

A Little Reality in Home Defense

I must confess, I get a bit concerned when I read what some preppers say about home and personal defense. I think we've all seen a few too many post-apocalyptic movies, where there's no law and order, warlords' rule their little territories, and only the fastest on the draw survive.

Can things get that bad? Yes, it has happened in other parts of the world and we're not immune. But the chances of something like that actually happening here are slim, mostly because there are so many privately owned firearms. The criminal element where those warlords would come out of might have guns and the willingness to use them; but objective reality would force them to recognize that they aren't the only ones with guns.

In a very real sense, a post-disaster world would be much like the Old West. Not the Old West of Hollywood, dominated by fast-draw gunslingers seeking to build their reputation. Not by criminals robbing the bank or the stagecoach. Those things are inventions of the movie industry. There is no recorded case of the fast-draw being used in the Old West and the crime rate was very low.

Being a criminal wasn't a good-paying "profession" in the Old West and was usually short-lived, because just about everyone in the West had fought in the Civil War. Someone who has stood their ground in the face of gunfire isn't likely to be buffaloed by some hotshot that thinks he's something, just because he has a gun.

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Granted, most of us have never been in the place of having to stand under fire, even though there are plenty of veterans in the prepping movement. But we do have guns and we're accustomed to using them. It's a whole lot easier for a criminal to ride roughshod over someone who's unarmed, than it is over someone who not only has a gun, but is well-practiced in its use.

This is not to say that there won't be any criminals or criminal gangs out there; I'm sure there will be. But I'm also sure that there will be citizen groups that take up the slack if our law enforcement abandons their posts. You and I, being the type of people that we are, will likely be involved in such groups, helping to keep our communities safe from the criminal element.

You see, I don't really expect us to reach a time of total lawlessness, at least not for more than a few days. Regardless of how bad things get, American citizens will step up to the bat, taking care of their communities. That doesn't just mean law enforcement, it means a citizens' court system as well.

Herein is where I see a potential problem for a lot of preppers, specifically those who are putting a lot of money into ballistic armor and sniper rifles. Some of them act more like they're preparing to fight a war from their home, than preparing to survive a disaster. While a war might come, if it does, it will likely be much more widespread than your home and your neighborhood.

Deadly Force

It is a principle of American law that we have the right to use deadly force in self-defense. Some states add the right to use it in defense of others and even in defense of property. But there's a huge caveat hung on there; that is, the courts have to agree with you, after the fact, that it was self-defense and the use of deadly force was necessary.

That's not going to go away if we have a disaster. You or I might get away with killing someone, calling it self-defense, but only if it is clearly self-defense. Our communities will judge our actions and if they determine that we are a danger to them, because we haven't merely acted out of self-defense, they'll take action on their own, taking us out of play. So, we'd better understand what we're doing and apply a little bit of restraint to our actions.

Let's talk legalities for a moment. For something to be considered self-defense, it has to be defending against "an imminent threat of life and limb." The word "imminent" there means "right now." That means an adversary is close enough to you, and facing you, to actually use the weapon they are holding against you. If they are farther away than that or are facing any other direction, they are not an imminent threat. The "live and limb" part refers to them being able to either seriously hurt or kill you. There's a lot of grey area there, such as someone rushing you with a stick. Can they do serious injury to you? That's something for the court to decide.

Another test that's used is what's known as the "reasonable man rule." The question is raised whether your actions were those that a reasonable person, put in the same circumstances, would feel their life was in danger to the point where the use of deadly force was a reasonable action to take. Killing someone shouting threats from down the street isn't seen as reasonable; but if they're in your face and are threatening

your life, it probably is.

So, what does this all mean for you and I in a post-disaster world?

First, it means we can forget about sniper rifles. Unless someone starts taking pot-shots at your home from a couple hundred yards away and you can see them shooting, there is no way that you can legitimately call the use of a sniper rifle at long range self-defense. Keep the rifle, but use it for hunting instead.

Secondly, we get into a really sticky area when it comes to defending our homes. For the most part, the courts will see someone in your home, facing you, with a weapon in your hand as an imminent threat of life and limb. But what if you're facing five or six people with weapons, who are outside your home, threatening to attack you if you don't give them food? While you and I would see this as an imminent threat of life and limb, there's no telling whether the courts would or not, especially if the jury was composed of hungry people who are jealous of our food stockpile.

There's no way that I would let 5 or 6 armed people into my home, just so that I could satisfy the courts definition of "imminent threat." At the same time, I recognize the great risk I would be taking in fighting them, even if I could keep them outside my home, while I fought from inside. If I win, it's not going to look good to others and losing is not worth contemplating.

More than anything, I think that defending our homes during such a time is going to require a lot of restraint. Rather than being quick to shoot, we should avoid shooting as long as possible, giving our antagonists every possible chance to steal away. A fight not fought, where the bad guys give up, is still a win in our books.

If you do end up having to pull the trigger, then I'd try to

make the fight as short as possible. That means taking out the leaders first, to demoralize the rest of the gang. Once the leaders are down, it's quite possible that the rest will give up and flee, especially those who are only there because they were pressured to join.

A Better Option

Rather than waiting to see if our homes are going to come under attack, it makes a whole lot more sense to be proactive about our community's security. As I mentioned earlier, there's a good chance that law-abiding citizens will come together, forming a defensive force to protect their homes. We should not only be part of that, but quite possibly be the ones who are organizing it.

Why us? Because we're probably the best equipped and prepared people to organize such an effort. Not only are we armed and prepared for a disaster, but many of us are former military. That gives us training which will be invaluable in protecting our communities.

But I'll give you an even better reason than that; I can guarantee you that there will be groups forming, with the goal of redistributing necessary supplies. These socialist groups will believe that they have just as much of a right to your food stockpile as you do and that you would be selfish not to share. If we allow such groups to take hold, we're going to find ourselves outnumbered and eventually overwhelmed. Rather than helping to protect our communities, we'll find ourselves having to protect ourselves from those communities.

Most people will be looking for someone to bring order out of chaos. If the person who does that promises to get them food, they'll easily gain a following. It would be better that we gain that following than they do. While that will increase the responsibility on our shoulders, it will be much safer for us than having to fight our neighbors.

Being proactive won't stop others from trying to form groups to take away our food; but it will put us in the position of having a group of people with guns, who are available to protect anyone who needs protection. That includes ourselves. So, if those other groups decide to storm our homes, we will hopefully have others standing with us; enough others to convince those demanding our food to go elsewhere and leave us along.

Let's Take that a Step Further

Of course, the best way to ensure the loyalty of those who are working with us is to help them meet their own needs. A few bags of rice and beans and enough extra seed to help them start their own gardens will go a long way towards gaining their trust and support; enough so, that they might just vote you in as their leader. While that carries extra responsibility; it also helps ensure that your family and your community will be taken care of. Isn't that worth it?



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