

▶ At Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona (AFPN), Capt. Chris Occhinzzo practices evasion maneuvers during combat survival training course. Evasion maneuvers are part of SERE training taught to pilots and aircrew members. Captain Occhinzzo is an aircraft navigator from the 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron. U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jesse Shipps.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF **ESCAPE AND EVASION, PART 1**

▶ BY JEFF RANDALL

Escape and Evasion (E&E) can encompass a myriad of situations, from fugitives escaping justice to civilian kidnap victims in the Third World to military personnel trying to evade hostile forces.

Due to the vast amount of material, the basic techniques of E&E will be a two-part series for *Against All Odds*.

When thinking of fugitives on the run, the story of Eric Robert Rudolph often comes to mind. Rudolph, who had been charged with bombing an abortion clinic in Birmingham, Alabama as well as the 1996 Centennial Park bombing in Atlanta, managed to evade capture for more than five years in the hills of western North Carolina until a rookie cop caught him dumpster diving for food.

While many consider Rudolph an excellent evasion artist, it was actually the federal government's unique ability to piss off the local populace—as well as its inability to understand the manhunt,

local culture and terrain—that allowed him to evade capture for so many years. Rudolph wasn't the highly trained survivalist and evasion guru that many thought. Simply put, he had a sympathetic support network.

CAN YOU DO IT?

But what if you have no support network? Is it still possible to survive, escape capture and make your way to safety? In a word, yes. But before we go any further, let's start with a basic assumption: *S.W.A.T.* readers are not going to be fleeing from criminal charges in the U.S. when they need to put a little E&E to work. Fleeing from potential kidnapers in South America? Check. Running from a corrupt police frame-up in some

Third World hellhole? We're with you on that. Military personnel trying to evade the enemy ... well, hopefully your mil training has covered all of this, but if not, we're here for you.

And in case anybody is thinking, hey, some bad guy could read *S.W.A.T.* and then use this info for their own evil purposes, I'll add this disclaimer: the following information is readily available on the Internet and in numerous open-source publications. It's not secret information accessible only to an elite few.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Let's get down to business: What basic principles can you use to escape and evade should your life depend on it? Attitude, conditioning and preparation are everything when it comes to escape and evasion.

You have to live every day prepared to act even during the most hum-drum, boring parts of your routine. One of the easiest things to do is keep minimal tools

on your body at all times. These should include a knife, flashlight, multi-tool and cash (concealable tools will be discussed in a future installment of *Against All Odds*). Always be aware of your surroundings and where you are, and know which way safety is located.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes a fitness training program as well as constantly exercising your memory. Get in the mindset of never taking anything for granted. For example, as soon as you enter a new room or building, identify at least two separate ways of getting out, preferably on two separate cardinal compass points of the structure (e.g., east and west, instead of two exits on the same side).

ON THE ALERT

If you get in a car or taxi, make sure the door will open and know how to open it (some Third World taxis remove the back door handles). If you're riding in the backseat, does the vehicle have child safety locks and are they engaged? Seconds count if you are attacked in a vehicle!

Perhaps the most important thing is to maintain a survivor's mindset. Mentally prepare yourself to win at all costs in case you cannot flee and are forced to fight, especially in Third World kidnap situations. *You must be willing and prepared to incapacitate the threat if you cannot escape!*

When attempting to evade, make it your goal to get outside of the attacking force perimeter, since threat forces typically attack inward. You will most likely be found if you are hiding within that circle. Most bad guys already know this. Law enforcement will set up a perimeter, then spend most of their resources and time searching that area. If you can anticipate this and get outside of those bounds, 1) they will likely not find you, and 2) it will give you lead time in organizing your future evasion plan while attention and resources are concentrated elsewhere.

EARLY ESCAPE

If you are captured, keep in mind that most opportunities for successful escape exist during the first few hours. The reasons for this are that the captured person

will be closer to a familiar area, he will still be reasonably fit and possibly still have items that will aid his escape (well-concealed escape tools are often missed by initial searches and pat-downs), he will likely have less complicated restraints, and the attacking forces will be less organized and lacking the "home field" advantage.

