SURVIVOR

MAGAZINE

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Issue #2

THIS ISSUE:

THANK YOU FOR READING!
If you would like to have your SERE-related article published,
please write it and send it in.

Survivor's Quote

"You need not worry about notifying your family. The AGO in Washington has been told of your liberation, and The Adjutant General notified your family or your emergency addressees. You may, of course, now write as many letters as you want to; you're done with that one letter a week business. If you have been mistreated while in a Prisoner of War Camp, or if you have knowledge of others who have been mistreated, and if the information has not already been given to an appropriate officer, now is the time to speak to the post judge advocate. All irregularities and abuses will be investigated. Before you leave, you will be told what not to talk about. There are lots of things the enemy is anxious to learn-information which he can use to make life tougher for the men still in his hands."

INFORMATION FOR LIBERATED PRISONERS OF WAR,
WAR DEPARTMENT PAMPHLET No. 21-28
War Department Washington D.C. 2 May 1945

"Features of Survival, Evasion Recovery, AFTTP 3-2.26, September 2012"

By SURVIVOR Staff

Prior to this publication going to print, several emails were sent explaining these changes, but I am unsure how far these went out. My apologies if this information is a repeat.

PURPOSE. As all of you know the purpose of the Survival, Evasion Recovery AFTTP 3-2.26 is to provide the reader with a quick reference to the basics of survival, evasion, and recovery. The idea is to provide a pocket-sized memory jogger and assistor to the service member in surviving no matter the climatic extreme or isolating event.

What does Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (MTTP) mean? The Air Land Sea Application (ALSA) Center formally runs the development of any MTTP publication based on memorandums of agreements established between them and each HQ Branch. The Survival, Evasion Recovery AFTTP 3-2.26 September 2012 is the first rewrite to the publication were each branch sent a representative to work on it. Before the 2012 edition, the US Marine Corp had never sent representation. In the 2012 Rewrite each branch of the military had sent notes and comments from multiple sources throughout their respective service, as well as at least one individual from their Branch to provide specific orientation on some aspect of survival, evasion, and recovery.

The advantage to a MTTP from the ALSA Center is that a consensus does not have to be reached by each branch of Service for the information to be included in the publication. Each branch can have a specific part or portion of any aspect of a MTTP topic; it just needs to be identified within the publication which branch of service it is applicable too. The Survival, Evasion Recovery Publication does not have any of these exceptions, because each Branch was in agreement to the TTPs included and felt the need for a true joint effort.

"NEW" INFORMATION. The publication breaks down into parts that haven't been changed, parts that have been reworded/reformatted/ relocated, and new parts. In some cases you may be asking why some of

the information was left in publication at all. Certain information is doctrinally mandated by each HQ Branch and must be included to some degree. One of the big discussions was in what order to put the information in. It was determined to try and base the order of information on most likely needs of the IP.

A large portion of the publication has been reworded and reformatted with different graphics added (and a lot taken out). For the most part the content will seem mostly unchanged, but how things were worded to meet all four Branch's needs was carefully considered, making sure terminology meant the same thing to the service member, no matter the branch. Some new features add to the publication are:

- Field expedient antenna information – how an IP could extend the range of their radio under adverse conditions.
- Five global edible plants with graphics helping the IP to find likely food source (this goes with the global medicinal plants added in 2009).
- New urban evasion information.
- Appendix C and D.

Survival Manuals 1942 - 2012

ATTACHMENTS. Two big changes/additions were Appendix C Survivor Tips and Tools and Appendix D Individual Survival Kit Considerations. These two appendixes give new meaning to the word attachments.

The group of individuals who worked on the rewrite wanted to add things to the publication, one of several ideas passed around was to include a sheet of glint or reflective material which could be removed as a signaling devise. This was not possible. So after looking at the options of each branch, it was determined that a lot of these publications went into an operator's survival vest or equipment that they might be issued. Our idea was to give the individual a place to attach in expensive survival items that they might find useful,
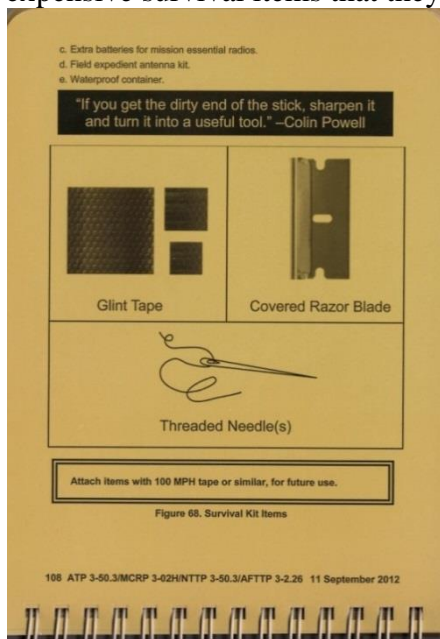
turning the publication into a personal survival kit. So instead of leaving a page intentionally blank we put a place where the operator could tape in sewing needles with thread, razor blade, and glint tape (page 108). We knew this was not something we could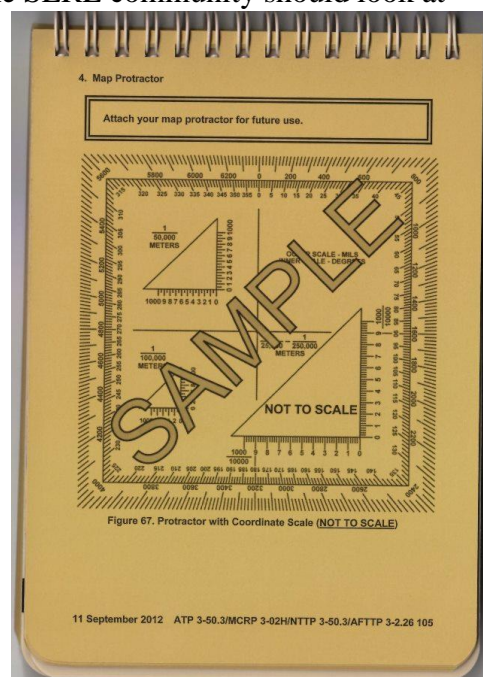 dictate or make mandatory, but it was something that could be brought up during training or mission briefings perhaps along with the items and tape for the operator's use. The other idea was to add a map protractor which could be cut out and used. Eventually we were all called individually and told that it couldn't be included to scale (page 105). So when this was identified to us, we changed it to another attachment point. Realistically the operator could add all sorts of other items at the blank pages (left in for notes) or at publication information points – things like plastic bag (turkey roasting bag), reflective metal, fishing items, wire, etc. This concept brings new meaning to the word "attachments".

