

# Training and Testing Physical Combat Readiness

**By Maj. Shawn Dillon**

2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 75th Field Artillery Brigade ("Deep Strike!")

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A Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment participates in "The Viking," just one of several events the unit has devised to improve its Physical Readiness Program. (Photos by 2nd Lt. Jeremy Fackrell, 2-20th FA Public Affairs Office)

The Army Physical Fitness test was designed to measure a Soldier's baseline fitness level. However, the Army continues to struggle with developing a combat-oriented test.

Problems facing the creation of a new fitness test range from equipment standardization and availability to execution simplicity. Additionally, the Army includes such a broad array of military occupational specialties that designing a test to evaluate the requirements of a light infantry paratrooper as well as Soldiers in noncombat MOSs such as an admin Soldier, presents a unique challenge. While all Soldiers are infantrymen/women, we understand that the physical demands required of a paratrooper exceed those of a Soldier spending the majority of time working in an

OFFICE.

We do train toward different mission essential task list proficiencies for different units, but why should we not design physical training to support our collective training tasks? For example, to function effectively, the paratrooper must have strong legs and joints to sustain airborne landings and possess the tremendous stamina required of long dismounted movements carrying a heavy load. Physical readiness training for the paratrooper should focus on training the core elements necessary to achieve these combat proficiencies.



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment participate in a physical readiness training test developed by the unit at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Photos by 2nd Lt. Jeremy Fackrell, 2-20th FA Public Affairs Office)

The new Army Combat Readiness Test is a step in the right direction, with the addition of a deadlift event and a shuttle run with weight. However, we contend that this is still not a proper indicator of combat readiness because it does not simulate combat and the unique, complex physical stress that it brings. While simulating actual combat is an impossibility, the effort to make training as strenuous and realistic as possible is a battalion function. A battalion is, in most cases, perhaps the best echelon for a standardized test, and there is plenty of room for expansion downward or upward in echelon.

Another consideration is the personnel within the battalion. How do you test, for example, the administrator in an airborne unit? Our suggestion is to evaluate everyone, tracking back to the concept that everyone is a Soldier first. Doing hard things together builds unit cohesion, while at the same time leaders can weigh the combat fitness test more heavily for the combat performers.

To illustrate the problem from an outside perspective, in 2013 the Mountain Warrior Brigade (formerly 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, now 2nd ICBT, 4th Infantry Division) invited Matt Wenning, a world record-holder in powerlifting and strength, to evaluate the unit's fitness training programs.<sup>1</sup> During a "train-the-trainer class," Wenning observed that strength training for Army Soldiers lacked focus on the types of stresses likely to be encountered in combat.

His intention was not to insult Soldiers, but instead illustrate an important point by asking a simple question: You have two Soldiers. The first Soldier can deadlift 225 pounds, and the second can deadlift 500 pounds. Which Soldier will have an easier time in combat if tasked with lifting and

deadlift 500 pounds. Which Soldier will have an easier time in combat if tasked with lifting and maneuvering with a wounded comrade, while he and his fellow Soldier and their respective kits both weigh more than 200 pounds? The answer is easy, but the implication of what he was saying is less obvious. The second Soldier would have an easier time, but his greater strength conditioning would also make him less likely to *injure himself* while aiding his buddy.



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment participate in a physical readiness training test developed by the unit at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Photos by 2nd Lt. Jeremy Fackrell, 2-20th FA Public Affairs Office)

Matt made one other vital point: Of all the athletes he trains, from marathoners to professional football players, Soldiers are his most challenging clients because they have to be able to do *everything* well. They need to be strong enough to pick up heavy loads, powerful enough to sprint in gear, agile enough to maneuver over walls and through urban obstacles, and possess enough endurance to do it all over an extended period. His solution? Focus on building strength with an emphasis on developing agility, power, and endurance over time, while reducing injury rates.

2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment is a rocket battalion, and while we may not have the most demanding combat mission, we still need strength for combat performance like any other unit. Multiple Launch Rocket System launchers involve a lot of heavy equipment, and we are often asked to operate from isolated positions in combat. And because we are Soldiers, we should also be capable of functioning as riflemen, so we wear our kit in these situations.

In the Deep Strike battalion, we have developed a potential solution to address this challenge. We designed our PRT program around rudimentary, easily obtainable equipment — logs, tires, medicine balls, and a few bumper plates.

