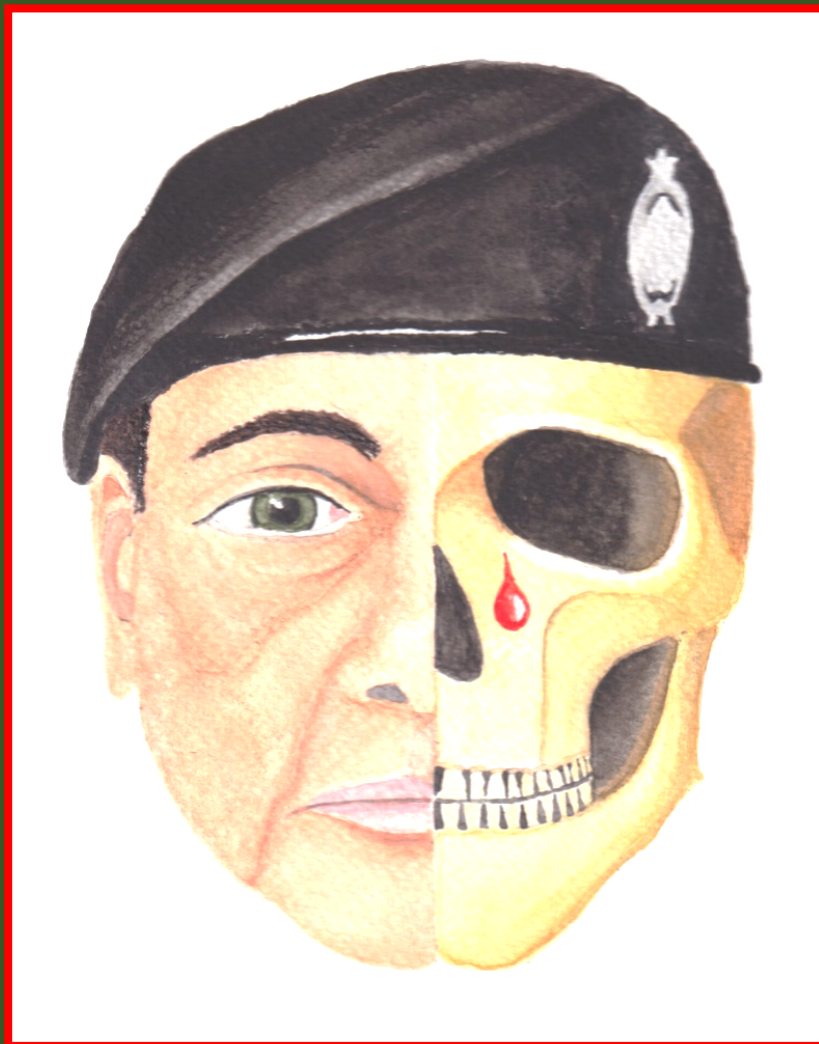


# **BREAK OFF:**

## **THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS**



**JIMMY JOHNSON**

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# 1. INTENDED AUDIENCE

## **'BREAK OFF: THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS'**

consists of three stages. Part 1 of the document is complete, and self-contained and can be studied without enrolling in Parts Two or Three. It is aimed primarily at all combat veterans who have served in conflicts around the world since the early 1970s (soon after the British Government began committing troops into Northern Ireland), and right through until recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. These combat veterans can take it away and in their own time, read and fully digest the methodology and relate this to their own experiences of the 'upped' intensive training programmes prior to their deployment in conflicts. **BREAK OFF** should help combat veterans realise that how since their participation in the 'upped' intensive training programmes pre-deployment, they seemingly now have a 'mental switch' in their minds that when flipped in an argument or frustration, it unleashes an instant aggressive feeling of 'rage and anger'.

This pamphlet will also be a useful reference to the people delivering **BREAK OFF** and a great help to the families and friends of combat veterans, in making them fully understand the root causes of this very short fuse of 'rage and anger' and violence in their loved one's behaviour since their return from conflicts.

# 2. SCOPE

**BREAK OFF: THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR VETERANS** is designed to help combat veterans recognise, understand and handle their heightened 'rage and anger'. However, it cannot prevent a reflex or conditioned violent response to perceived threats, as these are normal reactions and responses for soldiers to protect themselves when being attacked.

Nevertheless, the **THREE STAGES: AWARENESS, OUTLETS AND THE DRILL** will be a critical barrier to premeditated acts of violence arising from frustration or verbal

arguments with people, strangers or even domestic violence with loved ones. For example; when arguments become heated, they can boil up over a period of only a few moments and spill over into violence as the feelings of 'rage and anger' come to the point where aggression and the use of violence become the only release. But combat veterans should, as a result of mentally telling themselves to **BREAK OFF** and then using **THE DRILL**, be able to identify and recognise this feeling of 'rage and anger' and realise 'why' it comes about - quickly becoming aware that they have been purposely conditioned to react in this way and accordingly suppress their feelings!

### **3. BREAK OFF PROGRAM OUTLINE**

**FIRST STAGE = AWARENESS:** This will help combat veterans to understand how even minor arguments can lead to intense feelings of 'rage and anger' which can often result in severe and widespread acts of confrontation and violence. This awareness will be achieved by describing in depth how these feelings of 'rage and anger' were deliberately implanted in combat veterans' personalities, in 'upped' training programs prior to their deployment in conflicts. It will also explore and show how this induced legacy of 'rage and anger' manifests and eventually becomes accepted as normal in combat veterans' everyday lives - to the point where they are dangerously and consistently at high risk of ending up on the wrong side of the law because of this conditioned violence.

**SECOND STAGE - OUTLETS:** This stage will explain how this 'anger' can be harnessed and focused for constructive and creative use. This will be demonstrated by anecdotal evidence, and through experience of the processes of making and training in activities such as writing, art and sport. It is clear that 'anger' can be a great motivator in developing these skills.

**THIRD STAGE - DRILL:** This will help professionals and combat veterans realise how the 'Sword of Damocles' hangs over combat veterans returning from conflicts, and the necessity of using combat veterans knowledge in army drill to break the chain of

violence linked to their training and experiences in combat. So, combat veterans may achieve a lasting and rewarding release from their implanted 'rage and attack' legacy - now they know how this implanted violence unknowingly controls them!

*(N/B Stages 2 and 3 can be delivered in person or online. As a one-to-one programme, or in a group by a facilitator.)*

## **4. INTRODUCTION**

During the Second World War, Brigadier General S.L.A Marshall, himself a veteran of the first world war, pioneered a study that was carried out in the USA on some of the combatants, and in 1947 published his findings in his book "Men Against Fire". Incredibly, his study found that only 15% - 20% of these soldiers were actually trying to kill the enemy - as seemingly the majority were only aiming their weapons in the direction of the enemy.

Amazingly, what Marshal's investigation showed was that the greater part of combat infantry were really conscientious objectors when it came to pulling the trigger and killing the enemy. This was probably down to mankind's moral upbringing, as it's a known fact that it is very difficult to get a human being to intentionally kill another human being in cold blood.

Obviously the results of this investigation would have come as a massive shock to the American and British military authorities, because it revealed that only 20% of their armies were doing their job in annihilating the enemy, and that around 80% of their ammunition was therefore being expensively wasted by not being fired directly at the enemy targets.

Since that time, American and British military practice has been in the pursuit of creating supreme professional soldiers, killing instruments who will destroy with no hesitation or conscience whoever is perceived as the enemy. This quest was fulfilled with the help of psychiatrists and psychologists, who knew from their own research into criminal behaviour that the greater part of all murders are committed whilst the person is in a state of 'rage and anger'.

But this created other problems because, combat troops cannot be kept in a constant and permanent state of 'rage and anger' during peacetime situations, otherwise this would create absolute mayhem amongst the local civilian population where the combat troops were stationed. Nevertheless, the way round this problem was to train soldiers to a specific stable level of training, as this would maintain their physical fitness and also perfect the practical skills required of combat troops under peacetime conditions.

However, when combat troops are required for conflict situations and the enemy needs destroying, then their training level is 'upped' and intensified to a vicious and extreme killing standard. The way this is achieved is by the use of science and the redesigning of the intensive training programmes prior to the deployment of troops, along with rigorously targeted and focused discipline, to implant a 'rage and anger' as though the soldiers were being trained like attack dogs.

## **NOTES:**

# **BREAK OFF:**

## **THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS**



**STAGE ONE – AWARENESS**

## **5. AWARENESS – STAGE ONE**

In the 1970s, the British began using these intensive violent training programs, which compelled new levels of obedience in soldiers so as to make them respondent and competent killers. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) had entire new training complexes built (killing areas for snipers/gunmen and riot control zones), where they could train combat troops, day and night, in the use of extreme violence.

With this new type of training, extreme violence was being deliberately introduced to the psyche of combat troops in readiness for combat where they are primed to kill or be killed – this ended the low proportionate killing of the enemy achieved during the Second World War. The killing percentage of modern day professional soldiers has increased with devastating effect, as witnessed in the Falklands War and also in the continuous conflicts British troops have fought in since.

However, up until now little regard has been given to the tragic consequences of leaving combat troops with this implanted ‘aggression’ still very much active in their subconscious after their tours of duty in conflicts. We know that once dogs have been trained and used for attack, they cannot become normal household pets because they have become too savage in their behaviour. In a similar way this can apply to combat veterans, as verified by the fact that in recent years, the Criminal Justice System has admitted the existence of very high numbers of combat veterans in the prison population who are predominantly serving prison sentences for violence.