SUMMARY. When I started out the survival kit publication was paper, had prayers for the dead (I always used that to motivate students after wrapping them in orange parachute material so we could find them in spring thaw), was broken down into a lot of good basic survival information for each biome as well as the basic needs, but it included nothing on evasion. I think there have been a great number of improvements to this publication making it a more useful tool for our

potential IPs, but like all survival tools provided to our operators, we in the SERE community should look at multiple options and uses for any issued item. We need to present these options and uses to our operators, so that one in a hundred may take that and use it when they need it. They don't have to start from zero and work it themselves.

By knowing the origin and history of a product; the five "W", and how it has progressed it will help us to pass on the best methods of employment so our operators can return with honor.

"What If" Contingency Training
By SURVIVOR Staff

In January 2014, I attended Air Combat Command's Combat Air Forces (CAF) Weapons and Tactic Conference (WEPTAC) 2014. WEPTAC provides a chance for Combat Air Force Commands to get together and review tactical improvement proposals (TIPS) that come in throughout the year, with the idea of finding better ways to do things, placing emphasis on looking beyond the current fight.

WEPTAC focused on finding innovative ways to accomplish the five ACC core functions: air superiority, global precision attack, global integrated intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance, personnel recovery; and C2. Air Force Global Strike Command, USAFE, and PACAF general officers also participated in WEPTAC.

The main points brought up at WEPTAC by the Combat Rescue Officers briefing were needs derived by the likelihood of an extended evasion in contested degraded operations (CDO). The main thought was that counter-CSAR efforts by the enemy in a CDO would have the strong potential to limit CSAR operations, making the IP's ability to evade over long periods (time and distance) the most likely method of recovery i.e. walking out. Some discussions occurred on tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for the survival of an evader and their equipment in an extended CDO environment. The two main ideas pushed to the dozens of CAF generals and the rest of the audience (to include yours truly) was:

- The need for student learning objectives related to long-term evasion at the Survival School and base-levels.
- The IPs vulnerability to sensors and threats in an extended CDO environment driving the need for new technology in concealment, communication, and navigation.

While I do not disagree with either of these ideas, I also realize several limiting factors occur with good ideas, which in my opinion, always seem to elude people. 1). the first and foremost is while everyone thought these were valid points and good ideas, no money was pushed towards them. If it cost money to save lives, people will die. It is hard for others to view the importance of SERE training and the need to keep it state of the art. Even the equipment used every day for our operators takes a hit as far as what is needed and maintaining it. Usually conflict (i.e. people dying) is what is needed to motivate the government to spend money on improvements and change.
2). Every day operators attend once in a lifetime SERE training which for the most part has to last them their life time. So while we are waiting for possible funding, time, and effort to determine new equipment, changes to training programs, and incorporation of these into TTPs, there are a whole groups of potential operators missing out…who might need these skills in months and not years from now.

So what is to be done?

While we wait for the possibility of change to occur, we continue to make choices based on what we are directed to do, what our operators need, and what we feel are the likely future possibilities. This means continuing to teach the mission sets our folks have flown (we always teach to the last war), how to use the equipment they currently have, but we must also look at possible operational scenarios, what could be in their future. SERE always plays to the "what if" contingencies, so we continue to do just that.

We review historical data to determine how these possible enemies have acted before, what are their likely behavior and actions. We look at intelligence briefs as to what capabilities our possible enemies have, what our IPs might have to deal with. We look at and evaluate new technology, how it can help our IPs to return with honor, but we continue to teach them skills when technology is overwhelmed or fails i.e. what occurs when a GPS is jammed or the batteries run out? We teach them what their SERE and personnel recovery (PR) options when there are no or limited dedicated CSAR forces in a country such as in AFRICOM or SOUTHCOM. We get them to understand what their SERE and personnel recovery (PR) options are when dedicated CSAR forces can't get into the country.

For some of you, this article was a big, *"so tell me something I didn't know"*, to those individuals my apology for stating the obvious. Of course this article wasn't really oriented towards you. For those that are still teaching to a very CENTCOM-oriented isolating event my challenge to you is to review what you are doing and look how you can give your potential IP the background to meet the next conflict which may have them spending a long time on the ground.

Mail Call
By SURVIVOR Staff

In today's world better and faster communication seems to be the key to success in every aspect of our daily lives. We are so focused on the worldwide web, cell phones, and pagers that we often take the mail for granted. At one time or another, the mail has probably played an important part in our lives, whether it was receiving money, news, gifts, or a notice from Uncle Sam. To a Prisoner of War (POW), mail takes on a special meaning, not only conveying information, but also creating a lifeline to the ones they love and the life they have been cut off from. Historically mail has played several parts in the battle behind the barbwire, becoming a blessing and a curse. Mail is a tool for the POW, as well as a source of comfort, humor, misery, and sadness. Accounts of mail being of critical importance to POWs occurred from World War I on, mostly having to do with the overall dependability of the mail services. Before I start too much into what mail has given and taken from the POW, it is important to look at the basic facts surrounding POW mail.

RED CROSS PACKAGE

Mail is one of the three authorized pieces of communication that a POW can sign (health and welfare receipts and capture cards being the other two). Currently, POW mail is covered by the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 12 August 1949 Articles 70 - 77. The two Articles I will be dealing with basically state the following:

Art 71. Prisoners of war shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards. If the Detaining Power deems it necessary to limit the number of letters and cards sent by each prisoner of war, the said number shall not be less than two letters and four cards monthly. Art 72. Prisoners of war shall be allowed to receive by post or by any other means individual parcels or collective shipments containing, in particular, foodstuffs, clothing, medical supplies and articles of a religious, educational or recreational character which

may meet their needs, including books, devotional articles, scientific equipment, examination papers, musical instruments, sports outfits and materials allowing prisoners of war to pursue their studies or their cultural activities.

