



# The Bursting Bomb

MARINE GUNNER ASSOCIATION  
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

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2024





Editor: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian P. Wade USMC (Ret.)

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*On the Cover: Private First Class (PFC) Wilfred Voegeli USMC, MOS 781 Flamethrower Operator, pauses to light his pipe while Iwo Jima burns. US Marines began their assault on Iwo Jima (now Iōjō) on 19 Feb 1945. Photo: 24 Feb 1945 by USMC photographer Campbell (colorized).*



## SITREP...*from the Editor:*

Gunners and friends,

I hope you and your loved ones are well and enjoying the new year. I have been enjoying the interesting Montana winter. Just a month ago, we experienced a 100-degree temperature variation (from -40 to 60F within a couple weeks). Madness. Nevertheless, the winter has allowed me to concentrate my efforts on this edition of The Bursting Bomb. As always, I sincerely hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed creating it.

Readers will quickly detect that this edition includes more “people business” articles than technical articles. A Marine Gunner, if he is doing it “right”, spends a tremendous amount of time dealing with Marines and Sailors, face to face...something I very much miss, given that I have been retired for six years. A Marine Gunner is assigned to the Command Element, after all, and in this capacity, he will become deeply involved in the people business of a battalion, regiment, division, and more.

Sure, I love rifles, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and High Explosives, but it’s the energy of the Marines and Sailors that gave me the strength to push all the way to 30 years and 3 months, including 11 deployments (some were a year), with some intense and repeated close combat.

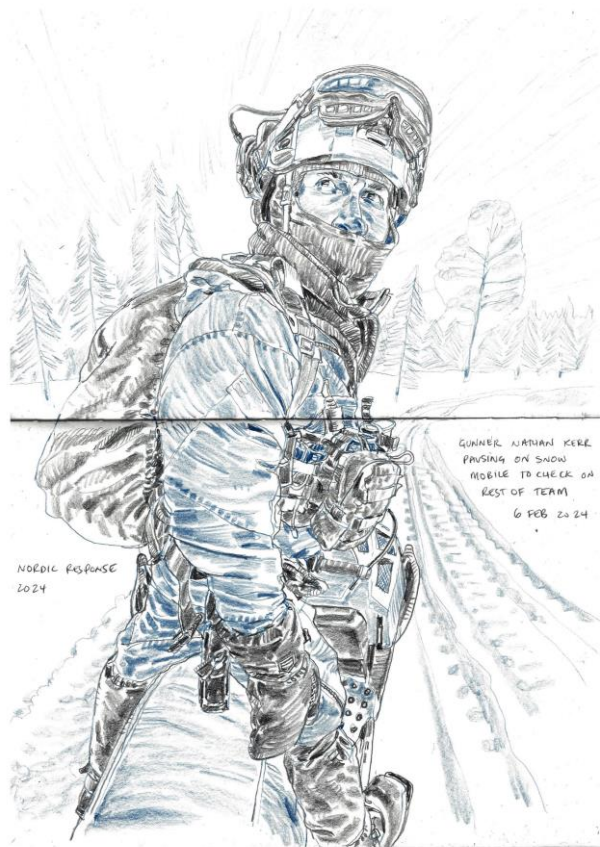
The creation of this edition has caused me to be in constant contact with old friends and make some new ones. This is the way. Connection and healing is the way to go...not isolation and resentment. Reach out to your friends from the Corps. It is good for the soul. I hope you enjoy this edition. Semper Fi!

**The Main Effort of the US Marine Corps is the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad.**

Christian Wade  
The Editor



*(Above): I enjoyed a recent visit with Marine Gunner Matt Kostielney, a contributing author to The Bursting Bomb, in Great Falls, Montana. Matt has recently retired from active service and is pursuing a certification in welding. I appreciate his work for the MGA and for The Bursting Bomb.*



*(Above): Sketch artist Rich Johnson created this fine depiction of Gunner Nathan Kerr while training in Norway with Nordic Response 2024. Gunner Kerr had stopped his snowmobile to check on the riders behind him (who had experienced a departure from controlled operation). Used with permission from Rich Johnson.*

## In Memoriam

The Marine Gunner Association mourns the passing of our brother in arms:

CWO4/Marine Gunner Michael A. Beltran USMC (Ret.)

Michael was born in 1967 and passed away in October 2022. He was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery at 0900 on 18 January 2024.



*(Top/L) Gunner Mike Beltran enjoying a break on a deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Top/R and bottom) Family, friends, and Marines gathered at Arlington National Cemetery to lay Mike's remains to rest. Marine Gunners Keith Eggers and Rodger Turner attended.*





## MGA Executive Staff



*President  
Matthew Carpenter  
CWO-4/Marine Gunner  
USMC (Ret.)*



*Vice President  
Matthew Anderson  
CWO-5/Marine Gunner USMC,  
DC, PP&O, HQMC*



*Treasurer  
Kevin Gonzalez  
CWO-4/Marine Gunner  
USMC (Ret.)*

*Operations Officer: Brian Somers CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC (Ret.)  
Communications Officer: Shelby Lasater CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC (Ret.)*

## MGA Membership

Annual Membership to the Marine Gunner Association is currently open. Annual Membership (MOS 0306 Marine Gunners Active and Retired) is \$50. Annual Associate Membership (Friends of the Gunner Community) is \$100. For more membership information please visit our website.

For coordinating instructions for the West Coast Gathering, the Annual Dinner, and any other Marine Gunner Association events, please check the association’s website and click on the “Events” tab in the upper section of the main page.

For tickets to each event, please visit:

<https://www.marinegunnerassociation.net/initiatives>

### The Bursting Bomb magazine:

\*Note: All editions of The Bursting Bomb will be placed, for public access and sharing, on the Marine Gunner Association website (hyperlink in blue on left of this page) and on the MGA page on LinkedIn.

Annual memberships also serve as a “the price of admission” for the Annual Dinner in the Quantico area (not to be confused with the ticket price of \$30.00 for the West Coast Gathering). See Coordinating Instructions for the Annual Dinner for more details, specifically for Associate Members, Family, and Friends.



## WARNO...

### 2024 MGA West Coast Gathering

**When:** 5 April 2024, 1800 PST

**Who:** MGA, Family, and Friends

**What:** West Coast Gathering

**Where:** 1617 Mission Ave. Oceanside, CA 92058

**Why:** To bring West Coast Gunners together, strengthen our community, and establish a dialogue between generations of Gunners.

**Specific Instructions:** Tickets cost **\$30.00** (thirty dollars per seat) at the following link:

<https://www.marinegunnerassociation.net/initiatives>



### 2024 MGA Annual Dinner

**When:** 15 August 2024

-Doors Open/Cocktails: 1700 (EST)

-Dinner: 1800

-Raffle: 1930

-Depart: 2200

**Who:** MGA, Family, Friends, and Sponsors

Tickets:

-Members: Cost of Annual Membership (\$50.00)

-Family members/Guests of Members: \$50.00 per seat

-Non-members: \$100.00 per seat

-Sponsors: Based on Tier Level

**What:** MGA Annual Dinner

**Where:** Hylton Performing Arts Center 10900 University Blvd. Manassas, VA 20110

**Why:** The annual national gathering of the Marine Gunner Association.

**Specific Instructions:**

**Attire:** Business

**RSVP No Later Than 31 July 2024**

Tickets are available at (lower portion of page):

<https://www.marinegunnerassociation.net/initiatives>



## Messages From the Executive Staff MGA President

Brothers and Friends of the MGA,

I would like to thank everyone for their efforts over the past couple of months as our association continues to grow, expand, and meet its mission. The efforts of a few driven individual members and our great sponsors have produced enormous positive impacts for all of us. Our growth and expanded outreach have enabled our young organization to provide scholarships to “children of the infantry”, an all-expenses paid hunt for two lucky recipients, and our first West Coast Gathering this April. Our board continues to develop and provide sage and welcome guidance, and your Executive Staff is engaged and looking forward to what this year will produce. I want to offer a sincere thank you and Welcome Aboard to the newest member of our Executive Staff, Brian Somers. Brian is our newly appointed Operations Officer and has jumped in with both feet! Our organization will go through some changes in leadership this year as we will be saying goodbye to our current Vice President and Co-Founder Matt Anderson. Matt will be retiring in April and with his retirement, we will see the newly appointed VP, Jeremy Barone installed at our Annual Dinner in August. Matt, your steady demeanor, and true care for our community has provided this organization a solid footing and clear path for greater success in the future. I sincerely thank you for all you have done for me, the Corps, and our association! As we continue to move forward, our committee chairs are actively engaged in keeping you informed, planning the next round of scholarship awards, planning the Annual Dinner, developing a competition shoot, and professionalizing our association through The Bursting Bomb magazine, Great Job All! The much-anticipated election of your new President is also underway. I would encourage anyone interested in running for MGA President to please contact Keith

Marine who is heading up our election committee. If you have any questions or would like to know more about the position, please feel free to reach out to me directly. I am encouraged by the level of dedication our team has committed to this organization and excited for what the future will bring, but we need assistance. Please feel free to reach out if you want to get more involved with the association, we will welcome you with open arms!

Semper Fidelis,

**Matt Carpenter (CWO-4/Gunner Ret.)**  
President, Marine Gunner Association



*(Above): US Marines raised the Colors atop Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, on 23 Feb 1945. This Pulitzer Prize winning photo is perhaps the most iconic photograph in US Marine Corps history. The MGA celebrates our brothers whose legacy we have carried forward with the greatest of care and respect. Photo: Joe Rosenthal, AP.*

*(Below): Iwo Jima with Suribachi in the foreground in 2001.*



## Messages From the Executive Staff MGA Vice President and Treasurer

### Message from the MGA Vice President

Greetings from Northern Virginia, I hope this edition finds each of you doing well!

The Gunner community continues to be extremely busy across the service, being instrumental in the support of ongoing global operations, modernization efforts, and ensuring the men and women of our Corps are trained and equipped to answer the nation's call at a moment's notice. I continue to be amazed and sincerely proud of these Marines wearing the Bursting Bomb.

In this edition of the Bursting Bomb, it is my distinct pleasure to share the results of the FY24 Chief Warrant Officer Promotion Board. Congratulations to the following Gunners and their families:

**CWO5** Select: Jeremy Barone, Tom Johnson, and John Lucero

**CWO4** Select: Todd Beckley, Sam Shin, Jordan Taylor, Zach Strelke, Kyle Costanzo, Max Veliz, and Phil Blackwell

**CWO3** Select: Brad Landers, James Gilchrist, Jeremy Ludwig, Chris Simser, Deacon Holton, Josh Larson, Adam Duvall, Orlando Saunders, Genemichael Juan, and Michael Tucker

I am sad to announce this will be my last contribution to *The Bursting Bomb* as the association's Vice President. April of this year will be my retirement, and my family and I will begin the next chapter in our lives. I am humbled and proud to have been part of this association. In a relatively short period, what started as an idea for a way to foster camaraderie and improve communication, has grown into an organization not any of us would have ever imagined. This would not have been achieved without your membership and the dedication of our group of volunteers. **THANK YOU** all for allowing me to be a part of this special organization. I am excited to see where the MGA goes in the future!

In closing, it has been both a personal and professional honor to have been a part of the Gunner community. I would like to extend a thank you to all the Gunners past and present, who have helped and mentored me along the way.

Semper Fidelis,  
Matt Anderson (HQMC, PP&O Gunner)  
Marine Gunner Association Vice President



### Message from the MGA Treasurer

Members of the MGA,

First, I would like to thank everyone for their continued support to the Marine Gunner Association (MGA). I'm happy to announce that we have been able to award (4) Marine Gunner Jesse Schertz Scholarships to deserving family members and veterans. These scholarships would have not been possible without the support of Aimpoint. We were also able to execute our first veterans outreach event in TX., which was 100% funded by the MGA. In the upcoming year, we hope to double the scholarships and outreach events. This association was born to provide multiple levels of support to veterans and their families. If you, yourself might need assistance or may know someone that may need assistance, please reach out to us. Once again, none of this could be possible without the support from you.

Semper Fidelis,

**Kevin Gonzalez (CWO-4/Gunner Ret.)**  
Marine Gunner Association Treasurer





## Rimstone Ranch Veterans Hunt

By: CWO-4/Marine Gunner Sean Flannery USMC (Ret.)

The Marine Gunner Association (MGA) would like to announce the success of the first MGA Veterans Hunt, conducted at the Rimstone Ranch in Grandview, Texas over the weekend of February 17-18, 2024.

The Marines, current active duty CWO-5/ Marine Gunner Ron Hathaway assigned to the 2d Marine Division and Gunnery Sergeant (Ret.) Jeff Lisk were met at the airport by the MGA team and transported to the Rimstone Ranch for the outreach event. The veterans had never met each other and after a short round of introductory questions, the conversation quickly turned to a dialogue about where the Marine Corps is...problems facing it and ideas to improve it. No matter how far removed from the Corps, she never truly leaves us. The Marine Corps becomes engrained into your existence; the Corps is the family that you needed and needed you. From day one at bootcamp, greater concern for the Marine to your left or right than yourself is literally driven into your brain. When you get two Marines together, they can't help but discuss the current state of the Corps.

The MGA team, led by Kevin Gonzalez and comprised of fellow Marine Gunners, veterans, and their families, put this event together as a pilot for future outreach activities. Many veterans walk through the valleys of uncertainty and adversity, shouldering the burdens of duty and sacrifice. It is the mission of the MGA to help guide them back to a safe harbor and provide a place of healing, camaraderie, and renewal.

The MGA seeks to enrich lives, by helping veterans gain and maintain purpose. The first step in the process is to bring them together, reestablish connections, and encourage the veteran to tell their story. For the MGA and two patriotic American families, the Sweeney's and the McGibbon's, this

sentiment resonated deeply as they came together to orchestrate a transformative event—the MGA Veterans Hunt at Rimstone Ranch.

The funds to support this event were gathered through direct donations and fundraising activities conducted at events like the MGA Annual Dinner, held in August in the National Capital Region. Every raffle ticket sold, item donated, or direct donation supports what the MGA endeavors to accomplish.

As the group stepped onto the grounds, they were met by not only the breathtaking beauty of the Rimstone Ranch, itself, but also the gratitude from the great Americans supporting the event, and a sense of community as they formed connections with other veterans supporting the hunt.



*(Above): The impressive ranch house at Rimstone Ranch.*

As they embarked on the event, they discovered a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. They were reminded that they were not alone in their journey. Through laughter, shared stories, and moments of reflection, the veterans found solace in the company of those who understood their experiences intimately. They

## MGA Events

### Rimstone Ranch Veterans Hunt

walked side by side, not as strangers, but as brothers and sisters in arms, united by a common bond forged in the crucible of service. But it wasn't just about the hunt...it was about creating a place for veterans to come together, share their stories, and forge connections that would last a lifetime. With the generous hospitality of the Sweeney family, whose culinary expertise and warm embrace provided nourishment for the body and soul, and the steadfast support of the McGibbon family, who opened the doors of Rimstone Ranch with open arms, the veterans found themselves enveloped in a sanctuary of warmth and compassion.

"It is a cherished moment to be in the company of fellow infantry Marines again and be involved in an outdoor event together," shared one veteran, capturing the essence of the camaraderie and connection experienced among comrades-in-arms. It was a reunion marked by shared experiences, laughter, and the bonds forged through military service, a testament to the enduring brotherhood that defines the Marine Corps.



*(Above L-R): Like McGibbon, Kevin Gonzalez, Jim Sweeney, and Sean Flannery at the Rimstone Ranch.*

"This is an incredible opportunity to visit a new place and meet a patriotic family who welcomed us into their home and ranch," remarked another veteran, reflecting on the warm hospitality they received.



