

SouthNarc PUC1, ECQC1, ECQC2 AAR, 2005
Otisco Lake Rod & Gun Club, Marietta NY
Marc H.

Several of our NY crew recently completed a 20 hour block of instruction with SouthNarc of www.Shivworks.com. All students have had prior firearms training with various instructors, and varying levels of open hand and edged weapons training. All students have had training sessions with Chris Fry of www.MDTStraining.com an excellent instructor in his own right who places an emphasis on realism in training and focuses on blending open hand combatives, knife, and firearms as a means of self-defense. I have posted a number of course reviews with Fry previously. Fry was both assistant (training dummy) and student in this class. Two students had extensive (greater than 15 years) experience of active training in varying disciplines of martial arts. One of these students (Fry) had previously completed a private training session with SouthNarc on the same course material.

A bad mistake most people make is to buy a gun and assume they are now properly equipped and prepared to defend themselves and their loved ones. Obtaining some advanced training is a sensible thing to consider. From my personal experience, good introductory firearms training classes will give you a solid foundation in weapons manipulations and will improve your shooting ability on a range. These are extremely worthwhile training tools that all people serious about defending themselves should pursue.

But this is where it gets interesting. Being able to shoot well in a stress-free environment, perhaps with stress only simulated by the addition of a timer, yields false confidence. Drawing your pistol from your holster from open carry, and shooting “standard responses” on cardboard targets at 5 yards or more on a square range has little relevance in the real world. This fact was driven home with a vengeance when we performed the drills that SouthNarc has dubbed the F.U.T. on the final afternoon of the class.

Who or what is a “SouthNarc?” I personally had never heard of him before meeting and training with Chris Fry. Chris is essentially a training junkie. He is constantly seeking out new people and techniques to study. His students benefit from his efforts. In Fry’s own words:

“SouthNarc is currently the head of a multi jurisdiction narcotics task force as well as SWAT Team leader in the MS Gulfport region. He is former military and spent several years as a Corrections Officer. He was the lead police academy instructor for his jurisdiction, training 2000 + officers over a 7 year period. A 25+ year student of the Martial Arts he has studied traditional Japanese arts as well as numerous Southeast Asian Arts such as Indonesian Silat and Filipino Martial Arts. He has recently gained national and international recognition for his presentation of the Extreme Close Quarter Concepts Courses, In-Extremis Knife and Practical Unarmed Combatives programs of instruction which challenge and shatter conventional theories and training methods associated with these subjects.”

The first part of the class (PUC1-Practical Unarmed Combat) was a 4 hour block about criminal assault, how to recognize a possible problem, and how to handle the situation of an unknown contact. This is essentially a lesson on common sense of the “street” persuasion. Develop situational awareness and avoid task fixation. How many of you have seen people walking down the street, blabbing on their cell phones and looking at the pavement at their feet? I see it every day.

What common pre-assault cues do criminals exhibit? There are several which have been consistently observed, such as nervous grooming, hands moving around the waist, and a shift in body weight as they prepare to strike.

You should develop skills to challenge a potential problem, both verbally and physically. If someone is approaching you, ask them to “stop, back off, stay right there,” or whatever words you choose-but be consistent. Escalate in volume and intensity if they do not heed. Do not engage in dialog and be distracted (maintain your chosen STOP commands), and be aware the wolves often run in packs. We drilled to develop this verbal skill. You don’t want to trip over words as a potential threat approaches-you will have more important issues to focus on.

Often, just being aware and assuming a defensive posture is enough. Most criminals prefer easy targets. Do not allow the potential criminal to get within grappling distance. Keep your hands UP in a compressed position, close to your body. This allows you to either assume a defensive position to minimize a blow, or allow you to more quickly deliver a pre-emptive strike. Defensive positions and strikes were demonstrated and practiced with partners wearing FIST helmets. Developing a proper fighting stance is also critical, and will also be the same as your shooting stance-“nose over toes,” butt out, squarely facing your opponent. Do not blade your body or lean back. Both are recipes for being knocked on your ass.

You do NOT want to get knocked down, or worse, knocked out. If you are knocked out, game over. And you WILL likely get hit if the assailant gets too close, or have a knife at your throat or a pistol in your gut. Not fun options.