The Geneva Conventions about mail prior to 1949, during World War II (WWII), were very similar, if not in most cases exactly the same. While mail from POWs held by the Japanese was limited, if not nearly nonexistent, the POW officers held by the Germans were able to send out three brief fold-up letters and four small (half normal size) postcards per month. POW NCOs and other ranks were allowed two letters and four postcards and medical personnel were allowed to send twice their rank allowance of mail. Mail went into two censors. First, a designated prisoner in each block screened the mail to ensure that no important information was being revealed to the Germans. Mail received by the POWs was not always favorable. In some cases, people wrote the soldiers/airmen about their "cowardice" in being captured. This in-house censor stopped any negative comments going out in reply to those negative comments coming in (anything to aid the war effort). The Germans, the second censors, struck out anything they thought was code or derogatory and offensive about the Germans. POW mail was used to maintain a lifeline with home, maintain survival needs, and to aid in escapes. POWs requested uniform/clothing items and food, not only to keep warm and healthy, but also to continue to combat the enemy behind the wire by escape attempts. An RAF NCO named George Grimson, used a combination of POW mail, the local mail, and shrewd judgment of character, to create and operate a secret escape line in enemy-occupied territory. He organized a line to the Baltic Ports, recruiting Poles and Germans, and established safe houses to get his fellow POWs

out, while he was both a POW and after his escape.

Even though mail for the most part was a morale booster, not every letter was a good one. Bad letters had some dramatic effects on the emotional stability of the POW. One of the most devastating ones was the "Dear John" or "Mespot" letters (term taken from a Royal Air Force (RAF) man's five-year tour in Mesopotamia). The letter would tell the POW that the girlfriend or wife had left him, because he had been too long behind barbed wire. The classic example of this in Luft Stalag III was so good, that the individual allowed it to be posted on the bulletin board (a common practice of the RAF POWs, so the individual did not have to carry the burden alone) and made the POW's paper, The Circuit. It was a letter from his fiancée: *"Darling, you have been gone so long that I've married your father. Love, Mother."*

The mail related articles of the conventions were exploited by the Allied services in many ways during WWII. The USA developed MIS-X from the British MI-9 example. MIS-X, America's ultra-secret "Escape Factory", was the architect (along with MI-9) of WWII's most heroic prison camp breaks, including the "Great Escape" and the breaching of Colditz Castle. MIS-X had several mission objectives. One objective was to acquire information concerning POW locations, conditions of imprisonment, opportunities for escape, reasons for escape failures, and other pertinent intelligence. Another objective was to maintain communication between POWs and the U.S. War Department. Many of those who were captured carried with them critical information making them invaluable links in MIS-X's vital communication network. Additionally, while training air and ground forces in E&E tactics and procedures, some of the briefers were secretly selecting two men from each squadron and battalion to teach them the letter codes used in the Creamery (the code name for the POW mail decoding center). Each trained code user (CU) was given a code name and instructed that, if captured, he was to advise his camp's Allied commanding officer that he was a code user and possessed the means of maintaining contact with the

Hidden Map

U.S. War Department. Using the prevailing U.S. mail system, the CU would write a conventional letter to a family member and conceal within it a coded message. The CU had no idea how or by whom that coded

message would be intercepted, only that somehow it would reach the proper authorities in the U.S. government. Knowledge of these codes was the only secret MIS-X information to which the briefers were ever privy, and so guarded was this information that not even every briefer was taught the codes, only those who were considered most trustworthy and competent. However, by the war's end, this system had become so efficient that MIS-X briefers had taught 7,724 military personnel the letter codes. MIS-X was able to maintain constant communication with American POWs in virtually every German POW camp. In fact, the first signal or letter received from an American POW was from Lt Colonel Clark, who during his stay in Luft Stalag III, became the North Compound's "Big S" or head of security and escapes.

To help the POWs as directly as possible, MIS-X followed MI-9's example of creating fictitious humanitarian societies through which they could, under the Geneva Conventions, send packages to the POWs without raising any suspicions (England had 36 such societies). MIS-X developed two of these "humanitarian societies", the War Prisoner's Benefit Foundation and the Servicemen's Relief. They would take information received from coded messages, and then by using the guise of "humanitarian societies" and a secret factory (to develop escape aids and equipment) send what the POWs needed. Starting in 1943, the packages sent from these "humanitarian societies" were a food parcel, which would always be strictly humanitarian and contain no escape aids; a clothing parcel, which would be loaded with escape aids; and a recreational parcel, having the greatest amount of escape aids, since they could be loaded within the papers, boards and pieces of equipment within the games. Over a 3-year period, the trained CUs not only reported to London and MIS-X the set-up of camps, staffing, status and identities of POWs, escape plans, and intelligence data, but also were able to advise the US of technical problems on aircraft, impediments with equipment and dangerous areas for escapees and evaders throughout Europe. One message that made its way out of the camps came from B-17 crewmen who advised MIS-X of critical problems with hatches on the noble Flying Fortress. Within days, the problem was fixed. Such masses of information not only aided the war effort, but allowed briefers to give Airmen a better chance of survival and

in the event of capture, a procedure to follow to support or contact camp escape committees.

U.S. and British E&E agencies, under the cover of the Aide Societies, were able to supplant the POW's starvation diet, which saved countless lives. They shipped hundreds of thousands of food items, such as coffee, sugar, pate, cheese, oleo, biscuits, canned meats, dried fruit, salmon, and powdered milk. Cigarettes, soap, and coffee created a POW currency with which to trade and bribe guards. Blankets and uniforms became lederhosen and peasant clothes for escapees that were fashioned by POW tailors using razor blades to etch perfect patterns in the wool cloth. MIS-X hand loaded many of their E&E devices at worktables in Virginia. Monopoly and checkerboards were loaded with currency, maps, and forged documents. Cribbage boards were actually radios; chess pieces, shaving brushes, and other handle items were full of compasses and money. Decks of playing cards, when stripped of their backs and laid out, became full-color, silk maps of Europe. Rubber shoe heels were carved with VISA and official stamps to be imprinted on the forged papers. Even complete photograph equipment and a hand-operated printing press were sent to the camps in pieces. The POWs under the "watchful eye" of their guards or sometimes the other way around, would receive and sort the mail, in some cases smuggling out items before the Germans saw what was in the parcels.

