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COMBAT ARMS

2011



EXCLUSIVE



M14 EBR-RI

**HOW TACOM
BUILDS AN M14**

**REPORT
USMC**

SMAW

**INSIDE THE MK153
83MM ROCKET
LAUNCHER**

TESTED

ARMALITE

SPR MOD 1

**MEDIUM-RANGE
MONOLITHIC 5.56**

FIELD TESTED:

BEST TRAINING

- > I.T.T.S. URBAN SNIPER
- > WARTAC CQC
- > VIKING TACTICS

BEST SIDEARMS

- > GLOCK 17 GEN4 9mm
- > FN FNX .40 S&W
- > ED BROWN STEALTH .45

BEST RIFLES

- > G.A. PRECISION .308
- > LES BAER .308
- > FNH SCAR-16 5.56

IT'S

BY ERIC R. POOLE

URBAN SNIPER

WHY SCOTT REITZ MAY BE

THE MOST EFFECTIVE FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR

IN THE WORLD.





It was a little unusual to ride shotgun in the front seat of a new blacked-out Cadillac Escalade wearing a Crye Precision uniform and knowing that there were multiple cases of LMT .308s stacked in the trunk. Here we were, traveling up California's 405 with high-capacity rifles fitted with SureFire suppressors. A grinning kid pressed against the back glass of his mom's Corolla caught my attention as we slowly passed. He looked us over before making silly faces. I stared and smiled before putting a hand up to gesture my entertainment. Strangely, it was like he knew something was odd about our common carrier and was dumbfounded by our appearance.

A sun-beaten, weathered fellow and a tough-looking Greek were feverishly pulling aside a heavy pair of chain links when we finally pulled up to a special section within the Angeles Shooting Range. These rope-tethered links were like the ones you'd imagine had once suspended a ship's anchor high above the ocean. Impressive as they were, it was obvious that last-minute preparations were underway ahead of our arrival.

"That's Uncle Scotty," SureFire's Ron Canfield pointed out. "Uncle Scotty," as I would soon learn, was Scott Reitz, a retired 30-year veteran of the LAPD with a colorful career. He spent 10 years with the Metro Division, where he served as a member of the elite D Platoon on the LAPD SWAT team. "This is International Tactical Training Seminars, or ITTS," Reitz said, "and you're here to learn about gunfighting. Call me Uncle Scotty."

You can infer a lot about a man by the way he speaks. Reitz has the voice of a man who once smoked to help manage the stress of his experience, and he projected confidence and intent. Imagine a guy who rips off the filters and smokes half a pack—not for his nerves, but to help him come down from an adrenaline rush.

My father is also a retired California police officer, and although the two didn't know each other, I worshiped his profession and knew Scott Reitz was legendary. With his history of clean and decisive actions to close multiple violent situations, Reitz's training at this Urban Sniper seminar was going to provide an invaluable opportunity to learn.

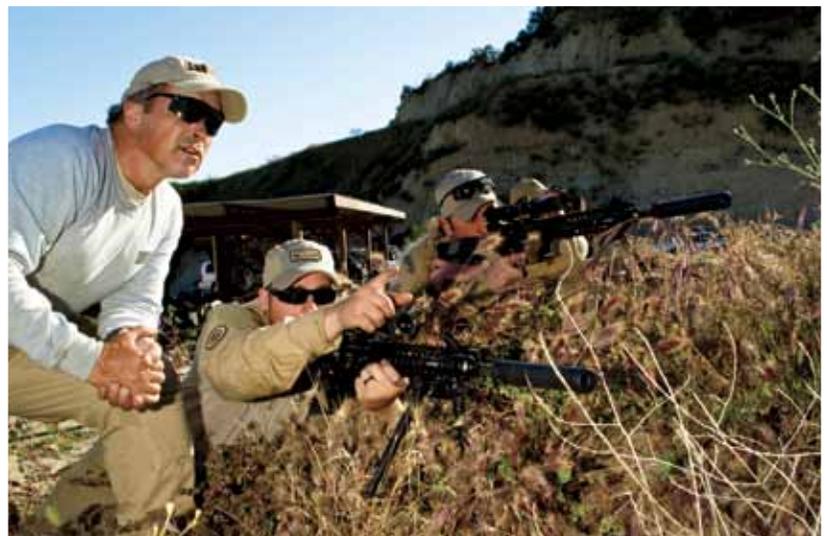


INTRODUCTIONS

Reitz had been involved in a number of shootings, and he came out on top after every one. Going around the class, he called upon each of us to provide our background and shooting experience. *I've done one combat tour as a Marine, I thought to myself. What the f*** is that going to mean to this guy? Nothing. Don't let this Uncle Scotty think that you're bullshitting him.* With the exception of one ego in the class, all of our responses were brief and humble.

