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## **SHOOTOUT!**

**SEALS VS CIVILIANS AT ELITE COMMANDO SCHOOL**

**Combative Concepts, Inc.**  
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# Real Men Behaving Badly

BY ANDY STANFORD  
Photos Courtesy of *Combative Concepts Inc.*

## Ex-SEALs At Combative Concepts Push Gunfighters To The Limit

**THE** young NCO took a deep breath, satisfied the facility was secure. In the half hour since going on alert, his security team had meticulously cleared every foot of the compound: primary structures, outbuildings, open spaces, and vehicles.

All 18 team members relaxed slightly. They remained behind cover but maintained an alert posture, weapons at the ready. The team leader pondered what to do next.

Just then, a van turned into the parking lot next to the fenced perimeter. The handful of guards glanced at the drab, military-style vehicle. Only one or two of the rear guard noticed the figures trotting behind the van, and puzzled for a critical second about what to do. Suddenly the air was rent by the angry passage of ordinance unleashed in short, controlled bursts. The half-dozen dismounted terrorists fired — accurately — as they moved toward the entry gate; the driver and passenger leapt from their seats and did the same. Fully half of the security team was hit before any effective fire was returned.

For a moment the attack faltered. One terrorist was “wounded” and another “killed,” leaving six to carry on. The fence was a good 6 feet tall; the razor wire topping it also impeded anyone attempting to climb over. The narrow gate next to the guard shack was a bottleneck. Unfortunately, none of the guards took advantage of the lull in hostile fire. The chance for decisive action evaporated as quickly as it had appeared.

The terrorist leader rallied his men against the disorganized defenders; they aggressively entered and cleared the compound with well-practiced efficiency. The attackers employed close-quarter battle (CQB) tactics to mop up the remaining resistance: a few personnel who had retreated into a building.

In less than 10 minutes, the compound was in enemy hands.

### Weapons And Tactics

This force-on-force CQB match took place in San Diego, Calif., and was a rude awakening for the students cast as defenders against training-cadre “terrorists.” It is just one example of the tactical-operations training available from Combative Concepts Incorporated.

Founded in 1993 by former Navy SEALs Ken J. Good and David G. Maynard, Combative Concepts Inc., (826 Orange Ave. #518, Dept. SOF, Coronado CA 92118; phone: 888-341-0063 [toll free in USA] or 714-227-3946) offers CQB training for both individuals and teams, plus a wide range of small-arms courses (including sniping), hand-to-hand combat (unarmed, baton, and knife), and even rappelling and climbing.

The weapons-and-tactics consultation group offers a decidedly unconventional curriculum that has attracted a variety of clients:



In urban ops, combatants must safely negotiate stairs, halls, walls, and corners, in light or darkness. At Combative Concepts, like other gunfighter schools, there is a right way to doing CQB and there are wrong ways.

members of SEAL teams 1, 3, and 5, Navy special boat squadrons, U.S. Marine special-response teams, federal Drug Enforcement Administration, California Highway Patrol, and several police SWAT teams.

### Targets That Shoot Back

Combative Concepts takes a different approach to weapons-and-tactics training than some firearms schools. In contrast to well-known institutions like Gunsite Training Center and Thunder Ranch — where all shooting is done with live ammo on targets of paper, cardboard, plastic, or steel — a large percentage of CCI's drills take the form of engagements between thinking, moving human beings armed with top-of-the-line pump-action or semi-auto paintball guns.

Firearms purists might scorn the use of paintball guns, which originally were used as toys by cammie-clad weekend Rambos.

"You can use it [paintball weapon] as a toy; you can use it as a training tool," Good explained. A pellet's velocity is about 300 feet per second; at the typical range of CQB — tens of meters, or less — an impact is not exactly a love tap.

Live-fire training on the range certainly is part of Combative Concepts' program, but it is the realistic force-on-force engagements that really set it apart from other gunfighter schools. Don't get me wrong: World-class live-fire courses are very worthwhile, and the serious student of combat shooting can benefit from any and all such instruction. I can personally vouch for such organizations as Gunsite, Yavapai Firearms Academy, LFI, Roger's Institute of Advanced Weaponcraft, and H&K and S&W academies, and for training by Clint Smith (whose International Training Consultants "Countersniper 2" I took during his pre-Thunder Ranch days). Without a doubt, each of these experiences con-

tributed materially to my own odds of surviving violent confrontations.

