The Mozambique or Failure to Stop Drill: History, Shot Placement, and Modern Perspective

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Introduction

The Mozambique Drill, also known as the Failure-to-Stop Drill or Failure Drill, is commonly summarized by the phrase *"Two to the Body, One to the Head."*

While this phrase does accurately describe the traditional shot-placement, the history and intention behind the drill is more nuanced than the phrase suggests.

The Origin of the Mozambique Drill / Technique

Historically this drill / technique is generally attributed to an incident involving *Mike Rousseau*, who was fighting in Mozambique during the country's war of independence, where according to the account later related to firearms instructor Jeff Cooper, Rousseau encountered an armed combatant at close range. Rousseau was carrying a Browning Hi-Power 9mm pistol and fired two rounds into the opponent's upper chest. Unfortunately the shots were not effective and did not immediately stop the advance.

Rousseau then attempted a more precise shot toward the head, which struck lower than intended but caused a catastrophic injury to the spinal column, ending the confrontation.

What the Mozambique Drill / Technique Looks Like in Practice

Traditionally the Mozambique Drill / Technique consists of three rounds fired at an assailant:

- The first two are generally performed using a *Hammer Technique* directed toward the upper torso or COM (Center of Mass).

- The third shot is generally a more deliberate shot toward the head or CNS in an effort to disrupt the CNS (Central Nervous System).

Although the more common phrase or description is *"Two to the Body, One to the Head."*, this is not the only variation of this technique. A similar method calls for the placement of multiple rounds into the Pelvis or more specifically the "Crest of the Illium" in an effort to immobilize rather than neutralize the threat. However, this method is only recommended withing very specific circumstances as the possibility of the threat remaining active can be a serious consideration.

The Actual Drill / Technique Includes Assessment

Frequently when this technique is instructed or practiced, the typical flow of shots will be two rounds fired into the COM of the target followed immediately by a single round to the head of CNS.

However, the original technique was somewhat different, where unlike the more modern adaptation of three rounds fired in rapid succession in essence climbing up the body, the original version called for the firing of two rounds to the COM, followed by an brief assessment of whether additional rounds were required.

The way in which the original technique was performed was as follows:

1. The weapon is drawn, presented and fired at the COM of the assailant.
2. The weapon is returned to a High Ready Position while an assessment is made.
3. If additional rounds are required, the weapon is re-presented and a single round is fired into the head or CNS of the assailant.

Ultimately there is only a very minor benefit to performing the technique in the original way over the more modern adaptation and ultimately it is left to the shooter to decide which method will be best within a given situation.

When is a Head Shot Appropriate

The historical reasoning behind the third shot to the head or CNS is found in the potential of an assailant remaining capable of continuing an attack despite being struck in the COM.

Extreme caution should however be exercised however, not to imply nor believe that a particular shot placement will guarantee an immediate physiological response. Human responses to injury vary, and there is no simple formula that guarantees an instantaneous cessation of dangerous behavior.

Modern Perspective

Within modern defensive firearms training there tends to be a greater emphasis on decision-making, threat assessment, and accountability rather than rigidly memorized shot sequences. The Mozambique Drill / Technique remains historically significant because it illustrates the fundamental problem of an initial response may not immediately resolve a hostile encounter and that an individual should train and be prepared to recognize rapidly changing circumstances and the need to adapt.

In Conclusion

Commonly described as two shots to the upper torso or COM followed, immediately, by a more deliberate shot toward the head or CNS and while this description explains the historical training concept, it should not be mistaken for a universal rule governing the use of deadly force.

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About the Author

Brian S. Williams is a professional firearms instructor, tactical trainer, and executive security consultant with greater than 35 years of experience in firearms instruction, use-of-force training, and protective operations. As the founder of several firearms training and security organizations, he has developed and delivered firearms, tactical, and instructor certification programs for civilians, law enforcement officers, military personnel, and licensed security professionals throughout the United States.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Williams has trained and certified more than 10,500 Connecticut pistol permit applicants, instructed more than 2,000 civilians and hundreds of law enforcement and security professionals in advanced firearms and tactical applications, and provided remedial firearms training to military and correctional personnel. He served as a Marine Police Officer and Watch Commander with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and was appointed to the Connecticut State Police Firearms Advisory Council, where he contributed to firearms training and policy discussions.

Mr. Williams holds numerous professional certifications, including NRA Training Counselor, NRA Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor, General Dynamics Simunitions FX™ Instructor, The Heckler & Koch International Training Division and Sig Sauer Academy Instructor certifications, and USCCA Concealed Carry and Home Defense Instructor. He is the author of *Welcome to the Real World: A Dangerous Place to Be Caught Unprepared* and has been recognized as an expert in firearms by the Connecticut Superior Courts. His work continues to emphasize responsible firearms ownership, sound judgment, lawful use of force, and practical, reality-based training.