

Fitness Chiefs **FORECAST** Strong Year Ahead

ARMY

As Armed Forces Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) and fitness professionals convene Nov. 29-30, for the annual Military Training Summit in conjunction with the Athletic Business (AB) Conference and Expo, in Orlando, Dec. 1-3, Government Recreation & Fitness caught up with military fitness leaders from each service to discuss the current state of fitness, and see what is on the horizon as we move forward in this new fiscal year. (More details on what military fitness leaders have planned for the annual training summit in Orlando can be found on page 22).

Army leaders try out the fitness equipment at the Human Performance Center at Fort Bragg, N.C.



As we move into fiscal 2012, Garrisons across the Army continue to offer the latest in group fitness programming, personal training, competitive fitness events and functional fitness classes.

“Garrisons are meeting the challenge of balancing general fitness interests while keeping pace with the fitness regimen required by the tactical Army,” says Darrell Manuel, chief, IMCOM G9 Sports, Fitness & Aquatics. “An Army-wide special promotion was held in May to demonstrate the magnitude of fitness programs available to soldiers, civilians, family members and retirees. Fifty-nine garrisons participated in the ‘Strong B.A.N.D.S.’ promotion supporting National Sports and Fitness Month. B.A.N.D.S. stands for Balanced lifestyle, Actively motivated, Nutritional health, Determined to excel, Strength and conditioning.”

In the past few years, the Army has embraced a more functional approach to fitness, with many new Human Performance Training Centers coming online, such as the ones at Fort Bliss, Texas, and Fort Bragg, N.C.

“Commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan understand PT scores don’t necessarily equate to physical readiness in a combat environment,” notes Manuel. “The physical demand of combat requires a soldier to perform more than running, situps and pushups. Soldiers need to physically train as they fight. The Physical Training (PT) test is undergoing an extensive review to make it tougher and more physically challenging. The enhanced PT test is looking at physical activities which mimic combat tasks, such as move under load, jump, climb, push, pull, change direction, etc. A soldier engaged in combat requires high levels of strength, speed, power and agility.”

Garrison Fitness Directors are introducing more power-based programs that promote agility and speed, flexibility and explosive movement. Garrison Fitness Centers offer functional fitness classes by providing exercise equipment and instruction that promote strength and agility, and qualified instructors conduct classes tailored for each participant with a goal of reducing the risk of injury.

Manuel points out, “Functional fitness should not be confused with extreme conditioning programs involving high-volume, aggressive exercise workouts comprised of a variety of high-intensity exercise repetitions and short rest periods between sets.”

When deployed, soldiers are af-

forded a host of fitness and recreation activities and services.

In the area of sports, Manuel points out that leagues and competitive events reinforce unit pride, cohesion and the drive to win.

“Lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan include the top three support elements soldiers seek after food and shelter: 1) Ability to communicate with loved ones; 2) Exercise areas to maintain physical readiness and conditioning; and 3) Intramural sports,” he notes. “Unit sports leagues and individual competitive events at the garrisons have steadily increased during soldiers’ down-time. Holiday and special event tournaments have seen the largest increase in participation since units have the freedom to put together their own teams. We see participation in sports leagues growing.”

Garrison sports programs are gradually including Wounded Warrior activities by partnering with Wounded Warrior Units (WTUs)/Wounded Warrior Battalions (WTBs) and/or civilian organizations that provide the expertise while garrison sports provides the facilities and equipment.

“Aquatic facilities remain the primary support location for WTU physical therapy and rehabilitation,” notes Manuel. “MWR Water Safety Instructors work closely with WTU leadership to structure water activities, such as kayaking, aerobic classes, adaptive scuba and range-of-motion classes. Garrisons with WTUs offer aquatic programs three days a week and average 15-20 soldiers per activity.”

