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## RESEARCH REPORT

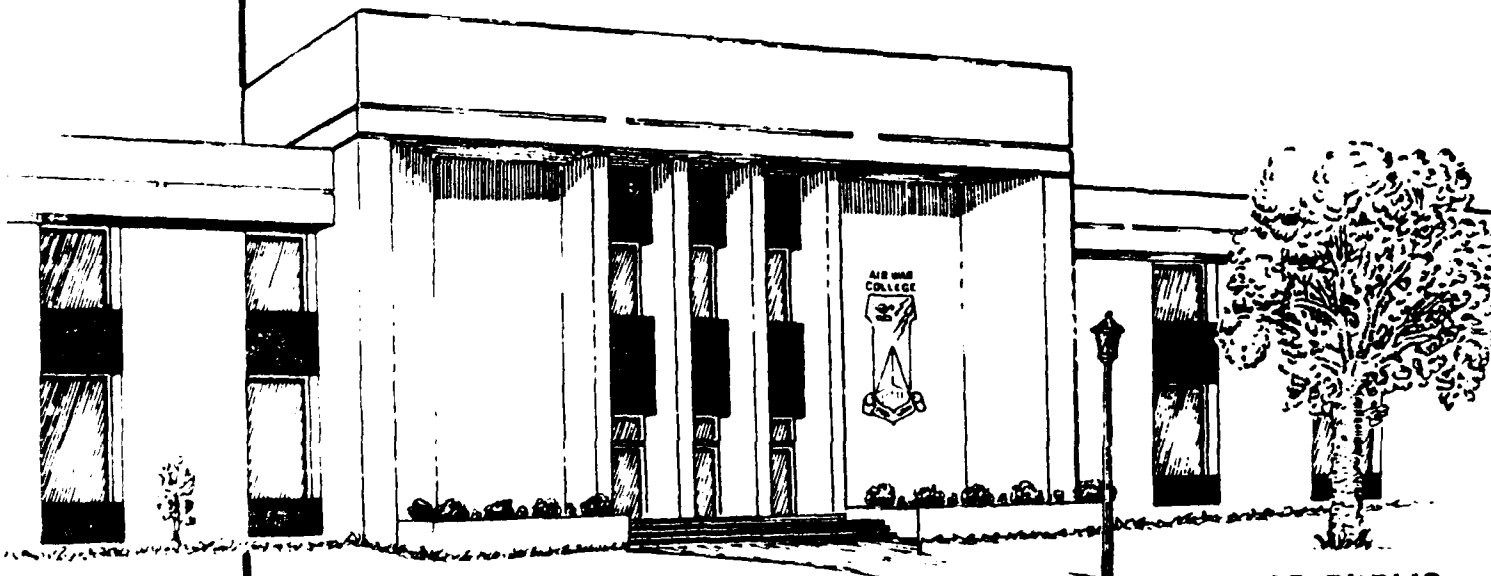
THE AIR FORCE FITNESS PROGRAM: AN APPLICATION OF  
THE GINGRICH "VISION VS TACTICS" TEST

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1990



AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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THE AIR FORCE FITNESS PROGRAM: AN APPLICATION OF THE GINGRICH  
"VISION VS TACTICS" TEST

by

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Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM  
REQUIREMENT

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: The Air Force Fitness Program: An Application of the Gingrich "Vision vs Tactics" Test. AUTHCR: Robert A. Barlow, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

The Air Force Fitness Program has been identified in several studies by Air Force officers as lacking in many areas. This study evaluates the senior Air Force leadership intent, or vision, for the Air Force Fitness Program. This intent is then compared to the reality present in unit-level fitness programs. This unit-level reality is based upon three studies conducted in the latter half of the 1980s and with the author's experiences as commander of a Strategic Air Command security police squadron. The results of the study show that senior Air Force leaders expect that unit-level commanders will ensure individuals fully meet Air Force Fitness Program intent and standards. The current Air Force Fitness Program allows unit commanders wide latitude in implementing fitness standards. Unfortunately, many unit fitness programs consist of nothing more than the annual fitness evaluation. While unit commanders have the authority to build viable fitness programs in their units, apparently many do not. This study recommends that senior Air Force leaders hold unit commanders fully accountable for the fitness of assigned personnel. The CINCSAC Morale, Wellness and Readiness program is identified as an example of the positive influence senior leader interest can have on unit fitness programs.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Robert A. Barlow (M.A., University of North Dakota, and Master of Military Art and Science, Army Command and General Staff College), has been interested in physical fitness and leadership since entering the Air Force as a security police officer in 1973. His assignments in the Strategic Air Command, US Air Forces in Europe, Air Force Systems Command and Air Training Command, including command of two squadrons and one tour on a major command inspection team provide him with experience in implementing and evaluating unit fitness programs. He is a graduate of the Air Force Squadron Officers School, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Air War College class of 1990.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### VISION VERSUS TACTICS

Congressman Newt Gingrich discusses two concepts which are key to this study in his book Window of Opportunity. He emphasizes the fact that one may choose to see gloom and doom at every turn, or one can see opportunity at precisely the same turns. (1:xv) He also suggests that in large organizations, those responsible for providing the vision of where the organization needs to be now and in the future are well-advised to regularly check that the tactics used at the lowest levels within their organizations mesh with these higher-level visions. (1:121-123)

The first concept, that of control over one's approach to the future describes the tone of this study. Basically, Air Force commanders can passively wait for senior leaders to dictate more stringent fitness standards and remove any unit commander flexibility in this area. Such commanders risk exposing themselves and their subordinates to unnecessary and inexcusable losses if they are tasked to perform in contingency or combat environments.

On the other hand, unit commanders can take a positive approach and initiate actions well-within their authority to ensure the physical fitness and readiness of their units. Such units will have taken an important step toward contingency and combat readiness and survivability.

The second concept, that of checking overall organizational vision and tactics to see if they logically move in the same direction provides the format and framework for this study. This paper attempts to provide senior Air Force leaders with a look at what is actually being done at unit level in terms of the Air Force fitness program. Congressman Gingrich's guidance would suggest that if senior Air Force leaders are not satisfied with the fitness tactics used at unit level, these leaders may wish to pursue changes in their vision of the Air Force fitness program; or, they may wish to provide further guidance concerning the tactics being employed at unit level.

The responsibilities of leadership and command place great pressure upon U.S. Air Force officers. There are plenty of opportunities for failure when one is tasked with leadership or command. Two dreaded situations for Air Force commanders are failure in front of their subordinates and unnecessary loss of subordinates to injury or death.

When the yearly Air Force-mandated unit physical fitness evaluation is scheduled, unit commanders are faced with the very real possibility of encountering the first dreaded situation--the airmen may watch as the commanders fail the test.

If this scenario plays out as described, the signal sent to the airmen is that physical fitness is not a high priority with the commanders who failed. Another option is for the commanders to test separately from the airmen, or not to test at all--the airmen eventually discover the results in either case and the same



message is sent--physical fitness is not a priority within the unit. Expecting the airmen to attain the fitness level necessary to pass the annual evaluation if the commanders have not done so is both hypocritical and in violation of Air Force regulations.

Additionally, a unit with such unfit leadership is likely to face the second dreaded situation--unnecessary injury or death of subordinates. If the commander is not physically fit and is unable to pass the very minimal annual physical fitness evaluation, that commander is unlikely to emphasize fitness within the unit. The risk of cardiovascular disease in such units is very real. Cardiovascular disease represents the largest single cause of death in the United States. (2:29)

The same unfit unit, if tasked to deploy, faces the extreme lethality inherent in contingency or combat operations. This hostile environment demands the highest level of physical fitness attainable. As General A.M. Gray, Commandant of the US Marine Corps, states in Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, Warfighting:

Whatever form it takes, because war is a human enterprise, friction will always have a psychological as well as a physical impact. While we should attempt to minimize self-induced friction, the greater requirement is to *fight effectively within the medium of friction*. (3:5) War is an extreme trial of moral and physical strength and stamina. Any view of the nature of war would hardly be accurate or complete without consideration of the effects of danger, fear, exhaustion, and privation on the men who must do the fighting. (3:10) We must therefore be prepared to cope--even better, to *thrive*--in an environment of chaos, uncertainty, constant change, and friction. (3:64)

If physical fitness has not been a key part of the unit's day-to-day way of life, the likelihood of injury and death is certainly increased in contingencies or combat.

