

Preparing for Modern Threats

Abstract

Are you feeling more threatened by current events and frustrated by the apparent inability of local, state and federal "authorities" to even recommend effective solutions?

If so, this essay discusses some specific things we can do, as individuals, to improve personal and family security in these dangerous times, without adopting a full-on "prepper" mindset.

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Preparing for Modern Threats
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1. Introduction

As the world watches, ISIS kidnaps and murders hundreds of innocents and Al Shabaab incites Minnesota's large Somali population to attack a gun-free zone called "Mall of America". DHS impotently advises shoppers "to be particularly careful", the White House looks the other way (toward the golf course?), and NYPD officers are being trained to "close their eyes, take a deep breath and pop a breath mint", to avoid "offending" offenders. So far, this administration's apparent detachment from reality has resulted in: a national security leadership vacuum, a series of immigration and foreign policy blunders, and a never ending stream of inept "solutions" that only make matters worse.

Preparing for Modern Threats

Do current events make you feel pessimistic about tomorrow?

Do you feel vulnerable, anxious, depressed?

In this essay, I outline some constructive things you can do to help lessen those feelings!

First and foremost, I believe that we, as individuals, need to take more responsibility for our personal & family security. That includes something near & dear to many VCDL members: preparedness with firearms, ammunition and the skills to use them effectively, as well as some issues of simple survival in the event of a crisis.

Note that, in addition to possible expense, the measures I advocate here will require: mental commitment, attention to detail, research, training, critical thinking, and practice.

The most important anxiety-reduction actions include:

- realistic threat level assessment for our individual lifestyle & activities
- change what we can change to minimize those threats
- include immediate family, where appropriate
- develop plans to deal with the remaining threats
- acquire the tools & build the skills necessary to execute those plans
- practice those skills every day!

To that end, here are a few resources that may be helpful:

- "Counter Violence", by E.J.Owens, available from www.LegallyConcealed.com
- Firearms training - NRA Pistol, Personal Protection, CHP classes (available thru numerous VCDL members who are NRA-certified instructors), and advanced training from Massad Ayoob's Lethal Force Institute, and others listed below.
- "LDS Preparedness Manual", free download from <https://www.ldsavow.com/PrepManualGeneral.html>
- "How to Survive The End Of The World As We Know It", by James Wesley Rawles, available at Amazon.com
- www.HarborFreight.com - useful tools, reasonable quality, reasonable prices!
- "The Modern Survival Manual: Surviving the Economic Collapse", by Fernando Aguiere, available at Amazon.com.com

The last item may well be the most important, as it covers all issues raised here, and others, with the authority of first-hand experience surviving the 2001 economic collapse in Argentina.

To get started, prioritize your preparedness concerns; for example:

1. personal and family protection (the main thrust of this essay)
2. water availability
3. food & nutrition storage
4. shelter & energy
5. financial considerations

6. transportation
7. health
8. emergency communications

2. *Personal & Family Protection*

Understand that there are three categories of actors involved here:

- Predators,
- potential victims,
- victims.

If you are reading this, you are most likely in the second category and would like to avoid joining the third category.

Note that by adopting any of the following suggestions, you will alienate individuals in the first class, and will likely "offend" some in the second class.

2.1 *Threat Level Assessment*

Pay attention to current events from "reliable sources". Think critically about everything gleaned from "broadcast news", cable news channels, newspapers & magazines, many of which have become apologists for this administration or political causes. Use the Internet to research topics and always consider the sources... ignore anything citing the sources named above, and posts by organizations with political agendas. Do your research now - in a major crisis the Internet may not be available!

Ignore everything on "social media"! Better yet, don't even go there - "Interesting game ... the only way to win is not to play!"

With current events in mind, consider where you live. Terrorists want to make national headlines, so they will target the largest malls, airports, churches, synagogues, theaters & high-profile sporting and other public events. It is no secret that many of these venues are high-risk "gun-free zones", likely to attract all kinds of violent predators.

If you live in a large city, those venues present a higher risk than the same venues in a suburban or rural area.

2.2 *Psychology*

2.2.1 *The Predator* Of primary concern here is the jihadi terrorist. Terrorists are unlike most predators we've experienced to date in that they don't want your material possessions, they want you to die, and have already committed to be "martyred" for their cause.

