FORGED MIND & BODY

THE FORGED TACTICAL CONDITIONING BLUEPRINT

Build Strength. Increase Endurance. Perform Under Pressure.

SECTION 1 | TACTICAL FITNESS FOUNDATIONS

STRENGTH • ENDURANCE • POWER • MOBILITY • RECOVERY

Prepare for real-world demands. Train with purpose.

THE 40-PAGE PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

Blueprint Table of Contents

Read the blueprint in order, establish your baseline, then use the programs, trackers, and readiness tools throughout each training cycle.

HOW TO USE THE BLUEPRINT

Assess. Train. Recover. Reassess. Adjust from performance data instead of emotion or random fatigue.

FITNESS FOR THE TASK

What Tactical Conditioning Is

Tactical conditioning prepares a person to produce useful physical performance in unpredictable environments. It combines strength, endurance, power, movement skill, and recovery instead of maximizing one quality while ignoring the rest.

GENERAL FITNESS VS. TACTICAL READINESS

GENERAL FITNESS QUESTION	TACTICAL PERFORMANCE QUESTION
Can you lift a heavy weight once?	Can you lift, carry, move, and repeat under fatigue?
Can you run when fresh?	Can you move efficiently after strength or load work?
Can you finish a hard circuit?	Can you control pace and preserve technique?
Are you fit in ideal conditions?	Can you adapt to heat, gear, terrain, stress, and schedule?

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

The job determines the priority. A firefighter, infantry applicant, police officer, and hybrid athlete may share qualities but not identical training demands.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: Tactical training must look extreme. FACT: Effective preparation is structured, progressive, specific, and repeatable. Chaos is not readiness.

THE TRAINING TARGET

CAPACITY

Build enough strength and endurance to perform.

DURABILITY

Tolerate training and occupational workloads.

SKILL

Move efficiently with and without external load.

READINESS

Recover well enough to perform again.

ACTION STEP

Write the three physical tasks your goal demands most. Those tasks should influence your training priorities.

START WITH A NEEDS ANALYSIS

Building the Tactical Athlete

A tactical athlete needs enough of several qualities at the same time. The program begins by identifying the mission, current ability, equipment, environment, schedule, and injury history.

THE FORGED NEEDS ANALYSIS

TASKS

What must you lift, carry, drag, climb, run, crawl, or repeat?

LOADS

What body armor, pack, hose, tools, patient, or equipment must move?

DURATION

Does the demand last seconds, minutes, hours, or an entire shift?

ENVIRONMENT

Heat, cold, altitude, stairs, uneven ground, confined space, or low light?

RECOVERY

How soon must you perform again, and how predictable is sleep?

LIMITERS

Which quality currently breaks first: strength, breathing, grip, movement, or pacing?

BUILD IN THE RIGHT ORDER

1. Move well
2. Build strength
3. Develop the aerobic base
4. Add speed and power
5. Integrate load and fatigue

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Greater muscular strength is associated with better sprinting, jumping, change-of-direction, and task performance. Strength raises the ceiling for other qualities.

COACHING TIP

Do not begin with the hardest version of the job task. Build the physical qualities, then add specific load, terrain, and fatigue progressively.

A COMPLETE PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

The Five Pillars

Readiness is limited by the weakest quality required by the task. The goal is not to maximize every pillar at once. Build sufficient capacity, then emphasize the current limiter.

01 | STRENGTH

Produce force, control external load, and make submaximal tasks relatively easier.

02 | ENDURANCE

Sustain movement, recover between efforts, and resist fatigue across long work periods.

03 | POWER

Express force quickly for sprinting, jumping, climbing, throwing, and urgent movement.

04 | MOBILITY

Access and control the positions required by the task without losing stability.

05 | RECOVERY

Restore performance through sleep, nutrition, hydration, stress control, and workload management.

RATE YOUR CURRENT READINESS

PILLAR	1 | NEEDS WORK	2 | DEVELOPING	3 | READY	YOUR SCORE
Strength				___
Endurance				___
Power				___
Mobility				___
Recovery				___

QUICK WIN

Choose one primary pillar and one supporting pillar for the next four weeks. Maintain the others instead of chasing everything equally.

ONE BODY. THREE OVERLAPPING SYSTEMS.

Energy Systems Explained

All three energy systems work together. The dominant contribution changes with intensity and duration. Tactical conditioning trains the right system without pretending they operate like separate switches.

PHOSPHAGEN

Dominant during very short, explosive efforts.

EXAMPLES: JUMP, HEAVY LIFT, SHORT SPRINT

TRAINING: FULL RECOVERY; HIGH QUALITY

GLYCOLYTIC

Supports hard efforts lasting roughly tens of seconds to a few minutes.

EXAMPLES: STAIRS, DRAG, HARD CIRCUIT

TRAINING: CONTROLLED INTERVALS

AEROBIC

Dominant during sustained work and recovery between hard efforts.

EXAMPLES: LONG MOVEMENT, SHIFT DEMANDS

TRAINING: ZONE 2 AND LONGER INTERVALS

WHY THE AEROBIC BASE MATTERS

RECOVER WHILE YOU WORK

Aerobic fitness supports sustained output and helps restore energy between repeated high-intensity efforts. It does not eliminate the need for speed or anaerobic training; it helps you recover between those efforts.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Occupational tasks often require several qualities together. A single test cannot fully describe readiness, which is why the blueprint uses a test battery.

COMMON MISTAKE

Using only all-out circuits. Constant high intensity can reduce quality, hide weaknesses, and make recovery difficult without building a strong aerobic base.

ACTION STEP

Label each current conditioning session: aerobic base, tempo, threshold, interval, sprint, or mixed work. If every session is simply hard, the plan needs structure.

TRAIN TO STAY AVAILABLE

Movement Quality and Durability

No program can prevent every injury. Good programming can manage exposure, build physical capacity, improve movement skill, and reduce avoidable spikes in workload.

MOVEMENT BEFORE FATIGUE

POSITION

Maintain alignment and balance appropriate to the task.

CONTROL

Own the lowering, landing, turning, and stopping phases.

RANGE

Use the greatest task-relevant range you can control without sharp pain.

BREATHING & BRACING

Create trunk stiffness while continuing to breathe when the task allows.

LOAD TOLERANCE

Increase weight, distance, speed, or duration gradually.

FATIGUE RESISTANCE

Stop or modify when technique deteriorates beyond the session goal.

PAIN AND READINESS TRAFFIC LIGHT

GREEN	Normal effort, mild soreness, stable technique	**Train as planned**
YELLOW	Unusual soreness, reduced range, declining performance	**Hold or reduce demand**
RED	Sharp, worsening, radiating, or function-limiting pain	**Stop and seek qualified guidance**

QUICK WIN

Increase only one major stressor at a time: load, distance, speed, total volume, terrain, or equipment.

