

# “Uke From Hell”

## Aikido and the Terrorism of 9/11/01

by Hugh Young

There is a story that I have adapted from the Japanese mythology that is useful in understanding how to apply the Aikido philosophy of conflict resolution to the events of September 11, 2001. The story is called “Samurai Justice,” and takes place in the age of the Samurai warriors who were the ruling elite of Japan from about 1300 to the mid 1800’s.

Once upon a time there was a lord who lived peacefully in his realm. He was an average man with both good qualities and faults, but overall he did his best to be a good leader and was well liked by his people. This lord had a loyal Samurai body guard whose job it was to see that nothing bad happened to him.

In an adjoining realm lived a rival lord who held a grudge against this lord over a disagreement they had many years before. This rival lord ordered the assassination of the peaceful lord and despite the samurai’s watchful eye the act was accomplished through the treachery of a hired ninja assassin.

The rival lord knew that the Samurai was bound by an ethical code of conduct that required him to avenge the death of his lord. So the rival lord retreated to the depths of his castle and sent his spies to assess what the Samurai would do.

The samurai very much wanted to avenge his lord immediately, but knew he had no chance of reaching the rival lord in the depths of his own castle. So the Samurai hatched a plan and began to patiently prepare for the right moment to set it into action. To all who watched the Samurai, he simply doubled his already intense training program, but took no direct action against the rival lord.

The spies reported back to the rival lord that the Samurai was clearly preparing for something but gave no indication of what he was going to do or when he was going to do it. This went on for several months and finally, growing impatient to be done with the whole unsavory matter once and for all, the rival lord sent another assassin to kill the Samurai.

The next day the spies witnessed the townspeople burying two coffins in the town cemetery. They reported that it must have been a case of aiuchi, mutual kill, that was a common result of Samurai sword fighting. At this the rival lord rejoiced and threw a large party to celebrate his good fortune, and his ability to return to the freedom of his normal life.

Following a night of celebration, the lord returned to his quarters to find the Samurai waiting for him. The rival lord shouted for his guards but it was too late. The Samurai unsheathed his sword and moved toward the rival lord to fulfill his duty. The rival lord shrank into a corner of the room cowering in front of the Samurai.

He shook with fear. He wept at his fate. He offered the Samurai gold and riches to spare his life. He pleaded and begged for mercy. The Samurai was unmoved. As the Samurai began to raise his sword, the rival lord’s fear grew so great he soiled himself.

Just at that moment the rival lord’s body guards reached their master’s door, and instantly recognized that they were too late to do anything but witness their lord’s end. Crazy with fear, the rival lord in a last desperate act spat in the Samurai’s face.

With this the Samurai’s eyes grew wide and his face grew red with anger and disgust. Then, the Samurai sheathed his sword and walked right past the astonished witnesses, thus leaving the rival lord alive and cowering in his own wastes and shame in the corner.

### The Importance of Context in Training

The question this story inherently asks the reader is why did the Samurai not kill the rival lord? Answering this question through the vehicle of Aikido is a useful way to gain insight into how to best respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11.

To do this it is important to understand that Aikido is much more than physical self-defense. I consider myself very fortunate to have been a student and friend of the well known Aikido Sensei (teacher), Terry Dobson. Terry is recognized as one of the pioneers in taking the lessons of Aikido out of the dojo and into daily life. My time with Terry taught me to look beyond Aikido as self-defense, and to also see it as a strategy of conflict resolution that is as useful off the mat as on.

Unfortunately, for many years I was frustrated in the quest to realize this. It took years of

hard work before I was able to develop an inner map of the territory of Aikido that is as useful in the dojo (training hall) as in life. If you are an Aikido practitioner and are having a similar difficulty, the problem might lie in how you are training and not in Aikido itself. I say this only because that has been my experience. It wasn't until I made some fundamental changes to the way in which I trained that I was able to unite Aikido's physical practice with the process of resolving conflicts in daily life.

