

# **Organizing Armed Defense in America**

**A Reference Guide**

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# Chapter I: Introduction

A firearm is not a talisman. It is crucial that those on the left do not fall into the trap of this mindset. A single firearm in the hands of a single person does not guarantee security, in isolation it will often do the reverse. Self-defense is a foundation, the individual must be capable of defending themselves and their immediate dependents. But regardless of individual skill, equipment, and preparedness, an individual will always be an inferior force to an even moderately well-organized group. True security requires cooperation across multiple competent individuals, organized in such a way that they can defend one another from a multiplicity of threats.

***It is imperative for armed individuals on the left to come together and form functional, autonomous community defense organizations.***

Many leftists have already started down this path. Affinity groups, small collectives of individuals, loosely aligned under the banner of defense, have become more common in leftist spaces, but the next step of organization has yet to take root. A gun club is not a suitable alternative for intentionally organized, armed community defense. Nor are a few well-intentioned friends a reliable fighting force. In order to effectively counter highly organized fascist threats, the authors of this document advocate the creation of secret, formalized, autonomous organizations.

The term “militia” comes with unfortunate political connotations, and with good reason. The modern militia movement in the United States is overwhelmingly far-right, and stands in open and violent opposition to all the values we hold as leftists. However, there is utility in the term, and in this document we will use “militia” interchangeably with “autonomous left-wing armed community defense organization,” trusting the reader to understand that our use of the term is decidedly in opposition to the values and practices of the reactionary, right-wing manifestation of the militia.

The militia as outlined here is not a revolutionary force. The authors of this document are of the opinion that the US left is incapable of revolution in its current forms. The militia is not an offensive force. The militia is a strictly defensive organization, it should be formed with the intent to protect against the coming violence the authors take as inevitable. The leftist militia exists to counter violent, organized, irregular forces on the right who are mobilizing and threatening communities with lethal violence. While we will discuss interactions with police in this booklet, we do not believe that the militia as described here is the most effective method to counter police violence, at least at the current national temperature. There are certainly discussions to be had on this topic in left wing circles, but they are outside the scope of our aims here.

This document is intended to serve those who have a small, dedicated group of community defense organizers already in place, who are looking for the next steps in preparing to fight against exterminationist violence from the right using armed force. It was written by individuals intimately familiar with militant organizing, and has been distributed in the hopes that the advice herein can be used to aid in the formation of these vital organizations.

This document is not a rule book, it is a presentation on the tools and tactics we have found to be useful in organizing these groups across the country. This document was written with certain

cultural blinders, although we have done our best to highlight these blindspots where we are conscious of them. We do not expect our conclusions to be universal, but we suspect that there is significant enough value to warrant the creation of this booklet.

With these considerations in mind, this document presents a roadmap to forming a leftist militia, broken into chapters. Organization and Administration will be treated first, followed by a discussion of Equipment, followed by strategies for Training, Recruitment, Security Culture, and we will end with a discussion on the Role of the Militia in detail. We hope you find it useful.

## Chapter II: Organization & Administration

The term “organization” is used very flippantly in leftist spaces, often to the detriment of leftist projects. The success of any organization, regardless of political affiliation, lies in the intentional creation of sustainable, accessible organizational infrastructure, which requires some degree of maintenance, which we will call “administration.” There ought to be formally recognized policies within the organization, so that there is no ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities of members. This means documentation and clear communication inside the org, which means structure.

Without structure it is difficult to even define an armed leftist comdef org as being distinct from a shooting club with certain ideological predispositions. However, structure does not imply hierarchy, and structure alone does not indicate an organization is a militia. The Socialist Rifle Association is a highly structured national organization of armed leftists, many of whom are themselves committed to the idea of community defense, but the SRA is not a community defense organization, and the authors do not believe it can become one.

There are some benefits to having the support of national organizations, but such organizations have proven difficult to organize, and are vulnerable to infiltration and disruption, both by organized hostile entities and by internal incompetents. Therefore we advocate for the development of secretive autonomous cells, which are more secure against infiltration and disruption, can be adapted to meet the specific needs of a community, and react more quickly to developing conditions on the ground. In time, with enough serious and competent militias in existence, collaborations between organizations will develop organically and eventually regional or national organizations may arise, but for now most local threats do not require national organizations to counter.

Without the national structure the role of the militant organizer is at once simplified and complicated. Many security concerns are done away with, but many interpersonal issues arise. We will present an outline of a structure we have found useful in organizing militant comdef orgs, and provide commentary and explanation where we feel it is needed. We do not confuse our experiences for universal truths, and this should be kept in mind when considering the following.

Most leftist militant orgs are likely to be small, less than fifty members at any given time. Even with as few as five active members, organizational activities can be cumbersome without specialization and delegation. Often it is wise to codify a group structure. Bylaws, written collectively, adopted by consensus, and stored securely for future reference and amendment are strongly recommended. The militia should operate under broad tactical unity, wherein the membership is allowed to be ideologically diverse, within the boundaries of certain non-negotiables. As an example, an organization in a region without a large, dedicated radical population might be willing to adopt a popular front model, with a willingness to cooperate with more liberal elements in moments of particular need, but under no conditions would the organization allow fascist, racist, or queerphobic members. The bylaws for a militia should be brief, considered living documents, and only address issues critical to organizational function such as officer positions and duties, the

scope and mission of the org, training and equipment requirements, membership requirements, and elections or decision making protocols.

## II.a: Roles and Responsibilities:

In terms of practical organization for operations and training, we strongly recommend militias adopt a fireteam structure. A fireteam consists of three to four fighters, and works in conjunction with other fireteams in combat. A fireteam need not have specialized internal roles, as most roles within a traditional fireteam are based upon access to explosives and automatic weapons, but each should have a “team leader” (TL). The TL is given the responsibility to make decisions and commands during training and in combat. Therefore TLs must be highly respected by the members of their organizations, and trusted to make educated and rational decisions under duress.

Other potential roles could include the “automatic rifleman” (AR), either utilizing a forced-reset trigger or else specifically training a fireteam member in providing overwatch and suppressive fire, or a “designated marksman” (DM) role, training to engage targets from three hundred to seven hundred yards. Not every fireteam needs these roles, as overwatch, suppressive fire, and intermediate range marksmanship can be trained by all team members, but having one AR and one DM per squad (three to four fireteams) is strongly encouraged. All this means is that the selected individuals would dedicate more hours of training to their particular role than the general rifleman, and would practice those roles specifically in group trainings.

A role we feel is critical to emphasize is that of the “squad medic” (SM). The medic is a squad-level role, but in an ideal situation each fireteam will have a member who can provide immediate medical care, and *every militia member* should be trained in hemorrhage control (at minimum Stop The Bleed certified). At minimum the SM should be formally trained as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR), or more ideally as an EMT-Basic or higher. They should be trained, certified, and (ideally) experienced in providing medical care in prehospital and austere environments. It is also the medic’s responsibility to ensure that all members have adequate, functional medical equipment and supplies within their IFAKs; to maintain an aid bag with adequate, functional medical equipment so that they are capable of practicing within their scope; ensure that emergency medical equipment is at every group training, event, and operation; conduct trainings with members of their fireteam; to keep up-to-date on latest evidence-based best practices for the kinds of injuries they are likely to face in the field, and bring their comrades up to speed; and to conduct and assist with public-facing activities such as Stop the Bleed classes. Many medical practitioners are left-aligned, and should be actively sought and recruited by members of the militia to fill the SM role.

At this point we must discuss the “officer” roles within the militia. The leftist comdef org may at some point require specialized officers to facilitate the training and administration of the broader membership. It is here that we must make a critical point:

### ***Officers are administrators, NOT commanders***

Given that almost everyone reading this will have been conditioned by a lifetime under authoritarian capitalism, from which extreme social, political, and fiscal power is afforded to the agents of bureaucracy, we feel this is a point worth explaining clearly. The position of an officer ought not come with the authority of command (as it is usually understood) under a leftist militia structure. The role of an officer is to facilitate the training, capacity, and readiness of the

organization and its members. This means that officers' duties are primarily administrative. Officers should be competent, well-organized, respected, and highly motivated. Most of the duties will revolve around scheduling, building agendas and itineraries, following up with membership, writing policies and reports, and facilitating healthy discussion and growth of the organization and its individual members. *None of these duties confer upon an officer the right to make demands of the membership which they are obligated to follow without question.*

Members of a leftist militia have taken upon themselves a heavy burden: it is a significant risk and a significant sacrifice to commit to this work. Coercion has the tendency to plant the seeds of resentment, which have been the downfall of countless leftist projects. A reliance on coercion rather than equal and free decision-making by all involved parties sets the stage for unnecessary and avoidable conflicts. Officers may bring forward suggestions, or plan events and trainings, but they can not command that membership comply with their recommendations.

For better or worse, most organizations of this type will number around ten to twenty core members. Having strong interpersonal skills is a highly desirable trait in an officer. As anyone familiar with leftist organizing can attest, leftism in the US attracts strong and clashing personality types, which can be difficult to manage. This can lead to many internal crises if egos are allowed to run rampant through the organization, but simultaneously freedom of expression and freedom to disagree amicably are foundational to militia success. A full treatment of managing conflict in a way that respects leftist values is outside of the scope of this document, but we recommend "On Conflict and Consensus" by C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein for a more thorough treatment of these issues.

Organic respect for an officer by membership can circumvent many potential points of conflict before they arise, although this can also result in undesirable hierarchies built on individual charisma. Ultimately it is incumbent on both the officer and membership to actively maintain horizontal relationships and navigate the tension between the tendency of power to concentrate, with the need for specialized administration and organizational efficiency and responsiveness.

To reiterate, the role of officers is threefold:

1. Officers are to schedule meetings, trainings, and operations
2. Officers are to build institutional knowledge and infrastructure through proper documentation
3. Officers are to manage the membership to promote the health and growth of the organization

To achieve this, it could be seen as wise to designate a few well-defined officer roles in the militia. As an example, if a member is a medical professional, having that member be the designated "Medical Officer" (MO) would be wise. Their duties would be to design and implement medical drills into trainings, facilitate the medical education of members, and lead public facing medical trainings for the community. Another useful officer position is the "Training Officer" (TO), who is designated to research, document, and compile drills and training agendas in collaboration with the MO.

An important officer position we recommend considering is that of the "Administrative Officer" (AO), whose duties include scheduling trainings, assisting the MO and TO in designing and recording drills, the coordination of resources and members for operations and trainings, and the

creation and maintenance of organizational documents. Many left wing organizations have little to no serious administrative roles, and they suffer for it.

The importance of active documentation within leftist organizations is under emphasized and accounts for much of the lack of sustainable organizations within leftist circles. Bylaws, organizational policies, training resources, schedules, meeting agendas and notes, and after action reports are the foundational infrastructure of organizations whose aim is long-term success, and are under the purview of the AO. These documents allow for the preservation of institutional knowledge and can be used in the absence of direct communication with current or former officers to allow for the continued functioning of the militia.

The authors of this document recognize there is an active disdain for these sorts of documenting efforts, often under the misguided notion of “operational security” in many left wing spaces. We reject the idea that simple creation of documentation is a severe enough security risk that it outweighs the myriad benefits, and we further wish to stress that while many groups who have sought to achieve our goals have imploded, our organizations have been sustained for many years in large part because of our dedication to proper, secure documentation. This booklet is itself the result of a commitment to the importance of documentation, and our knowledge and success is here demonstrated by our ability to offer you this guide. We will treat the issues of proper security practices with regards to documentation throughout this document, but we wish to state clearly at the outset our belief in the importance of excellent documentation and its usefulness in the administration of left wing orgs.

For certain groups it can be useful to select a TL to take on the role of “commanding officer” (CO). The CO’s role is that of accountability. The CO should work in conjunction with the AO to track the projects and responsibilities claimed by other officers and members at large, and should take an active role in holding members accountable for their duties, and step in to assist in the completion of those duties when necessary. This includes rallying members to trainings. This position can be useful, but also dangerous. The CO position can be mistaken for a final authority within the org, but their role is at most to execute the policies as they are agreed to by group consensus. They are there to promote accountability, they are not to make organization-wide decisions alone.

Finally, we should offer a word on the management of financial resources. We generally discourage the creation of bank accounts or physical stashes of financial resources to be used by the organization generally. Many groups — left wing, militant, or otherwise — have ceased to exist due to conflicts over communal financial resources. For the purposes of community defense organizing, there is little utility in maintaining a pooled balance of cash. Instead we advocate policies that require each individual militia member to maintain a dedicated amount of cash on hand to be used in the event of mobilization. We discourage the collection of dues and the use of crowd-funding. The one instance in which we feel it is appropriate is in the imminent purchase of supplies which can be equitably distributed back among the membership, when said supplies are offered at a substantial discount when ordered in bulk. Should an organization decide to combine financial resources an explicit, written policy must be adopted which at minimum treats voluntary contribution, minimum and maximum balances, use cases limited to explicitly identified, written events or situations within the policy, a treasurer to be appointed by consensus, and a sub-policy for where those resources will be donated in the event of an organizational collapse, as well as a definition of organizational collapse with an associated timeline.



## II.b: Organization of Trainings:

While many operations and smaller half-day trainings will require no more than a week to plan, larger, more complex trainings or operations may require weeks or even months to prepare for. During moments of regional or national tension, when the possibility of action is high enough to warrant a raised level of general activity, we advise a minimum of one full day of tactical training per month. The content of these sorts of trainings will be addressed in a later chapter, but for now it is enough to simply state that for a full-day of Small Unit Tactics (SUT) training, it is wise to schedule them a minimum of three weeks in advance and begin planning the agenda a month or more in advance. Range days need only a few weeks of advanced planning, primarily in order to accommodate schedules.

