

I was talking not that long ago around a campfire with two well seasoned former special operations officers. The chilly January air was juxtaposed to the heat that only a wood blaze can impart- it warms a part of your soul as well as the body. Between a mason jar of fine apple pie and the good company we shared, we reflected on a great many topics as warriors tend to do. As jovial as the mood was, we drifted into talking about how we'd defend the very area we were occupying. Basically it boils down to this- any area you plan to occupy overnight or longer, be it a campsite, a farm, or a compound, becomes a Patrol Base. Not a Patrol Base in the contemporary Iraq / Afghanistan sense, which is a small fort, but rather the traditional sense of the term. A Patrol Base is any place your group plans to occupy- and while on a patrol you only remain there for up to 24 hours, there's requirements that everyone on the team needs to know and understand, namely that it's easy to defend, not placing it on natural lines of drift, and competently secured by setting up observation posts to defend it.

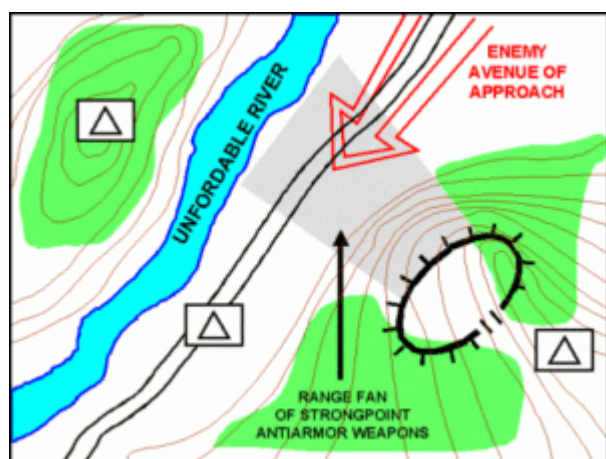
In Afghanistan something we experimented with for hide site security was infrared motion detectors that would transmit a signal to our MBITR handheld. Once we would secure the site the Senior Scout Observer (SSO) and another team member would place the detectors along any trails that might lead to our position, giving us an early warning without alerting anyone to our presence. Not long after I returned from that tour I found out there was a civilian equivalent- the Dakota Alert, which does the same thing while using the license-free VHF MURS channels. I've been using a few of them for a little over seven years now, and they're pretty good at what they do. With a few upgrades they make a very good force multiplier for a small unit patrol



The Dakota Alert, painted and rigged with a homemade rubber duck antenna cut for the MURS frequencies.

in the same ways those other motion detectors did for us when our lives depended on it.

The third principle of patrolling is security. A patrol, whether its a two man element or a company level operation, must always maintain 360 degrees of security. Its never as easy as it sounds. That starts with being awake and alert when pulling security- 50% of your force should be awake while at the halt in a patrol base. It's a tough thing to do when you've moved most of the night through rough terrain and the *Z monster* comes creeping. Its human error and we've all done it- you get comfy, you get warm at the halt, and you fall asleep. Extending this to a retreat setting, every security position should have a buddy team manning it with a roving guard to make sure everyone stays awake especially in those wee hours of the morning. It's a basic principle that we've been using for a LONG time- because as everyone knows, *dawn is when the French and Indians attack*. For that reason we use force multipliers, or devices that overcome the natural human error to give us that edge over the adversary.



Where do we put our security positions? Leaders in the Army are taught a simple acronym to analyze your operating terrain- OCOKA. It stands for *Observation and Fields of Fire* (where you can see, what you can shoot), *Cover and Concealment* (both you and your potential enemy), *Obstacles Affecting Movement*, *Key Terrain Features*, and finally, *Avenues of Approach*. Those avenues of approach- where the adversary is most likely to

come from- is where we place our security. Humans, like animals, usually follow the beaten path. These are called *natural lines of drift*. Trails, roads, rivers...anywhere people are likely to travel. When you're setting up security on your site it is those natural lines of drift that should get the most attention. In the diagram those boxes with the triangles are observation points (OP), but in a retreat those would also be where the area denial weapons would be

emplaced.

Those OPs must also have communications with the leader's element. You can do this by radio, but if you're building up a retreat, it's better to hard wire field phones into those security positions. They can't be monitored. But since we've identified the natural human error- falling asleep or simply not able to pay attention- it's a good idea to have as many early warning devices out as possible. There's a lot of ways to do this- trip wire flares, smoke, noise makers, etc. Those are fine but they each alert the enemy to your presence. It may very well be that they don't know you're there, but once those devices are set off, you've been made. This is where that Dakota Alert shines. Most folks use these as driveway alarms and with a few simple modifications, they can make excellent force multipliers for a small unit.

The nice thing about them is that like the old motion detectors we were using in Afghanistan, they are a passive security measure- meaning they make no indication of their presence when tripped other than sending a signal via radio. These are the same. They are set to one of the five MURS channels to relay their signal, sending out a message of *ALERT ZONE 1-5* based on which channel you've set it to. In other words, if it's set to channel 1 (*151.820 MHz*) it will state *ALERT ZONE ONE* when tripped. An easy way to plan this out is to emplace it for OP 1, and then have OP 1 have a radio set to 151.82MHz (*MURS 1*) to monitor it. This will provide the OP with an early warning if the detector is tripped, along with the leader's element. Speaking of, the Leader or roving



Up close after being emplaced. The paint helps, but it has to be masked by natural camouflage.

guard should have a radio programmed to scan only the MURS channels when pulling security- that way even if the OP falls asleep, the alert message will get to someone.



There, that's better. You'd walk right by that if you weren't looking for it.

There's a few things I do to the stock Dakota Alert motion detector before I carry them. First I paint them an actual camouflage pattern other than the plain and shiny olive, which blends in with exactly nothing. I use Krylon, because its cheap, effective, and well, because it's me and I know what the hell I'm doing. I Krylon everything I actually take on patrol as its non-reflective and if it gets scratched up it only looks better. We camouflage things from light colors to dark and buckskin brown blends in the best- so desert tan and darker brown does quite well. The next thing I do is remove the awful stock antenna and replace it with a purpose built wire antenna that disappears into its background. There's two reasons for this- the first is to make it transmit more efficiently and the second is to further camouflage it. When emplacing it, it needs to be put at ground level. The infrared sensor makes a small light- and when on patrol people pay close attention to what's at eye-level, especially with night operating devices (*NODs, what civis call night vision*) so it's outside the field of view. As with everything else, place some natural debris

around it further masking the outline and you're good to go.

No matter if we're gonna be there for a few hours or a few days, having an early warning system that interfaces with our radios is a huge advantage for security. I carry one in my ruck for a recce mission and for a static site security I consider them a must. Anything we can use that overcomes the natural human error or enables us to multitask is an asset, especially when you've got folks with limited training coming into the fold. It'll make a difference- it did for us in combat, and can for you too.



Fifteen feet away and the motion detector is gone.

If you want hands on with this and a bunch of other skills, check out the training calendar. You'll get a class environment unlike any other with skills taught nowhere else.

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