



Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management System's drills, techniques and training gear are all designed to be used as realistically as possible. If all your training is done in an open area without obstacles, how "reality based" can you be?

THE S.P.E.A.R. SYSTEM

CUTTING EDGE, REALITY-BASED COMBATIVE TRAINING

BY ROB PINCUS

You can probably pick up any magazine in this industry and find at least two advertisements and a feature article about a combative system or technique that claims to be superior in some way to everything else out there. I am not aware of any of them that are more reality based, easier to assimilate or easier to retain than Tony Blauer's S.P.E.A.R. System™.

S.P.E.A.R. stands for *Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerated Response*, and it contains important applications for police officers, military operators, housewives, kids or anyone else interested in being able to survive an aggressive close quarters ambush. Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management Systems (BTCMS) may be the most progressive self-defense training company in operation today and, without a doubt, they have some valuable information to share with anyone concerned about effective self-defense and realistic combative training.

Blauer has been instructing and researching close quarters fighting for over twenty years. His training practices and combat theory have evolved over this time because of his constant research and thought on the topic.

The S.P.E.A.R. System evolved from

what Blauer refers to as "The Sucker Punch Drill." During the drill, Blauer was the subject of surprise haymaker type attacks from a variety of angles from his training partner. Blauer, a life-long martial artist, found that trained responses (such as the classic "wax-off" forearm block) were pitifully ineffective against real ambushes. He also found that when he was truly surprised, his natural flinch response did a much better job of protecting him from the attack. This drill, combined with several years of further research and training, are what lie behind The S.P.E.A.R. System™ and the theory of Flinch Conversion—taking your body's hard-wired response to a sudden attack and converting it into a platform for an effective counter attack.

If you find the results of the Sucker Punch Drill hard to believe, think about every dash-cam video of a truly aggressive attack that you've ever seen. If you're not in law enforcement, you may have seen video of spontaneous responses to attacks from security cameras or on some reality television show. Neither I, nor anyone I've talked to, have ever seen a victim successfully defend himself from the initial ambush with a trained technique against a truly motivated and violent attacker. What you've probably seen is flinching, covering

up and, if the officer survived, it was most likely a result of his or her mental and physical toughness or the bad-guy's change of mind as anything else. "More untrained people defend themselves every day from violent attacks through sheer will and indignation than there are trained people who will get attacked in a year," is one of Blauer's favorite points during courses. We spend too much time watching tapes of officers losing fights as it is, we might as well try to learn as many practical lessons from them as we can, and one obvious lesson is that the human flinch response is an instinctive reaction.

While Blauer is fond of saying that The S.P.E.A.R. System™ is a bridge to whatever defensive tactic technique you are currently proficient in, BTCMS preaches the simple doctrine of CWCT—Closest Weapon, Closest Target—and it makes sense. The human flinch response brings the hands and arms up to protect the head during an ambush. Once we are in this position, how much sense does it make to go to a martial arts or other trained stance and respond with a typical strike or kick? By combining the flinch response (spontaneous protection) and the CWCT principle (accelerated response), Blauer developed the Spear Technique, which uses the forearms as

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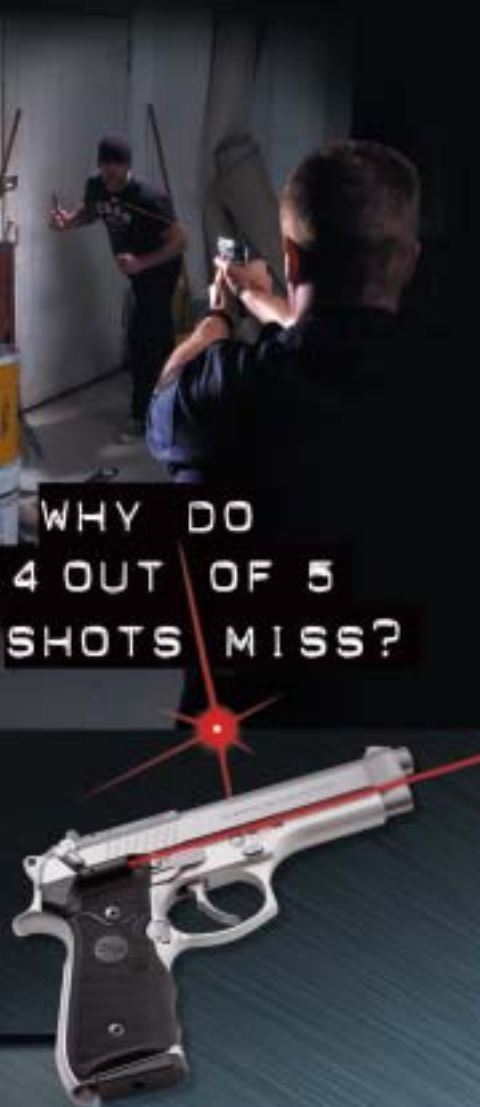
weapons and places the arms in the general shape of a spear—answering the question about which part of the program came first.

In addition to S.P.E.A.R. System™ courses for law enforcement and military personnel, BTCMS offers ground fighting and weapons applications of their research as well as their instructor development courses. BTCMS also consults with a variety of companies and units on training and tactical issues. During 2003, BTCMS worked closely with Federal Express to develop their Cockpit Defense Program. After researching a variety of programs, Federal Express chose Blauer primarily because they were convinced that his programs were easy to learn and retain.