He points out that instructional programs and sports have begun to grow at large garrisons with WTU populations. For example, Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Lewis, Wash., and Fort Bragg, N.C., have partnered with WTUs to deliver archery instruction, strength conditioning and sitting volleyball. Fort Sill, Okla., has a two-year working relationship with the University of Central Oklahoma (U.S. Paralympic Training Site) where university instructors conduct various sports (sitting volleyball, swimming, fencing and cycling) the first Monday of each month.

Fort Gordon, for example, has been very successful with the WTU and MWR partnering to provide recuperative soldier programs and services, such as archery, spin classes and horseback riding, and external community partnerships have resulted in aquatic activities and wheelchair basketball, according to Nicole Diaz, IMCOM G9 therapeutic recreation specialist.

“To ready our garrisons for returning Wounded Warriors, MWR staffs have several opportunities to learn and improve their knowledge and skill sets through inclusive recreation education sessions offered multiple times of year,” she points out. “A partnership with the U.S. Paralympics and their regional Adaptive Sports Experience generates training sessions at Army Garrisons, while a contract with Penn State University delivers ‘Inclusive Recreation for Wounded Warriors’ training on campus four times a year. These sessions give the MWR staffs the opportunity to become familiar with some of the diagnosis and deficits seen in many recovering service members and a chance to participate in the more familiar adapted sports and recreational activities. The Penn

State classroom sessions also provide the opportunity to network with Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps MWR personnel to expand Army services and activities.”

On the Bulk Buy front, “IMCOM G9 centrally funds equipment designed for heavy commercial use, allowing garrisons/units to focus local resources on specialized supplies and equipment unique to local training requirements,” according to Sakorafis. “The bulk purchase program capitalizes on the purchasing power of the entire IMCOM community, realizing cost avoidances of 13-17 percent below GSA pricing schedules over the past five years while establishing consistent standards for preventive maintenance and customer use Army-wide.”

The new IMCOM G9 Cardiovascular Bulk Buy Contract was awarded in July 2011 to Life Fitness, Precor and Matrix. The more popular mainstays – treadmills, ellipticals and recumbent and upright bicycles – were joined by indoor group cycles, while less popular steppers/incline trainers were dropped.

The fiscal 2011 Army Military Construction (MILCON) program includes two new fitness-related facilities: a natatorium at Fort Bliss, Texas, and a fitness center at Katterbach Kaserne, Ansbach, Germany, programmed for \$29.3 million. The Army’s fiscal year 2012 President’s Budget MILCON request includes four fitness center projects, programmed to cost a combined \$82.5 million. Three are new facilities (Fort Riley, Kan., Fort Campbell, Ky., and Fort Sill, Okla.), and one, at Fort Richardson, Alaska, renovates and expands an existing center. In fiscal 2011, the Army expended over \$40 million on the sustainment, restoration, and modernization of existing fitness facilities at over fifty installations. All of the physical plant projects are funded from appropriations.

AIR FORCE

As military fitness professionals gather in Orlando, the state of fitness programs continues to improve in the Air Force with a new emphasis on functional fitness and adaptive programming.

“Moving forward, this should help improve the fitness of our Airmen and improve the Air Force fitness culture,” says Greg Thomas, Air Force Fitness and Policy Combat Opera-

The Family Fitness Center at Whiteman AFB, Mo.



tions Division, AF/AISO, Directorate of Manpower, Personnel and Services. “The primary concern over the next few months is ensuring we have the right programming and resources available to meet customers’ needs.”

In July 2011, the Air Force reached the 1-year anniversary of its new Air Force Fitness Program and the results have been very positive.

“For 14 consecutive months, we have seen a decline in the total force fitness assessment failure rate,” notes Thomas. “In July 2010, the total force fitness assessment failure rate was 22.1 percent, and as of September 2011, the rate dropped to 8.2 percent. These rates clearly represent a positive trend and are better than what was expected. We are pleased to report that 9 out of 10 of our Airmen are passing the new fitness test while over half are scoring 90 or better. This success can be attributed to engaged commanders/leaders at all levels who continue to motivate their Airmen and inspire excellence.”

