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CLOSE-QUARTER COMBAT – EXCELLENCE?

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JCSP 47

Service Paper

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 47 - PCEMI 47

2020 - 2021

SERVICE PAPER – ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

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Word Count: 2,500

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CLOSE-QUARTER COMBAT – EXCELLENCE?

AIM

1. This service paper is intended to address the production of the Close Quarter Combat (CQC) skillset as well as the production of Close Quarter Combat Instructors (CQC(I)), specifically the currency requirements for qualification. This conversation is imperative to remove preconceived notions of frequent catastrophic injury from CQC training often held by leadership who are not familiar with the program which hinders the frequency of individual and unit level training.

INTRODUCTION

2. The method used in the training and production of CQC skillsets within the Canadian Army (CA) is based on the assumption that skillsets are refined over time, and in real world or simulated real world, scenarios. This method is intended to build capacity quickly while ensuring that the force has a balance of quantity and quality to ensure soldiers are prepared for immediate deployment in a theatre of operations. In today's army the reality is that during less contentious times, peacetime armies must guard key skills against atrophy through repetition of theory and the use of continuation and refresher training. Further, the mass production of basic skillsets requires, though to a lesser degree, the mass production of "expert" instructors.

3. This service paper will examine the requirement to fundamentally shift the institutional mindset surrounding the training of CQC as well as its prioritization within the limited time and resources available to the CA. Specifically, this paper will look at the general production and inculcation of the CQC skillset as well as that of the instructor cadre, while examining potential option space that could be used to foster training opportunities, the skillsets proper, and the mindset required for success.

DISCUSSION

4. Regardless of service, trade, or rank the role of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is to, when called upon by the Government of Canada (GoC), close with and destroy the enemy. From a philosophical point of view this means; close with – have the mindset and willingness to move towards danger, the fight response, and destroy the enemy – have the capacity, ability, and resolve, to engage in a fight, and to win the fight. *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy*, published in December 2020, notes the essence of CA core competencies as being the combination of Close Combat and Close Engagement. These two competencies are defined as follows: "Close combat comprises those operations conducted within range of direct fire weapon systems; it is essential for success in the operating environment and underpins all other activities."¹ Whereas "Close engagement

¹ *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy* (4th Edition) (Ottawa: National Defence and the Canadian Forces, 2020) 15.

is the ability to conduct both lethal and non-lethal activities at the tactical level to create effects across the physical, moral, and cognitive planes within the operating environment.”² Together, these core competencies create the “Canadian Army’s *raison d’être*: to engage, fight, and win across the full spectrum of operations.”³ Essentially, this requires our soldiers to be enabled with, and confident in, the application of a broad range of skillsets. This includes trade specific skills and competencies that allow for the combined arms teams and the brigade group to function. It also, however, requires the mastery of many individual skills that form the foundation of soldiering. These include, but are not limited to, fieldcraft, marksmanship, and physical fitness.

5. Frequently omitted from the list of critical skillsets is CQC. This can be broadly defined as the basics of a soldier defending themselves throughout the continuum of force in instances where they, or their opponent, may be armed or unarmed. A skillset that, with proper training, increases soldier survivability. Within the CA this particular skillset is governed under the Qualification Standard and Training Plan (QS/TP) Close Quarter Combat Basic (AJJP) and Close Quarter Combat Instructor (AITM), as well as under the training publication B-GL-382-004/FP-001 Close Quarter Combat, dated 2007-02-03. Combined, these layout the training methodology as well as the techniques that are to be taught.

6. Given the complexity and sensitivity of the CAF’s current theatres of operation, the ability of soldiers to skillfully and confidently escalate and, equally important, deescalate throughout the continuum of force is just as critical, if not more so, today as it was during times of all-out war. This is demonstrated in data gathered from studies and after-action reviews (AARs) coming out of the United States. In one such survey “nearly a quarter (189 out of 876) of Soldiers from an infantry brigade in the 3rd Infantry Division reported engaging in hand-to-hand combat during an eight-month deployment to Iraq.”⁴

7. The guiding documents for the formation of this fundamental skillset detail the need for the allotment of seven training days for the basic qualification, and a further twenty days allocated to the formation of instructors. This training methodology is common throughout the CA and it is geared towards mass-production of a capability for deployment within a theatre of operations. To this end, it is predicated on the assumption that, following the completion of the training, soldiers are practicing the skillset consistently and repeatedly. In a peacetime garrison military, this is not the reality; given current demands on training, misunderstood preconceptions about injury rates from CQC training, and a lack of familiarity with the program by leadership who have never been

² *Advancing with Purpose*, 15.

³ *Advancing with Purpose*, 15.

⁴ Peter Jensen and Susan Goodman, "Combat Feedback from US Army Combatives Instructors," *Infantry* (Online) 106, no. 3 (2017): 14.

mandated to complete the training. For example, CQC is mandated training for infantry non-commissioned members (NCMs) but not infantry officers.

