

AMERICAN SURVIVOR

Survival Information for the New American



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Surviving the Coming War

By James C. Jones

"There is no avoiding war, it can only be postponed to the advantage of others."

Prince Nicolas Machiavelli (1469-1527)

As a long-time student of history, I can assure the reader that war, not peace, is the natural state of humanity. I was born in 1941 and have never experienced a time when multiple wars were not in progress. Big wars do not end, they just split into multiple small wars, and small wars eventually coalesce into big wars again.

While America's might and its two surrounding oceans have spared us the horrors of battle in our own cities and fields, that protection is no longer relevant in today's world. We are no longer the strong, united, and economically mighty nation that saved the world in 1941.

America has been under siege for decades. Our jobs and industrial base have been savaged just as effectively as bombers did in Europe in World War Two, leaving cities in ruins. Fentanyl and other drugs manufactured and pushed into our cities by foreign powers kill millions each year. Cyber-attacks and scams rob our businesses and citizens with impunity, taking billions from our economy. Massive enemies' social media operations and their paid influencers

pump lies, confusion, disinformation, and division into our homes and communities.

These are the ways that the war has already begun. American citizens face a constantly declining standard of living, growing trends of crime and violence, and exactly the conditions that inevitably lead to wars. The current war in Ukraine is a precursor of what every American will face within the next ten years or

less. While Europeans and Asians have some level of understanding and psychological preparedness for war at home, most Americans have not experienced true war since the Civil War of 1865. The concept of a total war with enemy bombs, raids, and guerrilla warfare in our cities and towns seems "unthinkable," yet such events are not only possible, but probable.

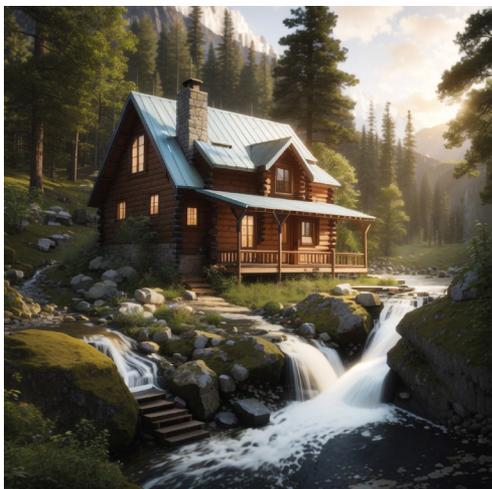
It is difficult to predict exactly how a twenty-first century total war will manifest itself. It will be a war of national and ideological survival between the totalitarian collectivism of China and Russia and the democratic freedom loving nations of Europe, Southeast Asia, and America. Tech-



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Directions

Thoughts from the Editors

Camp Independence 2024.

Planning is underway for the next Camp Independence at Tippecanoe River State Park in Winamac, Indiana. We are always looking for instructors to share their knowledge with the members of Live Free. In 2023 we had some great classes and demonstrations of products and equipment from Swartz Foods and Roving Blue.

It is also a great chance to network with members from around the country. I got to meet some great people and make new friends. The situation in the country is getting more than a little precarious right now and it is time to build Live Free USA into the strongest preparedness network in the country and networking at Camp Independence. We hope to see you there.

Lessons from Survival Fiction.

I have been watching re-runs of The Walking Dead. It's not so much that I think highly of the show. It's because it demonstrates some important survival points.

First, it really shows the importance of having and building community in a survival situation. No one survives on their own in a survival situation. Having a group for mutual support will enhance your survival chances in a dire situation.

Second is the importance of critical thinking. The show is written the way it is for the drama, but it demonstrates the importance of proper planning and critical thought. Most of the problems that the characters face, especially in the early seasons, spring from a lack of critical planning. The rash decision that they make leads to the loss of life and dangers that they endure.

So, while The Walking Dead is science fiction/horror fiction, it can give us something to consider. Community building and critical planning are survival skills.

