

Unpacking my equipment from last weekend's Urban Combat Course in NJ, I'm reflecting on a few conversations I had with the students. One of the unexpectedly best ones was reflecting on today- Veterans Day, also known (*and in my opinion, more appropriately so*) as Remembrance Day to our friends in the United Kingdom and Canada. The question was double barreled- first, why do I teach classes on holiday weekends and second, why don't more Vets jump into the training field?

For me the first question is an easy one. Trigger pullers and former trigger pullers face a number of issues ranging from coping with orthopedic injuries due to a high impact lifestyle to mental injuries from the traumatic nature of the job itself. The stress, the fear, the joy, the addition to adrenaline, the need for brotherhood. Its a switch that doesn't turn off. An activation of fight or flight that only selects fight. There's a look to the eyes, a manner in the step, when real recognizes real. Those that don't have it can't understand, and those that do would rather talk about anything else. So for me at least, taking those holidays where others will be enjoying the day off, drinking beer, and enjoying good food is better spent teaching good people to be more dangerous. We don't live in happy times and these are not holidays to be enjoyed- the best way to honor the memories of those I've lost close to me are spent sharing the knowledge paid for in blood.

The second question is a far more difficult one that I can only answer from my own perspective. Why don't more vets get into the training field? When I got out of the Army, I was angry, sought others like me, and looked for any outlet that would enable me to share what I know. It was a difficult ride and certainly a learning experience, but one that culminated in my recognition that the lone way to get people out training *and to value the knowledge being shared* is through offering classes. And even then, it hasn't been an easy process. The first issue is that in Army I had a baseline of knowledge for the troops I was instructing- since everything is by the numbers, I knew what they knew and what they needed to learn. In teaching civilians, I have zero way of knowing that for sure until I can make a rapid assessment on the fly, and in a mixed bag of students, that's not an easy thing to consistently pull off. To complicate things, building a curriculum is tough- there's only so

much time in a weekend, and its tough to cram as much in as you can without shooting over the students' heads. And that's leaving out the personal risk aspects.

In all, its an intimidating thing. Putting together a class, making it worth your students' time, and knowing that your success or failure is 100% yours. You own it. Its a tough step off that ramp. But what I will say is that the greatest reward- at least for me- is that in that 48-72 hour period, class recreates all those best aspects of the Army. The replication of that team atmosphere that I have not found anywhere else as a civilian. The enthusiasm of the students, the passion for learning, the spark that you see as a trainer when those that you're teaching gain something new. Its a validation that yes, you have something to offer the world. That, at least for this small group of good people, you can be the change you want to see. My biggest pet peeve is complaints with no solution (*and there's plenty of that to go around*), and training is the best solution we've got.

So with that said, on this Veteran's Day, the vets reading this have skills to share. If you're wanting to write about your experiences, looking to start up your own training company, or just want to offer a class and test the waters, I challenge you to do it. If you want to get the word out, I'm offering an outlet. The more of us out there training, the better we'll all be. Keep that hatchet sharp and stay in the fight.

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