

TACTICS AND PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

THE APACHE SCOUT PIT

BY KEVIN REEVE PHOTOS COURTESY OF ONPOINTTACTICAL.COM

The Apache were noted for their ability to navigate the harsh landscape of the Sonoran Desert, staying a step ahead of pursuers and materializing when they wanted to carry out raids.

General Crook, who tracked them on multiple campaigns was mystified how these warriors could set out across the harshest desert and then emerge days or weeks later looking completely rested and refreshed. What General Crook did not know, is that the Chiricahua used a network of underground hideouts known as scout pits that were stocked with food, water and weap-

ons. These pits were accessible on Apache routes, and regularly replenished so as to be ready when needed. General Crook had to use mule teams laden with a pair of 40 gallon water barrels to give chase.

What are these scout pits? I spent some time on the Apache reservations in Arizona and New Mexico and frequently asked about scout pits. Most of the questions were answered with a blank stare,

but one elder, a preserver of culture as it were, winked at me and asked how a white boy like me learned of such things. We then had a pretty good exchange of information.

These pits were placed away from visible trails and roads. The Apache understood that humans reliably take the courses of least resistance, therefore making a shelter away from those *continued next page*

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DIG A HOLE THE SIZE OF A GRAVE.

trails added a great deal to their invisibility.

The scout pit is an underground shelter. It was traditionally dug into the ground with only the aid of a digging stick. It is hard work, and the digging portion takes substantial time. I, of course, use shovels and modern tools to speed the process.

This shelter is only appropriate in areas without a lot of rocky soil, such as areas of the Sonoran Desert. I dig a hole about the size of a grave. That means slightly longer than a person is tall, and about three feet wide. The depth is measured by standing in the hole. When your hip bone is level with the ground, it is deep enough. So, I use a modern measurement of six feet four inches by three feet by three feet. Care is made to remove whatever ground cover is on the surface so that it can be replaced when construction is complete. All the dirt should be retained on one side.

After the hole is complete, a shelf about five inches deep and five across is cut around

the rim. This shelf will support placement of the logs or wood utilized to create the cover. In the example photographed I used four-inch logs ripped with a table saw. The covering structure was made from Agave and Sotol stalks.

The next step is to lay in the structure. Each log is laid as close as possible together. An entrance is left about two-thirds of the way down and narrowed so that an individual can barely fit through.

Once the roof structure is laid in place, a layer of brush is placed over the cross members. The Agave stocks did not fit together as well as my cut timber, so the brush filled an important role of filling the gaps to prevent dirt from falling through. Because the timber is cut and fit so precisely in my example, that layer was less important. Not gathering it, if not needed, creates less of a footprint on the landscape.

Next, we leave the entrance alone for now and place several inches of dirt on top. We



USE LOGS TO COVER THE HOLE.



LEAVE SPACE JUST BIG ENOUGH TO BARELY FIT THROUGH...



USE SMALLER BRANCHES AND SHRUBBERY TO FILL IN THE GAPS AND COVER THE LOGS WITH DIRT.

want to create a slight mound so as to allow for runoff of rain. The traditional door was a woven basket about six inches deep in the shape of a keystone (wedge shaped) that just fits the opening so that the top of the basket is level with the surrounding earth. The basket is filled with dirt and sometimes a local plant. The modern adaptation is a piece of plywood with a rim around it to hold the dirt in.

Before the pit was sealed, it would be filled with food in clay jars sealed with beeswax, Apache water baskets also sealed and maybe a bow and arrow set or maybe a lance. The Apache water baskets are very tightly woven and then a ball of pitch and a hot rock is put inside and rolled. The hot rock interacts with the pitch and coats the inside of the basket making it water tight. I own an 1860s era water basket of Chiricahua origin. The lining, though not intact, is still visible.

Ultimately, the pit is sealed. The last step is to camouflage the area. We call this return-

ing to baseline. Ground cover is replaced, tracks are erased, and extra dirt is dispersed on the landscape. The objective is to make the ground look undisturbed.

The maker must leave some form of identifier, because if this camouflage is done right, it is nearly impossible to pick it out on the landscape. I do not know how Apaches identified the pits, but there had to have been some kind of a system used.

If they were being pursued, a group of warriors would move at a slow trot. They could sustain this method of movement for long distances. Their southern neighbors, the Tarahumara are noted distance runners, competing in ultramarathons (100-mile races) at high altitude. This slow run allowed them to cover a lot of ground and I believe they could sustain that pace for 48 hours with very little rest. It is likely that they could cover 150 miles in that time frame. They then climbed into the scout pits, slid the basket in place and slept for a long re-

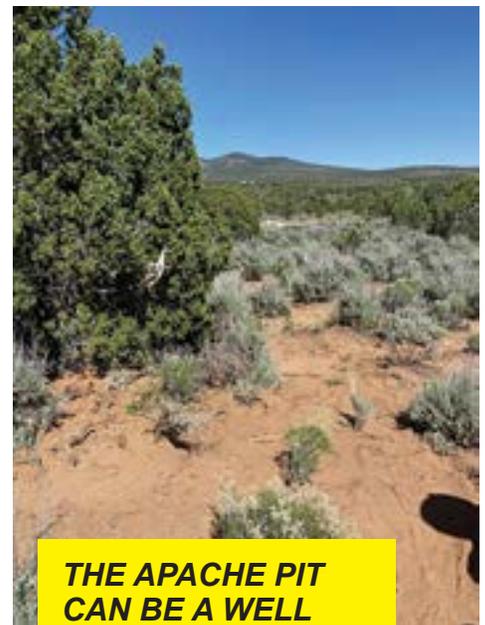
covery period, recuperating, eating and drinking in preparation for the next leg; two days of movement and one day of rest. In the summer they altered the schedule to spend the hottest part of the day underground and travel evening to midday.

I have spent many nights (and days) in a scout pit. Once you are inside, it is not unlike a sensory deprivation chamber, minus the floating. It is some of the best sleep ever. In colder conditions, the scout pits can be lined with leafy debris to insulate from the ground, but here in the desert, in summer, the constant temperature is quite mild, and a simple blanket is enough insulation.

If the pit has sat empty for a while, it may be inhabited. It is easy to drive creatures out, though; before getting into the shelter, make a small fire, and place some coals on a piece of bark. Then lay cedar leaves and sage (both are abundant here) on top of the coals and place the bark in the pit and put the door back on. The interior should fill with



PLYWOOD WITH A RIM FORMS A LID THAT HOLDS DIRT TO CAMO.



THE APACHE PIT CAN BE A WELL INSULATED, COMFORTABLE RETREAT FROM EXTREME TEMPERATURE AND THE ELEMENTS.

thick smoke that should drive critters out.

We have made four or five scout pits in a circular pattern with the entrances all in the ends and leading to a common area where a fire can be maintained. That common area was also three feet deep so the fire was obscured from being seen from the sides. This allowed the team to cook and eat by the fire and then climb into the pit. If the fire is maintained all night, it will stay warm in the pits even on cold nights, but ground cover inside the pits is an imperative when cold.

