

A Long-Term Survival Guide – Military Survival Kits:

The US Armed Forces have developed a number of different survival kits over the years, as well as a lot of individual equipment designed to help our troops stay alive in hostile environments. Other countries have acquired similar kits, and some invented a few unique gadgets of their own. Studying the kits and equipment is fun and instructive, and a source of ideas for your own kits.

Here are a few examples, but most of the kits were constantly being changed and improved upon, especially during active conflicts, so there are many variations and experimental designs besides the ones shown here. Some items, such as the Air Force Survival Vests, held different items that were tailored for each individual mission, so these examples should be considered as typical kits.

E6 Survival Kit: (early Vietnam War issue)



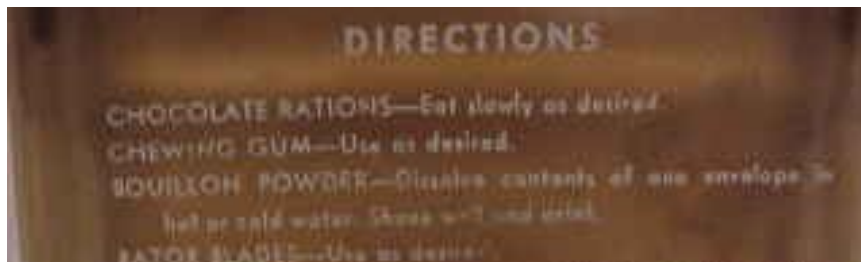
This kit came in a canvas pouch with two lift the dot fasteners and a belt hook.



The pouch held two plastic flasks full of survival items, and a signal mirror.



Inside the pouch are two amber colored flasks, with a list of contents printed on the sides of each. The tops of the flasks can be removed, to access the contents, then replaced to use the flasks as water containers. The tops are held in place by wire bails. One flask contains chocolate rations, chewing gum, bouillon powder, razor blades, leader kit, fish hook kit, fishing line kit, sewing kit, compass, saw blade, prophylactics, sharpening stone, and matches (in a small plastic match safe). The second flask has medical supplies, including four Band-Aids, two vials of pills, tweezers, tooth brush, iodine, and a signaling mirror.



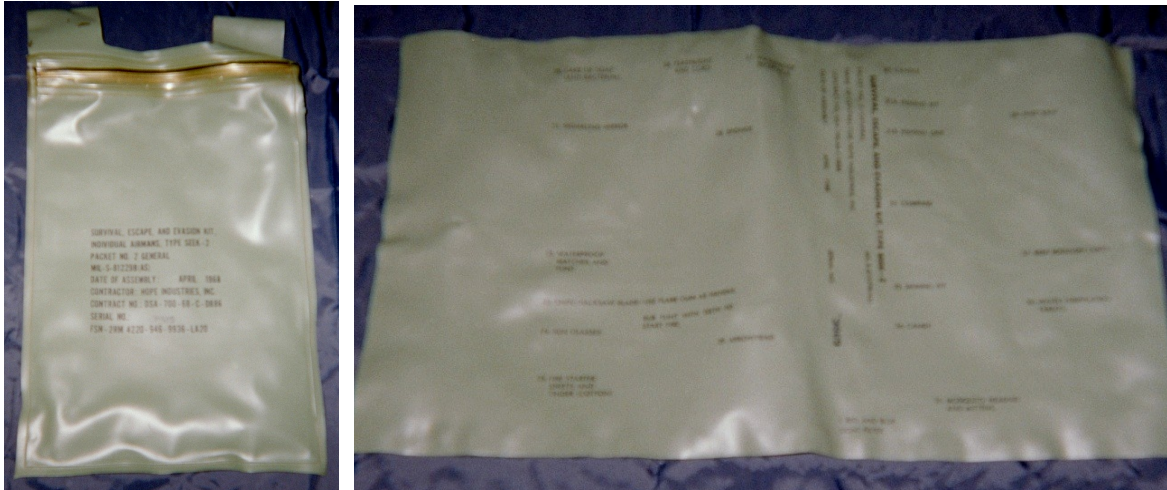
The flasks have rudimentary directions printed for each item, but most of them say things like “Use As Desired”. They are also marked “WHEN NO LONGER NEEDED, DESTROY OR HIDE FLASK AND ALL WRAPPERS”, to prevent any items from falling into enemy hands.



A modern version of this kit would be a wide-mouth water bottle, filled with survival items.

Airman's Survival, Escape, and Evasion Kit (Issued 1968):

This kit is an antique, since it was made in 1968, before the invention of things like Velcro and space blankets. The contents were packed in a heavy-duty plastic pouch, which also served as a water container when empty. The pouch has two loops at the top, so it could be hung on a belt.



This is the #2 packet (#1 was a medical kit), and the plastic sheet, with contents printed on it.

The contents were on a plastic sheet, which was coated with adhesive, like a sheet of flypaper. Each item was in a separate, sealed, labeled plastic bag, and was placed in the position on the sheet where its name was printed. The plastic sheet was folded in half inside the pouch. All of the items are in good shape, except the food and water purification tablets, which would all be poisonous now, and the sawback knife blade, which broke in half in the sealed kit at some point, probably due to embrittlement. The wristwatch compass has some crazing on the crystal, but it is not cracked or broken, and it still works ok. Not bad for a forty-four year old survival kit.



This is how each item was stuck to the adhesive-coated roll, in its designated position.



Contents: sponge, bar of soap, mosquito headnet and mittens, water purification tablets, flashlight filters, sunglasses, wire saw, arrowhead, flint bar fire starter, firestarter sheets and tinder, signaling mirror and lanyard, candle, sawback knife blade, fishing kit (in green plastic tube), fishing line, sewing kit (in green plastic tube), bullion cubes (two packs), candy (two packs), flashlight and lanyard, wristwatch compass, and water bag (the empty carrying pouch).

This kit has some interesting items, which make it rather unique:

There is an arrowhead, the old hollow-socket style, for making an improvised hunting weapon.

There is the sawback knife blade, which is basically a sharpened hacksaw blade, and which was designed to screw onto a separate flare gun.

There is a tiny flashlight (just left of the compass), on a lanyard made from the same cord as the fishing line.

There is a metal match flint firestarter, which is on a lanyard that goes through a hole drilled in the flint itself; it does not have a plastic handle like the later flints all did. The plastic sheet says flint and matches, but there were no matches in the sealed kit.

