

Being So Tactical...(Continued)

What wasn't routine was my experience at the mercy of a can of pepper spray. All Coast Guard boarding team members who want to carry pepper spray—an effective suspect control weapon—have to be exposed to it first. *Know thine enemy*, or in my mind, *know their pain*. Believe me, it was painful! You stand ten feet away from the training officer, get sprayed with two one-second sprays, then open your eyes. I was falsely confident until I opened my eyes; it felt like God had gouged my eyes out in the most painful way possible. I fended off my attacker, but was knocked to the ground at one point. Without even thinking about it, I did a tactical roll, rose, and fought him off for another few seconds. You only have to defend your weapon for thirty seconds; then you draw your weapon and put the suspect on the ground. By the time the training officer told me to draw my weapon, it felt like an eternity had passed. I was in SO. MUCH. PAIN. And I was angry by then. When I drew my weapon, I pointed it (a plastic gun) at the Red-Man, and screamed, "GET THE **** ON THE GROUND—NOW!!!" Everyone at the station was shocked, because I had been so well mannered and even-tempered until that moment.

After I finished, the medical staff guided me over to the water barrel. I dunked my face in the water, pulled out because it was too painful, and then dunked my head back into the water because the flow of air across my face was more painful than the water. This process is called reflashing—I'm glad it didn't happen in the shower! After another hour or so, I was fully recovered. I got my qualification letter, and made several copies of it. I'm not losing that letter EVER! I think that the next time I get sprayed, I will not be so eager to fight someone off—I'd rather end it quickly!

If you are interested there is [a video](#) for those who can't imagine what happens from my story alone. While it is Coast Guard policy not to videotape the OC-exposure training exercise, one of my friends appeared on Coast Guard Florida in a taping of OC-exposure. Look at his face, and imagine mine ten times worse!

These two stories have been my best experiences while at the Coast Guard Academy thus far. Next time, I will share my favorite experiences from around base: keeping it local. If you have any questions, email me: Peter.M.Driscoll@uscga.edu.