



LINES OF GEAR

A GET-HOME BAG IS JUST ONE ELEMENT OF YOUR TACTICAL KIT AND SHTF PLAN

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PHOTOS BY 5.11 TACTICAL

No matter your mission — armed professional or defensive-minded citizen — there are common principles that define the preparation for a deadly encounter. Breaking down these principles, we learn how to approach preparedness and where to focus our attention. I refer to these principles as the “pillars that support the gunfighter.” The pyramid chart shown in this story depicts the key layers, each supporting the next. The pyramid cannot stand effectively without each of these in place. This article focuses on concealed carry and the “lines of gear” system of preparedness.

When it comes to equipment, it’s a matter of trial and error, constant testing and evaluation periods. If you’re not training with the gear you plan to use, how else will you know its capabilities and points of failure?

EQUIPMENT

Over the years, I have accumulated and resold thousands of dollars’ worth of equipment that seemed like a good idea. But, after testing, I found much of it did not fit my criteria. Not long ago, a “low-visibility” bag was a commercial off-the-shelf bag, customized

with an adhesive-backed hook and loop on the inside. It worked for a time, but it was never 100-percent effective. This is not the case today. As America comes out of two long wars and continues to engage in the Global War on Terror, tactical equipment companies and the community benefit from the dearth of counterterrorism and combat experience.

So what gear is best? First, identify your mission and establish the profile you will be working. In the early days

of the war, most high-threat security teams worked in a high-visibility profile: full kit, drop-leg rigs, and pistols mounted high on the chest. Today, outside of law enforcement and military, gears have shifted for U.S. government contractors to go low profile — or even no profile. Many areas are considered non-permissive and are unforgiving if caught with tools of the trade. We need to be practical and functional in approaching concealed carry.





MISSION PROFILES

High Visibility

- › Weapons and equipment are carried openly.
- › Examples: patrol officers, SWAT members, and military infantry.

Low Profile

- › Handgun and armor are worn under a cover shirt. Slight printing is not a major concern.
- › Affiliation can be displayed if needed. Long-guns stored in a vehicle, ready to go.
- › Examples: Plain-clothes police, government low-profile protection teams.

No Profile (or “Zero Signature”)

- › Cover shirt worn over equipment. Holsters selected specifically for covert carry. No armor.
- › No printing permitted.
- › For low-vis teams in non-permissive areas, claiming affiliation is a last resort. Operate, carry, and transport all equipment in a fashion that does not draw attention to a trained eye. Experienced observers will spot low-vis gear, bulges under clothes, and physical movements; all tell-tales of an armed individual.
- › Examples: Government no-profile protection teams. Also, defensive-minded civilians could fall into this category.



LINES OF GEAR

Violent crime, terrorism, and environmental catastrophes leave us living under constant threat. Our goal should be to prove effective in any circumstance and in all conditions. We do this by laying out lines of gear.

The overall concept is a three-layer system whereby essential fighting gear is on your person, carried daily. You have trained with it, and it is the minimum needed to engage in a fight. The extended parts of these lines (line two and three) are considered your “get-home bags.” Filled with support items, these will assist you during a time of crisis.

These lines will allow you to break down how you carry your tools. What I have listed is based on my experiences using this methodology and is meant to be a template — customize these lines to fit your mission and profile. There are essentials you need to have, and then build from.

A common theme in all three lines is weapon and ammunition, medical kit, and communication. In these areas, the lines are designed to overlap, supporting each other. Depending on many factors, though, the first line might be all you have to work with.

First-Line Gear

Carried on your body and is the minimum to fight with:

- › Pistol
- › Ammunition (amount is mission dependent)
- › Medical gear: tourniquet, hemostatic and/or compression bandage
- › Small knife or multitool
- › Flashlight
- › Mobile phone

Depending on mission and threat level, add:

- › Compass/GPS
- › Emergency cash
- › Passport and credentials
- › Personal recovery kit/escape-and-evasion kit

When it comes to the first-line gear, one critical error is not carrying spare ammunition for your weapon. Also, carry some sort of low-profile medical kit with at least a tourniquet and an Israeli bandage or one with a hemostatic agent. These items are meant to be used on you; friends with guns should carry their own. Have a way to plug any holes you weren't born with. Obviously, you should have medical kit to cover your family and other folks you may want to assist. That is why we have a second and third line of gear. Larger more extensive medical kits can be kept there.

