

Defending the Homeland Begins at Home

By Chris Weinkopf

“LET ME TELL YOU, AS A COP, I’m not gonna be there,” Mark Granko told his students, who sat transfixed, listening to war stories from his 25 years as a police officer, including five on a SWAT team. “I don’t care if you call 911. By the time we get there, it’s over.”

That’s why the 15 men, mostly in their 20s and 30s, had trekked to the seedy Oakland suburb of Richmond for the weekend. We were there for one purpose alone: to learn how to kill an attacker instead of allowing him to kill us while we wait for the police to arrive.

This wasn’t a class on gun safety, although safety was the rule of the day. Nor was it a course on marksmanship, but we couldn’t let off a poor shot without getting an earful from Granko and his fellow instructors. After all, our targets were never more than seven feet away, just like real-life rapists, murderers, muggers—and possibly terrorists. As our coaches liked to remind us, a sloppy shot could make the difference between our own life and death.

That was the heart of the two-day Civil Shield class: life and death. The question was whether each of us, if tested, valued our lives and those of our family and loved ones enough to fight for them, or whether we would accept victimization.

In 1993, Jeffrey Snyder wrote a seminal piece for *The Public Interest*, “A Nation of Cowards,” in which he marveled at an odd contradiction in American culture—our collective, professed commitment to independence and autonomy, yet our utter refusal to accept, individually, the responsibility for protecting ourselves from crime. “While people are encouraged to revel in their individuality and incalculable self-worth,” Snyder wrote, “the media and the law enforcement establishment continually advise us that, when confronted with the threat of lethal violence, we should not resist, but simply give the attacker what he wants.”

This mentality assumes that the attacker—who has already broken both the law and our first social contract to respect the property rights, freedom, and dignity of others—will suddenly abide by a new social contract, one Snyder characterized as,

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"I will not hurt or kill you if you give me what I want." At times that may be the case, but often, it isn't.

There's also the greater point of our duty to our fellow civilized, law-abiding man. It's one thing to forfeit one's own life, property, or dignity to an assailant, and quite another to submit one's neighbor or loved one to the same. Where is the virtue in a husband who, honoring some imaginary social contract with a criminal, allows his wife to be raped? Or the parents who stand by helpless as an intruder carries off their child?

How about the citizen who quivers behind a potted plant as a terrorist unloads his rifle into a crowded theater? The war on terror adds a new dimension to the case Snyder laid out a decade ago. Today, self-defense entails not only protecting one's self, but also one's nation and *its* security.

Snyder wrote convincingly of each person's moral responsibility to take up arms in self-defense: "Crime is rampant because the law-abiding, each of us, condone it, excuse it, permit it, submit to it. We permit and encourage it because we do not fight back, immediately, then and there, where it happens.... We are a nation of cowards and shirkers."

Nearly a decade later, the dichotomy between our fetish of self-sufficiency and our aversion to self-defense is greater than ever. As a culture, we have increasingly come to realize that each of us can perform many of the tasks we once consigned largely to "experts," whether it's refinishing the hardwood floors or filing our taxes. Yet when it comes to confronting rapists, murderers, robbers, or terrorists, that's a duty most of us—especially those living in the "blue states"—would just as soon leave to the professionals, even though the professionals are usually the first to admit that in most situations, there's little or nothing they can do.

I'm a product of the culture of cowardice. I grew up in New England, where guns were considered the playthings of sociopaths and rednecks, with no place in the home of thoughtful, civilized people. I've lived in blue-state territory all my life, from New England to New York, to my current home in Southern California. In these parts, even among Republicans and conservatives, there's a stigma attached to gun ownership, as if the commitment to individual responsibility stops short of self-defense.

When my wife and I bought our first home a year ago, friends and family helpfully advised us to buy a fire extinguisher—after all, we wouldn't want a small kitchen fire to grow out of control and consume the house while we wait for the fire department to arrive. None, however, suggested that we buy a gun, lest a home invader rape or kill a member of our family while waiting for the police to show up.

When we enrolled in a Red Cross CPR and first-aid class last summer, we were widely praised for our forward thinking. Our instructor repeatedly advised us of the moral obligation to know CPR—without immediate attention, he said, someone in a state of cardiac arrest is unlikely to survive the wait for paramedics.

I got no such kudos when I told the same friends and relatives that we were headed up to the Bay Area for a weekend so I could take an intensive gun-training class. Then, the response was either one of disdain or bemusement. I repeatedly found myself offering an explanation—"It's for an article I'm writing"—as though a professional interest in self-defense was more legitimate than a personal one.

I hadn't so much as touched a loaded weapon until age 26, when, for my bachelor party, some friends and brothers-in-law took me to a local rifle range, where much fun was had blasting away at—actually, around—paper targets. Yet I had come to understand the societal value of gun ownership, and I was a supporter of the Second Amendment. But guns were still for *other* people.

My pro-gun convictions became more personal after 9/11, when the extent of existing dangers became all the more clear. So when Ed Ispier, then the president of Civil Shield, a Northern California company specializing in both armed and unarmed self-defense training of all kinds, invited me to participate in a weekend-long class in pistol techniques, I eagerly accepted the offer.

