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TIPS FOR RIFLEMEN

**IMPROVE
YOUR KNEELING**

BY: JEROD JOHNSON / PHOTOS COURTESY JEROD JOHNSON www.statraininggroup.com

Aristotle referred to kneeling as a form of barbaric behavior, the Greeks and Romans rejected it in general.

History has taught that it is a sign of submission and it is even referenced in the Bible. For gun slingers, hunters and competitive shooters, however, it is often used to establish a more refined firing position. One problem for a lot of shooters is that there are many kneeling positions to shoot from and each has many variables that will determine the outcome of the shot on target. Having spent the last 34 years shooting in all of the above mentioned categories,

I will highlight some of the most popular kneeling positions that pertain to engaging with a rifle. When I talk about supported kneeling positions I am referring to the elbow making contact at some point with a knee or load bearing equipment on your chest, not shooting sticks or artificial support like barricades that the firearm rests on.

Let's consider why we would use any kneeling position and what the pros and cons are. The factors involved with deciding on

the kneeling position you take may sound familiar to some, but likely with different meanings assigned. They are shoot, move and communicate. Can I effectively shoot from this position at the established distance, can I move in and out of the specific position with all of my equipment on and can I establish a two-way communication with my team, other shooters or hear bad guys? The kneeling position can be used as a more stable position to use when the *continued on next page*

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STAFF

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| DAVID MORRIS and "OX" | Publishers |
| CHRIS GRAHAM www.chrisgrahamauthor.com | Editor |
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prone, sitting or standing positions are not available or optimal to sling lead from. Kneeling may be utilized to conform to the cover or concealment available. It can also be utilized to make your profile a smaller target from incoming fire or observation from either an enemy or wild game.

Some challenges with a kneeling-type position are that a shooter can't sustain themselves in that position and on target for long periods of time. Shooters with flexibility limitations or knee injuries may have difficulty assuming a very tight position. The position is dependent upon the type of equipment the shooter is

wearing. For example, if you are wearing a plate carrier with 80 pounds of tactical bells and whistles, getting into a low, supported kneeling position usually forces the plates and carrier to ride high into your throat and make for a very uncomfortable position. Wearing knee and or elbow pads with plastic protectors makes getting into a supported position more difficult as you wobble with the plastic-on-plastic contact. Kneeling can also burn time when fast movement becomes necessary and it may even affect communication.

The firearm is a factor in considering the type of kneeling position to use. For instance, engaging with a McMillan Tac-50 or other heavy precision system is going to require the shooter being on a lower power and will force him into a supported kneeling position if the prone is not available. Knowing these factors will allow the shooter to establish ahead of time what position is obtainable with the chosen equipment, what is needed to accomplish his mission once in position, how long it takes to assume it and get on target.

SOME POPULAR KNEELING POSITIONS

High kneeling: this position allows most shooters wearing just about any type of heavy load bearing equipment to at least



A high kneeling delivers little stability, but may conform to cover and retain more mobility than lower positions.

establish themselves in a more steady position for placing that shot while also being less of a target to incoming fire and observation. This is done by placing your support leg out front into a lunge type position with your strong side knee on the ground and strong side toes pointed at the deck. Your elbows are hanging inboard to protect your sides and add to minimizing your profile. This allows the shooter to also move in and out of position faster than positions lower to the ground, as well as establish better two way communication with maneuvering teammates that may disappear when you get prone. Plastic knee pads are great for this position as no elbows are resting on the plastic knee pad and the pads are not negatively affected (for marksmanship purposes) by the terrain below. This position is most often used when using a light to medium weight weapon system. It maximizes ease of traverse for engaging widely separated targets, but provides little additional stability for long range or precise shots. This position is often chosen to conform to cover when targets are expected to be close. Shooters may do this with either knee down in order to brace against being inadvertently pushed out from behind cover by teammates (many CQB schools train students to keep the



above: Speed kneel. below: Low kneel.

Kneeling makes you a smaller target, helps alter your profile to the enemy or wild game, and can be used to conform to cover or concealment.



knee up on the side coming around cover so the planted foot can counteract a push from behind.) This is often used in vehicle evacuation drills where shooters conform to portions of a car that might be used for cover after a vehicle is downed.

Supported kneeling (no knee or elbow pads): this allows the shooter to establish a stable contact point with the backside of the support elbow (not the ball of the elbow, rather where the elbow ends and the tricep starts) and the inside of the support knee just off of the knee cap, all while in a lower and compact lunge position. Your butt can be resting on the heel of your upright strong side foot. This allows a very stable shot with relatively light equipment in stable or soft terrain for a short period of time with a medium to heavy weapon system. Mobility is limited, but if a shooter is skilled at monitoring or controlling their breathing and achieving a

true natural point of aim, they may successfully engage precise targets at greater ranges. To evaluate if natural point of aim is present, close eyes, relax and then open eyes. Where your weapon is now oriented is your natural point of aim. You may need to maneuver your body to create the advantage of acquiring a natural point of aim on your desired target.

Supported kneeling (plastic elbow and knee pads): This position does not offer as much stability as shooting slick, but it does offer more support than standing and also allows more time in position when working in rough or rocky terrain. Remember, your first shot may wobble your position enough to force you to re-establish your position, so it's important to practice this position with your equipment. Rehearsing each of these ahead of time can make the difference between a life and death shot for those who work the streets and roads or use rifles for self-defense. If you are a one-shot, one-kill hunter it will make the difference between your freezer being filled with meat or just ice cube trays.

Low kneeling: in my opinion this is a military snap in position or maybe something suitable for the hunter/shooter with minimal equipment. It extends the support leg out farther and lowers the profile of the shooter while establishing a stronger support base to shoot from. It is limited by your flexibility, equipment, physical condition, weapon system and terrain. Communication is not as good as other positions because you are low to the ground.

Speed kneel: this position is great while carrying a light load for fast shots from relatively close distances (usually within 200 yards.) This basically takes all the shooter's weight and drops it to the ground, landing on both knees, shoulder width apart, squared to the target and providing no support to the weapon system. It is most effective with lightweight weapons while wearing knee pads and in most any terrain. It allows moderate speed and mobility to get back out of position and offers some of the best communication in the kneeling position.

MODIFIED KNEELING POSITIONS

Modified speed kneel: this is a technique we teach a lot at STA. It is the same concept as the speed kneel, but it brings the shooter's support knee slightly in front of the strong side knee just like a boxing position, but from the kneeling. It mirrors your position if you were shooting in the standing, support leg

slightly out in front with weight distributed forward on the support knee and leaning slightly forward to allow for better recoil management. Getting in and out of this position is relatively easy, even with a medium ruck and plate carrier. Communication is excellent from this position as you are still in a high kneeling-type position.

Low speed kneel: This position is identical to the speed kneel with the exception that you are leaning back against your heels. This position is good when working around barricades, but is limited by your equipment, weapon system and your flexibility. You always want to ensure you can get out of the position you get into. Communication is still good, but not as much as in the higher positions.

Modified kneel/sitting/Gumby: This is often taught as the preferred position for precision by military school houses. This is not for those who are as limber as a 2x4. It requires the shooter to take a similar position as the low kneeling, but instead of your butt resting on your heel you actually roll your ankle to the ground and sit on the inside of your foot. This provides a very stable platform to shoot from, but has some drawbacks. You are limited by the equipment you have on, how limber you are, the practical time

that can be spent to take a precision shot, difficulty in getting out of the position and limited ability for two-way communication.

Strong side arm support on strong side knee: This position is great for shooting off strong sides of barricades or barriers you are using for cover or concealment. Usually it is recommended that this position be used for targets out of the shooter's maximum effective range from the speed kneel or modified speed kneel. It makes for a fast reload with minimal movement as your rifle (magazine fed type) can stay rested in your shoulder with your strong side elbow in place on the knee. Your support side is doing all the movement for the reload.

Whether your mission is hunting terrorists in Afghanistan, defending yourself on your ranch or acquiring meat in the woods, you must build the skills you want to be able to use. Run drills and practical scenarios prior to attempting to use these skills and get a good feel for what your capabilities are. The kneeling position is one that can reward you just as fast as it can humble you. Military and law enforcement shooters often lose the bulk of points lost on qualification courses from the kneeling. If you are willing to practice the kneeling position, you can have an advantage over others. I've made shots on moving elk

from the low kneeling that were more instinctual shot placement than prepared and I've missed shots from a stable high kneeling because I was over confident and failed to run through the fundamentals of marksmanship. Just as in the prone position, bypassing the fundamentals will bring you back to square one.

