

Seven Steps in the Development of a PRTP

By Major Scott Blanchard

Military police units that are gearing up for combat must develop comprehensive physical readiness training plans (PRTPs) to prepare Soldiers for the rigors of extended operational deployments. PRTPs should be built around the unit mission and commander's intent¹ and should contain clearly defined objectives and proven fitness concepts that foster the development of the Warrior Ethos. Lessons learned from deployment experiences should also be incorporated. This article outlines a seven-step process that military leaders can use to develop comprehensive PRTPs framed around the principles of exercise and lessons learned in combat.

Step 1: Analyze the Mission

Military police leaders must identify all specified and implied tasks and understand the commander's intent.² From this analysis and the five military police functions (maneuver and mobility support, area security, law and order, internment/resettlement, and police intelligence operations),³ they develop a mission statement and mission-essential task list (METL). The mission statement provides the unit with the overall task and purpose and helps the unit focus on the most critical collective and individual tasks to be accomplished in wartime. Military police-specific collective and individual tasks can be found in the *Collective Task List for Military Police Company (Combat Support)* and Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) 19-100-10-Drill.

Step 2: Develop Fitness Objectives

It is important to develop fitness objectives that link military police training activities to the mission. Clearly defined fitness objectives provide Soldiers with an understanding of the commander's vision and goals. Because these fitness objectives drive the training strategy that the unit uses to prepare for and accomplish its mission, they should be specific, observable, measurable, and realistic. Examples of good objectives might be: "A Soldier must perform 10 pull-ups" or "All squad leaders will be Modern Army Combatives (MAC) Level 1-certified." Additionally, leaders should consider developing objectives that emphasize and foster the tenants of the Warrior Ethos. This promotes a mental and physical toughness that transfers to combat.

Step 3: Assess Physical Readiness

The unit's state of physical readiness must be assessed. This assessment should go beyond the Army physical fitness test average⁴ to consider Soldiers' abilities to complete mandatory physical training (PT) requirements (command-directed quarterly road marches, obstacle courses) and the

unit's level of proficiency in combatives and skill-related components of fitness (agility, balance, reaction time, speed, power, coordination). Assessments of the general health behaviors of Soldiers in the unit and fitness levels of special-population Soldiers (such as those with profiles and those in the Army Weight Control Program) must also be conducted. The post obstacle course is a good place to test these skills.

Step 4: Determine Training Requirements

Training requirements may be mandatory (directed by Army Regulation [AR] 350-1) or related to the development of METL proficiency. From the moment they receive a warning order to deploy, military police units quickly begin to fill the training calendar with "high pay off" training that involves areas such as weapons ranges, team gunnery, lane training, and field exercises. The identification of deployment training requirements allows the unit to develop a training strategy that prevents duplicity and eliminates training distractions. In addition, the unit conducts certification and validation requirements on warrior tasks, battle drills, and theater-specific training. Leaders who use a METL crosswalk can weave the PRTP into the unit deployment training strategy so that the physical readiness of the unit does not suffer.

Step 5: Develop Fitness Tasks

The fifth step is the development of fitness tasks that are supportive of battle focus and unit training requirements. Because this approach links fitness tasks to training requirements (which, in turn, are linked to the mission and METL) (Table 1), leaders and Soldiers understand the purpose behind the PRTP. They are then able to accomplish unit training objectives. In developing fitness tasks, military police leaders first identify the most physically demanding individual tasks that support the unit METL and then determine the standards to which Soldiers must be able to perform each of the tasks under various conditions. For

Table 1. Sample battle-focused training

METL Task: Conduct an attack (company/platoon) (07-2-9001)		
Fitness Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 12-mile foot march with combat load in less than 3 hours • Sprint 100 meters with body armor in less than 30 seconds • Demonstrate proficiency in combatives (squad leaders and above become certified at MAC Level 1) 		
Individual Tasks	Physical Requirements	Exercises
Move over obstacles under direct and indirect fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full combat gear • 3–5-second sprints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100-meter sprints • Grass drills • Illinois Agility Test
Subdue a combative insurgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-to-hand grappling • 100-meter sprints with combat gear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guerilla drills • Combatives training • Pull-ups and squats
Evacuate casualties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement to casualty collection point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100-meter litter carry • 50-meter buddy carry

example, tasks and conditions might include transporting a casualty with or without equipment or moving through simple or complex terrain with or without a litter. Leaders then develop exercises and training events based on these analyses. Warrior tasks and battle drills serve as good starting points for the development of fitness tasks.

Step 6: Develop a Training Schedule

Military police leaders must develop an effective training schedule. Short-term training schedules are those that are implemented 3–6 months in advance of execution, while near-term training schedules are implemented 6–8 weeks in advance. Leaders can use “backward” planning to incorporate proven fitness concepts in developing a PRTP that progressively builds and peaks alongside other training objectives. The schedule is developed by considering all near-term training requirements and gathering the commander’s physical readiness training guidance. The training calendar can be refined by incorporating a training template that addresses the day of the week that each [fitness] component will be trained and who will conduct the training (Table 2). This provides Soldiers with predictability in their daily schedules as well as a means to accomplish training objectives. Leaders get more from

their Soldiers when the Soldiers have a clear understanding of the commander’s intent as outlined by the tasks and purposes listed on the training calendar.

