

Combative Carbine 1 AAR, 8-07, Oneida NY Thom O.

Last week I attended the Combative Carbine 1 class conducted by Chris Fry in Oneida, NY. I have trained with Fry in the past for combatives and blade work, so his well-integrated, straightforward approach is something that I'm familiar with and appreciate. I have a martial arts background, and love it every time there is something Fry presents that is a distilled, stripped down and highly-effective version of something traditional that works across armed and unarmed fighting systems. My professional work consists of designing, developing and conducting lots of (non-fighting-related) training, so I have a pretty critical eye.

Overall, his approach is detail-oriented, but there is an aggressive, learn-by-doing tone to all the exercises covered. After reviewing safety, fundamental marksmanship, basic history and the purpose-driven design aspects of the carbine and gear (mainly AR platform in this case and some AK) it was down to the line to start applying the lessons.

There was a range of experience levels in the class, and good habits were either learned, corrected or reinforced as we moved through pure fundamentals (attitude, shooting positions, sight picture, safety protocols) and on to basics (administrative gun handling, combative manipulations, combative marksmanship, shooting responses). We spent a proportionate amount of time on bilateral weapon operation, which Fry pegs as another one of the vital "basics" that should become automatic processes with enough training and practice, best learned from day one.

This was a great course for a lot of different reasons. Every position and action has a purpose, and sometimes a layer of purposes. Fry's attitude is not "because I told you so" but is instead "this is the problem, this is why A is a good solution, this is why B is not a good solution." He also recognizes that some things don't work for everyone; as long as safety and the fundamentals of combative shooting are not compromised, that's fine. We had a number of gear malfunctions but learned to deal with them in one way or another. I had my eyes opened a few times by discovering that a poorly mounted sling, poor ammo selection or not following a basic properly was a lesson better learned under the forward pressure of training than in a critical situation.

Fry mentioned that he will offer another course in this series, but I would also personally consider taking this course again the next time it's offered. There are subtleties and details that are tough to absorb in just four hours, especially since it seemed like eight. You will not run out of things to work on at the range and at home. The class was fast-paced, efficient (not rushed) and perfect groundwork to build on. If you get a chance to train with Fry, do it – there is a reason why a number of the "familiar faces" in his classes routinely drive hundreds of miles to participate.