*(Above): Gunner Ron Hathaway conducts test-fire and zero with an appropriately high-quality provided rifle.*



*(Above): A view from the blind on the Rimstone Ranch. (Below): "The horniest room in Texas"...the entrance to the game processing facility.*





## MGA Events

### Rimstone Ranch Veterans Hunt



*(Above): Texas is known for a great many things, fine cooking among them.*



*(Above): One of the many species of fauna on the Rimstone Ranch.  
(Below): Kevin Gonzalez presents an MGA plaque in gratitude for the support from (L-R) Tim and Tyler McGibbon.*



When a veteran signs up to serve their nation, they know that the journey may be long and arduous; however, they soon learn that returning home is a difficult road. Normal life feels different than it did before. There is no way to mitigate this for a veteran, but we can receive them with gratitude for their service, let them know that their sacrifices were not in vain and help guide them back to the safe harbor where they can work through what they have faced. It is our duty to help our veterans return to a home where they are honored, supported, and can thrive.

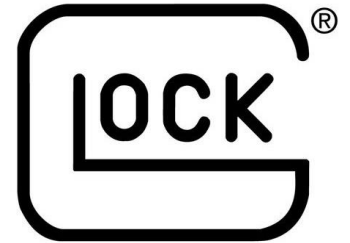
And as the sun set over the horizon, casting a golden glow upon the land, the veterans, the MGA team, the Sweeney's, and the McGibbon's looked toward the future with hope and appreciation. In the end, this event was a testament to the enduring spirit of patriotism, compassion, and unity that defines us as a nation; a reminder that if we stand together, we can weather any storm and overcome any obstacle that lies ahead.

Thank you to all the supporters, volunteers, and sponsors that helped make this event a success.





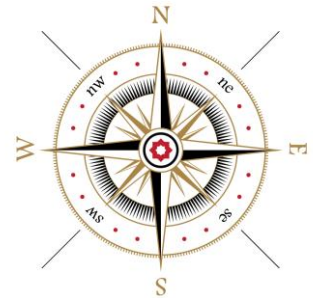
The MGA would like to thank the following sponsors for their continuing generous support:



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The MGA would like to thank the following sponsors for their continuing generous support:





## In Memoriam

### A Tribute to Gaston Glock

By: Shelby Lasater (Gunner USMC [Ret.]), Director of Government and Federal Programs, GLOCK, Inc.

Gaston Glock was an Austrian entrepreneur and founder of Glock Ges.m.b.H., a company renowned for its innovative firearms and accessories. Gaston Glock's journey from a relatively unknown businessman to a prominent figure in the firearms industry sits at the table of legends such as John Browning and Eugene Stoner. Gaston Glock's vision of PERFECTION was the drive behind everything. He never settled with good enough. He constantly sought to improve his products using the most advanced technology available.



Herr Gaston Glock

Gaston Glock initially worked in the curtain rod business, running his own company. His life took a significant turn in the early 1980s when the Austrian Ministry of Defense announced a competition for a new military sidearm. Despite having no prior experience in firearm design, Glock decided to participate in the competition.

His fresh approach to the design process set Gaston Glock apart from traditional firearms manufacturers. Glock's background in engineering and his lack of preconceived notions about gun design allowed him to think outside the box. His innovative use of polymer materials for the frame, combined with a striker-fired mechanism, resulted in the creation of the iconic Glock 17 pistol.

Introduced in 1982, the Glock 17 quickly gained attention for its reliability, simplicity, and high magazine capacity. The design departed from traditional metal-framed handguns, bringing a new era of lightweight and durable polymer-framed pistols. The Glock 17's success in the Austrian

military trials marked the beginning of Glock's rise to prominence in the firearms industry.

The GLOCK brand became synonymous with modern pistol design, and its popularity spread beyond military and law enforcement circles to civilian markets worldwide. GLOCK expanded its product line to include various models and calibers, catering to the diverse needs of gun enthusiasts, sport shooters, and concealed carry practitioners. Since then, the firearms industry has been chasing GLOCK Perfection.

Gaston Glock's astute business acumen was pivotal to GLOCK's success. The company implemented a comprehensive global marketing strategy, establishing firearms as preferred options for police forces, military units, and civilians worldwide. Glock's unwavering dedication to quality control and continuous improvement played a significant role in building the brand's reputation for reliability. GLOCK is the firearm of choice for over 70% of US Law Enforcement, numerous US government agencies, the US Special Operations Command, and more than 150 countries.

GLOCK remains a leading influencer in the firearms industry, and Gaston Glock's contributions to modern handgun design are widely acknowledged.

In conclusion, Gaston Glock's story embodies entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, and resilience. His impact has been profound, from a humble background in the curtain rod business to revolutionizing the firearms industry with the GLOCK pistol. The GLOCK brand continues to symbolize reliability and efficiency, reflecting Gaston Glock's commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional firearm design. People first, perfection always.



## TBS and IWOC Updates

The 2024 class of student Marine Gunners reported to The Basic School (TBS) during the last week of January 2024. Once Marine Corps standards-based evaluations were complete (PFT, weigh-in, etc.), the Marines were Commissioned as Chief Warrant Officer-2s on February 1st. India Company contains all the Warrant Officers and Chief Warrant Officers of each year’s selection board (including Marine Gunners). As an administrative note, Marines who are selected as Officers from the 8412 Military Occupational Specialty “Career Recruiter” are also Commissioned directly to CWO-2. Like Marine Gunners, Recruiting Officers skip an appointment to Warrant Officer-1 (W-1). Naturally, given the typical seniority of Marine Gunner candidates and 8412 Career Recruiters, an appointment to W-1 would come with a sharp pay cut.

Shortly after Commissioning, the Officers of India Company attended live-fire training aboard Weapons Training Battalion, Quantico (WTBN). Colonel Greg Jones, CWO-4/Marine Gunner Josh Grayek, and the WTBN Marines prepared India Company for their upcoming live-fire training during the Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC). India Company was also introduced to a derivative of the newly created Advanced Marksmanship Training Program (Rifle).

Over the next few weeks, the Gunners and India Company will conduct the Small Arms Weapons Field Exercise (SWMFEX), Field Exercises (FEX) 1, 2, and the Offense and Defense.

CWO-4/Marine Gunner Mark Erhardt, the TBS Gunner and the Director of the Infantry Weapons Officer Course (IWOC) is pleased to announce that all selectees from the recent Marine Gunner board are “full-up rounds”, healthy, and actively training with India Company.

In addition to his duties as the TBS

Gunner and IWOC Director, Gunner Erhardt trains Officers of the Basic Officer Course (BOC) companies—the student Lieutenants of TBS. Gunner Erhardt conducts weapons and gear instruction, education on the live-fire Surface Danger Zone (SDZ) Deviations employed by TBS, and he prepares the students for all of their blank and live-fire training. He also participates as a member of discussion groups and leadership (especially combat leadership) panels for both BOC and WOBC companies.

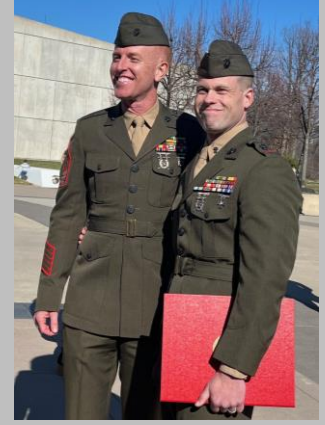
The TBS Gunner and IWOC Director are billets typically reserved for one of the highest performing Marine Gunners in the community who also possesses the unique personality traits to thrive in the unique TBS construct and culture.



*(Above): (Top) Officers of India Co. conduct the Rifle Marksmanship Assessment (RMA). (Left) A student of a BOC conducts an experimental Annual Rifle Qualification (ARQ). Col Greg Jones USMC, CO WTBN, Quantico, visits with Gunners Porter and McVay on R305. Photos: Used with permission from Col Greg Jones USMC.*



## TBS and IWOC Updates



*Photos of the recent Commissioning ceremonies of the 2024 class of Marine Gunners aboard The Basic School, Quantico, Virginia. Congratulations, Gunners. We look forward to watching you work to improve our Corps and her Marines and Sailors. Photos: CWO-4/Marine Gunner Mark Erhardt, USMC, TBS Gunner.*





## Marine Gunner 101

### Who's Who in the Zoo?

## The People Business of The Marine Rifle Battalion

By: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian Wade USMC (Ret.)

#### Rule #1: Don't be an assh\*\*e.<sup>1</sup>

The following is a tour, as it were, of some of the most magnificent Marines and Sailors who are assigned to a Marine infantry battalion, according to the Table of Organization (T/O). The purpose of this article is [at least] two-fold:

1. Introduce newly Commissioned Marine Gunners (and perhaps old stubborn ones) to the brilliant personnel construct of the Marine rifle battalion to help Gunners accomplish their mission, which begins at supporting the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad and emanates outward from there.
2. Inculcate a spirit of "gung ho" (a la BGen Evans Carlson USMC [Ret.]) between a Marine Gunner and his respective Battalion staff to maximize support and success for the subordinate elements within the unit.

**"A staff's success is measured by the level of success of its subordinate units." –LtGen John Love USMC (Ret.).**

#### The Battalion Gunner:

The Gunner is placed in the Command Element of the Battalion. Past efforts often found him placed into the Operations Section (S-3). While intuitive, placing a Gunner into the S-3 can stifle his initiative and muzzle his energy and ability to move to points of friction both in training and during combat operations. Naturally, a Gunner must possess the wisdom and maturity to resist present-

ing as, "I'm from [higher level unit] and I'm here to help you." Humility, sincerity, and previously established friendships, on the part of the Gunner, can ameliorate otherwise likely interpersonal friction. See Rule #1 and...

#### Rule #2: Be sincere.

Marine Gunners would do well to remember that "it" is not about them. "It" is all about the success of the subordinate units (the Marines). Embrace servant leadership. The sense of purpose and the pride of belonging when one submits to the practice of servant leadership is beyond description. When one retires and when the uniform and medals are all put away, these experiences are what fills one's heart.

So, the Gunner is a "free radical", unleashed to find others who would benefit from the Gunner's energy, experience, connections, and wisdom. He reports directly to the Commanding Officer but is often not with him. He "floats" between the staff sections and the subordinate companies and platoons. On any given morning, he could be assisting a General Officer with Course of Action (COA) development and decisions on a major issue, and after noon chow, a Gunner might provide direct one-on-one combat marksmanship training to a Private First Class (PFC) on a range. He's always on the job, searching for elements of the "people business" which are either not working correctly, or they have become stuck. And endeavor to fix them he does.

#### Who's who in the zoo?

## Marine Gunner 101 Who's Who in the Zoo?

### The People Business of The Marine Rifle Battalion

#### Commanding Officer (CO):

The CO has been selected by a USMC command screening board to be assigned the responsibility for the entire battalion. He has been trained and educated by the institution to carry this responsibility. The Gunner, both literally and figuratively, reports to the CO. From time to time, the Gunner “bubbles up” with the CO to gain and maintain the Commander’s Intent, ensuring the Gunner operates within the CO’s vision (and naturally, higher level guidance). This does not mean, however, that when the Gunner discovers an issue within a subordinate element, he runs straight to the CO and tells him. Doing so could severely and irreparably damage the Gunner’s reputation and standing within the battalion. **Rule #1 and #2.** In these instances (and there will be these instances), the Gunner would do well to deal with the issues by (Rule #2) assisting the subordinate unit commander in fixing the problems/issues without “telling on” that commander. Turns out helping people be successful earns their trust, inspires confidence, and can build life-long and rewarding friendships. Perhaps most importantly, this also helps Marines in mission accomplishment (a Marine Gunner’s mandate).

#### Battalion Executive Officer (Bn XO):

If a Gunner is “doing it right”, the Bn XO will not need to concern himself with what the Gunner is up to. In situations where the Gunner has established a harmonious relationship with the Bn XO, the Gunner can approach the Bn XO to help solve interpersonal issues among the unit’s Officers. Most Officers in a rifle battalion are Company Grade Officers and often seek out the Gunner when they need help, both of a professional and personal nature. In certain situations, the Bn XO is ideally suited and positioned to effect solutions. Gunners may be surprised at how many issues with which they become involved that have little, if anything, to do with infantry weapons, tactics, or training.

#### Rule #3: “It’s a people business.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Battalion Adjutant (“Adj” or “S-1”), Sergeant Major (SgtMaj), and Company First Sergeants (1stSgt):

A Gunner will soon discover that only a portion of his daily challenges relate directly to the infantry weapon systems in the armory. Most of the most profound challenges faced by the commanders and staff of any unit are based on personnel issues. After all, the most important assets of the USMC are the Marines (the “P” in DOTMLPF-P<sup>3</sup>). The USMC could deploy Marine Raiders with M1 Service Rifles and M1911A1 pistols and they would still win because it is far more about the Marine (discipline, maturity, training, education, skill, will, etc.) than it is about the weapons. The Adj, SgtMaj, and 1stSgts are essentially the unit’s human resource department,



(Above): A collection of some of the most revered US Marine Corps Commanding Officers and Commanding Generals since World War II (L-R):  
 LtGen Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller USMC (Ret.)  
 MajGen Merritt A. “Red Mike” Edson, Sr. USMC (Ret.)  
 Former SecDef, General James N. “Mad Dog” Mattis USMC (Ret.)  
 CJCS, CMC, General Joseph F. “Fighting Joe” Dunford USMC (Ret.)

## Marine Gunner 101 Who's Who in the Zoo? The People Business of The Marine Rifle Battalion

and since human resources are the most important in the USMC, a Gunner better establish an excellent working relationship with these Officers and Marines. While personnel assignments are typically the domain of the unit's SgtMaj and 1stSgts, the assignments are not always optimal...or relationships can sour over time. The Gunner is ideally positioned as a "traveler" among the companies of the battalion, to detect these disturbances in the Force. If the Gunner is paying attention, he will likely discover personnel assignments that would benefit from reconsideration. When this happens, the Gunner must engage in a professional manner with the SgtMaj. **Warning: Do not attempt to undermine the authority of the SgtMaj.** Rules #1 and 2 and for the love of all that is good, Rule #3. I am being hyperbolic for a reason. SgtsMaj are mature and experienced professionals and if the Corps finds them worthy of advising the Commanding Officer of the battalion, regiment, brigade, Division, Force (MEF), Combatant Commander (COCOM), the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), they are good enough for the Battalion Gunner. Spend time, have coffee with these Marines, and show them some respect. In the end, fixing personnel issues within a unit is good for morale and shows Marines their leaders care about them. Unit cohesion has direct causation toward mission accomplishment, preservation of combat power, and frankly, while "the Corps never promised anyone a rose garden", service as a Marine can actually be fun and rewarding as opposed to miserable.

**"All of my problems start with the "P"...not "M".  
—The author (said in the context of DOTMLPF-P).**

### Intelligence Officer ("S-2" or "The 2"):

Naturally, the S-2 will be constantly preoccupied with finding things out. To find out the information required for commanders to make solid plans and decisions, they often collaborate with the S-3 Battalion Operations Section (we will get to them directly) to "send out a patrol", or something akin to that. That is where the Gunner may get involved. In days past (up until last Dec), the S-2/S-3 team would task a Scout-Sniper element to sally forth and gather the required information with fancy abbreviations and acronyms like Named Area Of Interest (NAI), Request For Information (RFI), Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs), and many more. Naturally, the Battalion Gunner plays a critical part in the manning, training, and equipping of these information gathering infantry forces. As with any of the relationships between battalion staff offices and their functions, the Gunner must "keep a finger on the pulse" of these systems to ensure efficient operations and he must be ready to step in to fix any problems (Rules #1-3). From this time forward, until the day Snipers return to the infantry battalion (and they will), Gunnery must reserve a measure of bandwidth to ensure the Scout Platoon is mission-ready to execute the tasks originating from the S-2. Good luck.