The class began early Saturday morning, at a dusty rifle range tucked between several low hills that served as the backstop for our bullets. The classes, which cost \$350 apiece plus nearly as much in ammunition, drew a largely upper-middle-class clientele. It was a serious group, with few if any showboaters, survivalists, or overly macho types. The experience levels ranged from novices learning their basic skills to a Berkeley cop, there to supplement his professional training.

With the single exception of the dance classes my wife and I took in the weeks before our wedding, I had never felt so instantly incompetent. Each time, as we were called to draw and fire our weapons within a matter of seconds, I found myself stumbling to be mindful of my motion, my stance, my grip, my aim, how my eyes would move to the target, the way my finger gently squeezed the trigger until—pow!—the sudden burst jerked the whole upper half of my body backward.

But the instructors earned their paychecks that weekend. I learned how to do a "combat reload," and how to set up shots on the move by reacting to motions and sounds around me. I learned how to fire from one knee for close-quarters situations, and, when the circumstances demand it, how to perform a "fail-safe drill"—two shots to the chest, one to the head.

By the end of the first day, I was holding my own. At the end of the second, I had the calluses, blisters, and bruises to show for firing off literally hundreds of rounds of ammunition. I was smooth on the draw—albeit far from quick—and when I managed to remember all the pointers my instructors had given me, I was a pretty decent shot. In one of our last exercises, when, instead of firing at black-and-white outlines of human shapes, we got to shoot up life-size posters of fictional assailants, I managed to put a bullet smack in the forehead of the Uzi-packing Asian gangbanger in body armor. I couldn't help feeling a cer-

tain sense of self-satisfaction when the instructor looked at my handiwork and offered a one-word assessment: "Vicious."

But underlying the thrill of the moment was the sobering reality that in real life my targets wouldn't be made of paper, nor would they wait the several seconds it took me to get in my stance and aim. A lot more practice would be necessary. Still, the foundation had been laid, and my incompetence transformed to a basic confidence: Victimhood is a choice I need not make.

Ed Ispier, Civil Shield's former president, believes that September 11, 2001, "caused a lot of people to step back and re-evaluate their opinion on the use of violence in self-defense." "Something like 9/11 causes some soul searching. People...are much less inclined to accept being terrorized."

Indeed, if ever there was a crystallizing event to prove the inability of government to prevent, let alone stop, all acts of evil, it was that day. The combined, bungling efforts of the FBI, CIA, and myriad other law enforcement agencies proved inadequate to quash the murderous aspirations of 19 ruthless terrorists. Metal detectors, x-ray machines, and the perfunctory "have your bags been with you at all times" interrogation at the ticket counter didn't stop the men from bringing boxcutters on board. After the first airliner crashed into the World Trade Center on that awful morning, and federal officials realized that other planes had also been hijacked, the Air Force scrambled fighter jets with orders to shoot them down. Even that horrendous, last-ditch resort wasn't enough.

The terrorists did meet one setback that day: It was aboard United Flight 93, the plane presumably headed for the Capitol, but which crashed in Pennsylvania farmland instead. The difference was made by ordinary people—not experts, not police, not federal sky marshals—ordinary people who, thanks to their cell phones, soon realized that this was no "normal" hijacking. And so for those brave souls on Flight 93, the new mantra became "Let's roll." The terrorists thought it would be so easy, until a group of ordinary people made it so hard, staving off one more disaster on a day synonymous with the word.

Even after September 11, when airports worldwide made an obsession of screening passengers, Richard Reid boarded a plane in Paris bound for Miami with plastic explosives encased in the sole of his sneaker. Once the plane was in the air, there was nothing any police agency or stricter law could have done to stop him. A flight attendant saw Reid trying to ignite his shoe. She called for help, and within minutes, a swarm of passengers had pinned him down and were busily tying him up with their belts and neckties.

One of the great lessons to come from the first year of the war on terror is that homeland security necessarily begins at home. It's not enough for us to expect our government to stop every act of terrorism. We all must be willing to do our part.

On airplanes, doing our part is limited to hand-to-hand combat. It's not feasible to let armed passengers aboard aircraft, although allowing pilots to carry guns will have largely the same deterrent effect. But it's a mistake to believe that all future terrorist attacks will be confined to airplanes. And while hand-to-hand combat was sufficient to stop Richard Reid and derail the murderers on Flight 93, sometimes nothing less than a gun will do.

On the morning of July 4, 2002, Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, an Egyptian, left his Orange County apartment for Los Angeles International Airport with two guns and a hunting knife. He proceeded to the El Al ticket counter, where he opened fire on passengers and clerks.

That Hadayet succeeded only in killing two and wounding five is a small miracle. Although the Los Angeles Police Department had beefed up patrols at LAX after 9/11, the deployments had gradually declined. At any airline other than El Al, Hadayet's shooting spree would have been limited only by his supply of ammunition. But the Israeli airline has armed, private security guards at its ticket counters. It was the brave response of those guards—risking their lives for a nominal wage on a national holiday—that prevented Hadayet from killing far more people by shooting him dead.

