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Table of Contents

Gearing Up, Part 1

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If you've been following my articles in TAP Newsletter, you know I've been warning about the threat of what passes for America's government becoming totalitarian and cracking down on your freedoms. I've explained that this will mean that you will have to fade back from the government's assaults, evade, escape and keep your family safe while those capable will regroup, conduct guerilla warfare and hit the enemy on your terms as opportunity presents targets. The last two articles covered the basic strategies that will help you accomplish this. With this article, I hope to detail some gear that will help you in your quest for freedom and survival.

The statement of the above paragraph has already been demonstrated with the rush of bills that have been proceeding from committees in Congress. HR 645 establishes a color of authority in the federal government to build FEMA operated holding facilities and force Americans into them during declared emergencies. HR 1022 is a heinously un-American bill giving color of authority to the federal Attorney General to outlaw any class or model of firearm he wishes with the mere stroke of a pen. Legislation giving color of law to the restriction of ammunition is also in the works. For gun owners and freedom minded people, this comes as no surprise. Barrak Hussein Obama has promised this kind of "change" all along and his voting record in the Senate reflects his Marxist views. It is no longer time to think about preparing and reading up on the latest survival techniques. Now is the time to gear up and practice with your gear to gain the skills you read about.

It is important to note before gearing up that knowledge and skill are always more important than items stored in a back pack or cached in a mountainside. Having a box of matches and a flint, steel and magnesium firestarter with you on a camping trip does not guarantee that you can start a fire. You must have the knowledge and skill to use your equipment in a way that is effective. That means practice, not just reading the instructions and storing the equipment. This also means ware and tear on the equipment and you will have to rotate and replace the equipment when used. In today's economy you may have to get creative when budgeting in your gear, but you must practice in order to gain the skill to use that gear. In other words use what you buy and buy what you use.

To begin with gearing up, begin with the basics. Your first concern in survival is keeping your body core at a good working temperature. That runs around 98.6# degrees Fahrenheit for most people. It is important not to get too much hotter or cooler than this. The results would be hypothermia should you become too cool or hyperthermia should you become too hot. Either situation can result in death. Beside your body core temperature, factors like humidity, getting wet, sweat and wind play important roles in maintaining body temperature. While most survivalists know this to be true, many Americans, survivalists included, are more fair weather practitioners of the art rather than gain all season experience. They, therefore, neglect these factors combined with harsher weather extremes and are generally prepared only for fair weather outings. This is a huge mistake even for summer outings.

Under survival conditions and in the types of terrain where one might find him or herself in North America, weather conditions change rapidly. These changes can bring rain, wind, cold and sleet. Summer in my area is no exception to such adverse conditions. I have been caught in the higher mountain terrain gathering huckleberries in August when cold fronts from the Gulf of Alaska has moved through. Even in August the high temperature can drop into the fifties with the lows dropping into the thirties. These conditions always brings rain which can turn to snow in the mountains, and yes, I'm still talking about August. In such summer outings many are taken unprepared, caught in the weather with only summer gear. Such a situation can easily turn deadly. You may think that you may not have to face such situations as you are not living in my area. Consider, however, that you may have to evade hostiles like Blackwater mercs or a BATFE murder raid during summer conditions and need to evade through several seasons including winter.

After observing a freak summer snow storm on June 11 at the 2,700 foot level (this is a very low altitude for snow at this time of year) I noticed how the snow stayed wet and covered the ground. This made for muddy conditions and soaked firewood. Shelter building materials were also soaked and retained little insulating value. You need to be prepared when these conditions present themselves during anytime of the year. Since the solution to surviving the elements is shelter, shelter is the first priority in gearing up for survival in the wilds or on the run.

Shelter begins not within the walls of your home, but with the clothes on your back. Your clothing is your personal shelter and first line of defense against the elements. As with your other gear and tools you may use, there are certain grades of technology involved in production and quality. The material your clothes are made from plays a huge role in how well they insulate your body from the elements and protect you. Modern, artificial fibers can keep wind out and repel water while allowing sweated vapor from your body out and insulate against cold all at the same time. Gore-Tex and Thinsulate brand clothing do an exceptional job at protecting you from the elements and keeping you alive. Polypropylene is excellent material for retaining insulating value against the skin. Natural fibers that are excellent in retaining their insulating value are wool and down. Down refers to the down feathers of fowl like ducks, geese and chickens. While this natural material works extremely well in dry, cold weather, it loses it's value quickly under wet conditions or if stored so that the down piles on one side, leaving gaps in the insulating material. Wool retains it's insulating value extremely well and dries rapidly in the presence of only body heat. Leather is an extremely useful natural material for clothing. Properly constructed, treated and oiled, leather clothing will repel water and wind and keep an insulating layer of air trapped right where you need it to be. Cotton is an unforgivable sin in most survival situations. Cotton must be dry or it has absolutely zero insulating value. Worse, it absorbs and retains water and acts as an evaporative cooler helping to speed the cooling effects of the environment on your body. Cotton clothing used in a survival situation in any season other than summer can and has carried a death sentence for many people.