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nology, space, and artificial intelligence will add a new dimension of horror to the battles of the future. The war will be total, but it may be limited or unlimited in some way. Regardless of geographic factors, it will bring challenges, hardship, and violence to every American.

Limited Total War

*"Fear is a reaction; courage is a decision."
Winston Churchill (1874-1965)*

A limited total war would involve all aspects of traditional and asymmetric warfare without actual invasion, or massive bombing and destruction. In fact, China and Russia have been waging asymmetric warfare against America and Americans for decades. While symmetric or traditional war involves one nation's military forces fighting the other nations military forces, asymmetric warfare involves one nation's military force waging war against the other's domestic affairs, economic institutions, and civilian morale. The Chinese have decimated our industrial capacity, ruined our economy, and sown confusion in our society. They have used drugs like fentanyl to kill millions of our citizens, and massive social media campaigns to divide and demoralize our polity. They have manipulated the American mind into focusing on the past and petty differences, while they grow stronger every year. While America was hailed as "the arsenal of democracy" in 1941, China is now the arsenal of despotism for the twenty-first century. The asymmetric warfare attacks below are already in progress—or soon will be, as hostilities grow in intensity.

- Economic warfare: China has reduced America to a third-rate industrial power through underhanded dealings and currency

manipulation. They have put us deeply in debt while using our money to build the world's largest navy and army. While we fought a long war in Afghanistan, China simply bribed the Afghan military leaders that we trained to surrender once we left.

- Psychological warfare: China, Russia and other enemies of freedom use the Internet, social media, and front organizations to foster hate, confusion, and division in our society. They have succeeded in making patriotism, pride, and hope for the future a rarity.
- Cyber warfare: Both China and Russia have devoted huge resources to cyber warfare operations—including creating millions of false social media sources, data mining our civilian, military and government organizations, and establishing potential control of the electric grid, water supply, medical facilities, transportation network, and other critical infrastructure.
- Chemical and biological warfare: Much of the drugs coming into our streets through South America are sourced in China. Fentanyl is a Chinese product. While COVID-19 may have been an accident, it still helped China. China now owns a considerable number of "American" food processing companies and agricultural corporations.
- Guerillas in our midst: While the inevitable military combat may take place in foreign lands, on the seas and in space, we can expect raids, drone attacks, sabotage, domestic-based guerillas, and civil disorder in our

streets as hostilities spread.

If the above methods continue unopposed and succeed, America will be relegated to a third- world nation beholden to dominant foreign authoritarian states. There will be no safe, free place for American “refugees” to go.

Unlimited Total War

“War is hell, you cannot refine it.” General William T. Sherman (1820-1891)

While foreign invasion is improbable, it is possible that foreign manipulation could create guerilla warfare forces or even well supplied rebel armies on American soil. These could then “invite” foreign troops or mercenaries to support them. This could bring the Red Dawn* scenario to our hometowns and fields. While large numbers of uniformed foreign troops would probably unify resistance, the use of collaborators, and domestic mercenaries to create civil war is a real possibility. In any conflict, the possibility of massive conventional or even nuclear attack cannot be ignored. The events in Ukraine should serve as a warning. Modern drones and hypersonic missiles can strike anywhere at any time. Back in the 1970’s through the 1980’s, Live Free USA’s focus was on training for nuclear survival and Red Dawn-style civilian combat. These were popular and accepted survival education necessities that need to be revived and upgraded promptly.

Surviving War

“Wherefore the citizens ought to practice war not in time of war, but rather while they are at peace. And every city which has any sense should take the field at least one day in every month having no regard for winter cold or summer heat and they should go out in masses, including their wives and their children ...

and they should have tournaments imitating in as lively a manner as they can, real battles.” Plato, 304 BC

Ultimately, there are just three methods of surviving in war: run, hide, or fight (or a combination of these). If the war comes to American streets, there is no place to run, and with modern methods of surveillance, one cannot hide indefinitely. You should be able to run for a while and hide for a while, but eventually you are going to have to surrender, die, or fight.