RECOVERY TIP

A hard session is useful only if you can absorb it. Schedule easier work after unfamiliar load, sprint, hill, or ruck exposures.

BUILD A SAFE BASELINE

Assessment: Strength and Durability

Use standardized technique and record conditions. Do not test through illness, acute pain, or unfamiliar maximal loading. Agency-specific tests and medical requirements take priority.

PUSH-UPS

Maximum quality reps in 2 minutes or chosen fixed time. Use one body line and a consistent depth.

PULL-UPS

Maximum strict repetitions from a dead hang. Record grip and assistance if used.

DEADLIFT

Use a technically sound 3-5RM or submaximal estimated 1RM. Maximal testing is optional, not required.

FARMER CARRY

Carry a standardized load for distance or time. Record load per hand, distance, turns, and drops.

PLANK

Hold a repeatable front-plank standard until position fails. Cap duration if desired.

GRIP STRENGTH

Use a dynamometer when available. Record best attempt per hand under consistent setup.

LOADED CARRY

Use front, bear-hug, shoulder, or job-specific load. Record load, distance, time, and technique.

MOBILITY SCREEN

Check controlled squat, hinge, overhead reach, ankle motion, and trunk rotation. Note asymmetry or pain.

TESTING ORDER

Mobility and power first, then strength, muscular endurance, carries, and conditioning. Separate maximal strength and running tests when possible.

RECORD THE STANDARD

Date • warm-up • equipment • technique • load • time • surface • footwear • symptoms • environmental conditions

MEASURE THE ENGINE

Assessment: Conditioning

Choose tests relevant to the goal and repeat them under similar conditions. Do not perform every maximal test in one day. Space demanding tests to protect quality and safety.

1.5-MILE RUN

Warm up, then cover a measured course as quickly as sustainable. Record time, splits, surface, weather, and RPE.

5K RUN

Measures longer aerobic performance and pacing. Use the same course or calibrated treadmill settings.

RUCK TEST

Standardize pack weight, distance, terrain, footwear, and movement rule. Begin below occupational test load if unprepared.

LOADED-CARRY TEST

Use a repeatable load and course. Record distance, time, turns, drops, grip, and postural control.

INTERVAL RECOVERY

Complete a fixed work bout and record heart-rate drop or time until breathing returns to a defined level.

AEROBIC BASE TEST

Use a fixed-duration run, row, bike, or step effort at a conversational pace. Record distance, pace, and average heart rate.

EXAMPLE TWO-DAY TEST SCHEDULE

DAY 1	DAY 2
Mobility assessment	Movement preparation
Grip + pull-ups + push-ups	1.5-mile run or 5K
Deadlift assessment	Loaded carry or ruck
Plank	Recovery measurements

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

A faster run does not replace strength, and a stronger deadlift does not replace endurance. Interpret the complete battery against the actual task.

ASSESS. PRIORITIZE. BEGIN.

Baseline Tracker

NAME _____ ASSESSMENT DATE _____ PRIMARY GOAL _____

TEST	BASELINE	8-WK RETEST	CHANGE
Push-ups			
Pull-ups			
Deadlift			
Farmer carry			
Plank			
1.5-mile / 5K			
Ruck			
Loaded carry			
Grip strength			
Mobility notes			

FOUNDATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ I identified the real tasks and environment.
- ☐ I selected safe, repeatable assessments.
- ☐ I chose one primary training limiter.
- ☐ I will track pain, fatigue, and readiness.
- ☐ I rated all five performance pillars.
- ☐ I recorded equipment and test conditions.
- ☐ I will increase workload progressively.
- ☐ I will reassess after a complete cycle.

SECTION 1 KEY TAKEAWAY

Tactical readiness is not random toughness. It is the measured ability to produce useful performance, recover, and repeat.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What quality fails first? • Which test matters most to my goal? • What can I improve without compromising recovery?

EVIDENCE BASE: ACSM 2026 resistance-training guidance; NSCA tactical conditioning principles; Hauschild et al. occupational fitness review; Suchomel et al. strength and performance review; uploaded ISSA Tactical Conditioning, Strength & Conditioning, CPT, and Exercise Therapy texts.

NEXT: SECTION 2 - BUILDING TACTICAL STRENGTH

FORGED MIND & BODY

BUILDING TACTICAL STRENGTH

Strength is the foundation.

SECTION 2 | PAGES 11-20

SQUAT • HINGE • PUSH • PULL • CARRY • CORE • GRIP

Build force. Control load. Stay capable under fatigue.

BUILD FORCE WITHOUT WASTING FATIGUE

Strength and Progressive Overload

Strength improves the ability to move body weight, equipment, casualties, tools, and external load. Greater strength can make submaximal tasks less demanding, but the program must preserve endurance and readiness.

FOUR TACTICAL STRENGTH OUALITIES

MAXIMAL STRENGTH

Highest force capability; raises the ceiling for heavy tasks.

RELATIVE STRENGTH

Strength compared with body mass; important for climbing, running, and body-weight work.

STRENGTH ENDURANCE

Ability to repeat submaximal force without technique collapse.

POWER

Ability to express force quickly; speed matters as well as load.

PROGRESSION TOOLS

METHOD	EXAMPLE	USE
Load	Add 5 lb with same reps and RPE	Strength
Reps	5,5,5 becomes 6,6,6	Capacity
Sets	Add one quality set	Volume
Range / control	Deeper squat or longer pause	Movement quality
Density	Same work with slightly less rest	Strength endurance

RPE GUIDE

RPE 6: four reps left. RPE 7: three left. RPE 8: two left. RPE 9: one left. Most tactical strength work lives around RPE 7-8.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Current ACSM guidance supports heavier loads for maximal strength, while many loading strategies improve general strength. Consistency and gradual progression remain primary.

COMMON MISTAKE

Testing strength every week instead of training it. Build with repeatable submaximal work; test only when the training cycle calls for it.

LOWER-BODY FORCE PRODUCTION

Squat and Hinge Patterns

Squatting and hinging train different ways of producing force through the lower body. Tactical athletes need both patterns, selected around body structure, task demands, equipment, and pain-free control.

