

Force Forum 2026

Monday, April 20

15:00-17:00 Pre-conference check-in available
Marshside Lobby, Jekyll Island Convention Center

All training will take place in Ballroom H of the Jekyll Island Convention Center.
All working lunches will be held in Ballroom G.
Special Axon demonstrations will take place in Meeting Room 7.

Tuesday April 21

08:00-08:30 **Statement of the Issue, Training Objectives, and Definitions**
Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute

Perhaps the most difficult cases to defend – whether in civil or criminal courts or in the media – is the death of a subject resulting from the application of less lethal force. This year, the Force Forum will dive into the law, science, and medicine regarding intent versus outcomes, provide and explain medical and legal definitions relevant to less than lethal force, and explore strategies to defend these incredibly complex cases. We will also, as always, provide an insight into the toll these cases take on LEOs, agencies, and the lawyers who defend them. The objective of this year’s Force Forum is to better prepare LEOs, their agencies, and their teams to address the aftermath when less than lethal actions have deadly results.

08:30-09:30 **Current Case Law on Deadly v. Non-Deadly Force with Practical Applications**
Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute
Ken Davis, Esq, Managing Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm

This presentation will include a review and analysis of the most current and relevant cases involving deadly versus non-deadly force, with an overview of criminal and civil liability from a constitutional tort perspective, and from a state and federal criminal perspective.

09:30-10:30 **Prosecutions, Persecutions, and Case Studies**

Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute
Ken Davis, Esq, Managing Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm

Through the use of realistic examples from the LoRusso Law Firm as well as from around the United States, this class will inform attendees about how the application of non-deadly force that led to a death had significant impacts on the officer and the agency. The goal of the course is to allow attendees to develop policies and procedures to safeguard themselves and their agencies from agency and individual liability.

10:30-10:45 **Break**

10:45-11:00 **Sponsor Remarks**

11:00-12:00 **Essential Medical Concepts for Defending Law Enforcement Officers**

William Bozeman, MD, FACEP, Department of Emergency Medicine
Wake Forest University School of Medicine

This presentation includes a review of acidosis and how to read blood test reports; an overview of shock, including hypovolemic, neurogenic, cardiogenic, etc.; and a basic overview of red flags in blood chemistry and other diagnostic tests that indicate death from metabolic processes rather than trauma. There will be a discussion of common causes of death, unrelated to trauma, that are often coincidental to a trauma, including findings such as MI, CVA, cardiac arrhythmia, alcohol poisoning, or the effects of street drugs. The instructor will cover the physical effects of severe and deep bruising, such as from a physical confrontation, contact with the ground, or strike points from a baton or blunt projectile like a beanbag. Finally, it will include an overview of how common street drugs affect a person's performance in a physical confrontation and can lead to a downward spiral of vital signs, such as opiates, restricting breathing, the effects of fentanyl, the effects of cocaine, and the synergistic effects of many drugs at once, including alcohol.

12:15-13:15 **Working Lunch:**

The Aftermath of Fatal Encounters After Using Non-Deadly Force

Moderator: Lance J. LoRusso, Esq.

This panel will provide the audience with testimonials and an opportunity to question officers who have used non-deadly force that resulted in the death of a suspect. Attendees will be able to learn how to manage the well-being of the

officer from executive, management, and personal perspectives during the complex mechanizations of civil and criminal litigation.

13:30-16:00 **Intent, Impact, and Aftermath: The Psychology of Less-Lethal Force in Officer-Involved Deaths**

Tina Jaeckle, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

This presentation provides an in-depth, interdisciplinary examination of the psychological dimensions surrounding the use of less-lethal force in law enforcement, particularly in cases that result in serious injury or death. The aftermath of the psychological toll on officers (moral injury, acute stress reactions, PTSD), investigative and administrative stressors, media narratives, and community-level trauma will be examined utilizing research and case studies. This session is designed for law enforcement professionals, trainers, executives, supervisors, behavioral health clinicians, victim advocates, legal professionals, researchers, and policy leaders seeking a deeper understanding of how “less-lethal” force decisions reverberate psychologically—before, during, and long after a critical incident.

