

The 2001 U.S. Marine Black Belt Course

By Jane Eden

When US Marine Commandant General James L. Jones served during the Vietnam War he took notice that his Marines appeared to be intimidated by their allies, the Republic of South Korea Marines, called informally by many as “Rock” (ROK) Marines. When questioned, the Americans said their Korean counterparts were all black belts in Tae Kwon Do and were feared by the NVA and Vietcong as ruthless warriors. General Jones recalls that “the ROK was described as Attila the Hun. I thought that even if it’s not true, what a good thing it is to be able to intimidate people that way.”

Once promoted to Marine Corps Commandant, Gen. Jones began his list of improvements, and he ordered a serious martial arts initiative—“giving every grunt an opportunity to earn the equivalent of a black belt.” He designed the course to teach their established military tactics, already a conglomeration of more than a dozen systems, and augments material from certain outside instructors with the proper experience, mindset and teaching abilities.

LINE—the Linear In-fighting Neural Override Engagement program is out! It has been out for four years now despite civilian publishing houses, videos and martial arts magazines misconceptions. In its place, the Marines adopted an extensive and competent manual on the subject with no real flamboyant course title or acronym. With the new push from Gen. Jones, this material evolved into the “Black Belt” pilot program, which kicked off 1 May 2000 with

Non-lethal Weapons School Officer in Charge Capt. Maceo Franks squeezes the consciousness out of Cpl. Finley with a choke, supported by a sleeve grab. Chokes and counters to chokes are an important part of the course.

SSGT Sal Castilleja of the MEF Non-Lethal Weapons Course at Pendleton plies a regulation arm bar on Cpl. Daniel Finley. ►



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Marines from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment at Twenty-Nine Palms, Ca. From there, they reviewed and enhanced the system even more.

The US Marines define close quarter combat as the physical confrontation between two or more opponents, involving lethal and non-lethal, unarmed and armed fighting techniques that range from enforced compliance to deadly force. With this definition and these directives issued, a driving force and hands-on organizer of this new Black Belt course is Master Gunnery Sergeant Cardo Urso, the head of the Close Combat School in Quantico. The quintessential Marine, Urso has vast experience and multiple black belts in the combat arts. Urso works in the trenches running his outfit, teaching and traveling. Master Gunny Urso and staff are creating the instructors who spread the operation across the Corps, first solidified in the infantry, then to every occupational specialty.

“The new system went into full swing, the result of three years of hard work by more than a dozen subject matter experts,” reports Urso. His outstanding work on the

material has not only made for a more hard-core approach, but also

improved safety by way of smarter training methods. The levels are designated by t-shirt colors and the following are the actual physical and training time requirements.

The Tan Shirt

To attend this training, the Marine must complete basic training.

- Fundamentals of fighting -1 hour
- Punches -1.5 hours
- Falls 2 -hours
- Bayonet techniques -2 hours
- Pugal sticks -6 hours
- Upper body strikes -2 hours
- Lower body strikes -2 hours
- Throws -1.5 hours
- Counters to strikes -1.5 hours
- Counters to chokes and holds -1.5 hours
- Unarmed restraints -1.5 hours
- Armed manipulations -1 hour
- Knife techniques -1 hour

- Introduction to weapons of opportunity -1 hour
- Total of 26 physical hours, plus classes on structure and history of the martial arts program
- Responsible use of force
- Warrior case studies
- Reinforce core values and combat leadership

The Gray Shirt

To attend this training, the Marine must receive the recommendation of reporting senior. Marine must complete the Fundamentals of Marine Corps Leadership course.

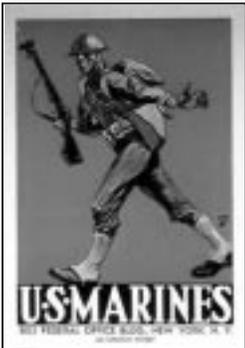
- Introduction to bayonet trainer -3 hours
- Upper body strikes -2 hours
- Lower body strikes -1.5 hours
- Execute front choke -1 hour
- Hip throw -1 hour
- Counters to strikes -1 hour
- Counters to chokes and holds -2 hours
- Unarmed restraints -1.5 hours
- Armed manipulations -1 hour
- Knife techniques -1.5 hours
- Weapons of opportunity -1 hour
- Ground fighting -1.5 hours
- Repeat practice -8 hours
- Skill sustainment and overall review -14 hours

- Total of 40 physical hours plus
- Martial culture study of the Raiders
- Nutrition and lifestyle
- Informal resolution system
- Warrior case studies
- Foundations of leadership
- Professionalism

The Green Shirt

To attend this training, the Marine must receive a recommendation from a reporting senior.

- Must rank as a corporal or above.
- Must have appropriate PME level completed.
- Blunt bayonet trainer -3 hours
- Muscular gouging -0.5 hours
- Side choke -1 hour
- Shoulder throw -1 hour
- Counters to strikes -1 hour
- Unarmed restraints -1.5 hours



- Weapons of opportunity -1 hour
- Ground fighting -1.5 hours
- Free sparring -2.5 hours
- Repeat Green practice -14 hours
- Skill sustainment and overall review 23 hours

- Total of 50 physical hours plus
- Killology instructor course
- Human dimensions instructor course
- Components of cohesion course
- Sustaining the transformation course
- Martial culture study of the Spartans
- Leadership roles training
- Combat leadership training
- Ethics and standards of conduct training

Brown Shirt Level

To attend this training, the Marine must receive a recommendation from a reporting senior. Must rank corporal or above. Must have appropriate PME level completed.