There are many excellent references which discuss individual reactions to the shock of combat. Reviewing the literature which describes individual reactions to combat, there is remarkably little difference in the unit-level individual's recorded reaction to the stresses of combat, regardless of the weapons being used and the mission being accomplished. For example, Gibbon's description of the Roman centurions and Marshall's description of overloaded men attempting to move across Omaha beach illustrate the similarities in reaction to combat. First, Gibbon's account:

...the disuse of exercise rendered the soldiers less able and less willing to support the fatigues of the service...The heavy weapons of their ancestors...dropped from their feeble hands. ...they reluctantly marched into the field, condemned to feel either pain of wounds or the ignominy of flight... (4:475)

Marshall, in describing the reactions of U.S. soldiers loaded with heavy packs as they attempted to storm Omaha beach during the Normandy Invasion of 1943, provides the following account:

Said Serg. Bruce Heisley:  
"We were all shaky and weak. I was that way though I had not been seasick during the ride in. In fact I didn't know my strength was gone until I hit the beach. I was carrying part of a machine gun. Normally I could run with it. I wanted to do so now but I found I couldn't even walk with it. I could barely lift it..." [Marshall explains] The substance of their testimony was that they lacked the physical strength the situation required."  
(5:43-44)

Those Air Force members reading this study who believe themselves exempt from contingencies or combat would do well to reconsider their situations. Given the unpredictability of natural disasters, terrorist threats, and potential hostile uses of increasingly available and increasingly lethal weapons, no one in uniform is exempt from the need for physical fitness. Air bases should not be considered the sanctuaries they may have been in the past.

Those personnel in the many support functions on an air base are vital to the mission of flying, fighting and winning. Matecko and Borofsky provide an excellent, up-to-date discussion of the importance and vulnerabilities of air bases. (6:76). Additionally, they point out the fact that there are potential and, in some cases, documented shortages in personnel assigned to combat-support duties. (6:80-81) Thus, those currently assigned combat-support missions may be expected to perform without sufficient rest or relief in order to accomplish the mission in combat.

The concept of having plenty of time to attain sufficient physical fitness after notification of a requirement to respond to a contingency or deploy into a combat zone is clearly invalid. Equally invalid is the idea that, in the face of a terrorist attack or natural disaster, those effected will be able to call a halt to the situation until they have developed their level of fitness sufficiently to survive the attack or disaster.

No one can purchase or in any other way obtain instant fitness. Recent operations requiring Air Force support in hostile environments have provided no more than a few hours of prior notice at the unit level. (7:1) Those personnel tasked to respond did so at the level of fitness they possessed when notified of the tasking.

In a more positive vein, one would do well to consider the commanders who prefer to minimize dreaded situations. In units with such affirmative leadership, one will likely find commanders deeply involved in personal physical fitness programs which ensure that they not only pass but clearly surpass minimum standards.

In such fitness-oriented units one would first see strong commander involvement in fitness training. There would probably be regular and frequent testing of aerobic fitness of all personnel. Additionally, an active unit sports program and very realistic, mission-oriented training would predictably be present. Morale and enthusiasm would be evident. Certainly the airmen would feel pride in their own physical fitness and the fitness of their leaders and commanders. Altieri, in describing a battle he survived in North Africa while assigned as a Ranger under Lieutenant Colonel Darby, provides insight into the thoughts of a fit, well-trained individual under fire:

...as I struggled along, Lieutenant Cowerson's words kept echoing in my mind. "It's all in the mind and the heart. You can do the impossible if the mind and heart will it." Now I knew why our Commando instructors had hammered home the importance of tenacity, stamina and endurance. Now I fully understood Darby's unrelenting insistence on physical conditioning and night training. And now I was thankful that the man who had organized and trained our outfit was with us, exhorting everyone to push on to our fullest capacities. (8:216)

Both unfit and fit units, as described in this section, assuredly exist within the Air Force today. The remarkable discrepancy between how commanders choose to interpret Air Force policy concerning physical fitness standards is at the center of this study.

#### ORGANIZATION

Chapter 2 provides a review of the current U.S. Air Force Physical Fitness Program, as established in Air Force Regulation 35-11, The Air Force Weight and Fitness Programs, dated 10 April 1985. Next, a comparison of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program with Department of Defense Directive 1308.1, Physical Fitness and Weight Control, dated June 29, 1981, provides a quick check to confirm that the Air Force Physical Fitness Program complies with the requirements of the Department of Defense (DoD). Then, a discussion of the intent of AFR 35-11 provides insight as to what the apparent senior leadership vision is regarding the level of physical fitness to be achieved throughout the Air Force.

Chapter 3 provides a look at physical fitness tactics presently in use within the Air Force at the unit level. This look at unit-level physical fitness programs, or the results thereof, is based first upon review of three recent studies which provide insight into shortfalls in the Air Force Fitness Program implementation at unit level. One of these studies provides excellent documentation concerning unit commanders' opinions about the Air Force Fitness Program. The author then describes his experience as a squadron commander of a large Strategic Air Command security police squadron and the possibilities available when taking positive measures to enhance unit fitness. Examples of current strong senior leadership within the Strategic Air Command in the realm of physical fitness and wellness are then discussed. A discussion follows concerning the possible reasons for the differences in perspective between the authors of the previous studies and this study. Chapter 3 concludes that there are clearly problems in many Air Force units with lack of emphasis on physical fitness.

Chapter 4 provides conclusions to the study and recommendations on possible solutions to the lack of physical fitness of Air Force military members at the unit level.

#### LIMITATIONS

The Air Force Physical Fitness Program is closely linked to the Air Force Weight Management Program; in fact, both are addressed within AFR 35-11. This study does not address the weight management program, though there may well be a correlation

between increased levels of physical fitness within an organization and decreased numbers of personnel who exceed their maximum allowable weight due to high percentages of body fat.

One could argue that firsthand statements by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and other Air Staff level leaders would have been useful in divining their vision of physical fitness within the Air Force. Such firsthand statements were not solicited. An additional potential source of information concerning senior Air Force leader intent is articles in military periodicals. A review of all articles listed in the Air University Library Index to Military Periodicals under the heading of "Physical Fitness" from 1982 through 1989 was conducted. Of the 56 Air Force-related articles for the eight years reviewed, none provided direct information concerning senior Air Force leader intent. Thus, the basic physical fitness program regulation and supporting pamphlets comprise the sources used to identify the overall vision and intent of senior leaders.

In exception to the above caveats concerning senior Air Force leader intent, the author attempted to verify rumors that the Commander in Chief of Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC) has emphasized fitness throughout the SAC staff and at the unit level. Contact with the Chairperson of the Strategic Air Command Wellness Council revealed that CINCSAC has, over the last two years, taken a number of steps to emphasize the importance of fitness within his command. (9:-- ) The SAC Superintendent of Morale, Wellness and Readiness (everywhere else in the Air Force that office is

called Morale, Welfare and Recreation) confirmed and expanded on the CINCSAC enhanced fitness program. He also mentioned increased interest within the Tactical Air Command (TAC) in pilot fitness.

(10:--)

Further investigation revealed much TAC interest in improved pilot fitness due to the importance of recognizing and reacting to the dangers of G-induced loss of consciousness in pilots of high-performance aircraft. In August 1985 the TAC Command Surgeon published an excellent article which highlights the importance of pilot fitness, asserting "...good fighter pilots from here on out are going to have to be physically healthy and in excellent physical condition." (11:31) In March 1988, a special report was published by the US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine providing results of a combined U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy review of G-tolerance and pilot fitness; this report echoes and expands upon the earlier article by the TAC Command Surgeon.

(12:--) In August 1989, Col John R. Greene, Physiological Training Center, Holloman AFB, New Mexico, published an article titled "Physical Training & G-Tolerance, (or what do I really need to do?)" in TAC Attack, again providing guidance to TAC pilots.

(13:18-20) No reference was made in any of these sources to fitness training of other than pilot personnel.