Incredibly, there is in reality no other group of people in the entire prison population of England and Wales, who are significantly over-represented for committing crimes of extreme violence or the most heinous crime of murder. This is not hypothesis or speculation, but is an actual fact for numerous combat veterans inside the prison population. It is therefore obvious that this implanted ‘rage and anger’ needs to be counteracted or reversed, as it is still very much behind the violent behaviour of combat veterans during peacetime conditions.



This program intends to give combat veterans a return ticket, because this 'implanted extreme violence' legacy will not miraculously disappear with age. This is because combat veterans need to be shown how they were programmed with violence in the first place, and how unknowingly it became part of their everyday existence on their return home from conflicts.

A number of years ago the rock band Pink Floyd released an album called 'The Wall' together with a video showing troops marching around all over the place in a robotic trance like state. The image is exactly the same message that the governments want the public to see when its soldiers return from conflicts, 'welcome-home' parades as a nation gives thanks to its heroes who are ready to resume their lives as if untouched by the whole experience.

However, what lies beneath the expressionless faces of these troops returning home to peacetime surroundings, supposedly to live normal lives again with their loved ones? Unknowingly with psychologically altered minds, programmed to respond with extreme violence at the least provocation.

Therefore, the first step in alleviating this 'conditioned-response' in combat troops is for them to fully understand and become consciously aware of the fact that even after the end of a deployment to a conflict, they now have a 'mental switch' in their minds that when flipped in an argument or frustration, it unleashes an instant aggressive feeling of 'rage and anger'. These violent training programs use a combination of different techniques, aimed at suppressing fear with a heightened state of 'rage and anger' that disregards any inhibitions of soldiers about killing or using extreme violence on other human beings. The training methods were first introduced in the British Army to combat the 'Urban Guerrilla Warfare' tactics that were being used by the provisional IRA against British soldiers in Northern Ireland.

To that end, I intend to disclose my own 'upped' violent training program, which I experienced nearly five decades ago, and which has not changed much since.

## ■ **SWITCHING-ON-THE-VIOLENCE**

My own participation in the 'upped' violence training program began one Sunday afternoon in late October 1971, when I was a Corporal and Section Leader. I had just arrived with a new Infantry Battalion, which had recently been formed from the Armoured Corps to serve a four month 'emergency' tour of duty in Northern Ireland. The training programme was being held at the NATO Barracks in Sennelager, West Germany.

The accommodation the men had been assigned to live in was filthy and disgusting. It was covered in dust and had all sorts of waste debris lying around and looked like it had not been inhabited for years. In fact, in one room there was a huge hole in one of the outside walls, where sleet, snow and rain often poured through during a typical German winter. I believed it was someone's idea of a sick joke to bring this level of realism to the training programme, since troops in Northern Ireland were routinely based in derelict factory buildings across the Province.

The start of training was on a Monday morning and was chaotic, because no-one had any idea of what was going to happen, but everyone still got ready as normal and went outside the building for 'First Parade'. The whole company apart from Officers mustered together on the road outside the accommodation, and waited for someone to let us know what was going to take place on this first day.

A mate of mine, one of the Corporals I was standing next to on the road, suddenly said: 'Who's that?'. He nodded with his head in the direction further down the same road we were standing. I looked to where he had indicated and saw two soldiers, I realised they were both marching and I literally mean marching. The pair of them kept in step together, straight as ramrods and swinging their arms at the correct military regulation. It was as if they were on a Parade ground but most notably they were marching in our direction.

Nevertheless, when they neared our location I saw one soldier who I took to be a Staff Sergeant in rank and he was built like a brick shithouse, in fact he was

enormous both in size and in height. The other soldier marching by his side was himself over six feet tall, but looked like a pygmy compared to his comrade. I also noticed from their berets and caps badges that they were both Welsh Guards.

I then spotted one of my men standing with other soldier pals of his near to the entrance of our accommodation building, but unfortunately for him, he had his hands stuffed inside his trouser pockets. Suddenly the massive Staff Sergeant came to an abrupt halt beside him and yelled in a very loud voice: 'What the fuck do you think you are doing soldier! Get those fucking hands out of your pockets now!'

The soldier from my Section stood there in shock and looked completely dumbfounded, and could only gawk at this gigantic Staff Sergeant who had suddenly come from out of nowhere and was now screaming orders at him. In fact, the whole company was stunned into silence at the sudden impact of this huge Staff Sergeant, now towering over the soldier from my Section and yelling orders at him. Thankfully, the soldier from my Section finally came out of his state of shock, quickly pulled his hands out of his pockets, snapped to attention and shouted in reply 'Waiting for First Parade Staff.'

At the mention of the word 'Staff', the 'Staff' Sergeant seemed to go berserk, and began ranting and raving about being a 'Colour Sergeant', not Staff Sergeant! He then ordered my soldier onto the ground to do twenty press-ups, though it wasn't long before one of his pals made a comical remark out loud about his performance.

This really astonished and seemingly incensed the two Guardsmen; they could not believe that someone had the nerve to crack a joke whilst they dealt out punishment. They whispered to each other, and then the pair of them began scurrying about amongst the men like a pair of screaming banshees, ordering anyone standing near them onto the ground also to do twenty press-ups. It wasn't long before most of the Company were face down on the road vigorously doing press-ups, but if the Guardsmen didn't think some of the men were doing them well enough, they made them do another twenty. This chastisement went on for some time, but eventually and

in a warped sort of way the Guardsmen seemed satisfied they had appropriately introduced themselves to the men of the Company. Then together they disappeared inside the accommodation building, leaving us all wondering what the hell had just hit us!

A short while later, the man we all now knew to be a Guards Colour Sergeant emerged out of the accommodation building with our Officers in tow behind him. We were then formed into a parade and the Colour Sergeant addressed the whole company, introducing himself and then telling us that his job was to prepare and train us for soldiering in Northern Ireland. He told us he was going to do this no matter what, because he had 'carte blanche' control over our training. He also told us that he didn't give a fuck whether we were Officers or ordinary soldiers, as he was now our God for the next eight weeks, and woe betide any soldier who did not come up to his standards.

**In short: This was no informal friendly welcome speech to the training program; in fact, it was a full scale assault on the whole Company's senses, together with the underlying message that 'discipline and immediate obedience' was expected of everyone. Welcome to the 'upped violence' training program!**

## ■ TRAINING

That was it from that moment on, the Colour Sergeant stamped his authority on our training as he and his team of instructors terrorised, chased and hounded the whole company twenty-four hours a day. In truth we all began to fear him unexpectedly turning up even when we were training under one of his own instructors, as he would immediately and intimidatingly take control and spring some sort of unhinged scenario or physical exercises on us. He transported himself around the training area in a short wheelbase Land Rover and whenever he saw troops, especially if they were standing round, he would literally leap out of his vehicle whilst it was still in motion and demand to know what they were doing.

Regrettably, no matter what reply they gave him, even if they had been genuinely 'ordered' to wait where they were, or they were waiting their turn to shoot

on the range, that was no excuse and he would yell something at them such as: 'Do you see that building over there?' He would be pointing at some structure far off in the distant horizon and when the men answered; 'Yes Colour.' He would then scream at them: 'Well go and touch its walls and get back here again quickly. Come on move yourselves, on the double!' The men would be off and running and strangely enough, it became a normal sight to see soldiers running to some unknown destination far away in the distance. Yet no one asked why or questioned this, because everyone knew who had ordered it and thanked their lucky stars the Colour Sergeant wasn't near them.

The very first time the Colour Sergeant waylaid me and my men with one of his made-up scenarios, occurred one morning around lunchtime the day after our training began. At the time myself and my Section of men were in fact in foot patrol formation and actually entering the Sennelager Barracks, deviously he had concealed himself behind the German Guardroom building. Then suddenly without any warning, he sprang out of hiding in front of the patrol, shouting and pointing at a row of buildings across the road from the camp entrance: 'Sniper in those windows over there!'

I was lucky as there was a huge tree standing only a few feet in front of me, so I promptly dived behind its trunk for cover and cocked my empty weapon and aimed in the direction the Colour Sergeant had gestured. However, one of my men had been caught out in the open and had no cover to duck behind when the alarm warning of the sniper had been given. Unfortunately, he was standing on the grass lawn outside the Guardroom, so rather than remain upright and become a victim of the Colour Sergeant's displeasure, he dived down onto the shortcut grassed lawn to make himself less of a target.

The Colour Sergeant spotted him straight away lying in his prone position on the lawn and ran over to him screaming: 'That's not cover! Those are fucking blades of grass and they won't stop fuck all coming at you from the Paddy bastards!' He then grabbed and half dragged the unlucky soldier over to the Guardroom building, slammed him up against the wall and then down on the ground. He bellowed at the

soldier: 'That's cover behind something fucking solid!'. At the same time, he was slapping the brick wall of the building with the palm of one of his hands. Then, after ensuring the soldier had now got this knowledge of cover from a bullet firmly fixed in his head, he began stalking each and every one of us in our positions. He checked if we had cocked our rifles and were ready to engage the sniper, then scrutinised and commented on our positions of cover - thankfully we all passed his muster.

