



## Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

### **Strategic Engagement: The Role of Tactics and Techniques for Self-Defense Combat—Part 3**

Francis M. Duffy, Ph.D.

---

*In Part 1 of this article (see [Strategic Engagement Part 1](#)), you read about using strategy, tactics, and techniques for self-defense combat with a firearm. You also learned about Colonel Jeff Cooper's concept of the “combat mindset.”*

*Part 2 identified four broad categories of self-defense combat, ranging from foundational concepts and mindsets to home and family defense. Twelve tactics were categorized, and each tactic had several techniques assigned to it. This arrangement supports a layered approach to armed personal protection, especially in home defense or concealed and open carry. Tactics tell you what to do, and techniques tell you how to do it.*

*Part 3 continues the presentation of tactics and techniques. Part 3 encompasses four broad categories of tactics, ranging from pre-engagement and tactical movement to post-engagement strategies. Fourteen specific tactics and related techniques are distributed across the categories.*

*My son (and business partner) and I acquired these skills over many years of personal training with America's elite warrior veterans, including Army Green Berets, Navy SEALs, Army Rangers, and veterans of Tier One Special Operations Command (SOCOM). I am also a certified executive protection specialist. That training provided many tactics and techniques, some of which are identified below.*

*It is essential to realize that the information provided below is not an ultimate collection of tactics and techniques. Other people will have ideas about what should have been included. Nevertheless, we encourage you to start imagining scenarios where you could use these and other tactics and techniques to defend your life and the lives of your loved ones, and then start training toward proficiency. Remember, when facing a life-*

*threatening event, you will fall to the level of your training, not rise to the level of your expectations (attributed to [Archilochus](#)).*

## Prologue

*Legal Considerations and Firearms Safety.* Armed self-defense, although justified in some cases, can bring the heavy hand of the law down on those who do not comply with legal requirements for using deadly force. You should be familiar with the self-defense laws in your state. Maryland's requirements, which are similar to those of other states, are: ([State v. Faulkner, 483 A.2d 759 \(1984\)](#))

- Innocence--You cannot be the aggressor.
- Imminence — You must believe the threat will occur immediately.
- Reasonableness—You must be up against multiple adversaries or those who are bigger and stronger.
- Avoidance — You must retreat if it is safe to do so.
- Proportionality—You must use only the minimal force necessary to stop the threat.

Even if these requirements are met, you could still face legal consequences.

Several organizations can help you stay current with your state's self-defense requirements. For Maryland residents, one of those is Maryland Shall Issue ([Self Defense is a Civil Right - Maryland Shall Issue®, Inc.](#)), which tracks legislative action, including bills that passed and those that have not (membership not required, but for a \$25 membership fee you can join the fight against those who wish to constrain firearms ownership and use in Maryland).

Another organization that provides legal updates is the National Rifle Association—Institute for Legislative Action (at [NRA-ILA | Home](#)). Send them your name, state, and contact information, and they will send legislative updates directly to your inbox.

A third place to find legal updates is at the website [www.handgunlaw.us](http://www.handgunlaw.us). It summarizes weapons laws for all states and the District of Columbia and is updated regularly. The site also provides a travel planner that allows you to check the firearms laws for each state you will be driving through.

*Firearms Safety Considerations.* Please ensure that you are familiar with and understand the safety rules governing the use of firearms. We teach a set of five rules that should be reviewed every time before starting or restarting a training program:

- Always check to ensure the gun is unloaded. It is always loaded until you check it, which is extremely important if you are engaged in “dry practice” with an unloaded gun.
- Never point the gun at anyone or anything you do not wish to shoot.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
- Be sure of your target and its surroundings.
- Be sure of the condition of your gun.

## **PRE-ENGAGEMENT AND TACTICAL MOVEMENT** (continued from Part 2)

### **13.0 Low-Light Training**

**13.10 Tactic:** Use a handheld or weapon-mounted flashlight to identify threats and control your engagement in low-light environments.

#### **13.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:**

- Use the “flash-and-move” technique: illuminate briefly, turn the light off, move, illuminate again, repeat.
- Avoid backlighting yourself (e.g., standing in front of windows or bright light sources).
- Practice low-light shooting drills with various flashlight techniques (e.g., Harries, FBI, and “neck index” positions).

### **14.0 Decoys or Diversions**

**14.10 Tactic:** Use a distraction to gain a tactical advantage or create an opportunity to draw and engage.

#### **14.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:**

- Drop or throw an object (wallet, bag) to divert attention before drawing.
- Use bright light (e.g., flashlight in the eyes) or loud noise (verbal outburst) as a disruption.

- Train with scenarios incorporating distraction and action drills to enhance your response.

## INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

### 14.0 Ambush Reaction/Rapid Engagement

14.10 **Tactic:** Respond to a sudden, close-range threat with immediate counteraction to disrupt the attacker's OODA loop.