In describing the various unit-level interpretations of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program intent and expectations, there was no Air Force wide, unit-by-unit survey conducted. Instead, research studies concerning unit-level physical fitness programs



provide part of the answer concerning the tactics being used at unit-level. One of the studies contains survey data collected in 1987 from a population of over 1,000 Air Force officers and senior noncommissioned officers concerning unit fitness programs. Additionally, the author's personal experiences as a squadron commander provide sufficient information concerning the variance in interpretations of Air Force Physical Fitness Program intent.

While costs of medical care for unit personnel and lost duty time due to injuries to personnel who are unfit are worthy of review and discussion, this study focuses primarily upon Air Force intent with regard to fitness and how this intent is interpreted at unit level into mission accomplishment and combat readiness. Other studies adequately document the potential savings in DoD and private industry if fitness were enhanced.

#### ASSUMPTIONS

The recommendations provided at the end of this study assume that there will continue to be constraints upon any increases in Air Force manpower authorizations; technical and unit training time and facilities; and, time available to any given unit commander for physical fitness program implementation.

The focus of this study is on congruity or lack thereof between senior Air Force leader's intent for physical fitness at the unit level and the facts concerning unit-level physical fitness. The author assumes that the readers are sufficiently aware of the many other good reasons for individual and institutional physical fitness.

## CHAPTER 2

### U.S. AIR FORCE FITNESS POLICY AND INTENT

#### WHAT IS OFFICIAL AIR FORCE FITNESS POLICY?

Air Force Regulation (AFR) 35-11, The Air Force Weight and Fitness Programs, dated 10 April 1985, is the single authoritative source for physical fitness policy and standards within the U.S. Air Force. (14:--)

The Air Force provides additional guidance concerning physical fitness in Air Force pamphlets (AFP). These pamphlets are of use in determining the intent of the Air Force policies set forth in AFR 35-11. Air Force Pamphlet 215-44, Family Fitness Handbook, dated November 1984, has an introductory letter from former First Lady Nancy Reagan encouraging military families to develop healthy life-styles. (15:i) In addition to physical fitness this pamphlet provides information concerning diet, rest, stress management, and substance abuse. Focus is clearly on the entire military family.

Another source of information concerning Air Force policies on physical fitness is AFP 50-13, USAF Personal Exercise Program (PEP), dated 23 September 1987. (16:--) This pamphlet was followed quickly by AFP 50-45, Wellness Lifestyle Guide for Personal Readiness, dated 8 December 1987. (17:--) Both emphasize the value of individual physical fitness and provide a number of suggestions and considerations in developing individual fitness programs. There is an interesting logo on the cover of AFP 50-45;

the words on this logo say "Air Force Fitness" at the top and "Fit For Freedom" at the bottom.

One pamphlet which could have included information concerning individual physical fitness standards is AFP 35-55, Commander's Quality Force Guide, dated 31 July 1986. (18:-- ) In fact, the only reference in this guide to AFR 35-11 deals with policy on the Weight Management Program and discusses procedures for administrative action when individuals fail to meet weight standards. No reference is made to the Physical Fitness Program within this pamphlet.

#### DISCUSSION OF AIR FORCE FITNESS POLICY

Within AFR 35-11, Chapter 3 provides official policy on the Air Force Fitness Program. Section A discusses some of the background behind efforts between 1980 and 1985 to develop an enhanced fitness program. Within this section is the following statement, located in paragraph 3-1.b.:

The Air Force has determined the fitness program does not appear to be contributing to the fitness requirements of its people and mission. Therefore, the Air Force has taken steps to develop an enhanced fitness program.

Description of the various committees and study groups formed and the results of their efforts is then provided. In fact, tests of an enhanced fitness program were conducted in 1983 and again, after modification, in 1984. The status as of the date the regulation was published (Apr 85) was as follows, quoting from paragraph 3-1.d.:

The Air Force is now finalizing an effective program which will be safe, feasible and acceptable for Air Force-wide implementation in 1986.

Despite the above prediction, no changes were made in the Air Force Fitness Program in 1986 or 1987. In the November 23, 1987 issue of Air Force Times, an article titled "More Changes Delay New Fitness Program" was published. (19:11) This article quoted service fitness experts as saying the delay in enhanced program implementation from January 1, 1988, to June 1, 1988, was necessitated by changes recommended at the major-command and Air Staff levels. This article goes on to explain that delays in program implementation in 1986 were due to funding constraints for the additional manpower required to administer the enhanced program. At the time this article was published, the proposed enhanced fitness program annual evaluation included a 1.5-mile run and performance of sit-ups.

The February 15, 1988, edition of the Air Force Times discusses the new Air Force Wellness Program, but no mention is made in this article of the enhanced fitness evaluation standard. (20:1+)

The next available information concerning the proposed enhanced fitness standard is in the September 11, 1989, issue of the Air Force Times. (21:--) This article provides the same information dispatched officially one week later in an interim message change to AFR 35-11, announcing the new fitness evaluation standards.

For the reasons discussed above, the enhanced physical fitness program evaluation standard was not implemented until 1 October 1989. This enhanced evaluation standard was promulgated via Interim Message Change 89-2, dated 18 September 1989, to AFR 35-11. This change reduced the time available for people to run the 1.5 miles during the annual physical fitness test. In fact, the change projects incrementally less time for the run, with the lower increments becoming effective on 1 Oct 89, 1 Oct 90, 1 Oct 91 and 1 Oct 92. The standard published in AFR 35-11 in 1985 is in Figure 2-1, while the enhanced standards are listed in Figure 2-2. The fitness evaluation standard does not include sit-ups or any other measure of muscular strength.

FITNESS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS [1985]

Age	1.5 Mile Run Time (Minutes)		3 Mile Walk Time (Minutes)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
17-29	14:30	15:36	40:54	43:52
30-34	15:00	16:05	42:04	45:10
35-39	15:30	16:40	43:15	46:29
40-44	16:00	17:10	44:25	47:44
45-49	16:30	17:45	45:34	48:55
50+	17:00	18:15	48:19	52:02

Figure 2-1 (14:29)

FITNESS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS [1989-1992]

Age	1.5-Mile Run Time (Minutes)		3-Mile Walk Time (Minutes)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Up to 29(2)				
Increment 1:	14:00	15:30	40:54	43:52
Increment 2:	13:20	15:30	NA	NA
Increment 3:	12:40	15:30	NA	NA
Increment 4:	12:00	15:30	NA	NA
30-39 (2)				
Increment 1:	14:45	16:00	42:15	45:15
Increment 2:	14:00	16:00	(1)41:30	(1)44:00
Increment 3:	13:15	16:00	(1)40:45	(1)42:45
Increment 4:	12:30	16:00	(1)40:00	(1)42:00
40-49 (2)				
Increment 1:	15:30	17:00	44:30	47:45
Increment 2:	14:40	17:00	43:30	46:30
Increment 3:	13:45	17:00	42:45	45:15
Increment 4:	13:00	17:00	42:00	44:00
50 & Above (2)				
Increment 1:	16:30	18:00	47:15	50:45
Increment 2:	15:45	18:00	46:30	49:30
Increment 3:	15:00	18:00	45:45	48:15
Increment 4:	14:30	18:00	45:00	47:00

(1) 35 & above only

(2) Increment 1 effective 1 Oct 89  
 Increment 2 effective 1 Oct 90  
 Increment 3 effective 1 Oct 91  
 Increment 4 effective 1 Oct 92

Figure 2-2 (14:IMC89-2)

The enhanced fitness program also reduces the time available for personnel 35 and older to complete the optional 3-mile walk, if they choose this option over the 1.5-mile run. Again, refer to Figures 2-1 and 2-2 for specific time changes.

Thus, the Air Force evaluation standard for physical fitness is as provided in Figure 2-2. The objectives of the Air Force Fitness Program are provided in para 3-2a(1), (2), and (3):

- 1) Ensure Air force members are physically fit to be trained to military tasks;
- 2) Establish fitness standards which promote the well-being of all military members, without undue health risks;
- 3) Support total force readiness.

These objectives were not modified in any way by IMC 89-2 to AFR 35-11, so the second objective involving establishment of fitness standards which meet those stated goals is apparently achieved via the new standards listed in Figure 2-2.