Nonetheless, something is missing with range training, even state-of-the-art range training. For one thing, no inanimate silhouette can replicate the sheer unpredictability of a live human adversary. The requirement to think on one's feet is at least an order of magnitude greater when confronting a dynamic opponent.

In a real gunfight, tactical decisions must be made in seconds — or less. Developing the ability to reflexively choose the course of action that offers the highest probability of survival is what CCI courses are all about.

### No Pain, No Gain

Except for criticism from the instructor or the embarrassment of failing in front of other students, live-fire drills otherwise performed safely provide no real consequences to the shooter. Yes, peer pressure can be a



Who might need to know how to form — or react under fire to — small-unit linear ambushes? Maybe federal Border Patrol field agents from southern California, Arizona, New Mexico or Texas in a crash course in “land warfare.” (left) Ghillie suit, drinking-water carrier, binoculars, rifle with scope, 500 rounds of match-grade — partial packing list for CCI “sniper/scout” course.

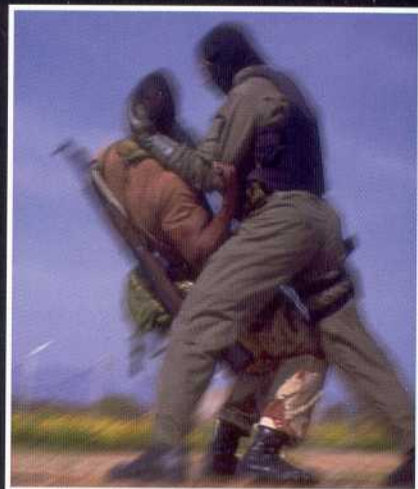
strong motivational factor but the effect is mental, not physical.

At CCI, the price of failure is instantaneous and somewhat painful. Do it right, you win; screw up, you feel the paintball’s sting — you’ve taken a round. It’s that sim-

ple. Your body learns, at gut level, which actions will get you shot and which will allow you to prevail over your adversary. (Bill Rogers uses a similar approach in his SpecOps reactive-shooting courses to develop high-speed combat-marksanship

skills, albeit with positive feedback as the motivator.) I’m not a psychologist, and don’t know if such conditioning is Pavlovian, Skinnerian, or something else entirely. All I know is that it works.

Granted, some types of live-fire training



Rubber boat on a remote stretch of river — recon Marines training in the Philippines, or DEA *Snowcap* agents in South America? No, CCI students and cadre in California. (above) Feet planted firmly in loose sand, no high kicks; elbows in tight, hands lock on target — silent training for a cruel world.

can provide fairly high levels of stress. For example, man-versus-man range exercises, in which shooters fire simultaneously on mirror-image reactive-target layouts, accomplish this much better than square range drills or assault courses. But the skills being tested in this man-versus-man exercise comprise technical marksmanship ability — which is far more simple than the myriad of attributes required to survive a real gunfight. And of course, there is no pain penalty.

### Slicing The Pie

As with all good instruction, CCI courses follow a logical progression of drills, each designed to impart the skills required to move on to the next level. Stress levels may seem high at the time, but in reality are carefully modulated by the experienced instructors to keep students just below the breaking point.

"We have guys [students] whose weapons skills fall apart under duress," Good said.

A typical course will begin with "gauntlet" drills, in which a single student will move with his weapon in an appropriate "ready" position through a corridor of wooden barricades. Not surprisingly, the "weapons platform" taught by CCI instructors involves carrying guns at what most instructors call "low ready": muzzle depressed approximately 45 degrees and in line with the shooter's line of sight.

At selected intervals, live targets step out: either armed aggressors who will fire at the student, or unarmed individuals who should not be shot. This Hogan's Alley with a pulse is only the first step, intended to teach the integration of movement and weapons handling.

Next, the instructors explain their version of "slicing the pie," that is, incremental, radial movement to view around the corners in a structure. Cornering techniques comprise staple tools in the CQB operator's tactical toolbox. Seeing the environment in terms of angles — along with the ability to successfully negotiate these conceptual geometric obstacles — facilitates the systematic and tactically sound job of clearing a structure.

Combative Concepts teaches an aggressive combination of stealth and dynamic clearing methods; the exact techniques vary depending on the specific floor plan of the target building. Perhaps most controversial, Good and Maynard recommend switching between right- and left-handed use of the firearm, depending on the direction of the clearing process. This is done to minimize the amount of the shooter's body that is exposed as he (or she) rounds the corner.