A limited overseas war like World War Two will involve severe shortages, rationing, curfews, mass evacuations, and possibly martial law. Since we could not even handle a few rules and inconveniences of a small pandemic, it is difficult to imagine these procedures not degenerating into civil disorder and chaos. In 1941, Americans turned to each other in the face of aggression, but now we seem more likely to turn on each other. If so, this will guarantee defeat and oppression. Surviving a war is the “gravest extreme” scenario requiring the highest levels of preparedness, training, organization, and dedication.

- Training for war survival must include all the basic survival subjects, such as first aid, water purification, foraging, self-defense, firefighting, navigation, and shelter building, but more emphasis must be placed on combat, tactics, evasion and escape, communications, and advanced medical skill.
- Preparedness must include planning for escape, evasion, evacuation, and combat under war conditions. Even greater amounts of food, medical supplies, weapons, camouflage, and ammunition will be necessary.

Remote and well-hidden supply caches will be a necessity, as well as places to hide valuables.

- Ultimately, resistance and survival organizations will develop—as will criminal and depraved gangs. Being part of a well-prepared and organized group of responsible citizens—before the winds of war envelop your community—will give you and your family a fighting chance to stay safe and free through these extremely dangerous times.

Conclusion

“If you want peace prepare for war” “Si vis pacem fac bellum.” Roman General Publius Flvius

Your humble author would suggest that you will get a war anyway, but if you prepare for it, you are far more likely to survive it. While “disaster” preparedness has driven the survival self-reliance movement in recent years, war preparedness must be the driving priority. Whether it is fought primarily overseas or on home ground, surviving the war will require survival preparations and skill greater than those needed for any other form of disaster. As we see in Ukraine, this war could grind on for years or decades, and no one and no place will be free of damage, violence, and struggle. ‘Anticipate’ is the first principle of survival. Denial is the first step towards disaster.

“This solidifies that we have entered a new era of authoritarian aggression.” Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan responding to a joint Russian, Chinese eleven-ship taskforce off the coast of Alaska in July 2023

**Red Dawn was a movie with Patric Swayze made in 1984. The film portrayed a Communist invasion launched from South America and a resistance group called the Wolverines. Live Free USA conducted several training events based on this scenario that include a group of fully uniformed mock Russian troops. A remake was done in 2012.*

Murphy’s Laws for the Outdoors

**Murphy lived
in the woods.**



1. Anything that can go wrong will go wrong more often in the outdoors.
2. The item you most need is the one you left at home.
3. If this place looks familiar you are going in circles
4. Equipment that works perfectly at home will fail to work in camp.
5. Water resistant always leaks. Waterproof probably leaks.
6. Backpacks gain one pound for mile they are carried.
7. There is no such thing as a safe campfire.
8. If you’re dressed for the weather, the weather will change.
9. Any item you put down in camp will be gone when you look for it.
10. The day you leave your survival kit home is the day you will need it most.

Staying Warm on the Move



By Ric Hubbard

Last issue, I discussed staying warm—at home, or at your bug-out-location. This month, I want to talk about what to do if you are on the move. There are some crucial differences between staying warm in a fixed location versus on the move that should be considered.

While equipment and knowledge of fuels is the most important consideration in a fixed location, you will be much more reliant on skills while moving. Your choice of fuels will be much more limited, due to issues such as weight, availability, and volatility. With these kinds of limitations, your skill set becomes more valuable.

The deeper your skill set, the less you will have to carry with you—however, this isn't to suggest the right choice of equipment is unimportant. Let's talk about heat sources, briefly, before we move on to skills. The three most common fuels that you will use are wood, propane, and isobutane. Small heaters are available that burn both propane and isobutane, and if you use either for

cooking, then one of these is a good consideration.

