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MARTIAL



ISRAEL MEETS BRAZIL: John Maclean demonstrates how Jujitsu grappling can mesh with a gun. Weapons training is a modern system of the 21st century.

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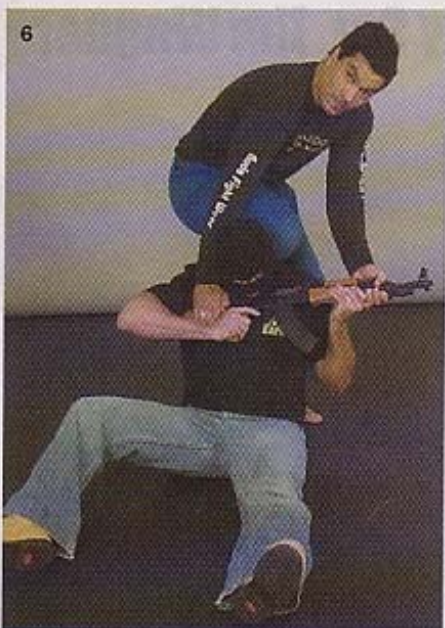
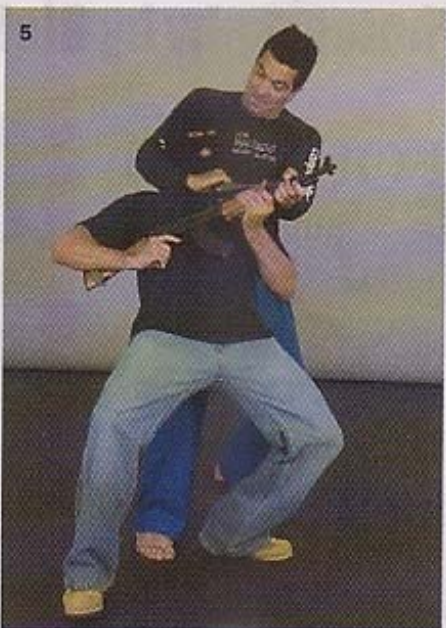
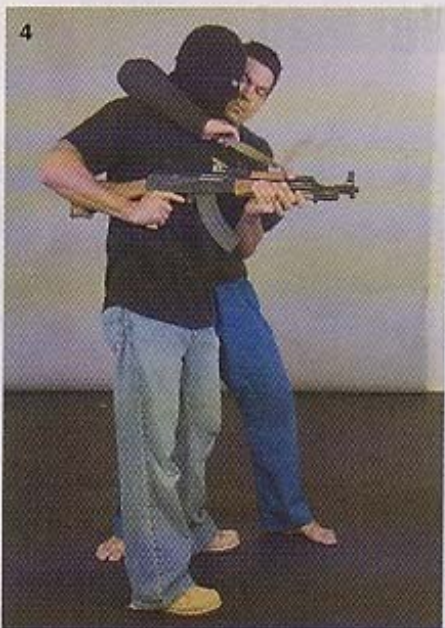
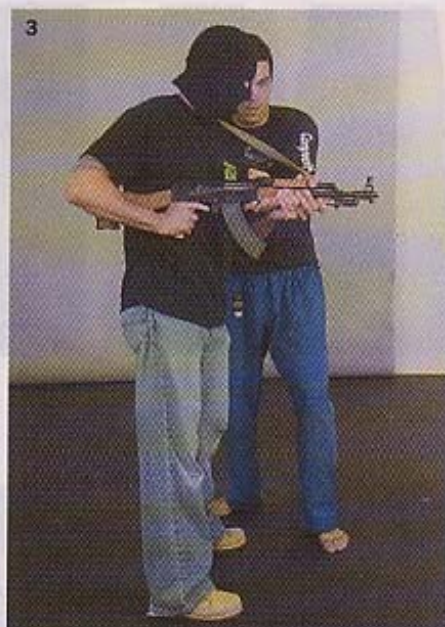
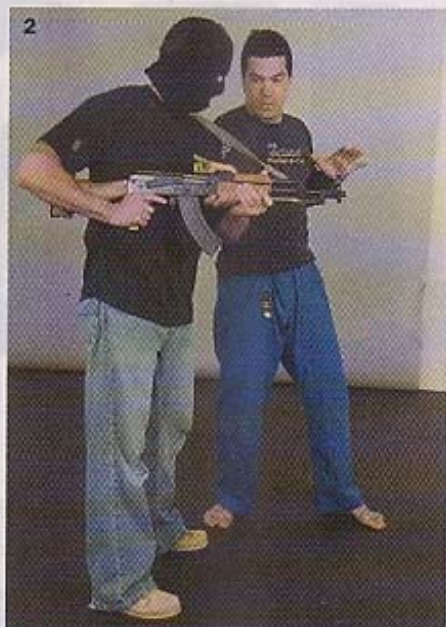
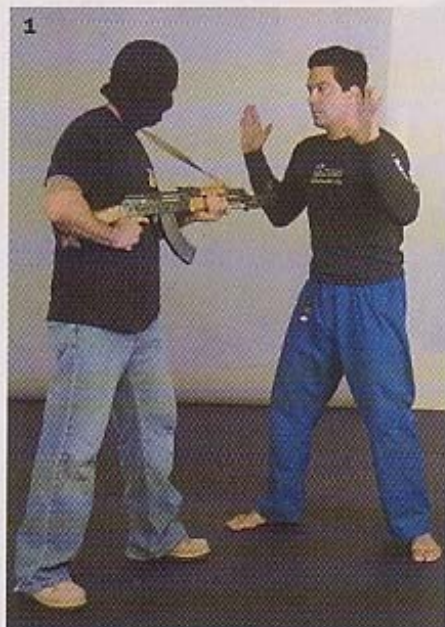
ALLIES

