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NTOA SWAT PFQ

BY GREG AMUNDSON

As Physical Fitness Section Chair for the NTOA, my first priority was to enlist a cadre of operators and trainers, the best of the best, to serve as subject matter experts in the field of functional fitness for law enforcement application. The consensus at our first meeting was to create the nation's first unified assessment and selection test for tactical operators. In my 15 years as an instructor of functional fitness for law enforcement departments and SWAT teams, I have seen firsthand the wide range of tests that departments have employed to determine the suitability of an officer for entry onto a tactical team. My observations included the following:

- All the tests were different, measured different things and defined operational fitness in a variety of ways.
- Teams within the same general jurisdiction were often radically divergent in their fitness levels, frequently a direct result of what their respective test was measuring.
- It was increasingly difficult for various teams to speak about a unified, objective and measurable level of fitness that was appropriate for special operators.

With these observations in mind, the SME team hit the ground running in developing a “beta version” of the nation's first unified SWAT Physical Fitness Qualifications (PFQ) Test. Our goal for the test was to

create a recommended fitness standard with universal applications for all SWAT operators. This standard would include functional movement, specific regulation and recovery techniques, and utilize mission-purposed skills that were varied and of high intensity. The fundamental purpose of this standard was to holistically improve the longevity, safety and effectiveness of SWAT operators, therefore influencing use of force, lessening injury, and increasing operational readiness for mission accomplishment.

HISTORY

The NTOA SWAT PFQ Test was influenced by the proven SWAT assessment and selection tests of the Los Angeles Police Department, the Santa Monica Police Department, and the St. Lucie (Florida) County Sheriff's Office. The SME team utilized the structure of the original tests with unique modifications to the allotted amount of time each operator would have to achieve repetitions or “points.” This type of test or evolution is referred to as AMRAP (As Many Repetitions As Possible) and encourages maximum effort and a clear system of scoring. Additionally, the test was designed to meet the needs of a variety of SWAT teams from across the nation, with considerations to minimal equipment, space, and time.

Of significant importance to the SME team in developing the PFQ was the vision that SWAT teams



PFQ TESTS

- **800-meter run**
Slick – training uniform and boots
- **400-meter run**
With 20lb. kit, two 25lb. objects in hand and gas mask
- **Burpees**
Slick – training uniform and boots
- **Squats**
With 20lb. kit and gas mask
- **Pull-ups**
Slick – training uniform and boots

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This test intentionally is very challenging and may require gradual on ramping, evolution-specific training, and preparation in order for operators to be successful. In other words, this test will test you.

would find greater cohesion, esprit de corps, and unity through the collective national standard on operational levels of physical fitness. We hope that all sworn members of a department would be inspired by the new standard of the SWAT team, and thus feel motivated to increase their own physical fitness abilities and expectations. This chain reaction would effectively create an atmosphere of fitness excellence and greater community relations.

This test intentionally is very challenging and may require gradual (six months to a year) on ramping, evolution-specific training, and preparation in order for operators to be successful. In other words, this test will test you.

SCOPE OF THE TEST

The NTOA is dedicated to the safety, effectiveness and well-being of all operators around the United States, and internationally. Fitness is a key component to this overall mission. Personal physical fitness (regardless of age, gender, or rank) can ensure that all operators maintain their highest level of operational readiness. This directly leads to decreasing chances of injury or sickness, and helps to control both agency-funded health care costs and workers' compensation expense claims. Most importantly, this leads to increased operator safety and effectiveness and is the primary reason for creating a fitness standard. The PFQ is intended to meet and exceed that standard in every foreseeable way.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

A standard provides operators a threshold to measure capability and capacity. Operators work in an environment that is inherently unknowable, tense, and rapidly evolving. Operational fitness, which includes endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance and accuracy, increases both an operator's capability and capacity. "Capability" refers to performance against a known variable, whereas "capacity" refers to performance against an unknown variable. In this sense, both capacity and capability are instrumental for operators to train for and achieve excellence in. High levels of operational capability and capacity foster adaptability, increase confidence and maximize the effectiveness of a team's ability to deploy against situations when "the cops need help."

With input taken from subject matter experts within various law enforcement agencies around the nation, the tests (which require nothing more than traditional SWAT gear and very limited equipment) have been developed to measure an operator's fitness. These specific tests, done in order of large to small muscle groups, and combined with the related scoring system, were designed to gauge both capacity and capability. (See PFQ tests on page 62.)

The NTOA PFQ is applicable, measurable and standardized, and designed to be fully integrated into a SWAT team's yearly cycle of fitness assessment. Your participation in the test, in addition to submitting individual and team results, will significantly help the SME team in further solidifying and refining the test.

Remember to train as if your life depends on it — because it does!

To access the testing protocols and implementation materials, and to input test scores to NTOA, please visit ntoa.org/pfq.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Amundson is a former DEA Special Agent and U.S. Army Captain. He is a Krav Maga Black Belt and Honor Graduate of the Los Angeles Police Department Handgun Instructor School (HITS). Amundson currently serves as a Chaplain and Reserve Deputy for the Santa Cruz Harbor Patrol in Santa Cruz, CA. In addition to his law enforcement work, Greg is a four-time #1 bestselling author in Christian theology and doctrine, and a graduate student at Western Theological Seminary in San Jose, CA.

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