

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hand-to-hand combat is an engagement between two or more persons in an empty-handed struggle or with handheld weapons such as knives, sticks, and rifles with bayonets. These fighting arts are essential military skills. Projectile weapons may be lost or broken, or they may fail to fire. When friendly and enemy forces become so intermingled that firearms and grenades are not practical, hand-to-hand combat skills become vital assets.

1-1. PURPOSE OF COMBATIVES TRAINING

Today's battlefield scenarios may require silent elimination of the enemy. Unarmed combat and expedient-weapons training should not be limited to forward units. With rapid mechanized/motorized, airborne, and air assault abilities, units throughout the battle area could be faced with close-quarter or unarmed fighting situations. With low-intensity conflict scenarios and guerrilla warfare conditions, any soldier is apt to face an unarmed confrontation with the enemy, and hand-to-hand combative training can save lives. The many practical battlefield benefits of combative training are not its only advantage. It can also—

- a. Contribute to individual and unit strength, flexibility, balance, and cardiorespiratory fitness.
- b. Build courage, confidence, self-discipline, and esprit de corps.

1-2. BASIC PRINCIPLES

There are basic principles that the hand-to-hand fighter must know and apply to successfully defeat an opponent. The principles mentioned are only a few of the basic guidelines that are essential knowledge for hand-to-hand combat. There are many others, which through years of study become intuitive to a highly skilled fighter.

- a. **Physical Balance.** Balance refers to the ability to maintain equilibrium and to remain in a stable, upright position. A hand-to-hand fighter must maintain his balance both to defend himself and to launch an effective attack.

Without balance, the fighter has no stability with which to defend himself, nor does he have a base of power for an attack. The fighter must understand two aspects of balance in a struggle:

(1) ***How to move his body to keep or regain his own balance.*** A fighter develops balance through experience, but usually he keeps his feet about shoulder-width apart and his knees flexed. He lowers his center of gravity to increase stability.

(2) ***How to exploit weaknesses in his opponent's balance.*** Experience also gives the hand-to-hand fighter a sense of how to move his body in a fight to maintain his balance while exposing the enemy's weak points.

b. **Mental Balance.** The successful fighter must also maintain a mental balance. He must not allow fear or anger to overcome his ability to concentrate or to react instinctively in hand-to-hand combat.

c. **Position.** Position refers to the location of the fighter (defender) in relation to his opponent. A vital principle when being attacked is for the defender to move his body to a safe position—that is, where the attack cannot continue unless the enemy moves his whole body. To position for a counterattack, a fighter should move his whole body off the opponent's line of attack. Then, the opponent has to change his position to continue the attack. It is usually safe to move off the line of attack at a 45-degree angle, either toward the opponent or away from him, whichever is appropriate. This position affords the fighter safety and allows him to exploit weaknesses in the enemy's counterattack position. Movement to an advantageous position requires accurate timing and distance perception.

d. **Timing.** A fighter must be able to perceive the best time to move to an advantageous position in an attack. If he moves too soon, the enemy will anticipate his movement and adjust the attack. If the fighter moves too late, the enemy will strike him. Similarly, the fighter must launch his attack or counterattack at the critical instant when the opponent is the most vulnerable.

e. **Distance.** Distance is the relative distance between the positions of opponents. A fighter positions himself where distance is to his advantage. The hand-to-hand fighter must adjust his distance by changing position and developing attacks or counterattacks. He does this according to the range at which he and his opponent are engaged. (For a more detailed discussion of the concepts of distance and range, see Chapter 6.)

f. **Momentum.** Momentum is the tendency of a body in motion to continue in the direction of motion unless acted on by another force. Body mass in motion develops momentum. The greater the body mass or speed of movement, the greater the momentum. Therefore, a fighter must understand the effects of this principle and apply it to his advantage.

(1) The fighter can use his opponent's momentum to his advantage—that is, he can place the opponent in a vulnerable position by using his momentum against him.

(a) The opponent's balance can be taken away by using his own momentum.

(b) The opponent can be forced to extend farther than he expected, causing him to stop and change his direction of motion to continue his attack.

(c) An opponent's momentum can be used to add power to a fighter's own attack or counterattack by combining body masses in motion.

(2) The fighter must be aware that the enemy can also take advantage of the principle of momentum. Therefore, the fighter must avoid placing himself in an awkward or vulnerable position, and he must not allow himself to extend too far.

g. **Leverage.** A fighter uses leverage in hand-to-hand combat by using the natural movement of his body to place his opponent in a position of unnatural movement. The fighter uses his body or parts of his body to create a natural mechanical advantage over parts of the enemy's body. He should never oppose the enemy in a direct test of strength; however, by using leverage, he can defeat a larger or stronger opponent.