#### 14.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Make your OODA loop run faster than the attacker's. You observe more quickly, orient yourself more quickly, make decisions more quickly, and act more rapidly.
- Practice startle response drills in simulators using a SIRT pistol.
- Train with a compressed time frame; on a live-fire range, respond in under two seconds from concealment. Use a shot timer.
- Incorporate verbal commands, or physical deflection if within arm's reach.
- Act with aggressive body language. Press forward toward the threat. Be sure of your target (safety rule #4).

### 15.0 "Draw and Move"

15.10 **Tactic:** Draw your firearm while moving laterally to make yourself a more difficult target. Get off the "X," where 'X' represents your current location.

#### 15.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Train to draw while sidestepping or moving offline (left/right) from your initial position.
- Combine movement with verbal commands, such as "STOP!" or "GET BACK!" to deter or delay the attacker.
- Practice using dry-fire drills with movement to build muscle memory.

### 16.0 Retention Shooting (close quarters point shooting)

16.10 **Tactic:** Fire from a compressed, retention position using instinctive aiming when the threat is within arm's reach.

**16.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:**

- While drawing your gun, simultaneously strike the attacker's face with your non-dominant hand or elbow
- Using your handgun as a blunt force object, strike the attacker's head.
- If you have the opportunity to draw your handgun, as it is drawn, keep the firearm close to your body with your elbow pinned to your rib cage.
- After the gun is drawn, point the muzzle of the firearm toward the target while keeping your elbow pinned to your rib cage (aka, point shooting).

**17.0 One-Handed Shooting (dominant and non-dominant hand)**

**17.10 Tactic:** Engage with only your strong or weak hand.

**16.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:**

- Train one-handed shooting with both dominant and non-dominant hands.
- Practice one-handed reloads and one-handed malfunction clearing using your belt, holster, or knees.
- Practice basic marksmanship principles that apply to one-handed shooting.

**ADVANCED ENGAGEMENT AND DEFENSE****18.0 Multiple Threat Engagement**

**17.10 Tactic:** Prioritize engagement of multiple attackers based on proximity, behavior, and immediate threat.

**17.20 Techniques for Effectiveness:**

- Scan surroundings to identify threats.
- Retreat if it is safe to do so.
- Identify the most dangerous persons in the attack group. Focus your attention on them first.
- On a live-fire range, practice transitioning between targets with quick target acquisition. Eyes find the target first, then move the gun.

- Train “shoot to stop the threat,” then immediately scan and engage other targets if needed.
- Avoid tunnel vision by scanning to reassess the environment.
- Use cover and concealment to your advantage.

## 19.0 Firearm Retention While Standing

19.1 **Tactic:** Defend and retain your firearm.

### 19.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Train with a holster that provides active retention, such as an ALS or thumb-break design.
- Learn weapon retention techniques (pressing the gun closer to your body, blading your body, or using striking techniques to incapacitate the assailant).
- Practice one-handed shooting from retention positions if needed during a struggle (Close Quarters Battle—CQB)

## 20.0 Firearm Retention While Ground Fighting

20.1 **Tactic:** Defend and retain your firearm if taken to the ground in a fight.

### 20.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Engage in personal strength and conditioning training (see [Stronger-People-Are-Harder-To-Kill/](#)).
- Train in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu-based combative skills (we offer a combatives course taught by Chad LaBrun, an undefeated MMA fighter and trainer for the FBI’s Hostage Rescue Team) (also see Gracie Jiu Jitsu and Muay Thai at the *Rising Tide Academy* (<https://risingtidemaryland.com/>)).
- Train weapons-based grappling—using body positioning to block access to your firearm.
- If carrying an AIWB (appendix inside the waistband) holster, learn retention techniques while lying on your back or side.
- Remember, you can’t put a rear naked choke on a 9 mm bullet traveling at 1200 feet per second. Retreat if it is safe to do so.

## 21.0 Scenario-Based Training/Adrenal Stress Conditioning

**21.1 Tactic:** Condition your body and mind to perform under elevated stress through realistic simulation.

### 21.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Engage in Simunition/Ultimate Training Munitions (UTM) training, where live role players simulate threats.
- Practice split-second decision-making using shoot/no-shoot range targets.
- Monitor post-drill performance for improvement, focusing on key proficiency metrics.

## IMMEDIATE ACTION AND RELOAD DRILLS

## 22.0 Immediate Action Drills (Malfunction Clearing)

**22.1 Tactic:** Identify malfunctions under stress to keep your firearm operational.

### 22.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Learn and practice TAP-RACK (tap the magazine, rack the slide, reassess/press the trigger).
- Train for double feeds, stove pipes, failure to feed, and out-of-battery malfunctions using dummy rounds.
- Incorporate malfunction drills in live-fire exercises to simulate real-world pressure.

