The Anatomy of Fear
Physiology of Survival
Roots of Ryukyu Kobujutsu
Interviews with Police Officials
Krav Maga in Law Enforcement
Systema: Perspective in Combat Training
MISSION STATEMENT
Meibukan Magazine is an initiative of founders Lex Opdam and Mark Hemels. Aim of this web based magazine is to spread the knowledge and spirit of the martial arts. In a non profitable manner Meibukan Magazine draws attention to the historical, spiritual and technical background of the oriental martial arts. Starting point are the teachings of Okinawan karate-do. As ‘House of the Pure Martial Arts’, however, Meibukan Magazine offers a home to the various authentic martial arts traditions.

FORMAT
Meibukan Magazine is published several times a year in an electronical format with an attractive mix of subjects and styles. Each issue of at least twelve pages is published as pdf-file for easy printing. Published editions remain archived on-line.

SUBMISSIONS
Readers of the webzine are enthusiastic and practitioners of the spirit of the martial arts world wide.

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Kevin Secours
David Kahn
Darren Laur

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The Roots of Ryukyu Kobujutsu

An Informal History of Law Enforcement Officers in the Ryukyu Kingdom

In every society there is a special group of people whose charge it is to protect the community at large. They are the men and women in law enforcement. The old Ryukyu Kingdom was no exception.

Unlike a typical military force, where lethality is the name of the game, those involved in domestic law enforcement often are required to bring down a suspect without resorting to lethal force. It makes sense, then, that throughout history, those involved in this profession have developed effective, non-lethal weapon techniques and unarmed tactics.

This article gives a brief overview of domestic law enforcement in old Okinawa as well as the possible influence these people may have had on the development of Karate and Ryukyu Kobujutsu.

- Joe Swift -

The Hirajo

In the old Ryukyu Kingdom, civil law enforcement was entrusted to a government facility known as the Hirajo. In addition to criminal and civil court systems and law enforcement, the employees at the Hirajo also performed mundane activities such as keeping the streets clean, working on the land and in the forests of Shuri, and guarding the Royal Tombs of Udun Yama (Hokama, 2007).

The officials at the Hirajo included judges (Nakamoto, 2007). Of these, the Chiku (Ufuchiku or senior inspectors and Wakichiku or subordinate inspectors) acted as police inspectors, and were authorized to carry iron truncheons (Sai). The Saji (Ufusaji or senior cops and Wakisaji or junior cops) were in essence street cops, and were authorized to carry a long staff (Bo).

For other overviews of the Hirajo in English, see (McCarthy, 1993) and (McCarthy, 1995).

"In addition to criminal and civil court systems and law enforcement, the employees at the Hirajo also performed mundane activities such as keeping the streets clean."

Bojutsu

Bojutsu is the Okinawan martial art of the long staff. As mentioned above, the street cops of the Hirajo carried the long cudgel, and used it in their daily activities, including the apprehension of criminals.

Although deceptively simple, the Bo is the central practice in most modern...
systems of Ryukyu Kobujutsu. In addition to the obvious techniques of blocking, deflecting, striking and thrusting, the Bo can also be used to lock the opponent’s joints and throw him or her to the ground, as exemplified in the photographs.

Some classical Bojutsu kata include:
- Shuji no Kon
- Sakugawa no Kon
- Shirotaru no Kon
- Yonegawa no Kon
- Chinen Shikiyanaka no Kon
- Sunakake no Kon
- Ufugusu Bo
- Urasoe no Kon
- Soeishi no Kon
- Sueyoshi no Kon
- Tokumine no Kon
- Choun no Kon
- And many more.

Saijutsu
Saijutsu refers to the use of the pronged iron truncheon. Not unlike the Jutte (Jitte) of mainland Japan, the Sai served as a sort of police badge for the Ufuchiku. In addition to this function as a status symbol, the Sai was also used to give orders to subordinates by waving it like a conductor’s baton; as a tool in the control of crowds or protecting the king, other government officials or foreign diplomats; as well as an effective weapon for defeating and arresting criminals who dared resist. In addition to its obvious martial application, the Sai has been used since ancient times by karate practitioners, because of its effectiveness in promoting manual dexterity, and strengthening the fingers, wrists and forearms (Mabuni, et al, 1938).

Kanagusuku Ufuchiku
Any discussion of the law enforcement profession in feudal Okinawa and its relationship to Ryukyu Kobujutsu would not be complete without a short description of the renowned Saijutsu master, Masanra Kanagusuku, also known affectionately as Kanagusuku Ufuchiku or Usumei Kani. The major source for this capsule biography was Masahiro Nakamoto’s 2007 publication (see bibliography for details). Masanra Kanagusuku was born in 1837 in Tobaru, Shuri. Considered a master of Sai-jutsu, much of his martial arts training came from Udun Yoshumura, the man who helped Goju-Ryu karate founding father Kanryo Higaonna gain passage to China.

Among Kanagusuku’s students were Moden Yabiku and Shosei Kina. Kina visited Kanagusuku in Gibo, Shuri, in 1907 and learned Saijutsu from the venerable former police inspector, who at that time ran an antique shop to eke out a meagre living. He had lost his position during the Meiji Restoration. Kina was Kanagusuku’s last student. True to the old ways, Kanagusuku had refused to teach the young man several times, but Kina’s persistence paid off, and he trained with the master for five years, learning the essence of Karate-jutsu, Saijutsu and Bojutsu. Kanagusuku often said, “If you are going to learn my style, you are not allowed to question the teachings or change the kata at your own whim.” He also admonished his students not to drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or engage in gambling and fighting, as these went against the very
heart of the martial arts. Although Kanagusuku did not drink, whenever he was at a celebration, he would accept a cup of alcohol and merely pretend to drink it, out of courtesy to the man who offered him the drink.

Kanagusuku served King Iku Sho and King Tai Sho and traveled to Edo (old Tokyo) with them as a bodyguard. During this time, it is believed that an Englishman snapped the now-famous photograph of him (shown in the upper right hand corner).

Even into his old age, Kanagusuku would train his body by striking a makiwara he had built near his well, as well as by lifting heavy stones and fetching buckets of water from the well. Kanagusuku told his granddaughter Kiyo Iha, “After I die, check my hips when you perform Shinkuchi.” Kanagusuku finally passed away on October 13, 1916. Upon Shinkuchi, Kiyo Iha noted that while on most normal people, the hip bones became separated after the flesh had rotted away, Usunek Kani’s hip structure was still intact. This truly was a testament to the hard training of the Ufuchiku.

Although Kanagusuku did not drink, whenever he was at a celebration, he would accept a cup of alcohol and merely pretend to drink it, out of courtesy to the man who offered him the drink.”

Conclusion

The following is a partial list of historical Okinawan martial artists working in law enforcement.

Sanda Kanagusuku  
Kenwa Mabuni
Chojun Miyagi
Seko Higa
Jinan Shinzato
Meitoku Yagi
Eiichi Miyazato
Shoshin Nagamine

Although there were certainly others, the list above shows that many of the prominent historical and modern Okinawan karate authorities had some connection to the police force. Perhaps they were drawn to use their skills in an uncontrolled combative environment. Or, perhaps it was the spirit of the Ufuchiku and Chikusaji of old boiling in their blood that sent them down this path.

Joe Swift is a 4th degree Goju-ryu blackbelt. After 9 years of studying Isshin-ryu in the US, he moved to Japan where he has studied Goju-ryu since 1995. He is currently an assistant instructor at the Mushinkan Shoreiryu Karate Kobudo Dojo of Sensei Uematsu in Kanazawa, Japan and is Shibuco of its Tokyo branch.

Bibliography


Notes

1 Shinkuchi, literally “bone washing,” refers to the custom of old Ryukyu by which the body of the deceased was placed in the family tomb for several years, and then exhumed, the bones cleaned, and reburied. There is a similar story regarding the legendary Matsumura Bushi, as well.

2 According to Seikichi Uehara (1995), Choyu Motobu taught Kenwa Mabuni the art of tying an opponent with a rope, in light of his position in law enforcement. Choyu Motobu allegedly taught a “secret” family art, known as Motobu Udun.

3 Although not a police officer himself, Miyagi was the teacher of many in law enforcement and was the karate instructor at the Ryukyu Police Academy for several years following WWII.
Interview with Erwin van Beek and Wytse Dijkstra

Both employed by the Dutch police force as instructors specialized in defensive tactics and firearms training, Erwin van Beek and Wytse Dijkstra first met at the Dutch police academy in Ossendrecht in 2003. Their martial background and mutual interest and passion for competence-aimed training in the way of violence and danger for the executive police officer, led them to the S.P.E.A.R. system by Tony Blauer. Today, both men promote and instruct the tactical S.P.E.A.R. system within Dutch police education as a complete confrontation-simulation (replication) training system.

- by Lex Opdam -

What was/is your drive and how did your search for competence-aimed training begin?

Erwin: There are I think, several reasons why I have this drive: Firstly, it has to be in you. The interest, the passion is not taught primarily, but something from within. From the moment I became an instructor for the Royal Constabulary (Police, KMAR), I found myself in an environment where I was stimulated to think about the question of ‘practical training.’ Partly it’s intrinsic motivation, (you do not always know from where it springs, but it nevertheless just is) and the stimulation due to my surroundings led me to always search for competence-aimed training from that moment on. Another reason is that from my teaching style, I am a real tester. That means that everything I see, hear, do and am told, is subject to testing of whether it is true or not. This means that I always want to test if something is right or not. Throughout the years, my passion and drive have grown, especially because you eventually reach a product and have a ‘team’ that is built solidly and a scientifically founded product that has proven its value in both the police and military world. Since 1997, I have studied Tony Blauer’s work and since 2003 we have been working together vigilantly and have become true friends. In the end, we want to do our part by offering safe and efficient ways for police officers and the military who often have to do their job under severe circumstances on an almost daily basis.

Wytse: The reason many practitioners of martial sports, myself included, begin training lies not so much with the aesthetic or background of the martial sport, but more with its use in way of defence. The feeling, background and philosophy of martial sports usually come much later. Many martial sports practitioners leave the purely defensive background for what it is and concentrate on the martial art as if it were martial sport. It is often about gaining ranks, belts etc. Of course, I have done that also, but I have never let the feeling, thought and drive of self-defence go. In the time that UFC, MMA/free-fight came into the picture, I concentrated on the defence. Searching for the ultimate self-defence sport, I never found an answer to my questions. I spoke with a lot of different professionals and studied a lot. At a certain point, I started focussing on street fights through police experience and the psychology behind them. That is where I eventually saw the light and took the street fight as the starting point for training instead of looking for the best fighting system to fit real life situations.

Erwin van Beek

Erwin started practising Judo at age 4 and Thai boxing at age 15. In both disciplines, he has fought many fights nationally and internationally. Following his study at the Academy for Physical Education, he has worked for the army as sports instructor and then went to work for the Royal Constabulary. Here he worked as instructor Arrest and Self-defence and as Firearms instructor. During this time, Erwin gained his police degree. In 1997, Erwin, while doing research on violence, came across Tony Blauer’s Panic Attack System. In 2001, Erwin started working for the Police academy where his primary task is to train members of the SWAT & Counter assault teams. He also teaches other police instructors defensive tactics and firearms training.
What were your questions concerning your search for the ultimate self-defence sport?

(W) My main question was, like many practitioners of martial sports, what would be the ultimate (martial) training for the ‘real life combat situation.’ It is or was a bit like comparing apples and oranges. You could pit a practitioner of Jiu Jitsu up against a karate-ka, or stage a wrestler against a kick boxer, but the question would remain…what would happen in a real fight? Because during the years that I have studied and analyzed actual real-life fights, the one thing that has become more than clear is that the actual real-life fight is completely different to the sports fight. The ‘ambush’ is the decisive factor. Like I said: apples and oranges…

(E) When you put the question like that, it becomes a comparison of sports like kick boxing, judo, MMA, etc., but actually, I never asked myself that question. I myself have never made the comparison between sports. From the moment I started this profession, I have constantly asked myself what works on the streets. In the process, I (we) looked at all of these martial sports, took what was best from them all, and combined that into a police/military package. Later I discovered that this was not so much a bad start, as that it was cutting corners a bit to try to translate the best of each martial sport into police/military use. Eventually, I wondered whether what we were teaching could be applied in who train every day, but is set by the police officer and soldier who perform their duties on a daily basis, considering the most dangerous situation and that is the ‘ambush’ or surprise attack.

Can you describe what you mean by ‘ambush’?

(W) The ambush is the element of surprise in an attack. When we talk about sports fighting, there is often a referee who signals the beginning of a fight, the location (mat, ring, cage) is determined beforehand, fighters know who they are fighting, there are certain rules etc. When we look at an actual real-life fight, the attacker determines the time of the attack, the location, the length of the attack etc., etc. The other is taken by surprise. This surprise triggers a primary reaction within which it is not possible to apply refined motor skills (physiologically). The trick is to survive this short ambush moment so you are able to actually engage in the fight stressful situations and if combining several skills was the most important part of what we were trying to teach. As Wytse referred to, the psychology and science behind police and military work has now become our starting point. Everything we do has to tie in with how people react and move in violent situations in their most basic sense. Furthermore, the standard is not set by us as instructors and people (startle flinch conversion).

(E) Complementing what Wytse has just stated, the theory is that if an impulse is introduced too quickly (by the aggression and suddenness or distance of the attack) the cognitive brain is closed off and the ‘reptilian brain’ takes over. We are referring to an actual surprise attack that knocks out our fine motor skills and disables our technical ability. We are of
the opinion that if you are aware of this, you should prepare for that moment and your training should reflect what happens to people at that moment. The part of the brain that is responsible for survival can indeed be taught. The provision is that what you learn is not technically based but follows on from the genetic make up of man. And that is what we call the ‘startle flinch conversion’.

In a physical confrontation there is always a phase preceding the confrontation, the confrontation itself and the phase following the confrontation. You both mention the fact that you began focussing on street fights and that the ambush surprise element is the defining factor in the first moment of physical confrontation. If we take a closer look at actual police work and the physical confrontations between police and citizens, what are the most important tools for the officer to control the danger, in this case from physical confrontation?

(E) What we do is never only look at the confrontation itself but in particular how it brought itself into being. We call that the stimulus before the stimulus before the stimulus... in other words reaching back from the moment of attack and researching what preceded it. In this manner, you become able to read the attack before it happens. Signalling signs and body language or pre-contact cues (PCC) can mean being able to take action in early phases to avoid further escalation and possibly resolving the conflict with much less use of force. This remains a much-underestimated way of thinking that is largely forgotten in current education. I presume you are referring to police and military education. Can you elaborate on this?

(E) Not only police education, but also reality based ‘self-defence’ education. You mention a much-underestimated way of thinking that is largely forgotten in current education. In my opinion you are referring to police and military education. Can you elaborate on this?

You mention a much-underestimated way of thinking that is largely forgotten in current education. I presume you are referring to police and military education. Can you elaborate on this?

What has the highest chance of success in an ambush cannot be too technically based. Perhaps someone who practises his sport daily under very high stress levels will be able to reproduce his techniques, but our question is, can his or her students do the same? This brings to mind two sayings by Tony Blauer:

“Do not show your students what you can do, show them what they can do.”

And,

“Be careful what you practice, you may get very bad at the wrong thing.”

That summarizes it quite well and makes one think.

Can you explain in what ways you pay attention to the feeling of restriction of action by police officers as you stated earlier?

(E) What I mean by that, without going into detail too much, is that a police officer and/or soldier is always bound by legal rules. In the military, they refer to this as “rules of engagement.” These rules often restrict the action taken by a police officer or soldier, because his thoughts are occupied by figuring out which rules apply. In any case this is how they perceive it, whether it actually works that way remains the question. Firstly, we try not to show people the restrictions of the law but the possibilities it offers. Then we try and teach people to take certain steps within a violent situation so that they can do their job more safely and better. Do not get me wrong, we remain within the legal parameter, however the way we approach this within our education, determines how people deal with it.

We teach our students to deal with many different kinds of confrontations. The first confrontation is with yourself. You have to overcome yourself to reach the second confrontation, which is the confrontation with the suspect, as we just discussed. Difficult and radical questions/answers and decisions that for example deal with the willingness to shoot someone or kill if necessary, are dealt with in this first confrontation. This harsh reality is a part of the police officer’s/soldier’s job and handled in a certain way within our educational system (the psychology of ‘fear management’).

The third confrontation is the one with the legal system. In actuality, you often
see the reverse and that is that the civil servants are occupied with rules and regulations at the wrong moment. This slows down reaction time with the possible consequence of escalation rather than de-escalation of a situation. Precisely by recognizing the signals and body language, one can react ("forward thinking") early on in a proportional manner.

Unfortunately, society is quick to judge and leaves it often impossible for the soldier or police officer to make the right decision. If you do not act, people walk over you and when you do act, they call it police brutality. We have a lot of respect for the men and women who put their lives on the line every day to keep our society one worth living in and we want to do our part to help in the difficult task they have on the streets and in war zones.

In what way does one get through the short ambush moment?

(€) By using the startle-flinch conversion, developed by Tony Blauer’s S.P.E.A.R. system. The S stands for Spontaneous, the P for Protection and refers to the defensive system that is wired genetically into everyone’s brain and which is activated when one feels threatened and/or attacked by extremely aggressive violence. The A and R stand for Accelerated Response, this is the training that leads one to be able to convert that primary response into a logical tactical follow-up. Under this amount of stress, actions based on gross motor skills, not technical skills can be carried out. Eventually you can use this information within the full tactical conduct of the police officer of soldier… and that is what we call S.P.E.A.R. tactics. What all this looks like, is best understood by experiencing and seeing it. We are always prepared to give demonstrations and clarify things on request.

In the article by Eric Cobb, published in this edition of Meibukan Magazine, he speaks about universal reactions to danger such as pushing away, protecting and turning away. Are these the only primary reactions using gross motor skills in response to danger or are there others such as clamping (like when falling from a tree) and in what relation do they stand to each other?

(€) Tony Blauer always says that everyone flinches the same, but differently… there are many different reflexes and shock reactions depending on the scenario, but one thing that always happens is that the hands go up to protect the ‘command centre.’ The hands always locate themselves between the threat and the primary brain. The distance between the danger and the brain determines the distance between the hands and the face. The closer the danger, the closer the hands will be to the head. The body’s reaction is to move itself away from the danger…which is why when the danger comes at an angle, people turn away. After the primary reaction, the raising of hands, all people when experiencing an attack, will try to push the danger away.

Within the S.P.E.A.R. system, we learn how to transform these reflexive movements into tactical action. An actual surprise attack will cause the body to be off balance and the drills from the S.P.E.A.R. system teach you to deal with regaining your balance from this state of unbalance - that is the training of the response to the startle flinch, to be able to come back into the fight and to come to a point of domination… and to think forward.

To think forward… you mean thinking ahead from the moment that the main brain can once again handle thought and then act tactically?

(€) Thinking forward has a double meaning…

We want to teach people to think forward, which means recognizing and acknowledging situations and pre-contact cues, and then acting upon them and thus being in action. Action beats reaction…, but being in action is faster than action, to quote Tony Blauer.

It is genetically determined that from the moment of ambush we firstly turn away from the direction of danger and are unbalanced in a backwards motion. Because we practise this over and over in our lessons (the startle flinch conversion), we classically condition ourselves (Pavlov reaction), using the flinch as the signal for the brain to react with a forward motion followed by a tactical counter that is not technical but uses gross motor skills.
In the Dutch police educational system, trainee officers are taught several specific techniques at the Police academy. These techniques are then maintained at a certain standard and practised more in-depth within the regional police force where the police officers are stationed after their initial training. What relation does the S.P.E.A.R. system hold to this?