It will probably get much worse for you, security-wise, once you arrive at the captor's area of operations. This is especially true in the Third World, where kidnap artists have built a series of safe houses and networks to deal with their prisoners. Each transfer will be more secure and better organized than the previous one.

If you are being held in a secure facility, study your opponent and plan your evasion before any attempted escape. Remember, your captors/guards are typically not highly trained fighting forces, but you should never underestimate them! Be patient and flexible, conserve your strength for the times you will need it, rest and sleep as much as possible, drink plenty of

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water, and eat what the locals eat.

Gather and conceal as many tools as possible and pay attention to every detail of your situation by using all your senses. Avoid using scented soaps and shampoos or any items that have a strong odor, including insect spray. Do not smoke or use tobacco products, since they have an unmistakably strong smell.

BODY CAMO

If you manage to escape and are on the run, camouflage yourself. If your evasion is over open ground (non-urban), apply personal camouflage to exposed skin. Use a blotchy pattern for temperate deciduous (leaf shedding) and desert environments. Use a broad slash pattern for coniferous (evergreen) and jungle environments. For grassy areas, use a narrow slash pattern. The point is to blend with your environment. Any camouflage that doesn't blend will become a beacon to your pursuers.

When camouflaging yourself, it's better to blend darker colors on high spots and lighter colors on lower areas. Your ears should have two colors to

break up their outline, plus use a scarf, vegetation, netting or collar around the neck and under the chin. Keep in mind that black is rarely found in nature. It also stands out more than earth-tone colors when viewed through night vision. Always take advantage of natural materials, but remember that foliage wilts and fades over time. Do not over-camouflage, since it will make you stand out—blend with the environment! Light hair should be covered or stained. You can use stains from grasses, berries, charcoal or dirt to accomplish this.

Never expose shiny or reflective objects such as watches, glasses, pens, etc., and break up the outline of the body, since the "V" of the crotch area and armpits stand out to an observer. If you intend to observe an area, always do it from the prone position and from concealment.

SHELTER

If you require shelter, then use the military BLISS acronym (**B**lend, **L**ow silhouette, **I**rregular shape, **S**mall, **S**ecluded location) and choose an area less likely to

be searched, such as rough terrain. Blend your shelter with the environment in the same way you do your personal camouflage. Make sure you have an escape route with approaches you can see, so you don't corner yourself.

The ideal shelter is one that can be concealed with minimal preparation, since there will be less visible ground disturbance. Locate your entrances and exits along ridges, ditches and rocks to keep from forming paths into the site, and always remember to have overhead concealment. When moving in and out of your shelter, "J" hook into the entrance instead of walking directly to it. This way your tracks and scent will most likely lead the attacking forces past you before finding your shelter, thus buying you critical moments to escape.

In the end, proper camouflage and concealment will buy you time, especially during the initial disorganized fray that will come when your captors realize you have escaped.

In Part 2, we will cover noise and light discipline, E&E movement, counter-tracking and urban evasion. ●

