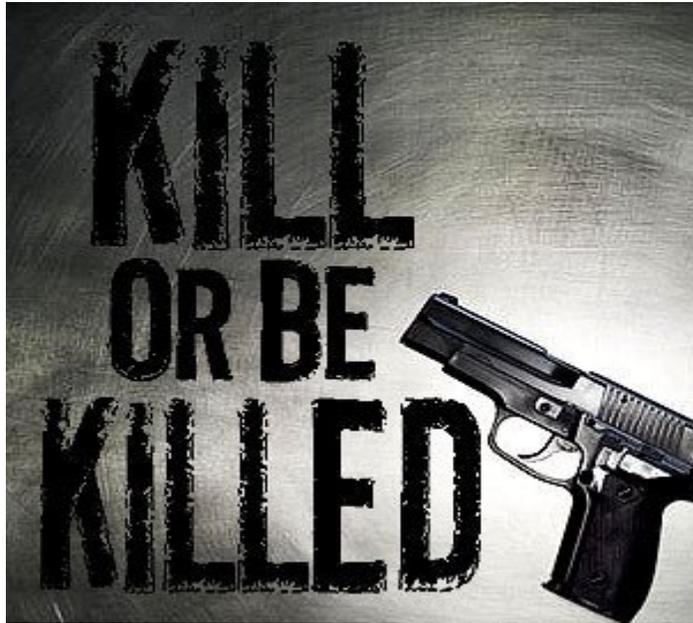


# Kill or Be Killed

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Muay Thaimes editorial note: In his capacity as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, specializing in Military Close Quarters Combat or MCQC, Snake Blocker is in fact one of the very few “professional” knife fighters. We all know that Muay Thai traces its origins to ancient battlefields. While Muay Thai has become a popular sport throughout the world, because of its effectiveness in close quarters combat, the original military application is intact, especially in our own Armed Forces. Where the battle is for life and death, edged weapons come with the territory, not just on the battlefield but also on the street. Snake shares with us here some thoughts on Close Quarters Combat with reference to actual experience.

## Killed or be Killed

Hector Santos came to appreciate the lethality of a knife in MCQC training. Before his deployment to the “Sand Box,” Mr. Santos pulled duty on Gate Watch at the entrance of a military compound. He was assigned a firearm, strapped to his side during the watch. Appreciating and respecting the blade, Hector also carried a personal knife. As he was checking in visitors, one day, a man lunged at his firearm. Mr. Santos instinctively secured the firearm with one hand. Grasping the knife with his free-hand, he stuck it into the assailant. The man slumped to the ground. He was DOA. Hector’s knife stopped not only the assault but also the assailant’s heart. No charges were lodged against Mr. Santos. What happened came within the rules of engagement. Self-defense must be a reflex. Imminent peril does not afford the luxury of even a hesitation to think it through. It took one flick of a blade to get Hector and those nearby out of harm’s way. MCQC training with an edged weapon made it possible for Mr. Santos to act instantaneously, as duty and reality required. The universal lesson for anyone who might be in harm’s way is to always bring a knife to a gun fight.

Tactics have to coincide with experience. It is said, "Those who can, do---those who can't teach." I'd put it differently. "Those who can't aren't qualified to teach." Hector's brush with fate illustrates one of several bogus beliefs out there that don't square with reality. Here are some myths that, in my own experience, fail the test of reality.

1. "Don't bring a knife to a gun fight." – WRONG

Study, after study confirms that an assailant can close the gap and do harm from 20 – 30 feet away, before most victims can make effective use of firearms. The few who are able to draw, aim, and shoot before they are stuck by a knife rarely put lead where it will neutralize the threat.

2. "Knife Fights don't work in close quarters." – WRONG

Attending a knife seminar by one of the most popular instructors at Black Belt magazine, I heard him say, "I don't teach close-quarters knife fights, because they don't work. If someone has a knife, you need to run." That might be sound advice, if running is an option. In reality, there is no option for many victims of edged weapons to escape. Attacks come without warning, at a time and place of the assailant's choice...Even if you could personally get away, what about your friends and/or family? Would you abandon them to save your own skin?