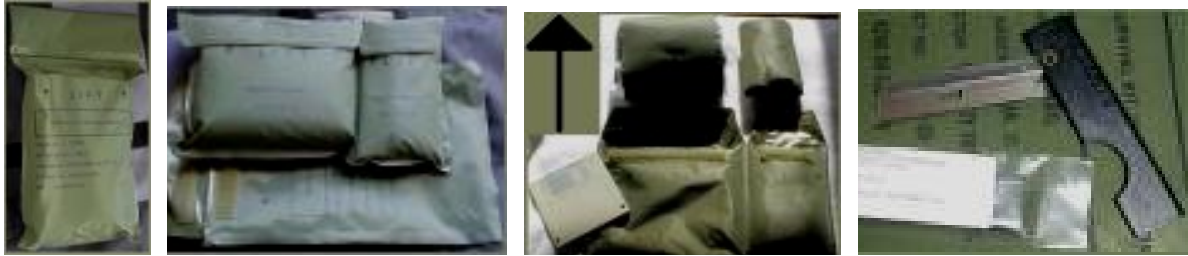
There is a wire saw, which has a type of clip on each end, of unusual design.

The fishing kit and the sewing kit are each contained in a little plastic tube, similar to a match safe, but the caps press on, instead of screwing on.

The colored squares of plastic are light filters for the little flashlight; it was just wrapped in one to change the light color to either red or blue, for clandestine use at night.

AIRMAN'S SURVIVAL KIT: (Issued 2001):

This is a modernized version of the previous kit from 1968. It was also divided into two packets, with #1 being a medical kit, and this #2 packet being the survival kit. This was done from logical necessity, because the medicines had to be replaced a lot more often than the survival items.



Here is the sealed kit (left-hand image). It is a large green nylon pouch with a Velcro closure. Inside are two smaller pouches (second image) with Velcro flaps. Inside each of these is a roll of nylon material (third image), with a floppy disc for scale (same size as a CD holder).



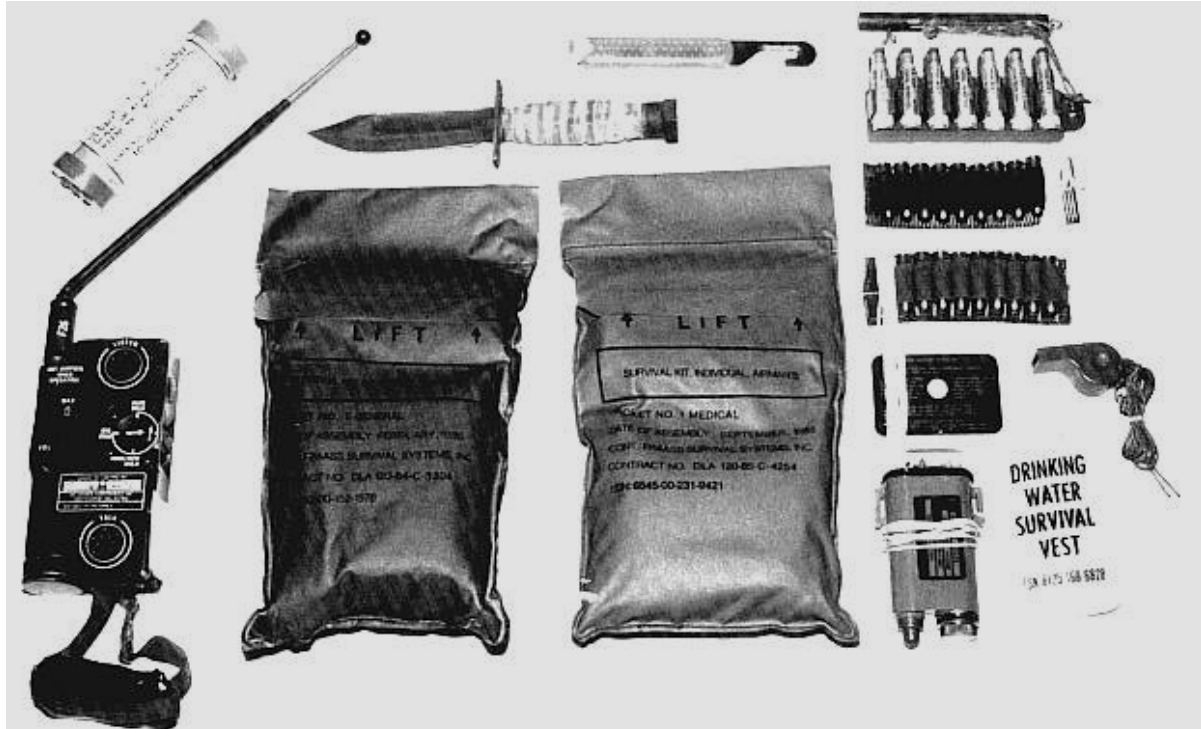
Contents: (16 Items) Water Storage Bag, Safety Pins, Tweezers, Chewing Gum, Candy, Signaling Mirror, Mosquito Head net & Mittens, Compass, Fishing kit, Wire Saw, Latex Gloves, Folding Razor Knife, Space Blanket, Instruction Sheet, Firestarter (Metal Match Flint Bar), and Enerjet (NoDoze). The smaller roll contains Candy, Chiclets Gum, NoDoz, Gloves, and the red ring, which is the cap to the water bag (it is folded up underneath the cap). Each item has a Velcro dot, to secure it to the nylon roll. The larger roll contains the mosquito head net and mittens, the Derma-Shave folding razor, the space blanket, the signal mirror, the wire saw (in a piece of folded cardboard), the fishing kit, the safety pins and tweezers, the compass, the firestarter flint, and the instructions.

This kit (as you might expect) is very basic, minimal survival gear. The compass, signal mirror, and folding razor are the best items (the razor could be re-sharpened when dull), but the wire saw tended to break under even light-duty use. The mosquito headnet was most effective when wearing a hat, to keep the netting away from direct contact with your skin. What's missing from this kit is a decent knife, but the Air Force had a good survival knife, that was issued separately.



US Air Force Survival Knife, with saw-back blade.

World War II Navy Pilot Bailout Survival Kit: (Complete)



Navy Pilot Bailout Survival Kit, World War II: This is a complete kit, showing parts one and two of the survival kit, radio, smoke signal, survival knife, life raft safety knife, pen flare gun and flares, 20 rounds of extra ammo, mirror, whistle, strobe light, and drinking water survival vest.