What I did was make a simple decision in my training which has had a profound effect. I decided that I would make the training mode known as randori the centerpiece of my Aikido practice. Randori translates as random attack, and refers to any training in which the uke (the training partner who plays the role of an attacker) is free to attack in any manner, and nage (the training partner receiving the attack) is free to respond in any manner.

Unlike kata, the highly choreographed study of a single technique which is the mainstay of most dojos, randori is unchoreographed training that can include both a single or multiple attackers. Randori is the training in Aikido that best reflects the freeform nature of true attacks, and therefore the best metaphor for bringing the principles of Aikido into daily life. Changing the nature of my Aikido practice simply created conditions that were far more conducive to discovering and exploring what I consider to be the essence of Aikido.

### **Uke From Hell**

A natural byproduct of the decision to focus on randori was the development of what I have labeled "Uke From Hell" training. Uke From Hell training evolved naturally as we pushed the envelope of our randori abilities, and needed greater levels of challenge to progress. This is relevant here, because it is Uke From Hell training that offers the best metaphor linking what happens in the dojo, to the terrorist actions we now must address as a nation. Without it I would find it difficult to make sense of the current crisis from an Aiki perspective. Uke From Hell is also a direct analogy for understanding the problem the Samurai faced in order to avenge his lord.

Uke From Hell is randori training in which uke attacks, but at the moment of contact withdraws strongly. It is a hit-and-run attack that, like the terrorist attack of 9/11, leaves the Aikidoka (Aikido practitioner) with little or nothing to work with in creating a response. An example is a boxer who is skilled at striking, and then immediately retracting his arm. A strong withdrawal is a very powerful way to negate nage's ability to apply any technique. Uke

From Hell training shows that even an individual who is much smaller and less powerful, can do a very effective job in resisting even a skilled and powerful nage's application of a technique.

Explaining why Uke From Hell is such an effective strategy, requires that I first explain what is meant by the Aikido terms "irimi" and "tenshin." Irimi breaks down into two parts: iri- enter and mi-body. Irimi refers to entering movements in Aikido. Tenshin also breaks down into two parts: ten- turn and shin- body. Tenshin refers to withdrawing movements in Aikido. These are the two opposite but complementary forces that form the structure of all Aikido techniques.

### **Qualities Of Irimi and Tenshin**

<u>Irimi</u>	<u>Tenshin</u>
yang (yo)	yin (in)
entering	withdrawing
pushing	pulling
compressing	tensioning
expanding	contracting
repulsing	attracting
attacking	accommodating
statement	question
declaring	listening

The act of attacking is inherently an irimi action. For an attack to be effective requires that uke close to within striking distance, penetrate nage's boundaries, and take actions that will cause injury. These are all examples of irimi.

In my opinion, Aikido technique is at its best when nage is able to match the irimi energy that is the mechanism of injury of most attacks, with a complimenting tenshin response. When done skillfully this naturally brings out the lack of integrity in uke's attacking position and creates a natural opening for nage to bring uke to the ground and under control. To work well, nage has to blend with the attack and thereby draw uke out of balance before he has a chance to withdraw.

What happens in Uke From Hell is that uke attempts to injure nage with the irimi force of an attack, but as nage begins to apply the tenshin response of an Aikido technique, uke instantly switches to a countering tenshin response. This means that both uke and nage are withdrawing, and like a tug-of-war, these forces effectively counter each other. At this point nage is confronted with two choices of how to resolve this stalemate, neither of which is very appealing.

### **Reversal**

One solution could be for nage to match

uke's tenshin energy with an irimi response. What this looks like on the mat is nage becomes the aggressor who is attempting to force an Aikido technique onto the withdrawing uke. This is a role reversal that now has nage attacking uke.

Uke From Hell did not get that name because he is mean and difficult in not letting nage do his technique. It is far more insidious than that. It is because of the way that uke is able to switch positions with nage. In other words, nage begins behaving like the attacker, often without knowing what is happening until it is too late.

Those of you familiar with psychology will recognize the passive/aggressive nature of Uke From Hell. A passive/aggressive individual is a master at pushing another person's emotional buttons just enough to put them on the offensive. The passive/aggressive individual can then play the role of a poor "innocent" victim.