When coming out of the pit the door is raised slightly and the area checked for enemy presence. During a training exercise, I was being tracked by dogs. I ducked into the scout pit and waited. Soon the dogs came along following my scent. Suddenly the scent trail ended and the dogs began circling to re-acquire the scent, but there was no scent to be found. They kept coming back to the hidden entrance and signaling. The handlers believed they had lost the trail and moved on. I popped out and surprised them. The dogs had been right, they just couldn't figure out

the mystery. I have also tested the scout pit in the dead of winter with a very expensive FLIR thermal detector and it provided more than enough thermal mass to hide the human form.

I have a few scout pits around. Some are strategically located to allow access to areas I want to have access to. They are a great reminder that technology doesn't hold all the answers. Sometimes it is a good idea to look back and see how the old ones did things. ✓

BIO

Kevin Reeve is the founder and Director of OnPoint Tactical Tracking School (www.onpointtactical.com). Kevin has provided training to law enforcement, SAR teams and the U.S. military in the arts of tracking, survival, escape and evasion and urban operations. Kevin also worked at Apple Computer for five years doing organizational development and executive coaching, as well as platform training and curriculum development.



THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

BY THOMAS JEFFERSON, ET AL. SUMMARY BY CHRIS GRAHAM

Each Independence Day I re-read the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights.

I also make a point of striking up a conversation on this subject with my family, friends and co-workers. I did, after all, swear to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic” when I was 17 years old. Could we do any less and still be honoring that oath?

This year, I am also re-reading the Declaration of Independence and discussing that with people I care about. If you think that is a worthwhile idea, feel free to consider doing that with the people you care about.

The Declaration of Independence was ratified on July 4, 1776. Prior to that declara-

tion, The British government held that the British Parliament was the supreme authority throughout the empire and that anything that Parliament did was legitimate. American patriots were convinced that human beings had fundamental Rights that no government could violate and they fought a revolution to discard the British government's enforced paradigm.

The Declaration's introduction establishes a unique value for individual humans. At the time of writing, it was commonly practiced that people were the property of their rulers and that rulers had a divine right from God, or a variety of gods, to enforce their will on sub-

jects. Contemporary governments like those of China, North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia and others have nuanced laws and bureaucracies, but essentially function this way. Behaving in that fashion is a historically common practice for those who inherit or rise to leadership. George Washington, later to be America's first President, was inestimably unique precisely because he declined the greater power of being a king. The Declaration cites the “Laws of Nature and Nature's God” as the authorities justifying the rejection of an authoritarian ruler.

The Declaration's preamble states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all

men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ...”.The authors described an American experiment in governance with few historical precedents and go on to say:“Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes...”.

The third section advances a list of charges of wrongdoing against the king of England. They include:“He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.”“He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness of his invasions on the rights of the people.”“He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries” and others.

The fourth section states:“We have warned them [the British government] from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us”.

It concludes:“We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.”

The final section declares:“We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world [God] for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States...”. The document concludes:“And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” John Hancock and 55 other patriot representatives signed the Declaration of Independence with certainty that the king would have each of them executed if they failed in their endeavor.The patriots won the American Revolution and the United States of America became a separate nation from Great Britain with the motto *E pluribus unum*: Out of many, one.

It is alleged that there was a time in distant history when tribes were sufficiently small

that leaders were informally chosen, largely on the basis of majority consent. If the majority of people followed Charlie, Charlie was the chief.As sizes of tribes grew, might-makes-right naturally displaced consent. From the time of the earliest monarchies to each contemporary form of government, leaders reserve the right to employ violence and coercion for the states they control and challenge the legitimacy of any others from doing the same. Authors of the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights recognized this truism as a necessary evil at best with tyranny being the historical norm for humans. The Declaration is a world changing document that identifies a principled set of concepts unique in human history and unique in the present. This document and these concepts should be reviewed closely to prevent committing errors already experienced in human history. ✓

BIO

*Chris Grabam is the former commander of a military anti-terrorism unit and serves as editor of **Tactics and Preparedness**. Visit his books and training products at www.ChrisGrabamAuthor.com.*

GEAR REVIEW



SEVYLOR RIO KAYAK

This boat functions as a traditional kayak in the water, but deflates and folds up into a nylon carry bag to be stashed where you want it. Made of 18-gauge PVC with an 840 Denier nylon cover and 1000D Tarpaulin bottom, the canoe is designed for rugged conditions. It has a raised bow and stern, directional strakes, a bucket seat, storage compartments and multiple air chambers for redundancy. Whether you want to recon the coastal areas and waterways in your area, do some fishing or give yourself an alternate travel option, the Rio can do the job. www.sevylor.com

FIXED vs. FOLDING BLADES

AND THE SKILLS TO EMPLOY THEM

BY **DAVE CADY** PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Do you carry a knife every day? Is it Grandpa's pocket knife that was passed down to you? Is it an auto? Is it a fixed blade?

My guess is that it is a folder with a pocket clip. It may have assisted opening and it probably has a blade length of three to four inches.

Several types of blades can be found, but I tend to favor the tanto style blade; I like it for poking and thrusting techniques. Two other popular styles are drop point and spear point. All three are versatile and durable. Handle size and construction are important. You want a handle that allows you to retain a positive grip even when the handle surface becomes wet. Rain and wet environments are common and if you cut your assailant with a knife, they will bleed. This will make the knife slippery.

The most popular opener for a folder is a thumb stud. Some folders are produced with a lever type action for opening with an index finger. That action can be described as "assisted

opening". In some states the possession or carriage of this type of knife is illegal. The same can be said for fixed blade knives as well as autos. The auto knife is opened by the release of a spring by pushing a button on the handle

of the knife. The blade then swings sideways or launches forward to an open position.

Folders generally have a dual mission. They can be used as everyday tools and they can be used as defensive or offensive weapons. A per-

*FOLDING KNIVES (TOP) AND
FIXED BLADES (BOTTOM) COME
IN MANY SIZES AND OPTIONS.*



DRAWING



son that thinks they can use a knife to protect themselves must develop a mindset that backs up that intention. Knife fighting and knife defense is both dangerous and deadly. Any technique of attack or defense with any type knife is generally considered deadly physical force. Therefore, circumstances must justify using the weapon and you must be able to articulate the reasons your life was in danger. I was taught a long time ago as a young patrol officer never to draw my firearm unless I intended to use it. Drawing a knife is just as serious.

You can spend as little as two bucks or hundreds on a folder. It needs to function reliably and consistently, but it need not be so pricey that you hesitate to use it. The story of the pocketknife is thousands of years in the making. It dates back further than the Roman Empire.