PATTERN COMPARISON

PATTERN	PRIMARY EMPHASIS	TACTICAL APPLICATION
Squat	Knee + hip extension	Standing, climbing, lifting from low positions
Hinge	Hip extension + posterior chain	Dragging, lifting, sprinting, carrying
Single leg	Unilateral force + control	Stairs, uneven terrain, deceleration
Step / lunge	Force through split stance	Climbing, kneeling, obstacle work

EXERCISE LADDER

SQUAT

Box squat • goblet squat • front squat • back squat • safety-bar squat

HINGE

Dowel hinge • kettlebell deadlift • trap-bar deadlift • RDL • conventional deadlift

UNILATERAL

Step-up • split squat • reverse lunge • rear-foot elevated split squat

POWER

Jump • broad jump • medicine-ball throw • clean pull • power clean when technically prepared

COACHING CUES

Squat: brace, keep the full foot connected, and drive the floor away. Hinge: push the hips back, keep the load close, and finish tall without overextending.

COMMON MISTAKE

Forcing one bar position or stance on everyone. The correct variation is the one that allows stable force, useful range, progression, and tolerable joints.

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

A stronger deadlift is useful, but occupational readiness also requires carrying, stepping, running, and repeated submaximal work.

UPPER-BODY STRENGTH AND CONTROL

Push and Pull Patterns

Upper-body readiness requires pressing, pulling, hanging, bracing, and controlling load in several directions. Balance movement patterns across the week rather than chasing only the bench press.

HORIZONTAL PUSH

Push-up • dumbbell press • bench press • machine press

HORIZONTAL PULL

Cable row • dumbbell row • chest-supported row • inverted row

VERTICAL PUSH

Landmine press • dumbbell overhead press • barbell press

VERTICAL PULL

Pulldown • assisted pull-up • strict pull-up • weighted pull-up

PROGRAMMING BALANCE

GOAL	PRIMARY WORK	SUPPORTING WORK
General readiness	Push + pull 2x weekly	Rear delts, arms, carries
Pull-up development	Frequent submaximal practice	Rows, pulldowns, grip
Push-up development	Quality sets below failure	Pressing + trunk stiffness

PUSH-UP PROGRESSION

Incline push-up → floor push-up → loaded push-up. Add repetitions without losing the body line, depth, or shoulder position.

PULL-UP PROGRESSION

Active hang → assisted reps → controlled negatives → strict reps → added load. Avoid repeated failure when quality practice is the goal.

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

Pulling and grip often become limiting during climbing, dragging, obstacle work, equipment handling, and loaded movement. Train them before fatigue destroys technique.

QUICK WIN

Place pull-ups or push-ups early in the session twice weekly and stop each set with 2-3 clean repetitions in reserve.

TRANSFER STRENGTH TO MOVEMENT

Carries, Core Stability, and Grip

Carries connect lower-body force, trunk stiffness, posture, breathing, and grip while the athlete moves. They are highly practical but still require controlled loading and progression.

FARMER CARRY

Heavy bilateral load; grip and total-body posture.

SUITCASE CARRY

Single-side load; anti-lateral-flexion demand.

FRONT / BEAR-HUG

Anterior load; bracing, breathing, and task transfer.

SHOULDER / RACK

Asymmetrical or elevated load; advanced control.

BAR-ON-BACK WALK

Axial load across the traps; controlled walking under squat-like loading.

DRAG / SLED

Horizontal force with reduced eccentric stress when equipment is available.

CORE STABILITY MENU

QUALITY	EXERCISES
Anti-extension	Plank, dead bug, body saw
Anti-rotation	Pallof press, cable hold
Anti-lateral flexion	Suitcase carry, side plank
Bracing under load	Squat, deadlift, front carry

CARRY PROGRESSION

Change one variable: load, distance, time, turns, terrain, or rest. Keep posture and walking mechanics consistent.

GRIP STRATEGY

Use double-overhand training, hangs, carries, thick handles when appropriate, and direct extensor work. Straps are a tool, not a moral issue.

PROGRAMMING NOTE

Most carry work: 3-5 sets of 20-60 seconds or 20-100 yards at RPE 6-8. Stop before posture, grip, or gait becomes unsafe.

PREPARE - DO NOT EXHAUST

Tactical Warm-Up and Mobility

A warm-up should raise temperature, practice useful positions, activate key muscles, and prepare the speed or load of the session. It should improve performance, not become a separate conditioning event.

1 | RAISE

3-5 minutes easy row, bike, jog, or fast walk.

2 | MOBILIZE

Target ankles, hips, thoracic spine, and shoulders based on the session.

3 | ACTIVATE

Use glute bridge, dead bug, band pull-apart, or scapular work as needed.

4 | POTENTIATE

Perform jumps, throws, accelerations, or progressive warm-up sets.

8-MINUTE TACTICAL WARM-UP

TIME	MOVEMENT
0:00-2:00	Easy cardio + nasal or controlled breathing
2:00-4:00	Squat-to-stand, hinge, reverse lunge
4:00-6:00	Dead bug, push-up, row / pull-apart

MOBILITY PRINCIPLE

Mobility is usable range of motion. If range exists but cannot be controlled under load or speed, add stability and strength instead of only stretching.

ets

RECOVERY NOTE

Post-training mobility may feel useful, but sleep, nutrition, hydration, and workload management have a larger role in readiness.

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Minimum: body weight, resistance band, dumbbells, pull-up option, and loaded object. Ideal additions: barbell, rack, trap bar, cable, sled, sandbag, and carry implements.

QUICK WIN

Write one standard warm-up for lower-body days and one for upper-body days. Repeat them until the sequence becomes automatic.

3-DAY FULL BODY + 2 EASY CONDITIONING DAYS

Beginner Tactical Strength Program

Schedule: Mon Strength A | Tue Zone 2 | Wed Strength B | Thu Recovery | Fri Strength A | Sat easy movement. Alternate A/B the next week. Start at RPE 6-7.

WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Goblet squat	3	8-10	90s	6-7
DB bench	3	8-12	90s	7
DB / cable row	3	10-12	90s	7
RDL	2	8-10	120s	7
Farmer carry	3	30yd	60s	7
Plank	3	30s	60s	6

WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Trap-bar / KB deadlift	3	5-8	150s	7
Landmine / DB press	3	8-10	90s	7
Pulldown	3	8-12	90s	7
Step-up	2	8/side	90s	7
Suitcase carry	3	25yd/s	60s	7
Dead bug	3	8/side	45s	6

PROGRESSION

DOUBLE PROGRESSION

Add reps within the range while RPE and technique stay stable. When every set reaches the top, add 2.5-5 lb upper body or 5-10 lb lower body. Carry progression: add 5-10 yards before load.

SUBSTITUTIONS AND COACHING

IF UNAVAILABLE	USE
Goblet squat	Box squat or leg press
Trap bar / kettlebell	Dumbbell deadlift or cable pull-through
Pull-up station	Band or cable pulldown
Carry implements	Loaded backpack, plates, or dumbbells

DELOAD WEEK

After 6-8 weeks or when readiness falls: use 1-2 sets, reduce load 5-10%, and stay near RPE 5-6.