Israeli Kapap Joins With Brazilian Jujutsu to Create an Unbeatable Art of Self-Defense by Sgt. Jim Wagner • Photography by Rick Husted

FOUR YEARS AGO, the martial arts community outside of Israel knew of only one Israeli art: *Krav Maga*. Then, after returning from my third trip to Israel, I wrote an article for *Black Belt* that introduced other popular systems of the Holy Land, including *lotar*, the fighting system of the nation's counterterrorism school, and *kapap*, Israel's original close-quarters-combat style.

After I convinced kapap expert Maj. Avi Nardia to go public with the system, it's gone from being the domain of a select few warriors in Israel to a growing





martial art in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Japan. Accomplishing that was no small feat, especially when you consider that most of the work was done during Nardia's frequent trips abroad and during his sabbatical from his special-operations career in Israel.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Nardia again at the offices of *Black Belt*. To my surprise, he said kapap is actually flourishing around the world. After having trained with him so many times, I knew why he's often referred to as a quiet professional, but the direction he's taking the system demonstrates true wisdom.

Humble Beginnings

On an unusually warm day in De-

AK DEFENSE: John Machado (right) is confronted by a rifle-toting thug (1). Machado moves off the line of fire as he slaps the weapon to the side with his right hand (2). He latches onto it with his left hand (3), then reaches around the man's neck with his right arm until he can grab the sling (4). The Brazilian-jujutsu expert uses the sling and his right forearm to choke the opponent (5). When the man falls, Machado uses his right leg to increase the pressure (6).

cember 2003 at Israel's Wingate Institute Bahaad-8 facility, I stood with Nardia assessing dozens of special-forces recruits. His job was to select those who would make good candidates for the program, as well as those who would be asked to leave at the end of the day.

