

The Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP) in all Training

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Outline

Thesis: Today's Army Physical Fitness Program does not effectively assess, train or prepare Soldiers for today's combat missions.

I. Introduction: Today's warrior requires the skills of the Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP).

II. Body (Pro):

A. The MACP and its use in developing the modern day warrior:

1. Introduction of the MACP to the U.S. Army.
2. The MACP as an innovative program to help build Soldiers' confidence and self- defense skills.

B. Lessons Learned: Units effectively using the MACP enhance the training and combat readiness of our Soldiers:

1. Additional instruction in hand-to-hand combatives training used to enhance Soldiers' combat readiness.
2. Application of the MACP to improves Soldiers' survivability in military operations in urban terrain (MOUT).

C. Integration of Lessons Learned into the school environment (TRADOC)

1. Soldiers in basic training now receive this training.
2. Every Soldier serving within the U.S. Army will experience the MACP.

III. Argument (Con): Why the MACP can render some units combat ineffective due to injuries from lack of supervision and proper training.

IV. Conclusion

Abstract

Units often become complacent with the reverberation and everyday maintenance cycles, marksmanship, and field training exercises. Soldiers become uninterested performing preventive maintenance checks and services on equipment, conducting battle drills, and attending blocks of instruction on mission essential task lists; these Soldiers beg for change of pace and a new challenge. Leaders who sustain a artistic operational tempo, and vigorous training schedule help their subordinate leaders in two ways:

- They continually challenge their Soldiers.
- Fewer discipline problems with these Soldiers.

The rangers in the 2nd Ranger Battalion during 1944 trained to use hand-to-hand combat skills when dealing with their enemy in close quarter combat; or when use of their weapons was no longer possible. Unfortunately, the results of this training were both inadequate and ineffective, thus making the training program for hand-to-hand combat skills unsuccessful. Although many reasons could help explain the root cause of this program's failure it ultimately came down to one key issue: the hand-to-hand training was not aggressive enough.

Senior leaders within the 2nd Ranger Battalion realized that standard takedown and throwing techniques were difficult to execute during training and could result in injuries to trainees. To help improve upon an aggressive training model—but also maintaining a level of safety during this training—several different types of fighting styles were researched as possible replacements to what was then offered. Some of the styles investigated included: Russian somboa, western-style boxing and wrestling (1). As research continued it became apparent that each of these possible fighting styles lacked one essential component: none of them offered a quick and effective way to both control and finish an opponent through joint manipulation or chokes. It was during this period when SFC Matt Larson (the author of FM 3-25.150 Combatives) began experimenting with jiu jitsu as a possible replacement for previously adopted fighting styles.

SFC Larson's own research revealed that: "70% to 90% of hand-to-hand engagements go to the ground and that these fights often last only seven to nine seconds."(2) The more 'boxing' style techniques previously mentioned were unrealistic for what the realities of combat-style fights would look like. Therefore, SFC Larson focused on close quarters combat—when opponents are within 3 feet of each other—

where the initial blows were the most critical because they often incapacitated the opponent immediately. Rather than standing up and exchanging punches with an enemy, this new style of hand-to-hand combat focused on decisive blows designed to kill or maim an enemy quickly. A well-placed carotid artery choke will incapacitate and an opponent within seconds; a well aimed blow to a major nerve will kill those who receive the hit.

This change in close quarters combat theory was a departure from the previous mindset of more classic hand-to-hand combat training. Trainees were now instructed to engage an opponent decisively and to land solid blows or chokes that would quickly kill or maim their opponent within seconds: ‘move with a purpose and use the techniques you trained on and you will be successful in close quarters combat.’ The key issue here to remember is that all combatives training is a perishable skill that must be routinely practiced and trained upon.

Just as the ranger battalion was dealing with the inadequacies of their hand-to-hand training program; special operation’s interest in martial arts was continuing to grow as they adapted the jiu jitsu martial arts and its ability to use an opponent’s momentum and leverage against him. This martial art allows special operations Soldiers to develop a wide variety of skills in several complementary areas, including; hip throwing, ground grappling, constrictions, joint-manipulation, punching, kicking, and striking to defeat an enemy (3). Soldiers are adapting to the upbeat operational tempo of today’s war against terrorism, however, just as with the principles of physical fitness; they need variety to keep them focused and to prevent them from becoming complacent.

