

Lead The Way

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Engineers, across all ranks and components, have a big stake in Achieving the Vision for our Regiment. The future policies, doctrine, equipment, and manning for the Regiment depend on the Soldiers, because they're doing the heavy lifting in garrison and in combat. They use the tools, apply the doctrine, and enforce the policies that guide us along a path that gives the Regiment quality engineers, using quality equipment and solving the maneuver commander's toughest problems. Everyone has a vision of what outstanding engineers should be, know, and do. It would be useful to reflect on what present-day maneuver commanders expect of engineers and whether or not we're meeting their expectations.



(6-mile run) exercises. Admitting that we need to be good at all types of physical demands is the first step to recovery. Focus on the weak areas. Some Soldiers are good weightlifters while others are good distance runners, and they tend to train their body on what they're good at and blow off their weak areas. The Army is telling us that we have to be good at all components of fitness, including the metabolic pathways. Dr. Greg Glassman and his wife Lauren have created the CrossFit website that addresses overall fitness and is worth a look.³ His article "What is Fitness?" is a great place to start. You can find it at <http://library.crossfit.com/free/pdf/CFJ-trial.pdf>

The Krebs cycle is the metabolic pathway that takes carbohydrates, proteins, and fats and converts them into carbon dioxide and water to generate a usable form of energy for the body.⁴ In my opinion, it's the most important pathway, and we give it the least attention. This is where the battalion commander and CSM must step in and make amends. Talking to the mess sergeant and coming up with a cost-effective menu that's nutritionally sound is time well spent. The dining facility may not be able to buy the best produce or meats, but there's a lot that can be done with food preparation. Ask the hospital nutritionist to help evaluate the mess hall's meal selection and provide some train-the-trainer classes. Your dining facility has to show a profit, which means the headcount has to stay high. Expecting every leader to eat at least one nutritionally good meal each day at the mess hall is not too much to ask. I've heard Soldiers say that their metabolism is so good that they can eat anything and stay fit. Ask them how much more fit they would be if they ate good meals instead of swallowing cheeseburgers whole and chasing them down with cheesy fries and Mountain Dew®.

Maneuver commanders expect engineers to be fit enough to work and fight alongside infantry and armor Soldiers while constructing fortifications or demolishing stuff. When the enemy shows up, commanders expect engineers to lay down their tools and be a part of the attack. We've always prided ourselves on being some of the smartest and most physically fit Soldiers in the world. CPT Tim Touchette and 1SG Mike Balch led by example while I was assigned to Alpha Company, 65th Engineer Battalion. We would lay hold and put in hard physical training, and it paid off when we linked up with our infantry brothers out in the field and showed them how to hump up and down the mountains of Hawaii and arrive at the objective with plenty of gas in the tank. Look out across the Regiment and you'll see that our duties demand the same level of fitness as they did 20 years ago. The Army's newest manual on fitness, TC 3-22.20, *Army Physical Readiness Training (PRT)*, is a step in the right direction, centering all physical training on Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills.¹

The ultimate goal is improving Soldiers' ability to deal with physically and emotionally demanding situations. Their overall fitness depends on your knowledge and experience to develop a plan that is challenging and competitive and raises their desire to improve their own level of fitness.

What is your definition of fitness? The Army's PRT manual states, "To prepare Soldiers to meet the physical demands of their profession, a system of training must focus on the development of strength, endurance, and mobility, plus the enhancement of the body's metabolic pathways."² Most of us are familiar with strength, endurance, and mobility, but the picture gets fuzzy when we discuss metabolic pathways. To keep it simple, there are three main metabolic pathways we use to perform physical activity—the phosphagen pathway, the glycolytic pathway, and the oxidative pathway—and one pathway to convert food into energy—the citric acid, or Krebs cycle. How well you condition your body to use each pathway will determine how well you perform short-duration, high-intensity exercises (like a one rep max deadlift), medium-duration, medium-intensity (2 minutes of sit-ups), or long-duration, low-intensity

¹Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills <<https://atn.army.mil/Media/docs/WTBD%20List%20Mar%202010%20-%20Copy.pdf>>.

²TC 3-22.20, March 2010, pp. 1-7, para. 1-18.

³<<http://www.crossfit.com/>>.

⁴<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krebs_Cycle>.