Load Carriage: An integrated risk management approach

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Load Carriage: An integrated risk management approach

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The requirement for soldiers to carry load has challenged military forces for over three millennia. This history suggests that changes to the nature of warfare and technology alone may not provide answers to these challenges. As such, means of mitigating the negative impacts of load carriage on military force generation, force sustainment and force regeneration, require a multilayered informed approach. The Risk Management Framework (ISO 31000) provides a process through which load carriage can be contextualized and the associated risks identified, evaluated, analyzed and controlled.

Viewed through the lens of the Australian Army soldier, this session will begin with a brief history of soldier load carriage from 800BC to present day to both establish the foundation of modern military load carriage and to highlight the enduring nature of this requirement and the demands placed on the soldier. The importance of establishing the context in which the load carriage task takes place will then be presented. These contexts will include terrain (both type and grade), speed of march, march duration, and environmental factors with examples drawn from operational settings. Once contextualized, the risks associated with load carriage that impact on the individual soldier and the larger organization will be considered. These risks include causing soldier injuries and potentially causing reductions (both actual and perceived) in the performance of operational tasks and skills, like mobility, lethality and attention-to-task. Commonly employed risk management options, including physical training and military doctrines and policies, will be evaluated with risk controls at a tactical, operational and strategic level discussed under the ‘hierarchy of control’ model.