Having a general theme to the trainings, such as advanced medical training days including care-under-fire, prolonged field-care, vitals, filling out casualty cards, patient transport and transfer to the next level of care, are useful in that the structure of the training helps solidify the knowledge through prolonged and repeated application of concepts. Other themed trainings could involve Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape trainings, integrated comms trainings, land navigation, and room-clearing/structure assessment trainings, depending on the pre-existing level of knowledge and skill within your organization. Such trainings are extremely time- and resource-intensive, both in planning and execution, but are worth doing, even with only a single fire team.

Trainings of this nature which incorporate live fire are extremely dangerous, and as such great care should be taken in their design and execution. Medical kits should be abundant, and must be prioritized in the planning stage. Safety meetings should be planned ahead of the event, and held before the training begins, during which a safety plan should be presented to all participants, including who the qualified medical responders are, and what a medical evacuation will look like. All drills should be run dry at least once by all participants, and a ceasefire order can come from any participant at any time.

Shorter trainings, or more minor operations, are easier to organize quickly, ideally three-to-seven days in advance. For these sorts of events it is useful for the organization to have an abundance of tactics, drills, or organizational knowledge that have been recorded and stored securely for future reference. These can include encrypted and physically secured harddrives of digital documents regarding past operations, or binders of drills useful for self-guided training. We will address the latter more specifically in a chapter to follow. Having a centralized, secure communication hub to alert membership of these activities is also highly recommended. For bigger operations and trainings we advise the creation of temporary encrypted group chats designed to be burned after the event. This will also be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter on security culture.

Finally, a critical aspect to cultivating a healthy organization is the democratizing of administrative roles. Administrative capability should be fostered as much as possible among the general membership, so that officers' duties are never abandoned when one, or a handful of members, falls away from active participation. The final duty of an officer is to cultivate self-sufficiency in the organization, so that ultimately every member is replaceable in the event of incapacitation.

***The ultimate goal is to maintain readiness at all times.***

# Chapter III: Equipment

The debate over equipment for a militia is the most subject to variance and also the single greatest waste of time when organizing such groups. The equipment can be broadly categorized as either Tactical Equipment, Medical Equipment, or Survival Equipment, which is how we will address the topic here. In a consumerist society there is a tendency to conflate ownership of an object with mastery of a skill, which is obviously ridiculous. There is also a tendency in the opposite direction among some on the left, spurred on by naive conceptions of anti-consumerism, that views all equipment as more-or-less the same. Your duty is to navigate this tension. In general, we offer two pieces of foundational advice:

1. Buy the best equipment you can afford
2. Understand the inherent limitations of your equipment, and develop contingency plans for its shortcomings

From here we will offer a few points of prescriptive advice, but we will leave it to the reader to conduct an honest inquiry into their needs and the needs of their organization.

## III.a: Tactical Equipment:

Essential:

- Reliable, Semi-Automatic Rifle Chambered in Commonly-Available Military Caliber
- Reliable, Semi-Automatic Pistol Suitable for Concealed Carry
- 3 reliable spare pistol magazines
- 500 rds pistol ammunition
- Quality IWB holster (kydex)
- Sling, Preferably Quick-Adjust (Vickers)
- 10 Reliable Magazines for Fighting Rifle
- 1000<sup>rd</sup> Stockpile of Defensive Ammunition for Fighting Rifle
- Load-Bearing Equipment/Chest Rig/Magazine Carrier
- Unrestricted UHF/VHF Radio (Baofeng UV5R/BFF8HP/UV82, Modded Yaesu FT60R, TRI PRC152)

- Earpro
- Eyepro
- Gloves
- Headlamp
- Pants, Multicam/OCP
- Day Pack with Hip Belt, 15-35L

Strongly Recommended:

- Reliable Full-Sized Semi-Automatic Pistol
- Quality Weapon-Mounted Light (WML) for Fighting Rifle
- Quality WML for Each Pistol
- Quality Optic for Fighting Rifle
- Quality Optic for Each Pistol
- Quality Plate Carrier
- NIJ CERTIFIED Ceramic Plates (level IV or Special Threat, not plates “tested to NIJ standards”)
- Plate Carrier Compatible Hydration Bladder
- 2000<sup>rd</sup> Stockpile of Defensive Ammunition for Fighting Rifle
- 1000<sup>rd</sup> Stockpile of Defensive Ammunition for Pistol(s)
- Quality battle belt including:
  - WML-Compatible OWB holster with Minimum lvl II Retention
  - Pistol Magazine Pouches
  - Rifle Magazine Pouch(es)
  - Dump Pouch
  - IFAK
- Electronic / Active Earpro
- Integrated Comms
  - Communications Capable Headset (Comtacs, Sordins, Opscore AMPs)
  - PTT Compatible with Radio+Headset
- NIJ CERTIFIED Concealable IIIA Soft Armor

- Plate Carrier Compatible Hydration Bladder
- Knee Pads

Force Multipliers:

- Ballistic Helmet
- PVS14 NODs + IR WMLs and Lasers
- Handheld Thermal Optics
- Drones w Integrated Cameras
- Incendiary Devices (Smoke and Distraction)
- Suppressors, Flash Hiders, or other Muzzle Devices

Many militia members will spend more time carrying concealed firearms than overt kits with rifles, so we recommend that the materials for a competent concealed setup are a primary concern, especially for those operating on tight budgets or living in permitless carry states. Having a firearm readily at-hand in day-to-day life contributes to a culture of community self defense, and also ensures that a militia member can be ready to respond to lethal threats at any time. We strongly encourage all militia members to pursue their concealed carry permits, as these are necessary for legal open-carry in some states, which may be needed for certain operations.

### **III.b: Medical Equipment**

Essential:

- Individual First-Aid Kit (IFAK) in a Marked Pouch, consisting of:
  - CAT or SOFT-TW Tourniquet Inside Pouch or Otherwise Protected From UV Exposure
  - Pressure dressing (ETD, Israeli, H-bandage or Equivalent)
  - Combat Gauze (QuikClot, ChitoGauze, Celox, or Equivalent)
  - 28f Nasopharyngeal Airway (NPA)
  - Hyfin Vented Chest Seals (2-Pack)
  - Nitrile Gloves (Blue, White, or Purple, NOT Black)
  - Watch with Second Hand
- “Boo-boo kit” (Aspirin, Moleskin, Topical Antibiotics, Electrolyte Powders, etc.)

Strongly Recommended:

- SAM Splints

- Pelvic Binder
- Bag-mask Resuscitation Device (Ambu SPUR, NAR Cyclone or Equivalent)
- Chest Decompression Needles (IF TRAINED IN THEIR USE)
- Supraglottic Airways of Appropriate Size (IF TRAINED)
- Extra Dressings, Gauze, and Bandages

Force Multipliers:

- OC / CS Decontamination Spray (Sabre)
- Quiklitter
- Tubular Nylon
- Vacuum-Packed Supplies in an Organized Bag Designed for Medics
  - Aid Bag
  - Protest Kit
  - Recce Bag

It is important to note the prevalence of counterfeit medical materials on the market. Large, non-specialist distributors such as Amazon are notorious for carrying counterfeit medical items such as fake CATs, which fail at spectacular rates, and will cost lives if pressed into service. All militia members should prioritize buying authentic equipment from reputable distributors such as North American Rescue, Rescue Essentials, Tac Med Solutions, or Guerrilla Tactical. If the militia has prioritized the recruitment of a medical professional, or professional medical training of a member, that member may be qualified for discounts from distributors upon the authentication of their medical license, and as such it is often cheaper to pool money and have the comdef org's MO order medical items in bulk using their discount.

We strongly recommend that all militia members carry an IFAK as part of their EDC. We consider this to be required for militia members who carry concealed firearms. Additionally, having more advanced medical kits stored in lockers or vehicles in frequently inhabited spaces is highly desirable for the purposes of immediate response. You are much more likely to encounter a medical emergency than you are to need a firearm in your day-to-day life, and simple trauma IFAKs can be conveniently stored in fanny packs and backpacks, which allow members to respond with their medical training immediately in case of a traumatic accident. This is an aspect of community defense which ought to be promoted not solely among militant, radical, or even political circles, rather it should be advocated for generally as a necessary habit for daily life. This is a simple form of community defense everyone can participate in, which promotes community autonomy, and for which all militia members should advocate openly and often.

Every event at which firearms are present should have multiple IFAKs present, in explicitly pre-communicated locations. In combat, the IFAK is intended to be used on the person carrying it. As such, we require militia members to carry a fully stocked trauma IFAK compatible with their

squad's most medically qualified member's capabilities on their first-line gear, usually meaning their battle belt. Many militia members also choose to carry a second IFAK on their chest rig or plate carrier, but these should be considered secondary or supplemental as there are more situations in which you are likely to wear your belt than your chest rig or plate carrier.

The Aid Bag is the medic's portable workspace: it contains everything they need to work within their scope; for a group with a trained and licensed professional this could include items such as bag-mask ventilation devices or chest decompression needles. It is NOT just a "big IFAK" – all members (including the medic) should have their own, separate IFAK. The purpose of the aid bag is the consolidation of durable medical goods and specialized medical supplies that are otherwise not expedient for individual members to carry due to bulk or cost. The general use-case of the aid bag is missions/operations of short duration, where additional sustainment gear will not be necessary. The aid bag is focused on treating traumatic injuries sustained by members of a squad, and caring for them for a short duration.

For actions where the aid bag is the appropriate choice, it may also be advisable to have a separate, distinct, "truck bag" meant to provide care during MEDEVAC/CASEVAC. The Truck Kit is meant to supplement a medic's Aid Bag, specifically for MEDEVAC/CASEVAC of wounded team members. Because it is stored in a vehicle, it is not subject to the limitations of an aid bag in terms of weight/bulk of items, and can and should include items like vital signs monitors, bag-mask ventilation devices, oxygen tanks and administration devices, etc. Think of it as a bridge between the point of injury and the emergency room, and pack in accordance with the expected transit time from the site where it will be staged to the nearest friendly clinic.

The "protest kit" is specifically for use at actions and demonstrations, and will generally NOT be contained in a stereotypically "tactical bag," but should be clearly marked with a red cross to signal to others the bearer's status as a medic. The protest kit should be geared toward medical emergencies expected at an action, including fluids for pepper spray decontamination (ideally Sabre Decon as mentioned elsewhere), splinting equipment for fractures, and oral glucose or other sugary substances for diabetic patients. PPE, CPR masks, bag-mask ventilation devices, a litter or other carrying device, and a robust set of Stop the Bleed equipment are the priorities for this kit. Since demos almost universally happen in densely-populated areas, where transport to a hospital within an hour of injury is almost certain, equipment for prolonged field care will not be necessary.

Depending on your org's operating environment, it may be necessary to maintain an additional "recce loadout" for missions where a team will be spending an extended amount of time outside of civilization, without resupply or access to amenities like indoor plumbing and running water. These types of operations necessitate a larger aid bag, as the medic may be operating into what TCCC calls "prolonged field care" (care of a patient for longer than 4 hours), which will require additional medical supplies. And of course, the parameters of the mission will require the medic (and the rest of the team) to carry a substantial amount of sustainment gear (food, water, shelter, clothing, firemaking equipment, etc).

The bag itself should be rugged, large, and designed with the medic in mind; there are many offerings from companies that specialize in tactical soft goods such as Mystery Ranch, Blackhawk, 5.11, and Tasmanian Tiger. The authors recommend a Mystery Ranch NICE RATS and have found it to be a rugged, comfortable, well-designed bag for this purpose. This bag in particular also features external MOLLE webbing allowing for additional pouches to be secured to the outside for carrying sustainment gear. The size of the bag selected will be based on multiple

factors: expected operating environment (especially with regard to distance from definitive care); expected duration of operations (which will affect how much sustainment gear will be needed in addition to medical gear); and the scope of practice of the medic (eg EMT-B vs Paramedic, etc).

### **III.c: Survival Equipment**

Essential:

- Month's Worth of Cash
- 2 Weeks Nonperishable Food
- Water filtration device
- Reliable Hiking Boots
- Rain Jacket
- Warm mid-layers for all weather
- Synthetic/Wool Base Layers
- Individual Preparedness Incidentals (Spare Prescription Glasses, etc)
- Functioning Means of Transportation
- Week Supply of Prescribed Medication on Hand At All Times

Strongly Recommended:

- Month Supply of Prescribed Medications on Hand At All Times
- 2 Months Nonperishable Food
  - 2 Weeks Freeze Dried / Packable Food
- Fuel Reserves for vehicles (1 Full Tanks Worth, use Sta-Bil)
- 65L+ Backpack
- Lightweight 2 Person Backpacking Tent (Earthtones Ideal)
- Binoculars (10x42 Ideal)
- 20° Packable Sleeping Bag
- Physical Topo Maps of Your Region + Compass
  - Water Sources Identified and Well Labeled
- Dynamic and Static Ropes + Climbing Gear (Harness, Crampons, Carabiners, etc)

Force Multipliers:

- 6 Months + of Nonperishable Food
- 6 Months + Medical Necessities (Prescribed and Over the Counter)

Many of these items are also standard outdoor equipment, and will likely be familiar to readers who engage in activities such as backpacking. This equipment in particular falls into a gray area between useful preparations and what we would call LARPing. The idea of an irregular force such as a comdef org engaging in prolonged, multi-day, overland operations is far-fetched, but we have decided to here include these items for a few reasons. The first is that basic individual survival skills are useful, and training them regularly, even with short overnight trips into the backcountry, helps build individual fitness, self-reliance, and important navigational skills. The second is that, while for many readers who exist in an urban context may find much of this unnecessary, for many committed leftists who exist in the western half of the continent, these items give crucial access to remote territory where overnight trainings can be held far from prying eyes.

The authors wish to reiterate that we do not generally advise “bug-out” bags or preparations in general. While some individuals under particular threat of primarily natural disasters may be at significant enough risk to warrant preparing for the potential evacuation of their homes, for the purposes of community defense the goal of a serious force is to entrench themselves against external threats. This requires not only stocking a maximal amount of shelf-stable food and medicine, but also strong ties with neighbors and a network of such preparations which can sustain a committed fighting group during periods of scarcity brought on by external breakdown of supply chains, or conflict within the community. At time of writing, the option of fleeing into wilderness is strongly discouraged, as is the undertaking of complex operations which would require overnight travel, by foot, in austere or mountainous environs. These sorts of operations are fun to train for, and can be good for morale depending on the individual makeup and interests of your comdef org, but in general these trainings will not have short-term utility in the defense of your community.

