

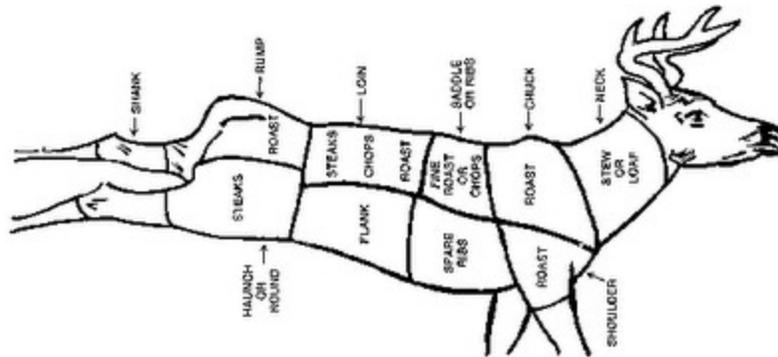
## YO HO, A PARTISAN'S LIFE FOR ME...I THINK NOT



One never knows what the future may hold. Our entire infrastructure has become completely interdependent, and is amazing fragile. It really wouldn't take much to put the whole deal tits up. A rogue nuclear power detonating an EMP nuke high in the stratosphere could turn out the lights for good. There are wars and rumors of war. In a time of great social unrest, the big cities would quickly starve and then burn. Balkanization of a bunch of increasingly Disunited States is not that far-fetched of a scenario if the economy crumbles completely. An over-bearing despotic government could declare war on its own citizens. Even a natural disaster such as a large volcano could wreck havoc over a huge area.

Far too many folks look at survival after SHTF as a pretty easy deal... "I'll just go out in them thar hills and shoot me a deer." This simplistic view is so far off the mark as to be ridiculous. Especially if feeding a family or group of personnel for survival or partisan operations. The bare-bone basics will come back into play. There will be no microwave ovens, you won't be able to run down to the Kwiki-Mart to pick up forgotten ingredients from Apu, and you can only lug along so many MRE's. When you run out of bullets and beans you certainly won't have the option of radioing in a Blackhawk or two full of goodies.

Once upon a time, up to about World War Two, the nation was still mostly independent farmers as Jefferson intended. These farm families were familiar with butchering their own cattle and hogs, baking bread, and a host of other now long-dead skills. Even the vast majority of modern “outdoorsmen” who kill a deer every fall can do nothing more than field dress it. Then they drag it off to the local meat locker to be processed into summer sausage and call it good.



**So, can you turn a deer into these cuts?**

When you factor in even a small family, let alone a fighting group, all problems are greatly expanded. Let’s take a quick peek at the kind of vittles enjoyed, and the life lived by, the Soviet Partisans living and fighting behind German lines during the Second World War. The movie *Defiance*, obviously an aberration in Hollywood, actually gives a fairly decent overview of the entire development and existence of these Partisans. Lest ye think that the life of a freedom fighter is nothing more than spectacularly successful ambushes, adulation by the beautiful woman partisan, and a quick, easy glorious victory after a short-term fight, here’s a more realistic non-Hollyweird view, based upon the real-life experiences of the Soviet Partisan.

**"Thus the partisans had to live off the land. Foraging became a major activity, almost the exclusive occupation of some units. A captured partisan gave this description of the food situation in his brigade:**

**We brought ten horses along to the camp and, in the course of the month, slaughtered and consumed eight of them. It was possible to secure enough potatoes by uncovering the storage bins of the burned-out villages in the neighborhood. In the same fashion, we secured some rye. In a village eleven kilometers from the camp, we found a larger supply of unthreshed rye which we threshed and milled, using millstones found in the village."**

(It has been said of the average American that if he were given a ten-pound bag of flour, he would starve to death using as a pillow. Where would you find grain in the first place? If you found unthreshed wheat, would you know how to winnow it from the chaff? Would you know how to grind it into flour? Besides dedicated grain crops, do you know what wild plants in your area could be used in lieu of such crops?)

Grain in the form of wheat, barely, corn, or rye can be found in great quantities in both grain elevators as well as storage bins on farms and ranches. In case of a SHTF type disaster, it may be still in the fields on the stalk, and picked by hand. The grain kernels had to be flailed to knock them off the stalks. The Indians used a blanket to toss the wheat and chaff up in the air and catch it, doing it on a windy day to blow away the lighter chaff. The same can be done by shaking the grain out of a bucket from a high area or ladder onto a tarp on a windy day. Grinding stones can be found, and have been used for centuries, but you could get a real cheap enough grinder now. Books such as the *Encyclopedia of Country Living* or the *Foxfire* books explain in detail how folks did many of the things mentioned here in "the good old days".)

