

SHTF Home Defense: Part 2 - Defending The Home

by Sam Coffman (<https://readfomag.com/author/humanpath/>) February 11, 2015

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Dennis and Jake looked at each other from across what used to be a living room.

"If they saw us come into this house, I'm guessing we have about 10 minutes tops before they come through one of these doors," Dennis said.

A little over a week into their bugout, they had left the rest of their group and families in a much safer location outside of this small town, and had come in as a team of two to scout out supplies, and bring back what they could. Despite their best attempts, someone had seen them come into town and had fired a shot, missing both of them by several feet, but forcing them into the best cover they could find: A small, ranch style home at the end of a small cul-de-sac. They both wanted to get out of town, but their exits were blocked by a small gang that looked to have taken up residence in this town. Their best bet was to hole up in an abandoned home and wait for nightfall.

None of the houses on the block were inhabited - and for that matter none of the houses in the town had appeared to be occupied, which made Dennis wonder where this gang actually resided.

They hopped the fence first as though they were heading into the yard behind this house. Once they saw the back yard was fairly secluded from vegetation, they circled around and came in the back door of the house as quietly as possible. A quick security check revealed the house was void of everything except furniture. An attached, half-finished garage contained some building supplies and tools that apparently had not been scavenged by anyone yet.

Dennis and Jake set to work while both keeping a watchful eye and ear on the street in front and the back yard...

Inside the Home

In part 1 of this series we covered some of the important points in defending the perimeter around a house. In part 2 we will discuss a couple of very important points relating to home defense from inside of your home - both while attackers are outside as well as once they have gained entry into your home.

One of those concepts is very similar to the perimeter around the home (which we talked about in part 1): Namely directing the flow of traffic in a manner that creates targets out of our attackers without allowing them the chance to shoot at us first. Secondly - and as an overlapping part of this first concept - we want to fortify our house on the inside in ways that allow us to identify and shoot attackers before they make it into the house (ideally) or force them to slow down and take certain routes in if they do get that far.

Both of these concepts require the use of barriers such as furniture and construction materials (cinder blocks, plywood and other lumber, sand or cement bags, etc.). Additionally - if there is time - the common entry points such as doors and windows - can be fortified.

Starting with the most common entry point for any house - the door - let's look at how we can fortify this. The door is held onto the frame with hinges, a deadbolt and a doorknob. However, what's holding the frame onto the house? Most doorframes are 1" wood (1 x 4) and have very little strength. The key to proper reinforcement of a door is to use steel (angle iron or mending plates) support that attaches the door frame to the studs that frame the doorway. Additionally, longer screws and a longer deadbolt (not necessary, but helps) sink the frame and the deadbolt itself into the framing of the house. In a post collapse situation where it is not necessary to keep the door looking pretty, 2 x 4's can be screwed or nailed across the door (if you want to keep it permanently closed), or slid through an angle-iron bracket attached on either side of the door, like a barn.

If there's time, windows need to be boarded up using plywood, cinder blocks and/or sandbags. If you're short on materials, decide which parts of the house are indefensible and pull back into the most structurally sound portion of the house. However, don't leave yourself blind. Whether you have to knock holes in the wall or remove doors, make sure you are able to cover as many angles as possible of any room in the house based on how you set up barriers. Home-made, bullet-resistant windows can be made relatively cheaply using glass sandwiched between polycarbonate or acrylic sheets, glued together with liquid nails.

Fake barriers will also afford you the ability to force people behind "cover" that you can easily shoot through. Even though the attackers are in your home, you can still set yourself up for success by having good cover in a defensible location that narrows your attackers through forcing choke points (requiring them to move in single file) and fake cover. For example, you heavily barricade all but one door entry or window entry that you are most sure the attacker(s) will try first. Upon entry, perhaps a light couch in front of the door that slows them down but offers them no real cover and makes it look as though you didn't want them to enter through this door.

Now let's say there is a breakfast bar that overlooks all entries into the front of the house. You fortify this with sand or concrete bags (be aware that shooting into concrete bags will create a lot of dust that will interfere with visibility and be caustic to breathe), steel or even lumber if that's all you have, but give yourself the ability to fire through several different "murder holes" (to borrow from the medieval defense concept) in your breakfast bar barrier.

If you have more than one person defending a room, make the door into a choke point (narrowing it if possible using scrap lumber and furniture) and create wide angles for each person to have to cover when they enter. In other words, force your attackers to walk directly, one at a time, into a room where they are immediately flanked widely. Don't wait until the first attacker is down before turning your attention to the next one. Have one defender always focusing on the next attacker coming through the door so that they do not have a chance to

create their own fields of fire and return fire as a team. Force fire superiority on the attackers from the very start when they have entered the room, and do not allow them to regroup or gain momentum.

Some of the supplies I would recommend having on hand to make your own home more defensible in a bug-in situation would be: Lumber (1/2" or 5/8" plywood, 2 x 4's, 4 x 4's, 2 x 6's), 1", 2" & 3" nails and/or sheetrock (or deck if you can afford it) screws, power drill (with sustainable source of power), crowbars, gas masks (assume an attacking force would try to gas you out if possible using propane or insecticide, etc.), duct tape, plastic sheeting, sandbags, sand, ready-mix concrete and/or mortar, angle-iron (pre-drilled holes), mending plates, sledge hammer, heavy axe, fire extinguishers.

There is a lot more to be discussed on this topic, but remember that thinking through the concepts I've outlined in this article and asking yourself how you would break into your own home are good starting points. It costs nothing but time to practice low-light reaction drills and think through as many possible scenarios as you can in your planning for a defensible bug-in situation.

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Sam Coffman is a former Army Special Forces Medical Sergeant. He now teaches survival, primitive living, and medical skills at thehumanpath.org.

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