Chapter 3 of AFR 35-11 goes on to describe how to rehabilitate members who are unfit physically. It levies responsibilities for program implementation and accomplishment. With regard to program responsibilities, two key points are repeatedly stated:

- 1) Unit commanders are responsible for the fitness of their units and for enforcement of the fitness program standards; and,
- 2) Responsibility for compliance with the standards established in the regulation is the responsibility of each Air Force member.

Insight into the intent of the regulation is found on page 1, the second paragraph which states that "...interpretation of any

part of this regulation will be resolved at the lowest practical level." Clearly, maximum responsibility for the fitness of airmen rests with the unit commander, while each individual is expected to meet the spirit and intent of the program voluntarily.

The question which frequently arises concerns the time required to develop and maintain the required level of fitness. May commanders allow on-duty conditioning? The answer to this question (in para 3-3 of AFR 35-11) is yes "...when possible as mission requirements permit." This paragraph also emphasizes the responsibility at major command level to evaluate the fitness programs within the command and ensure safe, effective rehabilitation is provided. This is normally tasked to the command inspector general team, with primary support from the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in developing inspection criteria and guidance.

At the base level, paragraph 3-5 tasks the base commander with overall program responsibility. Compliance by all personnel, active support for the program at unit command and staff levels, recognition of exceptional programs, media coverage of the program, plus development of unit and individual fitness opportunities all fall within the base commander's purview.

The base commander's staff agencies are tasked with specific fitness program support responsibilities. Paragraphs 3-6 through 3-8 describe the responsibilities of the personnel, morale, welfare and recreation (MWR), and base medical services offices. Personnel experts assist units in program administration,



communication with the major command and fitness program policy interpretations. The MWR staff develops a sports program and related facilities within local constraints. The sports program "...is expected to play a major role in keeping Air Force members physically fit." The director of base medical services provides support for the program in the form of a trained, central point of contact for the program at base level; evaluates personnel and documents medical excusals from the program; and, trains selected unit and base personnel in emergency medical procedures.

As mentioned earlier, unit commanders are responsible for ensuring assigned individuals are in compliance with Air force fitness program standards. Paragraph 3-9 states that unit commanders "...have the prerogative to allow on-duty conditioning when possible as mission requirements permit." Seven specific unit commander responsibilities are listed in paragraph 3-9, all of which clearly show the active role commanders are expected to play in ensuring the fitness of unit personnel. Conducting unit fitness evaluations at least annually is the unit commander's responsibility listed first. Authority is also clearly levied to take administrative action when subordinates "...fail to meet or maintain fitness standards."

Paragraphs 3-9 and 3-10 describe Unit Fitness Program Manager and supervisor responsibilities, respectively. Again, support for the commander and encouragement and guidance of each individual are emphasized in these paragraphs. Supervisors are expected to act as fitness role models through being physically fit and

articulate in explaining subordinate fitness responsibilities. Specific supervisory responsibilities include telling subordinates that "...noncompliance with...standards of fitness negatively impacts the unit's ability to contribute to the Air Force mission...".

Finally, in paragraph 3-12, the individual's responsibilities are set forth. Emphasis is placed on year-round aerobic conditioning, successful completion at least annually of fitness evaluations, and entry into rehabilitative programs for unit members. The importance of individual fitness, throughout the individual's lifetime, in support of the unit and Air Force mission is clearly stated.

Section C of AFR 35-11 provides detailed guidance concerning the mandatory fitness evaluation conducted *at least* annually. Provisions for safety are emphasized. Individuals are cautioned not to test if they have not adopted a healthy life-style which includes regular, progressive aerobic exercise. In cases where individuals are not prepared to test, guidance to commanders is provided specifying formal rehabilitative measures to take to enhance the individual's fitness level.

A particularly noteworthy change included in IMC 89-2 to AFR 35-11 is what is called the "Get Fit" option, which allows "...commanders greater flexibility to improve the unit fitness level and to provide the tools and incentive to encourage members to adopt fitness as a part of their life-style" This new option gives commanders greater leeway in allowing unfit members to

develop their physical condition and improve their overall life-style so as to meet the physical fitness testing standard.

Commanders may allow individuals up to 270 days of rehabilitation, using the 90-day voluntary "Get FIT" program established in IMC 89-2, and two consecutive 90-day mandatory Fitness Improvement Training (FIT) program entries. If such individuals successfully complete the FIT program and achieve fitness sufficient to pass the Air Force fitness evaluation, they are removed from the FIT program and are expected to meet their individual responsibilities without further monitoring.

Those individuals who fail to pass the Air Force fitness evaluation face potentially severe administrative sanctions. As determined appropriate by the unit commander, unfit personnel who failed in rehabilitative efforts face "...any...action the commander determines to be appropriate." Actions available to the commander as listed in paragraph 3-16 include: written reprimand; ineligibility for reenlistment; unfavorable comments in performance reports; placement on the Control Roster; denial of NCO status (E-4s only); limits on supervisory and command responsibilities; withhold, defer or nonrecommend enlisted personnel for promotion; demotion of enlisted personnel; initiation of appropriate propriety action concerning officer promotion, Regular appointment and Indefinite Reserve status or selective continuation; removal from flying status; administrative separation; and, in cases where violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice have also occurred (ie., missed medical or FIT

program appointments), after consultation with the Staff Judge Advocate, nonjudicial punishment is possible.

Clearly, unit commanders have a wide selection of tools available both to rehabilitate and, when appropriate, discipline individuals who are not physically fit. A key part of the entire program is thorough documentation of rehabilitative efforts prior to application of administrative sanctions.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE STANDARD

Department of Defense Directive (DODD)\* 1308.1, Physical Fitness and Weight Control Programs, dated June 29, 1981, provides directive guidance to the Military Departments. (22:-- ) Enclosure 2 to that directive specifies policies with reference to the military component fitness programs. The requirements pertinent to the Military Departments, as established in Enclosure 2 are summarized below:

- 1) Program Design. Design and implement physical fitness programs, consistent with established principles of physical conditioning.
- 2) Evaluation. Design and utilize physical fitness tests that, as a minimum, evaluate stamina or cardiorespiratory endurance. Strength and flexibility components may also be included. [emphasis added]
  - a) Test all service members regardless of age.
  - b) Evaluate fitness systematically, regularly, and score for record at least annually.
  - c) Forward test scores to the gaining command when service member is transferred.

d) Recognize and reward personnel who attain outstanding levels of physical fitness and who make substantial improvement.

e) Adjust test standards for physiological differences between men and women.

3) Command Emphasis. All commissioned and noncommissioned officers are expected to support the program, maintain a high standard of personal fitness, and to be well informed in the conduct and execution of physical training.

4) Objectives. Carefully plan and supervise physical fitness programs; follow established principles of physical training; involve all personnel.

5) Motivation. Develop programs and policies which contain provisions to motivate service members to achieve high standards. Address at least the following points:

a) Rewards and incentives for outstanding performance.

b) Corrective action for failure to meet required standards.

c) Include physical fitness comments on efficiency or fitness reports.

d) Variety and challenge.

6) Monitoring System. Provide assessments of Military Service physical fitness programs periodically, as required.

Paragraph 4 of Enclosure 2 also provides clear insight into the intent of DODD 1308.1. Physical fitness training is seen, under ideal circumstances, as the foundation for combat skills, unit cohesion, competitive spirit, positive attitudes toward exercise, and self-confidence and self-discipline.

In addition to DODD 1308.1, the Department of Defense also published DODD 1010.10, Health Promotion, dated March 11, 1986.

(23:-- ) The purposes of this directive are to establish a "...health promotion policy within the Department of Defense to improve and maintain military readiness and the quality of life of

DoD personnel and other beneficiaries..." and establish "...policy on smoking in DoD occupied buildings and facilities." Paragraph F.4.b. discusses physical fitness programs.

In paragraph F.4.b., DODD 1010.10 directs that in addition to DODD 1308.1 physical fitness programs must include health professional consideration of programs which improve health and which accord with military readiness requirements. Further, commanders and managers *should* [emphasis added] assess fitness programs at or near work locations and *should* [emphasis added] consider including fitness regimens in normal work routines for military personnel, "...as operational commitments allow." Finally, this directive tasks commanders to "...encourage the active participation of many people rather than competition among a highly motivated few."