The mail was used against the Japanese POWs held within the United States. Often the interrogators would threaten to send a picture of the POW being a captive to the POW's family (being captured was considered a disgraceful, cowardly thing within the POW's culture). So instead of the POW's family being ashamed, the Japanese POW would give our interrogators information.

My favorite mail related incident occurred to a WWII POW,

Hidden Radio

Colonel Jerry Sage, "the Cooler King of Luft Stalag III". After being released from his seventh stretch of solitary in the Stalag Luft cooler (August 1943), Colonel Sage was greeted with a bit of comic relief in the small stack of mail that had built-up. There was an official letter for Jerry M. Sage, from the draft board in San Francisco, notifying him that he was late in reporting to his draft board and that Uncle Sam wanted him. If he did not respond in thirty days they would come and get him. By that time he had spent over a year on very active duty with the Office Of Special Services (OSS) and six months on and off as a POW. He wrote the draft board to hurry and come and get him, and that he would be waiting for them.

The first real test of the 12 August 1949 Geneva Convention's mail articles (70 – 77) were during the Korean War. While the Koreans did allow a very limited amount of mail and capture cards to be sent and received, they mostly used the mail for their own purposes against the POWs. They would take the incoming mail and use the information gained against the POWs. Mail that was given to the POWs would usually contain bad news, such as deaths in the family, Dear Johns, and other spirit breaking events that would weaken their will to resist and even live. Letters that the POWs were allowed to write, unless coerced for propaganda (positive statements) were mostly used to find what the POW was thinking, feeling, and any possible weaknesses that could be exploited.

The Vietnam Conflict saw mail take on a more prominent role for the POW, but unfortunately still used against them by their captors. Lt Colonel Jay Jensen wrote that until late 1969, only about 110 POWs were allowed to write at all to their families, and only about 250 letters were actually received from 1964 through 1968. After October 1969, over 200 additional POWs were allowed to write and up to September 1970, over 1,200 more letters were received. The first letter he was allowed to write and receive occurred at that time. He also goes on to say that if the POWs had been allowed to write/send mail in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions, that at one point their families would have received over 9,000 letters each month. Lt Colonel Jensen received about 20 letters during his six years as a POW, but none were received the first three years with the majority received in his last month. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam also said that families could send one package/parcel every two months. He received seven in his six years. In two cases that I know of, POWs literally found bushel baskets and desk drawers filled with letters and photographs from home. The letters that they were usually allowed to write and receive were on a specific format, only six short lines. Since the POWs would spend weeks composing the letter in their minds and then memorizing them prior to being allowed to write the letters, they could usually jam a lot of information into the short time period allowed for writing. Lt Colonel Jensen also talks about printing so small, that he could get almost 150 words on to the

cards. Exceptions to the six-line format occurred during special propaganda opportunities, such as when western anti-war visitors would take mail "home" for the POWs. Anything of a religious nature, mention of God, specific dates, or not understood by the Vietnamese would be censored. Several POWs took to putting something to be censored within the first line, figuring that after one thing wrong was found the censor would stop. Additionally, every man in a cell would put his fingerprints on outgoing mail, no matter how slim the probability of that technique working.

Lt. Commander Joseph Plumb talks about receiving mail, while his two cellmates did not. While his cellmates were happy for him and enjoyed hearing his news, they all equally shared in the excitement of the stamps (Thomas Jefferson and a Boeing 707 aircraft) attached to his envelope. Lt. Commander Plumb talked about the plans he and his cellmates made after hearing over the loud speaker that the peace loving Democratic Republic of Vietnam was allowing packages to be received by the POWs. When they finally received them, most of the items were gone. He also talked about the POWs seeing the photographs of their loved ones and noticing that in most of the pictures the women were wearing a silver bracelet, no matter what else they had on or the occasion. They did not understand the significance of the VIVA bracelets, till a recent Pilot arrival to the Hanoi Hilton had one on. In fact, the name on it was one of his fellow POWs.

Colonel Edward Hubbard once wrote, "The food is really great here. The only thing which could make it better is a big glass of Alka-Seltzer." In his next package, he received what the Vietnamese thought was candy. Colonel Hubbard gulped the Alka-Seltzer down to settle the cabbage soup he had just eaten.
Captain Eugene McDaniel (Navy) constantly asked to write home, but was told, "When your attitude improves, you will be able to write." He and his other cellmates tried the fingerprint on the letter return of those allowed to write home. Captain McDaniel's asked one of his fellow POWs, Major Tom Sterling, when he wrote his wife to ask her to donate money to a scholarship fund Captain McDaniel's wife's parents had founded in the hopes that they would figure it out. Even though his attitude never changed, after three years he was allowed to write home (after his name and been released by the Vietnamese). Captain McDaniel also mentions that POWs tried to use growing a beard as a protest, since the Vietnamese did not like them. They

would shave the beards off, if they were allowed to write home.

Lt Commander James Stockdale's first two letters to his wife had phrases and hidden messages about some of his fellow POWs who were listed as Killed in Action. He also wrote "there was cold and darkness, even at noon." This was identified as a reference to the book Darkness at Noon, which describes life in a communist prison.

