



Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

The Call to Action:

Recognizing the Guardian Within

There is a moment in people's lives when their beliefs about personal safety are shattered. It's not dramatic. It's not cinematic. It's usually inconvenient. Maybe it happens when you hear glass breaking in your house at 2 a.m. Maybe it happens when you sense a person following you at night through a mall parking lot. Maybe it happens when you watch a news story about a local shooting and realize that it's just a couple of blocks from your house.

Or maybe it happens when you're looking at the people you love, and you think: *If something threatening happens right now, no one is close enough to help us.* No "guns not allowed" sign, no anti-gun law, and no fast police response time. This is not against the police. It's about the fact that when seconds matter, the police are minutes away—if you are lucky. This is reality. Police respond **after** something has happened. Sometimes quickly, sometimes not quickly enough, sometimes not at all.

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This awakening shouldn't make you angry. It should make you motivated. It should be perceived as being honest with yourself. Honesty is the point at which your transformation journey toward responsible self-defense begins.

Why Some People Step Up—and Most People Don't

When something goes wrong in public, human behavior is predictable. Some people freeze. Some people panic and run. A very small number of people are willing and able to engage the threat if justified. Those who step forward already decided that responsibility belongs to them.

Making the decision to accept responsibility for self-defense has nothing to do with bravery. It's about recognizing that it is your responsibility to protect yourself and your family. What separates armed citizen guardians (the "sheepdogs") from bystanders (the "sheep") is a simple belief: *If I don't act, nobody else will.*

Some people are naturally inclined to accept that responsibility. Others learn the importance of accepting that responsibility as they grow older and wiser. Some never accept it and expect others to take responsibility. They trust "no guns allowed" laws. They trust luck. They trust that the police will come to help them. But there is one seriously uncomfortable truth. There is no one else when seconds matter. When things

start to go sideways, **you are the one who must act and act quickly.** Recognizing this truth isn't paranoia. It's being a responsible adult.

The Weight of Choosing to Be Capable

You must prepare to defend yourself. Making the choice to be an armed citizen guardian for yourself and your family is not a casual decision. If the idea of carrying a firearm for self-defense feels exciting or empowering in a shallow way, you're not ready for the responsibility that comes with it. Dr. Jordan Peterson famously once said, "A harmless man is not a good man. A good man is a very, very dangerous man who has that under voluntary control." His statement highlights the need to be capable of violence. Being capable of using violence to defend life comes with a moral weight that some are unwilling to bear. Anyone who tells you otherwise is lying to you or to themselves.

Evil doesn't care if you disapprove of it. Violence doesn't disappear because anti-gun legislators pass laws against it. Violence stops when someone has the capability and capacity to take justified action to stop it.

Self-defense is a God-given right and a responsibility. Why would you allow yourself to be harmed when you could have defended your life with your handgun?

Allowing yourself to be harmed is not noble. Standing by while an innocent person is attacked when you have the ability to help is not morally neutral. It is moral complicity through inaction. Refusal to act when capable is an abdication of responsibility.

Defending innocent life is an important moral line that you need to be prepared to cross. That doesn't mean you must intervene in every situation. However, you need the capability and capacity to cross that line. Capability includes skill, proximity, risk, and consequence. Capacity means you are emotionally and physically able to handle the consequences. Once those thresholds are met, the decision to use force (or not) becomes a test of character. That does **not** mean you act recklessly or illegally.

Guardians know and comply with use-of-force laws, avoid conflict when possible, walk away when safe to do so, and use force when no other option exists. And, very importantly, armed citizen guardians are not harmless. They have the capability and capacity to be dangerous, but know how to keep themselves under control.

The Real Fight Happens Before Anything Goes Wrong

Most people think self-defense is physical. It isn't. The real fight happens in your head. When violence starts, your body dumps a chemical cocktail into your system. You have no control over that. This chemical dump hits like a hammer. Your heart rate doubles within 3 seconds, and your blood pressure doubles within 10 seconds. Your

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hands shake. Your vision narrows. Fine motor skills disappear. Thinking becomes harder, not easier. This isn't a weakness. It's biology.

