

# “Every Hour Two Nurses Are Assaulted.” Mel Cortez, RN, CEO, Cortex GOLD, Talks About Her Vision, Mission and Solution

*“In The Boardroom™” On  
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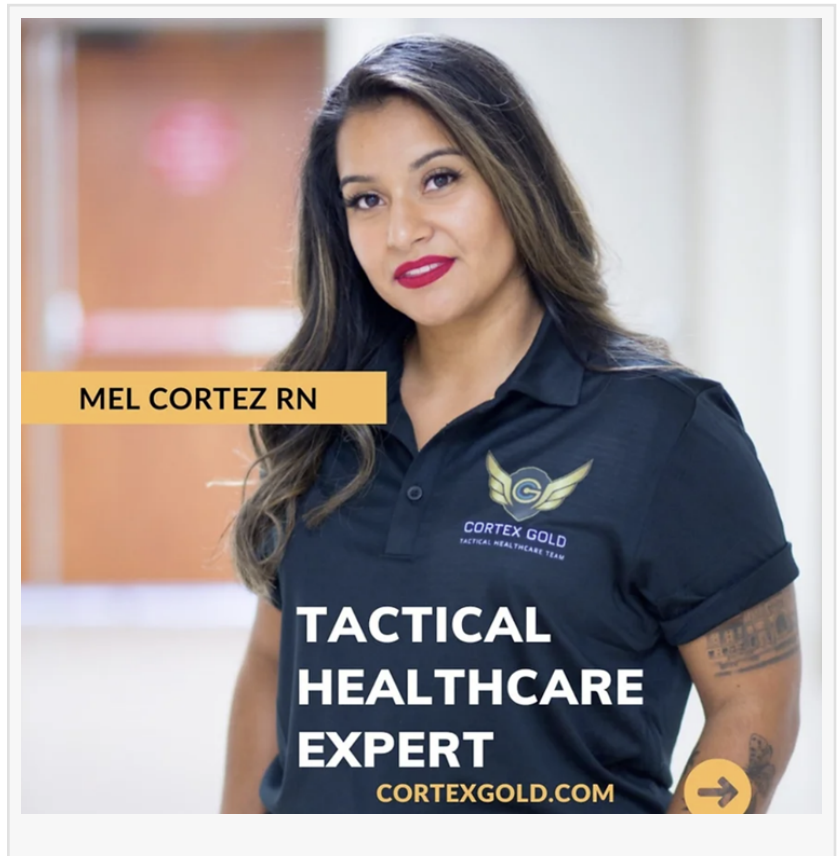
SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Thank you for joining us today Mel. It’s an honor to speak with a member of the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the International Association of Healthcare Safety and Security. Before we talk about Cortex GOLD and TACTBook in much greater detail, please tell us about your background.

Mel Cortez: I graduated from Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. As a Critical Care Travel Nurse for over 10 years, I have been in many facilities

across the country but got interested in security in 2020. I have held various management positions within Home Health, Hospice, and Long-Term Care prior to returning to the bedside to serve as a Critical Care Travel Nurse in the Northeast to care for the Covid ICU patients. I just took the position of CEO of TACTBook, a Non-profit based Clinical Violence Reduction Training Program supported by a Veteran Vocational Training Center in the lovely Texas Hill Country.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Your personal “safety and security” journey as a nurse is a very compelling story. Please share with us what motivated you to start Cortex GOLD and TACTBook and what is your mission and vision?

Mel Cortez: After 2 pivotal years caring for patients in the Covid 19 Pandemic, I was a victim of patient generated violence when a very unstable psych patient used a metal mop to assault me, my patients and other nurses in a busy ER. As a result of the violence, a critically ill patient



passed away. There were simply not enough well trained people or tools to manage this situation. I promised myself I would do whatever I could to prevent this for my colleagues. So I got to know some incredible experts, collected some preliminary survey data, and realized that workplace safety concerns were a preventable factor contributing to the mass exodus of healthcare workers from the bedside. I then created a solution to solve both the staff retention issue and a desperate clinical security training need. We are calling it TACT - The Tactical Approach to Caring Training. It's sort of like Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), but for clinical workplace violence. We will scale it with our Veterans transitional program and Virtual Reality.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: One will read on your site, "Every hour in the US two nurses are assaulted". This is a shocking metric! Your site goes on to say that,

