

Note from the Author

Back in August 29, 1984 the term "Survivalist" hadn't yet been trashed by the mainstream media (today if you mention this word, everyone assumes you're talking about a crazed person spouting Bible verses, wearing camo, and about to go off his god). And when I wrote this article for a "Survivalist" magazine, something like 90 percent of the US population was worried about an economic collapse, a nuclear war, and/or other similar disaster.

The US was spared such problems, but I'm sure those in other parts of the world who might be asked about the subject would be quick to tell you that things haven't been so pretty. Folks in Afghanistan, Kurdistan, or any of a hundred other spots that have seen savage fighting over the last few years. And I'm told folks in the North/South Korea, the Middle East, and Pakistan/India areas take the threat of a nuclear war pretty seriously as well.

Since things in today's world can go down the tube in the blink of an eye with a terrorist attack or the over-throwing of a government, I feel justified in "reissuing" this article which not only has appeared in print but also became an "underground best-seller" on first the comuter BBS systems of the 1980s and later showed up in various FTP Internet sites during the early 1990s. So now it's seeing yet another rendition on the Web.

I suspect at least a few of the readers of the article have had the unfortunate privilege of putting some of the lessons outlined below into practice. It's such possibilities that force us to learn about the savage art of war. Because no matter how peaceful you may be, there's always a bully of one type or another that's ready to knife, shoot, or nuke you. Being prepared to fight back not only improves you chances of surviving said knifing, shooting, or nuking, it also makes you less apt to be attacked. The last thing a bully wants to do is pick on someone who can protect himself. --Duncan

SURVIVAL FIGHTING

By Duncan Long

Your family survived the economic collapse and the world war that followed. But law and order is a thing of the past. Looters are headed your way and it's up to you and your family to either repel the freebooters or be killed...

Farfetched? Maybe.

But imagine the social upheavals that would occur following a major crisis. What happens when the damage is nation wide and the police and national guard aren't? I've talked to a number of "freebooters." These people admit that their only preparations to survive a major crisis consists of an arsenal of weapons and ammunition; they plan on stealing what they need. They're trouble for moral people like you.

If you're like most survivalists, each member in your group has an assault-style rifle (and you'd better have a whole lot of ammunition for each weapon). And you know how to use your weapon. But how does your survival group go about defending itself against a concerted effort of armed freebooters?

Let's look at "Long's Rules of War" for survivalists first.

Rule one: There're no rules.

The freebooters won't play by any and there is no reason for you to do so. Do anything to win and forget all ideas of "fighting fair" and everything you've ever seen on TV or at the movies in regard to combat.

The basics of combat aren't quite as simple. And a survival group must learn to coordinate its self-defense efforts.

One way of doing this is to have a set pattern for facing a bunch of "bad guys" so that each member knows who shoots at which bad guy so that you'll get them all before any of them get you.

Imagine a wave of freebooters stalking toward your group. The person at the far right of your group should start shooting at the enemy at your far right and the guy on the left of your group aims at the bad guy at the left. As bad guys are hit, those who are able start firing at other targets of opportunity.

Most groups don't just face off, however. Terrain may force single file travel and defending a fixed position usually requires a circular deployment.

Also, in combat you hardly ever see an enemy unless you both manage to stumble into each other. You'll normally get only a fleeting glimpse of an enemy and may have to figure where he is by where his gun fire is coming from. So how do you find the freebooters' positions to shoot back?

Most combat takes place within 300 yards and more often within 150 (that's why the .223 is as good as the .308 in real-world combat--it's effective over normal combat ranges).

If you suspect that there may be freebooters about but can't see them, situate yourself where you can look over a large area without being a choice target.

Look rapidly over the area you're in. Examine (don't just scan) nearby areas first and visually work your way out to the 300 yard limit. Rapidly study any potential hiding spot.

If you haven't spotted anything after 30 seconds of scanning, then visually go over the area MINUTELY within 50 yards of you. If you still have not sighted the enemy, then visually examine the next 50 yards and so forth until you've again looked out to the 300-yard limit.

