Afghanistan Pre-Deployment Training Program

This program is designed to build your legs and lungs in preparation for deployment to the steep, rocky environment down range in Afghanistan.

It is also designed to use minimal equipment, and thus be utilized to train up personnel without access to full featured gyms, bunches of equipment, and/or personnel who have little lifting experience.

This is a 6-week long program and makes the assumption that athletes will be training 5 days/week, yielding 30 total training sessions.

The program is build around the following exercises and activities:

**DOT Drill** - The DOT drill is a basic-level plyometric drill used in collegiate and high school weight rooms across the country. It serves as a great warm up. Also, it helps build ankle and knee joint strength, key for hiking and rucking over uneven terrain.

**Leg Blasters** - Leg Blasters are an intense, body weight only, lower body complex of exercises which builds incredible leg strength, and lactate tolerance. Also, we’ve found it key to building eccentric leg strength. Down range, you’ll be climbing plenty of steep hills, but you’ll also be hiking down them. Coming down forces your legs to work eccentrically, and can lead to crippling soreness in the early weeks. Leg Blasters will help you prepare for this.

Just because Leg Blasters use only body weight, don’t discount their effectiveness in building strength. In my gym we did a 6-week cycle heavy in Leg Blasters and subsequently tested front squat max lifts shortly afterward. The max effort front squat for nearly all my athletes increased. These things are incredible.

Note: Midway into the training program you’ll be doing full Leg Blasters with just 30 seconds rest in between. Thirty seconds rest is just that, 30 seconds, not a second more. Don’t milk the rest! (Sorry about the fire in your legs ....)

**Step Ups** - Step ups are a basic, butt-kicking single mode exercise used to build sport-specific climbing leg strength and cardio in a controlled, gym environment. During this program, expect to do thousands of step ups with a 40# pack. This is the primary exercise I’ll use to get your legs and lungs ready for long patrols in hilly Afghanistan.
300m Sprint - This sprint is divided up into twelve, 25m lengths. The athlete shuttles back and forth between two cones, 25m apart for 6 round trips (12x lengths). Sprinting is a key survival fitness attribute for military athletes facing combat, and the 300m sprint will help build leg strength and anaerobic endurance in a very sport-specific way. By the end of this program, you’ll be doing six 300m sprints in a full kit and helmet.

Sandbag Getup - We’ve found that core strength is a huge determinate of performance. Even more important, a strong mid section protects vulnerable limbs. I’m using this exercise to make you not only strong, but durable. The sandbag getup is an old school, basic exercise which builds core strength like no other, plus it makes you breathe like mother. Expect to do hundreds of these with an 80# sandbag.

Tabata Calf Raises - One of the first muscles to fatigue when hiking steep hills is the calf muscles. We use the Tabata interval protocol and calf raises to help strength your calves. The Tabata protocol is a 4-minute long interval of 8 rounds, 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest. Tabata Calf Raises are 20 seconds continuous, rapid calf raises, un loaded, for 20 seconds, followed by 10 seconds in a holding “rest” position up on your toes (it’s really not a “rest.”)

1/4 Tabata Calf Raises would be just 1-minute long, or 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest.

1/2 Tabata Calf Raise would be 2-minutes long, or 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, etc.

Upper Body Strength Endurance - One thing you’ll notice about this programming is you won’t be spending much time doing upper body training. We’ve purposely limited upper body work to a circuit of strict pull ups, dips and push ups, which double in volume over the course of the program. Why the limitation? Because you won’t be climbing hills in Afghanistan on your hands. Everything begins and ends with the legs. We put our attention here.

Rucking - You’ll be doing bunches of rucking down range, and nothing will prepare you for rucking like rucking. On the other hand, too much rucking can lead to nagging joint and other overuse injuries. You’ll ruck once a week on this program, in a full kit, helmet, carrying a weapon, with an extra 25# in a ruck sack.