Like any piece of technology, the technology of clothing construction brings differing uses for that technology. For example, while wool stays dry and insulates better exposed to body heat, wearing wool against the skin can be uncomfortable. It's not just that it is itchy for many people, but that it is rough and can chafe the skin during moderate and even light work sessions. Skin chafing during a protracted period in the wilds will eventually lead to infections which is detrimental to the goal of survival. The same is true of leather. Cotton is an appallingly deadly material to use in outer or mid-layer clothing, but can protect the skin from the chafing effects of wool. Polypropylene is an even better material for wear against the skin as it wicks water and sweat away from the skin and retains it's insulating value at the same time. Using these differing technological operating abilities to their own strengths will help to keep us alive. As you may have guessed, one of the best ways to insure you maintain your body's core temperature is to use your clothing to protect you from the elements. The easiest way to do that is to keep your clothing dry. Follow the simple rule; stay dry.

Now, as to how to use your clothing's technology in a survival situation, you must think about insulating value and heat produced by your body. A balance must be stricken between heat produced by your body that builds up in the trapped air of the insulating layers of your clothing and how much of this heat is lost to the elements. Moisture effects this which is why you must strive to keep dry, but if you become too hot, you will sweat and reduce the insulating value of your clothing. In a survival situation, you will need to perform tasks which will cause your body to produce more heat which will cause you to sweat. We balance these factors by layering our clothing.

The first layer is the layer of clothing that goes against our skin. This layer must be comfortable and must not cause chafing. Of course, the clothing in this layer is known as underwear. It is usually cotton, but can be polypropylene or silk.

Cotton underwear is perfectly acceptable in the summer months. Cotton is okay in the winter to protect your "fruit of the looms" area. Polypropylene long handles is preferred instead of T shirts and cotton long handles or "chicken skins". This layer will be exposed to most of the sweating problem and can become quite wet. This layer should not be exposed to the elements, but to become too wet here is very uncomfortable and can lead to rashes and/or chafing. Underclothing should fit snug, but not be too tight so that it cuts circulation or rubs the body nor should it be too loose so that it bunches in inconvenient places like under the armpits.

Socks are a necessary part of the first layer as well. You should buy your socks geared toward your footwear. In the summer when a cool stream and some air feels real good to your overburdened hooves, cotton tube socks are fine and can be dried in the sun. Not so in the winter and cold weather. In cold weather your feet sweat while you are walking or are at work and the cold soaks in fast when you come to rest. This is when wool socks are best. Polypropylene socks can be worn underneath the wool socks for comfort and to avoid itching and discomfort.

In the summer and in warm weather the next layer is considered the outer layer, but in the winter and during cold spells this layer is the middle layer. If the weather is warm to hot, a cotton T shirt may suffice as outerwear for the upper body, but one should ALWAYS bring another shirt for middle or outerwear layering. The middle to outer layer shirt should NEVER be made of cotton. Ideally this shirt should be made of wool or occasionally leather. A leather shirt over cotton or polypropylene will keep the wind away from the under layer. Wool doesn't break the wind as well as leather, but provides excellent insulation when exposed to any heat source. A thick wool shirt will still keep enough wind from your body and insulate well, especially if it is to be used as a middle layer with a windbreaking garment or parka over top.

Pants are the best lower body, middle to outer layer garment one can wear for escape and evasion or survival. This goes for guys and gals. Shorts don't cut it. Most environments in North America harbor mosquitoes, ticks or worse. Thorns, brush and sharp rock outcroppings are also prevalent. A good, rugged pair of pants will protect this part of your body from these hazards. In the summer and when weather is warm, a pair of pants will be your outer layer. Again, in the warm weather your pants can be of a cotton material like blue jeans (actually these should be brown, OD or died a subdued color) or BDUs as long as they are ruggedly constructed. In wet or snowy weather even cotton canvas becomes saturated with water. This means your blue jeans or BDUs will retain no insulating value. Wool becomes very valuable again in cold or wet weather. If you are worried about wearing holes in the knees of your wool pants, which does happen more rapidly than blue jeans and some well constructed BDUs, buy yourself a pair of knee pads to protect your pants. Elk hide pants were brought into my area by the mountain men and are still quite popular for winter hunting wear. Elk leather is rugged and repels water well. Many hunters fearlessly wade into streams and ponds in the hunting season wearing elk hide pants to retrieve downed game. The leather also breaks the wind from your body and protects the insulating value of your under or middle layer garments extremely well. I imagine any leather will work for this as long as it is constructed well and has been treated with oil.

