The Battlefield Zero 2016
By Paul Howe

General

I have heard many explanations and thought processes as to the best "Battlefield Zero" for the M16/M-4 type weapon system. Some explain how the knobs should be turned and the sights flipped to best accommodate hits. Some of these explanations require a college degree to decipher. Others use graphs and charts to justify their claims. Nothing confirms a zero like walking the actual ground and checking the hits on your target. So put away your graphs, charts, knobs, etc. and let's look at some holds and shots.

For the record, I zero at 100 yards, point of aim, point of impact….

This is the drop at 100/200/300 yards holding the same spot with a .223/5.56 mm bullet

Weapon and Ammo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon Option</th>
<th>Ammo Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rifle Optic:</td>
<td>Wilson Combat 16” Lightweight Barrel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optics:</td>
<td>Leuplold 4.5 x 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ammo:</td>
<td>75 Grain Hornady Match</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wind:</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position used:</td>
<td>Bipod</td>
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Point of Aim/Point of Impact Method on Human Targets

- Gives you accurate hits to 100-300 yards
- Falls off target after 300 yards

Humans are vertical targets. This zero will get you a hit on a full size person to 300 yards. Aiming at 100, the bullet will drop as indicated above.

100 Yard Point of Aim/Point of Impact

My zero here was to have the bullets cut where my front sight post met the target. The group dropped a little lower than the offset method from 100 yards and in. No real change in overall group.
What my sight post would look like on target with a point of aim/point of impact zero....

Zero's and how to get yours....

Several different targets are available to get a solid zero. I use two. One is the LE Targets PHT-LD or Long Distance Target and the other is an LE Targets triple bull target or SR-21C3A.

PHT-LD
I can either put my front sight post where the black meets the white or use the tip of dot in my optics. Both will give me a precision zero. I adjust the strike of the bullet to where the black and white meet on the target or have a 2-3” offset high. Bull type targets provide an easy contrast for your eye to see.

I prefer to zero where the sight cuts the white/black line.

CSAT Bull Target
Head Shots:

Using iron sights, the 2-3” offset can help you make head shots at 100 yards. Trying to do a center hold at 100 on a head is because the head is tough to see and split in two with the front iron sight. By simply “lollypopping” the head, the rounds go to their mark.

In addition, I have found that after the first round is fired in combat, people start moving. They use cover. By aiming where the ground meets their body using the above offset, you will get a good center face hit at 100.

At 200 yards, the rounds would be dead on. At 300, they would drop about 12”, still on a man sized target.

If I want to shoot bulls for score and hit the center with a 6 o’clock hold, I will use this zero/technique.
OTHER POINTS:

100 zero

I prefer zeroing and training at 100 yards for several reasons:

- It makes you a better shooter
- It is a realistic distance for combat and the capability of your weapon
- It gives you a versatile zero out to 300 yards with a realistic expectation of a 1st round hit.

As a side note, I can never recall anyone coming to a Tactical Rifle Instructor or Tactical Rifle course with a 50 yard zero and shoot it across my standards or ranges. Most, if not all had to adjust their sights. Many did not know where their round would strike at 100 and beyond using the 25/50 yard zero.
Field Fire/Hold Off’s

I first picked up this term during my time as a sniper. Having a zero and knowing your hold offs for targets within the appropriate range of your weapon is important to know for combat shooting. Below is a hold-off chart out to 300 yards to hit the same spot/100 point.

Combat Targets and Point of Aim/Point of Impact
Not all targets will be a full size man. Most will be partial targets after the first shot is fired because everyone takes cover. If I knew the distance to this target, I could hold off. But what if I don’t know the distance? What will my 100 yard zero do for me?

Using the above target out to 300 yards/meters holding off, I can drop the bullet to my desired impact point.

Engaging the above target with a center hold with a point of aim point of impact zero at unknown distance, the bullet will most likely “skip” into the target if it is at further ranges than 100. I would rather shoot short and skip it into a threat than shoot over and totally miss.

If the above person is at 100 yards-Center hit
If the above person is at 200 yards-Low hit or skip in
If the above person is at 300 yards-Skip in

Using a Center Hold Zero or a Deliberate 2-3” offset is a personal choice. Much will depend on how much you want to think and calculate under high stress. There is not much of a difference, but I default to the point of aim/point of impact zero. If I am not making hits at distance, I can always “favor” up a bit and drop the shot in.
Deliberate Offset of 2-3” holds

Deliberate offset works, it just requires you to think a bit more.

Optical Sights

I have witnessed optics fail in competitions, training and combat. In one law enforcement situation, a battery powered optic failed and the officer killed a bad guy with his iron sights five minutes later. In combat I have witnessed soldiers with optics that clouded up with moisture have to pick up a new weapon because they could not get the optic off and could not see through it.

Also, I have seen it take 1-2 minutes for an optic to “de-fog” after being taken out of an air conditioned patrol car and brought into a humid environment. The officer could not make shots because he could not see.
Next, I believe you need to learn how to shoot iron sights. Above is a picture of an Aimpoint T-1 that was hit with a simunitions round during training. This could have just as easy been a bullet, shrapnel, debris, mud, etc. You need a quick release mount when using optics and I suggest that you co-witness them with your iron sights.

Establishing reference points for consistent shooting is critical for consistent accuracy. These "index" points will transfer to weapons with optical sights.

Summary:

I do occasionally shoot optics and have some that I like and use. When I do shoot them, I have them co-witnessed and mounted with throw lever mounts whenever possible should they fail. I also prefer a 3X Burris as you can do CQB, distance work and discrimination at further distances. It is moderately priced and holds a zero.

In my experience of fast moving urban combat, I never had time to turn knobs or flip sights. I had to use what I had on the gun for the shot required when the target presented itself. The window of opportunity opens and closes in a flash and you either make the shot or you do not. You might have time in a static position such as was found in WWII, but not in a fast moving urban environment.

Further, you now have a light caliber weapon system that requires more accurate hits to put the target down in a rapid manner. In this case, you must know where your bullet strikes to do this.

Finally, in my former special operations life I learned that you might get a full body shot on one opponent in a gun fight, but as soon as you shoot them, their friends will take cover and probably only give you a head or weapon system to shoot at. I used to make team members practice shots on full and partial targets at 100 yards and beyond. This is reality. Bad guys use cover just as we do. You must be able to hit them when they get small.

I hope this helps answer some questions and if you have any, feel free to e-mail me via my web site.

About the Author

Paul R. Howe is a 20-year veteran and former Special Operations soldier and instructor. Paul currently owns Combat Shooting and Tactics (CSAT) where he consults with, trains and evaluates law enforcement and government agencies in technical and tactical techniques throughout the special operations spectrum. See www.combatshootingandtactics.com for details.