

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHOTOKAN KARATE AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

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SHOTOKAN KARATE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The relationship between Shotokan karate and law enforcement is a very broad topic. The two compared are like speaking the same language but with a different dialect. Each are based on a structured hierarchy with deep traditional values and purpose. Part of karate is based on serving the organization and physically protecting one's self, whereas, law enforcement's mission is to serve and to protect the community. Karate abides by the Dojo Kun and law enforcement has the code of ethics. Uniforms and rank are worn and achieved that indicate status and responsibility. Karate emphasizes a way of life while law enforcement protects life. Both stress the importance of training in order to make it home alive everyday.

Illustration of the narrowed down relationship between karate and law enforcement can be viewed in the use of force continuum that officers are trained in. It contains three classifications of force; low, moderate, and high, with each classification possessing one or more of the total eight levels of force.

<u>LEVEL</u>	<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>
8-Lethal Force	High
7-Impact Weapons	Moderate
6-Strikes/Kicks	Moderate
5-Chemical Agents	Moderate
4-Control Holds	Moderate
3-Verbal Commands	Low
2-Tactical Negotiations	Low
1-Officer Presence	Low

Officers annually complete several hours of state mandated training in each of these levels of force. The training includes proficiency examinations and quarterly qualification to maintain certification. Mandated certification is one of the insurance policies for the officer and his agency should he be tested on the street by a criminal or sued for excessive force in court. In addition to the importance for the officer's physical safety, the training is also for his psychological well being in the event of a physical attack or civil liability.

STRESS INOCULATION TRAINING

The finest officers, like the finest karate-ka, are heavily trained physically and psychologically. There is a parallel in elite training between karate-ka and law enforcement. SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team members are highly trained experienced operatives that possess vast skills with various weapons and tactics. They are the pride of the department and called in to resolve the toughest situations. Karate-ka, on the national team, are their counterpart and have hundreds, even thousands of hours, of training and competition. They are sent around the world to fight the most skilled fighters. Each are the elite in their profession and are trained physically and psychologically through dedicated sacrificial suffering with grueling physical activity. They professionally participate in "Stress Inoculation Training" which is the combination of repeated drills involving gross, fine, and complex motor movements with an elevated heart rate. This ingrains important muscle memory that will automatically execute due to intense repeated movements while highly stimulated. Also known as "real time" or "live" training, Stress Inoculation Training reduces, prevents and eliminates the common physiological effects during a critical incident. Time, visual, and hearing distortion occur during periods of intense stress in which the body releases survival chemicals. Experiences involving recounts of "it seemed like it happened in slow motion," and "I heard nothing and saw only a blur" are examples of the distortion. It occurs when pooling blood and fluids combine with survival chemicals which create distortions such as visual acuity (tunnel vision) and auditory occlusion (temporary loss of hearing). Stimulants such as adrenaline and epinephrine, and pain blockers dopamine and endorphins, are the human body's natural defense in a critical incident. If an officer is not properly trained and not used to the rapid acceleration of these chemicals during a critical incident, then he is more likely to use excessive force since he will be less likely to control himself. Relating to karate, a fighter would find himself in the same situation with diminished strategic thinking and self-defeating reactions.

In this paper I will compare and contrast karate-ka and basic law enforcement officers with regard to the general use of force continuum and with an emphasis on level #6 strikes and kicks. I will detail the justification and, conversely, the deficiencies regarding law enforcement teaching and training of heel palm strikes and front and round kicks. It will be based on the comparison of Shotokan karate training in the American JKA Karate Association and that of only general law enforcement officers. It seems fair to compare the two since general law enforcement officers, such as routine patrol officers, place their lives on the line daily and are responsible for protecting your life and that of your family at any given moment. Therefore, they too should be highly proficient with hand to hand combat, specifically, strikes and kicks. With respect to private advanced law enforcement training providers such as Martinelli and Associates, the law enforcement comparisons will be solely based on training given by a county agency.

STRIKES AND KICKS

The most synonymous of all the levels of force and karate are strikes and kicks. Strikes and kicks, otherwise known as hard techniques, are virtually identical whether you wear a gun belt or a black belt. They are used to render your opposition useless so you can live through the situation. The main difference is when and where you can use these techniques. Karate-ka use them daily in training and are expected to use them to the best of their abilities in a tournament and for self-defense. Karate-ka are not expected to adhere to a continuum of force or do what is politically correct or accepted by a department administration. For example, the nationality of the person or if they are a misdemeanant or felon is not a factor in determining whether or not to kick or strike the them or how many times to do it. You simply do what you need to do in order to live through the situation or win the tournament. However, using these techniques in a law enforcement capacity is quite different. Although it is not necessary to step levels one at a time to get to #6, officers must, in good faith, attempt lower levels of force and or will have to justify why they did not or would not have worked in that particular incident. For example, sometimes officers do not have the luxury of talking to someone before they are attacked. Often, attempts of verbal negotiations/commands, control holds, and chemical agents are clearly useless and inappropriate on a subject that is a delusional psychotic under the influence of mind altering drugs. When talking to those types of people the only voices they hear are the ones that are drug induced inside their heads. In such a situation they may not even feel the strikes and kicks which may require the immediate escalation of force.

