

# Military Service Spawns Careers in Law Enforcement and Life of Service

BY: BARRY SMITH  
BOOT CAMPAIGN



**Q**uite understandably, many American military veterans often gravitate to a career in law enforcement when the time comes to rejoin the civilian workforce. The two professions have many fundamental similarities, from the uniforms they wear with pride, to the firm command structure they serve under, to great personal risk they endure while protecting those who cannot protect themselves.

Two Boot Campaign Veteran Ambassadors – J.W. Cortés and Jason Borne – have successfully made the transition from service in the U.S. Marine Corp to law enforcement, and both have pursued a life of service that goes well beyond their chosen professions.

Cortés is a 12-year Marine veteran who now serves as a police officer with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTAPD), in addition to working in the entertainment business as an actor, singer and filmmaker. On the small screen, Cortés plays the role of Detective Carlos Alvarez in the hit FOX series “Gotham.”

Borne is an eight-year Marine veteran who is currently a senior police officer in his native Central Texas. But, unlike Cortés, he is not an actor and not the star of the action movies where the main character

shares his name. That would be Matt Damon. But Borne believes the similarity in his name helps bring much needed attention to the variety of causes he advocates for every day, including the military, first responders, critically ill children and their families.

“The Jason Bourne character was a source of annoyance for several years, but now I just embrace it,” explains Borne. “I figured if this annoying name can help people remember what I’m trying to do, then it’s worth it.”

Borne has felt the deep sense of responsibility for protecting and serving others for most of his life. During his early childhood, his father was a police officer and he had family members in the military.

“When I was eight years old I wrote a letter to my mother saying that I was going to go into the Army and then be a police officer because I liked their handcuffs,” he laughs. “She was probably in the next room when I was writing her these letters, and she still has them today.”

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The terrorist attacks around the country on Sept. 11, 2001, also played a significant role in his calling to serve and protect.

“I was still in high school and I walked into my Spanish class when one building was smoking and the second plane hit the second tower,” he remembers. “Obviously, that was impactful for a sophomore in high school to watch.

“The desire was there before that though, so 9/11 was more of a fortification than an inspiration,” he adds. “I’ve always been a very protective person by nature. I don’t know if it’s from having a little sister (Julia) or what, but I was always someone who felt like people need protecting and I want to be there to help protect them.”

At 19 years of age, he enlisted with the Marine Corp infantry in 2003 after completing just one college semester. In 2004, he was sent to Twentynine Palms, Calif., to get prepared for deployment overseas to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom. After seven months in Iraq, he returned to the U.S. and remained on active duty while going to college and working fulltime in an officer recruiting office. In 2006, he entered Officer Candidate School (OCS) himself, but after graduation he decided to withdraw and pursue a career in law enforcement.

“My daughter was born in February of 2006, and when I went to OCS in June, I didn’t like being away from her, even though it was only for six weeks,” remembers Borne, who was honorably discharged as a Marine Sergeant in 2011. “Getting a taste of what it’s like to leave a child behind kind of changed my perspective on what I was going to do for the next 20 years. I ended up moving on to my next life calling which was getting into law enforcement.

Now in his ninth year as a police officer, with two sons added to the family, his decision to change career paths is paying off just as he’d hoped.

What’s also paying off is Borne’s side business, a premium supplement company named MILLECOR® (millecor.com) that he founded in September 2015 as a vehicle to give back. The name is an abbreviation that reflects the company’s mission of support. MIL stands for the brave men and women of the U.S. military, LE is for law enforcement, and COR is short for Corps, or a group of persons associated together or acting under a common direction.

“I’ve always been into working out and have taken it seriously, because I think physical fitness is beyond vitally important for military and first responders,” says Borne, a resident of Cedar Park, Texas. “I also know a lot of veterans, first responders and active military are working out and taking supplements. I wanted give them a company they could support that would deliver just as good if not better products, but also a bigger purpose that would in a way be supporting themselves, their families, and the causes that they care about.”

A portion of all company sales directly benefit MILLECOR’s MILLECARE Campaign, as well as non-profits and other initiatives like Boot Campaign (Bootcampaign.org) and research for the childhood brain cancer called Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma. DIPG affects the pons portion of the brainstem, rendering nervous system function impossible, and symptoms usually worsen quickly because the tumor is rapidly growing.



Jason Borne





Photo By David Santiago (Instagram@CallMeDav1)

Borne has been inspired to give back and support many causes thanks to the influence and example of family members.

“A relative once told me, ‘if money could fix it, it’s not a problem,’” reflects Borne, “and the reason he has that attitude is because he knows what money can’t fix from a health standpoint. That’s kind of what fortified my desire to help people out financially.”

“Money can’t take away childhood cancer or a lot of things that healthy people or people with health kids can take for granted,” he adds. “But when people are in these situations when they’re dealing

a dying child with no cure and they have to take one day at a time, it is in situations like these that I don’t want money to have be anywhere near the forefront of their thoughts from a stress standpoint.”

By contrast, Cortés’ journey to a life of military service and law enforcement was quite different from Borne’s, yet both have made the most of their circumstances and upbringing.

Cortés was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y.’s primarily Puerto Rican neighborhood of Sunset Park on a street called by the NYPD as “little Vietnam,” that was surrounded by Methadone addicts and gangs.

As an 18-year-old he realized he wanted more, and followed his father’s footsteps into military service.

He served in the U.S. Marine Corps for nearly 13 years, including tours for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, for which he attaining the rank of Gunnery Sergeant and earned a Combat Action Ribbon and Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

His choice to follow-up his military service with career in law enforcement was aided by the extreme sense of trust he experienced as a Marine.

“After my time in Iraq I wanted to give life a chance and start a family and so that meant that I needed to find a new career,” Cortés explains. “I came to the realization that a career that included some sense of ‘service’ seemed the most appealing to me.

“An important factor in my decision was the culture of being in the Marine Corps where you really must learn to trust the person at your six and those who lead us,” adds Cortés, who joined the MTA Police in 2004. “I have found that being in the Police Department in many ways does mirror that sort of culture and foster that particular mindset.”

While developing a strong desire to serve his community and country at an early age, he also developed an interest in the arts at the same time, even performing in the musical *The Wiz* in high school. Since leaving the military, he has served in law enforcement for more than a decade and, at the same time, become one of the most revered actors of Puerto Rican descent on television today.

“In the beginning I didn’t set out to do both careers simultaneously but I did want to at least explore the idea of acting,” recalls Cortés, who in addition to “*Gotham*” has had various roles on shows like STARZ’s “*Power*,” NBC’s “*The Blacklist*” and CBS’ “*Blue Bloods*.” “The biggest take away from having this sort of career is the amount of empathy it has given me. That translates incredibly well and, in my opinion, has informed my acting.”

When not acting, singing or patrolling New York’s Grand Central Terminal, Cortés is actively helping to raise awareness and funding for various charities and organizations including Boot Campaign, Autism Speaks, Got Your 6, among others.

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“I remember my acting teacher explaining to us that actors are artists in service to their audience and that the craft of acting demands that we give it our 100 percent because folks pay good money and want to have an experience,” concludes Cortés. “That really resonated with me when I look back and see that I’ve had a life of service, whether it be in the uniform of the Marine or police officer or in the costume of a

character. It’s important that it involves a level of service.”

It’s also important that Americans can thank and celebrate the selfless life-of-service commitments made by military and law enforcement officers like Cortés and Borne, who continue to make us safe and proud.



J.W. Cortés