It is indeed so that new police officers are taught a set of skills which are then kept in practise in their own regional police force after their basic training. This is laid down by law and each police officer has to take a test of these skills every year. Our society is dynamic, changing all the time and Wytse and I agree that the education has to be continually evaluated as to whether it still applies to the current situation.

If you want to change things, you have to do it step-by-step and so we made a step-by-step plan to bring things up to date. The way it now stands in the Netherlands is as follows:

In several of the courses within the speciality courses that are taught at the Police academy in Ossendrecht, there are already S.P.E.A.R. system influences. Also, several of the regional forces that have already taken courses with us are implementing the S.P.E.A.R. system within their teaching. In particular, The Hague and several of the regional police forces in Brabant are leading the way and the basic academy in Amsterdam has a number of instructors who are working to implement the S.P.E.A.R. system. Everything is being done according to the legally stated regulations and the great thing about the whole S.P.E.A.R. science is that it does not contradict previously attained competences.

When and how did you start the introduction of the S.P.E.A.R. system in the Netherlands?

Inspired by Tony Blauer’s Panic Attack system and from my own view that self-defence in sports is something quite different to police self-defence, I started introducing concepts in 1997 within the Royal Constabulary (police, KMAR) and later within the police force. Initially we practised the scenario in a somewhat rough form within a convenient surrounding. The emphasis was on the mindset of being willing to fight and skills using the KISS principle of Keeping It Short and Simple. At first, I did what seemed best to me and taught mainly based on what felt right. By continuously researching Tony’s work, the teachings became more scientifically based and our education became more complete. Now, we spend a lot of time on the total awareness of the people, which enables them to recognize and acknowledge danger and or violence in an early stage and act accordingly. In the meantime, we are now able to support all of our teachings scientifically and that is unique. Everything fits together and we therefore also call it the “Lego system.”

In 2003, Wytse and I methodically started
to introduce the S.P.E.A.R. system within the Dutch Police force and other armed forces. From that moment on, we have followed all courses given by Tony Blauer and started to explain the theory behind the system to motivate our clients. We also offered many internships as teachers in the United States within all kinds of Police units.

In 2005, we gave our first workshop for the Dutch Police at the National Police Professionalism Day, where all police instructors come together to help professionalize each other. Meanwhile, we have also involved Dutch professionals in different fields of science to create a stronger basis and have laid out plans and projects for the future.

The S.P.E.A.R. system comes from the United States that has a much more violent society than the Dutch or Western European. The differences between rich and poor are more extreme, drug abuse occurs on a larger scale and the social laws differ from our own, to name but a few differences. I can imagine that this has consequences for the implementation of the S.P.E.A.R. system in the Netherlands.

(E) Isn’t violence always violence? Our point of view is that the reaction from the reptilian or survivalist brain to a violent situation is the unifying factor and so it does not matter what society or country you come from.

Sometimes you do everything as you should and it still turns out differently, but keep in mind that your primary instincts are the strongest and that that is a universal fact. Dutch Police sociologist Jaap Timmer has statistically shown that violence against the Dutch Police force is increasing and claiming more victims. So in short, for the implementation of the S.P.E.A.R. system in the Netherlands it does not make much of a difference. If you delve into the theory of the S.P.E.A.R. system, you find out how waterproof the system is.

When you reflect on the time from the moment of introduction to today, what positive and negative experiences and comments have you received from fellow instructors at the Police academy in Ossendrecht, the Forces and the policy makers?

(E) When you look at what has happened there have only been positive things and that it did not all occur without some firm discussion is only a good thing. You must not forget that I have been working on this personally for 10 years of which four years were together with Wytse. That depth of commitment cannot be expected from others after such a short period.

You have to allow people time to think about things themselves, to research and let it sink in. What you notice is that people are motivated to learn and are critical, but that is healthy. Policy makers are actually also only positive. They are there to make the final decisions, and you cannot just change policy without first testing and planning. We are all working together on this now and it is a given that this will take time. However, we have already achieved much in the Netherlands and abroad...after all it has taken us to the Pentagon and the White House where we have trained special units.

How do you see the future of the S.P.E.A.R. system in Europe and what role do you see for yourselves?

(E) That is like looking into a crystal ball, but let us say we are working hard to move forward and are giving it 100 percent. There are many great and wonderful projects on the calendar for the Netherlands, Europe and abroad...

Footnote
"The Association of Chief Police officers provide Management Learning and Leadership that supports and informs operational decision making and training to improve safety during the policing of violent or potentially violent situations.

In order to assist decision-making, a National Personal Safety Manual of Guidance has been produced by the Central Police Training and Development Authority. This manual is reviewed regularly and provides opportunities for new material to be added. It is through this process that a submission to have the S.P.E.A.R. system introduced as a module of training will be made.

Lex Opdam, Editor-in-chief of Meibukan Magazine interviewed Erwin van Beek and Wytse Dijkstra in 2007.

http://tonyblauer.com
Physiology of Survival

A Scientific View of the Blauer Tactical S.P.E.A.R. System
(Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response)

In the field of Close Quarters Combat (CQC) instruction there has long been a widespread lack of understanding of the neurophysiological effects of fear and adrenaline, and the so-called fight-or-flight response. This has been and continues to be a potentially lethal problem for anyone, whether civilian, law enforcement officer (LEO) or military operator who faces the threat of violence. I believe that an understanding of the survival stresses encountered in a real-life, real-time violent confrontation is of paramount importance for the effective teaching of CQC skills. Why? It’s very simple. In times of danger, in the ambush moment, in the shock and surprise of a real world attack one simple law applies: physiology rules.

- By Eric Cobb -

Over the past twenty years, Tony Blauer, the owner and chief executive officer of Blauer Tactical Systems, has studied the realities of violence from virtually every conceivable approach, including psychological, emotional, and physical. As a result, he has created what he calls the S.P.E.A.R. system, which he calls “the first behaviorally-inspired method of self protection”, or as he sometimes says: “behaviourally inspired - genetically wired.” S.P.E.A.R. is an acronym that stands for Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response, which is the ultimate aim of the system - responding more readily and effectively to the threat of violence.

Modern research demonstrates that Tony Blauer’s S.P.E.A.R. system is based on the facts of neurophysiology. It is built on our hard-wired neurological responses to danger, and is thus more easily taught and easily retained than other systems of defensive tactics. Instead of relying on what so many trainers like to refer to as muscle memory, which, generally speaking, is a physiological mistake under times of high stress, the S.P.E.A.R. system uses reflexive, instinctive movements to create a platform from which to first react to and then respond to an assault.

S.P.E.A.R. System Fundamentals

Before we delve into the physiology of the S.P.E.A.R. system, we should understand some of the philosophical underpinnings of the Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management Systems (B.T.C.M.S.) approach to training. Perhaps the easiest way to summarize the approach developed by Tony Blauer is to use his words. He once wrote that “preparation and theoretical totality in training requires complete integrity.” What does this mean? Simply that scientists in the field of human combatives must never be swayed by egos, traditions, systems or styles. Our egos typically want us to create, design and implement training strategies that make us look and feel good. However, very rarely does this type of training prepare students for reality.

Many years ago, Blauer often worked what he refers to as a “sucker-punch drill ” with his students. He discovered that when one of his students tried to hit him from a sucker-punch/ambush setup, martial art techniques typically failed 50 percent of the time - in the trained body and mind of a professional martial artist. From the perspective of self-defence, Blauer found this completely unacceptable. Almost by accident, he began to note that in situations of real surprise, when a student would unleash a truly well-disguised sucker punch, this would always create a flinch response. As he began to analyze the phenomenon in greater depth, Blauer noted that every time the flinch was created by the sucker punch, the attack never landed cleanly. After considerable exploration of this theme, further drills and refinements, Blauer was able to condense thousands of hours of this research into two simple, but vitally important, truths:

1. A stimulus introduced too quickly will bypass the cognitive, muscle-memory systems in the brain and create a flinch response.

2. The flinch is a physiologic response that is highly reliable and functions as an effective protective mechanism.

As he says, the startle/flinch response appears to be a sudden reaction to danger...
or surprise. In effect though, it is a sound, predictable and reliable process. Our built-in survival reflexes are actually much more reliable than our theoretical, cognitive muscle-memory programs! Therefore, the most responsible, reliable and retainable protective system would embrace and integrate these facts. This process is the foundation and inspiration for the S.P.E.A.R. system.

“Our built-in survival reflexes are actually much more reliable than our theoretical, cognitive muscle-memory programs!”

Based on this understanding, Blauer began the systematic dissection of the use of the flinch as a responsive platform. Countless live experiments were conducted. Hundreds of real fights were examined and microscopically scrutinized and the system was and continues to be refined. In my opinion, the S.P.E.A.R. system is the result of pure scientific inquiry. The basics of science are quite simple: propose a question, propose an answer, test the answer to see if it is correct, evaluate the results, refine the question and begin again. Tony Blauer has spent over 20 years following this very strategy. As a result, he has created, in the S.P.E.A.R. system, a process that is not only backed up by recent neurophysiological research, but in fact describes the outcomes of this research. The system is at least a generation ahead of its time and may very well be the most important development in CQC training for the foreseeable future, because it is built on the premise and understanding that physiology is the controlling agent in an ambush moment.

The Fight-or-Flight Fallacy
The S.P.E.A.R. system evolved out of countless drills, physical experiments, and research (often of the dashboard cam variety) and is solely focused on surviving an ambush on the street. From both a philosophical and a pragmatic perspective, we are only truly in danger in an out-of-control moment, which is simply another way of saying when we are ambushed. From a purely physical perspective, the ambush moment initiates a lightning-fast, whole-body response that is coordinated by a small portion of the brain known as the amygdala. The fear and desperation created by a sudden attack first causes what I like to describe as the flinch-or-freeze response, which is then followed by the well-known flight-or-flight response.

Numerous effects have been noted, seen, and experientially and experimentally proven to occur during times of high stress/combat. The very real possibility of any fight in today’s society quickly turning lethal places personal combat in the highest category of potential stressors. Just a few of the effects of high adrenaline on the body are:

- Tunnel vision
- Increased heart rate
- Increased cardiac output
- Increase in blood flow to skeletal muscles
- Pupillary dilation
- Auditory exclusion
- Tachypsychia (distorted time perception)
- Precognition
- State of fugue
- Amaurosis fugax (transient blindness)

All of these potential effects of high-stress environments and the engagement of the adrenal stress response in the body have only one goal: survival. No less an authority than Massad Ayoob, a noted police trainer and Director of the Lethal Force Institute, advises his students to remember that the fight-or-flight response manifests itself in effects such as a period of extreme strength, an increase in speed, a gross decrease in fine motor abilities as well as an increased tolerance for pain. In other words, strength goes way up and dexterity/coordination go way down.

“The fight-or-flight response manifests itself in effects such as a period of extreme strength, an increase in speed, a gross decrease in fine motor abilities as well as an increased tolerance for pain.”

However, these responses are only a part of the story. What so many CQC researchers have overlooked, in my view, is that fight-or-flight is a secondary response to an immediate threat – occurring after the primary and incredibly rapid response of the amygdala. If we are to develop a training methodology that efficiently enhances real-world survival, it is vital that we understand this distinction: amygdallic reaction first – fight-or-flight response second.

Neurophysiological Evidence
There are two vital areas of neurophysiology that must be understood in relation to CQC training:

1. Physiological survival mechanisms hard-wired in the nervous system of the body will bypass any learned defensive system based on the ability to access cognitively-based and developed responses to danger if the threat is introduced too quickly.

2. While the flinch response can never (and should never) be removed from an organism except via radical surgery or brain damage, the system can be trained to convert the flinch into a dynamic tactical response platform.

As noted above, the most important
area of the brain in the study of human response to fear or the threat of violence is the amygdala. The amygdala is a bilateral, almond-shaped area of the brain. In early neurophysiological studies it was considered to be part of the limbic system: a region that was described as the old, instinctual portion of the brain, primarily given over to threat response. However, many modern researchers now believe that most of the processing of fear and its subsequent effects on the body are related primarily to the amygdala alone and one of its many nuclei.

“Many modern researchers now believe that most of the processing of fear and its subsequent effects on the body are related primarily to the amygdala alone.”

The amygdala is home to the behavioural aspects of fear. Animals that have been experimentally examined after surgery to remove the amygdala usually display absolutely no organic fear. What is fascinating about this process is that buried in the reflexes of the amygdala are intuitive and instinctual reactions to potential threats. For example, a normal laboratory-born and raised mouse will have all of the normal fear reactions occur upon exposure to a cat for the first time: without having ever seen, smelled or encountered one. However, after amygdala removal, the mouse will cuddle up to the same cat without a hint of fear behaviour. By the same token, human subjects, when shown photos of different unfriendly facial expressions, show an increased amygdallic response. Hence, we know that the amygdala contains instinctive and intuitive fears, but also that it can learn.

The central nuclei of this region receive input from every sensory system of the body. Thus the amygdala can create responses to danger signals represented in the visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile or gustatory systems. In other words, the amygdala can instantly respond to any sensory input that indicates danger, regardless of the source. You may be sitting at your desk and suddenly flinch at the sound of breaking glass behind you. You may jump up and begin looking for the source of smoke that is tickling your nostrils. You may flinch and cover your head at the sight of a bottle flying toward you in the air, just from a hint of movement caught in your peripheral vision. All of these activities begin with the amygdala.

Even more vital to understand than the sensory input into the amygdala is its output. Its vital nuclei connect directly into the brainstem, where all of our instinctual responses and reflexive responses to danger are stored. Think of what is known as the flexor withdrawal reflex: If you touch a hot stove, your body doesn’t waste time telling the conscious portion of your brain that the stove is hot and that you should remove your hand before it gets badly burned. Rather, your body’s sensory system feeds this information into the brainstem and your hand and arm move away from the danger quickly: in fact, extremely quickly. It is not until afterwards that your thinking brain, the cognitive portion of the cerebrum, catches on to what just happened. This is a beautifully designed protective mechanism that does not require conscious thought. In fact, modern researchers believe that many of the amygdallic responses to danger do not involve the cerebrum, the cognitive/thinking portion of the brain, at all. The reflexes bypass our learned behaviours and, with apologies to Nike, just do it. As one neurophysiologist writes:

“If you touch a hot stove, your body doesn’t waste time telling the conscious portion of your brain that the stove is hot.”

of the cerebrum, catches on to what just happened. This is a beautifully designed protective mechanism that does not require conscious thought. In fact, modern researchers believe that many of the amygdallic responses to danger do not involve the cerebrum, the cognitive/thinking portion of the brain, at all. The reflexes bypass our learned behaviours and, with apologies to Nike, just do it. As one neurophysiologist writes:

“Stimuli go via the thalamic pathways (medial geniculate) to the amygdala (lateral nucleus, central nucleus). At the same time the information is sent to the cortex which tries to identify the situation ‘consciously’. By the time the cortex has figured out the situation, the amygdala has already started to defend against possible dangers. The information received by the amygdala from the thalamus is unfiltered and biased toward

Joseph LeDoux, the pre- eminent researcher of fear and the amygdala, eloquently states:

“In simple terms, there’s an emotion-al computer in your brain called the amygdala. It rests quietly until it perceives a threat. When the amygdala determines that danger is present, it shifts into high gear, marshalling the resources of the brain in an effort to protect you and yours from harm. This system was designed by evolution to detect and respond to predators and other kinds of natural dangers that threaten survival or territory, and it governs both innate and learned fears. The key to the amygdala is its neural wiring. It receives neural messages from all the senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch. If there’s danger lurking in any of these messages, the amygdala is activated and quick as a flash nerves coming out of it send messages to bodily organs that respond in ways to keep you safe. The amygdala works automatically, without ‘you’ having to get involved in the act... Part of the reason for this is found in the nature of the connections between the amygdala and the cerebral cortex, where our thoughts, hopes, and plans occur, and through which we exercise control over our emotions (to the extent we can). It turns out that the amygdala is in a much better position to influence the cortex than the other way around.”

Joseph LeDoux.
action. In contrast, the cortex’s job is to prevent an inappropriate response rather than an appropriate one.”

The amygdala’s ability to learn is vital. Numerous experiments have shown that while it is virtually impossible, without radical brain surgery, to completely eliminate the instinctive flinch response, it is possible, through training, to modify it. A good example can be seen in the explosive-entry tactics used by SWAT teams, etc. Consistent training of teams is necessary to prevent flinch-and-freeze responses to the noise generated by explosives and other door-breaching equipment. This fact - that while the flinch response can never be eliminated, it can be modified, is the very basis of the S.P.E.A.R. system. Blauer refers to this concept as “converting the flinch into a tactical movement.”

The real beauty of the Blauer S.P.E.A.R. system is that its tools, tactics, strategies and training methods both address and capitalize on this amazing genetic system. The system is based on the flinch response. It acknowledges that the body will react without the benefit of our conscious brain, which is where we store all of our typical martial art techniques and combatives training. This dichotomy is of paramount importance in understanding the S.P.E.A.R. system as well as some of the dangers inherent in traditional combatives training. What is most impressive to me personally is that Tony Blauer was able to develop this system from scratch, without the benefit of the recent research. The intuitive understanding of the human body and its functioning inherent in the S.P.E.A.R. system is a testimony to Blauer’s extreme perceptiveness, creativity and intelligence.

**Physical Platform of the S.P.E.A.R.**

Through observation, Blauer has determined that there are three basic and distinctive flinches that are present at times of danger:

1. **Push away danger** - This is easily visualized by imagining the instinctive response to a car suddenly slamming on its brakes directly in front of your car.
2. **Head Shield** - When most people visualize a flinch response, this is the motion that is typically imagined. The hands, forearms, elbows come up to protect the face and head, the shoulders rise, and head retracts.
3. **Shield and Turn** - This form of the flinch is associated with a threat that is picked up with the peripheral vision. This involves an arm, forearm and elbow shield that is raised to the side of threat with a circular/angular movement down and away from the line of the threat. Again, this is easily visualized by thinking about the movement induced at a baseball game when someone yells “watch out!” from beside you.

Each of these flinches carries with it certain movement characteristics that are unique - a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article at this time. However, they also all share some distinctive similarities. The flinch response generally lowers and widens the center of balance to increase mobility. The arms are placed into defensive positions that cover centreline (and vitally important) targets. The eyes focus intently on the threat, the breath is exhaled quickly, which is a component of both absorbing shock from an incoming blow and delivering a blow with power. The fingers are webbed and spread for additional coverage and protection.

Blauer has taken these three flinches, broken them down into their component parts, and then determined the manner in which each can be best converted into a tactical movement based on his observations of their similarities and differences. The S.P.E.A.R. functions as a synergistically developed movement that is extremely fast and powerful.

Because the flinch response to the threat actually initiates the movements and creates the S.P.E.A.R., it is also important to understand that these three flinches are hard-wired neural loops. Just as the automatic response of your hand touching a hot stove is an instinctual and incredibly quick movement, so is the flinch response. The output from the amygdala into the brainstem areas that control our reflexes creates massive coordinated muscular contractions, postural shifts, changes in eye focus and pupil dilation, etc. in response to a threat. Furthermore, the physical motions of the flinch require very little modification/conversion to become extremely sound from a tactical movement perspective.