### Operations Officer ("S-3", "OpsO", or "The 3"):

Since it's in the name, the Operations Officer is one of the most critical roles in the battalion. The OpsO is a carefully selected, trained, and educated Officer who takes orders issued by the CO and translates them into action. He coordinates with all the staff sections and



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subordinate units to, quite simply, make mission. Gunners should be advised that the OpsO is perhaps the hardest working Marine in the battalion. While the Gunner no longer reports to the OpsO per the Table of Organization (T/O), the OpsO is running the show. A Gunner's relationship with the OpsO is perhaps the most important and the most in need of constant care and maintenance. Gunners should take a clue from recent history—where the Gunner's T/O position was moved from the direct charge of the OpsO to the Command Element. There are many reasons for this...enough to serve as fodder for another quite substantial article. Rest assured that the Gunner must respect this relationship, perhaps above all others, and apply the following rule:

### **Rule #4: Be a servant leader. Every day. All day.**

Marine Gunners are known for being workaholic, hyper-performing over achievers (with huge egos). These characteristics are intrinsic to the type of Marine who is suited (if ever there was a euphemism) to serve in this brutal and all-consuming billet (case in point: I am writing this article at 0430 on a Thursday morning, six years after retiring from active duty.) Each day, Gunners might find it very helpful to conduct a meditation, of sorts, to ponder their place in the universe. Naturally, the Main Effort of the US Marine Corps is the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad. Everything outside of that is oriented inward, toward the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad, to support his/her mission accomplishment...including the Marine Gunner. Once a Marine Gunner's position has been properly understood, a Gunner can decide to subordinate himself (and his ego) to the Process. The OpsO, for example, is the conductor, and the

Gunner is part of the instrument ensemble. The Gunner, when in his right place, is supporting the efforts of the OpsO for the accomplishment of the unit's mission and the success of the subordinate units. And Rule #1. Gunners, help the OpsO and befriend them. They could really benefit from your help and support. Taking a position of "I don't work for him..." is unprofessional, unhealthy, and unproductive. If a Gunner ever finds himself thinking toxic thoughts like that, or worse, acts from this position in any way, that is the proverbial signal from the universe that it is time to retire and go home (and the Gunner is breaking Rule #1.)

### **Logistics Officer ("S-4", "4-shop" or "The 4"):**

At long last, we have come to my favorite Officer and staff section in the battalion construct—the "4". Newly minted Marine Gunners might be surprised to know that many Gunners spend far more time conducting business in the 4-shop than they ever do in the 3-shop. The 3 tells people what to do. The 4 makes it possible. Organized within the 4-shop are the Supply Officer (SupO) and the other Company Grade Officers (Logistics Officers) and Chief Warrant Officers who are responsible for everything the battalion needs to do its job (i.e. armory, motor transport, supply inventory and acquisitions, maintenance and repair, fuel, AMMUNITION (foot stomper), and much more. If a Gunner is not friends with every one of these Officers and Marines, he is doing it wrong. A Battalion Gunner should be ready to make daily trips to all the sections of the 4-shop, for business and for working relationship maintenance. Above all others, the 4-shop is critical to the Gunner's success (and by extension, the unit's success). Some Gunners (author included) have developed

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informal programs with the “4 shop” where Logistics Marines are invited to go to the field or live-fire range so that they can enjoy firing the weapons for which they tirelessly provide ammunition and other support. This is solid relationship building, respectful, and good people business. Note: Gunners, take the time to stop and visit with Logistics Officers and Marines. Put aside any toxic tribal nonsense and show them the respect they deserve. Break bread with them when you can, drink coffee with them, and from time to time, bring them sentimental gifts and souvenirs (i.e. unit pride memorabilia and Marine Corps spirit items). Gunners, consider inviting the Ammunition Officer, for example, to any meetings which discuss ammunition (that is not a joke) or to any meetings to which any Logistics professionals relate. Perhaps most importantly, and from your position of influence as a Special Staff Officer to the CO, recognize superior performance and dedication on the part of Marines and Sailors and recommend “impact” awards. There are many Gunners who have recommended (and secured approval for) impact awards for hard-charging young Officers and Marines and then completed the administrative requirements for the award to come to fruition...and had the enormous pleasure involved in witnessing young Marines and Sailors receive those awards.

There is a deep sense of life-long satisfaction in watching a Marine receive an award, especially when the observer was able to recognize the worthy performance, advise the approving authority (the CO), and create/author the award in the system. Gunners, apply Rules 1-4.



*(Above): Underestimate a Sergeant Major at your peril.  
(L-R): SgtMaj Brad Kasal USMC (Ret.)  
SgtMaj Justin LeHew USMC (Ret.)  
SgtMaj Brian Zickefoose USMC (Ret.)  
SgtMaj James Booker USMC (Ret.)  
SgtMaj Darrell L. Carver USMC (Ret.)*

#### Communications Officer/Section (S-6, “Comm”):

The Battalion Gunner will seldom need to become involved in training Marines with communications equipment. There are plenty of competent Officers and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) within the unit to ensure this takes place. The Gunner, however, will often require somewhat unusual items (for example, Gunners on Camp Pendleton required STX-5000 radios with special frequencies programmed to talk with Long Rifle.) Gunners will have a much easier time doing their jobs by following Rule #1.

#### Company Commanders:

Gunners are advised that sometimes, earning the trust of the Company Commanders is a bit more challenging than the battalion staff. It's in the name “commander.” Commanders can be stand-off-ish. Be patient and look for opportunities to help companies in unusual ways (i.e. using connections to quickly and efficiently solve problems and other issues for companies). Company Commanders, like anyone, really warm up to people who are “value-added” to them. Reminder: When Gunners encounter issues in

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need of correction within a company, immediately telling the Battalion CO is most often not the best course of action. Gunnery are advised to endeavor to address issues directly with the Company Commander. If sincere attempts to help a Company Commander do not work (and it is critical), a Gunner may need to inform the Company Commander, face to face, that he must "take it higher". Sometimes things just do not work out and a Gunner must do the right thing.



*(Above): We were Company Commanders once, and young (L-R, T-B):*

*MajGen J. Dale Alford USMC (Ret.)*

*Captain T. Ryan Sparks USMC (Ret.)*

*Colonel Willard "Willy" A. Buhl USMC (Ret.)*

*Major Chad Cassidy USMC (Ret.) and Gen Peter Pace USMC (Ret.)*

*Major Brian Chontosh USMC (Ret.)*

#### Company Executive Officers (Co XO):

We are now where the rubber meets the road. Gunnery, when you are in your office, if you are not actively helping a Co XO sitting next to you while several other Officers and SNCO's patiently

wait outside your door, you should up your game and start making house calls.

**"The Gunner just needs to be value-added."** —a US Marine Colonel to whom I was chatting while waiting at some dusty "AGDAG" in Iraq in 2009.

Gunnery, realize that the Co XO is typically under a great deal of pressure every day. He is usually on his/her second deployment cycle with the unit and whether prior enlisted or not, he/she is a relatively inexperienced Officer (and not in a command billet). This means the Company Commanders task the Co XOs with creating the training schedule for the companies and consequently, the training events. And if they are smart (and they usually are), they will ask you to help (thus beginning perhaps the most rewarding aspects of your life as a Marine Gunner). While Battalion Gunnery should not do 100% of the XO's work for them, Gunnery should sincerely help them create challenging and aggressive training to the greatest extent and highest quality possible. After all, it's all about the Marines. Basically, any help the Gunner provides to the Co XOs translates directly to the benefit of their Marines (and this is the essence of a Gunner's purpose.) I have witnessed Gunnery who have turned XOs away or refused to help them and again, I offer that this may be the universe informing that Gunner that it is time to retire and go home. Naturally, this is an opinion piece on how to navigate the human terrain of the maneuver battalion...and not doctrinal, but Gunnery, to refuse to help a Marine, when otherwise able, is unconscionable.

**"The Main Effort of the US Marine Corps is the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad."** —The Universe.



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### Platoon Commanders:

Speaking of the Rifle Squad, we find ourselves where the rubber does, in fact, meet the road...or rather, where the bayonet meets the enemy. For years, I advised young Lieutenants who were attending the various entry-level schools aboard Quantico that the first person they should seek out upon reporting to their rifle battalion should be the Battalion Gunner. Apropos, I advised newly Commissioned Marine Gunners that they should conduct daily reconnaissance patrols to locate and close with the Platoon Commanders to create opportunities to support them. Like the Company Commanders, Marine Gunners should exercise patience and understanding when some Platoon Commanders might be reluctant to “let the Gunner in” immediately. Trust can take time and demand results. And given that Marine Gunners will be transferred to different units and higher-level commands (and others transferred into the Gunner’s unit), trust must be earned again and again with new people—and this is a “two-way” rifle range. This cycle will repeat and that is simply a hard-wired aspect of a Marine Gunner’s life. Gunners are advised that this phenomenon can eventually sap even the sincerest Marine’s enthusiasm and can lead to apathy and even resentment. The treatment for this malady? Spending as much time with Platoon Commanders and their Marines as humanly possible. Perhaps my favorite place for recharging the soul was “down in the wadi with the \*%\$! (profane term of endearment edited for professionalism) on Range 400”.

### The Marines:

Marine Gunners are ideally placed within the command element, allowing direct access to anyone in the unit, from the Commanding Officer, the Riflemen in Rifle Squads, and everyone in between. Marine Gunners who went before us, beginning with the successes of the class of 1989, have set conditions for success. Marine Gunners of today need simply arrive with their knowledge and wisdom, judgment, enthusiasm, sincerity, and love for the Marine Corps and her Marines.

In my estimation, if a Marine Gunner is “doing it right”, he has the best job in the Corps. For 30+ years, a Marine Gunner can always find the time to go connect with the Marines of the Rifle Squad, the Mortar and Machine Gun Sections, or wherever and with whomever his travels might take him.

I envy you, Marine Gunners on Active Duty. You can find a Marine and talk with them whenever you want.

<sup>1</sup> Or try not to be an assh\* \*e. Do the best you can with this one.

<sup>2</sup> I have heard several Marines say this; too many to attribute to only one.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership (and education), Personnel, Facilities, Policy. <https://www.dau.edu/acquipedia-article/dotmlpf-p-analysis>



*This article is dedicated to Sergeant Byron W. Norwood, US Marine Corps (left), who gave his life fighting to save his fellow Marines in Fallujah, Iraq during Operation AL FAJR. Byron was Killed In Action (KIA) at 12:06 PM on Saturday, November 13th, 2004. We miss you, Byron. Photo: Lucian Read, used with permission from Bill and Janet Norwood.*



## The Quintessential Question (The Sako M10 Paradox)

By: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian Wade USMC (Ret.)

I sat down to write an article about Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (you know, fully autonomous killer robots) and during the opening statement, I tapped out and decided that today, I needed to write about something a bit lighter. I will get to the fate of humanity when I have the strength to ponder the darkness ahead.

Let us talk about something lighter and far more fun. When I estimate all the firearms questions I have received (i.e. which rifle should I buy? or I'd like to hunt "X"...which rifle should I build?), there is one question that easily rises to the top—

**"Which rifle should I buy for a general-purpose hunting rifle?"**

I know what you are thinking...something like, "Wow, if ever there was a vague question." or something more like, "What are you going to hunt?" In other words, what is the precise requirement? Excellent question. The requirement generally goes something like this:

"I'd like to be able to hunt anything from predators to deer", including big Muleys and maybe even an elk in Montana. And sometimes, "I'd like to be able to achieve first round kill shots out to 600 meters." Oh, I almost forgot, "I have a budget of \$1000.00." Apologies, I'm breaking my own Rule #1 (from the "Who's Who in the Zoo" article in this very issue).

So let us find a material solution for this requirement to the best of our ability. For starters, I am going to smash that budget immediately. We'll just get a "sporting goods" loan from, say, Navy Federal Credit Union. I have done this before! I will, however, begin by setting the bar for this entire discussion by presenting my ideal

general-purpose hunting rifle. We will proceed from there.

So, if money was no object, I would recommend the Sako ("Sah-kō"...not "Say-kō") TRG M10 multi-caliber sniper rifle with an appropriate optic and associated ancillary equipment.



*(Above): The world-class Sako TRG M10 precision rifle system. This lovely specimen could destroy my marriage. Photo: Sako.*

Sako, a Finnish rifle and ammo manufacturer, is an acronym (*Suojeluskuntain Ase- ja Konepaja Oy*). TRG is also an acronym (*Tarkkuuskivääri Riihimäki G-sarja*). That's quite a mouth full, and fitting, since it should take that many unpronounceable words (to your average American like me) to describe this work of art. The Sako TRG M10 without an optic, multi-caliber barrels, and equipment retailed for about \$11,600.00 (if you can find one). A proper optic, naturally, adds approximately \$2000-3000.00. And then all the associated equipment: sling, extra barrels, bipod, cases, cleaning kit, optic mount, sound suppressor, muzzle device, ammunition [perhaps two calibers], etc. One can easily do the quick math. We could have \$20,000.00 into the system before we are ready to hit the range to begin training. And if you happened to purchase the .338 Lapua Magnum enablers, you are looking at about \$6.00 per shot (plus a \$1.00 per-shot "throat erosion tax"). A .338 Lapua Magnum barrel supports precision for about 1000 rounds before starting to "spread the group". 1000 rounds and \$1000.00 for a new barrel installed = \$1.00 per shot added to the ammo cost.

## The Quintessential Question (The Sako M10 Paradox)

Perhaps the reader understands my earlier comment regarding my marriage and the Sako TRG M10, the best Leupold or Swarovski optic, a Surefire sound suppressor, and all the goodies (in at least .308 Win and .338 Lapua Magnum, of course). Thankfully, my wife does not read this magazine...but she (a professional accountant) does read the credit card statement every day.

Wow, the Sako TRG M10 really has me going. Back on track!

If money were not a concern in our lives, I could end this article right here. But sadly, we have a household/family budget. We are not the US Government with seemingly limitless funds and no accountability. We have our "PMC" funds...the part of the budget used to procure large item stuff. We also have our "O&M" funds...the money we use to pay our monthly bills (the bills for things other than procurement of vehicles, homes, and the like). And if we're lucky, we invest and/or put money in savings. Then there's what's left. Unless...I'm wondering if I can get a Navy Federal low interest loan for a \$20,000.00 precision Sako rifle system. I wouldn't be surprised if I actually could. Something to consider. If you want to get it done with one [hunting] rifle system, we're finished discussing this. You have your answer.

\*I am really happy I decided to write about this rather than Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning.

Wait. Before we "get real", I must show you some photos. For the record, neither Sako nor its parent company, Beretta, are sponsors of the Marine Gunner Association. I have no relationships with either company (sadly) and this is not a paid advertisement. Sako and Beretta employees who read this may be mildly entertained by this article, but they do not know I

am writing this. Readers can check the sponsor pages for any companies who are MGA sponsors in the spirit of full disclosure. I am not currently sponsored by anyone, and no one is paying for this.



*(Above): Look at that rifle butt! That's a double entendre. See, you did learn something.*



*(Above): This is what you will look like if you buy one. Photo: Sako.*

**TRG M10**

STEINER DEFENSE MSXi 5-25x56 sako + IBOT

TECHNICAL DATA		BARREL PROFILE		FIRING RANGE		MEASUREMENTS	
<b>SAKO LTD. FINLAND</b>		<b>BARREL MATERIAL</b>	Carbon fiber reinforced polymer (CFRP)	<b>EFFECTIVE RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>WEIGHT</b>	10.5kg (23.2lb)
<b>FINNISH MODEL</b>	MSXi 5-25x56	<b>BARREL LENGTH</b>	500mm (20in)	<b>MAX. EFFECTIVE RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>LENGTH</b>	1000mm (39.4in)
<b>FINNISH OPERATION</b>	Manual (open bolt)	<b>CHAMBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>MAX. RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>HEIGHT</b>	100mm (3.94in)
<b>FINNISH TRIGGER TYPE</b>	Manually controlled, lock actuator, integral safety	<b>CHAMBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>MAX. RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>WEIGHT</b>	10.5kg (23.2lb)
<b>FINNISH TRIGGER WEIGHT</b>	1200g (2.64lb)	<b>CHAMBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>MAX. RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>LENGTH</b>	1000mm (39.4in)
<b>FINNISH LENGTH OF RAIL</b>	300mm (11.81in)	<b>CHAMBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>MAX. RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>HEIGHT</b>	100mm (3.94in)
<b>FINNISH CALIBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>CHAMBER</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>MAX. RANGE</b>	1000m (3281ft)	<b>WEIGHT</b>	10.5kg (23.2lb)
<b>MAGAZINE CAPACITY</b>	10 rounds	<b>MUZZLE ENERGY</b>	1715 J (1254 ft·lb)	<b>MUZZLE VELOCITY</b>	915 m/s (2987 ft/s)	<b>HEIGHT</b>	100mm (3.94in)
	Detachable, center feeding, magazine, small and other configurations	<b>MUZZLE VELOCITY</b>	915 m/s (2987 ft/s)	<b>AMMUNITION</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>WEIGHT</b>	10.5kg (23.2lb)
		<b>AMMUNITION</b>	5.56x45mm NATO	<b>STOCK INFO</b>	Fixed, adjustable for stock height, length, and cheek rest	<b>WEIGHT</b>	10.5kg (23.2lb)

*(Above): A magnificent Sako TRG M10 eye chart.*



## The Quintessential Question (The Sako M10 Paradox)

Is your marriage worth it? That is none of my business, but there's no harm in looking, right?