Each letter was a top priority in the POW's communication net. Many of the POW's wives applied word associations in their notes. Sometimes the message was clear, such as in the case of a promotion, "You are a major factor in my plans." or "The tree in our backyard has sprouted silver oak leaves." But often the word associations just resulted in the POW asking, "What do you think she means by this?" Vietnamese selection for letter writing opportunities seemed given mostly to POWs who had been publicized by propaganda. So many hard cases would go from leg irons to writing a letter and then right back to leg irons. **"Good" behavior in no way guaranteed that you would get to write home.**

The following were just a few of the advantages to writing and receiving letters and packages from home. With a little fore thought prior to writing a letter, any gains by the enemy are minimal, while your gains as a POW are amazing. Whether it is communicating intelligence information, specifics on treatment, getting much needed supplies/food, captor behavior, names of your fellow POWs, or just finding out what has happened to your loved ones, mail is an important tool in fighting the battle behind the wire.
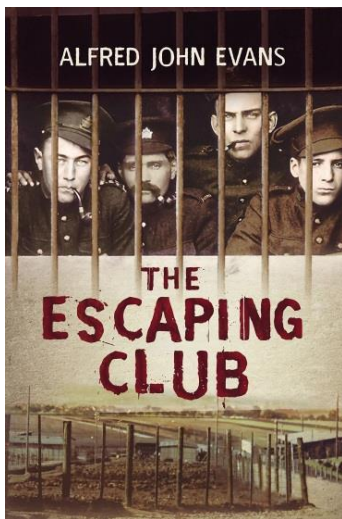
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Recommended Reading
By SURVIVOR Staff

Title: **The Escaping Club**
Author   Alfred John Evans
Publisher   Fonthill Media (April 2, 2013)
ISBN   1781551235, 978-1781551233
Length   241 pages

Alfred John Evans was a reconnaissance pilot officer with 3rd Squadron Evans of the United Kingdom's Royal Flying Corps in World War I. On 16 July 1916, while over enemy territory, his engine failed, crash landing his aircraft. He and his observer were surrounded by German soldiers. Evans was sent to a POW camp in Gutersloh where he made an unsuccessful escape attempt. From there he was sent to a camp in Clausthal (now called Clausthal-Zellerfeld), he evaded almost to the Dutch border before being captured. As a consequence of his two escape attempts from the German POW camps, he was moved to Fort 9 in Ingolstadt. Fort 9 was the "Colditz" of World War I, a supposedly "escape proof" camp where the German military collected all those POWs who had made multiple escape attempts from other camps.

There were about 150 officer prisoners of different nationalities in Fort 9, with at least 130 of these had successfully broken out from three days to three weeks of other camps. Evens writes in his book that over 75% of the POWs held at Fort 9 were in a constant state of scheming and working to escape again. The how-to and best-ways to escape was the most topic of conversation in any language. The POWs pooled their skills they learned, their areas of expertise, and their experiences to help each other to escape, quite regardless of risk or the punishment.

In summer 1917, Evans finally succeeded in his escape with a fellow officer journeying to freedom in Switzerland. Following repatriation, recuperation, and re-training, Evans was sent to Palestine early in 1918, where again his engine failed and he was captured by the Turks (approximately 7 months prior to the ending of the war). He suffered poor treatment from the Turks, but succeeded in escaping through bribery.

Evans' book influenced an entire generation of young men between the World Wars. Several World War II escapers referred specifically to Evans book as an inspiration, motivating many a POW's desire in making a "home run" back to friendly forces. During England's initial entry into World War II, Christopher Clayton-Hutton, a British intelligence officer who worked for MI9 to create escape and evasion gear for British servicemen and to design the methods to deliver them to prisoner of war camps, enlisted Evans' help as a subject matter expert in escape. Evans was critical in providing insight into POW needs for preparing and evading in their escape attempts, as well as providing training and aids in escape and evasion (E&E). These same E&E training, items, and methods developed by MI9 were shared with the United States of America when the US entered into the war. In estimation these escape aids and training touched the majority of Allied troops who became isolated in the European theater during World War II.

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SKETCH-MAP SHOWING ROUTE OF ESCAPE FROM GERMANY
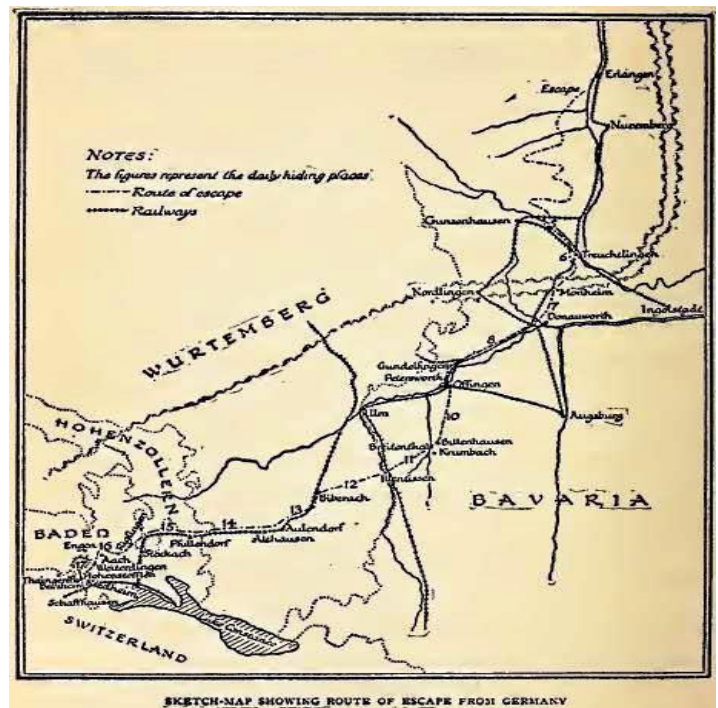
INTERNAL TRAINING - REINTEGRATION EXERCISE
By SURVIVOR Staff

Often, and many have heard me say this, we SERE Specialist get tagged as the greatest living training aid our organization can use. Not that I am disagreeing with that statement, but unfortunately being a great "training aid" may cause a SERE Specialists to miss out on their own training and practice for deployment/wartime duties. Add in diversified deployment missions, non-deployment operations having nothing to do with deployment operations, unit manning issues, and problems in doctrine and guidance may mean that a base level SERE Specialist have to fight to ensure they get any chance at deployment training. One deployment readying "internal" exercise most SERE locations can do, even on a shoe-string budget, is a Reintegration Exercise. Reintegration is one of those strange subjects that (and I believe correctly) SERE finds themselves the expert at, but also lacks the chance to practice and prepare. When exercises include reintegration, that part tends to be very quickly done or in some cases a pure after-thought. The development of some type of internal training to improve/increase your ability to conduct a reintegration is a very good "lean ahead" towards deployment preparation.

