



# Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

## Our Origin Story:

### Forged in Tragedy. Defined by Purpose.

Francis M. Duffy, Ph.D.

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#### In Retrospect, It All Started on a Tuesday Morning.

September 11, 2001, started like any other day. I was driving to work as a professor at a university in Washington, DC. On the way, my wife called and said a plane crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers. I was shocked, but had no idea about what was to come.

I got to work and turned on the news to see that the plane was a passenger plane. Then, a second passenger plane struck the other tower. Then, I heard that another plane crashed into the Pentagon. My DC office was on the second floor, and I could see the smoke from the Pentagon crash. I stared in disbelief and horror. Moreover, unbelievably, we next learned that a fourth plane nosedived into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Paul, our son, was attending a university in Maryland. I called him immediately and instructed him to purchase a self-defense shotgun and some essential survival items, including food and water. Marcia, my wife, and I did the same thing.

We had no idea about what would happen now that our country had been attacked, and there was no way that I would let my family be unprepared to deal with the possibility of more terrorist attacks close to home.

Then the towers fell. The Pentagon burned. A field in Pennsylvania became a grave. For most Americans, the world changed. For us, it clarified our desire to train to use firearms for personal defense. We embarked on a journey that took us to various firearms training facilities, including Blackwater in Moyock, NC, Team Torn in Wells, NV, and Oak Grove Technologies in Hoffman, NC. We engaged in that kind of training for 11 years. We took tactical medical courses with Rockwell Tactical (a Special Forces veteran

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company). We also incorporated martial arts and self-defense into our training, especially Brazilian JiuJitsu with the Stewart brothers here in Maryland (Rising Tide Academy-- [Gracie Jiu Jitsu, Muay Thai, and Martial Arts in Columbia, Maryland, and Finksburg, Maryland](#)).

### **Born From the Tragedy of 9/11 and Nurtured by Years of Training With Elite Military Veterans**

I mentioned earlier that Paul and I trained at several different firearms training facilities. What I didn't mention is that the instructors at those facilities were elite military veterans, including Army Green Berets, Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Marine Raiders, and veterans from Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), as well as Canadian SMU JTF2. One year, we even had the opportunity to train with the 5th-ranked competition shooter in the United States.

In 2014, Paul had to renew his Maryland carry permit, which he had had since 2007. This was the first renewal that required the training mandated by state legislation, effective October 1, 2013. Paul was shocked at the lack of actual live-fire shooting instruction that took place in this class. It was because of that experience that Paul proposed the idea of combining what we learned from the 9/11 tragedy, our personal firearms training, and my Special Forces military background to create a firearms training business that would help Maryland citizens prepare to defend their lives and the lives of their loved ones. I said, "Yes, let's do this"!

My wife, Marcia, used her business connections and a monetary donation to create a website. We hired an attorney to form a Limited Liability Company for us. We also submitted our business to a Veterans' organization to become a certified veteran-owned business. Paul provided the leadership to make it all happen.

Paul designed our logo and solidified our name. There is a fantastic book by Steven Pressfield titled "Gates of Fire." Pressfield's book is a historical fiction account of the Battle of Thermopylae, the story of Leonidas and 300 Spartans in their epic battle against Xerxes, the King of Persia. Paul had just read that book when we started Spartan Firearms Training Group, which inspired his design of our logo. The logo is a combination of three images: a Spartan shield with the Lambda in the center, the Maryland flag inside the shield, and the logo of the United States Army Special Forces (a knife and crossed arrows) positioned behind the shield.

We were off and running!

## Early Challenges

To pass our firearms knowledge to Maryland residents and sign off on their course scoresheets, we needed to be Qualified Handgun Instructors through the Maryland State Police. To get that certification, we needed to be official certified instructors. At the time, there were only two options for obtaining that certification: entering law enforcement or completing the National Rifle Association's training. We chose the latter. To expand our course offerings and help our customers safely and legally carry in more jurisdictions, we also became certified Utah carry permit instructors, and I obtained my concealed carry instructor credentials for Washington, D.C.

