

# TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

## MULTI-TARGET ENGAGEMENTS

WITH THE INCREASING ODDS YOU MAY FACE MULTIPLE THREATS—  
ARE YOU PREPARED?

BY: KEN JAVES

PHOTOS COURTESY KEN JAVES [www.shibumitactical.com](http://www.shibumitactical.com)

Wherever we go on a daily basis; whether for amusement or obligation, we typically encounter more than one person regardless of our desire to interact with them or not.

**A**lso, looking at the trend in the progression from the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist threat and evidence from recent attacks in Brussels, Paris and San Bernardino where the jihadists have deliberately selected targets with large unarmed crowds and used multiple attackers, the likelihood of having to deal with multiple threats to defend your life, your family or in the conduct of your protective mission is high. There are some training methodologies, tools and a tactical mindset that will help prioritize threats in order to engage them in the

most efficient and tactically-sound manner.

When developing any training program (particularly one with as many potential variables as the situations referenced above) a balance has to be struck between developing the fundamental skills required and ensuring the drills and exercises selected fit the anticipated mission or operational situation. For multiple threat training, much of this is determined by the placement and arrangement of the targets in relation to the shooter. Your operational environment will typically dictate *continued on next page*

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the anticipated engagement distance and you can base your training distance off of that. For example, if you are going to be performing a sniper mission in the mountains of Afghanistan you may want to set your targets 500-1000 yards away (or use reduced size targets if the training area has range limitations) and space them to simulate a group of Taliban on patrol or a mortar team. If you anticipate having to work in a crowded urban environment and are armed only with a pistol, the range of the targets would be reduced appropriately. Fundamental skills that can be developed at any range and for any multi-threat situation include the ability to transition between targets laterally, in-depth (near-far, far-near) and in combination (diagonally.) For working basic lateral transitions the targets are arranged on-line, left-to-right and in front of the shooter. A space of roughly one yard between the targets can be sufficient to work the requisite skills. What we are attempting to develop is the ability to rapidly and smoothly move eyes in front of the gun, shift the focus between the target and the sights, accurately engage and call the shots. This last part is where efficiency truly lives when dealing with multiple threats.

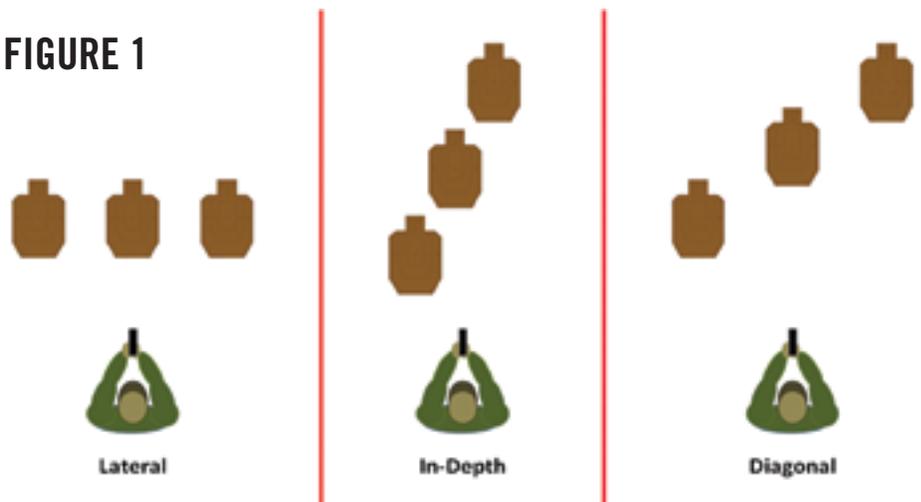
We can't always afford the time to stay on a threat and "shoot him to the ground" when dealing with multiple attackers. Depending on the situation there may only be enough time to "check his motivation" with one or two rounds before moving on to the next threat, then coming back to evaluate if the

rounds were effective. Also, unlike paper targets, we may not be able to see where our rounds are impacting due to lighting, heavy clothing or unpredictable reactions from the person we are shooting, so we must develop the ability to track the sights and make an accurate call on where our rounds went. There has been quite a bit of discussion over the years on how many times to shoot a person to stop the threat and the only conclusion is that there is no conclusion. Friends of mine witnessed an individual continue to fight after taking two rounds of 50 BMG and a dozen 7.62, so I am a believer that constant evaluation of effectiveness is the order of the day.

