



FAST. SIMPLE. EFFECTIVE. CONTROLLED

Remi Lessore reports on the state of the Special Forces system in Britain, if it is not real, then it is not **Krav Maga**.

When I began training in Krav Maga eight years ago, very few people knew much about it. There was a growing hype about an ultra-violent, Israeli secret service, Special Forces system that several 'closest' 'top students' of the Imi Lichtenfeld original founder were bringing to our shores. People trained in camouflage trousers and charged their students a fortune. Some encouraged their students to hammer each other; others sold instructor qualifications after a one week course. And they convinced themselves that training like this was the ultimate in martial arts. Others tried to sell fine techniques as taught by Mossad or Shin Beth. Mossad do not say much about what they teach, so who was going to set the record straight? Thank goodness this nonsense is gradually coming to a close. We can thank Paul Grey who teaches KM in the South West for his research in debunking some of these myths.

If you knew where to look, the real thing was always out there – but you did not always find it among those making the most noise. One problem was that anyone could teach anything and call it Krav Maga. If challenged they could say that since Krav Maga means 'close combat' (literally: contact fight) in Hebrew then what they taught was KM. But all martial arts and combat sports have a close combat expression – many are nothing but close combat, starting with Judo, Boxing and Wrestling. Then again, many are 'empty hand' (kara te), all require 'hard work' (gong fu), most are 'ways of fist and foot' (tae kwon do). But if we do not follow the convention of respecting names to avoid confusion between quite different arts, we create confusion. And this confusion was lucrative to many.

SO WHAT IS THE REAL THING?

I'm not going to bore you with stories of lineage and links to Imi. These links do exist but anyone among thousands can claim he taught them, or

↳ **Gonçalo Esteves** of Birmingham Krav Maga demonstrating a 360 drill

taught an instructor who then taught another, etc., who taught them... How can we tell who is passing on the principles faithfully?

The answer is not complicated: you can tell real Krav Maga by judging what is taught against these criteria:

Krav Maga must be Effective, Fast, Simple, and Controlled.

Effective. Each technique has to be delivered in the most effective way possible. This will involve application of force principles, such as getting the weight of the body behind a strike. It will also involve attacking the most vulnerable target areas. There is little point in teaching a 7 stone woman to deliver a punch to the chin of a 15 stone attacker. Although her chances of stopping him with this are slim, she is likely to injure her hand. But with similar motor skills she can probably punch him in the neck or heel palm him in the nose, and immediately after, kick him in the groin. Here her chances to at least gain time to escape are greatly enhanced. Krav Maga will give her the opportunity to train to do this.

↘ Eric being very simple against Yann

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↗ More difficult techniques are learned later on

↘ If justified a punch to the throat will be most effective



We also frequently train 360 drills where we practice defending a circular area around our head and the vital parts of our body. This also serves the building of conditioned reflexes and it is based on the natural flinch reflex inherent to all. Using these natural reflexes accelerates learning.

Fast. We strike or we defend by first moving

the point of contact that is going to be used. So, if we decide on a pre-emptive strike with the right hand, that moves first, in the shortest line towards target area and as it travels, the body and the feet line up behind it so that by the time it lands the most effective force is applied. If we are going to block or parry, the same principle applies, intercepting the attack along the shortest line and positioning the body

in such a way as to counter-attack with the most ease and most quickly.

SHORTEST LINE OF DEFENCE AND ATTACK

Speed also depends on being relaxed, avoiding anger while remaining totally committed to our attack or defence. It is interesting to look at the expression and posture of practitioners as they train. Those who frown or screw up their faces are introducing parasitic emotions which will slow them down and tire them more quickly. Our guard position is open-handed because a relaxed arm moves more quickly. If we use the fist, we close it at the last moment.

We learn all strikes from the guard and from no guard since a fight may begin without warning and building reflexes from a variety of positions will accelerate our responses, and our ability to strike pre-emptively. This is accessible to anyone, whatever their body mass and level of strength. We train to strike from the greatest variety of positions practicable, but first and foremost, and repeatedly thereafter, we practice whatever is most likely to be necessary and



↗ Sally of South London Krav Maga demonstrating an effective defence against a double throat grab from the front

which will have the greatest chance of success. This brings us to the principle of simplicity.

Krav Maga must be simple. It is known that in a stressful situation, gross motor skills – i.e. the most simple movements, will be the most likely to be remembered. We train to increase the range and variety of our reserve of conditioned reflexes, but we always stay simple.

When faced with an imminent assault, a skilled Taekwondoist for example, might deliver a turning kick to the side of the head. The technique is simple and effective but will have required a great deal of time (maybe years), stretching, kicking pads, and conditioning their entire body in order to land this kick effectively.