A fixed blade is one piece of steel forged into a tang and a blade. A fixed blade knife can be a stronger type of knife due to its one-piece construction. Handles are affixed to the tang. You want a knife that provides you with a positive grip. I like 3½ to 4-inch blades for general use and concealability. My folder and my fixed blade are about the same size and weight. The folder always rides in my right front pocket. My fixed blade rides on my right side just before my rear pocket. I recommend a kydex form fit holster with a rotating belt clip. This platform gives you a wide variety of carry positions. Some situations are best served by a larger fixed blade knife carried on the belt; this is common for hunting, fishing or military use.

The folder holds an advantage for space and is concealable, but this is often forfeited by being positioned for a quick draw in a visible position. A fixed blade can be faster or simpler to draw, but the sheath style must be compared



REVERSE GRIP

to the folder's attachment device (usually a clip) to determine the winning draw stroke under duress. Knives can be hidden almost anywhere, but folders are often carried in pockets or along the beltline and fixed blades are often carried on the beltline, sometimes angled to accommodate the movement of the body, such as along the crease between the leg and pelvis that must flex to sit down. Much like a handgun in an ankle holster, knives in boots can be well concealed, but they are not as readily deployed.

We must also consider that at some point, our blades may be seen by other people. At work or home, carrying a fixed blade and a folding knife during my duties is not out of the ordinary. If I am out in public, the sight of a fixed blade knife may make some folks nervous and may attract unwanted attention.

Knives are silent, they don't run out of ammo, and at close range they are more deadly than firearms. They can also be used for cutting, constructing and surviving. Whatever knife type is optimum for your needs, the skill for applying it is the most important component.

THE DRAW (FOLDER)

My folding knife is on the opposite side of my body as my handgun. I am a left-hand shooter; my folder is in my right front pocket. As a law enforcement officer, I carry a handgun daily and I carry off duty as well. My folder in the right front pocket has become a platform for its deployment. Most folders give you the option to place the clip on the right or left side

of the knife. My clip is on the right. Once you have established the placement of your folding knife, you must now practice the draw. When drawing the folding knife, you must first establish a solid hold of the knife when it is in your pocket. Withdraw the knife from the pocket and manipulate the thumb stud or lever that will start the action of opening the blade. Once the blade begins to pivot and unfold from the handle, give the handle a quick snapping action that allows the blade to move quickly to the rear and lock the blade in the open position. Once my folder is open and locked in place I go to an on-guard position. The knife is held in a forward grip. *All draws must be mastered slowly before adding any speed and all draws must be mastered under ideal conditions before adding any stress or distractions. It is your responsibility to confirm that all training you do is conducted safely, legally and does not harm yourself or others.*

THE DRAW (FIXED BLADE)

My fixed blade knife is on my right side. I use a kydex sheath that has a rotating belt clip. The sheath clips to my belt. I tilt the sheath at a slight angle that allows me to reach back and draw the knife. A positive grip must begin the draw. I draw the knife from the sheath and keep it close to my body. I practice the draw to an on-guard position with the knife in a forward grip.

ON-GUARD POSITION

This is your platform for attack or defense,

**Knives are silent,
they don't run out of
ammo, and at close
range they are more
deadly than firearms.**



FORWARD GRIP

much like a martial arts or boxing stance. One leg is slightly forward and the knees are slightly bent. Your feet should be about shoulder's width apart. Your non-weapon hand should be your lead hand. Your lead leg should coincide with the non-weapon hand. Your weapon and non-weapon hand should be held about shoulder height. Be loose and mobile in that stance. Do not be flatfooted, be on the balls of your feet. Footwork and maneuvering your center of gravity are just as important as your grip.

JAB/THRUST/STAB

Think of the boxing technique of lead jab, reverse punch. Your lead hand can practice a block/parry and your weapon hand does a jab. To drive an attacker away from you, use multiple jabbing and thrusting techniques. Think of how a wild animal that is backed into a corner acts. It will lunge or snap at an attacker to create a space or avenue of escape. Your techniques can accomplish the same results. You must practice the jabbing and thrusting techniques to develop a high degree of accuracy.

I like to think of this type of situation as "*Extreme Less Lethal*". If my adversary is much larger and appears much stronger than I am, I can articulate the use of these techniques. If I am in a situation that I fear for my life or fear that I will be severely injured, I have the right to defend myself, but beware that even

when you cannot retreat and your objective is only to motivate an attacker to withdraw, deployment of a knife may be assumed to be deployment of lethal force in your jurisdiction. Articulation is very important. Jabbing and slashing at areas of the body that will cut and make your attacker bleed without killing may allow a separate escalation to deliberate deadly physical force focusing on obviously lethal targets if necessary.

Cutting the forearms and jabbing at the attacker's hands may open the opportunity to escape a situation or release an attacker's weapon, but beware that no matter how precisely you may develop your precision, your targets may be moving quickly and unpredictably. Stabbing or thrusting techniques to the area of the head, neck, chest and abdomen can be fatal, as can the severing of major veins or arteries, but effects may vary and time required is variable. Just as a single shot is unlikely to win a gunfight, a single stab or slash may be insufficient to deter or incapacitate an attacker and a sewing machine style delivery to multiple targets may be necessary.

CUTTING/SLASHING

I use the same stance and forward grip for my cutting/slashing techniques. When conducting a slashing technique think of the eight points of a compass. Your slashing techniques should

follow those lines. East to west, southeast to northwest etc., circular flowing techniques that can be followed by jabs and thrusts. I also train for the situation of grabs and chokes. I counter-grab with the non-weapon hand and then practice cutting the forearms of the attacker.

If I am going to be in a situation that may require the use of an edged weapon for self-defense, I would prefer to have a fixed blade. The more important fact is that I conduct competent training with that weapon. I also carry a folder, and it has a dual purpose. It is a tool as well as a self-defense weapon. I recommend you carry the right tools for the job at hand and consider redundancy. Consult the laws and precedents in your jurisdiction prior to carrying or employing any knives and ensure your practices are safe, legal and well-rehearsed. ✓

BIO

Dave Cady is an investigator for the Oneida County District Attorney's Office. He has held positions as a patrol officer and deputy sheriff and served on assignments with the Criminal Investigation Unit, SWAT and the County Narcotics Task Force. He also holds a 5th degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do and is influenced by Hwa Rang Do and Sulsa Do techniques.



DYNAMIC PISTOL SKILLS

BY MATT S.

Is it better to shoot while moving or better to stay static and shoot then move, or should I move quickly to cover and then shoot?

