



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

In addition to being a time to honor our fallen U.S. servicemen, Memorial Day is when the annual Murph Challenge is held. Think of it as a high-energy, high-impact CrossFit workout, but ramped up even higher. Donors participate in the workout and donate to help build a Navy SEAL museum, a sea cadet training facility and scholarships — all in the name of a heroic Navy SEAL for whom the event is named.

Soldiers participate in the Murph Challenge at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan in 2015.



U.S. NAVY

LT. MICHAEL P. MURPHY

On June 28, 2005, Navy SEAL Lt. Michael P. Murphy was put in charge of a four-man team to hunt down a militia commande near Asadabad, Afghanistan. The team ran into a much larger Taliban force along the face of a mountain. Murphy became needed to call for support, but knew the mountain would block his radio signal. He moved out into the open, which exposed himself to Taliban fire. Murphy calmly reported the situation and requested immediate support for his team — all while under enemy fire. Murphy reportedly was hit 14 times. At one point, he dropped his transmitter, but managed to pick it up and complete the call.

A Chinook helicopter was dispatched with reinforcements to rescue Murphy’s unit, but

Taliban forces shot it down, killing all 16 servicemen aboard. Only one member of Murphy’s team would survive — he was found several days later after wandering in the desert.



U.S. NAVY

Murphy’s body was found six days after he was killed. He was buried July 13 in a national cemetery near his home on Long Island, New York.

The Navy responded to the incident by no longer sending small four-man units on reconnaissance missions. It began requiring at least eight members for similar tasks.

A bit of a workout fanatic and a fan of CrossFit style workouts, Murphy had developed his own workout he called “Body Armor.” As word of his heroics and death spread among Navy SEALs, his “Body Armor” workout also spread in popularity.

MURPH’S ‘BODY ARMOR’ CROSSFIT WORKOUT

Murphy’s favorite workout was not aimed at the faint of heart. It consisted of:

WEARING A 20-POUND WEIGHT VEST OR BODY ARMOR...

1. RUN 1 MILE

2. 100 PULLUPS

3. 200 PUSHUPS

4. 300 SQUATS

5. RUN 1 MILE

It would take Murphy between 32 and 35 minutes to complete his workout, his father says. But most top athletes need between 45 minutes and an hour.

Murphy’s workout regimen was posted by CrossFit in August 2005 — just weeks after Murphy’s death — inspiring CrossFit folks to give it a try.



LYLE WILKIE/U.S. NAVY

Electrician’s Mate 2nd Class Molly Bueide takes the Murph challenge aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York in 2020.

The “Murph is not a workout challenge you should do on a whim,” writes fitness coach Stew Smith for Military.com. “It’s for advanced-level athletes. Many people scale it down, dropping the weight vest, decreasing the reps or both.”

The CrossFit community took the Murph workout to heart, making it a point to follow Murphy’s recipe on Memorial Day and to raise money for the Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Scholarship Foundation. Participants pledge donations at [themurphchallenge.com](http://themurphchallenge.com), do the workout and then post their times.

But so many people were finding the Murph so incredibly grueling that the CrossFit folks added the word “Challenge” to the event’s promotional materials.

A number of celebrities have taken and tweeted about the Murph Challenge: Danica Patrick, Chris Pratt, John Krasinski and Dwayne Johnson.



DESTANI K. MATHENY/U.S. AIR FORCE

An unidentified airman performs the pullup phase of the Murph at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina in 2020.

TRIBUTES TO A FALLEN HERO

In May 2007, the post office in Patchogue, New York, was renamed the Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy United States Post Office.

In October 2007, President George W. Bush presented the Medal of Honor to Murphy’s parents at the White House.

On what would have been Murphy’s 35th birthday in May 2011, the U.S. Navy christened the destroyer USS Michael Murphy.

Since 2014, the Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Scholarship Foundation has raised more than \$1.8 million via its Murph Challenge campaign. Last year, the annual fundraiser took in more than \$300,000, which funded 37 scholarships and paid for completion of a Navy SEAL museum and training facility on Long Island.



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