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# World War II Combatives

**World War II combatives** are [close quarters combat](#) techniques, including hand-to-hand, advanced firearm [point shooting](#) methods, and weapons techniques (knife/bayonet/improvised weapons) that were taught to allied [special forces](#) in [World War II](#) by such famous instructors as [Rex Applegate](#) and [William Ewart Fairbairn](#).

Distinctions between World War II combatives and modern [combatives](#) include: 1) The former tends to be proactive by attacking the attacker, whereas the latter is generally reactive with specific defenses to specific attacks. 2) The former is based upon explosive high percentage gross motor strikes to vital targets, whereas the latter is based upon fine motor skill grappling. 3) The former seeks primarily to disable the enemy as quickly as possible at all costs, whereas the latter seeks primarily to build "warrior ethos" and the courage to close with the enemy.

## Background

World War II combatives are rooted in British colonial history with the [Shanghai Municipal Police](#) (1854-1943), pioneers of modern [SWAT](#), who operated in what was widely acknowledged as the most dangerous port city in the world at the time. After studying under some of the finest warriors of pre-Communist China and pre-war Japan, these officers condensed the most practical elements of these arts, combined it with elements of Shanghai gangster fighting, and field-tested their skills in over 2000 documented encounters, including over 600 lethal force engagements.

## World War II

Upon return to Great Britain and the U.S., veterans of the [Shanghai Municipal Police](#) were tasked in training allied World War II commandos and intelligence personnel, including the [British Commandos - SAS & SBS](#), the US/Canadian 1st Special Service Force ("[Devil's Brigade](#)"), the [Office of Strategic Services](#) (precursor to the CIA [Special Activities Division](#)), the British Special Operation Executive (precursor to [MI-6](#)), Marine Raider Units, and the US Army Rangers. Upon engagement with enemy personnel skilled in classical European arts and old school judo, the post-battlefield reports of the "Shanghai method" produced the highest number of documented kills of any combatives system to date.

## Decline

After World War II, however, this training was deemed as too dangerous for peacetime servicemen to know, and became virtually extinct. With a de-emphasis in realistic combatives training, increasingly reliable technology, and the influence of civilian martial culture on the establishment, the CQC approach proven in largest test crucible of the 20th century (World War II) was largely forgotten, and was gradually replaced by traditional martial arts and martial sports within the military.

## Instruction

A small number of instructors still teach and incorporate authentic World War II combatives into their programs, including:

Clint Sporman [Defendu](#) [1]

SGM. Larry Jordan's "Dirty Dozen" combatives [2], taught by Geoff Todd's "Todd Group" [3], Julie Turner, Greg Cumbee's "Covenant Combatives, LLC" [4], and others.

American Combatives (ACI)

Academy of Combative Warrior Arts (A.C.W.A.) - Close Quarters Combatives Program

Bill Underwood's Combato and [Defendo](#), taught by Robert Cressman and others[5]

Canadian Combato

Israeli Elite CQB KAPAP

[Jim Grover's](#) Combatives

Rocky Mountain Combat Training Applications (RMCAT)

Ted Truscott's Close Quarter Combat based on the FAS system (hand to hand combat designed for the [Home Guard](#) during World War II)[6]

Security Solutions Group

*For current combatives, please see [combatives](#).*

## References

"Get Tough" by William Ewart Fairbairn

"Kill or Get Killed" by Rex Applegate

"Cold Steel" by John Styers

"Jim Grover's Combatives" (video)

"Jim Grover's Situational Self-Offense"

Carl Cestari's videos

"The Dirty Dozen: 12 Nasty Fighting Techniques for any Self-Defense Situation"

"Do or Die: A Supplementary Manual on Individual Combat" [A.J. Drexel-Biddle](#)