Arranging targets in depth allows us to work the same eye-hand coordination of lateral targets with the additional benefit learning how to pace our shots as the range increases or decreases. For most of us, if we try to engage a target at 100 yards at the same speed (flash sight picture) we used on the target at 3 yards the result would be a wild miss. This again helps us with the ability to call our shots and develop our acceptable sight picture and pace to accurately engage as the distance to the targets increases or decreases. When working from near to far the rhythm should slow down and when working from far to near it should speed up. Ideally, the targets would be in a straight line extending away from the shooter, but this can't always be done with paper targets due to the front target masking the others, so a slight angle is acceptable. Using steel pop-

## FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED AT ANY RANGE AND FOR ANY MULTI-THREAT SITUATION INCLUDE THE ABILITY TO TRANSITION BETWEEN TARGETS LATERALLY, IN-DEPTH (NEAR-FAR, FAR-NEAR) AND IN COMBINATION (DIAGONALLY.)

FIGURE 1





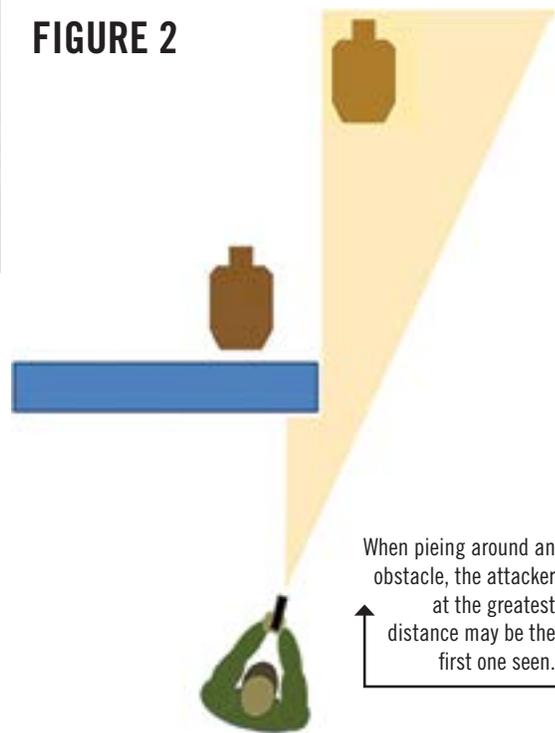
## PRIORITIZE THE THREATS- DETERMINE WHAT ORDER THE TARGETS SHOULD BE ENGAGED.

pers or falling plates would allow the straight line configuration with the added benefit of not being able to fire upon the next target until the current one is accurately engaged. It can also be tactically advantageous to line up your attackers like ducks-in-a-row. Much like the Spartans at Thermopylae, if you can channelize your attackers, effectively reducing the number of weapons they can aim at you and deal with them one at a time, the chances of success are improved. We can add complexity to these two basic transitions by combining them and arranging the targets diagonally to the shooter by simply increasing the lateral spacing of the in-depth targets in Figure 1.

The next piece of the puzzle is prioritizing the threats or determining what order the targets should be engaged. In most "tactical games" or competitions the rules dictate the tactical priority of the targets; usually the closest

target is a greater "threat" than a farther target and must be engaged first (although Sgt. York seemed to have pretty good results going from far to near.) This is a necessity of a standardized system and essential for fair scoring, but does not always reflect tactical reality. Would an attacker with an AK-47 at 75 yards be a greater or lesser threat than another with a knife at 50 yards? I think I will take out the guy with the AK first. This is an example of a weapon-based priority system which is also commonly used. The enemy's use of cover, concealment or angles can also be a major factor in threat prioritization. When pieing around an obstacle (Figure 2), for example, the attacker at the greatest distance may be the first one seen. It does not mean that you continue to pie until you see the closer threat before engaging.

