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Preface



On 5 July 1950, U.S. troops, who were unprepared for the physical demands of war, were sent to battle. The early days of the Korean war were nothing short of disastrous, as U.S. soldiers were routed by a poorly equipped, but well-trained, North Korean People's Army. As American soldiers withdrew, they left behind wounded comrades and valuable equipment their training had not adequately prepared them to carry heavy loads.

The costly lessons learned by Task Force Smith in Korea are as important today as ever. If we fail to prepare our soldiers for their physically demanding wartime tasks, we are guilty of paying lip service to the principle of "Train as you fight." Our physical training programs must do more for our soldiers than just get them ready for the semiannual Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT).

FM 21 -20 is directed at leaders who plan and conduct physical fitness training. It provides guidelines

for developing programs which will improve and maintain physical fitness levels for all Army personnel. These programs will help leaders prepare their soldiers to meet the physical demands of war. This manual can also be used as a source book by all soldiers. FM 21-20 was written to conform to the principles outlined in FM 25-100, Training the Force.

The benefits to be derived from a good physical fitness program are many. It can reduce the number of soldiers on profile and sick call, invigorate training, and enhance productivity and mental alertness. A good physical fitness program also promotes team cohesion and combat survivability. It will improve soldiers' combat readiness.

The proponent of this publication is HQ TRADOC. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to Headquarters, US Army Infantry Center, US Army Physical Fitness School (ATZB-PF), Fort Benning, GA31905-5000.

Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

A soldier's level of physical fitness' has a direct impact on his combat readiness. The many battles in which American troops have fought underscore the important role physical fitness plays on the battlefield. The renewed nationwide interest in fitness has been accompanied by many research studies on the effects of regular participation in sound physical fitness programs. The overwhelming conclusion is that such programs enhance a person's quality of life, improve productivity, and bring about positive physical and mental changes. Not only are physically fit soldiers essential to the Army, they are also more likely to have enjoyable, productive lives.

This chapter provides an overview of fitness. It defines physical fitness, outlines the phases of fitness, and discusses various types of fitness programs and fitness evaluation. Commanders and leaders can use this information to develop intelligent, combat-related, physical fitness programs.

Physical fitness, the emphasis of this manual, is but one component of total fitness. Some of the "others are weight control, diet and nutrition, stress management, dental health, and spiritual and ethical fitness, as well as the avoidance of hypertension, substance abuse, and tobacco use. This manual is primarily concerned with issues relating directly to the development and maintenance of the five components of physical fitness.

The Army's physical fitness training program extends to all branches of the total Army. This includes the USAR and ARNG and encompasses all ages and ranks and both sexes. Its purpose is to physically condition all soldiers throughout their careers beginning with initial entry training (IET). It also includes soldiers with limiting physical profiles who must also participate in physical fitness training.

Commanders and leaders must ensure that all soldiers in their units maintain the highest level of physical

fitness in accordance with this manual and with AR 350-15 which prescribes policies, procedures, and responsibilities for the Army physical fitness program.

Leadership Responsibilities

Effective leadership is critical to the success of a good physical training program. Leaders, especially senior leaders, must understand and practice the new Army doctrine of physical fitness. They must be visible and active participants in physical training programs. In short, leaders must lead PT! Their example will emphasize the importance of physical fitness training and will highlight it as a key element of the unit's training mission.

Leaders must emphasize the value of physical training and clearly explain the objectives and benefits of the program. Master Fitness Trainers (MFTs), graduates of a special course taught by the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School, can help commanders do this. However, regardless of the level of technical experience MFTs have, the sole responsibility for good programs rests with leaders at every level.

A poorly designed and executed physical fitness program hurts morale. A good program is well planned and organized, has reasonable yet challenging requirements, and is competitive and progressive. It also has command presence at every level with leaders setting the example for their soldiers.

Leaders should also continually assess their units to determine which specific components of fitness they lack. Once they identify the shortcomings, they should modify their programs to correct the weaknesses.

Leaders should not punish soldiers who fail to perform to standard. Punishment, especially excessive repetitions or additional PT, often does more harm than good. Leaders must

Components of physical fitness include weight control, diet, nutrition, stress management, and spiritual and ethical fitness.