

The original Israeli martial art

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Four years ago the martial arts community outside of Israel's borders knew of only one Israeli martial arts system, and that was Krav Maga קרב מגע (in Hebrew *Krav* קרב meaning *combat* or *fight*, and *Maga* מגע meaning *touch* or *contact*). Then, after returning from my third trip from Israel, having been invited by the Israeli government to train Israeli military and police units in my own Reality-Based Personal Protection system, I wrote an article in Black Belt magazine spotlighting Krav Maga and introduced readers to the equally popular systems of the Holy Land such as Hisardut הישרדות system known in Hebrew as *Survival*), LOTAR לוט"ר (deriving its name from the counterterrorist school *Lochama Be'Terror*) (the fighting system for Israel's counterterrorism school), and the original Israeli martial of KAPAP קפ"פ (a Hebrew acronym for Krav Panim I'Panim, ים קרב פנים לפנים *face-to-face combat*), which is alive and well in the modern world thanks to the likes of Lieutenant Colonel Chaim Peer and Major Avi Nardia.

During these past four years, after having convinced Major Avi Nardia that he should go public with the KAPAP system, I have seen this obscure system go from a select few warriors in Israel to a popular martial arts system that has been steadily growing throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, China, Russia, Europe, and even Japan. This was no small feat considering that the spread was due mostly to Avi's many trips away from home and a self-imposed sabbatical away from his Special Operations career and homeland.

Despite each of our busy schedules globe trotting and spreading our respective systems I recently had the opportunity to meet with my old friend at the offices of Black Belt magazine. To my surprise KAPAP is growing in ways that even I had not imagined. I had trained with Major Avi Nardia many times before on three continents, and I had always know that he was a "quiet professional" adopting many techniques from other systems, but the direction he is taking the system demonstrates real wisdom to me. In his own words "we keep it under the radar" we try to get the people that don't look for marketing systems and looking for the "Real Israeli martial art teachers" by doing research and search the credit of these teachers and not only how they advertise and marketing it.

Humble beginnings

On an unusually warm day on December 2003 on the sand dunes of the Wingate Institute Baghdad 8, the military side of the facility, I stood with Major Nardia assessing dozens of Special Forces recruits. It was Major Nardia's job to decide who was a likely candidate for the program, and who would be asked to leave at the end of the day. "What do you think of number 45?" he would ask me.

I would respond, "Yea, he's SF material."

Major Nardia would add, "I put his name down on the list."

There we were deciding the fate of these young warriors as they performed their grueling tasks, such as taking sandbags from one sand dune to another doing double time.

While soldiers were on their run I told Major Nardia that Krav Maga was very popular in the United States. He couldn't believe it. He said to me, "Krav Maga is what we teach our basic soldiers." At the time he could fathom that the outside world was actually interested in the Israeli martial arts. Of course, at the time Major Nardia was one of the top military Krav Maga instructors for not only the IDF, but for the main police academy in Israel as well – the Israel Police Operational Fitness Academy Havatselet Hasharon just outside of Netanya.

Having studied both Krav Maga and KAPAP under Major Nardia, as well as other Israeli instructors, I suggested, "Avi, if the world is interested in Krav Maga then they're definitely going to be interested in KAPAP. After all, this is the system of the Israeli Special Forces. You should come up with a civilian version and teach it."

Major Nardia rubbed his chin and thought about it a moment, but it was an idea that I thought would never materialize.

To my surprise Major Nardia called me a couple of months later and told me, "Jim, I think I'm going to do it. I think I am going to create a civilian version of KAPAP like you suggested. I'm planning on moving to the United States temporarily."

I was stunned. I couldn't believe that he was going to put his career on hold and come teach KAPAP to the world. Yet, I knew that such a move would definitely impact the martial arts and help fuel the "reality-based" movement.

Major Nardia rented out his Israeli house, tied up some loose ends, and then moved his family and two dogs to Los Angeles, California for the sole purpose of teaching KAPAP to Americans. Speaking only broken English at the time, he basically started a new life from scratch. He only knew only a handful of people in California, but he was willing to make a go of it. He told me, "I will give it two years, and then I will see what will happen."

The growth of KAPAP

The first two years for Major Nardia were rough. A couple of his business partners tried cheating him, getting students to enroll was like pulling teeth, and living in a foreign country was lonely at times. However, Lieutenant Chaim Peer was a constant encouragement and Major Nardia knew he had a product that people would want. I knew he had something special, so I set up some KAPAP seminars to help him out, designed his KAPAP logo, and hooked him up with some of my contacts in Europe.