There is not one answer. It is situationally dependent. Whether you are shooting a match or defending yourself, different scenarios will have different best answers, but we need to possess the skills to perform each and know what our abilities and limitations are. We train to make our mistakes in a safe, controlled environment and then develop consistent abilities that we can be confident in. When it comes to training with a handgun, there are two styles I like to separate. One is “static shooting” and the other “dynamic shooting”. Just like every-

thing else there are pros and cons to each. Shooting static is beneficial to those who are learning. It allows you to focus on a specific task without additional distractions. It is the way to build a foundation of the fundamentals. As you continue to grow and establish that solid base you will find ways you can apply stress into your shooting. Stress helps us prepare for dangerous situations without having to put ourselves in danger. Self-induced stress is enough to help identify flaws in your techniques, your consistency or your ability to go fast. Shooting slow and being de-

liberate is good for mastery of new skills and as you become more experienced it allows you to take a step back and isolate areas you want to keep polishing. Shooting in front of a paper target, with no time limit, can be very relaxing, but if you start thinking of shooting with a defensive or competitive mindset, things start to change.

Someone pointing a gun at you or someone you care about, or someone maneuvering to harm another person and placing their life in danger are stressful situations. Now you are presented with a real live person

who is going to shoot back and who is not going to stand there and be a still target. You have actions to prioritize alongside marksmanship. Even minor considerations like time constraints, shooting in front of others and limited problem-solving requirements can be significantly more stressful than the simple static engagement of a stationary paper target.

I challenge you to seek improvement and seek out the training you need. Set a standard or a goal for yourself, something within reach but that pushes you out of your comfort zone. If you are a soldier, law enforcement officer or citizen there is no reason your standard should merely be your agency qualification or CCW requirements. You should fail. Failure is nothing to be ashamed of. Without failure there is no success and no significant improvement. I would rather fail in my training in order to become successful, than discover a point of failure in combat.

Before a mistake or shortcoming can be fixed or improved, it has to be specifically identified. One tool to help you apply stress in your training is a shot timer. I have gone blank when the buzzer goes off or found myself executing something different from what I planned to do. This is a small dose of reality that is beneficial for all shooters to experience.

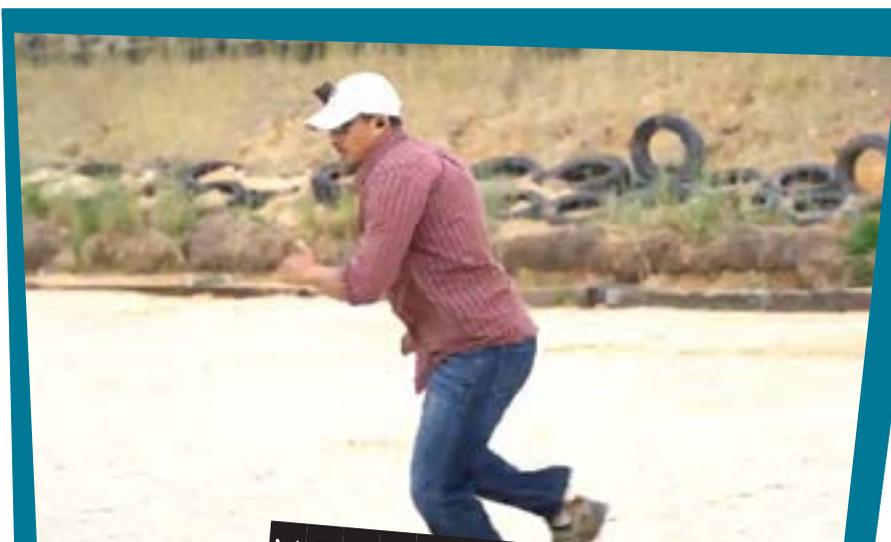
Dynamic shooting is the addition of complexity. It is adding movements and unortho-

dox positions to push you out of your comfort zone and give you a higher workload that is more similar to the physical and mental demands of gunfights and competitive events. In my line of work, we like to use the “crawl, walk, run” method. It is the same methodology behind my training. Before you walk and shoot, you will learn to shoot static and before you can shoot static you will learn safety and how to operate your firearm efficiently.

Some people call this “advanced”, but it really isn’t advanced. You know how to walk, so the only difference is now you have a gun in your hand and must combine gun handling skills and walking skills. These skills are not relegated to the needs of a hostage rescue

team, as your local range rules might imply. They are the real-world skills anyone who has considered defending their family might need. Anyone can learn these, but first build a solid foundation of marksmanship fundamentals, efficient operation of your pistol, and don’t move on until safety procedures are understood and internalized with 100 percent consistency.

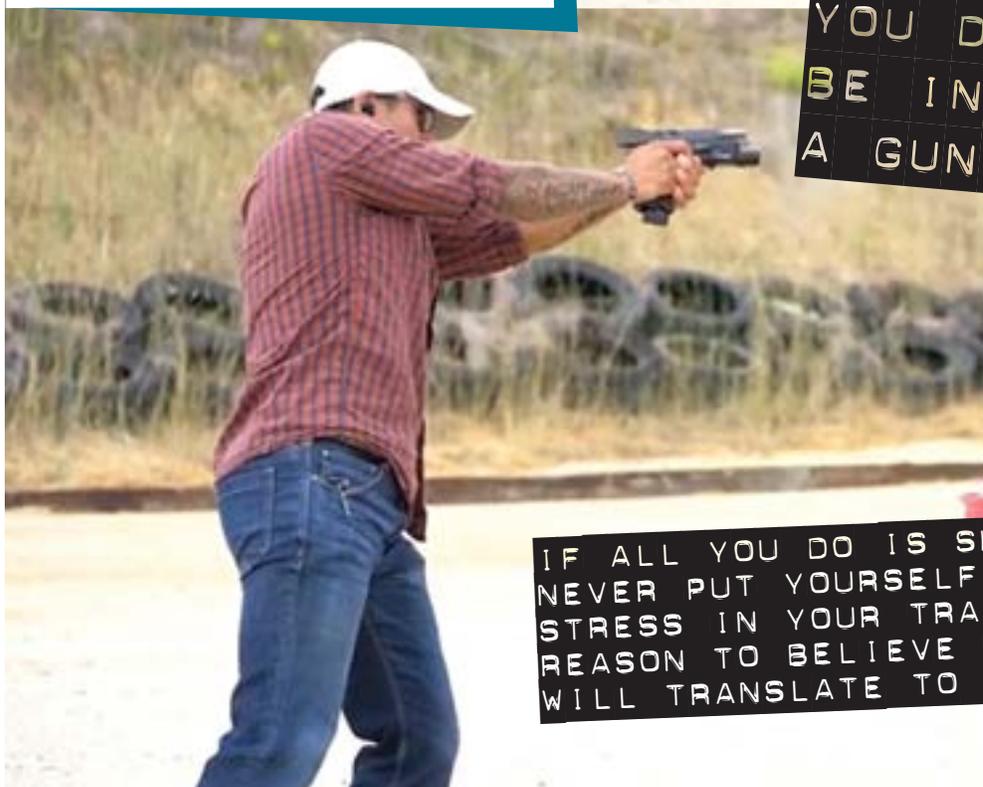
When shooting while moving, your sights are always going to move. Experience will provide the answer to how much (sight) movement produces how much precision for you at various distances. In my experience, you don’t want to shoot slow. The demands of combat and competition require you to



YOU DON'T WANT TO BE IN THE OPEN IN A GUNFIGHT.