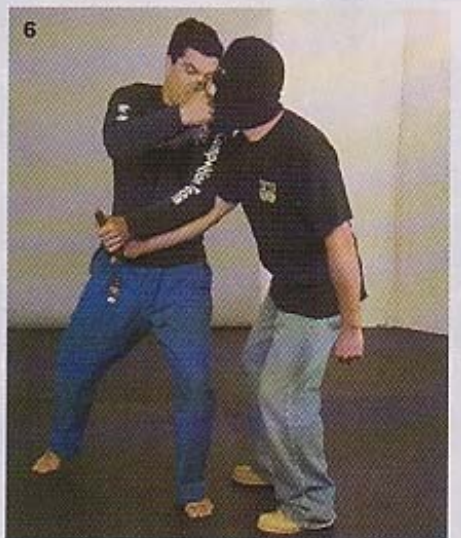
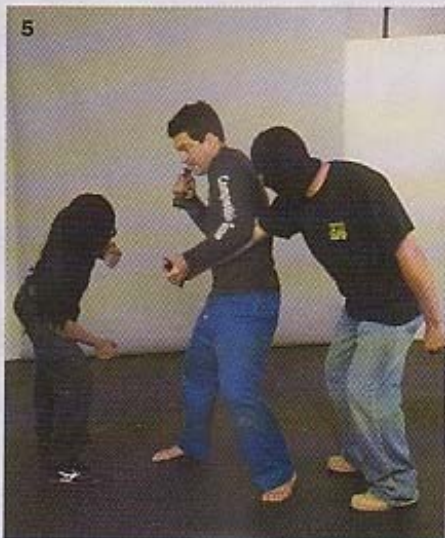
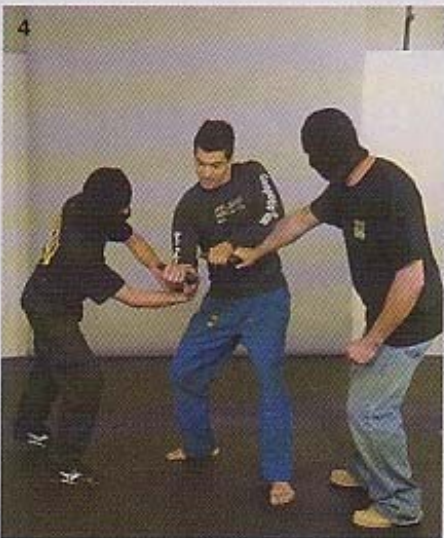
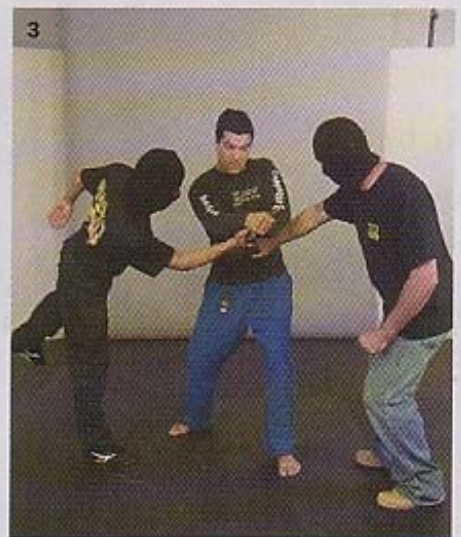
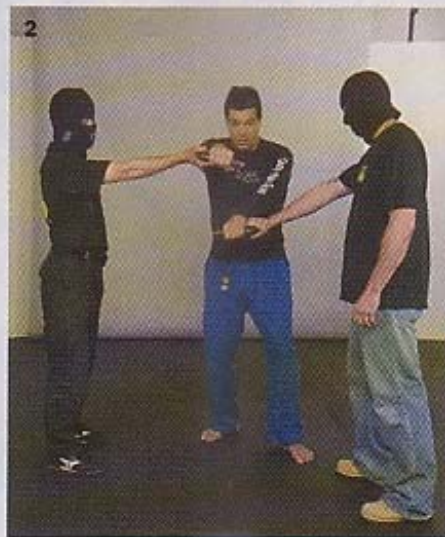
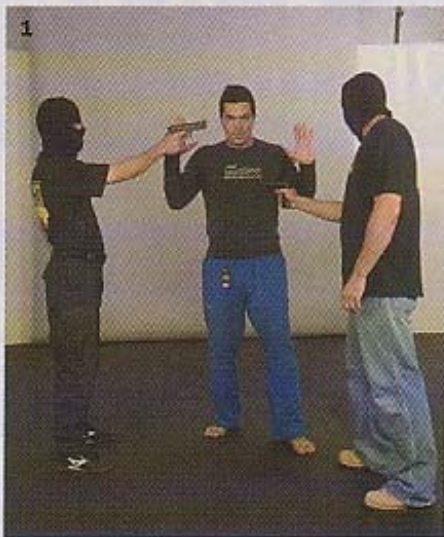
"What do you think of that one?" he would ask me.

I would respond, "Yeah, he's special-forces material."

Nardia would then say, "I'm putting his name on the list."

While the soldiers strove to accomplish their grueling task—carrying sandbags from one dune to another while doing double time—I mentioned to Nardia that Krav Maga was very popular in the United States. He seemed surprised that the outside world was interested in the Israeli martial arts.

Knowing that he was one of the top



NEVER LET GO: John Machado is accosted by two gunmen, one aiming high and one aiming low (1). He grabs the weapons simultaneously and shoves them away from his body so they point at the assailants' bodies (2). He then twists and yanks the guns, breaking the men's balance while keeping the muzzles pointed at them (3). Machado leverages the gun from the hand of the man on his right (4) and uses it to punch him in the head while controlling the other man's arm (5). He then punches the remaining attacker (6).

military Krav Maga instructors for the Israeli Defense Force and the Israel Police Operational Fitness Academy near the city of Netanya, I offered a suggestion: "If the world is interested in Krav Maga, people will definitely be interested in kapap. You should come up with a civilian version and teach it."