COACH AVERY'S NOTE

Leave the gym capable of repeating quality work. Beginners gain from skill, consistency, and gradual loading - not repeated failure.

4-DAY UPPER / LOWER + CONDITIONING

Intermediate Tactical Strength Program

Schedule: Mon Lower A | Tue Upper A | Wed Zone 2 | Thu Lower B | Fri Upper B | Sat tactical conditioning. Most work at RPE 7-8.

LOWER A

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Back / front squat	4	4-6	180s	7-8
RDL	3	6-8	150s	7
Step-up	3	8/side	90s	7
Farmer carry	4	40yd	75s	8
Plank	3	45s	60s	7

UPPER A

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Bench press	4	4-6	180s	7-8
Pull-up / pulldown	4	6-8	150s	8
DB overhead press	3	8-10	120s	7
Chest-supported row	3	8-12	120s	7
Grip hang	3	30-45s	60s	7

LOWER B

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Trap-bar deadlift	4	3-5	210s	8
Front squat	3	6-8	150s	7
Reverse lunge	3	8/side	90s	7
Sled / drag	4	20-30m	75s	8
Pallof press	3	10/side	60s	6

UPPER B

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Push press	4	3-5	150s	7
Weighted pull-up	4	4-6	150s	8
Incline DB press	3	8-10	120s	7
Cable row	3	10-12	90s	7
Suitcase carry	3	30yd/s	60s	7

PROGRESSION

Build reps, then load. Add only one set to a limiting pattern after 3-4 stalled weeks with strong recovery. Keep conditioning easy after heavy lower-body work.

DELOAD AND NOTES

Every 6-9 weeks as needed: reduce sets 40-50%, keep RPE 5-6, and avoid hard intervals. Replace deadlifts if fatigue compromises running or rucking.

4-DAY STRENGTH + POWER HYBRID

Advanced Tactical Strength Program

Schedule: Mon Lower Strength | Tue Upper Strength | Wed aerobic recovery | Thu Power / Full Body | Fri Upper + Carry | Sat conditioning or ruck. Requires accurate RPE and reliable recovery.

MON - LOWER STRENGTH

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Back squat	4	3-5	3m	8
Trap-bar deadlift	3	3-5	3m	8
Split squat	3	6/side	2m	7
Heavy carry	4	30yd	90s	8

TUE - UPPER STRENGTH

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Bench press	4	3-5	3m	8
Weighted pull-up	4	3-6	3m	8
Landmine press	3	6/side	2m	7
Heavy row	3	6-8	2m	7

THU - POWER / FULL BODY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Box jump / throw	4	3	90s	6
Power clean / pull	5	2-3	2m	7
Front squat	3	5	2m	7
Push press	4	3-5	2m	7
Sled push	5	20m	90s	8

FRI - UPPER + CARRY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	RPE
Incline DB press	3	8	2m	7
Chest-supp. row	3	8	2m	7
Pull-up	3	submax	2m	7
Shoulder carry	4	30yd/s	90s	8
Grip circuit	3	45s	75s	8

PROGRESSION

Progress primary lifts through load or rep targets. Power work stops when speed or landing quality declines. Maintain strength during heavy conditioning phases rather than forcing volume.

DELOAD AND NOTES

Every 4-8 hard weeks: cut sets 50%, load 5-10%, and keep RPE 5-6. Do not pair maximal lower-body strength with maximal sprint or ruck testing.

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Strength Programming Checklist

Select the simplest program that matches your experience, schedule, equipment, and recovery. Strength should improve tactical performance, not compete with it.

CHOOSE YOUR STARTING LEVEL

PROFILE	START WITH
New, returning, or training 3 days	Beginner full body
6+ consistent months; four days available	Intermediate upper / lower
Experienced; power-skill competent; recovery reliable	Advanced hybrid
Unsure between levels	Choose the simpler option

STRENGTH CHECKLIST

- ☐ I train squat, hinge, push, pull, carry, and core.
- ☐ I use movement variations that fit my body.
- ☐ I keep most working sets around RPE 7-8.
- ☐ I progress one variable at a time.
- ☐ I train grip without ruining every pulling session.
- ☐ I place hard conditioning away from heavy lower work.
- ☐ I use a repeatable warm-up.
- ☐ I deload before fatigue becomes a crisis.

EQUIPMENT LADDER

MINIMUM

Body weight • bands • loaded backpack • pull-up option

STANDARD

Dumbbells • bench • barbell • rack • trap bar

TACTICAL

WEEKLY ACTION STEP

Schedule every strength and conditioning session before the week begins. Protect at least one lower-stress day and one full recovery window.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Which pattern is weakest? • Which lift creates the most fatigue? • Does my strength plan support my running, carrying, and job demands?

EVIDENCE BASE: ACSM 2026 resistance-training guidance; NSCA strength and tactical programming principles; uploaded ISSA Tactical Conditioning, Strength & Conditioning, CPT, Exercise Therapy, and Bodybuilding texts.

NEXT: SECTION 3 - TACTICAL CONDITIONING

FORGED MIND & BODY

TACTICAL CONDITIONING

Build the engine. Control the effort.

SECTION 3 | PAGES 21-30

ZONE 2 • TEMPO • INTERVALS • SPRINTS • CARRIES • RUCKING

Conditioning supports performance. Fatigue alone proves nothing.

TRAIN THE QUALITY YOU NEED

The Tactical Conditioning Engine

Conditioning is the ability to produce, sustain, and recover from physical work. Tactical performance requires both aerobic and anaerobic capacity, but the program should identify which quality each session develops.

THE CONDITIONING SPECTRUM

AEROBIC BASE	Long, sustainable work	**Talk test / RPE 3-4**	Build capacity and recovery
TEMPO / THRESHOLD	Controlled moderate-hard work	**RPE 5-7**	Improve sustainable pace
HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVALS	Hard repeated efforts	**RPE 8-9**	Raise high-output capacity
SPRINT / POWER	Very short maximal-quality work	**Full recovery**	Develop speed and power
MIXED WORK CAPACITY	Strength + locomotion + load	**Task-specific RPE**	Integrate qualities

CONCURRENT TRAINING

Strength and endurance can improve together. Interference is usually managed through reasonable volume, smart sequencing, sufficient recovery, and avoiding excessive lower-body fatigue.

PROGRAMMING RULE

Hard days should be meaningfully hard; easy days should remain easy. Turning every session into medium-hard work often produces fatigue without a clear adaptation.