Guardianship is not about being fearless. It's about functioning while afraid. Functioning while afraid requires continuous structured training so that, to paraphrase Col. Jeff Cooper, you know this could happen one day, and you know what to do about it. An important part of that training is visualization.

That means imagining different threat scenarios and mentally working through different response decisions. By doing that, you create mental scripts that your brain will use to respond to threatening situations. Asking yourself hard questions now instead of when your hands are shaking. We wrote about visualization in one of our monthly posts titled *Preloading—The Guardian's Edge: A Clear Mind When Others Lose Theirs* found at [Visualization](#).

If you carry a firearm, you are carrying a promise that you understand the consequences of using a firearm for justified self-defense, that you accept responsibility for every round that leaves that gun, and that you are willing to live with the legal, moral, and personal consequences.

Another truth armed citizen guardians face is that there will often be emotional costs afterward, such as doubt, guilt, second-guessing, and judgment from people sitting on their couches who didn't face the threat you did. As an armed citizen guardian, you must also prepare for those costs.

Killing the Most Dangerous Lie

One of the most dangerous thoughts a person can have is *“that won't happen to me.”* That thought is an example of the normalcy bias. The thought feels comforting, but it is often wrong. Violence doesn't recognize naïve beliefs about being safe. Violence seizes opportunities to inflict harm. Violence happens daily throughout the country, including in “safe” neighborhoods and “protected” schools, and violence doesn't come with warnings. It doesn't wait until you think you are ready to deal with it.

The “that won't happen to me” mindset can't and never will protect you. What it does do, however, is prevent preparation. Preparing is not about fear; it's about being honest with yourself about reality. When you replace denial (“that won't happen to me”) with readiness, you are not being paranoid. You are becoming capable of self-defense and developing the capacity to engage when justified.

Prepared People Change Outcomes

Becoming prepared creates a ripple effect. A parent who takes responsibility influences how their children see the world. A person who remains relatively calm in the midst of chaos tends to steady everyone around them. One capable citizen can have a significant influence on the outcome of an entire event. Criminals look for soft targets. When targets stop being easy, their behavior changes. One prepared person can make all the difference in creating a positive outcome.

The Guardian Is Never Someone Else

Many people miss the fact that armed citizen guardians aren't "special." They're ordinary people like you who decide not to turn a blind eye to danger. You don't need a badge. You don't need a uniform. You don't need permission. You need willingness. At some point, you either accept responsibility for your own safety and the safety of those you love—or you don't. One day, your readiness may matter more than anything else you've ever done. That isn't a burden. That's the price of caring.

Reflection Questions

1. When was the first time you felt the need to become an armed citizen? What were the circumstances that made you see the need?

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2. Why is responsible self-defense a moral obligation?
3. In what ways are you preparing to become a responsible armed citizen? Think in terms of your mind, emotions, and body?
4. Do you ever catch yourself thinking *“that won’t happen to me”*?
5. How can your preparation influence your family, friends, or community?

Practical Tips

Tip 1: Notice moments when you felt possible danger.

Tip 2: Remember, self-defense isn’t just about legal rights; it’s also about the ethical duty to protect life.

Tip 3: Train using visualization principles.

Tip 4: Expect emotional and psychological challenges if you use deadly force to defend life.

Tip 5: Replace *“that won’t happen to me”* with Col. Jeff Cooper’s guidance. Say to yourself, *“I knew this could happen one day, and I know what to do about it.”* This mindset shift is empowering.

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.

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) is a Special Forces Veteran-Owned business formed in 2015 by Paul and Francis Duffy. At the end of March 2026, we will begin our 12th 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 group training
- Private 1-on-1 training

Our training calendar is available on the [SFTG Calendar](#).

Paul Duffy can be contacted at 410-707-2992 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!

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