

**BY ORDER OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

**AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 36-2620**

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**Personnel**

**AIR FORCE COMBATIVES PROGRAM**

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This Air Force Instruction implements Air Force Policy Directive 36-26, *Total Force Development and Management*, by establishing roles, responsibilities, programs, and procedures for the Air Force Combatives Program. This Air Force Instruction applies to the Total Force – Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and Department of the Air Force civilian personnel performing combatives training in support of United States Air Force Academy and Air Force Specialty Code training requirements. This program is actioned by the United States Air Force Academy; Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape; Tactical Air Control Party; Air Liaison Officer, but does not limit other Air Force Specialty Codes from participating in the program. (**Exception:** The Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Security Forces, and Special Tactics Unit combatives training programs are exempt from Air Force Combatives Program parameters.) Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Information Management System Records Disposition Schedule. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility using the Air Force Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route Air Force Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command to the Office of Primary Responsibility. This publication may be supplemented at any level to establish organization-specific guidance, but all supplements must be routed to the Office of Primary Responsibility of this publication for coordination prior to certification and approval. The authorities to waive wing/unit level requirements in this publication are identified with a Tier (“**T-0, T-1, T-2, or T-3**”) number following the compliance statement. All Tier 3 level requirements in publications are now waivable at the squadron commander or equivalent level, unless specifically retained by

appropriate wing commander. See Air Force Instruction 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers using the Air Force Form 679, *Air Force Publication Compliance Item Waiver Request/Approval*, through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the Publication Office of Primary Responsibility for non-tiered compliance items.

## **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

This is a new Air Force Instruction and it should be read in its entirety.

<b>Chapter 1— EXECUTING THE AIR FORCE COMBATIVES PROGRAM</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Overview. ....	3
1.2. Definition. ....	3
1.3. Program Objectives. ....	3
1.4. Roles and Responsibilities. ....	3
1.5. Staff Assistance Visits and Inspections. ....	5
<b>Chapter 2— TRAINING POLICIES</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Program courses of instruction. ....	6
2.2. Authorizing Providers. ....	6
2.3. Program Instructor Certification. ....	7
2.4. Instructor Currency. ....	8
2.5. Instructor Removal. ....	8
<b>Chapter 3— SAFETY</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1. General. ....	9
3.2. Student participation. ....	9
3.3. Risk Management (RM). ....	9
3.4. Requirements and Obligations. ....	9
<b>Attachment 1— GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION</b>	<b>12</b>

## Chapter 1

### EXECUTING THE AIR FORCE COMBATIVES PROGRAM

**1.1. Overview.** This instruction assigns responsibilities and prescribes policies and procedures for standardizing the Air Force Combatives Program, here on referred to as the Program. It provides administrative, management, and operational guidance for the Program at authorized sources as defined in paragraphs 1.2.1 through 1.2.2.

**1.2. Definition.** For the purpose of this instruction, combatives is defined as hand-to-hand combat in a close-quarters engagement between two or more combatants. This confrontation can occur empty handed, or with hand-held weapons such as knives, blunt objects such as sticks and bats, or projectiles. Hand-to-hand combat can include lethal and non-lethal techniques. Experience in hand-to-hand combat is essential for all Airmen to prepare them for the modern battlefield.

1.2.1. Designated Sources: United States Air Force Academy, Basic Military Training and Officer Training School.

1.2.2. Accession Sources: Any Major Command directed training program that fosters the continuation of the program from designated locations to include but not limited to; United States Air Force Expeditionary Center, Air University, the United States Air Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape School, Fairchild Air Force Base, Tactical Air Control Party School.

1.2.3. Program Training Provider: Any certified instructor qualified through Air Force Combatives Center of Excellence.

**1.3. Program Objectives.** The Air Force will use the Program to:

1.3.1. Provide Airmen with a basic set of armed and unarmed offensive, defensive, standing and ground fighting skills.

1.3.2. Expose Airmen to a full-resistance grappling experience.

1.3.3. Cultivate courage and instill confidence in Airmen's ability to defend themselves.

1.3.4. Help develop an Airmen's ability to think and react quickly under pressure.

1.3.5. Provide an environment for Airmen to develop and practice the aggressive mindset and mental toughness needed to survive an armed and unarmed combative situation.

1.3.6. Establish a common "Warrior Ethos" throughout the Air Force.

**1.4. Roles and Responsibilities.**

1.4.1. **Air Force /A3TS.** Will serve as the Office of Primary Responsibility for the Program. All Air Force-level Program guidance requires coordination and/or approval through AF/A3TS.