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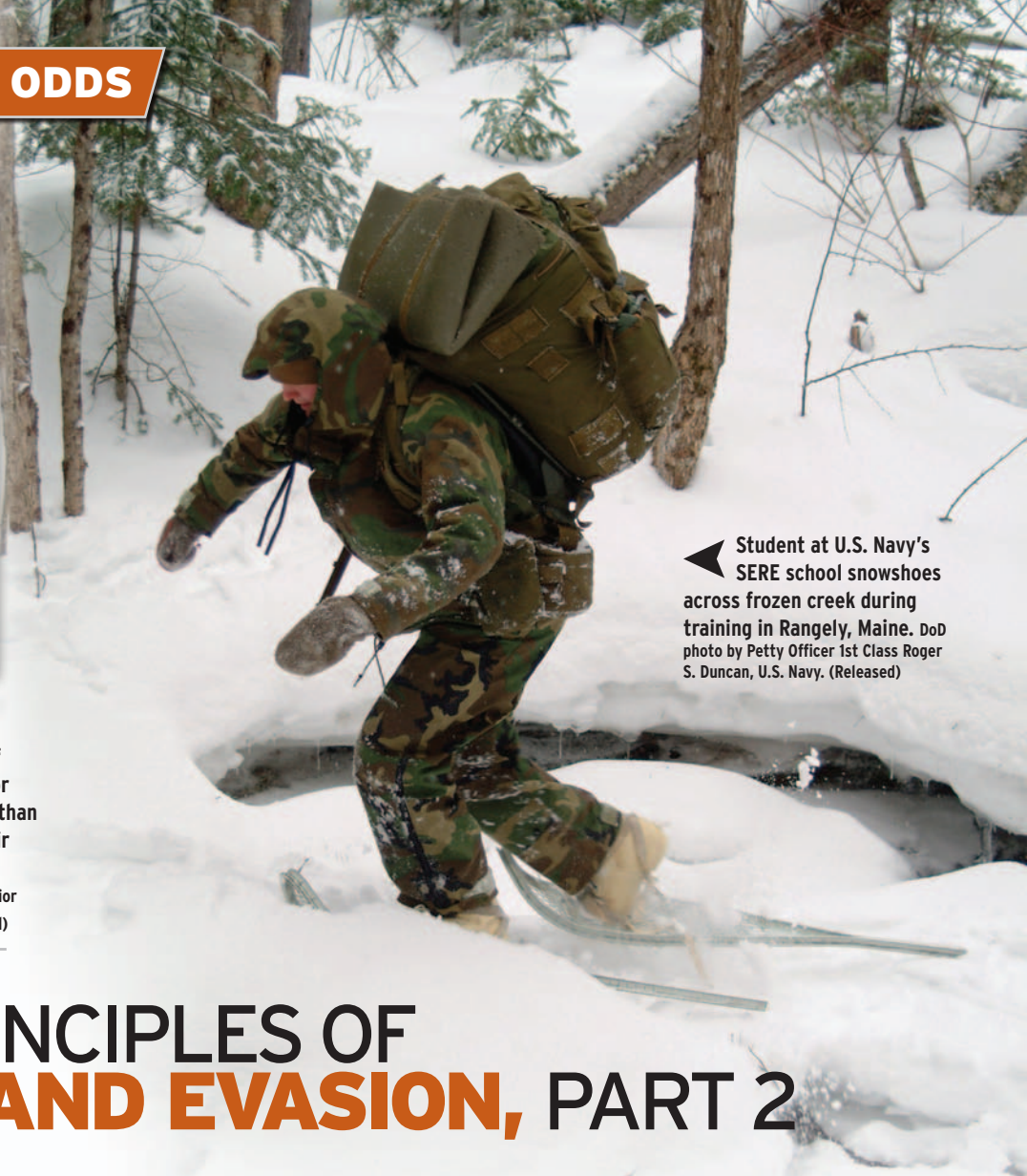
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▲ Senior Airman Cody Lefever uses signaling mirror to alert pilots of overhead A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft of his location during recovery scenario for exercise Angel Thunder near Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. Lefever is an Air Force Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) specialist. DoD photo by Senior Airman Christina D. Ponte, U.S. Air Force. (Released)



◀ Student at U.S. Navy's SERE school snowshoes across frozen creek during training in Rangely, Maine. DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Roger S. Duncan, U.S. Navy. (Released)

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ESCAPE AND EVASION, PART 2

► BY JEFF RANDALL

Last month, we covered the importance of proper camouflage when evading hostile forces or threats.

And while camouflage is extremely important during any evasion scenario, other factors also come into play.

Proper Escape and Evasion (E&E) should be thought of as a package of skills instead of a singular technique, since you may not know all the resources a threat could employ (tracking dogs, air surveillance, night vision, thermal imaging, spy network, etc.).