We watched two disturbing videos from surveillance tapes, which showed the tragic results of three police officers who were not observant enough and paid the price-two with their lives. Many of the expected behavior of the aggressors were clearly demonstrated, body language, stance, weight shift, even verbal clues such as “I can’t go back to jail!”

You have to keep your eyes on the potential aggressor, but don’t be so fixated that you don’t see the person approaching to your side or rear. It sounds easy on paper, but when you have a threat in front of you coming in fast, you have sensory overload. You NEED to practice this skill, like any other.

ECQC 1 & 2: Extreme Close Quarters Combat

The shooting portion of the class focused on shooting from 0-5 feet. Contact distance. Scary stuff the first time you do this. How many of you have set up targets at 3-7 yards for defensive drills, and have guys at the range wonder why you are shooting so close? “When I was in the army, we shot at 25 yards!” Yeah, but you also had a platoon to back you up, dude! The simple fact of the matter is that violent encounters are a close-range “in your face” proposition. You will not have the luxury to slowly draw your pistol, taking careful aim, and slowly squeeze the trigger when the perfect sight picture presents itself at a stationary target.

We all shot the class from concealment. Not too many places allow open carry for civilians. SouthNarc demonstrated his draw stroke and how to properly clear garments of different types. “1” is clearing your garment and obtaining a proper grip on your handgun. Finger positioning is key-keep your thumb out in “flagged” position. Your support hand should be flat on your sternum/chest, thumb up (or later, perhaps assuming a defensive or striking position).

The next position, “2” is the foundation of contact shooting. You must develop a consistent and proper 2 to be able to safely shoot at targets that you are literally in physical contact with. I’m not sure of how much detail to go into here, because if you do not do this properly, the possibility of shooting yourself is very real. SouthNarc does offer a superb video giving proper detail. The gun is held tight into your chest, your thumb indexed on your pectoral muscle, elbow high. You should feel your shoulder muscles hunch up if you are doing it correctly. The pistol will be angled downwards, your hand/wrist straight in line with your arm. At contact range, your shots will impact in the groin area.

“3” is moving the pistol out towards your target, your support hand leaving your chest and mating with the pistol as it moves forward. Keep it high. “4” is projecting the gun out towards a DISTANT target-at a distance incapable of grabbing your firearm-in essentially an isosceles stance.

We performed a lot of draw strokes cold, and then followed with very carefully orchestrated live fire to get comfortable as Southnarc carefully reviewed each student for safety. Hand placement was of paramount importance. You don’t want to shoot your own hand. We used cardboard IPSC targets. Paper will blow apart at this range. Fortunately for us, most of us had trained previously with Chris Fry and were familiar with shooting from the 2 but SouthNarc definitely refined the process. We did a series of movement drills forward and reverse, properly compressing the pistol as the range to the target dictates, and firing from the different positions. You will get good hits from the 2 and 3 if you have proper stance. We also did accuracy drills, slowly acquiring 4 and breaking the shot as you reach full extension. We ended up shooting a lot more than expected due to the small class size.

Later drills included incorporating defensive blocks and strikes from contact distance. Reloading or clearing a jam at 0 feet was also discussed. Do not stop, plant, and reload.

Strike the opponent with your support hand followed with a strike with your gun, back up, reload, and re-engage. We did all the shooting drills in the morning. The contact portion of the class followed lunch each day.

The physical portion of the class is pretty intense for an average guy. For those of us in less than ideal physical condition, fewer donuts and more aerobics are highly recommended. I'd also be willing to bet hitting the weights might not be a bad idea. The smaller guys who had me and that big ox, Fry, land on them were generally not too happy about the situation. I know that when Fry landed on me, all 270 lbs of him, I was thinking that underwater basket weaving might be a nice sport to take up.

I should get it out in the open right now. If you are afraid of getting hit, this class is not for you. You WILL get hit. You will also likely be knocked down and you will be rolling on the ground. You will have bruises, scrapes, possibly cuts. Sore muscles is a given. Most of us were intimate with Advil last weekend. If you have a delicate ego, it will also likely be battered and bruised. One student suffered a shoulder injury which reduced his ability to engage in the contact drills. Fair warning.