We learn it, but not first of all.

In a similar situation a Judo player or a wrestler may instinctively move to wrap up their opponent or pick him up to drop him on his head. But again these moves will involve much training, and they will need to transfer techniques devised and practised for competition into a real life conflict where the outcome will not be interrupted by a referee. Again, we do learn grappling but only after we have learned to punch.

We would say that Western Boxing provides the most simple and likely to be used solutions. If someone can throw a straight right or a straight left, not to mention a hook and uppercut they will incapacitate most opponents in most situations very quickly.

So in the first year, indeed starting from the first lessons, Krav Maga involves drills that boxers will recognise, with some modifications in stance and combinations. But why wait to punch an attacker if you see them coming? Interception is part of the principle of speed. So straight kicks are also the mainstay of the early syllabus... And if I can throw a straight kick, a punch and a hook, why not also include turning kicks as in Thai Boxing? And if I can block and strike why pause between the two? Let's block/strike simultaneously. And so on. Techniques are learned and practiced in layers of increasing ability, over the months and years. Yet while learning more complex moves and sequences we never neglect the constant practice of the most simple - those most likely to save us when we need it.

Controlled. This principle was always present

Control is also about staying calm – training to use and control the flinch reflex and the surge of adrenaline; not hating our opponent, but focussing on the immediate needs of the situation while remaining aware of the surroundings. We employ all sorts of drills to promote this.

Control extends into the area of self-control, self-mastery, stretching our limits, and challenging ourselves.

The whole art has to be Fast, Simple, Effective and Controlled. Teaching methodology is part of the art. We need to remember the military context of Krav Maga's conception. All sorts of people have to be taught together – a school leaver, a bricklayer, a librarian, a forty year old woman, a twenty year old man. They have to learn a set of principles that will allow them to defend themselves effectively and they have to learn them quickly.



Remi and Simon of South London Krav Maga with Richard Douieb

Fun and games reinforce learning

seeing techniques that a weaker person could never apply; or would be too complicated to remember under pressure; or would leave the defender hopelessly exposed or overbalanced? Are the attacks against which the class is training realistic or do the defences rely on the attacker being static, his arm being left out long enough for a lock to be applied, or is the attack a single strike when in reality flurries of punches and kicks are normally thrown?

If it is not real, then it is not Krav Maga because it is not effective training.

The FEKM-RD is the largest Krav Maga organisation in the world (www.krav-maga.com).

net/en/), counting upwards of 15 000 members mainly in Europe. It is headed by Richard Douieb (hence the RD) who was a student of Imi Lichtenfeld and of Imi's top instructors, and who was an Israeli commando and close combat instructor. The FEKM is now restarting in Great Britain under the heading of the BFKM directed by Yann Veillerant and Eric Tagliana, both second darga black-belts. There are already two FEKM-recognised schools – one in Birmingham (www.birminghamkravmaga.com) and one in South London (www.southlondonkravmaga.com). Eric and Yann have been charged by Richard Douieb with broadening the base of the federation here in Britain. They have a very successful school in France (see www.kmc92.com) and frequently visit to run very enjoyable and informative seminars in London.

More on these visits to follow. ■
REMI LESSORE

KRAV MAGA

but was recognised more recently. It covers a wide range of aspects.

Krav Maga was devised for self-preservation. Control is essential to this – not going into dangerous situations if they can be avoided, not overcommitting the body when throwing a punch or a kick, never neglecting the guard; it extends into the moral principle of discontinuing a counter-attack against an incapacitated assailant – we do not teach our students to stab after a knife disarm. It would not be intelligent if, having successfully prevented someone from hurting us we were arrested for GBH. Krav Maga must be intelligent.

Training must also be controlled. We aim not to hurt each other in class, while still trying to work as realistically as possible. Apart from the simple reason of compassion, if you are hurt during a lesson, you will be less likely to defend yourself successfully in the street, should the need arise.

So in a class the instructor begins by demonstrating a technique fast and from different angles. Then again slowly, with explanations. Then he faces the class and teaches each component of the move using what we call the 'mirror effect'. When he demonstrates a right punch, for example, he will throw his left but the students will throw their right. This makes learning faster, more simple, more effective. More Krav Maga.

We also bear in mind that learning is more effective if students are having fun so the lessons incorporate games and drills that are enjoyable and help to embed techniques and attitudes among our conditioned reflexes.

So back to my initial question: how can we tell what is real Krav Maga?

I suggest you go and view a beginner's class. Consider whether what is taught is fast, simple, effective and controlled. Or are you

