



Soldiers testing the new Army Physical Fitness Uniform conduct physical training last winter at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

# New Physical Fitness Uniforms to Debut Next Year

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**A** new Army Physical Fitness Uniform will become available service-wide, beginning in October next year.

Its design is based on Soldier feedback, said Col. Robert Mortlock, program manager for Soldier Protection and Individual Equipment at Fort Belvoir, Va. There will be a three-year phase-in program and the cost will be about \$3 less than the current IPFU, or Improved Physical Fitness Uniform, he said.

The Army Physical Fitness Uniform, or APFU, revision was actually initiated because of Soldier feedback, Mortlock said. A February 2012 Army Knowledge On-

line survey of some 76,000 Soldiers found that Soldiers had issues with the IPFU, he said. They liked its durability but believed the IPFU's textiles had not kept pace with commercially-available workout clothes.

They also had concerns with other things, particularly modesty issues with the shorts, especially in events like sit-ups. Those concerns were expressed by males as well as females. The issue was of such concern that Soldiers were purchasing spandex-like under garments to wear beneath the trunks, Mortlock said. Another issue was that there were not enough female sizes in the IPFU, he said, meaning IPFUs that would fit all shapes and sizes.

Program Executive Office Soldier worked closely with the Natick Soldier Research Development and Engineering Center to develop a new PT uniform that met Soldier concerns but did not cost more than the IPFU. The APFU met the goal of controlling costs and improving performance by adopting a lighter high-tech moisture-wicking fabric. The APFU introduces multiple sizes, including female sizing, and has solved the modesty issue, Mortlock said.

The fabric of the trunks will continue to be made with durable nylon fabric, but it is lighter than and not as stiff as the IPFU trunks. Also, there will be a four-way stretch panel inside the trunks, similar to bicycle shorts, which will eliminate the need for Soldiers to purchase their own undergarments. The trunks include a bigger key pocket and a convenient and secure ID card pouch.

In all, some 34 changes were made to the new APFU, which has five parts: the jacket and pants, which resemble warm ups; trunks or shorts; and the short- and long-sleeve T-shirts, he said. The ensemble is modular, meaning parts of the APFU can be mixed and matched. For example, short- or long-sleeve T-shirts can be worn with either the pants or trunks. During PT formations, platoon sergeants will determine the appropriate combo.

Soldier feedback not only determined the form, fit and function of the APFU, it also determined its look. The Army made prototypes of the APFU in a variety of colors and designs and took them to a series of Soldier town halls at Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, N.C.; and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. Soldier feedback was

solicited about the design features as well as the preferred color scheme. Then, the Army launched a second AKO survey, in which more than 190,000 responded, Mortlock said. Soldiers overwhelmingly favored a black T-shirt with gold lettering and a black jacket with gold chevron and the Army logo.

Then it was on to testing. About 876 Soldiers at Fort Wainwright, Alaska; Joint Base Lewis-McChord; Fort Bragg; Fort Sill, Okla.; Fort Hood and Fort Jackson, S.C., wore the APFU during PT for a three-month period, providing feedback on form, fit and comfort, Mortlock said. The APFU also was tested for things like durability, laundering, fiber strength, colorfastness and color maintenance after laundering.

A key part of testing addressed the concern of some Soldiers that a black shirt may cause overheating. Instrumented tests showed that the lighter weight material and superior moisture-wicking fabric more than compensated for any increased heat from the dark material.

The response to the APFU was “overwhelmingly positive,” Mortlock said, particularly with the trunks. Soldiers who tested the ensemble said they wear the APFU on weekends and off-duty outside the installations, Mortlock said, adding that many said they wouldn’t wear the current IPFU off-duty. That means communities across the country will soon see Army pride as Soldiers do their workouts.

The APFU will come in two types, the “clothing bag” variant, and the optional APFU, which will be visually the same as the APFU issue variant, but uses some dif-



Master Sgt. Dwayne A. Lewis and Capt. Leala McCollum model the short-sleeve T-shirt and shorts of the new Army Physical Fitness Uniform. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)



Lewis and McCollum model the long-sleeve T-shirt and pants of the APFU. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)



Lewis and McCollum model the jacket and pants of the APFU. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

ferent materials. The individual items of the two variants can be mixed together. The optional APFU variant will become available first when it arrives in Army military clothing sales stores sometime between October and December 2014.

The clothing bag variant will be issued to Soldiers from the clothing initial issue points, starting between April to June 2015, and to Reserve, National Guard, and Senior ROTC from July to August 2015. The APFU will

be phased in as the IPFUs are used up and worn out. The mandatory wear date will go into effect approximately October 2017, or about three years after the APFU is introduced.

The Army reached out to Soldiers at “multiple touch points to ensure we got this right,” Mortlock said. “The message is we’re listening to Soldiers. We’re continuing to listen to Soldiers, and this is the Soldiers’ selection and Army leaders went along with this.” ■



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