Let's get real.

Everything is relative. The ideal rifle I am about to describe could, just like the Sako TRG M10, be completely unreasonable for the reader. The Sako TRG M10, however, does serve as an excellent unit of measure to establish standards of relativity in performance and price. I am going to use the following characteristics in my selection of the ideal (and realistic) general purpose precision hunting rifle. We are talking game from predators to large deer...and maybe even an elk, assuming the shooter is precise (shot placement), uses appropriate ammunition/projectiles, and understands the anatomy of the animal in the shot scenario.

**-Cost.** Including procurement of all components and life-cycle maintenance cost. How long does a barrel last, etc.? How much does it cost per shot? And more.

**-Weight.** Do you plan to hike the Montana mountains? If you do, weight is critical. Generally, the lighter the better, but not "too light".

**-Portability.** Does the system fold into a smaller overall package for transport/movement? This matters, especially when scrambling on mountainside scree and talus.

**-Precision.** Typically, shooters consider a rifle/ammo's mechanical accuracy in terms of minutes of angle (MOA), which is approximately 1" @ 100Y/91M or 1/60 degree). Let's just say we would like our rifle, with the selected ammunition factored in (which also supports terminal ballistic performance) to be a "sub-minute" rifle...for at least two/three shots. Easier said than done.

**-Cartridge.** While I own rifles in the .222/.223, .22-250, and .243 domain, I will limit this discussion to the most common cartridges in use in the USA, say, beginning at the physical energy range of the 6.5 Creedmoor and moving "up" from there. This is a self-help article, not a book. "But what about the 6.75mm Multi-plex Demodulator" cartridge? It's all the rage!" Remember...an article, not a book. I may hear about this soon.

Enter my thought exercise.

For what it's worth, I generally prefer Sako rifles. I have since I was a youngster. I began with the L series, then the [older generation] A series (both very refined Mauser 98s), and then I fell in love with the TRG series. So, that is my bias. I do not begrudge anyone their preferences since there are some excellent rifles from other manufacturers on the market, some made in my own home state of Montana (i.e. Proof Research). And speaking of Proof Research, one would do well to check out their products. They use the short list to the left of the page, to the extreme, in the creation of their rifles. And with that, let us discuss the list using some specimens which fall somewhere on the relative spectrum, given those attributes.



*(Above): Accurized Sako AII in .308 Win (ideal for 168-175 gr projos) with Leupold Vari-XIII 4.5-14. Photo: Author.*

I am going to do the unthinkable and describe how each of these rifles, shown in the photos, is not optimal for the requirement. I will begin with the lovely Sako AII above. First, the rifle has a fine wood stock. Slide down a scree

## The Quintessential Question (The Sako M10 Paradox)

covered hillside, however, and you will almost certainly scratch the stock sufficient to need repair and refinishing. Not acceptable. The optic is outdated and lacks several key characteristics; notably, the old-fashioned reticle and turrets. Oh, and even though this rifle is bedded and fully floated, do not expect sub-minute performance. Surprisingly, though, Sako rifles typically shoot within an MOA out of the box, ammunition and shooter dependent, of course. Next...



*(Above): The surgeon's [very heavy] scalpel. A custom Sako AII with Hart barrel in .308 Win. Leupold 6.5-20 EFR Vari-XIII, Harris bipod. Photo: Author.*

So, why not this one? Heavy! Curiously, this rifle weighs close to the weight of a USMC M40A26 (sorry, there's my bias again...Rule #1.) While this rifle can touch 'em all day long (even in the heat), she is simply too heavy. Everything is relative, of course, and since I was a Marine Scout-Sniper once and young, I have surgically operated in the hills of Montana for years with this rifle. I simply carried her in a "drag-bag", waited for the animal to stop running away, and dropped it with one shot from the bipod or a shooting tripod. I have witnesses. After all, this rifle weighs about the same as the USMC M40A57 the USMC issued me, and I carried that reasonably well (I was young.)



*(Above): We are getting warmer... A Sako A7 in .308 Win with entry-level Leupold 3x9 optic. Photo: Author.*

Let's check the blocks on this one. Lightweight? Check. Precise...sub-MOA capable for at least a couple shots on a good day with the right ammo. Yep. Good Trigger? It's a Sako...naturally. Weather resistant? As they say in Montana, you betcha. This might be the one (or its sister rifle, the Sako-manufactured Tikka T3 series). For now, I do not take this one to the field, frankly, because of the optic. With an appropriate optic (say, a Leupold Mark5 HD 3.6-18 with a useful reticle), this dog will hunt. We're close.

So, given my budget and the consequences of the thousands of decisions I have made all around this particular matter, what do I take to the field? And how could I do better?



*(Above): The author in the field on a winter predator hunt near Pony, Montana with a Sako TRG 22 in 6.5 Creedmoor with Leupold Mark 4 4.5-14 (MOA turrets and "TMR" mil reticle), Surefire SOCOM 300SPS 30 caliber suppressor, 20" barrel, Harris/Larue bipod, KRГ folding butt stock, and Magpul MS-1 sling. Ammo: Hornady 140 gr. ELD-M. Naturally, Montana requires orange clothing in most hunting situations (and I wear it during those.) In this photo, I am predator hunting on private property, well out of a game season. It is the poacher who should be concerned about me. Photos: Author.*



## The Quintessential Question (The Sako M10 Paradox)



How does this rifle fall short? Firstly, I find it is on the heavy side. Throwing money at this problem actually helps. I could purchase a **lighter and less expensive rifle that does the same thing**. Remember I mentioned those thousands of decisions, all around this issue, which led to my current situation? And I admit that I am sentimental about this rifle. The optic could use an update, as well. The same Leupold Mark5 HD I mentioned earlier would compliment this rifle very well. Why did I not install an OEM Sako folding butt stock? Here's a little "Message to Garcia" for you...Google "Sako TRG folding stock". They cost more than most decent rifles! Naturally, the budget gets a vote, and I cannot fit all these fancy sniper rifles into the "van down by the river" I will be living in after the financial collapse and subsequent home-ejection.

I am going to rein myself in and get to the point. I have listed several fine rifles, but they all have some debatably serious faults. And these faults [literally] keep me up at night (thinking about how to throw money at the solutions...only to have other problems). Because, and to quote a friend, "reasons". Truth in advertising: I am always constantly [also] thinking about Mk18 Short Barrel Rifles and suppressors...Trijicon ACOGs, more ammunition, and handguns. Staccato has a new pistol! You get my meaning. I can only offer you this:

If I could do it all over again, how would I achieve nirvana with a precision hunting rifle? (The old "if I could go back and talk to my young self"—a la "Shawshank Redemption"—complete with Morgan Freeman narration.) The following is what I would discuss with my young self...

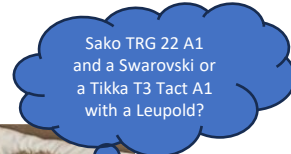
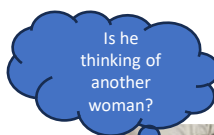
Alas, we have come full circle—right back to where we began. How could we obtain Sako TRG M10 metaphysical enlightenment with top-notch Swarovski, Schmidt & Bender, or Leupold glass...and a Surefire suppressor? Most of us either can't, or we don't want to. It's "Unobtainium".

It's the Sako M10 Paradox. But what can we do, you ask? Simple. We can purchase a rifle and optic that does everything we could ever need in keeping with the attributes I mentioned earlier. What does that look like? Here is one practical answer to the quintessential question:



*(Above): A Tikka T3x Tact A1 in .260 Rem, Leupold Mark5 HD 3.6-18, and Surefire SOCOM 300SPS. All for about HALF the initial cost of a stripped Sako M10, new in the box. When my friends ask me, this is what I tell them to buy. I should take my own advice.*

This discussion has helped me refocus my priorities. Perhaps I may have even helped you in your cogitations about precision hunting rifle systems. I have known for years that none of my rifles are optimized for the task (for up to deer-sized game at practical ranges). Time for some old-fashioned financial discipline *Author's note: I read aloud to my wife everything I write. After that financial discipline comment, I had to wait for her to stop laughing so I could finish. She hasn't laughed like that in quite some time. She knows me so well.* Good luck in your process, my friends.





## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM

### PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE

By: CWO-3 Marine Gunner Matt Kostielney USMC (Ret.)

Optimizing the Human Weapon(s) System (OHWS) is a current and ongoing initiative within the Department of Defense to build and prepare our warfighters to be as resilient and robust as possible in the conduct of war. Current and future service members across the defense enterprise will have to condition themselves and their teams to fight in a logistically constrained, physically taxing, and superbly hostile operating environment. This first OHWS installment is focused on the physical development of the individual Warfighter, Law Enforcement Officer (LEO), and Parent...as ALL have a solemn duty to protect and defend. Future installments will cover the mental and character discipline and the pursuit of martial arts and combatives as a mechanism to combine each of these into one. Eventually, sometime in the future, minds and technologies may move mountains, however, today that task requires flesh and bone.

The requirement for the individual Warfighter, LEO, and Parent to both be strong and conditioned cannot be stressed enough. The individual's ability to "hump the load" over the distance is critical to effectively executing actions on the objective, detaining an aggressive suspect, or defending your domicile and your family therein from an unwelcome intruder. Paul Howe underscores this importance in his book "Leadership and Training for the Fight" when he accurately and succinctly states:

"The Road March is the crucible in which the soul is refined. Pulling a trigger is easy. Humping the load over the distance is where you find out who will be on the ambush site to pull the trigger with you. The Road March defines you. Never quit. Come in ugly if you have to, but come in."<sup>1</sup> -Paul R. Howe

### STRENGTH - MOVE THE DIRT.

Academics place a great deal of emphasis on becoming a life-long learner and/or forever student. Not much is said about being a lifelong athlete. Often, men and women are left to their own devices in search of the best program, method, or approach to training. Too often, these same people hit the magazine stand of the local PX/BX to answer their training questions, not realizing that the information contained therein amounts to nothing more than falsehood "Bro Science" and advertisements for ridiculous supplementation.

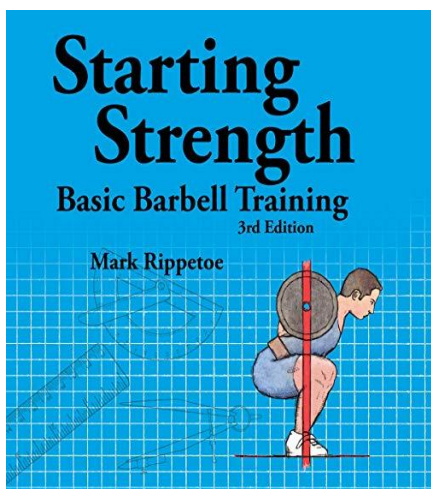
BLUF, you're not a Bodybuilder. You're not a Marathoner or a "Cross Fitter". You're especially not an elite power lifter, grinding out of West Side Barbell where it takes a 2,000-pound total to get invited through the door. Why train like any one of these elite-level outliers? Subscribe to the methodologies that will give you the most bang and value for your physical dollar.

"Physical strength is the most important thing in life. This is true whether we want it to be or not."<sup>2</sup> -Mark Rippetoe

Purchase "Starting Strength by Mark Rippetoe", commonly referred to as "The Blue Book" and read it cover to cover. There is no better strength training program for the teenager to the elderly on earth. Take advantage of the "Novice Effect" and build your strength base by training the five big barbell lifts (Squat, Press, Bench Press, Deadlift, and Power Clean)—three days per week. Throughout the Novice Linear Progression (NLP), utilize correct technique outlined within the text of "Starting Strength". Do your "Fives" and add five pounds of weight to the bar each training session, then micro-plate when necessary. Supplement your

## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE

training sessions with Chin-Ups and Bar Dips. Follow the NLP until progress can no longer be made by increasing the load on each lift every training session. Generally, this occurs within 3-6 months depending on age, sex, and lifestyle.



There are two supplemental articles one needs to read to understand the process of developing a base of strength. These articles define the attributes of a novice, first by recovery, and second by skill. Most importantly, these pieces of short and succinct literature separate the concepts of training and exercise, and further emphasize the important requirement that training and sport remain separate and distinct.

- “The Two-Factor Model of Sports Performance” by Mark Rippetoe<sup>3</sup>
- “Who Wants to Be a Novice? You Do.” Mark Rippetoe<sup>4</sup>

For military and LEO professionals, barring a monster-mash type competition...keep the gym away from the range and the range separate from the gym. Train both, don't exercise them. Training equals

progression. Exercise equals a display of theatrics for the common man, wastes precious time, and applies to nothing outside of your typical “Globo-Gym”.

Once a formidable base of strength has been achieved<sup>5</sup>, one can begin to focus their training to meet the requirements of their sport. For the purpose of this discussion, training for the military physical fitness test will serve as a rudimentary example to fit said requirement. For those currently in uniform, this approach can be implemented for a duration of 4-8 weeks, cycled twice a year to meet the specific testing demands of your service.<sup>6</sup>

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
ACTIVE RECOVERY Flexibility & Mobility	USMC PFT/CFT	SHORT INTERVALS 6-8 X 400 Meter Sprints 1:2 Work-to-Rest	STARTING STRENGTH (A) Squat Press Deadlift Chin-Ups Bar Dips

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MAF/ZONE-2 CONDITIONING "The Road March" "Fighting Load Endurance Run"	LONG INTERVALS 4-6 X 800 Meter Sprints 1:2 Work-to-Rest	STARTING STRENGTH (B) Squat Bench Press Power Clean Chin-Ups Bar Dips

- Run your mock PFT/CFT on the same course you will test.
- Alternate long (800 Meter) and short (400 Meter) intervals on Tuesday and Friday respectively. For LEOs, the recommendation is long (200 Meter) and short (100 Meter) intervals to emphasize a speed component to chase and apprehend the bad guys.
- Zone 2 Conditioning should mimic the service's demands. Alternate weekly “The Road March” and the “Endurance Run”. Maintain Heart Rate at (180-Age) +/- 5bpm.
- Continue to strength-train utilizing the principles of Starting Strength.

## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE

This weekly macro schedule will include a mock PFT/CFT, two interval sessions, two strength training sessions, one long slow distance conditioning session at Maximum Aerobic Function (MAF) heart rate, and one day of active recovery consisting of 30-45 minutes of low impact movement followed by heavy stretching and mobility work. Six to eight weeks is not an eternity; one must emphasize individual soldier discipline and apply apt compliance. The following is a list of common restrictions and daily habits one can employ to assist in the stress, recovery, and adaptation process:

- Prioritize sleep. Log 7-9 hours/night, AC your bedroom to  $\leq 60^{\circ}\text{F}$ , no screen-time within 1 hour of bedtime.
- Consume 1.5 - 2.0 grams of protein per pound of body weight daily. Real Food! Limit the protein bars and shakes.
- Drink 1 gallon of water a day, spike with electrolytes (Fast Lyte Fasting Electrolyte Mix) during training.
- Refrain from alcohol and nicotine.
- Cut ALL dietary sugar, sweets, candy, and chocolate.
- Perform a 10-20 minute daily stretching and limber routine.
- Sauna and cold showers when available.
- Supplement with a multi-vitamin, fish-oil, and creatine.
- Implement a sound and productive morning and evening routine.
- Males 35 years and older, seek Testosterone Replacement Therapy from a credible medical professional.