1.4.2. **Air Education and Training Command (AETC).** Is the lead command for the Program. AETC/A3Z will ensure consistency, uniformity, and standardization of the Program curriculum. Additionally, AETC/A3Z will:

- 1.4.2.1. Approve Program curriculum for Air Education and Training Command training providers.
- 1.4.2.2. Approve Program instructor lesson plans for the Program instructor course.
- 1.4.2.3. Develop instructor certification standards.
- 1.4.2.4. Provide guidance, direction, and oversight of the Program at all training locations (may delegate oversight to local agency in accordance with this instruction).
- 1.4.2.5. Provide staff coordination on matters that relate to the Program.
- 1.4.2.6. Coordinate on all Major Command supplements to this instruction.
- 1.4.2.7. Coordinate on approval of all designated Air Force Combatives Program sources.
- 1.4.2.8. When necessary, establish Major Command Interest Items.

1.4.3. **The United States Air Force Academy.** The United States Air Force Academy Athletic Department is the Program Center of Excellence and is responsible for the execution and management of the Program. United States Air Force Academy Athletic Department will:

- 1.4.3.1. Provide guidance and support to Program training providers.
- 1.4.3.2. Provide lesson plans and content guidance for Program training.
- 1.4.3.3. Assist Air Education and Training Command in development of instructor certification standards.
- 1.4.3.4. Consolidate lessons learned from staff assistance visits, inspections, training deficiencies, injury reports, and Program training memorandums for future development of the Program.
- 1.4.3.5. Provide initial certification and approval for all Program Master Instructors.
- 1.4.3.6. Maintain the Program certified Instructor list to include qualifications and list of approved training locations.
- 1.4.3.7. Conduct Staff Assistance Visits to authorized providers as requested to monitor and assist units in implementing the policies and procedures prescribed by this instruction. Formal team makeup will be at the discretion of United States Air Force Academy Athletic Department. Staff Assistance Visits will be conducted in accordance with Air Force Instruction 90-201, *The Air Force Inspection System*.
- 1.4.3.8. Publishing and maintaining any and all Air Force Combatives training support material to include but not limited to manuals and guides.

1.4.4. **Unit Commanders:**

- 1.4.4.1. Commanders that are designated by Major Command as an accession source will ensure execution of the Air Force Combatives Program training in accordance with this publication. **(T-2).**

**1.4.5. Program training providers will:**

1.4.5.1. Upon completion of the Program training, submit a memorandum to the Program Center of Excellence indicating number of students trained; noted training deficiencies; and reportable injuries as the result of training. **(T-2).**

1.4.5.1.1. Reportable injuries are defined as “a nonfatal injury or illness that results in 1 or more days away from work” per AFI 91-204.

1.4.5.2. Submit training deficiencies and injury reports to the Program Center of Excellence. **(T-2).**

1.4.5.3. Train students and instructors to a level of proficiency that meets the unit training mission requirements. **(T-3).**

1.4.5.4. Develop and maintain instructor records in accordance with Air Force Instruction 36-2201, *Air Force Training Program*.

1.4.5.5. Send a unit instructor roster to the Program Center of Excellence organized by level of qualification anytime there is a change in instructor status to the Program. **(T-2).**  
**Note:** Designated training sources must have at least one Master Instructor on staff. **(T-2).**

1.4.5.6. Send Master Instructor nominations to the Program Center of Excellence for final certification and approval. **(T-2).**

**1.5. Staff Assistance Visits and Inspections.**

1.5.1. **Informal Visits.** Program Center of Excellence, when requested by the unit commander, may periodically visit unit run programs that conduct combatives training. The purpose of these visits is to provide subject matter expertise to assist in the start-up, validation, and/or development of unit run programs.

1.5.1.1. Informal visits will only be conducted on an as requested basis and will not be required to produce a visit report.

## Chapter 2

### TRAINING POLICIES

**2.1. Program courses of instruction.** The Program currently consists of two training courses intended to provide basic skills. The Program Center of Excellence develops and maintains the contents of both Program courses 1 and 2. Program training courses, supporting documents and contact information may be accessed through the Program Center of Excellence SharePoint: <https://cs2.eis.af.mil/sites/10070/combatives/SitePages/AFCP.aspx>. E-mail: [Combatives@USAF.edu](mailto:Combatives@USAF.edu). This instruction prescribes the program manual, found at the above link to be the primary program guidance. Additional Program training may be developed by the Center of Excellence in accordance with the needs of the Air Force and advances in training techniques.

2.1.1. Program courses provide hands on combatives training.

2.1.1.1. Program course 1 introduces basic combatives techniques and will be taught at all Air Force accession sources. **(T-2)**.

