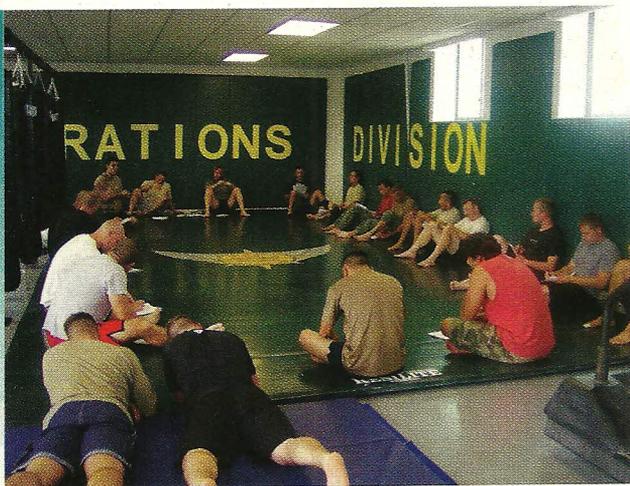


SECURING THE HOMELAND

To Safeguard America, a U.S. Border Patrol Special Operations Unit Employs Gracie Combatives



Study time (left) and Renner Gracie (right) has the rapt attention of a student.

BY DOUG JEFFREY

By day, the U.S.-Mexican border, which snakes along four states and covers more than 1,900 miles, is a dry, desolate place with blazing-hot sand that seemingly extends forever.

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By night, a whole new world emerges. Just ask the special operations unit of the U.S. Border Patrol (BORTAC).

"We had one incident in El Centro, California, in which an agent, who had returned to the station, encountered a suspect with an altered mental status," says Jason Owens, a field operations supervisor for the U.S. Border Patrol's Tactical Unit. "The suspect threatened to fight three or four agents at one time. The original agent moved in behind him, executed a rear naked choke (carotid restraint) and no one was hurt."

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30 HOURS, 23 TECHNIQUES

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is a defensive tactics program that entails 30 hours of instruction and establishes a strong foundation or base, addresses the most common threat scenarios the agents and officers will experience in the field, and allows agents to employ the amount of force appropriate for the situation.

Participants learn approximately 23 techniques, including stand-up and ground. Weapon-retention skills are part of the curriculum, and the information is easy to grasp, implement and utilize.

"This is an easy-to-learn program," says Spiro Demetriadi, who works as director of Special Programs for the Gracies through Triadi, Inc., a business development company, based in Irvine, California, that exclusively represents the Gracie Academy for all the Gracie Combatives programs for law enforcement and military.

Furthermore, Gracie Combatives is an organized program that permits techniques to flow from one to the other, says Demetriadi.

This is especially critical because "typically, a lot of organizations have a mishmash of defensive tactics techniques," he says.

Jason Owens, a field operations supervisor for the border patrol tactical unit, says they fell into that category.

"We knew we had to revamp our defensive tactics program," says Owens, 32.

Owens, who has been on the border

patrol for more than six years, says Gracie Combatives broadened their program.

"Their information has taken us to a level in which we have more options available to us," says Owens. "It enables us to handle confrontations and situations with fewer injuries to us or those in custody."

TYPICAL PROBLEMS

Agents monitoring the border have to deal with a multitude of problems – ranging from illegal aliens to drug runners – and most of the nefarious activity occurs at night. To accomplish their unscrupulous goals, these people employ a variety of methods, including building or utilizing tunnels.

"Their methods are only limited by their imagination," says Chuck Smith, the national coordinator for defensive tactics in the special operations division.

In addition to everything else, the agents are usually alone ... with the closest fellow agent sometimes 10-20 miles away.

"While 99 times out of 100 the agent faces a threat from an unarmed suspect, that suspect is willing to fight to get out of the situation," says Smith. "Gracie Combatives provides the agents a chance to defend themselves."

WHERE IT BEGAN

The wheels for the program were set in motion a few years ago when two Border Patrol agents walked into the Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Torrance, California.

"They were looking for something better because they realized what they had did not work," says Demetriadi. "They heard about us, came to the Academy and were blown away."

But, instead of adding what they learned at the Academy to their curriculum, Demetriadi suggested they "scrap" what they had and go full force with Gracie Combatives.

"I felt we could provide something bigger and grander," says Demetriadi.

Bigger and grander were on the horizon, but things did not immediately fall into place. First, there was a little government red tape. Next, Gracie officials felt a comprehensive review of the Border Patrol's program was in order, which

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Finally, right about the start of 2007, the Border Patrol's special ops unit was ready to use the Gracie Combatives Instructor's Certification Program for Law Enforcement.

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Having been sold on Gracie Jiu-Jitsu for some time, they pushed for that "policy."

"We thought Gracie Combatives was the most effective and simplest way [of self-defense]," he says.

When others hit the mats to learn the system, they also quickly realize the efficiency and simplicity, regardless of their skill level going in.

"When they get on the mat, they realize it's realistic," says Demetriadi. "The techniques make sense, and they are easy to learn. Plus, if they are easy to learn, they are easy to apply."

"You don't need to be an ultimate fighter to be good at it, and you won't be an ultimate fighter when you're done with the 30-hour course, either," says Demetriadi.

But they will be extremely prepared to deal with a multitude of scenarios along the border, which is critical in the real world.

BEST IN THE BUSINESS

Not only are BORTAC members thrilled with their new and improved defensive tactics program, they are also ecstatic to be working with the Gracies.

"The Gracies have a reputation for being professional and for being some of the best in the business," says Owens.

And the same can be said for the U.S. Border Patrol.



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BJJ HEAVEN

The Key Elements

1. ESTABLISH BASE

The main objective for Gracie Combatives for law enforcement or the military is to make the program the base for all organizations.

Many students who take the program learn “great” techniques and then bring these newfound techniques and add them to their existing defensive-tactics programs.

“What ends up happening is a mishmash of techniques that really don’t work together as a simple, effective, teachable and applicable program,” says Spiro Demetriadi. “There is no strong, core base to add techniques and in the end, even though there may have some effective techniques within their program, the overall program is ineffective because the base is not strong.”

2. THREAT SCENARIOS

Gracie Combatives addresses the most common threat scenarios one will experience in the field. When you effectively learn these techniques, you can then add other techniques (taser, baton, weapons, pepper spray or whatever) to the base, he says.

3. SIMPLICITY

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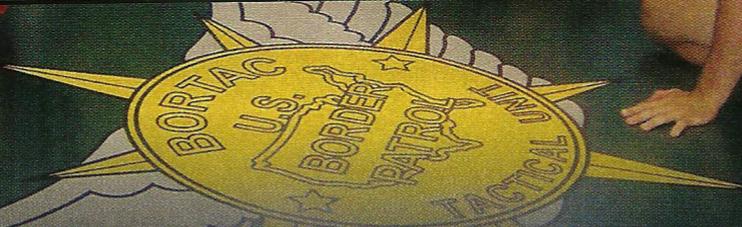
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“The most gratifying part about having the Gracie Combatives techniques officially adopted by so many military units and law enforcement branches in the U.S. is that it legitimizes all the hard work of my ancestors.

“The simple fact that the Secret Service, F.B.I. and the U.S. Border Patrol, who have the financial resources to hire anyone in the world, choose us to teach them is proof that the Gracie Combatives course is the simplest and most reliable course of its kind.”

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ULTIMATE GRAPPLING MAGAZINE ARTICLE MARCH 2008 - plain text version-

US BORDER PATROL SPECIAL OPERATIONS (BORTAC)

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