In short, the physical platforms created by the three flinches, while different, are inherently the same - as they begin in the amygdala, are then carried out by reflex loops and are easily modified to increase tactical superiority.

**Conclusions:**

Keeping these concepts in mind, we can draw definitive conclusions about the S.P.E.A.R. system and its applicability to the CQC needs of anyone - civilian, law enforcement officer or soldier.

**Ease of assimilation** - Because the S.P.E.A.R. system is based on, built around and trained via the reflexive movements of the body, there are no techniques to memorize. It is imperative, for real-world survival, to have a system that is built upon a gross motor/reflexive toolbox. The cognitive dissonance and amydallic reactions that are virtually guaranteed in a fight wreak havoc on the typical trained, fine motor responses taught in most CQC systems. The S.P.E.A.R. is a completely intuitive system that once embraced in theory, becomes readily available in the physical arena.

“For the real beauty of Tony Blauer’s S.P.E.A.R. system is that its tools, tactics, strategies and training methods both address and capitalize on this amazing genetic system.”
Non-perishability - Because of the inherent stability of the human nervous system and the hard-wired nature of our reflexive responses, the S.P.E.A.R. is extremely non-perishable. In simple terms, babies flinch, kids flinch, teens flinch, adults and elderly people flinch. The instinctive reactions of the amygdala are hard-wired from birth and thus the very physiological basis of the S.P.E.A.R. system makes it an incredibly efficient, non-perishable system that can be readily accessed at any time - despite a lack of consistent training. This is one of the major aspects that differentiate the S.P.E.A.R. system from other CQC practices.

Universal applicability - Blauer often refers to this concept as the power of one. Again, in accordance with research, there is no need in the S.P.E.A.R. system to memorize, train and develop muscle memory for a large variety of techniques to meet a threat. S.P.E.A.R. allows for the application of one tactic to meet any threat. S.P.E.A.R. allows virtually anyone with normal physical reactions to become effective in the system, because it is not based on athleticism, fine motor control or physical conditioning. While all of these factors are, of course, important, the S.P.E.A.R. system allows each individual to access their natural protective responses. Research has proven that as the number of available tactical options increases, so does reaction time. In other words, having one available alternative, in a situation that requires the fastest possible reaction time, is the best situation available - as long as the available option is adequate to the threat. It is here that the S.P.E.A.R. most uniquely shines in comparison to other training methods.

These three factors, then, are the “founding fathers” of the S.P.E.A.R. system - speed of acquisition, ease of retention and universal applicability. In his efforts to construct a generic system of self-protection, Blauer was forced to confront these three distinct challenges. The S.P.E.A.R. system is the result and is now proving itself by saving lives all over the world.

Blauer was once asked by a student what he considered to be the primary aspect of any fight. His clear, succinct answer was, “the result!” This passion for teaching real-world survival has been and continues to be the sole motivation for the existence of B.T.C.M.S. (Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management Systems). Blauer has constantly been challenged to innovate, create and explore the most effective methods available for self-protection. In the constantly growing, evolving and improving S.P.E.A.R. system, Blauer seems to have found the answers.

Dr. Eric Cobb is a chiropractic physician with a lifelong interest in hard-core CQC training. With over twenty years experience training and teaching a variety of martial arts, he has travelled the world training with different instructors in a wide variety of arts.
Russian Systema
A New Perspective in Modern Combat Training

Since its inception by Cossack warriors in the 10th century and its later refinement and implementation by the Soviet government in Russian Special Forces (Spetsnaz), the Russian martial art of Systema has redefined the way many approach defensive tactics and military combatives. In this article, we will examine firsthand accounts of how Systema has influenced warriors worldwide since its global unveiling in 1993, through the accounts of soldiers, law enforcement and security personnel and we’ll consider how Systema fares alongside other mainstream combat approaches so prevalent in the Western world.

- By Kevin Secours -

The Russian martial art of Systema (Система, “The System”) finds its earliest roots in 10th century Slavic fighting arts. In its ancient form, the various indigenous styles of Russia varied significantly from region to region, often surviving solely within villages or family lines. With the rise of Communism however, many of these traditional methods were synthesized along with elements of other martial systems into a modern hybrid. Fuelled by an unprecedented investment and testing by the Soviet Government, this newly forged combat system included a full consideration of 20th century concerns, weaponry and tactics.

Since the fall of Communism, Systema continues to be practiced and developed by some of Russia’s most elite Special Operations Units in the Russian Spetsnaz (Special Forces). In addition, due chiefly to the efforts of former Spetz operative Vladimir Vasiliev and his teacher Colonel Mikhail Ryablo, Systema has also grown exponentially outside of Russia’s borders. In this article, we will be examining the influence Systema has had on some military and law enforcement professionals outside of Russia. Specifically, we will analyze:

1—How Systema’s commitment to relaxing the body and achieving a heightened flow state compares to the popular contemporary approach of basing technique on the body’s flinch response, and;

2—How Systema can be standardized and measured as a curriculum and therefore disseminated in an effective and cost-efficient manner, given its emphasis on adaptability and principles over fixed technique.

I will be borrowing heavily from the first hand testimonies of many of the real-world warriors I have been fortunate enough to meet and train along side to provide greater depth to these answers.

The Reality of Flow:

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

- Charles Darwin -

The professional applications of a combative system can run a rather large gamut, On the most passive end of the spectrum,
“Defensive Tactics” are used primarily by Law Enforcement officers (LEO’s) and in some cases first responders, to assist Officers in performing arrests and restraint. The goal of defensive tactics is optimal safety for both the officer and the subject. At the opposite end of this scale we find Hand-to-Hand combatives. Generally reserved for the military, these systems are essential self-defence systems dedicated to survival above all else, without regard for the safety of the opponent. No matter where a system lies within this spectrum, one commonality exists in their approach—simplicity and function is valued above all else.

Research in most modern lineages of combative training support the dominant notion that combat stress leads to the deterioration of motor skill. As a result, techniques are primarily assessed on the basis of whether they are “gross motor” and therefore likely to be reproduced under stress conditions, or else “fine motor” and thus too complex to be performed with reduced capacities. Training generally integrates the body’s natural “flinch responses” and defensive instincts, with many systems using natural defensive positions as their starting point for technique. Through reinforcement, the goal of these systems is to effectively use the body’s natural flinch response to trigger the practitioner’s trained arsenal.

When we assess Systema from this perspective, one of the first contradictions to popular thought appears to be Systema’s emphasis on flow and relaxation over “flinch”. Certainly, Systema’s basic concentration on adaptability over rote memorization and fixed technique finds its earliest roots in Cossack fighting arts. These early predecessors maintained an over-riding belief in adaptability and unorthodox tactics, spawned and reinforced by their country’s long history of invasion and foreign occupation. As a point of comparison, consider for a moment how sharply these circumstances contrast with a country like Japan which maintained a period of complete cultural isolation (sakoku), between 1653 and 1853, in which missionaries, merchants and traders were expelled, and only select foreign trade was permitted. Even at a casual glance, one can begin to imagine how such a drastically different environment would forge a drastically different perspective on combat training.

A misconception regarding Systema’s approach is that it refutes the existence of the flinch response or that it somehow seeks to suppress these instinctive responses. Nothing could be further from the truth. Systema fully acknowledges the reality of the body’s flinch response. Certainly, given no other option, Systema training acknowledges the flinch response and shows students how they can build on these reflexes, in effect “functionalizing” and improving these primal reactions.

The key distinction in Systema’s approach however is that is does not seek to indulge the flinch or to simply accept it as the best possible response available to a practitioner. Consider a few examples: in the military aircraft design, every effort is made to simplify the controls used by a pilot. Ultimately however, a military pilot is still required to perform some degree of complex, fine motor skills under pressure. Through specialized training, obviously this is possible. Similarly, a sniper is required to perform with precision and relaxation during combat. Again, through correct training, this is achievable. In much the same way, Systema’s first goal is to optimize the practitioner’s natural capacities by reducing the fear and tension they experience. Training is designed to bring the practitioner’s awareness to their immediate capacities as well as to their areas of fear and tension in their body. Every exercise from the simplest push-up to the most advanced combative drill in Systema is carefully designed to incorporate and reinforce correct body structure and alignment, breathing and relaxation. Students are progressively led through increasing degrees of resistance and stress to heighten their coping skills and to inoculate them to these pressures.

Peter is an active member of the military and a Military Close Quarters Combat Instructor. He has worked in the entertainment industry and as a doorman for many years and has competed in Mixed Martial Arts. His training background included Muay Thai in Northern Thailand, Brazilian and Japanese Jiu Jutsu, Hapkido, Judo, Filipino systems, Uechi-ryu karate and now Systema. Peter notes that it is specifically Systema’s emphasis on flow that has been most essential to him professionally.

“Combat altercations can have a varied tempo and intensity level. Usually, the initial phases are high in intensity and short in duration. An event can begin and finish in less than 10 seconds with fatal results, but it can also be drawn out much longer, depending on the number of combatants, the security of the environment (combat zones, ring/cage, street/civilian setting), conditioning and training of the combatants, the size of area of the event (wooded forest or elevator)
and the weapons involved (impact, edged, firearms). The old comment “smooth is fast” is a common term when looking at combat. Every movement needs to be essential and confident. There is no time for unnecessary activity. Think of an experienced gun fighter form the old west. His movements are simple, sure and accurate. There is no time for anything else. This smoothness and simplicity leads to quickness of action. It’s better to have one single effective shot, kick, grab, twist, etc., than 100 ineffective ones. Being able to flow one movement into the next requires an unshakeable combat foundation. Violent events can be blinding fast or slow, grinding tests of endurance. There is no place for wasted energy. If you can’t move effectively during a slow movement or engagement in training, how can you do it when the tempo is faster? By being rigid and tight, you limit your ability to really let your body see what it’s dealing with. Your movement will always be one step behind. It’s like singing out of key and marching out of step. Relaxing allows you to assess and respond and flow with what is required.”

In Systema’s approach, emphasis is placed specifically on this—distilling motion down to its most efficient core. Training is designed to slowly erode the various fear responses that have infected our bodies throughout our lifetimes. Naturally, some degree of flinch will always remain. If someone throws something at your face, the intrinsic instinct is to raise one’s hands, close’s one’s eyes, and lower one’s chin, possibly even to turn away somewhat. Inherently, this reflex is there because over millennia that generalized response has served our species as a whole more effectively than other available options. It is not necessarily the best reflex for us within the immediate context of our specific situation however. The instinct to step back quickly from a threat might serve us well against a rattlesnake, but without thought or modification might now serve us as well if we are defending from an encroaching aggressor and backing into rushing street traffic. Similarly, a boxer will not simply say, “my natural reaction is to cover my face and freeze, so this is what I have to deal with.” Instead, they quickly learn that it is better to get out of the way of incoming force whenever possible and at the very least to move with the force, to bob and weave and slip punches, and to pre-empt strikes whenever possible. A boxer learns from experience that it is not enough to simply accept one’s flinch responses as their “life sentence”—it is possible rather to improve those reflexes and to gradually replace them with hybrid responses.

Worse still, many individuals enter training filled with irrational fear. Their flinch responses are often over-developed. Many reading this article may be walking through their lives fused with tension: shoulders that are frozen, chronic lower back pain, reoccurring headaches, repetition stress injuries to joints and so on. Take the example of someone who has been working out heavily with weights but employing only very limited ranges of motion. Over time, they seriously risk becoming tenser and more contracted to the point that they lose their body’s natural range of motion. This is not the fault of the weights, but rather the range of motion that was used with those weights. The same effect can be acquired by pounding away at your keyboard all day with a poor posture. Similarly, fear and trauma can have the same effects, restraining an individual’s movement capacities with poor posture and loss of flexibility. Finally, injuries can also massively restrain a person’s capacities. In Systema’s approach, all of these limitations are addressed. Training is designed to not only optimize a practitioner’s current capacities; they’re designed to break negative movement patterns that would otherwise detract from long term physical and psychological well being.

Brian, a shooter/medic currently employed in Iraq tells a similar story of his application of Systema. His daily activities include applying his special forces training to bodyguard dignitaries and high ranking government and military officials:

“My regular day consists of riding along side my subjects in an armoured limo. I wear full gear—over 60 pounds of

“By being rigid and tight, you limit your ability to really let your body see what it’s dealing with. Your movement will always be one step behind. It’s like singing out of key and marching out of step. Relaxing allows you to assess and respond and flow with what is required.”

Peter, Military Close Quarters Combat Instructor.

Vladimir Vasiliev is the Director of Systema training outside of Russia. A former 10-year veteran of the Special Operation Units of the Russian Spetsnaz, Vladimir instructed SWAT, Law Enforcement, KGM and Special Forces units before revealing his art to the public.
tactical gear, ammo, body armour, two weapons and also a heavy aid bag. My first job is to stay calm and to protect my client. If things go badly, I need to get them out of there at all costs. Just the burden of the equipment and the need to be constantly vigilant is enough to burn most people out. If I stayed tense, I would be finished. Every time we drive under an overpass I started to realize how tense I would become, since this is a popular place to hide IED’s (Improvised Explosive Devices). My body would cramp up and the tension would just stay in me all day and just keep on building up. One of the first things I noticed was that just by paying attention to my form and breathing, everything got easier. My body could stay more relaxed and my thoughts stayed clearer. I was more functional and I could last longer. Some times it’s not easy to keep things straight. When shooting breaks out I can hear everything going on outside; I have the team leader and gun trucks screaming in my ear bud. All the while I need to engage my client, give them directions and keep control of the situation. The key to everything has been breathing and effective movement.”

Brian also notes that incorporating Systema principles can be challenging since they conflict with much of what he’s otherwise taught to do:

“One of the first things I noticed was that just by paying attention to my form and breathing, everything got easier. My body could stay more relaxed and my thoughts stayed clearer. I was more functional and I could last longer.”

Brian, Shooter/medic. Currently active in Iraq.

and moving forward. This works, but it places a lot of stress on my mind and body. After a few hours my lower back is screaming and my nerves are finished. Vladimir told me that my shooting will simply continue to change and I can see this. I know that I need to do what I need to do to qualify but when it comes down to saving my life, a relaxed and fluid approach simply works better for me.”

It is from this flow training approach that principle-based learning evolves, transcending simple memorization and technique-based learning. Peter adds:

“Techniques are a great tool when employed properly and at the right time, but an ‘Attack A/Defense B’ approach becomes a hindrance in a dynamic event. Principles don’t require a specific set of rules or conditions. They adapt and flow with conditions presented. Responding with technique may work for the first few movements, but with changes in tempo and intensity, they quickly fade and are also dependent on physical conditioning as the vehicle to carry them out. When weapons are involved, the disarming of the defender nullifies their technique. They have to reset and approach with a new technique. With a principle-based approach, the loss of a weapon doesn’t require a reset. The defender can flow with any condition no matter what weapon, tempo or conditions the fight involves.”

Even if we leave the military environment, we find that it is precisely these same attributes of flow and adaptability that are most relevant to all practitioners.

Assistant Instructor Danny Kovac encroaches Kevin and threatens to strike (A). Kevin assumes a submissive stance and adjusts his position to facilitate verbal de-escalation and avoidance. Danny attempts to sucker punch but Kevin deflects the action from his natural position with his elbow and shoulder, (B) and blends with the strike in a windmill motion, trapping Danny’s arm and head (C) and delivering a stunning knee to the sternum (D) as he continues in a single fluid motion to spin Danny to the ground (E), driving a double knife hand into his ribs with unified muscle mass (F).

Courtesy of Kevin Secours.
Rob, a veteran prison guard from New York. He recounts that one of the most stressful times for the department of corrections and NYC in general over the last few decades was the crack epidemic of the mid 1980’s and early 90’s. He recounts:

“All of the jails were so packed that we were putting army cots in the jail gymnasiums and Rikers Island was building new housing at a record pace, even buying prefabricated geodesic domes to cover the incarcerated from the elements. Crack heads are a very reactionary lot and unpredictably violent at times. I worked in The Brooklyn Correctional Facility (B.C.F.) or “The Brig” as it was known. Back then, I already had multiple black belts and had been studying the more combative forms I could find for over 24 years. We had over 750 officers and about 100 of them had started in corrections in the late 1960’s so, we learned old school corrections from them as well. It was almost certain you would be involved on one level or another, in at least one or more violent confrontations in any given week. Simply put, I was an adrenaline-driven martial artist. My work was cold and brutal.

I met Vladimir Vasiliev 8 years ago. I told him that I needed him to teach me how to “live”—how to lose that old rusty armour that I just couldn’t escape. I wanted to be that “good person” that I was at heart. After my first serious encounter with Systema, I returned to work at “The 4 Building” on Rikers (The Adolescent Reception and Detention Center or ARDC). Once, it was considered the most violent jail in America. They called it “Gladiator School”. The jail holds about 1000 and is split between 16-19 year old males and violent sex offenders that have done considerable time. They house the ‘notorious’. I was part of the “probe” team. The alarm would go off, my second officer and I would suit into riot gear and mount a golf cart and respond to anything from an argument to a fire, an assault on staff or even multiple violent people. We would drive there as another 20 officers suited up to be part of the next wave if necessary. After Systema, my responses were very different. My previous reactionary mind was no longer ruling my responses. Even when a strong use of force was required, I was not mad or cold. I was much more forgiving. I could hear everything, I could stay more focused and I could be much more gentle when ending a conflict. Systema showed me how to relax and in that relaxation, I found better skill—on the job as well as in life.”

Sergey Proger, a police Constable in Toronto Canada. He has worked as a street cop for over 5 years in Canada’s largest city. He writes similar accounts of his own experience:

“The training consists of a unique mix of physical and psychological exercises, full contact work with multiple opponents, use of various conventional and improvised weapons – Systema builds a person’s confidence and develops a high level of sensitivity to the environment we live in. In my opinion, these skills are priceless for those whose duty requires them to go to places that the rest of the public avoids. Through the training I observed that the psychological aspect of Systema slowly changes a person’s “fight-or-flight” reflexes by making the body effectively and almost subconsciously respond to any threat and defend itself by giving just enough force needed to complete a task while preserving valuable energy. That aspect of Systema really makes this art unique and adaptive to strict police rules and procedures and reduces the risk of excessive force. Systema is a constantly evolving martial art. In my opinion it is one of the best tools to have for the job.”

Carrying Water From The Well:

While these testimonies reveal something about the System’s effectiveness, the greater question still remains: how do you disseminate something that has no fixed structure? How do you standardize and measure and test a curriculum? How do you concretely teach a variable and maintain quality in the process? Certainly the testimonies attest that a beneficial degree of understanding can be learned, but are these just exceptions or is the art truly a viable method for the masses?

Part of this concern stems from the conception of technique. In actuality, Systema is not against technique. Some level of technical instruction is always required to learn correct striking, movement, locks etc. The distinction lies again more in Systema’s method of instruction rather than its content. Rather than emphasizing specifically

Danny encroaches Kevin again (A). This time, Kevin blends using his shoulder (B) and continues his motion delivering a whip like strike to the back of Danny’s head (C).
what to do in a particular instance and then having students perform high numbers of repetitions of a single model. Systema instruction generally introduces a principle and demonstrates interpretations of that model. From the first example given, the instructor offers suggestions and ideas, rather than a fixed pattern that needs to be replicated. The old military maxim: “you’re paid for your results, not for your methods” is a good way of looking at this. From the very first exercise, students are encouraged and guided through their own, unique interpretation of that principle as they work. They are taught to trust their own bodies and learn how to improve their natural reflexes.

