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# Kill or Get Killed

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**U.S. Marine Corps**

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
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Washington, DC 20380-0001

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FOREWORD

1. PURPOSE

Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 12-80, *Kill or Get Killed*, is published to ensure the retention and dissemination of useful information which is not intended to become doctrine or to be published in Fleet Marine Force manuals. FMFRPs in the 12 series are a special category: reprints of historical works which are not available elsewhere.

2. SCOPE

This reference publication was written in 1976 by Lieutenant Colonel Rex Applegate, USA (Ret), with the help of the Combat Section, Military Intelligence Training Center, Camp Ritchie, Maryland. At last there is one volume which speaks to the subjects of unarmed combat (offensive and defensive), combat use of weapons, disarming the enemy, handling of prisoners, the handling of mob/crowd disobedience, the use of chemicals in such situations, and how to establish a professional riot control unit. This is an invaluable reference for officers and SNCOs whose duties encompass these topics. The detail, techniques, and training procedures presented will enhance small unit training, and every unit involved in the above activities should have copies to which they may refer.

3. CERTIFICATION

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS



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*KILL*  
*OR GET KILLED*

RIOT CONTROL TECHNIQUES,  
MANHANDLING, AND CLOSE COMBAT,  
FOR POLICE AND THE MILITARY

By Lieutenant Colonel Rex Applegate  
USA-Ret.

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*To*

GUS PERET

*and those officers and men of the Combat  
Section, Military Intelligence Training  
Center, Camp Ritchie, Maryland, whose  
accumulated experience and training helped  
make this text possible.*



The author, Colonel Rex Applegate, is one of the world's outstanding authorities on close combat and mob control techniques.

# INTRODUCTION

## KILL OR GET KILLED

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, war burst upon an unprepared America. Our young men, wrenched from a world where "fair play" was the code by which all games were conducted, were faced with a foe trained to ruthless killing. They had to be taught to be tougher, meaner, more efficient and more merciless than the enemy if this country was to survive.

It was of this necessity that the book, "Kill or Get Killed" was born. Techniques of hand to hand fighting worked out by then Captain Rex Applegate and his staff were taught to thousands of men going into combat. Many of these returned to verify the rightness of these techniques or to give information by which they were corrected or refined. In 1943, Applegate published this volume which became, and has remained, the basic classic text on close combat. Now long out of print, the few copies still in existence have been treasured by fighting men the world over.

As a nation, we are not now formally at war. As a society, menaced by ever escalating crime, the need for this book was never greater. Study and practice of the principles explained and illustrated will help you and those dependent on you to survive. It's reprinting was long overdue.

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Shooting Editor, Guns Magazine  
Author, "No Second Place Winner"

## Publisher's Foreword

Human life is precious. To guard it and to permit the individual to enjoy various rights and privileges, society has established rules of human behavior and has organized itself against unlawful violence. Police provide protection against individual criminals or gangster groups and mob violence; military forces guard against organized armed aggression. The presence of peace enforcement officers is a deterrent to the criminally inclined individual. Similarly, peace loving nations, such as our own, find it necessary to maintain armed forces to deter aggressor nations. Both our communities and our nation seek to preserve the domestic tranquility and international peace. Sometimes, in spite of these efforts, the peace is broken and a war must be fought—to defend our homes, our way of life, or our peace loving neighbors, and to restore peace. In our communities we must always maintain law and order.

War is a brutal business, whether it be war against an enemy or war against the criminal who strikes from within. And personal combat, at close quarters, is its most brutal aspect.

Personal combat conforms to no set rules of conduct, as the fighting in Korea so plainly proved. Were we, the United States, the choosers, it would not be thus; the decencies of human conduct would be observed. But we must be ready to fight against an utterly ruthless Communist enemy, one who feels he must win at any cost, even at the cost of human decency.

The American soldier who meets such an enemy is forced to adapt himself to a pattern of behavior that is foreign to his education and his religious beliefs. If he would win the fight—indeed, if he himself would survive—he must know all the dirty tricks of close combat, even as the enemy knows them. He must match them trick for trick. Further, he must be able to take the initiative and attack an enemy soldier as ruthlessly as he, in turn, would be attacked if he waited. It is a split



second business. There is no time allowed for moral debate. In close combat, it is now or never.