When you finally see your enemy, he probably won't stay exposed for long. Get a reference point to keep track of where he is. A small bush, rock, or some other distinguishing feature will give you that. (The reference point is also useful for pointing out enemies to others of your group.)

Sometimes you'll face an enemy that manages to stay hidden and starts firing at you from concealment. Rather than just spray the area around you with fire (and waste precious ammunition), use the military's

"crack and thump" to locate the freebooters.

Here's how it "crack and thump" works. A combat rifle makes two sounds: the sound of the gas vented out of the barrel (the "thumb") and the sonic boom of the bullet as it breaks the sound barrier (the "crack").

Since the bullet is traveling faster than sound, first you'll hear the bullet's crack and then the thump of the firearm's muzzle discharge. These two sounds will give you an invisible arrow that points toward the shooter's position. To find the distance, you can count--5 counts per second--from the time you hear the crack until you hear the thump. Multiply the number you counted times 100 and you get the yards the enemy is from you. Once you have the direction and distance, it should be possible to find your enemy's position and blast him out.

Blasting isn't too easy, sometimes.

Your rifle must be zeroed in properly. A 250-yard zero (with either .223 or .308) is good for combat since it allows you to fire at anything within 300 yards without worrying about bullet drop (if you can't range in at 250 yards, 25 yards is almost as good since it is almost the same as the other end of the ballistic arch the bullet takes). Impact will change up or down a few inches at the most (which makes little difference in combat).

The main change in bullet impact comes from wind deflection. It doesn't seem like this should be a consideration. But it is.

For example, with a 20 mile-per-hour crosswind a 55-grain .223 bullet will be 2.2 inches off the mark at 100 yards. Not much. But extend that out to 500 yards and its missing by 68 inches. Even with a very slight wind of just 4 miles per hour, the deflection at 500 yards will be over 13 inches. Even heavier .223 and .308 bullets will be off by up to 8 inches with just a 4 miles per hour cross wind at 500 yards and nearly 26 inches off the mark with a 20 mph wind.

Bottom line is to go to your local gunstore and ask for the free windage charts most ammunition manufacturers distribute for free to gun dealers. Get one of these and STUDY it. Know where your bullet will be striking during the critical moment.

Wind deflection is even more complex than the charts show since winds aren't often constant nor do they always blow across from your side. A lot of thought and experience is needed to get the hang of allowing for windage.

For cross winds, a chart is modified in the following way:

Winds blowing into your face or from your back can be ignored. Winds coming at an oblique angle to your front or back change the bullet's point of impact by 1/3 to 2/3 of its value (depending on its angle).

Here's how to estimate wind speed: a wind under 3 mph will hardly be noticed; breezes of 3-5 mph can be felt on your face; 5-8 mph winds will keep tree leaves in constant motion; winds in the 8-12 mph range will raise loose dust or blow papers about; and a 12-15 mph wind will make small trees sway about.

If the freebooters are moving, there's still more to consider since it takes time for a bullet to travel from your rifle to "there." You have to aim at where your enemy will be when your bullet gets down field.

To do this, point at the front edge of the freebooter's body if he's moving parallel to you at less than 250 yards or one body width ahead of him if he's over 250 yards from you. If he's running, double the lead.

If a freebooter is moving diagonally to you, use half the lead. You don't have to compensate for movement if he is moving toward or away from you.

It's important to know how long 100 yard increments are to compensate for wind and target movement. Step off 100, 200, and 300 yards around the area you'll be defending and use reference points so everyone in your group can know with some accuracy how far away a freebooter is from them.

When you shoot, aim first at clear and easy targets.

Now that you have the basics of hitting a freebooter, let's look at some of the tactics you need to use to lessen your chances of being shot by him.

The Right Stuff

Unfortunately, a lot of survivalists try to carry everything but the kitchen sink when they're practicing combat tactics. A backpack full of everything you might ever need in combat is worthless if it slows you down or gets you hung up on branches or barbed wire. All you need is your rifle, lots of ammunition, proper clothing (including some good boots and a hat), a pocket knife, a first-aid compress, matches, and a canteen.

