**Weight of war**

The rifleman, the core infantry soldier in the U.S. Army, may carry a basic fighting load of more than 65 pounds. But a 2003 Army study in Eastern Afghanistan found that on longer missions they may carry an approach march load exceeding 95 pounds for several days.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army has struggled to balance the need for body armor to protect against insurgent attacks with weight that can slow a soldier’s movements when he comes under fire. To increase the mobility of infantry soldiers in Afghanistan, the Army in 2009 began distributing lighter-weight vests that include ballistic plates to protect vital organs but less protection of extremities. So far, more than 48,000 of those vests have been distributed to soldiers.

Here is a breakdown of a soldier’s combat load as documented in the 2003 study.

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**Weight carried and worn over uniform/body:**

- Body armor: Full body armor: Vest, neck, groin, deltoid, lower back and side protection with ballistic plates weighs more than 30 pounds.
- M4 carbine
- Hydration bladder 80 ounces
- Ammunition
- Canteen
- First aid
- Grenade
- Assault rucksack with attachments

**FIGHTING LOAD:**

- Total: 38.55 lbs
- Total: 65.59 lbs (from uniform/body)

**APPROACH MARCH LOAD:**

- Total: 97.68 lbs
- Total: 63.79 lbs (from uniform/body)

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### The weight carried by other infantry company soldiers

**Recommended Army Guidelines:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>March Load</th>
<th>Fighting Load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combat medic</td>
<td>72 lbs.</td>
<td>50 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio telephone operator</td>
<td>64.98 lbs.</td>
<td>98.83 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60mm mortar gunner</td>
<td>63.79 lbs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional weight**

Depending on the mission, a rifleman may also need to carry one or more of these special equipment items:

- 10.75 lbs. Hooligan tool
- 8.75 lbs. Combat life saver kit and pole-less litter
- 7 lbs. M18 claymore mine
- 6.92 lbs. M249 ammunition
- 3.31 lbs. Metal detecting wand
- 3 lbs. Entrenching tool
- 1.10 lbs. Bolt cutters

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*Sources: “The Modern Warrior’s Combat Load, Dismounted Operations in Afghanistan, April - May 2003” by U.S. Center for Army Lessons Learned; BAE systems; www.peosoldier.army.mil; “Lightening the Load,” Naval Research Advisory Committee, Sept. 2007*