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Bankers Up For A Fight: Is Combat Training The Next Big Thing?

You may think that bankers are only interested in fat bonuses, but according to combat training expert Tim Larkin they are increasingly interested in learning how to fight! Larkin, from Las Vegas, is the creator of 'Target Focus Training' (TFT) and teaches entrepreneurs and bank executives how to protect themselves using 'extreme' violence. He has just launched a publicity offensive (no pun intended).

Giiven the scraps with Governments and regulators that look likely to lie in wait for banks in the wake of the allegations of fraud recently laid at the door of Goldman Sachs, it probably couldn't be better timed. "I have senior executives from banks like Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan Chase enrolled on my courses," he says. He organises training workshops to demonstrate self-defence techniques which help bankers and other professionals to recognise when they're in dangerous situations and the techniques to protect themselves when attacked. The workshops teach practical ways to stop an armed attacker to increase personal safety, especially when travelling in higher-risk continents such as Africa or Latin America.

Corporate clients principally attend Mr Larkin's TFT seminars, which include instruction in how to kill. But this is not any old killing, which is bad. This is killing people for protection when they are visiting markets in emerging countries, which has an altogether different moral tone. "Most people feel very uncomfortable with the idea of violence because we have stigmatised it so much,' he explains. 'But I try to impress on students that violence is just another tool. You need visions in your head so you can replicate them when you try to do them."

His publicity material cites as an example Krista Waddell, the CEO of Ounces2Pounds. She has enrolled on the courses for four-and-a-half years. She travels extensively, organising gold parties in the UK, US and Australia, which gives her something of an incentive to learn how to look after herself. "Sometimes I walk out of a gold party with £2,000 worth of gold and it can be dangerous especially because I travel on my own," she said. Armed with that knowledge, finance ministers the world over might well be keeping an eye out for her wending her way home after future parties.

Waddell, who is also a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, says that she has found TFT very efficient. 'He teaches you the basics on how to survive," she said. As well as learning TFT for protection some executives have discovered that combat training can improve their business decision-making. Tim Larkin reports that he was recently engaged to train traders at the New York Mercantile Exchange; not to improve their capabilities for violence but to help them clarify their aims when trading (ISJ, for what it's worth, fails to spot any significant distinction between the two!).

"Many of them were telling me that they became paralysed before making a trade by the amount of information and research going round their head. The combat training somehow helped them focus their priorities and read the situations better," he said. Tim Larkin claims also to have trained the US Navy SEALs, Scotland Yard, FBI Hostage Teams, US Border Patrol and US Treasury officers. He is no less than 'The Man' that these agencies consult when training for a 'kill-or-be-killed' situation. He is co-author of the book, How to Survive The Most Critical 5 Seconds of Your Life (which in terms of strict publishing style should really be called How to Survive The Most Critical Five Seconds of Your Life, because the numbers one to nine are normally spelled out in full while numbers above 10 are expressed in digital terms, but that is sheer pedantry, practised at a safe distance from 'The Man'). He also co-authors the online newsletter, Secrets for Staying Alive When Rules Don't Apply.

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