When you're engaged in combat, your body will do some strange things. Vomiting diarrhea aren't rare--the last dictates that you don't wear a jump suit into combat. You'll probably not be hungry at all either--that's why food wasn't on the list of combat needs above.

Since the adrenaline will be flowing, it is easy to accidentally fire a weapon. Don't kill one of your own members accidentally. Don't place your finger into the trigger guard until it's time to shoot and don't point a loaded weapon in the direction of one of your group.

Night Fighting

Many attacks against you will come when it's dark. Often darkness will negate some of your advantages IF you're not prepared.

Human beings see better in the dark "out of the corner" of their eyes rather than when looking at something in the center of the field of view. If a person looks directly at something in the dark it will tend to disappear. If you want to see at night, look around an object by staring to either side of it and above and below it.

Human eyes also take several minutes to adjust to darkness and just a few seconds to adjust to a bright environment. After you've been in the dark for a while you'll be able to see well but you can ruin your night vision for several minutes by looking at a flare or using a flashlight.

Dress in dark colors (not necessarily black) and be careful not to smoke, shine flashlights in the open, or have glow-in-the-dark equipment.

A rifle's flash suppressor diminishes flash at night but doesn't hide it completely to the area directly in

front of your weapon. Move around a little after firing whenever possible.

Night sights and tracer ammunition are sometimes useful at night but they aren't a complete solution and may not be available. Perhaps a better alternative if you're in a fixed position, is using stakes, strings, or wires to limit the vertical and horizontal travel of a weapon. Sight the weapon in carefully during the day so you can see what all you'll be able to fire on.

Wait until darkness has fallen before moving to your nighttime position. Otherwise an enemy may sight in on your position, set his rifle, and fire at your position when darkness falls.

Illumination flares or spotlights in the hands of freebooters could be a problem. When either is in use, get out of sight and try not to be seen. Close one eye to preserve your night vision in that eye if you watch for enemies who are caught in the glare (spot lights make great targets, too). Just don't look at the light with both eyes or you'll lose your night vision.

Night vision equipment is expensive but works well. If your group can afford it consider doing so. And remember that your enemy might have such equipment, too. There is not such a thing as a "cloak of darkness" in the 20th Century.

Refuge Defense

There are a number of things to be considered in defending a fixed position. The flanking movement is an important tactic that might be of use to you.

Here's how it works if you're not familiar with it. Imagine two groups of combatants facing each other. Stalemated. One group starts a flanking movement by splitting up and sending a few members off to one side of both groups. This splinter group then moves up so they're alongside their enemy, looking down the length of the enemy soldiers. For the splinter group, one point of aim now covers much of the enemy line. At the same time, the enemy is caught in fire coming from their front and side and will have trouble returning fire.

It is possible to counter a flanking movement by extending your line or moving in various ways; it's better to just be the first to make the flanking movement. Practice this beforehand and keep everything simple.

If you create a defensive position that has a circular or star shape, you will also prevent an enemy from being able to out flank you. Planning and practice is important if your group is to use flanking movements and to avoid being out flanked.

If you have to move when someone's blasting away at you, don't move from a safe spot to another, until you've spotted a good place to run to. Trenches connecting various points in your defense are a good idea IF you have the manpower to create them and the numbers to keep them policed during attack.

Create clear fields of fire around your defensive position. (A field of fire is the area which can be covered with gun fire from one defensive position.) Remove only enough brush, rubble, or whatever to give a better field of fire while leaving enough not to give away the gunner's position. Fields of fire should overlap among the different positions in your group. This makes for better defense as well as for taking up the slack if someone is forced to move or becomes a casualty. Best marksmen should have positions where they can take advantage of their skills. Those less experienced should be placed where they can

give support or reinforcement to the better fighters in your group.

Defense in depth is essential. This allows you to protect dwellings, children, livestock, or whatever, in the center of the area as well as dropping back to secondary positions rather than suffering casualties.

