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Ambushes are of special concern to preppers and survivalists because, in a crisis, there may be looting bands that prey on others in order to sustain themselves. If worse comes to worst and a total break-down of law and order occurs, criminal elements will have an almost free hand to victimize others. Surviving an ambush will certainly not be an easy task, but these strategies should give you an idea on how to prepare and what to expect.

Surviving an ambush is the reason many preppers and survivalists prepare by stockpiling firearms and ammunition. To them, firearms mean not only a means of gathering food but also a method for personal defence.

Some survivalists foresee the need to defend their survival retreat sites against attack by criminal bands. These survivalists employ various methods to fortify their refuges, such as strengthening walls, clearing fields of fire, installing alarm systems, and rehearsing defence plans with members of their groups. Such defensive steps are worthwhile, whether the survivalist plans to stay put during a crisis, or to flee to a previously prepared survival site.

These preparations don't cover all the bases, however, because, sooner or later, some movement and travel will be necessary.

Examine three possibilities to determine how and why people travel, which gives marauders the opportunity for an ambush, becomes necessary:

1. The first case is the survivalists who take refuge in a bomb shelter or bunker during a nuclear attack. Despite the most extensive preparations, they plan to come up out of their shelter

sooner or later to rebuild their lives. To do so, they must scout the area to assess the extent of the damage, forage for supplies, perhaps contact other survivors, and start growing food. This necessary exposure lays them open to ambush.

2. The next case is that of the survivalist who has prepared a refuge in an isolated spot. To use it, he must travel to said retreat. Unless he's taken a very long view and moved there before the crisis, he'll face the problem of travel after it hits, and an unfortunate encounter with a criminal band might cut his trip short.
3. The third case is that of a survivalist who plans to stay put, because at home he has all of his resources and supplies, without the work and risk of transporting the necessities to a remote site. The crisis, although serious, does not result in extensive destruction, as in a nuclear attack, but instead is a relatively low-grade threat, such as a national political breakdown, with little loss of life, but total disappearance of law and order.

Even if this survivalist has persuaded his neighbours to join him in a survival group, and to pool their resources, there still will be the need for reconnaissance and foraging, as well as security patrols to forestall attacks.

From this, it can be seen that any plans to build a survival site, wall it in and roof it over, are unrealistic. Because even the most dedicated survivalist isn't spending the rest of his life in a bunker.

Threats

Even in normal times, there exists a criminal element on the streets. At best, the police are barely able to cope with it. Additionally, there are hundreds of thousands of criminals serving prison sentences. The most significant fact about these prisoners is that they are almost all "hard cases," the serious offenders.

With the overcrowding in U.S. penal institutions, prison administrators have been forced to grant early release and parole to less serious cases. There's little prison space to waste on minor offenders, such as drunk drivers and shoplifters. It's safe to say that only the most dangerous criminals remain in custody, including the huge backlog of convicted murderers on "death row."

In a severe survival crisis, serious problems may arise because those who work in the criminal justice system will probably desert their posts to assure the safety of their families.

Police can't be expected to continue to patrol, prison guards to remain on duty if they believe that their families need them. Breaking out of a prison is not very difficult, without guards to keep the lid on. As a conservative estimate, at least 1 million hardened criminals can be expected to have a free hand, without the machinery of criminal justice to inhibit them.

Ambush

An ambush is a surprise attack, either to destroy or capture the subjects. An ambush can be simple or complex and can take place almost anywhere. It is necessary to understand what comprises ambush before defences against being caught in one can be planned. You can survive an ambush if you can't understand how it unfolds.

In the current preparedness literature, there's been little written regarding tactics for avoiding or breaking out of an ambush. The conventional wisdom for surviving an ambush is a frontal charge with everything you've got, but this is not very helpful because it means an open assault against an enemy who's prepared and waiting.

To cope adequately, it is first necessary to understand the principles of a successful ambush.

There are three elements to an ambush:

- a. The Stopper.
- b. The Fire Zone.
- c. And the Plug.

The Stopper is just that, a means of stopping the ambushed and preventing him from moving out of reach of the ambusher. It can be a tree, a roadblock or other obstruction across a road, or a fallen bridge. An ambusher can create an effective stopper by disabling the lead vehicle of a convoy.