“From the kindergarten classroom to medical school, student-centered, experiential learning continues to outshine rote memorization and gain popularity.”

As an educator, I have studied specifically how this more explorative method of learning, often referred to as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) consistently provides stronger results than conventional rote memorization. From the kindergarten classroom to medical school, student-centered, experiential learning continues to outshine rote memorization and gain popularity. Systema offers us a combative model of PBL that contrasts sharply with the conventional method of instruction used in most traditional martial arts and defensive tactics approaches as modern Western education contrasts with 18th century classroom teaching.

In my own experience, I serve as a security consultant and instructor, regularly teaching law enforcement, security and military personnel. Most of the agencies that I have dealt with have very specific objectives for their teams and as such will request well known and established curriculums, particularly within the domain of Defence Tactics. Even within the limitations of an existing curriculum, I have seen the exponential difference the Systema approach can make. The smallest implementation of even a few principle-based drills, wherein students are allowed to test and explore their own reflexes and to try to apply their technique, is essential. Even more effective, has been the Systemic notion of incremental learning, often referred to as “chunking” in educational learning. Rather than imposing a technique, saying: “We do it this way because…” I have seen time and again that by beginning with play and exploration, students learn firsthand what works and what doesn’t. This creates far more fertile soil to sow your techniques in afterwards.

While most traditional curriculums will dedicate the majority of teaching time to theory and technique, concluding with a small amount of resistant scenario training, I have seen firsthand that it is far more effective to begin by teaching technique with a regard for structure and biomechanics and breathing. Most officers come in unable to effectively move their bodies—adding a foreign weapon or tactical goal like restraining a hostile subject to their existing operating system only distances them further from their comfort zones. It’s like adding more and more software to a weak computer—ultimately this only weakens the computer until it crashes. Instead, I place immediate priority on having them understanding why a technique is chosen. Training is designed to allow the practitioners to explore and understand their own bodies. In this way, even the most basic technique becomes an example of a basic principle and as each successive technique is taught, that same principle become reinforced and ultimately transcendent. Particularly given the time constraints in professional curriculums, I see that most curriculums simply teach a concept or set of moves, whereas Systema teaches the practitioner how to become confident owners of the most important hardware they have— their mind and their body. They in effect learn how to teach themselves, becoming a thinking warrior.

Sharon Friedman has been an Infantry Sergeant (sniper) for the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) since 1994. He is currently active in Lebanon. Sharon not only practices Systema, but teaches it to his troop as well:

“Systema gives your entire system, from emotional to corporal, a different way of thinking. Systema’s breath work has given me the means to perform better aerobically and it has increased my strength level. When I was eighteen, I would reach my performance goals perhaps ten percent of the time. Today, I’m much more able to find solutions and keep a level head just by using breath and continuous movement…Systemic movement has kept me and my soldiers working even under loads that would otherwise ground our joints and tissue. Movement has made us much more...
survivable with much less work put into it. Systema focuses on getting the job done rather than the ritual or the drill. This method and mindset has saved my life many times and preserved my brothers in arms as well. The awareness it facilitates can amaze those who do not pay attention and I can say a simple sentence like “always look for the next target” has improved my performance in every way from driving a jeep to target selection within the cross hairs.”

Ultimately, as the name implies, Systema is meant to be adopted as a whole, as a complete set of inter-related parts encompassing all aspects of tactics and training. Nevertheless, particularly given the difficulties with integration in the existing establishment, tremendous advantage can still be had by incorporating select elements and constructing it within your own training parameters piecemeal. I used the analogy of Western medicine. In Western medicine, patients are universally encouraged to get a second opinion. Why wouldn’t we extend the same security measure that we use in preserving our health to ensuring our combat survival? Systema offers just such a second opinion, a versatile and unorthodox approach, to the most basic and ancient dilemma we face—survival.

Kevin Secours, holds B.Ed. from McGill University. Kevin is a senior instructor of Russian Systema under Vladimir Vasiliev and Mikhail Ryabko. In addition, he holds a 6th Dan in Russki Goshinbudo under Hanshi Sali Azem, a 3rd Dan in Modern Kempo Jujitsu and a 1st Dan in Akai Ryu Jujitsu. He is currently a Defensive Tactics instructor with assorted certifications in extendable baton, PR-24, tactical handcuffing, pressure point use and empty-handed combatives.

For more information about Systema please visit: www.RussianMartialArt.com

Bare Essentials Guide to Martial Arts Injury Care & Prevention
by Trish Bare Grounds
152 x 228 mm, 384 pp.
available at www.mikado.nl

BARE ESSENTIALS GUIDE TO MARTIAL ARTS INJURY CARE & PREVENTION

Written in easy to understand language, this revised and expanded guide addresses important self-care issues for the martial arts athlete. It is written as a discussion with athletes. All of the technical terms used are defined in easy to understand language so that athletes, instructors and parents can benefit. If you are involved in martial arts or have a son or daughter who is, this book will give you some basic knowledge on preventing and caring for the injuries inherent to the martial arts. Topics include:

- Stretching: Over 50 essential exercises for building flexibility, preventing common injuries and rehabilitation
- Conditioning: Get the facts on using plyometrics, weight training, running, core strengthening, resistive bands, TotalGym and the exercise ball for building strength and speed
- Nutrition: Learn to safely cut weight, prevent dehydration, and eat like a champion
- Step by step instructions, including photos, for professional athletic taping techniques: ankles, feet, toes, shins, knees, elbows, hip, fingers, and hands
- Self-care: Ice vs. heat, identifying serious injuries, caring for minor injuries, training precautions when injured or pregnant
- Tips on coping with: Blisters, Ankle Injuries, Back Pain, Knee Injuries, Groin Pulls, Rotator Cuff Pain, Shin Splints, Dehydration, Athlete’s Foot, Asthma, Concussions, Head Injuries, Bruises and Swelling, Lacerations, Facial Injuries, Hyperextensions, Chronic Injuries, Emergencies
- Instructors and Coaches: Guidance on developing an Emergency Medical Plan, safety in training and competition, training your staff and building a qualified sports medicine team

Trish Bare Grounds, USTU Medical Coordinator and Head Athletic Trainer for the US National Taekwondo Team, is a Certified & Licensed Athletic Trainer (ATC/L) and Strength & Conditioning Specialist. She holds a BA degree from DePaul University in Psychology & Pre-Med/Biology, along with an MS degree from the University of Miami in Sports Medicine, and Ph.D. from the University of Florida’s Sports Medicine/Athletic Training.

Marc van Dam

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At the moment we are looking for in-depth articles about Uechi-ryu, Shorin-ryu, Goju-ryu and others.
To be sure, the Israeli Krav Maga system is one of the most effective, practical, and instinctive fighting systems in the world. Krav Maga uses the same building blocks from the simplest defences to the most advanced techniques including empty-handed defences and disarms against bladed weapons, firearms, and even micro-explosives. Most important, Krav Maga emphasizes that there are no rules on the street. If a situation is dire, the defender must do whatever is necessary to overcome the threat.

Krav Maga relies on a person’s natural instincts and reflexes for self-defence. Awareness and mental conditioning are integral to Krav Maga training. Krav Maga’s philosophy is never to do more than necessary, but to react with speed, economy of motion, and the appropriate measure of force. Counterattacks may include multiple strikes to the groin, throat, and kidneys, a finger planted into an eye, shouting into an attacker’s ear, a head butt, breaking an attacker’s elbow using an armbar variation, severing an attacker’s Achilles tendon using an ankle lock, a bite to the neck, or choking an assailant into unconsciousness. Because of this philosophy, Krav Maga is not suited for tournaments and must be practiced under controlled conditions. Speed is paramount and one is taught to strike instinctively at the human body’s vulnerable parts.

The system is dynamic and constantly evolves as situations require. This type of continuous refinement and development is one of the leading reasons Krav Maga has such appeal to the law enforcement community. A trainee appreciates the simplicity and universal application of Krav Maga immediately. Krav Maga uses the concept of retzev, Hebrew for “continuous motion” to complete a defence.

Training time for any law enforcement institution is always at a premium. The goal is to make an officer proficient in defending himself against any manner of attack while safeguarding his weapon(s) in the shortest possible training period. Krav Maga’s deliverables become readily apparent. As Krav Maga is based on our most primitive and natural instincts, a few core defensive movements harnessing gross motor skills can be learned, retained, and applied to overcome numerous deadly force threats while under duress. For example, the same defensive movement can defend against a hook punch, overhand knife attack, wide forward knife slash to the throat or a hook stab to the throat.

This particular defensive tactic of defending against a knife attack to the head involves the officer stepping “off the line” to de-escalate or escalate the officer’s required level of force to meet the threat. A punch to an officer’s head clearly does not represent the same threat that a knife blade does. Accordingly, an officer defending against an open-handed strike to his head would not be justified in striking the assailant in the throat. However, when faced with an edged weapon aimed at the officer’s throat, the officer is justified in stopping the deadly force assault as quickly as possible – and this may mean using a throat strike.

This particular defensive tactic of defending against a knife attack to the head involves the officer stepping “off the line” to de-escalate or escalate the officer’s required level of force to meet the threat. A punch to an officer’s head clearly does not represent the same threat that a knife blade does. Accordingly, an officer defending against an open-handed strike to his head would not be justified in striking the assailant in the throat. However, when faced with an edged weapon aimed at the officer’s throat, the officer is justified in stopping the deadly force assault as quickly as possible – and this may mean using a throat strike.

There are no rules on the street. If a situation is dire, the defender must do whatever is necessary to overcome the threat.

“Krav Maga is not suited for tournaments and must be practiced under controlled conditions.”
founder Imi Lichtenfeld and some of his top students visited the United States. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was one of the first American agencies exposed to Krav Maga. Now, dozens of United States federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have incorporated Krav Maga into their training. Some of these agencies include: Federal Bureau of Investigations, United States Marshals Service, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Treasury Department, United States Department of Homeland Security, the United States Coast Guard, United States Sea Marshals, United States Coast Guard Police Department and local police departments throughout the country. In addition, special units from many countries have adopted the Krav Maga defensive tactics system including the GIGN, Brazilian Battalion of Special Operations of the Police - BOPE, Municipal Guard of Rio de Janeiro – GAE, the Norwegian Police Department and the Polish GROM.

Law enforcement personnel are armed with a sworn duty is to protect the public. Krav Maga training teaches an officer to directly handle a threat, significantly, with the ability to quickly de-escalate or escalate the appropriate level of force. Krav Maga recognizes that when faced with a deadly threat, most officers will instinctively reach for a sidearm or, in a tactical situation, resort to a long-gun or sub-machinegun. Continuing to examine our overhand knife defence technique provides far reaching insights into Israeli Krav Maga’s methodology and philosophy.

Use-of-force issues are a prime concern when instructing law enforcement defensive tactics training. Accordingly, Krav Maga’s weapon defences fit within each agency’s force matrix. When contending against deadly weapon assaults, such as a knife attack (see illustrations), Krav Maga provides law enforcement personnel with the option of striking to vital areas such as the throat. The immediate goal, of course, is to stop the attacker. Stated otherwise, whether a civilian, soldier, or cop, is defending against a deadly weapon Krav Maga’s goal is for the defender to overcome the threat. This means neutralizing the attacker with soft tissue strikes and other combatives.

Krav Maga instructors do not provide set instructions but, rather, a blueprint. Learning by rote would violate Krav Maga’s practicality and adaptability. Imi recalled a time he forced himself to learn a German poem word for word knowing in advance he would be tested in the next twenty minutes. He recited the poem, received a well done from the teacher, and, subsequently, forgot the poem one minute later, for good. Imi recognized...
how short-lived learning by rote could be. Imi emphasized there are no shortcuts to developing a lasting ability.

A more subtle, fundamental training tenet also emerged: the direct correlation between mental imagery and physical ability. Imi summarized, “it comes from the head” or your training comes from your brain absorbing, retaining, translating and combining your instincts and learning into action. No two attacks will be delivered in the same manner and law enforcement personnel are given tools for their tool box, but not strict instructions how to use them. Rather, officers are provided strong recommendations on the optimum use of these tactics. Keep in mind that in developing the self-defence system, survival in any situation was foremost in Imi’s mind.

In keeping with our previous example, a face-to-face overhand knife attack (often called an “icepick” attack) serves as a good example of how Krav Maga incorporates open-handed defensive tactics with tactical positioning putting the officer in the most advantageous position to effectively deploy his sidearm. Whenever possible, Krav Maga utilizes both a deflection and body defence that moves the defender “off the line of attack”, or in the case of firearm disarms, “line of fire.” By deflecting the incoming attack and simultaneously moving away from it with a counter-attack, Krav Maga strives to create a fail-safe or redundant defence. Not only is the attack thwarted by a deflection, but the defender is also not where the attacker targeted and at the same time delivering knock-down counter-attacks. Again, most important, the defender is counterattacking against the attacker simultaneously within the defensive movement.

Continuing to examine the overhand knife attack example, let’s take the reader through the defence step-by-step (See photo series Defence #1).

The attacker has the knife in his right hand and is facing the officer (photos A & B). The defence involves a simultaneous three part movement. The defence primarily relies on our instinct to block and move away from a blow, or, this case, a stab. The defender must (1) block the assailant’s right knife hand using an outside block by rotating his left arm (nearest to the knife) outside to deflect the attacker’s right arm away from the defender’s head while not breaking contact to maintain control (explained momentarily) while (2) simultaneously striking the attacker in the face or throat with his right hand and (3) stepping forward with the outside right leg taking him away from the line of attack (photos C, D & E).

The defender should try to deflect the knife as close as possible to the attacker’s wrist. After stunning the attacker, the defender has the option of pressing the counterattack by transitioning immediately from the block to securing that attacker’s arm (photos F, G & H). Again, this is done by not breaking contact with the attacker’s arm following the initial block. In other words, the defender blocks out by rotating his left arm and then immediately rotating the arm back

---

**Defence #1 against overhand knife attack**

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

Courtesy of David Kahn.
to grab and secure the attacker’s right wrist while stepping forward and away from the attacker and then driving the attacker’s arm back and delivering punishing knee strikes.

Driving the attacker’s arm back serves two purposes: (1) it prevents the attacker from initiating further stabs and (2) it positions the officer to apply a strong control hold, in this case what we term a #3 hold. One should remember that kravists train to use wrist releases. As always, in the fighting chess game, we know an attacker could use the same release against us. Wrist releases, when holding a blade, present special dangers because not only can the attacker release, he can slash and stab while doing it. The #3 hold (known to some as the kimura) secures the attacker driving him face down — importantly placing strong control over the knife hand.

A second option to counter the attack still uses the primary defence to block/sidestep and attack methodology. Remember, the sidestep has placed the right leg forward to take the defender off the line. The defender is now positioned to deliver a debilitating left straight kick to the attacker’s groin and to disengage while continuing to break the angle (moving away from the knife) to deploy a firearm or impact weapon.

A third law enforcement specific option, is to complete the block/sidestep with a simultaneously draw and point shoot the attacker provided the officer is wearing his sidearm on his right hip (See photo series Defence #2). (A different technique must be used if the officer has the sidearm on his left hip.) The officer should continue to move away from the knife arm. This can be combined with an initial strike to momentarily stun the attacker, create distance, and deploy a firearm.

Lastly, an impact weapon may be used following the same principals of simultaneous defence and attack while stepping off the line (See photo series Defence #3). When using a “cold weapon” against a “cold weapon”, Krav Maga generally targets the weapon arm followed by additional counterattacks. The officer will stand right side forward (assuming he is right side dominant.) As the knife hand comes in, he will use a body defence or sidestep the attack with a blocking/forward movement of the impact weapon smashing the incoming knife arm at the wrist. As soon as hard contact is made with the wrist, the officer immediately changes the angle of the impact weapon

A fourth option is to deliver a debilitating rear straight kick to the attacker’s groin while using glicha, or a sliding movement to step off the line of attack. The officer should pull the leg back and then to press the counter attack to secure the knife hand with additional strikes or break the angle to draw his weapon.

Lastly, an impact weapon may be used following the same principals of simultaneous defence and attack while stepping off the line (See photo series Defence #3). When using a “cold weapon” against a “cold weapon”, Krav Maga generally targets the weapon arm followed by additional counterattacks. The officer will stand right side forward (assuming he is right side dominant.) As the knife hand comes in, he will use a body defence or sidestep the attack with a blocking/forward movement of the impact weapon smashing the incoming knife arm at the wrist. As soon as hard contact is made with the wrist, the officer immediately changes the angle of the impact weapon.

"Many officers are surprise attacked from the rear. One of the more dangerous attacks is an assailant armed with a rope or wire to strangle the officer."

Lt. Paul Miller
State trooper
Homeland Security Branch

### Defence #2 against over-hand knife attack

![A](image1.png)

![B](image2.png)

![C](image3.png)
Defence #3 against overhand knife attack

A

B

C

D

Defence against wire strangle

A

B

C

Mike Delahanty is a Police officer and former SWAT team member. Mike also served as a Marine in Gulf War I. Mike’s thoughts:

“As a municipal police officer and a former Marine I wholeheartedly recommend Krav Maga for all law enforcement and military personnel. Krav maga is a fighting system developed for the Israeli military and law enforcement. It only focuses on real life situations; whether it is disarming a suspect who has gotten the drop on you, defending against an attacker coming at you with a knife (violating the twenty-one foot rule), using a simple joint lock to take someone into custody or using a punch or a kick to neutralize a suspect who has attempted to physically assault you, Krav Maga covers it all. Furthermore, Krav Maga also focuses on weapon retention, both for your personal sidearm and long guns. What other self-defence system do you know that does this? In addition to all of this, Krav Maga is easy to learn! Why? Because it is based on the body’s natural instincts. Of course, like any defensive tactics system, the techniques must be practiced to be retained in muscle memory.”

Michael Delahanty
Police officer
Ewing Police department
Ewing, NJ

Sidearm retention, before the assailant can grab the officer’s weapon, Krav Maga uses basic deflection defences with a 180 degree hip pivot to take the gun-side hip away while simultaneously striking or creating distance from the assailant. Should the assailant successfully grab the officer’s holstered weapon, the simultaneous defend and attack principle dictates that with a typical three point retention holster, the officer secures the weapon with one of his hands or one of his forearms by pressing against the rear of the slide or hammer. In the case of a tactical thigh rig, both hands may be needed to secure the weapon necessitating knee strikes or kicks while to use a backhand strike against the attacker’s head to shut down the attack. As noted, this defence would work against a slash to the throat or if the knife were used similar to a hook punch with the tip directed at the defender’s head or neck.

Let’s take a second concrete example of one defensive tactic thwarting numerous attacks. This one solution for multiple attack scenarios, once again, demonstrates Krav Maga’s practicality and utility. Many officers are surprise attacked from the rear. One of the more dangerous attacks is an assailant armed with a rope or wire to strangle the officer. The officer could also be yanked backwards to the rear with an attacker placing his hands on the officer’s throat. The attacker could also cup his hands over the crown of the officer’s skull to yank him backwards putting severe stress on the neck and spine. Note, this type of attack could also expose the officer to having a knee forcibly thrust into his spine as he is yanked backward.

One defence thwarts these attacks; an immediate turn into the attacker with a simultaneous counterattack including strikes to the head, throat, or groin. Immediately on contact, the defender spins by drawing one leg directly back in a straight line to toward the attacker while dipping the sameside shoulder with a brutal counterattack (See photo series Defence against wire strangle).

