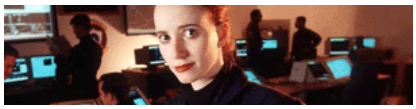

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Air Guard unit preps for 'Murphy Challenge'

Story by Tech. Sgt. Cheresa D. Theiral
Colorado National Guard Public Affairs

This coming June, Airmen of the 140th Medical Group, led by Lt. Col. Paul K. Miller, will compete in the "Murphy Challenge," a competition based on the high intensity CrossFit training program.

The challenge will begin and end with a one-mile run. Between the miles, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups and 300 squats will be partitioned as needed. While wearing body armor is encouraged, it is not required.

But the Airmen's challenge isn't just to honoring the life and sacrifice of **Lt. Michael P. Murphy**, a Navy SEAL and Medal of Honor recipient who was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2005. For these Airmen, fitness means readiness.

"It's a tough and challenging time for the Guard. We have to be more vigilant. We have to be more ready. We have to be more capable, more fit than ever before," said Miller. "The chances of us being called to duty at a moment's notice increase every day. The operations tempo continues to proceed at almost an unbelievable pace and … I think more is going to be required of us in the future than has ever been required of us before."

"We're medics and we need to be fit and ready to go at all times," said Capt. Christina Stack, a medical administrative officer, of the full-fitness training her unit has been participating in since February. "We want to be able to carry litters, pick of heavy things – it's very functional training … [and] we're training hard."

According to **CrossFit.com**, the workout is the principal strength and conditioning program for many police departments, military units and martial artists worldwide. Also, the workout itself is designed to be broad and inclusive; meaning the intensity can be adjusted for any skill level, age and physical ability. "Our specialty is not specializing," says the Web site.

And because the workout changes every day, boredom doesn't set in as easily as it might in other routines, said Lt. Col. Katherine Gains, a physician's assistant who espouses yoga and other forms of strength and flexibility training in addition to the CrossFit workout. She also advocates good form. "You do want to get to muscle failure but you

form. "You do want to get to muscle failure but you want to do it with proper technique and good form, and that's how you won't get injured."

So finding those muscles and avoiding injury is part of the fun – and potential pain – of the regimen. "I've seen women in their 40s and 50s developing muscles they probably never knew they had," said Stack.

While fitness and readiness are definite benefits of the program, the commander-led regimen is also a bonding experience for the Airmen.

"When I was doing the 'Murph' last October and suffering for an hour … I was just thinking about being in Afghanistan in the mountains and being in that firefight, what it must have been like. So the more I suffer in the CrossFit workout, the more I think about our comrades on the front lines and what they're going through (and) that really helps me focus," said Miller. "So we're doing this work out in June for a couple of reasons. We're doing it to honor this fallen hero (and) we're doing it for ourselves, to give ourselves a challenge, to prove something to ourselves individually and to prove something to ourselves as an organization. That we can meet this challenge says a lot about us."

The "Murphy Challenge" is named honor of Lt. Michael Murphy, Navy SEAL and Medal of Honor recipient for his gallant actions in Afghanistan. To learn more about the fallen hero, visit **http://www.navy.mil/moh/mpmurphy**. To learn more about the battle that cost Murphy his life, read "Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10" by Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SEAL) Marcus Luttrell, the only surviving SEAL from Operation Redwing.

Maj. James Reeman is a certified personal trainer, level 1-certified CrossFit instructor, and 140th Wing fitness program manager. For more on CrossFit training and how you can incorporate this workout into your daily routine, or if you have any other fitness-related questions, contact him.

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