

High-Speed Surgical Shooting

by Abner Miranda

High Caliber Training's Rogers Range Course offers a wide array of training options

In late 2010, I received an invitation by High Caliber Training's (HCT) point man, Steve Reichert, to attend a special session of the world renowned Rogers Range Course (RRC). I dropped everything and headed for HCT. Accompanying me to the RRC was my friend and fellow writer/photographer Sean Utley, who, upon seeing the facility for the first time, commented on its grandeur. High Caliber Training is the counterpart facility to Tier 1 Group or, as it's known in military circles, T1G. HCT is located in Crittenden County, Ark., just 20 minutes from downtown Memphis and is a comprehensive training facility that offers a wide array of training options. What's most impressive is that this facility isn't restricted to military clientele only: It's also open to properly vetted civilian and LE personnel. When you attend any training at HCT you'll actually be receiving instruction by the very men who prepare our Special Forces Soldiers for war. I've got your attention now, don't I?

REFLEXIVE SHOOTING

As cops, pistol craft is our bread and butter, and reflexive shooting is a must have for the modern officer. Reflexive shooting is the condition in which you cease to think about engaging the target and just do it. The course of fire is comprised of seven, pneumatically operated targets across five shooting stands that are staggered from seven to 20 yards. The shooter stands just inside a framed doorway inset in a wall that runs the length of the multi-bay RRC. From this position you fire nine challenging courses of fire, during which 8" steel targets are only exposed from .5 to .75 second. Those times are tough considering that a precision shooter's reaction time to hit a target, from a security holster, is about 1.5 seconds. To keep driving the class forward, the grading is simplified, you hit, you score. When a course of fire is done, you're offered corrections by the instructors while your shooting

partner refaces your targets in white, with a paint roller. There's no dawdling at the RRC. You're there to learn, and every second is used accordingly. Sean and I ran an M&P 9 mm and an XD .45, respectively. I wanted to run a 9 mm too for the controllable recoil. However, I chose to train with what I carry daily. The RRC can be run with pistols, shotguns and pistol caliber chambered M4s. Bill's program is world renowned for teaching professionals the reflexive shooting skills required for survival. Please understand that reflexive shooting isn't point shooting. Point shooters can't survive in this kind of environment. To prove this point, Steve invited several top point shooters to an "all expenses paid" trip to the RRC. All they had to do was say "yes." Nary a one had the chutzpah to come out and try to qualify on the RRC.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

Coaches have gone hoarse screaming that at athletes. Through devotion and arduous repetition, the moment finally arrives when the athlete hears the crack of the bat and sends the ball sailing over the outfield. Within 300 milliseconds of the success the mind forms a positive neural pathway and stores the muscle memory. Bill refers to this similar phenomena in shooting as positive instant recognition (PIR). PIR in shooting, just as in sports, must be recognized immediately or else the mind won't record the success as such. This is easy in sports because you can see, feel and hear the contact with the ball. In shooting PIR is almost impossible to achieve because a fired shot that misses a paper target sounds exactly like one that pierces the 10 ring. So how does one achieve PIR in shooting? Ditch the paper targets and go to all steel. With the instant feedback of ringing steel the shooter gets the PIR that's desperately needed to form a positive neural pathway.

AIM SMALL, MISS SMALL

HCT instructors Dallas Foyte and Phil Aldredge teach in the Bill Rogers style of aim small, miss small. What this means is, don't aim at the threat's head, aim at the tip of his nose. If you miss the nose, you still hit the head. At the

RRC you're taught on a dynamic system that moves and changes. There are several shooting schools that purport to run an RRC, however, they've padded their times to coddle the student into a false sense of success. A true RRC, such as HCT's, uses Bill's times, which are inviolate. The RRC is severe, and humbling, however, if you're willing to be broken and rebuilt you will succeed at reflexive shooting. When you sign up for the RRC you're immediately sent a copy of Bill Rogers' book *Be Fast, Be Accurate, Be the Best*. The precepts taught therein aren't difficult to understand, but, they're bold. Bill Rogers has taken heat for over 30 years for his teaching methods that challenge the status quo. These methods have truly shaken me out of apathy and have taught me new techniques. More so is the fact that Bill's precepts have taught me how utterly useless LE firearms training really is.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

Sean and I quickly got a wake-up call on day one when instructors Dallas and Phil demonstrated the times under which we'd have to operate. Dallas activated the system and one of the targets popped up then almost immediately dropped down. A half second is blazing fast especially when compared to the lethargic pace of LE qualification courses. The RRC, however, seems to go to the other extreme. Many times I found myself struggling to catch up with the cycle of fast appearing/disappearing targets. Thankfully Phil would run each drill before us and show us how it's done. It was comforting to see Phil, who's a competition shooter, miss an occasional shot. It showed us just how hard the RRC really is. Normally the RRC is a five-day class where the student is taken from novice to professional level with a strict regimen of drills and reps. HCT is trying to meet the needs of its students by offering the program in a more manageable time frame. Sean and I were the Guinea pigs for this shortened version. Let's face it, there are few of us that can afford to take five days out of our lives and attend a shooting class.

