



# Fight Back

## Active Shooter Response

BY DAVE ACOSTA, YouTACTICAL

**A**s I stood across the street from the Sutherland Springs First Baptist Church, the bodies still on the floor and slumped in the pews where they fell, a reporter from one of the local Fox News affiliates turned and asked me a question. “Mr. Acosta, when will this insanity end?” Her question was sincere and the hurt look on her face told me this was a hard story for her to cover. I have been asked this question so many times in the past that the answer now spills from my mouth almost as an involuntary reaction. “Mass shootings will stop in this country when they are no longer productive.” It’s a cultural issue. Right now across the country we believe that the bad guy with the gun has all the power. We need to change that culture. We have done it post 9-11. I don’t care what weapon you have in your hand, you will not kick in a cockpit door on an airplane again! We will tackle you, fight you and crush the life out of you with our bare hands before we let you crash another airplane into any building in the United States. As a culture we have taken responsibility for our own safety in the air.

OK, so that brings us to the next question, how can we make mass shootings less productive? Let’s break it down into three categories. Our program is based on three principles: Prepare, Prevent

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Jump up and fight back! If a shooter were targeting your child, would you run, hide or just huddle? None of the above! You would act!

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and Protect. I’ll attempt to give a quick overview of the first two and focus my article on the last principle, Protect.

### **Prepare:**

This is an educational piece. When it comes to Mass Shooting and Active Shooter (not the same thing), know what you are talking about. Know what these terms mean and make an effort to understand the dynamic of each. Just a little education can be empowering. Once you have a better understanding of how these incidents evolve, you can start working on a response plan that is more effective and relevant to your environment.

### **Prevent:**

Can we prevent 100% of mass shootings or active shooter incidents? No, not a chance, but we can certainly reduce the likelihood of an attack at a given location. For example, the night after

the Sutherland Springs mass shooting, I was invited to meet with a local pastor and the elders of his church (about an hour from Sutherland Springs). I spent two hours with him and his group. We created a prevention and response plan for a shooter in their church. At the end of the night, he asked me “What do we do next?” My response was to tell him to email all his parishioners and let them know that he and the elders had spent a few hours meeting with an expert on mass shootings and have come up with a relevant and effective plan to respond to and defeat an active shooter at the church. They will continue to worship God while prepared to defeat evil at the doors! Proclaim openly your preparation and willingness to defend your flock with force.

Being prepared to engage and defeat evil is a huge deterrent to anyone who’s



confined, remain at close range and are not moving. This works in the favor of the shooter right? Yes, unless...

We need to change our mental approach to our response to an active shooter. All of the dynamics that work in favor of the active shooter also work in our favor if we change our mindset. We need to reject victimhood! In almost every mass shooting in the US, the perpetrators were not trained shooters or tacticians. They were crazy people that made some effort to plan a shooting and had the equipment and ability to carry out the murders. Remember, they have not committed a mass shooting before (even if they have rehearsed it) and they will all experience tunnel vision (where the focus is intense on a specific effort, losing perspective of their surroundings). Jump up and fight back! If a shooter were targeting your child, would you run, hide or just huddle? None of the above! You would act! You would attack the person trying to hurt your child. It's in our DNA to protect our kids. You might be a horrible swimmer, terrified of the water. But if your child falls in, you don't stand by, assessing all the reasons why not, weighing the risks associated with jumping in. You act! So what is the difference here? I don't get it!

Turn the tables on the shooter. Do the unexpected. FIGHT BACK! The circumstances that make it easy for him to have such a high hit ratio are in your favor now. The shooter is in a confined environment too, he is at close range (25 feet or less) and he is not very mobile. Most shooters do not stray from their shooting base while firing a weapon. Additionally he is not expecting any resistance. The second you close distance and attack the shooter; he must process what is happening. He will have to recognize, assess and react to the attack. That process takes time (in law enforcement we call it lag time). Take the fight to this coward. Fight for your life, fight for those you love. Fight for those around you who cannot protect themselves. You might get banged up, cut, burned or even shot. So what? Make an effort! I cannot think of anything more vicious than a Mom protecting her child. If you are the target of her

aggression you are in for a knockdown drag out fight. Be the Momma Bear!

There are a lot of ways to skin a cat when it comes to disarming techniques. There are probably some respected and proven professionals out there that can teach you a "better way" to disarm an active shooter. And, if you have time to go to them and train, by all means, go do it! My staff and I at YouTactical will continue to empower teachers (and anyone else who wants to learn) with knowledge through practical application training sessions. You can count on this, while a certain number of people will finger smash their keyboards typing their opinions, we are busy training individuals to be the solution.

If we can create a culture where no matter what, we are going to fight back; mass shootings will become less productive. Prepare to be the Solution. 🇺🇸

*Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Utah Association of Public Charter School.*

*Mr. Dave Acosta has been working side by side with the world's most elite performers for over twenty years. Dave started his career in Las Vegas; he spent ten years in specialized units, including six years as the point man on the North Las Vegas SWAT Team. Dave moved on to become an international tactical instructor as well as a team leader for high-risk protection teams in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and Latin America. Dave has conducted over 1200 real world tactical missions and his company, YouTactical, continues to provide protection and tactical training to clients around the globe. The time Dave spends over-seas is spent working with handpicked operators and instructors. The majority of these men are former Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces and Marine Recon operators.*

*He currently trains and works with various law enforcement Tactical Teams from Brazil, training 150 team-members a year. These tactical schools include subjects such as Urban Counter Ambush, CQB, High-risk Tactical Operations, Tactical Handgun, Tactical M4 (similar), and much more. Dave is considered a national authority on mass shootings/lactive shooter and has trained more than 2500 teachers in fight back techniques. He is a regular guest on Fox13, KSL and many other media outlets where is used as a resource for his extensive tactical background.*

intent is to commit a mass shooting. It's about the body count to them. "Gun Free" zones are inviting, soft targets to a shooter. It makes no sense to these murderous whackos to attempt the same thing at a location where people are trained and prepared to fight back.

### **Protect:**

Most schools, government buildings, churches and corporate settings have adopted the "Run, Hide, Fight" response to an active shooter incident. I personally believe this is a good starting place for a conversation about a solid, relevant and effective response plan to an active shooter incident. The concepts of "Run and Hide" are virtually self-explanatory. However, the "Fight" portion of the plan is vague and open for interpretation. No one really knows what that means. Without guidance or an established protocol this becomes very subjective.

I struggle to wrap my head around so many mass shootings where (facts from the cases) we know people were gunned down at close range. People ran, people tried to hide behind whatever they could find, people huddled and people were executed. How is it that the hit ratio for mass shootings is 50%? That's more accurate than the national average for trained law enforcement during a shooting. The answer is simple; the targets are