8. This mass production does not account for the refinement and understanding of the skills that are contained within the CQC publication. The techniques presented therein are a conglomeration and adaptation of many styles of martial arts that, when taught outside of the CQC curriculum, take months or years to perfect. Contained within the TP are elements of Karate, Muay Thai, Judo, Sambo, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, as well as street fighting skills. Many of the techniques are intended to break bones, dislocate joints, or kill an opponent. To this end the publication contains a very clear warning on the first page, stating, “Techniques in this manual can cause serious injury or death. Training of these techniques will be conducted in strict accordance with approved basic level, unit level and instructor level training plans.”⁵

9. Within the CAF, CQC(I) production is predicated on two principles: rank, and the completion of the CQC course. Within the CAF context, a total of 27⁶ training days are required to be considered an expert. Additionally, despite recommending continuation training, a CQC(I) remains current as long as qualified instructors teach once every three years. This stands in contrast to civilian martial arts where many years of continual training are required to achieve a consistent demonstrable proficiency to instruct these same skillsets. For example, the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) notes minimum time in rank as well as minimum age for progression that is measured in years, not days. In order to supervise training as a junior black belt there is a minimum, and very rare, recognition of at least five and a half years of study.⁷

10. The formation of a CQC(I) must not compromise the skillset or its credibility, and the standard of excellence should be recognizable regardless of where it is being judged. The application and instruction of CQC, just as with all training in the CAF, must be professionalized to maintain credibility amongst global military peers and within the society that we serve. In other words, aside from the application of tactics in the CQC manual, the techniques should be and *are* recognizable, whether in a theatre of war or in a civilian gym. A jab is a jab in boxing and top mount is top mount in the grappling arts. Realistically, the vast majority of close quarter instructors in the CA would not be accepted as having ‘expert’ level skillsets in one, let alone all, of the disciplines that they are expected to understand. As a comparison, when a CA sniper, basic or advanced, lies down on a civilian range, there will be no doubt that they are an expert in their discipline.

⁵ Department of National Defence. B-GL-382-004/FP-001, *Close Quarter Combat* (Ottawa: DND, 2007), i.

⁶ Qualification Standard and Training Plan (QS/TP) Close Quarter Combat Basic 1-3/5 and Close Quarter Combat Instructor 2-2/6

⁷ GENERAL SYSTEM OF GRADUATION IBJJF (January 2012), 8.

11. Further hindering the creation of experts is risk avoidance from senior leadership. This limits CQC training, making it extremely difficult for instructors to practice, refine, and improve their skills. Again, this stands in contrast to the civilian system. It is highlighted by the expressly articulated warning at the beginning of *Close Quarter Combat*, stating, “The techniques in this manual are basic techniques for most close combat fighting. Instructors shall teach the techniques in this manual rather than their own individual styles.”⁸ This statement is very straightforward and intuitive at a surface glance. For example, a Parachute Instructor (PI) would not be allowed to integrate their individual opinions or techniques learned through civilian parachuting into military training. However, military parachuting requires and relies on relatively few drills and techniques in comparison with CQC. Additionally, PIs are mandated specific currency, refresher and continual training timelines that are comparably short.⁹ In CQC, civilian training in the skillsets is, even though expressly forbidden, the only manner in which CQC instructors can refine, deepen understanding, maintain and foster an instructor or ‘expert’ level of skills.

12. A fundamental challenge for leadership, is that it has the responsibility to lead and to train soldiers to fight and survive in the first battle of the next war, is that it must also weigh and prioritize the training that needs to be completed. As perceptions play a role in this weighting, an activity that is perceived as dangerous, risks injury, and is not mandatory will receive less attention than activities that are deemed less risky or are absolutely mandatory. The Commanding General of Ft Benning, Georgia, Major General Walter Wojdakowski, noted the importance of close quarters combat training in an open letter to his garrison. “A Soldier competent in combatives techniques is better equipped to approach a situation with confidence and appropriate aggressiveness, and to thus surprise an adversary unprepared for the shock of sudden, violent confrontation.”¹⁰ Similarly, in September 2019, the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps placed a corps-wide priority on their CQC program (Marine Corps Martial Arts Program – MCMAP) deliberately acknowledging it as professional military education (PME). His commander’s intent is:

Commander’s Intent. The intent of MCMAP is to develop the morale, mental, and physical resiliency of individual Marines and ultimately the unit as a whole.

(a) We will accomplish this mission by exposing Marines to physical hardship and interpersonal violence by placing emphasis on Professional Military Education (PME), study of warrior cultures, and frequent experience with combative techniques and environments.

⁸ *Close Quarter Combat*, i.

