



## *Deployed Fitness for the Armed Forces Part 1*

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In today's world, America's military forces are deploying to austere locations for extended periods of time (6 months for the Navy and Air Force, all the way to 14+ for the US Army) and carrying out operations at an incredible tempo. In spite of this, the US Military has a very poor

fitness doctrine. I am not talking about our elite special forces; I am talking about everyone else. The typical service wisdom is the daily dozen of body weight cals and running. While this certainly is better than nothing, it is not the best option either. The US Military has fallen far behind other nations militaries in terms of fitness. I was amazed when I trained with a South Korean SP a few years ago. They average 12-15 miles running and

rucking, then engage in 2 hours of martial arts practice, then head off to work. The North Koreans are training harder than that, who knows what is going on over there. Watch one of the Syrian Hezbollah training videos, men running obstacle courses, fighting and practicing martial skills for 12 hours a day. Has America forgotten something? It is no secret; the harder and stronger your body, the better you will perform in combat. Not to mention 18 hour duty days in Iraq with high temperatures of 140 degrees, and lows of 55 degrees at night.

This is not an article specific to any job. I do not care if you are a front line trigger puller, a cook, an admin troop, a load master, a cop or a mechanic. You should be training hard! While there is a massive difference in the level of fitness required for a navy seal vs. being a paralegal, there is no reason the two could not train the same way (talking about fitness here and nothing else). The armed forces have fallen behind the world in terms of fitness. We are suffering the same problem the rest of the country is, mediocre fitness programs such as body building and basic body weight drills being pushed off as cutting edge, end all, be all program. Many people honestly believe they are fit because they have a "big bench press" or "ripped abs" Unfortunately, the time most military members learn they have failed themselves physically is when the pivotal life and death situation is smiling in their face. A prevalent example is the mentality "I will get in shape while I am in the desert" All branches are guilty of this, and it is the NCO corps fault. As a service we fail each other by allowing mediocre standards to exist in our units. There is nothing hypothetical about stepping off a C130 on to a ramp when it is 130 degrees outside in the shade. Are in shape to start the mission now? Or must we wait 3 months for you to get your shit together?

The solution is simple. NCOs at each level must learn the methods, make the materials available, motivate their people, and eliminate mediocre exercise sessions. Challenge your people and show them how strong they can be. Unit PT sessions consisting of push ups, sit ups and a distance run must stop. Volleyball, basketball and soccer matches are not preparing your people for the demands of the profession. Even worse, these crappy programs are reinforcing mediocre standards. People join the service to better themselves. Let's facilitate this goal.

How about hoisting and throwing sand bags, swinging and snatching kettle bells, pull ups and dips with your full IBA? What about pushing HMMWV's and deuces? Focusing on preventing common injuries, not reinforcing the drills that inflict them. Make people stronger than they look, and leave the sissy programs to the shapers and pumpers.

I train a lot of people on a lot of skills, but I am not a "certified" personal trainer. I am not a CSCS, RKC, PhD, Dr, or any of the other certifications you may find in the fitness industry. If you are not one of the above, then don't pretend to be. Stop trying to find or invent the next "super program" in Muscle and Fitness magazine. There is a big difference in a coach or personal trainer working with a recreational athlete and training a military unit. If you are not an expert and you get one of your men hurt trying out your newest Muscle Mag super squat program, you just blue falconed the mission. Relax high speed; the best programs have already been developed. All we are doing here is taking those programs and tapering them to our needs. The ideas I am presenting are the things I have learned from the best, the things I have done in the past, and then things I am doing now.

I believe the following equipment items should be included in a deployed services member's fitness arsenal:

- A kettlebell. Indestructible. All Weather. Easily stored, easily carried. Literately replaces barbells, dumbbells any of these machines.
  
- Jump Stretch bands. I have only recently trained with real deal jump stretch bands, and I am impressed! They could fit in any pouch in your rucksack, and are incredibly durable and strong. You can do some very awesome drills with these.
  
- Shot-put. I started using Jeff Martones superior high output training (S.H.O.T.) last year. It delivers. A 12lbs shot-put is easily transported, and you can use them anywhere you have a few square feet.
  
- Something to pull ups. Look around; there is something you can pull your butt up on.
  
- A few square feet of sand. Hmmm, if you can not find this, you are not deployed right now.
  
- Something heavy and awkward. A sea bag filled with sand or gravel, a big rock, something. Almost every base in Iraq has a vehicle grave yard, go talk to the motor pool and ask them if you can have a shot out transmission. If you can carry it out, go for it.

That is everything you need. Now, how are we going to do it?

*First thing I want you to do is examine your duty schedule:*

- What hours are you working, what times?
- Is it summer time or the winter months?
- What is your on/off rotation? A person working a 6&1 will likely use a different schedule than a person doing a 3&1.
- How much sleep are you getting?
- What kind of chow are you getting, and how often?

These answers will help fill out the X factor for the question of “how much and how often will I exercise?”

I am not here to tell you how to do or not to do, unless you are unfortunate and have to work for me. I am not doing your job out there. But from my own personal experience I know this: A hard work out after a 18 day kicks me back awake as if I had a nap. It is a double edge sword. If I know I am going to have a bear or a week, then I know I need to cut out evening work outs. On the other hand I will hit the program hard when I know the week will be easier.

