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TACTICAL LIFE

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A MAN & HIS DOGS

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And His Giant Schnauzers**

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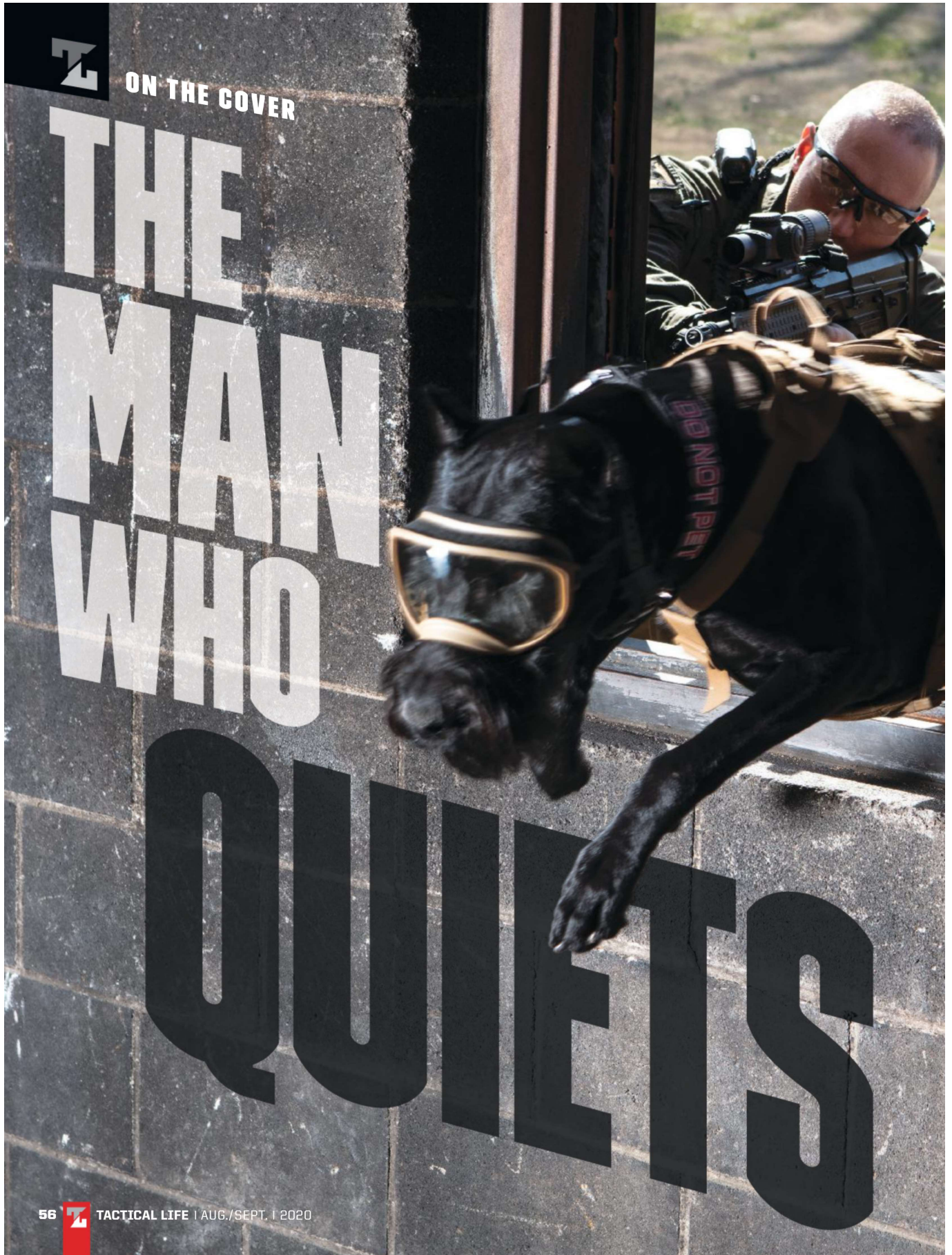
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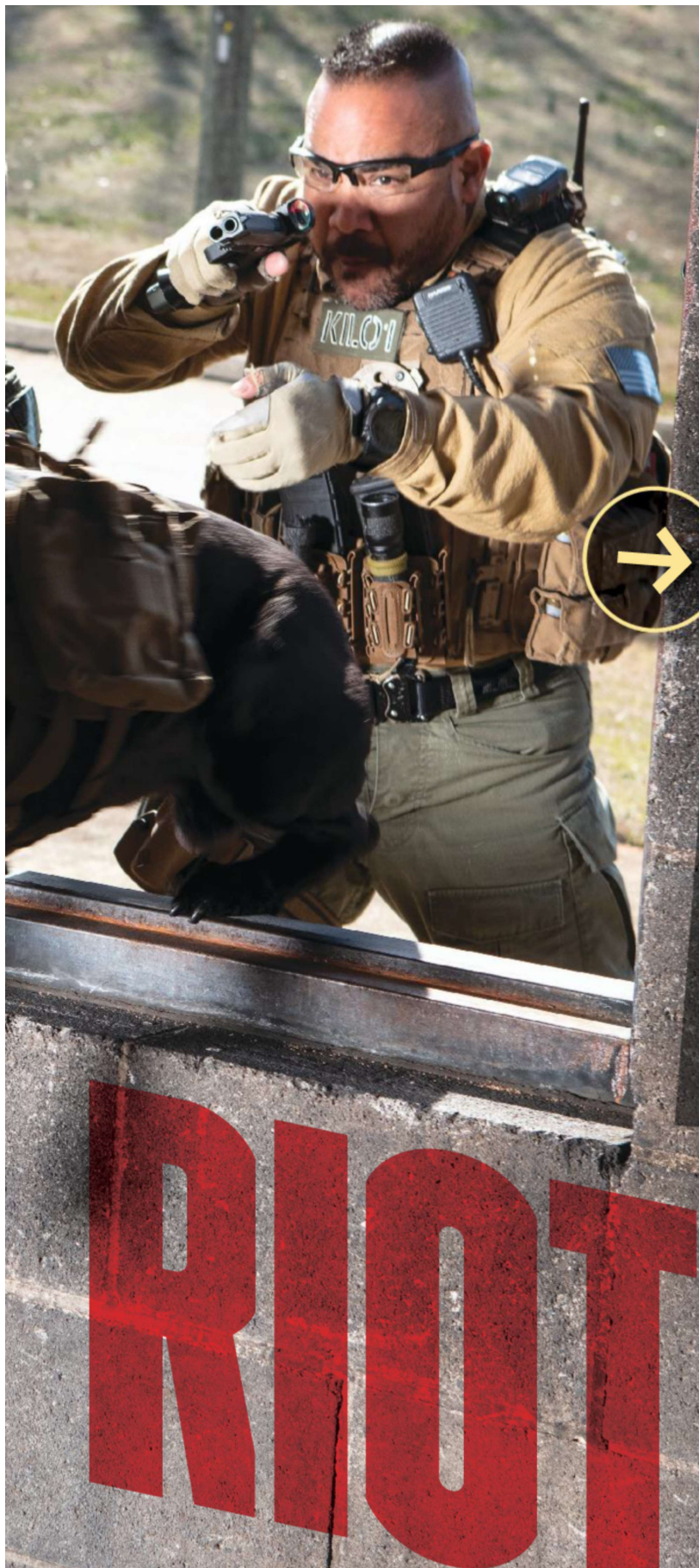
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OUTNUMBERED 50-TO-1, STL GARCIA AND HIS GIANT SCHNAUZERS ARE ALWAYS THE SAFE BET