Understand that jihadi terrorists do not want your "stuff", they just want to kill as many "infidels" as they can before they are killed. Negotiation, reason, bribes are meaningless to them.

Like all predators, they seek out the most vulnerable victims.

2.2.2 *Potential Victims* Potential victims fall into two groups: "sheep" and "sheepdogs". The "sheep" prefer to be defenseless apparently in the belief that bad things simply won't happen to them or, if they do, "the police" will protect them.

The "sheepdogs" do their best to defend themselves and others from predation.

2.2.3 *Victims* Victims are those who, for whatever reasons, have been victimized.

2.2.4 *What about you?* Decide whether you are willing to die in defense of yourself & your family. If you cannot figure this out and make this commitment, if you would soil your pants and/or run away while someone rapes and murders your spouse or child, stop reading now and go on rationalizing that "the police" or someone else will protect you in a crisis!

2.2.5 *Your Family* Help family members understand your commitment to them and, when age/maturity appropriate, encourage them to become active in their own defense.

2.3 *Defensive Weapons*

- Guns are the most effective "equalizer" when facing a disparate level of force.

For home defense, a 12ga pump shotgun is the most practical for both deterrence and defense.

For a "carry gun", choose a good quality revolver or semi-auto, depending on your ability and commitment to practice. Concealed handgun carry requires a permit. Open carry does not in Virginia and most states.

- Pepper Spray may help to gain time & distance, but location & weather conditions may cause it to impact you as much as the predator.
- "Call 9-1-1"? Make the call, IF the phones are even working, but don't count on a timely response. The police have no duty to protect you. Their only official duty is to collect evidence and apprehend the perpetrator(s) *after the fact*, and that's little comfort to those killed or injured.

2.4 *Tactics*

2.4.1 *The Easy Things*

1. Obtain your VA Concealed Handgun Permit (CHP) & carry daily, whenever/wherever lawful
2. Don't advertise: no political/gun-related bumper stickers, hats, patches
3. Be discreet, blend in, avoid unnecessary attention: never "flash" cash or valuables in public, if openly carrying a firearm, do so as subtly as possible.
4. DO NOT "project vulnerability" by appearing:
 - to be preoccupied with reading, texting, talking on cell phone
 - to wander around, as if lost
 - to shuffle, head down, eyes averted, shoulders slumped
5. Instead, project confidence and strength by appearing:
 - to walk with purpose (even when you are unsure)
 - to pay attention ("relaxed but alert" mode, as when driving), maintain a mental map of potential threats, possible exits or "cover" locations
6. Avoid "gun-free zones" - patronize different stores, restaurants, churches, where guns are not banned.

This doesn't mean the terrorists have "won", it's just common sense to avoid high-risk venues whenever possible.

7. Limit time with groups of people you don't know. While in such company, pay attention to people's actions and reactions. Be prepared to leave quickly.

When traveling:

- don't use room-service
- decline house-keeping services
- don't use the room/hotel safe; hotel staff always has "back-door" access
- if you *must* store anything valuable, discretely secure it in your car.

Traveling with a firearm:

- Research the states to/thru which you will be traveling. If they recognize or reciprocate VA CHPs (and you have one) you still need to know how those states' gun laws differ from those in VA (which you know well, right?).
- Note that some states consider the Firearm Owner's Protection Act (aka FOPA, McClure/Volkmer) as an "affirmative defense" meaning that if you are "caught with an unregistered gun" (e.g. in NJ) you will spend time in jail, be arraigned and go to trial before that defense can be asserted. Any time and money thus spent is lost. Worse, you might still be charged & found guilty of "felony possession", and be sentenced to a long time in jail!

Although I grew up in NJ, and still have some family and friends there, I do NOT go there any more. Likewise for DC, NYC and most of the northeast.

While it is highly unlikely that jihadists would ever target your home, it may be prudent to

- Keep strangers out of your home, check credentials of anyone seeking entry (repairmen, tutors, home-assistants).
- Don't leave dangerous objects (kitchen knives, sports equipment, guns) or personal information (bills, invoices, bank records, credit cards) out in the open.
- Break personal routines frequently - go out and return at different times, take different routes.