Human nature is to run away from a threat as fast as possible, but keep in mind that simply sprinting without planning may make you an easier target to apprehend. If you ever watch the TV show *COPS*, it's pretty obvious that the panicked runners always get caught. It's always best to prepare for the worst

possible scenario, then carefully execute that plan through discipline instead of fear.

NOISE DISCIPLINE

Noise discipline means total silence! Before moving, always secure any loose item on your person or pack. After securing it, jump up and down and if anything makes any sound, secure it again. Get rid of all Velcro, or tape it up. There's no better giveaway than trying to move silently through brush only to get a piece of Velcro snagged and hear that unique ripping sound.

If possible, always move during bad weather so the rain, thunder, snow or wind will mask your noise. You should also utilize unnatural noises such as

trains moving in the background. Make sure watch alarms and hourly chimes are turned off, and cell phones or other non-essential electronic devices disabled. As a side note, if you ever use a cell phone in an evasion scenario, be sure to remove the battery after using the phone. Technology is now available to track some phones even if they are turned off. The only *reasonable* amount of security is to remove the battery.

"Talk and Toss" disposable cell phones offer a little more security, since they are not registered to you, but consider them one-time-use phones, remove the battery, and toss them when you're finished with your call.

LIGHT DISCIPLINE

Avoid using any light source unless absolutely necessary. This means no smoking. Be aware of any electronic de-

vices, such as watches, that may have backlights or utilize glow-in-the-dark tritium. As stated in Part 1, avoid gear or clothing with black or white colors, because they project a strong IR signature. Earth tones are always best.

If you have to use binoculars, scopes or eyeglasses, don't forget about glass glint, which can be seen from far away. Also remember that moonlight reflects off vehicle glass, clear water bottles, etc. Only build a fire when it is absolutely necessary for your survival, then keep it small and try to build it under heavy canopy to dissipate the smoke as much as possible.

When observing at night, always scan with your eyes and avoid trying to focus in one direction, since scanning and peripheral visions will pick up faint light sources and movement more quickly than direct sight.

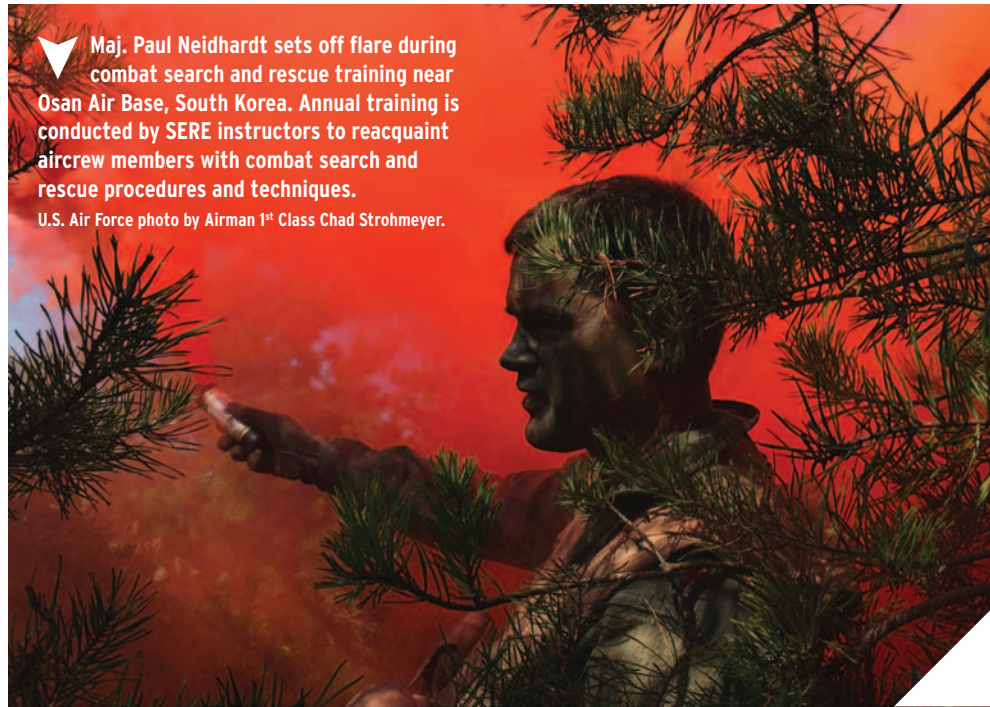
Keep in mind that many "threat forces" have poor light discipline when moving through woods or open ground. Exploit that if you need to, because bright lights create hard shadows and cause the user to lose his peripheral night vision.