What I hope with article is that it may spark an idea, giving you, the reader, and a direction towards creating a training template which can help you. I realize that in some locations there is only one SERE Specialist (whether permanent or temporarily due to PCS), but even when there is only one of you some of these exercises can work, it is just harder to gain learning outcome/feedback.

I would break out your Reintegration Exercise by what you hope to accomplish. These goals and desired learning outcomes plus your experience and available resources would determine how complicated your exercise would be. There are some basics to a successful exercise, creating and conducting a good exercise is important, because no one wants to waste their time and (just as important to a SERE Specialist) no one wants to look stupid or wrong in front of others.

Some basic things to do for any type of reintegration exercise are:

a) **LOOK AT THE ORGANIZATION'S AND YOUR MISSION AND TDYS.** Look at the standard locations you and your folks deploy too. By using these locations you may get more buy in from your chain of command.

b) **WHAT ARE THE STANDARD REINTEGRATION AND PR PRACTICES IN YOUR AOR?** Also look at the potential for terrorist or criminal interaction. Do the personnel on your base (not just the aircrews) deploy and go TDY to locations were terrorist tend to kidnap and take folks hostage? Find out what the local criminal's and terrorist's tactic, techniques and procedures for kidnapping/hostage taking are. Is it a money making operation or to cause terror?

c) **RESEARCH! RESEARCH! RESEARCH!** Read the After Action Reports (AAR) and SITREPs of reintegration. Read any reports or exercise that involved reintegration, learning from others mistakes and successes. Review DODI 2310.4, DODI 3115.10E, AFI 10-3001, and JP3-50 figuring out which are directive in nature or guidance. What are the standards that are established by DOD, USAF, and your MAJCOM? Also find out if your deployment location has any reintegration CONOPS or guidance from the COCOM that you should be familiar with, then get familiar with them.

d) **ALWAYS HOTWASH.** It doesn't matter if the exercise was quick or long, good or bad, and even if everything went perfectly (*which perhaps is indicator of bigger problems*) **always, always, always** hot wash afterwards. By providing feedback to each other and voicing the positive and the negative aspects of the event you can capture areas that need improvement, develop a better plan of attack/execution for future exercise, increase exercise running abilities, and enhance realism. During and after the hot wash document everything and then write it up into a lessons learned or an After Action Report; this way you are creating an internal training program, establishing future standards and events, and leaving behind good things for the next folks that show up.

Once you have these basics down, what you hope to achieve/practice will determine which type of reintegration exercise you are going to conduct. Below

are five templates/outlines from simple to complex reintegration exercises.

Keep it Simple. The simplest type of reintegration exercise would involve the people and items you have control over. This type of exercise could accomplish a great deal, the focus would be on the individual tasking of a SERE Specialist doing their deployed reintegration task of a SERE Debriefer and/or Team NCOIC of a Phase I or a Phase II reintegration. Some exercise ideas and learning objectives you could do are:

a) **PRACTICE REINTEGRATION SET-UP.** If you have a reintegration kit pull it out and set up everything, making sure you have all the parts, pieces, and know how to use them. Time yourself. Do you actually have everything you need? Are you self-sufficient if you deployed to a location where SERE had never been before? Some helpful things I did with the first kit I developed (02-03) was a checklist book for the kit itself with inspection sheets, list of items, and references/links on a CD. I also kept a copy of my courier letter and had a classified media (in the vault) which went with the kit when I deployed. I repeated this same process when I became the Reintegration Operations Manager at HQ ACC focused on Phase III.

b) **PRACTICE THE SET UP OF THE REINTEGRATION TEAM.** Practice and review what steps you would do if you came to a bare base operation and had to establish a reintegration team, determining what agencies you have to engage to get the things you need to conduct a reintegration and, just as importantly, how would you justify it. Create whatever documents and information you feel would be useful to those agencies and help them understand the role they play and the returnee's situation.

c) **TESTING YOUR CHECKLISTS.** These checklists could be ones you developed or "issued" ones from deployed locations; check their functionality; ensuring that they make sense. Testing your checklists identifies things that can be accomplished easily, what tasks should be lumped together or divided apart, and what is needed to support the members of the Reintegration team and the returnee.

d) **DO A TABLE-TOP DISCUSSION ABOUT REINTEGRATION.** Develop a likely scenario where you would have to conduct a reintegration and then discuss how you would accomplish it. Talk about how you would prepare for a reintegration, the resources you would need, and then focus towards conducting a reintegration with one IP and/or several. This develops a mental map for you, any other SERE Specialist, and other reintegration team members (i.e. Intel, PA, etc.), allowing all of you to brainstorm without the pressure of having to have an IP on the way. If you use a facilitator, have that individual think up problems and possible obstacles to continue to challenge your tabletop process. This lets you *talk through* and mentally rehearse your quick response actions.

e) **RUN A RETURNEE SCENARIO.** Develop an IP scenario to conduct your quick response actions. If you have two SERE Specialists available, have one play the IP so the other(s) could practice logistics, procedures, questions, and completing an AAR, plus this gives you a SERE perceptive for feedback. If you don't really want to develop your own scenario then grab one of the real-world AARs or take your own operators mission add in the possibility of isolation in either form (evasion or captivity). Start out with the basics of a scenario, i.e. USAF airmen has have been rolled up by a foreign military, allow the "reintegration team" to have some time to get support material such as maps, the foreign military information and political figures, historical treatment, a game plan for conducting the Phase I, and etc. Then the captives are returned after 40 hours, the "reintegration team" is notified that the returnee is on route and arriving within 1 hour. The SERE Specialist who plays the IP acts as the evaluator, they develop problems and obstacles during debriefing. Go through the entire reintegration process from the initial file, SITREPS, and the AAR which goes to the JPRC. Conclude the exercise with feedbacks after the exercise. This exercise would test all capabilities within the confines of a deployed SERE Specialist.