2.1.1.2. Program course 2 provides intermediate combative techniques intended to build upon basic techniques learned in Program course 1.

2.1.2. Courses may be taught in multiple increments to allow each organization to tailor the delivery to their mission schedule. For example, lessons may be taught together or separately; they may be spaced over several days or weeks; however, the entire course must be completed within five weeks. **(T-2)**.

2.1.3. Program courses 1 and 2 are designed to be taught consecutively. Course 1 is the prerequisite for course 2 and for safety reasons, all students must successfully complete course 1 before entering course 2. **(T-2)**.

2.1.4. Program courses 1 and 2 are certificate awarding courses requiring signature by a squadron level commander or equivalent.

2.1.5. Career field or mission specific Program modules may be developed and coordinated with the Center of Excellence, as required, to meet changing training requirements based on lessons learned, evolving training practices, and mission requirements. The changing focus of the Air Force mission makes it necessary for training organizations to deliver needs-based training with minimum time utilized in the development process.

2.1.6. Request for variations to Program courses must be coordinated through the Program Center of Excellence, AETC/A3Z and approved by AF/A3TS. **(T-2)**. **Note:** While guest lecturers, speakers of opportunity, and subject matter experts may be used to enhance the training experience, they may only do so when approved by and under the supervision of a Program Master Instructor.

**2.2. Authorizing Providers.** Units must coordinate with AETC/A3Z to gain AF/A3TS approval before conducting Program training courses outside the United States Air Force Academy, the United States Air Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape School, Fairchild Air Force Base, Tactical Air Control Party School, Joint Base San Antonio/Lackland or the approved list maintained at the Program Center of Excellence. **(T-2)**.

2.2.1. Authorized providers for the Program are the Air Force accession sources and/or Major Command designated training locations (e.g., United States Air Force Expeditionary Center). A list of authorized locations will be maintained at the Program Center of Excellence. **(T-2).**

2.2.2. Additional locations desiring Program implementation must submit an initial Program implementation request to the Center of Excellence, demonstrate their ability to conduct training in accordance with Program guidelines and coordinate approval through the Program Center of Excellence and AETC/A3Z. **(T-2).** Once validated, AETC/A3Z sends the request to AF/A3TS for final approval.

2.2.3. Functional or mission specific combatives training programs, such as Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape and Tactical Air Control Party career field combatives programs, will be codified and defined by specific modules and will be published with the Program Air Force Tactics Techniques and Procedures. Each module will be validated through the Program Center of Excellence, AETC/A3Z, and AF/A3TS prior to inclusion into the Program Air Force Tactics Techniques and Procedures. **(T-2).**

2.2.4. Air Force Combatives Program is the program of record for the Air Force. Other recognized programs include Department of Defense combatives programs of record, such as the Army Combatives Program, the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program and the Special Operations Combatives Program. Department of Defense approved programs are the only authorized non-Air Force provided combatives programs. **(T-2).**

2.2.4.1. Airmen are authorized to receive certification and execute sister service training through Department of Defense approved programs in lieu of or in addition to Air Force Combatives Program. When sister service regulations do not address a topic or are less restrictive with regard to safety, Air Force Combatives Program guidance will be used.

**2.3. Program Instructor Certification.** Certified instructors are essential to the success of the Program. Instructors must be skilled in combatives training and knowledgeable in training methods. Individuals must be certified by the Center of Excellence before conducting any Program training. **(T-2).**

2.3.1. Program Instructor Levels. Instructor certification validates the knowledge and skills needed to perform the duties of the instructor position unassisted. Program recognizes three categories of instructors: Basic Instructor; Senior Instructor; and Master Instructor. All instructors regardless of background start as Basic Instructors. All Program instructors must have a current Cardiopulmonary Reconditioning/Automatic External Defibrillator and Self Aid Buddy Care certification (Airmen Distant Learning System and hands-on). **(T-2).** Descriptions of Program Instructor categories are as follows:

2.3.1.1. Program Basic Instructor course is a train-the-trainer course that includes advanced instruction on all Program 1 and 2 techniques. Additional topics of training include course management procedures to include safety, formal evaluation techniques and remedial training methodologies.

2.3.1.2. Basic Instructor course will be taught by a Senior or Master instructor. **(T-2).**

2.3.1.3. Student-to-instructor ratio will not exceed ten-to-one. **(T-2).**

2.3.1.4. Army Combatives level 1 or higher graduates may receive Basic Instructor qualification after successfully completing the Program conversion course. All instructors regardless of prior training start as Basic Instructors.

