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Hey Squirrel,

I've been following your page on and off for about a year now and i just wanted to let you know that your doing a great job. I would imagine the amount of information that you process and organize is occassionaly staggering. Keep up the good work.

I have included an article that I've had on file for several years but just recently rediscovered. Feel free to post it but please do not include my name. I would appreciate a password if you think this counts as a contribution to the page, but if not I still plan to purchase a few books after Christmas.

Thanks,

Editor s Note (1): This article was taken from one S.O.F. type of magazine that was published during the mid-eighties. The magazine is no longer in print so I am not intending to infringe on anybody s copyrights. I have included the original author s name and affiliation and I am not attempting to take credit for this information. This article was/is geared toward the Professional Soldier but I think it is an excellent look at the equipment a group should carry in a bug-out or patrol situation. I guess I should also throw in the standard comment that you should adjust what you are about to read to meet your particular frame of reference and needs.

FIELD EQUIPMENT:

The Foot Soldiers Life-Support System
by Lt. Bill Johnson (Australian Army Reserve)

Back in jump school, the was no way you d consider stepping off the C-130 ramp at 1,000 feet without that trusty T-10 strapped to your back. Nor would your buddies in underwater demolition be too excited about leaving their air tanks back at base.

Isn t it funny, though? After two or three days on foot patrol, it s damned easy to curse that 50 or 60 pounds of field equipment slowly breaking your back. But it s there for the same reason: to keep you alive and help you do your job.

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Ever thought about how you'd make it out if you didn't have it? or lost it?

Maybe it's time to give some more thought to all that gear and how you pack it. After all, it might be all that stands between you and disaster for weeks on end.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Let's start with a quick recap on a few of the operational factors ultimately determine how much you'll need to carry on any mission. Things like:

1. Time in the field. The planned duration of your patrol or mission.
2. Local resources. Availability of food, water, shelter, etc. in your area of operations. This may be achieved by foraging or by pre-arranged caches.
3. ReSupply. Air drops or other forms of resupply may be available to extend the mission or to reduce individual loads.
4. Type of mission. This may dictate additional or specialized ordnance such as explosives, electronic equipment, or special weapons.
5. Operational pressures. When operational are low or absent, there's a tendency to leave certain items behind or to take along superfluous goodies.

With these factors in mind, you should be in a position to work out what to take and how much of it.

Next comes the most important consideration of all: packing it in such a way that if you happen to lose anything, you will still be able to survive and retain some degree of tactical capability.

This means, then, that each level of distribution of your field equipment must contain the essential elements of both survival and defense. These levels are:

1. Equipment carried on the man.
2. Equipment in the basic webbing (i.e., harness assembly)
3. Equipment in the backpack.

ON THE MAN

Here's where all those pockets come in handy; considering trousers and shirt or jacket, you'll probably have several to play with. Try to develop a set routine as to what goes in which pocket, to avoid a lengthy search every time you need something. In fact, taken a stage further, in a patrol group the location of any essential, one-of item (like radio codes) should be known to all members in the event that the soldier carrying it becomes a casualty.

The rule of thumb for the sort of gear that should be carried on the man is: any item critical to survival. Generally, this could include:

Field fatigues (camouflage pattern if necessary)
Primary weapon (e.g., rifle/shotgun) with full mag.
Spare ammo
Compass/ Protractor
Map (in plastic)
Watch (with cam. cover)
Emergency ration
Waterproof matches
Pocket knife
First aid kit
Survival kit (include. water purifiers) Notebook and pencil
Field dressing
Signal mirror
Pocket torch (flashlight)
String (or nylon twine) ((PARACORD)) Ed.
Can opener (combination spoon-type)
Plastic bags
Handkerchief
Sweat cloth/ cam. net (a sniper scarf is pictured) Ed.
Binoculars (optional)

Editor's note (2): The picture in the article showed the primary weapon to be a Winchester 1200 pump-action, with basic camo. added. The spare ammo consisted of 10 rounds of shotgun shells taped together (2 groups of 5 shells). The first aid and survival kits were homemade jobs packed in plastic soap containers (nice and small).

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The water purifiers were the common tablet type, not some bulky filter. (That's included below) The pencil is included over a pen because it will write reasonably well on a wet surface and still functions after it's been broken.

If all that seems like a tall order, keep this in mind: If you become separated from the rest of your gear, you'll still have sufficient supplies to keep going if you're carrying everything listed above. (The only problem you may have to face is the availability of water.)