We’ve kept the total volume of rucking down, but continually amp up the intensity. Note also that we are not loading you super heavy and we understand that you may carry much greater loads down range. We are seeking a balance here. Our aim is to get you strong for your deployment, not break you down before you get there.

When possible, ruck over broken, uneven, hilly terrain.

Distance Running - You’ll run relatively short distances at a moderate pace on this program. Moderate pace distance running will help build your aerobic base, add durability to the connective tissue in your joints, and work to flush out the lactic acid and other waste products from your sore legs and other muscles.

Pacing - For the purposes of rucking and running in this program, we prescribe two paces. Here are their definitions:

“Moderate Pace” - Comfortable, but not easy
“Threshold Pace” - Fastest pace you can hold without straining.

Mobility Drills - Included in the program are two hip mobility drills we use; HAM, and HUG.
EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- 25# Dumbbells
- 80# Sandbag. Watch this to build one - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j6yE8LbQTg
- 16-19” Box, bench, stool or whatever for step ups
- Watch with second hand or countdown timer (Timex is best)

EXERCISE DESCRIPTIONS:

**30/5/30 Sean Special** - 30 second side bridge, 5x push ups, 30 second side bridge, other side

60 Second Ab Bridge Complex - 20 second side bridge, 20 second front bridge, 20 second side bridge, other side.

**Plank Walk up** - Get into a front plank position, on toes and elbows, then “walk up” onto your right hand, and then left until you’re in the push up position. Then “walk” back down into the plank position. Repeat rapidly for the allotted time. Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLXCa0-BV24

**Leg Blaster**: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyfWQLWSMX4

- **Full Leg Blaster** = 20x air squats +
  - 20x in-place lunges (10x each leg) +
  - 20x jumping lunges (10x each leg) +
  - 10x squat jumps

- **Mini Leg Blaster** = 10x air squats +
  - 10x in-place lunges (5x each leg) +
  - 10x jumping lunges (5x each leg) +
  - 5x squat jumps

**Step Ups** - Step up onto a 16-19” box, bench or step. Each foot counts as one rep, so 50x step ups = 25x each foot. Come to complete knee lock out at the top, and both feet must be touching the ground between reps. Alternate feet each rep. These suck, but work. They will prepare you well for hiking uphill. Here’s an example: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lvVE35-Gpw

**300m Sprint** - Set a cone or other marker down on flat ground and step out 25m. Set down another cone or marker. At “go” sprint back and forth between the cones for 12 lengths or 6x round trips. Touch the ground at each cone. This is 300m.

You’ll be doing a 300m sprint every 2.5 minutes. This means the faster you finish, the more rest you get before starting the next rep.

Not only are we training your sprinting ability and anaerobic endurance, but also your ability to recover, and sprint again.

**Sandbag Getup** - The exercise starts standing, with the sandbag on one shoulder. Lay down, then “get up” any way you can. Come to complete standing, with both feet shoulder width apart. You’ll be doing these for time. Switch shoulders as needed.
Here’s a video of some Air Force JTACs doing our Operator Ugly fitness test in Boulder, CO. The fitness test includes 300m sprints and 80# sandbag getups: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCbVMrkhXI

**HUG - Hip Mobility Drill:** Side lunge, plus prisoner stretch, plus pigeon stretch.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gle5HaV65Rc

**HAM - Hip Mobility Drill:** instep stretch, hip drop, pigeon stretch, frog stretch, 5x duck walks. “1/2 HAM” means do just one leg, and alternate legs each round.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EANtKWs73zE

**DOT Drill:**  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwyxy3wDfp8  

**Scotty Bob** - Push up on 25# dumbbells, right hand row, push up, left hand row = 1 rep.  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB3kUpDgXFU

**Tabata Calf Raises** - The Tabata protocol is a 4-minute long interval of 8 rounds, 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest. Tabata Calf Raises are 20 seconds continuous, rapid calf raises, un loaded, for 20 seconds, followed by 10 seconds in a holding “rest” position up on your toes (it’s really not a “rest.”) 

