

## Public Affairs Guidance for Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)

### Messages Regarding Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)

**Message:** The Army has approved a new physical fitness test – the Army Combat Fitness test (ACFT) - to directly connect fitness with combat readiness for all Soldiers. The test will improve Soldier physical readiness, change the Army fitness culture, reduce preventable injuries and unplanned attrition, better inform Commanders of unit readiness, and enhance mental toughness and stamina. The test is designed to replace the current test of record with a gender- and age-neutral assessment based on the physical demands of combat. Field Tests begin in October 2018 with 60 designated battalions of different types in all three Army components - Regular Army, Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve. The ACFT will be implemented across the Army in October 2019 and will become the Army's fitness test of record no later than October 2020. The Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) will remain in effect during the transition period.

### Talking Points:

- Objectives from the Army Vision:
  - “Recruiting and retaining high quality, physical fit, mentally tough Soldiers who can deploy, fight, and win decisively on any future battlefield.”
  - “Focus training on high-intensity conflict, with emphasis on operating in dense urban terrain .... Training must be tough, realistic, iterative, and dynamic.”
- Fundamental to Army readiness is the readiness of our Soldiers. Physical fitness is an essential component of individual readiness, deployability, and lethality.
- The Army aims to increase readiness by training and assessing the physical capacity of Soldiers to perform common warfighting tasks.
- The ACFT is the product of a scientifically validated study, which identified physical fitness events that test the 10 components of fitness and are most predictive of performance on high physical demands common soldier tasks.
- The ACFT consists of 6 events: Strength Deadlift; Standing Power Throw; Hand Release Pushup; Sprint, Drag, Carry; Leg Tuck; 2-mile Run. The entire ACFT will be conducted with a continuous clock and must be completed within 50 minutes. The specific grading approach and standards will be determined based on data collected from the field test.
- ACFT Goals:
  - Improve Soldier physical readiness
  - Change the Army fitness culture
  - Reduce preventable injuries and unplanned attrition
  - Better inform Commanders of unit readiness
  - Enhance mental toughness and stamina

**Way-Ahead:** The ACFT is approved. It is age and gender neutral. And, the ACFT will be the Army's test of record for individual Soldier physical fitness. Field Tests begin in October 2018, the test will be implemented across the Army in October 2019, and the ACFT will become the Army's fitness test of record no later than October 2020. The Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) will remain in effect during the transition period.

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### **References.**

- FM 7-22, Army Physical Readiness Training (PRT), 1 October 2012
- Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) Execution Order 041-13 – Comprehensive Study to Determine Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Requirements and a Standardized, Baseline Physical Readiness Test
- Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) Execution Order 021-15 – Optimized Physical Fitness
- FRAGO 1 to HQDA 021-15 Optimized Physical Fitness
- FRAGO 2 to HQDA 021-15 Optimized Physical Fitness
- Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Tasking Order IN171782 – Army Combat Readiness Test (ACRT) Validation and Support, 27 June 2017

### **Public Affairs Posture.**

- The public announcement that the Army leadership has approved the ACFT and directed field testing will be executed IAW the HQDA Roll-out plan.
- Before the public announcement, the public affairs posture is passive, all queries should be forwarded to OCPA, and there should be no public statements regarding the ACFT.
- After the HQDA public announcement, the public affairs posture is active and all queries should be directed to the TRADOC PAO.

### **Background.**

- U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, with the U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training (USACIMT) as the proponent, will lead the implementation of a new physical fitness “test of record” that will be administered to all Regular Army, US Army National Guard, and US Army Reserve Soldiers.
- The ACFT is part of the Army’s effort to optimize Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F). H2F is a strategic effort in the Army Campaign Plan.
- The Army currently has one major physical assessment for serving Soldiers, the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The APFT was introduced in October 1980 and primarily provides an assessment of muscular and aerobic endurance.
- For Soldiers to be ready for the rigors of full spectrum operations today and tomorrow, the Army has determined that Soldiers must possess significant physical capacity in the following components of fitness: muscular strength, explosive power, speed (anaerobic endurance) and agility (coordination, flexibility, balance, and reaction time).
- From 2013-2014, TRADOC conducted the Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Requirements Study to scientifically validate the physical fitness test events that most strongly correlate with combat readiness within these components of fitness.