In most of the US, you can rely on salvaged wood or similar materials found in nature. This is why my preference is for wood burning stoves—such as the Biolite stove—and the skills to build, start and manage a fire. There are also portable, wood burning, hot-tent stoves which have become popular in recent years.

Stoke the Fire Inside

We have all heard the survival rules of three, and the assertion that we can live for three weeks without food. In a perfect world, this is true; survival situations, however, are not part of a perfect world. If it is cold, your body will burn calories to stay warm; the colder it is, the more you will burn. Your first step to staying warm on the move is to eat enough food to maintain calories. Your second step is to use those calories wisely.

For most of us, most of the time, a



high-fat, high-calorie diet is a bad suggestion; when surviving a bug-out, especially in the cold, it becomes vital. When you get cold, you shiver. This is your body trying to produce heat to protect your core. This burns calories at a higher rate than normal, which you must replace quickly to increase your chances of survival.

Packing three days of high-quality, high-calorie, nutrient rich meals and snacks is an important part of your plans. Freeze-dried and retort (MRE style) foods are formulated to provide these kinds of meals for backpackers, outdoorsmen and women, and the military, whose hobbies or profession demand fuel to keep them going. These attributes, combined with the generally long shelf life of these foods, make them an excellent choice.

Doing what is needed to reduce calorie use is just as important as carrying food. Clothing, shelter, and external heat reduce your body's need to burn calories. Skills may be more important on the move, but the ability to think critically in planning and in a survival, situation is one of the most important skills.

Start The Fire

Starting a fire should be the top priority when building a camp. That is true at any time, but is even more true when you are risking hypothermia. Developing strong fire skills (and an even stronger sense of safety) is one of the most important things a survivor can do to improve their chances.

Every YouTube channel discusses

fire kits, but the ones to watch are those that show you how to use them. When you put together a fire kit, you should be able to use (and, in fact, should have already used) every item you include. For example: most matches have little value in a survival situation. They do not, for the most part, hold up to storage or humidity. They do not burn long enough, and if you are using the "strike anywhere" type, you run a minute risk of self-ignition. Some, like the lifeboat style matches from UCO and other sources, are designed to stand up to this kind of abuse and will burn when wet, even submerged, once lit. How are

you to know what to expect if you have not tried them?

Other forms of ignition require even more advanced knowledge and practice to use effectively. The critical point is that you practice with your tools beforehand. When the time comes, your practice will be rewarded with

a warm fire. You should also develop some skill with primitive techniques for starting a fire. None of these are easy to do, but working through the bugs now will give you a head start for when the chips are down.

Contain the Heat

Once you have warmed up, it is necessary to find a way to contain the heat you generate. We have discovered many ways to do this since our ancestors walked into the first cave and wrapped the first animal skin around themselves. At some point, humans discovered fire, and shortly after that, we discovered that fire



consumes fuel, and then, that containing the heat reduced the amount of fuel needed to keep warm and to cook our food.

There are some basic ways we contain the heat that we produce. On the most personal level, it is clothing that preserves the heat we produce by burning calories. Clothing keeps this heat trapped near our bodies in the insulating dead air space between the body and the clothing we wear. In the infancy of human civilization, it was the hair left on the animal skins that trapped air pockets near the skin where heat could be stored.

Over the ages we have discovered more and better ways to insulate ourselves from the cold. Choosing the right clothing for the environment is one of those critical decisions that make up proper planning. The selections available today are many and run the gamut from cheap and useless to expensive and toasty warm. In-between, you can find your sweet spot of affordability and usefulness.

You should consider an approach to clothing based on layering. Start with an inner base layer—typically some type of “long underwear.” Then, choose a shirt and pants in moderate weather conditions, followed by a good jacket or coat as the weather gets cold. In conditions of extreme cold and/or wet you will want a water-proof shell layer, top and bottom, to keep the wind, water, and cold out.

The materials the clothing is made of are just as important. Natural fibers, such as wool and silk, make good choices—especially Morino Wool. There are synthetics that are just as good, but there is something comforting about natural fiber that I enjoy. Wool will insulate even when wet, and while it smolders, it does not burn, making it safer than synthetics.

