

MEDICAL REVIEW FOR GST LEVEL 1

Brothers and Sisters in Blue,

I just completed the Gracie Survival Tactics Level 1 Instructor Course. As an Emergency Physician and Reserve L.E.O., I have encountered both patients and subjects who are violent and needed to be made to comply. In the hospital, patient safety is, of course, of utmost concern, oftentimes to the detriment of the medical staff, who end up getting hurt due to their inability to safely control the patient. In law enforcement, as you all know, the use of force is something that is closely scrutinized in every counter with a suspect, particularly with the prevalence of cell phone cameras.

I was impressed by many aspects of the GST Level 1 course: the knowledge and professionalism of the instructors, the efficacy of the techniques, the superb method of teaching an instructor how to teach, to name a few. What I was particularly impressed with, however, was the emphasis placed on controlled restraint: using the least amount of energy and the least amount of force to gain compliance. As a lifelong student, I have considered several systems that emphasize self-defense, both for civilians and for law enforcement. The clear majority focus on applying quick, devastating force to neutralize the threat. Gracie Survival Tactics is the first system I have found that placed its emphasis on controlled (or restrained) use of force.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not implying that this system doesn't teach you techniques that will neutralize a threat or that will help you gain compliance with a violent suspect. On the contrary, there are several techniques that could cause injuries to the subject. However, if an injury were to result, it would be due to the suspect's refusal to comply with the verbal commands being given, which is in accordance with standard use of force matrices. This System emphasizes using the minimum amount of force necessary to gain compliance and control (the Kimura or the Americana are 2 techniques that immediately come to mind). During the application of these techniques, the officer can *gradually* apply the technique to gain pain compliance. Throughout the course our instructors would emphasize the fact that in a certain position (in the guard, in punch block 1, for example or in the mount with leg hooks and hands in base) was a "safe" position: one where the officer could maintain control, conserve energy, not inflict harm to the suspect, while maintaining control while waiting for the suspect to "relax". Any of these positions would still allow for the officer to defend himself/herself from any assault, and would allow for further measures if necessary, all the while allowing the officer to provide ongoing verbal commands.

Another technique that is taught is the vascular neck restraint. This technique has been the

subject of considerable controversy. The public is always in shock when someone is "choked out". Many departments either do not allow "choking" techniques, or reserve them for use in deadly force situations. The fact remains that, when applied properly, techniques such as the vascular neck restraint are safe and, in the vast majority of cases, allow for submission and control without any permanent sequelae. Critics, of course, will cite the rare cases of someone who did suffer permanent damage or even death. These **rare** cases are usually due to an underlying medical condition (i.e. a plaque in the carotid artery that ruptured) that would not have been known or suspected by anyone. However, if applied properly (as it is taught in this course), this technique can provide quick and effective control of a combative suspect, without having to resort to more punishing means of control (e.g. punching, kicking, use of a baton). The instructors, as with every technique taught in Gracie Survival Tactics, repeatedly emphasized the proper way to apply this technique (most importantly, not pressing on the trachea), and repeatedly clarified that this technique should only be used in accordance with each officer's departmental policy on use of force.

In summary, Gracie Survival Tactics is a course that provides an officer with many efficient and proven techniques that can be used to defend himself/herself, while simultaneously controlling a non-compliant or even violent suspect until, ultimately, the suspect can be handcuffed. Throughout the course safety is the primary concern: both the officer's and the suspect's. This is, I feel what truly sets this course apart from most of the other self-defense systems taught to law enforcement. The techniques are meant to be able to be applied with varying degrees of force so that injury to the suspect will only be sustained as a last resort. For bystanders watching (and recording), this makes it difficult to accuse the officer of excessive force. In court, one can readily defend his or her actions by pointing out that during the execution of a technique, the suspect was given the ability to stop resisting due to the application of controlled pain compliance and that any injury that resulted was due to the suspect's actions, not the officers.

Stay safe!

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