FIGURE 2



When pieing around an obstacle, the attacker at the greatest distance may be the first one seen.

Unfortunately, very few real-life situations are as clearly delineated as those encountered on a range or in competition and it comes down to the individual shooter's ability to read the threat environment and rapidly determine who gets the bullets and in what order. Again, much like the *how many rounds* debate, there is no clear-cut 100 percent reliable answer. It comes down to the shooter's ability to evaluate the situation they are presented with and it is difficult to train with static paper targets.

In Figures 1 and 2, you can see a point is reached where we have to move beyond the static range and begin testing, not only movement and fundamentals, but the shooter's evaluation and decision-making abilities. This is where simulation, force-on-force exercises and scenario-based training come into play. The exercises should be as realistic and controlled as possible. Examples of very complex, live-fire, scenario-based ranges can be found as far back as the 1930s in Captains Fairbairn and Sykes' work *Shooting to Live*. Modern non-live-fire systems include the Meggitt FATS used by law enforcement or the ISMT system used by the Marine Corps.

There are target options for live-fire range training on multiple threat engagements and although there is a myriad of targets out there, the two categories I will focus on are steel and paper/cardboard targets.

### STANDARD B/C ZONE STEEL TARGETS:

- They provide immediate feedback, which reinforces the shooter's ability to call the shot without looking for a hole.
- Allow the shooter to run multiple iterations in a shorter period of time since little time is wasted repairing targets; excellent for repetitive drills.
- Are good for long ranges, again reducing the time to spot or repair targets.
- Not affected by inclement weather.
- Using smaller targets will immediately indicate to the shooter whether they are watching the sights or looking at the target, as the latter results in a resounding "whiff."
- Will last for many training sessions if properly maintained.

There are, however, some downsides to steel targets:

- Unless you are using appropriately scaled small targets they are not good for drills requiring scoring or qualification.
- Most will not stand up to armor piercing (even M855) ammunition or rifle fire inside of 75-100yds.
- They are heavy and relatively expensive compared to other target options.

### PAPER AND CARDBOARD TARGETS:

- Are good for drills requiring accurate scoring to track progress or for qualification.

- If a standard target is utilized, times and scores can be compared to determine efficiency.
- Allows for accountability of shots fired.
- More target options than steel, including photo-realistic and shoot/no-shoot targets.
- Lightweight, easy to move and cheap.

For the minuses:

- Additional time is required to repair or score targets.
- Short lifespan.
- Affected by inclement weather unless protected.

The USPSA/IPSC and the NRA B-8 bulls-eye targets are good, general-purpose paper targets that are standardized (if not anatomically correct) and used for numerous drills and competitive courses of fire. Two others that I use on a regular basis due to their multi-purpose format, which allows multiple drills to be fired on the same target without repair, are the V-Tac Double Sided target and the Pistol-Training.com target. The V-Tac target has an advantage in that it is an anatomically correct target with a USPSA overlay on one side and contains four B-8 bulls-eye targets on the opposite.

The underlying skills for multiple target transitions can be developed utilizing dry-fire practice. Simply arrange targets in your dry-fire area to reflect the configuration described above. Targets of diminishing size can be used to represent targets in-depth or diagonally spaced if you are dimensionally limited and have to paste your targets to a wall. One thing to remember if you are training with a single action or striker-fired weapon is not to rack the action between targets. Due to the number of repetitions required it can lead to the development of a training scar. Simply concentrate on shifting the eyes to the next target and then smoothly bring-



STANDARD STEEL TARGETS PROVIDE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK AND LAST A LONG TIME.

ing the sights into the desired aiming area.