**"Irregularity characterized the partisan food supply. A given unit might eat well for several weeks or months and then be reduced to sheer starvation for a similar period. There was a chronic shortage of salt, which was sometimes brought in from Soviet territory. [References to the salt shortage appear repeatedly in the documents pertaining to the food situation and partisan morale. The shortage also affected the civilian population. The Germans frequently used salt as a premium for extra work.]"**

(How much salt do you have on hand? How could you improvise any? Would you think of pulverizing cattle blocks? If by the sea, could you figure out a method of distilling sea water into salt?)

**"Horsemeat, potatoes, and unmilled grain were the staple items of the diet. Some of the large brigade complexes gained virtual control of extensive districts, where they were able to regulate the food supply to some extent by establishing storage centers, gathering herds of cattle, requisitioning from the peasants, and controlling the rations of their subordinate units. The complexes, however, had the nearly fatal tendency to overstrain the resources of their zones of operation. At best they managed to achieve a delicate balance between consumption and supply. If a German counter-operation intervened to upset that balance the recovery of the entire complex was often seriously delayed or rendered impossible."**

(Red meat, generally speaking, provides just about every element the human body needs, with the very major exception of Vitamin C. Early explorers in North America often succumbed to scurvy, not knowing that Vitamin C was all around them and could be provided by rose hips or pine needle tea.)

## **THE CAMP**

**"The permanent camp was a distinguishing characteristic of the Soviet partisan movement. The climate made substantial housing a necessity throughout the greater part of the year. In the main regions of partisan activity the terrain afforded cover for fairly extensive installations and Soviet preference for large units of 1,000 or more men led to reliance on a relatively secure permanent base rather than on mobility of the unit. The permanent camp was a characteristic of the first detachments organized early in 1941. Prior to the occupation, some of the most elaborate installations of the entire war were constructed in the Ukraine. One of these was described in a German report of 1942:**

**' . . . construction of the reinforced dugouts was ordered. Taking tactical considerations into account, the dugouts were arranged to form a triangle [three dugouts facing each other so that each could be covered by small arms fire from the other two]. Each dugout had space for fifteen to thirty men. The average size was eighteen by twenty feet, with small passages leading off from the sides for protection against shell fragments in case of attack. The depth at the entrance was about four feet, and the floor slanted toward the rear to a depth of nine feet. The doorway was slightly more than a yard high. Beside the door there was a glassed-in window which offered observation into the forest [and could serve as a fire port].'**

(Have you ever even dug a sizeable hole with hand-tools? Have you ever entrenched a standard fighting position? Could you do it with just an E-tool, or even improvised tools? Have you considered such things as drainage; i.e. putting trenches of porous buried gravel on all sides?)

**"The dugouts were blended into the forest cover. Trees of various sizes were planted on the roofs of the dugouts, and the excess earth from the excavations had been hauled away. A yard-wide passage ran down the center of each dugout. Wooden platforms built on either side of the passage served as bunks. The walls were faced with small logs, partly covered with boards. A stove for heating and cooking was built in one corner. Most of the cooking, however, was done in a separately constructed kitchen dugout. The chimneys ran up through the roofs,**

**usually into a tall tree, so that the smoke would be dispersed among the leaves and branches. Each dugout also had a table and benches."**

(How good would your camouflage be? Would you have to rely on artificial netting? Could you site it so that it blended well with nature by itself? Would you have to cut and replenish natural cammo materials such as tree branches or pine boughs.