Be situationally aware of your surroundings before any fight starts.

IF ALL YOU DO IS SHOOT SLOW OR YOU NEVER PUT YOURSELF UNDER ANY TYPE OF STRESS IN YOUR TRAINING, IS THERE A REASON TO BELIEVE YOUR STATIC SKILLS WILL TRANSLATE TO A DYNAMIC NEED?



shoot slow enough to deliver hits, but the objective has to be to do that as fast as *you* can. If all you do is shoot slow or you never put yourself under any type of stress in your training, is there a reason to believe your static skills will translate to a dynamic need?

Let's say you have a lethal threat 15 meters away with partial cover. If you shoot while moving to cover, you can be effective, but you can only move as fast you can accurately engage, so this makes you a slow-moving target. If you shoot then move, now you are a stationary target, but may be able to deliver a higher number of hits faster. If you move then shoot, the threat can engage you unimpeded while you move, but you can get to cover much faster.

There is an upside and downside to each

variation, but it is to your advantage to have the ability to shoot/move, move/shoot and shoot on the move. Find your best practices for each of these. Develop your awareness of what your capabilities and limitations are for each and continually improve them. Then the only thing to consciously decide under duress is which is the best to select in that time and place, not *how* to do it. Identify the threat, make a decision and execute it. Your mind does amazing things, conscious actions will become subconscious actions with the training and time you put in. Here are some drills I have worked these with:

With a paper target at 15 meters and a nearby barricade within 10 meters of the target, I set my shot timer with a delay and start walking toward the target. On the

buzzer I engage the target with two to three rounds while moving to cover. I repeat the drill at least three times recording the value of my hits and times.

With a paper target at 15 meters and a nearby barricade within 10 meters of the target, I set my shot timer with a delay. On the buzzer I engage the target with two to three rounds then move quickly to cover. I repeat the drill at least three times recording the value of my hits and times.

With a paper target at 15 meters, and a nearby barricade within 10 meters of the target, I set my shot timer with a delay. On the buzzer I move quickly to cover then engage the target with two to three rounds. I repeat the drill at least three times recording the value of my hits and times.

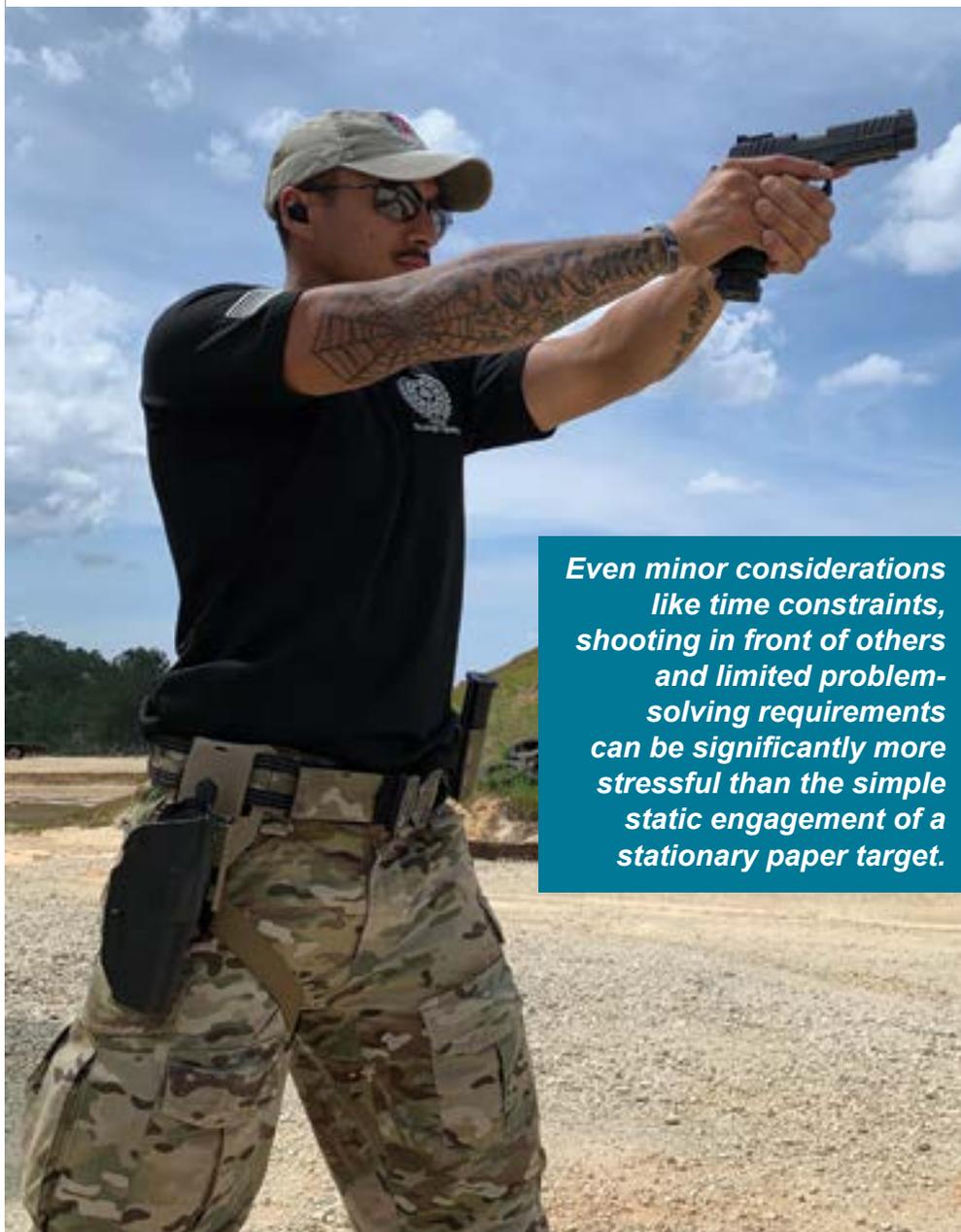
I make a point of not favoring movement to one side over the other in these drills. I also add difficulty by forcing myself to move faster or varying the sizes or distances of targets. The point is that I have specific data to track for improvement over time and I have a very real understanding of what I am able to do and what I am not able to do.

You don't want to be in the open in a gunfight. Be situationally aware of your surroundings before any fight starts. When you are at a covered position keep in mind that it is unwise to emerge where you entered and it is often better to incrementally clear around a side of cover rather than raise your head over the top and expose yourself from all angles.

Your firearms training must first account for the safe handling of your pistol at all times. It must secondarily build marksmanship skills so that you may press the trigger through discharge without disturbing your sight picture. Strangely, many shooters stop here, but if you wish to defend yourself with a pistol, you must also condition the efficient operation of your weapon and be able to do all of this under dynamic circumstances. I encourage you to seek out high quality training to get coached through the best practices of any new skills, then practice them safely until perfected. Make sure your training is safe, legal and conditions the best tactics possible for your needs. ✓

BIO

Matt S. (www.strategicdynamicsllc.com) is a currently serving special operations soldier and instructor for Strategic Dynamics, LLC. Follow on Instagram: @Strategicdynamicsllc.