### **III.d: Final Words on Equipment**

To reiterate, these are by no means the only required items, what is required will vary depending on your local conditions, resources and threats. A militant opposition to unorganized, but armed right-wing counter demonstrators will require different kit than a comdef org whose primary threat is a highly-organized and well-equipped fascist militia. It is cliché among tactical circles, *but mission drives gear*.

It is here necessary to have a word on force-multipliers. Under a capitalist system, many valuable tools with tactical applications are not in the budget for many working class people. A PVS-14 will set you back several thousand dollars, an amount simply out of reach for many. However, the abilities afforded to an organization with even a few members with NODs are many times that of an organization restricted to use of white-lights after dark. Specialization of roles can mean that those with means can purchase NODs, drones, thermal imaging systems, and other tools which will increase the militia’s capability as a whole. And for those who may not have as much disposable income, one force multiplier that is easily achievable is a “uniform” for



members to wear at overt operations or larger training days. In most cases this can be as simple as requesting members to have one pair of sturdy multicam camouflage pants, and a unit patch to be worn on chest rigs, PC's, or shoulders at official militia trainings and activities.

Finally, the writers of this document strongly encourage those who are able to accrue multiples of each item and quantity listed here, as well as those necessary to your region in particular. Doing so allows you to outfit and field a better equipped group more rapidly than waiting for each individual to accumulate all these items individually. This is a heavy financial burden, but pays dividends in the event of militia mobilization under extraordinary circumstances in which new members must be on-boarded rapidly.

## Chapter IV: Training

Consistent and high-quality training is the single greatest responsibility for a militia. Many reactionary groups prioritize acquisition of high quality equipment but neglect training. While it is important to note that these groups still represent a major threat, and the advantages of superior equipment are by no means negligible, it is necessary to stress that training is the true measure of a militia's ability to adequately defend themselves and their communities. No piece of equipment can overcome a large gap in training. The authors consider this chapter to be the most critical to the success of any leftist militia.

While we will not give an exhaustive account of specific drills / resources to be used in training, we will be specific about the general purpose behind organizing trainings with community defense firmly in mind. We will discuss how to motivate members, how to assess failures and diagnose shortcomings, the materials needed to train certain skill training, and what we have found to be often overlooked aspects of training that are critical to the safety of leftist militia members in particular. We will do this by separating the broad category of "Training" into three sections: Tactical Training, Medical Training, and Fundamentals.

### IV.a: Tactical Training

Tactical training, for our purposes, refers to group firearms drills involving tactical concepts such as covering fire, coordinated fire, communication during live fire, and movement. For any leftist militia, it is critical to build tactical capacity to the greatest extent possible. What follows is written on the assumption that the reader has the good sense of self to know their own capabilities and limitations, including those that prevent them from engaging in certain training activities.

We have already mentioned training events in the chapter on Administration and Organization, but here we discuss the details. First and foremost, the militia should secure as many locations conducive to training events as possible. While official ranges can be suitable for militia training, especially if they do not have rules barring dynamic courses of fire, we suggest also searching for alternatives. In the Western half of the country public lands abound, and are particularly suited to privacy-conscious training. Gravel pits in particular are fantastic training grounds, and can be located by searching satellite maps, although we strongly recommend a physical assessment of the landscape before bringing the entire militia. East of the divide, options can be more limited, but searching for private land can still be fruitful. If no such options are found, another strategy to source facilities is to join a competitive shooting association such as USPSA and use their facilities. This last option can be fruitful for gaining access to facilities and equipment, but has security drawbacks insofar as militia training is very much distinct from competition training. So long as this is kept in mind by a militia organizer, the contradiction is not so great as to be insurmountable.

Trainings can be broadly categorized into either range days or small unit tactics (SUT) days. Range days consist of multiple stages of fire, and are primarily designed to build and maintain

proficiency in weapons handling, use of cover and concealment, communication, and movement under fire. Range days can last anywhere from two to six hours, and are foundational to militia success.

Range days should involve training skills such as marksmanship, recoil control, remediating malfunctions, engagement from and proper use of cover, counter-ambush (get-off-the-x) drills, shooting from/around vehicles, identifying and maintaining sectors of fire, providing covering fire, shooting and moving, and shooting while moving. While steel targets provide the luxury of immediate feedback, range days should primarily use cardboard or paper torso targets, ideally ¾ IPSC targets, for the purposes of shot accountability, which is necessary for adequate assessment of a shooter's performance. We also recommend the use of tape to cover hits, which keeps targets cleaner and makes them last longer.

After each course of fire the shooter and other members should clear their weapons, and walk down range to assess performance as a group. Ideally most members will also have shot-timers, which are one of the greatest assets to building proficiency with a firearm – you cannot measure improvement if you do not measure speed and assess accuracy. Longer range days can include hybrid tactical and medical drills, wherein a course of fire is completed, the weapon cleared, a calisthenic drill is conducted (burpees, pulling a weighted drag bag to cover, wind sprints, etc), and then a medical scenario is presented and addressed by the shooter. Range days require minimal planning and should be conducted several times a month with as many shooters as possible making it to at least one each month.

One of the best uses of time during range days is practicing communication within fireteams during a firefight. Multiple sources of gunfire can be disorienting and temporarily deafening, even with appropriate electronic hearing protection. It is discouraged to use radio comms within a fireteam, leaving those channels open for coordination between multiple fireteams across wider terrain. Therefore training fireteams in the use of verbal and non-verbal commands to be given in a firefight is essential to the safety of all members. For instance, during an engagement it is likely that one or more shooters will need to change positions. Developing and codifying a militia Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for such commands is necessary. We provide the following as an example of an SOP for communication during a firefight:

1. Shooter 2 declares intention to move positions to Shooter 1.  
VERBAL COMMAND: "MOVING"
2. Shooter 1 responds in one of two manners:  
Scenario A: 1 needs to provide covering fire to make safe for 2 to move  
VERBAL RESPONSE: "COVERING"  
VERBAL COMMAND: "MOVE MOVE MOVE" (when 1 engages targets)  
Scenario B: 1 is engaging targets, immediately safe for 2 to move  
VERBAL COMMAND: "MOVE MOVE MOVE"  
Shooter 2 does not move from current position until 1 gives "MOVE" command.
3. Shooter 2 moves to new position, when in position, reloaded, and shooting  
VERBAL COMMAND: "SET SET SET"

#### 4. Supplementary Commands:

“CONTACT”: To be shouted by all at the initiation of enemy engagement

“RELOADING”: Should be met with response “COVERING”

“MALFUNCTION”: Should be met with response “COVERING”

“SET SET SET”: Called when ready to press shots after a reload, malfunction or position change

Magazine capacity should be checked after each position change before re-engagement, and administrative reloads performed if necessary. Single syllable commands should be repeated multiple times.

The above is just one example of a possible SOP a militia structure might adopt, but while the details may vary from org to org, it is important that these protocols are codified within the group. Failure to have such policies in place, and trained into members, results in poor communication during engagements which in turn results in casualties. Such policies are commonly overlooked to the extreme detriment of organizational capability. Emphasizing the training of clear, concise, and coordinated communication and movement within a fireteam is one of the single greatest force-multipliers available to a small comdef org. Mastering marksmanship in tandem with excellent communication during a firefight will put your capabilities above the vast majority of organized opposition you are likely to encounter in armed community defense.

SUT days are fundamentally distinct from range days in that they are primarily focused on non-shooting skills. SUT days are ideally done in a private, remote setting in full kit, with as many attendees as possible, and should last from six to twelve hours. Group movement, communication, and coordination between multiple fireteams are the central motivations for such events, and drills can include structure assessment/room clearing, bounding, patrolling, land navigation, radio communication, night shoots, mock-protest security scenarios, squad-level counter-ambush, and vehicular assaults/retreats.

Because of their more dynamic nature these sorts of trainings are exponentially more risky than flat range dynamic drills, and so it is **essential** that best practices in firearm safety are strictly adhered to. Each SUT day should begin with a safety briefing, each drill should be run at least once dry with cleared weapons before using live fire. Buddy-check weapon systems for clear before, after, and in between drills, and the use of chamber plugs / barrel flags are essential practices to cultivate. It is also imperative that you have the appropriate medical equipment to treat and transport a patient out of the training area in the case of a training accident, and that medical personnel develop and brief the team *prior to the commencement of training* on a plan for treatment and evacuation. Drills should be run slowly, deliberately, and should be subject to immediate cease-fires called by any participant or observer. These drills require mutual trust between all members of a fire-team, and should not be attempted without mastering the fundamentals of firearms safety and handling individually and as a group. Because of the greater need for structure and planning, these trainings should be conducted a maximum of once per month, and should be scheduled weeks or months in advance in order to maximize attendance.

An often overlooked aspect to training is the use of force-on-force (FoF) days, wherein a militia uses milsim tools such as airsoft or paintball to train combat skills as a group. Ideally this is done by using as near-to-perfect replicas of a shooter’s primary combat weapons as possible, so that the shooter can use their standard kit and loadout. These are fun events that can be used

to maintain morale and increase militia cohesion, while also serving as an invaluable resource to test members' SUT skills. Planning is minimal, although it can be useful to have a few different games in mind when you arrive; games such as escorts, ambush / counter-ambush, assault on an entrenched position, and room clearing are all good options to consider. It is important to note, however, that there are limitations to how well these skills translate. For instance, accuracy and range of airsoft and paintball guns are not comparable to that of actual firearms, which can lead to serious issues when trying to replicate actual combat engagement distances. It is our opinion that these FoF trainings should be kept to minimal engagement distances. If there are only a few members participating, an excellent application of airsoft in particular is gaming out defensive gun use (DGU) from concealment. This requires no special kit beyond standard concealment holsters and PPE (face shields suffice), no special locations to train in, and can be extremely valuable in testing your skills under stress.

Briefly, it is worth treating a type of drill that can be trained in range days, SUT days, and FoF days, that being the protest environment and subsequent surrender to police. Leftist comdef orgs are currently most likely to be deployed in protest scenarios with either overt, covert, or hybrid security models. We will address the militia acting as protest security in a later chapter, but for now we assume that this is the most dangerous operation a leftist militia is likely to engage in. Trainings seeking to replicate the protest environment should be loud, chaotic, disorienting, and must include a huge majority of no-shoot targets on the field, which the shooter(s) must assess and navigate quickly, and engage the proper targets. It may also be wise to train in the use of radio comms to secondary quick-reaction groups who would be stationed away from the course of fire, but called in to support in either the engagement or evacuation of the shooters. Using bluetooth speakers or headphones to replicate crowd noise, cheap fireworks to replicate returning fire or temporarily conceal parts of the field of fire, as well as changing the field after each drill so that the shooters must reassess and properly identify the threats each time, helps replicate protest environments, albeit imperfectly. We feel that when done appropriately, this type of training will demonstrate the need for integrated comms.

Furthermore, it is worth training secondary elements to a DGU in a protest environment. Making certain that the threat is neutralized, immediate assessment and treatment of casualties, and preparing for a surrender to police are all **critical** skills to train. On the last point in particular, it is crucial to train all militia members how to minimize their risk of being killed by police. As soon as a threat is definitively neutralized, militia members ought to retreat from the protest site and separate themselves as best as possible from bystanders. They should doff all tactical kit, clear firearms and remove them from their person. Ideally a non-militia member collaborator can be designated to stand guard over the kit until confiscated by police or removed from the scene. Kit not involved in the shooting belonging to members not engaged in the DGU should still be stripped, but can be placed in a vehicle and leave the scene immediately, again preferably by a non-member collaborator.

All of the above is written upon the assumption the police will not engage surrendering militia members, which as leftists we understand is a potentially unjustifiable assumption. We feel it is important here to note that a successful surrender to police need not take this form. Militia members of marginalized racial identities in particular are at high risk of murder by police, and thus should consider alternative models, including stripping their kit, and leaving the scene immediately, then surrendering at the police station at a later point with witnesses. Ultimately this aspect of post-DGU actions will vary depending on local conditions and we cannot prescribe

any single course of action, we simply advise that this topic is treated seriously and protocols and SOPs are developed with intention and a focus on keeping all protest attendees and militia members as safe as possible.

A valuable training opportunity comes in the form of collaboration between comdef orgs. It is critical that a strong security culture is maintained, but meetups between orgs can foster valuable relationships and increase capacity for building regional systems of dual-power. These orgs need not be other comdef orgs; close relationships with antifascist researchers can help increase your security by keeping them from unintentionally targeting your members, and can give you advanced warning of fascist actions planned in your area. Close relationships with mutual aid orgs and protest organizers can help build a robust system of intelligence and preventative comdef actions which do not necessarily involve firearms. Involving the militia, ideally covertly, in other areas of community organizing builds trust and prevents harmful attitudes about “protest security” from being fostered when the militia is called into service. These collaborations can pose serious security risks if not handled properly, but we feel they often have more benefits than drawbacks.

It is worth warning the reader now, that the authors of this document have spent years seeking highly motivated comdef orgs, and have found exceedingly few worth collaborating with in this manner. Many groups lack organization, commitment, and seriousness, but can still be worth collaborating with if only to help motivate their development. We again stress that we are writing this document to encourage the inception and development of more serious orgs, so that one day we might find each other. When seeking out potential organizational collaborations, organizers must use extreme discretion.

