

## **Combat Water Survival Swim Lab OVERVIEW**

Designed and utilized specifically for curricular instruction and research, the Combat Water Survival Swim Laboratory is a state-of-the-art facility that incorporates any number of modified environmental simulators, with a primary mission focus on cadet instruction, remediation, and Survival Swimming course skills evaluation.

Originally constructed to standard industry specifications (6 lanes, 25yd x 14yd) for inaugural Arvin opening (2005), the facility was immediately modified into a working laboratory to “mirror” various environmental elements found in open water venues, thus creating the most realistic of performance parameters in relation to “real world” simulation.

A specially designed plunger mechanism churns a 24” inch wave...indirect strobe/laser illumination fills the venue intermittently...a specially designed fog system produces surface haze...rain is generated from carefully placed distribution nozzles...and battlefield auditory “distracters” provide a deafening yet stark reality to operational awareness, analysis, and water survivability.

While the facility is used comprehensively across the Survival Swimming curriculum, its primary function centers around cadet performance parameters in both the 5 Minute ACU Survival Swim...where cadets must demonstrate an ability to swim (in waves), non-stop for a full minutes in full battle dress (ACU’s and Boots), utilizing in any order; four surface swimming strokes as taught and previously validated in earlier curricular segments; and the more comprehensive and culminating Survival Gate # 4, where all of the aforementioned environmental elements are engaged with a more invasive vignette (weighted MOLLE, M4 weapon carriage, ACU inflation) required for successfully completion.

When Justin Pope, AP Writer visited West Point while researching swimming standards across a wide variety of college and universities (inclusive of Navy!) for his 2006 internationally published, “The College Graduation Swim Test Has Gone Belly-Up”, he wrote, “Perhaps the mother of all swim tests – Survival Gate # 4 – can be found at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Weighed down by heavy equipment, cadets must perform several tasks in a pool amid simulated battlefield chaos. Artificial fog, rain, and deafening noise are pumped in, darkness is punctuated only by strobe lights, and the water is churned by artificial wave makers.”

Arguably one of the most uniquely designed and challenging venues found anywhere in the world today, the more important “statistic” associated with its overall use, is that since its inception, every graduating cadet has met and mastered the Survival Gate # 4 challenge.