Even minor considerations like time constraints, shooting in front of others and limited problem-solving requirements can be significantly more stressful than the simple static engagement of a stationary paper target.

Hunting has long been an American tradition that continues today even in these times of \$6.00 lattes, next day delivery and political correctness fads.

However, there is good news when it comes to keeping hunting culture alive. According to Ryan Zinke, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the demand for hunting licenses and wildlife use in the U.S. by those over sixteen years of age increased over 40 percent in the last five years. Zinke should be commended because on the first day in office he reversed an order that would have banned the use of lead ammo and fish tackle on National Wildlife Refuge land.

When we look at this fact, then look around the country with the COVID 19 Wuhan Virus outbreak, we see the frustration of millions of Americans. For the first time in generations, there are Americans waiting in lines outside of grocery stores, going to meat sections to find limits on what can be bought at increased prices and discovering upon arriving home that the overall quality of the product is often less than what it was at the beginning of the year.

Fortunately, in America, we have vast areas of rich hunting lands all over this great nation. All you have to do is decide what species you like, what area is most convenient for you

to get to and the licensing protocols for that state. Being from Chicago, I began hunting the woods of northern Wisconsin. I was a rifle guy and Illinois only had one county for hunting with a rifle. It was slug shotgun everywhere else. While en route to the woods of Eau Claire, I would simply stop for gas and purchase my whitetail license over the counter; this got me one buck tag and two doe tags.

When you decide to convert to big game hunting like elk and mule deer, the game changes. This comes with tighter restrictions and less numerous tags at much higher prices. In New Mexico, where I do my elk and mule deer hunting, non-resident tags for elk are \$548.00 for a mature bull or either sex tag. A quality or high demand elk tag can go for \$773.00. Mule deer buck tags are \$283.00 with quality or high demand tags going for \$368.00.

When paying these types of prices just for the tags themselves—without travel fees, lodging, meals or other incidentals—you want to make sure you are prepared for the hunt. Hunting tactics for the Southwest are

much different than for the Midwest and require more time prepping. In the Midwest, one can get away with minimal scouting and knowledge of the terrain. When it comes to hunting the great wide-open and harsh areas in New Mexico, scouting the area you are going to hunt on multiple occasions is a must for a successful hunt.

One of the first things I learned about hunting the mountains of New Mexico is the deceptiveness of weather conditions. Both how fast they change and the extremes to which they change will come as a surprise to those who haven't experienced them. After a morning hunt in the El Vado Reservoir area just outside of Chama we relocated to the base area of Chromo Mountain which was less than 700 feet elevation level, but the temperature change was insanely different. In less than a forty-five-minute drive the temperature changed nearly 60 degrees and the wind speed kicked up impressively. I must admit that I would have liked to have chosen my gear better for that hunt.

I am not a gear nut, but that outing taught me a valuable lesson and it made me realize

CHROMO MOUNTAIN EXPEDITION

HUNTING
TACTICS

BY JAMES WASHINGTON PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



that certain items are beneficial for a safe and successful hunt. You have to make sure you have extra clothing to change into. This includes an extra base layer made of a breathable material, liner gloves to supplement your cold weather gloves and extra wool socks. To me, nothing beats wool socks.

The point of a hunt is the successful kill and the skills that made it possible. Getting every second of daylight is important. This means returning to camp or your vehicle, after dark. A headlamp, with plenty of extra batteries is invaluable so you can keep your hands free for balance. You will want two types of first-aid kits with you: one for minor scrapes and cuts with antibiotic creams and anti-inflammatory pills, and a second kit for serious injuries with larger bandages, splints and sutures. It is also a good idea to keep a set of micro-spikes in your pack to help with winter weather traction. A minor fall can result in a large injury or swelling the next morning, hampering your efforts.

You always want to have enough

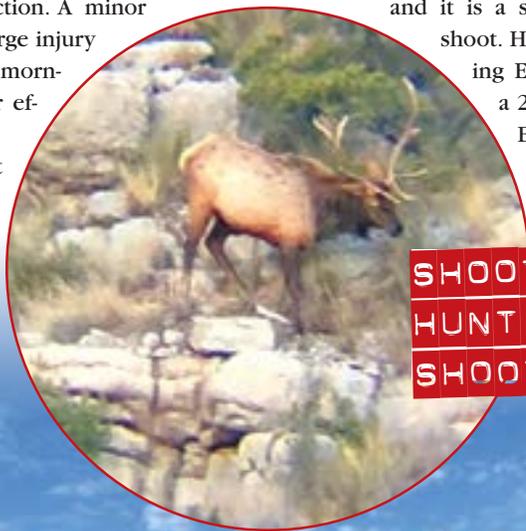
food and water on your person to sustain you for a full day hunt. I like to keep this amount around 3,500 to 4000 calories broken down into four or five smaller Ziploc bags or high carb and protein freeze dried packets. I always bring three boxes of hunting ammunition with me on hunts. I keep one box in my truck, one in my pack and one in my outer garment. I have been on hunts with guys who have left their ammo at home or in the truck only to have to turn around and schlep back to their truck to retrieve it and burn up hours of hunting.

When it comes to your rifle and ammunition set-up it is important to not only shoot the right caliber and bullet design for the game you are planning on taking, but that must also correspond with the zero and data you plan to use. I shoot a .35 Whelen out of a rifle I had built by JC Customs in Arkansas, and it is a slayer that's easy to shoot. However, when hunting Elk I prefer to shoot a 250 grain Remington Express Core-Lokt round. It gives you not only expan-

sion, but the penetration needed for an animal the size of an Elk, even if you hit bone.

This round will, without a doubt take Mule Deer but it will also damage more of the meat than necessary, which means less meat in the freezer. The round I prefer for Mule Deer is the 180 grain Barnes Vor-TX, TTSX polymer tipped spitzer round or the 200 grain Hornady Superformance soft point. The .35 Whelen is a personal choice for me, but any large North American game can be taken with the 270 Win, .308 Win, 7MM-08, or the 300 Winchester Magnum which will perform beautifully with the proper bullet selection for the game you are going after.

What really matters is your ability to deliver well placed shots into vital areas of the animal to quickly kill the animal. The main thing I see that hunters fail to recognize is that shooting in the wild on a hunt is not the same as shooting at the range. The shooting position will not be ideal at the moment of truth when you have your game inside the scope tube. It is vital to practice shooting standing unsupported, kneeling, and prone on uneven bumpy ground. Purchasing and practicing with shooting sticks in these positions will



SHOOTING IN THE WILD ON A HUNT IS NOT THE SAME AS SHOOTING AT THE RANGE.