Pistols are often fired similarly from the kneeling to make use of cover. Some benefit can be gained from the support this position offers and bracing. Rifle-pistol transitions can also be accomplished in the kneeling, but all of these skills must be learned and practiced before they are needed. I recommend that whatever position you take, before you get up, always look behind you to make certain you don't have any other shooters behind you who are engaging. This pertains to hunting as well as tactical shooting. Nobody but you can be responsible for identifying and improving your capabilities and limitations. ✓

BIO

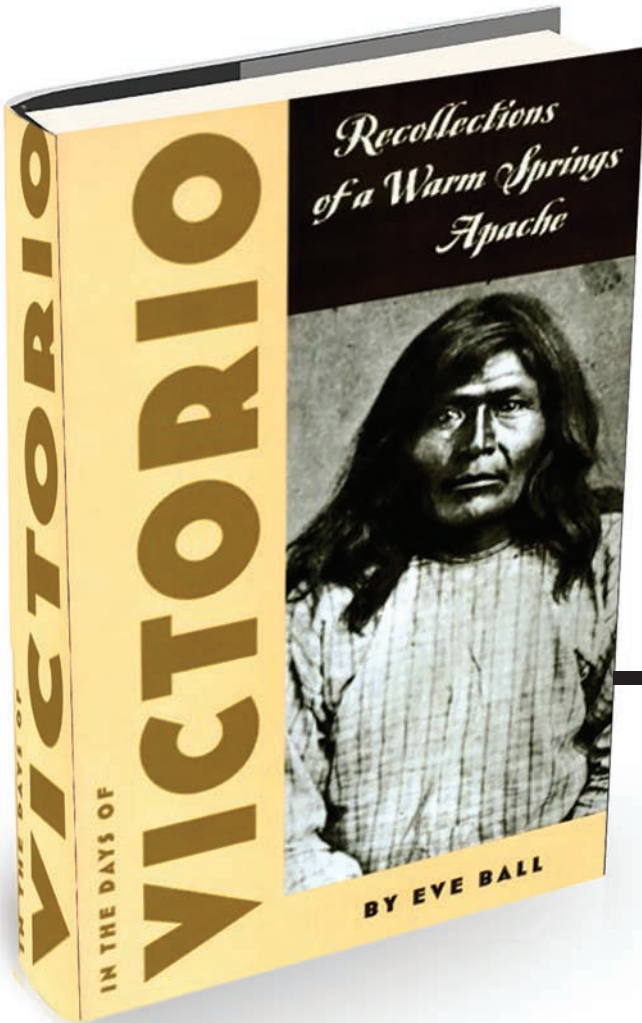
Jerod Johnson is a former Marine Scout/ Sniper, and high threat security contractor. He is a STA Group instructor (www.statraininggroup.com) and has worked for Leupold, Heckler & Koch, Gemtech and Patriot Ordnance Factory.

GEAR REVIEW



FRANK PROCTOR Y NOTCH PISTOL SIGHTS

This sight system was designed to give shooters maximum speed and accuracy. Most pistol sights are set up with either wide rear sights and narrow front sights for fast, but not so accurate shooting or narrow rear sights and a wider front for more precise shooting. The top of the Y is .140 wide and the bottom of the Y is .100. The front sight is .117 wide with a .040 fiber optic insert. The front sight is .180 tall and the sight set is designed for point of aim equals point of impact with the dot resting in the Y where the notch tapers down. www.wayofthegun.us



IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIO

WRITTEN BY EVE BALL

REVIEWED BY: KELLY GAETH

A friend of mine who knows my interest in primitive camping/living and military strategies and tactics recommended that I read **In the Days of Victorio**.

This book describes both. It is about the Warm Springs Apache and their multi-year campaign to evade being forced onto Indian reservations in the late 1800s. Its original print was published in 1969 by Eve Ball, primarily drawn from the recollection of James Kaywaykla, an Apache participant in the events described (as a very young boy).

Tracking the account on a map of the southwest USA and northern Mexico brings the journey to life. As you might guess, there were wrongs done by the “white eyes” to the Apache and wrongs done by the Apache to the Europeans and Mexicans, but the perspective of a “justifiable” wrong is set by the narrator of the book. Human nature hasn’t changed in the last 135 years, however, and one can see the traits of governmental leaders who mislead, cover up and justify wrong doing on display in this account. Some of the Apache people also worked for the white eyes tracking and fighting other Apaches.

While reading this book, I found myself compartmentalizing the information in the story into several categories of knowledge: 1) Primitive living/survival skills, 2) tactical strategies, 3) philosophy/culture of the Apache and 4) Government actions compared against government promises. Obviously some topics intertwine (i.e. primitive living and tactics, or philosophy and government actions.)

Apaches primitive living skills involved emergency kits equivalent to today’s bug-out-bag (BOB), but with much less gear. It was noted that each and every Apache-men, women, and children carried on them at all times an emergency pouch of food, usually containing dried meat and a knife. In addition, they would have a blanket nearby, ready to grab and run in case they were attacked. If possible they would also carry a rifle and ammunition pouch. In a nutshell, their BOB. was essentially dried meat, a knife and a blanket. No fire steel, no matches or

cotton balls dipped in Vaseline, no canteen bottle, stainless cup and water filters, no signal mirror or first aid kit, no axes, saws, machetes or parangs, just three basic items for wilderness survival. Their survival skills were that good.

It is noted that a child went to bed without his food pouch attached to him and in the middle of the night they were attacked and forced to flee. Having not taken his food pouch and blanket caused issues during their bug out. The narrator noted that, *“a knife was an essential part of each one’s equipment”* and that *“Mother had a knife, nothing but a knife. But with a knife, an Apache can survive.”* Knives were used for cutting cacti leaves for medicine to stealthily stalking and taking down a longhorn (by a female Apache name Lozen) while on the run. Lozen is described as having true character and being as good a warrior as the men, if not better than most. There are several interesting stories of her survival and accomplishments.

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The Apache movements around the southwest United States revealed that survival in the desert and plains was much harder than the mountain areas, but they knew their climate and environment for each area. They could navigate skillfully and they adapted to survive. They knew how to make fire by primitive methods, but went without fire when on the run or made small fires they could hide, from very dried wood to reduce smoke (hence the need for the blanket in the cold desert night).

There is no mention of water containers as part of their emergency kit. They knew how to find water even in arid places and the signs to look for. This was to their benefit as the book noted that the “white eye” didn’t know how to look for water, so would typically give up pursuit of the Apaches when the Apaches went to arid regions. This does not imply that a water container was not important to them in those environments; both the American and Mexican cowboys carried canteens and survived in those areas. It appears most of the water collection was held in pottery vessels, but they didn’t like to travel with them because they broke easily. They did make water jugs out of wicker and coat it with pinon gum. It is also known that Apaches cached water and other supplies, which gave them options to avoid visiting known watering holes. Their physical fitness allowed them to travel farther and faster than adversaries often assumed.

Their skills included evasion, camouflage, ambushes, navigation, tracking, raids, camp safety, battle wound first aid, deployment, hunting and foraging. They skillfully used terrain to their benefit when fighting the cavalry, especially narrow canons. Think the Battle of Thermopylae where a small group of Spartans held off a much larger Persian army. The Apache also had strategies around using arroyos (a water carved creek, gully or channel made in an arid region) for camouflage, concealed movement and hiding.

There are parts of their culture, with their religious and philosophical beliefs, to consider. Many of their ideals are valued throughout the world. These principals transcend time and culture (i.e. honesty, bravery, duty, fellowship and commitment, etc.) They talk about their religion and note, “When there is no danger; you forget Ussen, but when you fear for your lives you pray to him. You pay little heed when he tells

you how to live; but when you face death, you remember your religion.” This also sounds like today; mile wide spirituality that is only an inch deep.

The Apache noted that their young men had to spend time on a sacred mountain, praying and fasting before they started their journey on warrior training. They had to be spiritually and mentally prepared before taking on the role of a warrior protecting the tribe. Leaders had to first be good servers before they could be considered as a qualified leader. The Apache also despised the liar, who were shunned in their culture above anything else. It was too dangerous for the tribe to have liars in it. They also didn’t have profanity in their language.

