COLOR CODES OF AWARENESS
(from Wikipedia.com)

The most important means of surviving a lethal confrontation is, according to Cooper, neither the weapon nor the martial skills. The primary tool is the combat mindset, set forth in his book, *Principles of Personal Defense*. In the chapter on awareness, Cooper presents an adaptation of the Marine Corps system to differentiate states of readiness:

The color code as originally introduced by Jeff Cooper, had nothing to do with tactical situations or alertness levels, but rather with one's state of mind. As taught by Jeff, it relates to the degree of peril you are willing to do something about and which allows you to move from one level of mindset to another to enable you to properly handle a given situation. Jeff didn't claim to have invented anything in particular with the color code, but he was apparently the first to use it as an indication of mental state.

**White**

Unaware and unprepared. If attacked in Condition White, the only thing that may save you is the inadequacy or ineptitude of your subject. When confronted by something nasty, your reaction will probably be "Oh my God! This can't be happening to me."

**Yellow**

Relaxed alert. No specific threat situation. Your mindset is that "today could be the day I may have to defend myself." You are simply aware that the world is a potentially unfriendly place and that you are prepared to defend yourself, if necessary. You use your eyes and ears, and realize that "I may have to SHOOT today." You don't have to be armed in this state, but if you are armed you should be in Condition Yellow. You should always be in Yellow whenever you are in unfamiliar surroundings or among people you don't know. You can remain in Yellow for long periods, as long as you are able to "Watch your six." (In aviation 12 o'clock refers to the direction in front of the aircraft's nose. Six o'clock is the blind spot behind the pilot.) In Yellow, you are "taking in" surrounding information in a relaxed but alert manner, like a continuous 360 degree radar sweep. As Cooper put it, "I might have to shoot."
Orange

Specific alert. Something is not quite right and has gotten your attention. Your radar has picked up a specific alert. You shift your primary focus to determine if there is a threat (but you do not drop your six). Your mindset shifts to "I may have to shoot HIM today." In Condition Orange, you set a mental trigger: "If that goblin does 'x', I will need to stop him." Your pistol usually remains holstered in this state. Staying in Orange can be a bit of a mental strain, but you can stay in it for as long as you need to. If the threat proves to be nothing, you shift back to Condition Yellow. Cooper described this as "I might have to shoot HIM," referring to the specific target which has caused the escalation in alert status.

Red

Condition Red is fight. Your mental trigger (established back in Condition Orange) has been tripped. If "X" happens I will shoot that person.

Black

The USMC also uses "Condition Black" as actively engaged in combat. This is where you are physically engaged with the criminal. Your mental trigger has been tripped and you have responded. React and trust your training.

In short, the Color Code helps you "think" in a fight. As the level of danger increases, your willingness to take certain actions increases. If you ever do go to Condition Red, the decision to use lethal force has already been made (your "mental trigger" has been tripped).