The same principles hold when the enemy is domestic—when he is a brutal criminal running at large; or when he, with other subversives, in a critical hour strikes at our communities. In any case—enemy soldier, dangerous criminal, or fifth columnist—the opponent is playing for keeps. Whether we like it or not, we can defeat him and defend our decent standards only by beating him at his own game.

This book is designed to meet this situation. It is an intensely practical and forthright description of the techniques of hand-to-hand combat and of mob control. It is written primarily for members of our Armed Forces and those of our Allies (in the performance of their military duties); for the police officer; and for those members of civil defense organizations who may some day be forced to deal with the criminal subversives in our midst, including professional fifth columnists who would stir up dissension and incite disorders and riots.

The first edition of the book was written during World War II and was used by the various military branches of the United States and our Allies, as a textbook and reference, in training for individual combat and survival. Subsequent editions have been broadened to cover the civilian law enforcement field as well as the military. Over thirty thousand copies are now in circulation. We believe this text is alone and unique in its field. The completeness of the coverage of the subject has resulted in a steady demand for its material. It is felt that publication of this text is a public service, both to enable those who have to fight in close combat to survive, and to make more effective those who serve in the field of law enforcement.

This edition is being published at a time when the world is in a state of unrest. Race riots, intolerance, Communist-inspired mob violence, and nationalism emphasize the importance of mob control by the established forces of law and order. Three new chapters have been added on the techniques involved in riot control. The timely incorporation of these new chapters has again added greatly to the value of this text to law enforcement agencies.

There is probably nobody better qualified than Colonel Applegate to describe the techniques of close combat. During World War II, as an infantry officer, he served with military police units, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Counter Intelligence Corps, and the Military Intelligence

Division of the War Department. During the latter part of the war, he was in charge of special training in close combat at the Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, where high priority intelligence personnel were given the training described in this book.

Colonel Applegate has attended many of the principal police schools in the United States, has studied in foreign police and special combat schools, and has undergone British commando training. He has worked and studied with famous experts, including W. E. Fairbairn and E. A. Sykes of Shanghai police and British commando fame; with Gus Peret of the Remington Arms Company, J. H. Fitzgerald of the Colt Firearms Company, and Colonel Biddle of the U. S. Marine Corps. At one time, he was assigned to special duty with President Roosevelt's bodyguard.

During recent years Colonel Applegate has been actively engaged in the field of riot control. He has had an opportunity to observe at first hand several violent mob actions. He has also had the satisfaction of seeing riot control units which he has trained, successfully dominate a mob and restore order.

Like the publishers, Colonel Applegate believes that the techniques he describes should be taught under careful supervision and used only for legitimate purposes and in appropriate combat or law enforcement situations.

## Author's Preface

This book was first conceived and published early in World War II. If it had not been for the type of conflict experienced, combined with the circumstances and opportunities of my own personal assignments, it would never have been written.

Frequent armed conflict and mob violence since the end of World War II has brought about an increasing demand for a text on these very difficult subjects.

This fifth edition represents a further effort to broaden the scope of the text to cover adequately the combat and mob control problems of the civilian law enforcement officer as well as the military.

Weapons, tactics and strategy of modern warfare may be changing, but the age-old aspects of military and police individual combat and of mob control are still the same.

Since the time of the caveman, techniques of personal combat have been in the process of evolution. There are many methods and systems of personal combat. The methods of teaching them are equally varied. Some are good, some bad, some practical, others nonpractical. This book does not, and could not, cover all methods. It is a compilation of the most practical methods known to the writer, methods that have been developed and used during and after World War II by our own police and military, those of our Allies and even our enemies.

The soldier must be trained and indoctrinated in the offensive. Combat between armies is only won by offensive tactics.

The law enforcement officer has a different problem. He must first master restraint and manhandling tactics. He must also be able, under extreme or necessary circumstances, to take strong defensive or offensive action.

The "Cold" War has placed increased emphasis on guerrilla, mob control, and fifth column tactics. This furnishes an additional reason why members of the Military and of law en-

forcement and civil defense agencies must be trained in some or all of the offensive tactics covered in this book.

The tactics, training, and strategy of the enemy are in process of improvement and change. This is especially true of the direction and manipulation of a mob as an instrument of gaining or destroying political power.