FAILING TO SCOUT THE AREA YOU PLAN TO HUNT WOULD BE LIKE GOING INTO A STORE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN WITHOUT ANY AISLE SIGNS OR LOGIC TO THE ITEMS STORED ON THE SHELVES.

help in this endeavor and doing this in all different weather conditions is indispensable.

Another issue that needs to be addressed when it comes to the ethical harvesting of an animal, is what maximum range are you willing to attempt? Just because you have the shooting ability to hit at extended ranges with your hunting setup does not mean that long shots *should* be taken. You do not want to shoot an animal at distances that will allow your bullet to drop below 1000 Foot Pounds of Energy (ft-lbs.). The bullet's ballistic performance is not optimal there. This threshold should be adhered to even in the late afternoon of the last day of your hunt. With my hunting rifle combination this means no shots beyond 600 yards.

Failing to scout the area you plan to hunt would be like going into a store you have never been without any aisle signs or logic to the items stored on the shelves, and only having minimal time to gather your groceries. Scouting the area where you are going to hunt is the only way to get real time, on-the-ground details. It is the only way to establish daily food, watering and sheltering habits for your quarry. Don't be afraid to hunt areas that had fire damage a few years prior and have begun to recover. Young growth vegetation are good areas to hunt, especially when they are surrounded by timber patches. To get the best understanding of the land features, footing and food sources you have to get out of your

truck and walk the area. Road hunting in New Mexico is on a totally different level than I have seen anywhere else and the missed opportunities are staggering.

Prior to your hunt obtain quality maps with roads, property lines and land features. There are a couple good hunting apps available that, along with Google Earth are a valuable tool for pre-hunt information, but I still like the security of paper maps in my hand. Leaving your app login information with someone at home is valuable contingency planning, so if something happens searchers can have an idea of where to start looking for you.

Once you have decided where your hunt will start, you will want to begin glassing; that is scanning the area with magnified optics immediately to locate animals. When glassing, always start from near to far and break up search areas by land features. The feeling of stalking an animal 300 yards away, only to spook one you didn't see 100 yards away will make you want to cry, and if you are a soldier, law enforcement officer or other tactical professional, that feeling should make you reflect on the consequences of walking into an ambush you could have seen. Make detailed searches into dark shadowy and bright sunny areas while glassing. Look for animals' noses, antlers, and flicking ears stimulated by flying insects. Shading, shape, shadow, shine, silhouette, sound, spacing and speed are the things to observe for when you are trying to

see through the camouflage of animals, or people.

Glass the timberlines where patches of trees and grazing areas come together and don't be fooled by sage areas that you think are too scarce for big animals to bed or hide in. Once you do spot game, always try to approach from high to low by coming over the horizon. Don't rush, use this time to identify possible approach paths you can use to gain distance to another glassing area that will allow minimal time for animals to see you. Also, look for escape routes animals might use like washes and draws. Use these to your advantage.

A final tactic that I like to use is hunting water and a major food source. This is a common strategy all over the country, but in the Southwest, this is a necessity when accessible water can be found. Quality food sources is another area to hunt as well. Elk are more grazers than mule deer and can be found in meadows almost twice as frequently as mule deer. Mule deer can be found grazing timber more than twice as frequently as elk. Commercial farming like alfalfa fields or lush mountain pastures like those in the Zinker Canyon of the Lincoln National Forest are perfect for elk. If you can find Mountain Mahogany or Cliff Rose, which grow in altitudes of 2000 to 9,800 feet, they are great areas to hunt mule deer. These two food sources can overlap and make hunting elk and mule deer possible at the same location.

Your hunting skills, like any others, will improve the more you practice. You can camp and hike your favorite hunting areas during the off seasons to learn the micro terrain and practice your tracking and glassing skills. When the next season comes around and you draw those ever-elusive tags, you will be ahead of the curve and increase your chances of filling your freezer for family and friends. These expeditions are a satisfying way to sharpen your outdoors skills, share the camaraderie of friends and demonstrate for your kids the life skills of resourcefulness and resilience. ✓

BIO

James Washington (axiosofdefense.com) served as a patrol officer, field training officer, firearms instructor and police sergeant. He served on the FBI Gang Task Force in Chicago for six years and is a firearms & tactics instructor for multiple agencies and armed citizens.



TRAPPING RACCOON

BY KELLY ALWOOD

A while back, I was in the woods of Northern Indiana teaching a course on “bugging out” and we were in a phase of training where students were critically low on food and they needed to procure protein.

Hunting is an option, but that often gives away your location and it requires a significant time investment. At that point, I taught some trapping skills.

This particular area was abundant with raccoon, the sign and tracks were everywhere. We focused our attention on catching raccoon for the next several days. At first, the students were shocked that raccoon would be on the menu and they had many questions about eating the animal. How did it taste? Can it give them a disease? Does the meat last? How do you prepare it and so on. I explained

that eating meat is all the same, and preparation and cooking of meat is all the same as far as safety is concerned. I told them that raccoon meat is quite fatty and that their fat had a distinctive taste, and not ordinarily a pleasant one. Raccoon is one meat that I have found difficult to make taste good. Only once I have tasted pleasing raccoon. It was prepared by a man in his eighties and he refused to give up his recipe or secrets. I have tried grilling it, frying it and making it into a soup and none of them produced an enjoyable taste. I even tried boiling it in different sauces

and it always turned out disappointing. The meat always turned out safe, however and provided the protein needed.

Raccoons often carry diseases and can be a little dangerous to handle, but most wild game can have a host of diseases dangerous to humans, and all should be treated as though they do. There is typically little to no blood on an animal when it is trapped. However, a range of other fluids tend to be present when we harvest them. Once we see we have an animal in our trap we put on a set of rubber or nitrile gloves before we touch them.



WEAR RUBBER OR NITRILE GLOVES.

Like most wild game, raccoons often carry diseases dangerous to humans, and care must be taken in the handling and preparation of them.

We wear these when we have contact with the animal until it is fully processed. If you are going to work with the fur as well, use the gloves while working the fur until the skin is completely dry. The fatty oils and fluids in the skin will continue to “leak” out and be oily for quite some time.

When preparing the meat, the first thing we want to do is to remove the limbs and head. Use a knife to separate them at the joints and then begin skinning. It really doesn't matter how you skin the animal unless you plan to process and use the hide. It is easiest to skin the animal when it is still warm. After the body cools, the skin will not peel off like a jacket, it will need to be cut away inch by inch. I have skinned most of my game near the spot where it was caught. This leaves a lot of smell near my trap site and it greatly reduces the weight of what I will carry by ditching the limbs, head, fur and innards. Rac-

coon can weigh upward of 20 pounds each, so checking your trap line could add a significant amount of weight to your load if you don't choose to get rid of excess weight right there. If

the body is cooled off when you find it, then I have a trick you may want to use. Before removing the head, secure the animal to a tree limb about head high with the animal's head facing up. Then cut the skin around the neck and pull down as much as possible (you may have to do some cutting to get enough pulled down). Take a rock and place it inside the skin just behind the neck towards the middle of the back. Tie a length of 550 cord around the outside of the skin and around the rock inside, this will be what pulls on the skin. Now you can tie an overhand knot about thigh high into the rope. Put one foot inside the knot and push your leg down to the ground. This procedure will greatly reduce time and effort spent skinning the animal. At a few points you may need to do a little cutting to help the skin release from the animal and then just keep pushing down on the rope to pull off the skin in one piece.