One would think that the barren, treeless, snowy, wind-swept islands of the Aleutians would make concealment and camouflage of installations nearly impossible. The Japanese who occupied Attu Island proved otherwise:

*"As a rule, the Japanese constructed cooking and storage chambers, latrines, and bath houses by cutting into the sides of hills or banks. They made these structures blend with the surrounding terrain by grass covers, grass or straw, willow branches, and sometimes turf.*

*Office buildings, barracks, officers' quarters, radio installations, and hospitals in the more developed centers were generally constructed with only the roof extending above ground level (barabara type). The roofs had low peaks, casting only small shadows. The tops of these roofs were covered with sod, which formed a green carpet over each gable. The sod also helped to shed the rain, and gave limited protection from fragments of shells bursting nearby. Glass windows inserted near the gables as skylights were covered on top with loosely strewn grass to prevent daytime detection, while blackout curtains covered the windows at night."*

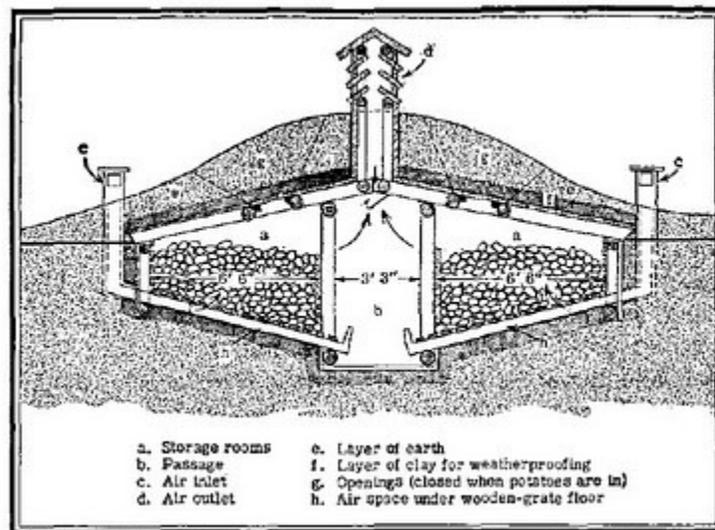
Another war-time Japanese method was, rather than use conventional sandbags in the usual manner, to build an outer layer consisting of rice straw bags filled with fertile dirt and seeded with grass or rice. Soon, the foliage grew up naturally from the porous bags, providing perfect maintenance-free camouflage. Burlap bags would serve just as well. Small trees may also be transplanted in front of or, depending on the construction, even on top of installations, as noted above.)

**"At the time the work on the dugouts was begun, large stocks of food—salt pork, beef, flour, and so forth—were brought into the forest and buried in sealed containers. The food caches were scattered over an extensive area and carefully concealed. Ammunition and explosives were stored in well-built underground storerooms, likewise well camouflaged."**

(Could you cache food so that it would not spoil? Do you have reference materials that could tell you how? Could you keep rodents out? How do you cache ammunition and weapons so that they will not be ruined by water or dampness?)

Survival in warm climates is easier, but the Germans and Soviets managed to survive in the bitter cold and deep snow of the Russian winters:

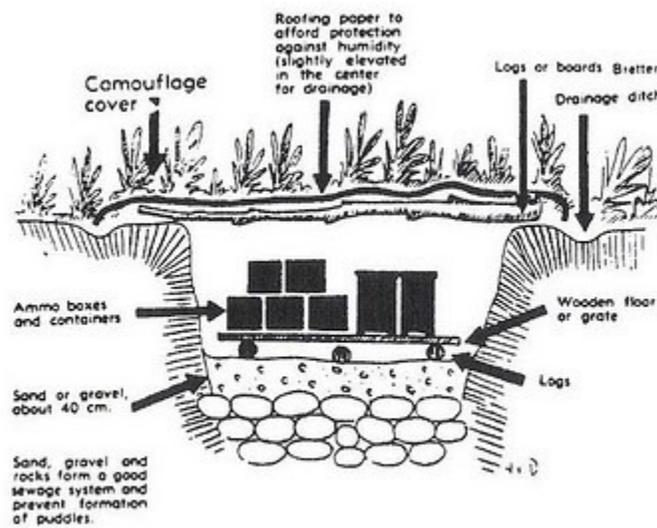
*In cold weather and snow it is necessary to adopt special measures for the transportation of food. The commissary wagons should be equipped with double walls filled in with hay, wood shavings, or sawdust for insulation against the cold. The floor should be well covered with straw, improvised mats, old baskets, or sacks. The food containers, crates, sacks, baskets, and bottles should also be covered with straw mats, blankets, old but clean sacks, and fir branches as protection against the cold. The insulating material must be kept dry at all times, or it will not accomplish its purpose. If possible, food should be transported around midday, when the temperature is somewhat warm.*



**Prefabricated rations hut installed underground for potato storage.**

*The precautions necessary for transportation also apply to the storage of small quantities of food. For the storage of larger quantities, use only dry cellars or frost-proof storerooms in houses or barracks. Where storerooms of this kind are lacking, the troops must improvise them before the cold weather sets in.*