It has taken a while to gain buy-in, but the program is starting to take off through a series of mechanisms that we have put in place, and all of them have the added benefit of increasing esprit de corps and unit cohesion.

## **Crucibles**

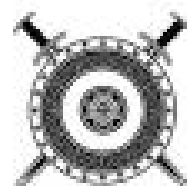
Our crucibles are demanding tests that are often, but not always, completed in teams, and are entirely voluntary. One such test, the "Viking," is a single event that consists of a one-mile run, pull-

ups, bench presses, deadlifts, farmer's walks, and tire flips. The "Samurai" has a two-mile run with burpee pull-ups, box jumps, water jug carries, heel hooks (above a pull-up bar), and military presses.

The "300" is a buddy event that includes a one-mile run, sled pushes, and buddy carries. The test also includes paired exercises, where one Soldier performs weighted push-ups while the other flex-arm hangs, followed by pairings of deadlifts and kettlebell swings, and planks with medicine ball sit-ups.



# DEEP STRIKE CRUCIBLE EVENT #1 VIKING



**0600-0700; 1 SEPTEMBER 2016**  
**15 SLOTS AVAILABLE**

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>TIME</b>
<b>RUN</b>	<b>1 MILE</b>	<b>8 MINUTES</b>
<b>PULL UPS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1 MINUTE</b>
<b>BENCH PRESS</b>	<b>220LBS X 11</b> FEMALE: 110X11	<b>1 MINUTE</b>
<b>DEADLIFT</b>	<b>220LBS X 22</b> FEMALE 135X22	<b>1 MINUTE</b>
<b>FARMERS WALK</b>	<b>110LBS PER HAND</b> FEMALE: 55LBS	<b>11 METERS</b>
<b>TIRE FLIP</b>	<b>12 FLIPS</b>	<b>5 MINUTES</b>



**ARE YOU A VIKING?**  
SEE YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND FOR A SLOT





2025 DEEP STRIKE DOZEN OF CAPABILITY FOR A DOZEN  
BEFORE THEY ARE GONE!

# October challenge.... The Samurai

Schedule of events for the "Viking," one of several tests developed by the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment to further the unit's physical training efforts. (Graphic courtesy of 2-20th FA.)

## Deep Strike Dozen (DS12)

The Deep Strike Dozen replicates the spirit of the APFT, but with activities more comparable to challenges a Soldier might encounter in combat. The events include: a one-mile run, a 400-meter run, a three-mile ruck, max bench press, max deadlift, one-minute intervals of push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, heel hooks, tire flips, and 75-meter log carries and farmer's walks. We have stratified each event into four groups—Deadlift 2 x Body Weight, 1.5 x BW, 1.25 x BW, 1 x BW—and have incentivized finishing all exercises within a particular category with coins, passes, and awards.

The DS12 provides a framework through which battery commanders can build PRT programs to develop the combat fitness we require of Soldiers. Awards and incentives also motivate Soldiers to "level up" on their physical fitness.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the DS12 provides a baseline physical fitness database. We recently finished evaluating the entire battalion. In six months, we will test again, and this will allow us to assess the effectiveness of our PRT program while showing the Soldiers the real gains they are achieving through daily hard work.



## THE DEEP STRIKE DOZEN: STANDARDS



		Bronze	Silver	Gold	Blue Max
GMLRS	400m run	100 sec	90 sec	80 sec	70 sec
	1 mile run	8:00 – 8:30	7:30 – 7:59	7:01 – 7:29	<7:00
	3 mile Ruck 44#	48:00	45:00	42:00	39:00
	Push ups 1 minute	30 (F=18)	40 (24)	48 (28)	56 (32)
	Sit ups 1 minute	30	35	40	45
	Pull ups				