My evaluation of the situation we now face as a nation is that we face an Uke From Hell, and judging by the simplicity and effectiveness of the attacks, he is a skilled master of passive/aggressive action. America suffered the Aikido equivalent of a massive ushiro (from behind) kick to the groin that caught us entirely unprepared, and before we were able to recover our senses, uke was so far away that we aren't even sure who it was that hit us.

Of course it would have been best to not leave ourselves open to this sort of attack in the first place. The historical record indicates that O'Sensei certainly would have concurred with this ideal. Still, to address whether or not this would be possible would be to sidetrack my point of how to best respond based on where we are, not where we would like to be.

If we respond to the attack without impeccable integrity, for example with a counter attack that kills many innocent civilians, those who perpetrated the attack will have executed the terrorist equivalent of Uke From Hell with impressive skill. I'm sure they are waiting for the bombing to begin in order to shout to the world "I told you so. I told you that the Americans are unprincipled bullies who are impotent to find and bring to justice the real attackers and so respond by killing innocent people. You didn't want to believe me when I told you what monsters they are, yet now you have undeniable proof. At this very moment they are killing your loved ones and hope to destroy everything you hold dear. Unite with me so we can deal them a blow that will end them forever." If this should happen, it holds the potential to unite many members of Islam into a holy war against the west.

On the mat, if nage is more powerful than the

retreating uke he certainly can chase after and force a solution on him. America, because of our power, could also do this if we so chose. The question is should we, when there exist far more elegant solutions that have less negative potential consequences? Solutions that even hold the potential for transforming our adversity into an opportunity to, as O'Sensei said, "reconcile the world."

### **Solving the Problem of Uke From Hell**

The other choice we discover in Uke From Hell training is to withdraw in order to break the connection with uke. This is an avoidance strategy that delays the conflict temporarily. The problem with this response is that it leaves a dangerous uke on the loose to plan and execute another attack. From a long-term perspective, this is entirely unacceptable and irresponsible. Like the Samurai who was duty bound to avenge his lords assassination, we as a nation are ethically bound to track down and make sure that those perpetrators of this terrible crime that are still alive, are brought to justice and never allowed another opportunity to injure anyone else.

The best solution I have found to the dilemma presented by Uke From Hell training is to use a tenshin withdrawal to break the connection with uke as a temporary response. This is because facing uke in a tug-of-war, or worse attacking him, leaves little opportunity for an ethical and effective Aikido resolution. It is better for nage to withdraw temporarily, and use that time and space as an opportunity to center himself.

I know this might sound crazy, but once nage has withdrawn, the problem he has to solve is how to get uke back into the attacking irimi mode. This is because as long as uke is withdrawing, nage will have little opportunity to effect an Aiki response that brings resolution.

Attacks are uke's means to injure nage, but they also create the conditions that hold the greatest potential for resolution. For example, on the mat it is a strong shomenuchi (strike to the face) that creates the ideal conditions to do an ikkyo (a common Aikido technique). Try to do Ikkyo to someone who is doing nothing or withdrawing and you will find it far more difficult than to someone who is attacking you. The problem the U.S. faces is that because we were caught so off guard by the act of terrorism, there currently is no interaction, attacking or otherwise. Without interaction there can be no Aikido, or for that matter any other form of resolution.

The ancient Chinese military sage Sun Tzu states in *The Art of War* that "Military formation is

like water - the form of water is to avoid the high and go to the low, the form of a military force is to avoid the full and attack the empty; the flow of water is determined by the earth, the victory of a military force is determined by the opponent.” The most powerful Aikido has a sense that nage did not create the technique, but rather that uke created it through his choice of attack. Nage then fulfilled what was missing to bring resolution.