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- TRADOC conducted an ACFT pilot in 2017-2018 to validate the order of test events and individual test event directions to ensure the ACFT is scalable to the entire Army.
- In June 2018, the Chief of Staff of the Army briefed general officers from across the Regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve on the details of the ACFT and the way-ahead. There was a long discussion about the test, and there was overwhelming consensus that this was the right path forward.
- In July 2018, the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army approved the ACFT and approved field tests of the ACFT beginning in October 2018.
- The field test will include 60 battalions of different types and from all three components. The purpose of the field test is to systematically and rigorously collect data and validate the standards of the ACFT. This data will also support policy decisions related to the ACFT.
- During the field tests, USACIMT will familiarize all Army components and major Army commands with the ACFT, collect and analyze ACFT performance data, gather feedback from Soldiers, and finalize a worldwide ACFT equipment-funding and distribution plan. As part of the field testing, Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) will conduct site visits and provide ACFT training to each participating battalion.
- Additionally, TRADOC will ensure ACFT training is incorporated throughout the Army professional military education system for officers, NCOs, and Soldiers during the field test and beyond.
- Effective 1 October 2018, all officers on the Centralized Selection List (CSL) for battalion or brigade command and all NCOs on the CSL to serve as battalion or brigade CSMs will complete the Pre-Command Course (PCC) before assuming their duty positions. While at PCC, they will demonstrate proficiency on the ACFT, which will be graded by TRADOC cadre.
- The current Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) will remain in effect until all final policy decisions regarding the ACFT have been made.

### **Questions and Answers.**

#### **Q: Does the Army need a test like this? Why or why not? Why now?**

A: The conditions/assumptions that fostered the transition from the Advanced Physical Fitness Test (1973) to the APFT (1980) have changed as military operations have become more complex. The U.S. Army believes the ACFT will improve Soldier physical readiness, change the Army fitness culture, reduce preventable injuries and unplanned attrition, better inform Commanders of unit readiness and enhance mental toughness and stamina. This will ensure our Soldiers are ready today and more lethal in the future.

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### **Q: Why is the ACFT tougher than the APFT?**

A: The character of war is changing as are the physical demands of combat. The APFT primarily provides an assessment of muscular and aerobic endurance. The Army assesses that for Soldiers to be ready for the rigors of operations in a complex environment, they must possess significant physical capacity in the following components of fitness: muscular strength, explosive power, speed (anaerobic endurance) and agility (coordination, flexibility, balance, and reaction time). Based on our analysis, the ACFT events most strongly correlate with combat readiness. The APFT is assessed to have 30% predictive power for combat performance; the ACFT is assessed to have 80% predictive power. Additionally, the work-to-rest ratio of the APFT is approximately 1-to-1. The ratio for the ACFT is 3-to-1.

### **Q: Why ACFT vs. ACRT?**

A: Fundamental to Army readiness is the readiness of our Soldiers. While there are multiple components to individual readiness, physical fitness is essential for all Soldiers. The ACFT is specifically designed to assess Soldier physical fitness as it applies to combat.

### **Q: Why does a clerk, a nurse, cyber-warrior, etc. need to take a “combat fitness test?”**

A: From the Army Vision: “The Army Mission – our purpose – remains constant: To deploy, fight, and win our Nation’s wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustain land dominance by Army forces.” To accomplish that mission, the Army must recruit and retain “high quality, physical fit, mentally tough Soldiers who can deploy, fight, and win decisively on any future battlefield.” The battlefields of today and tomorrow are increasingly complex, fluid, and uncertain; they demand that all Soldiers are physically fit and ready for full-spectrum operations.

### **Q: The Army says it needs to grow endstrength. At the same time, you are changing fitness standards. Are you willing to lose Soldiers due to a new PT test?**

A: The Regular Army needs to grow above 500,000 Soldiers with associated growth in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve to meet the threats and challenges of today and anticipated for tomorrow. Additionally, all Soldiers must be high-quality, physical fit, mentally tough and be able to deploy, fight, and win decisively on any future battlefield. The ACFT promises to improve the quality and performance of our Soldiers. The Army will never sacrifice the quality of our Soldiers to achieve quantity.

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### **Q: What type of work/research did the Army conduct to determine if such a test is needed?**

A: In the Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Requirements Study (BSPRRS), the Army researched the baseline physical-readiness requirements of high-physical-demand tasks Soldiers perform in combat. In addition to our own studies, we met with military fitness leaders from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Netherlands and many other fitness experts from civilian universities and centers to discuss U.S. Army Soldier fitness. We also consulted with the Department of Physical Education, U.S. Military Academy; the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine; the U.S. Army Public Health Center and the Army Physical Fitness School.

### **Q: What type of work/research did the Army conduct to determine what is included in this test?**

A: The primary effort in the development of the ACFT was the Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Requirements and Physical Demands Study (BSPRRS). Based upon the results of this study, we identified ten components of physical fitness and the contribution of each component to success on the battlefield. We subsequently identified the most effective fitness test events to assess those components of combat fitness.

### **Q: Did you look to the Marine Corps' existing combat readiness test for ideas?**

A: Yes. We looked at the Marine Corps' Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT) and the Air Force Tactical Air Control Party Operators Test, as well as physical performance assessments from 10-15 other sports programs, government agencies and allied nations' militaries.

