

When Things Turn Violent

Like many people, I'm a big fan of action movies. I don't care if the good guy is beating up the bad guy with fists, knives, guns or Phoenix missiles, just as long as the good guy wins. Jason Bourne, Rambo, Denzel Washington's the Equalizer, the Expendables, the Marvel characters and a host of others are frequent visitors to my television screen. My wife enjoys them as much as I do, which eliminates the disagreement over watching action films or chick flicks.

While watching these movies is fun, there's an inherent danger there, which most people either don't recognize or dismiss out of hand. That is, like all good fiction, the viewer identifies with the character. We see ourselves doing all the amazing things they do, as if any of us actually have that capability. Of course, none of us have the training and ability those characters supposedly have; nor do we have choreographers for the fights, making sure that the bad guys come at us in such a way as to guarantee our victory, usually without getting injured in the process. Besides that, few bullet wounds are going to kill instantly with just one bullet.

We may think we can, but trying to disconnect the fantasy of those movies with the reality of life is a lot harder than we think. Those images are very real to most of us, especially if we've never seen violent death firsthand. Without that experience, we don't have a standard of comparison to use, in our efforts to recognize fiction for what it is.



Okay, so that's actually not all that big a deal in our day-to-day lives, right? But what about trying to survive in a post-disaster world? One of the common issues we all discuss is the risk of being attacked by starving gangs. Of course, we always assume we'll win those encounters, no matter how badly we're outnumbered.

I think it's time to take a more realistic look at that potential encounter.

In Numbers there is Strength

To start with, there is a definite advantage in numbers. If some hungry gang attacks your home, you can be sure they will have already scouted it and know just how many of you there are. Chances are, they know the old adage about needing three times the attackers to take a fortified position and will have prepared accordingly. So, no matter how many shooters you have, you'll be outnumbered.

Speaking of shooters, we need to be realistic about our survival teams. Unless everyone in your team lives in the same neighborhood or you have a plan to gather together to live once a disaster strikes, that team isn't going to mean much of anything. You won't be able to give each other much in the way of mutual support, especially in the face of an attack.

What that means is that the only defenders you have are those who will be living in your home at the time of the attack. Actually, you might even have less, if not everyone is a shooter. You'll need to maximize the effectiveness of those non-shooters, using them as lookouts and having them load magazines for your firearms.

That was the way that pioneering families survived Indian attacks; those that did, that is. Generally, the man of the house would do the fighting, while his wife reloaded his guns. The kids would be sent upstairs to the loft, to act as lookouts. It didn't always work out for the defenders; but it worked out often enough that settlers kept taking their chances and moving west.

You can increase your odds tremendously by adding a couple more shooters. If you don't have room for extra people to move in with you, then train those you have. Maybe they won't be

the best shots in the world; but having more people shooting will help convince the bad guys to keep their heads down, especially if they are at least getting close to hitting the mark. You can then concentrate on sniper fire, going after leaders and other high-value targets. Your best chance of winning is to take out their leadership, scaring the rest of them into turning tail and running.

I understand that some may be against this idea, wanting to be the man of the house and protect their family. We'd rather take a bullet for our families, then risk one of them getting shot, right? The only problem with that, is that if we take that bullet, our families are done for anyway. While it might not be gallant to risk our wives and children getting shot; it's better than dying and allowing the bad guys to do whatever they want to them.

Use Your Passive Defenses to the Max

Your home really isn't a fortress, although you have to treat it as if it is. What I mean by that is that the walls of your home won't stop a bullet, unless those walls are made of stone or concrete. I've tested brick, and the only bullets it will stop are .22LR. Even so, the bad guys might not realize this. They are unlikely to try and shoot you through the walls, especially in a situation where ammo might be scarce. The movie idea of shooting a house full of thousands of holes is just that, a movie idea. It won't work for people who are short on ammo.

You can further fortify your home by adding sandbags below the windows, making protected firing positions. A one-foot-thick wall of sandbags will stop all pistol and rifle rounds, except for maybe a .50 caliber machine gun. I've done the calculations, and a floor built to code, will support a 12-inch-thick sandbag wall, 36" high. As the sandbags will be up

against the outside wall, that gives you an extra safety margin.

One of the most important things you have to do is keep the bad guys outside of your home. If they manage to get in, your chances of survival diminish greatly. That means securing windows and doors so that they can't break in. if you haven't guessed it already, that's going to take much more than the standard "security" locks that people put on their homes. I'll guarantee you that those attackers won't care one lick about damaging your home, while breaking in.

A Legal Note

I need to mention something here about the legality of having a battle with people who are outside your home. Generally speaking, the right to use deadly force to defend home and family ends at your front door. Courts will accept it as being self-defense if you're inside your home; but they apply a much more stringent standard once the bad guys leave your house.

Granted, we're not talking about the same situation. For one thing, we're talking about a time when law and order has broken down. For another, these bad guys haven't made it inside your home yet. You're trying to stop them before that happens. Even so, make sure they take the first shot, or have at least threatened to take it, so that you can legitimately call it self-defense,

After the Battle is Over

Unfortunately, the danger doesn't end when the bad guys break off the attack. If anything, it's going to increase. That is, it's going to increase unless you manage to kill them all off. Whoever is left is going to regroup, recruit some new members for their group and come back to attack in even greater force. If they're actually smart, they'll work up a plan of attack and practice it to maximize the element of surprise and

overcome your defenses.

This is when things get tricky for you. You've got to make a decision as to whether you're going to prepare for that second attack or bug out. Don't even think that you have won the war; all you've done is won a battle.



Knowing that they will return in greater force, you've got to ask yourself whether or not you can muster greater force than it took to repel the first attack. Do you have others you can call on, who will move in with you and help you defend your home? Do you have members of your family who didn't participate, possibly due to sickness? Do you have greater, more potent weapons, that you didn't use to repel the first attack? Unless you can answer yes to at least one of these, chances are that you will lose the second attack.

This is why it is often necessary to bug out, after your home has come under attack. You will likely have a slight reprieve after the attack, while the enemy regroups. The natural tendency might be to stay put, but doing so could be signing your own death warrant. Rather, you should use that reprieve to move as much of your stockpile out of your home and move your family or survival team to your survival retreat. As much as possible, do this in secret, so that they don't follow you, even if they want to.