



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY COMBATIVES COURSE
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ATZK-SBD-E

25 August 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Option Three Drill: ANNEX A

1. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this Annex is to describe the mandatory training each student will conduct during the Basic Combatives Course in preparation for the Option 3 Drill.
2. **SCOPE.** This ANNEX A applies to all U.S. Army Combatives Programs, Instructors, and Students.
3. **Stages.** Training the Clinch is divided into four phases that explain the process of controlling range and achieving the Clinch to Basic Combatives Course Students.
4. **Discussion.** The Universal Fight Plan and the Modern Army Combatives training strategy. During the first phase of training instructors will discuss the following topics with the students:

The Universal Fight Plan:

If I were to get into a fight tonight in any town in America, for whatever reason, we know what my opponent's plan would be. He would attempt to punch me repeatedly until I received enough damage that I could not fight back effectively. We will call this the universal fight plan because everyone has it. We don't even have to teach it to them because they already know it.

Most martial arts take the same approach to making someone a better fighter; they train the student to be more skillful at the same plan. Any improvements to the student's fighting ability are dependent on their ability to master the skill, which takes time to develop. Becoming a skillful striker is no different in the amount of time, effort and dedicated practice it takes than learning to play the violin. It can be done, however, it just isn't an efficient method; and it certainly doesn't fit the realities of training an army.

Basic Tactics: The best way to make someone a more dynamic fighter is to teach them to win by having a better tactic. The simplest tactic, designed to beat the universal fight plan, is known as the basic MAC tactic. The weakness of the universal fight plan is that it requires an agreement from both fighters to follow convention regarding effective strikes (staying in striking range) and fight it out. This can be defeated by simply controlling the range and changing when necessary.

By controlling the range and by closing the distance from striking range to clinch range when necessary, Soldiers maintain tactical options and eliminate the enemy's ability to effectively strike, which shuts down the Universal Fight Plan. Control of the fight allows Soldiers to access side arms while on their feet or to gain a dominant position in order to finish the fight in a

reliable manner by attacking from a position that does not allow the enemy to strike back effectively.

Dominating the enemy is not dependent on superior skill or size to be effective. Instead, it is based on employing effective and efficient tactics and techniques that emphasize controlled aggression and leverage. In regards to an enemy who is only familiar with the Universal Fight Plan, the Soldier can take an enemy combatant to the ground, establish a dominant position with which the enemy is unfamiliar, and then finish the fight with effective attacks. A classic example of this strategy is Royce Gracie in the early Ultimate Fighting Championships. Royce was able to defeat most of his opponents not because of superior training, but because his fight strategy emphasized a hierarchy of dominant positioning that his opponents did not understand.

Soldiers Tactical Options: With this concept of training to fight by having a better tactic in mind, closing the distance is not always the best tactic when a Soldier makes contact. To maintain his tactical flexibility, the Soldier should first keep the enemy at the farthest possible range. Projectile range is preferable but not always possible. Soldiers must often take physical control of non-combatants as well because of difficulties such as language barriers or the tactical situation. When laying hands on someone, the **Post, Frame, and Hook and Head Control** techniques establish a line of defense and a position of decision. Soldiers should be either at projectile weapons range or using one of these techniques when action has been initiated. From there he has three basic tactical options.

Regain Projectile Weapons Range (Option 1). A Soldier's first option is to regain projectile weapons range by pushing or throwing his opponent off so that he can regain his own weapon or clear the line of fire for his team mates.

Employ a Side Arm (Option 2). A Soldier's second option is to maintain control of the range by use of the post, frame or hook and head control techniques and then to employ a side arm such as a pistol, bayonet or combat knife.

Achieve the Clinch (Option 3). The Soldier's third option is to crush into the enemy to gain control of the situation and to neutralize any further threats that the enemy may present.

The 3 Elements of a Stand-Up Fight

It is important to remember that these basic plans are not the "end all" of fight strategies but are simply the first steps to understand the concept of controlling and winning fights through superior tactics. To understand this better we can use an analogy from the Mixed Martial Arts world. Imagine how someone who has trained in traditional Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu can beat an experienced wrestler who has also trained in striking skills. The Jiu-Jitsu trained fighter, who has concentrated most of his training on being the better ground grappler, will most likely win the fight if the wrestler is aggressive and takes him to the ground. He will, however, have a very difficult time against a wrestler smart enough to use their skill defensively and who is the better striker. The three elements of a stand-up fight are as follows:

1. **Range:** The distance between the Soldier and the enemy.

2. *Angle*: The difference in orientation between the Soldier's front and the enemy's front, side, or rear.

3. *Level*: The vertical relationship of the Soldier's body, head, and hands in reference to the enemy's body, head, and hands.