Wool, especially Morino wool, is not cheap. The further away the layer is from the skin, the more synthetics make sense because they can be found at better prices. Materials such as polyester, nylon, and Polartec insulate very well and can be found inexpensively on the surplus market. Commercial versions, such as those found at REI, are more expensive but just as useful. A polar fleece layer over the base layer, then pants and shirt, will keep you warm in much of the US during the most common weather conditions. Snow, cold rain, and high elevations such as you will find in northern mountainous regions and Alaska call for a water- and wind-resistant outer shell to protect from harsh weather.

Wearing your clothing in layers gives you choices as the weather changes. If you are going to be outdoors in cool temperatures—say, between 60 and 40 degrees—a base layer and a regular clothing layer should be enough. As temperatures drop, add a fleece layer to increase the insulating value. When it starts to get really cold or wet, an outer shell keeps the wind and rain out. When the temps start to climb again, you can remove layers until you are comfortable again. Too much insulation for the temperature will cause you to sweat—which will, in turn, cause you to lose vital heat to evaporation.

Build Your Environment

The next step is to build and control your environment. This is where all the training and skill building really pays off. There are three basic stages to building shelter that will keep you warm: One, sleep on something. Two, sleep under something. Third, sleep in something. Let's take a look at what this means.

The first step is to put some insulation between the ground and your body. There are numerous sleeping bags and pads that provide protection from heat loss through conduction, the tendency of heat to flow from a warm object (you) to a cool object (the ground).

On the other hand, in most environments, you can use natural debris piled and layered to create the same level of protection without the need to carry excess equipment. By creating a deep bed of these natural debris, you make a warm and comfortable place to lay your head. All this dead air space will slow the transfer of heat to the ground.

I will add one of my wool blankets over a debris bed for a little extra insulation. The same can be done with a sleeping bag. That is your choice, but you should use a layering approach here, too: A bed of insulation, and then a system to sleep on. Building with natural materials will let you drop the sleeping pad, but either way, you need that layer of bedding to sleep on.

The second step is to put some insulation over you. This is your sleep system, and there are a lot of choices available. Just like the insulation below you to keep conduction from sapping your heat, you need a layer above you to keep radiation and convection from doing the same. A sleeping bag or some blankets will

trap your body heat or the warmth that you have created near your body as you sleep.

What if your situation is unplanned? The same idea behind the insulated bed will apply to reducing heat loss from above. A layer of natural debris above can take the place of a sleep system in an emergency. This might not be ideal, but it could help save your life in a survival situation.

Step three is to have something to sleep in. If you planned ahead, you will have packed some form of shelter. With a tent or tarp in your kit, you will have a head start on shelter.



The most important reason to carry shelter with you is the conservation of calories. All work burns calories that must be replaced, and setting up a tent uses less work than building from scratch. On the other hand, tents or tarps do not contain heat as well as a constructed shelter

stacked with insulation.

If you have the skills to construct a shelter from natural materials, this will provide you with a shelter that contains heat generated by your body or an outside source. In warmer weather, a lean-to will shelter you and catch a lot of heat.

You can even bring some of the heat inside the shelter if you do so carefully. There are portable heaters fueled by propane or isobutane that will warm up the space if you choose one that is designed to be used safe-

ly inside.

There is also the choice of light-weight wood-burning stoves, designed for backpacking, that will not only heat your shelter, but they will also provide a cooking surface for food prep. They require either a tent designed for them, or specially constructed shelter. A tent with a stove jack for the chimney stack, or an opening in your shelter are required to use them safely. They can also be expensive, and even though they fold down, they still take up a good amount of space in a pack.

If you are relying on your survival skills to heat a shelter, there are some techniques that will help. Once you have built a fire, you should keep as much of the heat created from escaping into the air as possible. Place your fire as close to the entrance as possible, so that heat will enter the shelter. Heat can also escape from the other directions as well, so a reflector can be built to contain and redirect the heat into your shelter.

