



## The Science of Training

with [David Blake](#)

# Guardian vs. warrior: The many roles of a police officer

**A cop is a servant who protects the public from evils (guardian) while also having the skill and courage to fight in battles (warrior)**

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The hyperbolic rhetoric surrounding police use of force has reached a head. As a result, that commentary is changing a police officer's mentality from "warrior" to "guardian." The fact is, police officers are both warriors and guardians — and they are so much more.

The police badge is symbolic of the knights of old who were both guardians and warriors. The badge you wear on your chest represents the historical knight's coat of arms which identified the knight and his allegiance much as the badge represents your sworn oath to protect and serve (guardian). The badge worn over the left chest is representative of the knights of old who wore their coat of arms on the left arm to protect their heart while leaving their dominant hand to fight (warrior).

Law enforcement officers are "public servants" by design. A cop is a servant who protects the public from evils (guardian) while also having the skill and courage to fight in battles (warrior). Let's examine both.

### **Guardians**

The FBI reports that there were an estimated 1,165,383 violent crimes (murder and non-negligent homicides, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults) reported by law enforcement in 2015. Of those, 63.6 percent fell in the aggravated assault category. In 2014, the estimated number of murders in the nation was 14,249. Police made an estimated 11,205,833 arrests during 2014 — 498,666 for violent crimes, and 1,553,980 for property crimes.

Most of these arrests — based on prior statistics — were made without the use of force. As a matter of fact, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 40 million persons had contact with the police in 2008 with only 1.9 percent reporting the use of — or threatened use of — force during the contact. The evidence shows law enforcement has acted within this role with honor and integrity.

## **Warriors**

In 2014, 51 law enforcement officers died from injuries incurred in the line of duty during felonious incidents. A full 48,315 officers were assaulted while performing their duties. Of the 48,315 officers who were assaulted in 2014, 13,654 (28.3 percent) suffered injuries (nine injuries per 100 officers).

Of those attacked 30.4 percent of the officers faced personal weapons (e.g., hands, fists, or feet) and suffered injuries, while 13.2 percent were assaulted with knives or other cutting instruments and were injured. Of officers attacked with a firearm, 9.4 percent were injured, while 23.4 percent of officers who were attacked with other dangerous weapons were injured.

These statistics are the proof of engagement by warriors who fulfilled their guardian role — some to a heroic death. The evidence contradicts popular belief concerning the guardian vs warrior argument; one does not seemingly exist without the other. While law enforcement officers should not be hypervigilant, they seemingly cannot become complacent to the violence of the job.

## **Conclusion**

Although law enforcement is facing difficult times and confusion, its role in society is increasing. Do not allow the rhetoric to affect your mindset. The facts speak for themselves. You are servants, guardians, warriors, and heroes. Fulfill each role with pride and professionalism.

Be safe. Be vigilant!

## **About the author**

David Blake is a retired California peace officer and certified Ca-POST instructor in DT, firearms, force options simulator and reality-based training. His experience includes SWAT, force option unit, field training, gangs/narcotics and patrol. He is a certified Force Science Analyst and teaches the Ca-POST certified courses entitled Force Encounters Analysis and Human Factors: Threat & Error Management for the California Training Institute. He also facilitates the Ca-POST Force Options Simulator training to tenured officers from multiple jurisdictions. Dave is an expert witness/consultant in human performance and use of force.

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