The Samurai demonstrated this principle when through his patience and preparation, and the inconvenience that this caused the rival lord, he was able to draw him into taking action. It was the attack which created the ideal conditions for the Samurai to deceive the rival lord into thinking he had nothing to fear. It was a dangerous move, but it worked because he was so well prepared for what he knew was coming. As a nation the Aiki solution is to use our power and integrity to get the terrorists to reengage in the conflict on our terms, and by doing this create the ideal conditions for reaching resolution. How can we do that?

In the story of the Samurai, it meant first demonstrating great patience. This quality is also important to randori and absolutely essential when faced with Uke From Hell energy. It is important to note that the act of waiting patiently is not passive. As Terry Dobson used to say, we are not “doing *nothing*” with the emphasis on nothing. We are “*doing* nothing” with the emphasis on doing. While we are demonstrating patience we are positioning ourselves for the attack we know will soon come our way, and this is a very active endeavor.

### **Power**

The position that holds the greatest potential to create extraordinary results in negotiating a conflict is one that demonstrates the quality of integrity. Integrity is a wonderful word that has two distinct meanings, both useful to the Aikidoka. Integrity has connotations to power and ethics. In the context of power, integrity refers to effectiveness, the ability of an action to fulfill the purpose for which it is intended.

From an Aikido perspective, power has two sides, creative and preventive. On the creative side, power is concerned with the ability to fulfill interests. On the preventive side, power is concerned with the ability to protect interests from exploitation. For a strategy to be effective in daily life it will need to balance these two essential sides of power.

To hold this balance, Aikido sets and maintains boundaries that in a healthy relationship allow the fulfillment of self-interests, and in an

unhealthy relationship protect interests from violation. On the mat this means presenting positions that are open but not vulnerable. Applying this understanding to the terrorist crisis means taking preventive actions directed toward keeping this type of action from happening again, yet don't seriously limit the freedoms and civil rights that are the source of our prosperity.

The role played scenario of Aikido training has nage being attacked by an unprincipled aggressor. Because this type of relationship holds little potential for the creative fulfillment of interests, nage's actions are focused mainly on the preventive side of protecting his interests from violation. One way the Aikidoist does this is by making himself a difficult target.

To make himself into a poor target the Aikidoka focuses his efforts primarily toward improving the integrity of his own position, rather than looking for ways to undermine uke's. Sun Tzu speaks of this when he says that “In ancient times skillful warriors first made themselves invincible, and then watched for vulnerability in their opponents. Invincibility is in oneself, vulnerability is in the opponent. Therefore skillful warriors are able to be invincible, but they cannot cause opponents to be vulnerable. That is why it is said that victory can be discerned but not manufactured.”

Everyone enters into any conflict with both assets and liabilities. To improve the integrity of our position we want to increase our assets and decrease our liabilities. On the mat this is done through increasing our skills and decreasing our vulnerability. In facing the terrorist crisis the U.S. should reevaluate its positions both in the middle east and at home, and use this opportunity to improve them.

For example, our nation has done a great deal of good in the middle east. These actions should be reinforced. My guess is that there are also many areas that the U.S. has been lacking. Our positions in these areas should be mended. At home improving our position will focus largely on preventive measures like airport security. The stronger we can make our position the more difficult it will be to attack it again.

An essential skill for randori is learning to be very good at predicting when and how uke will strike. To do this nage trains himself to be acutely sensitive. With a great deal of practice he can learn to sense uke's intentions from his patterns of movement and body language. For example, most people will strike at the end of an in-breath. Since it is easier to respond well when you know when the attack will come, this is useful information. Of

course, Aikidoka will recognize exceptional awareness as one of the skills that O'Sensei said was responsible for his extraordinary abilities.

In the terrorist crisis, this should be the primary function of the U.S. intelligence community. As in randori training, how well they are able to predict the terrorists' future actions will largely determine if we get hit again, or are able to use their actions to create an effective response.

There is certainly a great deal that can, and will be done to decrease the vulnerability of our position. Unfortunately, Uke From Hell training also shows us that preventive measures designed to increase the effectiveness of our boundaries will never be 100% effective. Despite our best efforts, attacks will sometimes reach their intended target. We also need to acknowledge the problem that as we increase our defensive fortifications, we inherently reduce our freedom. Because of these factors, we want to do more than block attacks. Ultimately we are going to want to address our relationship with the attacker to make it so he no longer has the will or means to attack us.

