

# 10TH MOUNTAIN LIFE

HISTORIC DRUM



10th Mountain Life features soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

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Left: A historic accord was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, left rear, and Canada's prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, second from left, in Ogdensburg in August 1940. The Ogdensburg Agreement outlined a permanent plan for mutual defense overseas between the United States and Canada and established the Permanent Joint Board of Defense. Here, Roosevelt and King viewed 137 aircraft taking part in U.S. Army maneuvers in St. Lawrence County. Lt. Gen. Hugh A. Drum, for whom Fort Drum is named, at the right, and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson accompanied the leaders. Watertown Daily Times Archive

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## WARRIOR ETHOS

Soldiers hone their skills with Fort Drum's restored combatives team

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**F**ORT DRUM — Soldiers on Fort Drum are able to hone their skills in martial arts as the military base has recently reassembled a combatives team.

Capt. Kenny Hird, Company C commander, 10th Light Support Battalion, started recruiting soldiers in September after he was given the task of restarting a combatives program that had been inactive since 2017.

Combatives, according to the U.S. Army website, aims to "instill the Warrior Ethos and prepare Soldiers to close with and defeat the enemy in hand to hand combat."

Hird said orders came down for the XVIII Airborne Corps tournament in North Carolina. He said his battalion commander had asked if he wanted to assist, which he said he would.

Hird then saw his battalion and brigade sergeant majors getting invested in it.

Hird was training for a world championship and had already won the Pan-American games twice.

"There was nowhere for me to train, either," he said. "There were no mats, there was nothing."

Hird then spent time with a classic combatives instructor on post and they developed a training plan together.

So when Hird was tasked with getting the combatives team ready, he started asking questions. Fast forward to now, Hird says they've had no accidents or incidents. He said that not having injuries is due to "understanding soldiers' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats."

The camaraderie between soldiers is important, and the soldiers have been together for a while, Hird said.

Hird says the combatives team is important for morale and confidence.

"We're the most deployed



The Fort Drum combatives team. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

division in the United States Army. And having any type of facility to train hand-to-hand combat is special," he said. "It's not just about rolling and doing a takedown now. It's about confidence. It's about improving your physical fitness, your ability to walk into a room and know for a fact that you can handle yourself and other people."

He also said it helps partnerships within the community as local partners will help train the soldiers.

Soldiers from different ranks come together for the combatives team. Officers, majors, and multiple other ranks all train together.

"Understanding soldiers is very, very important," Hird said. "Any new soldier that comes into our formation, I sit down and talk with them."

Hird said he'll talk to the incoming soldier about their goals in the Army and how they can achieve them.

PFC-E3 Christian Test is one of the members of the combatives team. He did four or five years of wrestling in high school. He says it's helpful for the combatives program to be at Fort Drum.

"It helps boost morale for the units that participate," he said. "It can bring awareness to Drum and the Army as a whole, and it's a good way for privates and soldiers to improve themselves."

He said this helps out in a warzone because it is making him stronger, physically and mentally.

"Tapping or giving up is a mental battle, so if you know that you can make it through something, you will," he said. "Physically, it's helping because it's helping me improve my times for AFTs (Army Fitness Tests) and PT (physical training) scores."

Capt. Luis Weierbach, who is new on Fort Drum, said he heard about the team on social media and came out to practice, and it just so happens that they were getting ready for the Lacerda Cup at Fort Benning, Georgia.

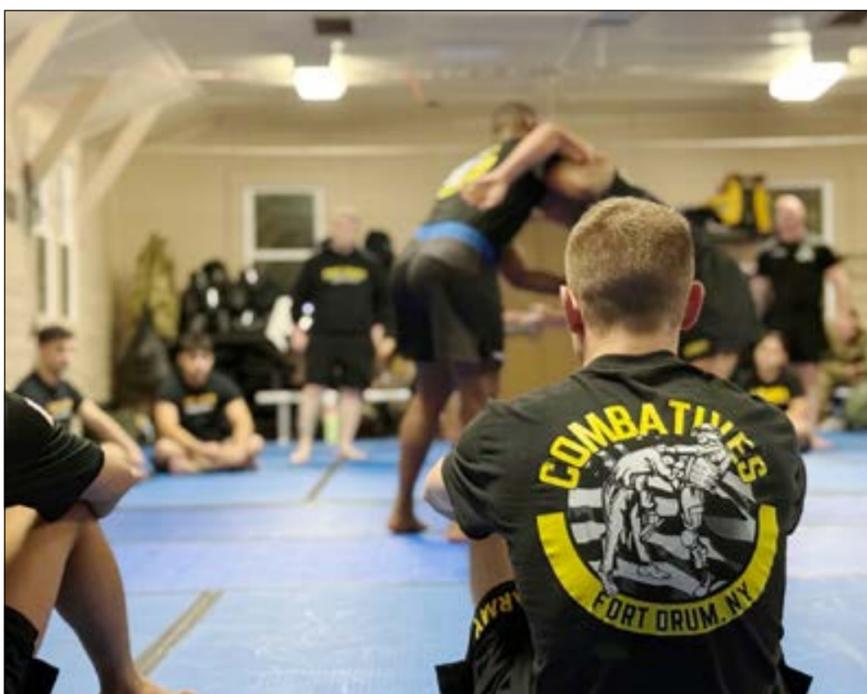
Weierbach said he was excited when he heard the combatives team was coming to Fort Drum.

"I'm from New York. I'm a wrestler and for wrestlers, combatives in the Army is a chance to get back after it," he said. "So I was excited to hear that they're bringing the team back here. I know that not every installation can say that they have one and certainly not one of this caliber."

Spc. Walter J. Galope has more of a striking background and used to box in the Philippines. He said he also picked up jiu jitsu.

He said he knew there used to be a combatives program before this one was brought back.

"I couldn't see the reason why they took it away because I think it's such a very big part of the warrior ethos, teaching soldiers how to actually fight," he said.



Right: A member of the combatives team watches a demonstration before attempting the same moves. Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times

Right: Capt. Kenny Hird speaks to the combatives team on Feb. 10. Photos by Jonathon Wheeler/Watertown Daily Times



The combatives team practices early in the morning Feb. 10.