Nardia rubbed his chin for a moment, and I thought that was the end of it.

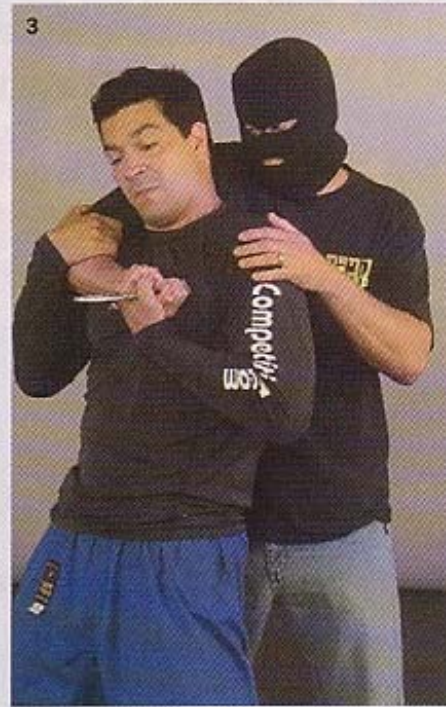
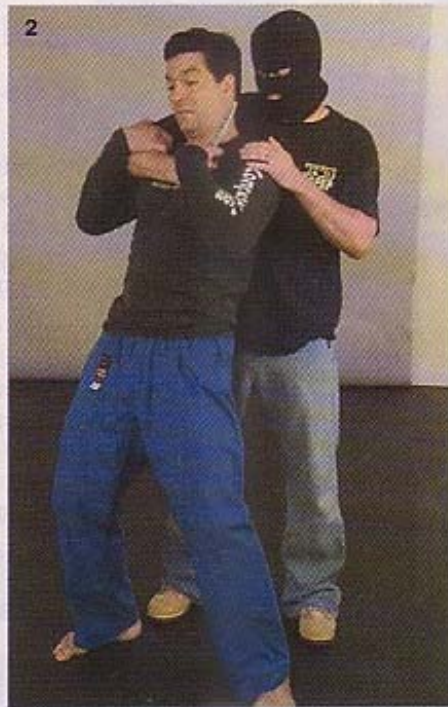
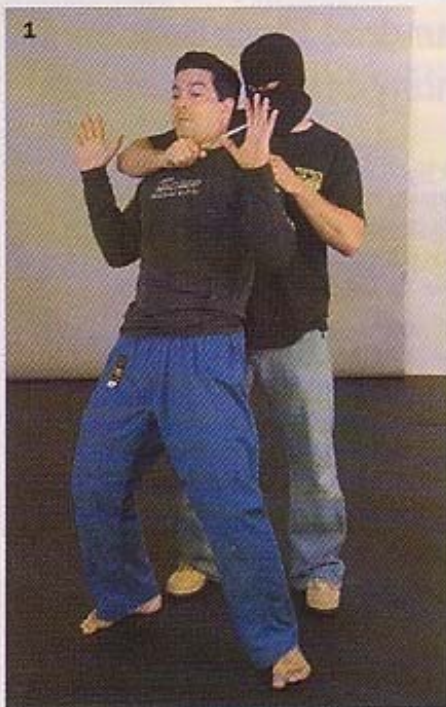
A couple of months later, Nardia called. "I think I'm going to do it," he

said. "I'm going to create a civilian version of kapap like you suggested. I'm moving to the United States temporarily."