Step 7: Conduct and Evaluate Training

The responsibility for conducting physical readiness training lies with all small-unit leaders, who must also forecast and secure training resources. Learning to do more with less and to be creative with available resources is important since gym space and swimming pools are difficult to reserve for an entire unit. Physical readiness training during combat is conducted similar to the way it is conducted before deployment. Predeployment training with exercise equipment that will be available down-range (ammunition cans, water cans, weighted vests, litters, vehicle tires) and in conditions that mirror the austere environment of Afghanistan or Iraq will prepare Soldiers to conduct physical readiness training during deployment. Finally, training evaluation is a continuous process that should occur daily (informal, after-action reviews [AARs]), weekly (during training meetings), and monthly (with planned training assessments that allow leaders to compare the current state of physical readiness to unit fitness objectives).

Table 2. Sample calendar template

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Company PT	Squad PT	Platoon PT	Platoon PT	Squad PT
Cardiorespiratory endurance	Muscle endurance	High-intensity cardiorespiratory endurance	Muscle strength and power	Combatives and cardiorespiratory endurance
<p>Notes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training will last a minimum of 1 hour and will include a 5–10-minute warm-up and a cooldown comprised of 5–10 minutes of stretching. 2. There will be one company run and one company road march per month. 				

Leaders who use the seven-step process, incorporating proven fitness concepts and lessons learned from combat, will improve the physical readiness of their units. Fitness concepts that can be used include training periodization (the systematic manipulation of the volume and intensity of exercise over the duration of a training cycle)⁵ and the principles of exercise.

With periodization, the annual training calendar is divided into quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily bouts in an attempt to develop a prescriptive and progressive PRTP. There are five distinct phases of periodization:

- **Base phase.** The unit develops a strong base from which to progress. This phase may take 4–8 weeks.
- **Build phase.** The unit gradually increases the volume and intensity of exercise to build upon the base. This phase may take 4–10 weeks.
- **Peak phase.** The volume of exercise is decreased, and the intensity is increased. This phase lasts 1–2 weeks.
- **Recovery phase.** The volume and intensity of exercise is decreased. This phase also lasts 1–2 weeks.
- **Maintenance phase.** The unit maintains gains made during the base and build phases through regular exercise. The duration of this phase varies depending on the physical training requirements of the unit.

The principles of exercise, which are outlined in Field Manual (FM) 21-20, provide general guidance for increasing the overall unit performance throughout the five phases of periodization. The principles of exercise consist of regularity, progression, balance, variety, specificity, recovery, and overload.⁶ The definitions of each principle are intuitive and easy to apply to the PRTP. To increase unit performance, leaders must develop plans for regular, progressively difficult exercise by overloading the body with strength and endurance activities. Overloading stimulates the physiological adaptations and changes that Soldiers' bodies need to continue at higher intensities. But, overloading must be balanced with recovery and bouts of exercise which consider individual differences that exist among Soldiers (for example, male versus female and trained versus untrained individuals). PRTPs should contain realistic exercises that will transfer to the specific physical demands of combat. For example, the "medicine ball clean" exercise replicates the same motion that a Soldier might use to move a heavy can of ammunition from the ground to the top of a vehicle. Finally, the PRTP must be balanced with a general approach to improve all components of

health- and skill-related fitness, while also offering variety so that Soldiers do not get bored with the training program.

Despite the high operational tempo over the past eight years, there is a wealth of knowledge about physical readiness. Soldiers know what does and does not work, and leaders must incorporate these lessons learned into the PRTP. For example, we have learned that military police companies generally perform missions at the squad level. With this in mind, squads must be independently capable of maintaining a high level of physical readiness without the constant oversight and supervision of company leadership. Therefore, squad leaders must know and understand how to develop and execute a PRTP for the duration of a deployment. Other lessons learned include the type of fitness equipment that should be used while deployed and the value of sporting competitions to evaluate physical attributes and leader character. Consolidated AARs such as the *Afghan Commander AAR Book* and Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Handbook 09-37 (Chapter 2) are good resources to consider when developing PRTPs.

The development of a PRTP is paramount to mission success. Comprehensive PRTPs increase unit survivability by developing Soldiers who are physically and mentally strong. Leaders who incorporate the principles of exercise and lessons learned into the seven-step PRTP process prepare their units for the rigors of extended operational deployments. Soldiers need and deserve military police leaders who are knowledgeable and understand the PRTP process.

Endnotes:

¹AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, 18 December 2009.

²FM 3-0, *Operations*, 27 February 2008.

³FM 3-19.1, *Military Police Operations*, 22 March 2001.

⁴AR 350-1.

⁵Jay R. Hoffman, "Periodized Training for the Strength/Power Athlete," *NSCA's Performance Training Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 9, December 2002.

⁶FM 21-20, *Physical Fitness Training*, 30 September 1992.

References:

ARTEP 19-100-10-Drill, *Military Police Drills*, 28 November 2003.

Afghan Commander AAR Book, Currahee Edition, September 2009.

CALL Handbook 09-37, *Small-Unit Operations in Afghanistan: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, Chapter 2, June 2009.

Collective Task List for Military Police Company (Combat Support), 10 October 2008.

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