Finally, we wish to recommend some basic equipment that can aid in tactical training. We highly recommend members acquire as many plastic rain barrels as possible for use as cover and structures, we advocate the use of building a system to rig up opaque “walls” for use in structure assessment drills, and we recommend using vehicles in the course of training often. Constructing target stands for cardboard and steel targets is also vital. The creation of dies to mass-produce cardboard torso targets is also extremely helpful. We strongly recommend constructing a library of drills, both digital and physical, which can be distributed among members for use individually and as a reference when planning larger trainings. These libraries should be completely apolitical, should describe a drill’s purpose (recoil control, target transitions, use of cover, etc), include the target par-times and round counts, be organized into clear chapters with page numbers, and should cover both shooting drills, medical drills, and group SOPs (while not mentioning nor alluding to the existence of the militia). We strongly recommend the use of graphics and visual aids to help in the description of the drills as well. These libraries can be printed and placed in binders to be carried at the range, and can include other training tools such as charts and note-taking guides for individual members to track their own progress and organize their training as individuals.

## **IV.b: Medical Training**

Just as every militia member must be competent in the use of their firearms, it must also be expected that they are educated in, and regularly train, medical skills. In terms of relevance to community defense, as explained in the paragraph succeeding Medical Equipment, we advocate

that trauma medical kits be carried by everyone every day, and that medical skills are foundational to community defense. You are much more likely to encounter a situation where in order to defend a community member you require a tourniquet, SAM splint, or Narcan than you are to require a firearm.

The minimal foundational medical training that every single militia member should be qualified in is the proper use of tourniquets, chest seals, trauma dressings, and wound-packing gauze. This collectively will be called “hemorrhage control” or “stop the bleed.” The national Stop The Bleed (STB) program from the American College of Surgeons offers free baseline hemorrhage control training for civilians that covers most of these topics, but is considered insufficient for a comdef organization. Additionally CPR certifications can be useful, but are again typically insufficient for the purposes of a comdef org.

A well-rounded militia will intentionally recruit, or encourage and help fund the training of, a qualified medical professional, at minimum WFR-qualified and ideally EMT-B or higher. They can then be tasked with the medical training of the other members. The MO should prioritize training militia members to Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) standards. TCCC standards are available for download online, and include care under fire skills, field care, triage, evacuation, resuscitation, monitoring of vitals, communication to higher levels of care, and the MARCH algorithm for traumatic injury treatment.

In keeping with their responsibilities as the MO, it is also incumbent on the professionally medically trained comdef org members to maintain their licensure and follow the latest evidence-based standards of care. This includes training all militia members in trauma-informed care and the standards of medical consent, so that all members are prepared to render immediate aid to injured community members, either in the course of an official militia operation, or simply in the course of everyday life. MO’s should also seek out training that is relevant to their community’s immediate needs, such as the use of Narcan or rehydration techniques, and train members in the use of those medications and equipment as well.

It is critical in any context where medicine is practiced to cultivate a “just culture” – that is, an internal culture where medical providers are not punished for self-reporting mistakes (medication errors, incorrect technique, etc). Instead, these self-reported errors are reviewed by the group of providers so that everyone can work to prevent similar errors from happening again in the future. For the militia’s purposes, this means thorough dissections of medical responses, simulated or real. In the case that a militia member should be involved in the response to an accident which required deployment of their medical training and equipment, the MO should schedule a meeting with the member, and as many other members as possible, to discuss and dissect the incident following just culture guidelines. The purpose then is to review institutional and individual decisions – from clinical practice guidelines, to aid bag layouts, to IFAK placement and fitout – and determine how the organization can adjust given the new revelations.

In the post-incident meeting we suggest MO’s adopt an “after action review/report” framework for moderating the discussion. The medical AAR consists of three primary questions, those being:

1. What happened?
2. What was planned, and what were the differences between this and the answer to question one?

### 3. Why did it happen this way?

While the first two questions are more or less recounts of the facts of a simulated or real incident, the third question is intended to provoke introspection and active identification of the initially unknown variables which caused the divergences between planned or trained response and the reality. We strongly encourage the documentation of these unknowns, as they can be incorporated into medical training for the org moving forward.

Medical trainings should be the primary focus of, at minimum, two full days of dedicated training per year, and incorporated into the monthly trainings or range days. This helps members maintain a level of medical competence that allows them to be ready to respond to medical emergencies year round. As with the creation of intentionally compiled organizational resources for tactical training, we encourage militias to prioritize the creation and dissemination of medical training resources and drills into consumable training aids such as binders of training scenarios. These scenarios should be organized by situational context, then a description of injuries under that context, and then have notes for the evaluation of an individual's performance in the drill. A binder of drills organized by scenario and severity of injuries, or flashcards compiled electronically and disseminated to membership should be a priority for any militia.

These sorts of resources also allow medical training to be easily incorporated into courses of fire, in which a shooter or group of shooters engage targets, cover for a member to retrieve a casualty, and once the simulated gunfight is declared over by a pre-selected RSO, practice care under fire, self-treatment, or TCCC and evacuation. These hybrid shooting and medical drills are risky, and proper firearm safety procedures must be strictly adhered to at all times. The second the RSO declares a course of fire clear, any member assigned to engage in treatment of casualties must first clear their weapon, show clear to an RSO, put the weapon down with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, and only then proceed to care for the simulated casualty. It may be useful to train Care Under Fire, during which one member of a group of shooters falls off the firing line, and pulls a volunteer or heavy drag bag behind cover and begins rendering care under CUF guidelines. It is also worthwhile to have each member practice ordering self-care instructions while still engaging targets down range as part of a drill wherein a civilian casualty might be capable of rendering care to themselves or to others while militia members are still engaged in a firefight.

Medical Trainings should further treat the topic of immediate response to mass casualty incidents as part of their TCCC training. This is especially necessary during training for protest security, when an immediate triage and clear communication of patients' conditions during the transitions to higher levels of care becomes especially critical.

Each individual militia member ought to pursue the greatest degree of medical training available to them, as the more medical expertise there is in the militia, the safer the organization becomes internally, and the more useful the members become to the community. A high degree of medical qualification also opens up the possibility of members becoming qualified instructors for programs like CPR or STB, which is an invaluable asset for the militia. Offering free or at-cost medical training and certification through front-organizations builds critical relationships and trust between militia members and community members, and cannot be overemphasized as an outreach method.

We consider medical training to be equally important to the proper functioning of the militia as firearms skills. A militia without proper medical equipment or training is a liability to their



community, not an asset. It is deeply irresponsible for an individual, let alone an organization ostensibly committed to community defense, to not develop these skills and resources, especially if they are carrying firearms into public areas. It has become popular to see leftists coming to protests armed, and it is not uncommon to see these individuals without IFAKs or medical equipment of any kind. This is an embarrassment, and must be actively scorned out of leftist circles.

#### **IV.c: Fundamental Training**

What is conceived of as “fundamental” for militia training will vary depending on the scope and size of an organization, and its mission. The recommendations below are just that, recommendations, and may not perfectly suit a specific militia or every individual member. In general, the basics of safety, marksmanship, medical, and movement are more important to organizational readiness than getting splits down. Being a good dynamic shooter is always a huge benefit, but for effective and timely organizing with people who may not necessarily have those skills, or may not be able to invest financially beyond the basics, or who are just not passionate about shooting, the basics are enough *when paired with a well organized group in which those skills are actively nurtured.*

That being said, the most fundamental aspect of firearms training is perfect firearms safety. Flagging is **NEVER** acceptable. Negligent discharges are **NEVER** acceptable. Violations of these safety standards are extremely serious, and are grounds for being expelled from the militia or disqualification of an individual’s candidacy. We will treat this again in the chapter on recruitment, but it should be inconceivable that an individual achieves membership within the militia without demonstrating excellent firearm safety habits. If an individual cannot be trusted on the flat range, they cannot be allowed at SUT trainings and must be prevented from arriving to operations or actions armed.

One of the limiting aspects to participation in militia activities is the financial burden on members. Equipment, ammunition, training, and transportation are expensive and can limit an individual’s ability to involve themselves. However, there are certain things with low / no fiscal barrier which we will address first. For the able-bodied, physical exercise is invaluable. Kit is heavy, being physically fit can help increase stamina for all-day trainings or actions, and will give you a tactical advantage in exchanges of fire.

We also strongly advise that all militia members regularly train concealed carry skills, regardless of whether they have a permit. At the current temperature, in most day-to-day situations in which there is a threat of lethal violence, a carbine will not be available. Therefore becoming excellent users of handguns is a foundational and essential skill of all militia members, and training from concealment ensures that you have the necessary skills to fight back effectively. Becoming excellent with the use of concealed handguns opens up militia participation in covert operations which will be covered in more detail at a later point.

A critical element of tactical capability is the practice of dry-fire. Snap-caps can be had for only a few dollars, with which a shooter can then train the vast majority of fundamental shooting skills besides recoil control. Spending ten to twenty minutes three to four times a week dry firing handguns and rifles/carbines will allow a shooter to build and maintain proficiency with a firearm while not spending any money beyond the initial investment. Dry fire can help train

trigger pulls, weapon and target transitions, emergency and administrative reloads, draw time, and other foundational skills with a firearm.

If money is not a limiting issue, members should expect to shoot about three hundred rounds from their primary and secondary weapons per month. With heavy use of dry fire this number can be cut significantly, but in general about three hundred rounds (or a case of ammunition every three to four months) will be suitable to maintain proficiency when expended in the execution of well-planned drills coupled with thorough dissection of performance and areas of improvement. It is important to find and/or develop shooting drills that expend the least amount of ammunition and yield the highest results in improvement. Pat McNamara and Kyle Lamb have developed many such drills which are readily accessible online, as well as high round count alternatives.

On the topic of improvement, we strongly recommend that militia members occasionally film themselves shooting a course of fire or a benchmark drill (such as a Bill, Failure, FAST, or El Prez). The ability to analyze footage helps identify issues in form and execution and allows the shooter to gain a more well-rounded view of their performance without having to rely solely on memory. This also has the benefit of acting as a morale boost, as it can show clear progression over time. In this same vein, having members record their par times and splits for a specific benchmark drill can be fruitful. Seeing clear evidence of progress is a strong motivator for a shooter to continue.

The preceding paragraphs cover the essentials of militia training, but there are a few other points regarding training that are worth mentioning. We strongly encourage all militia members to seek out formal training from other sources, whether in the use of firearms, medical treatment, use of comms, or other directly applicable skills within the militia. We understand that for some people, especially members of marginalized groups, such classes could be potentially hostile to their presence. This is why it is critical that those who can safely attend must diligently record as much of the information covered in the course as possible, make thorough notes of the drills used, and bring them back to the militia for dissemination and incorporation into the organization's repertoire.

In these sections we have treated the various elements of militia training in their most basic forms, and we have laid out a foundation from which we hope many different structures can be built. We wish again to stress that the details will depend heavily on the individual organization's mission, membership ability, and the surrounding material conditions, but we have endeavored to provide the most specific outlines possible while maintaining the general nature of the advice. What is not variable is the critical nature of training itself. Without the training we have identified, the militia will be lacking necessary capability and could become a liability to their community instead of an asset. We reject the capitalist consumerist notion that the product, be it a firearm or an IFAK, is equivalent to proficiency, and we demand of those who take this work seriously to seek out education in these topics to the best of their ability.

# Chapter V: Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment is one of the most controversial aspects of organizing a leftist comdef organization. We will do our best.

## V.a: Principles of Recruitment

Before anything else, it is critical we acknowledge the issue of race and gender in the construction of comdef orgs. In our experience organizing and observing leftist militias, it is obvious to us that most militia members are male, and most are white. This of course is not always the case, in some regions militia organizers are primarily from marginalized communities, or at least have been extremely proactive about recruiting from marginalized identities or organizing their groups to be explicitly for marginalized people, but in general the earliest adopters of the leftist militia as a concept have been white men. We feel that this is a result of external conditions of American culture, wherein young white men are often made more comfortable with firearms and militant action early in their lives, as opposed to other groups for whom the same interests or attitudes often constitute an extreme risk to their physical safety, but this does not absolve the leftist militia from opposing this general trend.

In recruitment this leads to tension. If we assume that most of these orgs will initially be spearheaded by white organizers, how do those organizations then make themselves safe for marginalized people, who often need the benefits of community defense the most? It is impossible to be universally prescriptive in this matter, however, if you are involved in your community – efforts to help the houseless, dual power initiatives, supporting queer events and individuals, and building relationships with local BIPOC communities – you will earn the kind of trust that overcomes these barriers.

While keeping that in mind, we feel it is worth addressing a specific topic around recruitment which we see discussed often. The counter-recruitment debate is always one which is dangerous to wade too deeply into, and in truth a full treatment of the matter would fill its own volume. However, as leftists we are compelled to believe that people are capable of change, and that discounting that possibility is counter-productive and the result of a culture of retributive and carceral “justice”. On the other hand we understand that forced forgiveness is counter-productive, and that victims of a group or ideology can feel unsafe around individuals who formerly held certain ideologies or attitudes, even if they are reformed. This is yet another tension for which there is no formulaic solution, that militia organizers must find their own way to balance. We believe the general best practice is to define clearly what deradicalization means to the org, and who should be involved in counter-recruitment. In general we advocate that organizers do not attempt to pull away fascists from their organizations, the security risks are too great and the individuals recruited are often not worth the effort.

That aside, many libertarians, particularly from regions where the dominant political ideology is more reactionary and traditionally conservative, are often great potential recruits and pose a

much lower security risk. Many are already pro-firearms and anti-state, and tend to have a naive egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism, which can be easily cultivated into a more internally consistent ideological bent. Such counter recruitment is often best done by white men in the leftist militia, since they are least at risk, but the recruiters should also be trusted by marginalized members to be vocal advocates for their rights and dignity in their absence, and must be trusted to not neglect the non-negotiables of militia membership such as anti-racism, anti-fascism, and anti-queerphobia. We advise that counter-recruits be kept out of official organizational membership until they have a prolonged and satisfactory record of ideological and behavioral adjustment, after which they can become full and trusted members.