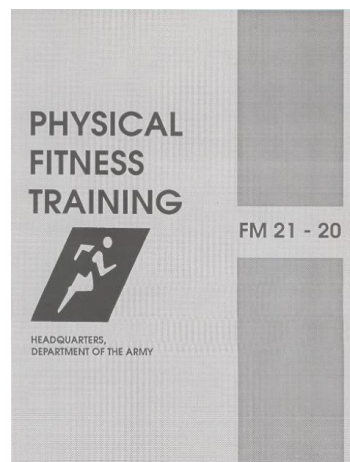
### INTERVAL TRAINING - PAIN & REPETITION

Doses of highly intense intervals have the potential to

take your mind and body to the next level while simultaneously pushing the limit on recovery. Intervals need only be performed in the last six to eight weeks of a work-up for deployment, competition, or service PFT/CFT.

“Pain is the purifier.”<sup>7</sup> -Percy Cerutti

In nearly all cases “The Old School” is simple, effective, and consistently produces results. The 1957 U.S. Army Field Manual 21-20 Physical Fitness Training outlines interval training by stating the following:<sup>8</sup>



The work-interval time (the speed at which a soldier should run each 440-yard lap) depends on his actual race pace for one mile. If a soldier’s actual 1-mile-race time is not known, it can be estimated from his last APFT by taking one half of his 2-mile-run time. Using a 2-mile-run time of 16:00 minutes as an example, the pace for an interval training workout is calculated as follows:

- Step 1. Determine (or estimate) the actual 1-mile-race pace. The soldier's 2-mile-run time is 16:00 minutes, and his estimated pace for 1 mile is one half of this or 8:00 minutes.



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PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE**

- Step 2. Using the time from Step 1, determine the time it took to run 440 yards by dividing the 1-mile-race pace by four. (8:00 minutes/4 = 2:00 minutes per 440 yards.)

- Step 3. Subtract one to four seconds from the 440-yard time in Step 2 to find the time each 440-yard lap should be run during an interval training session. (2:00 minutes - 1 to 4 seconds = 1:59 to 1:56.) Thus, each 440-yard lap should be run in 1 minute, 56 seconds to 1 minute, 59 seconds during interval training based on the soldier's 16:00, 2-mile run time. Recovery periods are twice the length of the work-interval periods. These recovery periods, therefore, will be 3 minutes, 52 seconds long (1:56 + 1:56 = 3:52).

Using the work-interval time for each 440-yard lap from Step 3, the soldier can run six to eight repetitions of 440 yards at a pace of 1 minute, 56 seconds (1:56) for each 440-yard run. This can be done on a 440-yard track (about 400 meters) as follows:

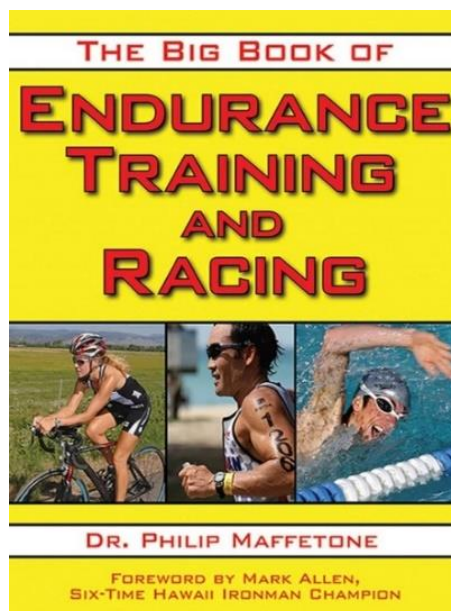
- Run six to eight 440-yard repetitions with each interval run at a 1:56 pace.

- Follow each 440-yard run done in 1 minute, 56 seconds by an easy jog of 440 yards for recovery. Each 440-yard jog should take twice as much time as the work interval (that is, 3:52). For each second of work, there are two seconds of recovery. Thus, the work-to-rest ratio is 1:2.

Stick to the basics outlined in FM 21-20 to adjust your interval distance, sprint time, and recovery distance/time. The “KISS” principle works and has produced consistent results over the last sixty-five years since publication.

**STAMINA AND ENDURANCE - ZONE 2  
CARDIO & MAXIMUM AEROBIC FUNCTION**

It is not advisable to grind flesh and bone at 100% for an extended period of time. Soon the wheels will come flying off and one will be laid up with an injury that will sideline anyone back to square one. Herein lies the benefit of MAF training, commonly referred to as Zone 2 training. This “level” or “zone” of training is where one can build an aerobic system that supports the recovery required from both interval and strength training. MAF training also provides a secondary benefit of adding cardio volume to go the distance. Select your modality (Run, Hike, Bike, Swim, Row, etc.) and allow heart rate to render instant user feedback for pace, load, and grade. Make small incremental progress weekly and reap the health and recovery benefits that Zone 2 Aerobic Conditioning provides. Dr. Phil Maffetone pioneered this methodology in chapter three of his book “The Big Book of Endurance Training and Racing”<sup>9</sup>.



## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE

The MAF 180 Formula for determining your MAF HR:

Subtract your age from 180, then modify from one of the categories below:

A. If you have or are recovering from a major illness (heart disease, any operation or hospital stay, etc.), are in rehabilitation, are on any regular medication, or are in Stage 3 (chronic) overtraining (burnout), subtract an additional 10.

B. If you are injured, have regressed or not improved in training (such as poor MAF Tests) or competition, get more than two colds, flu or other infections per year, have seasonal allergies or asthma, are overfat, are in Stage 1 or 2 of overtraining, or if you have been inconsistent, just starting, or just getting back into training, subtract an additional 5.

C. If you have been training consistently (at least four times weekly) for up to two years without any of the problems mentioned in a) or b), no modification is necessary (use 180 minus age as your MAF HR).

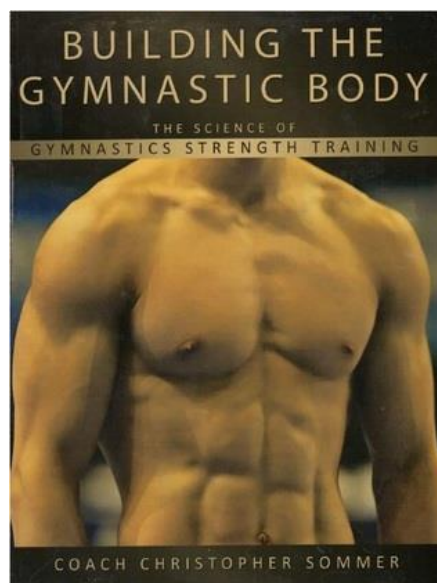
D. If you have been training for more than two years without any of the problems listed above, have made progress in your MAF Tests, improved competitively and are without injury, add 5.

Exemptions:

- The MAF 180 Formula may need to be further individualized for athletes over the age of 65. For some, up to 10 beats may have to be added for those only in category (D) of the Formula. This does not mean 10 should automatically be added, but that an honest self-assessment be made.
- For athletes 16 years of age and under, the formula is not applicable; rather, an MAF HR of 165 has been used.

### ACTIVE RECOVERY - FLEXIBILITY & MOBILITY

Unless one has trained as a gymnast, little is known about the vernacular in describing the process of becoming flexible, mobile, and powerful. For decades, gymnastics Coach Christopher Sommer has been responsible for assessing, selecting, and training young Americans for competitive gymnastics. His system is detailed in his book "Building the Gymnastic Body: The Science of Gymnastics Strength Training".<sup>10</sup>



Coach Sommer's methods in training the core chassis of a human by manner of progressing through Front Lever, Side Lever, Manna, and Straddle Planche with integrated mobility are both remarkable and achievable.<sup>11</sup>

Each of these foundational core progressions, when trained properly, build a combat chassis that can withstand the grind of humping body armor, weapons, pyrotechnics, communications equipment, etc. over daunting arduous terrain.

## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE



(Front Lever)



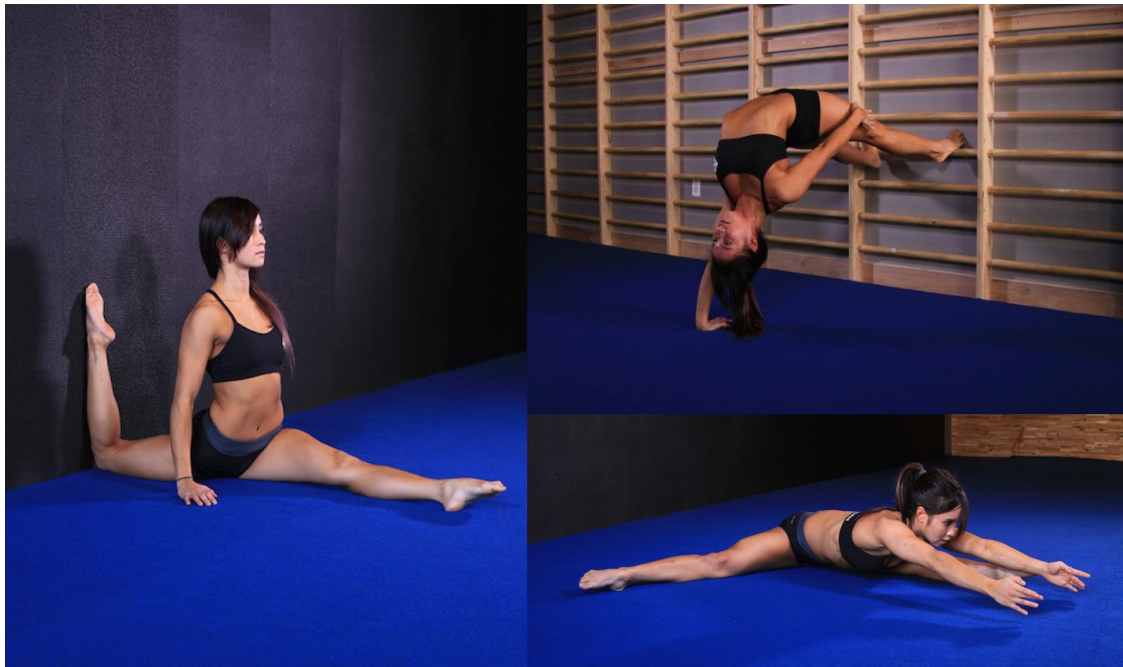
(Side Lever)



(Manna)



(Straddle Planche)



(Front Split, Middle Split, & Thoracic Bridge) <sup>11</sup>



## OPTIMIZING THE HUMAN WEAPON(S) SYSTEM PART 1: THE PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE - FLESH AND BONE

The most potent contribution, however, which Coach Sommer has delivered to the combat athlete are his three flexibility and mobility protocols; Front Split, Middle Split, and Thoracic Bridge.<sup>11</sup> These flexibility and mobility routines are not for the weak or fainthearted, 30-45 minutes in length, each performed once per week will render the rigid participant flexible and nimble within six months.

### CONCLUSION - PHYSICAL PROWESS IS A CONSTANT NEVER-ENDING PROCESS

Lacking superb physical strength and conditioning will leave anyone prone to attack and defeat. To remedy the daily excuses, interruptions, and disruptions impeding the effort to increase one's physical prowess, rise early and "move the dirt." Utilize the content contained herein, reference the sources provided, and engage in the process of building flesh and bone to withstand the challenges of one's chosen profession. Servicemen and women, Law Enforcement Officers, and Parents have a duty to ensure the security and safety of their teams and enforce the lethality of their trade. Semper Fidelis!

Gunner Matt Kostielney USMC (Ret) served as a Rifleman, a Force Reconnaissance Marine, a Scout Sniper, and a Marine Gunner. During his service as a Force Reconnaissance Marine, he was instrumental in the formation of the Marine Raiders while assigned to Alpha Company, 1st MSOB, as an Operator.

<sup>1</sup>Leadership and Training for the Fight: Using Special Operations Principles to Succeed In Law Enforcement, Business, and War , by Paul R. Howe, Skyhorse Publishing, 2011, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Rippetoe, Mark, and Stephani Elizabeth Bradford. Starting Strength: Basic Barbell Training, Aasgaard Company, Wichita Falls, TX, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Rippetoe, Mark. "The Two-Factor Model of Sports Performance." Starting Strength, 17 Jan. 2018, [startingstrength.com/article/the-two-factor-model-of-sports-performance](http://startingstrength.com/article/the-two-factor-model-of-sports-performance).

<sup>4</sup>Rippetoe, Mark. "Who Wants to Be a Novice? You Do." Starting Strength, 2 May 2013, [startingstrength.com/article/who\\_wants\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_novice\\_you\\_do](http://startingstrength.com/article/who_wants_to_be_a_novice_you_do).

<sup>5</sup>"Strength Standards." Starting Strength, [startingstrength.com/files/standards.pdf](http://startingstrength.com/files/standards.pdf). Accessed 27 Dec. 2023.

<sup>6</sup>Long, Ryan. "Why Does the Army Want Me Weak?" Starting Strength, 11 June 2010, [startingstrength.com/article/why\\_does\\_the\\_army\\_want\\_me\\_weak](http://startingstrength.com/article/why_does_the_army_want_me_weak).

<sup>7</sup>Cerutti, Percy Wells. Athletics: How to Become a Champion. S. Paul, 1960.

<sup>8</sup>FM 21-20 - Physical Training, Department of the Army, 1957, pp. 2-8.

<sup>9</sup>Maffetone, Philip. The Big Book of Endurance Training and Racing, Skyhorse, New York, 2010, Chapter 3, pp. 58-79.

<sup>10</sup>Sommer, Christopher. Building the Gymnastic Body: The Science of Gymnastics Strength Training. Olympic Bodies, LLC, 2008.

<sup>11</sup>"Gymfit TV." GymFit TV by GymnasticBodies, 6 Jan. 2022, [www.gymnasticbodies.com/](http://www.gymnasticbodies.com/).



## Seven Holsters for Seven Pistols

The Old West Tale of an American and his Relentless Search for the Perfect Pistol Holster.

By: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian Wade USMC (Ret.)

“I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing.”

-Plato, *Republic*

While the following can be interpreted metaphorically, I, the author, do not intend it as such. I intend this to be a lesson in perhaps what not to do, so that the reader can sooner get closer to their truth. And I mean this very sincerely, as I care very deeply for my brothers and sisters. I initially wrote this in the third person, using “the author” and pronouns and such. It read horribly. I changed everything to the first person. It just reads better this way, and I hope no one will fault me for this.

Now that the preamble is over, let us start here, with a photo, worth at least the following several thousand words...



(Above): Here are my holsters and other handgun accessories on my living room floor. While the article is humorously titled “Seven Holsters for Seven Pistols” (a play on “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers”), I have narrowed this field to seven holsters for three pistols (although I own over 50 handguns.) All photos: Author, unless otherwise noted.

Step One: Define the requirement (establish context).

Why are we doing this? And just what is “this” (the thing we are doing)? [For those of us who do], we endeavor to carry our sidearm, with which we are well trained, sincere, and disciplined. We, as Marines, generally make anywhere around us safer simply by our presence. Given that we are dedicated to the profession of arms, being armed is appropriate.

Let’s start with some fundamental ground rules for this discussion—some “conditions”, as it were, which we will assume are true for this entire discussion:

-We are disciplined, mature, judicious, sincere, and an American citizen in good standing.

-We have served (or continue to serve) as honorable servicemen or women in one (or more) of the US Armed Forces. Naturally, I will use the term [of endearment] “Marine” throughout this article. I do not mean to be exclusive.

-We have been properly trained and educated in the employment of a sidearm and in the use of deadly force. We seek peace yet we continue to seek out and participate in proper training whenever we can.

-We understand the laws in our states and local jurisdictions and other states where we may travel as it pertains to “the things we carry” (i.e. concealed or overt-carry firearms, edged weapons, ammunition, etc.).

-We have selected a sidearm(s), ammunition, and accessories which meet our general requirements.

