

Battle Field Karate

[Home](#)[Essays](#)[Index](#)[Links](#)[Recommended Books](#)[Resources](#)[Tactics](#)[Op Comm](#)[Next](#)

By William S. Frisbee Jr.

Martial arts are great. I have studied martial arts for several years and I think it is something every warrior should study. Most serious warriors do to some extent or another. Martial Arts means quite literally Military Arts, it does not mean hand to hand combat arts but it has come to mean that to many people. Technically, any soldier or Marine or practices his job is a Martial Artist.

Many of the unenlightened might wonder how hand to hand combat training makes one superior to someone who is an expert shot. In some cases it isn't but in many cases martial arts training is superior to marksmanship training. The martial arts is a way of training the mind as well as body. It increases physical fitness, physical agility, physical and mental balance. It physically and mentally toughens a warrior to endure hardship. It increases and helps train a warrior's reflexes. Marksmanship training does nothing for a warrior who suddenly has to run several miles.

Consider if you will a master marksman against a hand to hand combat specialist. In an open field without cover the martial artist armed with nothing but his mind would be in danger from a marksman with a pistol or rifle. It should be noted that this is a very rare situation. The marksman cannot shoot the martial artist if the martial artist is behind a brick wall, a car, in a house, in a ditch, ect. By going around the brick wall (or whatever) the marksman usually has to close the distance with the martial artist. A very bad move because all the martial artist may need is the blink of an eye at close range to attack and disable the marksman.

Another point to consider is that firearms run out of bullets.

In close range house to house, room to room fighting, troops trained in the martial arts are going to have an advantage over untrained troops. Kicking in a door can sometimes put an attacker face to face with a foe. By the time either opponent can aim and fire his weapon a martial artist will likely have buttstroked, kicked the foe in the testicles or another nasty, debilitating attack.

If a prisoner suddenly jumps a captor and one of the two knows martial arts then it is not difficult to guess who the victor will be.

It should also be noted that good martial arts training helps with the mental discipline and concentration of a warrior, regardless of how he is fighting.

Not a lot of people have studied the martial arts and fewer still have studied more than one. I have seen writers write that character A struck character B with an Aikido strike or Judo master A leapt up and kicked B in the head. I knew instantly that these writers probably did not know the first thing about martial arts. Neither one of these styles employs such methods. Aikido for instance is a very passive, non-aggressive (but very effective) martial art. The only time an Aikido artist 'attacks' is when he/she is training with another opponent. The core philosophy of Aikido is defense, not offense. Steven Segall is a student of Aikido but he is also an arrogant, third rate movie actor and the movies really tend to overrate things, but if you've seen Segall in 'action' you will have some idea of how Aikido works.

The Japanese and Chinese are not the only ones to have martial arts. The French have Savat, also called chausson. In Brazil there is an art called Capoeira. Wrestling is common from all over the world and Boxing (as seen on TV) came from Europe. The former Soviet Union has Sambo. India has Kalaripayit, Burma has Bando (thaing), and Bansahei. Thailand has kickboxing, the Philippines has Eskrima.

Nearly all localities have their own form of wrestling or boxing or weapons skill. It should be noted that it is primarily Asian martial arts that are as spiritual as well as physical. Fencing for instance does not (usually) try to teach the student right and wrong or respect for elders, ect.

As martial arts spread across the world some of them lose a bit of their focus. Individual instructors may teach their own variations and moves that they have learned elsewhere. Instructors may not stress the spirituality that is usually associated with the Martial Arts.

Each martial art usually has a very distinct history, outlook on combat and series of moves. Each martial art also usually has its own core philosophy and they might have a spiritual orientation.

Combat techniques also vary quite a bit among the martial arts. Some teach that the attack is superior to the defense, while others teach the opposite.

To say which Martial Art is best is a job for a fool. The Martial Arts are just that, combat arts. They are an art form that must constantly be practiced and perfected. A high ranking karate specialist might beat the daylight out of an Aikido novice. If the Karate specialist were to face an Aikido 'master' it might be an entirely different story. Maybe. It could all depend on how dedicated each one is to his art. If the karate specialist got his 'black belt' in what is sometimes refereed to as a 'black belt factory' then that Aikido novice might just defeat him.