On to the meat and potatoes

The following drills are of the highest importance. The core of the program is based around the ETK program break in period. Most people do not need to progress to the snatch and press, because the get up and swing are money.

The 2 hand swing: This can be done with a kettlebell, a sandbag, a dumbbell, or a plate. This drill is the key to unlocking the hips power. It will

allow you to run faster, hit harder, and go all day with 70 pounds of gear. This is also my primary cardio. There are many places in the CENTCOM theater where running is not an option due to safety and security reasons. No problem! Swings are superior to running for cardio, work capacity and GPP.

The get up: No one can say enough good things about this drill. I have yet to meet one person who has tried this drill and did not love what it does to your body. You can add a lot of other drills in to this complex. I like to use sand bags or kettle bells for this one. Take two or three sandbags so the weight pulls in several directions and knock out your reps. Throw in some windmills too. It's good for you.

The Nasty Hundred: This is a drill you will learn to hate. Take something heavy, like a 150 pound sea bag full of sand or a transmission. Get a platform that is 3 ½ feet tall to 4 ½ feet tall. The back of a HMMVW troop carrier, or some pallets work great. Put the implement at the base of the platform. Pick it up and put it on the platform. Now take it off. Do this 100 times. It sucks. To add extra misery, add full IBA, K-Pot and rush the clock.

Buddy carries: I have met pararesuce men who have carried injured men hundreds of meters on their backs across broken terrain. That is functional fitness, being able to do what is needed when it is needed. You need to be able to lift the biggest people you work with. You never know when you may need to move them. Leave the CLS tricks for this one; we are going to do it the hard way. Have your buddy put on his gear. You will have on your gear. He will lay on the ground, you will pick him up, and

you will move your ass. Up hills, down hills. Across sand, grass and gravel. Nothing else to say about this.

The Tactical pull up: A tactical pull up is one done with a thumb less grip from a dead hang, touching the throat to the bar. No kipping, knee kicking, bouncing or half reps here. I recommend you use the grease the groove system for this.

The pistol: The one legged squat. This was the hardest drill I learned to do. It took me months to get it down. It was worth all of the effort. This drill is the real deal for true leg strength. I use 40 to 50 pounds of extra weight for sets of single reps.

Finest in the World: Pushing a HMMWV, M-35 or even a 5 Ton. Great team building drill. Most likely you have had to do this on several occasions, hence the name. "Best equipment military in world," right... For full training effect, have the team get in full kit. Best used when people decide to drop their ass the last few months of the deployment and attitudes start to flare up.

That is what I consider to be the core. Some other things I recommend adding are the following.

The body bridge: strengthens the upper back, stretches the shoulders, upper back and hips, and builds the wrists. I love this drill.

Neck complex: Use the 3 plane neck movement, followed by weighted chicken drills, followed by the boxers jaw opener.

Forced Relaxation hip flexor stretches: Do them, your back will thank you when hour 14 hits and you are still on your feet standing guard duty.

Hanging spinal decompressions: There is a lot of medical evidence suggesting this drill is outstanding for your spine. I do not know anything about that, but I know it feels good, especially in the mornings when I wake up and the evenings after I work out.

*Putting it all together:*

The cycling element is key to avoiding burn out and staying strong. I personally use the ROP split. I believe this load is perfect for most people, and more and more people are testifying to this every day. Here are a few other ideas ideal for small group PT sessions.

*1<sup>st</sup> day*

Get-ups for time, mixed in with up/down drills while wearing your IBA. Up/downs are simple, get up, and then get down. I prefer to do 5-10 minutes straight get ups then go in to 5-10 minutes of up/downs.

Swings, with jumping jacks as active rest.

*2<sup>nd</sup> day*

Pull ups and Pistols. I highly recommend the ladder method, as this accommodates troops of different strength levels.

*3<sup>rd</sup> day*

Active flexibility drills and some stretches in the morning

4<sup>th</sup> day

Get-ups then the nasty 100.

5<sup>th</sup> day

Swings and buddy carries

6<sup>th</sup> day

Finest in the World, followed by pull ups

7<sup>th</sup> day

Sleep.

Other proven kick ass workouts I recommend are as follows:

- The DOE man maker. Written by a retired Green Beret and a former Sr RKC, it is an absolute ball buster. It is published on the Dragondoor web site. Read it, do it.

- Hand 2 Hand kettlebell circuits. The nature of the kettlebell and its style of lifting easily lends to circuit training. A basic circuit I recommend is swings followed by the around the body pass/sling shot, tactical lunges and then the hot potato. Do 3 rounds, 30 seconds of work and 30 seconds of rest between drills. As you get better, decrease the rest time and increase the work time.

- SHOT circuits. The shot put is an outstanding implement. Juggling, throwing, swinging, passing and catching the shot will increase your grip, lungs and work capacity.

- Sea Bag complexes. Fill up a sea bag with sand or gravel. Pick it up and throw it, clean it, press it, twist it, bear hug it, just keep it off the ground for 30 minutes.

Mix it up as you see fit. You should be working harder then you will ever need to while doing your actual job.

Take the hard road when ever possible. There never seems to be enough sand bags filled down range. Spend an off-day filling sand bags with an E-tool. Back breaking labor is good for the soul. If nothing else, you will have earned the right to gripe about how tired you are.

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