16:00-18:00 **Networking Reception**

Wednesday April 22

08:30-10:30 **Use of Force Tools and Techniques – What Law Enforcement Executives and Defense Attorneys Need to Know**

William Bozeman, M.D., FACEP, Department of Emergency Medicine

Wake Forest University School of Medicine

Those who are managing and authorizing the use of less lethal tools for an agency and the aftermath of events in which they are involved need to understand the effect of a conducted energy weapon on the body, including, but not limited to, the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. This would also include some distinction between “electrocution” and NMI. There will be some discussion of the reason for placing a suspect in the recovery position, how that affects breathing and oxygenation, and comments about positional asphyxia. The presentation also includes information regarding the physiological effects of a lateral vascular neck restraint, as opposed to an oxygen-depriving chokehold; effects of chemical agents on mucus membranes and the lungs; and an explanation of how even high doses of OC or hot gas are survivable. Attendees will gain an understanding of the physiological effects of nerve stuns, why they work, and why their effects are temporary.

10:30-10:45 **Break**

10:45-11:00 **Sponsor Remarks**

11:00-12:00 **Challenging the Medical Expert**

Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute

Relying upon 26 years of legal practice, including 18 years of representing one of the largest healthcare systems in the United States as well as several medical malpractice insurers, Lance will provide specific tactics to prepare for and depose a medical expert. These depositions require input from all sources, including the law enforcement agency, consulting medical experts, device manufacturers, and a great deal of research to challenge the opinions of any medical expert testifying against a law enforcement officer. Lance will also cover how to prepare your own defense medical expert for deposition or trial.

12:15-13:15 **Working Lunch:**

Collaborative Defense: The LEO, the Agency, and the Manufacturer

Amy Nguyen, Axon, Vice President and General Counsel, U.S.
Moderator: Lance J. LoRusso, Esq.

This class will explain the resources available to the officer, the agency, and the attorneys representing them to defend death cases involving law enforcement officers, specifically regarding the application of non-lethal force that results in a death. The course will provide strategies for preparation prior to any such case, as well as inform how to identify and access medical research, legal briefings, and scientific research regarding the specific non-lethal devices that may be at issue in these cases.

13:30-14:30 **TASER® Unplugged: Facts, Forensics, and Legal Insights**

Amy Nguyen, Axon, Vice President and General Counsel, U.S.

Amy Nguyen, Axon's Vice President, Associate General Counsel, will discuss the truth about TASER, how to effectively investigate a TASER case, and how to mitigate potential liability. This guided session includes best practices, TASER data science and medical studies, and insights on law and litigation trends.

Thursday April 23

08:30-10:30 **Non-Lethal Force on the Street, in the Jail, and in the Courtroom:
The Speed of Interactions, Situational Risks, and Evidence Preservation**

William Lewinski, Ph.D., Executive Director
Force Science

Dr. Lewinski brings a review and analysis of non-deadly force as it is delivered and implemented in realistic situations. His presentation will involve an analysis of several types of impact weapons, chemical agents, and conducted energy weapons, and how the extreme time compression of real-life applications cause officers to make decisions that are often second-guessed in civil and criminal courts.

10:30-10:45 **Break**

10:45-12:00 **Defense Litigation Strategies: Discovery, Expert Selection,
Daubert, and Interlocutory Appeals**

Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney
LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute

This course will give attendees access to proven methods to defend death cases where the only application of force was non-lethal. The course will be valuable to law enforcement agency heads and officers, as well as their attorneys, providing legal strategies that can be prepared in advance and immediately upon recognition that a suit or prosecution may be imminent.

12:15-13:15 **Working Lunch:
Media Strategies for LEOs, Agencies, and Defense Counsel**

Ross Cavitt, Principal CEO, Big Chicken Media
Retired, Cobb County Government, Communications Director
Facilitated by Lance J. LoRusso, Esq.

Cases involving the use of non-deadly force that led to the death of a suspect are unique, not only in the law, but also for the agency moving forward in its relationship with the public. These cases require, perhaps more than any others, education through every media opportunity to avoid a knee-jerk reaction that may remove valuable tools from the officer's reach. This lunch session will allow interactive communication to better prepare attendees for every media interaction involving this topic.

13:30-14:30 **Call to Action, Future of the Profession and These Attacks, and
Protecting the LEO's Career**

Lance J. LoRusso, Esq., Principal Attorney

LoRusso Law Firm/Blue Line Lawyer Institute

This course will discuss pending litigation in the United States Supreme Court and appropriate federal circuit court cases. We will also discuss trends occurring with regard to civil and criminal cases involving law enforcement officers and agencies. This section will also provide strategies for law-enforcement executives to prepare for future litigation.

02:30 **Conference Ends**