

Surviving in a Shooting Gallery

Once again, the country is shocked by a senseless mass shooting in one of our schools. The shooting in Uvalde, Texas, ranks as the third deadliest shooting to occur in one of our schools. Different groups will argue about just how many mass shootings have occurred, mostly because of defining a mass shooting differently. Even so, it is clear that they are on the rise. Before Columbine in 1999, they were all but unheard of; but we've had more than enough to make up for it since then.

The COVID pandemic, coupled with the killing of George Floyd, hasn't helped with this, as we saw countless riots and acts of violence take place during the pandemic. But there's something else going on, something that's not so obvious. That is, criminals are becoming better armed and less likely to use restraint. The shooter in Uvalde was armed with two AR-15s, which is a large part of why it took so long for the police to be able to stop him. As best as I can tell, that's the first school shooting involving an AR-15, although it is the third mass shooting I know of involving one.

Why is that important?

Back in the early 1990s, police forces across the country stopped carrying revolvers, opting to use larger, more powerful, semi-automatic pistols with larger magazine capacities. Why did they do that? Because they found themselves needing to keep up with the criminals. When most criminals were using .22LR "zip guns," the police had them outgunned. But now, the most common caliber firearm used by criminals is the 9mm. That gives them more rounds of a bullet with better penetration ability than the police had before.

The shooting in Uvalde seems to confirm that this is continuing, as this is the first time that a school shooter was armed with an AR-15. That gave him more firepower than the police, slowing down the ability of officers on the scene to react and putting a stop to his killing streak.



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I find myself asking the question – What does this mean for the future?

One thing it likely means is that police will eventually have to arm themselves with larger and more powerful weapons. I've spent a fair amount of time in Mexico, and the police there regularly go around in squad-sized units, wearing body armor and helmets, and armed with fully-automatic, military-grade rifles. I hope we never reach that point, but I suspect that we will.

There are those amongst the prepping community who act like we're going to end up with a dystopian future, where our ability to defend ourselves and our stockpile is all that keeps us from starving to death. It seems like some of these people are actually looking forward to living in a world where people are shooting at each other. While I believe that we need to be ready to defend ourselves, I definitely hope that we never get to the place where it's like we're living in that shooting gallery.

But what if it does happen that way? What if our future is one right out of Hollywood, where warlords control the land and violence is an everyday occurrence? How do we respond to that; should we try to be the biggest and the worst out there, or should we adopt another approach?

The Best Defensive Strategy

There have actually been several times where one place or another in the world was thrown into such a situation. When governments fail, warlords take over. While they all claim that they're controlling crime and protecting the people, what they're really doing is suppressing their enemies so that they can have control over all criminal activity. It becomes the classic "fox watching the hen house" situation.

People do survive these situations, but they don't do it by fighting the warlords. Rather, they do it by making themselves as invisible as possible. If people don't know you're there, they are much less likely to bother you, let alone attack you.

Our priority is survival, not defeating the bad guys. While there may come a time when it's necessary to defeat them, that's a "when all else fails" type of situation. Should that time come, then we're going to have to do whatever we can to make sure that we win; but until then, we need to do everything we can to keep from being seen so that we don't have to fight.

Countless species survive by keeping themselves unseen, either through the use of camouflage or through staying hidden when predators are around. If this has worked well for them, it only makes sense that it will work well for us as well. There's nothing that says we have to go out and look for trouble.

Keep in mind that camouflage means different things in this context. Those critters are camouflaged to blend in with their surroundings. When you and I wear camouflage, we tend to stand out from our surroundings unless we happen to be in the woods somewhere. Wearing camouflage in town is either going to make us look like preppers or like we just came back from a hunting trip. In any case, it will attract attention, most likely the

wrong kind of attention.

One of the big advantages we have as preppers is that we have the ability to stay home, out of sight and out of mind, living off of what we have stockpiled. If we need to go out, then we want to do so when we are unlikely to be seen. We also want to go out in such a way as not to attract attention.

Should it look like we might be confronted by a fight, then the best thing to do is run. Get away from there and find a place to hide. That may not seem like the macho thing to do, but it's the survival thing. The problem with fighting is that there is no guarantee of winning. No matter how good you are, there's always someone better. Besides that, there are always unforeseen occurrences in any fight, making it possible for a weaker or less capable fighter to win. At best, you can expect to come out of a fight injured; and if it really is the best, hopefully, that will not be all that bad.