Weapon retention is a foremost concern to the law enforcement community. For
turning the gun leg away from the attacker.

Long gun/SMG retention, with or without a sling, uses the simple concept of turning the assailant’s force against him as he attempts to wrest the weapon away coupled with the officer’s momentum by moving in the direction of the weapon pull with simultaneous strikes. The long-gun/SMG is also turned trigger side in to break the attacker’s grip while also turning the magazine into the attacker importantly clearing the way for kicks and knee counterstrikes along with a possible strike.

In summary, Israeli Krav Maga receives wide support throughout the worldwide law enforcement community for the following four primary reasons:

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Long gun weapon retention

A

B

C

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Some of Krav Maga’s instructors.

Grandmaster Haim Gidon, (10th Dan and Israeli Krav Maga Association [IKMA] President) heads the Krav Maga system from the Israeli Krav Maga Association’s main training center in Netanya Israel (www.krav-magaisraeli.com). Haim is a member of Krav Maga founder Imi Lichtenfeld’s first training class in the early 1960’s. Along with Imi and other top instructors, Haim Gidon co-founded the IKMA. In 1995, Imi nominated Haim as the top authority to grant 1st Dan Krav Maga black-belt and up. Haim represents Krav Maga as the head of the system on the professional committee of Israel’s National Sports Institute, Wingate. Grandmaster Gidon, whose professional expertise is in worldwide demand, has taught defensive tactics for the last thirty years to Israel’s security and military agencies.

Yigal Arbiv (4th Dan) is one of Grandmaster Haim Gidon’s senior instructors. After serving in an elite paratroop unit as a weapons specialist, Yigal attended Wingate, Israel’s national sports institute, an exclusive training academy for instructors and coaches, where Yigal received his Krav Maga coaching certification. Yigal is a security professional and Krav Maga instructor teaching in several schools in Israel. Yigal regularly travels abroad to teach law enforcement and civilians. Yigal was featured in www.realfighting.com for Krav Maga’s weapon defences. Yigal has received special commendations from many American law enforcement agencies. Yigal sits on the IKMA’s professional committee for Krav Maga technique development.

N. (Chief Counter-Terror and Krav Maga Instructor, IDF Special Forces Division Counter-Terror and Special Operations School) served three years in the Israeli Special Forces in Sayeret Golani - Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol operations, one of the Israeli military’s most elite combat units. N. is active in counter-terrorist and counter-guerrilla operations in addition to high-risk raids. He currently serves in one of the IDF’s classified counter-terror units and acts as liaison for foreign special forces units training in Israel instructing tactical close-quarters-combat instructor (Krav Maga) for counter-terrorism and Israeli tactical firearms instruction. N. is currently serving as the Chief Counter-Terror and Krav Maga Instructor in the IDF’s counter-terror school in Israel. N. teaches counter-terror strategies and tactics at the Israeli Krav Maga U.S. Training Center in the U.S. and other locations.

IKMA U.S. Chief Instructor David Kahn received his advanced blackbelt teaching certification from Grandmaster Gidon. David trains bi-annually in Israel with Grandmaster Gidon and was elected to the board of the IKMA. David and his brother, Abel, regularly train federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies under the oversight of Grandmaster Gidon at the Israeli Krav Maga U.S. Training Center in Hamilton, New Jersey. David has been featured frequently in the media and authored the book: Krav Maga: An Essential Guide to the Renowned Method - For Fitness and Self Defence, St. Martin’s Press (2004) and will have his next book, Advanced Krav Maga: The Next Level, published by St. Martin’s Press in the fall of 2008. Contact israelikrav@gmail.com or (609) 921-2001. More information is available at www.israelikrav.com.
1. Krav Maga emphasizes defending against any manner of unarmed and armed attacks, safeguarding personal weapons, arrest and control, and performing other law enforcement and security-related measures.

2. The defensive tactics system relies on instinctive body movements, which are easily learned, retained and performs under stress.

3. The techniques are based on building blocks that, that when combined, allow the officer to prevail in life-threatening situations.

4. Officers learn how to react with speed, economy of motion, and the app-pro priate measure of force.

IKMA U.S. Chief Instructor David Kahn received his advanced blackbelt teaching certification from Grandmaster Gidon. David trains bi-annually in Israel with Grandmaster Gidon and was elected to the board of the IKMA.

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**THE ISRAELI KRAV MAGA (IKM) TRAINING GRID©**

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<td>In a physical confrontation, the officer will experience a combined surge of stress, fear, and excitement. In short, mental and physical conditioning allows the officer to harness his adrenaline and channel it into action. Mental confidence and toughness, in particular, provides a decisive advantage in a violent encounter. Denial is the most common obstacle to taking appropriate action. The officer must hone both mental and physical skills that they are put into action without thinking. Only proper training can trigger this fighting response.</td>
<td>When confronted with the threat of violence, the mind goes through a series of steps to choose a response. These reaction stages include the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Threat recognition.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Threat recognition.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Situation analysis.</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Situation analysis.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Choice of action.</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Choice of action.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Action or inaction.</strong></td>
<td><strong>4. Action or inaction.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Reacting to an Attack**

An attack launched by surprise will force the officer to react from an unprepared state. Therefore, the officer’s self-defense reaction must be instinctive and reflexive. IKM training prepares the officer for just that. The subconscious mind turns an instinctive trained response into immediate action.

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**Understanding the Human Body**

The human body can withstand a high amount of physical punishment. To be sure, certain attacks can be lethal, but, even when severely injured, the body can perform miraculous feats. Adrenaline is a powerful energizer and allows the body to momentarily insulate itself against pain. The body’s resilience works for both victim and assailant. To stop an assailant, IKM primarily targets the body’s vulnerable, and if necessary, vital areas.

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**Training as Real as Possible.**

IKM training will help the officer overcome fight paralysis that can easily set in. The officer will learn how to alleviate fear, panic and other sensations as he prepares the body and mind to take the proper course of action. The officer will physically learn effective techniques while mentally adjusting to a harsh violent reality.

---

**Visualization and Scenario Planning.**

The officer will also use his mind to train his body to automatically and instinctively react to danger. Visualization and scenario planning boosts the officer’s confidence, reduce fear, improve fighting technique, and helps cope with unanticipated hostile situations because officers will have envisioned them beforehand.

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* This training grid, which appears in David Kahn’s book Advanced Krav Maga (St. Martin’s 2008) outlines Israeli Krav Maga’s approach to law enforcement training.

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**KRAV MAGA**

Increasingly popular around the world, Krav Maga is the renowned hand-to-hand defence system designed by the Israeli military forces. Swift, powerful, and simple, it is an effective method for fending off any kind of attacker-and it is also an amazing workout. Regardless of size, strength, and fitness level, anyone can master the essentials of Krav Maga-and reap the rewards of increased safety, confidence, and conditioning. With moves you can learn in as little as five minutes, or train and practice for long-term success, Krav Maga will show you how to protect your body’s vulnerable targets, use an opponent’s momentum to fuel your counterattack, escape all kinds of grips and holds, combine training punches, kicks, and other moves into a powerful conditioning workout and to lose weight, increase core strength, and improve muscle tone. Use the specially designed drills and a 12-week training program to become a kravist: a smart and prepared fighter. Written by one of America’s foremost Krav Maga experts, this new guide opens the door to an empowering and important set of skills that you or anyone can master.

Marc van Dam
This book is for all law enforcement officers, students and instructors. No matter what your background or system you will find, tactics and techniques that will help you enjoy a successful career and keep you going home safely at the end of each shift. Rod Sanford has drawn from over 30 years of law enforcement and training experience to bring you the essence of use of force, defensive tactics and officer training in a complete text with over 1,600 step-by-step photographs.

Rod has been a patrol deputy, field training officer and patrol sergeant. He has studied and taught defensive tactics and officer safety since 1969. In 1993 he founded the Pacific Institute of Defensive Tactic. Through his institute, police academies and law enforcement agencies Rod teaches the P.I.D.T. Method of integrated use of force, defence tactics, arrest control techniques, self defence, alteration patterns, baton tactics, officer safety, car stops, firearms, crowd control and civil disobedience. He works regularly with California P.O. S.T. as a subject-matter-expert and has helped develop guidelines, curriculum and tele-course in the areas of use of force, defensive tactics, civil disobedience, car stops, and firearms.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

**THE GIFT OF FEAR**

A stranger in a deserted parking lot offers to help carry a woman’s groceries. Is he a good Samaritan or is he after something else? A fired employee says, “You’ll be sorry.” Will he return with a gun? After their first date, a man tells a woman it is their “destiny” to be together. What will he do when she rejects him? A mother has an uneasy feeling about the nice baby-sitter she’s just hired. Should she cancel her plans? A man is threatened by his girlfriend’s angry ex-husband. Should he go to the police? We all know there are plenty of reasons to fear people from time to time. The question is, what are those times? Gavin de Becker, the nation’s leading expert on predicting violent behavior, proves that we are all qualified to answer life’s highest-stakes questions. “True fear is a gift,” he says, “because it is a survival signal that sounds rather than helplessly accept the cruel death bearing down on a crowd.”

In this extraordinary, groundbreaking book, de Becker shows how even unarmed civilians can fight back and prevail against this new breed of determined killer. Just some of the vital topics covered in The Citizen’s Guide to Stopping Suicide Attackers include:

- *reacting correctly during the two most crucial moments of this new threat—before they can carry out their deadly mission*
- *recognizing and responding to a crazed driver or an enraged passenger*
- *identifying and subduing suicide bombers before they can carry out their deadly mission*
- *escaping from or disarming gunmen intent on mass murder*
- *recognizing and responding to a crazed driver bearing down on a crowd*
- *reacting correctly during the two most crucial stages of a hostage crisis*

By absorbing the lessons in this book, you will be better prepared to confront the worst and stand up for yourself and your fellow citizens rather than helplessly accept the cruel death someone else has planned for you. That is the right and the duty of all civilized human beings in the 21st century.

Itay Gil spent his compulsory military service in Israel’s paratrooper reconnaissance company, serving in the 1982 Lebanon War. He then joined the elite counterterrorist unit Yamam and took part in hundreds of hostage-rescue and interdiction missions. He later became Yamam’s chief close-quarter combat instructor. Gil continues to serve in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) reserves as senior combat instructor for the undercover counterterrorist unit 217 (Sayeret Duvdevan). In 2002, he formed a special security team for the Israeli Ministry of Defence. The founder and chief executive officer of Protect, a Jerusalem-based security training firm, Gil has demonstrated his methods for dealing with suicide bombers on CNN, Fox and Israeli media.

**DEADLY FORCE ENCOUNTERS**

Deadly Force Encounters. by Loren W. Christensen & Alexi Artwohl

140x215 mm, 272 pp.

available at www.mikado.nl www.amazon.com

**CITIZEN’S GUIDE TO STOPPING SUICIDE ATTACKERS**

Airline hijackers, suicide bombers, fanatical gunmen, homicidal drivers, hostage takers – for decades, these types of terrorists have endangered the lives of innocent citizens worldwide. Now these killers have targeted the United States. But are ordinary Americans helpless in the face of this new threat?

Itay Gil — a veteran of Israel’s premier counterterrorist units and still an active operator in the War on Terror — says no! By describing the psychology and methods of suicide attackers, explaining how to summon the right mind-set in a life-or-death situation, and providing explicit instruction on instant submission and quick-kill self-defence techniques, Gil and coauthor Dan Baron show how even unarmed civilians can fight back and prevail against this new breed of determined killer. Just some of the vital topics covered in The Citizen’s Guide to Stopping Suicide Attackers include:

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Marc van Dam
You are the executive of the MPT-center for the police in Elst and among other things are responsible for policy development, counselling, management and liaisons. In what capacity did you previously work for the Dutch police? After the police academy I worked for roughly seven years in Arnhem doing basic police work, followed by 18 years as a traffic specialist, head of the regional traffic specialist department, head of the department of incoming reports, head of basic police care of the district Rijk van Nijmegen, head of the department of recruitment and training police staff Gelderland-South, and now head of the regional training center for MPT of the police force Gelderland Middle/South and the Royal Military Police.

The Multi-Discipline Professional Skills Training centers in the Netherlands (MPT-centers) are the pre-eminent training locations for the Dutch police. Although this issue of Meibukan Magazine focuses on the Dutch method and ideas concerning police training for danger containment, these methods and ideas are similar to those of most police centers in Western Europe and other Western countries. What facilities do these centers provide, what skills are imparted and who teaches them? What does a police officer have to deal with? To gain a wider perspective of the martial aspect of the street-officer police training, we introduce our international reader to one of these MPT-centers.

- By Lex Opdam -
certain police forces. Having all facilities housed under the same roof was unique. Gradually, this concept was taken over and more, similar centers, the latest in Sevenum (MPT-center for the Northern Limburg and South-Eastern Brabant forces) started popping up. Elst has consistently been used as a model. It has even been used as a model for several centers in Germany.

The Netherlands have several MPT-centers. Can you tell us about the cooperation and information exchange between these centers?

This subject belongs to the portfolio of one of the chief-commissioners. We have a national MPT-meeting, held by representatives of the MPT centers. Our MPT center is part of the eastern region. Each region convenes once every three months and chooses a representative for the national meeting. Furthermore, two national profession days are held in which several workshops take place. These all have to do with the MPT training. Also, there is often informal deliberation between and with the centers concerning all kinds of issues, the exchange of programs and such. However, I think the cooperation should be even more structured. This would enable us to adapt to current issues within our training of practical situations.

MPT-centers do not all have the same clients, in that they involve several specialist teams and units. How many clients does your center have and what kind of ‘clients’ are they?

The majority of our 2400 clients are colleagues from the basic police force. We also train police volunteers, Special Fraud Officers equipped with or without firearms, detainee attendants, members of the Riot police and special arresting units of the Riot police, the SWAT team Middle Netherlands and police recruits as well as bringing policemen and policewomen rejoining the police force back to the correct professional competence level.

Can you describe the kind of proficiency training given at your MPT center?

We supply training/courses in: firearms, arresting and self-defence techniques, violence control, mountain bike police training, group dynamics, large scale and special events (demonstrations, large events), procedures on how to enter a house or stop cars and make arrests, entertainment center control training, domestic violence, physical skill training, age-awareness training, gun holster training and pepperspray training (O-C spray). Furthermore, we also provide specialised training on request, such as for example arresting and self-defence for traffic police on motorcycles. In addition, we support colleagues in the field in the case of violent incidents.

Who teaches these courses/classes and what kind of training have these people had?

These courses are given by certified MPT instructors. They have all passed the professional training program Instructor Danger Control (defensive tactics and firearm training) at the police academy in Ossendrecht. Some of the instructors have a police background and others have followed a sports education supplemented with additional police modules. Several instructors have specialized in their area of expertise and all instructors regularly follow application courses.

Maintaining professionalism is a joint responsibility of the executive police officer and the police force manager. An executive police officer receives on average 32 hours a year (often spread over four separate days) of MPT training and testing. Participation is mandatory. The police force manager is required and expected to facilitate the MPT and the police officer is required to take part in the MPT training and pass the relevant tests. If the police officer fails to reach set standards, his professionalism cannot be guaranteed and sanctions will be imposed. This can lead to withholding the officer’s weapons and equipment and restricting the exercise of his profession.

The regional forces each have a part of the Netherlands (and at least one large city) as their working area. A region employs 600 to 5000 people, depending on the population and size of the region. To maintain close contact between police and citizens, police regions are divided into districts or departments. This way the police work from within districts and neighbourhoods to create a safer and more liveable environment.
Executive police officers have to maintain the peace during confrontations and if necessary only use violence as a last resort to achieve their goal of enforcing the law and containing dangerous situations. The use of violence by the police must at all times be proportionate to the situation. To be able to make these judgment calls professionally, the Dutch executive police officer is taught courses in MPT during basic training at the police academy and later on the job.

As to skill and knowledge of self-defence, what is expected from the instructors and what can you tell us about possible martial backgrounds of the MPT instructors?

The knowledge of the instructors is very diverse, ranging from affinity with self-defence to a practiced degree in self-defence. Basically, we expect our instructors to be able to instruct and practice the 19 techniques/skills (see the content of the 19 techniques/skills in the interview with Rob Walraven in this edition, p50) in a responsible manner. This skill is also part of the Instructor Danger Control professional training and mandatory for each instructor.

What facilities do you have at your MPT center?

We have a six-point gun range, two firearms simulation training rooms, two gym rooms, a climbing wall, a practice building, a practice street, a video system with a viewing room for the students and a dojo. The center also contains a restaurant section, a reception, revalidation/fitness room and a study center for taking the digital violence test (theoretical examination concerning Legal powers, Law etc.) and such.

What are the main differences between the MPT for beginners at the academy and the MPT at the MPT centers when they have finished their training?

None. The starting point remains that both training at the police academy and the MPT-centers is given according to certain regulations. However, it can be stated that at the academy the skills are learnt whereas at the MPT centers, the skills are maintained using cases from experience.

Can you give us an insight into the current 32 hours a year of MPT for the executive police officer? How are these hours divided and what does a training day look like at your MPT center?

Conferring with our client, we put together a year schedule in which certain training moments are already filled in, such as shooting, arresting and self-defence and danger containment. The 32 hours are divided over four days of eight hours each. Every three months one comes to the center for eight hours. The aforementioned subjects are trained then as well. Furthermore, actual practical subjects are taught, including: practical police actions/procedures concerning vehicles and buildings, interactive practice (legal powers/law), group dynamics, home violence, shooting with simmunition (paint ammunition), modules entertainment center control training (hotel and catering industry such as bars/ discotheques etc.), large-scale events, life saving operations, and so on.

The realities of police work demand a professional approach towards aggression and violence. This professionalism is exercised through reasonable and moderate police action. This is a key responsibility for the executive police officer, especially on the streets. It demands not only the ability to pass tests but more than that, the ability to apply those skills.

The Dutch minister of the Interior, Guusje ter Horst has proclaimed in 2007 that the current amount of 32 hours of training a year are sufficient for the professional skills of the executive police officer, despite the fact that recent research has shown this not to be the case. Dutch police scientists such as Otto Adang and Jaap Timmer recommend an expansion in the Netherlands of training and educating police officers for violent situations. Jaap Timmer even suggests that the amount of hours should be expanded to 80 hours a year.
Do you think it is possible to make the training more applicable to reality and thus give police officers more practical skills, using current training hours and facilities?

More practical training situations can be easily applied I think, but the amount of training and the frequency of training will have to be taken into account. We can use the real-life situations that our colleagues encounter on a daily basis.

As head of your MPT center you are in close contact with instructors, police education, the forces and the clients. In light of your years of experience and specific background, Could you share your thoughts on the frequency of training you feel to be necessary for training situations that are more practical. What do you think people should strive for and in what manner could this be implemented?

The frequency of training and practice can be discussed for hours; however, there must be a correct balance between theory and actual practice. I am of the opinion that besides being skilled in the use of force, one should also regularly practice. Four times a year is a certain regularity, but one that has testing and the customized training. These can be followed during work hours.

You mentioned customized training. Is this per person or per group, force or region? If it is personal, is the training customized by the client or is it mainly advised?

Customizing training to best fit the needs of the client is a collaboration between the client and the MPT center. If the client and or the instructor feels that extra courses or training are necessary then the possibilities are examined. The same goes for regional groups and departments. Sometimes we observe something and offer advice and sometimes the client requests it.