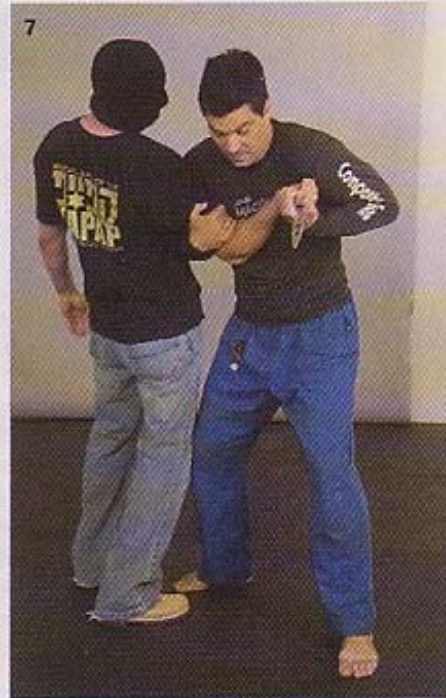
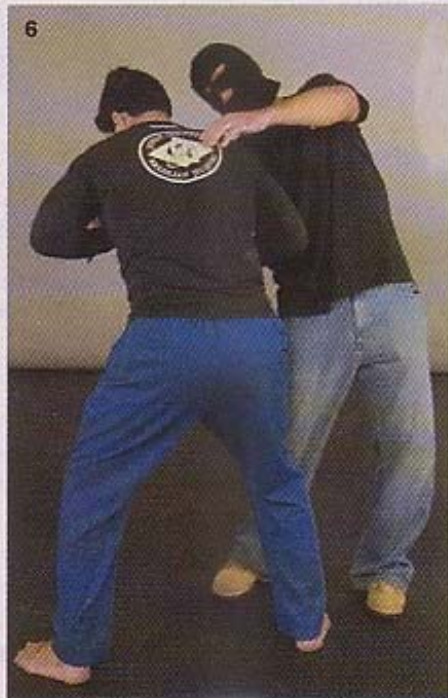
I was shocked to learn that he planned to put his career on hold and take kapap to the world. At the same time, I knew the move would impact the martial arts community and help fuel the reality-based self-defense movement.

Shortly thereafter, Nardia rented out his house in Israel, tied up some loose ends and moved his family and two dogs to Los Angeles. Speaking only broken English, he was starting a new life in a new land. He confided, "I will give it two years, and then I will see what will happen."

“ I was shocked to learn that he planned to put his career on hold and take kapap to the world. ”



SHARP OBJECTS: An attacker holds a knife to John Machado's neck (1). Machado uses his left hand to grab the weapon and his right hand to control the man's elbow (2). He pulls the blade away from his neck (3) before head-butting him (4). The martial artist then "opens" the assailant's arm by pivoting clockwise (5-6). Reverse angle: Machado controls the limb by pinning it to his chest (7), then twists his torso to direct the blade into the assailant's shoulder (8).



Growth of Kapap

His first two years were rough. He crossed paths with a couple of partners, discovered that getting students to enroll was like pulling teeth and found that living in a foreign country could be lonely. However, fellow Israeli martial arts authority Lt. Col. Chaim Peer offered constant encouragement, and Nardia was confident he had a product that people would want—if only they knew it existed. I arranged some kapap seminars for him, designed the art's logo and hooked him up with some contacts in Europe. Slowly, word spread.