<<As the only Workplace Violence Prevention Consulting company in healthcare branded and designed specifically for your frontline staff, we deliver the ultimate Workplace Violence Prevention Training Experience. Designed by frontline staff, with the support of executive protection specialists, our techniques are the most modern, safe, and effective on the market.>>

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“Every hour in the US two nurses are assaulted.” We are honored to speak today with Mel Cortez, RN, BSN, CEO, Cortex GOLD, about her vision, her mission, and solution.”

*Martin Eli, Publisher*

and retains staff. Need an intro to one of our great tech or threat assessment collaborators? Just ask! >>



[www.cortexgold.com](http://www.cortexgold.com)



Care to elaborate?

Mel Cortez: I like the word experience because that's what training has to be to leave an impactful impression. It has to make you feel some sort of way. First responders are often so good at dissociation that it leaves us numb. But

the moral distress comes from the fact that we are the opposite of numb, we care deeply. That sense of connection will create security in healthcare, we just have to approach it with Tactical Empathy. When I started really studying and immersing myself in the world of security, I realized that in order for the caregiver to be involved in security we would have to approach it with soft skills being prominent. Executive Protection is a natural fit. Through years of listening to prospective clinical clients for Cortex Gold complain about burnt out healthcare workers not wanting to take training, I figured out a way to create the need. To keep them engaged, it was going to take more than excellent branding. It was going to require new innovative techniques, delivered in a way that empowers the clinical workers while helping them to recognize and appreciate the vital role security plays in healthcare. So, in addition to providing high-quality and affordable training, we started a NonFungible Token (NFT) and Merch Line that organizations can use to incentivize training and purchase Personal Protection Equipment like BitePro. Tactical Scrubs has even launched a podcast where I have been honored to host incredible guests. I think there are some amazing tech innovators out there that have a lot to offer the space as well, but people just do not know about them. The podcast has been a great place for folks to learn more about what we are doing. Listen to the podcast here on YouTube (<https://youtube.com/@MelCortez-CortexGold?si=sXhv53z8--E1lBfo>) .



SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: There are many similarities between the threat environment in healthcare and the threat environment in education. Your thoughts on this, Mel?

Mel Cortez: 80% or more of the nursing workforce consists of women. The same is true with educators. We are both empathetic, loving people tasked with caring for the most vulnerable populations. Our approach to security training has to be unique for these folks. The training and technology needed to secure both schools and healthcare systems are so similar it only makes sense to attempt to collect research that will prove the cost effectiveness in both areas. We are hoping our research will help make impactful change in both healthcare systems, and schools. As a mom of 3 kiddos, I made a promise to my kids I have to keep, to do my best to keep them safe. We developed a scalable system where we train Tactical Teams composed of mostly transitioning service members. We house them, give them top level Security and EP (Executive Protection) training from our advisors and place them in organizations to serve healthcare organizations and schools. Sort of like a medical device sales rep supports products in the cath lab (catheterization lab). These veteran led teams can provide training and support to security officers, SROs (School Resource Officers), clinicians and educators. They also serve as content experts in regards to innovative research, new security technology, weapons capabilities and we

even have K9 teams now. We know they will be a great resource to the healthcare and schools they will serve.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: We understand that your team includes many of the most well-known and prominent experts and voices in the healthcare and security field. Please tell us more.