Complex Reintegration Exercises. A complex reintegration exercise is when accomplishment of your learning objectives involves other agencies, people, and items you do not have direct control over. You could conduct this type first or go from simple-to-complex. A complex exercise allowing more moving parts would force SERE to have a broader focus/influence as the reintegration SME; such as preparing other team members and accomplishing logistics of a reintegration. These objectives would also provide others the opportunity (particularly Intel) to practice their roles during a reintegration. The more involvement with

people and things you do *not* control, the more complicated the Reintegration Exercise gets, the more *buy-in* you might need from your chain of command.

Depending on what your objectives, the organizations involved, and learning outcome are you might be able to coordinate simply using a handshake agreement, but take it from me, get a Using a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) whenever possible. Using a MOA or MOU establishes everyone's tasks are and what is to be accomplished avoiding some confusion and the "I didn't know" excuses. The more moving parts involved the better it is to spell everything out, but you know your base better than anyone else. You know the folks (and their bosses) who can be counted on to support and who can be counted on to drop the ball. It also establishes a history and when people change it shows what agencies have committed too in the past. Most often handshake deals do not last past the person who shook on it PCS.

Several outside agencies have tasks within their AFIs that deal with returnees, so incorporating folks like Base Legal and Public Affairs in regards to a returned IP may be easy. You may also be able to attach yourself on already established exercises, just adding the reintegration part in. See if Security Forces or OSI do any type of terrorist/hostage or EPW exercise, if they do, you may easily be able to roll into this with your piece of the pie – reintegration a la mode.

You may already have an MOA which can be used to support a reintegration exercise. AFI 16-1301, *Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Program* and AFI 14-105, *Unit Intelligence Mission and Responsibilities* identifies a need to have Intelligence and SERE Specialists' responsibilities delineated. The ACC Supplement to AFI 16-1301 and AFI 14-105 states that a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) should be used to spell out this delineation. Look at your MOA with the Intelligence Section, is their participation in SERE/Personnel Recovery related exercise part of this? Can it be read into some other part of the MOA? If that doesn't work, then talk to the Intelligence E&R Rep to get them involved, then add it in to the next re-write of your MOA. Selling points are a reintegration exercise fills some of Intel's training requirements in debriefing and deployment. It helps them meet requirements levied

by DODI 2310.4, DODI 3115.10E , AFI 10-3001, JP3-50, and for those in ACC, AFSOC and PACAF, it helps them prepare for their Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) AFI 90-201, like it helps you for your SERE ORI. ORI preparation is also good justification on getting your Operations Group Commander and chain of command to support your exercise.

Another avenue to get critical support personnel to participate in your reintegration exercise, I picked up during ANGEL THUNDER 2014 was from Col Poppen, Joint Personnel Recovery Agency's Deputy Director of Human Factors and lead for DOD's SERE Psychologist. Col Poppen recommended checking with your MAJCOM PR Branch or a nearby Army or Navy installation to see if there are any local SERE Psychologists which may be able to support your exercise. Having a SERE Psychologist participate in your exercise can enhance the total learning outcome of the event.

As far as the complex reintegration exercises go, use the five templates/outlines for simple exercises then add in the other players and resources; making them as complex as you want. Your exercise choices are still based off what you want to practice (learning outcome) and what you can accomplish. You can mix and match how much additional support you receive i.e. the only outside agency is have the returnee played by a non-SERE Specialist freeing up the SERE folks for other roles or going through Reintegration Team training with every one of the participating outside agencies.

Having talked reintegration operations with countless individuals, the one constant is that each reintegration experiences is different. But each of these individuals agreed that a solid background in conducting one make the logistical nightmares that come up easier to deal with, and, most importantly, don't affect the welfare of the returnee(s). A reintegration internal training exercise would be able to allow you to practice, maintain, and improve skills you may be called on to employ. An exercise focused on this task of reintegration would allow you to develop core skills that can be drawn on when the real thing occurs. By controlling what and how much you want to do for these reintegration exercises, you can make the training worthwhile and get the most bang for your training buck.

Century Plant
By SURVIVOR Staff

The agave plant (genus agave), also known as the century plant for the incorrect idea that they needed 100 years to flower and reach maturity, is made up of over 200 species that are found throughout the southwest United States, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Region. The other misconception about agave (also yuccas and ocotillo) is that while it has cacti characteristics, it is not a cactus.

The species differ in their flowers, stalks-leaves, how often they produce a stem, and where they grow, but most tend to be similar in their look and characteristics.

While Mexico has the highest diversity of species, there are more than a dozen different types growing naturally in Arizona. Oddly enough, some agave species have also ended up on several barren planets explored by the original Star Trek series, along with Joshua Trees.

The agave species tend to grow in gravelly plains, rocky slopes, hillsides, and sometimes under desert trees. The agave has a unique and distinctive look especially when the center stalk has started to grow or is flowering. It has such a distinctive look that once learned it is easily identified and recognized even from some-what similar plants species, the yucca (incredibly enough the yucca has a lot of the same uses as the agave).

While the agave's leaves differs in exact shape and size per species (all growing at least 1', but as much as 5'),

they all grow stiff, succulent, and armed with a sharp edges and sturdy spines (either around the leaf or at the tip), for example the *agave schottii* is known as shindagger. All agave leaves grow in rosettes; a circular or spiral cluster of leaves at the base of the stem of the plant. Some species of agave can flower in less than a decade, while the slowest growing species may take perhaps 50 years to mature to the flowering point. Agave plants will send up a single sturdy center stalk. This center stalk will produce a pyramid-shaped cluster of flowers differing in color (species specific-yellow, green-yellow, blue-green, etc.) sometime from May to August. After the flowers have set fruit, the stalk will die and in the majority of cases the entire plant will die. The dried flower stalks and their cluster hard seed capsules are very prominent for months – the lone dead dried agave on a hill has often looked to me like a weird version of a radio antenna.

For non-isolating situations you should check local and state regulations, since it may be illegal to harvest this plant. Also from personal experience many businesses that have planted agave for "ornamental reasons" tend to be litigious when it comes to you harvesting any part of it. On the other hand I have seen places remove the agave very shortly after it flowers, so this may be a procurement method to obtain one without having to forage in the wilderness.

