

# COMMENTARY: Survival Advice from Governments and Safe2Safest

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## 1 Summary

Statistics released at the end of 2015 by The Trace show the sobering fact that Americans are just as likely to be killed by firearms as they are to die in a car accident. [1] The refugee crisis and attacks in Europe in 2015 have gotten people talking about radicalization and terrorism. To respond to the need for guidance on what to do in an event, governments and companies are issuing advice to people in school, work, or other public places.

Advice to the populace on surviving a weapons/shooting event (end of 2015):

- US government: **run, hide, fight** [2]
- UK government: **run, hide, tell** [3]
- French government: **s'échapper (escape), se cacher (hide), alerter (tell)** [4]

Advice on this subject comes from two sources: 1) policymakers and 2) companies that sell active shooter survival training as a product. Safe2Safest falls in the latter category.

Safe2Safest's three-word advice: **react, escape, survive** is a theory based on the observations and experience of our founders as survivors of what are now quite "thinkable" events in real life. We work as a multidisciplinary team to study, analyze, and collaborate (using a wide array of available data and critical evaluation of evidence) on the question of how to survive shooter/weapons events. The phenomenon lies at the intersection of politics, race, gender, religion, law, learning, psychology, communication, aggression, technology, intelligence, economics, history, and science. It is a busy intersection and we will not make steps toward solving this problem by diminishing its complexity and/or hiding our own agendas (like opinions, everyone really does have one). Safe2Safest's mission is to give people who are unarmed and in public, at work, at school, or at places of worship the building blocks of mental preparedness to create, in a crisis situation, a narrative for their own survival. Since each event is unique, this narrative must adapt to new information as it presents itself.

The final layer of complexity in this problem is the fact that, as stated in our training video, as much as we would like to think that criminals are inept cowards, the reality is that they have spent often considerable time and effort planning their events trying to make the news. They are aware of how long they have before they have to deal with trained professionals. They know how many bullets they have, how long it takes to change a clip, and the layout of the building. Active shooters, like everyone, think, write, and interact with others, trying to make sense of the world and their lives, and like everyone, they hope that after they die, someone will see them as a role model/hero and be inspired to carry on their work.

With **react, escape, survive**, our videos on this site, and the training we provide, the biggest mental shift/take-home message that Safe2Safest wants people to make in our minds is that **whatever our role was in life before actually**

**being in a shooter/weapons event, once it is underway, our role must become SURVIVOR.** A given active shooter may or may not be aiming to return home that evening, but if that is our goal, we can absolutely prepare and plan for that by spending some time thinking critically about the unthinkable. In preparing ourselves, we evolve toward letting knowledge and our survival instincts dictate our decisions, rather than allowing fear to bind us up or solely dictate what we ultimately do. Hiding may or may not lead to our survival depending on the circumstances. Safe2Safest is launching empirical testing of **react, escape, survive** in data (not live) simulations to quantitatively compare the effectiveness of different three-word advice strategies so that consumers can make informed choices.

## References

- [1] J. Mascia. 15 statistics that tell the story of gun violence this year: Highlighting the trends and data that defined another bloody 12 months in america. <http://www.thetrace.org/2015/12/gun-violence-stats-2015/>, 2015.
- [2] United States Department of Homeland Security. Active shooter preparedness. <http://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness> , december 2015, 2015.
- [3] United Kingdom National Counter Terrorism Security Office. Guidance: Developing dynamic lockdown procedures <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-dynamic-lockdown-procedures>, December 2015.
- [4] Gouvernement Francais. Comment reagir en cas d'attaque terroriste? <http://www.gouvernement.fr/reagir-attaque-terroriste>, 2015.