E&E MOVEMENT

Always be aware of any light source when traveling (sun, moon, etc.) and avoid silhouetting against them. Only stop at points of concealment and use all your senses to survey the area: look, listen and smell for signs of human activity, vehicles, aircraft, animals, etc.

Pick firm footing when moving by carefully placing the foot lightly but squarely on the surface. Try to avoid turning over any ground cover, rocks or sticks, or scuffing bark from logs. Be careful not to slip when moving, since this creates a very visible sign to even the most amateur tracker. If you're worried about the noise from breaking sticks, then wrap your feet in cloth to help muffle the sound. If tracks are unavoidable in soft ground, then try to place the track in the shadows of vegetation or other natural objects. Moving during rainfall or windy periods will allow the tracks to fill in. Always take advantage of any solid surface because it will leave less evidence of travel.

Avoid disturbing vegetation above



▼ Maj. Paul Neidhardt sets off flare during combat search and rescue training near Osan Air Base, South Korea. Annual training is conducted by SERE instructors to reacquaint aircrew members with combat search and rescue procedures and techniques.

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Chad Strohmeier.

knee level and do your best not to break branches, leaves or grass as you move. Do not grab any small trees or brush, since that may scuff the bark or break the plant. In snow country, this will also remove the accumulated snow, thus giving your pursuers easy sign to track you by. If you have to travel through heavy vegetation, use a walking stick to part it, then move it back to its original position. These pointers will not stop the expert tracker from tracking you, but they may buy you some critical time.

Most importantly, do not litter when traveling. Any type of trash or lost equipment will be quickly spotted because it's not natural and will identify you to your pursuers.

COUNTER-TRACKING

If you are being pursued by dogs, concentrate on defeating the dog handler, not the dog. If time permits, you can move in zig-zag patterns through heavy brush and rough terrain, thus creating more difficulty for the handler navigating with a dog on a leash. This may also create doubt within the minds of the handler and the follow-up team. A figure "4" or box movement in a large area will also help throw off trackers.

Set booby traps. Even if they are not effective, a simple trip wire or the appearance of a deadly booby trap will slow the pace of the tracking team

and make them more cautious in their movement.

Keep in mind that these tactics will also fatigue you, as well as reducing the time/distance factor that may be crucial to your escape, not to mention that the more deceptions you attempt to create, the more scent and sign you will leave behind. Be aware that techniques such as these can become counter-productive, since the more time you spend trying to confuse trackers, the more they may close the gap.

Whatever you do, it is critical that you never move on an azimuth. If you are being tracked and the team is paying attention to your direction of travel, they simply have to move an advance team in front to intercept you. Move in a general direction with slight changes if you know you are being tracked. Do not go directly toward an obvious location. For example, your target location may be a clearing to be evacuated by air, a main road, or a village. Your trackers will anticipate your movement to these locations because it is human nature to try to reach an area of "safety" as quickly as possible.

URBAN E&E

Depending on the situation, it is usually best to avoid urban areas because a larger number of threat forces are typically concentrated there, but if you have no other choice, then try to blend with

the locals as much as possible. Look like you belong there and use crowds to your advantage. Act casual, don't run or appear frantic. Avoid groups of children, since they are quicker to recognize a stranger than adults are.

If you reach an urban area after an evasion through open ground, try to change clothing and clean up as soon as it is safe to do so. Dress down and remove any signs of who you are. Be aware of local curfews and habits (for example, prayer times in Muslim countries). Do your best to hide E&E tools on your body in case you are recaptured.