### **Q: What are the test events?**

A: There are six test events: A three-repetition maximum deadlift (muscular strength test that mimics movements to safely and effectively lift and carry heavy loads), a standing power throw (measures upper- and lower-body muscular power, balance and whole-body flexibility), a hand release pushup (measures upper-body muscular endurance), a 250-meter sprint-drag-carry (measures muscular strength, power, speed and reaction time), a leg tuck (measures muscular strength/endurance for grip/core/lower-body with occupational relevance to mobility and load carriage), and a two-mile run (measures aerobic and muscular endurance). All six events will be executed with a continuous clock and must be completed within 50 minutes.

### **Q: What is the uniform for the ACFT?**

A: Like the APFT, the ACFT uniform is the Army Physical Fitness Uniform (APFU) with running shoes.

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### **Q: Will Soldiers be tested by MOS or unit-type? If by MOS, which MOS are in each band for grading?**

A: During the field testing, the Army will assess Soldiers' ACFT performance by both MOS and unit type. The Army leadership will determine the final grading approach and standards based on data collected during the field tests. Through the field test and going forward, the focus remains on increasing readiness by training and assessing the physical capacity of Soldiers to perform common warfighting tasks.

### **Q: How will the ACFT be graded? Are there tiers based on military occupational specialty?**

A: The grading standards are yet to be determined, but there will be a minimum baseline standard which aligns with the general physical fitness required for a Soldier to perform high-physical-demand common Soldier tasks. The specific grading approach and standards will be decided by Army senior leaders based on data collected from the field test.

### **Q: How would the Army use ACFT scores to evaluate Soldier readiness?**

A: Performing well on the ACFT is a key indicator of a Soldier's ability to meet the physical demands faced in combat.

### **Q: Does the Army believe there are physiological differences between men and women? Have you lowered standards to accommodate women?**

A: The Army is a standards-based institution and those standards are grounded in the requirements of combat operations. The rigors of ground combat are unforgiving and gender neutral and so must be our physical fitness test and standards. The ACFT is a product of a scientifically validated study, which identified field-expedient physical fitness events that were most predictive of performance on high physical demand common Soldier tasks, regardless of gender. While there are physiological differences between men and women, our focus remains on increasing the fitness and readiness of all Soldiers through training, and assessing the physical capacity of Soldiers to fully perform common warfighting tasks.

### **Q: How often are Soldiers required to take the test?**

A: That is a policy question and remains to be determined through the field tests, but we believe the ACFT will likely follow the same administrative requirements of the current APFT – twice per year about every six months.

### **Q: What if a unit is assigned or deployed to a location that cannot accommodate the space and equipment required to take the test?**

A: Currently, a record APFT is not required when deployed. It has not been required in the past and will not be required when deployed in the future. However, any location that can give the current APFT will be able to give the new test with the required equipment.

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### **Q: Are there other tests that the Soldiers will take in addition to the ACFT?**

A: The Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT) remains for future Soldiers as do a few specialized tests for certain schools, such as Divers, Rangers and cadets at the U.S. Military Academy. The ACFT will be a "test of record." The other tests are entrance or unit tests and are not tests of record.

### **Q: Are there alternate events for the ACFT that Soldiers can take? If not, why?**

A: The ACFT is approved and will be the Army fitness test of record no later than October 2020. During the field test, which begins in October 2018, the Army will develop alternate events for Soldiers with profiles consistent with the ACFT's focus on combat readiness.

### **Q: What is the impact on Soldiers who are on a physical profile?**

A: Many Soldiers who are on profile will be able to take the six-event ACFT. Soldiers with temporary profiles will still be able to train for and practice the test events that are not limited by their profiles. As is the case now, they will be allowed to rehabilitate and recondition from the profile before testing.

### **Q: If the ACFT is considered a test of record, can it be used for punitive reasons like the APFT?**

A: Passing or failing an Army test of record has implications. Going forward, based on the field test data, the Army will set policy regarding ACFT performance.

### **Q: What pieces of equipment are required to conduct the ACFT?**

A: The required equipment to conduct the ACFT include a deadlift hex bar with weights and collars, nylon drag sleds with straps and plates, 10-pound medicine balls, two 40-pound kettle bells and a location to do leg tucks and run.

### **Q: Will the required equipment be funded by the Army, or are units responsible for paying for the equipment?**

A: The current plan is for the Army to provide equipment to the battalion level for all units in the force. Units may choose to purchase additional equipment from their own funds.

### **Q: Can the required equipment be obtained in the timeframe currently being staffed to support ACFT implementation?**

A: A Total Army Acquisition and Fielding plan is being developed. We believe the fielding plan is affordable and supportable by industry. The cost of this test is minimal. In the long run, this test will save money and enhance readiness.

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**Q: Will a Reserve Component ACFT implementation plan be developed to take into consideration the geographic dispersion of RC units?**

A22: Yes, TRADOC is working closely with partners both in the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve Command to determine the right locations for field testing, equipment fielding and the overall training strategy to support the improved test and improve unit fitness levels.