2.3.1.5. Senior Instructor: A Basic Instructor may be upgraded to Senior Instructor after successfully completing a skills assessment in accordance with the Program Technique Guide and Evaluation Sheet and after teaching a minimum of one instructor course under a Master Instructor's direct supervision. Once complete, submit an instructor upgrade request to the Program Center of Excellence for upgrade in the instructor data base. Refer to paragraph 2.1 for forms and contact information.

2.3.1.6. Master Instructor. A Senior Instructor may be upgraded to Master instructor after completing the Program Master Instructor Course provided by the Program Center of Excellence. This can occur either in residence at United States Air Force Academy or by an approved Mobile Training Team.

**2.4. Instructor Currency.** Program Instructors must instruct at least 10 hours of the Program annually to remain certified. **(T-2).** Instructors can regain currency and certification by instructing 10 or more hours of the Program under the supervision of a Senior or Master Instructor. **Note:** Commanders may be more restrictive to ensure a greater level of proficiency within the unit.

**2.5. Instructor Removal.** Certification is removed when the confidence in the instructor's ability to safely and effectively conduct combatives training is in question. Only the instructor's unit commander may direct a downgrade to a lower level of certification or completely remove the Program instructor's certification. **Note:** Recommend unit commanders consult with the Program Center of Excellence before taking downgrade action.

2.5.1. The following are just a few examples of actions that may warrant downgrade or removal:

2.5.1.1. Failure to observe safety practices mandated in this instruction.

2.5.1.2. Failure to maintain currency.

2.5.1.3. Failure to maintain professional instructor conduct.

2.5.1.4. This list is not intended to be an all-inclusive. Additional reasoning for downgrade or certification removal is at the discretion of the responsible commander.

2.5.2. The commander must send a memorandum to the Program Center of Excellence with info copy to AETC/A3Z. Notice must include a narrative of the situation causing the downgrade or removal, any additional training requirements, and/or recommended actions necessary to regain certification. **(T-2).**

2.5.3. Master Instructors downgraded or removed as instructors for any reason must not be reinstated by the instructor's unit commander without Program Center of Excellence notification and consultation. **(T-2).**



## Chapter 3

### SAFETY

**3.1. General.** Safety is paramount and the Program has been specifically designed to provide realistic, full-resistance combatives training while minimizing the potential for injuries to participating Airmen. While the possibility of injury can never be completely eliminated when conducting live resistance training, following the prescribed training program outlined in this instruction and the Program manual, the risk of injury can be mitigated.

**3.2. Student participation.** Students must practice techniques as presented by the instructor via the program guide and risk mitigation matrix. Failure to follow pre-briefed safety guidance will result in immediate expulsion from the course. **(T-2).**

**3.3. Risk Management (RM).** Combatives training has inherent risks. These risks may not be readily apparent and are sometimes counterintuitive to the untrained person. Therefore, a combatives instructor certified at the appropriate level will be involved in the unit Risk Management process to mitigate these risks. Unit Risk Management process will be in line with AFI 90-802 and will supplement specific guidance for the program. **(T-2).**

**3.4. Requirements and Obligations.** Commanders must ensure the following requirements are provided and met prior to execution of training: **(T-2).**

- 3.4.1. Proper supervision.
- 3.4.2. Training progression.
- 3.4.3. Appropriate equipment.
- 3.4.4. Proper facilities.
- 3.4.5. Reasonable selection, screening, and matching of training partners.
- 3.4.6. Medical support.

**3.4.1. Supervision.** Proper student supervision by qualified Instructors is the most critical combatives safety consideration. Program instructors must be qualified in accordance with qualifications outlined in paragraph 2.3 and 2.4. **(T-2).**

**3.4.1.1. Student/Instructor ratio.** Anytime combatives training is conducted, a minimum of one senior or master instructor must be present in accordance with the following restrictions. **(T-2).** Student to instructor ratios will be no greater than:

- 3.4.1.1.1. Forty-to-one (40:1) for instruction/demonstration. **(T-2).**
- 3.4.1.1.2. Ten-to-one (10:1) for drilling and Live Resistance Training. **(T-2).**
- 3.4.1.1.3. Two-to-one (2:1) for live competition. **(T-2).**

**3.4.2. Training Progression.** Air Force Combatives techniques should be taught in the order presented in the training guide. They are arranged for a natural progression; the more advanced techniques are presented after Airmen have established a familiarity with the dynamics of general combatives techniques. This logical progression will result in fewer training injuries.

3.4.3. **Equipment.** Proper equipment is crucial to ensure safe participation in the combatives training program.