You can also bring heat directly into your shelter. Gather as many fist-sized rocks as you can find from any place but a water source. Pile 10 or 12 of them in your campfire to heat all day as you go about other tasks. This technique will be most useful with an enclosed shelter such as a debris hut, so while you are building it, dig a pit near the entrance. Make sure that you have dug it deep enough to remove any combustible materials that might smoke and ignite during the night.

This pit is your overnight heater. Before you turn in for the night, fill it with the rocks from your fire. These rocks will slowly release the stored heat and keep you warm throughout the night. This can also work for you with tents that do not have a floor, in

at least a section of it. Make sure you are careful to allow enough space around the pit to keep the heat from damaging the materials of the tent.

In Conclusion

As you can see, with proper planning, critical thinking, and skill building, it can be relatively easy to stay warm on the move. If you spend the time to learn these techniques and develop a plan, you will travel to your bug-out location in as much comfort and safety as possible.

I will finish by suggesting a couple of book series that will help you learn these skills. Tom Brown's Field Guide series focuses on primitive skills using few if any equipment to survive. Dave Canterbury's Bushcraft books teach skills for use with minimal woods crafting tools.

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Survival Tools: The Firearm.

By Mark Smith

When considering a firearm as a prepping tool, we have some requirements that need to be fulfilled beyond how much you like the firearm you are selecting. As a prepper, this is just another tool in your toolbox, and for the weight and space it takes up in your gear load out it must provide usefulness in your mission to stay alive.

A lot of people will assume that your firearm is one of the most important tools in your kit, but this is far from true. A good knife is probably the most important tool you can carry, and then fire, water, and shelter will be much more important in this kit if you want to survive in a hostile SHTF environment.

This firearm must provide certain enhancements to your journey and

be quickly put into action when needed, without being cumbersome to the rest of your kit. Again, each piece of your kit has a job and are only allowed to add weight and take up space in your kit because of what it provides.

I agree with another contributor to this newsletter, Mr. Travis Warlock, that the 22LR caliber does a particularly good job. The ammo is light, plentiful, low cost, and comes in many different designs or intended versions.

It is easy to carry and can be made Hollywood silent with the right selections of accessories. If you need to use this tool, the next consideration is whether it brings attention to you or where you are. Normally, this would be detrimental to your survival

as a single person or in a small family unit unable to go wage war on those attempting to maraud you or your supplies.

Looking at the tool and its design helps us select certain firearms over others. This is a very individualized process. There may be considerations based on an individual's body type, ailments, or other limitations. As you read other survival authors' suggestions on this subject, the Henry survival rifle and the Ruger 10/22 typically make the top of their lists of recommendations. Both are great tools with many different upgrades available to them. The Ruger 10/22 platform has an entire industry built around it, with all kinds of upgraded parts available. The Henry survival rifle even floats when in storage mode. I

would suggest you look past these models to a more compact tool that is easier to clean and carry with you everything else you need to survive during your journey.

I feel a pistol is an easier tool—both to carry, and to access on the trail. You can overcome the limitations in its design by practicing and learning about its capabilities. The pistol can be carried in a holster or pouch on one's belt, or somewhere in the front of their load-carrying gear. It could even be carried out in such a way that no one would know what it was, and it would still be available immedi-

ately if needed.

The pistol I would suggest is the Ruger 22/45 MKIV pistol, with some accessories to complete its mission in your kit. This model of firearm is very popular, with aftermarket parts and upgrades available: everything from trigger packs to magazine enhancements and assorted parts. The Ruger MKIV is noticeably light, handy, and can be carried with an extra 10-inch barreled receiver if you want to get the most out of the cartridge in your kit. I would select the much shorter 5-inch tactical barreled receiver, but there are plenty of different configurations on the market to choose.