The Modern Army Combatives Program will help achieve that within a unit. The MACP will help units in two ways: it will help improve the physical fitness of our Soldiers, and it will serve the unit as a combat multiplier. Successfully trained Soldiers in the MACP will have both higher self confidence and greater discipline. These attributes will sharpen reflexes and make for a more effective Soldier who can quickly resolve any close-quarters situation on the battlefield.

Soldiers returning from theater often cite previous MACP training as a tool used while reacting to numerous combat situations. These testimonies included statements such as: “I had more confidence when the first round cracked past my head,” to: “I had to use some combative training skills during a riot, when I could not use my rifle.” Testimonies such as these are needed to help promote the MACP. Particularly amongst units that do not incorporate this program in their training regimen; from either a lack of knowledge about the benefits of the MACP, or because they do not want to weigh the risks of the possible injuries. The injuries that have come from the MACP are often due to either a lack of supervision or a lack of certified trainers. To help mitigate these two issues; the leadership within units must understand and educate themselves on the long-term benefits of this program. The more MACP trained personnel there are in a unit, then the less likely injuries may result from MACP training.

The Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) mission in today’s war against terrorism is a dangerous one. Often our Soldiers find themselves within arm’s reach of the aggressor. If these Soldiers have only trained to engage an enemy with direct fire weapons—and close quarters make these weapons difficult or impossible to use—then how can we adequately expect our Soldiers to respond when they have not properly

trained to do so? Questions such as this become even more difficult when we consider how our Soldiers should respond to a non-combatant who turns hostile, and deadly force is not warranted. As leaders it falls upon our shoulders to prepare and train our Soldiers for scenarios such as these before they happen. A Soldier defending this nation should have all the tools, weapons, and support that their country can provide. The MACP was specifically designed to help answer this operational need of our ground forces and to further develop these forces. When we send Soldiers to enter and clear a building—and the use of their direct fire weapons may be negated by the confines of that building—then we as leaders must ensure our Soldiers are properly trained and have the confidence and skills to defeat any enemy on today’s modern battlefield.

As we train in the urban environment, we need to implement the MACP into the standard MOUT training. Soldiers who have only trained to use their weapons will be unable to respond when an aggressor grabs that weapon and the forces the Soldier to react through other means. MOUT training that uses a scenario such as this will help spread the MACP throughout the entire U.S. Army, not only in the combat arms units, but in all ranks and occupational specialties (4).

As the war on terror continues our military leaders have realized that we are engaging an enemy on a battlefield without a ‘front.’ Military occupational specialties (MOS) that have historically been considered as ‘rear echelon’ (e.g.: drivers, administrative clerks, food service, etc.) are now finding themselves in situations whereby MACP training could be of some benefit to them. As we continue to engage an enemy who respects no boundaries then our combat service and support Soldiers will be in need of the MACP. As operational requirements continue to stretch our ground forces—in both Iraq and

Afghanistan—then any Soldier deployed to these areas of operations (AO) can find themselves on any type of mission while serving there. As leaders to these men and women we must ensure that they are properly trained to incorporate the MACP as they react to situations in theater.

Research into combat attributable deaths in urban environments during World War II reveal that some of these deaths may have resulted by the length of the standard infantryman's rifle (e.g.: the M-1 Garand rifle) being a hindrance in tight quarters. As was the case nearly sixty-three years ago, Soldiers today also lose the benefit of a long range weapon in close quarters combat; in some instances their weapons become a hindrance in a building and other skills are required to successfully defeat their enemy.

The speed of today's war requires a well balanced warrior who can assess a situation and react quickly; the MACP helps deliver the confidence, self esteem, and the violence of action that our Soldiers need to succeed against a determined adversary in this sort of environment. To help develop these traits all incoming enlistees in the U.S. Army undergo 40 hours of Ground Fighting Techniques (GFT)—which is another version of the MACP—during Infantry One Station Unit Training basic training. To support this training requirement, basic training companies each have a level three trained instructor, and at platoon level, each platoon sergeant is a level one. The MACP was developed to ensure that every Soldier who attends basic training would leave and go to their new unit as a level one certified Soldier.

