

Dealing with knife threats and attacks

Dan Richardson

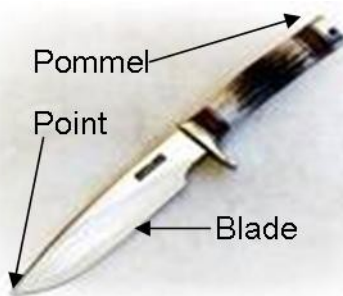


In recent times there has been increased awareness of the threat of knife crimes brought on by heightened media reporting concerning the spate of teenage stabbings both in London and across the rest of the country. The purpose of this article is to highlight how we, as practitioners of Krav Maga, would deal with various situations involving knives or knife like objects. Rather than try to go into specifics of individual techniques (which would require the writing of a book in and of itself) the article looks at the principles involved in order to give an overview of what we should be doing.



Whilst, throughout this article the term knife will be used to define the weapon, it is important to remember that any

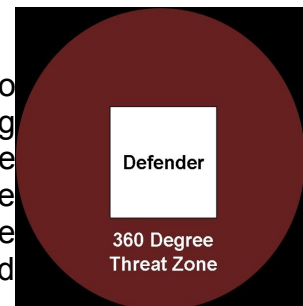
knife like object (such as screwdrivers, broken bottles/glasses or pens to name a few) is dealt with in the same way.



The knife itself can be broken down into three separate parts that can be used to cause harm to an individual, the blade and the point are the two that everyone can immediately recognise but many people forget about the handle or pommel which can also be used to strike with. This leads to there being three types or ways of attacking with a knife as well, slashing with the blade, stabbing with the point and crushing/blunt force impact with the pommel. This

article will look at each type of attack separately.

As well as having separately defined types of attack we also have separately defined types of threat, long range (including extremely long range), medium range and close range (including extremely close and with complications). These threats can be anywhere in a 360 degree circle around the defender. As with the attacks each type of threat will be looked at separately in this article.



It should be noted that this article looks at everything from the attitude of a civilian defender and not from a law enforcement, military or VIP protection detail point of view so control/restraint/arrest is not something that is covered. That is not to say that what is discussed is not relevant to those professions but that the way problems are approached/resolved are different within those professions. From a civilian outlook disengaging and escaping at the earliest possible opportunity is the best conclusion to any attack, though there will be occasions when this is not possible such as in confined spaces (lifts) or when accompanying other people (especially the elderly, infirm or young). Even during these more difficult circumstances you

should be looking to disengage and escape or acquiring an equaliser as soon as possible whilst counter attacking as strongly and continuously as possible.

Knife threats

The first thing to remember when discussing knife threat is that the attacker is using the weapon to coerce something from a target using the threat of physical violence rather than just applying physical violence immediately. **The attacker wants something from you.** It is up to each person as an individual to determine at what point the demand of the attacker is no longer something they can comply with. If they just want your money, and you believe they will then leave without harming you, then the best advice would be to give it to them. If they want to take you to another place, kidnap or rape scenarios, then fighting back is far more advisable and should be done at the earliest opportunity before the aggressor has gained even more control of the situation than he already has.

Whilst we look at each type of threat individually they do not exist in a vacuum and a single situation, even one involving a single attacker, can quite easily contain all ranges of threat (this is especially true if we do not recognise the threat or either fail to react or choose to comply).

Long Range Threats (inc. extremely long range)

As a general rule any threat that initiates outside of your immediate reach is a long range threat. If the aggressor shows the knife and you are in a position to run away before they can close down upon you then this should be your chosen defence every time. If you are unable to run (for whatever the reason) then the use of the legs to defend through kicks is the next advisable option. When kicking you should always look to kick to the opposite of the knife (if the knife is held low kick high and if the knife is held high kick low) to maximise the distance between your defending leg and the knife and therefore minimising the chances of your defending leg being cut or stabbed. (Having said that kicks to the face will always prove effective) Multiple kicks moving forward are also recommended to ensure that the attacker is dealt with.

Medium Range

Medium range would be defined as close enough to reach with either hand or foot but the aggressor is not touching you but still standing off you. This sort of threat is often described as being a nervous or scared attacker who uses the knife as a way of psyching himself up to demand something. This leads to a separate problem of sudden panic slashing/stabbing with no warning, which is much more common when the aggressor is himself scared.