Unarmed guards would have been impotent against Hadayet's attack. Massive passenger mobilization, the likes of which brought down Flight 93, might have made a difference, but at a far greater cost. Terrorists with guns can only be stopped with other guns.

For all the nation's much-trumpeted beefing up of security at airports and on planes, terrorists will most likely shift their attacks elsewhere—supermarkets, amusement parks, sporting events—the list of potential targets is endless. Because it's unclear where or how terrorists will strike next, it's also virtually impossible for the government to develop the appropriate safeguards for any potential attack.

What is clear is that the terrorists' efforts will be considerably more difficult if they are met with resistance from their intended victims. If that resistance is armed and well-trained, their efforts will be complicated all the more. And if they had good reason to fear such resistance almost anywhere they might strike, their ambitions would be severely dampened.

Our world has changed over the last year, and with it our moral responsibility to defend ourselves. Effective homeland security is not a political abstraction, but an individual duty—a duty to be alert, to be prepared to strike back, and to be willing to do so when called. Cowardice can no longer be an option.



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Our Values, Iraq's Freedom

Why Democrats should support regime change in Iraq.

By Stephen Solarz

Is a commitment to a regime change in Iraq compatible with the core values of the Democratic Party?

A majority of Democrats in the House and Senate voted against giving President Bush the military power to compel Saddam Hussein to relinquish his weapons of mass destruction and to respect the human rights of his own people. This would suggest that it is not.

But an honest assessment of the Democratic Party's role in shaping foreign policy indicates that the robust internationalism inherent in a dedication to regime change in Iraq is indeed consistent with the Party's principles. Perhaps the best way of determining the core foreign policy values of the two great political parties in the United States is to look at how the Presidents they put in the White House have conducted themselves while in residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Let's review the record:

It was, after all, the Princeton professor who first articulated a commitment to democracy and self-determination as one of the fundamental pillars of American foreign policy; the Hyde Park squire who put the prestige of the United States behind the establishment of the United Nations as the best way of creating a more peaceful world; the man from Missouri who enunciated the Truman doctrine pledging the United States to resist tyranny wherever it raised its ugly head; the New England aristocrat who made nuclear non-proliferation one of his primary objectives; the Texas rancher who committed American forces to the fight for freedom from Central America to Southeast Asia; the peanut farmer from Georgia who made human rights the centerpiece of American foreign policy; and the good ol' boy from Arkansas who signed the legislation making regime change in Iraq the official policy of the United States.

If democracy and self-determination are to have any chance of becoming a reality in Iraq, the removal of the Mesopotamian megalomaniac and his Ba'athist bully boys from their position of power in Baghdad is clearly a necessary, if not sufficient, condition. Put Woodrow Wilson, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If the United Nations is going to avoid the fate of the League of Nations and its tragic slide into irrelevance, the relevant U.N. resolutions calling for the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction will have to be truly implemented. It should be clear by now that the only way to secure the destruction of these

demonic devices is through the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Put Franklin Roosevelt, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If Iraq, which has invaded both Iran and Kuwait in its unrelenting bid for regional hegemony, is going to be transformed into a force for peace rather than a platform for war, there is no viable alternative to removing the Tikriti tyrant from his position of power. Put Harry Truman, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If Iraq, which has already used chemical and biological weapons against the Iranians and the Kurds, is going to be deprived of its weapons of mass destruction, and prevented from eventually obtaining nuclear weapons as well, Saddam will almost certainly have to be swept into the trashcan of history. It would be nice to think, after two decades of resisting sanctions and blandishments designed to induce him to give up his weapons of mass destruction, that Saddam will finally yield peacefully and voluntarily to the umpteenth U.N. resolution calling on him to do so as he said he will. But it is doubtful that anything short of a new government willing to abide by its international obligations will be able to accomplish this international imperative. Put John F. Kennedy, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If the Iraqi people are ever to enjoy the fruits of freedom, which the Ba'ath Party has cruelly and consistently denied them, and if Iraq is going to cease being a threat to regional stability, a new government in Baghdad is an urgent and compelling requirement. The United States would have no quarrel with a democratic Iraq. Put Lyndon Baines Johnson, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If there is to be any hope for a greater respect for human rights in Iraq, if the systemic repression which has been the hallmark of Saddam's rule is to end, there is no other way to do it than to change the government. If Jimmy Carter, who resisted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by providing arms to the *mujahedin*, were faithful to the principles that guided his Presidency, he, too, would be on the side of regime change in Iraq.

If the Iraq Liberation Act, passed almost unanimously by the Congress and signed into law by President Clinton in 1998, is ever to achieve its objective of liberating the Iraqi people from the clutches of one of the foulest tyrannies ever to blot the Middle East, the rule of Saddam Hussein has got to go. Put Bill Clinton, therefore, on the side of regime change in Iraq.

continued on page 59

Stephen Solarz, who served 18 years in Congress, where he was a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, led the fight for the adoption of the Gulf War Resolution in 1991.