There are some valid arguments against this procedure. For the average person, I would question the advisability of shooting from the "weak side" unless absolutely necessary, for instance, due to injury of the dominant arm. Accurate shooting is required to stop real-world adversaries, and most people don't even shoot that well from

their dominant side. A skilled shooter can become virtually ambidextrous, but only the exceptional individual will put in the trigger time to get this good. As with anything else worth doing, practice makes perfect.

### Fire And Maneuver

With a firm foundation of individual skills established, students next learn to work in concert with others.

Team drills begin with 2-on-2 engagements that emphasize situational awareness and communication. The concept of "cross clearing" is introduced at this point: engaging the flanks of a foe that is preoccupied by one's partner. Instructors also emphasize that maintaining some distance from cover is critical to maximize tactical flexibility and avoid succumbing to a "Maginot Line mentality" (false sense of security).

Four-on-one drills come next: Two pairs must coordinate actions to eliminate a single adversary. These drills reinforce the lessons learned in previous evolutions, while adding an additional level of complexity. Despite the odds, a lone aggressor can destroy an uncoordinated team. (The FBI learned that painful lesson in the 1986 shootout in Miami: Bank robber Michael Platt outflanked agents, shot two dead and wounded five before himself being killed.) The 4-on-1 exercises drive home the point that the maxim "Individuals die, teams survive" only holds true when those who wear the same uniform coordinate sufficiently

with each other.

By the end of a typical one-week CCI course, students have learned team fundamentals well enough that they can be formed into larger units. A variety of scenarios exist, including hostage situations, drug raids, barricaded suspects, and terrorist takeovers. All exercises are videotaped, and a detailed debriefing is conducted immediately upon conclusion. Students also take turns as aggressors so that they may view, from both sides, the effects of tactical errors.

A key principle in all of the team drills is that no one operates alone. A two-person element is the smallest unit of force employed. The number of tactical options increases dramatically when more than one gun can be brought into the picture. In the words of the CCI staff, "One equals one; two equals four."

Multiple clearing elements can then be directed by the team leader to maximize the synergistic effect of all members.

### The Night Stuff

Many high-risk situations occur in darkness or reduced illumination. In such dim environments, the person trained in low-light tactics and techniques possesses a significant advantage.

In this murky arena of CQB, Combative Concepts has pioneered a variety of tactical advances. Its understanding and employment of "white" light is nothing short of revolutionary. Although modern night-

## IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In addition to CQB training for urban environments, Combative Concepts Inc., also offers a "Land Warfare" course. Its students have included members of the U.S. Border Patrol.

The training covers basic dismounted-patrolling techniques, immediate-action drills (IADs) including reaction to ambush, establishment of secure perimeters and — most critical — actions at the objective.

CCI cadre and students maneuver on large tracts of undeveloped land in full field gear. The training includes live-fire exercises against standard range targets. Another phase, however, comprises the use of paintball guns, movement to contact with aggressors, and "firefights."

David G. Maynard, co-founder of CCI, said these non-lethal shootouts reveal how quickly a team's well-rehearsed IADs can fall apart "when things are flying over your head. ...

"Basically, what you have is chaos, and that's our forte: teaching these guys to deal with chaos," he said. "You have to be

organized or you shoot each other up." Friendly fire, Maynard continued, "is very easy to do; that's the grim reality of this stuff. 'There's my buddy going around a tree on one side, and he comes back around and I shot him.'"

Force-on-force training, he said, exposes another common problem: "target fixation." A combatant can become so engrossed in trading fire with one "enemy" soldier that he fails to notice other threats. — Marty Kufus



vision equipment is regarded as the state of the art in low-light equipment, the less glamorous flashlight is a better general-purpose tool for CQB. Visible light is the best means of positive threat identification — a mandatory prerequisite to gunfire. The potential drawback of position disclosure is more than compensated for by the flashlight's ability blind or confuse an adversary. In short, a high-intensity beam can be a weapon unto itself.

The first step in conquering the darkness is to "read" the lighting. Illumination can be classified as follows: bright, medium, low, and none. Visual acuity decreases correspondingly. Though the eyes will accommodate to lack of light, full adaptation to darkness takes 40 minutes, is instantly destroyed by even peripheral light, and provides — at best — the equivalent of 20/800 vision. (In most states, 20/200 is "legally blind.") The greatest challenge in low-light CQB is the identification of friend and foe.

Unequal lighting between areas can result in blinding front light, back lighting, and "dark holes." Each has its perils, and each can be mitigated to some extent with the proper equipment and tactics. Armed with a light, the shooter can modify the lighting to his advantage.