The shorter barrel lengths will provide a quieter firearm and employing the 10-inch barrel gives you the most velocity possible from the little 22LR cartridge,

enhancing accuracy when needed. The 22LR cartridge builds velocity up to about 11 inches of barrel length; after that length, the little cartridge will actually slow down, because the powder has all been burnt up. The shorter tactical barrel is threaded for a suppressor and also has rails on top and bottom for both a red dot and a flashlight. Both items will enhance the usefulness of this tool in your toolbox.

In addition to the aforementioned accessories, I would also put a lanyard loop of some sort on it to keep the tool in your kit when climbing



Another choice for consideration is the Smith & Wesson 22a. Not as many accessories, but it is a great pistol if you can find one on the used Market.

over tree trunks or through tunnels. You can enhance the internal parts with the addition of trigger packs, or an extractor from Tandemkross or Volquartsen. Getting a 22 LR suppressor for this tool makes it much more useful if needed. You can also disable the magazine cut-off with aftermarket parts, and putting magazine bumpers on your mags can make them survive the added abuse of a SHTF situation. This pistol can be broken down with the push of a button and would only require a basic cleaning kit to maintain it in the field. All-around, this pistol provides

a great selection to your INCH or BOB or get home kit and is worth the space and weight it takes up.

A firearm is not a necessary part of your kit but can be a welcome addition to your toolbox. Using something that is dependable, plentiful, and customized makes it an enhancement and not a liability in the end.

In conclusion, each tool in your kit—including the firearm—is part of your last-ditch effort to survive whatever calamity you have been put through, and you should scrutinize the worthiness of each tool's place in your kit.

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PSA Dagger: First Shots

By Ric Hubbard

I recently wrote about my first impressions of the PSA Dagger 9mm pistol and in looking it over, I developed a good impression of it. I recently got it out to the Lone Star Gun Range in Lockheart, TX to see if it holds up to the rep it is developing. Sorry for the spoilers, but it did.

I do not trust a pistol for everyday use until it has had at least 300 rounds through it and has been tested with a variety of ammo types. For this trip I was testing reliability and basic accuracy. I took 350 rounds for this trip. 200 rounds of AAC 115gr FMJ from Palmetto State Armory and 150 rounds of Freedom Munitions 124gr FMJ. These are both cost effective brands that provide a lot of value for your dollar that I will be saying more about in another post.

This is one step in my evaluation, but the results were promising. I loaded 349 rounds, and I pulled the trigger 349 times. The pistol fired 349 times. See my review of the ammunition in the related post for the story of only

349 of 350 purchased.

All shooting was done at 7 yards using the included Magpul Glock P-Mags. I have heard mixed reviews of these magazines, but they performed very well for me.

The PSA Dagger performed well. It seemed to like the AAC ammo better than the Freedom Munitions. The AAC ejected much more forcefully than the Freedom, though both had no problem clearing the chamber. The Freedom Munitions ammo ejected to the rear-right and the AAC tended to go over my head, occasionally dropping a spent cartridge on the top of my head.

I am also happy with the accuracy. This model comes with suppressor height sights which are different from the standard sights on my Springfield Armory XD-40 and are going to take a little getting used to. I also had surgery on my right wrist a few years ago and I am a little rusty when it comes to pistol shooting. I think that this, in part, explains why my groups

were low and to the right. The pistol has fixed sights, and the rear can be drifted to compensate for the windage, but elevation will take practice to get and hold the right sight picture. I intend to get the irons set for best accuracy, but this is an optics ready pistol, so soon it will have a red dot sight mounted to it. This will hopefully improve my accuracy after I get used to it.

I was happy with the groups that I shot, about 2 to 2.5 inches and able to be kept in an 8-inch circle once I got the sight picture right. I place the blame more on me than the gun. I am out of practice and not used to this trigger. More experience will help improve the groups, but the trigger bears discussion.