The first two years were also the worse times for another reason. Many people were writing to Major Nardia's website and posting vicious libel on martial arts forums stating that Avi Nardia was a phony and that he didn't have the credentials that he claimed he did. There was a few times that Major Nardia called me to say, "Jim, look at this website. Look at what they are saying. It is bad those people lay if you asked them to show letter that they teach in Israel army or police and counter terror units in Israel they cant while I can do it and show I was official instructor but here at the civilian market they call me pretender ...most of them even never been in the Israeli army and never as instructors !" I knew exactly what he was going through because many times I would get similar attacks through my Black Belt column *High Risk*, even from top martial arts instructors. So, I basically told my friend, "They are scared. You just need to keep on doing what you are doing." I would laugh at these personal attacks because I stood side-by-side with Major

Nardia on some of Israeli's top installations and I saw firsthand the respect that everyone in the police and military had for him. In a year's time Major Nardia finally learned how to deal with the "dark side of the martial arts."

It wasn't long before KAPAP started catching on. Before I knew it Major Nardia was speaking perfect English, he had obtained his green card to work in the country, and his student base was swelling. What was even more amazing to me was that the United States Army, law enforcement agencies, and foreign martial arts schools were contacting him, and people starting adopting the word KAPAP in their vocabulary.

KAPAP comes of age

I had trained with Major Nardia in police trainings, military trainings, and civilian trainings. We had both attended each other's courses on a few occasions. What I had always liked about Major Nardia was his desire to learn, and keep seeking after better techniques regardless of where they came from. For someone who led troops in actual warfare, was on the most elite counterterrorist team in Israel, spent seven years in Japan learning traditional systems, and was one of the top martial arts instructors in his country, he was quite open to changing things that needed to be changed and keeping combat proven techniques and training methods. If anyone challenged his methods he was always the first to be willing to step into the ring and see if they worked or not. I'm not talking about putting on a pair of gloves, I'm talking about a man who would go all out with out any protection. If someone were to say, "We can even break bones" Major Nardia would say, "Fine. I'll do anything." People who know his background and see the look in his eyes know that he is not kidding. Yet, he is one of the safest instructors I have ever met.

As part of Major Nardia's "openness" he teamed up with Brazilian Jiu-jitsu expert and actor John Machado. John, the nephew of Brazilian Jiu-jitsu founder Carlos Gracie, runs a successful school out of Los Angeles and has appeared in several action films including doing choreography for the television series Walker Texas Ranger. Major Nardia admitted to me that KAPAP was very weak in ground fighting and said, "The professor (as he is known to his students) opened my mind. Sport Jiu-jitsu is very step-by-step, but the professor teaches fluid ground combat. His approach is unique, and he knows how to close the gap in a close range fight."

Although John Machado has a solid background in sport Jiu-jitsu Major Nardia's attendance share with him about the tactical world and he started making adjustments himself to reality-based methods. John told me, "My goal is to show people how to incorporate effective Jiu-jitsu, and not insert my own ego. We 'play' with KAPAP and Jiu-jitsu moves until we come up with a solution for a certain tactical situation. The martial arts is not just about competition. There are rules in competition, but what KAPAP needed was more."

Techniques that Major Nardia and Professor John Machado have merged and molded are wrist grabs, locks, take downs, escapes, and lots of training with modern weapons. Of course, for the professionals arrest and control techniques are a main stay.

Another member of the team that has contributed to the modifications that KAPAP is going through is Albert Timen. He brings his tactical skills and training to the table. He is best known in Israel for actually taking down a suicide bomber in a hand-to-hand combat situation in the port city of Haifa. The terrorist came from the troubled Arab town of

Jenin and had planned to blow up a crowded disco. This incident is used as a case study for counterterrorists to this day.

Many people are under the assumption that the Israelis “know it all” when it comes to fighting having been at constant war since the birth of the nation in 1948, but to Albert nothing could be further from the truth. “Not everything is in Israel, so we have to look outwards as well when it comes to the truth of combat. This is our big gain when it comes to KAPAP. When we did away with the egos, then our training skills went up. As such, our goal is to share knowledge and develop the system to reflect that. This is what modern KAPAP is about.”

The future of KAPAP

The attacks of 9/11 changed not only the world, but the martial arts. After serving as a counterterrorist agent I developed the Reality-Based Personal Protection system in 2003.. With my involvement with Major Avi Nardia and Lieutenant Chaim Peer KAPAP came onto the scene and is flourishing. As such, even top instructors like John Machado are teaching more reality-based to those wanting to learn real self-defense, and that is why he has teamed up with KAPAP. John said, “I see myself as a contributor. Ever since 9/11 I have been thinking more tactical. I now work on the mental conditioning for real combat, and it is even changing my system.”

Major Avi Nardia just left the West Coast and is now living in the State of New York. This move is to help spread the system, plus it makes for a shorter hop to Europe and Africa where he and Albert Timen often teach.

Major Nardia has told me that his instructors are doing a good job in making KAPAP a world system, and in a couple of more years, if not sooner, he is going to go back to Israel to stay. As for me, I am happy that I helped make it happen.