**Notes: It was in those first days of training when the start of the dehumanising of the Irish people began, as the Irish were now being referred to solely as the 'Paddies' by the instructors. The threat to soldiers' lives was directly associated with Paddies, who would eventually become regarded as a subhuman species for whom normal standards of treatment did not apply. Remarkably much like the Nazis viewed the Jews in the second world war.**

**It should also be noted that the Welsh Guards Colour Sergeant, and his instructors, had very recently returned from a 'tour of duty' in Northern Ireland. They were still hyped-up, and we also soon learned they hated all 'Paddies' with a vengeance and without doubt, the hostility and intense hatred of the 'Paddies' was redirected at ourselves, so we, in turn, would begin to hate them even before we had any personal experience.**

A great deal of our time was spent on the small arms ranges at Sennelager, we practised shooting day and night at targets with cut out images of charging enemy soldiers, without any hesitation or thought of them resembling human beings and precisely the response required when faced with a 'real' enemy. Although part of our training with our rifles on the ranges was not only for accuracy and proficiency in shoot outs with future potential gunmen, it was also for our own personal safety in the living accommodation of our bases in Northern Ireland. As the army were billeted mostly in derelict factories across the Province, these were very cramped living quarters with troops and weapons packed tightly together. In fact, since the army had been committed in Northern Ireland from when the conflict first began, there had been a number of deaths or serious injuries to soldiers, caused by weapons being carelessly

left loaded with live rounds and then negligently discharged inside these Factories - so safety of weapons was paramount.

However, on one occasion while we were live firing on one of the ranges at Sennelager, the mishandling of an SLR rifle occurred within my own Section of men. The Section had finished their shoot and I gave the order to 'clear guns'. The correct procedure for clearing the SLR of live ammunition was: 'Take the magazine off the weapon and cock it 3 times, then apply the safety catch and draw the bolt of the gun fully back.' The users should then visually check, by looking inside the chamber to make sure no bullet is still remaining inside. Once this drill had been carried out, the user of the gun would then wait for the next order of 'ease springs'. This action was carried out by pulling back on the rifle's cocking handle and easing the bolt forward, then pressing the trigger to release the firing pin and a faint clicking sound should be heard. This meant the weapon was clear of bullets and was completely safe.

Yet on this certain day, once I heard the rapid sounds of the cocking handles had finished being pulled backwards and forwards and seeing the men visually checking inside their weapons, I then gave the order to 'ease springs'. I couldn't believe it, the next sound I heard was of a bullet being fired down the range! But the worst part about it was that the Colour Sergeant had only minutes before arrived on the range and was observing the clearing of guns. At the sound of the bullet being fired, he went ballistic!

Instantaneously he began running up and down the line of men lying prone on the firing point of the range, screaming: 'Who fired that fucking shot!' The culprit raised his hand above his head and straight away the Colour Sergeant yelled: 'Take that bloody weapon off that man and place him under close arrest!' The offender had his rifle taken from him by other soldiers, who were then detailed by the Colour Sergeant to escort the prisoner back to our base at Sennelager and have him put in a cell in the Guardroom. The soldier was placed in the rear of a waggon with the escort and driven back to base, and apparently he was locked in a cell in the Guardroom and left there. We heard later that within a couple of hours, he appeared before the Company Commander and received a fine of one week's wages as punishment.

**Notes: The real punishment for the soldier was not in fact the monetary fine, it was the chastisement and being virtually ostracised from the rest of the Section. Since the men realised that if the idiot had discharged his weapon like this while we were in Northern Ireland, he could well have killed or seriously injured anyone of us. Thus, emphasising the fact of not only having to be constantly alert for IRA terrorists, but also having to live with the constant threat of some fool firing a lethal weapon inside the factory base as well.**

The small arms ranges at Sennelager were equally shared among all NATO forces, but this is where all resemblance in training between British and NATO troops ended, because the British had their own agenda and very different training techniques for their troops being deployed to Northern Ireland. In fact, British troops had their very own special training facilities at the Sennelager base, including one area which was the 'close quarter combat range', nicknamed 'Tin-City'. It was given this name because the entire range was surrounded by a huge wall of corrugated sheets of metal, which had a small doorway built into the wall.

On entering this doorway troops find themselves in a sparsely furnished room, with a few tables and chairs. In this room they were issued with special gun attachments, designed to convert the high velocity SLR rifles to low velocity .22 calibre bullets which were to be fired on this range. I was also given a map of a built up area of streets and other structures, then myself and my men were briefed and informed that once we went through the second door in the room (which led onto the range itself); we would be in the Market area of Belfast – a well known Republican and IRA neighbourhood.

We were to carry out a foot patrol through the district, and the map I had been given had the route heavily highlighted in coloured pen and looked easy to follow. My first job was to sort out the positions of where I wanted my men in the patrol, and once this was done I led my Section through the range doorway, and was amazed at what I saw at the other side. I suddenly found myself standing on a tarmacked street with what looked like actual houses and other buildings, the whole scene seemed bizarre as the place looked exactly like anywhere you would come across in England. I could



also see the looks of shock and surprise on the faces of my men, as they too had unexpectedly found themselves transported to an ordinary street back in the UK by simply walking through a doorway in Germany.

It was my job to lead the patrol through the range and I was keen to set off and see what other surprises lay in store for us. But then, what I imagined as my worst nightmare happened as the Colour Sergeant turned up and informed me he would be joining the patrol to observe us. Still there was nothing I could do about it, so I just had to get on with it. Once he positioned himself on the road at the rear of the patrol, he nodded his head at me, and I led off the patrol down the street marked on the map.

At first the place was quiet and nothing out of the ordinary, until the patrol moved approximately halfway down the street when we heard the spine chilling sounds of metal dustbin lids being banged on the pavements and streets all around us.

We had been told about this clattering of dustbin lids being the 'early warning' system used by the 'Paddies' on Republican estates, it was to warn all residents that the 'Brits' were on the estate. However, this tactic also worked in favour of army patrols, because it was an excellent indicator of when to expect trouble such as a hidden gunman, or crowds of Paddies surrounding the patrol in confrontational mood. We also knew we had to be very, very wary once the dustbin lid banging stopped. On this occasion silence descended on the range for just a few seconds, then true to form a brick in the wall exploded just a few inches above my head and bits of stone fragments hit me in the face.

I did not have time to think or worry about what this was, and I instinctively fired off two or three shots in the direction of the window of the house a few yards from my position, where I glimpsed the gunman who had just opened fire at me. I then dived for the cover of the nearest house doorway. As luck would have it, only a few days earlier on one of the ranges, I had been instructed on a one to one basis by the Colour Sergeant on how to deal with a sniper. I now heard him shout from the rear of the patrol: "Well done Corporal, that's it get rounds off at that fucking gunman straight away!". I felt elated at having actually been praised by the Colour Sergeant!

He now began pacing up and down the street in between my Section, who were still in the cover of house doorways on either side of the street, bellowing at them: "And what the fuck were you lot doing, other than diving for cover when the gunman opened fire? That is okay on the ranges because the targets aren't firing at you and you've got the time to take cover and select a target, but in Northern Ireland you don't have time! If your Section Leader had been killed by that gunman, he would have had a birthday party with the rest of you lot! But your Section Leader returned fire immediately and hit the target, then he dived for cover and that's the way the rest of you are going to do it from now on!"

He then went on to explain to the men that when a gunman is lying in wait to ambush and kill a soldier, he has got full advantage of the situation and will have the first shot at the patrol. "So, you have got to take that advantage back from him and getting that advantage means, you have got to get rounds off in his direction immediately after his first shot! As this will make the gunman automatically duck his head or flinch for a split second, knowing a bullet is coming at you will instinctively cause this reaction. This means the sniper has taken his gun sites off you and that split second the gun is not directly aimed at you, means you 'living or dying' by taking cover and then taking him out!"

**Notes: The act of firing in the general direction of a sniper instantly and without thought, was intended to distract the sniper long enough for the patrol to find cover and take targeted shots. This method works, and was and still is practised on a regular basis. However, a significant side effect of this conditioned response, is that soldiers become ingrained with 'act first and reason later'. It is this instant response with violence to stressful situations, which causes problems in civilian life when the war is over.**

The training at Sennelager was relentless and never seemed to stop, though it was pointed out that we had never served in the 'Troubles' and therefore we had much to learn about the Paddies. In fact, the pace in training stepped up another gear, especially in the use of violence, since violence we were told was something we could expect to come across on a daily basis in Northern Ireland. We began training in hand

to hand fighting under our own Platoon instructor who specialised in unarmed combat and made sure we practised this art as regularly as possible.

In due course we began training in Riot Control, but this was very basic in the beginning and was mostly about how to form up and move around with walls of shields, and also the use of 'snatch squads'. A 'snatch squad' was normally made up of groups of four soldiers, chosen for their speed and ability to handle themselves in punch-ups. Their job was mainly to charge into a group of rioters and grab (snatch) a pre-selected rioter and take them prisoner, but they were very vulnerable as they did not carry weapons other than a club of sorts to defend themselves against the rioters. But, at this early stage riot control training was rehearsed amongst ourselves and in truth, it was applied light heartedly by everyone.

However, the day came when we experienced our very first encounter with the 'rent a riot' mob at Sennelager. This was another specially adapted (British) training area, and used specifically for nothing other than the instruction of pure extreme and severe violence. Ignorantly when we arrived at the training facility, we had no idea of what to expect or what was going to happen until we actually experienced the full and raw violence of it for ourselves.

Our Platoon arrived at this training zone in a couple of waggons, which stopped at a place that seemed in the middle of nowhere? As we leapt off the waggons I instantly heard the voice of the Colour Sergeant barking out orders at us, he was standing by himself in an area near to some houses which seemed to have been built in a field? I could not say how many houses there were because I did not have time to count, as the Colour Sergeant was already yelling: "Section leaders over to me quickly. And tell your men to get their riot gear ready. Come on move yourselves!"