Counter-recruitment again brings up the notion of internal ideological consistency. This will vary between organizations, but for many communities which require robust defense, strict adherence to specific ideological doctrines is counter-productive. The bylaws of the militia should include a list of non-negotiable ideological factors which have been previously mentioned, and outside of those we recommend against having political litmus tests. We reiterate our belief in tactical unity, wherein alignment with the broad ideological strokes and close alignment on organizational tactics is enough to qualify a person for full membership. In our experience, this does have the benefit of fostering spirited political exchange and personal growth, and indeed membership in a leftist militia is often the catalyst for further ideological development.

Keeping the former in mind, we should here describe a few traits which should be sought out and cultivated in militia members. First and foremost we again wish to stress the importance of gun safety. This can of course be developed, but ingrained bad habits are an extreme risk, and those without perfect habits should be excluded from membership until their performance improves. It is not necessary to have a deep background in firearms, but a familiarity is helpful and greatly simplifies the training process. Discretion is another highly desirable trait. As will be discussed, the greatest security risk to a comdef org is loose lips. Recruits should be thoroughly vetted for their discretion. Finally we suggest assessing members for congeniality. Membership in a militia is stressful, and as mentioned many leftist orgs attract strong and conflicting personalities. The ability to get along with others is essential to the proper functioning of a defensive group.

On the other side of recruitment is the recruiters the militia tasks with seeking out and developing new members. Depending on the militia these may be codified jobs within the organizational structure, or more loosely defined roles capable of being filled by general membership. Recruiters should have excellent training, and should be recognized for strong assessment skills. This ensures their opinions of candidates for membership can be trusted by the membership not involved in candidate development. They should also have discretion, and be trusted by marginalized militia members as previously discussed.

We reject identitarian essentialism, and we strongly believe that individuals are products of their environments, and therefore the militia ought to be intentionally organized to promote positive and deep-rooted solidarity among members, across social boundaries. To do this, members should be encouraging of each other, honest about their failures, quick to offer constructive criticism, quick to change behaviors, and quick to offer forgiveness. Solidarity, in this sense, is the foundation of all leftist praxis, and it is the opinion of the authors that most left wing orgs fail when they stray too far from this core tenet. The ego must be set aside, criticism welcomed, and growth actively and explicitly celebrated. We look to the success of the Kurdish revolutionaries in Rojava, and their demonstration of this deep solidarity across ethnic, religious, political,

gendered, and social lines that has led to their success against both Turkish and Islamic State fascism.

## **V.b: Recruitment Strategy**

In terms of specific recruitment strategies, we offer a few thoughts. The first is to have written policies within the org, adopted by consensus, by which potential recruits are assessed. These policies should outline the skills and traits of strong candidates, namely their familiarity with firearms, their safety habits, their discretion, their marksmanship, their commitment to left wing causes, their commitment to the community, and more granular skills such as their familiarity with low light shooting skills, vehicle dismounts, moving during a course of fire, and so on. We recommend that as part of this policy of recruitment current members are assigned to facilitate and document a candidate for membership's development in the areas of concern, and regularly report back to general membership on the candidate's progress. There should be an accountability system within the org that pushes for new recruits to be identified, trained, and initiated within a certain time frame, so that new recruits are not kept in prolonged limbo.

Sustained recruitment is a pillar of militia success. As mentioned previously, burnout and membership losses are to be expected. Thus continuously having an eye toward bringing in new members will always ensure that no single loss will sink the org. It is also worth reiterating the necessity of training new members in administrative duties for the same reason. The more democratized the institutional knowledge, the more sustainable the institution becomes, and when members move away, they can act as the seeds from which new militias might blossom.

Throughout our experience in organizing these groups, we have found that public-facing "front" organizations are extremely useful in identifying potential recruits. They can also act as a filter for incoming counter-recruited individuals. In particular, shooting clubs are often a great place to pull from.

While it is theoretically possible to pull someone with no previous experience or interest in firearms, the time and energy commitment is enormous, and with the continued degradation of state power and the consolidation of the forces of reaction, many individuals are already being driven to take up shooting individually and have created a good pool of potential recruits. Orgs such as local SRA chapters, or autonomous gun clubs marketing themselves to "non-traditional gun owners" are good places to start. If this strategy is taken, we highly recommend identifying current militia members for whom recruitment and vetting are developed skills, and having them imbed with these shooting clubs, and ideally seek positions of leadership from which they can help sway the non-militant front org to help cultivate a greater pool of potential militant recruits.

If no such clubs exist in a region, the militia should seriously consider the creation of one. This should be done extremely carefully and subtly, and we recommend that whichever individuals take up this task be extremely self-aware, security-conscious, and communicative with the militia. Such public-facing groups might also employ the use of social media pages or websites to drum up interest and participation, and while we will address social media and its pitfalls more thoroughly in a chapter to come, for now we wish to emphasize both the great rewards of taking this strategy in terms of garnering new members, and the risks of organizational exposure which come with being too addicted to posting. Other strategies for advertising include flyering, stickering, and sending representatives from the club or group to other clubs or groups outside of shooting

sports. If the org has certified instructors, advertising Stop the Bleed trainings, or hosting CCW permitting courses are other huge draws for potential club (and militia) members.

This can also be applied to the previously addressed necessity of inter-org networking. If a club or group is public facing, that collaboration becomes safer from a security perspective and often feels less sinister to those with whom the militia might wish to establish a relationship. This does have the danger of breaking trust should the militia need to reveal itself after only establishing its members as representatives of another club, but this revelation should only occur in moments of extreme duress in which the existence of a highly organized defense force is often found to be a relief, and is broadly welcomed. It is incumbent on the militia's administrators and representatives to handle such situations very delicately and be cautious to avoid revealing your organization too soon. When handled properly, the militia and its public front can be considered integral to the character of the community through such outreach efforts, which is the ideal situation which should be worked towards.

## **V.c: Maintaining Morale**

It is here where we must treat the intangibles of retention, those being the motivation for training and the maintenance of organizational morale. Militia organizers will find that motivation for militia participation will ebb and flow. In times of national political turmoil, motivating members is often not required, since that motivation is provided externally. However, over time this can precipitate burnout, at which point intentional motivation to continue participation in militia activities may become required of organizers. There is no silver bullet for the problem of burnout, and indeed organizers should expect that members will come and go with time. We will address off-boarding policies in the coming treatment of Security Culture, but for now organizers should simply bear in mind that losing members is not necessarily a failure on their part.

To minimize the impact of membership loss, we recommend emphasis on continued recruitment, and consciously addressing issues around the morale of militia members. This can be done both on the range and off by making militia participation a relief from stress, rather than an obligation. Treating range days as conscious practice for community and self-defense can be cathartic during periods of risk and tension, but in other periods of relative calm, conceiving of training this way can become a burden on some individual members. We recommend adjusting the messaging around training accordingly to the individual members. We have watched with great dismay as many organizations formed during the summer of 2020 have imploded through a combination of boredom, fatigue, and in-fighting, which has left many communities unguarded and vulnerable to the fascist threat.

We also advocate framing training with firearms like training in martial arts. It is a skill, an art, and it need not always be for the purposes of defensive violence. Training for competitions can also be enjoyable, and give a less threatening motivation to maintain training schedules. In this sense also, training should be fun for members to participate in, and militia members should be proactive in vocally supporting one another in the maintenance of their skills.

Militia leadership and organizers should also look for activities away from firearms to promote bonding between members. While it is not necessary for all militia members to be close friends, and in fact such a mindset can actively stunt organizational growth, there is a baseline level of trust and camaraderie that is necessary for peak group performance. Encourage members

to participate in other hobbies together; hold yearly campouts, have monthly cookouts or group outings to restaurants, have movie nights together. All these activities provide opportunities for community and belonging often absent in the rest of capitalist culture, and thus the militia offering both a sense of physical security and a sense of social identity can aid in member retention and morale.

Other tactics for building the bonds of solidarity and maintaining morale involve the presentation of the militia. Having a formalized unit name, insignia, patch, and traditions help foster a feeling of community that helps a comdef org recruit and retain members for the long haul. There exist many custom patch manufacturers which can produce hundreds of patches for a reasonable price, and the same applies for stickers. At some point a unit flag design can be a productive and fun project to have members work on, and the result is the growth of a tight-knit community and substantial buy-in from members. That feeling of exclusivity is one which has its downsides which must be actively guarded against (see the paragraph about militia demographics at the beginning of this chapter and the chapter on security culture to follow), but in general this approach is extremely useful.

## VI: Security Culture

Since 2020 the term “security culture” has taken center-stage in many discussions around leftist organizing. With the advent of smartphones, social media, and the general acceptance of the corporate surveillance state, taking organized action at the edges of the law poses an extreme risk. While the US constitution does guarantee the right of militias to exist and bear arms, as leftists we understand that legality and constitutionality will never stop the violence of the state from being used against us. In all 50 states there are laws against “private paramilitaries” and private security forces, which have been used to prosecute militia members in the past. As a leftist, one should expect even harsher prosecution for participation in militant organizing. As such, for the safety of organizers and members it is important that each militia have a strong security culture, both digital and physical.

### VI.a: Physical Security

Above all else, the greatest risk when interacting regularly with firearms, in a militant capacity or not, is the risk of self-harm. Therefore it is non-negotiable that every militia member must always practice excellent firearm safety, and actively maintain their mental health. The vast majority of gun deaths are by suicide, and as we are beginning to see the backsliding of neoliberalism into open fascism, despair is going to become a serious issue our communities will have to address. Leftist militias, in keeping with their values, must support members’ mental health needs, up to and including removing firearms from their home during periods of crisis. Every militia member is strongly encouraged to seek mental healthcare to the best of their ability, and be open and honest with other members about their mental health. In a similar vein, storing firearms safely is critical for proper security. A militant’s firearms should never be accessible to an unauthorized user.

In terms of the security of the militia itself, there are steps every member should be ready to take to keep themselves and their organization safe from fascist and state violence. It is here however that we must make a point that the advice herein applies primarily to protecting a comdef organization from surveillance by non-state fascist groups, and local state agencies. Federal agencies have surveillance capabilities at a much higher level and require much greater measures to circumvent than outlined here.

The first and most important step is to not take unnecessary action and to **keep your fucking mouth shut about the militia**. We emphasize this point because of the prevalence of federal reports demonstrating that the leading cause of extra-legal leftist organizations getting infiltrated and broken up is due to members of the organization sharing sensitive information without regard for the security risks, or snitching as part of a plea deal. If you do not talk about your organization’s activities with unvetted outsiders, you cannot be infiltrated. Similarly, either conceal or come up with a consistent organization-wide lie about the meaning behind militia symbols such as morale patches, flags, stickers, insignia, and so forth. Conspicuous displays of extreme



levels of organization at the range can also lead to unwelcome questions, so it is best practice to keep the uniformed, full battle-rattle trainings to private, remote locales.

In the same line of thinking, it is worth gaming out strategies for what members should do in the event of an arrest. First and foremost, when detained only speak to police in order to request a lawyer, say nothing more and nothing less. Specifically request legal counsel, and state that clearly. To the attorney, never admit you are a militia member, but your organization should have a set talking point to give to your lawyer that they can use in the construction of your defense. Police and DAs will target detainees with outright lies and falsehoods, and promises of lesser sentences or immunity in return for cooperation in an investigation. For leftist militia members, each should be prepared to weather personal consequences if it means that other members are spared harsh penalties. This includes committing to jail time.

***Militia members should mentally prepare themselves to say nothing, and admit nothing, while under police investigation.***

This also brings up other aspects of security culture after DGUs. After a DGU, when a member knows they are going to be detained by police, they should alert the rest of the organization as soon as possible, ideally before the police arrive. The message should be brief, letting the other members know that a DGU occurred, the sender is about to be detained, and should include other details such as any equipment, insignia, or documents they want retrieved from their homes before a potential police search. This is illegal, and should only be done with great caution and in circumstances in which violent, extra-legal action is expected from law enforcement. After the message is sent communications should be cut, and the sender should do their best to wipe and password lock their devices before they are taken by police.

Another measure that can increase security, specifically during operations, is to conceal one's face, hair, and eyes. During ops members should be aware of any cameras, and should take measures to keep themselves off recordings. However, it is often better to make oneself inconspicuous on camera than to attempt to seize the camera itself. The clothes worn at covert events should not be easily identifiable and shouldn't be able to be traced back to the member. This can be accomplished by a member buying a generic outfit from a large retail store with cash and keeping that outfit out of their wardrobe rotation, and only wearing it to actions and operations. If an action gets hot and hostiles are looking for a member, they should discard the clothing in a manner in which it is unrecoverable, and consider moving in with another member, even if only temporarily.

In regards to the aforementioned inter-organizational collaborations, when working with other comdef groups, in particular those from other communities, it is best practice to retain as much anonymity as possible. Refrain from revealing personal information such as names, employment, addresses, or other sensitive information until the organizations have thoroughly vetted one another and there is a high level of trust between the groups. For organizations within the community for which the militia has been organized, much of this isn't possible; but it is important to keep as much information as possible internal to the militia, sharing only what is vital to the success of a collaboration and no more.

Within this booklet we have repeatedly advocated for the creation and maintenance of organizational documents for the purposes of training and institutional administration. We reiterate how critical these documents are to the proper functioning and long-term health of a comdef organization, but we simultaneously acknowledge the extreme risk such documents can pose to the security of members and the organization as a whole. In general, all written documents should

never include the real, full names of members, should not give identifying information of members, should not use organizational names or insignia, should not admit to or advocate explicitly criminal activity, and should cover only those policies, reports, and notes which are valuable to the future function and long-term institutional knowledge of the org. These documents should rarely be turned into hardcopies, and if they are, they must be stored securely in locations only known to the individual owner, under lock and key, or destroyed after use.

Further security measures will depend on a militia's environment, and expected level of opposition surveillance. If the militia participates in overt operations, but not under the banner of the militia itself, steps should be taken to strip or conceal organizational insignia (unit patches, stickers, flags) from equipment. If members are organizing in potentially dangerous areas, concealing methods of transportation or identifying information such as license plates is also worth considering.

