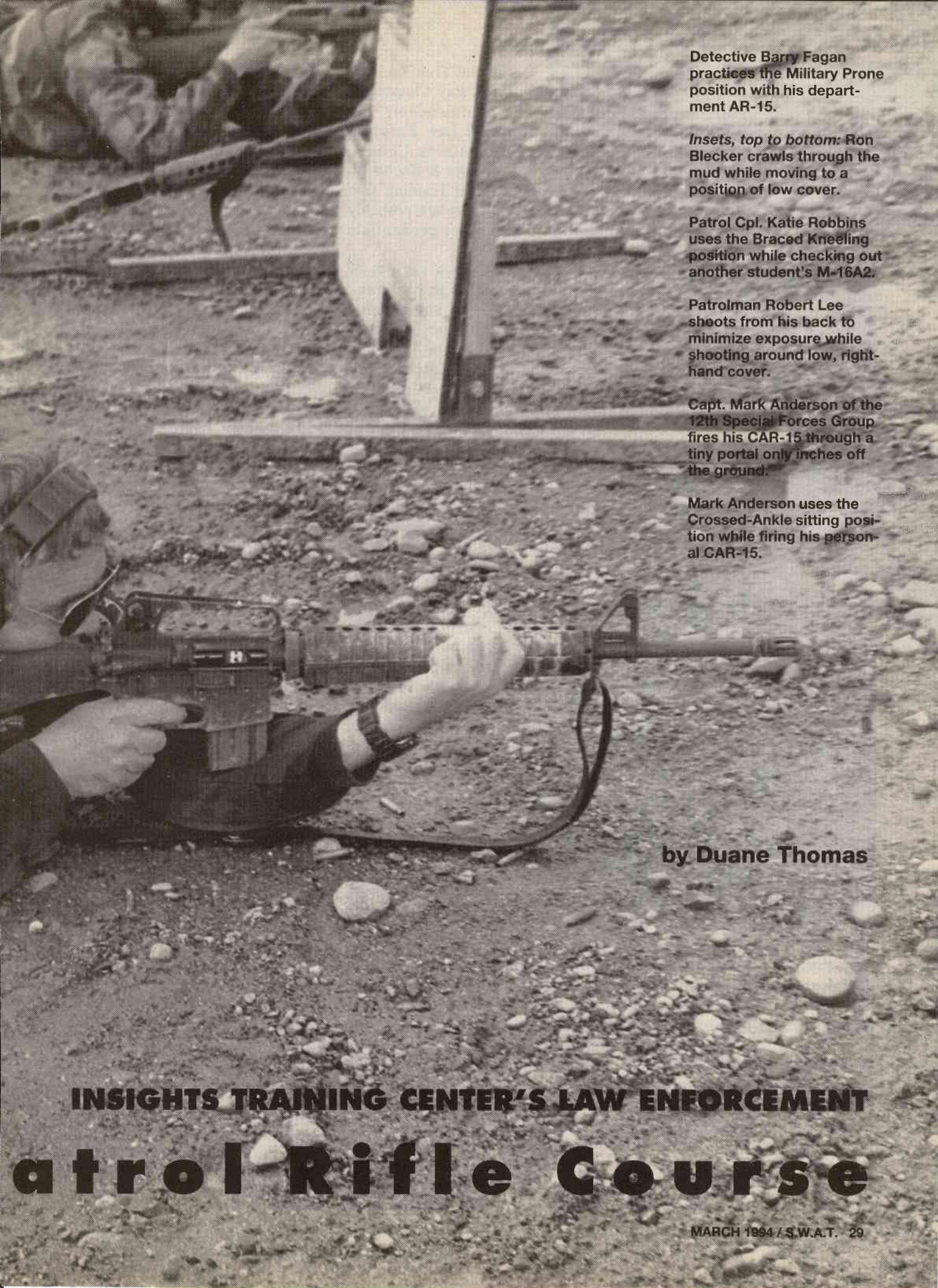


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Detective Barry Fagan practices the Military Prone position with his department AR-15.

Insets, top to bottom: Ron Blecker crawls through the mud while moving to a position of low cover.

Patrol Cpl. Katie Robbins uses the Braced Kneeling position while checking out another student's M-16A2.

Patrolman Robert Lee shoots from his back to minimize exposure while shooting around low, right-hand cover.

Capt. Mark Anderson of the 12th Special Forces Group fires his CAR-15 through a tiny portal only inches off the ground.

Mark Anderson uses the Crossed-Ankle sitting position while firing his personal CAR-15.

by Duane Thomas

INSIGHTS TRAINING CENTER'S LAW ENFORCEMENT

atrol Rifle Course



ternational Training Consultants, Ray Chapman's Chapman Academy, the National Law Enforcement Training Center, and Heckler & Koch's International Training Division. There are probably a few other credentials

I've missed.

