

New

HITT Program

Set for Roll-Out Marine Corps-wide



Marines at MCAS New River, N.C., participating in the HITT evaluation, do "wall balls," an exercise that combines a squat and throwing a medicine ball over the exerciser's head.

The Marine Corps is unveiling its High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) program at the annual Military Training Summit in Orlando this year. The program has already had great success at bases so far, and has ushered in a new era of HITT Centers throughout the Marine Corps, complete with a mix of functional fitness equipment – kettlebells, plyoboxes, sand bags, chains, tires and ropes – and traditional fitness equipment, such as treadmills, rowers, cross trainers, power racks and olympic platforms.

The Marine Corps has embraced the concept of Functional Fitness as it relates to combat readiness for years, and the HITT program is the next logical step in the Marine Corps' commitment to providing the best, most effective program for combat readiness.

"The HITT program will serve as an enhancement to our current functional fitness programming and combat conditioning course," says Ryan Massimo, HITT program manager, Semper Fit Branch, MWR and Business Operations Division. "As a comprehensive strength and conditioning program that encompasses five unified components of (1) Flexibility and Mobility, (2) Strength and Power, (3) Speed, Agility and Endurance, (4) Core Stability, and (5) Nutrition, the HITT program will provide the Marines the most effective and comprehensive programming to prepare for combat readiness with focus on physical resiliency."

"As an enhancement from our current Combat Conditioning programs, the HITT program will provide Semper Fit staff a comprehensive strength and conditioning program to implement on a cyclical basis tailored towards preparing active duty Marines for deployment," adds Cathy Ficadenti, branch head, Semper Fit Programs, MWR and Business Operations Division.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

To promote long-term training improvements and avoid over-training, the HITT strength and conditioning program is periodized and split into specific phases, each with their own objectives and set of training parameters. The overall training program is split into set phases and consists of:

- **Pre-Deployment Phase:** Focus is to STRENGTHEN the Marine to prepare for combat.
- **Deployment Phase:** Focus is to MITIGATE risk of injury while maintaining pre-deployment phase levels of physical fitness.
- **Post-Deployment Phase:** Focus is to REINTEGRATE levels of physical fitness while recovering from deployment phase.



Marines work at the new HITT Center at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.



The Camp Lejeune HITT Center provides a mix of traditional and non-traditional equipment.

“By coordinating the different elements of the HITT training program with the above phases, the Marine can fully develop, maintain and enhance their combat readiness and physical resiliency,” notes Massimo.

The program will be provided during deployment – part of the Pre-Deployment phase will focus on utilizing equipment that Marines will have when deployed in austere environments.

“Periodization is a critical component to the success of the HITT program,” he says. “Proper periodization relates to variation in the training stimuli with the use of planned rest periods to augment recovery and restoration of a Marine’s physical potential. The primary goals of periodization are the avoidance of overtraining and performing at peak or optimum levels at the right time (deployment). Pre-Deployment periodization will focus on a high level of training stimuli consisting of combat specific functional training with an emphasis on lower rest time interval training, while Post-Deployment periodization will focus on active recovery and reintegration of the program essentially re-starting the cyclical program.”

The program – and HITT center – is designed to provide a high intensity circuit with stations that address strength, agility, speed and power.

“As a comprehensive program, HITT will balance the training effects of both aerobic and anaerobic capacities,” notes Massimo. “A proper balance between the two will result in a Marine’s effectiveness to not only be physically prepared for short bursts of explosive movements (anaerobic) but also be able to endure long distance movements (aerobic).”

Anaerobic components of the program will train a Marine to withstand high intensity muscular activity that lasts for a short period of time while the aerobic components will focus on high levels of cardiovascular and muscular endurance using the large muscle groups at a regular, even pace.”

Massimo points out that the Combat Fitness Coordinators (CFCs) are highly qualified and are going to be key to the rollout of the HITT program.

“A CFC located on each base installation is essential to meet the demands of the HITT Program,” he says. “This individual must attain the knowledge and background in strength and conditioning both from an educational background state as well as a hands-on (experience) state.”