Given the intent and requirements of these two DoD directives, how does the Air Force Fitness Program measure up? To answer this question, this study takes each stated DoD requirement and matches a stated Air Force action, if any, to that requirement.

#### AIR FORCE COMPLIANCE WITH DoD STANDARD

In this section, the DoD requirements stated in DODD 1308.1 or DODD 1010.10 are compared with Air Force requirements stated in AFR 35-11.

DODD 1308.1, requirement 1: Design and implement physical fitness programs consistent with established principles of physical conditioning. The Air Force requires individuals to

develop healthy life-styles and provides information in AFR 35-11, Attachment 16, AFP 50-13 and AFP 50-45 which describes the wide panorama of options available to individuals in developing their individual fitness programs. The regulation and pamphlets developed by the Air Force are in accordance with established principles of conditioning.

DODD 1308.1, requirement 2: Design and utilize physical fitness tests that, as a minimum, evaluate stamina or cardiorespiratory endurance. Strength and flexibility components may also be included. Air Force Regulation 35-11, as modified by IMC 89-2, establishes the requirement for unit commanders to evaluate the aerobic (equivalent to cardiorespiratory) endurance of all assigned military personnel through either a 1.5-mile run, or for personnel 35 years of age and older an optional 3-mile walk. Strength and flexibility component measures are not mandated by the Air Force.

Included within DODD 1308.1, requirement 2, are five subrequirements. First, all service members must be tested regardless of age; second, fitness must be evaluated systematically, regularly and scored at least annually; third, test scores must be forwarded to the gaining command when service members are transferred; fourth, personnel must be recognized and rewarded when they attain outstanding levels of fitness and when they make substantial improvement; and, fifth, test standards must be adjusted for physiological differences between men and women.

Review of AFR 35-11 reveals that all subrequirements met by the Air Force program. The Air Force program does not mandate specific recognition or rewards for individual attainment of outstanding levels of physical fitness or for substantial improvement, but does task the base commander to recognize exceptional programs.

DODD 1308.1, requirement 3: All commissioned and noncommissioned officers are expected to support the program, to maintain a high standard of personal fitness and to be well informed in the conduct and execution of physical training. The Air Force program emphasizes the responsibilities of commanders and supervisors in maintaining personal physical fitness levels, and in educating and motivating subordinates with regard to physical fitness program importance and requirements.

DODD 1308.1, requirement 4: Carefully plan and supervise physical fitness programs; follow established principles of physical training; involve all personnel. The Air Force Fitness Program provides support for these requirements at major command, base and unit levels. A technical training course for Air Force fitness and recreation specialists was established at Keesler Air Force Base to train over 100 of these personnel per year. Course graduates return to their bases and help service members design safe personal exercise programs. (21:11) Additionally, base intramural sports programs and fitness facilities are open to all military personnel.



DODD 1308.1, requirement 5: Develop programs and policies which contain provisions to motivate service members to achieve high standards. Address the following four points: first, rewards and incentives for outstanding performance; second, corrective action for failure to meet required standards; third, inclusion of comments concerning individual's physical fitness on efficiency or fitness reports; and, fourth, variety and challenge. The Air Force fitness program tasks unit commanders and supervisors to motivate their subordinates to achieve high standards. No restrictions are placed upon unit commanders' use of incentives. The FIT program provides for corrective action for failure to meet standards and administrative sanctions are clearly set forth in AFR 35-11. Within the Air Force, rating officials may comment upon subordinates performance in official evaluation reports, though there is no specific requirement to do so. Finally, the Air Force establishes minimum acceptable fitness evaluation standards and provides commanders full flexibility in designing fitness programs which fit within their operational constraints while meeting the unit mission requirements. Variety and challenge are limited only by the commanders' resources and imagination.

DODD 1308.1, requirement 6: Provide assessments of Military Service physical fitness programs periodically, as required. Though this requirement has little effect at unit level, the documentation requirements of the Air Force fitness program make such reporting possible, when directed by higher headquarters.

Additionally, each major command evaluates unit-level fitness programs during inspector general team visits to units, as directed by the major command commander.

The requirements listed in DODD 1010.10 duplicate, for the most part, the requirements of DODD 1308.1. However, inclusion of medical expertise in designing fitness programs is required and is included in AFR 35-11. The requirement to encourage active participation by all personnel is reflected in the Air Force fitness program as well.

With regard to the DoD intent concerning physical fitness programs in the military, the Air Force fitness program does contain frequent emphasis of the connection between fitness and mission accomplishment, which equates to combat readiness, given the Air Force mission of flying and fighting. The program guidance regulation, AFR 35-11, plus the two key pamphlets, provide ample information on the interplay between fitness, positive attitudes and unit cohesiveness. Again, however, the specific programs developed at unit level are left to the unit commander, who best knows his mission requirements and operational constraints.

#### WHAT IS THE INTENT OF AIR FORCE FITNESS POLICY?

The discussion above reveals that Air Force fitness policies provide extensive guidance on attainment of fitness in the force and levy full responsibility for individual fitness upon each individual. Fitness program implementation and evaluation are command responsibilities, with the lion's share of responsibility

resting with the unit commander. While formal recognition programs are not mandated in AFR 35-11, they are not prohibited, again leaving this key area up to unit commanders. For personnel who are unfit, extensive time and effort are mandated to rehabilitate such individuals. Failure of an individual to improve via rehabilitation is cause for administrative action by the unit commander against the individual.

#### SUMMARY

The Air Force, in response to perceived weaknesses in its fitness program (circa 1982) developed and evaluated enhanced fitness standards and programs which were published in September 1989. The present Air Force fitness evaluation is oriented on ensuring all Air Force members meet a specific level of aerobic fitness. For airmen and officers under 35 years of age, the evaluation involves a 1.5-mile run within a specified time limit (see figure 2-2). Airmen and officers 35 years of age and older may be evaluated based upon a 1.5-mile run or 3-mile walk within specified time limits.

While the Air Force proposed enhanced fitness program included the 1.5-mile run/3-mile walk and sit-ups, the program ultimately published in 1989 included only the 1.5-mile run/3-mile walk. Sit ups were not included.

Air Force Regulation 35-11 emphasizes the link between fitness and mission accomplishment. Unit commanders are provided support at base and major command level in developing and enforcing unit fitness programs. Unit commanders have the option

of using on-duty time for physical conditioning, within operational constraints. Rehabilitative programs are mandated for unfit personnel. Continued individual lack of fitness may be addressed by unit commanders via a wide range of administrative sanctions.

The entire Air Force program appears to be focused on encouraging individuals to accept responsibility for developing fitness and provides individuals with ample information and opportunity to meet their fitness responsibilities. Commanders from major command to unit level are provided extensive flexibility in interpretation of basic regulation requirements. The only real requirement levied upon unit commanders involves the annual fitness evaluation and standard to be used during that annual evaluation.

Review of DoD Directives 1308.1 and 1010.10 and comparison of the requirements established in these directives with the Air Force Fitness Program directive reveal close correlation between the two sources of policy. The Air Force directive implements the minimum requirements of the DoD directives while providing unit commanders with impressive base-level support and maximum flexibility in developing unit fitness programs. The keys to Air Force Fitness Program success are enthusiastic support and enforcement of the program intent and goals at the unit commander level and full acceptance by all Air Force members of their personal responsibility to maintain physical fitness levels commensurate with mission requirements.

## CHAPTER 3

### PHYSICAL FITNESS IN AIR FORCE UNITS

#### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In this chapter, review of three studies concerning the Air Force Fitness Program provides insight into what the authors of those studies believe is or is not being done at unit level. Additionally, the author's experience at unit level as a leader and as a squadron commander fleshes out what is possible, within current Air Force Fitness Program constraints, at the unit level.

The studies reviewed take a dim view of the Air Force Fitness Program, calling upon the Air Force to implement more stringent evaluation standards, increase senior Air Force leadership involvement, increase resourcing of the fitness program in terms of administrators and facilities, and allow more flexibility in fitness evaluation methods.

