LOW BUDGET MILITIA

It doesn't have to cost a lot of money to prepare yourself for militia duty.

Many militia participants have fabricated their own gear, adapted other gear for militia use, or found a good source for inexpensive gear.



This dedicated militiaman has an inexpensive bolt-action rifle, low-cost surplus camouflage, and other gear adapted for militia use.

The best thing you can start with is a firm, dedicated commitment to defending yourself, your family, your community, and your country. There are good militia people who are very willing to help you find or assemble low-cost, functional gear. Contact your local militia people, attend a meeting or training session, and ask around. We want you to be geared up and ready...

Click on any of the below sections for ideas and suggestions about low budget militia gear:

SURPLUS BOLT-ACTION RIFLES	HOME MADE CAMOUFLAGE	CHEAP MAIL ORDER SUPPLIERS
ADAPTING GEAR FOR MILITIA PURPOSES	POOR MAN'S SNIPER RIFLE	LOW-BUDGET FIELD RATIONS
LOOKING FOR GEAR?	LOW BUDGET SLEEPING BAGS?	YOUR LOW-BUDGET IDEAS HERE?

Military Surplus bolt-action rifles

There is an excellent web site called, conveniently, Surplusrifle.com. It is worth reading for more information about these fine old weapons.

These old warhorses have been around for awhile, and many may have seen action. Some countries still use these rifles in limited roles. For example, in Israel, old 98k Mausers may still be used by "Civilian Guard" snipers/countersnipers.

There is nothing wrong with buying a military surplus rifle. Many militia people that we know have several, and some of us keep buying them. They are inexpensive, durable, and if you happen across a decent one, and do a little bit of work, they can be very accurate.

One of the first considerations that someone usually has when thinking about getting involved in militia training is the cost of a rifle. You can find some old surplus bolt-action rifles today (March 2003) for right around fifty dollars. Sometimes, you can even find them for less. Currently, M44 carbines in 7.62X54R are very affordable, and you may still be able to find an 8mm Turkish Mauser for under fifty dollars as well. You may have some luck with online gun auctions. Check the gun shows, check Dunham's, check your local gun shop, or talk to some of your friendly local militia people for ideas on where to look.

If cost is truly an issue, then an old military bolt-action may also help by being chambered for very inexpensive ammunition. (WARNING! This is not always the case...for example, even though the Swiss K31 Schmidt-Rubin rifle has been coming down in price, ammo for it is currently priced rather high.) Commonly available cheap ammunition is 7.62X54R and 8mm. For those wishing to use a somewhat more modern caliber, you might look for an old Indian Ishapore Enfield

chambered in .308. These .308 Enfields may be more expensive, but they use more modern ammunition.

WARNING!!! A great deal of military surplus ammo is CORROSIVE, especially 8mm and 7.62X54. Please be certain to use water or a water/ammonia mixture to remove any salt from your weapon, then clean as normal. Thorough and detailed cleaning information can be found here, and here, or ask some of your local militia people.

We want to stress that many of us have these rifles, and nobody, nobody, nobody in the militia will look down upon you for having one. If you want to try one of these, come on out to the next training session, and we will let you shoot one of ours.

Get what you can afford, and learn how to use it to the best of your ability. An accurate bolt-action shooter will always be a good asset for the militia.

Adapting Gear for Militia Purposes

The types and amount of gear that you can use for militia-related purposes is pretty vast. If you can carry something with it, wear it, strap it, tape it, or tie it to some kind of gear or rig, then it can be made "militia-worthy".

Hunting gear, of course, probably does not require any type of adaptation. Blaze orange hunting gear is out of the question. Most hunting gear is set up to carry guns, ammo, game, food, or other gear. These all can serve well as militia gear.

Most camping gear can be used as militia gear. Bear in mind that some camping gear is set toward comfort instead of tactical functionality. Camping gear may require additional camouflage, and may also require strengthening at certain stress points. Check your stitching and any type of fasteners, if these seem weak, add more stitching, buttons, snaps, or whatever you may need. Keep a roll of 100 mile an hour tape (or duct tape) to fix your gear, if necessary.

A lot of gear that is used by students today can be applied to militia use. Backpacks, belt-pouches, and water bottle carriers that today's students carry with them can become tomorrow's militia gear. You can avoid the cost of these probably expensive school items by finding military surplus gear, but if you have them already (if, for example, you are a student), then use them for militia duty.

If you are handy with a (heavy duty) needle and (heavy duty) thread, then you can fabricate your own militia gear out of just about anything. Any type of heavy duty cloth, such as denim, can be dyed, folded, and stitched to make straps, suspenders, or other types of harnesses. (We admit that only a few militia people have done such a thing, as the regular surplus gear is very, very inexpensive, but we have seen this type of thing done.)

We have seen militia persons use fishing tackle boxes to carry their medical gear in, and small backpacks would work well for this, also.

If your jacket/coat/shirt has enough pockets, then you can carry most of your gear along in those.

