

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO U.S. ARMY **COMBAT** SKILLS, TACTICS, AND TECHNIQUES



Battle Drills • Hand-to-Hand • Mines and Explosives
Land Navigation • Communications • Weapons and Artillery
Security and Camouflage

EDITED BY JAY McCULLOUGH

PART I

Hand-to-Hand Combat

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. has the best-equipped and well-trained Army in the world. Barring unforeseen political considerations or a catastrophic act of nature, it can deploy nearly anywhere and accomplish almost any reasonable mission. This is due in large part to the Army's experience as an institution in a variety of wartime environments. Its hard-earned wisdom about how to cope with almost every imaginable scenario, on a soldier-by-soldier basis, distinguishes it as a service of excellence whose individuals are highly adaptable. They are well prepared, they accomplish the mission, and when the circumstances are truly unfavorable to life itself, they are survivors.

The keys to this preparation are contained in the Army's many sensible, well-written, voluminous, and scattered publications. They address nearly every aspect of running, provisioning, or being in the Army, and include what constitutes really the best information on combat operations available anywhere. With the exception of being a professional soldier, I can think of no better way to learn about combat than from these many volumes. The task of culling every bit of useful information about combat from every U.S. Army publication would take months however, so I've done it here for you in *The Ultimate U.S. Army Guide to Combat Skills, Tactics, and Techniques*. You could say, it practically wrote itself. Anything useful you find within these pages is due to hard working and dedicated Army personnel who took the time to research and assemble this valuable information. Anything incorrect or inconsequential is my fault for including it.

I've tried to make the selections useful to a general reader who may find him- or herself in a combat situation, whether they are alone or in a small group. Here you will find information on how to defend yourself with your bare hands, how to pick through an urban battlefield, learn how to draw a bead on someone or something, and how to avoid having sniper get the best of you. On a battlefield you may need to recognize grenades, boobytraps, and natural defensive locations, and they are all discussed here. Since you may have occasion to find a machine gun, there are also sections about the tactical considerations of using one. Alas, since you are unlikely to become a tank commander, or forge a tank in your back yard (and because the stingy publisher would give me only a thousand pages), you will find no information on how to conduct a classic set-piece tank battle on the plains of central Europe. But, you will discover the weaker points of Soviet-era and modern Russian tanks. Useful stuff when you need it!

As a final note, I'd like to suggest some of what I'd consider the best advice about combat I can give. Just as hospitals are excellent places to get sick, battlegrounds are excellent places to get dead. War is a conflagration; it does not seek peace, rather, like many human institutions, it seeks its own continuance, jumping from country to country like a wildfire or a pestilence, and it ceases only when it has destroyed everything in its path and utterly exhausted all a people's political oxygen, ruins or expends all their resources, and has crippled or killed all their children. So, it's probably best to avoid combat situations for reasons large and small. But some wars are unavoidable, and for those times, the ability to survive, and yes, even thrive belongs to those who are best trained, properly equipped, and who are adaptable to rapidly changing conditions. Your training starts here.

Jay McCullough
December 2009
North Haven, Connecticut

Introduction to Combatives

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

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.

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 non-combatant 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.

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.

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

- 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.

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.

CHAPTER 1

Basic Ground-Fighting Techniques

Basic ground-fighting techniques build a fundamental understanding of dominant body position, which should be the focus of most combatives training before moving on to the more difficult standing techniques. Ground fighting is also where technique can most easily be used to overcome size and strength.

SECTION I. DOMINANT BODY POSITION

Before any killing or disabling technique can be applied, the soldier must first gain and maintain dominant body position. The leverage gained from dominant body position allows the fighter to defeat a stronger opponent. An appreciation for dominant position is fundamental to becoming a proficient fighter because it ties together what would otherwise be a long confusing list of unrelated techniques. If a finishing technique is attempted from dominant position and fails, the fighter can simply try again. If, on the other hand, a finishing technique is attempted from other than dominant position and fails, it will usually mean defeat. The dominant body positions will be introduced in order of precedence.

1-1. BACK MOUNT

The back mount gives the fighter the best control of the fight (Figure 1-1, page 1-2). From this position it is very difficult for the enemy to either defend himself or counterattack. Both legs should be wrapped around the enemy with the heels "hooked" inside his legs. One arm is under an armpit and the other is around the neck and the hands are clasped. Even though a fighter may find himself with his own back on the ground this is still the back mount.