BY MIKE DETTY • K1K9 PHOTOS



IMAGINE FINDING YOURSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRISON RIOT, OUTNUMBERED 50-TO-1 AND YOUR MAIN DEFENSE WAS A SCHNAUZER!

That's right, a schnauzer! It is a situation STL (senior team leader) Joseph Garcia has found himself in many times, and those who know him and his dogs will bet on them every time!

A senior team leader for Corrections and Special Applications Unit (CSAU-1), Garcia heads a quick-reaction team, always on standby to respond to correctional mayhem across the nation. One of the team's strategic assets is its highly trained cadre of giant schnauzers.

Garcia is a 25-year veteran of law enforcement and attributes his success to being in the "wrong place at the right time."

RIOTS

T THE MAN WHO QUIETS RIOTS



“CHANCES ARE, ONCE WE UNLOAD, THINGS ARE GETTING RESOLVED PRETTY QUICKLY!”



How did you get started in this business?

In the early 1990s, there was the Lucasville Prison riot in Ohio. There were officers killed, inmates were killed and it was one of the most violent prison riots ever. The need for an outside contractor to come in and quell riots became obvious. Bid specifications went out to have specialized teams with a higher level of training. Black Water was awarded some contracts and I was already doing some really unique things in the corrections industry. They (Black Water) found out what I was doing, gave me a call and said, “Hey, would you be interested in this contract? We have Navy SEALs, we’ve got Delta guys, but nobody has the prison background and this contract just fell in our laps. Would you be interested in spearheading it?” I said, “Sure, why not.”

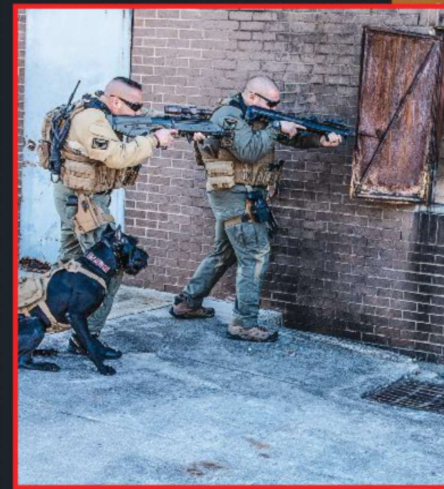
One thing led to another, one contract led to another and my name and reputation were formed in the corrections community. Years later, I have become the number one guy in

the world to go to. I have worked with the Israelis and in Singapore, Guam, Argentina, Ukraine... I have worked in the United Kingdom and among the who’s who in the United States. I have really been blessed with this opportunity to just be at the wrong place at the right time. Our stuff is 98 to 99 percent sole-sourced to us, meaning there is no bidding on contracts—they selected us from the git-go. It’s because of our capabilities, our logistical assets, our worldwide global reach, our technical capabilities, our personnel and what we’re doing with training and special operations guys developing teams for other agencies.

Whenever you hear of a hostage situation or a major riot inside a correctional facility or jail in the United States, chances are we’re the team being called to respond to it. We are specialists in what we call “reinforced structure operations.” When we go into one of those major situations, we’re usually outnumbered 50-to-1 so we have assets and capabilities of being anywhere in the United States within a certain period of time.

To make an analogy, it sounds almost as if you are a firefighter waiting for a call?

Yes, we have pallets of equipment strategically located in certain parts of the country, ready to be loaded on



EXCLUSIVE Q&A: STL JOSEPH GARCIA

aircraft. More importantly, we have an intelligence network that provides constant monitoring for at least 3,000 jails and prisons in the United States. It's like our own little war room that's in a classified location.

Are you government contractors?

We are, we're government contractors for state, county and federal correction facilities. We only work for the government and we're immediately deputized once we arrive at our hotspot. We've serviced the city of New York. Major communities like Maricopa County (in Arizona), agencies in Florida, pretty much all of the states in the lower 48. It is very difficult to put your finger on where the next hostage situation or riot will happen. It is very costly for a department to be on complete standby all the time and devote these resources unless it is a major agency. So, what we do is provide real-world response and get a team on-line before the event happens.

Our numbers are still classified, the number of operations we do are still classified and where we deploy is still classified. We move in the evening times when we get escorted. And whatever flights we get, whether it is private or commercial, fixed or rotary wing, nobody really hears us or sees us coming. It's usually over and done before it hits the media. We need to resolve the situation as quickly as possible.