I do not expect that all the answers as to how best to combat the professional mob will be found here, but they are the best known to the author at this time. It is sincerely hoped that the new material I have added on this subject will be of interest and help to all legitimate forces of law and order. The counter mob tactics outlined here may not make pleasant reading for Communists. But their willingness to use mob violence as a weapon in their drive to attain world domination is well known. The field of mob control and its tactics is not a new one, but the interjection into the picture of the professional Communist agitator, trained in all aspects of mob psychology and incitation, is relatively recent. New counter measures and tactics must now be employed by police elements to meet the situation. The Communists have taken over forty years to perfect their techniques of mob persuasion and direction. Police and military units will find difficulty in trying to meet such a threat with hurriedly improvised counter measures.

Other than mentioning general training aids, I have purposely avoided laying out specific, detailed training programs. Each organization—military or civilian—has its own problems, some phases of training demanding more emphasis than others.

Although this text has been pointed toward the training of large groups of men, I hope that those individuals who have sufficient interest to study it will, as a result, find themselves better prepared should they suddenly find themselves opposed by a killer.

REX APPLGATE

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## *Chapter 1*

# INTRODUCTION TO UNARMED COMBAT

ANY subject with as many variations in theory, training, and application as there are in hand-to-hand combat should be presented to the trainee in a simple manner, so as to be easily understood. The history and background of close combat without weapons is a desirable beginning for such a training program.

Unarmed combat is just what the name implies—a system of fighting intended for use when weapons are not available or when their use is not advisable. A soldier or police officer carries weapons in addition to those given him by nature; but he must not depend solely on his firearm, baton, or other issue equipment. These are only mechanical aids and will not always sustain him. Long before the existence of the stone knife and the bow and arrow, primitive man fought with his hands, teeth, legs, feet, and body. But through the centuries, unarmed combat tactics became more refined and skillful, until they reached their peak in the commando-type training given in certain of our military units during World War II.

Tibetan monks of the 12th century are reputed to have been among the first to develop a definite system of fighting without weapons. These monks, prohibited by the rules of their order from bearing arms, developed a system of unarmed combat to protect themselves from the brigands and robber bands of that era. Their system of combat involved many of the basic principles from which our body-contact sports and jiu jitsu have been developed. Some time after the 12th century, the Japanese learned of this method of combat and, characteristically, copied it and claimed its origin. They gave it the name of jiu jitsu, and claimed that it was developed during their mythological age. For centuries jiu jitsu was practiced, with many variations and interpretations, by the Samurai warrior clans. About 1885, a Japanese professor by

the name of Kano established a school in which a unified version of the best of the many jiu jitsu techniques was taught. He called his improved version "judo." Today the terms jiu jitsu and judo are synonymous, judo being in reality the modern version of jiu jitsu.

Judo as a sport, and, with certain restrictions, as a method of combat, was practiced universally in Japan until recently. It was advocated by the military as a means of body-building and of developing individual competitive spirit. Jiu jitsu, or judo, employs a group of basic principles that are common to body-contact sports, such as wrestling, boxing, and football. Basically it is a system of holds and throws based on the use of the mechanical principle of the lever and fulcrum. Properly employed, jiu jitsu enables a small man to overcome a larger opponent by using his opponent's greater weight and strength to the latter's disadvantage.

For years prior to World War II, this Japanese method of combat was cloaked in mystery. It was regarded by the public as a somewhat miraculous power that enabled the user to conquer a hapless opponent by a mere flick of the wrist. As long as there was lack of knowledge on the subject and an element of mystery surrounded its use, this was to some degree true. Taking advantage of the element of surprise, the jiu jitsu expert did not fight as his opponent expected and could thereby gain the initial advantage, which he never relinquished. This was evident, but not understood, when certain jiu jitsu experts publicly overcame unskilled opponents in scheduled exhibitions.

The most optimistic experts estimate that it takes several years of consistent, intelligent practice before an individual can use judo as a dependable method of unarmed combat. As a sport, it is practiced in this country by a small group of devotees, but there are relatively few experts who can use their skill effectively against determined opponents. Based on the application of holds, throws, and on the destruction of the opponent's balance, the jiu jitsu user has to be really expert if he is to overcome a determined assault by an individual skilled in the use of blows of the hands or feet.

