



Tactical Talk

Volume 8, Issue 5

May 2004

"I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."

--Thomas Jefferson

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Airsoft Force-on-Force Instructor Course

Karl Rehn operates KR Training near Austin, Texas, and was one of the first trainers to utilize gas operated Airsoft pistols in live, scenario based role play training. At the last couple of Tactical Conferences at Rangemaster, Karl has conducted some of this role playing training with Airsoft guns, and the students loved it. This type of training gives the student the chance to go beyond shooting cardboard targets, and actually interact with real human adversaries.

Karl has developed an instructor program for persons who wish to conduct this type of training. Topics include everything from selecting Airsoft guns and safety equipment, to designing training scenarios, debriefing participants, etc. This course will be conducted at Rangemaster on July 31-August 1, Saturday and Sunday.

Dynamic Marksmanship Course

On May 15-16, 2004, Tom Givens and Jim Higginbotham will jointly teach a Dynamic Marksmanship Course in Watervliet, MI. The Watervliet Rod & Gun Club is a very nice private outdoor range in southern Michigan. It is a short drive from Chicago or South Bend, Indiana. This is a very intensive weekend course, with an awful lot of training packed into two days. This is also a lovely resort area. Call Rangemaster for details.

"ALL THAT LATER": The Combat Mindset in Action by Mark Moritz

Rick Carr, pilot of TWA flight 427, was about to land at Stapleton Airport in Denver. At night, at 125 miles per hour, he suddenly saw a twin-engine Cessna on the runway in front of him. He reacted immediately, pulling his McDonnell-Douglas MD80 hard up and left. He avoided a disaster that probably would have killed him and the other 131 people on board, but his wing smashed through the cockpit of the smaller plane, killing the two occupants.

Seconds later he called the tower. "TWA 427 hit the other airplane on the runway. Roll the emergency equipment." The FAA tape reveals no panic in his voice. At that point, Carr had shifted to "computer" mode. He was focusing on one thing: getting his plane onto the ground safely.

No response from the controller, who was busy "rolling the emergency equipment." After a few seconds of silence, Carr spoke again: "Do you hear me? Do you hear me?" Still no panic.

"Yes, I do," came the response, "We're rolling the equipment."

Step One completed, Carr shifted to Step Two: determine if he had a fire or other damage to his plane. He asked if the controller could see any fire. The controller, flustered, replied that there was no fire, but went on to state that the Cessna was out of position, that it should have been on another runway, that the controller could not understand what had gone wrong.

This, of course, was irrelevant to Carr. Why the Cessna was out of position, and where it should have been instead, had no bearing on his task, getting TWA 427 down safely. "All that later," said Carr, "I just want to make sure everything's safe here."

"All that later." Remember those words. That, ladies and gentlemen, is character. That is what "combat mindset" is all about.

When your routine is suddenly shattered by a life-and-death emergency, whether it be a plane crash or a gunfight, it is quite normal for your mind to be filled with irrelevancies. What is going on? Why is this happening? Why me?

In a gunfight, your task is to stay alive. Why is this person trying to kill me? Is he on drugs? Is he nuts? Does he have me confused with someone else? Does he want money? Did he have an unhappy childhood? Did I cut him off in traffic? Is there something I could have done to avoid this situation? WHO CARES?

"All that later." Right now, do what you need to do to stay alive. Front sight. Press. Front sight. Press.

An emergency room nurse once told me that her term for "combat mindset" was "going cold." She said, "When the parameds bring in a small child who has been torn to pieces in a car accident, your natural tendency is to run around and scream. Doctors and nurses walk fast and talk loud, but we don't run or scream. If you follow your instincts, you'll knock things over and make the situation worse. The only way that kid has a chance is if you force yourself to 'go cold,' and just do your job. Later, after the kid is stabilized and on his way upstairs to surgery, you can have your nervous breakdown."

"All that later."

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Shooting instructors often make much of shooting "instinctively" or "naturally." To some extent, that is a good idea, but it must not become dogmatic. Sometimes, your instincts will get you killed. In a gunfight, it's instinctive to close your eyes. It's instinctive to freeze where you are and not get behind cover. It's natural to stick the gun out and blast away without aiming until the gun is empty, and then stand there yanking on the empty gun. Running around like a chicken with your head cut off is instinctive. Curling up into a ball, whimpering, and waiting for death is instinctive.

It is not natural to stay cool. It is not instinctive to press the trigger carefully and shoot accurately. Sometimes, what you really need to do is fight your instincts, and overcome them.

How do you do that? How do you teach yourself not to panic under life-threatening stress?

Step One is to recognize that you can do it. Yes, you. Many people just like you have done it. Pilots and nurses. Mothers who find their children floating face down in the bathtub, and start CPR instead of panicking. Little children who call 9-1-1 when they find grandpa unconscious on the living room floor. Millions of people have kept their cool under fire, and you can too.

Step Two is to get inoculated against panic. Panic is the instinctive, natural feeling you get when you say to yourself, "I can't believe this is happening," and "I don't know what to do." The inoculation to panic therefore comes in two doses: knowledge and skill. The first is to realize that terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad things really do happen sometimes, for no good reason, to people just like you. In an emergency, you must overcome your instincts, and say to yourself, "I knew something like this could happen. I never expected it to happen; I knew the odds were long; but I am not surprised, because I know such things do happen. And by golly, this is it."

The second dose is to be able to say, truthfully, "And I know what to do about it. I have a plan for situations like this." Pilots and nurses have checklists and procedures for every imaginable contingency. Under stress, they don't make things up as they go along, they just follow the pre-set routine, by the numbers. People who have taken CPR classes don't freeze up when someone stops breathing, because they know what to do. Knowing what to do has a great calming effect.

So study defensive pistolcraft. If you really do know what to do about it, you are much more likely to do it, aren't you? The old joke goes, "Can you play the piano?" "I don't know; I've never tried." You are more likely to do a safe, smooth draw from concealment, and fire two accurate torso shots plus a head shot, all within 2 seconds, if you have actually done it a few times before, and aren't trying it for the first time.

Play "what if" games in your head, with the scenarios you read about in the newspapers. What if you were sitting in that Luby's when that psycho crashed his truck through the wall? What if you were on the train when that other psycho started shooting up the place? What if you were loading your groceries into the trunk when the little creep decided to make you his gang initiation project?

If you haven't read Cooper's Principles of Personal Defense lately, today would be a good day. If you don't have PPD, get it, read it, and memorize it. The section on "Coolness" makes a fine booster shot.

Kipling wrote that the first attribute of character is the ability to "keep your head while all about you are losing theirs." Remember, you can keep your head, and if you have been inoculated, you will keep your head. Stay cool. When the excitement is over, there will be plenty of time to cry, shake, throw up, and analyze what happened and why. But, all that later.

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Trident Concepts, LLC.

Jeff Gonzales will be returning to Rangemaster on July 17-18 to teach his Combative Pistol Concepts course here. This is a very dynamic and intensive course, focused on effective shooting and gunhandling techniques for real life. Highly recommended!

Jeff retired as a US Navy SEAL, with a great deal of operational combat experience. Since retiring, he has continued to do field work in the Middle East as well as conducting training all over the world. Jeff is an accomplished shooter and a gifted communicator. Don't miss this chance to train with one of the best in the business.

Lt. Lowell Duckett, Special Assistant to DC Police Chief; President, Black Police Caucus, The Washington Post, March 22, 1996:

"Gun control has not worked in D.C. The only people who have guns are criminals. We have the strictest gun laws in the nation and one of the highest murder rates. It's quicker to pull your Smith & Wesson than to dial 911 if you're being robbed."