How large are the groups that receive training and does this differ per training? The groups taught usually consist of 12 to 15 people. These are the lessons in firearms, arresting and self-defence, practical cases and instruction in how to deal with violence. The groups are larger when we actually train, I think it should be once a month, four to eight hours depending on the subject matter.

The 32 hours of MPT we discussed earlier take place during work hours. Are there options for the police to follow additional skills training during work hours and are there options for training outside work hours?

The additional options we offer our clients are the retraining and refresher courses and the customized training. These can be followed during work hours.

The Dutch Police force was once required to exercise during work hours. Many years ago, they abandoned this view and left it to the officers to do this on their own time. Consequently, signals arose that the general fitness of the officers was rapidly declining, with consequences in their ability to do their job.

Until this day these signals remain unchanged, but due to a pilot (project) for physical skills held by several police forces (introduction Physical Skills Test 2007) the picture is getting clearer concerning the general fitness of the Dutch police officer since the results are now centrally registered in a database. Particularly, the linking of a set of minimum medical requirements to partaking in the test (which many failed to pass before they could conduct the test) and of course the results of the test, verify that the general fitness and health combined with the physical skills (the test conducts several physical components of police work) of the average officer were not so positive.
when practising large-scale exercises or entertainment event modules in which actors are also employed.

The differences in skill can vary a lot from person to person. To accommodate this, do you teach at different levels?

Recently we introduced age awareness training (50+) into our program. This is on a voluntarily basis. This training is almost the same as the other training, just slightly less physically strenuous. The other colleagues all take part in the same program; although we do take into account the level of the client and on that basis recommend participation in for example refresher courses.

Do you keep a register of the personal achievements and skill levels of the participating officers? And are these examined to signal long-term decline or progression and if necessary to intervene?

The Education and Information System is used to register the efforts of all clients, such as attendance, results of the tests, etc. We keep a record of each colleague using a personal continuous registration card.

If someone technically passes all set standards for the tests but the instructor feels he or she has not performed as desired, does the instructor have the authority to report this and do something about it?

The instructors supply me with the information and I offer advice to the client’s superior.

What role does the MPT center have and what is expected from the police forces in relation to the officers’ physical fitness?

Within the set framework of the regions, the MPT center receives support from the regional police force. In the first place, our role is an advisory one though we are often approached for advice. The Forces also have a fit-and-healthy program, steer towards the 32-hours agreement, and maintain a diligent control of whether the set standards are reached. They also collaborate with the center in devising training. The time factor will always remain subject to discussion.

Would you be so kind as to explain in which way the MPT centers in the Netherlands have to deal with the Police academy within the domain of Danger Control?

Our MPT instructors are trained there. We regularly inform about training and also request backup for our speciality instructors for courses at our center. We also use them to keep ourselves abreast of developments and maintain our network contacts. Although the contact is getting better, mutual exchange of information is still often difficult due to the many layers within the organisation you have to break through before a structure can be broken.

The national representation of MPT centers should manifest itself more emphatically in this area.

The Danger Control Education at the Dutch Police academy within the Domain Danger Control in Ossendrecht trains instructors for the MPT centers within the police forces and for the police academy’s in general concerning basic police education. The instructor Danger Control is taught to train police force members of all levels and to guide them to proportional use of violence. The course is accessible to police personnel holding a police level four diploma or higher and for graduates of CIOS or ALO (Dutch Sports academy) although only if they meet certain conditions. There is a procedure for selection available at the CCM (Center for Competence Measurement and Monitoring) to find out whether an aspiring student is eligible for the course. This selection procedure consists of a medical test, a so called intest (skills test) and an assessment. The selection procedure has not yet been made mandatory.

The Danger Control Education consists of four main assignments. These four main assignments are followed by two different courses: the course for basic instructor and the course for all-round instructor.

The basic instructor course trains the student to become a basic instructor in arrest and self-defence skills, firearms and legal and ethical aspects of using violence. He or she also becomes qualified to test for the three RTGP-tests (RTGP=Regulation Testing Violence Control).

The all-round instructor course teaches the student to become an all-round instructor for arrest and self-defence skills, firearms instruction, approaching techniques, communication in crisis situations, physical and mental skills and development of MPT programs. Furthermore, the student is taught to deal with violence-related emotions and to develop MPT and custom training programs. A ‘pedagogical didactic note’ is part of the total learning procedure. This will allow the certified person to teach Danger Control and related subjects anywhere in the Netherlands to a certain level (including teaching to civilians).

It is possible for the student to gain practical experience in the field between the program for basic instructor and all-round instructor. After the education for basic instructor the student receives a study advice. The diploma for Danger Control Teacher is given after all four main assignments are completed successfully. This must be achieved within four years. The course is partially residential and is held in Ossendrecht, the Netherlands. Apart from the Danger Control Education, the Police academy in Ossendrecht also provides education courses such as Arrest and Support, Special Operations and Personal Security.
How does the average police officer generally view professional skills training? Some see it as a necessary evil, and others as an important part of their profession. Of the current three tests (a physical test is to be added shortly) most of the officers struggle with the arresting and self-defence part and I believe that is due to the low frequency in training. Better to train eight times a year for four hours than the present frequency of four times a year for eight hours. I understand why people make choices.

You describe that some of the officers see the professional skills training as a necessary evil. Why is it that they, like many other officers, do not see this as an important part of their job? Applicants are selected on mental and physical criteria, they are well aware of the job description and what is expected from them. They make a conscious decision of occupation, carry a large responsibility and are required to act professionally. Why do they not see or experience this training as something positive? That is a question you should ask those officers. I think it is a matter of attitude, mentality and the offered facilities from the different forces. We also have a group of colleagues that were selected in a different time and have been working within many different fields for a respectable number of years. The new generation is indeed selected more on mental and physical criteria.

Can you explain the importance of a well-equipped MPT center and the necessity of the police training for the civilians, politics, the police force and the police officers? For the police officer on the street, and many others, it is of vital importance that they are able to perform their duties in a well-trained and well practiced manner from the onset of danger to the use of necessary force. This is as much an obligation of the employer as of the employee(s).

Proper facilities, containing the correct training materials are therefore essential. Our society is becoming more and more complex and the officer on the streets has to be well equipped to deal with that.

Note
* In Dutch, the acronym for MPT is IBT, which stands for Integrale Beroepvaardigheid Training.


For more information about the Dutch police force please visit: www.politieacademie.nl/politie_/EN www.politie.nl/English/
Helm and safety
Police Mountain bikers wear helmets. When in contact with the public they usually unlock their helmet strap to prevent the helmet from being grabbed. In stressful situations, it can occur that the officer forgets to unlock the helmet strap or does not have the time. In the photo sets shown on this page, we demonstrate two examples of police officers practising how to handle situations in which someone grabs and twists the helmet.

Arrest and Self-defence on bike
The Mountain bike is a vehicle with certain specific qualities that fulfil transportation needs suitable for police work on the street. The Mountain bike can be used as a tool and an asset in physical confrontations requiring Arrest and Self-defence techniques and procedures. In the photo sets shown on the next two pages we demonstrate two examples where the Mountine bike is used as both a self-defence tool and an asset for arresting a suspect.

1a. The opponent grabs the police officer’s helmet and pulls it towards him.
1b. The police officer reacts naturally following the flow of movement and pushes his hand into his attacker’s groin causing imbalance.
1c. The push shown from another angle.
1d. The officer takes advantage of this momentary imbalance and uses it to continue his natural movement and grab the attacker’s ankle.
1e. This causes the attacker to fall and loosen his grip on the helmet enabling the officer to establish a safe distance. The officer can then summon the attacker to stop and if necessary use pepper spray on the attacker.

2a. The attacker grabs the police officer’s helmet and chin and tries to twist his neck.
2b. As the attacker attempts to twist the police officer’s neck, the officer follows the flow of movement moving in the direction of the twist preparing a counter attack.
2c. The police officer then hits his attacker with an elbow to the chest/stomach area clearing the way for further action like an arm lock or the use of pepper spray.
3a. The suspect is resisting his arrest. The police officers take up tactical positions in front of and behind the suspect.

3b. The mountain bike is used by placing the front wheel between the suspect’s legs and pushing the handlebars against his back to restrict movement.

3c. The suspect is pushed backwards over the handlebars by the police officer in front of him allowing the officer behind him to take control of the suspect by the arms and neck.

3d. The police officer in front of the suspect moves behind the suspect controlling his arm to prepare for the arm lock.

3e. The arm lock is applied enabling the suspect to be handcuffed.
4a. A civilian is verbally assaulting the police officers who tactically stand behind their Mountain bikes in an alerted stance maintaining the appropriate distance.

4b. The civilian suddenly attacks the police officer in front with a double push to his jacket.

4c. The attacked police officer drops his Mountain bike in front of the attacker and grips the attacker’s right arm.

4d. The police officer uses the Mountain bike by pulling the attacker over it and dragging him to the ground.

4e. The attacked police officer regulates the attacker’s fall by holding on to the attacker’s right arm and pushing the attacker down by applying an elbow lock.

4f. The police officer’s colleague assists by holding the suspect’s other arm down firmly.

4g. The Mountain bike on top of which the suspect has been pulled causing him to fall down is shown visibly.
The Anatomy Of Fear and How It Relates To Survival Skills Training

“Research is to see what everyone else has seen, and think what no one else has thought”

Albert Szent-Gyorgy (Nobelish 1927)

- By Darren Laur -

An officer assigned to jail duty is conducting a prisoner bed check when he sees that an inmate, who had been lodged in the drunk tank, is face-down in a corner of a cell and apparently not breathing. The officer tries to verbally rouse the prisoner, but this doesn’t work. Now believing that the prisoner may be dead, the officer enters the cell, bends over and grabs the prisoner by his left shoulder in an attempt to roll him over. This is when the prisoner, spontaneously and with no prior warning, quickly rolls towards the officer and with his right hand swings at the officer’s face. The officer instinctively pulls both arms in to protect his head and moves backwards.

By now the suspect is on his feet. He again lashes out at the officer, with what he perceives to be a big right hooking punch. The officer again puts his hands up to cover his head, crouches and moves backwards, away from the threat. Only now does he realize that he is bleeding profusely - but he doesn’t know why. The prisoner lunges at him a third time, with a straight-line punch, at which time the officer sees the shining glimmer of a metal object in the attacker’s right hand. As this third strike makes contact with the officer, he instinctively tries to push the prisoner’s hands away from his body. But contact is made, resulting in a puncture wound to the officer’s chest area. Now realizing that he is in an edged-weapon encounter and cut several times, the officer disengages from the cell area to call for help.

The scenario I’ve described above happened to a police officer in my department in 1992. Although this officer had received training in edged-weapon defence and was one of the more officer safety-conscious members of the department, he could not make his training work.

Based upon the officer’s reaction to this attack, I began to wonder if his “instinctual” physical reaction, which was totally at odds with the training he had received up to that point in time, would be experienced by other officers as well, if they were attacked spontaneously and with no prior warning.

I’m a big believer in, “don’t tell me, show me.” So in early 1992 I conducted an empirical video research study. I had 85 police officers participate in a scenario-based training session in which they were attacked with a knife, by surprise. The attacker, wearing a combatives suit, was told that during mid-contact, they were to pull a concealed knife, flash it directly at the officer, yell “I’m going to kill you pig!”, then engage the officer physically. The results were remarkable:

• Three of 85 saw the knife prior to contact.
• Ten of 85 realized they were being stabbed repeatedly.
• Seventy-two of 85 did not realize they were being assaulted with a knife until the scenario was over, and they were advised to look at their uniforms to see the simulated thrusts and slices left behind by the chalked training knives.

“Siddle: A survival stress reaction (SSR) is a state where a ‘perceived’ high threat stimulus automatically engages the sympathetic nervous system.”

The sympathetic nervous system is an autonomic response process which, when activated, one has little control of.”

When I reviewed the many many hours of videotape of these scenarios, I made two very important and interesting observations about how the majority of officers reacted to the spontaneous attacks:

• Most flinched, raising both hands to protect their heads while crouching at the same time, and attempted to disengage by backing away from the threat. This

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Albert Szent-Gyorgy (Nobelish 1927)

- By Darren Laur -

An officer assigned to jail duty is conducting a prisoner bed check when he sees that an inmate, who had been lodged in the drunk tank, is face-down in a corner of a cell and apparently not breathing. The officer tries to verbally rouse the prisoner, but this doesn’t work. Now believing that the prisoner may be dead, the officer enters the cell, bends over and grabs the prisoner by his left shoulder in an attempt to roll him over. This is when the prisoner, spontaneously and with no prior warning, quickly rolls towards the officer and with his right hand swings at the officer’s face. The officer instinctively pulls both arms in to protect his head and moves backwards.

By now the suspect is on his feet. He again lashes out at the officer, with what he perceives to be a big right hooking punch. The officer again puts his hands up to cover his head, crouches and moves backwards, away from the threat. Only now does he realize that he is bleeding profusely - but he doesn’t know why. The prisoner lunges at him a third time, with a straight-line punch, at which time the officer sees the shining glimmer of a metal object in the attacker’s right hand. As this third strike makes contact with the officer, he instinctively tries to push the prisoner’s hands away from his body. But contact is made, resulting in a puncture wound to the officer’s chest area. Now realizing that he is in an edged-weapon encounter and cut several times, the officer disengages from the cell area to call for help.

The scenario I’ve described above happened to a police officer in my department in 1992. Although this officer had received training in edged-weapon defence and was one of the more officer safety-conscious members of the department, he could not make his training work.

Based upon the officer’s reaction to this attack, I began to wonder if his “instinctual” physical reaction, which was totally at odds with the training he had received up to that point in time, would be experienced by other officers as well, if they were attacked spontaneously and with no prior warning.

I’m a big believer in, “don’t tell me, show me.” So in early 1992 I conducted an empirical video research study. I had 85 police officers participate in a scenario-based training session in which they were attacked with a knife, by surprise. The attacker, wearing a combatives suit, was told that during mid-contact, they were to pull a concealed knife, flash it directly at the officer, yell “I’m going to kill you pig!”, then engage the officer physically. The results were remarkable:

• Three of 85 saw the knife prior to contact.
• Ten of 85 realized they were being stabbed repeatedly.
• Seventy-two of 85 did not realize they were being assaulted with a knife until the scenario was over, and they were advised to look at their uniforms to see the simulated thrusts and slices left behind by the chalked training knives.

“Siddle: A survival stress reaction (SSR) is a state where a ‘perceived’ high threat stimulus automatically engages the sympathetic nervous system.”

The sympathetic nervous system is an autonomic response process which, when activated, one has little control of.”

When I reviewed the many many hours of videotape of these scenarios, I made two very important and interesting observations about how the majority of officers reacted to the spontaneous attacks:

• Most flinched, raising both hands to protect their heads while crouching at the same time, and attempted to disengage by backing away from the threat. This
usually resulted in the attacker closing the gap quite quickly with their victim.
• Those officers who did engage the threat immediately, proceeded to effectively block the initial strike and then immediately grappled with the attacker, using elbows and knee strikes.

After making these observations I asked myself why I was seeing these reactions. During this 1992 research project, I had the opportunity to read an article authored by Bruce Siddle and Dr. Hal Breedlove entitled, Survival Stress Reaction. In this article Siddle and Breedlove wrote:

“…research by numerous studies provides two clear messages why people will place themselves in bad tactical situations. The common phenomena of backing away under survival stress results from the visual system’s deterioration of the peripheral field to attain more information regarding threat stimulus. Since the brain is demanding more information to deal with the threat, the officer will invariably retreat from the threat to widen the peripheral field. Secondly, the brain’s normal ability to process (analyze and evaluate) a wide range of information quickly is focused to specific items. Therefore, additional cues, which would normally be processed, are lost. This explains why people can not remember seeing or identifying specific facts which were relatively close to the threat.”

The research by Siddle and Breedlove not only confirmed my findings but also explained why our officers responded as they did. It also explains why one officer, who had actually caught the attacker’s knife hand with both of his hands and was looking directly at the knife, said “I didn’t see any knife.” It was not until I showed the video replay that he believed there was a knife.

In 1995 Bruce Siddle released his first book entitled, “Sharpening The Warrior’s Edge -The Psychology and Science Of Training.” Siddles’s published works began to answer many of the questions that I had asked during my experience with and empirical research into combatives.

The first real studies in the area of survival stress reaction (SSR) as it relates to combat performance were conducted in the 1930s. This study noted that soldiers, who were sending Morse code (a fine/complex motor skill) during combat, had much more difficulty doing so than in non-combat environments. The next real research in SSR came during the Vietnam War and related to the location of buttons and switches in fighter cockpits. As a result of this research, U.S. cockpits were reconfigured to take SSR into account, specifically as it related to eye/hand coordination in combat.

Although much of the early research surrounding SSR was conducted by the military during times of war, recently (from the mid-1960s until present-day), the focus of research has shifted to the relationship between SSR and athletic performance.

Siddle’s definition of SSR, as it relates to combat is: “a state where a ‘perceived’ high threat stimulus automatically engages the sympathetic nervous system.” The sympathetic nervous system is an autonomic response process which, when activated, one has little control of.”

Why is SSR so important when it comes to combat/self protection? Because when activated, SSR has both a psychological and physiological effect on the body, which can erode one’s ability to perceive threats.

So what are some of these effects, according to Siddle’s research?

a) Increased heart rate:
• We know that SSR is directly related to an increased heart rate.
• At 115 beats per minute (bpm) most people will lose fine complex motor skills such as finger dexterity and eye/hand coordination. Multi-tasking becomes difficult.
• At 145 bpm most people will lose complex motor skills (three or more motor skills designed to work in unison).

b) Effects on the visual system:
• The visual system is the primary sensory organ for those of us who can see, due to the fact that this system provides the brain with information that is vital during combat/self-protection.
• At approximately 175 bpm, a person will experience an eye/lid lift - their pupils will dilate and flatten. As this occurs, a person will experience visual narrowing, commonly known as tunnel vision. This is why it is very common for a person to back away from a threat, as they try to get more information through this tunnel. It is also at this stage that
a person becomes ‘binocular’ rather than ‘monocular’. This is why in Close Quarter Battle (CQB) shooting, I teach two-eye ‘binocular’ shooting rather than one eye aimed shooting.

• At 175 bpm, visual tracking becomes difficult. This is very important when it comes to multiple threats. During multiples the brain will want the visual system to stay with what it sees to be the primary threat. Once it has been neutralized, the brain and visual system will then find the next threat. This is commonly known as the ‘lighthouse effect’. Studies have found that a person in SSR will experience on average about a 70 percent decrease in their visual field. This is one reason why we need to teach combat trainees to constantly be scanning their environment, looking for the second and third opponent.

• At 175 bpm it becomes difficult to focus on close objects. One of the first things to go under SSR is depth perception. A fighter will become far sighted rather than near sighted. This is why it is very common for people experiencing SSR to say the threat was either closer or father away than it actually was. Studies in SSR have shown that binocular fighting/shooting will improve one’s depth perception by between twenty and thirty percent.

c) Effects on the auditory system:
• At approx. 145 bpm, the part of the brain that hears shuts down. This is one reason why it is not uncommon for fighters to say, “I didn’t hear that,” “I heard voices but I couldn’t understand what they were saying,” “I heard bits and pieces,” or “I didn’t hear a gun shot.”