### **Relationship**

The best way for nage to prevent the violation of his boundaries is by using his power to change the relationship he has with uke. All conflicts have two types of issues that are being negotiated: substantive issues and relationship issues. Substantive issues are the content that is in conflict, and in this case includes things like the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the American presence in Saudi Arabia, and the embargoes against Iraq and Pakistan. You will notice that in all these pages I have yet to introduce any substantive issues of the terrorist conflict.

I haven't attempted to address these issues because that is not the function of Aikido. In the dojo, every action is directed solely towards changing nage's relationship with uke, substance is never discussed. This is because the relationship that is role played in Aikido is one that is so unhealthy, that the idea of negotiating substance is ridiculous. Of course improving the relationships is an important step toward resolving substantive issues, but in the dojo we never get to that point. I find that this is an essential understanding for applying the metaphor of what happens in the dojo to the conflicts of daily life.

In addressing the relationship issues it is essential to understand that no conflict is solely between two parties. There is always a third side. The third side is the greater community in which the conflict is taking place.

This means that nage has at least two

relationships that must be addressed to resolve a conflict: the relationship with uke, and the relationship with the greater community. At the most basic level, the relationship with uke will be improved for nage if he is no longer the target of uke's attacks. If nage achieves this through actions which the community considers to be unethical, he would damage that relationship which could mean being chastised and even facing legal action. On the other side of this, if nage acts in a manner that the community considers to be ethical, he gains the community as an ally in the conflict, and thus increases his power.

In addressing the terrorist crisis, it is essential that we take actions which radically change our relationship with the terrorists, but it is also essential that we do so in a way that acknowledges and improves our relationship with the world community. The key to doing this lies in the other side of integrity: ethics.

### **Ethics**

Power is concerned with the ability to produce a result. Ethics are rules of behavior that guide *how* one reaches that result. So ethics and power are related concepts that should always coexist. Ethics are like the insulation on electrical wiring that carries power. Without the insulation of an ethical framework to guide the flow of power, those who come in contact with it will get burnt. Aikido teaches an individual to develop power. Ethics assures that he understands how to wield it properly.

The function of ethics in a conflict is to allow substance to be negotiated without damaging the relationships. The problem with uniting power and ethics is that the two often seem to act in opposition to each other. In other words, if we are ethical in our actions we will have to sacrifice some of our power to satisfy self-interests. On the other side it is thought that if we really want to be effective it will be necessary to sacrifice some ethical values. Certainly anyone who has ever entered a negotiation understands that it almost always confronts the negotiator with this dilemma.

O'Sensei, through his insight into the nature of the martial arts, created Aikido which demonstrates that ethics and power do not have to act in opposition to each other. Through training, the Aikidoka can learn to unite effectiveness and ethics in a centered state of integrity that is synergetically above and beyond either taken separately.

The Japanese sword provides a powerful example of this. To forge a Japanese sword requires two types of steel. To be effective, the cutting edge

requires very hard steel capable of being honed to incredible sharpness. The problem with steel this hard is that it is brittle, meaning a sword made just of this steel would snap in two under the rigors of combat. To remedy this problem the sword is forged with a combination of hard and soft steel. The soft steel alone would not hold a fine cutting edge, yet when mixed with the hard steel they form a blade that is both very durable and very effective.

Aikido is the product of the forging together of the two sides of integrity. As O'Sensei was able to demonstrate, when power and ethics are properly united the results can be extraordinary. If we as a nation want to produce extraordinary results in our quest to end terrorism, we will also want to take actions that balance the two sides of integrity.