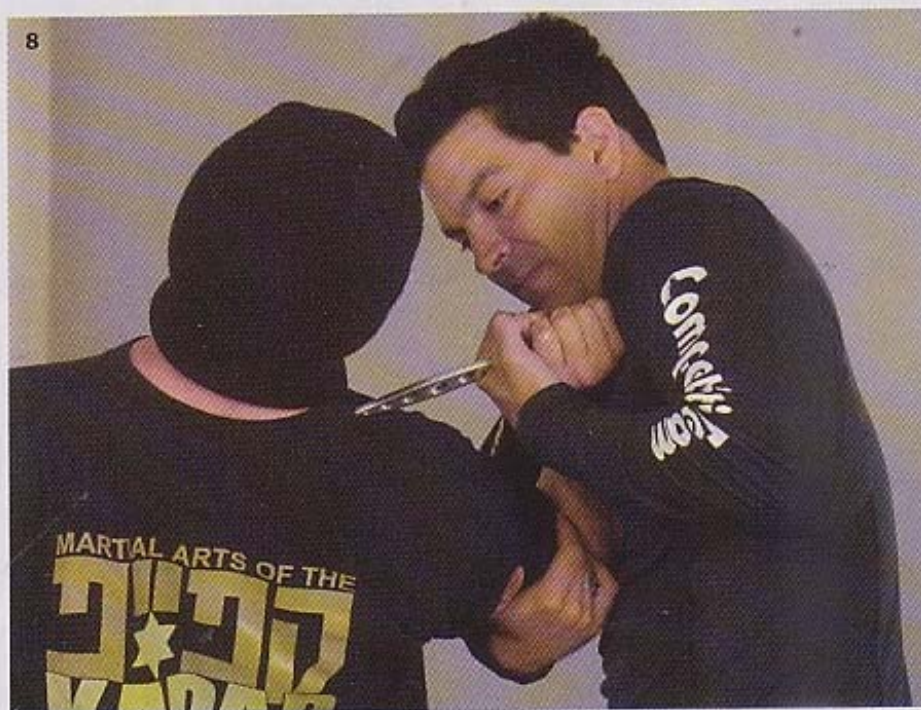
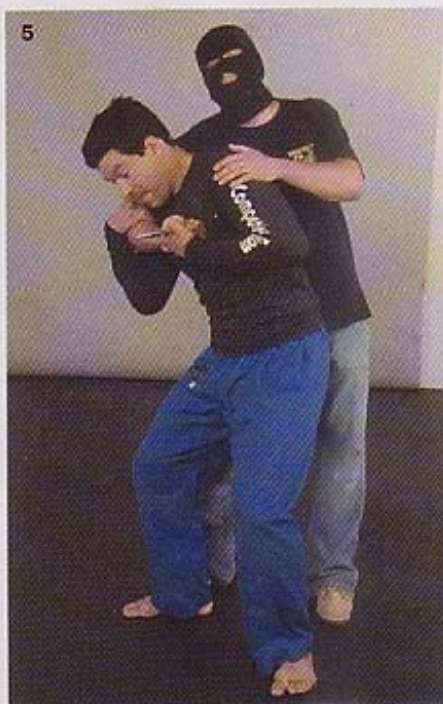
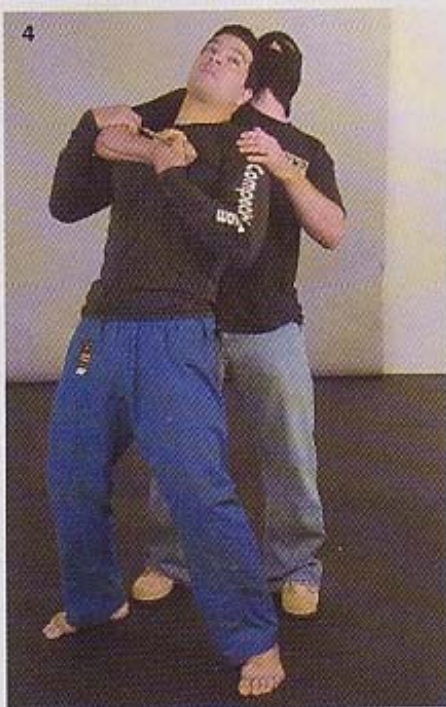
Still, times were tough. People would post vicious messages on the forums on Nardia's Web site, often saying that he lacked the credentials he claimed to possess. I knew exactly what he was going through because I often sustained similar

attacks inspired by my *Black Belt* column High Risk. My message for Nardia was straightforward: "They're scared. Just keep doing what you're doing."

Personally, I found the attacks laughable because I'd stood side by side with

“If a martial artist wished to challenge Nardia's methods, he'd be invited to step into the ring and throw down. The bouts weren't friendly sparring matches with pads and gloves; they were all-out battles with no protection whatsoever.”

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Nardia at some of Israel's top training facilities, and I'd seen the respect that the police and military had for him. It took him a year to learn how to deal with those denizens of the dark side of the martial arts.

Coincidentally, that's around the time that kapap started catching on. Before long, Nardia was speaking excellent English and tending to the needs of a swelling student base. The U.S. Army and numerous law-enforcement agencies had been in contact, and people across the

country were adding the word "kapap" to their martial arts vocabulary.

Coming of Age

During the many times I trained with Nardia, the thing I admired most was his desire to learn—the way he always sought better techniques regardless of their source. Even though he'd led troops in combat, served on an elite counterterrorist team, spent seven years in Japan learning the traditional fighting arts and built a reputation as one of the top martial

arts instructors in Israel, he was open to change. Whenever a new problem cropped up, he would search for a solution and, once it was properly tested, add it to his system.

If a martial artist wished to challenge Nardia's methods, he'd be invited to step into the ring and throw down. The bouts weren't friendly sparring matches with pads and gloves; they were all-out battles with no protection whatsoever. If someone said, "We can break bones," Nardia would say: "Fine. I'll do anything." One look into his eyes would convince you that he wasn't kidding.