WEEKLY DISTRIBUTION EXAMPLE

2-4 strength sessions • 1-3 aerobic sessions • 1 interval or tempo session • optional task-specific carry or ruck • at least 1 lower-stress day

BUILD THE AEROBIC BASE

Zone 2 Cardio

Zone 2 is steady aerobic work performed below the intensity where breathing and fatigue rise sharply. Heart-rate formulas are estimates; the talk test and repeatable effort are practical anchors.

FORGED ZONE 2 STANDARD

RPE 3-4 | Conversational pace | 20-60 minutes

You should be able to speak in complete sentences without repeated gasping.

MODALITY OPTIONS

WALK / INCLINE

Low skill, accessible, easily controlled.

RUN / JOG

Specific for running goals; higher impact.

BIKE

Low impact; useful around heavy lower-body training.

ROWER

Whole-body option; technique affects effort.

STAIR MACHINE

Useful climbing demand; watch calf and knee load.

SWIM / POOL

Low impact; skill and access dependent.

PROGRESSION

WEEK	DURATION	SESSIONS
1	20-30 min	2
2	25-35 min	2
3	30-40 min	2
4	Hold or reduce	1-2

QUICK WIN

Finish the session feeling capable of more. Zone 2 is not failed interval training.

COMMON MISTAKE

Letting pace drift until speech becomes broken and the session becomes another hard day.

CONTROLLED SPEED AND STRENGTH ENDURANCE

Tempo Runs and Hill Training

Tempo work sits between easy aerobic training and all-out intervals. Hills increase force demand and may reduce top speed, but they also increase calf, Achilles, and lower-body workload.

THREE TEMPO FORMATS

CONTINUOUS TEMPO

10-25 minutes at RPE 5-7. Sustainable, controlled, and below an all-out time trial.

TEMPO REPEATS

3-6 x 3-6 minutes at RPE 6-7 with 1-2 minutes easy recovery.

STRIDES

4-8 x 15-25 seconds fast and relaxed with full walking recovery. Speed practice, not a sprint test.

HILL TRAINING LADDER

LEVEL	SESSION	RECOVERY
Beginner	6 x 20 sec brisk uphill	Walk down fully
Intermediate	8 x 30 sec strong uphill	60-90 sec
Advanced	8-12 x 30-45 sec	90-120 sec
Long hill	4-6 x 2-3 min controlled	Walk / jog down

TREADMILL ALTERNATIVE

Use 3-8% incline and a controlled pace. Set speed before the repetition and step off only when safe; holding the rails changes the demand.

RECOVERY TIP

Do not place hard hills immediately after heavy squats, deadlifts, or a long ruck when lower-leg or back fatigue is high.

ACTION STEP

Choose one tempo format for four weeks. Repeat the same duration, surface, and recovery so pace and effort become measurable.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: Faster is always better. FACT: Tempo training works because the pace is controlled enough to accumulate quality work.

HIGH INTENSITY WITH A PURPOSE

Intervals, HIIT, and Sprints

These methods are related but not identical. Intervals alternate work and recovery. HIIT uses hard efforts near the upper aerobic range. Sprint training prioritizes maximal or near-maximal speed with long recovery.

CHOOSE THE CORRECT TOOL

METHOD	WORK	RECOVERY	PRIMARY GOAL
Aerobic intervals	2-5 min @ RPE 7-8	1-3 min easy	High aerobic output
Short HIIT	30-90 sec @ RPE 8-9	1-3x work time	Repeated hard efforts
Sprint intervals	10-30 sec very hard	3-6x work time	Anaerobic capacity
Speed sprints	5-10 sec high quality	2-4 min full	Acceleration / power

SPRINT PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Complete a progressive warm-up.
- ☐ Use a safe surface with clear space.
- ☐ Avoid maximal sprinting while significantly sore or fatigued.
- ☐ Build easy running and tempo tolerance first.
- ☐ Stop when speed or mechanics decline.
- ☐ Progress repetitions before adding distance.

PROGRAMMING NOTE

One true high-intensity conditioning session per week is enough for many concurrent programs. Add only when recovery and performance support it.

COMMON MISTAKE

Calling any exhausting circuit HIIT. If work duration, intensity, recovery, and progression are undefined, the label does not create a training effect.

EXAMPLE INTERVAL

6 x 2 minutes at RPE 8 with 2 minutes easy recovery on rower, bike, hill, or track. Keep the final repetition within the same quality range as the first.

MOVE LOAD WITH CONTROL

Loaded Carries and Sandbag Training

Loaded movement develops grip, posture, bracing, gait, and work capacity. The training effect depends on where the load is held, how far it moves, and whether technique remains stable.

FARMER / SUITCASE

Dumbbells, kettlebells, handles, plates, or loaded buckets.

BEAR-HUG / FRONT

Sandbag, medicine ball, heavy bag, plate stack, or loaded duffel.

SHOULDER CARRY

Sandbag or durable load; alternate sides and control trunk position.

BAR-ON-BACK WALK

Bar or fixed apparatus across the traps; use deliberate steps and a clear path.

SLED PUSH / DRAG

Strong horizontal force with limited eccentric loading.

STAIR / STEP CARRY

High local demand; use lighter loads and safe foot placement.

CARRY PROGRAMMING MATRIX

GOAL	LOAD	DURATION	REST
Strength	Heavy	10-30 sec	90-180 sec
Capacity	Moderate	30-60 sec	60-120 sec
Endurance	Light-moderate	60-120 sec	60-90 sec
Mixed circuit	Moderate	20-60 yd	As prescribed

PROGRESSION

Change only load, distance, duration, turns, terrain, or rest. Do not increase all variables together.

EQUIPMENT NOTE

No sandbag is required. A loaded duffel or backpack can work if it is secure, durable, and free of sharp or shifting contents.

STOP THE SET WHEN

Grip opens unexpectedly • posture collapses • gait becomes unsafe • breathing cannot be controlled • the load shifts unpredictably

PROGRESS THE LOAD - NOT THE EGO

Rucking and Loaded Movement

Rucking combines locomotion and external load. It is specific for many military tasks, but it also creates impact, foot, lower-leg, hip, and back stress that must be progressed conservatively.

START WITH THE FOUR VARIABLES

LOAD

Begin light enough to maintain posture and gait. Occupational test loads are goals, not automatic starting points.

DISTANCE

Establish pain-free walking tolerance before adding long mileage.

PACE

Use a controlled walk first. Faster movement changes impact and mechanics.

TERRAIN

Flat and predictable before hills, trails, stairs, or uneven ground.

FOUR-WEEK ENTRY PROGRESSION

WEEK	LOAD	TIME / DISTANCE	RPE
1	10-15 lb	20-30 min flat	3-4
2	Same	Add 5-10 min	3-4
3	+5 lb or slight hill	Hold duration	4-5
4	Reduce 20-30%	Easy technique session	3

FOOT AND PACK CHECK

Use appropriate footwear, secured load, fitted straps, and progressive exposure. Address hot spots before they become blisters.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Load carriage can reduce speed and movement efficiency. Strength and aerobic training support performance, but specific load exposure is still required.