This is clearly demonstrated in the first of the two reasons why the Samurai did not kill the rival lord. It was because of the fact that when the rival lord spat in his face, the Samurai was moved to anger. To kill the rival lord in the name of justice was his sworn duty. To kill out of anger was against his ethical code. If he had killed the lord out of anger it would have then been a personal act that reduced him to the status of an unprincipled murderer, on a par with the rival lord. The rival lords actions, like an Uke From Hell, tried to draw the Samurai into sacrificing his personal integrity, and he would rather die than let that happen.

Our ethical position dictates that the perpetrators of this crime must be brought to justice. It also dictates that the means we use to bring them to justice is as important as bringing them to justice. It would be possible for the U.S. to pursue justice by exercising our power in a manner that attains quick results, at the cost of a great deal of collateral damage. Doing so would sacrifice our ethics, and thereby damage our relationship with the world community.

It is essential we don't go down this road. Our leaders should instead choose to take actions that balance the short-term needs for retribution with the reality of having to live with the long-term consequences of our actions. This means seeing that justice is served, but not at the cost of injuring those who had nothing to do with the terrorism. This is a more difficult path, but the long-term payoff is worth the price.

This will assure that the U.S. maintains its hold on the ethical high ground. A great wrong was done to us. The terrorism of September 11 is clearly an unjust act, and most of the world sees it that way. We already stand atop the ethical high ground. We should use this fact to our every advantage.

There is no better ally to have in a conflict

than truth. By acting with integrity we will shine the light of truth on the many ways the attacker's position lacks integrity. This is exactly what well-executed Aikido does. The Aikidoist simply centers himself in the position of greatest integrity, and by doing so naturally exposes the weaknesses in uke's position.

### Pressure

My experience with Uke From Hell training is that this will naturally draw uke back into the conflict, but in extreme cases it will probably not be enough of itself. Another way to elicit an irimi response from uke is to maintain a strong presence and close proximity. As Uke From Hell withdraws, nage will follow him but stay just out of reach. This communicates the message that nage is fully committed to seeing the conflict through to a just and appropriate resolution.

To draw uke into irimi action, nage must stay in uke's face without crossing his boundaries. The Samurai in our story did a good job demonstrating this principle. A way to do this in the terrorist crisis would be to put some serious effort into improving U.S. relations with the people of the middle east. This would allow us to increase our presence in areas that the terrorists are suspected of operating, and thus let them know we are watching and waiting for them to make a move.

Another way to pressure uke into irimi action is through the prudent and intelligent use of atemi. Atemi are strikes used within the context of executing an Aikido technique. O'Sensei stated that Atemi is an essential part of Aikido. An atemi is an irimi attack used by nage to draw an irimi response from uke in the form of a block, a counter attack, or both. Any of these responses is an irimi force that holds the potential for an Aikido technique that can lead to resolution.

Atemi is at its best when nage uses the potential it holds to cause injury rather than actually causing injury. An atemi's potential can get uke to respond the way nage wants, without forcing nage to actually cause injury or opening himself to an Uke From Hell reversal. In fact, if you begin to work with atemi you will find that actually striking will greatly reduce the opportunities for an Aikido technique by causing uke to retreat even further. So it is essential that atemi be used wisely and only with impeccable integrity.

One way that the U.S. could use atemi against the terrorists, would be to attack the relationships that support them. The best way to do this would be to use this opportunity to improve our relationships with the people of the middle east. This

is something the terrorists would hate to see happen. This of course is something we should always be doing.

It is also something that should not just happen on a national level. As the saying goes, "Think globally, and act locally." An individual has very little power to effect national policy, but one does have the power to act and make a difference in one's own community. For example, befriending the Moslem members of your community could make a difference. Many of these people still have ties to the middle east, so there is no telling the ultimate effect this sort of action could have.

A second thing would be to attack the financial foundation that supports the terrorists. This can happen through finding the money and making it no longer available. This attack can happen with integrity and little risk of injuring the innocent.

A third use of atemi would be extremely well targeted military actions. Striking the terrorists is a defensive action of great integrity as long as it doesn't also injure innocent civilians. If there is any doubt we should err on the side of caution.

The upside of this is that these sorts of actions would bring the terrorists out of hiding and into irimi action, which means we would then have the opportunity to discover who they are and then deal with them, an opportunity that is almost nonexistent now.