The Fire Zone is right behind the stopper, an open area that offers the victim no cover. The ambusher fires on his victims, using cover so that he's protected from their return fire.

The Plug is a block behind the ambushed, to prevent him from retreating. As with the stopper, this can be a disabled vehicle, or a barrier placed in position after the victim has passed and is in the fire zone.

An ambush need not contain all three elements. Sometimes an ambush can be very informal, yet effective, as in the case of an assailant waiting behind a door or around a corner to attack someone on foot.

There are other facets to an ambush. Surprise is important, and the ambusher takes every precaution he can to keep his victim unaware until the last second. He locates his ambush around a corner or over the crest of a hill so that the victim doesn't see it until too late.

The ambusher will plan his fields of fire so that he has crossfire, which reduces the chances of his victims' fighting back from behind the cover of their vehicles. The ambusher will try to set up his ambush in an isolated area, to minimize the chances of help for the victims. He'll also try to situate his forces on high ground, which gives the opportunity to deliver crossfire in three dimensions. The high ground might be rises in the ground or rooftops in a built-up area. If time permits, he'll dig foxholes, and perfect his cover.

Understanding that something can go wrong with even the best plan, the ambusher will layout an escape route, in case his ambush fails and the victims counterattack.

An ambusher always plans on a short attack. If he can't make it work within the first few minutes, he's failed, and the victims have had time to organize themselves and fight back. The situation for the ambusher then deteriorates into a pitched battle. This greatly increases his risks.

The ambusher plans for a lookout, to provide warning of his victim's approach, and after the attack begins, any other parties who might interfere.

Defence

Now that the basic layout of an ambush is clear, counter-measures can be planned for surviving an ambush.

Defence against ambushes falls into two categories: avoidance and escape.

Counterattack is likely to be counterproductive. A counterattack is often just an expedient to make a possible escape from the ambush.

Just as there are no perfect people, there are no perfect ambushes. The ambusher makes mistakes and leaves gaps in his tactical program. Often, this is because the terrain doesn't permit a perfect ambush.

Avoidance

Avoidance means recognizing likely ambush locations, and not approaching them or giving ambushers the chance to spring the trap.

Awareness is the most vital point for surviving an ambush. This is the mainstay taught in most courses on self-defence. Some instructors complicate the subject unnecessarily by introducing a colour code to denote levels of awareness. This nit picking categorization makes the basic points much more difficult to understand.

Avoiding and surviving an ambush, requires for you to be aware of the ways in which an ambush can be set up. It is necessary to observe one's surroundings constantly, assessing the terrain for features that would help an ambusher, and it is necessary to keep the eyes and ears open for the tell-tale signs of an ambush.

There are some simple and practical precautions we can take for surviving an ambush, and overall, reduce the danger of being ambushed:

Avoid moving in regular patterns is often recommended for surviving an ambush. Daily trips to a water source, for example, gives anyone watching an excellent opportunity to set up an ambush, secure in the knowledge that his targets will be in the same place at the same time the next day. Try to move by different routes, and at different times, on regular trips.

Look out for situations that appear to be perfect "set-ups" for an ambush. Be careful when traveling down narrow streets and alleys, or defiles between two hills. Better yet, go around them. Scan the area ahead of you for cover that ambushers might use. Look very carefully at buildings, berms and wooded areas nearby to increase your chances of surviving an ambush.

Always assume that you're under observation. If you get complacent, "fat, dumb, and happy," your alertness will suffer and your chances of surviving an ambush will drastically decrease.

Look for furtive movements. If you see people, observe whether they're acting as if they don't want you to see them. There might be a harmless reason for this. In a survival crisis, people will be suspicious of strangers, but there might also be a more sinister purpose. Look for anyone who might be giving a signal. This doesn't have to be very obvious, like waving. Someone who gets up suddenly,

after having been seated as you approached, might be signaling unobtrusively. Someone who gets up and disappears behind a building or trees might be going to send a signal.

If moving through an area, you often travel, observe the level of activity, and any departure from the norm. Is the place “too quiet?” If there normally are people moving about, why are they all indoors? If there are normally sounds from birds and animals, do you hear them today?