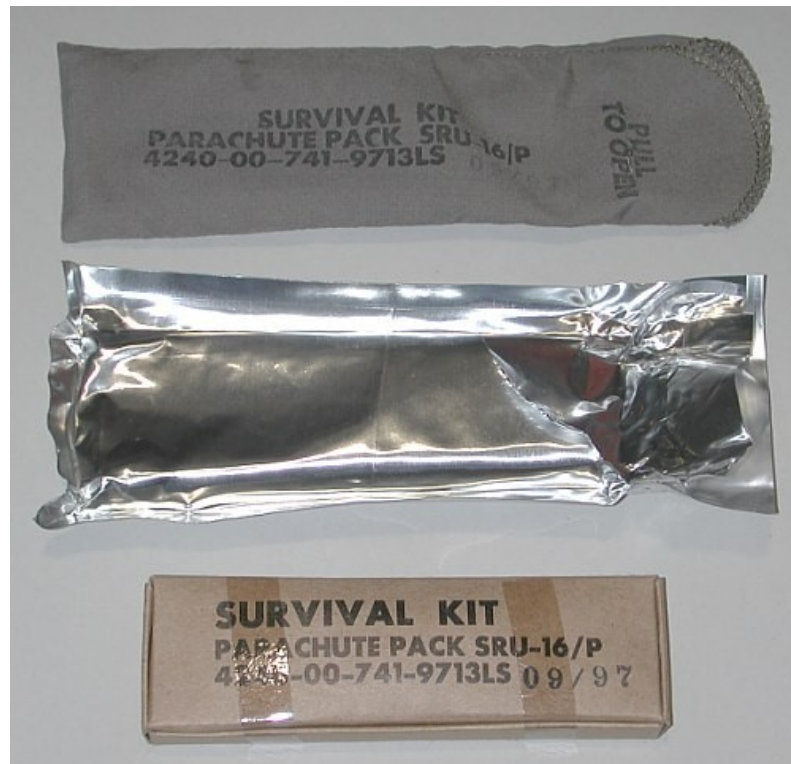
World War II, U.S. Naval Pilot Survival Kit, Gold Pack:



This is a U.S. Naval Pilot survival kit gold pack, from WWII. Gold coins are so universally accepted that they were included in the survival kits of American pilots during World War II and Desert Storm. The outer case is a heavy, tire-like rubber that was sealed shut when issued. Approximate size is 3.5 in. by 4 in. Inside it contains three gold rings and five gold coins: one George V British sovereign, one Victoria half-sovereign, one Edward VII half-sovereign, one French 20 franc Rooster, and one French 10 franc Rooster. The idea was that downed pilots could pay people for help, or barter for things, with the gold.

Parachute Pack Survival Kit:

This tiny little kit was secured to parachute harnesses, so that airborne troops would have some minimal survival items available, if they were blown off-course, and separated from their squads.



The outer pouch held a mylar bag, containing a slender cardboard box.



Contents of the cardboard box: Condoms (water containers), matches and strikers, fire-starter cubes, compass, candy, needles and thread, fishing hooks and line, pocket knife, and instructions. The instructions told the user to save their parachute, to use the cloth, paracord, and the inner strands of the paracord for survival tasks (improvising shelter, cordage, fishing lines, and snares).

U S Navy Pilot Back Pad Survival Kit:

This kit was sometimes secured to the seats of aircraft, like other bailout kits, so that it could be retrieved easily during an emergency escape. Contents often varied, for different environments.



The kit had a number of snap straps inside, to secure the contents, and straps on the back, to secure the kit to the aircraft seat. It could also be carried like a backpack, using the seat straps.



M592 Back Pad Kit Contents: Poncho Cover, Gloves, Mosquito Headnet, Instruction Book, Magnifying Lens, Signaling Mirror, Machete, Sunburn Ointment, Compass, Cotton Line, First Aid Kit, Emergency Rations, Jack Knife, Oil, Fishing Kit, Whistle, Drinking Water, Sharpening stone, Pyrotechnic Kit (Signal and Smoke Flares), Salt Tablets, Waterproof Tape, Safety Pins.

U S Navy Pilot Bailout Kit:



This over-water bailout survival kit has a one-man LRU3 life raft, with CO2 inflation cylinder.



Contents: Signal flares and launcher, match safe and matches, can of survival rations, life raft repair plugs, dye marker, sunburn cream, compass, strobe light, and a seawater desalination kit. Most life rafts had sea anchors and small emergency paddles that were tethered to the rafts and folded up in the raft bundle, so they would not be visible in these pictures.

PK-1 One Man Life Raft:



This PK1 raft is probably what people think of when they imagine a one man life raft, a simple open inflatable boat, with a small case of basic survival supplies.



PK1 Survival Kit Contents: Instructions, radio antenna, emergency radio, lifeboat rations, emergency drinking water, two drinking water kits, fishing kit, and sea anchor with lines.

C-2 One Man Life Raft:



This C2 life raft was part of another over-water bailout kit, that came with a set of supplies. This raft is a better design, because it has a canopy to protect the user from sun and spray.



C-2 Survival Kit Contents: Emergency radio, radio antenna, drinking water kit, shark repellent tubes, dye marker packet, signal flares, emergency rations, and flexible plastic water container.

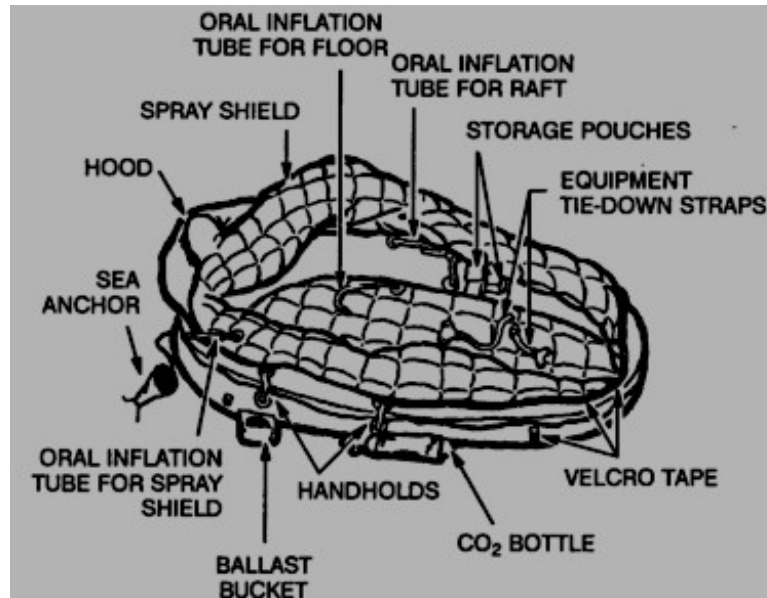


Most of these small life rafts had a CO2 cylinder, to inflate the raft during the initial bailout. They usually also had raft repair kits (raft plugs) and manual inflation ports, in case of leaks.



