

# THE ISRAELI SYSTEM

By Ondra Mach



Often misunderstood, the Israeli System is specific due to its place of origin and everyday circumstances that drove its establishment and still drives its development.

In Israel the biggest threat is not the common crime, but terrorism. The Israeli Armed Forces and Law Enforcement have been dealing with terrorism long before we started to acknowledge it. The system has also been developed for the military, not for civilians defending against criminal elements.

Everybody who takes part in formal training by Israeli instructors will learn it very fast. The shooting during the lessons often starts after a Hebrew command “Mekhabel” meaning “Terrorist”. It is taught, even to civilians, to shout “Mekhabel” during presentation of the weapon; the population learned to “hit the deck” upon hearing this to allow the shooter to engage the threat.

The reason for this is the fact the terrorists usually use explosive devices within their scheme of action. Suicide Bombers often started shooting into a crowd and when the weapon was empty they detonated the explosive attached to their body. Terrorist holding hostages often use explosives as a form of safety in case of a CT Unit raid. Even automatic fire aimed into a crowd – what we call an active shooter scenario will cause tremendous losses of life so the need of very accurate fire prevails.

The use of explosives is the reason why Israelis prefer the most accurate fire in the shortest possible time, i.e. shooting while standing still or stopping before opening fire. There is no chance of outrunning a bomb fragment or a bolt or nail propelled by an explosion to velocities of app. 2500 m.p.s – you simply cannot move faster than that.

Another difference is the Israelis are taught to run where the danger is to stop the bad guy – sort

of mentality “You have gun and you must stop it!”. I believe the Israelis taught the so called “Mozambique Drill” or “Zipper” before it got its name, simply because destruction of the CNS is the only reliable method of stopping the enemy immediately.

It is fact that Israelis consider loosing one life of a fighter (Police or Military operative, or even an armed civilian) in order to save many lives of the victims an acceptable trade; maybe rather a necessary evil. That is why the Israeli system teaches delivering accurate fire as fast as possible rather than seeking cover and individual safety.

So every time you encounter the term “Enemy” within this article, please, read it as “Suicide Bomber”.

The Israeli System is based on the Point-Shooting Concepts pioneered by Fairbairn, Sykes, and Applegate. The Israelis were obviously influenced by US Army marksmanship training; the references will be pointed out later during the description of the technique.

One of the interesting features of the Israeli System (hereinafter “IS”) is the common foundation of pistol and rifle marksmanship. Both follow the same logic and principles simplifying training recruits with both firearms. Both are built on body centerline.

## **Israeli Point-Shooting with Pistol**

### **Holding the pistol**

The pistol is held in the strong hand as close to the bore axis as possible, fingers firmly, almost convulsively, gripping it. The thumb is not pointed forward but bent down and pressing against the palm. Index finger is of course laid along the frame of the pistol, on the trigger guard respectively.

The strong arm is along the side of the body with elbow bent so the forearm is horizontal and the gun points naturally towards the target. For the basic exercise the gun is already loaded with a bullet in the chamber and the hammer is cocked.

### **Basic stance**

From the natural standing position the shooter takes a step left. The feet are perpendicular to each other, slightly further than shoulder-width apart, body squared towards the target. The center of gravity is lowered by bending the knees. The proper height of the basic stance is determined by lowering the body until the heel of both feet rise from the ground and then the body is lifted enough to put the heels firmly back on the ground. The weight is shifted forward to the balls of the toes. Hips thrust forward and abdominal muscles are tight. Shoulders are brought up and the head is tucked between them.

From the moment the feet are firmly planted on the ground and the body is stable the body doesn't move anymore. In the initial stages of training the Israelis make the students to shout “Body Weapon”, meaning the shooter assumes the stance first and only when the body is still he points the weapon.