Their thoughts on suffering, persecution and endurance are constructive for anyone. Kaywaykla recounts, “Grandfather impressed upon me that every struggle, whether won or lost, strengthens us for the next to come. It is not good for people to have an easy life. They become weak and inefficient when they cease to struggle. Some need a series of defeats before developing the strength and courage to win a victory.”

In the Days of Victorio is cautionary in its account of how the “men in Washington” deceived the Apache, breaking agreements with parties that relinquished the ability to defend themselves. An Apache leader is quoted as saying, “...a great chief is one who gives most to his people rather than he who steals most from them.” The narrator also asserts that the Apache never experienced hunger or sickness (outside smallpox) until the “white eyes” government forced them to live on the reservations.

My paperback version is marked up with highlighter and margin notes. I enjoyed the book and if you are interested in survival skills or the psychology of perseverance, you will too. ✓

BIO

Kelly Gaeth is Vice President of Commercial Portfolio Risk Management and Credit Analytics in the banking industry. He has spoken nationally at request of the American Bankers Association’s (ABA) and the Office of Comptroller of the Currency (O.C.C.) in Washington D.C. on Business Intelligence and Stress Testing. He lectures on banking, financing, entrepreneurship and reality based disaster planning.



Father and son get their point across during the 1973 Oil Crisis.

OIL, ECONOMIC WARFARE AND AMERICA'S FUTURE

BY: KEVIN D. FREEMAN

Oil has been employed as a potent economic weapon.

In 1973, OPEC launched an embargo to punish America, quadrupling oil prices, triggering a significant stock market drop and raising the specter of “stagflation,” where prices rose even as the economy stagnated.¹ With a single move, the Arab nations seemingly brought a superpower to its knees. Ultimately, the turmoil recorded a bear market loss of 46 percent for the Dow Jones Industrial Average, reordered the global monetary system, increased unemployment by 73.5 percent, caused a 2.6 percent decline in economic activity and raised the inflation rate to 11 percent.² There were, of course, multiple factors at work at the time, but also little doubt that the embargo was not only a

trigger, but also a significant long-term cause of the worst economic turmoil America had faced since the end of the Great Depression.³

Going back a bit further, a U.S.-led oil embargo imposed on the Japanese in 1941 culminated with the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor.⁴ Arab states attempted to use the oil weapon with embargoes in 1956 and 1967. Although less effective, they intended to punish the West through shortages and higher prices.⁵ Usama bin Laden was a big proponent of the oil weapon as a form of economic jihad.⁶ Reportedly, he called for a price of \$144 per barrel in the late 1990s.⁷ That level was briefly surpassed in the summer of 2008.⁸ This seemed unimaginable when

oil prices were \$27 per barrel just before al-Qaeda’s famous September 11, 2001, attacks.⁹ We cannot doubt that enemies of America understand the value of weaponizing oil.

Something altogether different is at work today, but the impact will prove no less potent. Rather than pursuing higher prices and shortages, today’s oil weapon is aimed at collapsing prices through surplus production. Why would Saudi Arabia consider such an effort, knowing it would curtail their own revenues while simultaneously boosting the economies of oil-dependent nations? The answer to this question also lies in history.

The concept is called predatory pricing, where one producer offers something below



“SAUDI ARABIA’S OIL MINISTER TOLD FELLOW OPEC MEMBERS THEY MUST COMBAT THE U.S. SHALE OIL BOOM... AND UNDERMINE THE PROFITABILITY OF NORTH AMERICAN PRODUCERS.”

the cost of production to drive others out of the market. A famous oil-related case involved billionaire John D. Rockefeller. More than a century ago, Rockefeller was accused of forcing out competitors so he could later impose substantially higher prices as a monopoly.¹⁰ Although some disagree with the finding, the U.S. government won its case at the Supreme Court and Rockefeller's Standard Oil was broken into thirty-four smaller independent companies, including behemoth heirs that exist today such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips.¹¹ The concept of accepting losses to hurt competitors became part of the global consciousness. The Reagan administration, in cooperation with the Saudis, reportedly fired this very weapon at the Soviet Union in the 1980s.¹² The result? The decades-long Cold War was won and Mr. Gorbachev's wall was torn down.¹³

Fast-forward a quarter century. Once again oil prices, under the leadership of the Saudis, target Russia. Only this time, the weapon is also pointed at the United States.

The logic of aiming at Russia is simple. From the Saudi perspective, Russia supports Syria and Iran, serious geopolitical rivals and militant threats.¹⁴ In fact, lower oil prices seriously impact Iran directly as well. Iran may require as much as \$140 per barrel to balance its budget.¹⁵ Any shortfall will foment unrest, possibly leading to the toppling of the regime.¹⁶ Given the economic war already underway between Russia and the United States over the Ukraine, Saudi Arabia can demonstrate support of American policy while achieving their own objectives.¹⁷ At the same time, the Saudis hope to reestablish monopoly control by taking out American energy production.¹⁸ This isn't just a theory. It has been openly discussed at a variety of levels.¹⁹ From a November 28, 2014 Reuters news report:

“Saudi Arabia’s oil minister told fellow OPEC members they must combat the U.S. shale oil boom, arguing against cutting crude output in order to depress prices and undermine the profitability of North American producers.”²⁰

THE SHALE REVOLUTION

Something that was totally unimaginable a few years ago happened last year. The United States became the world's largest producer of both oil and natural gas, passing Saudi Arabia and Russia.²¹ This capped a dramatic turnaround after several decades of decline, thanks to enhanced extraction technologies such as horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracking from tight shale formations.²² It also shifted the price curve in some amazing ways. The International Energy Agency estimated that without American shale production, the price of oil would be \$150 per barrel.²³ With 90+ million barrels of oil sold every day globally, the difference between \$50 per barrel and \$150 is of great significance.²⁴ For Russia and OPEC, the combined difference amounts to nearly \$1.5 trillion per year (based on their combined production of over 40 million barrels per day).²⁵ Stop for a moment and consider how significant an additional \$1.5 trillion annual transfer would be for OPEC and Russia, largely funded by the United States and the West. No wonder

economic analysts such as Ron Insana declare, "The fracking revolution must be protected at all costs..."²⁶

The domestic shale industry has some unique attributes, however, making it vulnerable to external price pressures. For one thing, the effort is relatively capital-intensive.²⁷ It has blossomed in a low-interest-rate environment.²⁸ Without access to inexpensive capital, however, oil drilling would stall.²⁹

The second issue is that hydraulic fracking readily stirs up environmental objections.³⁰ This creates the risk that public opinion could turn against the industry. In addition, shale oil production declines rather quickly compared to conventional extraction methods. While a traditional oil well might produce steadily for twenty years or more, a shale-play well provides strong production for about two years before a quick decline. Conventional wells might decline 2 percent per year while shale production can drop by more than 70 percent in the first year alone.³¹ This forces continual drilling to maintain production. So, even though the forecast has been for America to become fully energy independent in the near future, a price decline dramatically alters those hopes.³²

Estimates are that, at present, our domestic shale industry needs about \$70 per barrel to remain healthy.³³ Of course, some fields are less costly than others.³⁴ Current production will continue well below this price, but drilling activity will plummet. We are seeing that already as rig counts have dropped. Operators are already stressed and many could enter bankruptcy. If prices are suppressed for two years, all the recent production gains would be lost. The last time low prices hit a boom like the one we had been experiencing was in the 1980s. It took decades for a recovery, even when prices ultimately rebounded.³⁵

POLITICAL COLLUSION?

On September 11th last year, Secretary of State John Kerry met with Saudi King Abdullah at his palace on the Red Sea.³⁶ While they no doubt discussed Syria, Iran and Russia, they most likely also discussed global oil prices.³⁷ Only a day earlier, September 10, it had been reported that the Saudis were slashing their production to keep oil prices over \$100 per barrel. But, following the meeting with John Kerry, something seemed to shift. On November 23rd, Secretary Kerry reconnected with the Saudi Foreign Minister in Vienna.³⁸

This was just four days before OPEC would make a historic announcement, also in Vienna, that they would not defend prices.³⁹ The sudden shift in position sent prices collapsing. What had been \$100 per barrel just weeks earlier quickly slipped under \$50 and below \$44 by the end of January.⁴⁰

What made the Saudis change their minds so abruptly? They were set to defend prices as they typically had, but soon after meeting with Secretary of State Kerry, they pivoted 180 degrees to focus on maintaining market share, essentially pumping more oil into an already oversupplied market. Everything accelerated in November, immediately after a second discussion with the Secretary of State. It is impossible to imagine that such dramatic changes were not discussed. It appears that

these were strategic decisions made with the awareness and consent of the Obama Administration.

