

COMBAT FOLDER TACTICS

What You
Don't Know
Can Get
You Killed!

Combat folders are fast becoming the most popular knife on the market. The trouble is, most people don't know how to use them.



By W. Hock Hochheim

Edged-weapon retailers report that about seven out of every ten knives sold in the United States over the last few years were folding knives, the big increase resulting from the interest in, and popularity of, the "combat folder." The typical folder, however "combative" in name or violent-looking in shape and design, within reasonable blade lengths, is legally carried in every state.

All walks of life, from janitors to CEOs, are clipping on these combat folders. Police officers, firemen, guards and even soldiers are augmenting their standard-issue equipment with this weapon/tool. Despite this vast prevalence, few Americans know how to actually use *any* knife for self-defense against criminals and enemy soldiers, least of all, this prolific combat folder.

Folding knife or fixed-blade, your knife has to fit into real-world situations. Some martial art systems teach their signature brand of knifefighting in varying degrees. Thanks to the healthy margin of error afforded a knife, many strategically unwise and unsound techniques appear, and can sometimes be successful. Out of every average 100-hour block of instruction in a typical "karate" school, you may only receive about 30 seconds of knife training, and that usually is your empty-hand-versus-armed-attacker situations.

The average 100 hours in a Filipino school, considered by many to be the premier knife martial art, fleshes out to about 20 hours with a knife, since that art also must study single stick, double, stick, hand-to-hand and so on. Some confound the practitioner with never-ending, "artsy" and complicated drills, producing "drill-masters" who have only an

“The combat folder has changed the face of personal protection around the world.”



You must be able to quick draw your folder under combat stress (1-3).



Even though this cyclist has no pockets, she can still carry a folder. Note the neckline where the knife is within easy reach.

ners on the handle of your folder. Each corner will influence the type of draw you can execute. Before you purchase any folder, experiment to see if you can carry it where you want, plus draw it out quickly to your favorite combat grip, be that saber or reverse grip, and edge facing out or in. The clip may cause you to draw your knife in a new or uncomfortable way. Quality folders offer a “screw-in” option that allows you to customize the carry and screw the clip top into any one of the four corners. So, if you “do the folder math” the carry site, plus the corner clip attachment, equals a certain type of quick draw-grip.

If your folder comes in a sheath,

abstract connection to real-world, life-and-death combat. Few arts address the unique characteristics and special needs of the pocket folder.

Once you get your folder open, it then “becomes” the fixed blade, and all these other typical knife techniques may apply, but folders require additional scrutiny and training in these three areas: carry sites; quick draws; and “folded” folder combat tactics and techniques.

Carry Sites and Quick Draws

There are primary carry sites for the quickest of draws such as belt line, armpit, and pockets. Secondary carry

sites may take a second or two to “dig” the knife out, such as from inside the boot or from under the shirt on a neck chain. No matter where, practice drawing and opening your folder from your sites. Your life may depend on it.

While carry sites and quick draws also are vital issues with the fixed blade, how and where you carry your combat folder is even more complicated and important. Most folders have clips attached to the handle. If a clip exists and your folder does not require a sheath as a few do, make sure the clip is adhered to that corner of your folder most conducive to your type of quick draw.

There are four potential clip cor-



As you are attacked, you draw your folder. In this case, a simple pocket carry (1). You deflect and grab the attacker and start opening the blade (2). Once open, you counter-attack to defend your life (3-4).



Knife groundfighting is a common real-world occurrence, and folder quick draws must be practiced under stress from a ground position.



If you use the folder as a palm-stick style weapon, make sure the knife extends beyond the sides of your hand.



The Vaquero (bottom) is too wide to be used as a palm stick or brass knuckle and could cause injury to your hand. A Gerber Applegate (top) might be fine for your hand size to execute such support striking.



A "palm-stick strike" to the side of the face sends the attacker back in a hurry.

you must "pack" the knife into its carrier so you can draw it in your preferred fashion.

Folder Combat

Military vets have reported that in the heat of close-quarter combat, sometimes the first strike after their quick draw had to be with the pommel of their fixed-blade knife. There wasn't even a second to turn the blade into action! They hit first, then put the blade half into play.

The same time restrictions are true with folders. In combat, you will either quick draw, open and use the blade, or you will not have time to open the blade in the heat of action. You may have to first use your folder closed for a pre-emptive strike or defensive block, then open the knife. A closed-combat folder can be used two ways, as a "palm stick" type of blunt weapon, or as a "brass knuckle" type device.

With knives, as with pistols, you should know when and where your weapons can be used best, and under what circumstances. If you have to use your folder as a "brass knuckle," make sure the folder's shape will not injure the inside of your hand when you strike. For example, the Cold Steel Vaquero, a personal gift to me from Cold Steel President Lynn Thompson,

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is one of the most vicious and biggest folders I've seen and one of my favorite carries on high-risk assignments. I wore this awesome knife when I was hired to help protect ex-President Jimmy Carter on his 1998 book tour, augmenting his Secret Service detail. It has accompanied me on several bodyguard/security assignments such as with John Walsh of "America's Most" wanted, supermodel Cindy Crawford, and country singers Tanya Tucker and Lori Morgan. The Vaquero is my "big gun" combat folding knife, if you will. I drew and popped open the Vaquero once on a private investigation case and its sheer, wicked presence alone warded off two hostile people.

But because of its width, I know I simply cannot use it in a brass-knuckle application. Even using it as a palm stick hurts my fingers. Hit a heavy bag with your knife in hand and check out this "width vs. injury factor".

Remember: Your purchase of a combat folder is first and foremost because it is a knife. It has a blade. Things such as palm-stick and brass-knuckles applications are only secondary support strategies. The combat folder has changed the face of personal protection around the world. We must school ourselves in its realities and its optimum uses to maximize our street and battlefield survival. 🗡️

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