These life raft paddles have a reflective side, for signaling, and morse code printed on the back.

Typical Military Life Raft Instructions:



The greatest problem you face when submerged in cold water is death due to hypothermia, which occurs rapidly due to the decreased insulating quality of wet clothing and the result of water displacing the layer of still air that normally surrounds the body. The rate of heat exchange in water is about 25 times greater than it is in air of the same temperature. The life expectancy times for immersion in water are: 70-60 degrees F, 12 hours. 60-50 degrees F, 6 hours. 50-40 degrees F, 1 hour. 40 degrees F and below, less than 1 hour. Note: Wearing an anti-exposure suit may increase these times, up to a max of 24 hours.

Your best protection against the effects of cold water is to get into the life raft, stay dry, and insulate your body from the cold surface of the bottom of the raft. Remember, keep your head and neck out of the water and well insulated from the cold water's effects when the temperature is below 40 degrees F. Wearing life preservers increases the predicted survival time, as body position in the water increases the chance of survival.

Hot Weather: If in a hot climate, rig a sunshade or canopy. Leave enough space for ventilation. Cover your skin, where possible, to protect from sunburn. Use sunburn cream, if available, on all exposed skin. Your eyelids, the back of your ears, and the skin under your chin sunburn easily.

Raft Procedures: Most of the rafts in the U. S. Army and Air Force inventories can satisfy the needs for personal protection, travel, and evasion and camouflage. Note: Before boarding any raft, remove and tether (attach) your life preserver to yourself or the raft. Ensure there are no other metallic or sharp objects on your clothing or equipment that could damage the raft. After boarding the raft, don your life preserver again.

One-Man Raft: The typical one-man raft has dual inflation. If the CO₂ bottle should malfunction or if the raft develops a leak, you can inflate it by mouth. The spray shield acts as a shelter from the cold, wind, and water. In some cases, this shield serves as insulation. The raft's insulated bottom limits the conduction of cold, protecting you from hypothermia. You can travel more effectively by inflating or deflating the raft to take advantage of the wind or current. You can use the spray shield as a sail while the ballast buckets serve to increase drag in the water. You may use the sea anchor to control the raft's speed and direction.

U-2 Spy Plane Survival Kit (issued 1980):



U-2 pilot survival kit: Machete, Sharpening Stone, Fishing Kit, Lip Balm, Sun Screen, Water Bag, Desalinization Kit, Battery Radio, Shark Repellent, Survival Manual, Sea Dye Marker, Water Purification Tablets, Whistle, Signal Mirror, Sun Goggles, Compass, Monocular, Insect Repellent, and tools.

SR 71 Spy Plane Survival Kit (Issued 1995):



SR 71 Spy Plane Survival Kit: fixed-frequency radio, whistle, mirror, flares, matches, survival blanket, raft repair plugs, compass, first aid kit, knife, snakebite kit, food rations, water, locator beacon, one-man life raft.

Air Force Bailout Survival Kit Sleeping Bag:

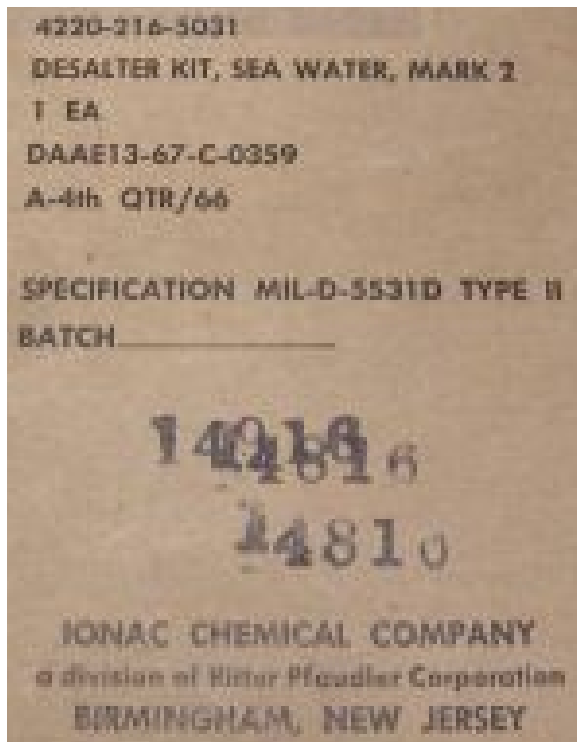


Air Force Bailout Survival Kit Sleeping Bag: This down sleeping bag was a component of numerous Air Force bailout type survival kits, including the MAC Daddy SAC Global Survival Kit, that was packed in a parachute dropped sled. As you can see it's a fiberglass shell, about 13" square, inside of which is a pressure and vacuum packed Arctic Rated down sleeping bag. The shell has a "T" handle that you can see in the images, that is pulled to separate the strapped top and bottom shell. Then the unit is opened by unscrewing the toggle bolt that is in the center (which clamped the bag flat between the two fiberglass panels). These sleeping bag kits are considered to have an indefinite shelf life. This one is still sealed, and weighs over 6 & 1/2 lbs, most of which is the actual goose down bag. **AND BE ASSURED, ONCE IT IS UNPACKED, YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO REPACK IT BACK!** The bolt goes through a hole that was drilled right through the sleeping bag, and it will leak some goose down through these holes once it is unpacked, but this does not stop it from working as a survival bag.



