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Bob Duggan, a noted martial artist, keeps things lively between lecture sessions in Aspen with an introduction to various close quarters defensive techniques.

# HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES? ESI'S ADVANCED EXECUTIVE PROTECTION RESIDENCY TRAINING — THE FINAL CHAPTER

BY ROB PINCUS

In this, the last installment of this series, I'll cover what most people consider the most important portion of Executive Security International's (ESI) program—the Advanced Executive Protection Residency Training session.

These fifteen intense days are spent in western Colorado, first in Aspen and then in Montrose. Throughout the course students are challenged to perform during training days that can be more than twenty hours long. Students are evaluated individually and as members of a team. By the end of the course, they have a pretty good idea of where they stand. The course that I attended had an incredibly diverse student body—from an airline pilot to a truck driver and from a former member of the French Foreign Legion to a couple of guys who had never before fired a pistol. Ages ranged from "too young for a carry permit"

right through "almost ready for social security." If nothing else, the students would learn a lot from each other over the two-week course!

The first section of Residency Training (RT), which consists mostly of lecture and classroom time, is taught by the legendary Jack McGeorge. At the time of my RT in the spring of 2003, McGeorge had recently returned from Iraq, where he was a team leader for the United Nation's Weapons Inspectors. It was McGeorge's team that had found many of the indications of chemical/biological weapons activity leading up to the second Gulf War. McGeorge has worked in the executive protection field for decades and his experience includes U.S. Secret Service duty on Presidential Details and copious amounts of work in the private sector throughout the world. He also has a long history of teaching executive pro-

tection for various agencies and schools, but he currently teaches on these topics only for ESI.

McGeorge explained to me that he has taught EP for various organizations in the past, but has never worked with a better group than that which ESI has put together. Even though many of his ideas about Executive Protection differ from the philosophy of ESI's "soft detail" approach, McGeorge's lectures are an important and respected part of RT. A great deal of McGeorge's experience is based on standard government procedures that are not available in the private sector. The United States Secret Service uses many layers of security and taps a multitude of federal, state and local assets for all of their protection operations. Their budget, in terms of protecting the President, is almost limitless. Clearly, the private sector bodyguard or

security company cannot hope to tap these kinds of resources. McGeorge points out these facts during his lecture, but he counters them with a fact that is very empowering to ESI students. He compares Secret Service training hours to the 600 hour long ESI program—and it breaks down clearly in favor of ESI.

A Secret Service agent trainee spends eight weeks doing Federal LE Training, eight more weeks learning about Secret Service Treasury Duties, but only 144 hours on protection-related training. Of course, they spend many years around details before they are allowed to participate, and they train constantly once on a protective detail. On the surface, the ESI graduate has the edge in terms of formal training, but it is obviously up to the individual to keep that edge sharp.

In addition to fundamentals of large, high-profile protective details, McGeorge also spends a significant amount of time going over his particular area of expertise: chemical & biological weapons. Although there really wouldn't be much that a close protection specialist could do in the event that his client was caught in the midst of a serious bio/chem incident, McGeorge and Duggan feel that the time spent covering the many different types of agents and their methods of deployment is justified. "A client today has the right to expect a professional in this industry to have a fact-based understanding of the chemical and biological threat," says McGeorge—and this course definitely equips the student with that understanding. It also puts the true threat in perspective. Regardless of the hype, there have been relatively few incidents of true bio/chem terrorism and they have been, as a whole, rather inefficient and ineffective when compared to more traditional attacks.

This first section of RT also covers improvised explosive devices, an overview of bomb search techniques, a history lesson covering notable assassinations from the last fifty years and Duggan's micro-expressions course. This is a short version of the same session that was taught during ESI's Protective Intelligence Course (see *S.W.A.T. Magazine*, October, 2003).

In order to keep the blood flowing, Bob Duggan holds a few hand-to-hand sessions during the first few days of the course. Duggan is well-known as a martial artist and is very respected in certain circles as both a practitioner and instructor of advanced techniques.

Duggan recognizes he cannot signifi-

cantly increase a student's combative effectiveness in a few hours; however, he introduces a few techniques the students may be able practice, learn and use to defeat a close quarters attack against themselves or a client. The disarm techniques were interesting, but too intricate to master during course time. As is very common within traditional martial arts circles, the practice was very choreographed and stylized. Hopefully, students realized through the entire process of ESI education that when a gun is out and pointed at them or their client they have already made a number of mistakes.

The most practical of the "hand-to-hand" sessions was probably the one where students practiced literally diving on an attacker while the rest of the team evacuated the client. This is not only a likely reaction to an attack, but would likely provide effective protection for the client. Of course, the protector himself must develop the ability to deal with the attacker from that point on, and that was not on the agenda for RT.

ESI's program stresses several things that shorter, more tactics oriented schools don't spend nearly enough time on: Client Management, Threat Assessment and Counter Surveillance. The first of these three items is covered during the lecture portion of the course.

In my opinion, there is no more important factor in finding, keeping and enjoying work in the private sector of executive protection than strong client management skills. I've always said that this job is 95% public relations. While this may not be sexy or exciting, it is true. "You need to look at yourself as a personal aide in some instances," notes McGeorge. "You are going to get the client to the airport on time, you are going to monitor and help organize the schedule."

