



Krav Maga Security System

How Israel's Elite Fighters Train

by the Editors of Black Belt

Photos by Thomas Sanders

When Israeli brass want their soldiers to learn

how to fight, they send them to *krav maga* class. When the nation's elite law-enforcement officers, soldiers and bodyguards want to learn how to fight, they look to krav maga security, a reality-based, close-quarters-combat system founded by Alain Cohen.

As its name indicates, krav maga security is based on the tried-and-true techniques of krav maga. However, it bolsters that base with plenty of supplementary material, both physical and mental, that makes it especially appealing to security professionals.

A hallmark of reality-based fighting is an emphasis on a smaller set of techniques, and KMS is no different. Cohen believes that such a philosophy offers two benefits: It fore-

stalls the mental logjam that often results when a martial artist must choose just the right move from the hundreds or thousands he knows, and it enables him to spend more time practicing each one. "The student can better assimilate the essential principles in less time," he says.

And that's not just ad copy. Martial artists around the world are discovering the logic of KMS to such an extent that Cohen has had to open branches in the United States, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Poland, Denmark and Belgium in addition to Israel, where he's based.

Listed below are some key concepts of KMS, along with a few of the training and fighting methods that distinguish it from its peers.



Krav maga security founder Alain Cohen is grabbed from behind (1). He drops his body as he traps the man's hands and pulls them off his neck (2). Cohen uses his right hammerfist to strike the assailant in the groin (3). Maintaining his hold on the man's left hand, he turns and executes a back elbow to the face (4). He disengages while twisting his foe's wrist (5), then advances and punches him in the face (6). He finishes with a standing arm lock (7).

The motto of the art sums up its philosophy. "We say, 'Don't carry a weapon; be a weapon,'" Cohen says. To that end, the curriculum covers empty-hand combat, as well as weapons, infiltration strategies, and security and executive-protection practices. KMS practitioners concentrate on a few basic hand techniques and kicks. They round out their arsenal with the head butt, elbow strike, knee thrust and a variety of strangulations.

"The first month, we teach you a basic drill in which you use different kinds of strikes," Cohen says. "We make you repeat the drill so that if you're attacked, you'll immediately use those strikes." The icing on the cake: KMS training puts you in situations in which you're forced to follow up those rehearsed responses with ad-libbed techniques. "Sometimes you make a good defense, but afterward you don't know how to keep going," Cohen says. "For this reason, it's very im-

portant to know how to strike in different ways and how to use your body as a weapon."

KMS includes instruction in what Cohen calls neurological striking, a set of skills designed to disrupt the opponent's ability to fight back. "We use neurological techniques of percussion to create a dysfunction of the nervous system, but it's not permanent damage," he says.

The acquisition of skills proceeds as follows: You cover the basic strikes first, then the best ways to nullify those moves should they be used against you. Next, you practice close-quarters combat on your feet and on the ground. That progression parallels the way most fights unfold: An altercation begins with strikes delivered from the outside, then the intensity increases and the gap narrows until the combatants are nose to nose.



The assailant takes a swing at Alain Cohen (1). Cohen sidesteps and intercepts the blow with the standard krav maga block (2). At the same time, he drives his fist into his foe's face. Cohen leans forward to land a quick elbow strike to the chin (3), then creates some space (4) so he can generate power with a knee thrust (5). The finish entails grabbing the man's chin (6) and pulling, sending him spiraling to the ground (7).

KMS divides the spectrum of violence into “families of learning,” which are normally practiced one to two hours a week. The nature of each family can serve as an indicator of where all students of reality-based self-defense should focus their energies.

- The first family is choke defense. It covers methods for neutralizing strangulations from the front, side and rear, as well as attacks that involve pushing or pulling.
- The second family is defense against grabs — shirt grabs, hair grabs and body grabs, Cohen says.
- The third family is knife fighting. It includes methods for defending against attacks that begin overhead, attacks that begin from below your line of sight and attacks that come straight in. KMS then ups the ante by using drills that unleash the same attacks executed from unexpected distances.
- The fourth family is ground fighting: how to escape from

chokes and locks, how to protect another person on the ground, how to take an attacker down, how to fend off a ground-based knife attack and so on.