Footwear is a very important subject in outdoor survival. Your footwear is what will protect your very important feet. Your feet is what will keep you moving for evasion, for work and for resistance. Your footwear must be up to the task, so no skimping here. Good leather boots are necessary for protection in the brush and rock. Summer boots should still enclose the whole foot, no sandals. The idea is protection in the brush. A quality boot with leather laces and eyehole lacing is necessary. The easy on catching type holds for lacing is also easy off and will catch on every twig and root to entangle itself and pry itself off the catch. There is a train of thought that for winter and even summer wading, a pair of rubber boots are what is called for. Rubber boots are certainly water repellant, but are not durable walking across country even in the snow. The terrain in my area is very uneven and buried under snow piles are fallen trees with broken branches pointing out to catch your footfall. An easily misplaced step will tear your rubber boot in an instant.

Reports that I have read on the Eastern Front during World War II and personal experience show that the pull on boots (like the jack boots the Germans wore) are superior to the lace up boots in the winter. I have fumbled with many a laces while iced up on my boots so agree with this line of thinking. At camp pulling off your boots and socks to warm your toes by the fire is a comfort and keeps the feet healthy. When you have to thaw out your laces first, the ice melts and water drips into your boots and soaks into your socks. Plus it is an extra hassle to fumble through the iced over laces if you have to remove your boots quickly, or to put them back on if you need to do that before the laces have thawed out.

Two pairs of boots are necessary if you live in a climate with more than one season. One pair for warmer weather and one pair for cold weather. For warm weather, a pair of quality leather, lace up boots are just the ticket. For cold weather, a pair of quality leather, pull on boots a size larger than your normal size are just the ticket. The winter boots are a size larger to accommodate and extra pair of thick socks for better insulation of your feet from the cold. This set up will keep your feet protected well in the summer and winter, through cold and heat.

As with your feet, do not forget to protect your hands. Gloves or mittens will work in this regard. Leather works best as an outer layer material. It is tough and durable and will stand up to necessary camp and survival work. It is necessary to protect the hands from abrasion and cuts under survival conditions as well as the cold. Exposed skin can mean frostbite when the weather conditions are right. Leather will break the wind from chilling your skin. For the inner layer of your gloves or mittens, wool or wool blend will fit the bill nicely.

Moving on to outerwear, we should consider tougher material that can withstand harsher conditions and being scratched and snagged by thorns, twigs and brush. Parkas or coats that are well insulated and roughly constructed fill the bill for the upper body's outerwear. There are many outlets for quality and reasonably priced parkas made from Gore-Tex or Thinsulate. These garments are superior in their durability and ability to shed water, insulate and allow water vapor in the form of sweat to move out through the special fabric of the garment. Even though prices have come down considerably on these garments, they can still be quite pricey and I admit that I go a cheaper route and purchase government surplus parkas for this. Government surplus parkas are warm, rugged (they have to be considering what they were designed for) and very reasonably priced.

For those really cold, sub-zero days, over pants are a helpful garment to keep the cold out. There are several surplus over pants on the market that, like surplus parkas, are very rugged and reasonably priced. These are typically worn while setting still on those very cold days and for insulation against the snow or frozen ground. Their rugged construction also protects the middle layer pants from brush and thorns.

A hat is also a necessary piece of clothing in your survival wardrobe. Most of your body's heat is lost through the top of your head. A wool knit hat has always been the standard in the last couple of centuries for retaining the heat that would be lost through your head. If wool is too itchy for you, wool blends are also very efficient and much less itchy.

The above technology in clothing is what you must gear up with in the way of your personal shelter against the elements. Like all technology, there is a method to its use. As mentioned throughout this article, becoming wet through weather or sweat can compromise your garments' insulating abilities. You will notice that as you move, walk or perform tasks that your body heat will rise and be retained by your clothing's insulating capacity. This will make you warmer yet and you will begin to sweat. Sweating will make your clothes wet, which is why you must never wear cotton in the cold weather, and your clothes will lose their insulating value. To strike a balance between insulation and moisture you must be aware of your body's situation. As you are working, open your coat or stow it away in your gear bag to cool your body to prevent sweating. On very cold days, take frequent breaks when your body temperature rises. Do

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