The *El Presidente* was originally developed by Jeff Cooper and has been the standard multiple target drill for many years now. It has been used by many training providers, organizations and competitions to gauge a shooter's ability to move, rapidly identify, accurately engage and quickly transition between targets. It is a drill that is simple in concept, but difficult to execute at the highest standard. The targets are placed ten yards from the shooter and spaced one yard apart. The shooter begins facing away from the targets and on the start signal must turn and engage all three targets with two rounds each, perform a reload, then again engage all three targets with two rounds each. The classic standard for the "El-Prez" was 12 A-Zone hits (on a USPSA target) in ten seconds or less. There are many different variations of

**THE ABILITY TO RAPIDLY ENGAGE MULTIPLE TARGETS, ACCURATELY, IS AN ESSENTIAL SKILL THAT HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS NECESSITY SINCE ONE CAVEMAN DECIDED HE WANTED TO TRY TAKING ON TWO.**

the drill. It can be done with either a pistol or a rifle and the targets can be arranged at greater distances, diagonally or randomly to increase the difficulty of the drill or to focus on different skills.

In order to develop the most efficient transition between targets, there are a few things to concentrate on during your practice sessions:

#### LATERAL TRANSITIONS:

- The eyes always lead the muzzle. We must always positively identify the next target before moving the gun to it.
- Drive the gun to the next target using your knees to pivot the body. This maintains the shooting platform established by your upper body, is much easier to control and helps prevent swinging past the target if you try to pivot from the hips or shoulders.
- Try to establish a steady rhythm to your shots, not distinct pairs on the target with a pause as you move the gun to the next target. This will help you to gain efficiency by utilizing the time the gun is in recoil to drive it to the next target (this is more mental than physical.)
- If practicing on steel and you miss a

target, continue to the next target and then come back to make up your missed shots. It sounds counter-intuitive, but is actually the most efficient method.

#### PIVOTS:

- Again, the eyes always move before the gun and the feet.
- Simply step toward the target. Don't get tied-up on footwork. You want to avoid stepping backwards into an area you haven't visually cleared because this results in stepping in holes, falling off curbs, stomping on the family dog, etc.
- Always maintain awareness of where your muzzle is pointed. It should only be pointed directly at the identified target. Practicing pivots and keeping the muzzle oriented in a safe direction (typically either up or down) until directly addressing the threat is good preparation in the event you have to deal with an attacker while surrounded by other people.

#### TARGETS IN DEPTH:

- Concentrate on finding your pace and the acceptable sight picture for each target.
- Pace should slow when going from near

targets to far targets and speed up when going from far to near.

- Don't be afraid to push the limits to find the extent of your capability, track your times and progress, and work to smooth out the movements.

The ability to rapidly engage multiple targets, accurately, is an essential skill that has demonstrated its necessity since one cave-man decided he wanted to try taking on two. Its relevance in the current threat environment should be transparent. So, train hard, diligently and prepare for the worst day of your life. Ensure that you have adequate safety training from an NRA instructor before conducting practice sessions on your own. ✓

#### BIO

*Ken Javes has over 19 years of military and security contracting experience to include multiple combat and contract deployments to South West Asia. He has served with Marine Infantry and Force Reconnaissance units. He possesses instructor certifications from multiple agencies and organizations, and has trained with some of the top military and competitive shooters in the country.*

## GEAR REVIEW

### VIBRAM FIVEFINGERS

The FiveFingers Classic takes a minimalist approach to bare-footing with a thin, abrasion-resistant stretch polyamide fabric that sits low on the foot for comfort and quick drying. A non-marking, razor siped Vibram XS Trek performance rubber sole helps protect the feet and provide a sure grip over a variety of terrain. They are machine washable and weigh about 6 ounces. You may find them useful stalking prey, working out or for comfort around the house. [us.vibram.com](http://us.vibram.com)