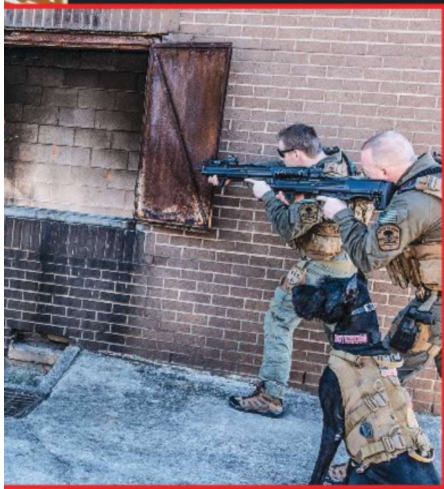
What makes us really unique is that nobody really wants to know what happens inside a prison. Once you go behind the walls, there's no fanfare, no media. Most of these agencies have an eight-hour window. That's it! It is an eight-hour window to conflict resolution. It has to end very quickly because, after eight hours, the media is going to find out about it and, basically at that point, we're not going to even get involved. It's pretty much that clean and simple. Because the reason for that is now you have politicians involved. You have the media involved.

Most of the administrations that call us as soon as it happens or as it is taking place immediately understand that the eight-hour window is ticking away and time is of the essence. Once we get there, decisions need to be made. Has the officer or the inmates been hurt? Has there been a loss of life? Is there going to be a loss of life? So, that when we arrive on deck and however we're getting dropped in the zone—whether we come in blacked-out vehicles through Sallyport gates or

whether we're getting helo dropped in a field next door to that facility at 2 a.m.—chances are once we unload, things are getting resolved pretty quick. (Garcia chuckles.)

Are your chief assets the dogs or are they just part of toolbox?

Our main assets are our personnel and technology. What we use dogs for, and this is really a big thing, is that we were the first to train giant schnauzers and get them certified and run them as corrections-certified canines. We were the first to use lights and lasers over 10 years ago to guide our dogs. In other words, if there's a group of people, right, how do you release a dog if you want to take down a ringleader? If you release your typical mali or shepherd, the dog is going to go and hit the first person it sees because it doesn't know who you want them to take down. So, what we do is we use a bright light, something like a Streamlight 1,000-lumen, 2,000-lumen, 20,000-lumen to light the area up and then we use a green laser to



THE MAN WHO QUIETS RIOTS



light up the person. Then the dog has been trained to hit only the person that has been lasered, no matter what. It's just going to find that laser and hit it once the dog has been released.

When you see a 104- to 124-pound giant schnauzer running at you at 30 miles per hour, trust me when I tell you, inmates get out of the way very quickly! (Garcia chuckles again.)

The funny thing is we don't just send one dog we send two, three, four or five dogs simultaneously, and if you've never seen that kind of picture before just imagine five dogs coming at you that are all black and there is no stopping them. When they hit their target, it goes down pretty quickly.

Our dogs are trained to hit lower extremities only, what we call the chasis, from the waist on down. If the dogs are trained to go after the upper body and arms, the operator can't shoot because our dogs will be in the way. When you're dealing in a riot, it is really important that we minimize the blue-on-

blue crossfire. The dog is going to hit you in the lower chasis and anywhere in the midsection. Anywhere behind the back of the leg, between the knee and Achilles, and it is going to collapse you immediately.

Are giant schnauzers the only breed you use?

They are. They're an exclusive breed and we use them for a number of reasons. The primary reason is temperament. These dogs can be amped up and then you, as an officer, can come up and pet that dog in the middle of a crisis and it's not going to turn on you. That is how strong the dog's mental temperament is. Number two is we selected a dog for pure size—we need size! You have to remember these inmates will roll blankets around their arms. They know the dog is coming for them and they'll extend the arm wrapped in a blanket and use the other hand to stab the dog. We learned this over 10 years ago. That's why when

we send a dog, it won't pay attention to the arm offered by the inmate—it's paying attention to the laser. It is going to hit you and bowl you over, I don't care how big or tall you are. You're getting hit by a 124-pound dog, and it is going to hurt.