Training started with the introduction of another instructor, former U.S. Navy SEAL Mark Semos, and a few words to carry forward.

"Proper use of dead space and clean lines win gunfights," Reitz said, "not speed. Gunfighting is problem solving at speed under extreme duress. It's righteous problem solving. Ninety-five percent of it is mental, 5 percent mechanical. Qualification courses you may have expertly qualified on are mildly interesting, but they have arbitrary times to measure skill. Those who call themselves *masters* are just ex-



ercising mental masturbation. That's not real life. I have no problem with shooting matches, but matches have to be controlled. There are no rules in a gunfight. There are no universal truths. In fact, there is a real penalty in a gunfight. I'm going to introduce you to a wide skill set and logic that's based off of real-world shootings. But first, your safety briefing."

IN MEMORIAM

A report indicates that 33-year-old Charles Heim was on temporary assignment to the LAPD Hollywood

Division. Heim and Officer Felix Pena acted on a tip given to them during a traffic stop that someone was dealing drugs from a motel room in the area. They knocked on a door at the Dunes Motel, and the suspect's girlfriend opened it. When Heim stepped into the doorway, he was shot twice in the upper body, and Pena was wounded in one hand. Heim died a few hours later.

"Chuck Heim was a mediocre shooter. [He was] not into shooting. He was killed. His wife, Beth, asked the team to make the call at the hospital, and we had to pull the plug. I was

pissed and frustrated, and I got mean. After that, I radically altered how I teach. I've been in shootings, and I know. I don't teach feel-good shooting. You get righteous truth."

I noticed Uncle Scotty's voice crack a little when he described the awakening that he experienced after the death of Officer Heim on October 22, 1994. It's an insight as to why he genuinely takes this subject so seriously, and it draws students into what he's about to teach.

GROUPS

"How much rounder can you make the wheels on my Hummer?" he asked. "I don't need to reinvent everything. I've got a range set up with small targets on the other side of this wall. I want to see how many of you can group three shots together using these rifles in a prone position. I don't care where they hit. Give me a group, and then we'll dial the scope to the center. Make it happen."

With that, we obediently broke with a sense of urgency and picked up our designated rifles—Lewis Machine and Tool MWS308s finished with a SureFire muzzlebrake and suppressor. We picked a spot on an imaginary firing line that was roughly 100 yards away from hanging targets. We followed Uncle Scotty's instructions and printed a series of three- and five-round groups using NRA 50-foot smallbore rifle targets. Two black sighters positioned in the middle were used to quickly dial in our scopes before moving on to the 10 black dots oriented near the edges of the paper. Six shots and I had the Nightforce NXS dialed in.

I moved on to the outer targets, eight more groups. Every shot clustered well within an inch, and two groups measured less than a half inch. It was like I was testing a rifle on a bench back at home. My last target was just one ragged hole with three shots dead center. It was so small that I couldn't determine how to measure it without a bullet gauge I once used to score rifle matches.



A similar version of this Lewis Machine and Tool MWS308 has been adopted by the UK MoD and designated the L129A1 for issue to its sharpshooters. Chambered for 7.62 NATO, this SureFire-suppressed rifle punched a single three-shot group during training that measured less than a 1/4 inch at 100 yards.

When we went downrange for a closer inspection, Semos critiqued my results and moved on to the next shooter. In search of affirmation, I protected my target in hopes that Uncle Scotty would notice and offer a nod. Black Oakley M-Frames prevented any insight into his stoic assessment as he simply walked down the line with his head cocked, holstered 1911 on his thigh. Regardless, the accuracy of the LMT seemed unbelievable. I thought, *He had to notice.*

New targets up, we were challenged to demonstrate our ability to accurately fire from the standing, kneeling, sitting and prone positions, falling from one to the next. When this was complete, we returned to our targets for individual appraisal from both instructors before moving on to train over the next three days. I think part of this exercise was designed to prove to the instructors that we could safely handle and operate these rifles in a training environment.

STEEL FEEDBACK

"Position shooting is great for practicing fundamentals," Uncle Scotty said, "but you need to be able to adapt to an ever-changing environment." With that



said, the class quickly moved to shooting long-range steel on an uneven and rocky firing line atop a small ridgeline.