2.4.2 *Things That Cost (time, effort or money)*

- Acquire a good concealed-carry gun & holster (a good CHP class will cover firearms and holster selection)
- Carry often, it's good practice for every-day carry
- Get a good 12ga pump shotgun for home protection
- Carry at home. In some emergencies there may not be time to retrieve the shotgun
- Have in an ample supply of ammunition for each firearm, "extra" if possible, especially rim-fire, which cannot be reloaded. Some have opined that ammunition may become *the new currency* in a "barter economy".
- Learn to reload, cast your own bullets & acquire ample supplies.
- Provide for safe storage of all firearms, ammo and related items

2.4.3 *Some more difficult, expensive and/or time-consuming things*

- Take advanced firearms training, e.g.:
 - Gunsite, Paulden AZ: <http://www.gunsite.com/course-offerings/>
 - Thunder Ranch, Lakeview, OR: <https://www.thunderranchinc.com/director.html>
 - Lethal Force Institute (LFI), Live Oak, FL: <http://www.ayoob.com/AboutUs.html>

- On Target VA, an LFI "Training Associate", Doswell, VA:
<http://www.ontargetvirginia.com/index.html>
- Participate in "practical skills" competitions: informal/fun competitive events at gun clubs, IDPA, USPSA, IPSC, etc.
- Carry every day, wherever it is legal.
- Practice regularly.

3. Other Survival Considerations

3.1 Bug-out bags

So, where you gonna go? For how long?

Obtaining, maintaining and securing a secret "bug-out destination", and the means to get there, is expensive and, depending on its location and the situation, it may actually be less safe than your primary location.

Bugging out may be a good idea in some cases, but not all. For example, the first 20 minutes of the 2005 version of "War of the Worlds", with Tom Cruise, offers a sobering scenario of how "bugging out" in the midst of a crisis might play out.

In any case, an Internet search for "bug-out bag" will yield numerous hits with lists of things you absolutely must have (e.g. things they sell ;-)

3.2 Get-Home Bags

A "get-home" bag is like the "bug-out" bag's little brother. More importantly, chances are that a crisis will unfold when you are not at home. As with the bug-out bags, an Internet search for "get-home bag" will yield numerous hits containing lists of things to consider.

Unlike the "bug-out" scenario, chances are you would be going against the traffic to get home, or could wait until the traffic clears.

3.3 Allies and Networking

For those times when it is not practical for one person, or a small family, to deal with a crisis, pages 219 to 227 of "The Modern Survival Manual:..." cited above, provide a practical discussion of this topic.

3.4 Shelter In Place & the Bunker Mentality

The rest of the priorities depend to some extent on whether you "bug out" to some secret hideaway in the woods, or prepare your home to be your "bunker". The James Wesley Rawles book, cited above, discusses the pros & cons of location, security, etc. in chapter 3.

Regardless of where you "settle", there are some things beyond security to be considered.

Like "the Pirate Code", we have a survival *guideline* called "The Rule of Three": A human cannot live three minutes without air, three days without water, or three weeks without food.

3.4.1 Water Since the air supply doesn't seem to be at issue, the most important item here is a renewable water supply, e.g. rain water storage and a supply of purification items like chlorine bleach, "life-straws", a saucepan for boiling, etc.

For the short-term, a 30 day supply of bottled water (i.e. about 3 to 4 quarts/day for each adult), and rotate per the "best by" date (or when it starts to taste "funny"). For other than drinking, consider a rain water storage system. For example, divert your rain gutters into topless 55 gallon plastic barrels covered with window screen (to prevent mosquito infestation). Large capacity water storage tanks can be purchased

from the Tractor Supply Company.

3.4.2 Nutrition A large stock of canned food, bottled water, sugar, salt, coffee, dried beans, rice, pasta, etc., is practical for those able to shelter-in-place, but is not very portable.

A modest stock of "life-straws", dried high-protein foods like meat jerky, MREs, light-weight "energy bars" and the like, seems to make sense in for a variety of emergency situations.

For details, refer to Section 2 of the LDS Preparedness Manual, cited above.

3.4.3 Shelter & Energy A stockpile of batteries, propane, gasoline can be relied upon for short-term and maybe a mid-term crises. For long-term outages, only renewable energy of some kind is viable. Large solar electric systems are one approach, but they are expensive and impossible to "hide" potentially targeting your location for predation. Small/portable solar systems are another option, but cannot provide or store nearly as much energy. Wind & water power are options for some venues but, like solar panels, tend to be expensive and hard to "hide".