- The fifth family is stick combat. It encompasses defenses designed to thwart attacks with a short stick, long stick, baseball bat and rifle — think butt strokes, not bullets. Naturally, it has a reality-based stick-against-stick component.
- The sixth family is Israeli gunfighting. You learn how to use a gun — checking to see if it’s in firing condition, firing while stationary and firing while moving. You then learn how to defend against threats in which a weapon is pointed at your head, your side or your back. Where things get interesting: It also includes defensive drills in which you’re seated at a table and in an airplane.
- The final family is security techniques. “They’re for air marshals, pilots and crew members,” Cohen says. “There are also control techniques for police, soldiers and bodyguards.”



Armed with a knife, the suspect threatens Alain Cohen (1). When he thrusts, Cohen moves his torso out of the way while using his left arm to parry the attack (2). He grabs the man's left wrist and the back of his collar (3), then pulls him into a knee thrust (4). The krav maga security expert bends the man's knife arm behind his back and takes him down (5). Pinning his hands with his knee (6), Cohen draws his sidearm and holds him there until backup arrives (7).

Civilian students can rest assured that they're getting the good stuff and not just a watered-down version of the system, he says. "The techniques are the same. The defense against a knife attack or gun threat won't change. What is different is the end of the technique — how you finish the guy." To illustrate, he offers these examples:

- A civilian faces an opponent. The attacker punches, and the martial artist responds with a krav maga defense that uses the same amount of aggression as the assailant. His aim is to cause enough damage to prevent the attacker

from continuing his assault or giving chase.

- A police officer faces a violent suspect. The attacker punches, and the cop stops the blow with the same krav maga defense. He then torques the man's wrist, takes him down and handcuffs him.
- A soldier faces an enemy. The enemy punches, and the KMS stylist takes action with the same krav maga defense. Because he must think about not only protecting himself but also continuing his mission and maintaining control of his weapons, he immediately transitions to a lethal response.



Alain Cohen faces two armed assailants (1). The man with the stick attacks, and Cohen deflects the blow with his extended arm (2). He then grabs the man's right wrist and pulls him into a face punch (3). Using the stick as a shield, Cohen blocks the other man's knife attack (4). He strips the stick from the first man's hand and uses it to shove the knife hand to the side, knocking the blade from the second man's grip (5). Cohen finishes by using the end of the stick to hit him in the face (6).

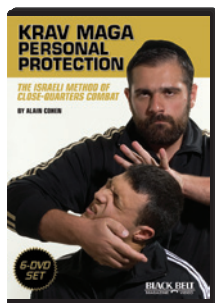
No matter which category you fall into, the prime directive is the same: "Never stop striking," Cohen says. "Keep going. Move ahead. Never back down."

Unlearning time: "In many self-defense courses, instructors teach you to make your defense and then run away," he adds. "Krav maga security is different. We do our best to avoid the fight, but once it starts, we don't stop until the guy is down and cannot continue — it does not matter if he's the strongest man in the world. You do all that's necessary to stay alive and keep your family and friends safe."

That's not to say KMS students, once activated, are out-of-control wrecking machines. "We keep in our minds an idea that was often repeated by Imi Lichtenfeld, the creator of krav maga: 'Be so strong that you don't have to cause irreparable damage to your opponent to get out of the danger.'"

The idea is simple: "If a 3-year-old child tells you he wants to fight you, you will 'play' with him for control — you certainly won't hit him," Cohen says. "When you're strong, getting out of danger is like playing a game. ✂"

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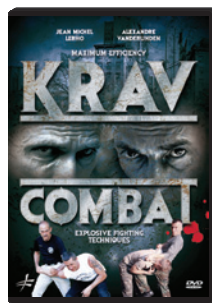


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by Avi Nardia and Albert Timen, special adviser: John Machado

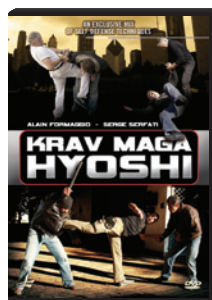
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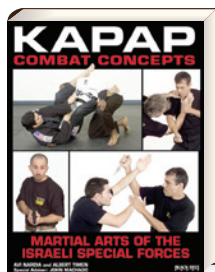


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