If you aren't ready to fit into a professional setting, use good manners and facilitate the primary goal of your client and his business (most often that means meeting deadlines, dealing with people and creating profits), you aren't ready to work in this field. Yes, of course, there are high-profile, ultra-heavy assignments in Afghanistan and elsewhere where bodyguards are carrying M4s and are supported by armored SUVs with counter assault teams, but they are not the bread and butter of this industry and the slots are generally reserved for graduates of elite government special operations schools—not private sector EP programs.

ESI prides itself on providing students with practical preparation for much more common, well paying and just as challenging low-profile assignments. There is also a great deal of historical evidence that the traditional high-profile type protective detail is anything but impenetrable. This is where some of McGeorge's lecture and the heart of ESI's philosophy separate.

Over more than twenty years, ESI has evolved into what it is today because of their practical approach to EP training. In the 1980s, ESI taught a great deal more martial arts, defensive driving and shooting than it does now, largely because they simply didn't know any better. These reactive skills had (and have) little or nothing to do with protecting a client in the best way possible: deterring and avoiding attacks in the first place. That is the goal that has led to the evolution of ESI's pre-emptive training model—using proven techniques and practices to gather intelligence, assess threats, conduct thorough advances and manage clients' activities to avoid potential confrontations.

This may not sound as exciting as kicking, shooting and running over a masked assassin wielding an AK-47 who has lined the streets with booby-traps and is being backed up by a sniper team, but it is hard to argue with a mission statement for a professional protector. "Training security personnel to be acute observers of human behavior or to identify the precursors to assault is more important than being able to shoot the bad guy in the crowd," says Duggan, "[if not only] for the obvious reason that it is simply not acceptable to shoot into a crowd."

Of course, no one is suggesting that EP agents shouldn't be as ready as possible to deal with an unexpected violent attack. ESI understands that some assignments and some parts of the world require an approach, equipment and posture which necessitate serious tactical training. The reality is that most VIP security does not entail such assignments. Duggan is quick to recommend that students look into attending driving schools, such as those taught by The Tony Scotti Training Network, to add those skills to their resume, but says that he is not familiar with any example of a J-turn or similar maneuver saving a client's life.

As an example of the failure of standard doctrine in a high threat situation, Duggan points to the attack on Hamid

Karzai in late 2002. This head of state was ringed by a heavily armed and well-trained security detail of elite U.S. special operations soldiers and the only thing that saved him was the poor marksmanship of the gunmen who attacked. They were able to fire many rounds before they themselves were counter-attacked by the security personnel. Other examples include Hinckley's attack on Reagan and Bremer's shooting of Wallace. In both of these cases, the targets were being protected by well-trained men using accepted techniques who not only missed the opportunities to stop the attacks, but also became incidental targets themselves. During the Reagan attack, the secret service did everything according to their training, but still failed to keep the president from being shot and almost killed.

The ESI philosophy is driven home during the four day "Stalker Problem" session in Aspen. During these four days, students are divided into teams of five or six members and participate in a twenty-four hour a day practical exercise that focuses on a stalker threat to their client. Each team is given all the information that they need to establish the client's threat level and the identity of the stalker. This exercise spans the entire city of Aspen, including the airport, many streets, several businesses and basically requires that ESI take over the Mountain Chalet Hotel. ESI has been operating out of the Mountain Chalet for a long time and they are very gracious in their acceptance of the entire student body and staff role-playing and working at all hours of the day and night.

It would be obviously unfair for me to go into too much detail about this exercise. It is very demanding and requires the full mental power of all the teams' members and effective leadership from the team leader, who is chosen by the members themselves. In fact, with few exceptions the teams are completely self-generated. The ESI staff interfere in the make-up of the individual teams only if they sense a real problem. As you might expect, the teams were very diverse. One team consisted almost entirely of former military personnel while another was made up of individuals who had no tactical experience whatsoever. My team was somewhere in the middle of the pack in terms of previous related experience. While the stalker problem is designed to last four days as a training experience, it is possible for a team to solve the problem early and successfully



Students went through several practical exercises in bomb search and vehicle security. It can take about SIX man-hours to do a thorough vehicle bomb sweep.

identify the stalker and take action before any attack can be launched. Accomplishing this feat reaffirms the legitimacy of the ESI philosophy. At the end of the day, this exercise is a learning experience, not a test—for that reason the outcome is not nearly as important as the process that everyone participates in. This process includes everything from multiple client interviews, advances and briefings to handwriting analysis, counter-surveillance operations and efficient scheduling of manpower.

The staff of the stalker problem is constantly changing, but it has been led for several years by Barry Wilson of Anlance Protection. For the past couple of years, Trip Wynn, an independent executive protection agent who often works with Anlance, has joined Wilson in organizing and running the stalker problem. Both Wilson and Wynn put a huge amount of time and effort into the stalker problem and it shows in the quality of the experience for the students. Wilson, Wynn and their whole team of instructors deserve a great deal of credit for putting on one of the most professional, realistic and effective practical training scenarios I have ever seen.