A one-liter pop bottle carried with a strap has served as a canteen.

The type of gear you can adapt for militia use is really only limited by your imagination. It would be a good idea to observe militia people at training and get some thoughts on how to make or adapt your gear. Again, in most cases, military surplus gear is so inexpensive that it is not necessary to make or adapt your own, but it is nice to be able to, should the need arise.

Cheap Mail Order Suppliers

There are other suppliers out there, but these are the three that we always order stuff from.

Cheaper Than Dirt 2524 NE Loop 820 Fort Worth, TX 76106-1809

Major Surplus and Survival 435 W. Alondra, Gardena, CA, 90248

The Sportsman's Guide 411 Farwell Avenue, So. St. Paul, MN 55075-0239

Looking for Gear?

In addition to the excellent suppliers above, there are other places you can look for low-cost militia gear.

Gun shows, like the ones held at The Gibraltar Trade Center, and military

surplus stores, such as GI Surplus in Wayne, are good places to look. The camping/hunting section of sporting good stores and even department stores can all be good places to look for gear.

But you can also find good usable militia gear at garage/yard sales, thrift stores, such as those operated by The Salvation Army, and you can even find some decent stuff at your local "dollar store".

Thrift stores can be good sources for used sleeping bags, blankets (to make your own sleeping bag?), clothing that may be useful (some of it may require being dyed), and used pots and pans that you wouldn't mind taking to the field. In one recent trip, a militia member found several good insulated bottles (thermos type and other), replacement globes for an oil lamp, "beater" cookware, and several sleeping bags. All of these were very cheap. Even if you are not interested in using any of this as your primary gear, it may serve well as "car gear" for your trunk, back-up gear, or gear to keep on hand for your neighbors/fellow militia people/Uncle Frank.

The dollar store may be a good place to find inexpensive medical gear, and possibly other useful stuff. In one recent excursion, we found dollar tarps (for covering your gear or making a field-expedient shelter), rope, foot powder, band-aids, and various useful medication, like triple antibiotic ointment. They also almost always have paper plates for your Level One targets.

Also, we would be remiss in our duties if we failed to mention that most experienced militia people have accrued a vast soiree of gear, some of which they may be willing to part with cheaply, or in exchange for something else.

Low Budget Field Rations

MRE's can be expensive, and certain prepared, dehydrated camping food can cost even more. You don't really need either. The quickest and least costly of field rations might be Ramen Noodles. They are very cheap in bulk, and also at Aldi's.

You can dehydrate your own food using just your oven on a very low setting. This will be much cheaper than buying dehydrated food, you can make all you want, you don't need an expensive dehydrator, and as a bonus, your house will smell nice.

You can also fall back on a tried-and-true, time tested field ration staple: Hardtack.

Basic Hardtack

2 c Flour
1/2 tb Salt (optional)
1/2 tb Sugar (optional)
1/2 c Water

Mix flour, salt (optional), sugar (optional), and water. Using hands or rolling pin, flatten dough on floured cloth until 1/4-inch thick. Score with a knife if desired. Bake on cookie sheet in 350-degree oven for 30 minutes. Break into pieces as needed. You may have to soak this in water or other liquid to be able to chew it. Some have even soaked hardtack in coffee, or fried it in some kind of grease. But, it will last a long time, and can keep you going if necessary. (Thanks to LTC James Park of Oakland County for this idea.)

You can also assemble your own MRE-type of meal out of regular grocery store components, as seen below. This meal contains a small can of stew, a fruit cup, a juice box, raisins, crackers, and other assorted stuff like napkins and plastic ware. These cost less than MREs to assemble, especially when components are purchased in bulk.



Low Budget Sleeping Bags

The first thing to do here would be to check at your local Salvation Army or other thrift store. One militia member found a five dollar sleeping bag at one of these stores that he carried and used for a couple of years. If there are no sleeping bags there, then pick up whatever blankets that you can find, with wool being the best option. (Sometimes, the mail order suppliers listed elsewhere on this page have military surplus wool blankets for a very reasonable price. They also sometimes have fairly inexpensive bags, too.) A couple of good heavy blankets should do the trick, get a third if the weather is really cold. You can even fold your blankets over and stitch them partially up the open side.

Now, pick up a couple of dollar store tarps, and tie these together for use as the shell of your sleeping bag. Be careful, however, to not have a completely airtight seal between your tarps, because you will not want to trap any of your body's moisture. If you cannot find a cheap sleeping pad, then an extra blanket may help as cushioning, or if it is available, you can always use straw or grass. (Don't knock it, this works.)

If it would be less costly, consider surplus cold weather garments to keep you warm, and then keep your bag light. You may be able to find real bargains on surplus parkas, and a good one of these will reduce your need for a heavier bag.