Soldiers and police can expect to encounter few individuals who will use judo against them successfully. They will, however, probably encounter certain judo tricks which have been combined with the type of rough and ready fighting tactics advocated in the commando style of personal combat.

The danger of overrating judo as an effective means of

combat lies not only in the aura of mystery that has been allowed to surround it, but also in the overemphasis placed on it as an effective means of hand-to-hand combat training in World War II. As a result of that war and a demand by the public for books and techniques on methods of fighting, bookstores were flooded with books and pamphlets on the subject of unarmed combat. Many of these, purporting to be genuine jiu jitsu, bore titles and slogans intended to appeal to the gullible. Courses which would take a sincere judo student months to master were offered in "ten easy, self-taught lessons."

Extravagant claims of success of the unarmed judo exponent against an armed enemy are frequently made. Students of many judo courses, given recently, are "quickly" taught a specific number of jiu jitsu tricks. When the course is completed and students are called upon to use what they have learned against a determined opponent, they usually find themselves helpless, unless the attacker performs in the specified manner taught in the course. Such courses obviously do not give the student the training necessary to adapt him to the uncertainties of combat. Many tricks advocated in jiu jitsu, and certain combat books, are not practical because they cannot be applied quickly enough. They are based on the assumption that the opponent will stand still, allowing the hold or throw to be applied.

The illusion of ease in subduing an opponent and the implication that this can be accomplished without personal risk or injury to the user, are also fallacies evident in many instruction courses in close combat offered the public. An individual can test the efficacy of such combat methods and holds by asking himself a simple question: "*Will this work so that I can use it instinctively in vital combat against an opponent who is determined to prevent me from doing so, and who is striving to eliminate me by fair means or foul?*" Considering the small amount of time devoted to instruction in fundamentals and the scanty practice demanded of the student in these courses, it is evident that many highly advertised techniques cannot measure up to this simple standard.

To sum up, the average American lacks the time, patience and usually the interest to become a genuine expert at judo. He does not really need a complete course in jiu jitsu, as is often claimed, to be able to take care of his opponent in unarmed combat. His athletic background, physique and temperament are usually adaptable to a style of fighting which is



based more on the use of blows than on finesse. Military experience, in combat and training centers throughout the world, has shown that the average man can be quickly turned into a dangerous, offensive fighter by concentrating on a few basic principles of combat and by advocating principally the use of blows executed by the hands, feet and other parts of the body.

All types of combat can be divided into two phases, offensive and defensive. Knowledge of both is necessary to any fighting man. In training for warfare, the emphasis is usually on the offensive. In the case of the military police or civil law enforcement officers, the emphasis should be at least equal. Only the local situation, as it affects himself personally and his mission, can determine which type of combat a police officer should use. At times, he will have to resort to extreme offensive methods, because they may be his only means of defense. In other situations, only simple defense and restraint methods may be necessary. The judgment of the officer will determine what tactics he must use. He usually carries a loaded gun and is expected to exercise proper judgment in firing it. Also, he must decide for himself whether a given situation calls for personal unarmed combat tactics, and which of those tactics he will use.

The unarmed combat methods presented in the initial chapters represent a selection and combination of techniques taken from judo, wrestling and other body-contact sports, from combat methods used in other lands, and from self-defense tactics, and those used in rough and tumble fighting. The techniques presented have been used successfully in training and in recent combat. They can be learned easily and applied quickly and instinctively—but only after adequate, but not excessive, practice.

No text, no matter how well-illustrated or clearly explained can, alone, teach a man to fight. It can only serve as an instructional guide. Closely supervised intensive practice is the only path to practical knowledge. There are no easy methods or short cuts. Practice must be intensive enough to render the mechanics of each technique automatic. There is seldom time to stop and think when the pressure of combat is on. *Being able* to throw a man is much different from *knowing how*.

Expert boxers and wrestlers will already be far along the road to proficiency in personal combat. The use of boxing, wrestling and other body-contact sports in training and condi-

tioning programs will add materially to the student's progress and will speed up his development as an aggressive fighter. An athletic background develops the necessary coordination and muscular ability, and enables the student to learn combat techniques more easily. However, experience has shown that such techniques can also be developed in the trainee who has had no previous athletic experience. His progress may be slower, but practice and a desire to learn can develop the average trainee, who possesses normal courage, physique and the will to fight, into a dangerous antagonist at close quarters.