

Information Paper

Center for Initial Military Training (CIMT)
6 December 2019

SUBJECT: DACOWITS December 2019 QBM Follow-Up RFI 8: Army Combat Fitness Test

1. Purpose: To answer the follow-up question to the Army from the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS) December 2019 Quarterly Business Meeting.

2. Facts:

a. In December 2019, a chart referencing scoring for the ACFT was presented to the Committee. What is the current perspective for the determination of that performance scoring criteria for the maximum score, minimum score, and any identified intervals?

During the Field Test (FY19), we used a variety of criteria, historical, and normative approaches to establish the minimum and maximum standards. Our guiding principles were to undershoot the 60-point standard to provide a 12-24 month training period before record testing and overshoot the 100-point standard to provide aspirational standards and account for future training effects. We expect these standards to change as we gain better empirical evidence of criterion-referenced performance and as Soldiers fully engage in a comprehensive Physical Readiness Training (PRT) program.

In FY19, the US Army conducted an ACFT Field Test for 63+ Active, Guard, and Reserve units from across the force to include Initial Entry / Military Training units (i.e., Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training, One Station Unit Training, and Basic Officer Leader Course). The Active, Guard and Reserve included Infantry, Armor, Air Defense, Aviation, Engineer, Quartermaster, Ranger, ROTC, Special Forces, Recruiting, Military Police, Hospital, Headquarters, and others. For the minimum and maximum standards, we used several criterion strategies and then mapped these projections to values representing two standard deviations (SD) above/below the mean for the Field Test (n=23,542; 88% men, 12% women) and a sample of cadets from the United States Military Academy (USMA) (n=761; 80% men, 20% women). For normal distributions, it is always the case that 68% of values are less than one standard deviation (1SD) away from the mean value, and that 95% of values are less than two standard deviations (2SD) away from the mean.

For the IOC scales, we extrapolated scoring levels for the significant and high physical demand categories (PDC) intervals based relationally to Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT) Gray and Black standards and linear steps between the minimum and maximum scores. We are currently working with the University of Iowa to refine all criterion-referenced standards based on an artificial intelligence – deep learning approach to higher-level simulation modeling. This study will be complete on / about 1 September 2020.

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b. There was an expectation that scores would be low before training and improve after. What are the ACFT scores, by gender and age, pre- and post-training in preparation for testing?

During the FY19 Field Test, we did not expect to see an increase in ACFT scores for two reasons. First, due to the Army's assignment cycle, many Soldiers only took one ACFT, which makes it impossible to obtain a post-test measurement. Second, of the Soldiers that took two ACFTs, many did not have sufficient equipment and personnel to field a proper training program.

However, we can look at several unique Field Test units to measure the effect of training in preparation for testing. These units (Initial Military Training units) administered at least two ACFTs, which provides valid pre- and post-training measurements. They also followed the Army's PRT doctrine (Field Manual (FM) 7-22, Army Physical Readiness Training, OCT 2012). This doctrine is taught in the Basic Combat Training (BCT) Program of Instruction (POI) which, like all TRADOC courses, is validated by the Combined Arms Center (CAC) and maintained by the Training Operations Management Activity (TOMA). PRT was scientifically validated over several years prior to implementation in order to improve physical readiness and control for injury better than previous doctrine. The ACFT results from BCT show that male scores increased by an average of 28 points from 456 to 484, and female scores increased by an average of 75 points from 315 to 390.

c. Provide the selection criteria for ACFT trainers and Program of Instruction for the ACFT Trainer training course?

HQDA EXORD 219-18 directed the Army to provide thirty Soldiers to the US Army Center for Initial Military Training (CIMT) with duty at the US Army Physical Fitness School (USAPFS), Fort Jackson, SC in support of the ACFT Mobile Training Teams (MTT) Phase 1 and Phase 2 (a minimum of two years). Twenty-five of those Soldiers were to be in the grade of E6/E7 from any MOS, and five officers were to be in the grade of O3 (branch immaterial). National Guard Bureau and United States Army Reserve Command were each directed to provide 5 to 10 certified Master Fitness Trainer (MFT) Instructors in support of the ACFT MTTs. All ACFT MTT personnel were required to hold the MFT Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) or educational/professional experience in Exercise Science, could not have been injured or on any temporary or permanent physical profile, and needed to pass the APFT with a minimum of 70 points per event.

Applicants for these positions submitted a packet consisting of their Soldier Record Brief, previous three evaluation reports, and current APFT scorecard. Any applicant that met the minimum criteria were invited to interview with the US Army Leader Training Brigade Command Sergeant Major and the Director of the USAPFS. Applicants were selected based on the strength of their packets and performance on the interview.

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Upon selection, ACFT MTT members attended several weeks of certification and refresher training at the USAPFS during FY19. Once certified, the teams conducted more than 150 ACFT grader validation MTTs (US and worldwide), as well as 35 resident courses at Fort Eustis, VA and Fort Jackson, SC between September 2018 and December 2019 (ongoing). The teams validated 14,385 MFTs and senior leaders, and those trained personnel are responsible to train additional graders within their units on the conduct and execution of future ACFT testing.

d. Provide policies, procedures, materials, and methods for training focused on soldier conditioning in preparation for the ACFT.