Ranges of a Fight

At this point the ranges of combat- striking, clinching and grappling range- become like rock, paper and scissors. You may have the best scissors in the world but I am simply going to come at you with a rock. In order to win every time, a Soldier must constantly evolve skills and be smart enough to employ them appropriately during a tactical situation. This becomes especially true when you start to think about all of the situations a Soldier may encounter in a combat environment. A Soldier must be able to adapt his/her skill set and strategy in order to win in the dynamic battlefield of today.

This is why training must progress past starting point of basic tactics. After a Soldier understands how to beat the universal fight plan by using the basic tactics, they must continue to develop skills that will, over time, allow them to defeat whomever they come against, no matter the situation. This is accomplished by employing their skills with a superior plan. The five basic ranges of a fight are as follows:

a. *Projectile Weapons Range*: The range from which the only effective attacks between the Soldier and the enemy are projectiles such as bullets, shrapnel, thrown objects, etc.

b. *Contact Weapons Range*: The range from which the Soldier and/or the enemy can execute effective attacks while using anything that acts as an extension of their body. Any distance from which a Soldier cannot respond to and engage a threat quickly enough with their primary or alternate weapon system is also considered Contact Weapons Range.

c. *Striking Range*: The range from which the Soldier and/or the enemy can execute effective attacks with natural weapons such as fists or kicks.

d. *Clinching Range*: The range in which the Soldier and the enemy are both on their feet and are so close that neither of them can execute effective straight punches and kicks. At Clinching Range Soldiers fight to control the enemy's posture in order to gain a dominant position so that attacks aimed at the Soldier are no longer effective. At this range strikes such as elbow and knee strikes as well as close contact weapons such as knives are also effective and should be considered.

e. *Ground Fighting Range*: The range at which the Soldier and the enemy have both gone from standing to the ground. The Soldier fights to achieve a dominant position relative to the enemy in order to neutralize any potential threats posed by the enemy or to finish the fight with close contact weapons, strikes, or submissions.

Dominant Clinch Position

Just as in Ground fighting, a Soldier can dominate Clinching Range by understanding of the concept of dominant position. Dominant clinch positions give you an advantage in both striking offense and defense as well as the offense and defense of takedowns and throws. The four basic Dominant Clinch Positions are as follows:

- a. The Rear Clinch
 - b. The Modified Seatbelt Position
 - c. The Double Under-hooks Position with body-lock
 - d. The Wall Clinch Position - Soldier controls opponent up against the wall with one under-hook
5. Demonstration. During the second phase of training the students will be shown the range controlling techniques of Post, Frame, and Hook and Head Control as well as the dominant clinch positions.
6. Drill. During the third phase of the training students will conduct the following seventeen drills in the order shown below:
- a. Controlling range and achieving the clinch from the Post position
 - b. Controlling range and achieving the clinch from the Frame position
 - c. Controlling Range and achieving the clinch from the Hook position
 - d. The Basic Pummel to Double underhooks
 - e. The Pummel Drill to the following forms of the Clinch
 - f. Modified Seatbelt Position
 - g. Double Under-hooks Position
 - h. Rear Clinch Position
 - i. Competitive Pummeling for dominant position
 - j. Closing the distance to achieve the clinch from projectile weapons range
 - k. The King Louie Drill
 - l. Turn the Corner from the 50/50 position into the modified seatbelt position

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- m. Close the distance and go into the Modified Seatbelt Position
- n. The Over-hook Counter Drill (same side and switch sides)
- o. Option one drill starting from each range controlling technique
- p. Option two drill starting from each range controlling technique
- q. The Slap Drill starting from each range controlling technique and from Projectile Weapons Range finishing in each dominant clinch position
 - (1) Modified Seatbelt Position
 - (2) Double Under-hooks Position
 - (3) Rear Clinch
 - (4) Wall Clinch- Soldier controls opponent up against the wall with one under-hook

Note: Ensure students understand that if they are having difficulty achieving a certain clinch they should attempt to transition to another one until they get one that is effective.

Note: While conducting the various drills, students should change partners regularly to adjust to different body types and sizes. Students should also alternate which side they move to in order to achieve the clinch. Keep in mind resistance should be relative to size of your opponent which reinforces reality based training.

- 7. Practice. The final phase of the students training will be a portion of time for the students to practice what they have learned on their own.
 - a. Students should practice on the portions of achieving the Clinch that they feel need the most improvement.
 - b. The time given to this phase is determined by the NCOIC/OIC and is based on time available, and the ability level of the class.
 - c. The Basic Combatives Instructors should make themselves available during this phase to answer questions and to supervise the student's progress.

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8. The POC for this SOP is the undersigned at alexander.l.robinson13.mil@army.mil.

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