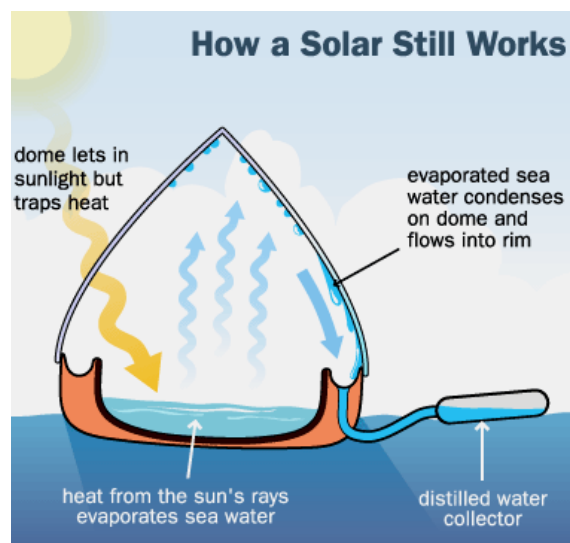
This toggle bolt keeps the two fiberglass panels clamped together, until the bag is needed.

Sea Water Desalter Kit (issued 1967):



Mk 2 Type 2 Desalter Kit: These kits would be found among the contents of a survival raft or life boat, and are used for making sea water drinkable. This can contains 8 packages and a filter bag. Each package treats 1 pint of sea water, and converts it into acceptable drinking water.

Life Raft and Bailout Kit Solar Still:



Solar stills like these are included in most life raft and bailout survival kits, for producing fresh water from sea water. Solar Stills are light, compact, float, and are very easy to use. They utilize solar radiation to distill and collect pure drinking water from sea or impure water. Each still can produce 1 to 4 pints of water per day, and they have been used by the military since 1966.

Hand-Powered Sea Water Desalination Pumps:

Katadyn now makes small hand-powered sea water desalting pumps that use reverse-osmosis to produce fresh drinking water from salty ocean water. These units are great, but very expensive, costing approx \$800 for the Survivor 6, and approx \$2,000 for the Survivor 35 (ouch!).



Katadyn Survivor 6 Desalting Pump



Katadyn Survivor 35 Desalting Pump



These pumps are being used in some of the newer military over-water bailout kits.

Survival Fishing Kit, Life Raft:



The survival fishing kit, seen at the bottom left, was often included in liferaft survival kits.



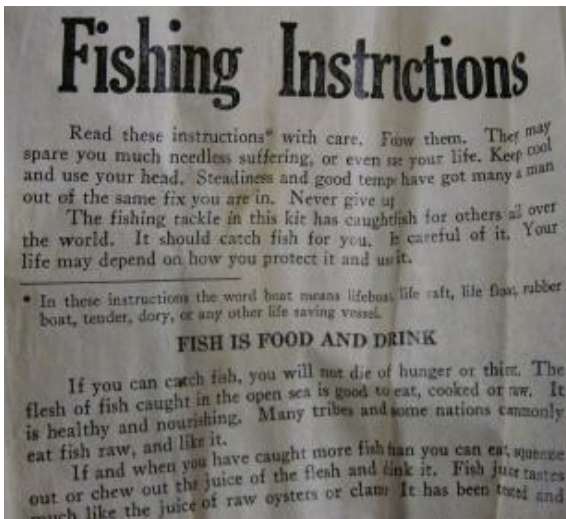
This fishing kit came in a sealed metal can, and was a cloth roll, like a tool roll, that held an assortment of lines, hooks, floats, and weights, and an interesting little fish spear, that could be lashed to a paddle or stick, if available. There were also some emergency fishing instructions.



Here are the contents of the fishing kit. Notice the spear head, on the right side.



The kit rolls up into a compact bundle.



These are the instructions which were included in the kit.

Survival Fishing Kit:



This is a smaller survival fishing kit, which was included in a lot of military survival kits.

