

# Gracie News

## How MMA Impacted Police Work

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While there is always an event that changes the landscape of every era in law enforcement, none have had a greater affect than what we are experiencing currently, the combined forces of two ostensibly unrelated phenomenons: Cell phones and MMA.

I can remember as a child in the 1970's, I would hypothesize with my friends the eternal question, who would win in a fight between a Karate guy and a Judo guy. We would debate whether the Judo guy, i.e. "the grappler" can takedown the Karate guy, i.e. "the striker". We would try to imagine how this hypothetical fight would go down. The only point of reference we could go on was the fight scenes of T.V.'s Captain Kirk and James West, as well as the occasional playground brawl between two flailing children. However, my friends and I were not the only ones that were ignorant of how a real fight occurs between trained fighters. I saw how the whole country gasped in 1993 as the Gracie Family brought MMA to American viewers. A real fight between two trained individuals did not look anything like we imagined it. Then, in the ensuing 19 years, the whole country got a continuing education on how two trained individuals fight each other. They also got to see all the individual styles in action and how each style approaches a fight. Viewers, through the course of hundreds of fights, began to notice how some techniques tended to work more than other techniques. They also began to mimic these techniques. They found that some of these mimicked techniques, such as the Guillotine and Rear Naked choke tended to be functional even with no training. Just by watching Spike T.V. they found they could choke out their friends in living room wrestling matches.

With this genie out of the bottle, law enforcement personnel had a new challenge. They no longer had the advantage with their tactics training. Before MMA, the average officer's 4-8 hours of training per year offered them an upper hand against suspects. Now the average Joe's limited MMA knowledge gives them a more realistic view of a fight than the average police defensive tactics system. Therefore, police departments must adapt to the changing landscape and offer their officers a more effective option.

### **Enter the cell phone**

When I started Police work 20 years ago, there was always the possibility of someone, who happened to have a 20-pound camcorder balanced on their shoulder, catching the action of a police arrest. This was the case with George Holliday, who was in the right place and time with his camcorder when the police pursuit of Rodney King happened to end right outside his apartment. Now, everyone routinely witnesses people quick drawing their smart phones to video record any incident transpiring in front of them. Officers must always assume they are being filmed. No matter how justified their force election might be, the public will judge the officer's actions based on whether it looks bad on the video. For example, anytime an officer is striking a

suspect with his baton, it looks bad to the average person. The public outcry can exert a tremendous amount of pressure on police and city administrators, elected leaders as well as the court system. Cops must be "camera friendly" in this new environment.

### **The Solution**

Now we have two independent trends that are converging on the officer at the same time. First, the offenders who are more dangerous by being more functional in a real fight and second, the increased scrutiny of a constantly filming public who expects the officers not to appear too aggressive in response to this new threat. The officers need a proven street effective system and they must look humane or "gentle" while using it.

What better solution can we find than "the gentle art"? Jiu-jitsu literally means "the gentle art" in Japanese. It is not based on out-striking and overpowering the opponent. Gracie Jiu-jitsu is an even "gentler" version of its Japanese ancestor as the result of Helio Gracie's improvements to the art. He found that the Japanese Jiu-jitsu required too much power and athleticism for his 5'4" 140 pound physique. His lifelong quest of constantly refining the art led to it being based on only leverage and natural body movements. It's now the farthest thing from a power based, aggressive system as possible. Coincidentally, the finesse of using leverage happens to be extremely camera friendly. To the average Joe, it looks like the kind officer is only "controlling" the suspect by "holding" him. However there is much more to this system.

The whole reason for the system's popularity with the martial arts enthusiast is that it works. The typical martial artist does not care that Jiu-jitsu looks gentle, only that it is proven to allow them to defeat their opponents. There are countless documented cases of smaller, less athletic people defeating bigger, stronger, more aggressive opponents. This is the perfect fit with the police industry which generally hires people of all sizes. The 5'4" officer must first be able to overcome the physically superior offender and get him in cuffs, and he or she must look gentle doing it. This method can reduce the risk of injury to not only the officer but also the suspect. Since teaching Gracie Survival Tactics (G.S.T.) in my agency, there have been some field applications that illustrate this. A typical example of this is a suspect violently resisting arrest by fighting with the arresting officers. In the past, this would mean that the officers would have to escalate to more injurious forms of force. For example, in a recent case, while serving a weapons related warrant, one of our SWAT officers obtained the position of a G.S.T. vascular neck restraint against the resisting suspect, which caused the suspect to immediately put his hands behind his back and comply before the officer could apply any pressure with the restraint. Who can deny the benefits of this? With the suspect's guns nearby, if the officer was ineffective at controlling him, either the officer or the suspect might have shot their opponent. These effective G.S.T. techniques are good for the officers, the police department, the community, and even that suspect (who is uninjured).

The Gracie Academy not only teaches the art as based on the founding principles of leverage over athleticism, but also teaches Gracie Survival Tactics which is a, sub system of Jiu-jitsu specifically tailored to train law enforcement officers of all sizes to not only survive an attack by a bigger stronger opponent, but to also be able to successfully handcuff them from any position they end the fight in. The camera friendly and tactically effective techniques resonate with officers and administrators alike. Remember, current case law holds officers to the objective

reasonableness standard [Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)]. Who decides what is objectively reasonable? The courts do. Who comprises the courts? Juries are comprised of regular people and it is rare that a judge will have street experience as a police officer. So do not underestimate the power of being camera friendly. Remember that when the state court acquitted the officers in the Rodney King case, the Mayor of Los Angeles stated: "The jury's verdict will not blind us to what we saw on that videotape". Even the sitting president of the United States said: "Viewed from outside the trial, it was hard to understand how the verdict could possibly square with the video." Statements like these were indicative of the public opinion. It was only after the public outcry, brought on by the inflammatory nature of the video, that the officers were tried again in federal court. We must ask ourselves if the result would have been the same had the arrest appeared more benign, i.e. the suspect being held in a position of control.

When an officer attends a GST course they will not only get a lot of Jiu-jitsu but they will be constantly reminded of intricacies of the proportional force concepts that the community and courts currently hold the officers to.

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