

**The Selection and Initial Training
of
The USAF Pararescue Specialist**

Men have reported for training who were not of the right caliber mentally or physically. This resulted in the expenditure of time, money, and effort to no avail. If a man is not qualified mentally and physically, he is liable to injure himself or cause injury to others, or at some point in his training refuse to continue. If injuries and waste of time money and effort are to be held to a minimum, it is desirable we identify having the right type of trainee before putting the individual into training where most injury is sustained or refusal to continue training occurs. This is why the USAF Pararescue Specialty has had a selection process since 1947 to identify job candidates who have the abilities and attitudes needed to help commanders achieve their mission objectives.

- The avoidance of injury depends on the individual's ability to think fast, to learn the proper technique, and to make his/her muscles obey his/her mind.
- The clumsy, athletically inept person is an injury or loss of limb and life liability to themselves and others. This individual becomes the weakest link causing inability for a team or unit to safely engage into and accomplish mission objectives.
 - The person who permits his/her fear reactions to make him/her forget what he/she has learned cannot be trained successfully.
 - If an individual is prone to surrendering to his/her fear reactions when dealing with an unexpected and immediate emergency situation, this pre-identifiable faulty physique will eventually become the cause of faulty technique and undesirable decision resulting in injury, loss of life, and unsuccessful mission accomplishment.
 - Mental fitness is necessary for total fitness and this includes having a good work ethic and other traits pertaining to moral competence.
 - The possibility that eventually there may many avoidable claims for injuries received while training cannot be overlooked.
- Injury on-the-job and refusal to continue to do hazardous service when it comes time to accomplish a mission is lessened by better discipline with specific reference to Physical Fitness standards must sustain to remain certified to do the mission.

- Prevention of injury is why retention of awarded Pararescue AFSC is dependent on each individual demonstrating annually the ability to meet minimum personal physical fitness qualification standards that are more demanding than standards the Air Force prescribes as a fitness standard.
- Although specific testing methods and administration of fitness testing have changed since 1947, the job requirement of pararescue personnel must sustain adequate physical condition to perform and do safely has not changed.
- USAF Pararescue policy in place since 1947 is all pararescuemen must have endurance, strength, and overall physical coordination to successfully accomplish any SAR and CSAR mission.
- The physical and behavior requirements recruits must possess are absolutely determined by the training necessary to become qualified to do pararescue duties and are driven by realistic expectations of what is encountered accomplishing the mission once they obtain entry level mission ready qualification.
- Individuals can possess outstanding physical and mental fitness but lack and always-will-lack the physical ability to do the job.
- Human beings, male or female, can carry up to one-third of their body weight almost indefinitely. The typical combat load for the light infantry soldier is 50 to 70 pounds. Consequently, the minimum physical requirement to do this job is an individual weighing 150 pounds and in good or better physical shape.
- AF Weight Charts prescribe minimum height for this weight requirement as 59" (4'11") for potential male recruits and 65" (5'5") for female recruits. Unfortunately, max weight indicates a "certainly so" lack of adequate physical condition to perform. Duties performed indicate the desired recruit be male, at least 65" (5'5") tall and weigh at least 150 pounds.
- Heat loss faced is a significant problem pertaining to cold-water immersion (combat/rescue swimmer duties) and working in cool to cold outdoor environments for long periods. Rates of body cooling (hypothermia) depend upon subcutaneous fat thickness and body shape. One obstacle women face in these situations is that they often get colder than men do. Blood vessels near the surface of women's skin constrict sooner, and to a higher degree, than men's do at the same temperature. As a result, women feel cold quicker, particularly in their extremities and on the surface of their skin. In addition, while women have a higher

percentage of heat-conserving fatty tissue, they have less muscle mass and so do not create as much body heat when exercising. Working environment indicates the desirable recruit more capable of dealing with tempura extremes is individuals of the male gender.

- Military parachuting, static line accomplished with the typical combat load (a lesser degree and HALO to a higher degree, and HAHO to the greatest degree subjects the parachutists to G-forces exceeding what AF Flight Surgeons consider acceptable to the neck and the head. Considering also the typical combat load puts significant injury risk on landing it becomes more desirable the individual has the physical requirements to carry this weight and have the best physical and athletic fitness conditioning if injuries during training and missions are to be held at a minimum. These hazardous duties indicate the male gender is more likely to accomplish training and the mission without injury.
- Gender differences do have pertinent hygiene and sanitation issues requiring consideration. The standard being doing the job equally means being present and available to do the job equally.
- Many people do not understand link between poor hygiene and sanitation and the increased occurrence of disease in the field.
- Non-Menstrual requirements are no different from males, but the military medical community recommends menstruating women take a daily bird bath and if possible shower every third day.
- Embarrassment over the subject of urinating and having a bowel movement in the field when no latrine facility exists is a problem. Women having no access to a latrine may have strong desire to wait until dark to go to the bathroom or might decide they have to walk long distances away from team and perimeter to find an isolated spot. This exposes them to the danger of sexual harassment, assault and animal attacks, from whomever or whatever is in the immediate local area. Men have greater freedom to go to the bathroom in the field as the male anatomy does not cause need to disrobe and expose themselves as much as the female's anatomy does to urinate.
- Holding and retaining an AFSC having with it the requirement of must sustain mission ready or capable qualifications bring other gender problems that impact unit's ability to sustain combat readiness.

- The female gender (sex) into the mix that has the potential to be off the job for 9 months, due to pregnancy and the training needed to regain proficiency and mission ready qualification. This means others have to pick up the operation workload during this time.
- The smaller the force structure and the greater percentage inclusion of female gender in the team mix increases the eventual possibility to likely probability units will lack sufficient qualified mission ready team members, jumpmasters, or team leaders because too many women are pregnant at overlapping periods of time in the different units.
- Gender difference is not an absolute exclusion from opportunity factor. It is an issue requiring addressing policy to prevent mission impairment and stoppage at the unplanned immediate time of need.

RECOMMENDATION: Any consideration to remove medical qualification requirements from the USAF Pararescue AFSC and putting Flight Surgeons, Flight Nurses, and aeromedical technicians on CSAR aircraft to provide medical treatment capabilities currently being provided by pararescue must consider why and how individuals are currently selected and trained to provide pararescue capabilities in the combat rescue role and mission. Pararescue's method of training and sustaining current qualification capabilities is a time proven "can do" success bringer to combatant commanders. How acceptable is to the combatant commanders to destroy and break, this capability for purposes of providing a problematic politically correct opportunity solution to an imagined problem that selection standards were put in place to unfairly exclude. The training and qualification standards are not unrealistic and do not lack legitimate doing the job purpose. The selection and training process exists because success doing the role and mission requires it.