With the MACP already on the training regimen at basic training, now the issue revolves around the time allotted for the MACP versus other topics. We must reassess the benefit of spending the current time allotment for 'Rifle Bayonet Fighting

Techniques' instruction. As a professional army, we must ask ourselves: "do we still need to spend limited training time on a skill such as 'bayonet fighting' that has little to no practicality on the modern battlefield?" Instead we should reassign the time allotted to this skill and expand the MACP by 20 more hours. Combatives are a perishable skill that requires routine 'maintenance'—just as an assigned weapon does—and retraining; our young Soldiers must be made to understand this point. To adequately achieve muscle memory with the MACP then all training used to teach combatives must reinforce instinctive and effective reaction. Soldiers will never know when they will need to employ the techniques they have learned from the MACP; therefore training in the MACP must come at non-standard times when Soldiers least expect it. Hand-to-hand combat must be reflex driven and instinctual; asking Soldiers to grapple only when the training schedule tells them to do so would be counterproductive. The following training scenarios help reinforce this concept:

1. As an infantry company is road marching, order two Soldiers to execute a two minute bout in full gear. The Soldiers would not expect to fight at that time, and leaders could get a more accurate evaluation of their skills as they fought. The bout would be fully supervised—thus reducing the risk of injury—and an after action review (AAR) would be conducted with the entire company immediately following the bout.
2. As Soldiers are completing physical training, pick different Soldiers to grapple for a two minute bout. Again, the chosen Soldiers are already tired and are not expecting to grapple at this time. Since they are not expecting to grapple then

they must react instinctively. This not only builds combat warriors, but helps to develop Soldiers as individuals.

There is a demonstrated interest in training scenarios such as these. In some end-of-course critiques at Fort Benning Soldiers stated that they wanted more combatives training. We are fortunate to have Soldiers serving in today's U.S. Army that are like sponges; they want training to be challenging. Our Soldiers enlist knowing that they will be going to war and that what they learn in basic training may be the difference between life and death for them once deployed overseas. Our all volunteer Army understands the country is at war and realizes that to win this conflict, then we must develop the full spectrum warrior. The MACP has been ignored by some leaders due to the ongoing challenges of the war. In some instances, these leaders lose focus because they are focused on the battle rhythm of the area of operation they are deploying to. In other instances, they ignore it because they have tried the MACP in the past and too many injuries resulted.

In response to both of these instances: when properly trained and supervised the MACP serves as a force multiplier. It sharpens instincts on the battlefield, it enhances individual Soldier preparedness, and it improves physical fitness. When injuries sustained during MACP training occur and are investigated, it is often due to a lack of supervision. When SFC Matt Larson developed the curriculum for the MACP and the certification program for leaders who attended MACP training, the intent was that these newly trained trainers could then take what they learned back to their units. The MACP carries some risk when misused and mismanaged, yet the potential rewards outweigh

these risks when Soldiers are properly trained and supervised in the MACP and these same Soldiers deploy to combat.

In conclusion, the Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP) was developed to enhance the combat effectiveness of Soldiers serving within the United States Army. The program helps to educate, train and offer guidance to units that want to incorporate it into their training schedules. As we continue to ask America's sons and daughters to serve in harm's way, then we owe it to the families who provided us with their sons and daughters to provide them with all the tools and knowledge to succeed and survive in the war on terrorism.

References:

- 1) Retrieved November 1st, 2007, from the 'Training Theory' section of the Modern Combatives website:
<http://www.moderncombatives.org/home/trainingtheory.html>
- 2) Larson, M., (2006) taken from a presentation made during the "2006 Combatives Tournament" at Fort Benning, Georgia in June of 2006,
- 3) Retrieved November 1st, 2007, from the 'History' section of the Modern Combatives website:
<http://www.moderncombatives.org/home/trainingtheory.html>
- 4) Larson, M., (2007) taken from a presentation made during the "2007 Combatives Tournament" at Fort Benning, Georgia in June of 2007,