



# The New MFTC: What Are The Differences?

*By Clifford Kyle Jones*

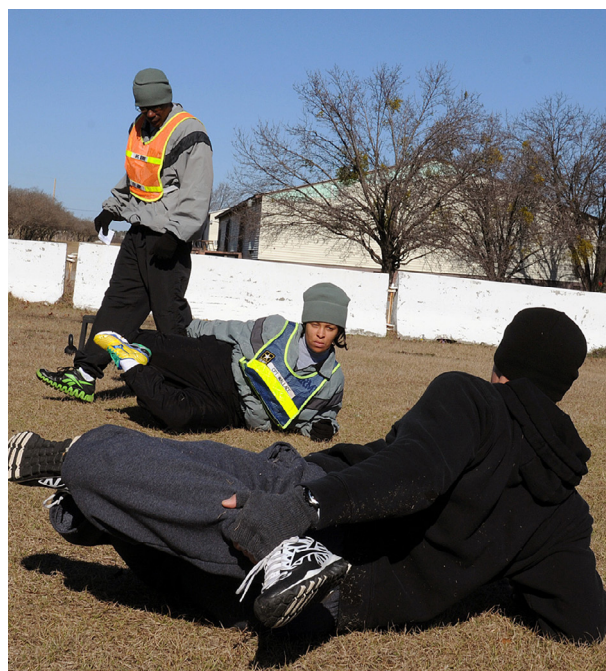
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**T**he Master Fitness Trainer Course being rolled out across the continental United States this year and outside CONUS next year is a revised version of the MFTC discontinued in 2001. It incorporates many of the lessons learned from the previous iteration, but also makes significant modifications and strides. The Physical Readiness Division's director, Frank Palkoska, calls it "that MFT course on steroids."

"The biggest difference is the application of the new doctrine: The training is more functional, and it directly relates to the ability to improve Soldier task performance," he said. "I think that's the biggest piece. The idea of how the understanding of the human body and how it performs movement is driven home in this course, that's a big aspect. And how it relates to improving the components of fitness that we have today — which are strength, endurance and mobility."

Naturally, he said, the science and technology involved in fitness training methods have advanced significantly in the past two decades.

"That program in the early 1980s was based on the science that we knew from the late 1970s and early '80s and those types of training techniques that were applied



MFTC students take part in a practical exercise teaching the Thigh Stretch.

back then,” Palkoska said. “It was more of the application of a civilian-based physical fitness model as it applied to the Army.

“Back then,” he said, “we looked at five components of fitness: muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardio-respiratory endurance, flexibility and body composition. What you basically had to do was understand each one of those components and then integrate those components into your daily training program.

“What we did with the new doctrine in the current FM was we simplified those components, and basically looked at it from the perspective of three:

- There’s strength, which runs a continuum.
- There’s endurance, which runs a continuum.
- And there’s mobility. Mobility is the practical application of strength and endurance, because you can be really, really strong and you can be really, really fast in the ability to run long distances. But if you suffer with mobility, you won’t be able to apply it in your Soldier task performance, and that’s kind of the idea that we get across to the MFTs.”

The shift to the idea of continuums of strength and endurance is critical to the way PRT is structured and an important element of what MFTs learn in the course.

“It’s either the ability to do sustained movement — which is your sustained running, your foot marching — but then all the way on the other side of the continuum where it’s more anaerobic, very, very high intensity type of activities for a very short period of time. ... So [Soldiers] have to be fit enough to be able to do that,” Palkoska said. “The strength aspect comes in being able to move under load proficiently.

So that’s what we kind of address in this course, because that’s what it’s all leading up to: Preparing soldiers to do their job on a daily basis regardless of what their MOS is.

In addition to the advances in theory, the new MFTC has zeroed in on some of the more practical concerns involved in Physical Readiness Training, said Stephen Van Camp, the PRD’s deputy director.

“We taught stuff about sports and recreation, stuff about swimming — all the [Morale Welfare and Recreation] stuff besides the fitness training stuff,” he said. “Also, now Soldiers get combat life support, they get all kinds of different life-saving training, and we had first-aid classes, CPR classes, all that stuff in the past Master Fitness Trainer Course. Now, [Soldiers] get them in other places. [Our course] is pretty focused now.” ■

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- [The new MFTC: How do I get in?](#)
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