LOW-IMPACT ALTERNATIVES

Incline treadmill without load • stair machine • sled drag • weighted step-ups • bike or row intervals. These build qualities but do not fully replace ruck-specific practice.

COMMON MISTAKE

Adding load, distance, pace, and hills in the same week. Progress one major stressor at a time.

BUILD REPEATABLE OUTPUT

Circuit Training and Work Capacity

Work capacity is the ability to perform useful work and recover enough to continue. A good circuit has a clear purpose, balanced movements, defined intensity, and a progression method.

THE FORGED CIRCUIT FORMULA

1 | LOCOMOTION

Row, bike, run, step, crawl, or shuttle.

2 | LOWER BODY

Squat, hinge, lunge, sled, or step-up.

3 | UPPER BODY

Push, pull, drag, or climb pattern.

4 | LOAD / CARRY

Farmer, front, shoulder, or job-specific load.

5 | TRUNK

Plank, dead bug, anti-rotation, or controlled get-up.

6 | RECOVERY

Defined rest, easy movement, or breathing target.

CIRCUIT PROGRESSION OPTIONS

VARIABLE	PROGRESSION
Rounds	3 becomes 4 while quality remains stable
Work time	30 sec becomes 40 sec
Load	Increase the smallest practical amount
Rest	Reduce slightly without losing output

SAMPLE CIRCUIT

4 rounds: 250 m row, 10 push-ups, 12 step-ups, 30-yard front carry, 30-second plank. Rest 90 seconds. Target RPE 7.

skill i

EQUIPMENT SUBSTITUTIONS

No rower: brisk incline walk. No kettlebell: dumbbell hinge. No medicine ball: controlled power clean or sled push when skilled.

CONCURRENT-TRAINING RULE

Separate demanding endurance and heavy lower-body strength by several hours or different days when possible. Protect the quality that matters most.

SELECT THE RIGHT DOSE

Sample Conditioning Workouts

Choose one workout that matches the intended quality. Scaling changes duration, repetitions, or load - not the purpose of the session.

ZONE 2 ENGINE

Bike, row, incline walk, or easy run. Beginner 25 min | Intermediate 35 min | Advanced 45-60 min. RPE 3-4.

TEMPO REPEATS

Beginner 4 x 3 min | Intermediate 5 x 4 min | Advanced 4 x 6 min. RPE 6-7; easy recovery 2 min.

AEROBIC INTERVALS

Beginner 5 x 2 min | Intermediate 6 x 2 min | Advanced 5 x 3 min. RPE 8; equal easy recovery.

HILL POWER

Beginner 6 x 15 sec | Intermediate 8 x 20 sec | Advanced 8 x 30 sec. Walk down and recover fully.

CARRY CAPACITY

Beginner 4 x 30 yd | Intermediate 6 x 40 yd | Advanced 8 x 40 yd. Moderate load; 60-90 sec rest.

RUCK FOUNDATION

Beginner 20-30 min light | Intermediate 45 min moderate | Advanced 60-90 min task-specific. RPE 3-5.

MIXED WORK CAPACITY

3-5 rounds: 250 m row, 8 burpees or step-downs, 12 DB swings or hinges, 15 push-ups, 30 yd carry. Rest 90 sec.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Complete one Zone 2 session and one structured hard session. Record duration, pace, RPE, recovery, and next-session target.

RECOVERY BETWEEN SESSIONS

If output falls across several sessions, reduce interval volume, carry load, ruck exposure, or lower-body lifting before adding more work.

TRAIN THE ENGINE WITH PURPOSE

Conditioning Checklist

Conditioning should improve readiness while allowing strength, skill, and recovery to progress. Use this checklist before adding another hard session.

WEEKLY PROGRAMMING CHECKLIST

- ☐ I know the purpose of every conditioning session.
- ☐ I limit true high-intensity work to a recoverable dose.
- ☐ I separate hard lower-body stress when possible.
- ☐ I use equipment substitutions without changing the goal.
- ☐ I complete at least one easy aerobic session.
- ☐ I progress one ruck or carry variable at a time.
- ☐ I track RPE, pace, load, distance, and recovery.
- ☐ I reduce workload when readiness remains low.

EXAMPLE BALANCED WEEK

DAY	PRIMARY SESSION
Monday	Lower strength
Tuesday	Zone 2
Wednesday	Upper strength + carry
Thursday	Intervals or tempo
Friday	Full-body strength / power
Saturday	Ruck, circuit, or longer aerobic work
Sunday	Recovery / mobility

SECTION 3 KEY TAKEAWAY

Aerobic work builds the base. High-intensity work raises the ceiling. Loaded movement creates specificity. Recovery connects them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Do my easy days stay easy? • Which conditioning quality is limiting? • Does my current workload improve or reduce strength-session quality?

EVIDENCE BASE: NSCA tactical load-carriage programming; Huiberts et al. and Schumann et al. concurrent-training reviews; ACSM conditioning principles; uploaded ISSA Tactical Conditioning, Strength & Conditioning, CPT, and Exercise Therapy texts.

NEXT: SECTION 4 - TACTICAL PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

FORGED MIND & BODY

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

Fuel readiness. Execute the plan. Prove the standard.

SECTION 4 | PAGES 31-40

NUTRITION • RECOVERY • 8-WEEK SYSTEM • TESTING • TRACKING

Readiness is built by what you repeat—not by one heroic session.

SUPPORT THE WORK

Fuel and Hydration for Readiness

Tactical nutrition should support training, recovery, cognition, and body-composition goals. Requirements change with body size, climate, equipment, session length, and operational demand.

BUILD THE PERFORMANCE PLATE

PROTEIN

Include a quality source at 3-5 meals. A practical daily range for active adults is about 1.6-2.2 g/kg.

CARBOHYDRATE

Scale portions to workload. Add more around long, fast, or high-volume days; reduce when demand falls.

FATS

Use mostly unsaturated sources while maintaining enough total fat for health, taste, and energy.

PRODUCE

Use varied fruit and vegetables for micronutrients, fiber, and a repeatable meal structure.

HYDRATION FIELD GUIDE

WHEN	PRACTICAL ACTION	CHECK
Daily	Drink regularly; include fluids with meals	Pale-yellow urine is one clue
Before	Begin sessions normally hydrated	Avoid last-minute overdrinking
During	Use thirst plus a plan for long/hot work	Know individual sweat loss
After	Replace fluid and sodium over several hours	Body mass and urine trend

ELECTROLYTES

Sodium becomes more relevant with heavy sweating, heat, long sessions, or salty sweat. Needs vary; more is not automatically better.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Fluid plans work best when individualized. Both substantial dehydration and excessive fluid intake can impair safety and performance.

