

May 23, 2024

Hi Xxxx,

I wanted to take a moment to share my thoughts regarding the training a small group of us had at Troysgate in North Carolina.

As you know, I was an 0311 infantry squad leader in the Marine Corps with 1st LAR. I fought in the second battle of Fallujah. I was getting into close-quarter gunfights daily. It was house-to-house, up close and personal, having to decide who I should kill and who I should allow to live. Do I shoot, or do I not shoot? 20 years later, the decision to shoot or not shoot still impacts me. But I can rest easy knowing that when it came time to take life, I always did the right thing. I always took to heart that line at the end of the Marine Corps Hymn, "to keep our honor clean." I took that to mean, that no matter the outcome, though it would cost me my life, I would do what is right. And when that time came, and I crossed that threshold, my conscience was clean. And today, the faces I see when I close my eyes at night are not those of the men whose lives I took, but the ones I didn't. The ones who I could have killed, and probably should have, but I allowed to live. Now that's okay. I'd rather it be that way than the other way around.

I say all this to drive home this point. The training that we received at Troysgate was the single best training event I have ever had in my career as a warfighter. Live fire, shoot or no shoot, on living breathing targets. Nothing in my training with the Marine Corps or with Diplomatic Security Services (DOS) has ever come close to this. No one teaches you how to cross that threshold and drill live rounds into real people. Troysgate does. Shooting paper and steel targets doesn't get you this. Paper and steel don't tell your brain what it's like to kill someone, or how it feels when you make a mistake in a life-and-death situation. Troysgate does. Anyone who carries a firearm in the defense of others absolutely needs this level of training.

They had a motto posted all around the firing range, "Experience the dream before you live the nightmare." Experiencing a real deadly-force encounter before it actually happens gives you tools you can't get anywhere else except in the heat of combat. But then, it may be too late.

Xxxx, thank you for allowing us to do that training.

Milt C.