I had the dishonor of enrolling in one such 'black belt factory.' I lost all stomach for it after three months. I had acquired three belts, one a month. A Tae Kwon Do black belt from that school would have been clobbered by a green belt from my previous Karate school.

Belts can have meaning to some and no meaning what so ever to others. Belts also vary between different martial arts. The Goju Ryu school where I studied did not have orange or purple belts for instance and children could not advance all the way to black belt.

The style of martial art should be chosen very carefully by a student. For example. I recall one

Martial Artist, a tiny, fragile looking oriental lady who studied Karate. Her moves were precise and skillful looking and she was very good. The problem was that in my opinion Karate was not her best option. Karate is mostly force on force and I do not think she would have lasted long in such a force on force confrontation because she lacked the physical mass to compete force on force with say a two hundred pound man. In Aikido she would have been downright lethal. She had an inner hardness and a great deal of discipline but she lacked physical mass.

Aikido for instance does not require the student to have a great deal of physical mass because the student is trained not to confront an attacker's force but to evade and direct it.

An example of how the martial arts may vary. An attacker strikes a Tae Kwon Do artist. The artist would hard block the attack and follow through with a kick to the opponent's head.

In Judo, an attacker would strike an artist and the artist would grab the attacker's punch and use that to close the distance where the Judo artist would 'throw' the attacker, slamming him/her to the ground and put him/her into a limb lock.

In Karate, the defender would hard block the attacker's strike and counter attack with a punch or low kick.

In Aikido the artist would step aside and deflect the attacker's strike, then use that strike to pull his attacker off balance. With the attacker off balance and at the mercy of the Aikido artist, the attacker would be 'directed' into a compromising situation where the Aikido artist could apply a limb lock. If an Aikido artist uses brute strength then he/she is not performing the maneuver right.

Few martial arts are strictly limited to one method. In Karate for instance most kicks are kept below waist level, this does not mean ALL kicks are kept below waist level. It does not mean a student of Karate does not know how to 'throw' his opponent either. Judo does not teach grappling alone.

Weapons are another point of interest. Not all martial arts teach them. Some styles teach weapons to novices and some wait until the novice has more experience and body control.

Aikido for instance does not teach students how to use nunchuka. Judo does not teach students sword fighting.

Martial Arts schools also vary in their teaching orientation. Some styles may teach students to 'survive on the streets' some may teach discipline and spiritual enlightenment. This does not mean that a student who goes to a 'spiritual' school will be helpless when faced with a thug on the streets. It all depends on the instructor and each instructor is different.

A 'street survival' instructor is more likely to teach students about knife and gun attacks. He/she is also likely to teach the student several 'dirty' but highly effective tricks before the student has reached a high level. The focus will be on surviving a life and death confrontation by all means available against a mugger or rapist. A great deal of training will involve a partner.

Some schools will concentrate on honor, discipline, integrity, ect. Instruction will be more traditional and the student will have to spend more time 'mentally' adapting to a real combat situation. This does not mean he/she will not be able to adapt or will be inferior to a 'street

survival' student. It all depends on the student and the instructor.

Of course there are combinations of the two and an instructor may walk a fine line between the two.

Then there is the black belt factory. My experience involved a person named "Jack Motley" in Pensacola Florida. He taught Korean Tae Kwon Do. Every month he would hold gradings, if you paid the fee you made the grade. Three months, three belts and I quit with disgust. Students were graded enmasse and if you could mimic those around you then you could make the grade. To kumite, or fight, with another student you had to be at least a green belt and you used special padding.

In Hawaii I studied Karate under Jann Aki. He held grading every six months and when I advanced from white to yellow belt it was no easy task. I studied for eight months to take my first test and I suffered big time. I was worn out and then I had to kumite against several relatively fresh higher belts. I was floored twice, as soon as I could get back up the kumite continued. We did not use padding the only thing we didn't do was hit the other person in the face or groin.