Historically the agave plants have provided food, drinks, soap, cord, tinder, sewing awls, and more. One caution when using agave is that for some individual's the juice of the fresh agave leaves can cause a rash or itching. Let us look at some of the more basic uses of agave:

FOOD: Almost every part of the agave is edible, depending on the time of year and the level of its maturity.

Harvest the rootstock and thick stem for eating. Dig up the leaf rosettes, trim off the leaves as close to the base as possible, and then roast or bake the remaining base, a large starchy core called the caudex (rootstock and basal stem). The *best*

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time to harvest this, for starch content, is just as the flowering stalk starts to emerge. When I have done this I created a baking pit/rock oven to bake the root core (if at home, bake at 300°-350°). Bake the core and center stalk for several hours. Some manuals will state 24 hours, but I have cooked agave core for about 8-12 hours to perfection, tasting like a sweet squash. The type of species, the size, the time of year of harvesting, as well as cooking time, thoroughness, and temperatures will affect taste varying from sweet into bitter or even a bit soapy.

Cut off the top two or three feet of the center stalk when it first starts to grow (before any flower branches start), it looks similar to a giant-sized asparagus. Peel the fibrous outer rind leaving the inside which is very edible. Similar to a turnip or yam in texture and flavor, it can be eaten n be eaten raw, bake, boil, or roast it. Baking usually produces the best taste. This stalk will occur when the plant is mature enough to flower and eventually die. Multiple references state that the plant's instinct to seed is so compelling that when you cut off the stalk another will develop.

The yellow pollen of the agave is a high protein food source. As spring occurs, the pollen becomes bright yellow and very powdery. To collect it, place a flexible paper or plastic bag (I have used a 5 quart) over the pollen stems, try angling the stalk downwards and knock/tap the stalk or side of bag so that the pollen falls into the bag, collecting as much as possible. You can add pollen to stews, baked items, and any type of soup. The pollen mixed with water then mashed into a cake or tortilla which can be sunbaked, flat-rock baked, cook kit baked, or wrapped in foil/leaves under a hot bed of coals tasting pretty good once it is "baked". Slide a plastic or paper bag (I used a five quart water bag) over the pollen laden

stems, shake and knock the stem until as much pollen as possible fills the bag. Obviously, pollen can also be mixed with any type of flour too.

Died after Flowering

The flowers of an agave can be boiled or added to a stew. They can also be added to anything baked or baked on their own. The petals can be mashed into a paste sautéed or baked into a patty on their own or with other edibles.

Agave fruit is best eaten when tender; the older they are the less palatable. They tend to have a sweet taste with a slightly bitter after flavor. They can be boiled, roasted, or baked. I have boiled them and then baked/sautéed them which has improved the taste. I have also treated them like a baked potato either wrapping them in foil (or not) and placing them on hot coals baking them for 30-60 minutes.

The flat black seeds are used in a variety ways, either group into flour for bread-type products, or cooked into a porridge-like mush.

DRINK: Agave plants also serve as the base product to create tequila (blue agave plant primarily from the area surrounding the city of Tequila) and mescal (agave americana). The leaves are cut away from the center core. The core is put into an oven to be slowly baked breaking down their complex starches into simple sugars. Then, the baked cores are either shredded or mashed under a large stone wheel called a *tahona*. The pulp fiber left behind is often reused as compost or animal feed, but can even be burnt as fuel or processed into paper. The extracted agave juice is then poured into either large wooden or stainless steel vats for several days to ferment, resulting in a wort, liquid extracted from the mashing process during the brewing of beer or whisky, with low alcohol content. This wort is then distilled once to produce what is called *"ordinario"*, and then a second time to produce clear "silver" tequila. The tequila is either bottled as silver tequila, or it is pumped

into wooden barrels to age, where it develops a mellower flavor and amber color.

SOAP: Soap has been made using the leaves as well as the core. Cut the thicker part of the leaves and/or core into thin strips. If water is available, gather the thin strips into a bundle, wet them, and then roll them between your hands working them back and forth until lather starts, add more water as needed. If water is not available, then follow the same process but without wetting the bundle.

Close-up of Agave Flowers

CORD: Agave leaves create a great fiber which makes a strong cord. There are two methods depending on if the plant is alive or dead. When alive, clip the leaves from the base into thin strips putting them out to air dry. Pound and twist the dry leaves to separate the fibers from the following material then braid and weave them into cordage as needed. When the leaves are already dead and dried, cut the dead leaves into strips and then roll and twist the strips until they are reduced to fibers. Wetting the strips prior to agitating them (similar to the soaping effect) may help in working with the leaf strips and keeping them from breaking. Once the strips are broken down into fibers braid and weave them into cordage as needed.

TINDER: Cut into the stalk of a dead (desert dried) agave plant. Cut into the hard outer rind of the dried

stalk to reach the soft pithy inside. This pith makes good tinder. The pith can easily be hollowed out of the stalk with a sharp knife or stick.

NEEDLE: Cut and dried (or without drying) fat or thin the agave leaf tip as a needle or awl for sewing or weaving. I have also grabbed the tip of an agave leaf (below the thorn-tip) bent it back and forth against itself so the tip breaks and pulled so that some of the plant fiber comes away with it creating an already threaded needle/awl.

WATER: While I have never actually done this I have read in two different references that the agave can be used to get water similar to a banana plant. *Reader is warned this part is total book-learning*. Find an agave with the center stalk. Cut the central stalk horizontally leaving no more of the stalk then the height of the leaves. Hollow out the core of the stalk creating a basin/cup-like area, cover it, and then come back after a few hours to allow the water to fill in from the roots. Drinkable water will seep into the stalk basin-bowl, continuing to fill approximately a quart a day for up to a month. The water is supposed to be sweet and can be drank as-is without purifying.

These basic uses of the agave just touch the surface, historically the agave has also been used in storage containers/quivers, baskets weaving, making paper-like material, sandals, and other uses. How helpful this distinctive desert plant might be is completely up to how effective a problem-solver the IP is and what their needs are.

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