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California Guardsmen grapple in unit's first combatives training

By Capt. Renato Rossignoli
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq — Thirty-nine National Guard Soldiers spent a week grappling and choking each other in the first Army combatives level-1 course offered at the 1st Battalion, 185th Armor, here, from May 4 to May 11.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Tackett, medical platoon sergeant, 1st Bn., 185th AR, who is the battalion's primary combatives instructor, said they plan to offer more courses due to demand, and to qualify more Soldiers at higher levels of combatives.

“We had such a huge request for more classes that we plan on conducting three more Level 1 classes in the month of June,” Tackett said. “We currently have three Level 2 certified instructors. We have another 12 Soldiers currently enrolled in the Level 2 instructor's course, which finishes this coming Friday.”

The program is about a week long. Soldiers are exposed to various exercises that help them not only become good at level 1 skills, but also develop a warrior's mentality, Tackett said.

“This ground fighting style, based on Brazilian and Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, is a solid foundation

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from which to train in further hand-to-hand combat tactics,” said Tackett, a native of Covina, Calif. “The class teaches the warrior spirit, to never quit, to close the distance with your enemy, to obtain a dominant position and then to finish your enemy.”

The class teaches basic ground grappling positions like the mount, side control, guard and rear mount. It also demonstrates finishing moves such as straight arm bars, bent arm bars, and the rear naked choke.

Soldiers spend many hours of studying and grappling on the mats and running through drills like the “clinch drill.”

“A Clinch drill to show your warrior spirit and willingness to close with the enemy is mandatory and always leaves the body sore,” Tackett said. “Choke-out day always causes anxiety and nervousness.”

“The combative course was great,” said Spc. Juan Rivas, 1st Bn., 185th AR. “I learned how to properly close the distance, achieve the dominant position and finish the fight. I know that there are a lot of mixed martial arts out there, but this one was really easy to learn and a lot of fun. If I had a chance to do it again or take the next level I would. I would recommend this course to anybody in the Army.”



Two California National Guardsmen battle it out during combatives level 1 training at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, May 10. Thirty-nine Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 185th Armor, here, participated in the training from May 4 to May 11. Sgt. 1st Class Robert Tackett, medical platoon sergeant, 1st Bn., 185th AR, who is the battalion's primary combatives instructor, said they plan to offer more courses due to demand, and to qualify more Soldiers at higher levels of combatives. "We had such a huge request for more classes that we plan on conducting three more Level 1 classes in the month of June," said Tackett, a native of Covina, Calif. (courtesy photo)