

Training Notes



Maintenance — People Readiness

GEN PAUL E. FUNK II

While I was growing up in armored cavalry units, maintenance was always at the forefront of my mind. A good maintenance program generates combat power, gives the commander options, and provides units the tools to win. As a young officer, I viewed maintenance as a function of applying people, parts, petroleum, tools, and time (P3T2) to bring equipment up to “10/20” standards. As I matured in the Army, I learned successful units and maintenance programs depend on a culture of maintenance — a pervasive attitude and focus on building and maintaining readiness by setting priorities, exercising leadership and ruthless execution. It has been a winning formula. It is this culture, or way of doing business, we must now employ to turn on a persistent challenge regarding our #1 pacing item — our Soldiers. We need to apply the culture of maintenance to our people to build our overall readiness and health of the force.

At any given time, 6 percent of our force is non-deployable. Of these, the majority are unavailable due to medical reasons. This number does not include Soldiers who are also not fully mission capable (FMC) due to failure of Army Body Composition Program or Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) standards. This personnel non-mission capable (NMC) rate also does not include Soldiers unable to perform to their full potential due to temporary injuries and profiles. While we can accept the bare minimum of 90-percent operational readiness for most of our fleets, this is not something we can long tolerate for our people. We cannot accept a loss of combat power of 6 percent or more before we even cross the line of departure. This is leader business. Leaders need to focus on building “people readiness,” and it starts by changing the culture of fitness. We must adopt a culture of Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F).

Changing culture is hard but necessary. Many will argue that we have always valued fitness, but our pursuit of physical fitness has been unevenly applied and has not incorporated all components of fitness. In our current and future fights, every part of our force — every occupational specialty and every unit — must value and adopt a culture of fitness. We will win on the battlefield by embracing a culture of comprehensive fitness. We are starting this change by replacing the APFT with the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). For the first time in our history, we have developed a scientifically validated fitness assessment based on the physical demands of combat. Critically, the ACFT also drives balanced and appropriate physical training that will reduce overuse injuries and unplanned attrition, and, like combat, the test standards are age- and gender-neutral. We will measure all Soldiers against common Soldier and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) tasks using the physical demands we expect Soldiers to face in combat. But physical fitness is just the beginning.



Photo by Mark C. Olsen

A New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier carries two 40-pound kettlebells during the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, on 19 December 2018.



Photo by SGT Casey Hustin

A Soldier does a hanging leg tuck with support from a fellow Soldier during a lunch and lift hosted by a Holistic Health and Fitness team at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, on 25 February 2020.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), through the Center for Initial Military Training (CIMT), is leading the effort to implement the H2F system. H2F is the foundation of the entire fitness enterprise. H2F provides the commander all the tools required to maximize the physical and non-physical components of health and fitness. H2F is the Army's primary investment in increased Soldier readiness and lethality, optimized physical and non-physical performance, reduced injury rates, improved rehabilitation after injury, and increased overall effectiveness of the Total Army.

In the H2F system, dietitians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, athletic trainers, and strength and conditioning coaches will provide relevant and ready subject matter expertise. Just as important are resilience, mental readiness, and spiritual health to address the inter-relationship between physical and mental well-being. Commanders and leaders take heed — H2F is not designed to be the “valet service” option. Do not expect to hand them the keys when they show up to your unit and stand back and watch them do their thing. H2F provides the mechanism, but your engaged leadership will make it happen.

Leaders must do three things: understand the system, trust

the system, and dedicate the time to make it work. Creating a shared understanding is the basis for successful mission command. It starts with my headquarters and team. As we move to broader adoption of the program and resourcing across the force, we will use every available means to expose leaders to the concepts and techniques. While we are pushing, you need to pull; educate and arm yourselves with the knowledge, skills, and proven science our teams have utilized to get us this far. Only you can take us to the next level. When you see the results with your own eyes, I have no doubt you will trust the system. Results will not come fast or easy. We will see some short-term positive results, but the ultimate prize is increased readiness and reduced musculoskeletal injuries over the long term. True success will only come through a long-term commitment to regularity and progression. You will see results.

Finally, units will embrace what the commander values and resources. The most precious of these resources is time. Make H2F a priority. Nothing demonstrates a commander's priority like dedicated time on the training schedule, and to optimize use of the H2F system, you will have to commit training time throughout the day. H2F is an example of the Army's commitment to its people. Commanders' successful H2F administration makes that commitment real. Our obligation to our Soldiers is to provide them with an immersive, integrative, and comprehensive training system to ensure their success on the ACFT, reduce injuries, and build individual and unit readiness. Most importantly, Soldiers watch what the commander does and where the commander chooses to spend his or her time, so my advice is to lead by example. We lead the way.

Generating combat power or building readiness does not just “happen.” Just like returning a tank to the fight, preserving the health and physical fitness of a Soldier to withstand the rigor of combat is the product of planning, hard work, and leadership. We will need generous quantities of all three if we truly want to change the culture of fitness. It all starts with leadership. This is a priority. Our Army is in the midst of building a multi-domain operations enabled force and modernizing equipment across all warfighting functions to meet the ever present requirement to fight and win in large-scale combat. Our efforts to improve the most essential component — the individual Soldier — is not a separate endeavor but the true cornerstone of building a more capable Army. As GEN George Patton observed, “Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men.” Today's men and women in our great Army will win our wars of today and tomorrow. It is up to us to prepare them to win. Victory starts here!

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