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## A Military Approach To Survival Security

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by Larry Diffey , July 22, 2014

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It may seem antiquated, but the primary function of a U.S. Army soldier has not changed since the inception of the Continental Army. A soldier always has, and likely always will be, tasked with performing guard duty in one capacity or another. Perhaps you are wondering what this has to do with survival security. If a method for securing a variety of locations as well as various-sized elements has worked so well for centuries, doesn't it seem like it would serve a group well during a survival scenario, regardless of the cause?

Obviously, the amount of technology that is currently available could provide a great advantage in securing your stronghold. Things like ground sensors, remotely controlled and monitored security cameras, and automatically triggered obstacles are outstanding tools. But in most cases, they are prohibitively expensive. And they also rely on systems of support like electricity and telecommunications equipment to operate. Because of these requirements, the guard will, for the foreseeable future, remain the foundation of a survival security system, whether it is mobile or stationary.

Army Field Manual 3-21.8 identifies the term guard as having two different meanings based on the size of the unit. The guard as an individual is defined as, "the individual responsible to keep watch over, protect, shield, defend, warn... also referred to as sentinels, sentries, or lookouts." A guard, when referencing a unit that is tasked as a guard force, serves to protect a larger body while "fighting to gain time while observing and preventing the enemy's observation and direct fire against the main body." It is clear that both of these definitions could apply to a group that is trying to stay alive and independent during a difficult scenario.

For the sake of simplicity, we will assume that today we are talking about maintaining the security of a large group by a shift of guards. When trying to gain time through observation and simultaneously preventing enemy observation or action, two approaches are necessary: stationary guard posts and patrols.

Stationary guard posts can be established almost anywhere. They serve to identify potential threats and discourage outside forces from attempting to breach the area which you are protecting. There is not a requirement to have a guard tower, a bunker or any structure in which to post the guard. While these locations can provide cover and concealment for the guard, stationary posts can be located in trees or in a car or even be a chair on the side of a house.

The important thing to remember is that when securing a sizable area, it is vital to layer security and have intersecting areas of observation so as to minimize the possibility of something being missed. Stationary posts will primarily be observation posts, battle positions, roadblocks, checkpoints or entry control points.

While it is ideal to have a constant security presence, it may not be practical for your group. If that is the case, a conscious decision will have to be made as to when it is possible to have guards posted and how many there will be. It is probably smarter to maintain a constant presence of lower numbers of guards than an intermittent presence of higher numbers. Your situation will dictate. Conduct an assessment of your needs as well as the highest-risk time frame and develop your plan from there.

Another factor to consider when determining guard positions is what will be guarded. If your retreat location includes not just a house but a barn or other outbuildings, it is likely that multiple structures will need to be guarded. This could mean additional stationary guards or implementation of security patrols to encompass the expanded area(s). During a situation where clean drinking water is difficult to come by, a guard may need to be posted at your drinking water source to ensure the security of the site as well as the safety of the water. These are only a few of the considerations that should be made when setting up your survival security plan.

Make sure to also include the element of the unknown, if possible, when making your plan. If the enemy can clearly see how many guards you have, where they are, when they switch out, etc., it will be much easier to plan an attack or way around your system of security. Consider the possibility of varying the number of visible guards and the times when guards switch out. If you also rotate the locations where each individual performs his guard duty, it can result in less complacency and an increased awareness of what is going on around the area.

Don't rule out the possibility of making some fake guards, using mannequins that can be placed in windows or other locations to make it appear as though there are more guards than there actually are. This is especially practical at night when fewer people may be available anyway.

Security patrols can be conducted on foot, bicycle, boat or truck and most often serve as an additional layer of security, farther removed from the primary area being secured. (This is likely practical only during extreme circumstances and primarily when a crisis is ongoing for a long period of time.) Patrols can also be used to investigate an area or probe the enemy to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Do not send a group out on patrol without first identifying each person's role in the patrol and conducting rehearsals. A security patrol can be difficult to conduct and could just lead to people getting lost, hurt or even killed if proper precautions are not taken.

An effective communications plan should also be in place. And no patrol should ever leave without an established objective, time of departure and estimated time of return. Establish specific intervals and/or locations where the patrol will check in to report their progress and any issues or concerns. These plans will make it possible to track the patrol and make it possible to help in the event that additional resources or assistance are needed.

One of the components of a guard force that has led to the long-running success of military guard duty is the sergeant of the guard, a person tasked with making sure that the guards are at their appointed place(s) of duty, performing their duties. The sergeant of the guard also ensures that the guards are appropriately relieved when the time arrives. If the capacity is available in the group, make sure to identify at least one person per shift who has the leadership capability and knowledge of guard duties to act as the supervisor for the shift.

Do not overlook the equipment necessary to conduct security operations, especially the ability to communicate between guards. In an ideal scenario, each guard would have a radio with extra batteries to facilitate communication; but this may not be what happens. If radios and/or batteries are not available, work out a system of animal calls, hand signals or other means of communication that will allow everyone to know when things are OK, when there is a problem or even just if someone needs a break. Other equipment that can be very useful to stationary guards and patrols include:

- A map of the area.
- A compass and/or GPS.
- Binoculars, spotting scope or night vision goggles.
- Weapons.
- Protective obstacles such as a solid wall.
- Early warning devices like trip-wires.

As a way to augment a human security force during a survival situation, physical barriers can be placed or developed around the area to help decrease the number of eyes that may be needed to secure an area. Fences, ditches, pits, rocks, walls and the natural terrain are all examples of physical barriers that can prevent infiltration into an area. Animals, especially dogs, can also be useful in augmenting a human security force. The military currently uses canines as the animal element to a security force. But historically, chickens, goats and even horses have helped serve as an early warning system to alert when a possible threat is present.

While there is more to a solid security plan than just placing a few people around the area you are trying to secure, the human element cannot be beaten when it comes to reliability, performance and the ability to adapt to and overcome challenges. The military has been relying on this model for centuries and has experienced success with it around the clock and around the world. When it comes to your survival security, are you willing to take a chance on the unknown? Or would you rather use something that you know will work, even in the most difficult of times and circumstances?

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