

## **SHOULD COPS RECEIVE FIREARMS AND TACTICS TRAINING FROM SOURCES WITH NO LAW ENFORCEMENT BACKGROUND?**

This question often comes from cops who have an interest in an organization that provides firearms and tactics instruction for LEOs. That organization could be their agency or a private enterprise. The assertion is that people who have never done the job should not be providing instruction to a profession's practitioners. For example, you don't see the military hiring lots of cops who have never served in the military to provide firearms and tactics training for service members. However, it's very common to see police agencies or the cops themselves, flipping the bill for firearms and tactics training services provided by private enterprises owned by veterans or citizens who have never worn a badge.

As a former soldier, retired cop, and the owner of a 28-year-old LEO based private training company, I understand that perspective to a small extent, but I reject the idea that only cops should be training cops in firearms and tactics. If all we did was receive training from other cops, can you imagine how inbred our training would be? Most cops from the 80's, 90's and 00's era will likely tell you their academy and in-service firearms and tactics training sucked compared to today's, but at the time they thought it was adequate (I always thought it was horrible). Our profession has vastly improved its firearms and tactics training over the past generations because of technology (internet) and competition. Competition is what drives innovation regardless of where it comes from, cop or otherwise. Just look at the great work the folks at Centrifuge (cop founded business) have done in changing the paradigm of how we fight in and around vehicles or the incredible work the folks at Modern Day Samurai (competitive shooter / citizen founded business) has done to help the profession transition to red dot sights on our pistols.

So, when this question is asked of me, my answer is overwhelmingly YES! For instance, your administrators, supervisors, and peers attend training every year on diverse subject matter that is taught by people who have never been a cop, and we never think twice about it. The reason we don't think twice is because we are smart enough to know that we don't have all the answers. So, what's the difference when it comes to firearms and tactics training?

As an LEO attending a training program our job is to learn whatever is being taught, even if the training provider may have a differing perspective and experience. In other words, the course is being taught by folks who have never been a cop, but they're here to tell you cops how it should be done. When it comes to firearms and tactics training there's absolutely nothing wrong with learning from those who are not in the same profession but share some level of commonality. Competitive shooters and of course military veterans share commonality with LE in firearms training, gun fighting skills and experience. You should never shy away from learning from those sources whenever you get the opportunity.

At the conclusion of the training, you may have to decide what tactics, techniques, or equipment are keepers. For instance, a Christmas tree reticle may work great for quick holdovers in PRS matches (shooting games) but may not be a great idea for the police sniper. Conversely, I bet any police sniper learns some new things about various shooting positions, ballistics, and tripods from virtually any PRS competitor. That's the beauty of it, you get to make the call on what you use or don't use after you

graduate from school, except for the law. You must always abide by the US constitution, federal, state, and local law, or you can expect to be held accountable. That's where your expertise must come into play as what you do for a living here in the United States of America is certainly not a game nor is it the combat zone where missing a target or collateral damage is generally accepted as a byproduct of war.

Many cops are enamored with our military veterans, especially our special operations veterans. Many veterans run firearms and tactics schools because this is what they know and are very good at. It's a given that we all have a great deal of respect for their service, and we recognize and appreciate their level of expertise. There are truly some incredible veterans out there who go out of their way to share their knowledge base with the cops. It is your job as a cop to make sure that any new skills, tactics, or equipment you learn about from any entity align with the job of a cop and especially the laws of our land. What works very well for our military in the combat zone may not be best suited for use by the cops.

It's also important to keep in mind that a particular tool that works well for our military on the battlefield doesn't automatically make it the right tool for the cop here on US soil. Case in point, many military snipers deploy with semi-auto rifles so that they can expeditiously engage multiple targets. That has crept into LE sniping over the last 20 years and today we see more LE snipers using semi-auto sniper rifles than ever before. That said, I am not aware of a single police sniper engagement whereby a single police sniper has had to engage multiple threats one right after the next. Further, the expectation for the police sniper is to be able to take precision cranial vault shots at closer range on moving head targets to effect instantaneous death upon a hostage taker, are different than the military sniper taking body shots at hundreds of yards. The result that I constantly see with LE snipers who come to our basic police sniper school with a semi-auto rifle is that they struggle with consistency. Semi-autos are more difficult to shoot accurately than bolt-action rifles because of all the moving parts. These students generally struggle to pass the school. In fact, about 70% of semi-auto shooting students will abandon that rifle halfway through the school and use their partner's grubby old simplistic bolt-action rifle just to pass the school. After graduation, those students then must go back and explain to their command about why they should at least consider a different weapon system.

The best way to ensure any training will be worthwhile is to vet the entity providing it. That's not a hard thing to do given today's technologically connected society. Whatever you do, don't go take a course just because it's being taught by a cop. Make sure you vet everyone. Nothing is worse than getting your time and money wasted. Seek out training from all sources and I believe you will be much more well-rounded in the long run.

Very respectfully,

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