

GET REAL

FULLY FUNCTIONING FIREARMS, LIVE AMMO AND
INTERACTIVE ROLE PLAYERS. TROYSGATE: TRAINING THE
MOST IMPORTANT SKILL SET.

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The mean-mugging and dialogue are different in every Troysgate scenario because both shooter and role player are real live people.

“ONCE I STEPPED IN THE ROOM, THE ‘FORMER ACQUAINTANCE’ STARTED A CONVERSATION WHERE HE BECAME INCREASINGLY WORKED UP AND I HAD TO SHOOT HIM.”



If you’ve ever wondered what a real gunfight looks like, get online and view dash-camera footage of law enforcement shootouts. Most of the time, they start off as something routine such as a traffic stop until suddenly, all hell breaks loose. Ninety percent of the time, we’ll have no idea we’re about to get into real trouble until we’re already in it.

Historically, a surprise fight-for-your-life scenario isn’t something for which you can really prepare. Sure, there are a couple of different target systems that use prerecorded videos projected onto a screen that create realistic scenarios, but they’re not perfect because we’re still just watching a movie waiting to see whether we’re going to shoot.

There’s a target system created by a small training company in North Carolina that provides the most realistic scenario-based training I’ve seen or participated in. Troysgate uses an angled reflective surface to create a target that lets us look into our assailant’s eyes, interact with him, then determine whether we use lethal force. It’s the best way to test the most critical skill to have in a gunfight: decision-making.

Good role players will be able to play off the trainee’s moves and also provide invaluable feedback once the scenario is complete. Indoors or out, the Troysgate target works equally well.

THE TROYSGATE TARGET SYSTEM allows students to experience all of the psychological elements as well as the physical ones in as peaceful or violent a scenario as our instructor creates. The target is a large, reflective surface that works like a big mirror. When I went to Troysgate, I participated in situations based in a hospital waiting room, a police vehicle stop and a sniper position providing overwatch on a barricaded suspect.

The waiting-room scenario occurred in a building where I stepped through a door into a small, three-sided room that opened to the reflective target. The wall to my right was constructed of ballistic-rated material in case students got overcome by events and tried to turn a loaded weapon toward the role players. On the other side of the wall to my right was the rest of the waiting room, where a role player pretended to be a highly agitated former acquaintance of mine. Once I stepped in the room, the “former acquaintance” started a conversation where he became increasingly worked up and I had to shoot him.

The reflective surface on the wall I faced made it appear as if I were in one big room. While watching and talking to a man whom I would soon need to shoot, neither he nor I were ever in any real danger. Using the reflective wall and live role player meant the man knew my name, spoke to me and waited for a response. He then keyed off that response and could choose to escalate or de-escalate the situation. This is the first time I faced a scenario in training that required me to think and make decisions throughout.

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The interaction with my soon-to-be target also kept me psychologically involved because I was talking to a real person — the role player — not just watching a video on a screen or shooting at a picture on paper. It meant I had to think through every portion of the event, evaluating what my assailant was doing and determining what I could/should do at the same time. This requirement provided a source of stress not normally found in training and made it that much more realistic. I've faced situations where finding targets quickly and shooting accurately provided some stress, but never had I been in a training scenario that required so much participation throughout the exercise.

The first time I was involved in a Troysgate event, I attended with two fellow 3rd Special Forces Group veterans. We all went through the waiting-room scenario blind and then afterward discussed what happened. Each of us agreed that it felt just like prior deployments where we had to defend ourselves. What separated the Troysgate target from others were the interaction and the knowledge that how you responded to your adversary, the decisions you made, really mattered. You had to think your way through the problem.

Most of the time when we train, there is a command such as someone shouting, "Gun!" that kicks things off or we see a target



with a gun in the hand that clues us in that it's time to shoot. Videos and reactive screens are better because our target moves and sometimes speaks, forcing us to remain attentive.

One of my former teammates, "Bob," handled his scenario very well. He stepped into the doctor's office and was calm the whole time, spoke politely to his antagonist and then, when he felt the situation was getting out of control, pointed his pistol at his assailant and said, "Pull it." I spoke to Bob later, and he said that the conversation hit the point where he felt like there was no turning back, so he wanted to draw his gun first to guarantee that he could shoot first, if required. This is exactly what we should do in real life.