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Being Prepared to Fight

While you want to do everything you can to avoid a fight, you also need to do everything you can to be prepared for a fight, should it come to you. That means being both armed and armored, but more than anything, it means being properly trained.

The one thing that everyone is talking about with the Uvalde shooting is that it took an hour before the police breached the classroom that the shooter had barricaded himself into. This gave ample time for the shooter to kill a whole bunch of

fourth-graders. Had the police rushed him right away, it might not have made any difference; but to some, the whole reason those children died was that one-hour delay.

Ok, so why the delay? It happened because the police on the scene weren't prepared. The shooter was using an AR-15 rifle, and the only ballistic armor they had wouldn't stop a rifle round; it would only stop a pistol round. Some are calling that cowardly, but if the police had charged him and gotten shot, he would have gained more weapons, more ammo, and worst of all, a police radio to keep track of what the police were up to. There wouldn't have been any way of surprising the shooter after that.

Had the police been prepared for that eventuality, they could have gone in right away. But apparently a Level 4 ballistic shield wasn't high on the priority list of that small-town police department, so they had to wait for one to come from the Border Patrol.

It's impossible to foresee every possible fight, but that's what those police were expected to do, and that's what you and I have to do, as well. Somehow or other, we have to think of the worst possible dystopian scenario and prepare for it. Since that's basically impossible, we need to think of the worst scenario we can and plan for something worse.

From what I've seen, the prepping community seems to be pretty good at doing the arms part of that; but we don't seem as good with the armor part. I see preppers buying ballistic armor, but it seems to be done in many circumstances without much understanding. People don't know what they're buying and therefore depend on salespeople to steer them straight.

But even buying ballistic armor might not be enough. Soft armor is rated at a maximum of level IIIA, which means it is rated to stop any pistol round, with the exception of the FN 5.7, which is more like a rifle round on a pistol case. It

can't stop any rifle round. The geometry of the bullet, along with the increased velocity, make it impossible for that level of armor to stop the round. That requires the addition of a ballistic chest plate, rated at level IV.

The problem with ballistic chest plates is that they aren't all that big. They're intended to cover the center of your body mass, which basically means the heart, lungs, and liver. That's it. Considering that most people shoot for center mass, the idea is that they will hit the plate; but there are no guarantees. There are still a lot of places where we can get hit, outside that plate, which would be kill shots.

In the Uvalde incident, the police weren't waiting for a ballistic chest plate but rather a Level IV ballistic shield. These are the shields that the police stack behind when preparing to breach a door. The first guy usually isn't holding a weapon, but rather just the shield. His job is to provide cover for the rest of the police to hide behind while they shoot. A quick search online shows that those shields are \$5,000 and up, making them a bit expensive for the average prepper to buy. The lower-cost, Level IIIA shields wouldn't have done any good.

When it's Time to Fight

Any such situation can reach a point where you have no choice but to fight. As I already said, you want to avoid that as much as possible. Even so, it might not be possible. You might be forced into a fight. Should that happen, there are a few basic strategies you want to keep in mind:

First, plan your attack, at least to the point where you decide who you're going to shoot first. That should be the leader, followed by as many sub-leaders as you can. If you can take out the leaders, chances increase that the rest of the group will flee, leaving you alone. In many cases, it's fear of the leaders that push the enemy forwards more than a desire

to get at you.

Secondly, when it's time to start shooting, shoot as much as you can, as fast as you can. Don't waste time. Your time is limited, so you want to make sure that you take out as many targets as you can, as quickly as you can. The speed and ferocity of your attack will help to instill fear in those who remain.

Don't get me wrong on this; I'm not talking about shooting indiscriminately or even shooting on full-automatic, just throwing lead downrange. I'm talking about taking as many aimed shots as you can, as fast as you can. Fully-automatic fire is great for drilling holes through the sky, but it's not very good at hitting targets. You want to hit targets, ideally with every shot fired.

Finally, once you've defeated them, get out of there. It doesn't matter where the fight happened; you don't want to be there when they come back, and you can be pretty sure that they will. When they do, there will be more of them, and they will be better prepared to deal with you. So, the fact that you won the first encounter, assuming you did, doesn't mean that you'll win any further encounters.

This is one sure situation where a bug out is called for. You can't expect to win a firefight at your home and go back to hiding in plain sight. No, that fight will forever mark your home as a danger to the warlords, someplace that has to be taken out of commission for them to have control. That's how they'll see it, and they will do whatever it takes to take you out.



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