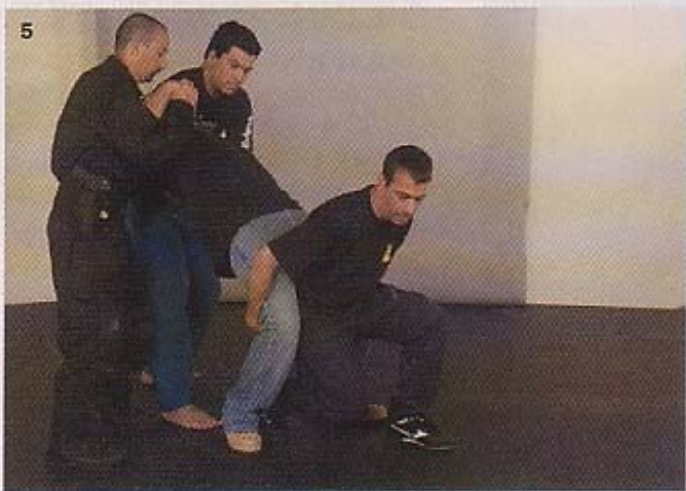
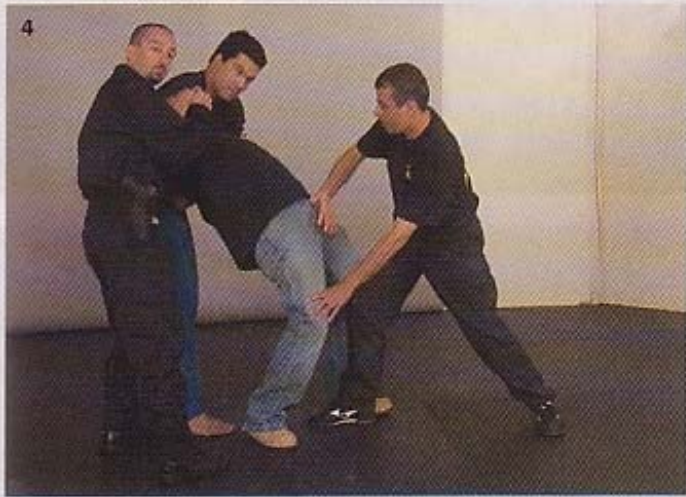
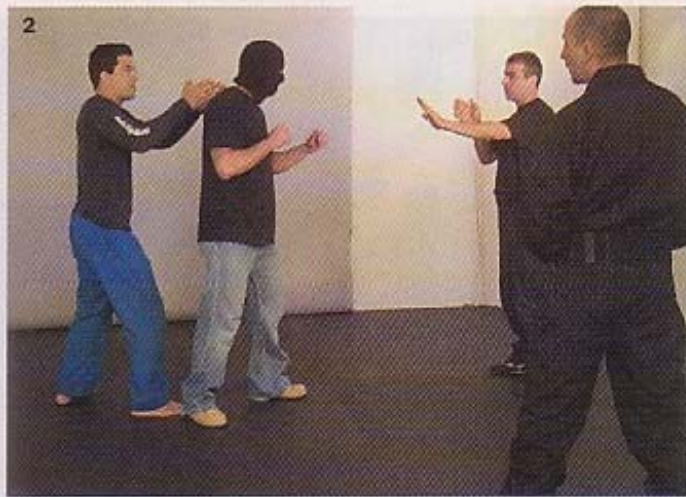
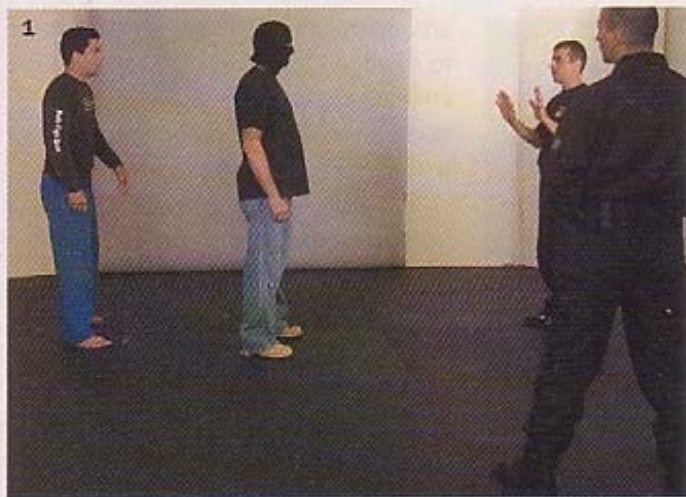
The most recent manifestation of Nardia's open-mindedness has seen him team up with Brazilian-*jujutsu* expert John Machado. The nephew of grappling legend Carlos Gracie, Machado runs a successful jujutsu school in Los Angeles. After noting that kapap was weak on the ground, Nardia established an instructional relationship with Machado. "The professor opened my mind," Nardia says. "Sport jujutsu is very step by step, but the professor teaches fluid ground combat. His approach is unique, and he knows how to close the gap in a close-range fight."