We then will remove the head and innards and will now have meat to cook. In any type of situation where food and calories are in short supply, I recommend boiling the animal and making soup. Meat and bones get boiled together, and the soup is full of nutrients. By creating soup, you will keep all the extra nutrients of the animal. If you choose to broil over a flame, you will only get the protein from the animal as the fats cook off. Whichever way you decide to cook the meat, remember, it must be cooked until well done as anything other than well done can increase risk.

My favorite way to trap raccoons is with a snare. I have tried and succeeded in trapping them with 550 cord, wire, old-school army booby trap wire, long fish leaders, embroidery thread and more. In a pinch you can use whatever you can get your hands on, however proper planning and equipment selection will enhance success while last minute improvisations will have unreliable results. The absolute best thing to use for snaring raccoons is treated galvanized 1x19 1/8 inch braided wire. The size is perfect for the strength needed to hold them, the twist ensures smooth closing without knotting the

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fur, and the treated galvanized finish will remain unnoticed by the animal and not rust to the point it won't work anymore.

The best snare set I have found is to place the noose under a natural horizontal tree branch that hangs over a raccoon trail. If the branch is 6-8 inches above the trail the raccoon will duck under it and put his head right into the snare loop. It is unlikely you will find this naturally in a spot you want to trap, so create your own by using two "Y" sticks and place a branch between them to get your horizontal obstacle just right. Your snare loop should be 8 inches in diameter. Less or more will cause it not to close properly on the raccoon and also raise the likelihood of a different animal setting it off. The bottom of your 8-inch loop should be 4 inches off of the ground. Two points on the snare are absolutely critical, the anchor and the set trip. The set trip is what keeps the whole length of wire from moving when the animal goes through it. When the raccoon places his head into the snare loop and continues to walk, we need the snare to close, not stay open and drag the whole line with him. To ensure the loop closes we will secure the wire tightly to the horizontal branch just on the side of the snare's lock. Now when the animal puts his head in and takes a step, the only movement allowed is in the loop; it will close shut around the animal and then you have him. The other point is the anchor. This is what keeps the animal there and not running off in the woods or up a tree and getting away from us. The best way to anchor your snare is to secure the end of the wire around a tree. The tree must be at least three inches in diameter or it may not hold. The cable can cut through smaller saplings as though it was a wire saw. The length of your cable should be about six feet long. No lure is needed at all, in fact attempting to use a lure is counterproductive as you want the animal to simply walk along its normal daily trail and not stop to smell things.

I mentioned earlier that the ideal cable is "treated". This is done by boiling the cable in water with baking soda in it. This will dull the cable so it doesn't shine and attract attention from animals. This process will make it appear to the animal as a natural vine or grass. This process also removes the oils that are on the cable. The oils are put on to keep it from rusting, however we don't care if it rusts as that will only help to camouflage it in the woods and will not attract and keep our scent. As long as the lock will tighten, there

isn't too much rust. Unless the snare is left for extended periods in the woods it will not rust over enough to reduce effectiveness. Sitting in your "go bag", it will be fine for years.

Cage traps, footholds, conibears and others are additional options. The downside to these is that they are very bulky and heavy steel traps. They are generally impractical for use on the move or in a bugout bag. Depending on your loadout and your allocation for food procurement there are two choices that *could* be considered. The first is to carry one conibear 220 trap. They are fairly small as they fold and they are fairly light weight, considering the options. This would simply be placed on that same raccoon trail and staked with small branches. The other option is to carry one Duke foot trap. These are basically a small diameter tube that the raccoon will stick his paw into in an attempt to get food out of it. Both of these traps can be used over and over again and will get good results. The downside is that they don't outperform snares, they are heavier and bulkier than snares, and they cost a lot more than snares. If you buy the parts from a snare shop supplier you can cut the wire and make your own for about \$1.00 each.

I encourage you to make your own and you can customize them any way you need to. If you aren't yet proficient at making them, it is better to buy them for now, as they are easy to ruin while practicing and you don't want experimental gear in your survival kit. Snaring can be learned and practiced until perfected. Every state has a trapping season and the gear is cheap. I highly encourage you to attend a trapper education course put on by your state, and the ones put on by various trapping associations. You will leave the classes with the confidence of knowing you can feed yourself, and they will also explain your local laws so you can get some practice before your life depends on the skill. ✓

BIO

Kelly Alwood has served as a security consultant in Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia including: India, Iraq and Afghanistan. He provided security services in support of Hurricane Ike, Hurricane Gustav, Hurricane Katrina and the Asian tsunami. He is a partner in OnPoint Tactical, and provides instruction in urban escape and evasion, tracking and survival.
www.kellyalwood.com.

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Whether you are facing fire from 2000 communist soldiers as you taxi your A-1 Skyraider down an enemy held runway to rescue a friend, facing the challenges of providing for your family or looking for the courage to speak an unpopular truth, there are times when each of us can use a little inspiration. Sometimes it helps to put your challenges in perspective. Sometimes it's encouraging to see how selfless human beings can be. This account is the Medal of Honor Citation for Bernard Fisher.



Although aware of the extreme danger and likely failure of such an attempt, he elected to continue the rescue...

BERNARD FISHER

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. On that date, the Special Forces camp at A Shau was under attack by 2,000 North Vietnamese Army regulars. Hostile troops had positioned themselves between the airstrip and the camp. Other hostile troops had surrounded the camp and were continuously raking it with automatic weapons fire from the surrounding hills. The tops of the 1,500-foot hills were obscured by an 800 foot ceiling, limiting aircraft maneuverability and forcing pilots to operate within

range of hostile gun positions, which often were able to fire down on the attacking aircraft. During the battle, Maj. Fisher observed a fellow airman crash land on the battle-torn airstrip. In the belief that the downed pilot was seriously injured and in imminent danger of capture, Maj. Fisher announced his intention to land on the airstrip to effect a rescue. Although aware of the extreme danger and likely failure of such an attempt, he elected to continue. Directing his own air cover, he landed his aircraft and taxied almost the full length of the runway, which was littered

with battle debris and parts of an exploded aircraft. While effecting a successful rescue of the downed pilot, heavy ground fire was observed, with 19 bullets striking his aircraft. In the face of the withering ground fire, he applied power and gained enough speed to lift-off at the overrun of the airstrip. Maj. Fisher's profound concern for his fellow airman, and at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country. ✓