MISSION-READY MEAL EXAMPLES

Breakfast: eggs, oats, berries • Lunch: chicken, rice, vegetables • Pre-training: yogurt and banana • Dinner: lean beef, potatoes, salad • Field option: shelf-stable protein, fruit, pretzels, and water

QUICK WIN

Pack tomorrow's training meal, snack, and water before the day becomes unpredictable.

RECOVERY IMPROVES PERFORMANCE

Sleep, Stress, and Readiness

Recovery is not passive. It is the process that allows training stress to become adaptation. Sleep opportunity, nutrition, workload, and life stress should guide—but not completely control—daily decisions.

THE READINESS DASHBOARD

SLEEP

Duration, regularity, quality

BODY

Soreness, pain, illness signs

MIND

Motivation, mood, concentration

OUTPUT

Warm-up speed, coordination, RPE

LIFE LOAD

Work hours, heat, travel, stress

RECOVERY

Food, fluid, easy movement

TRAFFIC-LIGHT ADJUSTMENT

STATUS	SIGNS	SESSION DECISION
GREEN	Normal energy; warm-up feels expected	Train as planned
YELLOW	Poor sleep or unusual fatigue; no red flags	Reduce volume 20-30% or intensity
RED	Illness, sharp pain, unsafe fatigue, major decline	Stop; recover or seek qualified care

SLEEP TARGET

Most adults should create a consistent 7-9 hour sleep opportunity. Individual needs and operational constraints vary.

TACTICAL PERFORMANCE NOTE

When sleep is restricted, preserve technique and easy aerobic work; be cautious with maximal lifting, sprinting, and complex tasks.

DOWNSHIFT ROUTINE

- Set a repeatable wake time and protect a realistic bedtime.
- Reduce bright light, work, and stimulating media near bed when possible.
- Use a cool, dark, quiet environment; limit late caffeine and alcohol.
- If the schedule breaks, resume the routine at the next opportunity.

REFLECTION

Which one recovery behavior would most improve tomorrow's readiness—and what will make it easier to repeat?

BUILD • INTENSIFY • PROVE

The 8-Week Tactical System

Choose the level that matches your current training history, technique, and recovery—not your ambition. Each level combines strength, aerobic development, higher-intensity conditioning, and loaded movement.

EIGHT-WEEK PROGRESSION

WEEK	FOCUS	STRENGTH	CONDITIONING	RUCK / CARRY
1	Establish	RPE 6	Controlled baseline	Light / short
2	Build	Add reps or load	Add 5-10 min easy	Same load
3	Build	RPE 7	Add one interval	Add duration
4	Deload	-30 to 40% sets	Easy only	Reduce / omit
5	Intensify	RPE 7-8	Quality intervals	Moderate
6	Build	Small load increase	Add one rep / round	Add duration
7	Specific	Hold quality	Goal-specific dose	Task-specific
8	Taper + test	Low fatigue	Performance tests	Test only if prepared

RULES THAT GOVERN EVERY LEVEL

RPE

Most working sets finish with 2-4 good reps in reserve.

PROGRESSION

Change one major variable when all prescribed work is clean.

SEPARATION

Separate demanding running and lower-body lifting when practical.

DELOAD

Reduce fatigue; keep movement patterns and leave the gym fresher.

PAIN RULE

Sharp, escalating, or gait-changing pain is not a progression signal.

SPECIFICITY

Test preparation becomes more specific as the assessment approaches.

PROGRAMMING NOTE

If work demands spike, hold progression or repeat the week. The calendar does not override readiness.

COMMON MISTAKE

Adding extra hard sessions because the plan feels manageable. Save capacity for consistent progress and real-world demands.

LEARN • BUILD • REPEAT

Beginner Tactical Program

Weekly schedule: Mon Strength A • Tue Zone 2 • Wed recovery/mobility • Thu Strength B • Sat conditioning or introductory ruck • Fri/Sun off or easy walking.

STRENGTH SESSIONS

DAY	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	INTENSITY
A	Goblet squat	3	6-10	90 sec	RPE 6-7
A	DB bench press	3	6-10	90 sec	RPE 6-7
A	Cable / DB row	3	8-12	75 sec	RPE 7
A	Farmer carry	3	20-30 yd	60 sec	Stable posture
B	Trap-bar deadlift	3	5-8	2 min	RPE 6-7
B	Split squat	2	8 / side	75 sec	Controlled
B	Lat pulldown	3	8-12	75 sec	RPE 7
B	Plank	3	20-40 sec	45 sec	Clean brace

CONDITIONING AND LOADED MOVEMENT

DAY	METHOD	DOSE	RPE	PURPOSE
Tue	Zone 2	25-40 min	3-4	Aerobic base
Sat	Tempo intervals	4-6 x 2 min / 2 min easy	6-7	Sustainable output
Alt Sat	Intro ruck	20-40 min light, flat	3-4	Load tolerance

PROGRESSION

When every set reaches the top of the rep range with clean form, add the smallest practical load next time. Add Zone 2 duration before intensity.

WEEK 4 DELOAD

Perform 2 sets per strength exercise, 20-30 minutes easy Zone 2, and omit hard intervals or rucking if soreness persists.

COACHING NOTES

- Prioritize technique and finish sessions capable of more.
- Alternate tempo and ruck Saturdays until basic tolerance is established.
- Use walking, cycling, or rowing if running impact is not yet tolerated.

DEVELOP • INTEGRATE • PERFORM

Intermediate Tactical Program

Weekly schedule: Mon Lower + carry • Tue Zone 2 • Wed Upper • Thu intervals • Fri recovery • Sat full-body strength + ruck rotation • Sun off.

STRENGTH SESSIONS

DAY	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	INTENSITY
Mon	Back / front squat	4	4-6	2-3 min	RPE 7-8
Mon	Romanian deadlift	3	6-8	2 min	RPE 7
Mon	Farmer carry	4	30-40 yd	75 sec	Heavy-clean
Wed	Bench press	4	4-6	2 min	RPE 7-8
Wed	Pull-up / pulldown	4	5-10	90 sec	RPE 7-8
Wed	1-arm press + row	3	8 each	75 sec	Controlled
Sat	Trap-bar deadlift	3	3-5	2-3 min	RPE 7
Sat	Split squat + push-up	3	8-12	75 sec	RPE 7

CONDITIONING AND LOADED MOVEMENT

DAY	METHOD	DOSE	RPE	PURPOSE
Tue	Zone 2	35-55 min	3-4	Aerobic base
Thu	Aerobic intervals	5-7 x 2-3 min / equal easy	7-8	High aerobic output
Sat alt	Ruck	40-75 min moderate	4-5	Specific endurance

PROGRESSION

Add 2.5-5% load after all sets meet the target at or below prescribed RPE. Progress intervals by one repetition before increasing pace.