The role player later told me Bob drew his gun a few seconds before he planned on drawing his own. While the role player still drew his pistol, Bob's superior decision-making ensured that he was able to survive the situation. That type of good judgment comes only with lots of potentially dangerous street experience — or time on the Troysgate system.

THE TROYSGATE SYSTEM PROVIDED A REMINDER OF WHAT ARMED CONFRONTATION is like, but it wasn't that emotional and highly memorable "first time." That critical first experience is so important. The first time we look a man in

the eye and make the decision to shoot him isn't when to learn how we'll react or if we're really capable. Both the individual faced with that scenario and everyone who interacts with him will be better off if there has been some psychological preparation.

I saw a young soldier who had never deployed or been in a violent encounter go through a similar scenario at Troysgate as one I experienced. I stood in the back of the room to watch his reaction to the various stages of the encounter and could see the tension and uncertainty build in him. The soldier did well and managed to react quickly once the aggressor began shooting, but he was visibly shaken after the drill.

I approached him as soon as he cleared his weapon and spoke to him for a few minutes about what he experienced. He was breathing heavily as if he had just run up a few flights of stairs, he kept looking around while we were talking, and he spoke in fragmented sentences, classic signs of stress that we normally see only after real confrontation or combat.

Most who experience the Troysgate system will rapidly improve from one encounter to the next. A few will struggle. I saw video footage of students having nervous breakdowns, trying to hide when the shooting started and bursting into tears as soon as the exercise ended. This is good information for both the student and his superiors to have because it should influence where and how that individual gets

2%

Dave Grossman, author of "On Killing," states in his book that only 2 percent of the male population can kill where it's appropriate without experiencing negative psychological effects. He got this figure from talking to hundreds of military veterans who served during wartime, studying what they did and how they reacted. What this means is that 98 percent of men are in for a hard time should they ever experience a lethal encounter.

This group will struggle when required to kill, even in self-defense, or undergo psychological complications after the event occurs. Without some type of preparatory training or conditioning, we're deciding to take our chances that we'll be able to perform on game day and/or that we'll "just be able to deal" with what happens after the fact. This is a losing strategy.

employed. Those who show such a reaction would be strong candidates for additional training or assignment to posts where the possibility of confrontation is low.

THE VEHICLE STOP SCENARIO OCCURRED ON AN OUTDOOR RANGE WHERE A cruiser was pulled into the bay with a ballistic wall a couple of feet away from the driver's door. The reflective material in front of the vehicle allowed me to see what was on the other side of the ballistic wall. Exiting the vehicle, I was looking straight down the road at another car in front of me.

My brief stated that the description of and license plate on the car I'd stopped matched a vehicle seen leaving a bank robbery and that the people in the car were suspects. Knowing that the people in the car may have just robbed a bank and shot multiple employees made the scenario easier because there was less ambiguity. I exited the cruiser and immediately drew my pistol, knowing there was a high probability that someone in the car was about to get the good news. Both driver and passenger exited with guns in hand, forcing me to shoot.

THE FINAL SCENARIO I FACED WAS FROM A SNIPER OVERWATCH position. A suspect had taken hostages and barricaded himself in a building. My position was just over 100 yards away,

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This is the only time a sniper will get good live-action training that replicates what he'll see in a crisis. Being able to lie on the rifle and report for hours, if necessary, is something the Troysgate system can provide.

facing the reflective material that made it look like I was watching the suspect just inside a doorway. The suspect and hostages were in a ballistic shelter to the left of my line of fire and 20 feet from the reflective screen. While each scenario was relevant, this one was my favorite.

It required the sniper to stay behind his rifle for as long as the mission required, just like real life. It would be an ideal way to test marksmanship under stress as well as shake out our equipment. Few things are more difficult for a sniper than spending hours behind the scope while remaining alert, and it's something that hardly ever gets practiced or tested. Troysgate's target system allows us to do that.

Regardless of the environment in which you live and work, the Troysgate target is a valuable addition to your training program. Instructors can create any scenario that we may face, testing not only our marksmanship but how quickly and how well we make decisions. ◯