Depending on operational circumstances, personal camouflage should be applied and maintained as normal. In particular, shiny metal watchbands, spectacle rims, jewelry and the like must be avoided or covered by painting or taping.

IN THE BASIC WEBBING

It's hard to beat the versatility of standard-issue, basic webbing: pistol belt, harness, two or three canteens, and two or three ammo pouches. Get it all properly adjusted to a snug fit. Once again, keep everything organized; establish a routine in laying it out.

For example: the left-hand ammo pouch might always be for full magazines, while empties are carried elsewhere (until they can be transferred to the backpack). Similarly the bayonet or field knife should always be carried on the same side, and so on. Needless to say, all pouches and clips should be kept done up.

If you need to attach anything to the harness straps--field dressing, torch, or survival knife--secure it carefully, using additional cam. tape if necessary. But ensure that it's position will not prevent effective use of your weapon and won't dig into your ribs or neck in a cramped O.P. (observation post) Ed.

Another point: any bent or broken clips, buckles or other items must be replaced (or repaired until you get back). A field repair kit of pliers, wire, tape, string, etc. could prove very useful.

Here's what you should have in or on your basic webbing:

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Ammo (at least one full pouch)
Secondary weapon (i.e., handgun) with full mag
Water canteens (two or three)
Water sterilizing kit
Weapon cleaning kit
Rations (three meals minimum)
Knife/ Bayonet
Torch (flashlight)
Canteen cup
Vitamin pills
Nylon rope (20 -30 feet)
Solid fuel (e.g., Hexamine)
Sheet of waterproof material
Sharpening stone (pocket type)
Flares (pencil type)
Entrenching tool (optional)
Camouflage cream (optional)
Strobe light (optional)
Machete (optional)

All this gear, added to what you already have stuffed in your pockets, will obviously extend your range and operational effectiveness considerably--even if you did lose your field pack during the last river crossing!

Getting back to that sheet of waterproof material listed. This can be used in a variety of ways: ground-sheet, shelter, poncho, or even as a rain catcher to supplement water supplies. In the absence of your main hootch or poncho, this one item could save your life in some situations.

Your basic webbing is so important that many hard core schools of thought suggest that it should never be removed while you are on a mission--not even if you get the chance to sleep. At best, it might be unbuckled at the belt during stops. Worth considering.

IN THE BACKPACK

Finally, we get to all those extras and backup supplies that you'll need to keep you going--in relative comfort--

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for the duration of the mission. And its amazing just how much a standard field pack will hold if you pack it neatly, with everything in its place. Naturally, the most essential items should be more easily accessible.

One point to watch is hanging odds and ends on the outside of the pack. They tend to rattle, fall off, or snag on passing scenery.

These are the items to consider carrying in your backpack:

Extra rations

Extra water

Spare clothing (include. socks and wool sweater) Raincoat

Extra ammo (for both weapons)

Shelter/ Poncho

Toiletries (including Toilet paper)((This item should be carried on the man, if you ask me.))Ed. ;) Bedding and groundsheet

Folding stove

Solid Fuel

Cleaning rag

Spare boot laces

Foot powder

Insect repellent

Sewing/ Repair kit

Plastic bags and rubber bands (include. litter bag) Knife, fork, and spoon (optional)

Specialized stores (e.g. radio, claymore, smoke grenades)

Each time you stop for a meal break or an overnight bivouac, take the opportunity to use backpack stocks to replenish items in your basic webbing--food, water, or ammo--that way, you'll gradually lighten the backpack while maintaining your best odds should you be left with basic webbing only.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

It's a good idea to pack non-waterproof items in plastic bags, while any classified documents, briefing notes, coordinates must be destroyed before leaving base.

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Once all your gear is sorted and packed, there's one important check to conduct before insertion: testing for rattles. Put it all on, make any final adjustments, then jump up and down. Any noises must be eliminated.

Finally, do a last-minute check on serviceability of weapons, magazines, radio and other equipment, leaving metal edges lightly oiled. And if you've camouflaged your weapon, make sure you can still get a clear sight picture!

Even considering our increasingly sophisticated methods of insertion and extraction, the old foot/leg combo is still the most reliable. But every grunt is painfully aware of the catch; that life-support system strapped to his back. But in most situations, it's essential to both survival and operational effectiveness.

To achieve both of these aims is not always easy. Given those hairy insertions--parachute, small boats, or a hot LZ--the possibility of becoming separated from all or a portion of your field equipment is pretty good. What then?