### **Two-handed Shooting**

The support and the strong hands are brought together in the grip described below at

approximately the Sternum level, barrel of the gun pointed all the time towards the target. From this point the pistol is thrust “into” the target in a sort of stabbing movement until the elbows are locked. The shooter should exhale during pointing. During the pointing, the strong index finger is placed on the trigger and should depress the trigger to remove all the slack so only the slightest movement is necessary to discharge the pistol. The ability to depress the trigger only to remove the slack and not to discharge it unintentionally is emphasized and thoroughly practiced. At this point the shooter can immediately discharge the weapon, having aimed the weapon by pointing only, or correct the sighting picture prior to discharge.

### **The Two-handed Grip**

The shooting and support hands are brought together and the support hand fingers wrap around the strong hand fingers, support thumb is placed on top of the strong hand knuckle.

(Note: The height of the stance as described is basic training. I would compare it to “ryu” forms in Martial Arts. However it is stable and allows quick movement when necessary. The so-called “horse-stance” according to what I have been trained is wrong, it is too low and doesn’t allow rapid movement.)

The basic stance works well for open space combat but in enclosed spaces, for example for two-man team in a doorway, it is too wide and the fighters from CT units stand higher. The same applies to other uses, for example bodyguard protecting his Principal.

When you read through the US ARMY FM-23-35 you can, on page 2-17, find a reference to a Quick-Fire Shooting System. The description in the paragraph fits perfectly the idea of Israeli Point-Shooting in a two handed grip. However, the Israelis went further and developed and expanded the system into a self-contained method of handgun shooting. The immediately following paragraph in FM 23-25 describes Quick-Fire sighting method and doesn’t apply to the IS.

### **One-handed Shooting**

The same stance just the two hands don’t join on the grip. The strong hand pushes the Pistol towards the target. The support hand is also thrust forward and should reach the extended position at the same time as the strong hand. The support hand serves, in this case, as a counter weight and eliminates movement of the shoulders, which should stay squared towards the target. The trigger work remains the same.

### **Charging the weapon during presentation**

The stance remains the same. The strong-arm elbow is lifted by turning the arm mostly at the shoulder. The elbow comes up just below the eye level so as not to block vision. The pistol is brought in front of the body into the centerline, barrel pointing towards the target. The pistol is naturally on its side, the top of the slide towards the support hand.

The support hand is brought up and in front to meet the pistol, hand turned thumb up, fingers bent. The support hand grips the rear of the slide very firmly. Now the strong hand pushes forward and support hand remains motionless; the strong hand pulls the pistol out of the support hand's grip, racking the slide and loading the first round into the chamber. This movement is part

of the “point-aiming”, the pistol moves forward towards the target and immediately when the slide slips in its rearmost position the support hand the strong hand starts to turn the pistol into a normal position.

When the pistol leaves the support hand, the support hand starts forward and should join the strong hand on the grip from behind. The grip should be completed by placing the thumb in the above-described position first followed by placement of the fingers.

Placing the support hand from the support side on the grip should be avoided as it would disturb the “point-aiming”.

What follows is either immediate discharge or correction of the sight picture as described above.

The same method applies for one-handed shooting; just the support hand doesn’t join on the grip, but is thrust forward to counter-balance the strong hand.

This balancing is necessary as all the movements are very aggressive with lots of power applied.

### **Retention Shooting**

Assuming of proper stance is entirely eliminated. The shooter only presents the pistol. The support hand moves to the strong-side hip. Immediately when the pistol leaves the holster the support hand grips the slide and strong hand pushes the pistol forward towards the target, from the hip. The shooter discharges immediately after charging the weapon.

The strong hand either stops by the hip, moving only enough to rack the slide, or continues the “pointing” towards the target and shoots at the same time.

### **Movement and Shooting**

The IS teaches that you either move or shoot. It doesn’t mean that when the shooter is suddenly presented with a threat at close distance that he would not shoot immediately. He would do so utilizing basically the FSA method.