- Bayonet trainer (multiple attackers) 2.5 hours
- Ground fighting -2 hours
- Ground chokes -1.5 hours
- Unarmed vs. hand-held weapons -1.5 hours
- Firearm retention -1 hour
- Firearm disarmament -1 hour
- Non-lethal baton -1.5 hours
- Weapons of opportunity -1 hour
- Free sparring -2 hours
- Repeat Brown practice -19 hours
- Skill sustainment and overall review 27 hours

- Total of 60 hours of physical hours plus
- Anatomy and physiological effects
- Killology advanced
- Human dimensions advanced
- First aid and medical response
- USMC counseling
- Developing subordinates
- Martial culture study Apache
- Mentoring program participation
- Warrior as a gentleman training

Black Level Shirt

To attend this training the Marine must have recommendation from a reporting senior, must be SGT of above, must have an appropriate PME level.

- Bayonet techniques -3 hours
- Seeping hip throw -1 hour
- Face rip -1 hour
- Neck manipulation takedowns -0.5 hours
- Triangle choke -1 hour
- Rolling knee bar -1 hour
- Straight-arm bar -1 hour
- Bent arm bar -0.5 hours
- Counter pistol top the head -0.5 hours
- Striking techniques -1 hour
- Knife vs. hand-held weapons -1 hour
- Anatomy -2 hours
- Free sparring -2 hours
- Black material practice -25 hours

- Skill sustainment and overall review -30 hours

- Total of 70 physical hours plus
- Anatomy advanced
- Leadership training techniques
- Martial culture study Zulu
- Mentoring program participation
- Core values training

Marine officers worry that their men and women might not have, or find the time away from their regular duties for all these training courses. Then they worry about quality control. "Will the instructors across the world understand and teach correctly?" Such is always the problem in large institutionalized training programs. Other leaders express the common sense concerns of Marines getting rowdy at bars off hours and getting into fights. No matter what the military training, this is always a concern solved by discipline and integrity. The course generates great self-esteem, enthusiasm, morale and interest. Vocal members of the US Army are jealous over the progress, "at least the Marines are trying!" one G.I. says, comparing their lack of such an initiative.

Civilian martial artists running schools in the United States wondered what will happen when a glut of these black belted Marines end their tour of service in the future and attempt to open schools in their marketplaces.

These are not the overall concerns of General Jones who says, "Putting it in warrior like terms, I have no problem with Marine Expeditionary Units or deployed battalions landing on some foreign shores, and I would like whoever it is that wishes us harm to think every one of those Marines coming their way is a black belt." ☘

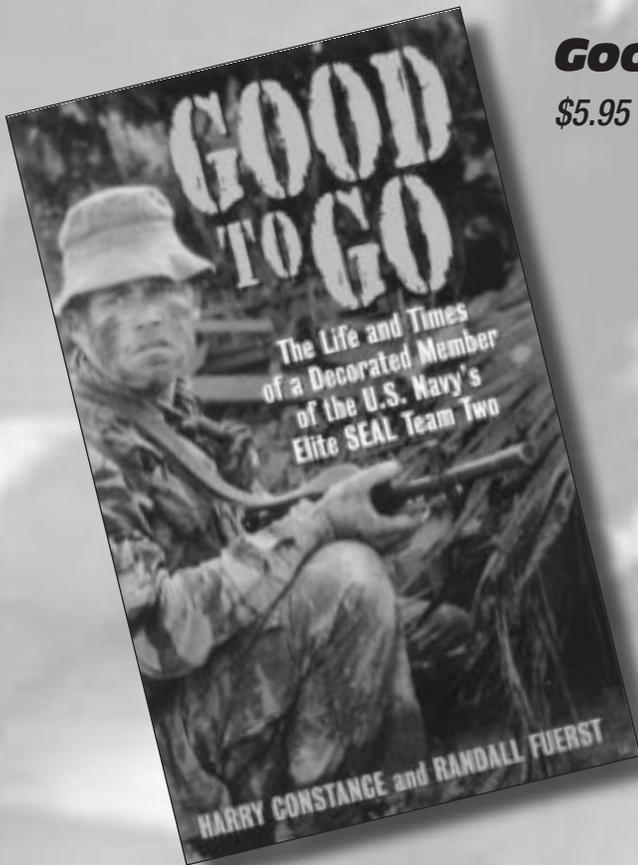


▲ The one and only master Gunnery Sgt. Cardo Urso. (Right)

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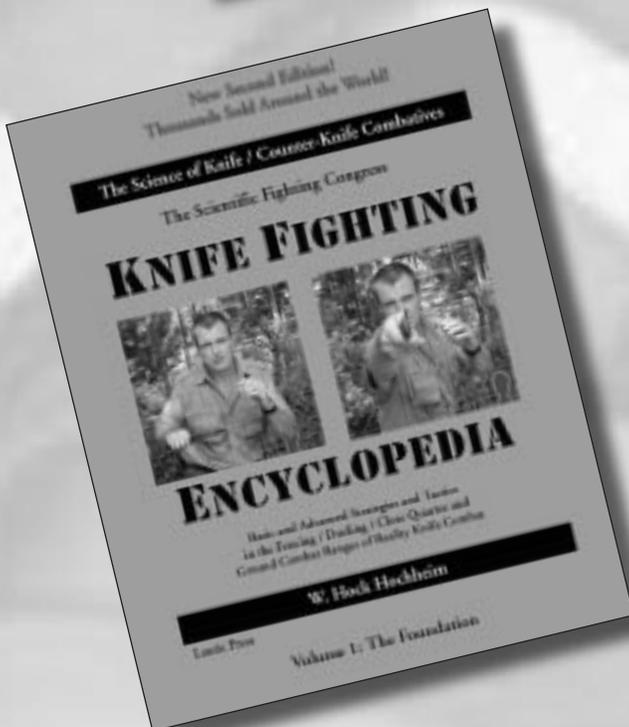
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