Be especially cautious when going over a hill or around a corner. You don’t know what’s beyond. If in doubt, stop and send a scout ahead, to look over the area by moving off the road and approaching from an unexpected direction, remaining unseen.

Be alert if you see anything blocking the road ahead, even if it looks harmless. A “disabled car” might be just that, or it might be a Stopper, especially if it blocks the road. If people try to flag you down, look carefully not only at them, but ahead and behind.

Listen for gunfire. This may seem silly and obvious, but gunfire from some distance ahead may be a hunter, or it may be an ambusher, waiting for you, whose finger has tightened a bit too much on the trigger.

When in vehicles, keep the windows rolled down if the weather permits, to avoid the risk of flying glass. Wear safety goggles, if the windshield can’t be rolled down.

If on foot, don’t walk down the centre of the road, where an ambusher would like you to be. Follow a parallel trail a few yards to the side, if possible, or spread out along both sides of the road. Keep an eye on ditches, boulders, and anything else that might offer cover or concealment to yourselves or to an ambusher. The main rule is to keep spread out, avoiding the natural tendency to gather together for company. Surviving an ambush is more important than chatting.

Each element should have a CB or other two-way radio. Use this only for listening as you might hear the ambusher’s lookout giving warning of your approach over the air. Don’t use it for routine transmissions, as this can give you away. If the point spots something suspicious, hand signals serve well for getting the message back. The communications radio will be useful after an ambush starts, to coordinate between elements. At that time, there’s nothing to lose by transmitting.

Weapons for surviving an ambush

It might seem sacrilegious to say it, but almost any weapon will do for you and help you in surviving an ambush, as long as you know how to use it well. I recommend reading here about the firearms every prepper should own.

A few more comments will put weapons in perspective:

Pistols are handy if traveling in vehicles, whereas long arms are cumbersome. This isn’t as great a disadvantage as it may seem for shotguns and rifles, as shooting from moving vehicles is chancy. Often miraculous shots are made from cars on television and in the movies, but anyone who tries it for himself finds out that it’s not as easy as it looks.

Another unfortunate fact is that during a well-planned ambush, the victim doesn’t get much of a chance to shoot back. The ambushers are well-concealed, having prepared cover and concealment

long before, while the victim is out in the open, under fire, with no visible targets at which to return fire.

Keep weapons handy in the vehicles, but remember that accidents can happen. Keep the safeties on! With a finger lightly on the trigger, a sudden bump can cause an accidental discharge. Surviving an ambush will be harder if you accidentally injure yourself.

When you plan to carry weapons for defence in a vehicle, assessing the possible tactics will help you to get your priorities right. It has already been shown that firing from a moving vehicle during an ambush is most likely a waste of ammunition because the ambushers are hidden and also because precision shooting from a moving, bouncing gun platform is nearly impossible.

Dismounting in a hurry is more important than firing from the vehicles because the vehicles will draw fire and not offer effective cover.

Carrying it inboard of both your legs means that you can either swing your legs out first or pivot your upper body down and out, unobstructed by the weapon, dragging it after you when you leave the vehicle. Carrying it flat on the floor also keeps it out of the way and lets you dive out and reach in for it after you're out and flat on the ground.

There's always a temptation to return fire for surviving an ambush, even at well-hidden targets. This is common in the military and often goes under the name of "suppressive fire," a fancy-sounding term that masks the fact that it's mostly a waste of ammunition.

The military can do this, as they're not paying for the ammunition and have a large supply, but a survivalist can't afford to waste any. That he paid for it himself is the last of his problems. He knows that his supply is limited and that there's no more available, at any price. This dictates that he must make even shot count.

Regarding calibre, don't take too seriously published "stopping power" figures, and don't trade in a weapon with which you feel comfortable to buy another that has greater power. Fabulous "stopping power" figures on paper don't do any good if you can't hit your target. Choose something with which you're comfortable and with which you can hit most of the time.

Keep in mind that, whatever score you can attain on a range, firing at paper targets, most of your shots will probably miss in the urgency of a gunfight. It seems hard to believe, but this has been confirmed many times. In the stress of a deadly threat, people miss targets in plain sight at ridiculously short ranges.