To run the Stalker Program effectively, ESI brings in a great number of qualified professionals. The cadre list changes every session, mainly because ESI utilizes real-world operators to a great extent and often encounters schedule conflicts that might prevent them from participating.

In addition to the activities that the students are going through with the stalker problem, ESI runs several administrative instructional sessions during these four days, including a section on

practical first aid and emergency medical treatment. This portion of the course was recently overhauled by Duggan to concentrate more on practical applications of medical knowledge and techniques in the context of executive protection. As usual, this comes back to client management and this section of the course now includes a great deal of discussion about how best to find out about your client's medical needs, provide for them while traveling and dealing with potentially embarrassing medical conditions and illnesses with high-profile clients.

Another recently expanded section of study is on dedicated counter surveillance. While this was always a topic of discussion for ESI students operating in a protective details, ESI now advocates dedicating personnel to this activity full time, outside of the actual close protection team. The theories and practical aspects of counter surveillance are covered during a short, but intense, session on the streets of Aspen.

During the lectures, McGeorge goes into great detail about what types of things an advance man is looking for when he goes to research an area or venue. It is during the stalker problem that the students get their practical experience in running real advances on stores, restaurants and routes. The client in the stalker problem (played by several instructors) has a busy itinerary and can't be hampered by a simple stalker! During break-out sessions, instructors take teams on tours of a five star hotel, the airport and several other establishments to discuss the fine points of a good advance.

Several sessions are held throughout RT on embus/debus (the process of get-

ting the client and the detail into and out of any number of vehicles) and moving with the client. While these things may seem simple, they get complicated very quickly in the real world. Trying to orchestrate these movements could be compared to choreographing a ballet in which none of the dancers is thinking about the dance itself. The client is thinking about a meeting or speech, the team leader is thinking about the schedule, one of the detail is talking to the advance man about the next stop, the point-man is watching a suspicious guy up ahead with a camera, the rear-guard is glancing at a cute blonde in a mini-skirt and another member is talking to the client's assistant.

"FREEZE!" Is everyone in a perfect diamond formation? Probably not. The fact is that most non-government details are smaller than State Department doctrine requires. In the private sector, you often find that the team leader, point man, driver and advance man are all-in-one. While ESI prepares students to work in large teams, they also spend a great deal of time letting students work in smaller units. The biggest reason for this is driven home one evening during Wilson's presentation on operational budgets.

With five protective agents, a driver, an advance man and all the required equipment, a client's bill can reach five figures per week very quickly—that's why it isn't realistic for most clients. Is the lawyer who's being threatened during a high-profile case going to be able to afford that kind of protection? Probably not, and most towns have a lot more of that type of work than they do five-man details.

After all the time in Aspen and an immense amount of information about how to prevent an attack, the teams pack up and head to Montrose to learn the skills to deal with the truly worst case scenario: an attack on the principal that requires a lethal response.

In the February, 2003 issue of S.W.A.T. Magazine, I wrote a detailed review of the last four days of "RT," during which students go through the ESI Shooting Program. Rather than re-hash that story, I'll just point out some important changes that were made since—possibly because of—that article.

Foremost among these changes is the increase in time spent on topics that are directly related to circumstances specific to executive protection scenarios. There is much more dynamic shooting, one-

handed shooting and deploying from concealment during the first two days of the course. In addition, two of the final examination drills have been modified to incorporate concealed carry. One of these drills is ESI's variation of the Farnam Drill, which tests a student's ability to draw, clear a malfunction and reload—all while maintaining accuracy under a time constraint. Potential employers with high-risk assignments and students looking for practical training should note that this course is now much more relevant to the students' future job. The final two days of this program are spent at the recently renamed Valhalla Training Center at The Elk Mountain Resort (If you've read the complete review of the shooting program, you'll know where that name came from!), which recently announced a full training curriculum, including an Advanced Executive Protection Shooting course.

Having completed ESI's two Residency Training programs, meeting their instructor staff and studying much of their distance education material, I see how they earned the reputation of "The Harvard of Bodyguard Schools." They are thorough, elite and expensive. You can be assured that most of their staff pride themselves on making sure that the student is getting what they are paying for—a complete education in the fields of Executive Protection and Protective Intelligence. When I complete my distance education courses, I'll proudly wear the pin of an ESI Close Protection and Protective Intelligence Specialist.

There are other less demanding, more action oriented, cheaper and easier options in the field of EP training, but if you chose one of them you might not know if you've really "got what it takes." ☺

*[Editor's Note: At S.W.A.T., we pride ourselves in not just publishing the finest magazine available, but "walking the walk." Although too modest to mention it in the article, the Rob Pincus won the Top Gun award during the residency portion of the ESI course. He also took the Top Overall Individual Performance Award.]*

*During the Stalker Program module, he was named the winner of the Outstanding Performance Award. Rob's team identified the "stalker," located his hide-out and had him "arrested" on the second day of the Program. Rob was subsequently asked to work as an Assistant Instructor in ESI's Residency Training Program during the Stalker Problem and Shooting Program. We're proud of his efforts and accomplishments.]*

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