



# IN THE LINE Of Fire

By Mike Conti

## In the Line of Fire

An Intro from the Front Line of Law Enforcement

Since this is the first installment of a new column that will appear regularly in *Guns & Ammo*, I feel an introduction is in order. After this initial entry, future installments of "In the Line of Fire" will focus on a variety of subjects, from books, training programs and product reviews to interviews and opinion pieces.

First, let me explain the name of the column. It is the title of my first book, published by Paladin Press in July 1997. The subtitle, *A Working Cop's Guide to Pistolcraft*, states the actual theme and purpose of the book, which, I am proud to say, has been well received by many of my brothers and sisters in the law enforcement community.

Far from being an incendiary or exploitive title, *In the Line of Fire* states a simple truth that is faced by every law enforcement officer throughout the world. When you put on a uniform, badge and gun, and you go out to enforce the laws that your society deems necessary to preserve peace and promote the common good, you are inevitably going to run into people who don't agree with those laws or share society's regard for that common good. And occasionally, while dealing with some of these individuals, the encounters turn violent. Statistically, these law enforcement-involved encounters are most likely to occur at extremely close range, and consist of the most intense few seconds of an officer's life.

Such is the core reality of the job.

That's why when Garry James, editor of *G&A*, suggested *In the Line of Fire* for the title of this column, I had no objection, other than I didn't wish to appear to be trying to portray myself as being exposed to any greater or different danger than that faced by other officers on a daily basis.

And danger there is. For while working in the line of fire is definitely exciting, it can also become unnerving, disabling and deadly. Especially when the officers who place themselves out

there every day often receive limited or no support from their superiors, departments or general public.

"Well," begins a standard reply when these concerns are voiced, "that's your job—nobody made you take it!" While partially true, this line of thinking is ultimately deceiving. The truth is, while no one "makes" anyone take a job in civilian law enforcement, someone has to. Without civilian law enforcement officers, certain lawless segments of our

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society would run amuck.

There is also a problem with portraying civilian police officers as being outside of the society that they police. This common attitude tends to produce and reinforce the negative "us against them" mentality on both sides of the badge. But the fact of the matter is that the members of civilian law enforcement are members of our civilian society and may indeed be your father, sister, brother, husband, wife or child. As such, we, the members of our society, have a great and necessary duty to ensure that all of the members of our police forces are properly selected, trained, equipped and supported.

That's one of the reasons that after being asked to write for *Guns & Ammo*, the first thing I said was "Absolutely!" Having been a longtime reader of the magazine, I was only too thrilled to be offered the chance to contribute regular pieces and perhaps shed some light on various subjects from a civilian law enforcement officer's perspective.

In many ways, I liken this golden opportunity to my law enforcement career itself, for I grew up reading *G&A* and dreaming of being a police officer.

Looking back on a childhood some people have jokingly described as "being raised in a closet full of guns and

badges," I cannot express how lucky I feel at this point in my life, because not only am I blessed with a lovely wife and two stellar children, but here I sit, a 13-year veteran of the Massachusetts State Police, writing for the gun magazine.

I need to make a few things clear. First, any subjects I write about, opinions I express and musings I entertain are completely my own. Nothing that appears here is endorsed by or representative in any way of the Massachusetts State Police.

This does not mean, however, that I am oblivious to the fact that my actions and words naturally reflect on my family, my organization, this publication and myself. I will never intentionally do or write anything that would discredit or bring embarrassment to any of the above.

Other than that, my intentions are simple. I plan an honest, forthright column from a law enforcement officer's perspective. I'm saying this up front because my opinions will absolutely be influenced by my experiences, and for that I make no apologies. Not only am I a police officer, but I'm the son of a police officer, and contrary to Boston attorney Alan Dershowitz's infamous "testi-lying" indictment of U.S. law enforcement, all I've ever been taught about being a good cop revolves around the truth.

While sometimes making people uncomfortable, this straight-on approach is the only one I believe in, because I have seen how tenuous life can be, and frankly, I don't think any of us should waste the precious amount of time we've been allotted on trivialities or inconsequential pandering.

I also welcome any feedback, suggestions and criticisms and will do my best to address any subjects or questions that you, the reader of this magazine, may present.

This invitation is especially extended to the young reader who may be sitting on his or her bedroom floor, reading about the rich history and traditions associated with the proper and lawful use of firearms in this and other countries, perhaps dreaming about adventures and exciting deeds of derring-do while serving the greater good in their chosen field, be it military or civilian.

Yes, Virginia, despite what many would have us believe, young people like that still do exist. And we should be thankful that they do, because they are absolutely necessary to the future survival of our society.

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