WEEK 4 DELOAD

Reduce strength sets by one-third, replace intervals with 25-35 minutes easy, and cut ruck duration and load by 30-40%.

COACHING NOTES

- Keep Thursday intervals away from maximal lower-body loading.
- Rotate the Saturday ruck every other week if feet or lower legs need more recovery.
- Carries should challenge grip and posture without turning into unsafe shuffling.

SPECIFICITY WITHOUT CHAOS

Advanced Tactical Program

Weekly schedule: Mon heavy lower • Tue aerobic + upper volume • Wed speed/power • Thu recovery • Fri heavy upper + intervals • Sat task-specific ruck/circuit • Sun off.

STRENGTH SESSIONS

DAY	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	INTENSITY
Mon	Deadlift / squat	4-5	2-5	3 min	RPE 7-8
Mon	Unilateral lower	3	5-8 / side	90 sec	RPE 7
Tue	Press + weighted pull	4	4-8	2 min	RPE 7-8
Tue	Carry + trunk	3-4	30-50 yd	75 sec	Task quality
Wed	Jump / med-ball throw	4	3	2 min	Fast
Wed	Hill / speed sprint	6-10	10-20 sec	Full	RPE 8-9
Fri	Bench / overhead press	4	3-6	2-3 min	RPE 8
Fri	Row + posterior chain	3	6-10	90 sec	RPE 7

CONDITIONING AND LOADED MOVEMENT

DAY	METHOD	DOSE	RPE	PURPOSE
Tue	Zone 2	40-60 min	3-4	Recovery + base
Fri	Intervals	4-6 x 3 min / 2 min easy	8	High aerobic output
Sat	Ruck / work circuit	60-120 min or 4-6 rounds	4-7	Task specificity

PROGRESSION

Use small weekly changes and wave volume across hard sessions. Progress only when bar speed, running pace, movement quality, and recovery remain stable.

WEEK 4 DELOAD

Reduce total volume 40-50%, keep brief exposures at RPE 6-7, remove maximal sprints, and use an easy short ruck only if fully recovered.

COACHING NOTES

- Advanced means better control, not more exhaustion.
- Avoid stacking three high-impact days; substitute bike, rower, sled, or pool work when appropriate.
- Task-specific work should reflect an actual goal, test, or occupational need.

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Performance Testing

Test under repeatable conditions after familiarization. Standards differ across occupations; official agency or service requirements always take priority over this coaching framework.

PERFORMANCE BATTERY

TEST	PROTOCOL	RECORD
Push-ups	Quality repetitions to a fixed technical stop	Reps + standard
Pull-ups	Dead-hang to clear finish; no kipping	Reps / assistance
Deadlift	Technically sound 3-5RM or submax estimate	Load + RPE
Farmer carry	Fixed load and course; safe turns	Load, distance, time
Plank	Neutral position to technical stop	Time
1.5-mile run	Measured course or calibrated treadmill	Time + conditions
5K	Even pacing on a repeatable course	Time + splits
Ruck	Fixed load, distance, terrain, footwear	Time + symptoms
Grip	Same dynamometer and position	Best of 2-3 / hand
Mobility	Squat, overhead reach, ankle, rotation	Limitations / pain

THE FORGED TACTICAL STANDARD

READY is not a single score. It is the ability to demonstrate competent movement, useful strength, sustainable aerobic capacity, repeatable hard effort, and loaded-movement tolerance—without sacrificing health or recovery.

MOVE WELL

No avoidable technique breakdown

BUILD STRENGTH

Progress key patterns over time

OWN THE ENGINE

Complete easy work with control

REPEAT OUTPUT

Maintain quality across intervals

CARRY THE LOAD

Preserve posture, feet, and gait

RECOVER

Return ready for the next demand

TESTING RULE

Do not perform every test on one day unless the official assessment requires it. Sequence tests to limit fatigue and preserve validity.

SAFETY NOTE

Stop testing for chest pain, faintness, severe breathlessness, sharp pain, neurological symptoms, or unsafe technique; seek appropriate care.

RECORD • REVIEW • ADJUST

Track the Signal

EIGHT-WEEK PROGRESS TRACKER

WK	BODY MASS	SLEEP	STRENGTH WIN	ENGINE WIN	READINESS 1-5
1	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
2	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
3	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
4	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
5	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
6	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
7	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___
8	_____	___ h	_____	_____	___

WORKOUT LOG

DATE	SESSION / EXERCISE	SETS x REPS / DOSE	LOAD / PACE	RPE	NOTES
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____
___	_____	_____	_____	__	_____

POST-SESSION REVIEW

- ☐ Did the session achieve its intended quality?
- ☐ Where did technique, pace, or focus decline?
- ☐ What should remain the same next time?
- ☐ What single variable—if any—should progress?

COACH'S RULE

Track enough to make decisions. More data is not better if it is inconsistent, unclear, or never reviewed.

PREPARE WITH PURPOSE

The Forged Final Challenge

For the next 30 days, prove that tactical fitness is a system—not a collection of random hard workouts. Choose the appropriate program level and complete the fundamentals with discipline.

30-DAY CHALLENGE

- [ ] Complete every scheduled strength session—or use the planned reduced option.
- [ ] Accumulate at least 90 minutes of controlled aerobic work each week.
- [ ] Complete no more than two purposeful hard-conditioning sessions per week.
- [ ] Practice loaded movement only at a dose your feet, gait, and recovery tolerate.
- [ ] Create a consistent sleep opportunity and record readiness each morning.
- [ ] Prepare protein, produce, carbohydrate, and fluid before demanding days.
- [ ] Log every session and write one useful coaching note afterward.
- [ ] Finish the month healthier, more capable, and ready to continue.

YOUR ACTION PLAN

PRIMARY PERFORMANCE GOAL

_____

PROGRAM LEVEL

Beginner / Intermediate / Advanced

TRAINING DAYS

_____

TEST DATE

_____

RECOVERY COMMITMENT

_____

FIRST ACTION TODAY

_____

FINAL CHECKLIST

Train the needed qualities • Progress one variable • Respect pain and fatigue • Fuel the work • Review the data • Repeat.

REMEMBER

Consistency beats perfection. Strong athletes are durable athletes. Recovery improves readiness. Train with purpose.

BUILD STRENGTH. INCREASE ENDURANCE.

PERFORM UNDER PRESSURE.