The Swiss, a small neutral country surrounded by belligerents, make guerilla warfare by soldier and civilian alike a key point of their defensive tactics. In fact, during the Cold War they had an entire “civil defense” manual, *Total Resistance*, by Major H. Von Dach, that is definitely worth the price. As opposed to American Civil Defense, which consists mainly of huddling in the basement of city hall with a few cans of Korean War surplus foodstuffs and then obeying the weasely Quisling politicians who would fall all over themselves collaborating with the enemy, Swiss Civil Defense involved survival, guerrilla warfare and sabotage. Here is how they advise making an ammunition cache.



*“Construct a camouflaged ammunition cache. Humidity is the greatest enemy of ammunition; therefore the cache must be carefully constructed. Build a grate using boards and logs, so that the packages will not lie on the ground.*

*Leave an interval of about the width of a hand between boxes and containers to afford air circulation. Insert roof lath between rows to provide for air circulation. Air the depot by removing the roofing paper as often as possible.”*

**"The dugout (zemlyankd) described above was constructed according to specifications issued by the Soviet central authorities after it was learned that, left to themselves, the partisans were likely to solve their housing problems in various fanciful but impractical ways.**

The dugout became standard in all partisan areas, and the Germans were often moved to something approaching admiration for the simple utility and painstaking camouflage of the structures. A German lieutenant submitted the following report on an attempt to locate and destroy a partisan camp:

**“With a patrol composed of one officer, two NCO's, nine men, and thirteen OD men [indigenous police] I left Kletnya at 1230 to clean out this partisan nest. The patrol was guided by a captured partisan under guard. At the beginning we marched along fairly good sled trails. . . . Scattered blood stains on the snow indicated that we were on the right trail. [That same day, in a skirmish, German troops had captured two partisans and wounded several others.] After one hour we reached the end of the sled tracks.**

**From there on faint footprints were observed which followed winding forest paths. Here and there more blood stains appeared. Frequently, secondary tracks led off into the forest, obviously made to confuse pursuers. Zigzagging back and forth in the forest I lost my sense of direction, but I think we went in a generally northwesterly direction. At 1400 ... we came to a clearing. . . . According to the prisoner we were still about two miles from the camp.**

**Knee-high snow made movement difficult. . . . After another twenty minutes' march [we came to another small clearing where one track branched off to the left]. We had all gone on past, when an OD man who had followed that track called our attention to a man standing in a fir thicket sixty to seventy yards away. He had already opened fire on us. Splinters of birch twigs fell around me. We returned the fire as the man turned and ran. I sent several men [to cut him off].**

(Could you keep a base camp secure? Would you know how to assign sentry duty shifts, and know where to place them? If you had enough people, would you be able to set out LP/OP's? Do you know what LP/OP's are?)

**"With the OD men and three or four of our men, I formed a skirmish line and moved forward through the forest. The fleeing man, of whom we caught occasional glimpses through the trees, fired on us several more times. After we had moved on another 500 yards or so, I suddenly found myself in a clump of scattered fir trees. Catching sight of horses' hooves hanging out of the trees [carcasses hung there for storage], I thought I had come upon the dugout we were looking for. As I circled the spot, I was fired upon from nearby. I took cover and noticed for the first time an excellently camouflaged bunker-like structure about thirty yards away. I ordered hand grenades thrown into the bunker. ... It was empty. . . .The bunker was solidly built. The walls were made of five to six inch logs, extending only about a foot above the level of the ground. The dugout was covered with earth, with only the entrance and window left uncovered. The roof was**

**supported by two log beams and covered with a foot of ground. . . . The bunker on the inside measured about twenty-six feet in length, sixteen feet in width, and six feet in height. Nearby we found a supply of firewood, a kitchen dugout, and a well. The small stock of food was worthy of note."**

(Would your base camp be defensible, at least long enough for the majority of the group to escape? Have you thought of pre-arranged escape routes and rally points? Have you practiced an escape drill? Would the escape routes concealed or covered from enemy fire?)