I have been shooting striker-fired hand-guns for about two decades now. My XD took familiarization and practice to get right, and I think the same is true of the dagger. The trigger has more in common with the Smith & Wesson M&P pistols than the Gen 3 Glock that the gun is based on. It has a long take up to the "wall," but it breaks so quickly after you hit the wall that some will say that it is non-existent. The take-up feels a little gritty to me, not so much

that it is a problem, but noticeable. The break is a little cleaner and the reset is short.

I feel like it will wear into a fairly nice trigger with more use, but if you are looking for a competition grade trigger, you are going to need to invest in a competition replacement. There are several videos to be found on YouTube that demonstrate the

process of polishing the trigger to smooth it out and you might be well served to try it out.

I would be comfortable with this as a carry gun, but I will be more so when I have run some defensive hollow points through it to make sure that it will function as needed with them. Future range trips will involve running at least 100 rounds of hollow points through the gun and testing it with an RDS.

This is not my final endorsement of the PSA Dagger, but it is so

far living up to its promise and I think it has a lot of potential. So much so that I am considering trading my XD-40 in for a full-sized, 17 round capacity Dagger as a primary with my bug-out kit. If you are prepared to deal with a quirky trigger, you should consider giving one of the Dagger series guns a try.



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The Super Shovel

By James C. Jones

Long before there were any devices specifically made for survivalists, Live Free members recognized the need for some kind of digging tool in the survival pack. A shovel would be needed to dig fire pits, drainage trenches around our tents, and dispose of waste. We might even need to dig shelters from weapons fire, nuclear blasts, and fallout. Back in the late 1950's and early 1960's, surplus "Army Shovels" were plentiful, but too heavy for carrying any distance. They were excellent digging tools but were meant to be carried and used by healthy young soldiers for short distances to the

front lines. After World War Two, every child in my neighborhood had one, and we trenched and tunneled every vacant lot we could find. We early survivalists started adopting garden trowels to put into our packs as BTN (better than nothing) digging tools. In the 1980's, The Vietnam-era military folding shovels that came out were lighter and more compact than the old army shovels, and could be car-



rried further, but were not designed for civilian survival applications. Recently, a wide variety of so-called "survival shovels" have come onto the market. These shovels range from basic folding shovels for about

\$15.00 to the complex GRAMFIRE™ ones for over \$200.00. Survival shovels* are defined as relatively compact, while having multiple functions, such as ax blades, saw blades, hooks, and wrenches. Like many items designed to do more than one thing, they are never quite as good as just a shovel, just a knife, just a saw, et cetera; however, they are useful for their multi-functionality.

The 15-in-1 Multi-Function, Folding Shovel from Stealth Angel™ sells for a very reasonable \$34.95. The shovel blade is very heavy-duty and includes a saw blade, sharp ax-knife blade, hook, and two hexagonal wrench cut-outs. One handle segment contains a small knife, fork, and saw blade, and another segment contains a Philips and blade screwdriver. There is also a glass breaker point and a compass in the handle. A magnesium fire starter comes attached to the carrying strap and case. The whole thing fits into a 9" x 6" x 2" cloth carrying case that weighs about two pounds. When all four segments are fully assembled, you have a strong 30-inch-long shovel tool. The heavyweight handle and sharpened spade also make for a formidable weapon and effective rescue tool. There is a bit of room left in the handle for a few extra items. I don't advocate this for a primary survival pack item since you should already have a multi-tool, knife, fire starter and other tools with you, and there are lighter, smaller shovels available. It is ideal for carrying in a vehicle, keeping at your jobsite, or in a cache where you might need all of these functions.

** I covered a variety of survival shovels in chapter five of The Ultimate Book of Survival Gear. Published by Skyhorse Publishing.*

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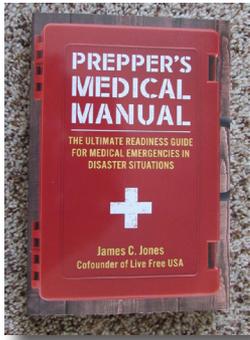
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