

## **From the streets of a Bratislava ghetto to the battlefields of the Middle East, follow the history of Krav Maga—the official combat system of the Israeli Defense force—and the man who created it.**

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### **1910 Krav Maga founder Imi Lichtenfeld learns self-defense from his father Samuel**

Imi grew up in Bratislava, but was actually born in Hungary. A natural athlete, he earned national and international awards in gymnastics, boxing, and wrestling.

However, Imi's greatest influence was his father, Samuel, a police officer and self defense instructor. Samuel started his career as a circus acrobat and wrestler, but later entered the police department and served for 3 decades as Chief Detective Inspector. He became well known for his considerable arrest record, particularly of dangerous criminals.

When not on the trail of violent felons, Samuel taught various self defense techniques to the local policemen at "Hercules," the first gym in Bratislava, which he owned. In his training, Samuel constantly emphasized the need for proper moral conduct when dealing with the public and suspected criminals alike.

### **1930 The seeds of Krav Maga are planted**

During the 1930s, Imi honed his fighting skills in the streets of Bratislava, protecting himself and his Jewish neighbors from local fascist thugs. He took part in numerous fights to prevent anti-Semitic groups from terrorizing the Jewish community in the city. These fights sharpened his awareness of the basic difference between sport and street fighting. It was at this time that the seeds of Krav Maga's principles were planted in his mind and the official Krav Maga history begins.

### **1940 Imi Lichtenfeld begins teaching soldiers**

By the late 1930s, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany had turned Europe into a battlefield and made it a dangerous place for Jews. Imi's fights to protect his family and neighbors rapidly became unpopular with the local authorities, and he was forced to leave his homeland in 1940.

After several years of travel, Imi arrived in Israel, which was then called Palestine. He joined the Haganah, a paramilitary organization of the Jewish community and fought to create the independent state of Israel. During this time, he began teaching soldiers basic self defense techniques, an important moment in Krav Maga history.

### **1948 State of Israel is formed, Imi Lichtenfeld becomes Chief Instructor**

The fledgling Israeli government asked Imi to develop an effective system of self defense and fighting, which later became the Krav Maga system. The Haganah was eventually incorporated into the Israeli Defense Force, and Imi became the Chief Instructor for the military school for Physical Training and Krav Maga.

## **1950 Krav Maga is refined on the battlefield**

In the 1950s, the history of Krav Maga states that the fighting technique gets refined on the battlefield. In the 20 years that he served in the army, Imi developed and refined his unique system of self defense and hand-to-hand combat, training the instructors and soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force's elite units. Since Israel was in a constant state of war with its neighbors, the techniques and tactics he developed were constantly being tested – not in theory, but on the battlefields of the Middle East.

## **1964 Imi Lichtenfeld devotes his time to adapting Krav Maga to everyday life**

After his retirement from service, Imi devoted his time and energy to adapting Krav Maga to everyday life. The system was adjusted so that it would supply solutions to ordinary men, women, and children who might face an aggressive encounter.

The system spread rapidly within the civilian population, thanks to a team of Imi's qualified students. These instructors were personally chosen and trained by Imi and accredited by the Israeli Ministry of Education as teachers of Krav Maga.

## **1978 Krav Maga founder Imi Lichtenfeld and his students create the Krav Maga Association**

Imi and several of his students created the Krav Maga Association, a non-profit public benefit organization aimed at promoting the teaching of Krav Maga in Israel and throughout the world.

## **1981 Darren Levine attends First International Krav Maga Association Instructor's Course**

In 1981 the Krav Maga Association of Israel and the Israeli Ministry of Education held the first International Instructor's Course at Wingate Institute for Physical Education. A generous philanthropist in New York, S. Daniel Abraham, sponsored a delegation of 23 members from various cities in the United States to attend the course. This course was supervised by Imi himself, who was then 71 years old and retired from his military career. The course was taught by Krav Maga lead instructors Shike Barak, Eyal Yanilov, and Ruevin Moimon. Darren Levine was chosen to be part of the delegation because of his martial arts and boxing background, as well as his involvement in the physical education program at the Heschel Day School near Los Angeles, California.

The course was a 6-week intensive course consisting of 8+ hours of training per day, six days a week. It was a strenuous and exhausting 6 weeks, and by the end of the course only a few people passed. Darren Levine was one of them.

## **1982 Darren Levine teaches Krav Maga at Heschel Day School**

After returning home from Israel, Darren began teaching Krav Maga at Heschel Day School as an elective class. The class became so popular that it was incorporated into the physical education program.

## **1983 Krav Maga Association Of America is formed**

Krav Maga Association is formed at Imi's request. Darren, Joel Bernstein (one of Darren's students), and other prominent members of the Jewish community in Los Angeles formed the Krav Maga Association of America, Inc. The Association's goal has always been to help promote : (1) Krav Maga and its history in the United States and (2) good relations between the United States and Israel.

## **1984 Krav Maga founder Imi Lichtenfeld passes on his own black belt to Darren Levine**

In 1984, Darren Levine received his first degree black belt in Krav Maga. At the belt ceremony, Krav Maga founder, Imi Lichtenfeld, passed on his own black belt to Darren.

At the same time, Darren received his full Instructor's Certification from Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sport as well as the Krav Maga Association of Israel.

## **1987 Darren Levine begins teaching Krav Maga to law enforcement**

In 1987 Darren and his top students began teaching Krav Maga to law enforcement in the United States. Under Imi's guidance, they adapted Krav Maga to suit the needs of U.S. law enforcement and military personnel. The first agency to adopt Krav Maga into its force training curriculum was the Illinois State Police in 1987. When Darren taught that course, Imi, then 77, flew in from Israel to attend.

Due to its growing popularity, Krav Maga's main program moved to the University of Judaism in Los Angeles while still maintaining a program at Heschel Day School.

## **1997 Darren Levine awarded Founder's Diploma by Imi Lichtenfeld**

Darren Levine is awarded a Founder's Diploma by Imi Lichtenfeld shortly after Darren received his 6th degree black belt in Krav Maga. Imi awarded Darren a Founder's Diploma for Special Excellence in Krav Maga. Imi awarded this diploma to only 2 individuals in the world: Darren Levine and Eyal Yanilov, the Director of the International Krav Maga Federation. These diplomas were given to the people that Imi wanted to be the leaders of Krav Maga.

## **1998 Krav Maga founder Imi Lichtenfeld passes**

Imi Lichtenfeld, the founder of Krav Maga, died in 1998 at the age of 88. His funeral was attended by many of the highest-ranking and most important members of the Israeli military. He will be sorely missed.

But Imi's legacy lives on. His system of Krav Maga was founded on moral and human values, emphasizing personal integrity, non-violence, good citizenship, and humble conduct. These principles have been, and will continue to be, the guiding force for the students of Krav Maga.

To date, Krav Maga has been taught to thousands of civilians, law enforcement, and military personnel in Israel, Europe, and the United States. Through his efforts, Imi has saved numerous lives and has helped thousands to "walk in peace."

## **1999 Krav Maga Worldwide™ is formed**

Krav Maga Worldwide Enterprises was formed in January of 1999, Darren and several of the organizing members of Krav Maga formed Krav Maga Worldwide Enterprises to help the Krav Maga Association of America, Inc. expand and promote Krav Maga in the United States and around the world.

Krav Maga Worldwide Enterprises eventually expects to have a Krav Maga training center in every major city in the U.S.

We thank everyone for their continued support of the finest self defense and fighting system in the world.