



## MMA FOR NAVY SEALS

**The controversy surrounding the US Navy SEAL special forces unit's recent decision to bring MMA into their close-combat program has little to do with the training's effectiveness.**

**By Paul Cale**

Just as the above heading may have caught your attention, mine was caught recently by an article with the title 'Controversial MMA training causes rift in Navy SEALs program'. Having had inside exposure to the Navy SEALs program during a sharing-of-information trip to the United States just after I had created the Integrated Combat Centre (ICC) at 2 Commando, Holsworthy Barracks, I was privy

to the SEALs reasons for wanting to move into MMA-style training as opposed to the reality-based course-style training they had been doing for over 20 years. Their thinking was sound; however, it was important for me to show them what we were doing back home within the Australian Special Forces Close Quarter Fighting (CQF) program and how we were developing a blend that was

proving to be more effective than one over the other. I have spoken before about this blend, but I see problems arise now and again for organisations trying to maintain the optimum mix – there is a little bit of an art in getting that right.

The key to solving this problem is achieving a fluid blend of the two; fluid in that the element of training change depending on the objectives, much in the same way a BJJ player would need to adapt a sport jiu-jitsu guard to a vale tudo-style guard if they were to fight in MMA. The BJJ guard has a general structure and follows general principles and concepts; however, the methodology and application of the guard must be adapted to the environment in which it will be used.

For example, a sport jiu-jitsu player does not need to be concerned with blows when applying the guard, but in MMA, striking and body-slamming tactics are legal. The guard has its place in MMA; the fighter does not discard it but they do need to adapt it. This is a must in developing a complete fighter who can work from underneath another fighter – whether they want to be in that position or not, they have an answer to a problem that is likely to happen if grounded. In the same way, Kinetic Fighting (KEF) teaches practitioners how to apply the guard to a street or combat environment. Again, we need to adapt the guard for soldiers and law enforcement personnel, taking into account the presence of weapons. Regardless of whether the attacker is armed, the soldier/officer will be armed with their own weapons, and if they are not consistently being accounted for in training, there is obvious potential that they will be used against their owner when on duty or operations.

Outside of the sporting environment, we must take into account that if we are going to use the guard to deal with being caught under an attacker, we need to be aware that from this position all of the threats found in MMA

are present, along with all soft targets such as the groin and joints. The greater threat of weapons adds to the problem – theirs and yours. Then there's the potential complexity of other armed members of your team being involved if you are not caught alone, as well as others working against you in support of the attacker, with some or all of the enemy potentially being armed. There is a lot to consider, as when dealing with weapons there are so many internal targets exposed from the guard position to an attacker with a knife, for example.

Regardless, all forms of fighting are about finding a method to deal with chaos. And the name of the game is mastering a few high-percentage techniques (those that work to a greater extent most of the time) with exposure to differing environments rather than a never-ending collection of techniques with limited application.

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This has become a fundamental core value of the KEF program, especially now that this style of training had expanded beyond just the Commandos and has been adopted by the Australian Army as a requirement for all Infantry Corps. For this reason, more than ever, we must remain on course by keeping our desired 'end state' in view when developing and delivering our training.

The more I read the article about the clash between the Us Navy SEALs programs, the more it becomes clearer that they were having a clash of personalities and egos rather than a real issue with the training.

The concern was over SEALs organising MMA training with gyms that they have connections with, and the money involved for that training. That's none of my business.

Training is my business and using mixture of training methods and protocols proven in various hands-on environments works well, so long as we adhere to one simple rule: Why we train drives how we train.



## About the author

Paul Cale has been involved with the Australian Army for thirty years either as a soldier or currently as a preferred contractor with the majority of that time being a member of Australian Special Forces (SF). Paul's company draws its specialist contractors from the two pinnacle SF regiments being the 2nd Commando (2 CDO) and Special Air Service (SAS). Paul himself is a founding member of 2 CDO and drove new capability forward by rewriting the SF Close Quarter Fighting (CQF) course and co-founding the 2 CDO Integrated Combat Centre (ICC). Paul deployed five times as a Commando to Afghanistan and Iraq with his personal hand to hand combat experience and that of his Commando Regiment guiding the core development of Kinetic

Fighting. Paul also created the Infantry Integrated Combat (IIC) Course now being used by the entire Australian Infantry Corps.

Recently, Paul was appointed Head Coach of the Australian Defence Force Martial Arts Association (ADFMAA) and is continuing his work enabling soldiers to develop their unarmed combat skills

Paul is also a Specialist Consultant to the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and co-founder of the AIS Combat Centre. Paul currently maintains a position on the Combat Centre's leadership team.

Paul has been involved in combat sports and martial arts since the beginning of the eighties and holds a total of eight black belts being Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Kudo Daido Juku, Kyokushin Karate, Yoshinkan, Tomiki and Gyokushin Ryu Aikido as well as the Olympic combat sports of Judo and Tae Kwon do. Paul was the first Australian to earn a Kudo black belt and heads the International Kudo Federation Australia (IKFA) as Branch Chief.