Whilst the rest of the Platoon began getting riot shields and visored helmets out of the wagons, myself and the other two Section leaders ran towards the Colour Sergeant. On arriving at his position, he immediately gestured with his arm towards a row of houses and a street with groups of soldiers dressed in civilian clothing. The three of us could see a large group of around 40 or 50 civilians standing approximately halfway down the street. Some were laughing and talking, and it was clear they had

done this before because they seemed very relaxed. I also noticed other small groups of men standing beside or leaning against burnt out cars, and a few of them were slowly whacking these burnt out wrecks with pick-axe handles and grinning at us (as if to say come near us and you'll get this, fucker!). There were also large piles of bricks, rocks and glass bottles with pieces of rag sticking out of their necks (petrol bombs), and these had been strategically placed around the street in neat orderly stacks of readiness.

The Colour Sergeant gave us a few moments to take in these alien and threatening sights and assess the situation, then said: "There they are lads, now let's see you sort these fucking Paddies out good and proper! Remember your riot drill, get your shield men locked together and get them advancing towards the Paddies. When you get in range Corporal (pointing at me because I was carrying the rubber bullet gun), or you feel you or your men are in danger, then hit the fuckers with a rubber bullet. You've also got to get your 'snatch-squad' into the rioters as well, because we want prisoners. Don't worry, you can sort this fucking lot out, just imagine this is your chance to get hold of the Paddies. Now get your men moving and get stuck into the bastards, go on, move it."

The three of us doubled back to our men, who were already carrying their shields and wearing their supposedly protective steel helmets (all except myself and the 'snatch-squad' who were wearing no protective gear whatsoever as we may have to move quickly). When the Colour Sergeant gave us the signal to move, we formed a shield wall with the first men hugging the wall of the first house. Then, with all the shields locked together, I ordered the wall to move forward.

At the corner of the first house we turned our wall of shields onto the same street as the rioters, and instantly we were greeted with a furious barrage of bricks and other projectiles raining down on us. This was a readily planned ambush of flying missiles and was intended to give us a taste of what to expect when patrolling the Catholic areas of Northern Ireland, as apparently the Paddies on these housing Estates were experts and well practised at this sort of thing.

However, apart from the bombardment of bricks and rocks, I also saw a couple of petrol bombs explode on the street but ignored them as they were well out of our range and not an imminent threat. Through the thunderous noise of the bricks slamming into the shields and the shouting from the rioters, plus the racket of the banging of pickaxe handles on the burnt out wrecks of vehicles, the street became a crescendo of noise and sounded very intimidating.

Still, as our wall of shields slowly progressed down the street under the constant hail of bricks and rocks, I noticed a pair of rioters in the upper floor window of a house our shield men were hugging as we pressed forward. The houses were only facades, with rows of scaffolding and batten boards behind the frontage, giving access to the windows. These walkways allowed rioters to move behind the houses unseen, just as they would do in Northern Ireland, so that they could do whatever damage they wished on the troops patrolling the streets.

Incredibly, I realised the two rioters in this upper floor window were struggling with a huge lump of concrete, whilst actually trying to position it on a window ledge to drop it on us as we passed underneath the window! I screamed at my shield men to get away from the house wall, then fired a rubber bullet at the pair of them in the window. The bullet missed the rioters, but thankfully made them drop the huge lump of concrete harmlessly on the pavement only a few yards in front of us.

I heard the Colour Sergeant laugh out loud and shout: "That's it Corporal, always watch those windows. Them fucking Paddies will use any trick in the book to kill a British Soldier." My instant thoughts were: 'Watch the windows? I had to watch everything in this place, or someone would be killed, it was as simple as that! Then to make matters worse, suddenly countless numbers of petrol bombs began hitting the wall of shields. It looked as if the whole wall of shields was ablaze and absurdly my men were pushing a wall of fire down the street towards the rioters, and at the same time getting relentlessly battered by more and more bricks and rocks. There was no let up whatsoever!

Inevitably one of my men got hit with a rock in the face and staggered backwards, I grabbed him because there was lots of blood running down his face.

Unfortunately, the Colour Sergeant had also seen this happen and yelled at me: 'Leave him Corporal, it will teach him to duck fucking faster the next time!' I couldn't believe this, as apparently the only 'first-aid' rule in this place was: Don't get injured! In truth, it really felt that as we advanced further down the street, we were being pulled deeper and deeper into a place of nothing more than pure brutal physical violence on a scale none of us had ever before experienced.

Finally, as we managed to get in rubber bullet range of the rioters, I heard the Colour Sergeant shout for me to get my 'snatch squad' ready. But I didn't need to tell them to get ready, as they were already 'chomping on the bit' and raring to go and besides, I reckon all of us wanted to get stuck into the rioters! I leaped into the street from behind our shield wall and fired a rubber bullet directly at the crowd of rioters, then immediately the 'snatch squad' were running straight at the rioters armed with their baton sticks.

It was obvious the rioters had played this game before, because as soon as I fired the rubber bullet at them they were all off and running away down the street - all except one! Amazingly the rubber bullet I fired had hit a target who was now writhing on the street floor, unable to flee after his mates. When our 'snatch squad' reached him I was 'over the moon' since we had managed to get a prisoner, plus it was now our turn to dish out some of our own treatment in return for the hammering the bricks, rocks and petrol bombs they had inflicted on ourselves over the length of time it had taken us to reach this point - it was payback time.

There was a massive cheer from all the lads as we saw the injured rioter desperately kick out with his feet at the 'snatch squad', in an attempt to keep them at a distance from himself as he lay on his back in the road. But the 'snatch squad' were in no mood for giving quarter and were on him like a pack of rabid dogs, and they laid into him with their batons and eventually began putting the boot in on him. This made us cheer the more each time as we saw him being kicked, in fact it felt fantastic watching our mates kicking the shit out of the rioter.

I also became aware of the Colour Sergeant, who was standing near me in the street and intently watching the 'snatch squad' attack the prisoner. To my surprise, he

began cheering and encouraging the 'snatch squad' to dish out the violence, then I heard him shouting: 'That's it lads, now give the Paddy bastard some of his own fucking medicine!' Unfortunately however, our Riot Control time was now up, and the Colour Sergeant had to end the training session and stop our retribution. I watched him start walking (slowly) down the street towards the 'snatch squad', who was still taking kicks at the prisoner. It was clear that the Colour Sergeant was purposely taking his time to free the prisoner, ensuring the lads got their reward by letting them get as much time as possible with a frenzied assault on the prisoner.

The mini riot was now over, and everyone was talking at once. Some of the lads had cuts, lumps and bruises where rioters' missiles had hit them and were proudly showing them to each other as if they were war wounds. A few days later the Platoon was again put through this Riot Control drill, and yet again we were battered and pelted with bricks, rocks and petrol bombs. But this time round, my men were pissed off because we did not manage to get our hands on any prisoners. I told the lads afterwards that the rioters had learned their lesson by making sure they didn't get captured by our Platoon, more so after seeing the results of what happened to their own comrade a few days earlier.

**Notes: Shortly after the Toxteth riots in Liverpool (July 1981), the Police Federation recognised the fact that the Police needed training in Riot Control. The British Army offered to train them in this drill, since they already had experience in controlling and quelling riots in Northern Ireland. The Army got the task to train the police, but this training did not last very long. Apparently the Police complained about the Army training being too realistic and intense, as Police Officers were being injured with bricks, rocks and petrol bombs being hurled at them. Therefore, the Police, claiming for their own safety decided to train themselves in Riot Control by using such things as balsa wood bricks to throw at each other!**

However, it is also very possible that someone in authority with psychological awareness had realised the long term and damaging effects of the Army's intensive upped training programme. As the Police responding to

**civilian rioters with such rage and aggression would not be publicly acceptable, especially when the violence was spontaneous. At the same time, it was also rumoured that Armed Police Units would not employ ex-soldiers because they were trained to kill, whereas Police marksmen are trained to just wound or disable a gunman.**

Inside the base at Sennelager, there was a German Army canteen which we frequently passed when practising foot patrols throughout the Garrison in the evenings. The canteen was also a typical squaddies bar, in that on most nights when our Section patrolled past there were usually fights going on outside between drunken German soldiers. Also, the German soldiers carried bayonets whilst drinking in this place, and consequently we often saw fights with bayonets drawn and drunken German soldiers posturing and circling each other with these weapons in threatening attitudes.

I myself ignored these fights as my responsibility was for the protection of the patrol, and I worried more about the Colour Sergeant using these fights as an ideal distraction and justification for him to attack us. However, I did not realise at the time that these fights outside the German Army canteen had very much attracted the interest of most of the men in the company. This became apparent to me shortly after our brutal training sessions in the Riot Control zone, when I was approached by the other two Corporals in the Platoon regarding a plan the men had hatched between themselves to attack the German soldiers in this canteen!

At first I thought it was a joke, but soon realised they were very serious about this matter, as I could also see that some of the lads in the room were looking at me eagerly and expectantly whilst the Corporals were talking to me. Basically, the whole Platoon wanted to lay into the German soldiers, who by now were being called Krauts by nearly all the men in the company. It was becoming just like the dehumanising of the Irish by calling them Paddies!

In reality I believe the men were envious of these fights among the Germans, and wanted to be part of the violence they were seeing. The Corporals then told me the lads were planning to attack the Krauts when they were fighting outside their bar,



and the first Section passing the bar would use this as an excuse to get stuck into them! Nevertheless, the men needed my help with their plan, because they knew as senior Corporal I could arrange for the Platoon to be in the neighbourhood of the canteen when they attacked it.

