

# Security Focus



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# FOCUS

## Life or death – effective firearm training a must in SA

By Thomas Kritzer, Marketing Manager

**W**hen President **Jacob Zuma** made the controversial “shoot to kill” statement to police, an outcry followed with other political parties arguing that policemen who wrongfully or accidentally kill civilians would still have to face the full might of the law.

With the recent unnecessary slayings of **Kekana Mabopana**, gunned down by police who mistook her and her two colleagues for hijackers, as well as unarmed **Kgothatso Ndobé** who, while fleeing was shot and killed by Metro Police, and three-year-old **Atlegang Aphane**, also mistakenly killed by police, urgently warrants the rethinking of the South African Police (SAPS) and Metro Polices’ live firing training approach.

Making a decision on whether or not to pull the trigger in a defensible situation without injuring innocent bystanders, is an extremely difficult and challenging judgement call. Especially when the decision has to be made within split seconds, with the likelihood of one’s life hanging in the balance.

Marksman Trainer (Pty) Ltd has, for the last 25 years, installed indoor shooting ranges for handguns and rifles. In collaboration with an overseas company, Marksman Trainer has extended its capacity by adding laser firing to its indoor range capabilities.

Marksman Trainer (Pty) Ltd develops and produces a sophisticated indoor shooting range that is currently installed at various police (SAPS), Metro Police, security companies and the SANDF (Air Force, Army and Navy) training centres. The technology has proven so successful that NATO, as well as government agencies from Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland and Switzerland, make use of this training ideology.

The Marksman Trainer air-conditioned indoor shooting range which is operational 24 hours a day, even during adverse weather, is a highly versatile interactive video combat training system that combines live firing of rifles and handguns as well as laser simulation.

The success behind the Marksman Trainer indoor shooting range lies within its four integrated components:

- The programmable software, allowing for a multitude of training

scenarios (which can be tailor made to customer requirements);

- The target screen assembly on which the said scenarios are projected;
- The bullet trap area in which fired rounds are safely retained;
- The shot analysis system, evaluating the shottists performance during debriefing.

A novel and integral feature of the Marksman Trainer range is the interactive target training. In comparison to static and video projected targets, which can also be displayed on the range, interactive targets react according to the training officers commands. The instructor decides on how the villain reacts on screen; for example, whether the felon draws a weapon or, instead, produces an ID document. The officer, in turn, is forced to make his (firing) decision based on what he sees in front of him. If the officer fires a round in a non-lethal area, the villain is not killed, instead surrenders injured.

This type of training can be easily reproduced in various custom-made environments from hijackings and roadblocks to bank robberies and burglaries, and is limited only by the user’s imagination.

A further innovation of the Marksman Trainer indoor shooting range is the capability of combining live with laser firing on the same shooting range. Almost any weapon can be converted by simply fitting a laser insert into the barrel. All training exercises, from static through to interactive targets can be practiced, without having to fire a single live round. Imagine the cost savings and safety implications of allowing a novice trainee to train with a laser weapon prior to engaging in live fire training!

Firearms training for weapon-carrying security personnel demands more than just mastering the fundamentals of marksmanship. It is pivotal to include a clearly defined set of priorities to instruct personnel in the use of firearms. These priorities are safety first, accuracy and speed. With effective training on realistic targets, security personnel will not only become more proficient in handling his or her firearm, but also be able to make sound judgments and decisions, more often than not, meaning the difference between life and death. ■

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