There are ample reports in the news of stabbing victims surviving their wounds. Some of the outcomes that have been documented are: defeating assailants; disarming them; getting possession of their edged weapons and using it against them; withstanding injuries that miss vital organs. There are stories all the time of people surviving armed violence. My partner at Global Knife Fighting, Mica Amelin, got into a taxi cab in the Philippines. Upon taking her seat, a bad guy forced his way into the cab. He sat down, grabbed her and pulled out a knife. The taxi driver hit the gas. This is a common criminal tactic. Mica whipped out her own knife and stabbed the attacker, who gave it up. She then slit the taxi-driver's throat, managed to stop the cab and got out. Mica's reaction was reflexive. An edged weapon made it possible for her to be the first to skewer and slice. There was neither an option for her to escape nor to skip a heartbeat. Her only choice was to do unto others before they could do unto her.

3. "I carry a gun with me, so I don't need a knife." – WRONG

Petty Officer Elkin Pavajeau is known to his buddies as "Papa Joe." He trained with me in Kuwait. "Papa Joe" was heckled by another sailor about our knife training. The heckler told him that a knife would never work against an M-16. Petty Officer Pavajeau said, "Okay. Clear the barrel and magazine clip from your rifle. Then we'll see who's faster." The sailor cleared his barrel and clip. Throwing a training knife at the skeptic with one hand, "Papa Joe" whipped out a real blade on the charge. Confused by the airborne knife, our false prophet took evasive action, which kept him from locking and loading. Before the rifleman could recover, Petty Officer Pavajeau had his blade against the guy's throat. The M-16 never got into the action. Experience made our "wise guy" a believer. His whole worldview changed in 3 seconds. One of ours, he learned without bloodshed that tactics have to coincide with experience.

4. "Most Fights end up on the ground, so I just need to learn Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu." – WRONG

Most fights do not end up on the ground. Most fights start standing up and end with the loser down. The myth that "most Fights end up on the ground" is a marketing slogan. It was given currency by the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) community from what they see in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) shows. I happen to be a big fan of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. I'm avid about the sport—both training and teaching it—but not for the street defense nor for self-preservation. Remember,

you are prohibited from doing the most effective wrestling counters in MMA competitions. You can't poke out someone's eyes; you can't mouth "fish hook;" you can't bite; you can't rip out the private area; you can't stick your fingers or thumb into another's eardrums; and you can't spit in his eyes. In combat and street fighting, you do whatever works. BJJ only works for sports tournaments, law-enforcement and Military Police. BJJ is hazardous in street defense—especially against multiple assailants—guerilla-warfare, special ops, or any kind of armed combat. Only a fool would wrestle someone with a knife... one with a death wish.

My friend, Duane Addison was at a park in Farmington, New Mexico. Mr. Addison is former Army and has wrestling pedigree. He was sitting on the tailgate of his truck, waiting for a friend to show up. A stranger approached, asking for money. When Duane refused, the stranger trash talked him. Words were exchanged. The stranger crept a hand around, towards his own rear. Sensing danger, Duane put a foot in the guy in the chest. It blew him on his back. As Mr. Addison unsheathed a knife, his friend arrived on the scene. Getting right into it, the reinforcement aimed a pistol at the stranger. Their search produced a lethal Bowie knife concealed inside the back of his pants. Had Duane gone BJJ, he would have been in mortal peril of the stranger's blade. Mr. Addison only had a few dollars on him at the time. He asked the stranger, "Were you going to stab me for a few dollars?" The reply was "Yes!"

We do sports for fun and entertainment. No matter how extreme sports push the safety envelope, like any other game, there are rules. They apply in the practice of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Muay Thai, as in Mixed Martial Arts. There is a scene in the movie "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark." He's in a Middle Eastern bazaar. An assailant comes out of the crowd, revealing a scimitar. There is some fancy sword work, meant to establish the assailant's prowess with his weapon of choice. Indiana Jones is nonchalant. He pulls out a pistol and blows the guy away. The message is that rules don't apply in reality. The only rule is "don't lose." Kill or be killed!