Range of the weapon is less important in defence than it is in hunting. Anyone who selects a calibre because of effective range should ask himself, and answer honestly, whether he can hit his target at the weapon's maximum effective range. Some make the mistake of trading in a rifle chambered for the .223 in favour of a .308, because they feel the need for a longer-ranged weapon. Yet, all of their firings, even in practice, happen at 200 yards or less, where the differences between the two calibres are not critical.

As will be shown, the choice of weapons is not as important as the choice of tactics. For surviving an ambush, tactics can make it or break it.

The reaction needed for surviving an ambush

Despite all precautions, anyone may be caught in an ambush. It then becomes necessary to think of escape. Escape means getting out of the trap if caught inadvertently. It means learning to recognize the gaps an ambusher leaves, and making use of them for evasion.

Some of the gaps an ambusher may leave in his trap are as follows:

His stopper is inadequate and doesn't stop his victim.

He tips his hand, by living signs for the intended victim to see. A gun barrel poking out of a window, an accidental discharge, or a poorly-concealed ambush site can all warn the victim.

He may be a poor shot, and, even with the advantage of surprise, not be able to overwhelm his victim with gunfire.

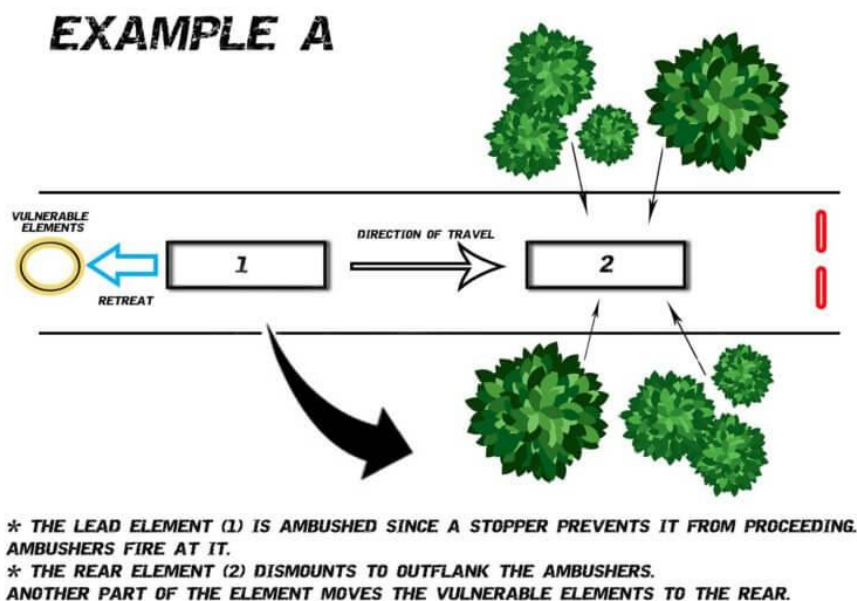
He may have planned his cover badly, exposing himself to counter fire.

He may not have chosen a site that completely denies his victim cover.

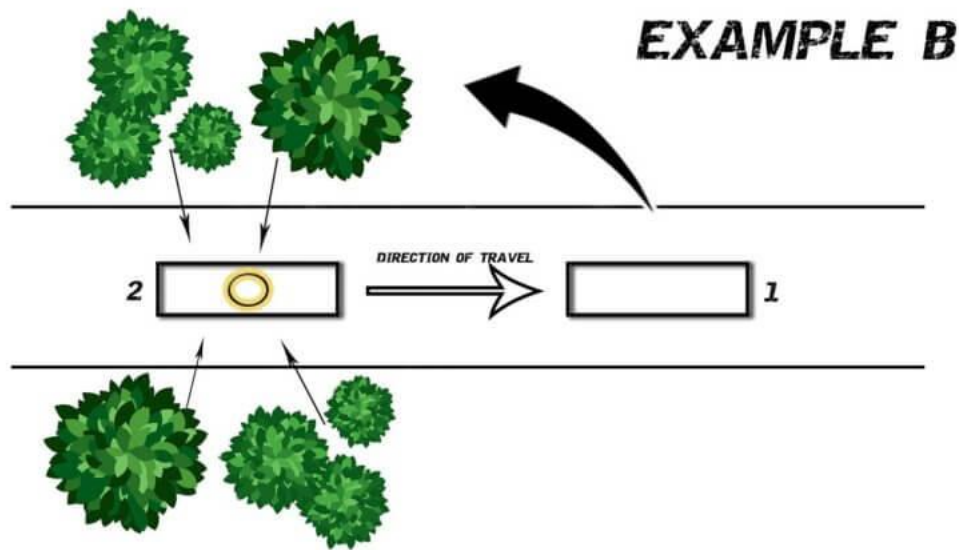
In some situations, counterattack is one means of making an escape, but it must never take priority over safety. It may be macho to fight it out, but it's also often unwise to face a prepared ambusher from an inferior position. Surviving an ambush often requires wits and not a display of force.