One take-away from the next evolution taught each shooter to settle into an unusual and sometimes uncomfortable position. We learned when it would be good to dial the impact on target or hold over with the mil-dots. This period of instruction went on for quite some time and concluded with a reminder to dial back the scope to return to zero after each engagement. Semos transitioned well to a wind-reading and range-estimation class with many anecdotal examples to reinforce each lesson.

ITTS URBAN SNIPER

Going through boxes and boxes of Federal Gold Medal ammunition might sound blasphemous to those contenders who reserve this load's match-winning consistency for winning paper matches. Here, our goal was to ring a metallic report by hitting somewhere on a randomly designated steel target. It was a bit of overkill and expensive, but those who take this type of training seriously can't afford to question the performance of ammo. Results just have to be there. Training with Reitz isn't an everyday opportunity, so the cost in ammunition is justified.

Shooting steel provides immediate feedback and confidence to any shooter during training. It's a great measure to keep a student's concentration on what has to be learned rather than wasting the mental effort to weigh an answer to the plaguing question, *Did I hit the target?*

Training was fluid, with each student conforming to unique scenarios and adapting to different positions, sometimes requiring a shot off a bipod or an issued Eberlestock pack. More and more, a successful hit came down to the shooter's ability to hold the fundamentals together, mentally block out distractions (as well as gunfire from other shooters) and focus on applying consistent pressure to the trigger until after the round is sent.

Steel was scattered out to 600 yards, which made it all the more impressive how quickly the class improved, conquering the first day's feats in just

a few hours of range time. Once we moved to steel, the LMT and I never missed a shot.

HOSTAGE TARGETS

The next day's focus was on applying accuracy to timing and judgment. Our training progressed to engaging hostage targets and movers. On what was normally a lengthy pistol range, Uncle Scotty revealed a target system he engineered that allowed him to manually draw the head of a threat target from just behind the hostage—moving just an inch if he wanted. Controlled by a rope-pulley system, the movement of the threat was unpredictable.

The threat target was positioned behind the hostage target for cover and randomly moved laterally from behind the hostage. Some of my classmates pulled the trigger and took a chance at hitting the threat target. Uncle Scotty then edged the target slowly, revealing what someone would consider the ear or edge of the threat's face. Again, some pulled the trigger at this opportunity, and at the corner of my field of view I observed that the shooter next to me hit the hostage target in his attempt. This drill was familiar to training I received in the military, so I knew that Uncle Scotty had a lesson to teach. The exercise had to be more than just seeing who could put the most rounds in the head of a threat target.

After a few more quick appearances of the threat target and more shooting from others on the firing

line, Uncle Scotty kept the threat hidden as we lay behind our rifles. I still hadn't taken a shot, and my mind raced as 10 minutes passed without movement. This had become a lesson of patience. As more minutes ticked, I began to develop a solution. Through my prior service, I realized the importance of placing a headshot in the T-zone to immediately shut down the central nervous system. I knew this would prevent the hostage taker from inflicting any harm on the would-be victim on his way out of this world. Using the Nightforce mil-dots in my reticle, I measured half the width of the head and placed my reticle off the target to the right. I decided to hold my crosshairs on that calculated spot and wait for the right moment for the target to reveal an opportunity.

Scotty changed directions, and the target began emerging on the left side of the hostage's head. I noticed other shooters try and move their entire body to adjust for a left-side shot. This altered their positions and affected natural point of aim. Some hit and some didn't. I continued waiting, and the target's last move was to the right. It paused, and I fired. Before the target retreated, I noticed a perfectly placed shot exactly in the center of where my target's medulla would be in real life. And with that, Scotty called cease-fire and the drill was over.

In assessing the targets, we saw that every student in the class had littered his threat with multiple holes punched all



Located only a few miles from Southern California's 210 freeway, the Angeles Shooting Ranges used by ITTS are conveniently located in Lake View Terrace. Various types of steel targets positioned at 100-yard increments are available to long-range riflemen.



over the head. Uncle Scotty pointed out which hits would likely have been fatal and which would have cost an agency a lawsuit.

Pointing to a shot made on a threat target at the head's edge, he rhetorically asked, "What? Think any hit to the head of a target counts as a successful hit? It doesn't work that way in real life. You need to be absolutely sure that you can put down a threat before you pull the trigger. You might not get a second chance."

Many shooters had pulled the trigger and accidentally hit the hostage as they chased the threat moving toward the hostage. When Scotty got to my target, he stopped and called me out.

"Good shot. Why only one?" he asked.