• At 175 bpm, most people will go into a state of ‘hypervigilance,’ also known as the ‘deer in the headlights’ or ‘brain fart’ mode.” It is not uncommon for a person to continue doing things that are not effective (known as a feedback loop) or to show irrational behavior such as leaving cover. This is also the state in which people describe that they can not move, yell, or scream. Once a person is in this state, it is a downward spiral that for a person to only recall approx. 30% of what happened in the first 24 hours; 50% after 48 hours; and 75 to 95% after 72-100 hours.

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Why is this information so important? In effect, Siddle’s research has found that the higher the heart rate, the more SSR will affect one’s perception of threat. It is this ‘perception’ that dictates one’s response options.

In a study conducted between 1994 and 1999, Dr. Alexis Artwohl (author of Deadly Force Encounters, reviewed on p30) interviewed 157 police officers who were involved in deadly shootings. Dr. Artwohl’s study revealed the following results specific to ‘perception’ issues:

• 84% experienced diminished sound (auditory exclusion).
• 79% experienced tunnel vision (peripheral narrowing).
• 74% experienced “automatic pilot” with little or no conscious thought.
• 71% experienced visual clarity.
• 62% experienced slow motion time.
• 52% experienced memory loss for part of the event.
• 46% experienced memory loss for some of their own behavior.
• 39% experienced dissociation; sense of detachment or unreality.
• 26% experienced intrusive distracting thoughts.
• 21% experienced memory distortion.
• 17% experienced fast motion time.
• 7% experienced temporary paralysis.

Dr. Artwohl’s research is also echoed by that of other researchers (Soloman and Horn 1986; Hoenig and Roland 1998; and Klinger 1998), who found the same perception issues.

One must remember that in combat, a person’s heart rate can go from 70 bpm to 220 bpm in less than half a second. This raises the question: What is the combat maximum performance range when it comes to SSR and heart rate? In his studies, Siddle found that it is between 115-145 bpm. He also found that a fighter’s maximum reaction
time performance range is between 115-145 bpm. In other words the 115-145 bpm range is where fighting skills (gross motor) and reaction time are maximized.

As I said earlier, SSR is an autonomic response, which happens without conscious thought. Having said this, Siddle has found that a person can manage SSR to attain that peak 115-145 bpm range in the following ways:

1) Skill confidence:
   - This is gained through both mental and physical training.

2) Experience through dynamic stimulation training:
   - Experience increases and builds confidence - reduces newness of stimulus.
   - Training should be realistic stimulus/response based.
   - The more real the training experience (stimulus) the better.

3) Visualization (mental imagery):
   - This is commonly known as spinal tuning. We now know that the upper part of the spinal column holds a short-term memory.
   - This is one reason why I have taught our Victoria Police Department’s emergency response team (ERT) to visualize both their plan A strategy and plan B strategy as they are en route to their target.
   - Remember that the mind can not easily tell the difference between fantasy and reality. The more one uses mental imagery, the more one becomes spinal-tuned to deal with the task at hand.
   - As a certified hypnotherapist, I use the science and art of hypnosis and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) to pre-program stimulus/response directly into the subconscious, specific to combat performance. Not only have I have seen a dramatic increase in combative performance in those students in which I am using hypnosis and NLP, but I am also experiencing about a 50% decrease in the amount of time needed to make a student unconsciously competent in the skill set taught, compared with students who have not received this type of training. I believe that hypnosis and NLP specific to combatives, will be the next nexus in training.

   “In other words, are our brains hardwired to the point where a trained response, no matter how well ingrained, will be overridden by a more powerful instinctual response?”

4) Breathing:
   - This skill has been used in the martial arts for thousands of years.
   - It is known as autogenic breathing.
   - One wants to breathe in through their nose for a three count, hold for a two count, and then breath out through the mouth for a three count Studies have found that if a person does this for a three-cycle count, their heart rate is reduced by 30% for up to 40 seconds. Again, remember that heart rate is directly related to SSR. If a person’s heart rate sits at 175-220 bpm, autogenic breathing will help bring them back down into that target range of 115-145 bpm.
   - I have also taught this skill to our department’s ERT team. While they are doing their spinal tuning, they are also conducting autogenic breathing drills. Our ERT team has conducted empirical and real-world operations in which heart monitors were placed on team members. The results confirm the de-escalation of heart rate.

5) Value of life:
   - In our society a person’s life is considered precious. In fact, most of our morals and laws are based upon protecting oneself and others against serious injury or death.
   - In a self-defence situation, one may have to seriously injure or even kill another human being.
   - Many people involved in combatives training have not really internalized or even thought about this. Because of their belief system, killing or seriously injuring another person is as foreign to them as committing suicide.
   - If one does not come to grips with this one will fail to act in such a situation.

6) Belief in mission/task at hand:
   - If you do not believe in the mission or task at hand, or if the risks outweigh the ultimate benefit to you/society, you will hesitate in combat.
   - One who hesitates in combat runs a serious risk of being killed or injured.

7) Faith system:
   - You do not want to go into combat without having things resolved.
   - Both the ancient Samurai and the kamikazes during WWII understood this important rule.
   - Even in modern times, certain special warfare teams around the world are allowed to make peace with their deity prior to mission. A strong faith system, whatever it may be, minimizes the fear of dying. As a graphic example of this, consider the events of September 11th, 2001. The terrorists were not afraid to die and thus were able to carry out their mission. Also, look at what is happening in Israel right now with suicide bombers.
   - Remember, combat is not the place for you to be making major adjustments to your belief system. You need to be concentrated on the task at hand and nothing else. A failure to do so places you in jeopardy.

8) Training:
   - Training for combat must be gross motor based. Why? Because we know that during combat, SSR will impair fine/complex motor skills no matter how well trained the fighter.
• For any skill taught, there must always be a plan for abort strategy conditioned as well. We must not be teaching multiple defences (responses) to a specific type of attack (stimulus). The reason for this is Hick’s Law.

• Hick’s Law states the following: The average reaction time given one stimulus with one possible response is about half a second. If we now teach a student a second technique (response) to the same attack (stimulus) we will increase a person’s reaction time by 58%. On the street we want to decrease reaction time, not increase it. If we teach multiple defences to one specific attack, the brain will take time deciding which option to use. This increased reaction time could mean the difference between life and death.

• Instructors should always teach a new technique in slow motion. This allows the student’s brain time to observe the technique and begin the ‘soft wiring’ that becomes hard-wired through physical and mental training in conjunction with repetition, as long as it is gross motor based.

• All physical skills should be ‘chunked’ or partitioned into progressive steps, rather than taught all at once. Many instructors will have students practice an entire technique from beginning to end when first learning the specific skill set. This is a huge mistake. Remember that the brain first learns in pictures and through modeling. If you teach a technique from A to Z all at once, your student may not fully develop the proper and full mental picture needed to perform the technique properly, which usually leads to frustration. Teachers, coaches, and instructors must insure that the student understands step A fully before they move onto step B. Once step B is understood move on to step C and so on. In this way the student’s frustration decreases, while their confidence and skill levels increase.

• Once the skill sets are learned, they must now be applied in dynamic training in order to make the stimulus/response as real as possible. Again, the more real the training, the better-prepared one becomes for the reality of the street.

It must be noted that most of Siddle’s pre-1995 published work with regard to motor skill performance was based upon the research of leading sports psychologists. Prior to 1995, most of this research used fluctuations in heart rate to measure performance, due to the fact that it was the only biological mechanism that was measurable via scientific testing at the time. Although Siddle’s research (based upon his book “Sharpening The Warriors Edge”) has brought to light the physiological effects of fear (increased heart rate, fine complex motor skill deterioration) and what we can do as instructors to limit the effects of SSR during combat, it did not fully explain why and how the brain learns and responds to fear, thus triggering SSR.

To me, this is the key question to be answered if one’s combative system or style is to help one consistently deal with an unexpected spontaneous assault, be it unarmed or armed. In other words, are our brains hardwired to the point where a trained response, no matter how well ingrained, will be overridden by a more powerful instinctual response? If the answer to this question is yes, can this response be changed, molded, or integrated into a combative context?

Research into this question, specific to survival skills training, has really been non-existent. Having said this, neuroscientific research into how the brain learns and responds to fear has taken off over the past few years, due mainly to brain mapping technology such as MRIs. One of the more significant researchers, Dr. Joseph LeDoux of New York University, has led the way in tracing brain circuitry underlying the fear response in animals/mammals. It is because of Dr. LeDoux’s pioneering research, that the neural pathways and connections that bring about the effects of SSR are now being understood.

Dr LeDoux has stated: “Fear is a neural circuit that has been designed to keep an organism alive in dangerous situations.” Dr. LeDoux has shown that the fear response has been tightly conserved in evolution throughout the development of humans and other vertebrates. According to most in the neuroscience field, the areas of the brain that deal with fear are located in the phylogenetically old structures commonly known as the reptilian brain. Based on his research, Dr. LeDoux believes that, “learning and responding to stimuli that warn of danger involves neural pathways that send information about the outside world to the amygdala, which in turn, determines the significance of the stimulus and triggers emotional responses like running, fighting, or
freezing, as well as changes in the inner workings of the body’s organs and glands such as increased heart rate.” This explains the correlation between SSR and heart rate increase as reported by Siddle in his research. Siddle’s research drew a direct correlation between SSR and heart rate increases.

One problem with this assumption is that for people such as runners, who can have very high heart rates, SSR does not take effect. Why? The runner’s high heart rate is caused by physical exertion, and not the emotion of fear caused by a spontaneous or immediate threat to body or life, which triggers the neurological response of the brain and more specifically, the amygdala, which in turn begins the SSR process. This explains why instructors who have attempted to mirror Siddle’s research by hooking students up to heart monitors and then subjecting them to physical exertion such as push ups and wind sprints, have failed to see any fine complex motor skill deterioration. It should also be noted that even Siddle acknowledges the fact, primarily due to Dr LeDoux’s post-1995 research, that heart rate increase is nothing more than a thermostat or indicator of a perceived stress level, and is not the driving force of performance deterioration.

Dr LeDoux has also found: “There are important distinctions to make between emotions and feelings. Feelings are red herrings, products of the conscious mind, labels given to unconscious emotions, whereas emotions are distinct patterns of behavior of neurons. Emotions can exist of conscious experiences as well as physiological and neurological reactions and voluntary and involuntary behaviors.” I believe the important thing to take from this statement is that the emotion of fear is an unconscious process that has been blueprinted at the neurological level, and when triggered, has physiological reactions that we may have little, if any, control over, but which can be moulded.

Likewise, Dr. LeDoux has discovered that the components of fear go way beyond feelings and emotions. According to Dr. LeDoux it is also the specific memory of the emotion. A fellow neuroscientist, Dr. Doug Holt expanded upon this fact: “After a frightful experience one can remember the logical reasons for the experience (i.e., the time and place) but one will also feel the memory, and the body will react as such (i.e. increased heart rate and respiration rate, sweating).” This is why it is not uncommon for a survivor of spontaneous assault to not only vividly remember each detail, but also feel their body react as though they were reliving the experience. This is another reason why I believe that guided imagery, when used appropriately and professionally, will be the next nexus in combatives training. Although not all scientific research makes this particular distinction between emotions and feelings, most would agree that the fear response involves more than just the physical preparation for fight, flight, or hypervigilance. This initial, physiological response is followed by a slower, more detailed psychological assessment of the dangerous situation being faced, during which the individual becomes conscious of feeling afraid.

So, what happens in our brain when fear is triggered? According to Dr. LeDoux and other neuroscientists, once the fear system of the brain detects and starts responding to danger (primarily the amygdala, which receives input directly from every sensory system of the body and can therefore immediately respond), and depending upon fear stimulus intensity, the brain will begin to assess what is going on, and try to figure out what to do about it using the following process:

• Information of the threat stimulus is detected via the senses of the body; sight, sound, touch, smell, taste.
• Information from one or all of these senses is then routed to the thalamus (a brain structure near the amygdala that acts like an air traffic controller or a mail sorting station that sorts out incoming sensory signals).
• In a non-spontaneous threat situation, the thalamus will direct information received to the appropriate cortex of the brain (such as the visual cortex) which consciously thinks about the impulse, assesses the danger, and makes sense of it. This is where the O.O.D.A. loop begins (Observe, Organize, Decision, Action).
• Once a decision has been made as to what to do, the information is then downloaded to the amygdala which creates emotion and action through the body to either perpetuate a physical response or to abort a physical response.

Again, this process takes place in non-spontaneous type situations. This neural pathway is commonly called the “high road”. This is the pathway in which most combatives instructors teach too.

In other words:

• Person throws a right hooking punch that is seen and detected by the visual system.
• Visual system downloads this stimulus to the thalamus that sorts it and send it to the visual cortex of the brain.
• Visual cortex using the OODA loop, observes the stimulus, organizes it (right hooking punch), makes a decision as to how to deal with stimulus and then downloads the response to the amygdala.
• Amygdala then creates emotion and

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action through the body and the punch is blocked.
This is what Siddle and others have called stimulus/response training. The goal is a trained response to a threat stimulus, as long as that response is gross motor based and takes into consideration Hick’s Law, as mentioned earlier in this article. Siddle has stated: “An automatic response to a specific threat can only occur when the students practice a skill in conjunction with a specific level of threat. For a response to be conditioned or an automatic response, there must be an associated stimulus which triggers the response. Therefore, if a survival motor program is expected to be automatic to a threat in the field, the two must be combined early in the student’s training.”

Although I do agree that we as instructors should focus our training on the development of automatic responses to specific threat stimuli, what happens if those trained responses are not congruent with the body’s hardwired response during an unexpected spontaneous assault? Does it not make sense that we as trainers should teach a physical response that would be congruent with what the brain has pre-programmed itself to do through millions of years of evolution?

Again, the answer to this question is a definite yes, and Dr. LeDoux has been able to prove why, scientifically. He has found that frightening stimuli trigger neural responses along dual pathways. The first path is the one mentioned above, “the high road.” The second path is known as the “low road,” and this is the path that the brain will follow in a spontaneous surprise attack.

• In a spontaneous surprise attack, information received by the thalamus is quickly re-routed to the amygdala bypassing the cortex (the thinking brain in which OODA is followed).
• The amygdala immediately sets SSR (autonomic arousal) into effect with the added benefit of what neuroscientists have called “somatic reflex potentiation” also commonly known as the startle circuit or protective reflex (i.e., an exaggerated startle/flinch response). Other protective reflexes include sneezing, blinking, the gag reflex, pulling away from a pain stimulus, laryngospasm (closing of the airway to prevent water entering the lungs).
• After passing directly through the amygdala, which initiates SSR and somatic reflex potentiation, sensory information is then sent to the cortex.
• Once the cortex has received this information, the frightening stimulus will be signaled both to perpetuate the physical response and deal with the threat, or abort action. Because the amygdala is aroused before the cortex can accurately assess the situation, an individual will experience the physical effects of fear even in the case of a false alarm. The ‘low road’ has already prepared the body for immediate action.

Knowing that the brain has a dual pathway to deal with what I like to call progressive and spontaneous fear stimuli, Dr. LeDoux has stated: “There are problems associated with the double wiring between the higher cortex and

Hick’s law, or the Hick-Hyman law, is a model of human-computer interaction, that describes the time it takes for a user to make a decision as a function of the (number of) possible choices he or she has. Given n equally probable choices, the average reaction time \( T \) required to choose among them is approximately

\[ T = \log_2(n + 1) \]

where \( b \) is a constant that can be determined empirically by fitting a line to measured data.

are connections from the amygdala back up to the cortex. Thus, the amygdala exerts a greater influence on the cortex than vice versa. Once an emotion has been turned on, it is difficult to exert conscious control over it at will.”

What this means to me is that in an unexpected spontaneous attack, if you are training motor skills that are not congruent with what the amygdala will cause the body to do (more specifically the ‘somatic reflex potentiation’), the trained response will be overridden. But many in the combatives field believe that we can make a trained response the dominant response through repetition and training using stimulus/response training methods. In a ‘high-road’ scenario this will work given SSR issues and Hick’s Law. But in a low-road scenario, it will only work as long as the motor skill taught is congruent with the automatic protective reflex stemming from the amygdala.

To demonstrate the importance of this congruency issue, an empirical study that examined 98 shooting scenarios that were either spontaneous or non-spontaneous. A firearms instructor named Westmorland (1989), compared two shooting styles/systems (Weaver and Isosceles) to see which one was more suitable during times of what Westmorland called combat stress. In this study, Westmorland used dynamic-scenarios-based training with dye marking rounds. It should be noted that the majority of the officers involved in this study were Weaver practitioners. The results of the study:

**Spontaneous under 10 feet: 39 total scenarios**
- 96.7% Isosceles (29 events)
- 3.3% Weaver (one event)
- 62.1% One-handed stance (18 events)
- 23.1% Failed to respond (9 events)

**Spontaneous over 10 feet: 27 total scenarios**
- 92.6% Isosceles (25 events)
- 7.4% Weaver (two events)
- 14.8% One-handed stance (four events)

**Non-spontaneous under 10 feet: 27 total scenarios**
- 74.1% Isosceles (20 events)
- 25.9% Weaver (seven events)

**Non-spontaneous over 10 feet: 5 total scenarios**
- 60.0% Isosceles (three events)
- 40.0% Weaver (two events)

**Westmoreland study results:**
- 56.1% To-handed Isosceles stance (55 events)
- 12.2% One-handed stance (12 events)
- 22.5% Two-handed Weaver Stance (22 events)
- 9.2% Officer failed to respond

Westmoreland’s study created quite the debate in the Weaver vs. Isosceles shooting camps, and stood alone until 1997. That’s when a respected firearms instructor by the name of Bill Burroughs (former assistant director of the Sigarms Training Academy) conducted a similar study. Burroughs’ study asked two very important questions:

- What does the average trained officer resort to when faced with a simulated and spontaneous life threatening assault?
- How does this response compare to the officer’s previously trained shooting stance?

Burroughs’ empirical study involved 157 officers.
- 47% were Weaver-trained shooters
- 17% were Isosceles-trained shooters
- 32% stated that they used a “natural” stance

“LeDoux: You’re better off mistaking a stick for a snake than a snake for a stick.”

All 157 officers were placed into 188 life threatening dynamic training scenarios. When Burroughs reviewed his findings, he found that once officers were placed into a dynamic/spontaneous-shooting situation, the percentages changed dramatically.
- 59% of the 157 officers adopted an Isosceles stance
- 19% of the 157 officers adopted a Weaver stance
- 7% of the 157 officers adopted a “natural” stance
- The rest did not respond at all.
Another very interesting observation that Burroughs made: Officers who adopted a Weaver stance had the opportunity to pre-select their stance before the scenario became critical.

The above two studies (Westmoreland and Burroughs) were further tested by Steve Barron and Clyde Beasly of Hocking College in Ohio. Both instructors are firearms managers for the regional police academy. Hocking College was teaching Weaver shooting techniques to recruits. But when these same recruits were moved from static range training to dynamic force-on-force simulation training using Simunition cartridges, they consistently noted that the Weaver stance was not being used. Instead they observed that these same recruits would adopt a two handed Isosceles shooting platform.

"Seek out instructors, coaches, trainers who use this research in their training. You will be surprised that there are few who do."

Many of the experts in the field of Sport Psychology and Motor Performance do not find the above noted research all that surprising. In fact, Robert Weinberg PhD, a well known and highly respected sports psychologist, stated (after reviewing Westmoreland’s study): “One principle which seems appropriate is that individuals usually return to their preferred or instinctual mode of behavior especially under stress. When put into a stressful situation, it is instinctual to face your opposition (Isosceles) rather than turn to the side (Weaver).”

