

THE MOZAMBIQUE DRILL: FALLACIES & SOLUTIONS

By Tony Zanti

There is a shooting exercise, known as the “Mozambique Drill”, which allegedly was generated as consequence of a true fact: an AK47 toting terrorist was killed by a third shot to the head, after the first two rounds that hit the chest area produced no result. Whether the terrorist was wearing a bullet resistant vest is immaterial (may be he was not), but the episode came to signify the necessity of shooting in the head someone who endures shots being fired to his center mass, as if he would be wearing a ballistic protection.

The problem with shooting an adversary in the head during a gunfight is that the person is highly mobile in such a circumstance, especially after being already hit to the chest – whether or not the bullets penetrated the chest. Moreover, the head is small and relatively protected by robust bones. Hitting the head exactly at the center or through an eye, may be a problem. However the Mozambique Drill, which is also referred to as ‘failure to stop’, is a good exercise of eye-hand coordination. It is also simplified as body-body-head, indicating the location where each shot should hit the target. It should also be said that pistol bullets rarely have the power to determine an immediate stop.

There are spin-offs of the body-body-head concept. One is the body-body-head-head, that elaborates on the idea that the head is hard to hit, so it must be shot at by a double tap of varied speed, depending on the distance from the target. Clearly, a head shot must be aimed. Close Range is really the limit from where a head shot should be tried. Over the seven yard mark, it takes incredible shooting skills to hit a target as small as the head, while also being under the effects of combat stress. Even when shooting within Close Range, the operator should be aware of whom is in front, behind, and at the sides of the target, as rule # 4 requires. Pistol shots to the head of a hostage taker are a Hollywood fantasy.

Another version is the body-body-hip-hip. After the initial failure to stop, here the two additional shots are directed at the hip area, in the attempt to hit the pelvic girdle, formed by the sacrum at the center and two pelvic bones at the sides, that are large and thin, and they are designated to hold the human skeleton upright. When the pelvic bones are shattered by a mechanical force – such as a projectile passing through – they cannot hold the structure of the body, which then collapses to the ground. This would work in theory, but the shooting must be accurate, in that both bones must be hit, because hitting just one bone would leave the other one capable of sustaining the weight of the body. Then, even if downed, the adversary armed with a firearm can shoot from the ground as well, thus rendering useless this tactic.

Others suggest that it may be best to shoot at the whole live Armed Target, until it goes down for good, or it runs away from the scene. After all, scared people do scary things (or, at least this is one way to justify the fact you put too many holes in someone who was hell-bent on harming you). But, it may not be appropriate to do so, in the largest percentage of cases, because of missed shots and ricochets: you are responsible of any and each bullet that leaves the muzzle of the firearm you are shooting. Quite a responsibility, in that not even half of the shots fired in a gunfight reach their intended target, even at close distance.

In fact, hitting a small target, such as a human head, is quite difficult. We are talking about solid hits, here, meaning that the bullet or bullets must hit about the center of the head, rather than peripherally. The forehead, the cheekbones, the teeth and the jawbone constitute pretty hard surfaces for a pistol bullet to penetrate, unless the angle of impact is near zero degrees. Bullets have bounced off the above mentioned parts of the human cranium, even when fired from up close. The same goes for the pelvic shot, because the pelvis is not readily identifiable from the outside and it may be grossly missed, resulting in wounds to the thighs or lower abdomen, which may not be readily incapacitating.

Most of all, as noted by many Training sources, the Mozambique Drill may be flawed from the start, since it advocates a pause after the first two rounds are exploded – pause that is used by the shooter to lower the handgun and assess the situation – before the final round is directed toward the culprit's head. Very theoretical, not practical at all! Since Training must resemble the way the operator should react in real life events, such an exercise, executed literally, would hinder the operator's reactivity and minimize his chances of Survival. After all, even the act of shooting till the bastard is down and done, sounds like a better alternative.

A true tactical alternative to this conundrum may be represented by two simple Techniques taught at the JustForce Training Center: the 'Controlled Trio' and the 'Up-Saw', both of which dispose the shot group centrally on the paper target, from Center Mass to the head. A distance at the limits of Close Range (seven yards) renders necessary the use of the 'Controlled Trio', that is three shots fired at regular and brief intervals, where each shot is fired as soon as a clear sight picture can be seen. The 'Up-Saw', instead, consists of a series of shots aimed at the center of target, starting from the solar plexus area and ending at the head. Three shots are a minimum, and five shots a maximum, depending on the distance and other objective and subjective conditions. When the threat is closer (at about half that distance), four to five shots can be delivered by 'hammering' (i.e., shooting rapidly, without waiting to see the front sight enter the sight picture), though maintaining a firm grip while elevating the two hand hold upward.

It is not an easy task at first, but it is a taking exercise, that can be mastered in a relatively short time. Also consider that in the real world, this result is very hard to

obtain, because of the compulsory startle reflex each bullet would produce on the body, thus causing a probable folding of the trunk and bending of the knees. Because of this sudden movement, and the fact that the human target may turn to one side, the bullet will disperse in a pattern that is much different from the one obtained at the shooting range. Just keep in mind that shooting drills performed in absence of induced stress and without the self-instilled persuasion of being up against the Armed Target, constitutes plain Active Shooting: he who shoots is not a target, and the target is not armed. Reactive Shooting is exactly the opposite.