The other thing about what makes these dogs special is that if you look at the giant schnauzer, its jawline is shaped almost like a C-clamp, versus a V like a shepherd or mali has. The malis and sheps have a bite strength between 200 and, maybe, 300 psi. Our giant schnauzers are coming out of the box at between 400 and 450 psi. They are breaking and crushing bones when they make a hit. Malis and sheps like to corn cob and rip when they bite. When a giant schnauzer bites a human being and gets a grip on a leg, it automatically goes into a crush. Every person I've seen get hit by one of our dogs screams for their life. I have never heard an inmate get hit by one of these dogs and remain silent.

Will the dog stay on that inmate until you release them?

He will. Our dogs "out" on demand. We spend almost 2.5 years on their training because they go to air-assault operations, they go to breaching school, they go to low-light and multiple-threat engagement, etc. Our dogs are dual certified with an EOD (explosive ordnance) and/or narcotics or special operations patrol. You know, these dogs are highly talented. We even send some of our dogs to cadaver school. They're so smart we even train the dogs to pull an inmate's pants down or lift their shirts so we can see if they have shanks from far away. So, if the inmate is on the ground and he surrenders, I still need to know if the individual has a shank on them. Next to Navy SEALs and CAG (Combat Applications Group) K9s, our dogs are among the most highly trained in the world of special operations and they do what they need to do to mitigate violence in a prison riot scenario. Their temperament and intelligence are really why we selected them.

EXCLUSIVE Q&A: STL JOSEPH GARCIA

How do you select your dogs or do you have your own breeders?

We have classified breeders in Europe.

Do your dogs wear cameras?

They do. Going back 10 years, our dogs were the first, outside of the military special operations, to wear body cams. They were using what were called the POV cameras and then we went with the Garmin cameras. The wifi signal inside of prisons isn't really great. So, we have to make sure that we have a good camera that can go through these walls, in terms of linking up with communications. Our dogs use embedded earbuds inside their ears—that's technology that we've been running for seven years now. Dogs have a high sensitivity to noise, so we need to make sure the sound level doesn't overwhelm them. Think of an empty gymnasium—how it echoes when you talk. Now fill that gym with 300 inmates, every one of them screaming at the top of their lungs. Now add gunfire—six of your friends are firing shotguns as fast as they can. There's going to be sensory overload, and a dog is going to go purely on visualization, not hearing, at that point. So, we use light and lasers and that's why we went to embedded earpieces for our dogs. We communicate with them on a different level so we use a



lot of vibration and low tones for them to steer them left or right, what have you. There are some crazy things that we're doing with our dogs!

We use specialized booties that are slip-resistant on ice, grease and polished concrete. We were the first to use lights on our dogs. Red, blue or green lights with strobes, and in the dark or low-light we can see the direction of our dog's head.

What are your go-to firearms?

We primarily use the Kel-Tec KSG shotguns. The reason we went with the KSG is its high capacity and the ability to switch the type of rounds we need on the fly. It gives us the compactness we need. You know it is 26.1 inches

long, and that's one inch smaller than an MP5! It gives us capability no other shotgun in the world can come close to. We adopted the KSG some seven years ago and it has worked 100 percent for us. We use the bullpup platform because of the compactness and we'll run the Kel-Tec RDB rifle with a Razor HD for high-risk transport out of our vehicles. We run the new Gen 5 Glocks with Vortex Razor dots and use G-Code holsters. We use Angel Armor for body armor—we love their vests and great technology.

Maybe you have an unclassified success story you can share?

