Occupational Load Carriage: Formal and Informal Conditioning

Rob Orr

Bond University, rorr@bond.edu.au

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Occupational Load Carriage: Formal and Informal Conditioning

By Rob Orr (Bond University: Australia)
BLUF:

• A well-structured and periodised load carriage conditioning program can reduce the negative impacts of carrying load and optimise operational performance.
Introduction:

• Tactical operators are required to carry load as part of their occupation

• Carrying these loads can place the operators at risk through reducing occupational task performance and causing injury
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

When you get shot at, you move as fast as you can…but it wasn’t very fast. You are just tired. So tired.

Justin Kalentis, US Army, wounded in Afghanistan, discussing the loads they were carrying quoted in *The Seattle Times* (14 Feb 11)
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

- Injuries: Associated with a variety of injuries (from skin blistering to muscle, ligament, tendon, bone and nervous system injuries)
RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

- Decrements in performance:
  - ↓ Mobility (Park et al., 2008:2010: Ruby et al., 2003)

Australian Fire Season 2013 – Firestorm moved at speeds of up to 31-37 mi/h
RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

• Decrement in performance:
  – ↓ **Mobility**
    • Impacts not new
    • Assyrian Spearmen (Orr, 2010)
    • Impacted on battle tactics in major conflicts (Lothian, 1921)

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

• Decrement in performance:
  - ↓ Mobility

• Impeded mission success – Chasing Militia in East Timor (Breen 2000)
RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

• Decrement in performance:
  – ↓ Lethality
RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

• Decrement in performance:
  – ↓ Lethality
  • ↓ Grenade throw distance (Harper et al., 1997: Knapik et al., 1990:1991)
RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LOAD CARRIAGE

- Decrements in performance:
  - ↓ Lethality
  - Ave soldier grenade throw distance = 40m

A. Lethal Radius - 6 metres
B. Casualty Radius - 15 metres
C. Danger Radius - 30 metres
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

- Decrements in performance:
  - ↓ Mobility + ↓ Lethality
Decrement in performance:
- Pandorph et al., (2002) 4 Step Over hurdles at 6.3m had time increase from 5.4s-6.8s (+1.4s) = 14 rds from AK47 on full automatic
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

- Decrements in performance:
  - ↓ Attention to task
    - ↓ Alertness: Attention to task: Response to stimuli
      (Johnson et al., 1995: May et al., 2009: Mahoney et al., 2007)
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

- Decrement in performance:
  - The IED?
Risks Associated with Load Carriage

• Decrements in performance:
  – The IED? (Would they notice?)
Load Carriage Conditioning

- Concept is not new (Flavius Vegetius Renatus - *Epitoma rei militaris*)
Formal Load Carriage Conditioning

Orr et al., (2010)

- Initial literature search identified 8,053 papers.
- Further 36 papers gathered from colleagues.
- 8089 papers reduced to 214 papers following implementation of exclusion criteria.
- Secondary literature search reduced papers to seven original research papers, one conference paper and four secondary source papers (military reports, journal articles).
F.I.T.T Formula (Frequency, Intensity, Time & Type)

- **F.** 10-14 days per load carriage session
- **I.** To loads required (Last decade 40-50kg) at the speeds and over the terrains required
- **T.** Duration of load carriage operations
- **T.** Load carriage preferable, but combined resistance and cardio may be of some benefit
Load Carriage Conditioning

Knapik et al., (2012)
• Method: Review of several literature databases
• Results: 11 Publications from 10 original studies
• Discussion:
  • Substantial trg effect with Progressive RT combined with Aerobic trg (3x4/52)
  • Effects greater when LC added specifically
  • Field based training (inc LC) also very effective
  • RT or Aerobic trg alone had varying effects
Load Carriage Conditioning

Considering Intensity – Gender / Fitness differences for same given task

Load Carriage Conditioning

Considering Volume – Fitness / background / other tasks

Load Carriage Conditioning

Considering Type - Specificity
Load Carriage Conditioning

Considering Type - Specificity
Load Carriage Conditioning

Integrated Periodisation

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<th>Phase of Training</th>
<th>Physical Development Phase</th>
<th>Physical Hardening Phase</th>
<th>Self Management and Corp Specific Phase</th>
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<td>Sub Phase of Training</td>
<td>(III CLASS)</td>
<td>(II CLASS)</td>
<td>(I CLASS)</td>
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<td>Macrocycle</td>
<td>Anatomical Adaptation</td>
<td>Complex Skills Development</td>
<td>Rest</td>
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<td>Microcycle</td>
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<th>Neuromuscular Skills and Fitness</th>
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<th>Healthy Lifestyle Education</th>
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<td>Load Carriage</td>
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<td>Sports Specific Fitness</td>
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<td>Remedial Training and Rehabilitation</td>
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Load Carriage Conditioning

Integrated Periodisation – The LCC Plan

Load Carriage Conditioning

• Informal conditioning
  – Load carriage conditioning as a supplement to everyday tasks
Load Carriage Conditioning

• Informal conditioning - can be used to counter
  – Limited training time

• Patrol Order/Fighting Order – Mondays
Load Carriage Conditioning
• Informal conditioning - can be used to counter
  – Specific negative impacts associated with load carriage task performance
Load Carriage Conditioning
• Informal conditioning - but must consider what’s next.
Take Home:

To improve load carriage performance and reduce the risks associated with load carriage (including injury and reduced tactical performance) a well designed and progressive LC program (including both formal and informal conditioning) is needed.

This program would include specific LC events, preferably ever 7-14 days, progressing to meet with occupational requirements while consider other elements of workplace requirements.
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A/Prof R. ORR

Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine
Bond University
Gold Coast

Email: rorr@bond.edu.au
Ph: 0468 646 027