

# TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

## WASHINGTON, D.C. CONCEALED CARRY?

You may love to visit Washington, D.C. for the distinct architecture and interesting museums, or you may cringe at the thought of a town with so many gun laws that inhibit law-abiding citizens, but as the capitol of the United States and the seat of American government, many of us have to visit regularly.

BY **CHRIS GRAHAM**

**A**fter years of hearing rumors that only family members of well-connected government officials were granted Concealed Carry Pistol Licenses in the district, I was intrigued to receive an email from the Commonwealth Crimi-

nal Justice Academy (CCJA) announcing a Washington, D.C. CCW course for both residents and non-residents.

On a rainy November morning, I sat at a table in the CCJA Fredericksburg (Virginia) classroom with 15 other people. Tom Per-

roni, CCJA owner, training director, law enforcement officer and D.C. Metro Police firearms instructor served as our primary instructor. In two days, we accomplished 16 hours of classroom instruction and two hours of range training/ *continued on next page*

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qualification. We began by watching the infamous video of a DEA employee condescendingly telling a school room full of children that he was the only person competent to handle a firearm, and then promptly shooting himself in the foot after clearly violating multiple standard safety practices. We were told that the Federal Air Marshal Service has had 256 firearms mishaps on aircraft (as of that time) and we discussed complacency and negligence.

We were informed that negligent discharges often occur as a result of placing fingers on the trigger at inappropriate times, allowing leather holsters to warp and getting shirt tails or other fabric wrapped around the trigger while holstering. We discussed standard safety rules and Tom cautioned against permitting authorized persons access to your guns. He talked about various locks for firearms, gun cases, storage boxes and safes. We discussed firearms nomenclature and moved on to principles of marksmanship.

We discussed *grip*. Tom encouraged students to establish the desired grip in the holster, high on the back strap and the stacked thumbs position upon presentation, with 360 degree pressure exerted primarily by the non-firing (support) hand. He stated that the two most important components for marksmanship are: sight alignment and trigger control. We discussed *stance*. Tom encouraged use of the modified isosceles stance and presenting a pistol from the holster to eye level rather than ducking the head down. He encouraged keeping knees bent slightly and your center of gravity slightly forward. He advocated placing your holster on the seam of the pants. We discussed eye dominance and trigger manipulation. He had a proscriptive recommendation for trigger finger placement and he encouraged pressuring the trigger for a "surprise break" and maintaining continuous finger contact with the trigger for efficient trigger reset. He asked for *follow through*: reconfirming sights on target before moving onto the next task.

Tom cited the FBI's Uniform Crime Report and stated that law enforcement shootings commonly occur at about 10 feet, in low light and eight out of ten shots fired are misses. He mentioned the acronym *BRASS*: breathe, relax, aim, sight alignment/sight picture and smooth pressure on the trigger. He encouraged pausing on a half-breath for

pistol shooting. He insisted that stress, such as is experienced with Simunition is necessary to turn firearms skills into defensive skills and he observed that both fear and courage are contagious; when one person exhibits either trait, others often follow. He explained survival versus prevailing and described excessive force as more force than is reasonably necessary.

Tom demonstrated a low-ready position and introduced Max Joseph's position *sul* (Portuguese for South), a position that allows a shooter to safely hold a pistol in crowded spaces in a two-handed configuration with the weapon pressed (nearly) vertical against the chest with the muzzle oriented in front of your toes. He talked about presenting the weapon with the trigger finger on the frame (outside the trigger guard) until the decision to fire is made.

Manipulation Position was the shooters "workspace" where the weapon could be conveniently reloaded at eye level. He talked about the importance of scanning—*seeing* what your eyes are observing, not just letting your brain default to assumptions. He described admin reloads as changing magazines while staying holstered, defined tactical reloads and referred to emergency reloads when the gun runs empty. Perroni advocated reloading when you choose to and not allowing yourself to be forced to reload. He introduced the acronym, "FAST": fight, assess, scan, tac-load and he introduced the acronym, "MOVE": motionless operators ventilate easily, meaning that staying on the move makes you a harder target.

Tom described a five-step draw stroke. Step One is: establish a grip in the holster. Two: The pistol is lifted from the holster and the non-firing (support) hand is moving toward the center of the chest. Three: pistol-side elbow rotates down, pointing the muzzle toward the target. Four: the pistol enters a retention position close to the body. Five: the two-handed grip is established at chest level and the weapon is projected to the "threat position" in front of the shooters' eyes.

He discussed his points of performance for reholstering; encouraging students to scan 360 degrees in order to break tunnel vision and assess any additional threats, to tac load if appropriate, and then finally to reholster slowly and safely while maintaining focus down range and applying all retention systems on the holster.



## Constantly be aware of escape routes, avoid confrontation when possible, be aware of potential threats, plan ahead, avoid dangerous people and situations, don't stand out or antagonize others.

Tom talked about malfunctions such as misfires; when the primer strike doesn't cause the round to fire. Hang fire was described as a delay before discharge after the primer is struck. Squib fire was when the projectile is launched with inadequate pressure behind it and it remains lodged in the barrel.

Perroni introduced immediate action using the saying, "tap, rack, fight" to remember to tap the magazine to ensure it is seated, rack the slide to ensure a round is chambered and to take the next shot if necessary. He talked about fixing double feeds with the saying "rip, rack, replace". He encouraged students to act. He said, "don't just stand there". Quickly weigh all options, be aware of cover, how quickly can you get to cover? Observe hands and don't give up if hit.