## 23.0 Immediate Action Drills (Emergency Reloads)

**23.1 Tactic:** Quickly replace the empty magazine with a full one.

### 23.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Bring the handgun into your workspace
- Quickly check to see if you have a malfunction or if your magazine is empty

- Press the magazine release control button to remove the empty magazine. Let it fall. Don't try to catch it.
- Simultaneously, remove the full magazine from a pouch or pocket.
- Place your pointer finger on the tip of the top round of ammunition, and quickly insert the full magazine into the handgun.
- Release the slide forward to chamber a round.
- Continue engaging the target(s) as needed.
- Scan looking for additional threats.

## 24.0 Time and Opportunity Drills (Tactical Reloads)

**24.1 Tactic:** When you have time and opportunity, replace a partially full magazine with a fully loaded one.

### 24.2 Techniques for Effectiveness

- Keep the handgun oriented toward the threat while retrieving a full magazine.
- Bring the handgun into your workspace.
- Using either the "L" technique or the "V" technique, quickly swap the partially full magazine with the full magazine while having the handgun in your "workspace."
- Maintain possession of the partially full magazine.
- Press the gun forward toward the threat.
- Acquire follow-up sight pictures.

## POST-ENGAGEMENT

### 25.0 Post-Engagement Procedure

**25.1 Tactic:** Once the threat is neutralized, assess for additional threats and communicate with the relevant authorities.

### 25.2 Techniques for Effectiveness:

- Conduct a 360-degree scan of the surroundings.
- Keep the firearm ready, but avoid brandishing once the threat is down.

- Call 911 and report the incident at the specified location, using a script provided by your legal protection service. Request the police and an ambulance. Follow the 911 operator's instructions carefully.
- Contact your legal protection service as soon as possible after calling 911.
- Get the gun out of your hands by re-holstering, placing it in a vehicle, or placing it on the ground.
- The initial response matters. Provide the least amount of information required. Remember the Miranda Statement.
- Identify case elements (witnesses, the attacker's weapon).
- Inform officers of any personal injuries.
- Control the information about the incident.
- Do not talk on a cell phone with a lawyer while close to a police cruiser. The conversation can be recorded.

## Conclusion

In part 1 of this three-part article, you learned about the role of tactics and techniques for self-defense combat. The concept of self-defense combat was defined. Distinctions between strategy, tactics, and techniques were explained. The importance of integrating tactics and techniques through ongoing training was emphasized.

Parts 2 and 3 described in detail a layered approach to understanding the relationship between tactics and techniques. Eight broad categories of tactics were identified, and twenty-five sets of tactics and techniques were distributed among the categories.

Effective self-defense strategies supported by efficacious tactics and techniques are imperative for successful self-defense combat with firearms. Strategy and tactics provide the framework guiding your self-defense combat decisions. Tactics tell you what to do, and techniques tell you how to do it.

Through rigorous training and constant reassessment of your self-defense strategy, tactics, and techniques, you can enhance your ability to protect yourself and your loved ones effectively and legally. Train toward proficiency.

## About the Author

Francis (Frank) Duffy is a veteran of the 6th and 5th U.S. Army Special Forces Groups (the Green Berets), a graduate of the Army Ranger School, and a Green Beret combat diver. He is also a certified executive protection specialist.

He is a certified instructor for the NRA (rifle and handgun instructor), the Maryland State Police, and the United States Concealed Carry Association (USCCA). He is also a certified concealed carry instructor for the District of Columbia.

He is also a member of the Board of Directors for Maryland Shall Issue, an all-volunteer, non-partisan organization dedicated to preserving and advancing gun owners' rights in Maryland. He is the co-founder and Vice President of Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC. He can be reached at 443-472-0216 or via email at [frank@spartanftg.com](mailto:frank@spartanftg.com).

Individuals interested in scheduling a private, one-on-one firearms training session should contact Frank.

### **About the Spartan Firearms Training Group**

The Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC ([www.spartanftg.com](http://www.spartanftg.com)) is a Special Forces Veteran-Owned business formed in 2015 by Paul and Francis Duffy. At the end of March 2025, we entered into our 11th year of business, and we have trained thousands of Maryland residents in a variety of ways:

- Concealed carry training
- Handgun Qualification License (HQL) training
- Emergency Casualty Care training
- Long-distance precision shooting training
- Home Defense training
- Private, 1-on-1 firearms training
- Private group training

Our training calendar can be found at the [SFTG Calendar](#).

Paul Duffy can be contacted at 410-707-2992  
[Paul@spartanftg.com](mailto:Paul@spartanftg.com)

**WHEN FACING A LIFE-THREATENING EVENT, YOU WILL FALL TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR TRAINING, NOT RISE TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR EXPECTATIONS. TRAIN THE WAY YOU FIGHT!**

---