We learned some basics of ground fighting. Ideally you stay on your feet and handle the situation, but as we learned in the F.U.T., staying on your feet can be problematic when you are grappling with two strong guys. All contact drills that we did on our feet, we also pretty much did on the ground whenever applicable.

We also learned some weapons retentions drills, in and out of the holster-again, on our feet and on the ground. Really great techniques-simple, effective, and rough on your hands and wrists.

We used SIMS pistols as training aids. Except for Fry, none of us had experienced these before. If you get the chance to train with SIMS, dress appropriately. FIST helmets and eye protection were mandatory. One student had a sweater which offered little protection. He ended up with some serious, near-bleeding welts after some contact distance hits. I wore a Carhart jacket which offered excellent protection. The only contact hits I took were on a ground fighting drill where Fry creamed me. I only suffered very minor bruising, and felt no pain from the hits. My ego, on the other hand!

These pistols took a huge beating and kept on working. An airsoft trainer would have disintegrated from the abuse we gave them. I should mention the SIMS pistols were somewhat prone to jamming with the soft-nosed SIMS rounds. As such, they were often used as striking implements, a perfectly acceptable use for a firearm if A) you don't want to shoot someone (less lethal option), B) it jammed, or C) you are out of ammo. More on that later.

The F.U.T.

My favorite drill of the class involved a good guy with a concealed SIMS, on his feet in a small defined area with one wall behind him. In a totally unscripted scenario, a potential

unarmed bad guy (KNOWN) approaches. He may or may not engage you in dialog or assault you. You are to handle the situation with all the tools at your disposal. At some point in the scenario, SouthNarc sends in the UNKNOWN, potential bad guy #2-usually at an off-angle to the good guy.

I will attempt to outline my experience as I remember it. It is something of a blur, and not just because I couldn't see well through the fogged-up FIST helmet.

In my case, KNOWN came up to me yapping about something. My hands came up in a hopefully compressed position. I engaged him verbally from 10-12 feet out: "Hey man, stop right there!" "STOP RIGHT THERE" to "STOP RIGHT FUCKIN' THERE!" When he didn't, I first struck him with an eye jab, a low impact strike. Next, a palm strike to the face as he came back at me. While this is going down, the UNKNOWN comes moving in at a decent pace to my right. I drew my SIMS pistol with my right hand while holding KNOWN back with my hand in his chest, trying to remain square to him. I guess I did as I stayed on my feet. I think I addressed UNKNOWN to STOP. I hope I did. He didn't stop. I then shot UNKNOWN from position 3 (half-assed) at about 6-7 feet two times when the damned pistol jammed. I thought. As I took my hand off KNOWN to try to tap/rap, I saw it slide-locked. I had only had 2 rounds in it. I'm not sure if this was planned by SouthNarc or just bad luck. Either way, badly wanting to ventilate KNOWN was now not an option.

Encouragement from SouthNarc went something like this, "You have a problem, solve it!"

I somehow managed to take KNOWN to ground and promptly used the %\$#@%\$ SIMS pistol to pound on his FIST-helmeted face. SouthNarc ended the drill at that point.

I had hit UNKNOWN but can sure as heck say I never consciously used the sights. I was a bit gun-fixated on solving the problem. I didn't use a proper 3. But I can tell you, perfect form is hard to achieve when you're holding off a 200+ pound guy with your support hand.

We all made some mistakes, some worse than others. The biggest was allowing the bad guys to get too close before striking or moving away quickly. Some guys got pushed up against the wall. Some had their gun taken away from them. One guy shot Aimless (acting as UNKNOWN) after popping his KNOWN. The only problem was that Aimless was just standing there watching. He hadn't moved in or said a thing. Aimless clutched his chest, said "ACK, I'm an off-duty cop!" and collapsed spread eagled to the ground, an Academy Award performance.

The class was a slap in the face, literally. You have to experience it to understand it. I was no doubt guilty of over-confidence in my shooting ability going in as being able to solve problems. I know better now. I have a little better understanding of just how difficult a street encounter can be.

This was a top-notch reality based training experience developed by a guy who HAS experienced the F.U.T for real. If you want a dose of reality, and get the opportunity, train with SouthNarc and enjoy the experience! We certainly did.

A big “thanks!” to SouthNarc and Chris Fry.