A survivalist must go by the principle that casualties are unacceptable. A military commander accepts that a certain proportion of his force will become casualties in a firefight, but as preppers, concerned with the safety of our families, we do not consider them expendable. This may affect the ambusher, too. In a survival crisis, with medical care unavailable, even a minor wound is serious.

Surviving an ambush when traveling in two elements – Example A



Surviving an ambush when traveling in two elements – Example B



- * THE AMBUSH OCCURS ON THE REAR ELEMENT (2) STOPPED BY GUNFIRE AND NOT A ROADBLOCK.
- * THE MEMBERS FROM THE LEAD ELEMENT (1) COME TO RESCUE ATTACKING FROM THE RIGHT. .

These are some tactics that will help in surviving an ambush and cope with it:

1. Whatever the case, never, never sit there trying to decide what to do. DO SOMETHING! The ambusher counts on his victim being surprised, stunned, and indecisive.
2. Plan an “immediate action drill,” as the military calls it, an emergency plan that all members of your party know, and have rehearsed. Make sure that they understand that they are to follow the plan. If there are any questions or objections, the time for them is during planning and rehearsal, not when the action starts.
3. The details of your escape plan will depend on the sort of people in your party. If the members of your group are all able-bodied combat veterans, all of them will be available for active roles. If, as is more likely, there are women and children in your party, you’ll have to plan for their safety and detail some of your people to assure their evacuation.
4. It’s a good practice to avoid traveling bunched in a group, as this enables an ambusher to catch all in his trap. It’s better to divide the party into two or three elements, spread far enough apart so that no ambush will trap all members of the party. A spacing of about 100 yards is enough for most cases in surviving an ambush.
5. If there are any signs of an ambush ahead, go back immediately. Don’t stop in the middle of the road to discuss the situation. Going back may be your only chance for surviving an ambush.
6. If an attack materializes, the first priority is to get out of the line of fire, either by running for nearby cover or breaking through the ambush. Any element caught should try to keep going. Bear in

mind that no ambush is perfect, and that the Stopper may not be total. There may be room to pass on the sidewalk or the shoulder of the road.

6. A field along-side the road may offer a way around. It may be possible to ram the stopper and get it out of the way. A moving vehicle, depending on its weight and speed can hit with hundreds of thousands of foot-pounds of kinetic energy, and can dislodge a car parked across the road or go through a brick wall.

Also remember that a moving target is harder to hit, so keep moving, if at all possible. If going forward is impossible, turn around and go back.

7. The first decision, therefore, is whether to stop or run. If on foot, it will be “every man for himself,” as the ambushed party runs for cover wherever the members find it. If in a vehicle, the question will be whether to dismount immediately or try to make a run for it.

8. The answer is up to the driver. He can judge best if there’s a chance at breaking through, or if the best course is to stop and get out. Passengers should wait for an order from the driver before trying to dismount. If the driver is disabled, the only logical course is to get out.

9. Dismounting quickly is critical, and worth rehearsing until everyone has it down perfectly. With a four-door vehicle, each dives out the nearest door. A two-door sedan, in this regard, can be a trap for anyone in the back seat.

Note this: Carrying supplies in the back and having only two people in front, avoids this problem. A camper or motor home is a special problem. Having the exit procedure well-rehearsed will avoid people colliding in the doorways.

10. Returning fire, at this stage, is not as important as getting out alive. If the ambushers are well hidden, you can waste valuable seconds looking for targets when you should be looking for a way out. As a prepper, you won’t have ammunition to waste by panic firing.