Hamilton offers a variety of courses at InSights in handgun-, shotgun-, rifle- and submachine gun-shooting skills, for both civilian and police shooters. I recently attended the Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle Course at InSights. The same course is offered to civilians who can provide proof of good character.

The Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle Course is a three-day course. Day One starts with an in-depth classroom lecture delivered by Hamilton. Greg is a dynamic teacher who combines infectious enthusiasm with a thorough knowledge of the topics under discussion. His instructional style reflects his background as a military trainer. His approach provides students the maximum opportunity to absorb the information being presented to them.

Aside from myself, the token civilian gun writer, most of the attendees at the course were firearms instructors for various police

departments; either sent to InSights for training, or who decided to attend advanced training on their own time and nickel. We had one Army MP, Staff Sgt. Ron Blecker from nearby Fort Lewis. Capt. Mark Anderson of the 12th Special Forces Group also attended this training.

I was surprised at the uniformity of rifles brought to the course. With one exception, every shooter brought an AR-15 pattern gun to the course, mostly semiauto-only

full-sized guns, with a sprinkling of CAR-15s. Patrol Cpl. Katie Robbins brought her department-issue 9mm Marlin Camp Carbine. Ron Blecker brought a select-fire, military M-16A2. I took a semiauto CAR-15, recently sent to me by Colt for this course.

One thing I was looking forward to was seeing how this late model Colt would perform under hard use. Most of my prior experience with AR-15 pattern guns had been in the Army, firing M-16A1s with worn-out military magazines. In the ten years I was in the Army, it was rare for me to make it all the way through a day shooting the M-16 without having a malfunction. Other shooters tell me recent production guns are quite a bit more reliable—especially when dirty—than their predecessors. My range time at the Insights course would provide me ample opportunity to confirm this.

The class begins with a discussion of the four Universal Firearms Handling Rules: (1) All guns are always loaded. (2) Never point your gun at anything you are not willing to shoot. (3) Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target. And (4) be sure of your target and what is



Top to bottom: Katie Robbins gets the opportunity to flip the selector switch on the M-16A2 all the way over; her first taste of full-auto.

Ron Blecker practices a close-range malfunction drill, slinging his M-16A2 and bringing his Beretta 92F into play.

Part of the InSights Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle Course consists of training in shooting from various types of cover. Here Ron Blecker switches his rifle to his left shoulder while practicing shooting around low, left-hand cover.

Final live-fire qualification is a 22-round course of fire on a camouflage human silhouette target. Duane Thomas is with instructor Greg Hamilton in front of the qualification target.



InSights Training Center is a firearms training school located in Issaquah, Washington. The owner, top man, chief instructor, and overall head honcho at InSights is Greg Hamilton. Greg's background includes Ranger, Special Forces, instructor at John Shaw's Mid-South Institute of Self-Defense Shooting; graduate of multiple courses from Jeff Cooper's American Pistol Institute, John Farnam's Defense Training International, Clint Smith's In-

behind and beyond it. If everyone followed these four simple rules, there would never be any gun "accidents."

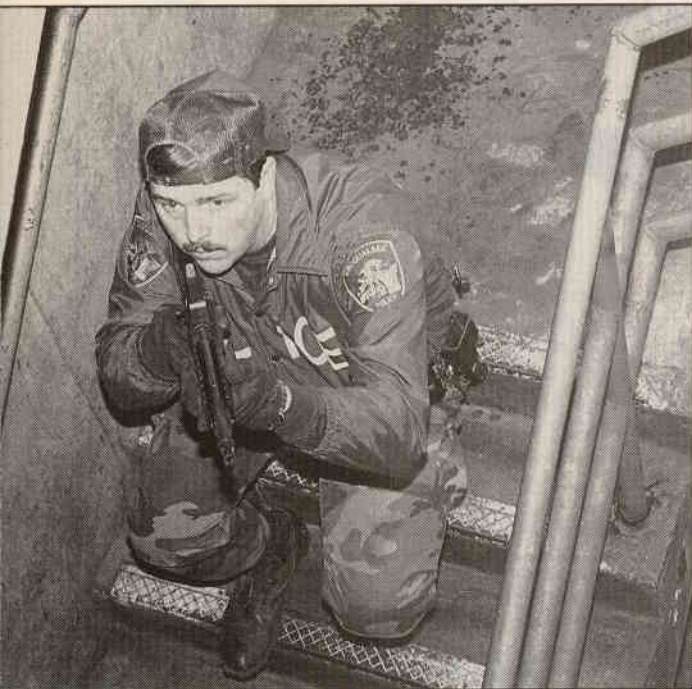
Hamilton discusses the Priorities of Survival: (1) awareness and preparedness, (2) tactics, (3) skill and (4) equipment, along with some observations on how people tend to get those priorities confused and focus on the least important aspect of survival (equipment), to the exclusion of all others.

