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V CORPS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE OFFERS SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING, TIPS

By Spc. Rebecca Burt
V Corps Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany — You're walking to your car one evening after staying late to finish up a project at work. You parked your car a little way down a nearby alley. As you near it you hear something behind you. Whirling around, you find a strange man standing too close for comfort.



SPC REBECCA BURT

15-year-old Nicole Harvin practices a self-defense technique against "Boxing Bob" under the guidance of assistant instructor Salvatore Giangregio during a self-defense course at the Campbell Barracks Fitness Center in Heidelberg, Germany August 28. The free class was sponsored by the V Corps Equal Opportunity Office as part of its programs for helping to prevent sexual misconduct in the Army.

What do you do?

You may not know, but now the students of a self-defense class sponsored by the V Corps Equal Opportunity Office here August 28 do.

More than two dozen soldiers, family members and DoD civilian employees attended the free class to learn skills

potentially dangerous people and situations and how to

The students also had a chance to learn and practice

techniques for protecting themselves and escaping an attack.

The half-day session was sponsored by EO as part of its programs for helping to prevent sexual misconduct in the Army, said V Corps EO Sgt. Maj. Evy Lacy.

The class opened with instructor Jack Dempsey, a contract employee of the V Corps operations division with many years of experience in martial arts, boxing and weapons use, explaining the differences between self-defense and martial arts, sports fighting and cardiovascular exercise programs that use similar movements.

More information on the techniques and self-defense tips taught during the class follow this article.

Dempsey told students that while martial arts are wonderful for exercise and sport, they aren't a good choice for learning self-defense, because martial arts and other fighting sports work on a system of set movements and rules that both opponents follow in a match. Each participant has certain things he or she can and can't do within the sport's rules, while an attacker on the street isn't concerned with following such a script.

"Street fighting has no rules," he said. "If you get hurt or tired, there's no referee to stop the action."

"The martial arts teach a wonderful array of skills, including discipline and self-control, but they don't teach you how to recognize a thug on the street or what he may try to do," added Dempsey.

Self-defense really starts long before a bad situation arises, when a person stays aware of his surroundings and takes precautions to prevent being chosen as a victim, Dempsey explained.

“Bad guys want an easy target. If you walk like you know what you’re doing and where you’re going, and you pay attention to your surroundings, watching for suspects and avoiding quiet, removed areas, they’re going to choose someone else who looks easier,” he said.

Dempsey went on to describe the steps of an assault, and verbal and physical techniques that attackers may use to create panic, fear, frustration or distraction in their victims, as well as ways to maintain some control over a situation, such as refusing to get into an attacker’s car.

After learning about what leads to an attack and motivates an attacker, students learned and practiced a variety of moves they could use to fend off an attack, including protective blocks and responses to an attacker punching or grabbing at them.

Several of the moves, though easy for students to do, created enough attack force to make the weighted practice dummy, “Boxing Bob”, rock on his hundred-pound base. With their newfound knowledge and defense movements, many of the students said they felt much better about their chances of surviving an assault.

“I’ve never been to a self-defense class before, and I didn’t know anything except to run,” said Sgt. Patricia Mandy, a topographic analyst with the V Corps Special Troops Battalion. “I know how to block a punch now, so maybe I’ll be able to do something if running’s not an option. I think everybody should come to it and learn something.”

Sgt. 1st Class Karen Hetu, equal opportunity advisor for the corps' 30th Medical Brigade, agreed.

"I learned some good techniques and it's given me more tools to keep myself safe," she said. "I really would try to encourage other soldiers to come out if we have another class, because I think it would be helpful to anyone. It was good."

Lacy said the V Corps Equal Opportunity Office hopes to partner with other organizations to host more self-defense classes, so interested students should keep their eyes open for future class dates. Organizations interested in sponsoring one of these classes can contract the V Corps EO Office at 370-5763 or 370-5768.

Phases of an Assault:

- 1 – Observation: The assailant chooses a victim and observes his actions and behavior.
- 2 – Interview: The assailant speaks to the victim to confirm his observations.
- 3 – Positioning: The assailant assumes a position for their attack, possibly by directing the victim into a certain location, getting physically closer or preparing his own body to react.
- 4 – Attack – The assault takes place.

The "mindset" of an assailant:

- Looking for an easy target
- Chooses the time and place for the attack
- Attempts to gain confidence to close the gap
- Uses verbal and physical intimidation to create panic or fear
- Wants to dominate or prove his strength

What you can do to protect yourself:

In general:

- Take responsibility for your personal defense and the defense of your loved ones
- Make an assessment of your lifestyle and your environment from the point of view of an attacker

- Train your senses to “see” things that an attacker sees, such as opportunities and weaknesses
- Train your body in gross motor skills and protective movements
- Understand the “adrenaline dump” and your possible reactions to it

In an “up close and personal” sense:

- Scan your immediate area for people, exit routes, actions, observers and other things that could affect an attack
- While driving, check your car mirrors regularly. When walking, use the reflections in store windows for the same effect -- to see who might be behind you.
- Vary your travel routes
- While driving, be wary during traffic stops
- Dress according to the environment; don’t “stick out”

Help to keep control of the situation:

- Vary your routes and plan where you’re going beforehand; avoid areas that may facilitate an attack.
- Practice “target hardening” -- walk with confidence, stay alert and don’t present an attacker with an “easy mark.” Attackers do not want someone who will scream, hit, fight or attract attention, so present yourself as someone who will.
- Pay attention to where you are, know where you’re going and who and what is around you.
- Do not allow anyone to invade your personal space.
- Don’t allow yourself to be distracted by interviewing techniques such as asking for the time, offering unwanted assistance or someone trying to charm you.
- Never allow your attacker to move you to a secondary location. Refuse to enter a vehicle or to walk to a more secluded place.

Never allow yourself to be restrained with rope or cuffs -- it gives the attacker even more control.

