

# Physical strength essential for combat roles

**Murf Raquet/Moscow-Pullman Daily News Editorial Board**

In a combat situation, you want the person next to you - the one who has your back - to be in top physical shape. Your safety, your very life, may depend on that person's ability to perform under fire.

So we have to wonder why the U.S. Marine Corps has delayed a new female combat physical fitness plan because half of them failed.

Part of the plan requires women seeking combat roles to do three pullups - half couldn't.

It's not an arbitrary figure established by male officers bent on keeping women out of combat roles.

On the contrary, the Marines have a long history of demanding the best from members of its ranks. That has always included strength as well as top physical conditioning, because lives depend on it.

The pullup requirement is supposedly an indicator of the ability to perform in combat such tasks as scaling a wall, climbing a rope or carrying ammunition. The three pullup minimum is for male and female Marines. Eight is a perfect score for females and 20 for males.

The Marines aren't the first organization to integrate women into roles historically held by men. Police and fire departments have grappled with similar issues and have successfully placed women in most if not all positions. And becoming a smokejumper is no easy task for either gender.

Jan. 1, 2016, is the date thousands of jobs must open for women in the armed services, and military brass have said standards won't be lowered to accommodate women.

We also don't believe the standards should change. We are willing to bet most females wouldn't want special treatment when it comes to their physical fitness.

Enlisting in the military is a choice. The standards are high and training for some jobs is rigorous - especially for combat roles.

Men and women may seek combat jobs with the best of intentions. But without the physical preparedness to do whatever it takes, intentions become meaningless when you are fighting for your life and the lives of others around you.

If having to do three pullups eliminates half of those taking the test, so be it. That still leaves the other 50 percent able to pass.