## Seven Holsters for Seven Pistols

*The Old West Tale of an American and his Relentless Search for the Perfect Pistol Holster.*

The next logical question asks why *I* choose to carry a sidearm? These are my reasons, practical or idealistic and naïve as they may be:

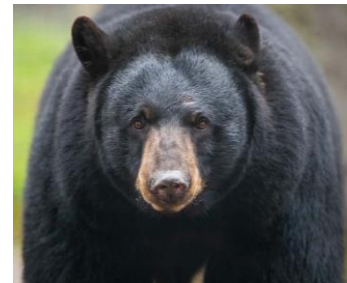
-My life experience has provided evidence which I have interpreted to suggest that there several animal species (including homo sapiens) with whom I may, despite my wish for peace, engage in interpersonal violence. And robots, as a likely proxy of human malevolence, have entered this discussion.

-If I were asked to classify my personality type and estimate where I fall on the spectrum of our society, I would offer that I am obviously (and thankfully) not a psychopath. My history of enthusiastically seeking out close combat with [actual] psychopaths, however, and my memories of immeasurable joy as I destroyed them in the most brutal and violent of ways, suggests to me that I am not as far from psychopathy as I might fancy. So, I offer that I am one of the many “good guys” with a gun, and the space around me [us] is generally safer with me [us] in it. As I write this, I realize that a great many readers will know exactly what I mean. Society needs people like us to, shall we say, “address” the psychopaths.

-I believe I have a responsibility to do my best to provide a stable, safe, and secure environment and experience for my family and friends. I will defend those in need. Our brothers in the Green Berets, for example, have chosen a very appropriate motto (and they have backed up the words with action every single time!) **DE OPPRESSO LIBER**. That is what people like us are hard-wired to do. **Semper Fidelis** is another fine expression of this sentiment.

Right. Now that I have established the what and the why, let us dive into the complexities of the weapon and supporting equipment I have chosen to operate within the environment in which I live. Naturally, this is my home, and readers may soon

find some distinct differences in “clime and place” and potential threats relative to theirs. Speaking of potential threats, here is a list of many of the threats I might encounter in my travels in Montana (I address them according to their general propensity to keep me up at night):



*(Above): I have the greatest respect for the Grizzly Bear (left) and the Black Bear (right). When I am among them, they keep me up at night. Frankly, I would rather engage in a gunfight with a criminal or terrorist than defend against either one of these...especially the one on the left. Photos: Open source.*

(After you have read the caption above)...There are other animals native to Montana which can attack humans (i.e. moose, mountain lions, prairie rattle snakes, bovine bulls, wolverines, bobcats, bison, etc.) but employing a firearm in defense of these is unlikely and, in many cases, impractical. Most of these animals want nothing to do with homo sapiens and there are other techniques to mitigate risk (stay away from them, for starters.) Bear spray can be effective, as well, and non-lethal. The National Park Service at Yellowstone National Park tells visitors, “Don’t pet the fluffy cows.” Excellent advice (yet tourists still walk up to bison and attempt to pet them). Thankfully, I do not recall any stories where the tourists attempted to defend themselves against an angry bison in Yellowstone Park with their “9”. Apologies, I am showing my Montana bias and I digress.

And what of the aggressive two-legged predator? We have those in Montana, as well.



## Seven Holsters for Seven Pistols

The Old West Tale of an American and his Relentless Search for the Perfect Pistol Holster.

Now that I have identified my potential threats, we can move forward with focus on the requirement. And it goes something like this:

*I live in an environment with elevations from 5,000 to 12,000(+) feet MSL. I spend most of my time at ~5,000 feet but do travel to 12,000(+). I come in close contact with bears during their active months and I wish to do all that I can to prevent a firearms engagement with them (or any other animal, including homo sapiens). I will endeavor to expend every other possibility before using a firearm in all situations. I experience temperatures from [actual] -40F to 100F during the year. In Jan and Feb, I may experience a 100 degree temperature difference through the month. My equipment is likely to encounter sustained temperatures below zero and snow, ice, rain, and transitions from cold to warm and back to cold within minutes/hours. I require a closed emitter electronic handgun sight due to snow/ice/precipitation. My handgun and cartridge selection must be reasonably useful when defending against Grizzly and Black Bears and homo sapiens, based on credible data from law enforcement and military studies and the best information available from the outdoor industry. My sidearm must be fully concealed under clothing appropriate for a given time of year (my clothing should not draw attention to myself nor be too hot or cold, weather dependent.)*

Now that I have defined the general requirement, I will “cut to the chase” and show the results of my requirements-based selection process and explain the reasoning for each item in the system. Given that there is not one [single] handgun which physically meets all these requirements, I employ the following three handguns (naturally, these items are Commercial Off-The-Shelf [COTS]).



*(Above): My General Purpose sidearm is a GLOCK 45 MOS (Modular Optic System) 9x19mm pistol with Aimpoint ACRO P-2, Trijicon suppressor height sights, and a Surefire X300U-A Weapon Mounted Light (WML). I attach the WML when appropriate. The long floorplate 17-rd. magazines are “borrowed” from my GLOCK 47 (US CBP contract) for removal when iced and wearing gloves.*



*(Above): When operating among Grizzly and Black Bears (during the months when they are not hibernating), I employ the GLOCK 20 Gen4 10mm AUTO with Trijicon HD night sights and a Surefire X300U/A WML. This will soon be upgraded to a Gen5 MOS and [another] closed emitter optic mounted.*

## Seven Holsters for Seven Pistols

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*(Above): When hot weather clothing prevents the proper concealment of the primary full size sidearm, I employ the GLOCK 43X 9x19mm pistol with Trijicon night sights and a Shield Arms 15-rd. magazine and metal magazine catch.*

Now that I have shown my three-handgun-system that best meets the conditions I encounter through each year in Montana, let me state that readers should employ a handgun which fits *them* and performs the best for *them* (when measured with pro-timers and other objective measurements and tools) and with which they have the most confidence. While for many years, I swore by the Colt M1911 series .45 ACP handguns, as I demanded more and more from a handgun (and was trained and educated to higher degrees), I transitioned to a system that could meet the increased requirements. While I love the Colt M1911 series, my requirements development process does not include steps for the consideration of nostalgia or subjective hokum.

The GLOCK 45 (from here on out, the G45) serves as the primary sidearm which I employ most of the year. I maintain the G20 10mm AUTO handgun (and conduct periodic training and proof firing with/of it) for use when I will be in the presence of Montana bears. There are many anecdotes of guides and other adventurers who have successfully defended themselves (and others) with

a G20 handgun...so much so that the G20 has become the iconic bear defense handgun (assuming there is such a thing). While the 9x19mm cartridge has also proven capable of defense against bears, I am going to defer to physics and data, anecdotal or otherwise, and employ the 10mm AUTO with deep penetrating hard cast bullets with +P propellant charges. Why not carry the G20 10mm AUTO all year 'round, you ask? Excellent question, and some folks do. When considering the cost of the amount of training ammunition I wish to expend throughout the year (and this alone), the G20 becomes untenable as a primary pistol. Other factors come into play, as well, including size (it's bigger and harder to conceal), weight (it's heavier), and GLOCK only recently released the Gen5 MOS model (for which I have been waiting). I do not have an optic, and so on and so forth. Readers likely get the picture. Given our budgets, procurement is a work in progress and takes time.

So, I have followed the example of the FBI and adopted the 9x19mm GLOCK handgun and similar ammunition for "Every Day Carry" (EDC). I employ Speer Gold Dot 147 grain JHP ammunition and will transition to, once again, what the FBI issues since...I do not have a ballistics laboratory and employ geniuses who work on these problems every day.

The only enhancements/modifications I have made to the G45 are:

- Addition of an Aimpoint ACRO P-2 optic (this could be its own article.)
- Talon Grip abrasive grip (my hands are often wet, muddy, icy, or bloody...and I require an absolute rock-solid "death grip" for retention and recoil control.)
- Trijicon suppressor height night sights. I have killed a 2032 battery or two (and an optic) when the temps went well below zero and I require Back-Up Iron Sights (period...full stop).

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-G47 long floorplate 17-rd. magazines. The long floorplate may look awkward, but it is effective at facilitating the quick removal of an icy stuck magazine when wearing gloves. Readers may remember that Gen2, early Gen5s, and FBI "M" handguns have a cut-out on the forward portion of the grip/magazine-well. This was intended to help with removal of sticky magazines, when in fact, it could lead to painful cuts and blood blisters on large-handed shooters, when aggressively reloading the handgun. The US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), in creation of their new handgun requirement, opted for protruding floorplates as opposed to the grip cut-outs. Note that these magazines are not compatible with the G19X (a US Army handgun contract development) nor the Gen5 magazines (an FBI contract development). Systemic education is key.



*(Above): GLOCK Gen5 magazine (left) and G47 magazine (right). Note the G47 magazine floorplate protrudes farther forward. GLOCK handguns often result from Federal (or other level) law enforcement or military requirements. In this case, Gen5 magazines resulted from an FBI requirement whereas the G47 magazine resulted from a US Customs and Border Protection requirement. Why is this important? Neither of these magazines will insert into a G19X (a US Army requirement).*



*(Above): Do I carry a spare magazine? Sometimes...and it depends. "Two is one and one is none." Yes, but life is a little more complicated than that. If my gut tells me to bring my spare magazine (or more than one spare), I do it. Spare magazines not only provide ammo resupply to an empty pistol but can also serve to solve a feeding problem that has occurred in the primary magazine. While I carry a spare G20 10mm magazine in the mountains, I don't for a second believe a bear will allow me time to conduct a speed reload. Bears can run at 35 MPH. Ever the optimist, I train for this, nevertheless.*

Why do I employ a red dot sight? Simple. My eyes are getting old and my spectacles, assuming I can keep them on my face in a fight, are not optimized for aiming with iron sights. I have also decided that in a gun fight (or any fight), I would like to focus on the threat as opposed to the front sight. The enemy gets a vote and moves "off the X" just like we do. A red dot sight allows a shooter to keep threat focus since the dot is essentially focused on the same plane as the threat...whereas the front and rear sights are anything but. My further requirement here in the great white north of Montana is a sealed emitter. Fall down in the snow with an open emitter optic and the sight is useless. A closed emitter sight, like the Aimpoint ACRO P-2, allows a traveler to simply wipe off the snow off and proceed. \*And, when it's cold, don't ever attempt to clean snow or ice from your optic by blowing on the glass! The moisture in your breath will cause the glass to ice over in a heartbeat. Then you're "point shooting".



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### Holsters!

Finally, we arrive at the matter of how to safely carry our sidearm. A holster also retains it from loss, guards the trigger, protects the handgun from the unforgiving environment, and ensures one can withdraw it from the carrier and place it into potentially lethal service as quickly and professionally as possible. Let's dive right in. I employ the following holsters throughout the year with my three-handgun system shown earlier (and I will explain each):



*(Above/left): This is a simple trigger guard holster for a G17 sized [frame] pistol. I can use this holster on every GLOCK I own (over 20 specimens) except for a G42/43, and G43X/48. Trigger guard holsters can be purchased for just about every pistol available. A lanyard is a requirement to allow the shooter to remove the holster with one hand (or their teeth) when attempting to defend against an attacker who is inside arm's length. When my sidearm is not in a belt or chest mounted holster, it is secured in this. I always carry my sidearm at Condition One except when cleaning. For cleaning, I retrieve another pistol, take it to Condition One, and then clear and conduct the cleaning on the first. When finished, I switch back to the primary. Ammunition is not allowed on the maintenance table.*



*(Above two): Port and starboard views of the G45 MOS in a Raven Concealment Vanguard 2 minimalist Inside the Waistband (IWB) holster. I have used this holster for approximately ten years. This holster can also serve as a trigger guard holster when the pistol is not carried on the body (within arm's reach, of course) but lacks the lanyard for easy one-handed presentation under stress when defending or preparing to defend (when not secured to the belt). Note: I mark equipment where there exist multiple, similar-looking items but for different firearms (i.e. GLOCK magazines, holsters, etc.). When training with this holster, remove the holster from the belt before inserting the holstered weapon back into the belt area. I carry at 3-4 o'clock on the waist (not appendix).*



*(Left): On the rare occasions when I carry my G43X, I use my IWB holster sized for it (G43X/48 models have a smaller frame than G17 series pistols.) My G17 series holsters fit not only my G17s, but also my G19s, G20, G23, G26, G34, G44, G45, and my G47.*

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*Above: I have tried almost as many belts. I prefer the CrossBreed Executive Gun Belt. This belt is sturdy and can support a full-size pistol with optic and light and spare magazines while not appearing "tactical". Naturally, there are other gun belts available, even some made by Veteran-owned companies (Macks Belts, for one). Photo: Open source.*

(Above/left): The Galco M7X Matrix Outside the Waistband (OWB) holster. Alas, this holster is no longer produced. One of the most useful features is that the pistol can be easily removed from the body while still in the holster by unsnapping the belt loops. This also facilitates easier donning and removal of a gun belt when getting dressed. The holster was also produced before the advent of suppressor height iron sights, causing a bit of rubbing when drawing and reholstering, although this is minimal. One potential flaw, however, is that the tall front sight, exposed as it is, can tangle on a loose insulating layer (a fatal flaw, if not mitigated). Very comfortable and concealable...my favorite OWB holster. The pistol is rotated muzzle-to-the-rear when worn and is retained by friction (with no levers or locks). The author has been searching for an identical (or near identical) replacement for this holster. The II MEF issued this holster for the G19M service pistol (USMC "M007") for Task Force South-West in Afghanistan in the 2017 time frame.



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\*Note: I do not employ a conceal carry holster equipped with a locking lever due to a concern for ice/debris jamming the lever, locking the pistol in the holster.

Matters become more complex when employing a WML. This OWB holster is made by WERKZ who ensures their holsters are compatible with Safariland belt mounting hardware. I have installed a Safariland large paddle (shown in this photo). Good business choice. I have removed the forward muzzle-end portion of the kydex to prevent the holster from bumping into my folding knife which I secure in my right front pocket (especially when sitting in a vehicle). I removed the problematic portion of the holster with a hand saw and polished the edges on a polishing wheel with no polishing compound. I cut as far as required to facilitate holstering of my pistol with the longest slide (that I might place into this holster) to ensure the muzzle does not protrude from the holster (G47 and G17). This system requires at least a light jacket to properly conceal and the large Safariland paddle to secure the weight and bulk of the sidearm with 18 rds (or more), an optic, and a Surefire X300U/A. Note: the WML secures the pistol in this holster (by friction without levers or locks)...not the pistol, itself. This holster is not safe to use without the WML mounted. \*None of these holsters have proven acceptable for use when carrying a rucksack with a waist belt.



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*(Above): For those who wish to have more modular options, kits like the Alien Gear "Photon" holster offer options for IWB Appendix carry, left and right-handed set up, cross draw, and more. The paddle mount is also smaller, yet just as efficient, as the Safariland large paddle shown at left.*

\*Note: I do not employ a conceal carry holster equipped with a locking lever due to a concern for ice/debris jamming the lever, locking the pistol in the holster.

(Above): I can more reliably obtain a proper and complete firing hand grip on my pistol when using an OWB holster. In Montana, the long months of cold weather allow for easier concealment of a full-size handgun with accessories (optics and lights) for much of the year. I rarely carry my sidearm overtly due to several reasons, even in Montana, a relatively permissive firearms culture. For these reasons, I generally prefer OWB holsters. This is a Safariland 5198-283 holster with full size paddle for solid, comfortable carry and ease of donning and removing with or without the handgun inserted. The holster has a belt lock on the inside, so it remains secure when removing the pistol from the holster. The pistol is retained by friction...not levers or locks. Note: Like most other climes and places, I employ an IWB holster during the warm months. I simply cannot properly conceal a full-size pistol in an OWB holster while I am wearing a light shirt. The pro-timer has shown me that I am slightly faster on the draw with my OWB holsters (compared to my IWB holster), but we adapt to our environment as best we can.