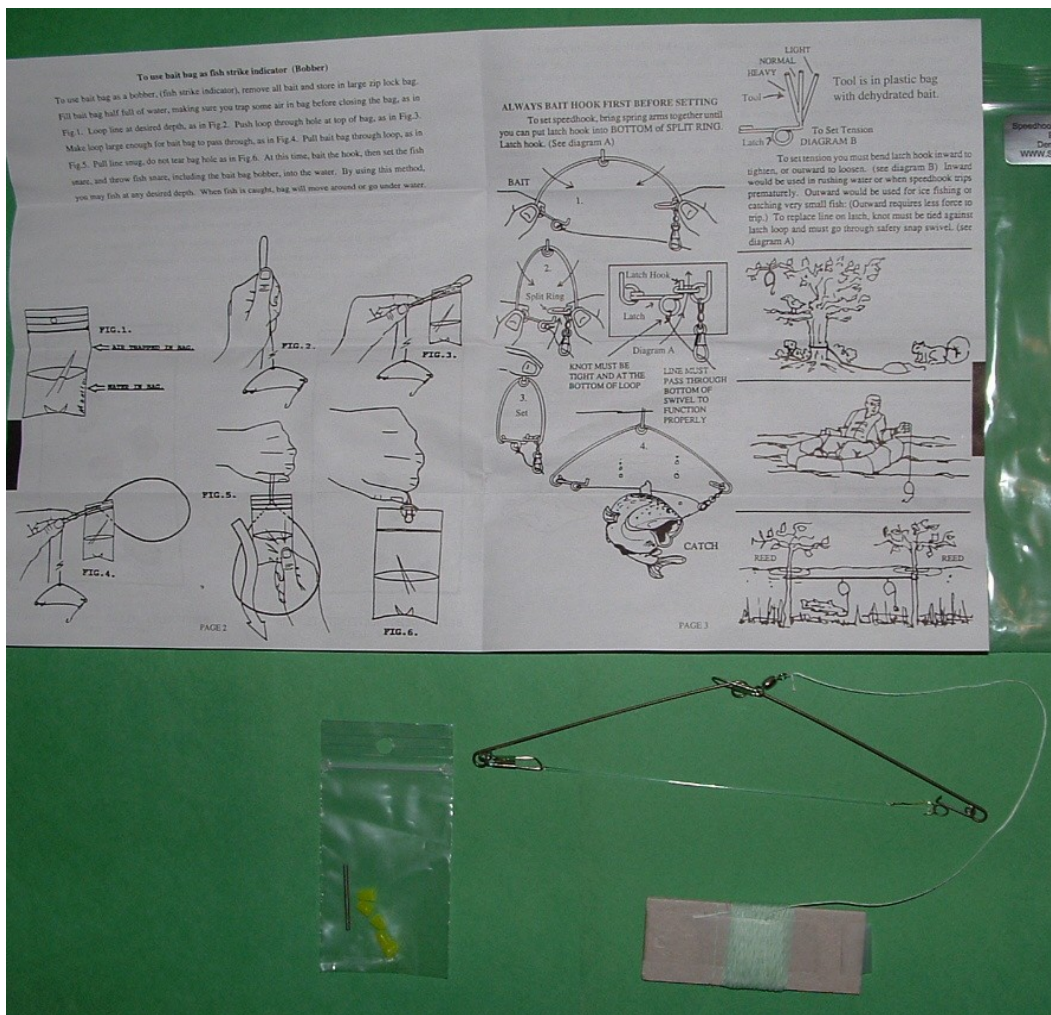


Contents: (1) fishing instruction booklet, (1) plastic case (1) treble hook size one, (1) straight shank hook size nine, (1) leader packet assorted, (8 leaders and 2 spare snap swivels), (1) nylon line 18 lb test 50ft. (1) nylon line 63lb test 50ft, (1) assemble of assorted hooks, (1) assemble of assorted needles, (1) assemble of 8 size 3 safety pins, (1) packet of 6 assorted spinners, (1) baby copper spoon, (1) large chrome spoon, (1) red & white spoon, (1) illustration of leader knots & hitches, (1) single edge razor blade, (1) packet 8 assorted flies.

Speedhook Survival Fishing Device:

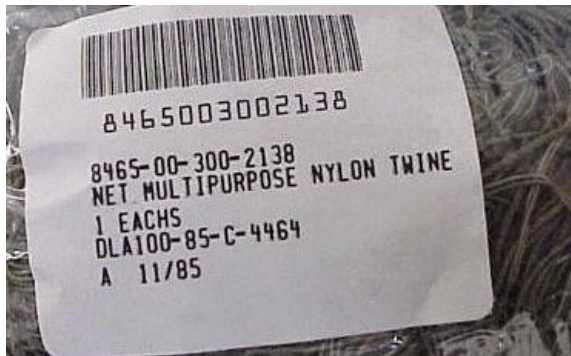


The Speedhook is a simple but clever fishing gadget, that hooks fish by springing open and yanking on the fishing line. Speedhooks are now included in many military survival kits.



One speedhook setup, shown with the instructions for use.

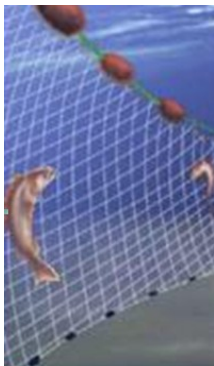
Survival Fish Nets, and Survival Gill Nets:



Military survival kits sometimes included either a survival fishing net, or a survival gill net.



The gill net is a bundle of fine nylon netting, like a net made from monofilament fishing line. The larger cords are the upper and lower edging, used to keep the fine net suspended in place.



Gillnetting

A gillnet is a curtain of netting that hangs in the water at various depths, suspended by a system of floats and weights, or anchors. The netting is almost invisible to fish as they swim into the gillnet. The mesh spaces are large enough for a fish's head to pass through, but not its body. As the fish tries to back out, its gills are entangled in the net.

The size of a gillnet's mesh determines the type of fish it will catch

Small mesh can catch small fish like sardines. Larger mesh can entangle fish such as salmon and cod, while allowing smaller species to pass through.

Gill nets work well for survival fishing and store compactly, but they do not hold up well under rough use. I like having them in my kits, and they can be used as net traps, for catching birds.

Survival Fishing Spears, Gaffs, and Harpoons:



Spit and Gaff Hook Kit: This little kit contained a sectional pole, a fish-spear head, and three gaff hooks. There were instructions on how to assemble the pieces for use as a meat roasting spit, pole spear, pole gaff, and oversized treble gaff hook. The sharp pieces came in a small metal can.

Harpoons: There were two basic styles of survival fishing harpoon, the Aitor, and the Hoffman.



Aitor-style survival fishing harpoon, and Hoffman-style survival fishing harpoon.

The Aitor harpoon was designed as a small multi-function tool. In addition to the harpoon point, there were three holes for lashing the harpoon to a spear shaft, and a tapered hole for use as an improvised wrench. There was also a bottle opener at one end, with a slotted screwdriver tip.



The Hoffman harpoon can be used as a small knife, a spear head, and a spear-fishing harpoon. The commercial version of this tool comes with a little sheath, and with the handle wrapped in paracord, which can be used for lashing it to your spear shaft. But this design is simple enough that you could easily make your own improvised versions, using a bit of scrap steel stock.

US Marine Corps Survival Kit:



This is the modern Marine Corps Individual Survival Kit: Length: 13 in, Width: 6 in, Weight: 1.75 lbs.



This Survival Kit keeps Marines from having to purchase their own survival items, and helps them perform the basic survival tasks: making shelter, gathering food and water, and signaling.

Contents: Side A: (Shelter and Food Gathering) Fishing Kit, Wire Saw, Survival Blanket, Zip-Lock Bag, Candle, and Snare Wire.

Side B: (Escape and Evasion) Magnesium Fire Starter, Pocket Knife, Signaling Mirror, Compass, Smoke Signal, Zip-Lock Bag, Whistle, Drinking Water Bag, Waterproof Matches.

The Marine Corps Survival Kit is a general purpose kit, but it was developed for use in desert; mountain; arctic; and temperate water survival, during small boat operations. The kit is packaged in a sand colored, abrasion resistant, waterproof outer bag that is heat sealed around the edges and center, to form two separate sides. The outside is some kind of tough plastic. Both sides have inner bags that are transparent, waterproof, vaporproof, and greaseproof. The inner bags are vacuum heat sealed. The two-sided design allows a Marine to carry the kit as a single item in a rucksack or butt pack, or to be folded and placed in a trouser cargo pocket.



The wire saw is a better design, as the handles clamp onto the wire. If it breaks, just re-attach it.

Survival Kit Firearms:



The US Armed Forces almost never included any guns in their survival kits, which is strange. They expected the troops to use their issue weapons, I suppose. Special forces were also trained to cache survival equipment, supplies, weapons, and ammo, but it would have been nice if there was a gun in every survival kit, even a single-shot pistol. There were two exceptions that I know of, a very limited run of bolt-action 22 rifles that had collapsible wire stocks added on, and the Air Force survival vest, which could come with a pistol and holster, if the mission allowed it.