⁹ Qualification Standard and Training Plan (QS/TP) Parachute Instructor 1-4/5

¹⁰ Walter Wojdakowski, "Combatives and Conditioning: Winning the Close Fight," *Infantry* 96, no. 3 (2007). 1

(b) The end-state of this program is to produce Marines and units that are more lethal, exhibit greater resiliency, and are equipped to handle the rigors of combat.¹¹

13. In order to rationalize this dichotomy, recognized and institutionalized prioritization must be placed on CQC training. There is an acceptance in our core trade that mandates soldiers to train repetitively to maintain and enhance proficiency; doing so mitigates some of the risks associated with the tasks to be completed. For example, before participating in training on a live fire platoon attack range, a soldier must first:

- a. Complete their test of elementary training (TOETs) on the weapon system they will be using on the range;
- b. They must be current in the personal weapons test (PWT) level 3;
- c. They must have completed dry and live section attacks; and,
- d. They must have completed a dry platoon attack.¹²

14. This progression in training develops confidence and calmness, and it ensures that the member maintains situational awareness during the conduct of the range, which simulates as closely as possible, real word conditions.

15. This same rationale should apply to CQC, though this concept of progression and repetition is not currently followed or understood. CQC(I) must facilitate these fundamentals of confidence, calmness, and maintenance of situational awareness for the following reasons:

- a. In order to create confidence in the CQC skillset members must reinforce and internalize their individual ability and believe that they *have* the ability to respond to a myriad of situations effectively and without hesitation.¹³ This confidence is not created in seven days of training. Further, is it not reinforced by instructors who themselves have skillsets that have atrophied due to lack of repetition. The absence of continued, repetitive training negates an instructor's ability to immediately answer questions or demonstrate techniques and their variations without referring to the manual.

¹¹ United States Marine Corps, *MARINE CORPS ORDER* 1500.59A, 23 SEP 2019.

¹² Department of National Defence. B-GL-381-001/TS-001, Training Safety (Ottawa: DND, 2017), 8-1-2 to 8-1-3.

¹³ Jensen and Goodman, "Combat Feedback," 16.

- b. Though CQC teaches and encourages aggressiveness, it is actually the ability to exude calmness that demonstrates true understanding of the skillset. Through calmness, injury prevention occurs. There is a difference between executing a technique correctly at 100% vice simply reacting in a spasm of aggression. Calmness in training goes beyond the execution of techniques, to learning and adapting skills to individual body types. It carries on to the application of techniques in training fights as well as onto the battlefield, while ensuring that in both instances situational awareness is maintained.
- c. The execution of CQC training is the only time throughout foundational training when there is a general acceptance that soldiers will lose all situational awareness, engaging only with the immediate threat, remaining in that state until the fight is over. This is attributed to the fact that neither students nor instructors participate in supervised matches at appropriate intervals to instill comfort with, and confidence in, their skills. The reactions to stress span the realm of the physical as well as the mental, and while both can be addressed and mitigated through repetitive training, the mental aspects of “[f]earful emotions, racing thoughts, and tunnel vision”¹⁴ require more time and training to mitigate.

CONCLUSION

16. In order to build capacity and credibility in the short-term, the CA must institutionalize CQC training by mandating unit level training in conjunction with regular exercises, and in physical training. Further, it should be incorporated at the institutional level in the short-term through the integration of training that is delivered by Personnel Support Programs (PSP) during unit PT sessions, ensuring that soldiers receive “high-quality, demanding, motivating, and relevant training.”¹⁵

17. The only way to create better instructors for the long-term is to commit our two most precious resources to the problem set: people and time. Time for people to train, practice, apply, and absorb the training will have ripple effects across every aspect of military life, from physical fitness to mental resilience, none of which can be achieved without a solid foundation of expert instructors. Once the CAF institutionalizes CQC, and the production of true experts within the discipline of the CQC(I), it will take approximately three to five years to produce integral experts who have been produced exclusively through a CAF training regime. Ultimately As part of the profession of arms CQC, as part of PME should represent a career-long investment.

¹⁴ Jensen and Goodman, “Combat Feedback,” 16.

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy* (3rd Edition), (Ottawa: National Defence and the Canadian Forces, 2014), 9.

RECOMMENDATION

18. The following recommendations are made with respect to CQC:
- a. Mandate CQC training for all units through integration of CQC into physical fitness training, including its integration into the PSP training plans, and with a minimum monthly/annual threshold. This mandated training should be logged in systems of record, such as Monitor Mass in order to track progression.
 - b. Prioritize the CQC skillset throughout all levels of training and PME through its recognition as a baseline foundational skillset for the CAF.
 - c. Establish recognized milestones of progression and achievement. These milestones become prerequisites to the instructor title.
 - d. Establish currency requirements for CQC(I) to maintain their qualification in terms of hours of instruction provided per month/year that is logged in the SOR.
 - e. Establish a train the trainer program that is required to produce instructors. Close Quarter Combat Instructor Trainer (CQC(IT)), similar to the First Aid Instructor (FAI), First Aid Instructor Trainer (FAIT) progression.

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