

SEAC Visits Afghanistan, Endorses Tough Physical Fitness Regimen

By Lisa Ferdinando - Department Of Defense News

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“Come on, sergeant major, let me see those cartwheels!” reverberated through the fitness center in Kabul, Afghanistan, earlier this month during an intense early-morning workout session led by the senior noncommissioned officer in the U.S. military.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxell, the senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, prodded Army Command Sgt. Maj. David M. Clark about those flips, then quickly shifted his rallying cry away from the Resolute Support/U.S. Forces Afghanistan senior enlisted leader to another Soldier.

“No choking up on those sledgehammers, Clements!” Troxell yelled out to Army Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Clements, the senior enlisted leader at Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan, who was lifting, twisting and holding the weighted tool over his head.

“You have to train hard, because our enemies are training hard,” Troxell bellowed in the training session at the Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, the Afghan capital.



Army Command Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxell, the senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at left, leads an intense early-morning workout at Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. (Department of Defense photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

Troxell accompanied his boss, Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, to assess the mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces.

“The battlefield is dynamic,” Troxell said after a high-intensity, sweat-inducing circuit session that included jumps, core strengthening and weight training. These types of daily vigorous training sessions push beyond Soldiers’ comfort zones and have a singular focus: to keep troops ready for the enemy, he said.

Service members must be agile and flexible in the battlefield, where they scale walls, navigate rough terrain, work in extreme temperatures, and carry heavy loads over long distances, Troxell said, so the workouts need to mimic situations the troops could face on a mission.

“We have to have the reserve to be able to defeat the enemy when we get on the objective or we come under attack,” Troxell said. “We have to train under conditions that are harsh, brutal and extreme, so that our minds, our bodies and our souls are prepared for that kind of fight.”

Explaining his “PME Hard” philosophy, Troxell detailed the importance of a holistic focus to be “physically, mentally and emotionally hard.” Adding spiritual resilience is an important component as well, he said.

“We have to train our bodies; we have to train our minds,” he said. “Then we have to be able to train with emotion [and] with passion, and then we have to have something outside ourselves that we can rely on in adversity — some kind of spiritual fitness.”



Army Command Sgt. Maj. John Wayne Troxell leaps into the air during his workout at Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. (Department of Defense photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

In addition to battlefield readiness, the training builds resilience, camaraderie, confidence and trust among the troops and services, he said.

“This kind of training allows us to bounce back quicker, because combat is brutal and unforgiving — we all know that — and bad things happen,” said Troxell, who has served five combat tours of duty, including in Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan.

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in the end, when we take the fight to the enemy, it's one team and one fight. The more we can do these shared experiences and bonding between other services, the stronger we'll be when we have to fight."

With more than three decades of service, Troxell said, he has no plans of easing back on his heart-pumping training, even after he hangs up his uniform.

"I'm 52 years young, and I'm going to continue to train like this until I can't do it again," he said. "I anticipate that Sergeant Major Dave Clark and Sergeant Major Mike Clements and I, when we're in our '80s, are going to be doing this same stuff. Stay tuned."