One of the most interesting topics discussed was the criteria necessary for a good law enforcement patrol rifle. These are: reliability, light weight, compactness, mobility, power, penetration (or lack thereof in some cases), speed of manipulation, and magazine capacity for multiple threats or hits. Also discussed are the different rifle-action types. Let's touch briefly on the different rifle-action types, and how appropriate each is for the law enforcement patrol function:

Bolt action: high-powered, optically sighted rifles capable of extreme accuracy and penetration required for hostage-type situations. The high-powered sniper rifle's extreme penetration and relatively slow rate of fire make it unsuitable for patrol functions. Although a good man with a bolt gun can fire it almost as fast as a semiauto (at least until time to reload), that level of skill requires high dedication and a lot of practice.

Lever action: lacking in magazine capacity. Requires more manipulation than is necessary with modern rifles; however it can be pressed into service as a patrol rifle if necessary. Basically, we're discussing the Model 94-type lever action .30-30 here. While not a first choice, as Greg Hamilton points out, there have been a lot of people shot in the past with lever-action Model 94s. When shot in the chest with a .30-30, most folks have a tendency to be so busy dying they don't have time to look at you and lecture, "Don't you know that's an ancient gun design?"

Pump actions: same comments



Semiautos of military origin: low manipulation and high magazine capacity. These are battle tested and have proven reliability. The primary choice for serious use.

It's become popular in certain circles to recommend rifle- or carbine-sized weapons in pistol calibers for the law enforcement patrol function. Hamilton is very down on this idea. As he points out, with a pistol-caliber weapon, you lose the primary

going to a fight. And if you're going to a *real* fight, I strongly suggest you take a *real* gun, i.e., a rifle or a shotgun."

The classroom portion of the course addresses conditions of carry. Also addressed are the fundamentals of marksmanship or, as Hamilton calls it, "the integrated act of firing." These are a steady position, aiming, breathing control, trigger press, and follow-through. In addition, Hamilton discusses various shooting positions, including the advantages, disadvantages, and applications of each.

The lecture also covers tactics. Hamilton's definition of tactics is "Any skillful method to gain an end." There is an overview of tactical principles and guidelines, and the components of tactics.

The afternoon of Day One is

Top inset: Robert Lee practices mounting stairs during a tactical simulation. Left: Chuck Holton practices navigating a stairwell during the Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle course.

as lever-action rifles.

Semiautos of civilian origin: low manipulation required to operate. High magazine capacity; however, these guns do not have the advantage of the true military-type guns of having had their reliability thoroughly tested under harsh conditions and actual field use.

advantage of having a rifle—the ability to strike fight-stopping hits at extended ranges, even if your opponent is behind light cover. Says Hamilton, "We carry handguns as insurance for those times we don't know we're going to a fight. If you have time to grab a long gun, then you know you're

given over to range work. Primary topics addressed on Day One's range work are: carrying the rifle and bringing it quickly to bear from a slung position; safe loading and reloading; and malfunction clearance drills. At this time there is also an intense overview of marksmanship fundamentals, and live-fire practice of the basics. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to re-familiarize myself with AR-15 type ergonomics after a year out of the military. Extremely user-friendly, control layout has long been one of the AR-15's strong points.

Our weapons zeroed, we were trained on what Hamilton calls the Primary Positions, doing all our shooting, even the high-speed stuff, on small steel plates at 100 yards. All firing for the remainder of the course was done starting from the muzzle-depressed-ready position. Hamilton figures that if you have the confidence, you can bring your gun from the ready position, aim, fire and hit a foot square steel plate at 100 yards in, oh, say two seconds.

The first of the Primary Positions is the offhand or standing position. This is the hardest position from which to get fast, consistent accuracy. Hamilton places a strong emphasis on getting the support arm as nearly underneath the weapon as possible, so the muzzle will track straight up and down under recoil (instead of side to side), which allows much faster sight reacquisition. He also recommends keeping the strong-side elbow high to accentuate and lock the rifle into the shoulder pocket, even under the recoil of high-speed rifle fire.

This last point is very important for law enforcement personnel who may be wearing concealable body armor. With Kevlar™ padding covering the area that would normally form the shoulder pocket, if the strong-side elbow is held low, there's a very real tendency for the rifle to slide off the shooter's shoulder during recoil. With the elbow high, exaggerating the shoulder

pocket, you can hold the gun in place even while wearing body armor. If you're not wearing body armor, this technique allows a higher rate of accurate, aimed fire.