But when possible the shooter is taught to stop rapidly, assume proper shooting stance and then engage the enemy with accurate fire to eliminate him as fast as possible.

At every Class I organized the issue of speed of the first shot has been brought up. Logically it is faster to shoot without the need of racking the slide, simply present the pistol, and shoot. The instructors usually answered the question by demonstrating the speed and accuracy of the first shot. It was usually an answer good enough to drop the issue. I am not stating that there is no difference in speed, only that the speed is usually found to be enough for combat purposes.

Another thing is that certain units in IDF have dropped the Condition 3 mode of carry. To my knowledge it was a bodyguard unit protecting the members of the government. They were one of the first to receive Glocks as their service weapon and knowing the internal mechanism of the weapon they did not see the need to carry empty chamber. For them it means to take care of the Principal and rack the slide before shooting; Too many things to do.

I believe the discussion will continue and the Cond.3 mode will eventually disappear.

## Summary

The IS is a method developed and modified to suit the needs within a very special environment. We in the West will not question the need to move off the X as our biggest concern is regular crime and we want to protect ourselves. If we shoot, the enemy will shoot at us to protect himself, so if we move we avoid being shot. In Israel the enemy will shoot anybody because he strives to kill as many as possible, he doesn't particularly care about you personally.

We also question the Cond. 3 mode of carry. The Israeli arguments usually mention safe margin when the gun is taken away from you. For sure the Cond.3 would give, in such a situation, a slight margin to fight back. However I believe when my gun is taken from me before I have a chance to present it I will be probably dead, unconscious, or unable to fight back.

Another Israeli argument is you have a last chance to reconsider, however briefly, whether you really want to shoot. I know what they mean but in my world when I present the gun I shoot. For sure the argument has a substance, no problem. They are obsessed with safety.

Yet another argument Pro Cond.3 made in Israel is that using SA/DA pistol you have a heavy trigger for the first shot and light trigger for every consequent one. Sure you do, I carry a Glock and it doesn't apply to me, trigger is still the same. However they prefer accuracy to speed, which is fine. I can see what they mean and I don't think they are completely wrong or that I am completely right.

From my experiences with formal training in this system I can say that a very strong emphasis is placed on the "Mindset", the Israelis call it the "willingness to fight". I have seen many times the Instructor to switch from friendly mode of explanation to a very aggressive mode of demonstration within one second. The system may not be to our liking and we can see many faults in it, however, I think it would be a great mistake to underestimate the mindset of the fighters. This is the strength of the IS as I see it.

The formal training in later stages puts the trainee in disadvantages, under stress and exposes the trainee to fatigue. However the student is always required to keep open mind and to process information. The real training in IS often hurts. I started many drills by being punched in Solar Plexus very strongly without warning, loosing my breath. For the instructor it is no reason not to start to fight back and engage the enemy.

Running and physical exercise prior to shooting is the standard, the Instructor will tell the trainee "You never fight when you feel fine, but always when you are tired and scared".

One very popular drill simulates moving through a crowd of people escaping from the scene of the shooting. The trainee is required to move through other students assembled two abreast in several rows. The students, representing the crowd, press against each other creating a compact wall of bodies. The shooter is supposed to move through without punching or kicking, only to sneak through covering his pistol with one hand not to loose it. When the shooter arrives at the shooting line he is short of breath, heart rate elevated, muscles shaking.

Other drills start with one Instructor punching and kicking the trainee for something like 20 seconds quite strongly. Then the shooter runs (running in IS is defined by the Instructors as "run

like crazy”, i.e. sprint) to the line and engaging targets. Sometimes Instructors assemble and punch and kick the shooter during live fire. One of them usually only keeps the trainee under control; one or two do the punching.

I hope my write-up will provide a first hand account of the system and some of the training methods as well as some principles on which it is based. I did not learn about IS from the Internet, but in real live training from licensed Israeli instructor, members of the IDF. I will be more than happy to answer any questions should they arise.