

First Annual Patrol Rifle Conference and Competition

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In May 2006, I was invited to speak at the first annual Patrol Rifle Conference and Competition, in Detroit, Michigan. The event, sponsored by Center Mass Inc. was co-hosted by The Oakland County (Michigan) Sheriff's Department and The Michigan Tactical Officers Association (MTOA). Although the Conference had taken place the seven previous years, this was the inaugural patrol rifle competition, in which over 150 competitors took part. A good many of the shooters came from the upper Midwest, but some came from as far as Texas and California. Unlike the Swat Roundup and other competitions I've been involved with, all six competition events are centered around the patrol rifle. It's all patrol rifle' all the time. Movement and tactics are incorporated, but in every event the primary challenge is to the operator's skill with the patrol rifle. None of the competitors know in advance what the events or course of fire will be. They do know that the evolutions will incorporate CQB techniques, midrange shooting, moving and accuracy with the patrol rifle. All shooters were briefed on the upcoming events, the morning of the competition. This is done in an attempt to make the playing field as level as possible.

The first evolution was the CQB course. The event is designed to replicate an active shooter or warrant service scenario. It's moving, shooting and reloading. One second is deducted from your total score for every second it takes to complete the course. Hit a hostage or an innocent and a major penalty is assessed. Sixty seconds is the maximum time allowed.

Next was the moving target event. The shooter started seated in a patrol car, weapon in the trunk. Upon command the shooter exits the car, retrieves the rifle from the trunk, runs to the 75 yard line where 10 rounds are fired at the moving target, from the prone position. The shooter then must move to the 50 yard line and repeat the 10 rounds fired at the moving target, this time from the seated or kneeling positions. This must be completed in 30 seconds. The competitor then moves to the 25 yard line and again repeats the drills, in 30 seconds, from the standing position.

The third event places emphasis on target identification. At the 100 yard line, shooters are given file folders with suspect pictures, they must then run to the 7 yard line, make their weapons hot and engage each suspect target (3) located in a maze of other photographs. After completing this task, the shooter must safe the weapon, place it on the deck and return to the 50 yard line, view another suspect photo, go back to the 7 yard line and repeat the drill. Step 3 is the same, except the shooter goes back to the 25 to repeat the process.

The low light transition drill is next. Very simple and direct. The shooter, in very dim light, must transition from a dry rifle to the pistol and fire a total of 4 rounds at two targets. Very simple in that no light means, no target ID can be made and no shot should be taken. Several competitors learned the hard way. Always carry your light. You may need it, even on a bright sunny day. In the fifth event, the shooters must engage a hostage rescue target from the 50 yard line. The shooter must low-crawl from the 65 yard line to the 50, three times, firing 10 rounds per stage, at the target. During the three stages the shooters must fire 10 rounds from the three different prescribed positions (standing, kneeling/sitting and prone). Head shots (the only area of the suspect available) count for 10 points, a miss costs -5 and hit a hostage and its -20.

The final event of the day was the "Pure Marksmanship" event. The shooter has 2 minutes to fire 40 rounds from the prone at 100 yards. Twenty rounds are fired from both strong side and weak side. In this evolution, the rifles equipped with optics really had the advantage.

All in all, this was a good comprehensive series of events that tested the shooters abilities in several areas. And as it should be, the over-riding theme throughout the day was safety.

The second day of the conference was devoted to information sharing. Some of the most knowledgeable people in the field lectured on a variety of patrol rifle related themes. Topics covered were establishing a patrol rifle program, policy considerations (FAQ in the patrol rifle classes I instruct), a review of actual rifle shootings. Patrol rifle equipment selection, maintenance, equipment failures and why they occur. Defensive/Urban rifle issues. Patrol rifle ammunition selection (another FAQ). Advanced transition techniques and drills. The day ended with a debrief conducted by Captain Charles Cabannis of the Rock Hill, South Carolina Police Department, of a bank robbery/pursuit, involving the deployment of patrol rifles.

Jeff Felts of Center Mass Inc. (www.centermassinc.com) and the co-hosts put on a very professional event. I compare this with other law enforcement events I have participated in such as the SWAT Roundup, Texas Tactical, Illinois Tactical and of course NTOA conferences. It was well organized; professionally and personally attended to by the staff. And most importantly it was a safe and positive learning experience for the attendees.

In 2007, the National Patrol Rifle Conference and Competition, expanded to three days will be held in Detroit, May 2-4.

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