In addition to department policy, training for law enforcement regarding strikes and kicks also has physical limitations. Body armor and heavy duty belts containing various weapons and other items shift during erratic movement thus limiting the officer's mobility. Boots create difficulty for foot positioning while kicking and the heavy obstructive duty belts limit the ability to kick high. Furthermore, physical conditions such as blood, loose gravel, couches, attacking dogs and the assailant's family members, also contribute to the difficulty of throwing complex or dynamic movement. Officers must also consider their physical placement in a situation regarding weapon retention so the assailant does not use their own tools against them. For example, an officer in a physical confrontation may want to deploy a specific technique to neutralize the threat. However, he may have to expose his weapon in an enclosed area where he has poor footing and hostile collateral subjects nearby forcing him to use alternative methods.

Karate-ka are not concerned about footing while on a nice wooden floor or carrying extra weight. Karate-ka wear a simple gi and are in a controlled environment. If the honorable person across from you is profusely bleeding then the match is stopped. However, in law enforcement, the bleeding person across from you is a psychotic attacking IV drug user with Hepatitis C and you are fighting for your life while slipping in his blood and praying that those distant sirens from assisting units will find you quickly. There are no time outs, no tap outs, or penalties, and the person who wins is determined by who is sleeping in a jail cell or hospital or their own bed that night.

Officers are not privileged with the mind over matter mentality (I don't mind and you don't matter) due to restrictive law and department policy. It is imperative for officers to be prepared for a fight for life physical altercation. An officer must know his

individual limitations and try to have an idea of the assailant he wants to apprehend. Officers only have a matter of seconds to conduct a pre-contact threat assessment, whereas, karate-ka can get a scouting report on a competitor from prior competitions or observing 1st and 2nd round matches. On the street, there is no way for an officer to tell if the assailant is a former Navy Seal, a 5th degree black belt, or some equivalent street tough fighter that just did not have any formal training.

Unfortunately for law enforcement officers, strike and kick training in karate is far more dynamic and advanced. Currently, in use of force class, 90% of the students deploy extremity weight rather than body weight due to improper teaching and training. In other words, only a fraction amount of the weight of an arm or a leg is being used rather than the individual's entire body weight anchoring the technique. Most of this is due to the minimal annual number of hours that is mandated for officers assigned to use of force training. The average karate-ka will train more in one month than the average officer does in one year through his agency. This restriction of time limits the ability of the officer to progress and learn more advanced techniques and body movement. Furthermore, use of force training is not of interest of all officers. Many officers do not like to attend the training and actually feel that they will never have to use it. Several officers feel that alternative means will prevent them from having to go hands on. Some think that they can talk anyone down (verbal negotiations), however, the previous example with the delusional psychotic puts that into perspective. Others refuse to go hands on which subsequently forces them to ignore their force options and automatically escalate to a higher level. These officers reluctantly train for "IF THEN" scenarios rather than willingly with a "WHEN THEN" attitude. Still, law enforcement training has more of a deliberate mindset over karate training since their only purpose of learning the techniques is to use them on a combative assailant. Conversely, the mindset of karate training is split between kata (forms), kihon (basics), and kumite (fighting) which creates a divided attitude that often results in the sport practitioner. Subsequently, the karate-ka becomes a performer proficient in tournaments with outstanding looking techniques but useless applications. In other words, his karate only works with others in a karate setting. The mindset mimics the sport of san-bon kumite meaning that they have several chances to win in a variety of ways including stopping the match and earning points off of penalties. Obviously this does not represent a real self-defense incident since you will have only one chance to live and the only penalty is serious harm or death.

Law enforcement training emphasizes the importance of breathing during critical incidents. Proper breathing during a critical incident will keep the officer from passing out. For example, an officer that has a subject at gun point is to continue with verbal commands even when the assailant is down on the ground being compliant. The continued talking essentially forces the officer to breathe and simultaneously advises all subjects near him that an incident is taking place. However, in the mat room, officers are not taught proper breathing patterns during strike and kick training. Proper breathing will increase speed and power through muscle contraction and expansion as well as decrease fatigue. Ki's must be used, taught, and practiced correctly, with an emphasis on contraction of the core muscle groups rather than just to make a noise. Additionally, a ki assists in absorbing shock in combat since it readies the mind and body for impact.