When traveling to high-threat areas or restrictive gun zones where weapons may not be allowed, build your first-line gear around things you are allowed to carry. Craft ways to conceal a personal recovery kit and edged weapons in your clothing. (See the new 5.11 Tactical Apex Pants). If you can't carry a firearm, have a plan and remember you're not out of the fight.



Second-Line Gear

- › Go bag or chest-rig/armor
- › Medium-size trauma med kit
- › Booboo kit
- › 550 cord
- › Small roll of duct tape
- › Spare batteries for GPS, optics, and flashlight
- › Snacks
- › Notepad and pen
- › GPS
- › Seatbelt cutter
- › Multitool
- › Charging cables for electronics
- › Headlamp
- › Glass breaker/window punch
- › Maps
- › Cash

Depending on mission and threat level, add:

- › Flashlight/signal kit/strobes
 - › Rifle
 - › Ammunition and additional magazines
- Second-line gear can be configured in a number of ways, using small slings packs, medium-sized back packs, and even chest rigs. It all depends on the mission and/or purpose. If you opt for a long-gun as a part of the second-line gear, store it with your bag. A 5.11 Tactical 4-Banger Bag would be a good fit for a second line bag.

Be ready to fight from your second line bag. I've placed my rifle ammunition in a rolled-up lightweight bandoleer or chest rig. This provides a couple of options. I can access the ammunition from the bag, or place it on my body.

Third-Line Gear

If you need to break into this line of equipment, chances are things are bad and getting worse. Therefore, the following gear should go in a three-day pack or larger:

- › Additional ammo in a chest rig or bandoleer; staged to fight
- › Spare handgun, magazines/ammo, holster, and belt
- › Spare mobile phone
- › Helmet and night-vision goggles (mission dependent)
- › Rifle
- › GPS
- › Emergency cash and credit cards
- › Copies of identification
- › Urban SERE kit
- › Communications support items (solar-powered phone charger)
- › Extensive medical kit
- › Water
- › At least one day's worth of food rations
- › Satellite phone
- › Headlamp
- › Signal kit
- › Space blanket
- › Fire-starting kit
- › Baby wipes
- › Multitool
- › 550 cord



Third-line gear is designed to haul the high-profile kit considered part of the disaster plan. Keeping a spare handgun with ammunition, holster, and mag pouches is optional in the event you need to arm a buddy and/or you are displaced from your resources due to unforeseen circumstances, i.e. a weather disaster or civil disturbance. Having a spare handgun can bring peace of mind. Take it a step further and make sure it's the same type and caliber as your everyday carry so magazines and ammunition are interchangeable.

Communications capabilities, along with the items that support them, are commonly overlooked, but having a PACE communication plan in place can be a lifesaver. PACE stands for primary, alternate, contingency and emergency. If your primary

is your mobile phone, what happens when the towers are down? Having a layered approach will set you up for success.

Once you have considered the purpose of your third-line gear, it's up to you to decide in what configuration you carry your long-gun. Rifles can be broken down and consolidated into a pack that allows for easy carry. You want this line to be portable; don't pack the kitchen sink if you really don't need it. Choose wisely and be practical.

Take the time with your family to establish the game plan for safety and success in the fight. Don't take shortcuts when purchasing equipment. Seek out reputable and experienced teachers in your area to assist in tactical readiness development for everyone in your family. Always be ready. ☐

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Danny "Gator" Pritbor has a combined 23 years of experience as a U.S. Marine, a law-enforcement SWAT officer, a protective special agent, and a contract government security specialist. He has spent extensive time conducting low-profile security operations in high-threat areas throughout the Middle East. As a firearms and tactics instructor, Gator has taught for private and governmental agencies, including the SureFire Institute, Strategos International, and the U.S. State Department Antiterrorism Assistance Program. He's currently the director of FireBase Combat Studies Group LLC, and remains active as a government security specialist.

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