Army Regulation (AR) 350-1 “Army Training and Leader Development” prescribes policy and procedures for the conduct of Army Physical Readiness Training. AR 350-1 specifies that physical fitness training is one of the Army’s mandatory training requirements, and applies to all Soldiers. AR 350-1 directs Soldiers to train in accordance with FM 7-22. This doctrinal publication guides the training for the Army in the physical tasks associated with Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills. The drills and exercises in FM 7-22 are therefore very similar, if not exactly the same, as the events in the ACFT. For example, the Leg Tuck is an exercise in Climbing Drills 1 and 2; the 300 Yard Shuttle Run is a similar anaerobic test to the Sprint-Drag-Carry; and the kettlebell-focused Strength Training Circuit includes four weighted squatting exercises that support performance in the 3 Repetition Maximum Deadlift.

Policies, regulations, and doctrine provide source material for all Army training. ACFT training materials can be found on the Army Training Network, ACFT microsite (www.army.mil/acft), ACFT EXORD and associated FRAGOs, Army MFT courses, ACFT MTTs, ACFT resident courses, Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) “The Army Combat Fitness Test” manual, and other PAO-approved social media sites. Each of these sources includes training material focused on Soldier preparation for the ACFT.

e. What official (formal & informal) communication has the Department of the Army provided to major and subordinate commands regarding the ACFT, including but not limited to current status and implementation?

Since CIMT became the proponent for the ACFT, Public Affairs has produced, distributed, and coordinated a variety of media products to communicate with priority audiences, including Army Senior Leaders, Army Command (ACOM) Commanders, and subordinate units. Various products include:

- AR 350-1, ARMY TRAINING AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT, 10 DEC 2017
- FM 7-22, ARMY PHYSICAL READINESS TRAINING (PRT), 01 OCT 2012
- HQDA EXORD 022-13 ISO MASTER FITNESS TRAINER COURSE (MFTC) ASI P5/SI 6P, 08 NOV 12
- HQDA EXORD 021-15 OPTIMIZED PHYSICAL FITNESS, 27 MAR 15
- HQDA EXORD 219-18, ARMY COMBAT FITNESS TEST, 13 JUL 18

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- HQDA EXORD 149-19 ESTABLISH THE ARMY HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS (H2F) SYSTEM, 12 MAY 2019
- ACFT Microsite: Since early 2018, the central repository for information on the ACFT is <https://www.army.mil/acft/> which is updated consistently through coordination with the Department of the Army's Public Affairs Office, and CIMT.
- ACFT PRT App: Available on Android and iOS platforms, the ACFT PRT app was developed to keep Soldiers and leaders informed on how to train for and administer the ACFT. The app includes links to the CIMT website, as well as includes resources such as the IOC ACFT Manual, and FM 7-22. This app is an update to the pre-existing PRT app which included FM 7-22 instructions, photos, and videos for each exercise/drill in PRT.
- The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) published "The Army Combat Fitness Test" in September, 2018. This document, available in digital (<http://call.army.mil>) and print, describes the ACFT test events in detail, administrative guidance and testing procedures, and a variety of training exercises (with and without equipment) for the ACFT. An updated version of this document will be published in January, 2020.
- CIMT has developed and distributed 6 versions and updates to the Public Affairs Guidance, approved by the US Army Chief of Public Affairs, and disseminated to units across the ACOMs.
- CIMT, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and Army leadership participated in the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) National Forums in 2018 and 2019 to discuss ACFT implementation and provide updates to Senior Leaders, Commanders, Soldiers, and external Media.
- The US Army Chief of Public Affairs published multiple iterations of "CPA Sends", which is published and disseminated to Army Senior Leaders, Office of the Chief of Legislative Liaison (OCLL), ACOM Commanders, and is amplified on Army Public Affairs social media platforms available to all Soldiers, Civilians, and family members.
- Army Senior Leaders, TRADOC Senior Leaders, and CIMT Senior Leaders participated in multiple earned and owned media engagements generating over 100 articles and stories, communicating the rationale for the ACFT and the importance of test.
- ACFT MTTs conducted numerous demonstrations and familiarization engagements for Army Senior Leaders, Commanders, and Soldiers from all components since 2018.

f. How and for what purpose will the individual results of the ACFT be used during this pilot period?

The IOC testing results will be used in three ways: (1) to help Commanders determine the readiness of their unit, (2) to drive changes in the unit PRT program, and (3) to determine physical developmental needs for individual Soldiers.

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g. What are the tentative plans for use of ACFT scores with regards to career progression?

Physical readiness is a job requirement for all Soldiers in the US Army. During the ACFT IOC period, no policy changes will be made. After the IOC period ends, Army Senior Leaders will determine what policies, if any, related to ACFT performance and career progression need to be updated.