Currently, Fitness and Sports Center staffs support and prepare Airmen for the Air Force test with the fitness programs and equipment they provide. Thomas points out that when necessary, staff members work one-on-one with customers to develop individualized training programs. Staffs also support commanders by helping unit Physical Training Leaders (PTLs) develop unit training programs. In CY12, the Air Force will provide installation staffs with additional program templates to expand the options for conditioning programs.

“Based on the positive fitness results so far, it is clear Airmen have embraced a year-round culture of fitness as encouraged by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force,” notes Thomas. “The feedback from Air Force Fitness leaders has been very positive and the guidance they’ve provided is to ‘stay the course.’”

In the area of deployed support, fitness specialists can be found at many deployed locations to deliver the same types of fitness programming to deployed members as one would expect at home. “Much of the fitness equipment is the same,” says Thomas. “Many of the established locations offer a regular schedule of group exercise classes, intramural sports programming and monthly fitness incentives.”

At Travis AFB, Calif., the Fitness & Sports Center staff has taken a different approach in support of spouses and family members of deployed members. The base implemented a co-op program called “PeeP Drop.” Thomas points out the purpose of the PeeP Drop is to provide free quality drop-in care for children while allowing parents/guardians to exercise free of distractions. In order to use hourly care of PeeP Drop, one must volunteer (background checks are required) time in return. Volunteers start out with 10 hours of workout time to use. After the initial 10 hours, they earn three hours of workout time for every hour volunteered.

“Team Travis recognizes the importance of parents/guardians having the opportunity to put their children in a safe environment while exercising,” he notes. “They understand the value of investing in their future by empowering their Travis family.”

Training and education are critical to staffs having the right skill sets to perform their duties and contribute to the Air Force mission, whether home or abroad.

“Entry-level training includes CPR/AED, First Aid, equipment familiarization, physical training leader (PTL), AETC Fitness Specialist course, customer service and other training at each location as required per the fitness center master training plan,” explains Thomas. “Advanced training for managers

and at least two other staff members include advanced fitness courses and workshops through a nationally accredited organization. A number of nationally recognized organizations are approved as Air Force certification options – American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), The Cooper Institute (CI), American Council on Exercise (ACE) and Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA).

As it is across the military, combat fitness and tactical training is being woven into current training approaches.

“A number of installations have taken the initiative to implement these types of conditioning programs,” notes Thomas. “Functional fitness programs supplement existing options and provide a greater challenge for customers. Air Force is developing a standardized functional fitness program with modules in three tiers – introductory, intermediate and advanced for implementation across the Air Force in CY12/13.”

While budgeting for fitness equipment, facilities and/or renovation projects normally happen at the installation level, OSD has provided funding for centralized equipment purchases for installations across the Air Force, according to Thomas.

The Air Force recently finished a \$14.6 million equipment purchase and has begun the process of initiating another \$10.7 million central buy. Additionally, OSD provided approximately \$120 million in O&M funds over the last two fiscal years, which allowed for an estimate of 360 different facility sustainment projects, repairs, maintenance and minor construction projects to be initiated. “With no MILCON projects on the books for FY12 or the near future, at this time, these O&M funds provided opportunities to fix some issues and allow many facilities to continue to operate at the high-level of standard our customers have come to expect,” Thomas points out.

MARINE CORPS

The overall state of fitness in the Marine Corps continues to remain strong, according to Cathy Ficadenti, branch head, Semper Fit Programs, MWR and Business Operations Division.

“Our staff continues to deliver robust and comprehensive fitness and health promotion programs to our Marines, their families, retirees and civilian personnel,” says Ficadenti. “As we move forward, we are working toward full implementation of the High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) program (*see more on HITT on page 26*). At this time, seven of our installations have established HITT Centers to accommodate the HITT program with another ten installations in the process of developing these training areas.”

The HITT Program will be released to the field during the Marine Corps Training Summit in Orlando, and HQMC is at the beginning stages of an initiative to expand/revise the current 2-day Combat Conditioning course to a 5-day HITT course.