- **1/4 Tabata Calf Raise** would be just 1-minute long, or 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest.

- **1/2 Tabata Calf Raise** would be 2-minutes long, or 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, 20 sec. work, 10 sec. rest, etc.

**PROGRESSING THROUGH THE PROGRAM**

This program is set up to be completed sequentially. Exercises and volumes build as it progresses, so don’t skip around. Start at the beginning, or if you have less time or already very fit, start into it a week or two, and then do the sessions in order until finished from there.

Again, we are assuming a 5 day/week training schedule. Try not to train on the weekends.

Sessions 1, 6, 11, 16, 21 and 26 are the first session of each week’s training.

If you are doing the program Monday through Friday, here is what your schedule will look like:

- **Monday** - DOT Drill and Step Ups  
- **Tuesday** - Distance run, moderate pace  
- **Wednesday** - Sandbag Getups and Leg Blasters  
- **Thursday** - Ruck in kit, with 25# in ruck sack, carrying weapon  
- **Friday** - 300m sprints and Calf Tabatas

Questions? Good Luck!

- Rob Shaul, 307-200-1968, rob@militaryathlete.com, June 15, 2009
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Afghanistan Pre-Deployment Training Program

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SESSION 1

Warm up: 5 Rounds
  2x DOT Drill
  30/5/30 Sean Special
  1/2 HAM – Hip Mobility Drill

Training:

(1) 6 Rounds
  Run 400m
  50x Step Ups @ 40#

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SESSION 2

Training:

(1) Run 3 miles, moderate pace

(2) 5 Rounds
  5x Pull ups (Strict)
  10x Dips (full range of motion)
  15x Push ups (perfect form)

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SESSION 3

Warm up: 10 minute Sandbag Getup @ 80#

Training: 10 Rounds
  Mini Leg Blaster
  5x Ankles-to-Bar

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SESSION 4

Training: Ruck 5 miles, Moderate Intensity, @ Kit + 25# in Ruck

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SESSION 5

Warm up: 5 Rounds
  20x Squats
  5x Scotty Bob @ 25#

Training:

(1) 4 Rounds
  300m Sprint every 2.5 minutes

(2) 3 Rounds
  1/4 Calf Tabata
  HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

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SESSION 6

Warm up: 5 Rounds
  3x DOT Drill
  60 Second Ab Bridge Complex
  1/2 HAM – Hip Mobility Drill

Training:

(1) 2 Rounds
  Run 800m
  200x Step ups @ 40#

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SESSION 7

Training:

(1) Run 3 miles, moderate pace

(2) 6 Rounds
  5x Pull ups (Strict)
  10x Dips (full range of motion)
  15x Push ups (perfect form)

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SESSION 8

Warm up: 10 minute sandbag getup @ 80#

Training:

(1) 10 Rounds
  Mini Leg Blaster
  5x Ankles-to-Bar

(2) 5 Minute Sandbag Getup @ 80#
SESSION 9
Training:
Ruck 5 miles total @ Kit + 25#. Use this pace scheme:
    Ruck 1 mile, threshold pace
    Ruck 3 miles, moderate pace
    Ruck 1 mile, threshold pace

SESSION 10
Warm up: 5 Rounds
    20x Squats
    5x Scotty Bob @ 25#
Training:
(1) 5 Rounds
    300m Sprint every 2.5 minutes
(2) 4 Rounds
    1/4 Calf Tabata
    HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

SESSION 11
Warm up: 5 Rounds
    3x DOT Drill
    30 sec. Plank Walk up
    1/2 HAM – Hip Mobility Drill
Training:
(1) 10 Rounds
    50x Stepups @ 40#
    10x Push ups
    5x Ankles-to-Bar