I had not expected anything like this and pointed out the fact that all the other German soldiers drinking in the canteen would immediately join in the fight to help out their mates and our men would be well outnumbered. The Corporals laughed and said: "That's where you come in. If the platoon (30 men) are in the area when the first Section kicks it off with the Krauts, they will call for assistance and the other two Sections you've put in place nearby will come running and we'll sort all the fucking Krauts out!"

It was as if the German Army had been selected by the men to be used as substitute rioters, and they were going to get sorted out exactly like the ones in the Riot Control training area had been. As for myself, I actually thought it would be good training for when we came face to face with the Paddies in only a few weeks' time - so yes I readily agreed to go along with the Platoon on this battle with the Krauts. Immediately I could tell the men were 'over the moon' with my decision and they rushed away to tell the rest of their mates in the Platoon.

However, I did not know there was a competition going on between all the Platoons in the Company – on which Platoon would get the honour of doing the Krauts in first! Hence it did not take long before virtually 'everyone' in the Company knew about our Platoon's planned battle and seemingly they all wanted in on this action. But this created other problems, because with nearly all the men in the Company wanting to be involved in this attack on the Germans, word soon got round to the Sergeant Major and the Company Commander.

Therefore, it wasn't long before our Platoon Commander came storming into the room where I was talking with the men, and straight away he ordered everyone outside except for myself. As soon as the room was empty he said: "There's a rumour going around that the Platoon are going to create a fight with the German soldiers at their canteen, attacking them the next time they are out doing foot patrols

- is that true?" It was obvious he already knew everything about our planned confrontation with the Krauts, so I said: 'The lads just want to try out our newly honed combat and riot control skills on them, that's all.'

The Platoon Commander looked horrified and said: "You can't do that! It will cause a bloody 'international incident' and there'll be hell to pay! You can't have NATO troops fighting with each other! Get the Platoon together; it's not going to happen!" The whole Platoon then received a lecture come bollocking from the Platoon Leader, who made it clear that we were not going to cause any 'international incidents' whilst we were in the German barracks at Sennelager.

**Notes: This incident demonstrates how the continuous exposure to violence and dehumanising process of the upped training programme had changed the soldiers' mentality to the point where they were now looking for any opportunity to inflict violence. Pandora's Box was now open and already beginning to generate problems. With hindsight, this was an early indication of the problems of unleashing violence that would follow for many decades to come for untreated combat veterans.**

In the evenings at Sennelager, if the Company were not out doing training exercises such as foot or mobile patrols or night firing on the ranges, we would attend lectures. These lectures were given by Officers and NCO's of the Welsh Guard Battalion, who as I said earlier, had only recently returned from a tour of duty in Northern Ireland. As a result, these troops had the latest intelligence and information to pass on and update us on the most recent terrorist tactics being used in the Province.

There was however one lecture in particular at one of the evening presentations, which has always since stuck in my mind. The talk was aimed at Section leaders, but I do not know if the story we were told was true, yet it sounded very realistic and besides I had no reason whatsoever to doubt that it really happened. The lecture was addressed to the whole company, but the main theme was to 'impress' upon Section leaders the 'need' to know where their men were at all times when out on the streets of Northern Ireland.

The account we were told was of an Infantry Regiment based in Belfast, who unexpectedly came under a great deal of pressure by being constantly called out to deal with the frequent disturbances on a Republican housing estate. Apparently a great many of these were really nuisance call outs for what turned out to be only minor disturbances, but they all had to be investigated in case they were genuine emergencies and people needed help. Unfortunately, due to the number of these call outs, which on some occasions were more than once a night, soldiers were getting very little sleep and were not as vigilant as usual.

These call outs became very monotonous and wore down on the troops morale, especially when most of the time the soldiers arrived at the scene to find that the people had disappeared and there was no sign of there ever having been a disturbance in the first place. All the same, the troops would 'de-bus' from their armoured vehicles, physically check around the area, and having found nothing out of the ordinary they would then climb back in their vehicles and return back to base.

This routine set in over a period of many days and nights, and there was one Section of soldiers who had been unlucky enough to have been called out particularly often to this Republican housing estate. On one dense 'foggy' evening this same Section were again called out, and as usual they 'de-bussed' from their vehicles checked around the area and again found nothing out of the ordinary. The estate seemed peaceful, so the troops returned to their vehicles and headed back to base.

But it was only when the soldiers arrived back at their base that they realised that one of their mates was missing! Somehow he had been left behind on the housing estate in the thick peasouper fog, and no-one had seen or become aware he was missing until the Section arrived back at base. At once the Section quickly sped back to the estate and did a search of the area but could not find him. It was only later after an in depth search of the estate by the Regiment, when they eventually found him and tragically he was dead!

The soldier had been found in a garage, and he had been fatally shot through the back of the head in an execution style killing. We were also told that the soldier was better off dead, because apparently when a crowd of 'Paddies' on the estate

discovered and captured the soldier, most of the crowd were women who gruesomely attacked and tortured the soldier with scissors! In fact, the Welsh Guards instructors told us they thought the IRA gunman who shot the soldier had done the soldier a favour to put him out of his pain and misery!

**Notes: We received a number of talks and lectures regarding soldiers being ill-treated and killed by IRA terrorists and their sympathisers on Republican housing estates, who were portrayed as our real enemy and from where we would get all the 'aggro' during our tour of duty. This was deliberately intended to further demonise and intensify the level of hatred of 'Paddies', and instil in soldiers minds a paranoia that would extend to the whole Catholic population in everyday life while serving in Northern Ireland.**

**It is a paranoia that felt in many ways justified and necessary, more so when there were cases of soldiers being snatched (both on and off duty), and tortured and killed by IRA terrorists. However, the paranoia of expecting to be attacked, tortured or killed during any kind of confrontation, does not simply disappear with age, but it remains in soldiers minds and influences their behaviour for many years afterwards.**

Finally, after around 8/12 weeks at Sennelager, our training for Northern Ireland came to an end. The finale came in the form of a huge riot, planned to culminate in a no holds barred pitched battle between our Battalion and what seemed like hundreds of other British soldiers dressed in civilian clothing to play the part of rioting 'Paddies'. Our opponents were from local Regiments stationed around the Sennelager area, signed up for the day to act as mobs of rioting Paddies and given a free hand to do as much damage to us as possible with the usual missiles of bricks, rocks and petrol bombs.

As expected, the job of our Battalion was to put down the rioting Paddies and to take as many prisoners as possible, but at first the men in our company were not very happy because we were to be held in reserve and only to act as a back up if needed. This really did piss everyone off, as we were thinking we would miss out on all the aggro! So, we just had to sit and watch the other three companies doing foot

patrols through an extensive area of buildings, until suddenly the companies came under an extensive barrage of bricks and petrol bombs from the 'Paddies'! They seemed to be outnumbered by the Paddies and looked under a lot of pressure, until thankfully we were called into the melee!

There were hundreds of rioters everywhere and as our platoon charged towards the main groups, we were met with a bombardment of bricks. Somehow (I don't know how), our Platoon finished up in the middle of the mass of rioters, it was chaos and madness together. We were dodging blows, kicks and also getting hit with bricks, plus also having physical punch ups with the rioting Paddies all at the same time. It felt more like a bloody battle for survival in hand to hand fighting, and at the same time we had to capture prisoners who weren't coming quietly!

We were grabbing anyone dressed in civvies and after subduing them with kicks and punches (of our own), we would send them back to another party of the Battalion who were holding them as prisoners. Sometimes a captive would have to be carried back as prisoners because of their injuries. However, I was actually getting worried because there seemed no end in sight of these Paddies coming at us, and I knew that me and my men were being worn out with all this fighting. Then at long last we could hear someone yelling: "It's over, it's all finished!" Astonishingly the whole lot of us Platoon and Company were so exhausted, I could see the lads just collapsing on the ground where they were standing!

Shortly after this vicious pitched battle with the Paddies, the Battalion were formed up on an old parade ground. The Colonel then gave a speech and informed the Battalion which companies would be posted to where in Northern Ireland. We all knew since the beginning of the training at Sennelager, that three companies would be posted to Long Kesh (an Internment Prison for Paramilitary terrorists), and one company would be posted to the town of Lurgan, County Armagh. Lurgan was classed as the cream of the postings and was throughout our training held up as the prize or reward by the instructors, so when the Colonel announced that we in C Company were being posted to Lurgan, there was a great cheer from all of us.

Then after the Colonel stood down, the Colour Sergeant addressed the Battalion saying: "Gentlemen, to be honest my initial thoughts when I first met you were. 'You lot would never survive on the streets of Northern Ireland. But my job was to train you for Northern Ireland, and I can now truly say; 'That job has now been done! I can also tell you that my conscience is clear, and I have no worries about any of you. You are now ready for Northern Ireland, and I have no doubt you will be able to handle anything that you come face to face with over there as well. In fact, I now pity the Paddies who try and come up against you, you're more than ready for them now! Thank you very much gentlemen, it's been an honour to train you and well done!"

Someone shouted: "Three cheers for the Colour Sergeant." We all cheered, even though he had chased, harassed and terrorised the whole lot of us from the moment he arrived at Sennelager. Yet now he had everyone's respect because he had given us confidence in ourselves, and like attack dogs we were now ready to be unleashed on the Paddies. In truth we were all eagerly looking forward to our 'tour of duty' although a very good friend of mine summed up our training for Northern Ireland by saying: "Now we can go and shoot a fucking Paddy!"