Russian Survival Kit: The Soviets were a little more sensible. They included a Makarov pistol and a box of ammo in some of their survival kits, like the example below.



HA3-3, NAZ-3 survival kit. Left to right, top to bottom in photo: Makarov pistol and ammunition; wrist compass, 18 waterproof matches with striker; machete; fishing kit; strobe light with spare battery; 8 fire starters; folding knife; antenna; 3-pair wool gloves; signal mirror; NAZ-7M-type medical kit; penlight; R-855-YM or R-855-A1 radio; two Priboy 2S, ПРИБОЙ-2С radio batteries; three wool balaclava hoods. Not shown are containers, three PSND, ПСНД hand-held flares; 15 mm flare set; whistle; sewing kit; insect repellent; wire saw; rations and 2-liter water container.

Russian TP82 Survival Gun:



Now here is an interesting survival gun. For approx 20 years, Soyuz space crews have carried this TP-82 survival firearm with them on their missions. It is a three-barrel, break-action pistol, consisting of a double-barrel shotgun with a rifle barrel underneath, and a detachable stock.



TP82 with machete stock and cover, and vies of the three barreled break action.

The stock is an important part of the weapon, because besides improving stability and accuracy while firing, it is also a functional machete, with a protective cover, and clamp-on shoulder pad.



TP82 with machete stock, cartridge belt, ammo, and flares.

If you like this gun as much as I do, you will be happy to know that Kel-Tec will soon be manufacturing a "westernized" version, firing .223 Remington ammo in place of the original 5.45mm cartridge, and .410 gauge ammo in place of the 12.7mm shotshells and flares.

Russian Spetsnaz Survival Machete:



The Russians issued this heavy chopping knife to their Spetsnaz (Special Forces).



The Spetsnaz machete can be used to chop, saw, dig, pry, hammer, and many other tasks. The original had a hollow handle, with a small survival kit inside, and a compass cap.



The blade design is very functional, and has inspired several modernized versions.

American Survival Machete:



This little machete, made by Case, was included in some military survival kits.



There was also a folding version of the same machete, which took up less room in the kits. Both the folding and non-folding versions came with a blade guard, instead of a sheath.



A modern version of the folding machete would be something like this Cold Steel Rajah.

Military Survival Shovels:



The Russian Spetsnaz shovel (left) became rather famous a few years ago as a throwing weapon. Several countries issued similar entrenching tools to their troops. They all had thick steel shovel blades that could be sharpened and used as knives and hatchets, as well as for digging foxholes. These tools have been used as hammers, prybars, raft paddles, and even improvised frying pans.



Most folding shovels are frustrating to use, because collapsible tools tend to collapse. But recently China developed this multifunction entrenching tool, that has a vastly superior locking mechanism. The wheel and pin style hinge joint is a great design, and the shovel has a cutting edge on one side, and a saw edge on the other side. It can be used for many tasks, and it even works as a grappling hook. These are already available for sale on E-Bay, and the design will probably be quickly copied and improved upon by other countries.



Arctic Survival Gear:



Most arctic gear was individually issued, so basically there were no standard arctic survival kits. This is partly because most arctic gear is fairly bulky, and partly because if you are out in arctic conditions, you already need to be using the gear, in order to stay alive. Large aircraft that traveled in the arctic had footlockers containing parkas and other ECW (extreme cold weather) gear. There were also some containers of arctic clothing, survival equipment, and emergency food that were kept at designated locations, and these were called survival caches. Anyway, other than clothing, such as the hooded fishtail parka, basic arctic survival gear included arctic mitts, snow goggles, mukluks (snow boots), snow shoes, and arctic-rated sleeping bags.



Snowshoes shown are traditional laced shoes, aluminum shoes, and inflatable snowshoes.



There was an arctic canteen, which was supposed to keep the water inside from freezing, but it was inferior to just keeping water bottles under your clothing. There was an arctic survival tool, called a Pilot Survival Tool, that was a combination of a snow shovel and an ice saw, with one handle for the shovel and saw blades. It was used to build igloos, and cut holes for ice fishing.



Military Wire Cutters:



Wire cutters may not qualify as survival tools, more like escape and evasion tools. But a number of military knives were designed to also have a wire-cutting function, to make them more useful.



These escape tools were wire cutters with blades and saws, the early version of multi-tools.

Survival Wire Saws:



The early wire saws have mostly been replaced by the sturdier pocket chain saw.



These little folding razors and saws were eventually combined into one tool with two blades.

Military Trip Wire:



Like cordage, wire has as many survival uses, such as making traps, snares, and lashings.

Survival Compass:



There were several types of survival compass, but I prefer the wristwatch style.

Signal Mirrors:



Emergency Crash Axe:



The crash axe was designed to allow plane crash survivors to chop and pry their way out of a downed aircraft. Hard landings tend to warp the frames of airplanes, jamming the hatches shut. This example has a cutting head and prying spike, and the handle is insulated to 20,000 volts. Most aircraft have aluminum body panels, so chopping your way out with an axe is feasible.

Military Flare Guns:



Useful for signaling, flare guns were found in many military survival kits.



Flare guns shown are launching handle with flares (left), H & K flare pistols with a case of flares, and a Heckler & Koch semi-auto flare launcher (at far right), with a package of flare cartridges (that were designed to feed & eject through the launcher like a clip of bullets).



Most flare pistols are single-shot, break-action designs.

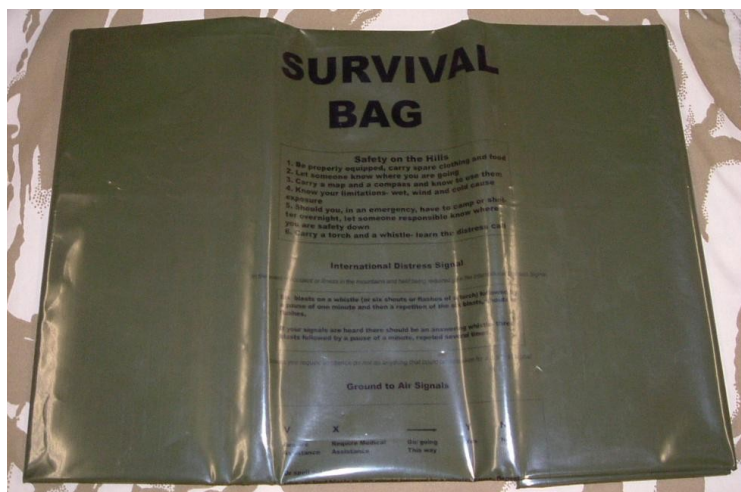
Mosquito Headnet and Mittens:



The mosquito headnets were usually packed into little squares, that don't photograph well.



