



Tested Under Fire: Relevant on the Battlefield and in the Streets⁽¹⁾

By R.W. Trewyn Ph.D. — Bio and Archives* — February 2, 2021



Listening to city leaders pontificate about defunding the police while anarchy is erupting in their streets has been but one of numerous moronic storylines playing out on the news over the past few months. It's another area where there are far too many appalling similarities to the late 1960s, early 1970s. That's when mayhem in the streets was the "in" thing for many of today's leaders on the left ... another sordid "time warp."⁽²⁾

The images from today's cities with rioting and looting ongoing — a.k.a., mostly peaceful protests — have illuminated clear analogies regarding what infantry troops face on the battlefield and police officers face in the streets. Being tested under fire is pivotal to both.

But, is the expectation of perfection — all officers, all the time — based in reality?

For me, Groundhog Day is when that test has particular relevance. And, yes, it relates to shadows on Groundhog Day morning. However, they weren't cast by Punxsutawney Phil nor were they in Pennsylvania.

The date was Feb. 2nd, 1969 and the shadows emerged from tunnels near Cu Chi in the Republic of Vietnam. They delivered a very bad forecast for Delta Company that a.m. A deadly, all-day battle ensued.

Groundhog Day was the first exposure to combat for me and many others ... our first test under fire. And it still amazes me how quickly young troops — 18 and 19-year-olds — pass the test. Of course, in many cases, it must be instantaneous if they and their brothers are to survive. Those experiences Feb. 2nd, plus others, proved to me that the rigorous infantry training works really well. It may not be 100% successful, but close.

That's where I see the analogies residing ... training and coming under fire on the battlefield or in the streets.

Law enforcement officers are trained rigorously to do their jobs as well. Thus, every officer should perform perfectly all the time. That's what people expect and it's understandable. Moreover, on days when the streets are calm, the overwhelming majority perform quite admirably.

But, is the expectation of perfection — all officers, all the time — based in reality? What does infantry training and combat offer for comparison?

Soldiers are well trained too, but until their first exposure to combat, there's no way to know how they'll perform. **THEY DON'T KNOW!**

Until Groundhog Day in 1969, I didn't know.

Training tries to mimic life and death moments that could be encountered, but the trainees all know it's not real. It's just pretend

Training is only part of the equation. Until you look death in the eye — when someone is trying to kill you — it's impossible to know.

Each and every person that goes through the training believes they can do it, but believing it and actually knowing it aren't the same. From my short stint in Vietnam, I only knew of one in about fifty that didn't manage it. The total is an estimate since casualties and their replacements were in a constant state of flux.

But, whether it was 98% or something less than that, the VAST, VAST majority passed the test. I was putting my life in their hands; they were putting their lives in mine. As a result, you tend to know, since you're living it ... your life depends on it. Obviously, 100% would have been better, but in most fire-fights that's what it was.

Tested under fire in combat, a small percentage don't pass the test. It seems reasonable to expect the same thing to be true in law enforcement.

Training tries to mimic life and death moments that could be encountered, but the trainees all know it's not real. It's just pretend.

In the Army, crawling under machine gun fire only a couple feet above you might give you a feel for what combat is like, but the NCOs aren't trying to kill you, only get you ready for the real deal. No one crawling worries about getting shot.

When those doing the shooting are actually trying to kill you, it's a different story. Everyone takes that seriously. A very small number can't handle it.

Doesn't it make sense that the same thing would be true with police officers?

But, a life and death confrontation IS the hurdle

Yes, it would be nice if every officer had cleared that hurdle prior to a use of lethal force encounter. But, a life and death confrontation IS the hurdle.

Plus, it would be good if every officer with two strikes against them performance-wise were off the streets prior to a use of lethal force encounter. That can probably be done more effectively within some police departments and, hopefully, it will be going forward. The national news has certainly put that issue front and center which should help get it done.

Unfortunately, declining support for the police has proven that where support goes down crime goes up. That's not rocket science, folks.

Moreover, the thin blue line is paying a heavy price. The total number of non-COVID, "line of duty" deaths in 2020 was "118."⁽³⁾

NOT GOOD!

A majority of American citizens likely still believe "blessed are the peacekeepers,"⁽⁴⁾ but that must translate into discernable support whenever and wherever possible. Some of it can happen quietly in the voting booth by NOT voting for idiots who support defunding the police; vote for their opponents. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like that happened across the board on Nov. 3rd.

Some of it must be more visible and vociferous though. If it's not, the number of quality officers out there will continue to drop. That's the wrong answer.

Vocal members of the Star Spangled home of the brave are needed to ensure the U.S. will remain the land of the free. SPEAK OUT FOR AMERICA'S LAW OFFICERS!

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References:

(1) <https://canadafreepress.com/article/tested-under-fire-relevant-on-the-battlefield-and-in-the-streets>

(2) Trewyn, R.W. "Time Warp: 1969/70 Anarchy ... Recycle 2019/20," *Canada Free Press*, Dec. 3, 2020; <https://canadafreepress.com/article/time-warp-1969-70-anarchy-recycle-2019-20>

(3) <https://www.odmp.org/search/year/2020>

(4) <https://www.bible.com/bible/111/MAT.5.9.NIV>