The Semper Fit Health Promotion program is also developing a standardized nutrition education program for the Marine Corps community that will include components of the newly revived “Fueled to Fight” nutrition program in all USMC dining facilities.

The Marine Corps continues to place a greater emphasis on family fitness and combating childhood obesity.

“Increasing and improving the physical fitness opportunities for military family members, wounded, ill and injured Ma-

rines, retirees and military civilian workforce is the focus of the Semper Fit Family Fitness Program,” notes Ficadenti. “Providing guidance to our existing fitness programs for this large and varied section of the military population encompasses not only healthy individuals but those with medical concerns (obesity, heart disease, asthma, Autism, anxiety disorders, etc.), as well as physical disability and in every age group (cradle to grave). Due to the importance of this effort, OSD has funded the development of a DoD-wide Family Fitness Initiative. A working group has been selected and is beginning the process of researching, developing and implementing a program for all the services.”



The fitness center at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Staff training is also a key focus for Semper Fit. “We are working closely with our Training Department to increase the level of training we provide for our fitness staff to include NSCA’s Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist Course, Tactical Strength and Conditioning Course, and the USA Weightlifting Level 1 Sports Performance Certification Course, in addition to our current ACE offerings.”

In addition, Ficadenti notes that the Fitness and Health Promotion Policy has undergone some additional revisions and is ready to be staffed to the field for an initial review. “One of the most significant changes to the policy is the staffing model that provides for a tiered approach for our personal training staff from those with basic personal training certifications to those holding degrees and advanced certifications,” she points out. “This model creates a career roadmap for our fitness staff.”

Semper Fit also continues to be a leader in the area of deployed support.

“In the more austere locations, where fitness facilities are non-existent, we are increasing the amount of suspension trainers that will be available to our Marines,” says Ficadenti. “We are also including increased quantities of functional fitness equipment that provides a workout that is more suited to the rigors of the deployed environment compared to a standard workout in a fitness facility.”

Last year, DoD introduced the concept of Total Force Fitness, which is being integrated into training for all services.

“The concept of Total Force Fitness is a shift away from simply having a sound body to a holistic view of health and fitness that includes both mind and body,” Ficadenti explains. “The Commandant’s Planning Guidance 2010 maps out the way ahead for the Marine Corps with a focus on building resiliency within the Corps. Semper Fit is engaged in addressing the physical and social aspects (pillars) of resiliency. For example, our Combat Fitness Specialist at HQMC is working closely with TECOM on revisions to the 1988 Marine Corps Physical Readiness Training for Combat Manual (MCRP 3-02A).”

As a leader in Wounded Warriors support, the Marine Corps is making programs and facilities more adaptive and inclusive.

“The Semper Fit and Recreation Program’s effort to serve Wounded Warriors included the formalization of the HQMC

Semper Fit and Recreation Inclusion Program,” says Ficadenti. “This effort began with the selection of Geoff Hopkins, therapeutic recreation specialist at Marine Corps, Headquarters, who serves to define and grow the Inclusion program. This included the implementation of a 2-day, on-installation Inclusion course, developed by Pennsylvania State University specifically for Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS).”

The training, entitled, “Including Customers with Disabilities in Recreation Programs and Services: Unique Challenges ... Unique Solutions,” was designed to educate Semper Fit and Recreation professionals in the application of inclusive programs and services. A total of 13 CONUS and OCONUS Marine Corps installations participated in this training, marking the “first of its kind” training, says Ficadenti.

“Following each course, installations established a representative to act as the point of contact for matters concerning inclusion and adaptive programming as well as taking the lead in the development of a community inclusion plan,” she says.

The Marine Corps was fortunate to receive funding from OSD in the form of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds for Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization (FSRM) projects. These funds were used to renovate existing athletic and fitness facilities across the Marine Corps to include renovation/installation of a synthetic turf surfaces at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., MCAS Yuma, Ariz., MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., MCB Quantico, Va., and MCRD San Diego, Calif.; installation of a 4,000-sq.-ft. HITT Center at MCAS New River, N.C.; renovation of a PFT trail at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif.; and many basketball and tennis court renovations throughout the Marine Corps.