Naturally, this raises a few interesting questions. Did the Obama team collude to lower oil prices in the economic war with Russia? The Russians certainly believe so and have reported as much.⁴¹ Equally important, did they do so with full knowledge that such action would hamper American energy entrepreneurs who are primarily Republican supporters?⁴² This theory may not be far-fetched. In the 1990s, tobacco companies primarily supported Republican candidates.⁴³ Senior Democrats demonized tobacco and launched an organized push to ban its use. These were even called "the tobacco wars."⁴⁴ Is it simply that these figures opposed smoking

OUR DOMESTIC INDUSTRY NEEDS ABOUT \$70 PER BARREL TO REMAIN HEALTHY. WE ARE CURRENTLY BELOW THIS PRICE, AND MANY OPERATORS ARE ALREADY STRESSED AND MAY GO BANKRUPT.



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or was money the higher priority? Given the fact that many of the same key Democrats now support marijuana legalization, the latter appears to be the answer.⁴⁵ Consider that three marijuana joints can cause more lung damage than twenty tobacco cigarettes.⁴⁶ Clearly, it's also about money, politics and the exercise of power.

The same may be said about energy development and the environment. President Obama clearly stated that he opposed the coal industry and openly promised that his policies would bankrupt coal plants.⁴⁷ Having demonstrated antagonism to American hydraulic fracking, is it possible that the Obama administration would support policies that might bankrupt hydraulic fracking as well?⁴⁸ If so, collusion with the Saudis becomes a logical consideration. Even as American oil production has risen during President Obama's time in office, federal opposition has dramatically increased.⁴⁹

Saudi Arabia targets both American shale production and Russia. Russia targets American shale and threatens the Saudis through Iran. America supports the Saudi effort against Russia, but our domestic energy industry is in competition with OPEC and Russia. The Obama administration supports environmental opposition to domestic energy, making strange bedfellows with the Russians. While complicated, it is clear that oil is the primary weapon in play, and American energy independence is clearly in the crosshairs of many.

A NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE

Unfortunately, the issue isn't just about money. It is truly a matter of national security. The unnatural collapse of prices threatens continued domestic drilling by making the effort financially unviable.⁵⁵ It also provides the opportunity for anti-drilling forces to triumph (in America and Western Europe

the oil weapon targeting us, even when it is manifested in low prices for the short term.

Perhaps the issue was best summarized in an editorial by Ron Insana titled, "What the U.S. Should Do to Fight this Oil War."

"The U.S. has lost too many economic wars over the last 50 years, allowing foreign producers to "dump" cheap goods onto world markets to make U.S. energy companies, textile-makers and auto-manufacturers suffer near-death experiences.

The U.S. is on the edge of energy freedom ... freedom from nations who use oil money to finance aggression, like Russia ... to finance terror; like many in the Middle East, most recently the Islamic State and freedom from indebtedness that may one day become quite burdensome, if not cataclysmic.

If this is the war to end all oil wars, the U.S. should use every means at its disposal to win...."

HOW DO WE WIN?

First, we need superior economic intelligence. We need to know precisely how long our shale industry can survive with low prices. Equally important, we need to know how long the Russians and Saudis can sustain their budgets with depressed revenues. In addition, the American people need to be educated about the importance of a strong and sustainable energy industry. Political winds can shift quickly and we can't afford to see the promise of energy independence die from the apathy of low prices or contrived environmental activism and regulatory campaigns.

Next, we should support efforts to lower the cost of production domestically. One good example is AERA, the American Energy Renaissance Act sponsored by Congressman Jim Bridenstine of Oklahoma and Senator Ted Cruz of Texas. This legislation would reduce stifling regulation, support the development of pipelines and adopt other measures that could help domestic producers compete effectively.

Another time-tested solution to predatory pricing is to buy up any essential product that's dumped on the markets below the cost of production if it is also below the long-term expected price. As a nation, we already have a Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) used to store oil for emergencies.⁶⁰ We could increase our holdings dramatically through open-market purchases at these depressed prices, issuing 30-year Treasury bonds and backing

RUSSIA HAS JOINED OPEC'S INITIATIVE TO STOP THE AMERICAN ENERGY RENAISSANCE. FORMER SENIOR KGB OFFICERS REPORTED THAT THEY WERE DIRECTED TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST GROUPS IN ORDER TO HAMPER AMERICAN PRODUCTIVITY.

Ironically, Russia has joined OPEC's initiative to stop the American energy renaissance. Former senior KGB officers reported that they were directed to support environmental activist groups in order to hamper American productivity.⁵⁰ Anders Rasmussen, former Secretary General of NATO, stated that former KGB Lieutenant Colonel (and current Russian President) Vladimir Putin has been funding anti-fracking efforts globally.⁵¹ Russian energy companies have likewise been pushing money into the American "green movement" with hopes of undermining energy production.⁵² Even the Chinese strategy document "Unrestricted Warfare" advocates "environmental warfare" and "regulatory warfare" to constrain the United States. It's deeply concerning to note that anti-fracking efforts have prevented energy production in multiple states and even in Denton, Texas.⁵³ Why do you think the United Arab Emirates funded Matt Damon's anti-fracking movie?⁵⁴

This has created a triangle of sorts.

only, of course) amid public apathy. Are we seeing evidence of this as President Obama proposes banning oil exploration in a large part of Alaska?⁵⁶ Without fracking, oil prices would be \$150 per barrel and OPEC projects \$200 per barrel before long.⁵⁷ The West can't afford the enormous wealth transfer that would ultimately occur to potentially hostile areas. To put this in context, our entire defense budget is about \$600 billion per year.⁵⁸ Since OPEC and Russia together produce close to 15 billion barrels of oil per year, \$200 per barrel would provide them a combined \$3 trillion. That does not take into account how losses in our economy will ultimately force military cuts.

Low oil prices are beneficial for our economy. Artificially low prices from competitors can destroy our own energy industry. Former Director of Central Intelligence, Jim Woolsey, warns that without aggressive domestic energy production, we will again be "funding both sides of the war on terror."⁵⁹ We must be on our guard against

them with the new oil asset. Assuming that oil prices will at one point exceed the current price plus the interest rate (currently under 2.5 percent) and the cost of long-term storage, such a move would not only stabilize prices, but could also prove quite profitable. As an example, the nearly 700 million barrels stored at the SPR cost an average of \$29.70 per barrel, demonstrating the economic benefits available.⁶¹ Is there any doubt that oil prices will, at some point in the next thirty years, far exceed the current level?

Another idea would be to open more federal lands for energy production, especially those that can be developed at lower cost. This

would ensure that drilling activity remains at high levels for the foreseeable future. It is estimated that the amount of recoverable energy on federal lands is almost 1.2 trillion barrels of oil and over two quadrillion cubic feet of natural gas.⁶² Even at \$50 per barrel, the oil resources alone would be valued at about \$60 trillion, more than three times our current stated national debt.⁶³ Yet, despite this, the government leases only about 2 percent of federal offshore areas and less than 6 percent of federal onshore lands.⁶⁴

There are multiple solutions and we will likely need to combine several to be effective. Unfortunately, mainstream reporting on the

subject is typically superficial and there is general ignorance surrounding the problem. Based on the actions of the Russians and Saudis, however, the conclusion is obvious. Oil is a weapon and this is a matter of national security and long-term survival. ✓

BIO

Kevin Freeman (CFA) is the author of Secret Weapon: How Economic Terrorism Brought Down the U.S. Stock Market (www.secretweapon.org) and Game Plan: Your Secret Weapon to Protect Yourself From Economic Attack (Regnery, 2014). He authors the blog: www.globaleconomicwarfare.com

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WHAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN ABOUT HEAD INJURIES

BY: CHRIS CASSELL

After the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the global medical community has learned a lot about extremity trauma and head trauma.

With military members sometimes coming back from deployments with short term memory loss or even fragmentation wounds that took bone away, we have come to rapidly diagnose, treat and save hundreds of lives through trial and error. This was done at a pace that research and empirical medicine could not keep up with. It was treated as you go: "Try this, oh that didn't work, try that. Not sure, but we will figure it out..." And we did. War seems to have that effect. I don't have the ability to make anyone a brain surgeon or neuroscientist, but you should be aware of an injury that can go from bad to deadly.