**Notes: Unfortunately, whether deliberately or through the lack of care, this training in extreme violence prior to troops service in conflicts becomes permanently imprinted in combat soldiers' minds. Regrettably, the sad reality is that no consideration was given to the fact that in many cases, the psychological changes implanted during these violent training programmes would not only 'kick in' during sanctioned deployments, but also whenever a combat soldier or veteran was involved in a personal conflict.**

**As in the following case: 'Within only a few weeks of completing our training and prior to our tour of duty in Northern Ireland, a soldier from A company killed a German civilian in a pub fight at our base in Osnabrück. Subsequently whilst working with Veterans in Prison (VIP), I realised this incident was a tragic example and also a precursor to the now extremely high numbers of combat veterans in the prison population who are serving life sentences for murder. As there are many hundreds of innocent civilians that**

have been killed or seriously injured since the early 1970s by combat veterans using severe violence on their return home from conflicts.

A frightening fact is that in the early 1970's the numbers of combat veterans in the prison population were very low, yet today since the introduction of these upped training programmes, there are now many thousands of combat veterans in the prison population serving prison sentences for violence!

## **NOTES:**

## ▪ **STANDARDS INSTANCES & EXAMPLES**

The following three examples have been written to help combat veterans explore their own similar experiences. By relating them with their own tours of duty and so they can understand 'why' they have no social, moral, or empathy barriers to using extreme violence. At the same time, how they can switch from passive to highly aggressive at the least provocation and will attack others with no thought for their own safety or the consequences of their actions.

### **EXAMPLE 1: RAGE & ANGER**

#### **TOUR OF DUTY NORTHERN IRELAND (1972)**

One Saturday a Civil Rights meeting was being held in one of the two Republican housing estates in Lurgan, and the whole Company had been detailed to cover the meeting because trouble was expected as large numbers of Republicans had been predicted to attend from across the Province. Meanwhile, soldiers from another Regiment stationed outside Lurgan had been drafted in to cover the other Republican estate on the other side of town, as this estate was a well known trouble spot and IRA bastion, where confrontations with the Army were a regular occurrence.

However, with trouble being expected the lads in my Platoon and Company were very much looking forward to this gathering of Paddies. On our arrival at Lurgan, we had all been presented with our own personal weapons from the troops we took over from. These it must be said were weapons that had already been used by the Paddies and had been taken off them by soldiers during encounters on their estates. I personally was carrying a genuine 'black-jack-cosh', while the rest of the men in the Company were carrying 'baseball bats, knuckle dusters and clubs of all sorts of shapes and sizes'. These weapons would have been used against us and this was going to be our chance to try them out on the Paddies instead.

My Section were the first troops to arrive at around 0900hrs in the area of where this Civil Rights meeting was being held, we patrolled mainly on the Loyalist



side of the estate and were talking to these residents for most of the morning. Unbelievably, the atmosphere on the Loyalist side reminded me of football fans enthusiastically looking forward to seeing their team playing in an F.A. Cup Final. We of course were the Loyalist team and my men were being given plenty of encouragement, to simply do as much damage to them Fenian bastards (as the Loyalists called them) as possible!

The rest of the Company began arriving in the neighbourhood at around 1300hrs and the Civil Rights meeting commenced on the Republican side of the estate an hour or so later. Yet surprisingly the large crowds of Republicans which had been expected did not arrive. The meeting went ahead, but it was poorly attended and apart from some verbal abuse from the Loyalists there was no 'aggro' whatsoever. It all turned out to be a damp squib and a proper let down for the lads in the Company, especially when the meeting ended, the small crowd quickly dispersed from the area and that was it!

Shortly afterwards the Company began to pull out of the area but for some reason my Section had been selected to be the last troops out of the estate, even though we had been there since early morning. There was nothing we could do about it other than keep patrolling the estate until the rest of the Company had withdrawn. Finally, a waggon turned up to take us back to the base and my men began clambering aboard. Then suddenly a Land Rover appeared at speed, carrying my Platoon leader who informed me that my Section was urgently needed to flush out a gunman on the other Republican estate.

I couldn't believe this, instead of being taken back to base me and my men were now on our way to the staunch Republican estate where this gunman had been sighted by the other troops. I began thinking to myself 'why' the fuck didn't the soldiers who had seen this gunman go and engage him themselves, why wait for me and my men? The waggon came to a halt a few hundred yards from the Republican stronghold, where the soldiers had been observing the estate from a distance because it was all open grounds from this position to the IRA domain.

I leapt out of the waggon and immediately noticed my Platoon Officer signalling me over to himself and another Officer, who were both standing on the road near the brow of a hill which overlooked the Republican estate. The Officer standing next to my Platoon leader was in charge of the soldiers drafted in to cover the estate and he began briefing me about the gunman, pointing to an area on the estate where he said the gunman had been spotted carrying a rifle. Strangely he then said: "Remember your 'fire and movement control' Corporal". I thought this odd as I did not need to be told how to control my patrol, so I presumed he might be joining the patrol and said to him: "Oh, are you coming with us sir?"

He seemed startled at my question and there was also a look of fear on his face. I knew then he wasn't going anywhere near the estate and could see why these troops hadn't gone for the gunman when they first sighted him. The Officer hurriedly replied: "No, no I'm not going with you." I felt angry with him for trying to tell me how to command my patrol when I knew he didn't have the bottle to do it himself. I walked back to my men standing near the waggon, who were waiting for me to brief them on what we were going to do and the way we were going to do it.

My main concern was having to cross the open ground of approximately 200 yards with no cover whatsoever, before we could get onto the estate. Luckily, I recalled something which the Colour Sergeant had told me and my men to do when in Northern Ireland: "Don't do what is expected - always do the opposite!" So, I decided I wasn't going to lead my patrol over this ground in the way the Officer had expected, with his 'fire and movement control', idea, as I believed the gunman would probably be thinking on the same lines.

I briefed my men about the gunman, telling them: "We are going for him the same way the Colour Sergeant taught us. That means the opposite way of what everyone expects, we are going straight down this road in a normal open foot patrol and we'll keep this formation throughout the estate - unless someone has a pop at us. I told them to stay extra alert, as it was likely the gunman was waiting to ambush us. I then emphasised the most important detail, saying: "Remember, he's got one shot and we'll fucking have him." I saw some of my men grin at the mention of the feared Colour

Sergeant's 'one-shot' tactics, a couple of them winked at me and I knew that I had their complete confidence.

I divided the Section up equally on either side of the street, and the Officer in charge of the other troops looked on us in disbelief when he realised we were doing a normal foot patrol, but I felt nothing but anger at this Officer for not taking on the gunman. I was leading the patrol and once we were ready I said: "Let's go" and headed the patrol over the brow of the hill towards the Republican estate. However, walking across the open ground towards the IRA stronghold, a voice of sanity was screaming inside my head: 'Are you fucking mad?' But the anger I felt at the Officer before we set off had now turned into an all out rage at the thought that someone might kill me or my men because of him and this rage overrode any fear of a gunman!

The estate was very quiet even though it was now around 1730hrs in the afternoon, when normally there would have been lots of kids running about with their usual greetings of a few bricks and "Fuck off you Brit bastards". The emptiness made it seem as if the estate was readily expecting trouble, after ten minutes or so of patrolling through this uncanny quiet, and feeling like a walking target, it made me want the gunman to open fire. Undoubtedly it was the waiting and expectation of being shot at, that made it far worse than if it did happen, as I knew this from being under fire a few times during my previous war service in Aden.

If there was a gunman waiting to attack us, I don't know what he must have been thinking at seeing my Section seemingly presenting themselves as easy targets but also looking alert and eager to take him on. He may have even twigged that we were trying to draw him out and set him up as a target himself, I really don't know. But me and my men were now fully committed as we were halfway through the estate, so I had to follow my plan though until we reached the other side. It took between twenty and thirty minutes to move through the estate checking everything, our eyes everywhere watching rooftops, windows or any place a gunman could be hiding, but thankfully nothing happened.

At the far side of the estate we secured a small area at the rear of some garages and I let my men have a breather. I was still in a rage at me and my men

being used as targets, plus we had to go through the same routine to get back to safety. A short time later I contacted my Platoon leader on the radio and gave him my position, I told him I was returning the patrol through the estate by the same route. The tension on our return journey was exactly the same as when we first moved onto the estate, and I was bloody glad to see the brow of the hill on the exit road out of the estate and from where we first began the patrol.

It was a great relief to get back to our original location all safe and sound, but when seeing the troops who had first sighted the gunmen still lying prone on the ground and in cover, I yelled at them: "Look no gunman, no nothing you missed your fucking chance when you had it!" I was raging at them because this meant there was a gunman still very much alive and active on the estate - meaning that without doubt he would have a crack at the company over the next few weeks, and that is what he did.

**Notes: The intense 'rage and anger' I was feeling whilst walking towards the staunch Republican estate was something which I never experienced before in my life - this was on another level which I can only attribute to the 'upped' training programme when getting bricked and petrol bombed in riot training. But once combat veterans know that someone is actually trying to kill them, then their rage turns to another level of hostility as the will to survive is a very powerful thing. This hostility overrides concern for their own safety, and it is the precursor to unleash violence on the person responsible for this emotion.**

## **EXAMPLE 2: FEAR**

On one occasion on my first tour of duty in Northern Ireland, I found myself cut off from my men during a riot situation on a Republican housing estate. This happened when I chased a rioter inside one of the houses, as he had attacked one of my men with a bucket of blue paint and tried to steal his rifle whilst the soldier could not see because of the paint in his eyes. However, in the fast changing circumstances of the riot, more Paddies joined in the rampage, and I suddenly became aware that they were now at least fifty of them outside the house where I was now fighting with the rioter.