## **VI.b: Digital Security**

Digital hygiene is critical for the safety of members and of the organization on the whole. Much of the American left in particular are extremely online, and as such their digital footprints leave broad security risks open to surveillance and organizational disruption, whether from malicious outside agents or from myopic liberal-identitarian meddling. However, it is important to note that most comdef orgs, especially if they maintain a low profile during their initiation and early integration into the community on-the-whole, are not likely to be subject to resource-intensive surveillance. So we will take a tiered approach, and outline measures which can be taken to evade surveillance, specifically by hostile amateurs and local agencies without significant resources. The ability to evade dedicated federal surveillance efforts is beyond the scope of this booklet, but we encourage the reader to learn as much as possible in this field.

### Basic Security Measures

#### DO NOT:

- Write down passwords
- Share passwords
- Keep sensitive documents on publicly accessible devices
- Use facial recognition/biometrics to manage your phone
- Send or receive sensitive messages via unencrypted text/email/phone call
- Lose devices with sensitive information
- Search for illicit/incriminating information on standard search engines

#### DO:

- Use strong alphanumeric passwords for all devices, minimum 10 characters long
- Practice good OpSec

## Intermediate Security Measures

### DO NOT:

- Enable device location permanently; have it on for the required time, then turn it back off
- Re-use passwords across multiple devices/services/accounts
- Send sensitive information over unencrypted/public networks
- Turn on notification previews which can be viewed from the lock-screen on your phone
- Use burner phones on home nor work wifi networks
- Own voice-activated smart-home technologies

### DO:

- Use a reputable VPN service
- Use a reputable password manager
- Encrypt all devices with reputable encryption software
- Set up multi-factor authentication, preferably using yubikey or similar device
- Make liberal use of the tor browser + duck duck go search engine
- Lie profusely about personal information linked to accounts (but track the lies)
- Consider a burner phone paid for with cash for sensitive ops
- Create self-contained chats for specific ops
- Practice good chat hygiene
  - Do not allow strangers into secure chats
  - Do not make criminal jokes with strangers
  - Do not post operations details in chats with strangers
  - Do not say anything you wouldn't want screenshotted and posted to Twitter
  - Do not post personal identifying information in chats with strangers
  - Remove inactive members or outdated numbers from group chats
  - Set a disappearing messages timer when chats are created
  - All members should leave / be removed from and delete ops chats after completion

This level of security optimizes the maximum amount of return for the minimum amount of effort. Following these best practices will eliminate 99% of risks members of an org are likely to encounter.

## Advanced Security Measures

### DO NOT:

- Pair bluetooth devices to devices storing sensitive info
- Permanently pair wireless printers to devices storing sensitive info
- Have sensitive conversations in vicinity of microphones
- Have sensitive conversations via text, email, or other written comms
- Allow devices storing sensitive info to connect to any unencrypted network

DO:

- Store all devices capable of internet connections in faraday bags, powered off when not in use
- Try to keep all sensitive information from touching the internet or internet-capable devices
- Use face-to-face meetings with trusted accomplices as much as possible

Advanced Digital Security protocols are often not pragmatic, and only become relevant when risk of digital surveillance is extremely high. Remember that most DigiSec failures are actually failures of OpSec. Otherwise excellent procedures will fail if you allow hostiles into a chat. Advanced protocols are best deployed when surveillance has been established and the need for higher levels of discretion is obvious.

Social Media

Guidelines:

- Do Not mention comdef orgs in any way on social media
- Do Not post faces, tattoos, names, addresses, locations, occupations, or any identifying info of members linking them to a comdef org explicitly
- Do Not post details about a comdef org's leadership structure, mission statement, goals, or bylaws
- Do Not post info regarding operations, including meetups, trainings, observations, or confrontations
- Do Not post content explicitly endorsing violence
- Do Not post inflammatory political content
- Do Not initiate requests for a meetup with other accounts without consensus of the membership
- Do Not post pictures of non-ATF compliant equipment, should it exist
- DO keep accounts listed under your real name private and unconnected to suspicious accounts
- DO audit your following at least yearly to be aware of who your posts reach

While posting individual gun content is not necessarily a risk, members should keep in mind how such posts could be perceived by their audience. In particular, posts which include members in full kit are likely to draw unwanted attention if posted without other context which might diffuse questions. Members should make liberal use of the functionalities which limit certain posts to particular sections of their audience, such as the “close friends” feature on instagram.

Members of comdef organizations should be particularly conscientious of the effects that posting images or videos which include unit patches, flags, or other insignia. Such items should NEVER be highlighted in an individual post, and should in general not be easily visible in content posted. Members should keep in mind the goal is to never be perceived as a militia member. Convenient lies such as being a competitive shooter / member of a shooting club (such as the front organizations discussed previously) provides adequate cover for most kit.

It is also understood that comdef members may have social media accounts not linked to their personal information. So long as those accounts follow the above guidelines and do not post content which could attract unwanted attention upon their org, there is no reason to address those accounts within this document.

The risks posed by excessive social media use are not exclusively tied to surveillance risk. A real and often under-acknowledged threat is that posed by nominally leftist accounts seeking social capital at the expense of other leftist organizing efforts. While good-faith criticism and accountability are important for the discipline and integration of community defense organizations, these are not practices which can be conducted online by anonymous strangers. So-called “on-line drama” has sunk many fledgling comdef efforts, and left our communities more vulnerable for their absence. We will discuss the responsibilities of the militia to its community in a following chapter, but at this point we feel it is important to impart upon the reader what we feel is the seriousness of the matter when considering organizational exposure on social media. The perceived benefits of a social media presence have always been outweighed by the risks in our assessment, and as such we encourage all militia organizers to seriously consider the necessity of social media in relation to themselves and their organizing.

## **VI.c: Miscellaneous Security Concerns**

While there are more risks which could each be covered in extensive detail, we believe the preceding sections have set a strong foundation from which many militias can grow and develop their own best-practices. However, there are a few concerns in particular which bear brief but explicit attention. These are primarily in regards to vetting members and those who can know about the organization, as well as mitigation efforts when leaks do happen, and finally the off-boarding of members.

In general, the vetting for membership in the militia should last for months, and should include subtle research into the individual’s background, their reputation in the community, their safety with firearms, their security online, their discretion, and their resilience. This should be done in collaboration with many members of the militia, and especially early on in the development of the organization, there should be complete consensus on a new member being formally admitted.

After a certain size this becomes untenable, but such a large membership is rarely reached within the first several years of organizing, and thus we trust the militia organizers to have gained

enough experience to appropriately develop a procedure that doesn't require total consensus and which aligns with their own orgs culture and values. However we encourage caution in the recruitment process, as many militant leftist organizations' doom had their genesis in the poorly conducted recruitment of new members, and the subsequent conduct of those members. The story of the Earth Liberation Front, particularly in its later years, is illustrative of such risks

A similar process should be developed concerning non-members who the militia feels can be trusted to be aware of the org's existence and general activities. These non-members tend to fall into two broad categories: community organizers and loved ones of full members.

It can be useful for the militia to have close ties to other organizations in the community, either explicitly by building official inter-org collaborations, or implicitly by having cross-over in membership. For smaller militias, crossover tends to be the more natural and secure method of inter-org collaboration. In such cases the orgs need not be explicitly aware of the militia's existence or status, and indeed having front-groups such as shooting clubs provides an added layer of security while also allowing a level of visibility such that in the event of a need, community members can seek aid from the club and come into rapid contact with the militia. However there are certain organizations, such as antifascist groups or radical protest organizers, for whom knowledge of the militia proper can be beneficial for both parties. Due to the antifascist research contingent in particular, having close ties to those groups can allow a militia to keep its members safe by keeping their identities from suspicion by such researchers, and their skills can allow the militia to both test their security practices against an experienced group as well as keep the militia aware of local threats.

The other category of non-members, loved ones, is more difficult to address thoroughly. The militia should not require members to keep secrets from partners, in no small part because being associated, even unknowingly, with a member could lead to consequences, and they deserve to make that decision for themselves. However, it is again up to the member's discretion the level to which their partner or loved ones know about this work. There exists a point of diminishing returns, after which specific knowledge of the militia's work becomes a liability to non-members, and as such the decision to reveal the existence or activities of the militia should not be taken lightly. There is also the possibility of the relationship ending, at which the information tendered to the non-member does become of some concern. This can be addressed in much the same way as outlined in the final consideration when it comes to security of the org, that being how to off-board members who will no longer be affiliated with the organization.

It is an unfortunate event, but it should be anticipated that a certain number of members will drift out of the militia over time. This can be due to burnout, or simply life taking them in another direction, or potentially because of conflict with other members or the organization itself. Losing members is never easy, but it is a security risk and thus should have contingency plans in place. In the event of an amicable separation, the measures are standard. Remove them from group chats, restrict their access to sensitive documents or information, and explicitly inform all other members that they are no longer privy to inner-org information.

However, in the event of a hostile separation, certain mitigation efforts should be prepared. These include the standard measures, as well as potential concerted disinformation campaigns to give the appearance of organizational dissolution. Potentially damaging and sensitive information about the militia and members should be identified by members, and action plans to counter the impact of that leak should be taken. Of course these efforts run the risk of backlash, but when conducted properly, with a united front from membership, they allow a militia to rapidly recover

and for there to be a continuance of security practices and operations by the organization. In the event of a serious security breach, or in the event of damage to the organization too severe to withstand, there should also be policies in place to dictate the dissolution of the militia, the donation of commonly held assets, and no-contact agreements for a pre-recognized period of time after the formal dissolution.

In the most drastic case, we encourage the immediate institution of a new, highly covert organization with only the most trusted members to continue the work of community defense. The goal is to never leave our communities without defensive resources. The only time at which this is inappropriate is if the reader of this document is themselves responsible for the conflict, either through indiscretion, or abuse (within and outside of the militia). In such cases it is incumbent upon the reader to delegate organizing roles to others, and to instead expend effort into real accountability to the community, the parties harmed, and to their rehabilitation and the rebuilding of trust.

## VII: The Role of the Militia

Here we get to the final topic of this document, and one of the most delicate. As stated in the introduction, the militia is not an offensive force in the sense that it is not intended to engage in guerrilla or direct action against regular state forces. The militia as defined by this booklet is not a revolutionary force. The militia as conceived of in this document is designed and trained with the express purpose of being a reactive, defensive force against external, primarily non-state, irregular threats. It is absolutely critical that the reader understands this point, because this final chapter deals with how to put the militia into action in defense of a community. If an organizer misunderstands the mission and purview of their org, they will put lives at risk unnecessarily, and thus betray the spirit of both community defense and this booklet. At all times, the goal is to defend the community, and this includes defense from the downstream effects of the militia's actions.

This brings up the point of organizational visibility. We strongly advise all organizers to keep their militias secret, at least at this stage of American national decay. Visibility increases risk of infiltration, identification, and counter-action by both regular and irregular forces, and offers little besides the *possibility* of an increase in recruitment. Most of the duties of community defense do not yet require an org to publicly field armed combatants in defense of protests, marches, or other left wing political gatherings, and as such bringing a visibly armed contingent into these spaces may increase their risk of being targeted by outside hostile forces. And while secrecy does lead to a smaller recruitment pool, this doesn't necessarily imply that the militia will have to remain small in the event of serious threat to the community.

The ideal should be that the militia begins as a small, dedicated core of highly competent individuals, skilled in the full spectrum of duties, so that should the need for rapid deployment and growth arise, each member is capable of taking charge of a fireteam of new recruits, onboarding them rapidly, and training them up to the minimum standards of competence required by the organization. This model allows for exponential growth in moments of need, while also being more secure against infiltration than a public-facing organization. Many new recruits can be selected from the previously discussed front-orgs, and equipped from the extra supplies stored by militia members advocated for in the Equipment chapter. For the following few sections we will lay out the role of the militia on the assumption that it is a secret organization, or at least that it is an unknown element outside radical political circles in the community.

We will refer to all the different actions taken by the militia (other than training) as "operations", meaning actions and responsibilities taken by the militia in the pursuit of its mission to defend its community. Operations will largely be defined by the level of community engagement in matters of left-wing politics, as well as the "temperature" of those actions. For most communities this means public protests, union meetings, queer community events, and outreach events involving radical elements. However, while many communities have such events, the right wing reaction to them — what we will refer to as "temperature" — may vary wildly. The material conditions in different cities are unique and therefore warrant tailored approaches. In the discussions



to follow we will lay out the broad strokes of organizing operations, but we will do our best to avoid specific prescriptions which may not be suited to all communities. We will define and discuss three broad categories of operations which, from our experience, are the most common forms for militias to take on. These are Surveillance, Security, and Counter-Threat operations.

## **VII.a: Surveillance**

Surveillance is the lowest-risk operation type, particularly for white men. Surveillance is here taken to mean the infiltration and documentation of reactionary right wing groups and events. Infiltration of more secure right wing organizations or events is possible, but this is not typical for a militia operation, and is more suited to dedicated antifascist research teams. While we strongly encourage militia collaboration with such antifascist researchers, militia organizers should also seek to gather their own intelligence and documentation about local threats. This is beneficial for several reasons, but primarily it is an issue of security. For most militias, their existence will be secretive, and while antifascist research groups are an invaluable asset, due to the research skills of those involved and the outside attention they receive from fascist intelligence gathering operations, it is often a risk to disclose too much information pertinent to the militia's own activities and thus an internal records-keeping system should be devised.

Surveillance operations do not require a high degree of planning, but there are some best practices to follow. Safe surveillance ops require a minimum of four members for the op, a pair for infiltration and another for extraction. Ideally surveillance ops will have a minimum of five to six militia members involved. Working in teams, one dedicated to direct monitoring of the event and participants and another to the safety of the first team, helps make these operations safe and successful.

Before the surveilled event a special encrypted operations chat should be created and have its security settings changed to automatically delete all messages and the chat within a week of the op's conclusion. This chat can be used for both the planning and execution of the operation, as explained shortly. Other crucial steps to planning a successful op are sending reminders to charge/change batteries on equipment, packing lists for the involved teams, discussions of entrance and exit strategies, and specific mission interests such as identifying crowd members or gathering intelligence about future events or actions.