3.4.3.1. Instructors and students will wear appropriate athletic mouthpieces when engaged in Live Resistance Training. **(T-2).**

3.4.3.2. Students will wear sturdy clothing with long sleeves and pants that facilitate combatives learning objectives while providing ample personal protection. Examples of appropriate clothing items are the trousers and blouse of the Airman Battle Uniform, Army Combat Uniform or other service type utility uniform components. Physical Training clothing such as t-shirts, shorts, sweats, and warm up suits do not facilitate the appropriate level of sturdiness and personal protection required and will not be worn during combatives training. **(T-3).**

3.4.3.3. Only certified Program Instructors are authorized to wear commander approved nonstandard clothing items during the conduct of combatives training.

3.4.3.4. Program managers will ensure combatives equipment is sanitized and stored in a manner as to mitigate health concerns for all training participants. **(T-3).** The program will have dedicated sanitation equipment for cleaning combatives equipment. **(T-3).** Equipment will be cleaned prior to and after each session of combatives training in accordance with manufacturers suggested cleaning standards. **(T-3).** Personal skin wipes with antimicrobial and antifungal agents to limit spread of dermal diseases will be available for all participants. **(T-3).** Equipment should be inspected for cleanliness and serviceability prior to and after training.

3.4.4. **Facilities.** Combatives training will be conducted on a suitable training surface. **(T-3).** Grappling or wrestling mats are preferred and if available should be utilized. If mats are not available training should be conducted on a soft footing, such as grassy or sandy area. Training surfaces should be free of hazards and large enough to allow for safe separation between each pair of students.

3.4.4.1. At a minimum, an eight square foot training area is required for each pair of participants. **(T-2).**

3.4.4.2. In addition to the minimum training area, ensure there is a six-foot buffer zone from any obstructions/obstacles near the training area. Examples of obstruction hazards may include but are not limited to furniture, support poles, walls, etc. Additional padding may be utilized to mitigate obstructions within these buffer zones.

3.4.4.3. As a professional training environment, training should be conducted within an area free from external distractions.

3.4.5. **Training Partners.** When matching training partners for drilling and live resistance training, consider size and weight, skill level, experience, aggressiveness, and injuries or physical limitations. These factors should guide, not dictate, partner matching. When necessary, instructors can serve as training partners for students to meet instructional objectives as long as proper student instructor ratio for training oversight is maintained.

3.4.6. **Medical Support.** Ensure a medical response plan is in place. A reliable means of communication to contact emergency personnel must be available on site at all times. **(T-2).** Recommend a certified Emergency Medical Technician be on site during training. An

Automatic External Defibrillator must be readily available during training. **(T-2)**. All Air Force Combatives Program instructors must have a current Cardiopulmonary Reassessment/Automatic External Defibrillator and Self Aid Buddy Care certification. Injuries sustained during training will be reported through appropriate local safety channels. **(T-2)**.

3.4.6.1. All reportable training injuries must be in accordance with paragraph 1.4.5.1. and 1.4.5.2. to ensure controls are implemented to mitigate recurring risks of injury. **(T-2)**. These metrics are for Program internal use only and do not supersede mandatory local safety reporting directives. Refer to Air Force Instruction 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports*, for injury classifications.

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**Attachment 1****GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

Air Force Policy Directive 36-26, *Total Force Development and Management*, 22 Dec 2015

Air Force Instruction 11-215, *USAF Flight Manuals Program (FMP)*, 22 Dec 2008

Air Force Instruction 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 1 Dec 2015

Air Force Instruction 36-2201, *Air Force Training Program*, 15 Sep 2010

Air Force Instruction 90-201, *The Air Force Inspection System*, 21 Apr 2015

Air Force Instruction 90-802, *Operational Risk Management*, 11 Feb 2013

Air Force Instruction 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports*, 12 Feb 2014

Air Force Manual 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 Mar 2008

***Adopted Forms***

**Air Force Form 679**, *Air Force Publication Compliance Item Waiver Request/Approval*

**Air Force Form 847**, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

***Terms***

**Additional Training**—Includes any training or action recommended by a unit commander that must be completed following removal or downgrade in Instructor status.

**Center of Excellence**—A center of excellence is a team, a shared facility or an entity that provides leadership, best practices, research, support and/or training for a focus area. The focus in this case is the Program.

**Certification**—Designation of an individual by the organization commander as having completed required training and being capable of performing in a role, mission, job, etc., for which no qualification training program exists.

**Currency**—Currency is compliance with annual positional proficiency required by this directive.

**Downgrade**—The downgrading of an individual's instructor status due to failure to meet annual currency requirements, or the unit Commander determines the individual to be non-proficient.

**Providers**— For the purposes of this instruction, a provider is a unit or section that is authorized to provide Program training.

**Unit**—For the purposes of this instruction, a unit is defined as an authorized provider to conduct the Program.