We started small. We held our first class, which had three participants, in the basement of Marcia's office. From there, we moved to the Bollinger Farm. Bobby and Brandi Bollinger of Bollinger Gunsmithing ([www.bollingerguns.com](http://www.bollingerguns.com)) have a farm in Taneytown. Their gunsmithing business at the time was located in a small building on the property. We ran our training in a room above their store. Importantly, they also had a gun range on the property, and we were able to rent it for our training.

Paul continued to build professional relationships and eventually met Michele Geidel of Essential Support Services ([www.essentialsupportservicesllc.com](http://www.essentialsupportservicesllc.com)). Michele provided us with a professional conference room and the best fingerprint and application assistance services in the state. Our clients loved her, and she was a strong referral source for us in the early stages. We continue to utilize ESS as a valued collaborator.

Our next challenge was getting the word out about who we were and what we offered to grow our business. We did that in two ways. First, as mentioned earlier, Marcia gave us some money to build a website. We contracted with Trembling Giant ([tremblinggiantmarketing](http://tremblinggiantmarketing.com)) for the initial design. Then, we engaged with BizMarquee ([bizmarquee](http://bizmarquee.com)) to host and refine the website (we still have a relationship with BizMarquee; they do a great job). Trembling Giant also designed business cards for us, which we still use today. We also still have a great relationship with them.

Between 2015 and 2022, it was difficult for Maryland citizens to qualify for a carry permit. Citizens had to prove they had a "good and substantial reason" to carry. The Maryland State Police made that determination. Consequently, most of our training helped people get Maryland's Handgun Qualification License (HQL), which would allow them to purchase a handgun.

Helping Maryland citizens qualify for a concealed carry permit was a challenging task. As mentioned earlier, prior to 2022, citizens needed a “good and substantial reason” to qualify, and the Maryland State Police decided who did or did not satisfy that requirement. Those who met the requirement back then were typically business owners, people with security clearances, and others with documented threats against their lives.

Given the strict “good and substantial reason” requirement, we didn’t have many customers who needed or wanted carry permits. However, we were still able to assist some individuals in obtaining their permits. Paul created a screening protocol that he used to interview people who contacted us about wear-and-carry training.

Because it was challenging to recruit customers for the wear-and-carry permit, our HQL training was our primary course offering. Marcia suggested we contact Carroll Community College to test their interest in offering an HQL course there. They liked the idea, and we have been doing that ever since. We teach one course each academic term as part of the college’s continuing education program.

### **Challenges Evolved Into Opportunities: The Bruen Decision**

We offered the HQL and limited wear-and-carry training from 2015 to 2022. In 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decided a case known as *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*. Bruen was the Superintendent of the New York State Police. At that time, New York and several other states, including Maryland, imposed stringent restrictions on their citizens’ ability to carry a firearm in public. The SCOTUS declared that such restrictions were unconstitutional. That decision, now known as the “Bruen Decision,” spread like a prairie fire throughout the country, particularly in the states affected by it.

The Bruen Decision opened the floodgates that had been holding back Maryland citizens who wanted a carry permit. We were perfectly positioned to seize that moment. We started running two wear-and-carry classes a week, and running two live-fire groups on Saturday range days. Each class would have 20-30 customers. On those range days, we would arrive at the range around 7:30 a.m.. to set up and not step off the range until about 7:30 p.m..

## Time to Grow

As our training opportunities increased, we had to hire range safety officers (RSOs) to be with us on our live-fire range days. We maintain a 1:5 RSO-to-student ratio. Our RSOs focus on customer safety. We are obsessive about firearms safety.

Our RSOs are truly amazing men. One is a Ranger-Qualified Green Beret veteran, another is a Marine and the lead firearms instructor and supervisor at a federal firearms training facility, another is a veteran of a U.S. Army Ranger regiment, two are long distance precision shooters, two are active-duty police officers, one is a retired Maryland State Police officer, some are veterans of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) units, and another is a veteran of the Naval Special Warfare.