As previously alluded to, surveillance operations should always consist of at least two teams, an infiltration team inside the crowd or event and a reaction team outside the event but close enough to respond in the case of an emergency, and in constant communication with the infiltration team. The infiltration team should take special measures to be as inconspicuous as possible, including considering the racial and sexual demographics of the team itself, their dress and body language, and the items they reveal. In general we suggest that all members of an infiltration team carry a concealed handgun, and if the temperature of the event is high enough consider wearing well-concealed soft armor under their outer layers of clothing. Other necessary safety equipment includes good running shoes, backpacks with medical equipment, radios for overt comms in the case of an emergency, and spare equipment as deemed necessary for the conditions of the operation, which can include extra batteries, lenses for recording equipment, fake credentials, or spare magazines in the case of a firefight. The infiltration team should be dynamic,

and should have at least two exit strategies pre-identified and coordinated with the reaction team in case of an emergency.

The infiltration team is first and foremost concerned with recording the event. This includes speakers, MC's, event security staff, and crowd members. Infiltration teams are usually best kept to no more than six members. In such a case, the infiltration team should split up into pairs, but remain within sight of each other at all times during the event. In this case the aforementioned medical and spare equipment should be divided evenly between the two teams, with each having at minimum an IFAK. The teams should then have pre-designated roles, for example one member should be tasked with monitoring the crowd for reactions and potential developing threats, while the other team member is tasked with recording the event in real time. This can include taking pictures or video (if it can be done without drawing attention to themselves), recording audio, or sending observations and a record of events via text to the previously mentioned operations chat. In some cases conspicuous cell phone use will result in unwelcome attention, but members should attempt to have scheduled check-ins sent to the operations chat at a consistent rate throughout the course of the event. Members tasked with documentation should keep their notes brief but descriptive. Include physical descriptions of persons of interest, their location in the crowd at what time, their actions or responses, and any other pertinent details, without overburdening the operation with useless details. An example of a useful observation could be as follows:

*"11:43am: 2 white middle aged males in yellow and black clothing near the speaking stage, appear to be monitoring crowd, possible event security, possibly proud boys. No visible firearms, no visible packs or bags. Person 1 is approx 6' and 200# with shaved head and red goatee, person 2 is approx 5'8" and 180# with blonde hair and visible tattoos on right arm and left leg. See attached photo."*

Briefly we should address emergency response plans. In the event that a member or team is identified by the crowd, it is critical that the members leave the area as quickly as possible and do not return. Strong de-escalation skills are incredibly important in such a case. Should the absolute worst happen and a deadly threat arise, members should attempt to flee at all costs before drawing their firearms and engaging an enemy in a hostile crowd. In such a case usually the element of surprise is compromised, and as such members must rely on speed and violence of action to increase their odds of survival. Militias engaged in dangerous surveillance should take special care to train their infiltration teams in fighting retreats. The goal in such a situation then becomes getting all members of the infiltration team to a pre-identified rendezvous point with the extraction team as quickly as possible. Depending on the severity of the incident the emergency exfil alert can be sent to the group chat via text, or else radioed in directly if all cover is completely compromised. These plans should be explicitly drawn up and communicated to all participants before the operation.

The role of the extraction/reaction team is primarily to monitor the communication channels and be outside the event but within range to provide immediate support to the infiltration team in the event of an emergency. The extraction team should consist of two to three members in full kit and a driver in a vehicle with enough space to fit themselves and the infiltration team. The extraction team should have rifles on hand with the goal of providing overwhelming firepower against lethal threats and allowing the infiltration team to regain an element of surprise. The goal for the extraction team is not to successfully neutralize threats, but simply to engage just long enough to retrieve all operation members, and no longer. If the nearest safe static position for the extraction team is outside the zone of immediate response, then the operation should plan for an intermediate response where the extraction team moves to a closer location but is more

dynamic, for instance they are circling around the block of the event. The extraction team should move to this intermediate, dynamic position only at the request of the infiltration team. The driver of the vehicle should not actively engage in exchanges of fire, but should remain behind the wheel unless it is impossible to safely do so. As soon as the call for support comes in, the extraction team should proceed immediately to the agreed upon rally point. Once the infiltration team is retrieved from an emergency and transported to a safe location the first priority is for all members to doff their kit, disarm, and get to a safe public space where they can surrender to authorities while minimizing risk of getting shot by the same.

While the extraction team is not the primary observation team, they should be aware of incoming threats and alert the infiltration team of developments outside the event which could become pertinent. In our experience this is usually alerting the infiltration team to the presence of left wing counter protesters closing in on the event, which could lead to a rapid spike in event temperature and make conditions unsafe for the infiltration team. Since extraction teams are usually positioned in parking lots, and often the event parking lot itself, they can also be useful in recording identifying vehicle information such as decals and license plates, but they must not abandon their vehicle as their primary duty is to monitor communications from the infiltration team.

Having now spent some time considering the worst case scenarios, it is worth remembering that surveillance operations should never get hot. It is critical that the militia be capable of handling the worst case scenarios in order to be effective, but in general surveillance operations will be calm and uneventful if conducted appropriately. Immediately after a successful operation all members should rendezvous and have an after-action meeting to cross-reference and solidify observations, and ideally an after action report is written up during the course of this meeting to be securely stored with other organizational documents. After Action Reports (AAR) are for militia records and to inform the rest of the membership who were not involved in the action. In general such reports should begin with a brief summary of events and observations, should include a chronology of the event, have assessments and takeaways of both the observations and of the operation itself, and conclude with a list of action items (if applicable.)

AAR's should be written as soon after the event as possible for accuracy's sake, and should be kept to under two pages when possible. They should be internally distributed among the militia so questions and amendments to details can be added, and once finalized they should be stored alongside other sensitive militia documents on encrypted, password protected drives. These after-action reports are useful because they can also be drawn from to feed intel to antifascist researchers without compromising the militia's formal involvement.

Having now outlined the surveillance operation, we feel it is worth concluding with a note about the practicality and usefulness of these operations. It bears repeating that surveillance is the easiest operation to coordinate and execute, it involves the least risk and offers valuable real-world training for militia members. These operations can be especially productive for new militias and new militia members needing experience, but in such cases the planning phase must be extended to ensure the safety of all involved. Surveillance operations are useful not only for anticipating future community threats, but also because they begin conditioning members for action, especially insofar as members are required to control their emotions under stress, while simultaneously developing acute observation skills. Monitoring a crowd, identifying developing threats, effectively communicating over multiple channels, and perfectly executing every step

from planning, to AAR writing, to digital clean-up are all skills which translate directly into other operational skills. We strongly encourage all new militias to develop surveillance capabilities.

Finally, we again wish to stress how useful it is for a militia to have an established relationship with active regional antifascist researchers. The potential for a leftist militia member to be spotted in a crowd and selected for investigation or potential doxxing by well-intentioned leftist researchers is considerable, and a risk that should be mitigated by informing researchers known to be simultaneously monitoring the event of the leftist militant's identifying features.

## VII.b Security

The term "security" has a fraught relationship with much of the left. In the fallout of the Capital Hill Occupied Protest in Seattle during the 2020 BLM uprising, in which multiple black teens were killed in a shootout with CHOP "security", the presence of armed contingents declaring themselves responsible for the safety of protesters has rightly been questioned by many activists. This is further compounded by the innate power differentials between most protesters and anyone with a firearm, especially when the armed individual is a white man. These questions are necessary for the left to ask and develop, but as a more recent shooting at a racial justice march on February 19, 2022 in Portland, OR demonstrated, hostilities against anyone perceived as "left" by the right have reached such a point that armed elements are often necessary to keep movements and events safe. So while we recognize the current questions around the very concept and nature of armed security, we feel that the topic of security operations is worth treating in this document.

Security operations in many respects have the same foundations as surveillance operations, with the critical difference being that rather than recording the event and participants being a priority, all involved militia members are observing the event for developing threats and responding to those developments in real time. In the most ideal cases militia members will not be overtly armed and armored, will have been involved in the event organizing itself, will be working in tandem with dedicated de-escalation and medical teams, and will have more overtly armed extraction and threat-response teams similar to the extraction teams in surveillance operations, stationed outside the event itself but within rapid response distance.

Event organizing is outside the scope of this document, but if the militia is directly asked to provide security for an action or event, they should strive to be as involved in the planning process as possible. Just as with surveillance ops, the creation of dedicated encrypted ops chats with all involved parties is useful. Regardless of the level of secrecy, under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should militia members providing security primarily identify themselves as militia members, at least at this present moment. If an event organizer is aware of the militia's existence and asks for a security team, the militia can send members for that team, but identifying as the community defense organization itself can draw unwanted legal and press attention, cause conflict among other organizers, and should therefore be avoided in all but the most exceptional cases wherein the use of the explicit label can garner trust with organizers.

The first and most important step in organizing a security op is to model the likely threats and develop specific plans for each. Most of these threats will be non-lethal, and will primarily involve de-escalation tactics or non-lethal defense. The most common threats for most events across the country are from single individuals or small groups intent on doing non-lethal violence

towards protesters (mostly in the form of physical beatings, deployment of pepper or wasp spray, paintballs, or other harmful but nonlethal attacks). Ideally there will be a dedicated contingent of the security team, not necessarily militia members, who can handle these non-lethal threats, leaving militant security members to confront lethal violence and deter violence more generally. Through our experiences working as security at events, and having observed many different security models across the country, most lethal threats are in the initial or final stages of an event, especially when attendees are coalescing or dispersing, and most attacks target isolated individuals or small groups rather than the bulk of the event. The other common form of lethal attack on left wing events are vehicular attacks, which are difficult to neutralize with firearms alone. We will treat both separately.

Lethal armed attacks against an event are rare, but becoming more common. As stated, these attacks have so-far tended to come at the beginnings or ends of events, tend to target smaller clusters of attendees rather than the bulk, and tend to be at the fringes of the event rather than fighting from the center outwards. To counter these attacks, area studies are useful. Anticipating the flow of attendees to and from an event allows fireteams to be assigned to certain streets or regions outside the event itself, which we will call “zones of responsibility,” from which they can begin at the very distant outskirts, and slowly move in as the crowd gathers mass. Ideally armed security maintains a perimeter just inside the crowd, with no more than 10% of the attendees outside the perimeter set up by security. This allows a positional advantage, since most lethal threats will be moving towards the crowd from the outside, security needs to be able to monitor the edge of the crowd while also maintaining a sector of fire which does not shoot into the crowd itself. If security is too far outside of the crowd they run the risk of their sector to engage a threat at the perimeter intersecting with the crowd itself, and if they are too far internal to the crowd they will struggle to identify and respond to a potential attack before it happens, while also including a great number of attendees in their sector. Regardless of formation, should an active threat arise there will be noncombatants in the responders’ sectors of fire and thus proper target identification is **CRITICAL** and should be properly trained.

When engaging an active shooter, standard doctrine is to press the shooter immediately and keep them under constant fire until they are neutralized, so it is critical that these sectors of fire are properly identified and anticipated for the safety of all involved. Printing out maps of the event area, marking out potential access points like bus stops or parking lots, and identifying zones of responsibility are critical.

Defending against vehicular attacks is another matter, and one which is best addressed through prevention rather than direct counter-assault. Even if the driver of a vehicle is neutralized, the vehicle can still pose a threat which is not best addressed with a firearm. This is where the militia being a known quantity to trusted event organizers can pay dividends. Taking steps to design the event itself to be defensible is the best security against vehicular assaults. This can mean a buffer of vehicles or pylons or other obstructions between the event and the attendees which prevents a vehicle from being able to penetrate the perimeter of the event, it can mean placing overtly armed security at the very perimeter of an event as a deterrent, or better still simply planning the event for a space not accessible by vehicles at all. Again, we understand that such solutions may not always be possible given the nature or goals of certain events, these are merely meant to illustrate potential courses of action and the necessity of planning.

The next stages of planning involve making decisions about the outward appearance of armed security to the rest of the attendees. In most cases, for most events, overtly armed security in

full kit is not advisable, and thus the best practice is to conceal carry. Most events do not meet the threshold for temperature at which openly armed security becomes a deterrent, especially if there has not been a history of openly armed right-wing counter-demonstrators confronting similar events. If an event perceived as left wing brings out open arms before the right wing, it will be seen as an escalation and can draw backlash from right-wing groups (including their militias), state forces, and liberals within the movement, whether this is fair or not, and can result in riskier events. However, state forces and liberals, while not usually accepting, are less likely to be as opposed to openly armed security if the city has a history of armed right-wing counter protests. Should overtly armed security be called for, uniform standards and wearing full kit, including plate carriers and full IFAKs (but excluding militia insignia or patches) is best practice. In such cases, if the militia fields enough members, pairing each overtly armed guard with one who is carrying concealed weapons is also ideal, as it can regain an element of surprise that is usually conceded with the use of overt security. We reiterate the mantra for winning firefights: speed, surprise, and violence of action will keep you alive.

Concealed security has the benefit of not requiring the approval of all the event organizers as well. This is another extremely delicate point which we wish to make explicitly clear: security which is not wanted should not be provided by the militia. However, in many cases an event will be attended by many subgroups, some more radical or more marginalized than others, and those smaller groups in particular may want added security for their own protection. In such cases, covert security is an ideal solution. Rather than being responsible for the entire event, the security operation is designed specifically to keep a smaller contingent safe, and a smaller security team can still provide an adequate level of protection.

However, in fully covert security operations it is still advisable to organize outside response teams, staged in vehicles outside the event but near enough to provide immediate back-up, analogous to the extraction teams organized for surveillance operations. Concealed security is likely to only be able to carry handguns, and as such if the threat is armored or there are multiple concurrent threats, rifles may be necessary to adequately address the situation. Thus having at least one fireteam staged a block or so away adds a level of capability.

