

Ways to Defend Yourself Against Civil Unrest

Civil unrest on a national level—protests, riots, looting and unprecedented street violence—have sadly become part of our American landscape. With a decline in police intervention and the fact that extreme physical violence can spontaneously erupt anywhere, it should make you ponder what can be done to stay safe.

Forewarned is Forearmed

Open-source intelligence (known as OSINT in the defense-intelligence community) is the collection and analysis of information gathered from public, or open, sources. The term “open” refers to overt, publicly available sources (as opposed to covert or clandestine sources).

Everything from listening to the news to reading articles to watching videos can provide you with a tremendous amount of relevant information. This information can tell you the time and location of a specific event or trending of events. If you do not place yourself in the middle of a volatile situation in the first place, it significantly decreases your odds of being harmed. In other words, if you don't show up for a riot, then you likely won't get hurt in one.

Three Seconds

Is your personal security worth the price of 3 seconds? “The thing about [assailants], they catch you when you're not looking,” said one victim. The easy defensive measure to combat that? Take a few seconds and look. Situational awareness amounts to nothing more than observing your environment. We have a tendency to have our faces buried in our smartphones, texting or talking and completely detached from our immediate environment.

Mob Mentality

Mob mentality is fickle and can change like the wind. In 1 second, a large group can be milling about, holding signs and peacefully chanting. In the next second you observe fistfights, flying bricks and airborne Molotov cocktails. The best defense against being attacked by a mass of human beings is to first be made aware of its presence and then do everything possible to avoid direct or peripheral contact. If you are confronted by a mob, your best defense is de-escalation and avoidance.

Tactical Medicine

It is strongly recommended to always have a compact bleeding/gunshot-wound-trauma kit (including a tourniquet) on hand. Keeping a few medical supplies on hand could save your life or the life of another. The form/size of your kit should be a factor in your consideration. Is it

compact enough for everyday carry? Will you carry it in your purse, in your car, keep one at your office? Bottom line with a GSW kit is to win the fight, “stop the bleeding, help them breathe, warm not freeze and get ready to leave.”

Trust Your Gut

When you take those few seconds to pull your head out of the sand and look around, what does your gut tell you? It’s absurd to walk around in a state of raging paranoia, suspecting everyone around you as a potential attacker. However, knowing what to look for when you are observing your environment and trusting your powers of perception (gut feeling) allows you to assess a potential threat and prepare you to respond appropriately.

Create Space

The first and best reactive option in avoiding a threat or reducing injury is to move off the “X,” otherwise known as creating space. Whether in a vehicle (air, water or ground) or on foot, more space—a larger gap—brings you farther away from the threat, out of harm’s way and with the least potential for physical injury. It is considered an optimal tactical response.

Threat Engagement

Failing to create space, the defensive “A” answer, your very next option is to use whatever physical means at your disposal to get yourself into a position so that you can get out of danger with the least degree of injury. Fighting is not easy. Fighting is not pretty. Fighting is pure violence of action. Whatever it takes to immediately fight your way out is always better than the alternative.

Controlled Areas

Your safety increases relative to the level of security provided by that controlled area. If you are in your vehicle, you are safer than if you are on foot. You are usually safer behind the walls and doors of a restaurant or business than you are outside those walls.

Vehicle Defense

Your car is a controlled area and one of the safest places you can be. Staying mobile and keeping distance always gives you the tactical advantage. As always, keep your doors locked so assailants cannot readily pull you out of your car. Keep your windows rolled up so they can’t reach in or introduce weapons (such as chemical mace or pepper spray) into the cabin.

Get Trained

Your survival odds increase exponentially when you are trained. Most people who carry

a firearm believe it to be a talisman that, if carried on their person, will ward off all evil. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you carry a firearm, then you are on the hook for appropriate gun safety, handling and marksmanship, all of which are perishable skills. Get to the range. Work on your presentations (rapid deployment); work your depth of shooting at varied distances, including manipulations such as ammunition management (reloading), and resolve malfunctions (failure to fire, failure to feed, etc.).