Hamilton teaches two prone positions. In the Olympic Prone, the shooter's body is centered behind the rifle. In the Military Prone, the shooter's body is offset behind the rifle to take maximum advantage of vertical cover.

Hamilton also teaches three kneeling positions. In Speed Kneeling, a shooter simply drops to one knee and shoots. The advantage of this technique is its speed while still allowing you to take advantage of low cover. Braced Kneeling sees the support arm's elbow braced on the offside knee. This position is still fairly fast to assume, while offering a much more stable shooting platform. Double Kneeling has both knees on the ground. The advantage of Double Kneeling is that, simply by lowering or raising your body, the technique can be adapted to a variety of different heights of cover.

By this time I've put about 250 rounds of assorted hollowpoint and FMJ .223 ammo through the CAR-15 under wet and muddy conditions. So far, it hasn't skipped a beat.

Day Two sees the students practicing rapid assumptions of the Primary Positions. Also on Day Two, Hamilton teaches what he calls Secondary Positions. These are basically special-purpose techniques, intended to round out your abilities as a shooter. The first of these is the Squat.

To assume the Squat, simply stand with your feet shoulder width or more apart and drop your butt toward the ground. This position is an alternative to Speed Kneeling. It's very fast. It's also a hell of a lot more stable than it looks.

Three sitting positions are taught. The Crossed-Leg position, as the name indicates, has you sitting on the ground with your legs crossed, elbows braced on the inside of your knees. The Crossed-

Ankle position is essentially the same, except your legs are crossed at the ankles instead of tucked under one another. The Open-Leg position has the legs spread out to the front, elbows braced on the inside of bent knees. Hamilton points out that, based on the particular body structure, one person may do his best work from a different sitting position than another person. As a matter of fact, he continues, you'll usually find one position works wonderfully for you, one works okay, and one not at all.

There's plenty of practice in shooting from positions of cover. A wooden wall is used to simulate shooting around various heights of cover, forcing shooters to use everything from high kneeling to prone positions as their cover becomes progressively shorter. Finally, you wind up flat on your belly, gun held sideways and barely off the dirt to fire through a ground-level port only an inch or two high.

Day Three saw us practicing rapid assumptions of the shooting positions, as well as what Hamilton calls Special Positions—esoteric techniques that may never be called on, but he feels should be part of a well-rounded shooter's repertoire. These include Retention Fire, to keep your rifle away from a gun grab while neutralizing the would-be disarmer, Opposite Side Fire and Underarm Fire.

There's also lots of practice on malfunction-clearance drills, speed reloads and tactical reloads. The rule Hamilton teaches regarding malfunctions during a gunfight are these: (1) If your rifle malfunctions or runs empty while you are within handgun range and exposed to incoming fire, immediately draw your handgun and continue to fight; (2) if you are inside or outside of handgun range and behind cover, immediately clear the malfunction or reload your long arm; (3) If you are outside of handgun range and not behind cover, immediately move to cover and clear the mal-

function or reload your long arm.

By the time I packed up the CAR-15 after qualifying on the morning of Day Three, I had put well over 600 rounds through it, under extremely dirty, wet, cruddy conditions. I reported to the range with a clean, lubed gun, but after that I never cleaned or lubricated the weapon. By the way, this is *not* how I usually treat my weapons; but this course was something of a field evaluation for the CAR-15, as well as a valuable training opportunity. I wanted to see how a current-production Colt handled the guff. The answer is, "flawlessly." The little CAR-15 was absolutely filthy by the end of the course, and it still worked like a champ.

Greg Hamilton is a stickler for giving credit to the sources from which he's taken the ideas and techniques he teaches. He's a scrupulous trainer who realizes the debt he owes to those who trained him. Hamilton's training techniques are a synthesis of ideas from diverse sources. The sources he credits as being most responsible for his instructional curriculum are the United States Army, Clint Smith, John Farnam and Bill Jeans.

In all, I found InSights Training Center's Law Enforcement Patrol Rifle Course to be well worth the time and money. If you're a cop whose department just adopted a patrol rifle, a training officer looking to get your people up to speed on the best techniques with their carbines, or simply a civilian rifle owner who'd like to learn how to make the most of his semiauto "assault" rifle, I highly recommend this course. The breadth of topics covered, and the quality of the instruction, is nothing short of excellent. ●

SOURCE

InSights Training Center
240 NW Gilman Blvd.
Issaquah, WA 98027
(206) 391-4834

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