

Leonia PD Lead Defensive Tactics Program

Roman Martyniuk

NJSACOP Public Information Officer

Leonia Police Chief Jay E. Ziegler, and police officers from the Leonia PD, Englewood PD, and the Bergen County Sheriffs Office have been participating in a defensive tactics training session at the De Pasquale Defense Academy, 187 Rivervale Road, Rivervale NJ 07675. This unique police training consists of a series of eight, weekly 2-hour sessions which take place on Tuesdays from 10:00 am -12 noon.

According to Chief Zeigler, who had previous experience in a variety of martial arts disciplines before beginning this program, "This training provides a very practical approach to defensive tactics and is designed specifically to meet the needs of our police officers. It minimizes the need to use lethal force and reduces the possibility of injury to either officers or suspects in the course of making arrests or taking persons into custody. From a risk-management point of view, this specialized training insulates officers & police departments from potential 'excessive force' liability law suits." Zeigler's previous martial arts training includes Tai Chi, Tai Kwan Do, two different styles of Karate, and Shu Ko Kai.

The course, which is voluntary, was first offered in November of 2006. Chief Zeigler observed that "The fact that we have officers voluntarily participating in the program clearly demonstrates that they, too, realize the value of this training. It pays off for the individual police officer and it pays dividends to the departments they serve."



Sensei Michael DePasquale, Jr., a highly accomplished and well known martial arts expert utilizes a three-phase approach utilizing unconventional jujitsu techniques. The course teaches students the three basics of "I-N-F"- Immobilize, Neutralize, and Finalize and specifically focuses on law enforcement application.

"We teach police officers to 'Immobilize' or deal with the

initial attack or physical confrontation which usually takes place in the standing position; bring the perpetrator to the ground which 'neutralizes' the potential threat they pose; and 'finalize' the arrest by safely hand-cuffing the individual. In these situations, you don't want to hurt people ...you just want them to calm down so that they can hear and respond to the directions and commands the law enforcement officer is making."

“Police officers can never predict the level of force any particular situation may require. When they complete this course they will have mastered the principals of INF which then will provide them with the skill and confidence to make arrests or apprehend suspects using minimal physical force.”

Bergen County Sheriff Leo P. McGuire, who stopped in to observe some of his officers participating in the defensive tactics training observed, “Techniques like these wrist locks that are being employed can be used safely and effectively and in some cases, save the officer’s life and bring the offender to justice.”

The techniques of INF provide police officers with the skill to control most arrest situations in such a way as to facilitate cooperation from the subject. The proper use of leverage eliminates the need for more forceful tactics and allows communication between the arresting officer and the



suspect individual. This minimal force approach also provides the individual being taken into custody ample opportunity to comply with the verbal instructions being given by the police officer which, in turn, diffuses arrest situations before they have a chance to escalate into a more violent confrontation.

Zeigler has a long history in law enforcement including service in the United States Army Reserve as an M.P. with the 812th Military Police Company and more than 20 years as a police officer - serving Leonia as Chief since 2004. He also has a longstanding relationship with Michael DePasquale having begun his martial arts training with the sensei when he was 17 years old.