

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Very few people have ever been killed with the bayonet or saber, but the fear of having their guts explored with cold steel in the hands of battle-maddened men has won many a fight.

-PATTON

1-1. DEFINITION OF COMBATIVES

Hand-to-hand combat is an engagement between two or more persons in an empty-handed struggle or with hand-held weapons such as knives, sticks, or projectile weapons that cannot be fired. Proficiency in hand-to-hand combat is one of the fundamental building blocks for training the modern soldier.

1-2. PURPOSES OF COMBATIVES TRAINING

Soldiers must be prepared to use different levels of force in an environment where conflict may change from low intensity to high intensity over a matter of hours. Many military operations, such as peacekeeping missions or noncombatant evacuation, may restrict the use of deadly weapons. Hand-to-hand combatives training will save lives when an unexpected confrontation occurs.

More importantly, combatives training helps to instill courage and self-confidence. With competence comes the understanding of controlled aggression and the ability to remain focused while under duress. Training in combatives includes hard and arduous physical training that is, at the same time, mentally demanding and carries over to other military pursuits. The overall effect of combatives training is—

- The culmination of a successful physical fitness program, enhancing individual and unit strength, flexibility, balance, and cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Building personal courage, self confidence, self-discipline, and esprit de corps.

1-3. BASIC PRINCIPLES

Underlying all combatives techniques are principles the hand-to-hand fighter must apply to successfully defeat an opponent. The natural progression of techniques, as presented in this manual, will instill these principles into the soldier.

a. **Mental Calm.** During a fight a soldier must keep his ability to think. He must not allow fear or anger to control his actions.

b. **Situational Awareness.** Things are often going on around the fighters that could have a direct impact on the outcome of the fight such as opportunity weapons or other personnel joining the fight.

c. **Suppleness.** A soldier cannot always count on being bigger and stronger than the enemy. He should, therefore, never try to oppose the enemy in a direct test of strength. Supple misdirection of the enemy's strength allows superior technique and fight strategy to overcome superior strength.

d. **Base.** Base refers to the posture that allows a soldier to gain leverage from the ground. Generally, a soldier must keep his center of gravity low and his base wide—much like a pyramid.

e. **Dominant Body Position.** Position refers to the location of the fighter's body in relation to his opponent's. A vital principle when fighting is to gain control of the enemy by controlling this relationship. Before any killing or disabling technique can be applied, the soldier must first gain and maintain one of the dominant body positions (Chapter 3, Section I).

f. **Distance.** Each technique has a window of effectiveness based upon the amount of space between the two combatants. The fighter must control the distance between himself and the enemy in order to control the fight.

g. **Physical Balance.** Balance refers to the ability to maintain equilibrium and to remain in a stable upright position.

h. **Leverage.** A fighter uses the parts of his body to create a natural mechanical advantage over the parts of the enemy's body. By using leverage, a fighter can have a greater effect on a much larger enemy.

1-4. SAFETY

The Army's combatives program has been specifically designed to train the most competent fighters in the shortest possible time in the safest possible manner.

a. **General Safety Precautions.** The techniques of Army combatives should be taught in the order presented in this manual. They are arranged to not only give the natural progression of techniques, but to present the more dangerous techniques after the soldiers have established a familiarity with the dynamics of combative techniques in general. This will result in fewer serious injuries from the more dynamic moves.

b. **Supervision.** The most important safety consideration is proper supervision. Because of the potentially dangerous nature of the techniques involved, combatives training must always be conducted under the supervision of qualified leaders.

c. **Training Areas.** Most training should be conducted in an area with soft footing such as a grassy or sandy area. If training mats are available, they should be used. A hard surface area is not appropriate for combatives training.

d. **Chokes.** Chokes are the best way to end a fight. They are the most effective way to incapacitate an enemy and, with supervision, are also safe enough to apply in training exactly as on the battlefield.

e. **Joint Locks.** In order to incapacitate an enemy, attacks should be directed against large joints such as the elbow, shoulder, or knee. Attacks on most of these joints are very painful long before causing any injury, which allows full-force training to be conducted without significant risk of injury. The exceptions are wrist attacks and twisting knee attacks. The wrist is very easily damaged, and twisting the knee does not become painful until it is too late. Therefore, these attacks should be taught with great care and should not be allowed in sparring or competitions.

f. **Striking.** Striking is an inefficient way to incapacitate an enemy. Strikes are, however, an important part of an overall fight strategy and can be very effective in manipulating the opponent into unfavorable positions. Striking can be practiced with various types of protective padding such as boxing gloves. Defense can be practiced using reduced force blows. Training should be continuously focused on the realities of fighting.