CAUTION

While in the back mount, the fighter's feet should never be crossed because this would provide the enemy an opportunity for an ankle break.



Figure 1-1: Back mount.

1-2. FRONT MOUNT

The front mount (Figure 1-2) is dominant because it allows the fighter to strike the enemy with punches without the danger of effective return punches, and also provides the leverage to attack the enemy's upper body with joint attacks. Knees are as high as possible toward the enemy's armpits. This position should be held loosely to allow the enemy to turn over if he should try.



1-3. GUARD

If the fighter must be on the bottom, the guard position (Figure 1-3) allows the best defense and the only chance of offense. It is important initially for the fighter to lock his feet together behind the enemy's back to prevent him from simply pushing the fighter's knees down and stepping over them.



Figure 1-3: Guard.

1-4. SIDE CONTROL

Although side control (Figure 1-4) is not a dominant position, many times a fighter will find himself in this position, and he must be able to counter the enemy's defensive techniques. The fighter should place his elbow on the ground in the notch created by the enemy's head and shoulder. His other hand should be palm down on the ground on the rear side of the enemy. The leg closest to the enemy's head should be straight and the other one bent so that the knee is near the enemy's hip. He should keep his head down to avoid knee strikes.



SECTION II. BASIC TECHNIQUES

These basic techniques not only teach a fighter to understand dominant body position, but also provide an introduction to a systematic way of fighting on the ground. Almost all types of finishing moves are represented by the simplest and, at the same time, most effective example of the type. Before any time is spent on the more complex and harder to learn techniques presented later in this manual, the fighter must master these basics.

1-5. BODY POSITIONING MOVES

The key to developing good ground fighters is ingraining a feel for the dominant body positions and how they relate to each other.

- a. **Stand up in Base.** This is the most basic technique. It allows the fighter to stand up in the presence of an enemy or potential enemy without compromising his base and thus making himself vulnerable to attack. The principles of body movement inherent in this technique make it so important that leaders should reinforce it every time a fighter stands up.
 - (1) *Step 1* (Figure 1-5). The fighter assumes a seated posture resting on his strong side hand with his weak side arm resting comfortably on his bent knee. His feet should not be crossed.



Figure 1-5: Stand up in base, step 1.

- (2) *Step 2* (Figure 1-6). Placing his weight on his strong side hand and weak side foot, the fighter picks up the rest of his body and swings his leg between his two posts, placing his foot behind his strong side hand. It is important that the knee should be behind the same side arm as shown.



Figure 1-6: Stand up in base, step 2.

- (3) *Step 3* (Figure 1-7). After placing his weight on both feet, the fighter lifts his hand from the ground and assumes a fighter's stance. He holds his hands high to protect his head and face. His fists are clenched, but relaxed. His elbows are close to his body, and his weight is evenly distributed on both feet, creating a stable base. He is light on his feet with his knees slightly flexed to allow quick movement in any direction.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT U.S. ARMY COMBAT TECHNIQUES

From the Official Manuals of the U.S. Army

Here for the first time in one place is everything you need to know about modern military combat. Drawn from dozens of the U.S. Army's official field manuals on every conceivable aspect of combat operations, this huge compilation contains everything for any combatant anywhere, armed or unarmed, and in all conditions and terrains, including:

- Desert, jungle, mountain, and house-to-house urban fighting
- Training for rifle, automatic, mortar, mines, and sniper operations
- Mental preparedness, survival training, and leadership for combat and combat stress
- Tank and artillery tactics (great for mothers-in-law)
- Forward and reconnaissance operations
- Construction of defensive positions
- Combat in nuclear, biological, and chemical environments
- Land navigation, map reading, first aid, and camouflage

Complete with illustrated advice on hand-to-hand combat techniques, with hundreds of photographs and illustrations demonstrating tips and methods for every aspect of combat, if it's not in *The Ultimate Guide to U.S. Army Combat Skills, Tactics, and Techniques*, you just don't need it.

JAY McCULLOUGH is a writer and editor specializing in the subjects of history and military history. He is the editor of *The Ultimate Guide to U.S. Army Survival Skills, Tactics, and Techniques* and the author of *Tale of Two Subs*.

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