To this day I still remember what I learned under Jann Aki and that was over eight years ago. I barely recall what I learned from Jack Motley which was only six years ago. I value my yellow belt over my green belt because I paid sweat and tears for that yellow belt, I paid money for my green belt.

I have also dabbled in Aikido, Nin-po Taijitsu, JKD and as a Marine I studied Marine Corps Line training.

The Military Martial Arts

Sometimes special forces have their own 'style' of martial arts. Many US forces employ a collage, different techniques taken from different styles. Elite troops are frequently taught to use rapid, aggressive and very violent attacks to disable the foe. In general there are two to three moves. The first move is designed to set up the opponent, to stun or cripple him. The last move is the killing move. For example. One method is when an enemy soldier attacks, the defender breaks the attack with a throw and then in the same motion, stomps the attacker's skull while he is on the ground gasping for breath.

Elite troops are not taught to 'fight fair' they are taught to fight and win as quickly as possible. They are taught to gouge eyes, break fingers, crush toes, kick testicles, break arms and break necks. Most martial artists do not concentrate on such vicious, brutal attacks except maybe at higher levels. This may be because of the psychological trauma involved in such brutal attacks. Such a fight may insure the student is victorious but there is still a psychological price to pay for crippling and killing another human being in a face to face confrontation.

A martial artist may have the option of disabling an attacker instead of killing him, for a soldier it is a little different. A foe with a broken arm can still use the other arm to aim and fire a pistol or strike with a knife, or he can scream for help. Unlike most street fights, the field of battle is usually to the death and most soldiers will fight to the end.

Most militaries do teach their soldiers the rudiments of hand to hand combat. Very few spend

much time or effort doing so however. Elite troops spend much more time at it than most regular troops because they are more likely to need it.

Bayonets

Bayonets and bayonet fighting is an anachronism. Even today in the twentieth century assault rifles come with bayonet lugs and troops are issued bayonets. Bayonet training is taught in basic training and in regular units.

This does not mean bayonets are used on the field of battle except in maybe rare instances. Bayonets are usually most effective at intimidation rather than killing enemy soldiers. Bayonet training is a good way of familiarizing a soldier with using his weapon as a hand to hand combat weapon also. Bayonet courses are more for morale than actual combat use.

I have seen doctrine that calls for troops to 'fix bayonets' when they get within ten to twenty meters of the enemy and are preparing to assault through. After reloading for the final charge, they fix bayonets and prepare hand grenades. That doesn't happen, combat is not so simple and clear.

According to the studies of Dave Grossman in his book **On Killing** most close combat casualties are not inflicted by bayonets they are inflicted by troops wielding their rifles like clubs and most bayonet casualties are inflicted on fleeing troops. This probably has a lot to do with the psychology of killing.

Some individuals think that bayonets should be fixed to the rifles in MOUT (Military Operations in Urban Terrain) house to house and room to room fighting. While this may make some sense because MOUT is a lot of close quarters fighting it may not be that practical. Attaching a bayonet to the rifle extends the length of that rifle thus making it harder to maneuver in tight spaces, endangering the user, and making it harder to keep from sticking your weapon around corners or windows.

Short weapons like submachine guns and pistols are easier and quicker to maneuver in tight spaces. In close quarters speed means survival.

Although many troops think bayonets are obsolete they are not. They are excellent for use by troops in a crowd control situation. No sane mob is going to go anywhere near a line of fierce looking 'maniacs' jabbing and chanting with 'spears' in their hands. A wall of sharp, vicious shards of metal jabbing forward in search of your innards is going to encourage anyone to get out of the way.

Police do not use bayonet equipped rifles for crowd control because they are (usually) more interested in subduing than killing, plus Police usually don't use rifles.

Marines evacuating US citizens from a hostile foreign country are a lot less concerned with being 'nice'. A line of camouflaged Marines advancing, jabbing their bayonet's with each step is an excellent method of 'encouraging' a hostile crowd to get out of the way.

The Marines would not be trying to kill the civilians if they could avoid it but the civilians would be less likely to charge Marines than they would a wall of police armed with clubs and shields.