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Two views of the Hill People Gear “Recon Kit Bag” (Large) chest rig system. The top/left photo shows the pistol pouch opened and a G20 10mm AUTO mounted in a modified Raven Concealment Systems Vanguard 3 holster (believe it or not, this is an IWB WML holster for a Surefire X300U/A since these holsters attach to the light...not the pistol.) The top/right photo shows the chest rig with pistol secured inside, and a Mystery Ranch bear spray pouch and Mystery Ranch GPS pouch. The GPS pouch contains a Garmin InReach Iridium network satellite communicator, navigation aid, and rescue device. I have a rule that any essential safety items (knife, map, compass, pistol, InReach, bear spray, etc.) must remain on my body when my rucksack is removed. And the pistol **MUST** have a WML in the backcountry since the freaks come out at night. Also, I secure the pistol with a lanyard, shown in the photo, when in the backcountry. The bottom photo shows the customized elements which secure the VS3 holster to the chest rig. Note: the VS3 has been cut to accept a web loop which secures the holster to the chest rig when the pistol is pulled. The pistol draws very quickly from this set-up. I have proven this in the presence of a large, very close, and aggressive Montana bear and strangely, I have no memory of drawing the pistol in that confrontation...it seemed to instantly materialize in my hands. My training is working.

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So, those are my [7!] holsters—with some customization due to unique environmental conditions (and naturally, my personal preferences), but all rigorously field tested and proven in the hinterlands and mountains of Montana (and the wild and dangerous streets of Bozeman). If you have ever been to Bozeman, you know I am joking...although things are slowly changing here (and not entirely for the better).

Before I continue, is there anything else I carry on a daily basis (when not in the mountains)? Yes.



*(Above): I, like every American should, carry a very sharp and well-maintained automatic folding knife (this specimen is a Gerber 06 Automatic...just like when we were in the Corps.) The requirement? One handed operation and deployment of the blade. \*Check your local laws (cough...New York). While the WML is optional and dependent on the circumstances, a hand-held light is mandatory (especially when looking for old Marine Corps memorabilia in dark and dusty antique stores). At a minimum, I carry a small, rechargeable Streamlight LED light and when able, the Surefire E2D Defender Ultra hand-held light...the gold standard. Photo: (below) Surefire.*



What does all of this mean?

I recommend the following holsters in an armed citizen's tool kit:

- Minimalist IWB holster.
  - Trigger guard holster with lanyard.
  - OWB paddle holster (without WML) that is safely removable with the pistol still inside.
  - OWB paddle holster (with WML).
  - A spare magazine/s carrier (paddle, clip, etc.).
- \*Consider if one employs multiple handguns, one may require multiple holsters of these types (i.e. G43X and G17 series handguns are not generally holster-compatible.)

\*Resist the comfort-based decision to unholster a handgun and wedge it somewhere while driving a vehicle (i.e. cup holder). It does not take much energy to dislodge the sidearm, flinging it somewhere unreachable when it might be very much needed. The old conservation of angular momentum trick.

I recommend the following items be carried, when possible, every day:

- Mechanism that contains ID cards and other essential items (credit cards, etc.).
- Keys/key fob. \*Faraday cages for key fobs are a thing.
- Hand-held light (a WML can be employed off weapon.) Remember that everything and everyone you wish to illuminate does not need a pistol aimed at it/them. Add a tourniquet, if appropriate.
- Knife. Consider that many jurisdictions do not allow a knife to be carried even when one possesses a concealed carry permit. The permit often only allows the handgun and not the edged weapon (I know...that is absurd.) To quote one of my Vietnam-Veteran Platoon Sergeants, "I don't make the games...I just play 'em."



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As I close, I wish readers to know that I am not trying to push them toward a particular brand. I clearly have my preferences, but I have chosen many of these items because of data gained from expert sources. Truth in advertisement: I often researched what law enforcement agencies, like the FBI, issue their officers/agents. Law enforcement agencies are not the end-all-be-all, but they are generally much more invested in the handgun, for example, than the US Marine Corps (Raiders, Reconnaissance, and the USMC Shooting Team excluded from this statement). Sadly, a Marine or Sailor is likely to train with only 200 rounds in a year. 200 rounds a year **is not enough** even when the training is conducted 100% properly and professionally (and God bless the USMC, but the [combat pistol] training is sometimes not conducted in that manner.)

The first photo in this article is an honest depiction of my frustrating and expensive journey through many “good ideas” which failed. Notice, for example, that I do not employ a holster that is currently issued by the USMC. Those holsters simply do not meet my requirement for concealed carry anywhere in my home state of Montana (or anywhere else for that matter).

I sincerely hope there is at least one bit of information in this article that proves useful for each reader (and perhaps saves a little money and frustration)...or maybe even your life. I very much enjoyed writing it and I hope to engage on social media with the experiences of others.



Full disclosure “open kimono” information:

To ensure readers are aware of any and all relationships I have (or have had) with these manufacturers, I offer the following information:

The following manufacturers are mentioned in this article. I will describe my relationship with each.

**-GLOCK, Inc.** I purchased the G45 and G20 pistols shown in this article from a “Blue Label” FFL dealer in Bozeman, MT. I purchased the G43X from my mother (cue sentimental “aww” expression). While I have never been an employee of GLOCK, Inc., I have acted as a consultant on two GLOCK projects since I retired from the USMC in 2018. I began purchasing and using GLOCK pistols in 1991, well before any interactions with GLOCK, Inc.

**-Aimpoint:** I do not have a working relationship with Aimpoint. I acquired any Aimpoint products I own either through retail purchase or from personal friends who do not work for Aimpoint.

**-Trijicon:** I purchased the night sights through a Trijicon distribution website at retail price.

**-Safariland:** I know no one at Safariland and have no affiliation with them. I purchase their products directly from their website at retail price.

**-Werkz, Raven Concealment, G-Code, Talon Grips, Hill People Gear, etc.:** I purchased all the holsters and accessories shown in this article from websites or retail stores (including the Post Exchange). I have no affiliations with holster companies. I purchase Talon Grips directly from their website with no discount.

**-Gerber, Surefire, Streamlight, etc.:** I purchased the products shown in the article through websites or retail stores. I do not know anyone at any of these companies.

**-Mystery Ranch, Speer, Garmin, Buffalo Bore, etc.:** I have no affiliations with any of these companies. I have purchased all the products shown or discussed in this article from websites and retail stores. I maintain an active Iridium subscription for which I pay monthly with no discount.

The following companies are MGA corporate sponsors (this article is not a paid advertisement): **GLOCK, Trijicon, and Aimpoint.** To date, The Bursting Bomb has produced no paid advertising in any of the editions.

Semper Fidelis!



## Warriors & Quiet Waters

### Seeking Healing and Enduring Peace in the Wilds of Montana

By: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian Wade USMC (Ret.)

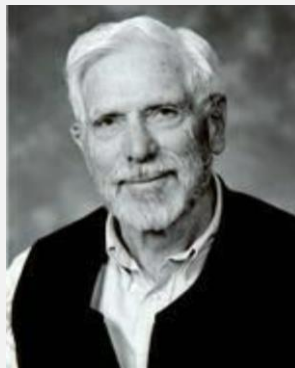
Very recently, under the watchful eye of the mighty Bridger Mountains of Montana, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Colonel Brian Gilman, USMC (Ret.), the CEO of Warriors & Quiet Waters. Warriors & Quiet Waters is a legendary veteran non-profit organization which, since it was founded in 2007, has focused on helping approximately 1600 post-9/11 combat veterans<sup>1</sup> to not only find healing and purpose, but thrive in their lives after fighting our nation's battles.

#### *Origins*

Warriors & Quiet Waters is the creation of founders Colonel Eric Hastings, USMC (Ret.) and Dr. Volney Steele M.D. Colonel Hastings ("Eric") also credits his wife with the idea, from 2006, which led to the establishment of Warriors & Quiet Waters, an organization dedicated to helping combat veterans heal through the meditative power of fly-fishing and immersion in nature. Eric, a Bozeman, Montana native, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1960 and completed his undergraduate degree at the Montana State University in Bozeman in 1964. He was soon Commissioned and earned his wings as a Marine Naval Aviator, initially flying F-8 Crusaders and then, for the majority of his career, the A4 Skyhawk. He flew 168 combat missions over Vietnam during the war. Colonel Hastings retired from the Corps following his service as the I MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force) Chief of Staff during the Gulf War in 1991. He retired to his home in Bozeman, Montana (which coincidentally, is also the author's home.) Dr. Steele, a long time Bozeman resident, established a medical pathology laboratory which is still in operation today, as part of the Bozeman Health Deaconess Regional Medical Center. Upon retire-

ment from his medical career in 1986, Dr. Steele's commitment to wounded servicemen and women led to his involvement in the formation of Warriors & Quiet Waters.

Incredibly, after the initial creation of Warriors & Quiet Waters in 2006/2007, Eric was able to coordinate with the Naval Medical Center San Diego (a.k.a. "Balboa") and arrange military flights of wounded combat veterans up to Bozeman. These were the first groups to participate in the healing journey to the rivers of Montana...and Warriors & Quiet Waters has only intensified their efforts since then.



*(Above): (L) Dr. Volney Steele, M.D. and (R) Colonel Eric Hastings USMC (Ret.), the co-founders of Warriors & Quiet Waters in Bozeman, Montana. Photos: W&QW and Mike MacLeod, Studio MacLeod, Bozeman, Montana.*

#### *Task and Purpose*

**"Warriors & Quiet Waters empowers post-9/11 combat veterans and their loved ones to thrive and live purpose-driven lives through peak experiences in nature, meaningful relationships, and a sense of community."** –Warriors & Quiet Waters Mission Statement.

Readers who have not experienced the majestic wilds of Montana are advised to visit. I, the author, speak from personal experience when I say

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that for those who are working a program of reflection and recovery from trauma, Montana offers a natural setting and energy which can greatly aid in healing and growth. To properly describe the wonders of Montana, however, it takes a genius the likes of Charles M. Russel...and not me. Montana has mesmerized her native peoples, authors, artists, poets, miners, hunters, politicians, cowboys, US Marines, anglers, and most anyone who visits her for as long as humans have wandered her mountains, lakes, rivers, and prairies. It is no wonder that an organization devoted to the healing and wellness of combat veterans is in Bozeman, Montana. Warriors & Quiet Waters endeavors to connect veterans with nature and with people who deeply care about them.

#### *Concept of Operations*

The Warriors & Quiet Waters staff and many volunteers continued serving combat veterans with week-long therapeutic solo fly-fishing expeditions from 2007 until around 2019, when they noticed that the energy of the attending combat veterans had changed. Upon investigating this phenomenon, the staff determined that for both new veterans and returning alumni, more time had passed since their combat service or completion of active duty. This meant that the attendees had developed coping mechanisms which allowed them to move beyond immediate crises which the original programs were designed to serve.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, Warriors & Quiet Waters partnered with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University to study the effects of existing programs and to find potential ways to improve upon them. While the original programs at Warriors & Quiet Waters were working well, the leadership wished to improve upon the longevity of the healing effects. From 2020-2021, the staff con-

ducted a thorough reimagination of the entire concept of operations of Warriors & Quiet Waters, including concepts such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Dr. Carol Ryff's six-factor model of psychological well being. The goal was quite simple and sincere—reimagine how to do best for veterans.



*(Above): Warriors & Quiet Waters CEO Colonel Brian Gilman USMC (Ret.). Photo: Mike MacLeod, Studio MacLeod, Bozeman, Montana.*

#### *Colonel Brian Gilman USMC (Ret.)*

Brian grew up in Butte, Montana and earned a B.S. from Montana Tech. He was Commissioned in the Marine Corps as a Ground Intelligence Officer, initially assigned as a Scout-Sniper Platoon Commander. After service in the 1st Battalion 1st Marines, he earned his place as a Reconnaissance Marine. During his career, Brian also earned two graduate degrees from the US Naval War College and the US Army War College. Upon earning one of his graduate degrees, a series of subsequent and deliberate transfers led him to a position at the Pentagon, at the Chairman's Office of Reintegration. In this billet, Brian was immersed in, among many things, an intense and thorough



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education in national veterans' non-profit organizations. Fortuitous? Perhaps. Apropos? Entirely. After all, the US Marine Corps not only protects our nation and our way of life, she also prepares service men and women to serve our nation as honorable citizens upon the end of their service. After several years of duty at Headquarters, Marine Corps, Brian's final assignments were as the Commanding Officer of the Marine Raider Training Center and as the Chief of Staff of the Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Brian then continued his life in the service of others as the CEO of Warriors & Quiet Waters in the summer of 2020.

#### *Scheme of Maneuver*

Author's note: Until my intense (belt-fed in a good way) two-hour conversation with Brian Gilman, I neither appreciated nor fully comprehended Warriors & Quiet Waters' intense, colossal, and multi-dimensional campaign to help our veterans. And I live here! Thanks to Brian's enthusiasm for the mission, I understand now and wish to share this with our beloved readers.

How does Warriors & Quiet Waters accomplish their sacred mission? First and foremost—people. As we have stated in several of this edition's articles, "It's a people business." Warriors & Quiet Waters employs a small but efficient staff, a Board of Directors, donors, and over 250 annual volunteers to effect the following efforts:

- Built for More
- Military Caregiver Program
- Couples Fishing Experience
- Hunt for Purpose
- Photography Experience

Authors note: I know what you're thinking...How can one fly-fish all year 'round in Montana? One cannot, but do not let that fool you, dear reader. Warriors & Quiet Waters has found ways to work with that. Florida, to name one. For the times in which fly-fishing in Montana is not feasible, Warriors & Quiet Waters sends participants for a saltwater fishing experience in Florida. Florida and Montana...sounds like a snowbird's year 'round dream. Noted.

#### *Coordinating Instructions*

Built for More is "a life-changing expedition into nature and self."<sup>3</sup> The staff first conducts the application process and forms a cohort of 6-8 veterans who will conduct a **long-term** journey and grow together for a year. Built for More is **high-touch**—book-ended by two, week-long, in-person fly-fishing experiences in Montana. The staff of Warriors & Quiet Waters guides each cohort through the program they have created to build strength in the pillars of a thriving life and pursue purpose-driven lives. The program builds trust and community; breaking down veteran isolation and creating bonds that can last a lifetime. When participants complete Built for More, *there's more*—the Warriors & Quiet Waters Alumni Engagement Program continues to engage the Warrior Alumni through volunteer opportunities, regional events, and the ability to come back to alumni programs. There is no cost to the attending veteran, and their issue of top-notch fly-fishing equipment is theirs for life.<sup>4</sup>

The Military Caregiver Program is an in-person fly-fishing experience for primary caregivers of post 9/11 combat veterans. Caregivers are brought together and outfitted with equipment they can keep for life. *\*Continues after the photo insert page.*

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Seeking Healing and Enduring Peace in the Wilds of Montana



*(Above): Warriors & Quiet Waters' veterans and volunteers immersed in the healing grandeur of Montana. Photo: Mike MacLeod, Studio MacLeod, Bozeman, Montana.*

*(Below): The Warriors & Quiet Waters logo. "1. An eagle that is strong, balanced, centered, rising up, and thriving. 2. "Emblematic" of the military and growth. 3. The depiction of flowing water, combined with the new brand colors, reflects the palette of the natural settings where WQW programming happens."<sup>5</sup> Photo: Used with permission from Warriors & Quiet Waters.*

*(Below): A veteran, his guide, and "Battle Buddy" fly-fish while floating with the current of one of the magnificent rivers of western Montana. Photo: Mike MacLeod, Studio MacLeod, Bozeman, Montana.*



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Caregivers are then immersed in the healing powers of fly-fishing. Throughout the experience, caregivers not only develop supporting friendships with other caregivers, but they also become part of the Warriors & Quiet Waters family.

In the Couples Fishing Experience, six couples come to Bozeman to participate in a fly-fishing therapeutic journey, acknowledging that post-combat relationships can present unique challenges. Couples enjoy full days fly-fishing on Montana rivers which can strengthen and deepen their relationships. Naturally, Warriors & Quiet Waters pays for a family member or trusted friend to take care of family members while the couple is away in Montana.