The author's perception, based upon repeated experience in unit command positions, is that requesting and subsequently receiving more regulation from higher authorities invariably reduces unit commander flexibility and can tend to stifle initiative. Given that AFR 35-11 doesn't prohibit an enhanced fitness program, the author's impression is that a commander may proceed with more stringent fitness initiatives. Availability of time to add in such initiatives may require reprioritization of other unit tasks. When deciding which other tasks are of a lower

priority than fitness, consider those which are less important to wartime mission accomplishment than the increased likelihood of survival provided by enhanced physical fitness. Judicious application of common sense, if available, is strongly advised when unit commanders start exploring such courses of action.

#### STUDIES OF THE AIR FORCE FITNESS PROGRAM

The first study under review was conducted by Air Force Colonel Gerald J. Lopez, while a student at the Army War College for academic year 1986. Please note that Lopez's study was completed prior to publication and implementation of the more stringent evaluation standard reflected in IMC 89-2 to AFR 35-11, in 1989. His study, "Air Force Physical Fitness and Combat Readiness--Myth or Reality?" provides a comprehensive look at the reasons physical fitness is important to individual health; recounts a thorough history of the Air Force Fitness Program; discusses the "Myth of Combat Readiness" over the years; discusses the psychological benefits of fitness; and, covers in great detail physical fitness requirements and methods of meeting these requirements. (24:-- ) His conclusions concerning combat readiness are most pertinent to this current study.

Review of Lopez's conclusions reveal an expectation on his part that the Air Force Fitness Program should produce "...a uniformly high level of fitness among its personnel." (24:103) He notes that the program:

...has undergone considerable 'watering down' since 1972. It is no longer a viable measurement of physical fitness, and the apparent lack of senior leadership support has resulted in the program being treated with benign neglect. (24:103)

Lopez quotes studies and research which clearly show that Air Force personnel are, with some individual exceptions, in a poor state of physical fitness. (24:103-104) He asserts that physical fitness is "...a combat effectiveness multiplier." He then states that, though the Air Force thinks it has a "...finely honed war-fighting capability...", it apparently does not. He also notes that Air Force members may well face wartime scenarios where the enemy is superior in number and all personnel must dramatically increase their mission-related activities, possibly in hostile environments, to sustain the warfighting effort.

Given these conclusions, Lopez provides ten recommendations, most of which relate to improving combat readiness of Air Force personnel through enhanced physical fitness. In his opinion, the most important recommendation is to provide increased leadership "...from the top echelon down to the unit level." (24:107) His second recommendation is to create standards which result in individual fitness commensurate with combat requirements. Within this recommendation he suggests a change from annual to semiannual fitness evaluations; inclusion of strength and endurance evaluations; more stringent 1.5-mile run standards; and, implementation of the proposed [at that time] Enhanced Fitness Program. He asserts that all Air Force personnel must meet a

"...fitness level baseline..." due to the possibilities that those in support career fields may find themselves performing duties in more demanding specialities during wartime. (24:108)

Other recommendations Lopez provides include increasing enforcement of the program via special interest by Inspectors General; mandating (to commanders and supervisors) specific minimum standards for fitness training; identifying incentives which will motivate individuals toward enhanced fitness; making study of Air Force fitness a formal, ongoing enterprise for the purpose of feedback and program improvement over time; designating a single point of contact for Air Force fitness research and meeting semiannually to discuss findings--include sister services to avoid duplication of effort; studying Air Force physical fitness "...during a large-scale exercise that closely approximates the surge requirements of combat conditions..."; studying fitness within the professional military education classes at Air University to "...obtain a cross section of Air Force fitness..."; and, revalidating the 1.5-mile run and the standards for the various age groups. (24:110)

The next study was conducted by Majors Torgeir G. Fadum and R. Allen McReynolds, while they were students in the Air Command and Staff College Class of 1988. Titled "Effectiveness of the Air Force Fitness Program", this study provides particularly useful data concerning the opinions of Air Force active-duty officers and senior noncommissioned officers who were in attendance at in-residence professional military education schools at Maxwell



Air Force Base or Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, in November 1987. (25:--)

Using a survey questionnaire, Fadum and McReynolds obtained responses from 1,252 people, which provided a confidence factor of at least 95 per cent in each respondent category that the survey responses were representative of the population. Of particular note to the present study is that 140 of the respondents had filled command (unit or squadron section) billets. The responses of these commanders deserve review in this study. First, however, Fadum and McReynolds appropriately caution that their survey, while very representative of the Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, Squadron Officer School, and Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy students in residence in November 1987, may not be representative of these students' peer groups in the remainder of the Air Force. (25:3)

While a complete reading of Fadum and McReynold's study is well worth the reader's effort, this paragraph focuses on their conclusions related to the surveyed commanders' opinions about the Air Force Fitness Program. Respondents agreed that the Air Force must have "...an effective physical fitness program to improve...productivity and to ensure ... personnel are fit enough to perform ...wartime duties." (25:29) Survey results show that commanders perceive the Air Force Fitness Program as ineffective, unfair and incomplete in administration. Further, the program fails to "...adequately test physical fitness...and fails to encourage individuals to maintain physical fitness...". (25:29)

The commanders indicated strong support for more stringent aerobic standards, increased testing frequency, and (with less enthusiasm) addition of strength testing. Caveats to these commander's opinions came from the maintenance community, where duty requirements leave little time for mandated fitness training during duty hours.

A note here is appropriate concerning stated reluctance on the part of 49 per cent of the senior noncommissioned officers surveyed to increase standards. Though not pertinent directly to command opinions, the support of senior noncommissioned officers is vital to commanders at the unit level. Two quotations taken from senior noncommissioned officer survey sheets are worthy of quoting again here:

1) "Any change to the current physical fitness program should consider the impact of the change on the senior force structure. Any new program should not have the effect of driving experience and corporate knowledge into retirement in favor of a more physically fit Air Force. Many senior NCOs and officers would be forced to retire, or [would] retire in frustration at being unable to meet stringent new fitness requirements." [SNCOA]

2) "I believe the tightening of physical fitness standards (reduced run times, include push-ups and sit-ups) will cause a number of older Air force personnel in the higher grades (E-8, E-9, O-6, O-7, O-8) to retire. The older personnel would feel they shouldn't have to put up with this after 20 to 30 years [service]. It may cause a void at the top level of leadership and management." (25:23)

The ultimate conclusion drawn from the survey by Fadum and McReynolds was that "...unit commander support is vital, including

the use of duty time." They define support in terms of enthusiasm and personal example on the part of the commander. They also include the need for support "...from the highest levels of the Air Force in order for any physical fitness program to be effective." (25:30)

Using the above conclusions, Fadum and McReynolds provide four recommendations. First, they see a need for more stringent running standards, inclusion of sit-ups and push-ups, and more frequent testing. Along with this recommendation, they caution that gradual implementation is advisable to "...minimize adverse personal reactions to the program and allow people time to work up to the new standards." (25:30)

Their second recommendation is to change Air Force policy to more clearly encourage unit commanders to use duty time for physical training, within mission constraints. The third recommendation involves creation of "...a comprehensive education program to teach personnel about physical fitness." Finally, their fourth recommendation suggests consideration of fitness evaluation methods in addition to the 1.5-mile run "...when feasible, based upon the availability of local facilities and resources." (25:30-31)

The third and final study reviewed by this author was accomplished by U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Brian P. Quarrie while a student in the Air War College Class of 1989. Titled "Air Force Weight and Fitness Programs", this study reviews and compares the weight control and physical fitness policies in DODD

1308.1 and AFR 35-11, then reviews the provisions of U.S. Army, Marine Corps and Navy physical fitness programs.