All CFC’s must have as a mandatory requirement the following:

- National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Certification – CSCS.
- United States Weightlifting Association Certification –

Level 1 Performance Coach.

- At least three years experience as a fitness professional at either a Semper Fit facility, university or private sector.
- BS degree in exercise science, kinesiology, exercise physiology or related field.

“The CFC shall lead and coordinate support for the HITT Program as well as ensure that all combat strength and conditioning programs are delivered and/or instructed by Semper Fit staff members who possess a certification that is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA-CSCS preferred) in order to deliver the most comprehensive, safe, and effective program within the Marine Corps,” Massimo explains.

Another component of the HITT program is “Fueled To Fight” – a nutrition program that is currently being utilized on some installations within their dining facilities.

“Fueled to Fight nutrition training began in September 2011 for Semper Fit staff from each installation,” says Massimo. “This training will provide a source for Marines to seek nutritional advice from Semper Fit staff specific to the HITT program.”

ROLLOUT/IMPLEMENTATION

After its initial rollout at the training summit in Orlando, “proper implementation of the HITT Program will be critical to the effectiveness of the program,” says Massimo. “Rollout to the field will be on Dec. 1st and will consist of one month of training for Semper Fit staff from the base CFC with full implementation set for Jan. 1, 2012.”

He points out that as a hard copy and electronic copy, the program will also be web-based to provide full capability. “With these capabilities, the HITT program can be used during unit PT, and/or stand alone in functional fitness areas and at all HITT centers.”

Great progress is being made in creating HITT centers and spaces to provide HITT programming, with the ultimate goal of providing these facilities Marine Corps-wide.

“Each base is currently identifying spaces for HITT centers either from existing functional fitness spaces, underutilized spaces, outdoor spaces or new construction,” notes Massimo. “The goal of the program is to have units come to the HITT centers and receive their HITT training on a consistent basis delivered by certified strength and conditioning specialists from Semper Fit. This will help ensure that the program is

being delivered in a safe and effective manner.”

Current HITT Centers include:

- MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.
- MCAS Miramar, Calif.
- MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Current HITT Centers in Development:

- MCB Butler, Okinawa, Japan
- MCAS New River, N.C.
- MCB Quantico, Va.
- MAGTFTC Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Massimo points out that most installations will be adding/creating HITT centers in the future, and incorporating current and new fitness equipment to meet the specific needs of the program.

“Most of the equipment that will be utilized during the HITT programming is equivalent to the functional fitness suites delivered to all installations in 2009,” notes Massimo. “Additional equipment for the HITT program will include modalities such as power racks, total body power stations, conditioning ropes, speed harnesses and various core program training equipment.”

Semper Fit is also currently exploring the implementation of video analysis software programs in order to provide “instant biomechanical feedback to Marines on form and technique as a learning tool to mitigate the risk of injuries.”

FEEDBACK FROM MARINES

Initial feedback has been “extremely positive from both the Semper Fit staff as well as the Marines,” says Massimo, and bases such as MCB Camp Lejeune and MCB Camp Pendleton have had great success so far with the HITT training and facilities.

Officially opened in November 2010, the HITT Center at Camp Lejeune, is a model for how other new combat training centers will be designed and operated in the future.

“We purchased a lot of functional fitness equipment, such as the sand bags, chains, tires, kettlebells, plyoboxes, etc., and set up different circuits with the rowers, battling ropes, treadmills, stepmills and other hardcore functional equipment as well,” says Camp Lejeune Fitness Director Mary Troja.

An important aspect of the facility is that it can take up to 100-200 Marines or sailors through a workout simultaneously. The facility is set up with a series of training circuits using both hard core functional and more traditional fitness equipment from companies including Cybex, Life Fitness, Precor, Matrix, PowerBlock, Woodway, Technogym, Jacobs Ladder, Concept2, VersaClimber/VersaPully, Dynamix, War Machine, BSN, Power Systems, Gopher and Perform Better/MF.

Since its opening, feedback on the HITT Center from Marines has been very positive.

“Guys are really starting to buy into the concept,” Troja points out.

—GRF