

**Fit (and Ready) to Fight Revisited:
Controlled-Aggression Techniques required for Total Force
Readiness**

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Three years ago, *Air and Space Power Journal* published my vortices regarding the lack of physical and personnel security training provided by our nation's Air Force. As a newly-commissioned officer, I informally interviewed another newly-commissioned lieutenant who had deployed to combat-stricken Afghanistan during his enlisted service and to a senior colonel with 100+ flying hours as a combat navigator on the B-52 *Stratofortress*. Both combat veterans were trained in defense mechanisms and small arms weaponry just prior to their respective deployments.

However, these officers readily stated that in a situation where all ammunition is expended and with enemy soldiers or insurgents / terrorists remaining active and present, their respective capacity for survival in a hand-to-hand combat environment was non-existent. Today, my concern is solidified; Airmen are woefully unprepared to defend themselves. Training in close-quarters combatives and the utilization of weapons of opportunity is an urgent requirement for our Air Force.

Our sister services have this specific aspect of training wholly and completely correct, and we MUST recognize and correct our training inadequacy immediately. The U.S. Army's Field Manual (FM) 3-25.150, [*Combatives*](#), strenuously notes that "Combatives are the techniques and tactics useful to Soldiers involved in hand-to-hand combat. Proficiency in Combatives is one of the fundamental building blocks for training the modern Soldier."

No such definition exists in our service. Consequently, no universal training program to mentally and physically arm Airmen with skills for hand-to-hand survival exists. In 2001, our brother Marines instituted a belt-ranked, battle-field oriented program that instructs, teaches, and satisfies the Corps' requirement for close-quarters survival, the [Marine Corps Martial Arts Program](#) (MCMAP).

MCMAP is a structured system that requires both cumulative practicum hours and a demonstrated excellence of skills; more significantly, it effectively prepares Marines to utilize controlled violence to maintain self and personnel security. Airmen have and will

continue to deploy to the same locations and quite often in many of the same functions as our joint counterparts.

Fortunately, we have not suffered the same percentages of casualties as the Army and Marine Corps. But, let us imagine for a moment that an Airman was tasked to fill a combat position most frequently tasked to a Soldier. Would the Airman be instantly combat-ready in self-defense tactics or would he/she require hours upon hours of new training? As a Total Force asset, each of us must be adequately prepared to step-up, strap-on and defend ourselves and others in any environment where our brother Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines fight.

I propose a system parallel to the MCMAP. Our Airmen must be immersed in combative fundamentals during Basic Military Training (BMT) and all officer accession programs. Combatives should be required annually much in the fashion as the Air Force Physical Fitness Test. A demonstration of chokes, strikes, kicks, vitals, and weapons of opportunity usage must become inherent to our service as Professional Military Education (PME). In fact, effective self and personnel security will require a layered approach. PME schools should include Combatives into curricula. My unqualified proposed method follows:

Combatives for BMT/Officer Accession Programs – (required 40 hours training for airmen and CGOs) instruction and demonstration of Lethal Chokes, Strikes, Kicks, Vitals, Survival Techniques and Personal Damage Assessments.

The Warrior Course for Beginner-level PME programs and schools – (required 10 hours training in Airman Leadership School, Air and Space Basic Course, and Squadron Officer School) instruction and demonstration on use of edged weapons and weapons of opportunity and defense mechanics, required demonstration of *Combatives*.

The Mastery Course for Intermediate-level PME programs and schools – (required 10 hours training in Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (NCOA) and Air Command and Staff College) instruction and demonstration on personnel support/defense and withdrawal methods and required demonstration of *Combatives* and *The Warrior Course*. Intermediate-level PME graduates will be certified by an Air Force-level certifier to instruct both the *Combatives* and *the Warrior* courses.

The *Combatives* program should be re-evaluated annually for training efficiency and realistic resemblance to the Joint Battle-space. We are no longer a “blue” corps, but a “purple” service standing ready for task to operate and support any Joint mission. It is apparent that we must quickly realize support of the nation’s interest mandates that professional Airmen be willing and able to fight and survive in the most likely of combative landscapes, that our Airmen be ready to continue the fight in any situation, even when his/her enemy is at arm’s length.

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