Quarrie asserts that more emphasis is placed upon the Air Force Weight Management Program than the Air Force Fitness Program and that this emphasis is at odds with the spirit and intent of DODD 1308.1, which emphasizes the primacy of physical fitness programs within the service components. He assesses the Air Force Fitness Program as "...marginally productive...". He blames "...the implementers [who] have compromised the physical fitness efforts by turning it [sic] into the image of an effective performance program." He suggests separation of the weight management and fitness programs into separate documents, which "...could solve the present dilemma." (26:51)

Quarrie concludes that the fitness program is "...in sorry shape." He asserts that the fitness program has evolved over time into just an annual evaluation which "...provides limited feedback...". He goes on to state that:

In the process of implementing the aerobics physical fitness program, the Air force lost the importance of 'training the way you fight' and the importance of testing to validate both the training effect and the fighting capability." (26:59-60)

He recommends "Air Force senior leaderships [sic] intervention..." in defining the fitness role within the Air Force. Lacking such involvement, the policy on fitness represents "...good intentions and ideas... [which]... will only be rhetoric." (26:60)

His second recommendation is to apply the technical training development process known as instructional system development (ISD) to create and implement "...a credible physical fitness program." Quarrie believes the ISD process, which systematically assesses service requirements, training methodologies, resource requirements and valid evaluation methodologies, could be applied to the Air Force fitness program. He suggests that the result of this application of ISD would be a viable fitness program which would ensure the appropriate level of physical fitness of Air Force personnel. (26:64)

One particularly strong caution in Quarrie's paper has to do with, in his opinion, the present unacceptable state of the Air Force Fitness Program:

If the Air Force does not start repairing the shortfalls in personnel physical fitness and Congress discovers them, either through an embarrassing peacetime emergency or during combat, the correction may be mandated. Being forced to confess that the limiting factor in doing our mission is the physical stamina of our personnel and that we knew it but did not implement a viable training program is inexcusable! (26:62)

#### THE AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCES

The author's first and most extensive experiences in the Air Force have been in the security police career field and involve leadership of and responsibility for a few senior noncommissioned officers and a number of enlisted personnel. With increasing rank, the author eventually came to command other officers in addition to the enlisted personnel. The first assignment called

for leadership of 105 personnel, spread across three flights. The last assignment involved responsibility for the supervision and training of approximately 1,000 personnel, both officer and enlisted. Between these two assignments was one "operational" squadron command in the Strategic Air Command and command of a technical training squadron in Air Training Command. The following discussion provides lessons learned, with reference to physical fitness, during the first operational squadron command assignment. The command assignment in Air Training Command included as a key mission task daily physical fitness training of assigned students and was thus atypical of normal Air Force units. For this reason, the ATC command assignment is not discussed, other than to mention that the entry-level students (17-19 years of age) were extremely enthusiastic about the fitness training with surprisingly few exceptions.

Personnel in the Strategic Air Command squadron were used to an annual evaluation, no additional officer or senior noncommissioned officer leadership with regard to expanded physical fitness, and a fairly active intramural base sports program in which at most a tenth of the squadron was involved. Of the six squadron officers subordinate to the commander, four were capable of passing the 1.5-mile run evaluation and two could not. Most of the senior noncommissioned officers were unable to pass the 1.5-mile run standard, but all were able to pass the 3-mile walk (a few just barely).

The author decided to initiate an enhanced fitness program to

ensure all squadron personnel (including security police, administrators and on-the-job training specialists) attained fitness levels commensurate with surviving and completing mission requirements under adverse situations which could arise in times of natural disaster, contingencies or war. Considerations investigated before initiating the program included:

1) What aerobic and strength programs presently available logically fit with the squadron's mission?

2) Are the available programs well-documented in terms of research and medical acceptability?

3) Which programs fit within the squadron and available base resources?

4) Will the staff judge advocate support implementation of a well-documented, enhanced fitness program?

5) Will the director of base medical services support implementation of a well-documented, enhanced physical fitness program?

6) Will the base and wing commanders support an enhanced physical fitness program?

7) Will the squadron officers and senior noncommissioned officers support an enhanced physical fitness program?

8) Over what time period should implementation of the program take place to minimize injuries to unfit squadron members while at the same time allowing identification and removal of those individuals not medically or attitudinally capable of success in the enhanced program?

The U.S. Army physical fitness program, as described and documented in Army Field Manual 21-20 was selected (including the Army fitness evaluation standards) as logical, well-documented and feasible given squadron and base resources. The Army fitness evaluation requires a timed 2-mile run, plus completion of as many push-ups in two minutes and sit-ups in two minutes as possible. The results of the run, push-ups and sit-ups are compared to a table to identify each individual's point score on each measured area. Passing was based upon achieving at least 60 points in each of the three areas.

The standard was provided to both the staff judge advocate and the director of base medical services for review and comment. Both offices suggested a six-month implementation period and fully supported the use of the Army Physical Fitness Program within the security police squadron. The staff judge advocate advised compliance with the annual 1.5-mile run mandated in AFR 35-11, in addition to the Army program.

After legal and medical support was received, the proposed use of the Army Physical Fitness Program was discussed with the base and wing commanders. They enthusiastically supported the idea, including use of on-duty time, where feasible, to conduct physical conditioning. Both commanders basically said, "It is your squadron, do what you think is right and let us know what support you need."

The next step involved discussion of the enhanced fitness program with the squadron's officers and senior noncommissioned



officers to solicit their feedback and concurrence. Four of the six officers enthusiastically supported the idea. The two unfit officers were very adamant about the "fact" that an enhanced fitness program was certainly illegal, unfair, medically dangerous and probably a violation of the uniform code of military justice. The attitudes displayed by these two unfit officers were, for the most part, mirrored and magnified by the senior noncommissioned officers. Several noncommissioned officers nearly threatened to quit, whatever that meant, before they regained their composure. Fortunately none of these key supervisors attempted to undermine the program by inciting the airmen under their leadership in any way.

After reassuring the skeptics that the enhanced program was legal, medically sound, well within the intent of the Air Force Fitness Program and enthusiastically supported at the base and wing commander levels, discussions were directed at how best to implement the enhanced program. There was no further question at the author's level as to whether or not to implement the enhanced program, just questions regarding the best way to transition into the program.

The challenges to be addressed in working out implementation of the enhanced fitness program included:

- 1) How to implement the program fairly, given that fully a quarter of the squadron personnel worked a standard day shift, while the remaining three-quarters of the squadron worked eight hour shifts, around the clock, providing base law enforcement and

security services every day of the year.

2) How to allow personnel performing rapid response duties the on-duty exercise opportunities or equivalent privileges allowed office workers and support personnel.

3) How to implement a running program in a climate where temperatures were typically between zero and twenty-five degrees Fahrenheit for over half the year, with snow on the ground for most of that time frame.

4) Determining how often measurement of the individual and overall squadron fitness levels should be measured.

5) Determining how to best document and track squadron and individual fitness program progress and provide feedback to squadron personnel.

6) How best to reward superior achievement levels or individual progress, as well as squadron achievements as a unit.

7) How best to handle injuries during unit fitness evaluations.

8) How best to document and eliminate unfit personnel with medical or attitudinal problems.

Rather than discussing the details involved in resolving each of the above questions, it suffices to say that each of these challenges was resolved. Frequently the solutions were provided through innovative suggestions from the junior enlisted personnel, who were given continuous opportunity to take part in the squadron enhanced fitness program development during the six-month implementation period.

The program, in its final form, was enthusiastically supported by the vast majority of the squadron. Evaluation using the Army standard was conducted monthly immediately following commander's call, regardless of weather. The rationale here was that security police personnel are expected to perform their duties under all weather conditions, so a bit of running and exercise outside should be easy.

The wise senior noncommissioned officers stopped smoking, started exercising regularly and after six months grudgingly admitted they liked the results. One of the two unfit officers left the Air Force and the other exercised just enough to pass the monthly evaluations. Due to the size and duty commitments of the squadron, three commander's calls per month were required to ensure all personnel were given the opportunity to subsequently run with the commander. Additionally, all officers and senior noncommissioned officers were required to take part in at least one of the evaluations each month. The author took part in all monthly evaluations. No exceptions were made to the evaluations unless written medical profiles were presented by individuals, and they were tested as soon as the profile expired and medical clearance was granted. This policy dovetailed nicely with the requirements of the personnel reliability program under which the squadron was managed.

The results of the enhanced program were gratifying. The younger squadron members welcomed the program from the outset and the more senior members became believers within the six-month

implementation period. The enthusiasm with which on-duty law enforcement and security forces responded to exercise and actual emergencies and contingencies was gratifying. Unfortunately, no data reflecting pre- and post-program fitness evaluation times was collected. The squadron's sports teams took first or second place in intramural sports almost without exception.

From a squadron commander point of view, the unit's improved duty performance was gratifying and accepting the many intramural sports trophies won by squadron teams was memorable. The visible improvement in unit morale and pride was great, but the knowledge that the squadron personnel would be more likely to survive in war was truly the biggest payoff. The fact that none of the personnel were injured during the implementation phase and when the enhanced program was fully implemented was also noteworthy.