Avoid overeating or appearing to be too hungry. Stay away from markets, as they are typically one of the first places pursuers will place "pavement artists" (watchers whose only goal is to identify and relay information on the person being sought). With that said, markets during closed hours are a good place to source thrown-away food and tools.

If you choose to stay in a hotel, try to get a room on the second floor (known in some countries as the first floor). It will buy you some escape time if you

are watching for threats. Make sure to mentally map your escape route by exploring it both in the daylight and at night. Block all the doors and make sure the window is a good escape route. Memorize where the stairs and elevators are, as well as any utility rooms or ceiling areas that may aid you.

If you sleep, do so with your clothes and shoes on and all gear packed and ready to move at a moment's notice. Again, if you have to use a cell phone, use a throwaway phone or steal one and discard it after use. If you think you are being followed, use your surroundings, such as windows and mirrors, to your advantage. If you have to evade, don't forget about the underground of large cities. Drainage systems can often be used to move about undetected.

LAST RESORTS

You should only resort to stealing, burglary and/or bribing as last resorts. If you have to break into a place, test the alarm systems before attempting entry. Repeated tripping of an alarm, then waiting in a safe area, will often con-

dition the owners and authorities to a false alarm, making it easier for you to gain access.

If you have to steal a vehicle, older cars are easier to hotwire than newer ones. In fact, some of the mid-1990s GM products are amazingly simple to drive off with minimal tools. If you do acquire a vehicle, disable all interior lights by pulling the fuses as soon as it is safe to do so. You never know when you may have to crawl back into your car under cover of darkness, and dome or dash lights are nothing more than signaling beacons!

Perhaps one of the best evasion tactics is to study and memorize an area of operation before ever setting foot in the place. Knowing the geographic lay of the land or a city layout can be a crucial component to successful evasive tactics, although in many kidnap situations, this may not be possible.

In the end, circumstances will always dictate the required actions, but the ideal evasion tactics are to remain low-key and calm while cautiously moving toward freedom. ●

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E&E TOOLS AND CONCEALMENT

► BY JEFF RANDALL

Escape & Evasion (E&E) tools have been around as long as man has existed, with numerous stories about them being told and passed down through the ages.

In the year 1716, 26-year-old Lord Nithsdale escaped live disembowelment (and certain death) using trickery and tools to flee the Tower of London, where he was being held captive. In the first half of the 20th century, the legendary Henri Charrière (Papillon) succeeded in escaping from the infamous French penal colony in Guiana. More recently, Scott O'Grady, a United States Air Force pilot, evaded capture and was eventually rescued after being shot down over Bosnia in 1995.

What all these men have in common is that they applied tools, techniques and skills to escape with their lives.

While E&E tools can encompass just about anything you can get your hands

on, in this article I'm going to focus on small, body-concealable tools that may aid in a person's escape or evasion from hostile forces. In many cases, these are not highly specialized tools designed solely for the purpose of E&E. In fact, some of the best tools are everyday items fashioned to fit the purpose. With that said, it should be noted that the tools/techniques discussed here are for defeating unlawful detention, such as kidnapping or hostage situations. Concealing a knife, handcuff key or other escape devices is prohibited by law in many jurisdictions.

CUTTING TOOLS

For most applications, cutting tools

will probably be the most valued asset of a compact E&E kit. Not only can they be used to escape restraints, but most importantly, they can also be used to make or acquire other tools. Dog Tag knives, razor blades, wire saws, hacksaw blades, diamond wire, Kevlar cord and specially designed mini knives pretty much cover the gambit of what's readily available.

Some of these cutting tools are available in non-magnetic ceramic, Titanium and plastic to avoid detection with metal detectors, thus making the art of concealing them on the body much easier. (A March 2009 Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center Law Enforcement Report stated that Dog Tag knives and non-metallic Zytel knives were potential threats due to their ability to defeat screening equipment.)

While cutting tools get the most attention when it comes to survival, keep in mind that Escape & Evasion can encom-

Pant labels and seams are perfect places to conceal escape tools. Note the piece of Kevlar cord coming from underneath the label. This type of concealment is almost always missed on initial pat-downs and searches.