The downside is that the new acts of terrorism would most likely lead to the loss of more lives. A lesson from Uke From Hell that is painful to contemplate in this context is that it often takes a number of attacks before the conditions are ripe for resolution. Of course the option of a massive offensive strike does not promise to be any less painful and potentially could be much worse.

### **Taking Action**

After working diligently to create the ideal conditions for resolution, the final step is to take decisive action. In his book "Budo," Ueshiba writes that, "In a secret training manual written by an ancient worthy, there is the following statement: 'Bujitsu (martial technique) must be applied just like a sunbeam flooding a room with light as soon as the door opens a crack.'" This describes the ideal application of technique.

Nage patiently works to improve the integrity of his position until the moment is right to spontaneously and intuitively apply the technique that best fits the conditions presented by uke's attack. This is like those magic moments during an oral argument when you intuitively say just the right thing at the right time and the tension instantly melts

away.

How does the Aikidoka know which technique to do when? At the Utah Aikikai we say that "Uke will always tell you what you need to do to resolve the conflict." The question is whether nage is aware and knowledgeable enough to recognize the answer. Fisher and Ury in "Getting To Yes," tell us that master negotiators spend the vast majority of their time asking and listening, and only a small portion making statements. In this way the process of Aikido is a lot like Principled Negotiation. Nage's goal is to draw out the information that he needs to create an elegant solution to Uke's attacking position. To do this he uses tenshin energy to question the integrity of Uke's position and then listens to the response by watching what effect this has.

Through training, nage will learn to sense where uke's position lacks integrity, and then apply the technique that best capitalizes on that weakness. In the terrorist crisis the question we need to answer is where does the terrorists position lack integrity? If we can answer this question effectively it will tell us where the opening is and what response will be most effective.

The irony of effective action is that if the conditions are ripe, the actual execution of a technique will seem to be effortless. In other words, if nage has been adroit in creating the optimal conditions, meaning the time and positions are right, the actual application of the technique will seem almost as if uke were doing it to himself. The Samurai demonstrated this masterfully.

The second reason why the Samurai did not kill the rival lord was because his mission was to avenge the death of his lord, and he had accomplished this without having to sully his own hands by killing the rival lord. The rival lord did that himself. This is the highest level of accomplishment in the martial arts. The Samurai simply carried out the task he was duty bound to accomplish with full integrity. It was the rival lord's actions that gave him the opportunity to do this without so much as touching him.

To recognize why this is so, it is necessary to understand the historical context of the story. In the Samurai tradition, honor was the highest tenet. Honor and face were held in greater esteem than life itself. How you died was far more important than whether you died. The rival lord through the treachery of his actions, and the cowardly way that he faced death, had shamed himself irreparably. The Samurai did not force the rival lord to shame himself, for only he had the power to do that. In the end, it was a far worse punishment to let the rival lord live in

his shame than to relieve him of that burden by killing him.

Sun Tzu speaks of this ideal when he says that, "In ancient times those known as good warriors prevailed when it was easy to prevail. Therefore the victories of good warriors are not noted for cleverness or bravery. Therefore their victories in battle are not flukes. Their victories are not flukes because they position themselves where they will surely win, prevailing over those who have already lost." This is the standard in Aikido that we train diligently to someday achieve.

Imagine how much pain and suffering could be averted if the U.S. were to use its resources with such outstanding intelligence, skill, and integrity that we drew the terrorists into effecting their own demise. This is the ideal we strive for in the dojo and who knows, maybe if we are successful in teaching enough students how to use these Aikido principles in daily life, it could be the method our leaders some day use in approaching a crisis like the one we now face.

Hugh Young

11/1/01

Quotes from Sun Tzu are from "The Art of War" as translated by Thomas Cleary

Quotes from Morihei Ueshiba are from "Budo" as translated by John Stevens

Hugh Young

3434 East 7800 South #101

Salt Lake City, UT 84121

hughyoung@mac.com