Most modern troops usually use their bayonet to pick their teeth with or as regular utility knives.

Knives

Many 'Warrior wannabes' load themselves down with knives. Knife in the boot, knife on the web gear, knife on the belt, knife strapped to leg, knife in the pocket, ect. It really doesn't make a lot of sense.

I tried the knife in the boot but it chaffed the hell out of my leg during forced marches or patrols. That didn't last long. Knife strapped to my right thigh was my primary.

Placement of the knife on the gear should be considered very carefully. More than two knives is usually a waste unless their are throwing knives.

While throwing knives seem like a cool thing, on the battle field they are not. A great deal of practice is required to be able to throw knives accurately. If you are laying in a ditch and throwing a knife it is going to be very difficult. Commandos using thrown knives to silence sentries is mostly hogwash, there are many more effective ways of doing it and too much can go wrong with that method.

Throwing a knife and trying to score a kill is usually VERY difficult because a high degree of accuracy is needed to hit an organ that will drop the foe instantly. Otherwise the target is going to scream and cry and make all sorts of bothersome noise. Knives just don't have the penetration or kinetic force that bullets do. A spare magazine is usually more practical than having a brace of throwing knives, it is lighter and less trouble. Besides, why 'throw' away a perfectly good weapon?

The Pro is likely to enter battle with two knives. One utility knife to do open meals and do camp work with (usually the bayonet) and one 'battle blade' to fight with. The battle blade should be kept razor sharp, be thick enough so it won't snap in someone's rib cage and a 'blood' groove is nice because it makes it easier to pull out of the body.

The pro is unlikely to throw his knife but may spend some time practicing this. While a thrown knife is not as likely to kill a foe as in the movies, it may injure the enemy and give the pro a precious moment to do something else, like finish reloading or toss a grenade.

There are many ways to fight with a knife and almost every knife fighter is different. Some have it pointed opposite the thumb (using it like a pick), others have the blade on the same side of the fist as the thumb. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. People swear by either method.

My experience has led me to employ it with the blade pointed in the same direction as the thumb and with the flat of the blade to the ground. This method provides greater wrist flexibility for slashing. If the foe is stabbed it is likelier to pierce the rib cage instead of getting stuck, and since most organs run from the top to bottom of the enemy the blade is more likely to get one because the width is working in your favor. This grip is also strong for stabbing and pulling the blade out of the body. It is not as strong at stabbing as the 'ice pick' method.

Skilled knife fighters will be able to reverse the direction of the blade and switch hands in the

blink of an eye. This makes the fighter more unpredictable and dangerous.

When preparing to enter a knife fight the pro is going to wrap something around his arm so he can use his arm as a kind of shield. Only a fool will enter a fight thinking he is not going to get cut. When the fool does get cut he may panic or go into shock and that will likely be the end of him.

Cuts inflicted by a knife are extremely painful and can bleed quite a bit. In some cases a knife wound is more dangerous than a bullet wound.

While scoring a killing 'stab' is sought by a knife fighter, slashes work well. A slash is painful and causes blood loss. A slash on the forehead can cause blood to run into the eyes for instance.

Martial artists have a great many ways of disabling a foe armed with a knife. The first step usually to grab or block the enemy's knife hand. It should be noted the knife can be blocked by striking the enemy's wrist or forearm instead of the knife. The next step for disabling of a knife fighter varies. Most Martial Artists will close the distance and get close to the knife wielder for some vicious move.

Regardless of what weapon a warrior enters into hand to hand combat with, only a fool enters a fight believing the weapon he is holding is his only weapon. Kicks, punches and the like can be used to stun the opponent for the lethal strike.

Also see the section on ["Types of Martial Arts"](#)

Battle Field Karate	Combat Operations	Combined Arms	Communications
Defensive Operations	Electronic Warrior	Evolution of Warfare	Fighting Vehicles
Future of the Infantry	Future of Infantry	Future Trooper	The Individual
Logistics	Martial Art Styles	Military Organization	National Policy
Offensive Operations	Psychology of Killing	Robots and Drones	Special Operations
Types of War		War Theatre	