

AN OLD EXERCISE RETURNS

By Carl Frank

An old exercise seems to be staging a comeback, but its hazards largely have been forgotten. We're talking about log drills, an exercise that dates back at least to the early 1900s. This exercise used to be conducted on most Marine Corps bases during the '40s and '50s but gradually disappeared during the '60s. Anyone who has had the dubious pleasure of participating in these drills remember them well (and not fondly, either).

For those not familiar with log drills, they primarily are a conditioning exercise to develop strength and

muscular endurance. They also develop teamwork. What people may not realize is that these drills are inherently dangerous, and failure to adhere to the proper procedures can, and has, resulted in serious injuries (broken back, dislocated shoulder) and death.

Marine Physical Readiness Training for Combat (FMFRP 0-1B) sets forth the guidelines for these drills. For those personnel conducting this exercise, note that only six exercises are authorized for use in log drills. These exercises do not include running with the logs or tossing them from group to group.

Watching some of these drills recently caused me to be concerned. Here are some of the problems I observed:



- Failure to properly stretch/warm up before the log drill. Putting a strain on cold muscles is what causes sprains, strains, and tears.
- Personnel not sorted correctly according to shoulder height. One short person means the rest of the people have to carry most of that person's log weight.
- Improper (or no) space-indicator rings marked on

- Ensure enough instructors are assigned to adequately cover all participants. These instructors also must be familiar with all body positions and exercises. They must carefully monitor to ensure hand/arm positions are the same for all personnel, heads are all on the same side of the log and, when picking up the log, legs vice backs are used for the lift (buttocks down and backs



the logs, or markings no longer clearly visible. People get out of position and wind up interfering with others, which is particularly dangerous during lifts.

- Wrong number of personnel on a log. This situation can cause several problems, such as crowding or excessive weight per person.
- Incorrect hand placement and/or body position while moving or lifting logs. This has caused some very serious injuries (including a fatality).
- Insufficient distance between log teams. Crowding and possible interference with others is the result.
- Conducting log drills in rough terrain and/or areas where slip/trip hazards are prevalent. This problem also has caused some serious injuries.
- Conducting a “by the numbers” count too fast for all personnel on the log to keep up. This problem results in the log seesawing (where the front and back of the log are moving out of sync). Extreme danger is created because people get out of position in relationship to the log.
- Improper size/weight of the log. FM FRP O-1B gives the log weights as 300 pounds for a 14-foot log (for six people) and 400 pounds for an 18-foot log (for eight people). The log should average roughly 50 pounds per individual.
- Improper log storage. Logs stored on the ground tend to absorb moisture. Wet logs are slippery, as well as heavier.

Here are some recommendations for conducting safe log drills at your command:

straight).

- Follow the exercises outlined in the FM FRP O-1B. According to BUMED, when doing squats, the angle formed by the knee joint should not be less than 90 degrees. Based on this information, it strongly is recommended that the “three-quarter squat position” shown in the exercise drawing, (knee bend) as position 3 not be used. Recommend going from start to position 1, position 2, position 1, then position 4, vice start, position 1 through 4 as shown in the FM FRP O-1B.

- Taking into account the differences in upper-body strength between male and female personnel, it is recommended (to avoid unnecessary injuries) that the weight to be lifted by female personnel should equal 70 percent of that required for male personnel (35 pounds per person, vice 50 pounds). To achieve this weight reduction, it is recommended that you utilize the following changes to FM FRP O-1B log nomenclature:

Diameter – 4 to 6 inches

Weight – 217 pounds (14 foot logs) to 280 pounds (18 foot logs). Average 35 pounds per person.

Don't take this seemingly benign exercise too lightly. Remember, between 300 and 400 pounds are in motion (including over your head). Know what you are doing, when, and how. Don't improvise; it's a recipe for disaster. A single mistake could be detrimental to the Marines' training. **GW**

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