Most literature presented on this subject begins with treatments, but I have found a simple, yet obscure step is missing: establishing a baseline with anyone who could be exposed to a head injury. This can encompass a lot of people, but I will try to narrow down the list so it's a little more manageable. Prime examples of people likely facing brain injuries are military combatants, impact athletes (such

as football, soccer and rugby players) and individuals camping, hiking and rock climbing. Anyone involved in a vehicle crash may be at risk.

If you get hit with a tennis ball, you should be fine, but the baseline is the most important aspect to closed head trauma. When I talk about closed head trauma it is important to understand there is no life, limb or eyesight at risk here. It is more represented by concussions and periods of unconsciousness. It should be noted that when bleeding or airway is compromised then all other injuries are insignificant until those two are dealt with and managed.

A baseline is easy to establish if you have known someone for a little while. By simply seeing, hearing and watching abnormal behavior you can establish if something is wrong. Military divers have a similar test when a diver comes to the surface. A neurological exam is conducted in less than 10 minutes. This 10-minute time limit is necessary as it relates to the injury. However, the key factor

here is establishing a baseline which is done in the dive brief through questions and answers and through knowledge of medical history and knowing one's dive team. If you have ever had observation training the key to being successful is having an established baseline and then when you recognize an anomaly it appears to be obvious. The same applies to concussion recognition and unconscious head trauma. The next point is how to establish a good baseline of questions and then questions or observations that draw out the anomalies.

Emergency room and hospital medicine routinely use what is referred to as the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). The GCS measures a person's functioning primarily in three specific areas.

The ability to speak

The ability to open their eyes

The ability to move

The problem with this method is it relies on clinical-based support. The hospital can then provide care for whatever the problem turns out to be. A doctor will assess these

three areas and rate a patient's responses. Five points are the maximum for each task. Once complete, the patient has a potential to get a score up to a total of 15. After this, the doctor will then go by protocol. Essentially, if a patient scores an 8 or less this means the person is so unconscious that they would need an Endotracheal Tube (ET) to breathe. A score of 13 and higher may indicate a mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and a 9 through 12 would indicate a moderate TBI.

This form of evaluation does not give any credence to the baseline anomaly theory because there is no need or time. Emergency rooms deal with the unexpected and unknown, therefore they cannot poll the population for a baseline; that would be like asking if everyone was "normal." We will see later that when questioning your friends or team members, normal is very much a subjective criterion. The military tried using a program that all deploying members were supposed to go through and test prior to deployment. First, it was the Predeployment Health Physical Assessment, then it was a computer program under the acronym ANAM. Both seem to have been failures in data production.

I believe the most viable tool is a MACE examination developed by the Defense and Brain Injury Center. It can be found in many forms on the internet and is a good tool to have.

<http://www.pdhealth.mil/downloads/mace.pdf>

How to use it is where things will differ and get easier to understand now. First, let's look at levels of head injuries.

Mild: The person was not unconscious or was unconscious for less than 30 minutes. If there was memory loss that lasted less than a day. If they are able to speak to you, answer you and move on command.

Moderate: If the person was unconscious for greater than 30 minutes and up to a day. If there was memory loss lasting anywhere from a day to a week. This person may not be able to answer or understand the questions that are asked.

Severe: If the person was unconscious for more than 24 hours or found unconscious and the time was unknown. If their memory loss lasted more than 7 days. This person may not be conscious for very long.

Early on, there would be some tests that were given post blast or injury, but ironically, no test results to compare them to. This is where the MACE exam becomes a key instrument. If

you know of anyone in a high risk situation or even close friends or family members, you can use this simple checklist and file it away in a medical record or personal file for later use. Essentially the MACE is a checklist that is broken into 13 sections of questions and tests. Take time to look at it, print it and use it when everything is "normal." This allows for a baseline to be established so that when an injury does occur and the test is given again, any anomalies will hopefully be obvious.

While all these tests are useful and well thought out, you can also use intuition. While not a medical term and often thought of as not very scientific, it can help in an emergency. Ask your friend simple questions such as: what year it is, what his parents' names are and then ask them to remember three items at random: *Couch, Red Ball, House Phone*.... With these tasks you can assess long term memory and short term memory. Lastly, look at the person's eyes and how their facial features appear. Evaluate muscle tone, smiles, terseness and tense facial expressions. Lastly, simply ask them how they feel. A person with a mild or severe head injury will often be angry or frustrated. This comes from not being able to recall or remember simple things. This anger and frustration cannot be identified unless you have a baseline to go from. I have some angry friends who, given this assessment, would be false positives.

As for treating head injuries, it is almost always necessary to seek professional medical advice, but in the event you are unable to reach advanced medical care then keep in mind a few simple steps: Treat any life threats first and manage specific symptoms such as airway. Do not leave the injured person alone for the first 24 hours and they should not go to sleep or nap after the injury for at least six hours. If this is not possible, then have someone watch over them the whole time. Small bleeds can slowly get worse and are often precipitated by excruciating headaches that will not go away and almost always get worse with time. Repeat the MACE exam as needed and looking for anomalies base off the baseline exam.

There are a few red flags that require immediate medical attention:

- In and out of consciousness
- Pupils are abnormally different (some people have different pupils, so you need a baseline)
- Seizures
- Repeated vomiting
- Double vision (unless they had glasses

that were blown off or lost)

- Cannot recognize people. Disoriented to place.
- Any of these symptoms almost certainly identifies a problem that will require surgical intervention or medications to help the injured person recover.

When looking at the long term outcome, the medical community has a lot to learn and there are sometimes more questions than answers. As for concussions, they can seem

WIKIPEDIA / PATRICK LYNCH-VALE



Even if a person has no outward signs of damage such as bleeding, head injuries (concussion shown here), require diligent observation and testing.

simple. Even Muhammed Ali thought that, but now suffers greatly from a condition known as *Parkinson's*. There are many pro football players who have been diagnosed and now treated successfully for mild, moderate and severe TBI's and as I write this, I am still going through therapy myself. The treatments and successes will become greater as time and experimentation march onward, but the evaluation and proper identification of these issues are the initial steps. To find an anomaly, you must have a baseline. Identifying TBIs are no different. ✓

BIO

Christopher Cassell is a U.S. Navy Special Operations Independent Duty Corpsman (SOIDC) and works as an independent contractor teaching tactical medicine for U.S. government agencies. He has experienced multiple combat deployments providing medical and tactical team support with Marine Reconnaissance units.

A map is a graphic representation of the earth's surface, typically as seen from above.

The most common maps used in military operations are topographical maps with the military grid reference system (MGRS) superimposed and scaled. Road maps and road atlases are the most commonly used maps for civilians on a daily basis. The U.S. Forestry Service publishes visitor, motor vehicle, topographical and specialty maps widely used by hikers, adventure racers and orienteering clubs. When used in conjunction with a protractor and a good military lensatic compass or a quality commercial compass, accurate cross country navigation can be easy if you have the right skills. Small wrist compasses and concealable mini compasses will not be of much value for precise navigation. "You get what you pay for" is often true with compasses.

Regardless of the type of map used, you will need to spend time following some simple steps: read the marginal information (printed on the map), look at the terrain features, determine your location/starting point and objective or destination, orient your map,

determine the necessary grids and determine the necessary azimuths and distances. Ensuring these fundamentals will save you a ton of time and headache on the tail end from being lost or missing hit times.

I'd like to start with what I see as one of the best general purpose maps, the topographical map.

MARGINAL INFORMATION:

In the margin of the map you will find what are essentially the instructions on how to read the map, to include the meaning of all the symbols.

Sheet name: located generally in bold in the top center or lower left margin.

Sheet number: located in either upper right or lower left margin. It will tell you other maps, overlays orders or plans associated with this map.

Bar Scales: located in the center margin, will help you convert map distance to ground distance.

Contour interval note: Typically located below the bar scales, will help you estimate elevation and vertical distance.

Adjoining sheets diagram: Is a diagram to demonstrate how to join this map to other maps to cover a large area.

Elevation guide: typically in the lower right margin, it is a miniature characterization of the terrain showing elevation and drainage.

Declination diagram: located in the lower margin indicates the angular deviation between the 3 Norths; true, grid and magnetic.