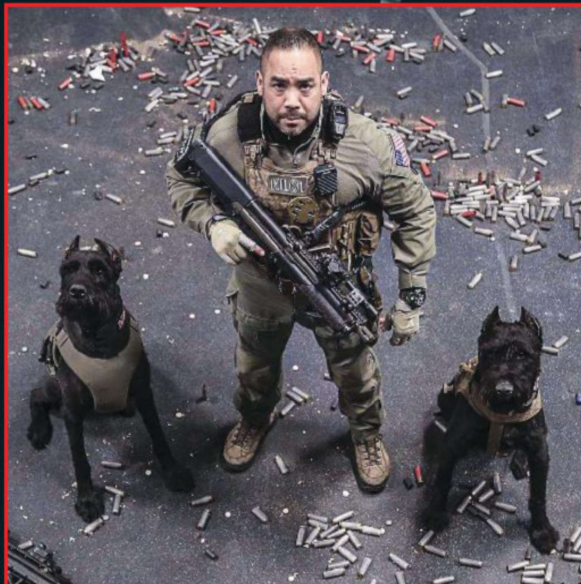
We had a riot with, believe it or not, cartel members at a facility near the southern border. They blocked the doors and were getting ready to do a hit on a new person who came in. They barricaded the door pretty hard, and we only had one access point to go through so we were able to breach part of the door by cutting through it and sending the dog in and laser-guiding the dog. For about 4 minutes he was in there by himself pushing back inmates while they were trying to kick him. And this dog, Max, was able to keep the inmates away from the door long enough that we were able to do a complete breach of the door. Max is one of our most decorated dogs. He has over 24 bites in his career (a bite is classified as any time a dog is deployed for a real situation—not a training exercise) and he's just a beast!

Has the COVID crisis caused an issue for CSAU?

I was one of the first to come out and talk about needing to be careful. There have only been one or two cases reported of canine to human transmission. For the most part, our dogs' time in that environment is very short. We also use a lot of different things to ensure everyone's safety. It can be hard on the dog's respiratory system, but dogs are very viable, flexible animals and if they have an issue it presents itself very quickly. Especially if you know your dogs very well as we do



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ours. But, for the most part, it has been a non-issue for us.

We've been extremely busy and the primary reason is that there are a number of institutions that were affected in the early stages of the Coronavirus. The problem is that many of the tactics implemented by prisons are "manpower intensive." If a large portion of your manpower becomes sick and your tactics rely on those people, you're at a disadvantage. The other reason we've had to respond to a number of institutions is that they are using old technology when it comes to chemical agents.

During the COVID crisis, you don't want to use pepper spray or tear gas which causes respiratory inflammation, which causes people to spit and have mucus running out of their nose and eyes. So using those irritants inflames that situation both physically and medically.

What we have done is instituted new technology that attacks the eyes predominantly. It is like when you get a drop of lemon juice in your eye. You squint hard, your eye burns and you're temporarily blind. It's an organic compound that is citrus-based and it is state of the art and truly amazing. We spray them in the eyes and it shuts

them down quickly. No coughing, sneezing, hacking, or mucus.

During COVID, we've also gone to a very concentrated direct action so we're using very strategic impact rounds with the KSG shotgun. The KSG is really a force multiplier in that we need fewer men because now we can drop five or seven guys into a prison yard and their KSG is loaded with 14 rounds plus what they carry on their body. The Kel-Tec KSG has been the tip of the spear for us.

With the George Floyd tragedy have you been deployed to non-prison environments?

All I can say is our role has been flexible with a number of government agencies primarily because of the tactics we're utilizing. I don't want to say too much for obvious reasons—I just can't compromise anything.

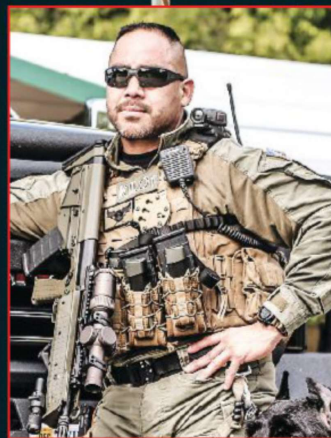
But this I can say. From the prison and jail side, there's a lot of racial