The concept of rewarding superior performance or dramatic improvement on the fitness evaluations turned out to be of minimal value. Those that achieved perfect scores on the tests were able to do so nearly from the outset and most of the other individuals never aspired to achieve those levels. So many of the squadron personnel achieved dramatic improvements that recognition by major subunit became necessary and became a bit diluted. Through discussions with the airmen on the flights, who were the target of incentive programs, they saw no logical reason for rewards. They accepted enhanced fitness requirements as a reasonable part of their duty requirements. This enthusiasm for and acceptance of the enhanced fitness program was reflected not only in the

security police ranks but also among the squadron administrative personnel and the on-the-job training monitor. In fact, this smaller group of non-security police people stated that they felt more a part of the squadron as a result of being included in the enhanced fitness program. Many voiced frustration that the program was not implemented sooner.

Support from the base and wing commanders was superb and both provided regular positive feedback concerning the visible improvement in the morale and appearance of squadron personnel. When the need for round-the-clock access to the base gymnasium became necessary for the shift workers, the base commander tasked the morale, welfare and recreation staff to train selected squadron noncommissioned officers to supervise use of the equipment in the gym and this became a no-cost, self-policing option.

A side comment worthy of note is the fact that, once the enhanced fitness program was implemented the squadron then embarked on more realistic and strenuous exercises during duty time and training time. These exercises were oriented on the security police mission during contingencies. The enthusiastic support by the squadron personnel was not very surprising. One tangible reward for the increased exercise realism was improved ratings during higher headquarters inspections.

Gen Chain, Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command apparently agrees with the concept of holding commanders (and senior leaders) responsible for physical fitness. In

conversations with two members of Gen Chain's staff in February 1990, the author discovered that CINCSAC requires senior SAC leaders at the major command, air division and wing levels to lead healthy life-styles. Specifically, personnel selected for these key positions may not smoke, must have blood cholesterol levels below 200mg/DL, and should expect to spend time doing some form of aerobic exercise whenever attending conferences at SAC headquarters. Rumors from SAC units indicate this very clear interest on CINCSAC's part is clearly felt at unit level, where enhanced fitness programs are being tested and where personnel are fully aware of unit command interest in ensuring the physical fitness of all personnel.

SUMMARY

The primary lesson learned by the author during the process of implementing and evaluating an enhanced fitness program at the squadron level is that AFR 35-11 provides plenty of flexibility in terms of the levels of fitness training a unit commander may want to achieve within his unit. Additionally, the younger unit personnel welcome enhanced fitness training and all unit personnel eventually accept and support such training and standards. Command and supervisory involvement is absolutely essential.

The author's experience thus validates the concerns voiced by the other Air Force officers quoted in the studies reviewed in this chapter. If one accepts the Air Force evaluation standard as the Air Force fitness program and requires nothing more of subordinates, then the level of fitness of those subordinates

will, for the majority, be very low.

Where the author parts company with those officers previously reviewed is in levying responsibility for lack of fitness at the unit level. The flexibility exists within the Air Force Fitness Program for innovation and enhanced fitness programs which would ensure the fitness foundation necessary to survival in high-stress environments, such as war. The unit commander is responsible, per AFR 35-11, for ensuring the fitness of assigned personnel. Failure to meet this responsibility certainly appears to be a failure at the unit command level. Such failure places unit personnel at risk both in terms of inability to survive and inability to complete the mission.

The other authors recommend, among other things, more regulatory guidance mandating more stringent standards and more frequent testing. This approach fails to recognize the opportunities and flexibility inherent in the current Air Force Fitness Program. Additionally, making recommendations which require additional funding, personnel or facilities may well be a waste of time given constrained budgets which occur within the Department of Defense.

The positive approach to the Air Force Fitness Program at the unit command level worked for this author; logically, it could work in any squadron.

However, the survey by Fadum and McReynolds points out that at the unit level there may well be a general trend toward meeting minimum fitness levels as the sum total of units' fitness

programs. Both Lopez and Quarrie also cite lack of physical fitness within Air Force units as typical. Finally, recalling the author's experience in Air Training Command, students who came from field units for advanced technical training involving stringent fitness requirements more frequently failed due to lack of prior conditioning than to academic deficiencies. Failures of minimum fitness standards in these courses by unit personnel on temporary duty to technical training were not unusual.

Thus, if Air Force senior leaders intend that Air Force personnel are in sufficiently good physical condition to survive and perform well in combat, there is some question as to whether this intent has been achieved. In other words, the data presented by Fadum and McReynolds, if taken as even partially applicable to the Air Force at large, reveals that the senior Air Force leaders' intent has not been achieved in all Air Force units.

The senior leadership involvement in physical fitness and wellness within the Strategic Air Command appears to support the contention that such involvement can facilitate unit commander efforts at the squadron level to emphasize and support the fitness of their subordinates. Gen Chain's program is noteworthy because of its comprehensive nature and, unfortunately, because it is unique within the Air Force in terms of senior leadership support for physical fitness.



In Chapter 4 conclusions are presented as to why the vision from the top doesn't match the tactics at unit level. Recommendations are also provided concerning possible solutions to the disconnect.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of the studies reviewed in Chapter 3 consistently identify lack of a stringent Air Force Fitness Program and insufficient senior leadership emphasis on physical fitness as the primary causes for generally low levels of fitness within the Air Force. This author disagrees with their conclusions.

If senior leaders are to be blamed for anything, the offense would more appropriately be that of failing to hold commanders accountable for the fitness of Air Force personnel. Perhaps even that conclusion is a bit strong, if senior Air Force leaders are not aware of the generally low level of fitness within the military ranks of the Air Force. If the problem is one of lack of awareness at the senior Air Force level, then these senior leaders might well be blamed for being out of touch.

Whatever the reasons may be, there is strong evidence that too many Air Force military members are not sufficiently physically fit to safely accomplish their Air Force missions when faced with the additional stresses of natural disaster, contingencies or war. Assuming that this author's interpretation of senior Air Force leadership intent is correct and senior leaders want a truly fit force, then the conclusion that the force is not fit is noteworthy. If this conclusion is valid, then the recommendation by Congressman Girgrich that senior policymakers check their visions or policies against the tactics or actual results at the lowest levels has been justified. Now the question

remains, what should be done and by what Air Force office or agency?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

If senior Air Force leaders expect the personnel at unit level to successfully perform assigned missions during war, these leaders must select unit commanders who are willing and able to lead their assigned personnel to the requisite level of fitness. Senior leaders must then absolutely hold these unit commanders responsible for the physical fitness of their units. If senior leaders do not hold their subordinate commanders accountable in this key area of physical fitness, the rigors of combat may well sort unfit commanders and their unfit subordinates out very quickly. Unfortunately, if enough commanders and units are not sufficiently fit to survive and win in combat, the entire country may have to pay the ultimate price.

Gen Chain, Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Air Command holds commanders (and senior leaders) responsible for physical fitness. In commands where such clear senior officer interest is not as evident, unit commanders are well advised to take full advantage today of the flexibility allowed by AFR 35-11 to develop enhanced fitness programs for themselves and their units. Those who choose to accept the present Air Force fitness evaluation standard as their fitness program and those who choose to await more stringent standards from above should read the very short report of the Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, subject "Adequacy of U.S. Marine Corps

Security in Beirut." (27:--) One comment found in the report and voiced by Representative Dan Daniel of Virginia is particularly pertinent to the topic of command responsibility:

...when an officer accepts command of troops, he accepts not only the responsibility of accomplishing a mission, but the guardianship of those who serve under his command. The military hierarchy exists and can function because enlisted personnel entrust their well-being and their lives to those with command authority. When those in command either abdicate that authority or neglect that guardianship, more is lost than lives. Lost also is the trust that enables those who follow to follow those who lead." (27:48)

Those readers who aspire to command or are now commanders would do well to realize that if confronted with unfit subordinates and a need to accomplish the mission under stressful conditions, they may well have to explain to Congress why their personnel were unprepared for the mission. In the case of the Beirut bombing, plenty of Congressional blame was levied upon the entire chain of command above the unit commander on scene, but that unit commander was officially identified as primarily responsible for the inadequate preparations which allowed the deaths of those under his command.

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