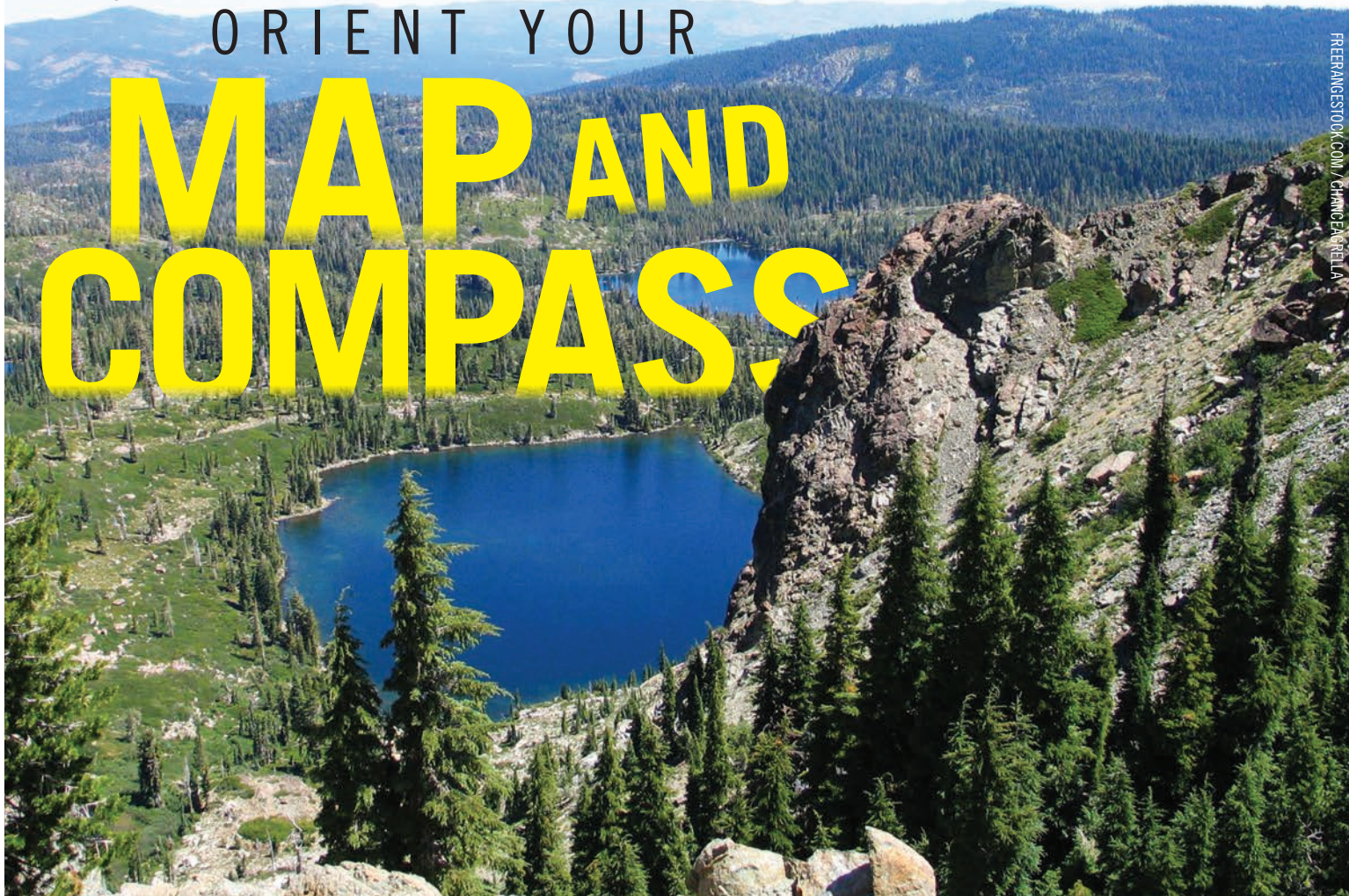
Grid reference box: located in the lower margin, this contains instructions on how to use the grid reference system.

Legend: Located in the lower left, it illustrates and identifies typographic symbols such as mines, roads, churches, cemeteries, etc.

The colors of different features are also significant information to have while navigating. Some of the colors typically used are black, red-brown, blue, green, brown and red. Keep in mind that other colors may be

BY: ERIC LEID

ORIENT YOUR MAP AND COMPASS



FRERANGESTOCK.COM / CHANCEGRIFFIN



TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPS ARE EXTREMELY USEFUL WHEN TRAVERSING THE LAND, DETAILING HILLS, VALLEYS, WATER FEATURES AND OTHER OBSTACLES.

left: Silva Expedition.
right: military-style lensatic compass.

used for special information. Again, refer back to your marginal information. (Caution: some maps use colors to code different meanings than others do.) Here is the standard: Black: indicates man-made features such as buildings, roads and spot elevations.

Red-brown: identify relief features, elevation and contour lines.

Blue: identifies water features such as rivers, streams, lakes, swamps and drainage.

Green: identifies vegetation such as woods, forests and orchards.

Brown: identifies relief features, elevation and contours on older maps. On modern maps it represents cultivated land.

Red: classifies populated areas, main roads and boundaries on older maps.

TERRAIN FEATURES:

In order to orient your map or navigate by terrain association, you'll need to be able to recognize terrain features. The five major terrain features are hills, valleys, ridges, saddles and depressions. The three minor terrain features are draws, spurs and cliffs. Supplementary terrain features are cuts and fills.

Hill: are represented by rings of concentric

circles on your map. A hill looks like the knuckle of your fist.

Valley: they are the low ground depicted as a U and usually contain a stream or river. You can visualize a valley as the palm of your open hand.

Ridge: a ridge is a series of connected hills. You can visualize this as the four knuckles of your fist.

Saddle: saddle is the low ground between two hills, like the space between two knuckles.

Depression: depressions are represented similar to a hill, but with tick marks pointing toward the low ground.

Draws: are depicted as a series of vees running toward the low ground. You can visualize by making a fist and looking at the space between your fingers running down from the saddle between your knuckles.

Spurs: the high ground between two draws. You can visualize by making a fist and looking at your fingers running down from your knuckles.

Cliff: cliffs are depicted by contour lines drawn close together. A steep cliff may appear to be a very thick black line.

Cuts and fills: typically seen with railroad tracks, cuts are earth that has been excavated

to allow a path and a fill is earth that has been built up as a platform. Cuts have tick marks facing in, where fills have cut marks facing out.

Terrain features are normally found in groups. Spend some time studying your map to become familiar with them and remember, rarely will two of the same terrain features look identical.

USE A COMPASS

Now that you're acquainted with the marginal information and terrain features, you have enough information to determine your location. By relating the two dimensional features on the map to the three dimensional features you see around you, you should be able to determine roughly where you are. For example: you might see an east/west running river about 50 meters wide immediately to your south, a distinct twin peaked hill 100 meters to your west and a 200 foot tall antenna 600 meters to the north.

To navigate, you will need to orient your map. Besides using the terrain association method mentioned above, you will get the best results by using a compass. The two I have found to be the most commonly used are military lensatic compasses and the

commercially available compasses for hiking from Silva. In either case, to ensure you have your map oriented correctly:

Place the straight edge of the compass along a north/south running grid line of your map, with the top of the compass pointing toward the top of the map.

Rotate the map and compass together until the compass points north. This is most practically done by turning your entire body around while holding the map and compass.

USE A PROTRACTOR

To get more precise, you can use another tool that is relatively inexpensive: a protractor. A protractor is a square, circle or triangle that is usually constructed of transparent plastic and is used for measuring angles in degrees. My personal favorite was always one sold by "Ranger Joe's" outside of Ft. Benning, Ga. It was durable, easy to read and the different scales were cut at precise, sharp angles (a lot of issued protractors were sloppily cut making accurate use difficult). You will need to use the appropriate scale on your protractor for the scale of your map, which again would be found in the marginal information. For our purposes here, we will use the standard military 1/50,000 scale map. A grid map has vertical and horizontal lines. On an MGRS map these lines form squares that form 1,000 meter squares called *grid squares*. These grid squares are numbered along the outside edge of the map. Using your protractor over a grid square, you can break that 1,000 meter, four digit square into six digit (for 100m precision), eight digit (10m) grids or even 10 digit (1m) grids.

To determine your four digit grid, start at the bottom left (southwest) corner of a grid square. Reading the numbers on the outside edge of the map, read "right and up," so if the north/south running grid line is on 01 and the east/west running grid line is on 80, your 4 digit grid is 0180.