This is not to get into the debate between Weaver and Isosceles shooters, but rather to demonstrate that if a trained response is not congruent with what neuroscientists have called the somatic reflex potentiation, it will be overridden.

Remember, according to Dr LeDoux, this “low road” signal system does not convey detailed information about the threat stimulus, but it has the advantage of speed. In combat, speed is of great importance. Dr Ledoux points out that having a very rapid, if imprecise, method of detecting danger (such is found in the low-road pathway) is of high survival value. “You’re better off mistaking a stick for a snake than a snake for a stick,” is his eloquent way of putting it.

As I said earlier in this article, there is quite a large body of psychological research into stress and fear. One of the leaders in this field is Dr. Seymour Epstein, who in 1994 did a comprehensive review. Dr. Epstein concluded that, from a psychological perspective, a person has two distinctly different modes of processing information during a spontaneous high threat situation:

* Rational Thinking: (low emotional arousal states) able to calmly engage in the conscious, deliberative, analytical cognitive processing.
* Experiential Thinking: (high stress and emotional arousal) an automatic, intuitive mode of information processing that operates by different rules from that of the rational mode, far more efficient during times of high stress than conscious deliberate thinking.

Dr. Epstein points out that “In most situations that automatic processing of the experiential system is dominant over the rational system this is so because it is less effortful and more efficient, and, accordingly is the default option.” This is especially true in sudden, high stress, situations requiring instant physical performance.

It is my belief that Dr. LeDoux has now provided the physiological explanation for what has been empirically observed for years, by researchers such as Dr. Epstein, about how people process information in high vs. low emotional arousal states. As Dr. Artwohl wrote in an e-mail to me: “It’s like saying we have been able to empirically observe for millennia that people ‘see’ things by their ability to report what they are seeing, but neurologists can now tell us ‘how’ the sensory information is transported to the visual cortex where it can be interpreted and translated into visual images.”

So what is the correlation between the neuroscientific research of fear, and its relationship to survival skills training?

* The brain has been hard-wired to deal with fear.
* One pathway is known as the high road, in which action can be based on conscious will and thought. This pathway appears to take effect during progressive types of fear stimuli. Here a combatives student will be able to apply stimulus/response type training using the OODA model, having regards to gross motor skills and Hick’s Law.
* A second pathway, known as the low road, is triggered by a spontaneous/unexpected attack. Here, the brain takes control of the body with an immediate protective reflex (downloaded directly to the brain stem where all of our reflexive responses to danger are stored), which overrides any system of combat that bases its ability on cognitively applying a physical response. This is especially true if the trained response is not congruent with the protective reflex. This is exactly what I observed in the 1992 video study that I conducted and mentioned earlier in this article.

So, what can we as instructors, coaches, and teachers do to incorporate the most current research in the field of fear and survival skills training?

• Absorb the above noted information and research it yourself.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Courtesy of Lex Opdam, Peter de Vogel and Wil Visser.
systems is also a leader in the field of SSR, as it relates to motor skill performance in combative training.

• If you can not attend courses from those mentioned above, look at what you are doing in the area of self protection and ask yourself, is my training congruent with the concepts noted above? If not, change what you are doing.

• Train on the concept of commonality of technique. The initial plan A strategy that I use in an unexpected spontaneous assault (be it armed or unarmed), is no different than in an attack that I do see coming. Why? Because, no matter whether the brain goes high road or low road, my ‘congruent’ gross motor skills will work in both paths. This is a definite tactical advantage.

• Understand that although the low road reflexive motor responses cannot be changed, they can be moulded to fit a combative motor skill technique that is useful during a spontaneous attack. I use the somatic reflex potentiation response, which I call “penetrate and dominate,” in all my programs. Tony Blauer uses the flinch response in his SPEAR system. Richard Dimitri also incorporates the flinch in his training at Senshido.

• Fortunately, there are methods of reducing fear and inhibiting the fear response (see Siddle’s eight steps to management of SSR earlier in this article).

I am not a doctor or Neuroscientist, but I have been studying combatives for the past 14 years. Since 1992 I have used training techniques based upon the concepts outlined above, not knowing that I was doing so. In the past, my training was based solely on my empirical research here at the school, and what was happening to officers and civilians in the real world. The information in this article has solidified my belief that what I am doing (and have been doing for years) in the area of combatives is correct. This belief is not only based upon my empirical research over the past 10 years, but as reported in this article, the scientific research as well.

The field of neuroscience, specific to fear, is constantly evolving. Any true “street” combative system or style, should keep abreast of these new discoveries, and integrate them into training to make their survival skills more street applicable.

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Interview with Rob Walraven, Instructor at the Dutch Multi-Discipline Professional Skills Training Center of the Dutch Police

Having been introduced to one of the Dutch MPT-centers in the Netherlands, we now explore and focus upon the so-called Arrest and Self-defence techniques and skills within the Dutch police force. In conversation with a well-experienced martial police instructor, we take a look at the establishment of the present basic training model for the Dutch police. After 10 years of integration within the Dutch police force, this basic training model has finally settled in, but on the other hand, it seems to be more suitable for fulfilling the positive test results required by the Ministry of the Interior rather than for practical application in actual physical street confrontations. Is there a need to do things differently and are there possibilities and alternatives to develop and integrate?

- By Lex Opdam -

You are one of the police instructors at the Multi Discipline Professional Skills Training Centre in Elst, the Netherlands. Can you briefly lay out your career with the police force and explain your role as police instructor to our readers?

I started 31 years ago as a self-defence instructor for the Arnhem police force, where I also gave all lessons concerning Physical and Mental Education. Ten years later, I began to concentrate my efforts on policing skills by following BOA (Special Fraud Officer) courses and the instructor’s course for ME and AE (Riot police and Special Arresting Units).

As a civilian, I lacked the executive experience and acceptance within the force. I have been a firearms instructor now for 12 years, and for the last five, I have been an executive police officer and can join my target group on all their shifts on the streets and that is definitely an enrichment of the speciality of my profession.

During my career, I have trained all of the special teams, the Arrest Team for 21 years, the ME (Riot police) for 8 years, the AE/VAG (Special Arresting Units and groups) for 6 years, the mountain bikers also for 6 years, drugs, SGO, and several special project groups for keeping the peace. The last few years, I have spent a lot of time educating, supervising and coaching new colleagues at the centre and throughout the country. In addition, I have also been a national examiner for the RTGP (Regulation Testing Violence Control) and the teachings of Danger Control Instructor (Defensive Tactics and Firearms training). Despite tedious developments, I enjoy my work tremendously.

In view of your long record of service as a police instructor, you have undoubtedly encountered many changes concerning police training during the years. I can imagine that your knowledge, experience and capability have attributed to the development in the way of Multi Discipline Professional Skills Training in the Netherlands. Can you tell us what changes have occurred in the Netherlands in the way of professional training and in particular the training of Arrest and Self-defence techniques, tactics and procedures within the last 31 years?

The largest difference is how we are permitted to deal with violence. Formerly, one acted harshly and firmly and both the police and the civilian thought that was necessary and acceptable, whereas now, the officer’s conduct on the streets is questioned much more. In short, the competence of the officer has not grown with the measure of aggression that he is confronted with during his duty. Society has become more mature and makes action that conflicts with basic rights more difficult. You notice this as an officer when entering situations that require a fast and adequate response and you have to consider all sorts of aspects to determine whether you are using the correct process order to attain your objective. I must say I have the utmost respect for the Dutch police officers, because besides being a very interesting and fascinating occupation, it is also an unpredictable and hazardous one. The phase I experienced is one in which the police action has moved from ‘hard’ to
more ‘cautious’, of which the cause lies in the above stated aspects.
I have also had to continuously adjust my teachings over the years to be able to instruct the target group properly in the correct tactical, technical and cognitive aspects so that they remain on the correct side of the law when performing their duties.

Currently, the Dutch police uses many techniques for Arrest and Self-defence. These techniques are related to unarmed and armed confrontations, using the officers’ weapons and equipment. When, by whom and in what way did these techniques arise?
These techniques were formalised about ten years ago, presented to the police personnel in the test form, Arrest and Self-defence Skills, and then agreed to by the Ministry of the Interior. The techniques were thought up and formalized by the very capable budo instructors Leo Verhoeven and Tom Wessels, who have a broad knowledge of many martial sports such as judo, karate, jiu-jitsu, aikido etc.
The techniques were chosen for the Dutch police, attuned to, and based on the skill level in the first place and testability in the second place. It was a starting point to enable switching to a more practical content at a later time (these developments have already begun). I think they have achieved this quite well. The Dutch police now knows what is meant by Arrest and Self-defence and that is the first gain. Working on the standard and practical application is a next step. Of which, subjectivity in the judging of the test is going to be a big challenge!

Concerning content, can you tell something about the techniques/skills themselves? These basic techniques do not demand a high skill level, but are not very useful in the practical service. I would have been more satisfied with techniques such as an over extension of the elbow joint, a circulation strangulation and open hand techniques. All exam segments have been written out from A to Z and in my opinion could have been left more open. There are many roads leading to Rome, and each individual has his or her own manner of applying violence that fits their options, both physically and psychologically.

Can you elaborate on why you would like to see techniques such as an over extension of the elbow joint, a circulation strangulation and open hand techniques introduced within the Multi-Discipline Professional Skills Training?
Yes, these are techniques that are used within the actual police work and which receive feedback that they work when dealing with unruly suspects. A lot of control and little damage to reach our goal of arresting and transportation of the suspect.

You mention that subjectivity could become an obstacle when working on improving the skill level and practical application. Can you explain this?
For the participants to achieve a higher level of skill, they of course simply have

Rob Walraven is a certified sports teacher and has speci-alised himself as a fitness coach. He is a teacher of karate, judo and Jiu Jitsu. At the age of 16 he started practising Wado-ryu karate and at the age of 19 became Dutch karate champion in kumite and did hold that title for another eight consecutive years. From 1978 until 1989, he also participated in many International karate kumite competitions until he stopped performing at that high level of sport at the age of 31. After that, he shared his knowledge and skills with his friends and put it to service for his work. In the last few years, Rob Walraven has devoted his career to educating and coaching people who want to teach.
to come and practice more often. The level of the examiners within the Dutch police however, is very diverse which makes it difficult to require much from them. You have to carry out something unanimously and in my opinion, there cannot be too much difference in that. As to the legal position, it can have great consequences if someone fails their test.

This is the obstacle that worries me. To be able to pass correct judgement of various applications that strive for the same goal, you have to have enough knowledge of the subject matter. I am of the opinion that a large part of the examiners has insufficient knowledge of this due to a lack of budo background.

Would you then prefer other criteria for the hiring of examiners?

Yes, I would not so much lay down and map out the road to the goal, as leave it more to the person who has to carry it out. However, that would require examinations to be carried out only by people who are specialists in that area of expertise.

In modern day Dutch police training of physical conflict situations, what comes first and why? Technique or mindset?

Mindset, but I do not think there is anything new there. Correct assessment and consideration of how to handle a situation is of the utmost importance and that is where there is the most to gain. There are but a few situations in which you have no choice! In most of the situations on the street, you have enough time to weigh pros and cons. But there are also situations in which you do not have the time and due to the immediate nature have to respond ‘instinctively’. In those cases, it is very helpful to have sufficient knowledge, both mentally and physically to refrain from making bad decisions due to stress, which can cause you or a third party harm or injustice.

For the average officer it is difficult to train and master the Arrest and Self-defence techniques and procedures within the limited amount of hours at their disposal (See photo series p53-54). The priority that lies with the testability and the examination itself, takes up a lot of that time. Many readers will therefore wonder which forms are chosen and in what way to train the skills required. The mindset and skills concerning flexibility and speed necessary to react to each physical movement, to be able to follow through in the case of a violent physical conflict situation. For example, do you train sparring as a free fight, or do you practice with protective gear enabling hard contact resembling actual circumstances? Are special courses held dealing with subjection to physical stress, is the training of the mindset regarding physically entering a conflict at the risk of one’s life incorporated within the technical training?

That kind of aspect is only trained by specialist groups, because the frequency of their training offers the space and time to fit this in. I am also of the opinion that in fact the less trained should be fed with these skills. Everyone knows that with the right mindset, you are better equipped to take advantage of new situations and because of that, you can act in a safer manner, but here as well, time is the biggest obstacle.

The Dutch police currently use 19 basic skills for Arrest and Self-defence (See photo series p53-54). To summarize these skills briefly, there are four techniques for transportation, striking/kicking/blocking with hands and legs/feet, general evasive movements, stabbing/striking/blocking with the small baton, cuffing, frisking, and the use of pepperspray. All this in the correct proportion and performance according to among other things balance, timing, distance, verbal and physical accompaniment and an alert and fighting stance. Most skills are performed solo and others in pairs. You mentioned that these techniques were formalised ten years ago. In that time, what are the most common comments made by officers concerning these techniques and what is your view of this?

The most heard criticism is that they are not techniques that are used in actual practice. Although this observation is largely correct, it also springs from the fact that these techniques are often poorly
ARREST & SELF-DEFENCE SKILLS
of the Dutch Police

In this photo-series fragments of techniques and procedures are demonstrated which give a reflection
of the subjects and content of the 19 Arrest and Self-defence Skills that every executive Dutch police
officer possesses. Be aware of the fact that in several photo’s only a fraction of a procedure/technique/
position/posture of a demonstrated skill is shown while more exist within the framework of the 19
basic Arrest and Self-defence Skills. Some of those are shown on pages 40-49.

Courtesy of Lex Opdam, Peter de Vogel and Wil Visser.
BENT ARM LOCK  
WRIST LOCK  
DUO LOCK

VERTICAL HANDCUFFING  
HORIZONTAL HANDCUFFING

Courtesy of Lex Opdam, Peter de Vogel and Wil Visser.
mastered. I would also support a relaxing of the performance criteria, as long as all other technical performances are purposefully enough, in short guarantee enough control (safety) and clearly add to the use of violence during the performance of my job.

Apart from the fact that the techniques are not completely mastered, you indicate that you agree these techniques are hardly used in actual practice. Which criteria then were used ten years ago when developing these techniques and skills?

At the time, I campaigned against the choice of techniques, but they took for granted the inexperience of the officer and thus made the techniques simple and performable, because the exam had to be one the police officer could pass. Therefore, the most important criteria were testability and feasibility.

Of course, that was not what was wished for, but you have to start somewhere! So, as a starting point for a skill level test I did not think it was a bad choice. Personally, I would have chosen different techniques, but the concept of testing and being tested could not have been made more difficult for the Dutch police, that much is clear.

Over the last couple of years the S.P.E.A.R. system has made it’s entry in the Netherlands. How do you feel about this? I think it is blown a lot out of proportion and almost revered as an art. It is the well known basic principles of the budo sport that are put forward as if they stand alone. This is however not the case, these techniques are part of the whole. They are definitely important principles of which it is beneficial that they are brought to the attention again and that is the greatest benefit of this attention. For the rest it is comparable to a new name for a type of fitness, it is still movement to gain or maintain a healthy body. On the other hand, it is quite an achievement for the performer that he can inspire such a large target group with techniques that have been written about in at least 500 books. That is also a skill of which I am slightly jealous.

In your opinion, is the S.P.E.A.R. system suitable for the average Dutch police officer?

These techniques are definitely useful in actual practice for the average officer. The basic position, where the arms take on an angle of approximately 100 degrees, is a good starting position for defence, confrontation or creating workspace. Therefore, if every officer were even to master only this technique it would make me very happy! But the best advantage is gained by the initiative of the performer; the first response is also half the battle! The first reaction to an attack and consequently taking on the correct arm posture and body stance is a good starting point for a counter attack or take over.

Besides the S.P.E.A.R. system there are also many other so called Reality Based Training systems such as ‘Fast Defence’, ‘Psychology-Attributes-Tactics-Skill (P.A.T.S.)’ and even the Dutch ‘Multiple Opponents Survival System’, (M.O.S.S.). The basic officer receives training in Arrest and Self-defence, but specialist units receive more applied and extensive training. Are these systems offered within the Dutch police force or do the police instructors themselves follow these courses and then integrate them within the official training for the officers?

I think that in general the initiative lies with the instructor to go to work with these kinds of systems. Based on enthusiasm he or she shall implement certain systems within the training program for the target group. There are certain cases in which people give preference to certain systems and come out as an ambassador for its propaganda, but that also is on one’s own initiative. And the Dutch police is very sensitive to the way new things are laid out, so if you spend the necessary attention to that, you will have a lot of attention for your product!

Are there courses given for officers outside duty hours for Arrest and Self-defence/Resilience organized by either Police unions or Multi Discipline Professional Skills Training instructors?

The fanatical athlete visits the gym on his or her own initiative. There are gyms that have special hours for the police. I myself have started self-defence courses for police officers several times to emphasize techniques that can be used during active service, but each time it died a slow death within the year, with only the ones who...
already exercised anyway remaining and the ones for whom the course was set up having all kinds of reasons for not showing up anymore. I still often hear from colleagues that they need reality-based training for Arresting techniques and use of the weaponry they carry. Maybe we will start up another course that fits the wishes of the customer again one of these days.

Can you tell our readers something about the kind of kicks and punches one has to master for the police officer’s exam? For the exam (according to the exam criteria) they have to show the forward kick (demonstrated with the ball of the foot or the whole underside of the foot) and a roundhouse kick (demonstrated with the shin and or top part of the foot). Both kicks are intended to be used as preparation for or opening of a physical arrest. Only straight punches are required for the test, which have to comply with the set criteria. Personally, I feel that other punches are more practical, such as the hook punch, hammer punch or an open hand technique (reprimanding slap) with the palm or back of the hand.

In what manner and with which techniques are evasive movements and blocking demonstrated? Are different attacks used for these defensive actions? Yes, different kinds of attacks are used, but the defence is almost always turned inwards, placing the defender behind the attacker, and if not, then during the attack or immediately following, a counter is placed. Of course, we delve into this kind of thing much deeper with the specialist units and technically we can set a higher standard. Luckily, that is still a part of my job and we as of yet do not have to pass an exam on that!

The baton techniques are demonstrated with a short baton, made of a PVC core covered in hard rubber on the outside. For which basic purposes (offensive and defensive) is the baton used?

For the basic purpose you need to look at the (allowed choice) spiral of violence. For some of the techniques, the impact of the baton is quite severe due to the indentation of the tip or back end of the stick. The strikes are said not to have the desired immediate effect so the strikes are hard and many. As to technique, we mainly focus on a proper grip, a functional posture, and in dealing with the delivery of force working from the centre of your body. When doing so, make as little large movements as possible and make sure you maintain the correct skilful posture from which you can easily apply a different technique.

Does one generally practice both left and right handed with the baton/pepper spray/punches/kicks etc. and what does this depend on? One usually trains with ones preferred side because this suffices for most participants. The most important factors are the training facilities (time and accommodation) and the involvement of the participant in the subject matter.

Of the 19 Arrest and Self-defence techniques there are 4 transportation techniques meant mainly to support arrests. In principle, after the transportation techniques one moves on to handcuffing. Which transportation techniques does one basically practice and can you describe the phase leading up to the application of the transportation techniques?

For more information about the Dutch police force please visit: www.politieacademie.nl/politie/_EN www.politie.nl/English/