For the Navy, a big focus this coming year is on implementation of a Command Fitness Leader (CFL) Certification Course curriculum, according to Lisa Sexauer, Fitness, Sports and Deployed Forces Support program manager (N921), Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). “Currently we certify more 1,300 CFLs annually and the new cur-

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Sailors and Marines participate in an Iron Gator challenge aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4).

riculum modernizes the Navy's approach to physical training as well as the Physical Readiness Program policy, which was launched in July of 2011," she notes.

Additionally, the Navy continues to roll out and refine the Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling Series (NOFFS) program, with the addition of a new iPhone application that officially released in October 2011. "We continue to collect information and feedback about the program and plan to add three new series in FY12," Sexauer explains. "Each new program addition will feature greater specificity, such as endurance for our avid runners and triathletes, strength for those that enjoy strength development programs and fitness in austere environments for those times when traditional fitness tools are not available."

The Navy is also looking at ways of integrating the new DoD concept called Total Force Fitness (TFF) into programming methodologies.

"TFF is a very good concept and I think it embodies what we do in Fleet and Family Readiness as a whole," says Sexauer. "I think as we continue to develop the concept, we must utilize the methodology as a screening process to ensure our programs are contributing to TFF in a quantifiable and meaningful way. As I mentioned, I do believe that MWR and FFR embody the entire concept as well as any program in the Navy. We just need to communicate that effectively."

Unveiled last year, the new Navy Fitness Standards (for MWR Programs) were "well received and currently provide standards that adjust with funding levels," notes Sexauer. "The installations have stated that they find it very useful in the planning and budgeting process. It also provides a brief synopsis of program degradation as funding levels decline. This allows program managers to articulate to their leadership a consistent message. Currently, the mid-Atlantic region has elected to focus on fitness standards in the coming fiscal year. I am excited to see the impending outcomes and more importantly, the impact to sailors in that region."

The Navy is also launching a two-year "Outreach" pilot program in Navy Region Southwest in November of 2011.

In the area of deployed support, fitness and recreation activities "provide a vital stress and health management tool at sea and ashore," notes Sexauer. "This holds true for families and active duty and is substantiated in the science. It has proven to be an effective tool in mitigating any number of preventable diseases as well as suicide and stress. It is vital to a fit and ready force."

Training and education for fitness staff remains a top priority in the Navy. "We continue to train our field to deliver NOFFS, and FY11 focused on field-level programmers to include the group exercise specialists and the training was conducted by Athletes Performance Institute, an industry leader in fitness education," she points out. "Additionally, we trained field-level staff to provide basic TRX training to sailors in addition to TRX group class training. Of course, Mission Nutrition and CFL Train the Trainer courses are a staple in our curricula delivered to the field. Collectively, the training provides enterprise-wide consistency in programming while affording our professionals with the opportunity to attain CEUs required by their certifying bodies."

For FY12, the Navy will be working with DoD and a joint-service working group to develop a Family Fitness initiative for all the services. "We are excited about the potential in this arena for a multi-service initiative," notes Sexauer.

In FY11, the Navy began and/or completed 81 renovation projects, and will continue in FY12 to focus on facility upgrades that bring facilities into compliance with OSD standards to include HVAC, according to Sexauer.

"Additionally, where it makes sense, we are focusing on field conversions to synthetic," she points out. "This provides a surface that is 'up' and playable despite extreme weather conditions while requiring minimal maintenance. The continuous surface provides our sailors and families with a safer training and playing environment that is world class. A great example is the upcoming field and track renovation at Subbase New London, Conn. It should kick off in the spring with a ribbon cutting in the summer of FY12."

Upcoming MILCON projects for FY12 and beyond include new fitness centers at NAS North Island, Calif., in FY12, at NSA South Potomac-Dahlgren, Va., in FY13 and at Subbase New London, in FY15, as well as a new pool at JRB New Orleans, La., in FY13.

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