To determine your six digit grid, you start at the bottom left corner of your grid square (0180 for example.) Place your protractor's 1/50,000 scale on top of that grid square. Now you have another set of numbers to further break down that four digit grid. You will add another number to the first half and another number to the second half, so now your location will have six numbers instead of four. For example, 0180 becomes 012802.

We can also use our protractor to plot our direction or find an *azimuth*

to get us where we need to go.

Plot the location you are starting from and where you want to go by lightly placing a dot with a pen, pencil or map marker.

Make the line long enough to cross the scale on the protractor.

Your protractor has a set of crosshairs in the center. Place that crosshair on the dot marking your location or starting point.

Ensure the protractor is squarely on the map by checking its straight edges with your map grid lines and then find the number where the line you drew intersects the numbers in degrees along the outside of the protractor.

You can break up a long route into multiple shorter legs (to simplify or improve navigation) and navigate to *attack points* (easily identified features) near your destination. For example, if I am navigating 800 meters to a buried cache there is a lot of room for error. If I break the route into shorter legs and have noticed on my map that there is a distinct river fork 30 meters from my destination, navigating to that obvious fork then adding one additional, precise, 30 meter leg to get to the cache may be most practical.

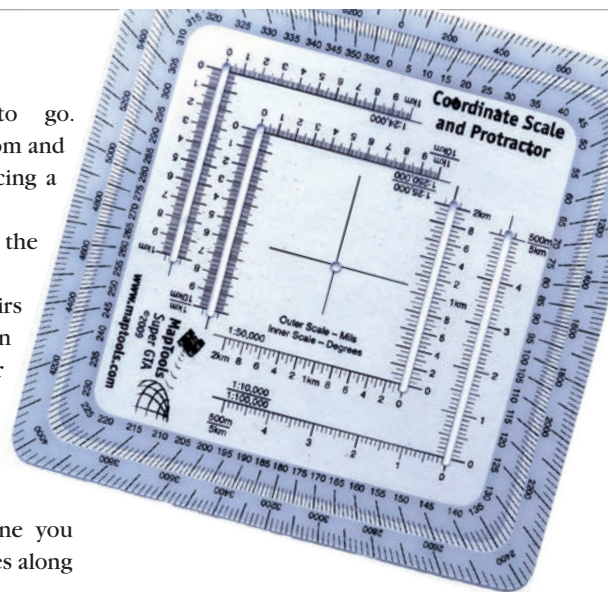
Note: if you are like me and hate marking up your map, simply mark your starting point and end point, place your protractor down squarely and use a straight edge like a 3x5 card as your line to find your azimuth.

ALSO

Remember that there will be varying degrees of difference between grid north, true north and magnetic north. Compass needles actually point to magnetic north, which is close to true north, but not exact and this is where we must go back to the declination diagram in our map's marginal information. This changes based on your location in the world (even across the USA.)

The angular difference between grid north and magnetic north is called the G-M angle. The declination diagram will show what the G-M angle is and how to make the conversion. For example, the diagram may say "to convert a magnetic azimuth to a grid azimuth ADD G-M angle" or to convert a grid azimuth to a magnetic azimuth SUBTRACT G-M angle. Failing to do this can create enough inaccuracy to miss the point you are trying to navigate to.

While the above information is most pertinent to military style, topographical maps, much of the same information also



USE A PROTRACTOR FOR MORE PRECISE MAP ORIENTATION.

applies to other commonly used maps such as forestry service maps, road maps and city maps.

Like military topographical maps, you'll see simpler, user-friendly versions of the marginal information. Also, you'll see a simplified version of the grid system, typically with a number system running North-South, and a letter running East-West. No matter what map being used, remember that the fundamentals of map reading do not change; read the marginal information (printed on the map), look at the terrain features, determine your location/starting point and objective or destination, orient your map, determine the necessary grids and determine the necessary azimuths and distances.

Navigating with a map and compass is a basic field skill. GPS is a valuable tool, but they don't always work. Sometimes they can't access enough satellites to give accurate data. Sometimes batteries die. Sometimes electronics get ruined by moisture. Anyone serious about being able to navigate on their own has to practice map and compass use and these skills begin with orienting the map and compass. Teaching someone else to do this is a great refresher once you have acquired this skill. ✓

BIO

Eric Leid has more than 25 years of experience as a U.S. Marine, paratrooper, Ranger Instructor and police officer. Currently, Mr. Leid works as an independent contractor providing training and "operational support" to U.S. Government agencies in high-threat zones.



SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

THE ELUSIVE KEY TO SURVIVAL

BY: KEVIN REEVE

I have spent a fair amount of time over the past several years trying to define and refine my understanding of the term, “Situational Awareness.”

I define situational awareness as “paying attention to what is going on around you.” How is that for practical? It’s more complex than that, but the basic definition is the ability to scan the environment and sense danger, challenges and opportunities, while still conducting normal activities. It often pays the biggest dividends to pay attention to your surroundings while not *appearing* to be paying attention.

Awareness is a choice. One has to choose to pay attention. Once that choice

is made, the part of the brain responsible for monitoring the senses, known as the Reticular Activating System (RAS) takes over. It switches filters on and off that will fulfill your subconscious desire to pay attention. By simply telling yourself to pay attention to certain things, the RAS will scan for and acknowledge those things when it encounters them.

When we considered buying a car, on our way to the dealer, I did not notice any white minivans. At the dealer we decided on a

white minivan. On the way home I noticed dozens of white minivans. Why? Because the RAS had flipped the switch to scan for white minivans. When I was first learning to track (of course I am always learning to track) I programmed the RAS to look for footprints and now I see them everywhere. It drives my friends and family crazy when I point them out in movies. In *Cast Away*, Tom Hanks was supposed to be on a deserted island, but I see the tracks of the movie crew all over the beach.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR AWARENESS

I have found three main obstacles to developing awareness. To understand these obstacles, let's define the most basic tenet of awareness: *baseline*. The concept of baseline depends upon awareness that our environment has a baseline, a homeostatic state of what things look like, sound like, and feel like when nothing much is going on.

In the woods, this is reflective of the noise and activity level of the area when nothing much is happening. The normal state. For example, in the late afternoon, things are quiet and serene. The baseline is flat and seldom varies. As we move into evening, the baseline fluctuates. Night feeding animals are coming out, while day feeders are seeking shelter for the night. While there is an increase in noise and activity, this increased activity is still the norm. It is louder and yet still within the realm of normal for this situation. Suddenly, a predator appears. All the prey animals react. Alarm calls go out, and the noise level suddenly spikes. This is sometimes referred to as a "concentric ring of disturbance" because it radiates out from the source. Like a stone tossed into a still pond, the rings indicate the location and intensity of the disturbance, and the exact presence of the predator.

In the city, each neighborhood has its own baseline. In one area, people move at a certain pace, talk at a certain volume, stand at a certain socially acceptable distance from one another and gesture in a certain way. This combination of noise, activity and social preferences constitutes that area's baseline. Depending on cultural or ethnic norms, it will be different in various neighborhoods.

Being able to develop awareness is dependent upon first knowing the baseline for the area you are in and recognizing any variations from the baseline. These changes in baseline are learned from observation. One can only recognize disturbances to the baseline if one is first familiar with the baseline. One can benefit from the ability to read what threats and opportunities are indicated by those disturbances.

In the woods, spikes in baseline are the indicator of a predator. That may be true in the city as well, but we call them pre-incident indicators. The variation from the baseline indicates the start of an event that is *not* baseline. It may be a predator, an accident or a natural occurrence.



OLEG VOLK - WWW.A-HUMAN-RIGHT.COM

DISTURBANCES TO THE BASELINE RADIATE OUT IN A CONCENTRIC CIRCLE. FAIL TO NOTICE THE CIRCLE, AND YOU MAY WIND UP IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

I can recall watching an elderly woman fall in a crosswalk. There was a palpable disturbance. People circled around her, traffic stopped and the rings of the disturbance radiated out. Soon, an ambulance arrived. More disturbance to the baseline. It now radiated out farther as traffic backed up and a crowd gathered. I was on the top floor of a parking garage. I called 911 and then watched it all unfold.

On another occasion, I was in a crowded ballroom for an event. I started noticing "pre-incident indicators." First, there was a spike in the noise level. Soon, people were shouting. The people around me were standing on their toes to see what was happening. I could tell the direction of the disturbance because of where people were looking. Now the inclination was for me to look to see what was going on across the room, but I resisted the urge. Instead, I moved toward an exit. Sure enough, a fight had broken out. I do not know what precipitated it, but the crowd suddenly surged away from the source of the disturbance. Concentric rings radiated out. Tables were knocked over, adding to the rapidly developing chaos. I was now in a position to remove myself from the melee.