Over the past several years, the CCI staff has developed low-light tactics that have to be experienced to be believed.

Based on the lighting conditions in question, artificial illumination can be selectively employed to obtain needed information while denying the same the enemy. If fact, darkness provides a blank canvas upon which a variety of illusions can be created by a well-practiced CQB operator. The end result is that the adversary makes bad decisions based on an inaccurate assessment of the situation. Couple this constructive chaos with the blinding effect of the beam and the conclusion is clear: Light is power.

Good and Maynard strongly advise the use of both weapon-mounted and hand-held lights, and feel that only the "Sure Fire" line from Laser Products currently has the required features. The "Armed Forces Trainer" semi-auto paintball guns issued to students are equipped with integral Sure Fire mounts in the fore ends. When pump guns are used in low light, they are augmented with Sure Fire CombatLights.

### Hardware & Software

As mentioned previously, Combative Concepts' curriculum includes live-fire training with both handguns and shoulder weapons. Instructors have attended numerous private- and public-sector schools, including Gunsite, John Shaw's Mid-South Institute, and police and military CQB

courses. Techniques developed both in-house and elsewhere are synthesized with the feedback from thousands of force-on-force encounters to ensure that skills hold up under stress. Firefight survivors often are consulted as a "sanity check."

Like the force-on-force training, range work begins with individual skills, then builds up to team drills involving mock structures such as doorways and shooting houses. CCI doctrine stresses different levels of focus on the sights depending on distance from the threat.

Not surprisingly, the teaching is done in the context of CQB tactics. Don't expect a lot of static marksmanship drills; shooting on the move is the rule rather than the

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exception. Even those exercises that involve firing while stationary generally begin with some sort of horizontal or vertical displacement, such as "move left, then engage." This integration of shooting with movement ensures that students understand they don't have to be in a particular position to fire accurately.

With respect to hardware, CCI promotes the idea that any appropriate and reliable firearm will do the job, provided the operator uses it correctly.

The 1911A1 .45 ACP-style pistols are popular with the staff, many of these customized by former Marine armorer Barry Dueck. Shotguns of choice include the Remington 870 and Benelli Super 90. And as seems to be the trend these days, instructors increasingly prefer the Colt M4 5.56x45mm carbine over the H&K MP-5 submachine gun, due to the increased power and range of the former. Naturally, most of these firearms are equipped with Sure Fire light mounts.

The bottom line is that CCI deals primarily with the "software." Its two former-SEAL founders believe technical shooting skills contribute, at most, 20% to the outcome of a

violent confrontation. The rest is tactics.

Their courses emphasize the ability to fight with the firearm, with the ultimate goal that the weapon will be employed subconsciously. Because it takes thousands of repetitions to make combat marksmanship and gun-handling skill reflexive, no one course can impart this level of expertise. For this reason, it makes sense to avail yourself of any and all such training possible.

### Men Behaving Badly

Innovative and relevant, the training at Combative Concepts is ideally suited to military and law-enforcement personnel who operate as part of a team. The learning curve is steep; significant benefits accrue very quickly.

Private citizens, too, can benefit from attending such high-stress, force-on-force training: They will gain firsthand knowledge of the difficulties involved with moving through any structure when opposed by a live adversary. Keep in mind, though, that the best home-defense strategy is usually to ensconce yourself in a "safe room" and phone the police. Make no mistake: In home-intrusion scenarios, arming yourself and then moving into potentially hostile territory should be considered a last resort — unless the life of a loved one is in immediate danger.

The amount of suppressive fire employed and number of "casualties" taken during some of CCI's force-on-force paintball exercises would be unacceptable if real bullets were used. Military operations differ significantly from situations involving private citizens and law-enforcement

officers in this regard: In wartime, casualties and collateral damage sometimes come with the territory.

Further, to drive home the point that numbers alone do not dictate the outcome of a gunfight, Good and Maynard sometimes double-team a whole squad of students — and invariably win.

*As he huddled behind a desk, gripping his weapon, the federal law-enforcement agent wondered, "What went wrong?" Never before had a pair of criminals "murdered" so many agents in one incident: Two armed felons, out there somewhere in the building, had eliminated an entire entry team. Well, all but one member — but that was cold comfort to the sole survivor as he now was being stalked. ...*

*Sebring, Fla.-based writer Andy Stanford has lectured at the Soldier Of Fortune Convention. He teaches armed and unarmed self-defense through his company, Options for Personal Security.*

*Combative Concepts Inc., has a website at <http://combative.com>. ☒*