11. If the attacked element can’t move. The members should get off the road, or out of the open area at once, and seek cover. This is critical, because the ambusher will have planned to fire upon this area, and moving out will upset his plan of fire, and even mask you from some of his guns.

Although the ideal ambush site should have absolutely no cover close enough for the victims to reach, the terrain may not allow this. In a built-up area, cover is as close as the nearest building. Parked cars, alleys, and doorways offer cover.

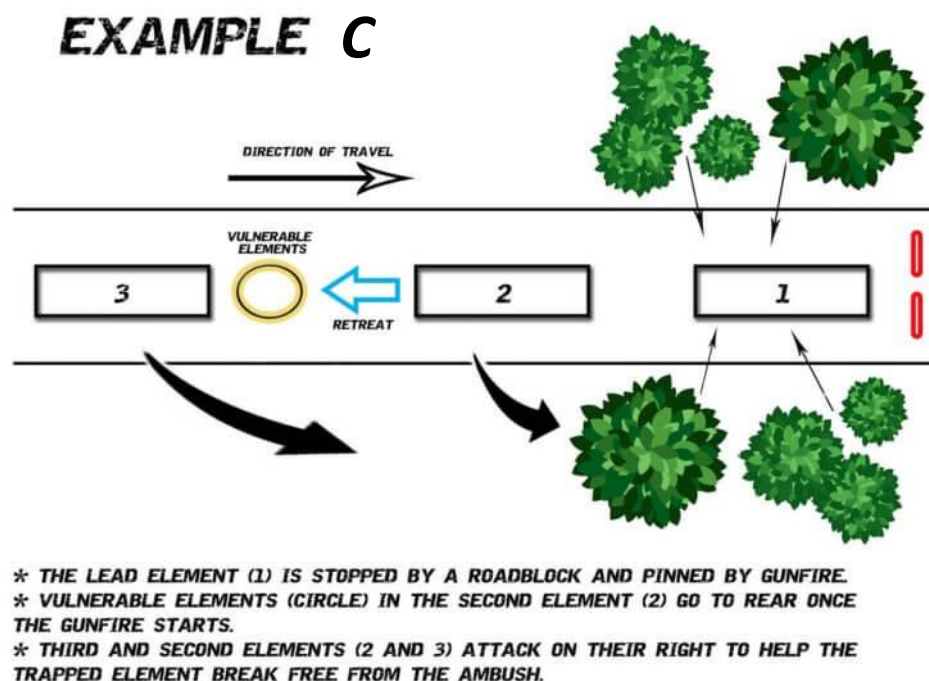
12. The driver should try to stop near cover, or in it. In a built-up area, driving through a plate-glass window into a building or into an alley will provide cover or concealment. In open areas, driving off the road into trees or a ditch is better than stopping in the open.

13. If one element is trapped, plan for the others to come to its aid. Often, ambushers will let the point go by, as they want to trap the main body. If this happens, the point members can circle around and take the ambushers from the rear. If there’s a rear guard, it can attack from the other side.

14. Standard military practice is to keep the point and rear guard small, but for our purpose, all elements should be about the same strength. If there are women and children, there's no guarantee that locating them with any one element will provide greater safety. An attack can come on any element, depending on the whim of the ambusher.

15. Plan on a short encounter, using minimal force. This is because you want to avoid unnecessary casualties and because you don't have ammunition for a long fight. The object is to escape, and you should plan to break off the counterattack as soon as all survivors are clear.

Example C



Summing up on surviving an ambush

Surviving an ambush and its setting becomes a bad situation in which the ambusher tries to catch his victim at a serious disadvantage. The victim can't fight back on equal terms.

The obvious conclusion is that it's better to avoid an ambush than to try to crash out of one. If caught, the best course is escape, and any counterattack is only to aid the escape, not to gain a victory over the ambusher.

As with other situations involving deadly force, tactics are more important than weapons. This is especially true in an ambush because the ambusher tries to set up his ambush so that the victim can't use his weapons effectively.

Planning ahead for surviving an ambush and coping with its prospects is essential. Use your head, and you may not have to use your weapons.