HEAL PALM STRIKES

Through extensive training, karate utilizes several more techniques than law enforcement teaches and promotes a higher degree of force that would be considered excessive by many department policies. For example, one agency will teach strikes with the heal palm rather than a fist (zuki). The purpose for this is to not break your knuckles/wrists and to not “look” so aggressive. “Look,” meaning, that officers can place their hands up (opened heal palm toward the assailant) and appear to be talking the assailant down or directing him to stop or get back while in a field interrogation (FI) stance. The FI stance is the equivalent of natural stance in karate and is used while interviewing subjects. It is a standing ready position with the firearm side back and hands in front in order to quickly defend or attack. It is non-threatening to the subject and allows witnesses to testify that it appeared that the officer was attempting to diffuse the situation rather than aggravate it by raising his fists. The downfall of this teaching is that by opening your hand and pulling it back to form the heal palm you lose two vital inches of reach that could make the difference between you going home that night. Additionally, officers tend to separate their fingers and close their eyes during their attack which increases the chance of grazing their assailant and breaking a dangling finger. The further reality of the situation is that the officer involved just wants out of that violent situation and does not care how they look since violence and aggressiveness in this fight for life is the same regardless of who describes it. Regarding practicing of the heal palm technique in law enforcement, body action needs to be emphasized in order for it to be effective. If the officer is in a stance then body rotation must show the distinction between front facing and half-front facing positions. Body positioning increases power and allows the officer to absorb shock due to increased body connection should he be hit by the assailant. If the officer is in a standing position then body vibration will be necessary to develop speed and power for the strikes. Finally, officers may consider using a tiger fist by tightly curling the knuckles together which creates a stronger striking point and protects the fingers from separation.

In the photographs on following page; 1) notice the FI ready stance during the pre-contact threat assessment. 2) As the assailant attacks with his right arm, the officer simultaneously engages the attack in a half-front facing position to break the assailant’s power curve and timing by way of a front inside hand heal palm strike. 3) The hip is driven forward from the rear support leg which forces the officer’s body momentum to shift into a full front facing position automatically firing a rear hand heal palm strike with the officer’s entire body weight.

FRONT KICK

Law enforcement kicking is taught much different too. The targets are the body (chudan) and legs rather than the head (jodan). Front kicks (Mae-Geri) are taught to be deployed from the front (weak side) leg rather than the back. The kick is a thrust rather than a snap. The impact point of the foot is the entire foot, including the heal, rather than the ball of the foot. The purpose is to push the assailant back while keeping your gun side away to allow time to draw your weapon or disengage. It is used as a close quarter technique within punching distance rather than a long range technique in karate most

often used for kicking distance. Officers can improve this technique by simply modifying their actions that fire the technique. For example, officers need to first comprehend that kicks are an off balance technique that requires planting then driving off of the support leg, thrusting of the hips and following through. Follow through must be emphasized for the officer to gain maximum speed and power and then transition into handcuffing to finish the combination fluently. Finally, kicking training should require a moving and resistive target so officers can learn timing, distance, and recoil. A stagnant target is asinine since it essentially represents a non-threatening subject that officers would likely rather be using verbal negotiations instead of strikes and kicks.

ROUND KICK

Law enforcement teaches round kicks (Mawashi-Geri) to be deployed from the rear leg with the impact point being the shin or the top of the foot rather than the ball of the foot. The target areas on the opponent are the body and legs. Furthermore, officer instructors stress the importance of turning your front foot out prior to engaging with the kick, rather than pivoting on that foot during the kick, to prevent injury to the knee. Needless to say, in karate, the telegraphing of the foot turning out prior to movement is the fraction of the second of unnecessary movement that will get you knocked out. Additionally, if the front foot turns out it shows lack of body connection which inherently makes the attack slower. By using the core muscle groups, body connection is maintained and forces a single action, rather than a double action, thus increasing speed while eliminating the telegraph. Using the core muscle groups also force the hips to travel in the direction of force (direct rotation) increasing power and kinetic energy. When properly done, the officer should fall forward into his assailant, rather than spin around to the side, illustrating a correct off balanced kick completed with follow through.

In the photograph on the following page, notice the attacker's absolute commitment to engaging his opponent. The hips are in maximum thrust as illustrated by the arch in the body and the gliding of the support foot's toes across the floor. The kick, with the ball of the foot, is on target breaking the opponent's center of gravity. The arms are driven forward by the hips since body connection is consistent throughout the combination. The attacker's left hand remains in a cover position while the right hand follows through with a strike to the face.

The remaining photographs with the round kick carry the same concepts of the heel palm strike and front kick. It is followed up with; 1) a control hold pinning the assailant's shoulder to the ground by way of an arm bar and wrist lock. 2) The officer maintains the pinning of the shoulder with pressure from his inside leg while his outside leg immobilizes the assailant's elbow into a rear twist lock. 3) By applying pressure to the assailant's wrist, the officer gains compliance and has the assailant place his hands to the small of his back to be handcuffed.

CONCLUSION

All of this is imperative to the proper dynamics of movement in order to get at or away from your assailant. This type of training should be incorporated for law enforcement as it enhances the basic techniques and makes officers move fluently in order to gain the advantage over an assailant. Often times it's these body actions, rather than the actual techniques, that determine success or failure in physical combat. If the actions are perfected, then officers can supplement any technique within the combination making it highly effective.

On the other hand, karate-ka must develop their actions and techniques so it is effective in any situation in the karate world or the real world. Good karate will work on a wooden floor in a gi or on cement in plain clothes. It should win a tournament and defeat a drug induced delusional psychotic armed gang member. Karate-ka must train with the mindset of the ippon fighter, which is smash mouth with only one chance to live, in order to survive life threatening physical combat.