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GET YOUR SHOT OFF

Get your shot off! That's the phrase you hear hounding you as you stand in the doorway facing the targets, an instant before Dallas unleashes the program on you with "here they come." The moment you hear that, your pulse and breathing skyrocket, and your vision tunnels in. Bill covers the issues that arise from combat stress, several times in his book. You must accept that as soon as you recognize a threat, you'll naturally start breathing fast, and your vision will tunnel onto the perceived threat. Since this is what'll happen anyways, you're taught to use it to your advantage. The heavy breathing and elevated heart rate are simply your body feeding the muscles that'll be needed for fighting, so accept it. Next you need to learn to break tunnel vision by scanning for more threats. Just learn what your body does and work with it, not against it. However, remember that the longer you stay in the fight the slower time feels, this is called tachypsychia. Tachypsychia is a perceived slowing of time due to your senses recording everything around you at a hyper-accurate rate. Tachypsychia is something that I've experienced as an LEO before, however, I never realized that it could cause me to miss a threat so blatantly as I experienced at the RRC. I was shooting a course of fire, and twice in a row missed the target that popped out on the lower left, of the third target station, due to my tunneled vision making me stare where I'd just dropped a target. Had that been a real threat, they would've gotten a shot off at me before I ever saw them. I only noticed the target's presence when its actuator began to draw closed and I heard it in my digital head set. Had I lowered my gun slightly and scanned around me I would've seen the threat. At least I'm learning.

THE LONG ROAD HOME

After the final scores were tallied, Sean and I came out OK -- not great, just OK. Feeling excited over what I'd learned, I loaded up my gear and headed for home. While en route, Steve, who'd been out of town during our class, called me to see how it'd gone. I shared

with him how utterly career changing the experience had been. As a cop, I'm accustomed to qualifying at 98% or greater. However, the RRC showed me that the training that most LEOs receive is based on a useless program of wishy-washy drills that are dumbed down to ensure successful quals out of the worst shooters in the agency. I went to HCT/RRC thinking that I'd just breeze through -- I scored below 70% and was stunned at the fact. More importantly, though, I realized that I've been following a stunted program of false training for years. Now I see why so many point shooters turned down Steve's invitation to attend the RRC. It wouldn't do to be somebody in the world of shooting and have your tail whipped by a computer program. The RRC taught me that if an outstanding precision shooter like me can get shellacked by the RRC, it means that several of my fellow LEOs may not survive when the bullets start flying. I know that this is an unsavory statement to make, however, it must be said. We see it all the time in our training videos, cops that didn't react fast enough when attacked. They simply stood there and got killed. Then there are those that empty their gun at the threat and hit nothing. It's not their fault, they were never taught any better. Law enforcement training is written to fit a budget, not reality. Who's job is it to ensure your survival? Yours! Please do this one thing for yourself. Read Bill's book, and see if it doesn't motivate you. It shook me to the core, and it might just get you moving too. Bill has several things that you can do for yourself at little to no cost. That really is our biggest enemy isn't it, cost? On the last day of class, Sean asked Phil and Dallas how the Spec Ops guys that come to T1G/HCT fare on the RRC. The answer was enlightening, but, not surprising: "They don't come here for the RRC, most groups that depend heavily on their shooting skills have their own RRC on base." Let that one sink in for a bit. Bill Rogers has gone from being despised for rocking the boat to being lauded for his genius in simplifying firearms training. My friend Michelle, who's a New Orleans restaurateur, went through the five-day RRC last year. She told me that you get "scary

good, scary fast." Remember: Practice only makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect, so get it right.



Being forced to shoot one handed under the severe time constraints of the RRC is a real wake up call for new comers to this type of shooting. It will teach you where your strengths and weaknesses really are. Photo Sean Utley



Until this course, I had never been put into a position where I had to deliver three shots on target in the blink of an eye. The RRC will shake you as a LEO to your very foundations.



The Multi Bay RRC allows for multiple sets of students to be running the course simultaneously. Photo Sean Utley



The RRC is so stressful that it will shake even the most die-hard shooter. Here the author is running a course of fire where multiples attackers appear one after the other with only .5 second to spare. Photo Sean Utley