Hunt for Purpose is a six-month program which prepares a veteran for an archery hunt in the Montana wilderness. For many hunters, archery hunting serves as an almost ritualistic and primal experience, offering a richer and more meaningful endeavor than of that with a rifle. Hunt for Purpose incorporates elements of the Built for More program to effect healing and make it last.

The Photography Experience allows combat veterans to learn the art and science of photography, coupled with several [other] concurrent Warriors & Quiet Waters programs. Participants will travel to Montana, be issued their photography equipment (which they will keep) and be trained and educated for one week by combat correspondent SGT Mike MacLeod. At the end of the week of instruction and practical application, veterans will create a final project photo. Participants of the Photography Experience will travel back to Montana two more times to photograph other programs which will further allow them to hone their skills. Their photos will also become treasured mementos of their fellow veterans' experiences.

As I walked out to my truck after meeting

with Brian, I stopped and gazed contemplatively at the Bridger Mountains, attempting to fully absorb all that I had just heard. Warriors & Quiet Waters is an organization of hard-working staff, volunteers, and donors who care deeply for our veterans. I am awestruck by and profoundly grateful for their selflessness and generosity. I was also struck by the similarities of Brian's former position as a Commanding Officer, where he endeavored to serve Marines and Sailors as a leader every day. He and his staff, volunteers, and donors continue to serve post 9/11 combat veterans of all services and the community they call home. From "Battle Buddies", guides, cooks, drivers, and facilitators, the volunteers are the salt of the earth, just like the veterans they support.

I highly encourage readers to check out the Warriors & Quiet Waters website. In addition to being a model website for any organization, there is a great deal more detailed information about Warriors & Quiet Waters programs and initiatives (and more brilliant photography). Naturally, readers can apply for programs, donate, and discover potential ways in which they can volunteer.

Eric, Brian, generous donors and volunteers, and the entire Warriors & Quiet Waters organization, thank you for caring so deeply for our veterans.

<sup>1</sup>"Combat veteran", defined as having received Imminent Danger Pay.

<sup>2</sup><https://warriorsandquietwaters.org/brand-story>

<sup>3</sup><https://warriorsandquietwaters.org/participate/first-time-programs>

<sup>4</sup> Written directly from correspondence with Brian Gilman, CEO.

<sup>5</sup><https://warriorsandquietwaters.org/brand-story>





## The General Officer Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle

### The Quantum Paradox of Calculating the US Marine Corps' Position in Time and Space

By: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian Wade USMC (Ret.)

**“General, this is bullsh\*t. It’s smoke and mirrors.”  
—Unknown**

Marine Gunners are Special Staff Officers who are assigned to the Command Element at the battalion, regiment, Marine Division, and within various levels of the USMC supporting establishment (training and education units and Headquarters, Marine Corps activities). Gunners belong to a relatively small, enigmatic, and anomalous group of Infantrymen who have “reached escape velocity” through the natural attrition of the physical, mental, and spiritual challenges of up to three decades of sustained infantry deployments and combat operations.

And full stop, take a breath. Let us discuss the fabric of our reality, starting with these beloved United States of America (USA). Firstly, the USA is a collective project, a sort of legal fiction, and “it” does not exist in time and space as a physical entity. Sure, there’s some land, but the USA is an idea, created and expressed on paper, and legally accepted by humanity as a real entity.<sup>1</sup> For example, I live fairly close to the “border with Canada”. The land on which we have placed “the border” does not know it’s the border with Canada. It’s just land...the same land it was before we got together, came to an agreement, and wrote on a “legal” document, that it is the “border with Canada”. Sorry for all the quotes, but other than the land and some legal documents, none of what I am discussing is physically real. So, the USA is simply an idea, a [legal] fiction that we, homo sapiens, “created” (if ever there was a euphemism). The USA exists in our minds (many even imagine the shape of the Continental United States is an animal...with Texas

as the strong hind legs, Florida as the agile front legs, Maine as the head, and California as the ass.)

Enter the United States Marine Corps, born in a tavern in 1775. Curious...the USMC was not first called this. Why? Because the United States of America had not yet been “created” (the agreements made, and legal papers signed and sent to King George III—a divinely ordained king...or at least we once believed that [legal] fiction.) We are beginning to understand the illusory construct of our reality. We are monkeys with cell phones.

So, what about, as an example, the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores...oh, sorry, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California? For brevity’s sake, I will skip past the nature of the [colossally fictional] state of California. Camp Pendleton was once a cattle ranch in California, another fictional country’s land (which we *acquired*). The US Government bought Rancho Santa Margarita from resident cattle ranchers at the beginning of World War II (likely purchased with some paper IOU’s which the owner received in lieu of gold, created in a supernova, which we somehow have all agreed for millennia is “money”). Some Marines put up a fence, built some buildings and roads, gave it a name, and voilà, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton (one of the best places to be stationed in the Corps!) But it’s just some land we selected, next to some water for our ships, where we can eat, sleep, and train for our wars (with other legally fictional countries and belligerent tribes).

*Author’s note: This is a case study for when the author and the editor are the same person!*

Where were we? Oh, yes, we were discussing our existential nature and how it is nestled within the Laws of Physics and Thermo-

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dynamics, and that all we can do is fight back against entropy—bust the rust, as it were. What is most important is that we, who have not been removed from this societal construct (imprisoned), have come together in the service of our country, and this is as real as it gets. Readers, thank you for your service to our beloved country, legally fictional as she is. As we prepare to move forward with this discussion, please allow me to state that while I believe the USA and the USMC are both a sort of legal fiction, I am all in...fully bought into the collective agreement. I've even heard some call the USMC a cult. I do not believe that, but if I am wrong, then the US Marine Corps is the best cult ever. Let us proceed.

"**Dog and pony show**" is a colloquial term which has come to mean a highly promoted, often over-staged performance, presentation, or event designed to sway or convince opinion for political, or less often, commercial ends. Typically, the term is used in a pejorative sense to connote disdain, jocular lack of appreciation, or distrust of the message being presented or the efforts undertaken to present it." —Wikipedia. As a rule, I do not use Wikipedia as a reference or source, but I just couldn't resist when I read this. We will mention this again.

Now, Werner Heisenberg was a German theoretical physicist and one of the first to discuss quantum mechanics. Among many other notable works, he is credited with the creation of the [Heisenberg] Uncertainty Principle. This principle states that "we cannot know both the position and speed of a particle, such as a photon or electron, with perfect accuracy; the more we nail down the particle's position, the less we know about its speed and vice versa" (quoted directly from source<sup>2</sup>). The

Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle is often confused with the "Observer Effect". The Observer Effect posits that "the greater the amount of "watching", the greater the observer's influence on what actually takes place."<sup>3</sup> A reader who is actively running avatar-based simulations in his/her prefrontal cortex can easily see where I am going with this.

**Paradoxically, a General Officer cannot gain an accurate measurement of a Marine Corps activity because of the effect of their presence on the activity they are attempting to measure. The Marine Corps activity cannot continue in its true, unaltered form, when in the presence of an observing General Officer. Therefore, the General Officer carries with them, an "event horizon", as it were, causing their inability to properly measure any activity affected by their event horizon. Apropos how General Officers wear stars.**

Being a General Officer must be a very lonely endeavor, indeed, and I do not envy them this...their many burdens of command. So, what are they to do? General Officers must rely on their trusted agents; namely their own experience (before they were elevated to the stars), and their Command Element (Sergeant Major, Command Master Chief, and Marine Gunner). But even these trusted agents have "gravitational event horizons" around them when they observe Marine Corps events. "The Sergeant Major is here..." or "Quick, here comes the Gunner..." There are legendary General Officers who are known for their ability to "suddenly appear out of thin air". Those Generals were able to catch fleeting glimpses of Marine Corps reality, but as soon as their presence was discovered and their reputation known, the game

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was up. Marines soon adapted to this effect and remained on guard for the “General to show up” (and the mere idea of the General’s presence affected reality.) And while this is not a leadership discussion, per se, I would offer that sneaking up on Marines to catch them “in the act” may be indicative of some insecurities, or even some malevolence. Ask me how I know...I have made my mistakes. So, perhaps, don’t do that to Marines!

Marine Gunners, you are a “directed telescope” for the Commanding Officer or the Commanding General. If you have started reading this edition with this article, I respectfully request that you next read the “Who’s Who in the Zoo” article. That covers the “people business” of a Marine Rifle Battalion, like units, and higher-level units. They are all built with the same scaffolding (i.e. Command Element, staff sections, and maneuver/action elements).

Why, you ask, did I write this? I wrote this as a cautionary tale for General Officers and their advisors. I grew up reading, among many things, the Beetle Bailey comic strip. I am here to tell you that after 30 years of Marine Corps service, Beetle Bailey isn’t that far from the truth. Despite being a comedic representation of life in the US Army, imagine Marine Corps emblems and some wordsmithing, and it’s the USMC experience...at is best (sadly, the Marine Corps experience can be dark and traumatic for some, as well.)

So, to counteract the General Officer Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, General Officers could:

-Realize that the General’s existence is like that of a mushroom, because many wish the General to be

“kept in the dark and fed a steady diet of shit”.

-Generals must find and keep their trusted agents very close...agents (not spies, but representatives) who have mastered the art of observation while not alienating subordinate commanders and Marines (that is another hugely complex matter for its own sake.) In other words, agents who have reduced their own “gravitational event horizon” to the greatest degree possible. A case study in this art is, for example, SgtMaj Bryan Zickefoose USMC (Ret.) People love him and tell him everything!

Generals, one of the perks which comes with all this responsibility is that people actually listen to you and do what you say. General Officers can call the monitor and “request” (euphemism) to keep a Gunner, for example, or for the Monitor to send one of the General’s selections. The Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) grew up with Marine Gunners. Even he might have developed a relationship of trust with one or two of them. The same applies to COMMARFORCOM, the MEF Commanding Generals (they have a Division Gunner), or Division Commanding Generals. Just pick up the phone and Headquarters, US Marine Corps should answer and work to support you (this is the reason for their existence...to support the rest of the Marine Corps and COCOMs.)

And what of Marine Gunners? [I will not attempt to educate Sergeants Major or Command Master Chiefs here.] Gunners, you are this trusted agent about whom I speak. Please read “Who’s Who in the Zoo” for some basic people-business operating principles and **earn the trust of the unit’s subordinate commanders and their Marines** so that they “let you in” and tell you the truth. Their lives and the lives of their Marines depend on this. A



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recent indication which supports my assertions regarding the nature of Chief Warrant Officers, and in this context most specifically Marine Gunners, is that the US Air Force is resurrecting its own Warrant Officer program, albeit initially in a limited capacity. The US Air Force is intrinsically more technically-based than the USMC. While the USMC has elements, even large components, which are technically-centered (i.e. cyber, comm, and aviation to name a few), the fundamental nature of the Marine Rifle Squad, while having technical aspects, is rooted in far more abstract concepts, such as leadership, camaraderie, esprit de corps, cohesion, and [sometimes harsh] discipline. I would argue that while the US Air Force publicly states the return of Warrant Officers is to increase technical expertise within select units, I offer that they are going to get more bang for their buck. As for Marine Gunners and among our many efforts, we write articles like this. We are allowed to and expected to. We are both simultaneously revered and resented [for it]. Jedi mind tricks do not work on Marine Gunners. We are the best possible “directed telescope” to walk out of the CP, move to a subordinate unit, and “see the Matrix”...straight through any potential dog and pony shows, sincere as they may be. Without embarrassing the unit commander, we can quickly get to the truth, and effect solutions for the benefit of the subordinate unit. Reminder: Gunners, read “Who’s Who in the Zoo.” If a Gunner is not careful and sincere, he can destroy relationships and his reputation like Col Ripley destroyed the Bridge at Dong Ha (except he was supposed to do that.) Marine Gunners are ideally suited for the observation and subsequent sincere assistance of subordinate units, entirely for the purpose of facilitating their success.<sup>4</sup> Command-

ing Generals are not. Therefore, Gunners, do not attempt to make the Commanding General your action officer.<sup>5</sup>

Just as light cannot escape the gravitational event horizon of a black hole, a General Officer’s event horizon significantly alters the condition of the subject of their observation. It’s just the law...the General Officer Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.

Gunners, good luck. I envy you. You are the greatest [legal] fiction of all. Much of the Corps doesn’t even believe you exist.

<sup>1</sup>Harari, Yuval Noah. (2011). *Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind*. Dvir, Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Heisenberg, Werner

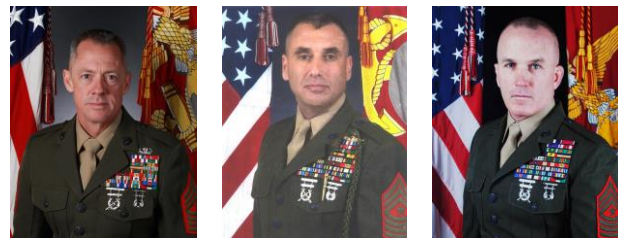
<https://scienceexchange.caltech.edu/topics/quantum-science-explained/uncertainty-principle>

<sup>3</sup>Observer Effect.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1998/02/980227055013.htm>

<sup>4</sup>Paraphrased from a directive of LtGen John K. Love USMC (Ret.) when he served as the Commanding General of the 2nd Marine Division.

<sup>5</sup>A quote from Colonel B.J. Fitzpatrick USMC (Ret.), then the Chief of Staff of the 2nd Marine Division.



*This article is dedicated to SgtsMaj Bryan Zickefoose, Jim Booker, and Brad Kasal (all USMC Ret.) I have tried to be like you. Photos: USMC.*

*USMC Camillus 1970s(+)*

*USMC WWII PAL "red spacer" (circa. early 1943) peenedommel*

*USMC M.S.I. 1980s (rarest USMC Mk2 knife)*

*USMC Utica Cut. Co. 1960s. 1st post WWII contract*

*USMC Camillus (post WWII) broken tip made to spear pt.*

*US Navy WWII Camillus (hand guard stamped)*

*(2) KA-BAR Cut. Co. 1970s(+) reproductions*

*USMC Union Cut. Co. "KA-BAR" red spacer (1943). peenedommel*

*Ontario "Case XX" WWII prototype repro.*

*USMC Conetta 1960s*

*USMC Conetta 1960s (tip repaired to clip pt)*

*USMC Ontario 1980s+*

*USMC Camillus 1970s+*

*USMC Ontario 1980s+*



*(Note: both sides of each knife is shown.) As the Editor prepares to update the Marine Corps Mk2 fighting/utility knife article (The Busting Bomb 1-23), he continues to build his collection to ensure he can provide specimens of every manufacturer who produced Mk2 knives for the US Marine Corps from 1943 to 2003. Photo composite: Editor's collection.*

\*\*If you, or someone you know needs help, support is available 24/7. Service members and their families can call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or chat at [militaryonesource.mil](https://militaryonesource.mil). Service members, Veterans, and their loved ones can also call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat at [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net), or text to 838255. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to anyone at 1-800-273-8255.

More excellent sources for Veteran's mental healthcare are:

**The Headstrong Project:** Contact <https://theheadstrongproject.org> and select "Connect to Care".

**The Cohen Veterans Network:** Contact at <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/>. Help is available for Veteran mental health issues and for help in transitioning from military to civilian life and family related issues.

**Ambio:** <https://ambio.life/>

## In the Next Bursting Bomb

MGA SITREP & Message Traffic from the Executives and Staff

Focus on an MGA Sponsor

Update on the Marine Gunners at TBS and IWOC

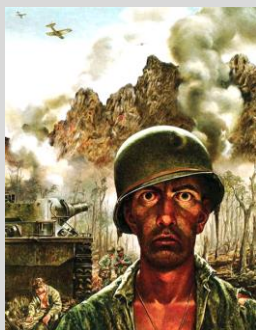
USMC Fireteam Concepts

USMC Rifle Squad Concepts

United States Service Rifle and Marksmanship Historical Study

Contributions from our Members

Mental Health and Wellness Concepts



*(Right): "The 2000 Yard Stare" by Thomas Lea  
Battle of Peleliu.*

*Rounds Complete.  
Record as Target: 1-24.  
End of Mission.*