Think through how these reactions benefit

or hinder people at the scene of active-shooter incidents. Terrorist attacks often exploit the reactions of the untrained with a secondary, larger explosive device targeting gawkers drawn to an initial explosion as well as first responders professionally required to move to the incident.

Monitoring the baseline requires knowledge of the environment. The more detailed and specific your knowledge of predator behavior, the more accurately you can read situations. This requires one to see well beyond normal sight. For example, an aware person will notice things others may miss: a youth in a hoodie across the street whose movements mimic yours; a dumpster set in such a way that requires you to pass close by it. These can be threats or potential threats. It can be a pre-incident indicator or it can be the event unfolding. If you are monitoring and observing the baseline, you will be warned. However, you must constantly monitor and assess. Over time, this becomes an almost background activity, requiring little conscious thought. I developed the skill over time by setting aside a block of time 15 minutes at first in a public place to see how many indicators I could observe. The RAS took over, and soon I was seeing things I had previously missed.

THREE BARRIERS TO SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

The first barrier to awareness is a failure to monitor the baseline. If you are not monitoring the baseline, you will miss the presence of predators or events that can cause a disturbance. Any unusual occurrence from a car accident to a street fight can create a concentric ring. One of the keys to personal security is learning to look for and recognize these disturbances. Some disturbances are dangerous, while others are just entertaining. Even the quiet surveillance that precedes an attack creates a disturbance to the baseline. The less skilled the personnel doing the surveillance, the greater the disturbance there is to be noticed by anyone paying attention.

Interpersonal interaction is also worthy of some attention. Discreetly observing several different couples interacting in a restaurant can give you great practice in observing baseline.

FOCUS LOCK IS WHEN SOMEONE IS SO ENGAGED IN A FORM OF DISTRACTION THAT HE MISSES ALL OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL STIMULI. PEOPLE TEXTING WHILE WALKING IS A FINE EXAMPLE.

EIAl airlines famously uses interviewers and observers to look for variations to baseline in the passengers waiting to board their planes. They look for people whose stories don't match their demeanor and behavior.

The second barrier to awareness is "normalcy bias." Even though we may sense a concentric ring that could be alerting us to danger, many times we will ignore the alert due to the desire for it not to be a danger. We want things to be OK and consequently, we do not accept that the stimulus we are receiving represents a threat. We have a bias toward the status quo. This is a rationalization for assuming nothing will happen because there was a time when similar evidence was present previously and nothing happened. Quite often, the truth is that the result the evidence foretold simply hasn't happened yet.

I have a few friends with a strong bias for action. "Bias for action" means not waiting

until there is an obvious drama to react to. It is recognizing the subtleties of a situation unfolding before a more significant event is manifest. For example, before a fight breaks out or before a crowd becomes unruly. It is a strong bias to act and not be acted upon. Depending on your actions, it can be risky if your instincts are off, but if your awareness is high, you may anticipate and act before things get out of hand. It is a form of preemptive behavior.

A close friend described a guy in his platoon who had the uncanny ability to sense pre-incident indicators while on patrol. His fellow team members knew when he tightened the strap on his helmet, to get ready. He was eerily accurate. They called him Radar after the 1970s TV M*A*S*H character.

The third interrupter of awareness is what we consider "focus lock." This is some form of distraction that is so engaging that it focuses all of our awareness on one thing—the lock—and by default blocks all the other stimulus in our environment. You see this when someone is texting and walks into a fountain. The smart phone is the single most effective focus lock ever invented. It robs us of our awareness in times and places where it is needed most; like driving or monitoring an outdoor environment.

Jerry, a close friend, tells of a training situation where he used an intentional focus lock to draw and hold everyone's attention so he could conduct another operation unnoticed. With a group of SF soldiers sitting in the bleachers at a track, he arranged an attractive female to run past. As expected, every head turned and followed her. He was able to plant and detonate a loud explosive device directly under the bleacher with no one observing him. They were suitably embarrassed at how easily they were distracted. This is the magician's tool for misdirecting attention to what he wants you to believe is relevant rather than what *is* relevant. This is utilized in ATM robberies, kidnappings and other crimes. It is also common in competent military ambushes.

FOUR MUSTS FOR AWARENESS:

Monitor the baseline. At first, this will require conscious effort, but with practice I find that I can monitor the baseline subconsciously.

Fight normalcy bias. This requires you to be slightly paranoid for a while as you practice and develop your ability. Look

at every disturbance to the baseline as a potential threat. This will allow you to stop ignoring or discounting concentric rings and begin making assessments of the actual risk. Just because others aren't reacting (even authority figures) this doesn't mean you are wrong. This is a skill that could save your life.

Avoid using the obvious focus locks in transition areas like headphones, smart phones or even an intense conversation with the person walking with you. It is okay to text while you are sitting at your desk or lying in bed, but it is reckless to text as you walk from your office through the parking garage.

Create the habit of reevaluating and resetting your vigilance on a regular interval. If you were stepping off on a patrol in Iraq how alert would you be? If you were stepping off on your 100th exhausting, but tedious patrol and nothing had happened on any of them, how vigilant might you be at that point? Could you remind yourself that enemy contact was entirely possible in the next five seconds even if it hadn't occurred in the last 50,000 minutes?

Any time you are drawn to a concentric ring event, do a quick assessment of that ring then stop looking at it (the event) and scan the rest of your environment to see what you are missing. Developing awareness is a choice because it is a skill which can be practiced and honed. At first you may feel awkward and self-conscious, but with practice, it will become seamless and subconscious. You will start to pick up on more and more subtle rings of disturbance and more complex stimuli. Eventually, people may think you are psychic as they try to explain how you sense events before they realize that they are happening. In reality, you will have developed a skill set long used by indigenous people for survival, but mostly dormant in modern man. ✓

BIO

Kevin Reeve is the founder and Director of on Point Tactical Tracking School (www.onpointtactical.com). Kevin has provided training to law enforcement, SAR teams and the U.S. military in the arts of tracking, survival, escape and evasion and urban operations. Kevin also worked at Apple Computer for five years doing organizational development and executive coaching, as well as platform training and curriculum development.

Whether you are facing a platoon of AK-47 wielding communists, facing the challenges of providing for your family, or looking for the courage to speak an unpopular truth, there are times when each of us can use a little inspiration. Sometimes it helps to put your challenges in perspective. Sometimes it's encouraging to see how selfless human beings can be. -Editor

CAPT. ALTON G. GRAHAM

Alton Graham was born in rural South Alabama on the 8th of September, 1941.

Just three months later, the United States felt indignation at the Imperial Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and Hitler's conquest of Europe. The nation was mobilized and locked in combat with the Axis forces. The United States was a powerhouse of productivity and Americans unquestionably wanted to win, but the outcome of the war was far from certain. Ultimately, our grandfathers beat down those two regimes and later rescued South Korea from a communist invasion from the North.

The boy from Alabama dreamed of flying airplanes and set out to become a pilot. He enrolled in the U.S. Marine Corps MarCad program. With an associate degree, he went to flight school. Upon graduation he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He learned to fly the F-8 Crusader and deployed to Vietnam to fly combat missions against the communists. He and approximately 1.5 million other Americans risked their lives battling to free South Vietnam from socialist enslavement by the North Vietnamese Army. They fought as bravely as any generation of Americans, but with deficient leadership, failed to win the war. They did, however, deter and slow the spread of totalitarian and authoritarian governance around the world and serve as an inspiration to each of us who stand for liberty. Not one more drop of American blood need be shed for us to learn from their experience that we will be most severely challenged (as individuals and as a nation) when we are psychologically and skillfully unprepared to face adversity.

Capt. Alton G. Graham showed me what it is to be an adult and on the 22nd of April, 2015, he drew his last breath. I miss you, Dad.

With Love,
Chris Graham

Editor, *The Journal of Tactics and Preparedness*
www.chrisgrabamauthor.com



Alton Graham and 1.5 million other Americans risked their lives battling to free South Vietnam from socialist enslavement by the North Vietnamese Army.

Capt. Al Graham and Capt. Chuck Douglas, VMF-232 F-8 Crusader pilots (1969). Photo courtesy of Capt. Douglas.