they not think that bullets fly that high or something? The problem is not based on ignorance. When one sees this kind of blatant lack of officer safety there's usually politics lurking behind it. A lot of police administrators don't let their police officers wear ballistics helmets because it looks too "militaristic". Now, I'm not suggesting that they wear them to every call, although that would be the safest thing to do, but at least to known high-risk calls. These same administrators who won't issue their officers helmets are the same administrators who will give the slain police officer a "militaristic" funeral: flag-draped casket, uniformed escort, a band, salutes, and the

whole works. When the bullets are flying who cares about how it looks, or how the public will perceive this piece of equipment. The only concern that any police supervisor should have is whether their people are adequately protected or not. It can't be the prices because helmets are relatively inexpensive.

Another reason why many police officers are not issued ballistic helmets is because those in charge of training or equipment research over-emphasize the negative aspects of wearing helmets: reduced peripheral vision, reduced hearing, and they are uncomfortable to wear. It's true that these are drawbacks to this piece of equipment, but they used to say the same thing about ballistics vests.

The last excuse given by some administrators, and this applies to patrol police officers, for not wearing helmets is that

# THE POLICE AND MILITARY HELMET: USAGE AND DEFENSE

## JIM WAGNER