	<b>1 minute</b> <b>***Must touch ground b/t reps</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(F=2)</b>	<b>10</b> <b>(4)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(6)</b>	<b>20</b> <b>(8)</b>
	<b>Heel hooks</b> <b>1 minute</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ATACMS</b>	<b>Tire flips</b> <b>75 seconds</b>	<b>3</b> <b>(F=1)</b>	<b>6</b> <b>(2)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(3)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(4)</b>
	<b>Log carry</b> <b>75 meters</b>	<b>1 lap</b>	<b>2 laps</b>	<b>3 laps</b>	<b>4 laps</b>
	<b>Bench press</b> <b>1 rep max</b>	<b>1xBW</b> <b>(F=.55xBW)</b>	<b>1.25xBW</b> <b>(.70*BW)</b>	<b>1.5xBW</b> <b>(.75*BW)</b>	<b>1.75xBW</b> <b>(.96xBW)</b>
	<b>Deadlift</b> <b>1 rep max</b>	<b>1xBW</b> <b>(F=.55xBW)</b>	<b>1.3xBW</b> <b>(.72*BW)</b>	<b>1.75xBW</b> <b>(.96xBW)</b>	<b>2xBW</b> <b>(1.1*BW)</b>
	<b>Farmers Carry</b> <b>75 meters</b>	<b>80lbs</b> <b>(F=45lbs)</b>	<b>90lbs</b> <b>(50lbs)</b>	<b>100lbs</b> <b>(55lbs)</b>	<b>110lbs</b> <b>(60lbs)</b>

GMLRS or ATACMS block in Bronze = ½ day pass  
GMLRS or ATACMS block in Silver = COA  
GMLRS or ATACMS block in Gold = Coin  
GMLRS or ATACMS block in Blue Max = AAM, coin

Both Blocks Bronze = 1 day pass  
Both Blocks Silver = COA and 1 day  
Both Block Gold = Coin, COA, ½ day  
Both Block Blue Max = ARCOM, coin

An example of performance standards for the "Deep Strike Dozen," another of the tests developed by the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment to further the unit's physical training efforts. (Graphic courtesy of 2-20th FA.)

## Combat Fitness Test

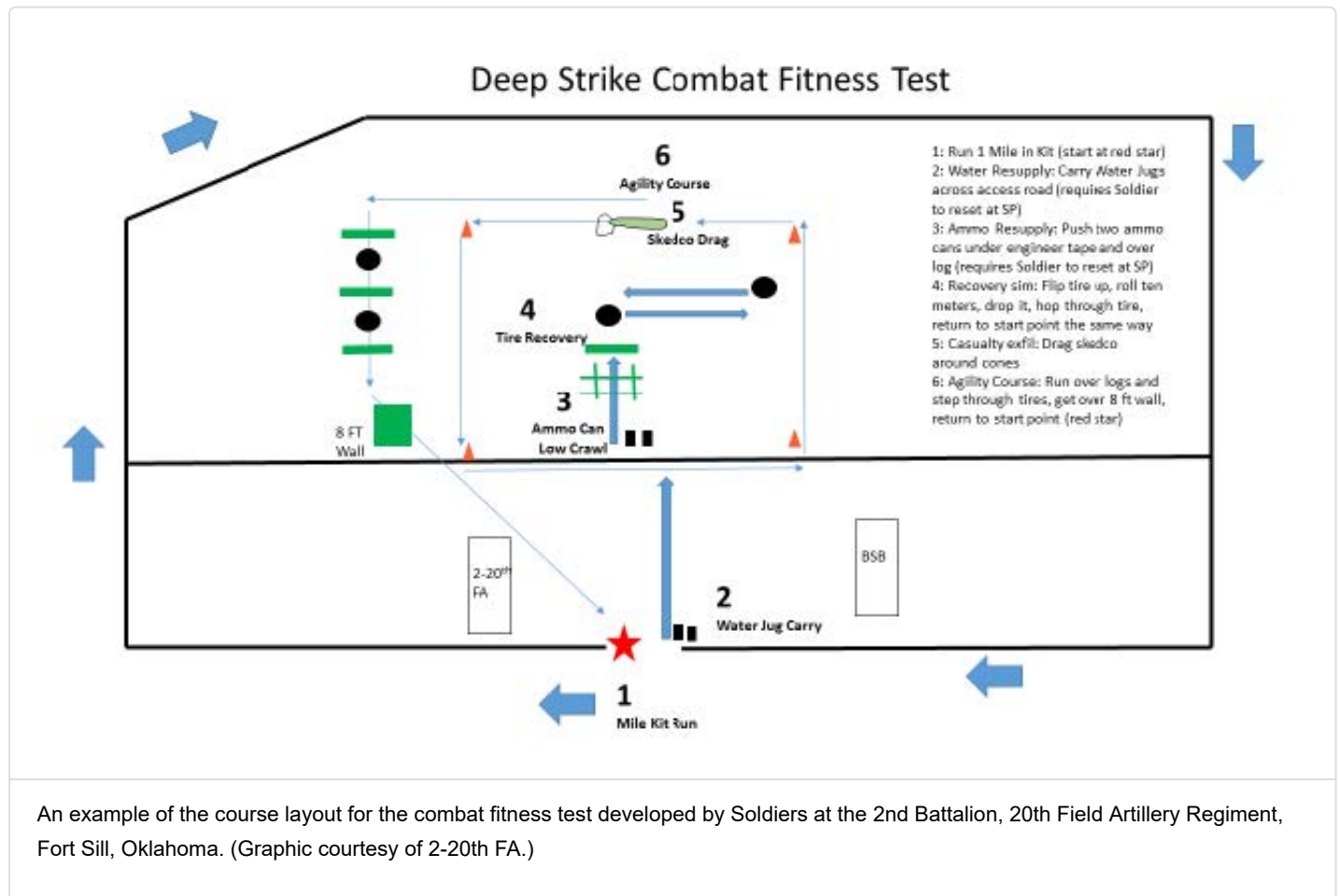
In assessing what we have done so far, the one thing that we ascertained we could not measure was holistic physical fitness. The DS12 would show areas for improvement—the best Soldiers in the strength events might have weaker endurance and vice versa—but we did not have any useful metric that tied everything together. With that in mind, we created the CFT. We designed this test to be executable with minimal resources and equipment. It also simulates only combat-applicable tasks such as hasty infiltrations or extractions, water resupply, ammo resupply, recovery, litter carries, and running through urban terrain.