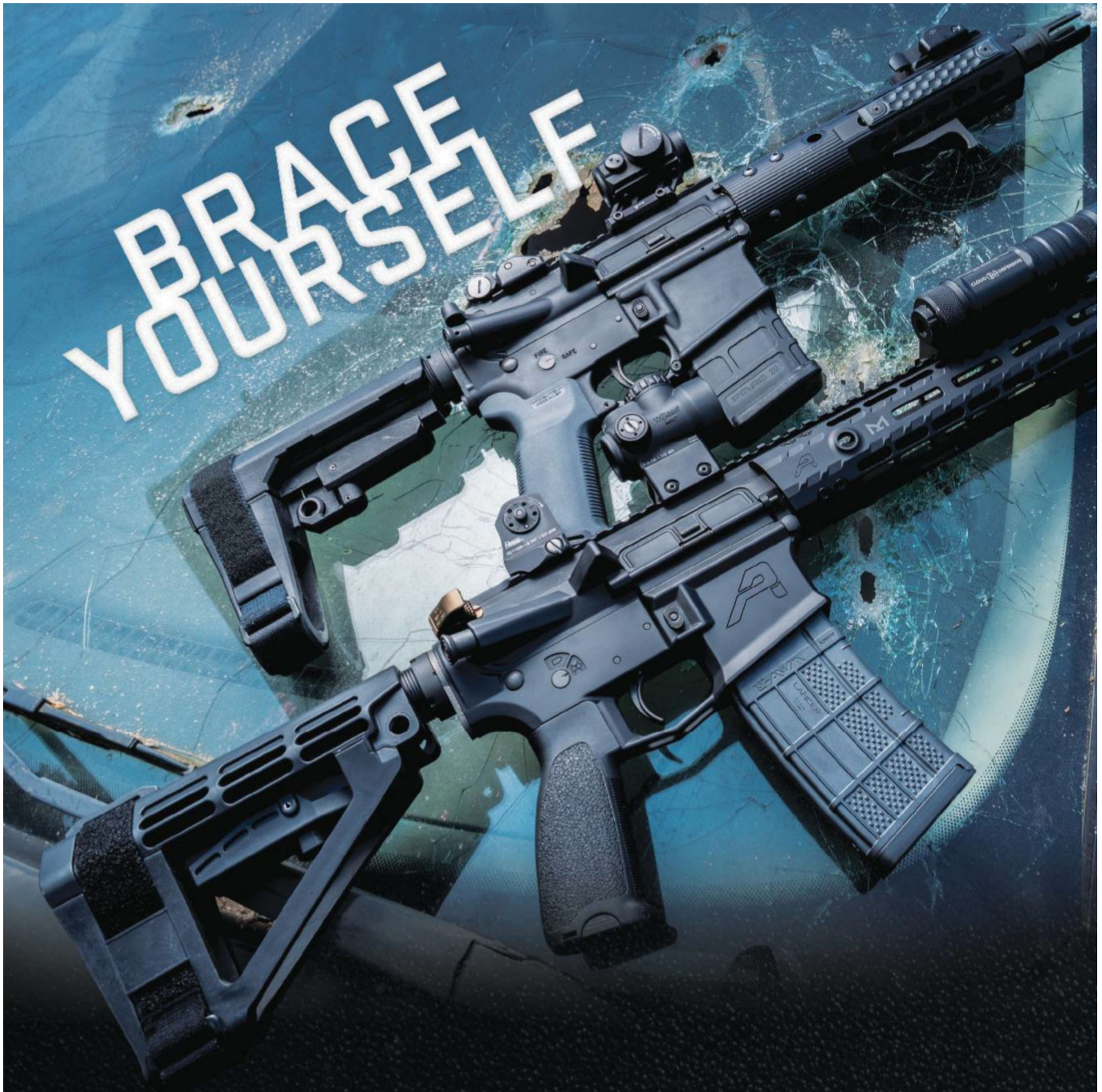
tension and it is mounting and extraordinarily high right now. We're looking at them to provoke major types of

incidences and I fear that in the next 90 to 180 days we're going to see some serious racial riots inside the prisons. I can tell you firsthand there are a number of agencies ramping up very quickly because they feel it coming on. There have already been some skirmishes and our concern is that there will be a racial war against

the corrections officers. We're doing our best to prepare for what we think is going to happen.


If you see me on the news we didn't do our job. We're the guys who show up behind the scenes and do our jobs very quickly and leave. We're very clandestine when we show up and agencies don't want to broadcast when they're using us because it means they have failed at some level. 🇺🇸





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