As if he really didn't know the answer to his question, I replied, "It was the only one that properly presented itself, sir."

"Don't call me 'sir.' I need two of you to help me put this stuff away. The rest of you, get your gear and wait under the shed."

Through his dark shades, I couldn't tell if he was looking at me or staring at something else. There was no sign of affirmation on his face and no acknowledgement that I was the only student to figure out the solution to his drill. He turned around and taped up the targets without another word.

Taking fire from an enemy sniper played by ITTS instructor Mark Semos added a sense of urgency and realism to training. Here, students are alerted and are preparing to embark on a countersniping lesson.

MOVERS

"Lead is dependent on math," Scotty said. Locktime, dwell time, trigger time. Pressing the trigger is mechanical. It's not actually part of locktime. We're talking about 1/10th of a second. "The truth is that you can't get good if you don't practice. Books can't teach you how to balance a bicycle. You just do it. It's all theory."

With those words, we moved to an elevated position on another range with a firing line overcome with brush. Targets were hung on mechanical movers positioned 80 yards away. We were instructed to take up prone and make a firing position to shoot off our packs.

"Most guys don't get to practice on movers. Try and get the weapon system as static as possible. Most people shoot at the

trailing edge because they don't consider checking target speed or they stop tracking the target before they pull the trigger. I'll give you a baseline lead. Use the target's leading leg to track. The targets are moving at eight miles per hour at 80 yards. You have to be fluid like water. Track your subject with the same velocity at which it's traveling. To accomplish this, you need flawless trigger control and complete follow-through. Only fire rounds with a realistic expectation of a hit. We don't ambush. Less rounds fired is more. I'd be astounded at a six-inch group. No one has placed a five-shot group under six inches."

With that statement laid before me like a challenge, I set out to achieve





(Above) An instructor was always observing, ready to offer advice to help students accomplish a task. (Right) From 80 yards, the author finally achieved the approval he sought with this mover target. Reitz indicated that no student had ever grouped 10 rounds in less than six inches from that distance and at that speed.

absolute purity. I exercised patience and pure mechanics. Never once did the question of the rifle's capability enter my mind. I knew the LMT would do its job. I just needed to do mine. Scotty activated the mover and began the drill. I carefully considered each shot, detaching myself without dwelling on the shots I made before. The drill tested our endurance and ability to repeat our actions. I felt good about most of the shots I fired. Others commented on the difficulty and joked about errant shots they could spot through their scopes. I kept quiet, but felt confident. At the end, I hurried to inspect my target and was rewarded for my efforts. This time, Scotty smirked and finally acknowledged under his breath that I had accomplished something he'd never seen a student of his do before.

FURTHER TRAINING

Four days of training reinforced what each instructor taught the day prior. A few additional classes were taught, including a long-range night vision demonstration by TNVC. We

targets on the Angeles hillside. Define the search area. Systematically move through the area. Slightly overlap the last field of view. Move the scope until you've burned through the entire pic. Look for shapes. There is no true straight edge in nature. You can't duplicate the true color of nature. Don't keep coming back to the same spot. Movement is the first thing to catch the eye. Head and shoulders are the most recognizable features to look for.

Working with *Shooting Illustrated's* Adam Heggenstaller, we were positioned beside 3-Gun champion Barry Dueck. I challenged Heggenstaller and myself to locate and successfully engage each target before Dueck's team could for bragging rights. Uncle Scotty and Semos spotted hits and required us to use proper communication in spotting and firing.

"Spotters," Semos called, "observing is an art. If you have your scope set on a high power, you'll