In 2016, Paul pitched the idea of Spartan Firearms Training Group becoming a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL). We went for it! It took time because we had to get approvals from the county, the sheriff's office, the state, and, of course, Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). With the FFL, we assist customers in purchasing and transferring firearms. We do not stock firearms inventory.

At about the same time we became an FFL, we also contracted with a certified paramedic and active-duty police officer to design and teach our Emergency Casualty Care course (E-Triple-C). We deliberately did not want this course to be a first aid or CPR course. That training is important, but we were looking for a course that would teach customers how to stop profuse bleeding from knife and gunshot wounds. To this date, we believe it is our most important course because the knowledge and skills learned can save lives.

Paul and I discussed the possibility of offering private, 1-on-1 training to customers. We agreed that I would do that. I became a certified "outside instructor" at the Guntry Club in Owings Mills, Maryland (<https://www.guntry.com/>), where I continue to provide private training. I have trained hundreds of customers.

We also started offering private group training. We accommodated groups ranging from 6 to 30 people. For one of our group training sessions, we invited Chad LaBrun to teach a class on how to use JiuJitsu for self-defense while carrying a handgun (see [www.thelabmma.com](http://www.thelabmma.com)). Chad is an undefeated MMA fighter who also trains the most elite federal hostage rescue team. The training involved each customer using a concealed and holstered inert "blue" firearm for hands-on learning. One customer would be the "good guy," and the other would be the "bad guy." On command, they

would start to spar. The bad guy's goal was to disarm the good guy. The good guy's goal was to prevent that from happening. In almost all cases, the good guy got "killed." Lesson learned: When there is a handgun present, that gun no longer belongs to the person who brought it. It belongs to the person who is bigger, stronger, and more skilled at using violence.

### **We Are Evolving**

Over the past 10 1/2 years, we have evolved into a premier training business for citizens who want to carry a handgun legally and effectively in public. We don't teach people to become marksmen; we teach them to make "good enough" hits on a target to stop a threat to their lives or the lives of their loved ones. That philosophy is known as "defensive shooting."

Today, Spartan Firearms Training Group is a respected and highly regarded training provider. Whether you're a new gun owner or an experienced shooter, we meet you where you are. We don't just teach defensive shooting. We build "sheepdog" warriors with the mindset, judgment, and discipline to stand their ground when no other option remains and safe de-escalation is impossible.

### **Our Mission Moving Forward**

In a world that feels increasingly uncertain, our mission has never been more vital:

- To train strong, informed, skilled, and morally grounded protectors.
- To educate, not intimidate.
- To prepare, not provoke.
- To make sure that when seconds count, they won't freeze, blunder, or fail.

Spartan Firearms Training Group continues to grow because our students leave empowered, not just trained, and they share their experiences with others about what we do. From 9/11 to now, we've stayed true to one belief: **The world may not be safe, but you CAN and SHOULD BE ready.** Come and train with us. We are pretty damn good at what we do!

### **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 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).

He also offers private, 1-on-1 firearms training at the Guntry Club in Owings Mills, Maryland. Please contact him directly to schedule a training appointment.

### **About Paul Duffy**

The Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC, is the brainchild of Paul. He recognized the need for what we do and envisioned a way to respond to that need. His business acumen and drive to succeed positioned SFTG for great success. Without him, SFTG would not exist.

Paul has over 16 years of experience in tactical firearms training. He holds several instructor certifications and is a certified range safety officer. Additionally, he owns multiple small businesses and is a competitive sport shooter and hunter. His knowledge and skills provide our customers with unparalleled access to state-of-the-art firearms skills. His inspirational platform skills inspire our customers to learn how to use their firearms safely and legally.

### **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, including:

- Concealed carry training
- Handgun Qualification License (HQL) training
- Emergency Casualty Care training
- Long-distance precision shooting 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)

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