

Case

Hot in the cell

PO21 Learning Resources



Credits

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Case – Hot in the cell

This case was developed within the PO21 project¹, based on the critical incidents approach and the experience of the Prison Officers involved in the project. It can be dynamised using several strategies², according to the training and trainers' objectives.

Case Script:

Summary

Main situation

One inmate gets aggressive and vandalises the cell. Four PO`s intervened: 3 PO`s from the wing, 1 PO from the central station, with special training in the intervention.

Why is it complicated/difficult/challenging:

- Lack of coordination
- Lack of control
- Excessive use of force
- Disregard all the consequences
- Inadequate guidance
- Wrong decision making
- Insufficient managing
- Endangering people
- Insufficient follow-up/ debriefing
- Mental stress (PTSD)

¹For more information: <http://www.prison-officers21.org/>

²Detailed information on cases dynamisation and development can be found in the Guide for developing cases, produced under the PO21 project

Main Characters

Character 1: Billy

Name - Billy

Professional description – PO

Personal/psychological description – 38 years, he was a boxer, very fit, arrogant, and provocative. He was a very good, reliable colleague, known for using excessive force in some cases.

Main function/hierarchy – PO on the wing

Character 2: Vladimir

Name - Vladimir

Professional description – Inmate, convicted of murder

Personal/psychological description – 39 years, Chechen, former soldier, hitman. As an inmate, he was very reserved, mentally ill, and unpredictable.

Main function/hierarchy – NA

Character 3: Clark

Name - Clark

Professional description – PO

Personal/psychological description – 45 years, he was a trainer for the intervention in a critical situations. He is very balanced, respectful with the inmates, respects the law and internal regulations, is a good colleague, is reliable, and has good communication skills.

Main function/hierarchy – PO on the wing

Secondary characters or witnesses

Character 4: Michael

Name - Michael

Professional description – Chief of the PO's

Personal/psychological description – 52 years, a prudent person, experienced in his job, knowledge, not very good communication skills, he knows his staff well and trusts them, he cannot manage stressful situations.

Main function/hierarchy – Middle management

Character 5: John

Name - John

Professional description – Prison Officer

Personal/psychological description – 46 years, he was a professional karate practitioner, a good speaker, bragged about being a good fighter, narcissistic personality, never had trouble with inmates, and followed the law internal procedures.

Main function/hierarchy – PO on the wing

Description of the situation

Time

In the morning

Duration

5 minutes

Location

An inmate cell

Description of the situation

In the morning, one of the inmates of the wing, **Vladimir**, starts to get agitated and aggressive and threatens to destroy his cell. Inside the cell, there is a switched-on boiler with hot water.

A PO, **Billy**, turned off the electricity, knowing he had a boiler inside the room. Still, unfortunately, he only turned off the electricity for the lights, not the power outlet where the boiler was plugged into.

Michael has a briefing with the 4 PO's to describe the situation and make the decisions to clarify everyone's role in bringing the inmate to the security room. He approved the plan and commanded that the PO's start the intervention but didn't intervene with the team. He considered the risks that were at stake and relied on his team.

Billy was very enthusiastic about the intervention. He was the first to enter the inmate's room with the shield. He stood with a shield in front of the inmate, who took the boiler and threw the boiled water behind the shield and over him. After that, **Billy** put his shield down, cried, left the cell for a short time and then went back in and hit the inmate in the face.

After that, **John** and another PO immobilised the inmate against the wall, and then **Billy** came inside the room and hit the inmate 4 times in the face.

Clark extracted **Billy** from the situation, outside the room, telling him that he should receive medical intervention. **Clark** put the inmate on the floor. **Billy** came into the cell again and started jumping over the inmate's back.

Another PO from a different station came to help and got **Billy** outside the room.

The PO's lift **Vladimir** off and try to put him into the safety room.

On the way to the safety room, **Billy** hit **Vladimir** in the head with his knee.

After that, the inmate is put on the floor for safety measures, and **Clark** assures his position on the floor.

The inmate passed out, unconscious, and **Clark** and **John** took him into the safety room.

Reaction of each character

Vladimir

Vladimir threatened to destroy the cell.

Billy

Billy switches off the wrong plug.

Michael

Michael has a briefing with 4 PO to organise the team for intervention.

Billy

Billy entered the cell, and Vladimir threw the boiling water at Billy. Billy leaves the cell for a while in shock.

John

John and another PO immobilised the inmate against the wall.

Billy

Billy reenters the cell and hits the inmate in the face 4 times

Clark

Clark takes Billy out of the cell.
Clark put the handcuffs on the inmate.

Billy

Billy reenters the cell and jumps on the inmate, who is lying on the floor. Another PO from a different station came to help and got Billy outside the room.

Result of each action

Chief of PO's result of actions: the conditions to enter the room regarding body protection suits were not fulfilled, so 2 PO's got wounded, and the inmate almost died.

He shouldn't have chosen **Billy** to be part of the intervention because he conflicted with the inmate.

He should have had a debriefing of the incident with the staff involved.

Billy: The conflict escalated. Because of switching off the wrong electricity button, the water was still boiling in **Vladimir's** cell, which made it possible for the inmate to throw the boiling water on him, so he got burnt.

He put everyone in danger because of his aggressive behaviour. He could have suggested to the chief that he shouldn't be involved in the intervention because he was a part of the conflict.

John: Because he froze, **Clark** had to replace his activity, and **Billy** wouldn't have been burnt, and the injury would be avoided.

Clark: Experienced Post traumatic stress disorder(PTSD) for half a year.

Being endangered by taking **John's** place and entering the room to help **Billy**.

He should have convinced **Billy** to stop and reported him to his superiors.

Vladimir: 1 year and 8 months added to his sentence for throwing boiling water on **Billy**.

How to apply this case?

This case can be used in several ways, there is no prescriptive, specific strategy, and the trainer shall choose the specific themes to highlight by applying the case. However, making the best of this resource in terms of promoting debate and stimulating reflection among trainees, common strategies can be:

Brainstorming:

Create a question about the case and promote group discussion. Remember that in brainstorming is particularly important to register all contributions and to make a summary of all contributions. It is suited to initiate a new theme.

Role-play:

In the training room, arrange the scenario according to the case description. The trainees should perform the characters as close to the description possible to create a real-life situation. After the presentation, group discussion can be promoted. It is suited to deepen a situation or theme.

Problem-Solving:

Present the case without providing information on how it was handled and ask the trainees, individually or in groups, to describe how the situation should be handled. Then, dynamise a debate around each new ending for the situation. It is suited to applying theory to practice.

Dilemma:

Create a dilemma by designing a new development of the situation. Organise a debate around which was the best solution and why. It is suited to explore complex situations.

Pros and Cons:

A debate can be used in any strategy. If used as the main strategy, one idea may be to organise the group in two sectors: one, arguing in favour of the resolution and the other, arguing against it. This can be improved by providing other learning resources that support the arguments of each sector. It is suited to deepen a situation or theme.

To learn more about the creation and application of Critical Incidents, you can consult the Critical Incidents Technique Application Guide.