Mel Cortez: Innovation in healthcare has always occurred at the bedside of our Soldiers, Sailors and Marines and as a former military wife, I knew that if I asked them for help, they would at least give me some advice. But I had no idea I would be met with the amount of support and dedication that the veteran community has shown me. In the early stages Covered 6 a large well known Security and Protection training program on the west coast was pivotal in believing in the concept. Then with membership to the IAHS we gained the support of Eric Clay in his monthly "Mel that's crazy but it might work" wisdom and I found comfort in Paul Sarnese's uplifting conversations. I would say that my membership to the IAHS has been the most valuable asset to this project and my work thus far. In addition to those gents, we have David Corbin, David LaRose, John Oast, Kim Urbanek, and Rachel Nolan just to name a few of the other well known experts in the industry. To see a list of all of our expert advisors please visit our website. We have included Jason Lesandrini to assist us with Ethics related issues in workplace violence and Winifred Carson-Smith JD a well known Policy and Legal Advisor for the last 20 years in Healthcare. To address the global problem, we added international voices such as Laura Smith, Kallan Griffin and Hafiz Bin Rohani who are industry leaders and content experts in the UK, Australia and Asia. Our K9 experts are EP focused as well from X Factor K9 who create dogs that are able to be loved on and enjoyed by staff but also work really well when asked. We have one of the best in our security and EP training division, Micah Hoevelman from Paratus Critical Skills Academy. He is leading our Veterans Vocational Program, along with Daniel Haggerty and Eddie Diaz who assist in the physical fitness and MMA portions of our training. The people we have on this project are the most incredible and I have left so many amazing people out due to time, but please go to our website (<https://www.cortexgold.com/home>) to see the other collaborators.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Are there any recent projects, testimonials, endorsements or success stories that you would like to mention here?

Mel Cortez: This year I was featured in the book, Latinas In Nursing which was humbling and tells my story of going from Covid ICU nurse to Clinical Violence Prevention expert. We are honored to have been accepted by the Institute for Homeland Security and Sam Houston State University for their 2024 Spring Research. We will be studying the impact that a Standardized Workplace Violence Training for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Security would have on critical infrastructure support for healthcare. Early adopters will be considered for future grants and research opportunities as they become available. This will allow smaller, lesser funded organizations to access the training and support they really need. To get more information on this incredible opportunity please visit our website. I have talked to some nurses doing research at Yale and Mass Gen on violence projects and I am excited about offering our support there.

People are really excited about our potential to use Training and research in schools. We even had a local business offer to donate a building for 6 months free lease to house our Veterans Vocational Training Center and Technology Innovation Gallery. I was so humbled and looking forward to raising money to make that possible.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Do you offer free consultations and what is the best way to reach you?

Mel Cortez: We do! I am always happy to talk to healthcare or school organizations that are looking for innovative, creative ways to reduce violence that not only meet their budgets but are well branded for their organizations. My favorite thing to do is support security directors in their efforts to find funding for needed innovations. Please reach out to me via LinkedIn or send me an email to [melcortez@cortexgold.com](mailto:melcortez@cortexgold.com)

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Congratulations on the many free resources that are available on your platform: newsletters videos, overviews of training programs and so much more. Please summarize for our readers here the resources that are available for the healthcare, education, and security community at-large.

Mel Cortez: They can visit this link (<https://68qo888yma0.typeform.com/to/JCzudE5l>) and we will add them to our Resource Network we designed just for those who believe in safer healthcare systems and schools. We will also be providing free training videos and resources as we continue to develop TACT. You can listen to the podcast on YouTube, Tactical Scrubs I mentioned above where we interview some of our advisors and learn more about our program as well as practical tips for use in the healthcare security world.

SecuritySolutionsWatch.com: Thank you again for joining us today, Mel, we look forward to future updates. Is there anything else you would like to discuss today?

Mel Cortez: Thank you so much for providing this excellent resource to the security community. If people would like to get involved in TACTBook they can make a tax deductible donation to the Research and development of our program (<https://buy.stripe.com/8wM3fN7et5EofNm28b>) .

It will go towards training veterans to provide much needed security and support to organizations all over the world. If an organization is interested in purchasing TACT for their organization they can email me at [melcortez@cortexgold.com](mailto:melcortez@cortexgold.com), or they can visit our website at [cortexgold.com](http://cortexgold.com) and book a call.

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For the complete interview with Mel Cortez, please click here: [www.SecuritySolutionsWatch.com](http://www.SecuritySolutionsWatch.com)

Connect With Mel Cortez on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/navigatennurse/>

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