Survival shoestrings are easy to make. Simply remove the inner strands from a hollow sheath cord such as ParaCord, replace with Kevlar cord, make a quick end seal, and you have an accessible cutting tool that will easily zip through FlexiCuffs, rope and other bindings.



pass a myriad of requirements. Simply having a knife or cutting tool may not ensure your ultimate success. Once you escape initial capture, you may have to break into a building for shelter, travel overland to evade, or survive in the wild until you are rescued. The secrets are to look at everything as a potential tool and always plan for the worst-case scenario.

Besides knives, there are other valuable tools that can easily be concealed and employed for various tasks: hacksaw blades, SAS-style wire saws, button compasses, small cylindrical Rare Earth magnets (for making a quick gross-direction compass), handcuff keys, handcuff shims, padlock shims, lock picks, mini pry bars, small fire starters, piano wire, hairpins/bobby pins, needles and jewelers' files. Even if you're not in possession of commercially available tools when captured, always be looking for useful items—be it the rusty nail you find lying on the ground in your prison cell or a broken piece of glass. When properly applied, every tool has use for E&E.

CONCEALMENT

Most small tools can be concealed by taping them to various places on the body or clothing, such as:

- inside wide belt loops on the back side of pants
- inside clothing labels located inside or outside of pants
- inside the cuffs or hems of pants
- inside the waist seam
- inside shoes/boots



The user can also conceal items inside a slightly modified shoe heel or in a pocket formed by slitting the sole and then partially concealing the area with a product like "Shoe Goo."

In many locations, a small lanyard with an unobtrusive knot tied on the end (and barely exposed) may be required for retrieval of the tool. It is not advisable to conceal items on a necklace chain cord or under wristwatches, because anything of value will be taken by kidnapers. Likewise, wallets and passports should also be avoided for concealment, as they will be confiscated by kidnapers and hostage takers. Hats can be easily lost during a scuffle, so they are not recommended as concealment for first-line escape gear.

Shoe and boot laces can be replaced with (550) ParaCord or a similar cord

that utilizes a hollow sheath. Remove the inner strands of cord and replace them with Kevlar Cord. Trim to fit the shoes and sear the ends without sealing the ends.

Kevlar cord and escape tools can also be stored inside the tongue of a shoe or boot. Use a seam ripper to carefully open the tongue and then sew Velcro along the edge, creating a pocket that you can open and close. This requires attention to detail and minor sewing skills. A short length of Kevlar cord can also be woven into the pants seam for quick removal to cut through FlexiCuffs, wire ties or other bindings.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

The most important thing to consider when concealing any escape tool is what you will be left with once you are taken.



◀ Escape & Evasion can encompass a whole spectrum of small tools that are readily concealable on your body or clothing. Most of these (even those made from magnetic materials) are easily missed during a search or by magnetometer machines.

▼ Small cylindrical Rare Earth magnets can be concealed just about anywhere and make great survival compasses by suspending them on a piece of dental floss or other small string. The beauty of this type of compass is it can't get broken and can be used to magnetize other items for use as a compass needle.



In most cases, the initial contact with the "enemy" will be with the least qualified personnel in the chain of authority looking for you. Their only mission is to detain you and pass you up the line, so the faster you can break contact and flee, the more likely you are to succeed.

This is when proper planning and concealment of escape tools in shoes and clothing work best. Once you arrive at a more secure facility and are turned

over to personnel whose business is to handle prisoners, your shoes and clothing will probably be removed and you may only be left with your pants—if you're lucky. Always plan for these scenarios in advance, even if it means taping small escape tools to the genital area before going on a mission. (Laugh at that suggestion if you will, but it's the least likely place to be searched by many violent extremists.)

If you work or travel in hostile environments, Escape & Evasion planning should become a regular part of your routine, since your M4 may not be the only tool that keeps you alive. Take a little extra time to conceal items on your body and clothing, practice using them, and keep a survivor's mindset.

These actions might just keep your severed head from showing up on the Internet. ●

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