Although he has never served in the military or with any law enforcement agency, Blauer has been accepted by some of the most elite units around the world. Blauer has also had the forethought to consult with many members of these units to research applications of The S.P.E.A.R. System™ for close quarters shooting engagements and the lessons of confined space combatives from the real world of lethal combat.

One of the most interesting facets of BTCMS training techniques is the combination of their "Be a Good Bad Guy" principle and their Simulation Instructor Development program. I attended the latter course at the Northeastern Technical College in Wisconsin early last year. The school, which runs both law enforcement and corrections basic academies as well as other schools, features an adjustable-walled, scenario-training house and is run by retired police officer Robert Willis. Willis has been known for years as a top-level officer survival and tactics instructor. His building was a perfect setting for Blauer's High Gear™ Simulation Course.

Blauer preaches two important facets of close quarters training during this course that he believes are vital to effective simulation: replication and strict choreography. Replication enables students to experience an attack over and over again. Effective replications of realistic attacks and realistic responses (which, of course, begin with the flinch response) develop the student's ability not only to weather an ambush, but also to start recognizing the pre-contact cues to an attack. That is the point of the choreography. By instilling *Be a Good Bad Guy* principles in all participants, the attacks repeated during drills (known as *Ballistic Micro-Fights*) are realistic. As an example, if someone launches a real attempt to tackle someone, they would almost certainly lower their center of gravity prior to making their move. It is imperative that the role-player in the attacking position utilizes such pre-contact cues for the training to be valuable. If your defensive tactics drills



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start with the bad guy in a boxing or horse stance, they are not realistic. Would you really stand within arms reach waiting for a punch to be launched? Blauer demands that the officer start in a typical non-violent position and that the bad guy start from a position that does not present an overt threat. If the attacker is any closer to action during a replication drill, the student is deprived of the opportunity to learn pre-contact cues which are his key to picking up on (and surviving) a truly violent ambush.

BTCMS concepts are taught to civilian personnel through the Personal Defense Readiness™ Program (PDR). Several times a year, Blauer holds three-day seminars for martial arts instructors who are interested in adding his theories to their programs. I was able to attend a PDR Seminar last year in Montreal. The list of attendees included full time martial arts instructors from over a dozen different styles as well as several men and women for whom instructing was only a part-time occupation or hobby. It was also interesting that several people were attending their second or third PDR Seminar in order to sharpen their edge and learn what new concepts and teaching techniques Blauer had developed.

The integrity of the BTCMS instructor level courses is ensured by the requirements for certification. Unlike most courses, you cannot simply pay a fee and attend a course to get certified as a S.P.E.A.R. Law Enforcement Instructor or PDR Coach. After the course, members of BTCMS Core Team collect and review several items from students before recommending them to Blauer for full certification. Each student must submit typed and organized notes from the course (my notes from the five-day S.P.E.A.R. Instructor Course took up more than twenty pages), a sample lesson plan and another written assignment, which must demonstrate their understanding of BTCMS concepts. After almost a year, I know of only five individuals from a class of twenty who followed up and were certified as S.P.E.A.R. LE Instructors. While it is unfortunate that more students do not follow through, this process helps keep The S.P.E.A.R. System™ sharp.

In addition to live courses offered all around the world, BTCMS offers a variety of training videos for both law enforcement and civilian study. Although no certifications are available through distance education, those interested in being exposed to Blauer's concepts and unable, or not ready, to attend a course can pick up a lot of good information and get a feel for the vast variety and universal applicability of BTCMS training. There is also a significant amount



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of material that can be read on their website at www.tonyblauer.com.

The first exposure I had to BTCMS was their High Gear™ training suit. As an Impact Reduction Suit, High Gear™ allows non-lethal CQB and force-on-force training to be taken to a new level. While at Camp Blanding with the St. Johns County (FL) Sheriff's Office, I was able to utilize this suit during some very intense training at the MOUT site. I don't think there is any other suit that allows a similar level of mobility combined with injury protection. It is important to note that High Gear™ does not completely insulate the wearer from feeling impact. Blauer operates under the idea that training should occasionally hurt, but never injure—I agree. If you're training in a suit that allows you to, for example, take full force blows from impact weapons without feeling anything, how realistic is your training? High Gear™ is designed to give an adequate level of protection from serious injury in all areas when both subjects are equipped with full suits and engaging in full contact training.

Almost two years later, after attending several Blauer courses, reviewing most of his videos and spending a considerable amount of time with Blauer and his staff discussing all aspects of their programs and close quarter training, I have begun integrating a great deal of S.P.E.A.R. System terminology and BTCMS lingo into my training. Blauer says that a number of people over the years have told him that he has given them labels and tools for explaining things they've known to be true for years. Count me among them. "People sometimes say that my stuff is common sense, says Blauer, "but the truth is that it's *uncommon sense*—it only seems simple *after* it's been explained."

Obviously, I've spent, and continue to spend, a fair amount of time looking at and talking about other combative training programs. I haven't found another system that is more universal or reality based. I hesitate to write such a glowing review here in S.W.A.T. Magazine, but the truth is the truth and I believe that anyone who is serious about reality based training and effective close quarters self-defense should be familiar with Blauer Tactical Confrontation Management Systems. ©

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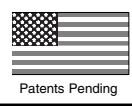
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