Here it is also worth drawing a distinction between working security at an event and merely being armed at an event. In any situation wherein a militia member is armed at an event or action, their first priority must be the safety of themselves and the community around them. It is improper for either security or armed demonstrators to engage in escalations with counter-demonstrators, the purpose of bringing a firearm into those environments is to defend against immediate threats to life, and any involvement in escalation is both morally wrong as well as legally perilous. However, when working security there is a greater obligation to the other demonstrators, and this responsibility may compel security to intervene in confrontations with countering forces. In such cases the risk of escalation is high, and so all militia members who choose to participate in security operations must be trained in de-escalation and practice those skills continuously. Individual militia members who choose to be armed without being requested to perform a security operation must avoid direct involvement in those scenarios at all costs, engaging only in matters of lethal violence. In both cases anyone who uses lethal force will (at least initially) be subject to civilian use-of-force (UoF) laws, which vary state by state.

It is critical that every militia member have a strong understanding of the UoF laws they are subject to in their state or locality, and reliably be able to identify situations which call for lethal force to be deployed in the defense of their own lives and especially in the lives of others.

The second a firearm is produced, even if it isn't discharged, there is a high likelihood that the individual is going to at minimum be detained by law enforcement. When working security for a left wing event in particular, if a firearm is drawn it should be deployed immediately, as the only situation in which it is acceptable to level a firearm on another person is in protection against a clear and immediate threat to someone's life. However if over the course of a security operation a weapon is discharged by security, there is the potential for the shooter to be harassed or charged by law enforcement if they admit to being "event security". As always, we suggest not speaking to law enforcement without legal council, and not disclosing membership in a comdef organization or a security team to said legal counsel.

In the event of a defensive gun use (DGU) there are a few immediate steps which must be trained by militia members who plan to provide security or be armed in any way at a protest. The first is to ensure the threat is completely neutralized and no longer capable of being a threat. Then it is imperative that all armed security immediately doff any kit or baggy layers meant to conceal firearms and armor, and disarm themselves. Ideally a designated person will come collect the kit and remove it from the premises, so as not to give law enforcement any excuse to fire upon the security team while still saving the members' equipment from confiscation. We reiterate that such situations are worth explicitly training for. From there, it is almost certain that members will be detained and at least questioned by law enforcement. Militia members should have the National Lawyers Guild's "Mass Defense Resources" close at hand in the case of such events, or their own DGU insurance so that they can have counsel. We do not advise speaking to law enforcement without trusted legal representation.

The preceding statements are all made under the assumption that there will be time between the end of the gunfight and the arrival of police. If the gunfight is not over, or if law enforcement arrive before members can doff their kit, they should not attempt to. If not directly engaged in close combat with the active shooter, militia members must drop their firearms and create distance, with hands raised, and then follow LE commands. This is an extremely dangerous situation, and those who engage in these activities should understand the associated risks.

A less dramatic, but still serious risk comes from the presence of armed, left-aligned elements who are not affiliated with the militia or involved in the organizing of the event. With the advent of social media and the creation of explicitly leftist online spaces, it has become popular for certain groups and individuals to take it upon themselves to attend left wing events with firearms and tactical kit, often not up to the standards laid out in this booklet, for the primary purpose of accruing social capital online, as opposed to serious community defense. These groups and individuals may not be a direct hostile threat, but they pose risks. They can be unsafe with their weapons, they can be an escalating presence for event attendees, and they can raise the event temperature by attempting direct confrontation with right-wing counter protesters. These situations are extremely dangerous, and are best dealt with through tactics of avoidance. Trying to identify these groups or individuals beforehand, and assigning unarmed, ideally non-militia members to intercept them before they reach a protest is the best course of action in many cases. It may be that they are well intentioned, and with careful development could one day be qualified for militia membership, but the behavior described here is indicative of poor self-control and poor judgment, and should be taken seriously.

While it is critical to keep the preceding considerations in mind, most security operations will end uneventfully. In this case security should run the procedures in reverse, starting close to the bulk, then migrating outward back to the initial positions before the event began. Ideally

security can escort the crowd all the way back to their means of transportation, but in many cases that is not feasible, and so the security teams should follow the crowd to the edge of the pre-designated zones of responsibility. If many participants utilize public transit or park in the same lot, assigning a team to follow the crowd to those locations is advised. After the crowd is sufficiently dispersed, the security team should immediately leave the area, and reconvene as quickly as possible in a secure location to share information and write an after action report to be distributed to the rest of membership.

We wish to end this section on a note about mindset for security operations. Security operations are, by their nature, extremely dangerous. It is incumbent upon the security team to make the situation maximally safe at all times, and never be the cause of new threats. Individuals who participate in security operations must keep strict control over their emotions and egos at all times. In much of American gun culture there is the notion of the “sheepdog” which originated and proliferated primarily on the right, but which has its mirror image on the left. Members in charge of security are not there to police nor command the crowd, if protesters choose to engage in actions which escalate a situation, security’s job is to mitigate the risk to the lives of themselves and the other protesters, not to keep a protester from acting on their own autonomy. Leftist security is not meant to guide the protest. The relationship between demonstrators and security teams should be one founded on direct, honest communication and accountability. The fatal errors made by the security at the CHOP in 2020 were the result of poor coordination practices, and a lack of restraint and discipline. This lack of planning ended tragically, and there can be no excuses for the failures. It was replicated in incidents at the Red House eviction defense movement, where self-appointed “security” merely adopted the role of police, rather than focusing on defending from lethal threats. These examples in particular highlight the most common pitfalls of security operations, mainly that they have a tendency to recreate oppressive hierarchies rather than defend against them. Well organized and disciplined security operations are critical to the safety and continuation of the movements for justice, and it is imperative that militias which undertake such operations do so competently and in coordination with the other demonstrators.

## **VII.c: Counter-Threat**

This final operations category is largely theoretical for most militias, but we feel it is worth treating if only to give a warning. In the current climate, it is the opinion of the authors that the time is fast approaching when armed conflict between irregular forces becomes sustained and open. The pending collapse of ecosystems and societies from climate change, the global backsliding into authoritarianism, and the collapse of old imperial powers are likely to place unprecedented strain on all the infrastructure, physical and social, that our societies and their states rely upon. Under such pressures, we are liable to see pockets of decay and collapse. We do not believe there will be one sudden failure, after which the whole world, or whole country will fall into chaos. Rather there will be moments too great for the old systems to bear. Environmental, social, and political disasters will conspire, and in some places the old institutions will withdraw or collapse, leaving in their place dangerous power vacuums.

In the fallout from Hurricane Katrina it was widely reported that the superdome had become a lawless hellscape, filled with theft, abuse, and murder. This was largely disproven in later analysis, but what was true were the reports of white supremacist patrols in majority white neighborhoods,



who used the cover of the disaster to commit heinous acts of racial violence and murder their black neighbors throughout the suburbs surrounding New Orleans. It will never be clear just how many innocent people were killed by such groups, but it is a case-study in the threats to communities that can rapidly develop when the typical institutions fail. If prejudices are allowed to run unchecked and unopposed, many people will die. The authors believe this can be prevented with adequate foresight and defensive preparations.

It is with such cases we will define the term “counter-threat” to mean militia operations that are usually overt, and designed to directly oppose known, open, armed threats under the assumption that there will be violence. These are extraordinary measures, and almost never the appropriate course of action under the present, typical circumstances. They are the most dangerous form of operation, as they carry a high likelihood of exchanges of fire. They are still defensive, but are undertaken with a much more aggressive set of tactics and strategies than security, and are never appropriate for deployment in a protest or rally situation. If they are conducted while the state’s institutions are still in place, there is an extreme chance of felony convictions and even capital punishment. However, if a moment should arise when the state has retreated from your home, and an organized opposition is threatening the community, it is within the militia’s purview to take action. Again, these operations are not called for in any of the common situations many leftists will find themselves in for the next few years, but it is worth mentally preparing for as the state continues its decline and fascist paramilitaries come to the foreground of political conflict.

The best methods of preparing the militia for such mobilizations are accurate, rational threat-modeling for your community in order to anticipate threats, both manmade and natural. A thorough and proper treatment of threat-modeling is beyond the scope of this document, but in general consists of an organization identifying all potential threats to your community, ranking them according to likelihood, building policies and procedures in countering those threats, pressure testing those procedures, and continual reassessment and contingency-making. This can include formal area studies, establishment of rally points and communication protocols, evacuation protocols, establishment of “safe” houses, identification of defensible locations of high priority in the event of organized external attacks, and so on. As the planning of security operations builds upon the proper execution of surveillance operations, counter-threat operations build upon the precepts of good security organizing. The primary difference is that whereas the security operation is limited to strictly reacting to external threats, it is within the scope of a counter-threat operation to make proactive decisions and actions to secure human populations, tactically advantageous geographic positions, and resources in the face of certain and imminent exterminationist violence against the militia’s community of interest.

If a member insists on calling for such operations under inappropriate circumstances, they should be forcibly distanced from the organization. Whether they are acting as a deliberate hindrance to the organization’s safety, or are simply rash and naive is immaterial, they are a liability, and not to be trusted.

## VIII: Conclusion

This booklet has been compiled from the collective input and experience of several community defense organizers, of militias both active and dormant across the continent. These tactics are the result of years of trial and error. We were compelled to begin writing this document after years of assessment, after which we came to a grim conclusion.

### *The US Left is unprepared for the coming century.*

We will not condescend to you with a full recount of the pending climatic, social, and political disasters the US is facing, we assume that if you have made it this far you are aware on some level of the pending crises. This booklet is not intended to persuade those on the fence about militant defense of marginalized communities, we are writing for those already committed to the cause.

We also do not wish to imply that militant community defense is the most important aspect of community organizing. The concepts we have endorsed are built upon the assumption that there is a baseline level of community organization and autonomy already in place and in need of defense. Protest movements, mutual aid projects, labor and tenants unions, community spaces for the poor and marginalized, and similar community networks are the seeds of the future, and it is the job of community defense organizations to ensure that they have room to take root, grow, and blossom free of suppression and external harm. The authors of this document are actively involved in such efforts, and understand their centrality to our mission. The authors wish to stress the importance of the intersectionality of the comdef org with other organizations with aligned values once more. Members of the militia should be involved throughout their community and within the types of organizations we've alluded to here, or else risk recreating the hierarchies we've repeatedly warned against in this booklet.

While other community organizations have grown rapidly in the past decade, community defense remains scarce, scattered, and poorly organized. We hope this booklet can aid in changing that. We wish to reiterate that this is meant to be a guide; to provide considerations and lessons from our own experiences organizing comdef groups across the country over many years, and should not be taken as a strict rulebook for organizing militias. That being said, we do strongly believe that the broad outlines we have presented within this booklet are worthy of careful consideration, as they were arrived at after comparing our experiences and coming to certain agreements on the foundational requirements of successful and sustainable militias. It is our belief, informed by our experience, that comdef groups wishing to scale with the on-coming crises will require strong organization and administrative skills, should be well-equipped for their mission as informed by their experience in their local area, should be as well-trained as possible, should make special efforts to recruit and retain new members, should emphasize excellent security practices, and should have a clear vision for their roles within the community they are organizing to defend. These are the pillars of successful organizing, not just in community defense but in any number of organizing projects.

It is necessary to remind the reader of the risks of this sort of organizing. What we have advocated for in this document exists in a legal grey-area, because while the day-to-day activities

of organizing such a group (firearms and medical training, attending events armed either in a surveillance or security role, etc) are all generally legal activities, all fifty states have vague laws prohibiting “unsanctioned paramilitary activities”, which gives state authorities some room with which they can persecute left wing community defense. Again, it is inappropriate for the militia to explicitly call for or plan offensive violence, all the work must be done within a defensive mindset.

***An overt, public, unnecessary, sustained mobilization of a leftist militia in an offensive context would be devastating for leftist projects in general at this stage of social decay.***

The US left has a theatrics problem, and the so-called “armed left” especially so. All too often American leftists are driven by ego, and the desire for social capital, especially online. As a result, rash decisions are made which put individuals, organizations, and entire communities at unnecessary risk. This must be recognized, and actively guarded against. Solidarity to each other and to the community, and deep personal commitment to the goals of community defense must be centered at all times. Without active maintenance of this mindset, organizations will be ripped apart under the tension of conflicting personalities and poor decisions, as we have seen with uncountable organizing efforts in this country. In the context of a militia, the consequences of poor decisions fueled by unchecked egotism could have far-reaching, lethal repercussions, not just for a local org, but potentially a violent state crackdown across the entire nation. Again we stress the importance of keeping these realities in mind while vetting recruits. Humble yourselves and each other before the enormity of the work that awaits us all.

We have intentionally omitted certain topics from this document which were deemed either irresponsible or irrelevant to our aims. It is tempting to play out multiple scenarios of “social collapse” which would require more extreme and dramatic measures than outlined here, but we encourage you to not be derailed by this thinking. There are active threats to our communities *now*, there are defense needs going unmet *now*. What is laid out in this booklet alone is enough work to fill years of consistent organizing. Indulgence in fantasies of the implosion of state power are alluring, but they distract from the tangible and meaningful steps which can be taken by committed leftists today. This project is a plea for pragmatic, serious action on the part of leftists who are committed to real defensive work.

We offer this booklet to you, to do with as you see fit. We have written this over months, and been having these discussions over years. These are our insights into the creation and maintenance of successful armed community defense organizations, based on our lived experiences. We are not theorists, we are praxists. We cannot answer every question, we cannot foresee every problem, we cannot guide you through each step of the process, but we can offer you what we’ve learned over years of doing this work successfully, quietly, while dozens of other groups have shot into the spotlight and subsequently failed. This isn’t glamorous work, it will not garner you personal fame, and we sincerely hope that all of you who involve yourselves in such organizing never see the day when any of this becomes necessary.

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A Reference Guide  
04-02-2023

We are grateful for the input and contributions from organizers all around the country and the world in compiling this guide. We hope you find it worthy of consideration. Future editions and physical copies may become available with enough interest and feedback. Solidarity and good luck.

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