If your group has a very good marksman who can act as a sniper, you can add a lot of depth to your defense. Snipers should aim for leaders (spotted by how they give orders, their better dress and special equipment like binoculars, or by the fact that they carry only a pistol).

Good camouflage can greatly enhance elements of surprise as well as giving extra protection. It's especially important for forward positions. Be sure you've camouflaged your group for maximum protection.

Fencing, Punji sticks, broken glass, nails in boards, booby traps, barbed wire entanglements, etc., can be used to slow down freebooters and keep them from surprising you. However, they also give away your positions. If you use barriers or booby traps, keep them as inconspicuous as possible and keep track of them so your own group isn't injured by them.

Keep watch over barriers and booby traps. Such don't stop men from crossing an area; they only slow down movement through them.

Booby traps and fencing can also be used to force an enemy to attack from a direction that gives you the maximum advantages. Give that some thought.

Much of the fighting in the aftermath of a nation-wide disaster would probably happen in urban areas or from a shelter/home that is similar to a bunker. Unfortunately, most survival combat training is aimed at learning to fight in a wooded area without a fixed position or camp. This knowledge is important but so is knowing how to fight in the asphalt jungle and from a fixed spot.

If you are fighting in an urban area, rock chips and dust can be problems. In such an environment, add a dust mask, goggles, and gloves to your combat list given above. A crowbar and knee pads can also be nearly essential.

In urban environments, ricochets and stone chips can cause as many or more injuries than direct hits from bullets. Pavement or long walls of stone create ricochets which tend to travel parallel to the flat surface at a maximum height of about 16 inches. Full-metal jacketed bullets are especially apt to do this. If you stand next to a wall or lie prone on a road, you're just asking for a knowledgeable shooter to demonstrate the fine art of ricocheting.

Any building you are planning to defend should be built of reinforced concrete if possible. Stone or concrete will often stop rifle bullets; frame houses won't. Close all entrances on the ground level (including windows) except for your entrance and one emergency exit that is hard to locate from outside the building.

If possible, place bulletproof materials inside the building so that you can still fight freebooters even if they fight their way into the building. This gives you fortresses within your fortress and will allow your group to fall back and minimize casualties while inflicting heavy casualties on the freebooters when they fight their way into the building. Rubble, brick, sand and dirt will all work for .

To stop standard rounds up to and including the .50 machine gun, you'll need *at least* 16 inches of sand,

10 inches of concrete, or 2 inches of steel plate. That's the minimum to stop one bullet. You'll need more if multiple bullets strike the same place -- as may be the case when facing foes with automatic weapons. Always err on the conservative side. It's better to have too much material around you than not enough.

Compacted earth gives about 1/3 to 1/2 the protection of sand and water will downgrade your protection since the water acts as a lubricant.

Loopholes

Don't fight from your home base. Move your defenses out from anything you value. Second, don't fire at freebooters from doorways or windows (remember Waco); doing so is a quick way to get shot by return fire since windows and doorways are the first thing a freebooter will fire at on the off chance that you're dumb enough to be there.

Instead you should use loopholes.

Loopholes are cone-shaped holes in walls with the point of the cone pointing out. They allow you to fire out of the building you're in from relative safety while limiting the amount of fire that dangerous to you. Loopholes should be wetted down to keep dust from becoming a problem and goggles are a good idea since near hits will send rock splinters into the building.

When possible, mesh wire should be placed over loopholes. This keeps you from poking the barrel out of the loophole (and giving away your position) and also keeps freebooters from lobbing grenades or molotovs through it at you (mesh over air vents and other points is also a good idea to keep molotovs out).

All loopholes on ground level should be manned to keep someone from firing through them into your fortress. Higher up, it is possible to have several loopholes so that one person can switch when return fire becomes too great for one of them.

If your group works to create an easily defended position and practices together so that you can support each other in combat, you can protect yourself from the looters and freebooters who will be around following a nation-wide disaster.

By fighting well, you can survive.

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