Instantly once the rioter I was grappling realised there was a pack of his fellow rioters outside the house, he began doing his damndest to open the door of the house to alert the mob of my whereabouts. I did not need to be told of what would happen if these Paddies realised they had a British soldier trapped inside, as no mercy would be shown, and I would be ripped apart limb from limb!

The lectures we received in our training at Sennelager emphasised the tragic consequences of soldiers being separated from their comrades by IRA terrorists and their sympathisers. Hence there was this paranoia and fear of being taken as a prisoner, tortured and killed by these Paddies which now kicked in. As a result, I attacked this Paddy more viciously by clubbing him with a heavy rubber-bullet gun I was carrying, and I used such violence that I nearly killed him. I would have done so too, but in the meantime my men who had been fighting hand to hand with the paddies outside had pushed them back nearer to my location. Thankfully, one of my men managed to enter the house in a bid to rescue me and brought me back to my senses.

**Notes: Fear, when uncontrolled and left to run indiscriminately can paralyse, cause flight or, for those experienced in violence such as soldiers, will turn into a frenzied rage of pure violence with an overwhelming desire to destroy the cause of the initial fear!**

### **EXAMPLE 3: VIOLENCE**

This incident happened whilst I was on leave from Northern Ireland. It was the first Saturday of my leave and I had taken my wife out for the evening. During the course of the night we bumped into my wife's brother and his partner, we had an enjoyable evening and finally finished up at a local nightclub. However, after buying some drinks at the bar and returning to our table, I noticed a large group of the nightclub's 'bouncers' standing around the table where my wife was sitting. There was an argument going on regarding my wife's brother's partner, as apparently she was barred from the Club and the bouncers wanted her to leave.

I myself wasn't worried as I did not want to stay in the place because there were too many people around for my liking, so to calm things down and stop the arguing, I invited everyone at the table for a meal at a nearby restaurant. My words seemed to have the desired effect and the four of us made our way to the exit. But on our way out my wife waited whilst I collected her coat from the cloakroom. However, whilst walking behind my wife and helping her into her coat, she suddenly dashed forward and away from me. I watched as she ran out of the exit doors, down some steps outside and towards a group of bouncers holding someone against a wall and punching him.

To my astonishment, when my wife reached the group of bouncers, she whacked the nearest one on the back of his head with her handbag shouting: "Get off him, he's my brother!" The whole scene now seemed to go into slow motion for me, as I saw the bouncer my wife had hit with her handbag quickly spin round, grab hold of her coat with one hand and draw back his other arm to hit her with his fist! I did not hesitate or have time to think, otherwise my wife would have been laid out on the floor with her face smashed in. I dived from the top of about six steps and headbutted the bouncer who was about to punch my wife. He immediately went down to the ground and I shoved my wife away from all the bother, but the next thing I heard were voices around me shouting "Get him!".

Suddenly I was surrounded by a large group of bouncers who began to punch the hell out of me. I remember people telling stories who said: 'They were punched that hard - they actually saw 'stars''. But I never believed them, not until now as 'stars' began exploding inside my head. I put both my forearms up to protect my head like a boxer, but there were that many punches coming at me, a lot of them were getting through my guard. I realised I was in very serious trouble, and I instinctively knew that if the bouncers got me down on the floor I would never get up again!

It was then when something seemed to click inside my head and I heard the command words: "Wrists, wrists get their fucking wrists!" At first, I had automatically shut my eyes when all the punches began slamming into my head, but now I opened them looking for wrists. My head was angled down as my chin was tucked in from the

punches, so when I opened my eyes I saw the tarmac road and a mass of clenched fists sweeping up in the direction of my head. I thrust my arm amongst these fists and managed to grab hold of an arm attached to one of the fists coming at me. I then smashed down with all the force of my other hand onto the clenched fist. This drove the fist backwards and I heard a very loud scream, the good thing about this was a body fell away from the bouncers surrounding me.

I was desperately looking for a way out of this ring of bouncers, so I now focused my eyes on the nearest pair of nuts (testicles) of a bouncer and crushed the fuck out of them with my hand. There was another loud scream and the space opened as another bouncer fell away from the group encircling me. This now gave me the chance to break free of them and I ran to the opposite side of the road. A couple of the bouncers chased after me and I ran between some parked cars. I noticed that one of the bouncers had pulled away from his overweight mate who was puffing and panting a distance behind him. I deliberately slowed and let the bouncer in front get up close to me, then I abruptly stopped turned and smashed my fist into his throat - he dropped to the ground like a sack of spuds.

I honestly believed the other bouncer chasing me would now give up, but he didn't he kept pursuing me? Unsurprisingly I wasn't worried about this fucker as the tables were now turned in my favour on a one to one basis, so I stood and waited for him. This one threw a wild punch whilst he was running towards me and missed, I grabbed his arm and using his own weight and momentum, threw him over my shoulder. The next minute he was sailing through the air and landed on the bonnet of a parked car, but before he realised what was happening I grabbed his head, pulled him towards me, and smashed my knee into his face - then tossed him away from me.

I was standing on the road straightening my tie when the police arrived. A Police Sergeant and Constable approached me and asked if I had been fighting with the bouncers. When I confirmed this, the pair of them escorted me back to the nightclub entrance as it was brightly lit-up. Then under the light the Police Sergeant began to check me over very closely, looking for any visible indications of my involvement in the fight. However, when he realised there wasn't a mark on me, he

said in a disbelieving voice: "Are you sure you've just been fighting with these bouncers ? " He then pointed with his hand to the rear of an Ambulance parked only a few yards away, which now had four or five bouncers in the back of it. One of them was holding a towel over his face, most likely to stem the flow of blood, another was gingerly clutching his arm and wrist, which was probably shattered in a few places and God knows what injuries the others had.

My wife suddenly appeared in the entrance doorway of the nightclub where I was being questioned. She interrupted the Police Sergeant by shouting: "He's just come home from Northern Ireland and they all attacked him!" She was clearly distraught that the bouncers had attacked me. But the Police Sergeant was frustrated at having his investigation disrupted by my wife and said to her: "Look Missus, not long ago we received a phone call at the police station, saying a load of bouncers had jumped on a lad wearing a light coloured jacket outside this club, and to be honest we expected to find a body here when we arrived!"

The Police Sergeant was puzzled and amazed that there wasn't a mark on me and kept asking if I was alright and not injured. I told him I had a sore jaw, which I did. He then asked, "Do you want to go to hospital for a check up?" Straight away I shouted at him: 'Put me in there (ambulance) with them and I'll kill the fucking lot of them!' The Police Sergeant quickly said: "No, no we'll take you by car to the Hospital." But I wasn't seriously injured and didn't need any hospital treatment, so I declined his offer.

A large number of Police Officers were now on the scene, and I noticed they were interviewing a crowd of bystanders who had seen the fight. There were a large number of eyewitnesses, and thankfully in the end every one who were interviewed confirmed to the Police that it was the bouncers who had all attacked me first. The Police Sergeant eventually released me, but he was astonished at the amount of damage I had done - to who he called the town's local hard men!

**Notes: When I was first attacked by the bouncers, I reacted like any normal untrained civilian, with my eyes tightly closed and my arms raised to protect my face from all the punches hitting me. Then without doubt the Police**



would eventually have found a body outside the nightclub as they expected! However, the threat to my life brought on an intense feelings of survival, and my upped army training automatically kicked in which suppressed all sense of fear. I then meticulously went through each bouncer with pure violence, not thinking of them as human beings, but as targets to be destroyed.

## **NOTES:**

## **NOTES:**

# **BREAK OFF:**

## **THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS**



**STAGE 2- OUTLETS**

## 6. OUTLETS – STAGE TWO

All combat veterans who have reached this phase of the programme should now be able to recognise in their own experiences, how their minds were deliberately implanted with pure violence prior to deployment in conflicts, and most importantly were never de-programmed from this violence.

Therefore, it should be no surprise that many combat veterans who were programmed to respond with extreme violence in conflicts, will continue to do so in their civilian life when experiencing intense feelings of ‘anger and rage’.

These are two very powerful emotions and are closely related, but distinguished by the likelihood of physical violence. Appropriately, the next two stages ‘Second and Third’, recognises this distinction and deals with them separately.

The second stage will deal with ‘anger’, as like all emotions, it requires an **OUTLET**, and if this **OUTLET** is not to be violence, then it must be harnessed and channelled into a constructive or creative use. The following examples demonstrate how ‘anger’, when managed, can be a powerful motivator in diverse activities, such as writing, art or sport.

**Writing:** The writer of this programme is a veteran of Aden and Northern Ireland, and also a published author who wrote the book: ‘The Veteran’s Survival Guide.’ The foreword was written by General The Lord Dannatt, and the book launch was at the Queen’s House, The Tower of London. This was some achievement from an ex-soldier in prison and suffering combat related PTSD, who at one time could just about put a letter together never mind a book – but ‘anger’ was his emotional motivator.

The author Jimmy Johnson states: ‘When he first realised he had been unknowingly suffering from combat related PTSD for many years, and how not only his life, but also the lives of his family and those of other innocent people had been destroyed because of this mental disorder. It wasn't the worst moment, day or week

of his life of his life – it was the ‘worst and darkest place’ he had ever been in his life by far!