Generally we would look to remove the knife from its immediate position using a hand defence whilst simultaneously countering with a kick to buy time to escape/disengage. We would not look for control/lock/disarms unless disengaging/escape is not an option. (Often a strong attack will disarm an attacker without you having to actually look for a disarm) If disengaging/escape/acquiring an equaliser is not an option continuing strong attacks are a far better option than looking for the control/lock/disarm. In fact given the likely hood of facing multiple attackers and the relative complexity of the techniques involved we should never be

looking to finish with a lock as it means that we are tied up with the initial attacker and in effect have locked ourselves as well.

Close Range (inc. extremely close and with complications)

Close range would be defined as close enough to reach with a hand, usually with the knife touching or close to touching your body, with leg defences no longer being applicable. Extremely close is an extremely predatory threat with almost no gap between your body and that of your attacker. Complications would also involve the grabbing of clothing or limb by the attackers free hand. At close range we again look to remove the knife from its immediate position using a hand defence combined with a body defence and a counter attack as soon as possible, preferably simultaneously. Due to the range we are more likely to have a control of some sort on the knife hand but would still not look for a lock/disarm finish as continuing strong attacks are still a better option.

Given the nature of some of the threats we can face at this range it may become necessary to use a sacrificial defence in order to escape. A sacrificial defence involves the use of a hand defence with the prior knowledge that the hand will be injured (or sacrificed), potentially severely and permanently, in order to prevent greater harm coming to us. As a general rule these defences should only be used where there is no alternative and waiting for a better time or opportunity to defend does not exist.

Knife Attacks

Knife attacks present a far more serious situation than that of the knife threat. All situations would begin with one or possibly all of the above types of threat. The progression from threat to attack can be caused by a failure to recognise the threat in time to deal with it or by a failure to deal with the threat in an effective manner (this can be that you attempted to defend against a threat but did not escape and end up being attacked or it could be that you were co-operating with the threat but not quickly enough in the eyes of the attacker). **Even if your attacker's intention was to stab you from the outset there is still a period of time when you are dealing with a knife threat rather than a knife attack.** This can be as short as the amount of time it takes to draw the weapon and attack but it does always exist.

When dealing with attacks involving knives, as already mentioned in the threats section, we do not look to control/disarm our attacker in the traditional sense but rely on the strength and ferocity of our counter attacks to finish the situation as quickly as possible.

Slashing Attacks

The slashing attack is probably the least dangerous or lethal of the three types of attack. Slashing attacks will generally be towards the face/neck area and involve multiple slashes, both back and forehand. In an ideal situation we would pick the first slash up in time to utilise a blocking defence with the arm combined with strong counter attacks. Often this will not be the case, either due to a flinch reaction from ourselves or a failure to recognise the attack in time.

Both of these circumstances are less than ideal, and can lead to us being cut, but are all too likely to occur in reality. Both cases lead to us tending to pull back from the initial slash so we should utilise this as a body defence before returning forward to use our arms to block the following attacks. In these circumstances we should initially use both arms to block before countering strongly with the arm closest to the attacker whilst maintaining control at the attacker's wrist with the other arm. From here we should be looking to disengage and escape as soon as possible.

Stabbing Attacks

These are probably the most dangerous and lethal of the types of attack due as they are likely to puncture a major organ and cause extensive damage. Stabbing attacks can come in both circular and straight configurations and will almost always include multiple attacks as a frenzied burst to roughly the same location. Studies indicate that the number of stabs can vary anywhere from 3 – 15 in a single attack.

As ever, the ideal would be to stop the attack and neutralise the attacker on the first stab, but where this does not happen we must continue to defend even if we have actually been stabbed.

When defending a stab we should always use a combination of both body and hand defences. Usually sending the arm to the attack in a blocking motion whilst moving the body out of the channel of attack. Strong repetitive counter attacks should be utilised at the earliest opportunity and we should disengage and escape as soon as possible.

Crushing/Blunt Force Attacks

This type of attack is also incredibly dangerous as it is generally very surprising. As a whole we tend to forget that the pommel of a knife can be smashed into us as well. This can be lethal, either through the skull being fractured from the blow or through falling to the floor after being hit.

The actual attack itself is really no different to that of a circular type stab and should be handled in the same way.