

PARANOID OR PREPARED?

By John T. Meyer, Jr.

When you get the call to respond to a situation that was never supposed to happen in your town, will you be prepared? You know what I'm talking about: imagine any of the situations you've seen recently on the national news in which first responding officers arrive at the scene and are pinned down by gunfire, with wounded people running from the building, school windows shot out or the school on fire. The stuff of nightmares, perhaps, but all too common, and if you say, "It can't happen here," you're fooling yourself. So, of course, you should be preparing yourself mentally and physically by training appropriately for just such situations. Take it a step further: What if every patrol officer had a simple bag to grab out of their vehicle at an incident like this, something to provide a little more ammo, some added protection and a few basic tools that might mean the difference between mission success and failure?

Many manufacturers have created small range bags and modified battle bags to hold extra equipment. They're usually smaller than a briefcase and come in many configurations and colors, often with a strap that can be thrown over the head and carried on the shoulder. They may have large storage areas, internal pouches for pistol and rifle magazines, loops for shotgun shells, and a few external pockets for radios, flashlights or whatever else you may want to carry. I

know there are some officers who carry these bags in their car "just in case." Smart guys—they're prepared.

One day, while having a discussion with a few of our Team One Network instructors, we started to brainstorm. What if, we said, you took the bags described above a few steps further? If you took a few simple concepts that have been developed through real-world experience and combined them to create a modern kind of battle bag?

These types of modifications, resulting from thinking outside the box, have been done before. The Molle/Strike system was created so soldiers could configure their body armor carriers and assault vests to hold a variety of ammo and equipment and have it stay secure on the vest. Then some manufacturers created individual plate carriers that could be added to fill gaps in body armor while driving. Someone designed an Individual First Aid Trauma kit that fits in a small pouch configured for the Molle/Strike system.

So here's what we came up with: Take a Molle/Strike plate carrier carrying a Level III or IV armor plate, add a pouch that will accept a couple of rifle magazines, a double magazine pouch for handguns and another that will hold an assortment of shotgun rounds (double-ought buckshot, slugs, breaching and less-lethal). Add another pouch that could hold a small pair of binoculars, a multitool, a flashlight, some flex cuffs, chemical lights, a folding knife and a big marking pen. Finally, mount a trauma/first aid kit and *voilà!* You've got a modern battle bag that isn't a bag at all—it's an extra piece of body armor

with ammo, tools and a trauma kit attached. Best of all, it's self-contained. No rooting around in duffel bags for stuff to cram in your pockets. This is the KISS principle at its best—grab the bag, hang it around your neck and in a matter of seconds you're ready to fight.

The Specifics

Plate carriers come in different configurations, from a simple piece of nylon the size of a Level III or IV ceramic plate, to a vest-type of design that can be slipped over your head with pockets on the front and back. Using either one of these is fine.

Secure Molle or Strike pouches on your plate carrier for the following items:

- Two rifle or long gun magazines;
- Two handgun magazines ;
- 19 shotgun rounds;
- Binoculars;
- Flashlight;
- First aid/trauma kit;
- Chemical light sticks;
- Multitool;
- Flex-cuffs;
- Knife;
- Permanent marker; and
- Door wedges (these can be homemade).

The kit can be individualized to whatever weapons you normally carry. Is it perfect? Of course not. But having one of these sitting in the trunk of your patrol vehicle ensures that if the unthinkable occurs during your shift, you'll have the extra protection, ammo and tools you'll need, all available in a matter of seconds.

There's even a ready-made



For many officers, carrying a simple bag containing extra ammo, protection and other basic tools means the difference between mission success and failure.

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alternative to the do-it-yourself version. Point Blank Body Armor sells a Rapid Deployment Armor Bag that satisfies all the requirements I listed above. The creator, Ken Blakely, describes the bag as a quickly deployable breakaway soft rifle case in which both soft and hard armor and mag and utility pouches are pre-inserted. It's a self-contained unit that holds a long gun, extra magazines and gear. To deploy, you simply slip the gun's sling around your neck, unzip the case—it breaks into two sections connected by shoulder straps—and drop the sections over your head. In four to ten seconds, you're wearing body armor and carrying all the extra equipment you'll need, and

you can do it on the run.

Point Blank's Rapid Deployment Armor Bag offers Level IV protection and is available in five different sizes to accommodate everything from an MP5 submachine gun to a full-size AR-15 or shotgun. This is an excellent piece of equipment that will help save lives.

If you're looking to have a little more cover quickly, Patriot 3 makes a Minuteman Folding Shield that folds flat and deploys in less than a minute. It comes in two different sizes with and without view ports and neither size takes up much room in the patrol car.

The bottom line: Whether you do it

yourself with a homemade augmented plate carrier system or go with Point Blank's ready-made bag, when the smoke clears, they won't say you were paranoid, they'll say you were prepared. **LOM**

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