

## Shooting without Sights

There is a way of looking at the world that I call the “either-or” mentality. Whenever you offer something new, it is automatically assumed that something old must be discarded or has become “wrong”. The army adopted ATGWs so it got rid of its 106mm Recoilless rifles. Now people are realizing that this may have been as mistake since there is also a need for something that can blast buildings and machine gun nests at close range. The Russians, on the other hand, created platoons that used both SPG-9s and ATGWs.

Shooting without sights is an additional technique, not a replacement for aimed shooting. Gun magazines like to run “aimed vs pointed” articles and debates, which fills a lot of column inches. Often discussion between the two sides gets very heated and even abusive, but these writers are losing the point. If you look at Applegate's book “Kill or be Killed”, he has some very nice illustrations of supported positions for aimed pistol fire.

Shooting without the sights is a technique for when there isn't time to use the sights! It is also useful for when the sights are damaged, misaligned or just not visible.

I'll describe the basic method for pistol shooting first, since it illustrates many of the basic concepts, and handguns are more likely to be used in situations where there is no time for sight use.

### **The Fairbairn-Applegate (FA) Pistol method.**

- The shooter adopts a semi-crouched position, exactly as he is likely to adopt if being shot at.
- The gun is gripped with the handle well into the web of the hand. Fairbairn talks of griping the gun like it weighed 30lb,

while Applegate uses the term “convulsive grip” FM 23-35 suggests “Grip the weapon tightly until the hand begins to tremble; relax until the trembling stops. At this point, the necessary pressure for a proper grip has been applied.”

- The “ready position” has the gun arm pointing forward and down at an angle of about 45°. The gun is in line with the body's centre line. When firing the arm is straight with the elbow and wrist locked. Initially the student keeps his arm in this state when in the ready position. When he has got into the habit of the arm being like this when he fires he can relax the wrist and elbow when in the ready position.
- The shooter keeps his “Nose and Navel” on the same vertical line. He can look up and down but to look or fire to either side he turns at the waist, moving his feet as needed. Such movement should be familiar from many martial arts.
- To fire, use three locks. Lock your vision onto the target. Lock your wrist and elbow and swing the arm upwards. When the pistol comes up between you and the target, fire immediately -preferably fire a double tap.

That, basically, is it. FA method is not for hitting bullseyes or a particular shirt button. It is to put a couple of bullets in a man sized target as quickly as possible before he kills you. For this reason the inventors were against grading a student --he either qualified or he didn't. His confidence that he could hit what he shot at was more important than any paper score.

Useful training aids include:-

- Toy guns that fire rubber tipped darts.
- Paintball guns.

- Guns loaded with wax bullets loaded in a case with a primer but no powder. This works better in revolvers since a double tap can be fired.

All of the above weapons can be fired against suitably protected personnel for more realistic training. These weapons may also be fired against mirrors.

- Air pistols can be used to learn FA method.
- Guns with a laser sight system can be set so that the laser activates as the trigger is pulled, allowing practice without ammunition.

A dark area can be used for training, the instructor directing a torch spot onto earth banks and the student placing a double tap in the spot. Under such conditions it will be too dark to use conventional sights.

Although the FA method is taught initially using one hand, there is no reason why a double handed grip can't be used. The usual isometric grip of pushing with the firing hand and pulling with the support hand with equal force can be used.

FA shooting is a fast system for close range shooting. Applegate claims that it can be used at ranges as great as 50ft. However, the method is learnt at close range and the shooter builds up to shooting at this range in at least three stages.

### **FA method and the draw.**

Strong side draw -as soon as the gun is clear of the holster the gun is thrust forward into the ready position and swung up to fire.

Weak side shoulder holster and crossdraw. The gun is brought to ready position by straightening and locking of the

elbow and then swung up to fire.

### **Quick Kill (QK).**

This is sometimes called “instinctive shooting” -though obviously it is a system that is learnt. This method was taught to US servicemen during WW2 and the Vietnam war. As far as I know it is not currently taught.

### **QK for Longarms.**

Hold the pistol grip of the rifle so that the tang is in the “V” of the hand when the palm is open -this is much the same as the way the pistol is held for FA shooting. The forend is held well forward, the fingers well out of the way of the line of sight.

The rifle is shouldered. The head is kept erect. The shooter does not make a cheek/stock wield, just enough contact with his cheek or chin to form a reference point. Both eyes are kept open. The eyes look down a line parallel to that of the barrel. Any changes of aim are made by bending or twisting of the waist. The relative position of the eyes and gun do not change. Looked at another way, you forget about the gun and just move your gaze around by waist movement. This method can get so accurate that practiced shooters can hit an aspirin or hand thrown BB

The traditional training aid for QK shooting is a BB gun without sights. As well as being economical and allowing a large number of shots to be made, this has the advantage that many shooters can see a BB in flight. Later an M16 can be used if the sights are concealed by black tape. It doesn't really matter if the gun is firing 5.56mm or 22LR training ammo, the technique is the same.

It will occur to some readers that with the QK method the bore points at a point some distance below that which the eyes are directed at. Depending on the range, the bullet will impact a varying distance below the boreline. For an M16 this will be

around 3.5” at 100m and 5” at 200m. For combat shooting at the ranges that QK is usually used at this doesn't usually matter. Shooters that use the QK method for skeet and exhibition shooting train themselves to look above their intended target. There is some merit to using the head as point of aim for QK shots in combat.

- The brain naturally tends to look at faces.
- At extreme close range such a point of aim puts the round into the least armoured target that offers fast incapacitation.
- At longer ranges point of impact will be the neck or upper torso.

### **Hip Shooting.**

The QK firing position can quickly be assumed when the rifle is held crossbody, muzzle down and butt on the shoulder. There are positions that allow the weapon to be fired even quicker, although with less accuracy.

The weapon is held at hip level or high assault position, barrel roughly parallel to the ground ahead. The line of the bore is kept parallel to the line of sight. If you look up, you raise the muzzle. If you turn you pivot at the waist. Obviously this works best if the gun is close to the centre line. Some folding or retractable stocked weapons can held on the centre line.

Weapon position is corrected by observing the impact of rounds. Hip firing is a hasty technique, so when ever possible the weapon is fired from the shoulder.

Firing from the hip can also be with handguns. There are several ways to do this. The “cowboy” method brings the boreline

to intersect with line of sight -this requires considerable muscle memory and practice. A simpler technique is to position the gun to aim parallel to the line of sight. When the gun is at the hip this means the point of impact will be several inches to one side of the point of aim, but at a range of under two yards this will not matter as much. The method is more accurate if the gun is positioned over the centre line, held at either waist or chest level. This has aspects of FA method, but also some of QK.

Hip firing can be done with both hands on the handgun - though it can be argued that if you have time to do this you might as well bring the weapon up for aimed or FA fire. Also, such shooting is often done at very close range and the other hand needed to defend against close attack.