The mosquito headnets came with a pair of mittens, made from the same netting material.



The survival bag was just a heavy plastic bag that could be used as a poncho, windbreaker, tarp, ground cloth, rain catch, foxhole cover, and any other use that a sheet of plastic was needed for.

Air Force Survival Vests:



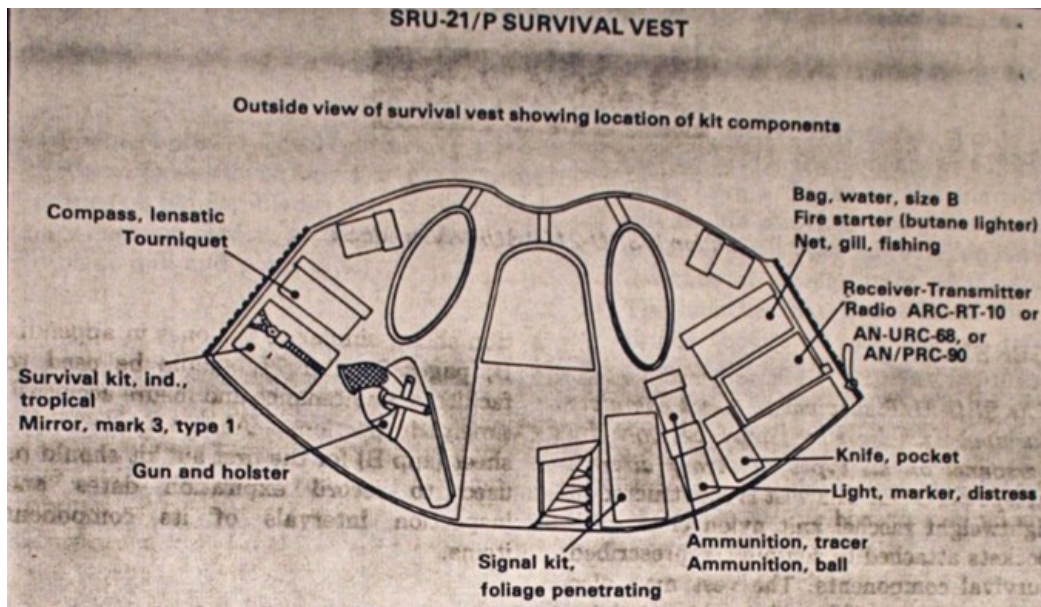
These are versions of the Air Force survival vest, designed to hold essential survival gear.



SRU-21/P vest with PRC-90 radio pouch and pilots knife (1974)



SRU-21/P vest (back)





Typical survival vest equipment.

Components for the SRU-21/P vest vary depending upon the mission or command. Because of the many variations, components below are those outlined in the basic operating manuals TM 55-8465-215-11 (dated June 1970) and TM55-1680-351-10 (dated 22 April 1987). The operating manual and a copy of the assembly sheet drawing with FSN/NSN's are sometimes placed in an inside pocket. Copies of the assembly sheet drawings are included in the appendix.

Components for the SRU-21/P:

- Individual Tropical Survival Kit (TAC)
- Tourniquet (non-pneumatic type)
- Gill net
- Three pint water bladder, size B
- Mk-3 Type 1, 2" x 3" signal mirror
- SDU-5/E distress marker light (strobe light) w/AGR-FG1B flash guard
- Foliage penetrating signal kit (M-201, rocket launcher and seven red flares) Other types of pengun signal kits were used earlier.
- Pocket knife
- Fire starter (butane lighter, match case, M-2, magnesium fire starter, Aviation Spark-Lite)
- .38 caliber revolver or 9mm pistol and ammunition (17 rounds ball M41, 6 rounds tracer M41)
- Radio (The current radio is the PRC-112. The AN-PRC-90, AN-URC-68, ARC-RT-10, and URC-64 have also been used.)
- Whistle w/lanyard

Survival Water Containers:



An early water container was this flat plastic canteen.

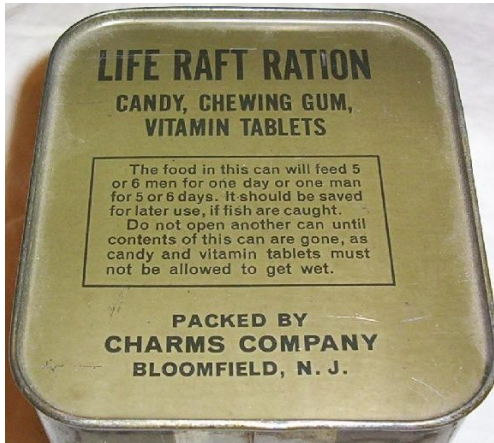


Modern survival water containers include these flexible plastic flasks, and this flexible jug.

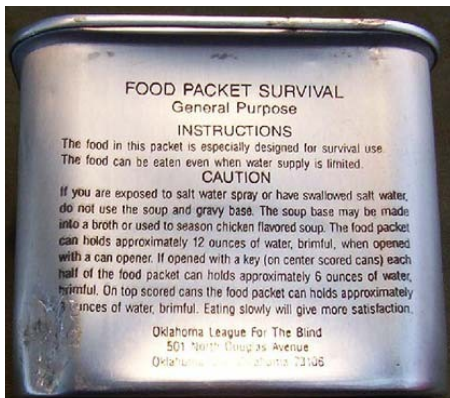


Survival drinking water also comes in sealed mylar pouches, like this one.

Military Survival Rations:



Shown here are a can of life raft rations, and a can of pemmican (a high-calorie arctic survival ration). Canned pemmican was also used as food for sled dogs, in both the arctic and antarctic.



These canned survival food packets contained compressed cereal bars (my favorite), chocolate bars that could be made into a cocoa drink, and a bullion soup base bar, for making hot soup.



This survival food packet contains several individually wrapped survival food bars, and candy.