Learn to use hand tools! Whatever shelter options are (or become) available will likely need repairs at some point.

Firewood is renewable, if you have the tools, opportunity and ability to collect it. An air-tight wood stove will make the best possible use of the energy available. Like alternative energy systems, smoke is impossible to "hide", hence may also target your location.

A good stock of warm clothing, blankets and towels is essential! Most of us can endure heat & humidity, but cold and wet can kill you in short order.

3.5 Financial

It is certainly prudent to lay in a modest supply of some precious metals like silver (and lead, if you cast your own bullets), but serious hoarding of precious metals may be counter productive. While a pile of gold & silver coins may make you feel like Scrooge McDuck, consider how much gold you'd be willing to give for a quart of stewed tomatoes and a couple pounds of venison if your family was starving! Some things are more valuable than "money"!

For financial and transportation details, read the Ferdinand Aguierre book cited above.

3.6 Transportation

The main personal transportation issue in a crisis will be fuel availability and fuel consumption. Options to consider:

- Electric golf carts can be recharged IF you have an energy source like solar power, and would likely be sufficient to haul water from a nearby river, stream or pond, but long-distance travel is not an option.
- Motor scooters can travel quite a ways, but can't haul much.
- Small cars can travel long distance, and haul modest amounts of stuff, but if fuel availability is in question, becoming stranded away from your "stronghold" is more likely.
- Full-size SUVs great for most everything, provided fuel is available.

3.7 Health

Some things to keep in stock (and rotate, per expiration dates):

- spare Rx glasses
- first aid kits & supplies

- 90 day supply of necessary Rx meds - buy a set without insurance and rotate such that there is always a 90 day supply in reserve.
- several pairs of drug-store reading glasses (+1.50 to +3.00)
- extra soap, feminine hygiene items, disinfectants, hydrogen peroxide, antibiotic ointments, band-aids, Epsom salts, allergy meds (for stings, etc), pain meds (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, Ora-gel for minor surgeries, etc.

Also consider keeping some extra toothpaste, toothbrushes, dental floss, mouthwash (to help avoid needs for future medical attention) plus deodorant, toilet paper ... hardly "essentials", but nice to have ;-)

3.8 Emergency Communications

In a "grid down" emergency, it is highly likely that utility communications will be unavailable: no telephone, no cell phone, no internet!

Fortunately, there are several alternatives including: citizens band radio and "ham" radio. Citizens band radio is relatively inexpensive, readily available and does not require an FCC license to operate. However, the number of "channels" and the communication distance/range are limited.

Ham radio provides almost unlimited range and channels, but operators need an FCC license, equipment can be expensive, and very long distance communications may not be 100% reliable. To learn more about ham radio, contact a local amateur radio club, or visit the National Association for Amateur Radio website: <http://www.arrl.org/>.

To build communication skills, many ham radio clubs and other organizations practice emergency communications "nets" and other activities and contests.

4. Conclusions

Quoting E.J. Owens, in "Counter Violence":

"In a real life-or-death situation, you will not rise to the occasion. You will only perform to the level for which you have trained!"

So, train as much as possible.

In all matters, set goals that are practical and attainable for *you*. Know your limitations and don't over-commit - it is far better to do a few things well, than many things poorly.

While self/family-defense skills may be paramount in a dangerous world, consider becoming more skilled in some basics like first-aid, carpentry, cooking, foraging for wild foods, map-reading/using a compass, vegetable gardening, animal husbandry, hunting & butchering, food preservation (canning, drying), knife-making/sharpening, blacksmithing, etc.

Like cash and precious metals, skills are fungible and highly portable. Unlike cash, etc., skills cannot be stolen! In a world where many simply don't know how to do much of anything for themselves, possessing a number of useful skills may be the key to your survival. As with cash, precious metals and extra ammunition, you may be able to barter skills and services for things you need.

However prepared and proficient you become with any of this, if you are in a bad situation and have the opportunity and ability to leave the scene, do so. If not, do what you have to do, as quickly as possible!

Preparing for Modern Threats

Whatever measures you are able to incorporate into your daily life will be better than doing nothing!

Think like a survivor: anticipate problems and devise practical solutions.

Don't procrastinate!

Achieving a state of general preparedness is hard work and potentially expensive, but the rewards can be great:

- improved outlook on life each morning,
- increased likelihood that you and your family will be intact tomorrow!