Soldiers wear full fit and run our version of a "Mogadishu Mile

([https://www.army.mil/article/197328/call\\_event\\_recalls\\_mogadishu\\_mile](https://www.army.mil/article/197328/call_event_recalls_mogadishu_mile))," carrying two water jugs 100 meters, low crawling while pushing two ammo cans for ten meters under engineer tape before lifting the cans up and over a log. It also includes flipping and rolling a standard Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck tire ten meters, dropping it to the ground, flipping it back up and rolling it back. Next, they simulate a casualty recovery by dragging a dummy 50 meters. Finally, they



negotiate an agility course consisting of logs and tires, followed by climbing up and over an 8-foot wall, and sprinting back to the finish line. Executed in a period of 13 to 18 minutes, the CFT is an absolute smoker as it tests a Soldier's strength, power, agility, and endurance. As we already do with the DS12, we will soon conduct the battalion's first test, and repeat the evaluation in six months.



## Deep Strike Strength Academy

Our final component is our battalion strength academy, from which we just graduated eight NCOs and officers. This new training course emphasizes proper form and function of physical movements, and graduates become subject matter experts that battery commanders can now use to help develop PRT programs and teach technique classes.

With a focus on bench presses, squats, and deadlifts, the academy provides emphasis on how to safely complete these strength building exercises using the equipment we already have, such as heavy logs and truck tires.

## Conclusion

A well-designed combat fitness physical training program can be a cornerstone of unit readiness. By employing clear metrics and testing for such a program, the unit provides both emphasis and direction. Getting PRT right sets the conditions for the entire unit, from first formation information

flow to teaching the grit and determination necessary to prevail in combat. A well-rounded PRT program also prevents injuries, provides leadership training opportunities and develops cohesion. We believe the Deep Strike Battalion's program addresses all of these factors while maintaining a focus on the primary goal of cultivating Soldiers who are physically fit as well as combat ready and, ultimately, combat effective.

## **Notes**

1. Andrea Sutherland, "Mountain Athlete Warrior Program Stresses Functional Fitness," *Army News* website, February 29, 2013, accessed January 3, 2018, [https://www.army.mil/article/96484/Mountain\\_Athlete\\_Warrior\\_program\\_stresses\\_functional\\_fitness/](https://www.army.mil/article/96484/Mountain_Athlete_Warrior_program_stresses_functional_fitness/) ([https://www.army.mil/article/96484/Mountain\\_Athlete\\_Warrior\\_program\\_stresses\\_functional\\_fitness/](https://www.army.mil/article/96484/Mountain_Athlete_Warrior_program_stresses_functional_fitness/)).