The ‘anger and rage’ he felt at being left to cope alone with combat related PTSD and its consequences, was unbelievable. Thankfully the ‘rage’ quickly faded, but the ‘anger’ still remained, and it was this ‘anger’ which inspired him to write his book, as well as this programme.

**Art:** The author Jimmy Johnson is also the Co-founder of ‘Veterans in Prison’ and during the years he spent in prison, he has met numerous combat veterans in the prison population. The vast majority of them were serving life or lengthy prison sentences for violence related crimes, and all of them had anger and rage issues, stemming from their training in violence and their service in conflicts. Nevertheless, through therapy, several of these combat veterans became accomplished artists, and produced some fine, award winning works of art whilst in prison.

**Sport:** The professional boxer Nigel Benn is an army veteran who served in Northern Ireland with the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers during ‘The Troubles’. After his demob back into Civvy Street, he took up professional boxing and became the world middleweight champion. At times during his fights, Royal Fusilier comrades would turn up in Regimental uniform to honour him.

His nickname was The Dark Destroyer, and he attacked all his opponents with full head on aggression from the moment the Bell sounded. The aggression was possibly reinforced and embedded during his Northern Ireland training, which luckily was an asset for his boxing career. Once when being interviewed on television he was asked: ‘Do you ever feel afraid when going into the ring?’ His reply was along the lines of: No, not after serving in Northern Ireland nothing in there frightens me.

## **NOTES:**

The second stage is designed for the facilitator to discuss other ideas and constructive uses in diverse as well as creative activities with the combat veterans themselves since writing, art and sport are examples chosen by the author.

***(N/B Stages 2 and 3 can be delivered in person or online. As a one-to-one programme, or in a group by a facilitator.)***

# **BREAK OFF:**

**THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF  
EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS**



**STAGE 3 — THE DRILL.**

## **7. THE DRILL - STAGE THREE**

### **▪ VIOLENCE - THE ONGOING PROBLEMS:**

The following media excerpts clearly show how combat veterans' involvement in violent conflicts has long been recognised as the cause of their violence on their return to peacetime surroundings.

#### **Ministry of Defence Statement**

**BBC**

**CEEFAX**

**(24/07/12)**

##### **Returning soldiers admit violence**

One in eight soldiers has attacked someone after coming home from combat deployment, research suggests.

Ministry of Defence – funded researchers surveyed 13,000 Army personnel and say they found a link between combat and trauma, and violent behaviour – often towards their partners.

Former head of the Army General Richard Dannatt, warned a cultural change is needed within the forces.

#### **KINGS COLLEGE STATEMENT**

**BBC NEWS**

**CEEFAX**

**(15/03/13)**

##### **Dr Deirdrie McMann**

Soldiers returning from combat are more likely to commit 'violent crime' than the rest of the population.

53% of troops who serve in wars/conflicts are more likely to commit violence than troops who have not served in wars/conflicts.



## The Paras Men Of War

The Paras: Men Of War, ITV TELEVISION (17/01/2019), this second episode of the series, showed the physical and the psychological indoctrination of the recruits training to become Paras by having to complete P Company. It showed Instructors yelling at the recruits: "What makes grass grow?" The recruits were yelling back: "Blood! Blood! Blood!"

The programme also showed recruits doing bayonet practise – sticking their bayonets into dummies. The dummies had packets of fake blood draped over them, so when the recruits withdrew their bayonets – fake blood spurted into their faces!

This training is undertaken by all Para recruits and is prior to the upped training programme they will undergo before deployment into conflicts.

An Interesting article detailing the extent of violence amongst combat veterans can be read in The Guardian - Soldiers more likely to be convicted of violent offences by Nick Hopkins (15/03/13). Accessed at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/mar/15/soldiers-convicted-violent-offences-report>

The newspaper article dramatically states the extent to which exposure to traumatic events during conflicts, when left untreated, is a significant factor in the high number of violent acts committed by combat veterans. However, the reports researchers, Dr Deirdre MacManus and Professor Sir Simon Wessely of Kings College London, nor Dr Walter Busuttil, Director of Medical Services at Combat Stress make reference or connection between the mind-altering 'upped training' programme and combat veterans subsequent mental health issues and violent behaviour.

Instead the finger is firmly pointed at PTSD as a primary cause. However, the vast majority of combat veterans in the prison population are serving sentences for violent offences and all of them since the 1970's would have undergone the 'upped training', yet only a small percentage of them suffer from PTSD, and that is a fact.

Tragically, to this day, PTSD is still assumed to be the main cause of extreme violence in combat veterans. For this reason, there is a need to raise awareness about the Army's 'upped training' programme, and its subsequent life changing effects, as these are still not being adequately addressed. Hence the urgent need for **'BREAK OFF: THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS'**.

## **NOTES:**

## ▪ **THE DRILL.**

**This third stage of the programme is designed to be implemented either to a group or individually either in person or online and will enable combat veterans to break their default violence response to confrontations.**

Thankfully, with the help of this programme, professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and combat veterans can now fully understand how combat troops are programmed in pure violence prior to their deployment in conflicts. They will also be able to comprehend how civilians or enemy troops are deliberately dehumanised and classed as targets, so combat troops who have been psychologically shaped into weapons of violence can physically destroy these targets without any conscience.

In effect, combat veterans, their families and innocent victims are being sacrificed by the lack of Government action and awareness regarding the 'upped' pre-deployment training programmes and the urgent need to re-train combat veterans to break this mental cycle of violent aggression so that they fit back at peace into society.

However, such re-training can clearly be made a reality, more so with combat troops/veterans as they are all disciplined and accustomed to Army drill. And the most appropriate way to re-train them in non-violent behaviour would be precisely as a 'reverse' drill.

- **As we know, 'rage' is one step from physical violence, but luckily the rage emotion is so intense that it quickly burns itself out if not allowed to escalate. Unfortunately however, combat veterans are trained to go instantly from passive to killer, and consequently the instantaneous switch from rage to attack is the dangerous connection which must be broken.**
- **Accordingly, to break the subconscious link between rage and launching an attack, combat veterans must be trained to recognise the early signs**

of rage developing, then carry out a rehearsed drill as an alternative to allowing full rage and violence to develop. This rage recognition stage may be achieved through the use of focused meditation and visualisation techniques.

- The second stage - alternative behaviour, could be an 'immediate action' drill by focusing on the command order to 'Halt'. Every soldier in the British Army have this command order embedded in their minds – they will forget their names before they forget their drill movement. For instance, when the order to 'Halt' is given to marching soldiers, every one automatically recites in their minds 'Check, One Two'! And that is it, they stop marching and remain standing to attention - they don't move.
- Therefore, to break their chain of thought from rage to attack, combat veterans must concentrate on the command order 'HALT'. However, instead of the usual 'Check, One Two' they must voice inside their minds: 'HALT. CHECK, BREAK OFF!'! This should be repeated again and again in their minds until the rage subsides. This command order to 'BREAK OFF' should be practised in their minds and in everyday life, especially whenever they recognise the early stages of rage developing.

This drill must continue until the subconscious connection between rage and attack is permanently extinguished. Finally, allowing the murderous and violent legacy left implanted in combat troops minds to be banished forever.

Notes: The wives, husbands, partners, family or friends of combat veterans can provide much needed support and encouragement by reminding the veterans to do their daily practise **DRILL**. As well as this, whenever the veteran shows signs of hostility, they can encourage them to '**BREAK OFF**' by reminding the combat veteran to mentally recite the drill to themselves . Importantly, praising, encouraging and affirming them whenever a confrontation occurs can ensure that it does not escalate to violence.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, **BREAK OFF: THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF EXTREME VIOLENCE FOR COMBAT VETERANS** programme is the key to the problem of violence, amongst combat veterans, as it provides deep insight into the causes of their violent behaviour following their training and service in conflicts. This was achieved by exploring and explaining how the 'upped' training and subsequent conflict experience becomes so embedded in their minds, by making every action count, every shot and every bit of aggression so vital that violence becomes a natural and automatic or spontaneous response to all altercations, even minor ones. This is why domestic violence is also a hidden problem amongst veterans.

Furthermore, if veterans can learn to apply **STAGE THREE: THE DRILL** combined with a genuine desire to break the link of violent behaviour combat veterans can learn instead to take satisfaction in finding constructive and creative outlets for their anger and defusing their rage.

## **NOTES:**

## **9. QUESTION & ANSWERS**

**Q1. Why, if the conditioning is so effective, don't all combat veterans become involved in acts of violence in civilian life ?**

**A1.** As with all conditioning, training and interventions, some people are much more susceptible to adverse effects because of their genetic makeup, life experiences, exposure to trauma, brain injury, use of drugs (legal or illegal) and alcohol, and also how deeply they internalise their conditioning. Additionally, not all combat veterans will have been involved in violent experiences during conflicts.

**Q2. Why don't combat veterans differentiate between conflict situations and civilian confrontations?**

**A2.** This is because their reactions are at a subconscious and automatic level due to the 'upped' training, and therefore reasoning comes too late to prevent their actions.

**Q3. Why is there no other group of people in the entire prison population of England and Wales who are as significantly overrepresented as combat veterans for committing crimes of extreme violence, and also the most heinous crimes, of murder?**

**A3.** Nobody as yet really knows the answer to this question, because up until now it has been hard to get access to relevant information on this subject. Governments will provide aggregated statistics for the armed forces in prison but seem reluctant to reveal specific data for combat veterans, which means that this particular group have been largely kept from public attention. Naturally therefore, few of us are aware of the link between these new forms of military training, and the true costs that combat veterans, their families and the innocent victims have had to pay for the conduct of modern day warfare.

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