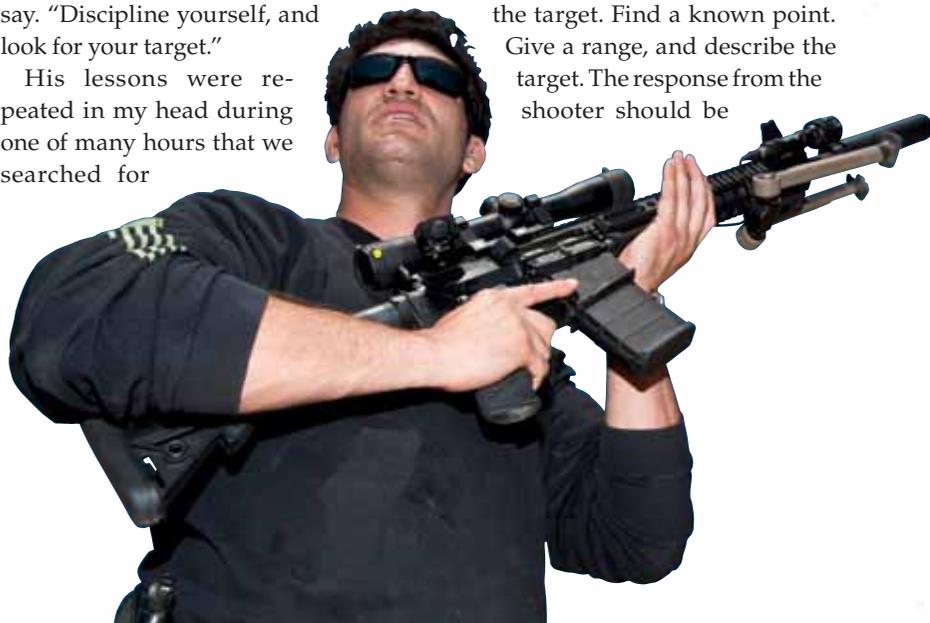
also benefit from a bit of practical first-aid training by Combat Medical Systems, suppressor use by Barry Dueck, as well as combat loadout classes, and observation training conducted by Semos.

"Every time you look through a scope, there is a new two-dimensional image to search within," Semos would say. "Discipline yourself, and look for your target."

His lessons were repeated in my head during one of many hours that we searched for

learn that it isn't the greatest thing to search through. Come out and then work in. In the military, you need a spotter for shooting and long distance. The spotter is the guy in charge, and the dialog needs to be clean. It's a system. Be cold and clinical. No extra verbiage. Sometimes you need plain language. Walk the shooter in to the target. Find a known point.

Give a range, and describe the target. The response from the shooter should be



ITTS URBAN SNIPER

'Ready.' Then the spotter needs to give wind calls. Get in the habit of holding off for wind. Don't dial. Talk in clicks. If the wind changes, spotter says 'Hold.'"

WHEN IT COMES TOGETHER

The final day in a week of training came too quickly. The physicality of countersniping drills, rushing to a position and dragging the chain links (or "clanks," as we learned to call them) created a bit of physical fatigue and forced us to manage our heart rate as well as shooting fundamentals. Amazingly, ITTS instructors Scott Reitz and Mark Semos did a seamless job of bridging each training evolution into the next to prevent information overload. Everything seemed to connect and make sense. By the final test, each student's confidence and effectiveness were high. Heggenstaller and I remained a scout/sniper team and worked through the course's multistage test against a clock. We observed and engaged multiple unknown-distance targets that were camouflaged to blend with the surrounding environment. Targets were camouflaged in brush out to 600 yards.

Moving from range to range and stage to stage presented different obstacles, but we moved swiftly without pulling a single shot. Each of us had to act as the sniper and switch to a spotter role to pass. Some shots were taken from the roof of



Brad Gilpin of Combat Medical Systems provided the critical-incident aid training. Learning more than just how to save a limb, stop the bleeding and treat a gunshot, students practiced how to properly equip and organize the contents of the medical kit.

a disabled vehicle we used for cover at close-range engagements, while others were made across the Angeles valley from the top of a former shipping container. Dragging the 170-pound clanks simulated the recovery of a wounded friend, and wearing a complete kit while carrying the LMT and a combat load of ammunition made each unnecessary movement more challenging. For kicks, a KIMS (memory) game was added to screw with our minds. Thankfully, it never factored into our tested results.

Heggenstaller and I didn't complete the test with the fastest time, but neither of us missed a shot or left an objective incomplete. We passed, and we left Southern California better marksmen.

This experience at ITTS was dense and had the most practical application of any I've ever participated in. When I returned home, I made a rare purchase—an LMT MWS308 at retail value—and set it up the same as the one I'd used at ITTS: SureFire Scout light, SureFire muzzlebrake, Nightforce NXS scope, TangoDown folding bipod and Dueck Defense offset iron sights. It has proved itself to be the one rifle I can do anything with.

Scott Reitz's training has already saved lives. A local, unassuming civilian visited during our course and revealed how his ITTS training had given him the skills to stop a home invasion that resulted in the death of both suspects. I can't knock the other instructors under whom I've trained in the past, but Uncle Scotty's training has had direct results in saving lives. He's one of those people you wish you could copy to the benefit of anyone interested in learning how to survive a gunfight. Unfortunately for all of us, you can only have one great person one place at a time.

For more information on ITTS, visit ittstraining.com. **CA**