David Hackworth noted this about how the VC escaped from American forces in Vietnam: *"When the attempt is made to seal in the enemy troops, one small opening left in the chain of force, such as a ditch, the palm grown slope of a canal bank, or a drainage pipe too small for an American to venture, will be more than enough to suit their purpose. They will somehow find it; there is nothing that they do better by day or night. It is as if they have a sixth sense for finding the way out and for taking it soundlessly. They are never encircled so long as one hole remains. Beaten, they will lose themselves in shrubbery and tree tops while the daylight lasts, get together when night closes, and make for the one exit."*

In one particularly clever escape more recently, Taliban insurgents fled from American forces unmolested by going up an underground irrigation tunnel used to bring water down from the mountains. After making their escape thus, they flooded the tunnels to deter any pursuit.

**"The camps varied in size. Ordinarily, however, the brigades and other larger units did not establish a single contiguous camp but set up separate sites for each *otryad* or even for each company. A brigade might be dispersed over ten or twenty square miles. Groups of brigades occasionally occupied areas of several hundred square miles. In the larger concentrations the partisans proceeded as well to the construction of machine gun and mortar emplacements, earthwork fortifications, and roadblocks."**

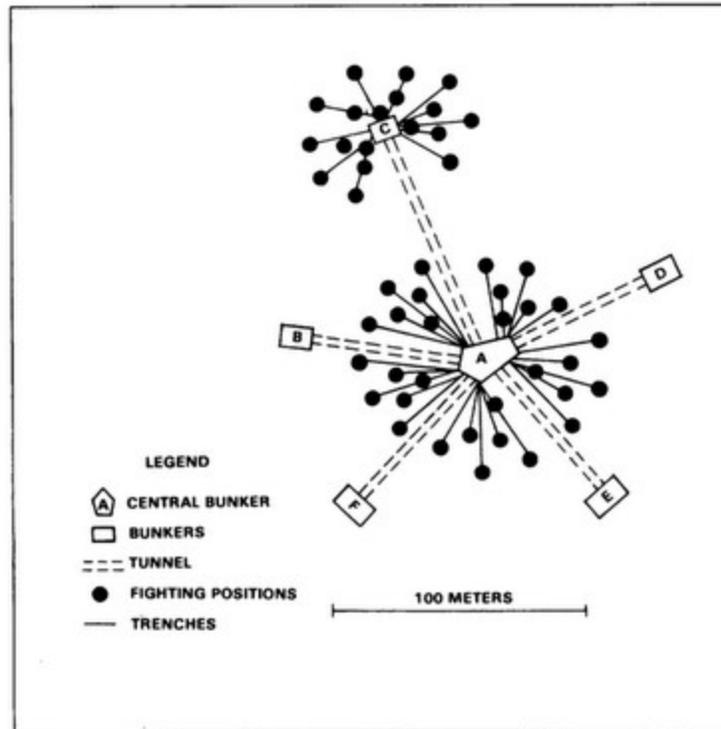


Figure A-6. Fortified base camps.

This describes the VC base camp: *"The fortified base camp is roughly circular in form with an outer rim of bunkers and foxholes enclosing a total system of living quarters, usually frame structures above ground, command bunkers, kitchens, and sleeping platforms. But as with the U.S. defensive perimeter, the shape will vary according to the terrain, the rise and fall of ground, and the use of natural features to restrict attack on the camp to one or two avenues. Some of the bases, and in particular those used only for training or way stations, have minimum defensive works. In all cases, however, the enemy is prepared to defend from a ground attack."*

*The semi-fortified village is usually an attenuated or stretched out set of hamlets, having length rather than breadth, a restricted approach, bunkers (usually at the corners of the huts), lateral trenches, and sometimes a perpendicular trench fitted with fighting bunkers running the length of the defended area along one flank. There will be at least one exit or escape route rearward, though the position is often otherwise something of a cul de sac, made so by natural features. Tunnels connect the bunkers and earthworks, enabling the defenders to pop up, disappear, then fire again from another angle, a jack-in-the-box kind of maneuvering that doubles the effect of their numbers."*

**"In the final analysis, the camp provided barely tolerable living quarters. In the spring and the fall, if the bunkers did not fill up with water,**

**they were certain, at least, to be damp and muddy. In the winter they could be heated but only at a risk of revealing their location. In the daytime they were never heated; and at night, as long as snow was on the ground, fires were lighted only for cooking, in order to avoid smoke stains on the snow which could be detected from the air."**

So we can certainly see that survival after SHTF or life as a freedom fighter ain't all it's cracked up to be. Be careful what you wish for.

<http://benandbawbsblog.blogspot.com/2010/07/yo-ho-partisans-life-for-menot.html>