



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAR 30 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS

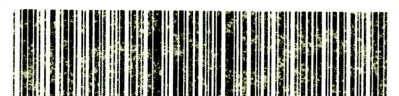
SUBJECT: Combat Arms Standards

The United States military's strength is rooted in its unwavering commitment to high standards that foster discipline, unity, and purpose. It is these principles that have made our fighting force the most formidable in the world. As the nature of warfare evolves and the demands on our Service members grow more complex, it is imperative that we assess and refine the physical fitness standards that enable our readiness and lethality.

I am directing the Secretaries of the Military Departments to develop comprehensive plans to distinguish combat arms occupations from non-combat arms occupations. This effort will ensure that our standards are clear, mission-focused, and reflective of the unique physical demands placed on our Service members in various roles.

Combat Arms vs. Non-Combat Arms Occupations. The Military Department's plans must clearly define combat arms occupations and non-combat arms occupations. Additionally, for certain combat arms roles, it is essential to identify which positions require heightened entry-level and sustained physical fitness. These roles, which are critical to our military's mission success, demand exceptional physical capabilities, and the standards for them must reflect that rigor. Therefore, plans must address:

1. **Ground Combat Occupations.** Standards for ground combat occupations should emphasize the ability to carry heavy loads, endure prolonged physical exertion, and perform effectively in austere, hostile environments. Service members in these roles must exhibit speed, strength, agility, and endurance to navigate the demands of combat situations.
2. **Special Operations Forces (SOF) Occupations.** The standards for SOF occupations must be equally rigorous, incorporating advanced swimming, climbing, parachuting, and the ability to operate in extreme environments. Sustained peak physical performance is essential to execute missions of the highest stakes across diverse and challenging terrains.
3. **Specialized Occupations.** For specialized occupations like Navy Divers and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians, the focus should be on proficiency in those unique and demanding tasks such as aquatic rescue, repair, and demolition. Sustained endurance is necessary to tackle long hours in physically and mentally taxing conditions.



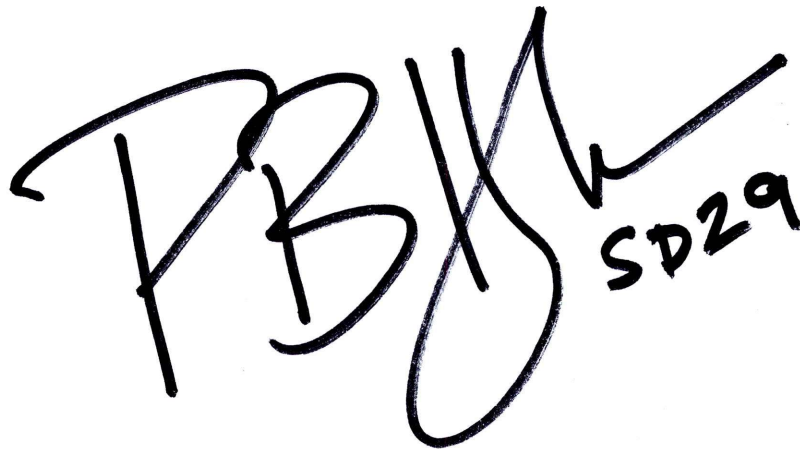
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Sex-Neutral Standards. All entry-level and sustained physical fitness requirements within combat arms positions must be sex-neutral, based solely on the operational demands of the occupation and the readiness needed to confront any adversary. In establishing those standards, the Secretaries of the Military Departments may not establish standards that would result in any existing Service member being held to a lower standard. *

To ensure the effectiveness of these plans, I am directing the Secretaries of the Military Departments to submit their proposals to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) within 60 days of this memorandum. The Secretaries of the Military Departments will provide an interim update on the development of their plan to the USD(P&R) within 30 days. The USD(P&R) has the authority to provide additional direction based on the interim update.

Full implementation of these plans must occur within six months of submission. This initiative aligns with my broader directive to maintain uncompromising and clear standards that ensure the continued dominance of our military.

This review is a necessary step to strengthening the readiness of our forces and preparing for the future. It will demonstrate how our department continually adapts to meet evolving challenges and ensure operational excellence. I trust in your commitment to upholding the principles that define us as the world's most lethal and effective fighting force.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RBJ'. To the right of the signature, the initials 'SD29' are written in a similar style. A short arrow points from the 'SD29' towards the signature.

* no existing standard will be lowered in this process.