SESSION 12
Training:
(1) Run 4 miles, moderate pace
(2) 7 Rounds
    5x Pull ups (Strict)
    10x Dips (full range of motion)
    15x Push ups (perfect form)

SESSION 13
Warm Up: 15 minute Sandbag Getup
Training:
(1) 3 Rounds
    Full Leg Blaster
    30 Seconds Rest

SESSION 14
Training:
(1) Ruck 5 miles total @ Kit + 25#. Use this pace scheme:
    Ruck 1 mile, threshold pace
    Ruck 1 miles, moderate pace
    Ruck 1 mile, threshold pace
    Ruck 1 miles, moderate pace
    Ruck 1 mile, threshold pace

SESSION 15
Warm up: 5 Rounds
    20x Squats
    5x Scotty Bob @ 25#
Training:
(1) 6 Rounds
    300m Sprint every 2.5 minutes
(2) 2 Rounds
    1/2 Calf Tabata
    HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

SESSION 16
Warm up: 15 minute Step up @ 40#
Training:
(1)  5 Rounds
    4x DOT Drill
    30/5/30 Sean Special
    HUG – Hip Mobility Drill
(2) 15 minute step up @ 40#
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SESSION 17

Training:

(1) Run 4 miles, moderate pace

(2) 8 Rounds
   5x Pull ups (Strict)
   10x Dips (full range of motion)
   15x Push ups (perfect form)

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SESSION 18

Warm Up: 15 minute Sandbag Getup

Training:

(1) 4 Rounds
   Full Leg Blaster
   30 Seconds Rest

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SESSION 19

Training:

(1) Ruck 8 miles, moderate pace

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SESSION 20

Warm up: 5 Rounds
   20x Squats
   5x Scotty Bob @ 25#

Training:

(1) 6 Rounds
   300m Sprint every 2.5 minutes
   ** Run the first two sprints in Full Kit + Helmet

(2) 3 Rounds
   1/2 Calf Tabata
   HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

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SESSION 21

Warm up: 15 minute Step up @ 40#

Training:

(1) 5 Rounds
   4x DOT Drill
   45 second Plank Walkup
   HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

(2) 15 minute step up @ 40#

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SESSION 22

Training:

(1) Run 4 miles, moderate pace

(2) 9 Rounds
   5x Pull ups (Strict)
   10x Dips (full range of motion)
   15x Push ups (perfect form)

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SESSION 23

Warm Up: 10 minute Sandbag Getup @ 80#

Training:

(1) 4 Rounds
   Full Leg Blaster
   30 Seconds Rest

(2) 10 Minute Sandbag Getup @ 80#

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SESSION 24

Training:

(1) Ruck 5 miles total @ Kit + 25#. Use this pace scheme:
   Ruck 2 miles, threshold pace
   Ruck 1 miles, moderate pace
   Ruck 2 miles, threshold pace

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SESSION 25

Warm up: 5 Rounds
   20x Squats
   5x Scotty Bob @ 25#

Training:
SESSION 26

Training:

Warm up:  5 Rounds
  5x DOT Drill
  1 Minute Second Plank Walk Up
  HUG – Hip Mobility Drill

SESSION 27

Training:

(1) Run 5 miles, moderate pace

(2) 10 Rounds
  5x Pull ups (Strict)
  10x Dips (full range of motion)
  15x Push ups (perfect form)

SESSION 28

Warm up: 5 Rounds
  Full Leg Blaster
  30 seconds rest

Training:

(1) 20 minute sandbag getup @ 80#

SESSION 29

Training:

(1) Ruck 5 miles, threshold pace

SESSION 30

Warm up:  5 Rounds
  20x Squats
  5x Scotty Bob @ 25#

Training:

(1) 6 Rounds
  300m Sprint every 2.5 minutes in Full Kit + Helmet

(2) Full Calf Tabata (8 rounds, 4 minutes)

(3) HAM – Hip Mobility Drill