At least one militia member that we know of has constructed his own sleeping bag out of several wool blankets, a couple of poncho liners, and a couple of ponchos. While not exactly inexpensive, this works well for someone who might not enjoy the strict confines of a bag designed for smaller folk. The wool acts as an extreme cold weather insert, and is easily removed when it gets warmer.

Home Made Camouflage

Used, military surplus clothing is among the cheapest you can find, especially if you are size medium or smaller. However, if you are not on the smallish side, or if your money is really too tight, you can easily make your own camo with some cheap dye and a magic marker or two.

Just twist and dip some parts of some durable clothing into a bucket with dye in it, and alternate green, black, or brown. Add a few strokes or blotches with magic marker, and you will have passable camo clothing. This same can be applied to your gear, blankets, and whatever.

Try to use tough, loose-fitting clothes, and hopefully these will have a good amount of pockets.

Below, you can see a dedicated militiaman who has developed his own camo, for winter, and also for the warmer months.







Home made woodland camo, (left and center) using dye and markers; and home made winter camo (right), black, gray, and brown applied to white jacket and tan pants.

Your Low Budget Militia Ideas Here?

If you have ideas or suggestions to contribute to this "Low Budget Militia" section of the web page, feel free to send them to us. You can also mail your ideas to:

Michigan Militia

PO Box 40866

Redford, MI 48240

Ultimately, we may have a separate section where we can post all of your low-budget militia ideas and cost-saving tips.

Thanks to Cpt Jeff Thurlow, webmaster of the 2nd Brigade, Indiana Citizens Volunteer Militia website, for the link to this low-budget silhouette target site:

http://www.sportshooter.com/improving/brownbagtarget.htm

I was reading your page on budget militia items, and was struck with an idea for a "poor man's camelback", that I have already tried and would like to share with you. Please feel free to post on your budget militia gear page.

First, start with a Vietnam style 5 quart canteen bladder. You can either make a carrier from 'scratch' or you can use the manufactured 5qt carrier that comes with the bladder in most cases (total $15). Use material from a soft-pack lunchbox or cooler, or you can use bubble-wrap around the bladder/insert as an insulating agent to keep water cool.

Next, drill a 7/16ths hole in the canteen cap and insert a rubber grommet with 7/16 outside diameter and 3/8 inch inside diameter. Pass a 3 foot length of 3/8"dia. fish tank tubing through the rubber grommet. Tubing should be snug through the grommet to prevent leaking. To further protect against leaking, use a standard garden hose grommet on the 5qt canteen cap or cut the canteen cap's rubber grommet (included) to allow for the tubing. Take two pieces of heat-shrink tubing (1" min.) and set that aside for when you slip an OD cloth cover over the tubing. When the cover is on the tube, the heat-shrink tubing will be used to secure the OD cover to the plastic tube.

From this point forward, you will have to purchase items from a military supply catalog rather than the local hardware or hobby store.

Take the "poor man's camelback" and add an OD tube cover to the remaining exposed tubing (approx. 2ft) and leave a few inches of tubing exposed for adding the bite valve and valve lock. These "replacement" items are available in most police/military supply catalogs and allow you to use the poor man's camelback exactly like the $60+ versions, including the no-drip, no-siphon features.

Your "poor man's camelback" is now ready to be inserted into your patrol pack, just as if it were the full-price version. Other aftermarket add-on possibilities include an in-line charcoal filter to improve the taste of the water, but that is purely optional and not needed for a basic homemade camelback.

Another option is to use a standard canteen cap, a collapsible 2-qt canteen, and the rubber tubing, grommet, and aftermarket replacement supplies (bite valve, valve lock, etc.) to make a "Canteen Straw". This only works with the 2-qt collapsible canteens! Semi-rigid and hardshell canteens will either siphon air back into the line because the canteen cap was not loosened; or more importantly, they do not collapse completely and "slosh", giving away your location!

In Liberty,

Col. William Flatt

Senior Brigade Cdr., Indiana Militia Corps

Sirs,

I am from the Indiana Citizens Volunteer Militia of Miami Co. I thought I had a couple ideas you may like. We take old "Skoal" can, plastic of course, clean them out and make a homemade "survival kit". Some will have a fishing kit some will have a wire saw, etc. Others will have kindling or a combustible material in it. For the "firestarter" combustible material, we take drier lint out of the clothes drier, which has already had the moisture sucked out of it by the heat, and stuff them in the Skoal cans and seal the lid back on the can with 90MPH tape, and label it. Or the other way would be to take a knife and scrape as much as you can from a magnesium fire starter bar into the can and seal it, so when the time comes you won't have to spend precious time scraping away when you need fire NOW. We can put several cans in our packs and have very little weight or space taken up by these very important pieces of gear.

Hope you like! Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

Maj. John Hilgeman
Miami County Regimental Co.
ICVM

Note from Lee: thanks to the great state of Indiana for all of these Patriots. In addition to the above fire starting trick, we have mixed paraffin wax with drier lint in single sections of old egg cartons. These can help in fire starting or can be used as low budget heat tabs.




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