Although Machado had a solid background in sport jujutsu, his work with Nardia has dragged him into the tactical realm, as well. After a few adjustments to his mat repertoire, it seemed like a match made in heaven. "My goal is to show people how to incorporate effective jujutsu [techniques] and not insert my own ego," Machado says. "We play with kapap and jujutsu moves until we come up with a solution for a certain tactical situation. The martial arts are not just about competition. There are rules in competition, but what Kapap needed was more."

The techniques that Nardia and Machado focused on included wrist grabs, locks, takedowns, escapes and weapons defense. Of course, when crafting a course for law enforcement, arrest-and-control techniques received additional emphasis.

More Fine-Tuning

Another expert in hand-to-hand combat and weapons training has joined the



TAKING OUT THE TRASH: The terrorist is verbally engaged by Avi Nardia (far) and Albert Timen (near). Meanwhile, John Machado sneaks up from behind (1-2), grabs his head while covering his eyes and pulls him backward (3). Machado wraps his right arm around the man's neck and left arm, Timen restrains his right arm while searching for other enemies, and Nardia strikes him in the groin (4). Timen then effects a wrist lock as Nardia positions himself between his legs (5) for the carry (6).

kapap team and contributed much to the curriculum. His name is Albert Timen. Best-known in Israel for an incident in which he tangled with a suicide bomber before capturing him alive in the port city of Haifa, Timen brought in a world of tactical training and experience.

Like Nardia, Timen is defined by his humility. He knows the martial artists in his nation don't know it all—despite the current popularity of the Israeli fighting

systems. "Not everything is in Israel, so we have to look outward, as well, [for] the truth of combat," he says. "This is our big gain in kapap: When we did away with the egos, our training skills went up. Our goal is to share knowledge and develop the system."

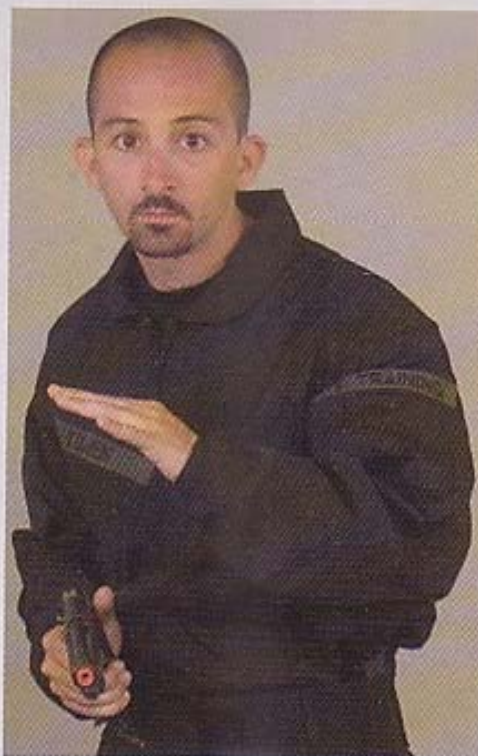
Future of the System

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, changed the martial arts as much



Avi Nardia

as they did the world. Even renowned instructors like Machado, men who've climbed to the top in the competitive martial arts arena, have begun teaching material that's more reality-based—



Albert Timen

which is why he decided to team up with Nardia and Timen. "I see myself as a contributor," Machado says. "Ever since 9/11, I have been thinking more tactical. I now work on mental conditioning for

real combat, and it's even changing my system."

Nardia recently moved to upstate New York, where he'll continue his efforts to spread kapap. A fringe benefit is that the new home base will facilitate his frequent flights to Europe and Africa, where he and Timen have cultivated a substantial following. Nardia reports that the instructors he's trained are doing an exemplary job of teaching kapap and thus helping prepare the world to meet the challenges we all face in the 21st century. ✖

About the author: Sgt. Jim Wagner is a police and military defensive-tactics instructor and a civilian reality-based personal-protection trainer. For more information about kapap, visit www.blackbeltmag.com and click on Community, then Black Belt Authors. To view additional kapap techniques or to read Wagner's November 2002 article about the Israeli martial arts, visit www.blackbeltmag.com.