He introduced shooting on the move and advocated using the body to minimize vibration. He talked about heel/toe roll, bend-

ing knees and elbows, and staying flexible. He encouraged practicing shooting on the move in all directions. He mentioned that *cover* stops bullets while *concealment* only stops you from being seen. He mentioned how important hand-held lights are and the need for backups.

We watched a video from Escambia County, Florida of deputies involved in a shooting and discussed decision making, angles of fire and revisited the safety concern of what lies beyond the target. We discussed the advantages of initiative over reaction. Tom introduced another acronym, this time for unloading: "PROVE": Point the weapon in a safe direction. Remove all ammo. Observe the chamber. Verify the feed path. Examine for obstructions.

Perroni talked about firearms retention. He suggested that skills should be based on gross motor skills, should work under stress and should be practiced. He said that reten-

tion was based on a triad of mind, holster and skills. He also described three levels of holster retention: Single retention such as a holster with a thumb break, dual retention, such as a holster with a thumb break and a Serpa style retaining device, and triple retention; a system that has three actions required to draw.

We talked about situational awareness, conflict management, moral/ethical decisions and the use of deadly force. We discussed author Dave Grossman's concept of people being sheep, sheep dogs and wolves and we reviewed Marine Colonel Jeff Cooper's color codes of awareness, white, yellow, orange, red and black. Each is a different euphemism for states of awareness ranging from blissfully unaware to completely overwhelmed. Perroni added "platinum" that he described as the ability to practice critical thinking under duress. He also talked about air force Colonel John Boyd's OODA loop

(observe, orient, decide, act) occurring for two adversaries in a continuous cycle where whoever processes more efficiently or shortens their loop, has the advantage over their adversary.

Tom talked about recalibrating your internal clock for tiny increments in fractions of seconds and talked about role-player training scenarios in which FBI agents were tested by an apparently suicidal individual pressing a firearm to his temple, but the fact that movement from the temple to the agents could be done so fast that the only agents who did not consistently get shot were agents who immediately moved to a position of cover without hesitating. He explained that humans are very good at reading people and their intent while very young, but often become conditioned to suppress their intuition as they mature. He talked about mental preparation for defensive mindset, the concept of never giving up, planning, practicing and visualization. He recommended peoples' personal defense plans should include: constantly being aware of escape routes, avoiding confrontation when possible, being aware of potential threats, planning ahead, avoiding dangerous people and situations, not standing out or antagonizing others and not provoking. He talked about psychological and physiological considerations.

Perroni talked about selection of a defen-

sive pistol and ammo. He provided a handout called "The Laws on Self Defense in the District of Columbia". He talked about ability, opportunity, jeopardy and preclusion as they related to self-defense and reminded students that what you say will be considered from a criminal perspective and a civil perspective. He compared the "spirit of the law" and the "letter of the law". He explained officer discretion stated that deputies can warn, issue a summons or arrest. He stated that there is not a duty to notify officers of a concealed firearm in the state of Virginia, but there is a duty to notify officers of a concealed firearm in the District of Columbia. He talked about considerations for citizens rendering assistance to law-enforcement officers in jeopardy, and when they would be considered deputized. He provided links to lists for firearms approved in D.C. He provided a handout called "Prohibitions on Carrying Licensed Pistols" and one called "DC Restaurant Carry", one called "Firearm Registration in DC" and "Washington DC CCW Reciprocity". D.C. recognizes no other states' CCW, but DC's Concealed Carry Pistol License is recognized in 21 other states. Another handout covered authorized ammo, magazines and holsters. To complete our law library, we were also given a handout called "Code of DC Municipal Regulations Title 24. Public Space and Safety Chapter 23. Guns and Other Weapons. Perroni ex-

plained relevant portions of each in detail.

The course ended at a remote range site with two hours of range training and qualification fire. We shot from three yards out to 15, drawing from concealment. We fired standing and kneeling, and made use of cover. Each of us passed the course and was given a certificate to deliver to the D.C. Metro Police along with a firearm registration form and a concealed carry application.

It appears that I will be able to select one of my Glocks to register in the District of Columbia, and carry it concealed in an approved holster (along with a total of two ten round magazines) in many of Washington D.C.'s venues on the basis of this Concealed Carry Pistol License. Navigating the maze of bureaucracy, statute and regulation to carry a concealed pistol in the District of Columbia may be complex, but Commonwealth Criminal Justice Academy can walk you through the process and provide all the documents and training you will need. ✓

**BIO**

*Chris Grabam is the former commander of a military anti-terrorism unit and serves as editor of **Tactics and Preparedness**. Visit his books and training products at [www.ChrisGrabamAuthor.com](http://www.ChrisGrabamAuthor.com).*

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# GEAR REVIEW

## SURVIVAL BELT 2.0

This belt comes 56 inches long to fit up to a 48-inch waist. The survival strap has notches that run the entire length of the belt to ensure a perfect fit for your pants, or a bundle of firewood. 1.5-inch wide, the belt boasts internal webbing with almost 1500 PSI of tensile strength. The two-inch buckle conceals a small stainless steel knife blade with bottle opener, an LED flashlight and a ferrocium fire starter. [www.slidebelts.com](http://www.slidebelts.com)

