

'Snivel GEAR'

NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT

"WE'RE LEAVING ON PATROL IN FIVE minutes! Get your gear together!" shouted Staff Sgt. Christian B. Amason, a platoon sergeant for Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, assigned to the 1st Marine Division.

That used to be a cut and dry order, but with today's gear, combat loads are tailor fitted. Even packs come with detachable pouches, adding and taking away space for gear. It's a balancing act.

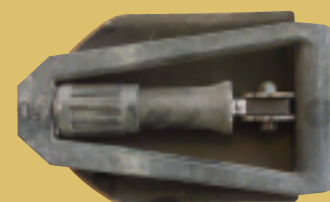
Too much gear, it weighs the Marine down. Too little, and they suffer needlessly.

Take Amason, for example. He's a former Army Special Forces soldier and Marine sniper. He's got a good number of patrols under his belt. He knows what he needs and what he can live without when he takes to the field.

"I always take what I call my catch-all-gear," explained Amason, a 32-year-old from Elora, Tenn. "Those are the basics, like my weapon,



"It's a balancing act. Too much gear, it weighs the Marine down. Too little, and they suffer needlessly."



Etool: Digs Marines out of trouble.



2 Qt. Bottle: Two quarts of thirst-quenching bleach water.



Boot: For carrying the rest of the gear.



Packing Tip: Roll and seal clothes in plastic zip-lock bags to keep them airtight, fresh and dry.

Editor's Note: We finally found a use for the tent stake!

Known as "Walking Saigon Sam's," Lance Cpl. Ryan P. Taylor, a rifleman with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, is the go-to Marine when his platoon mates need something on patrol. Taylor's combat patrol gear, displayed here, includes his squad automatic weapon and 35 pounds of ammunition.

Photo by Cpl. Shawn C. Rhodes



→ **Enjoying a cup of "joe,"** Marines of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, start the morning around a portable stove on the road to Baghdad in March of 2003. Coffee, tea, coca, cappuccino, sugar and creamer packets in Meals, Ready to Eat provide Marines with a selection of morning starters they can cook in their trusty canteen cups.

Photo by Staff Sgt. David L. Crockett

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→ **"As snug as a bug in a rug."**

Marines often call cold weather gear "snivel gear" and complain about packing it, but when it comes sleeping in the mud, every bit of snivel gear counts. Most Marines have their own tricks to staying comfortable in the field and custom lists of snivel gear they pack.

Photo by Staff Sgt. David L. Crockett

The top 15 items Marines said they wished they'd taken with them on deployment are:

- More pictures of family
- Travel coffee mug with lid
- Good pair of sunglasses
- A camera or video camera
- MP3 player
- Portable DVD player
- An M-16 instead of 9mm
- Lots and lots and lots of batteries
- Baby wipes for showers
- More card games
- Stomach medicine
- More books
- Extra socks and skivvies
- More trash bags
- A camping stove

ammunition, optics, navigational equipment and flak jacket and helmet. With a water supply, that makes for at least 30 pounds on your upper body. If you're a (machine) gunner, then it could easily be 50 pounds you're carrying."

Amason knows what items will keep him alive in the field, and he also knows what items can make the discomfort a little easier to bear.

"No matter where I go in the field, I always take my 'woobie,'" he said. "That's what my wife calls my poncho liner." It's the best piece of gear he has, he said. It keeps him warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather.

Other Marines have different necessities they insist on carrying.

"I'm the go-to-guy on a patrol, a regular walking 'Saigon Sam's,'" said Lance Cpl. Ryan P. Taylor, in reference to the military supply store just outside Camp Lejeune, N.C.

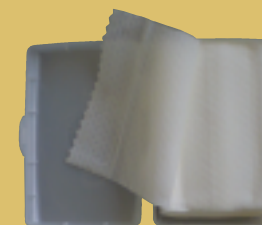
The Dumfries, Va., rifleman is known to always have a steady supply of chemical lights, parachute cord, fly tape, shoe-goo used to repair boots

and superglue, among other things in his pack.

"You never know when you're going to need

"You never know when you're going to need something, so I try to bring it with me."

Packing Tip:
Every Marine pack one book, then share it.



Baby Wipes: A shower in every towelette.



Flashlight: Known to recruits as "moonbeams."



Gloves: Makes handling razor wire a more pleasant experience.

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something, so I try to bring it with me," he added.

As important as all these items may be, the mainstay of infantrymen in the field is still chow. If not carrying the Meals, Ready-to-Eat they are issued, many Marines have a good supply of junk food.

This is especially true for Sgt. James M. Back, a platoon guide from Logan, Utah. Known as 'Snacks' to his platoon mates, the Marine always has a steady supply of food.

"I blame it on my wife," he said "She really takes care of me with care packages, so everyone knows to come to me for junk food."

Back also knows how to pack for a patrol. In preparation for whatever situation may arise, Back carries extra sergeant chevrons, zip ties, caffeine pills for late patrols, different sized-batteries, spare socks, a whistle, sunscreen and a flashlight.

"Marines learn from the experience of their squad leaders and then find out for themselves what works for them," Back said. "It really comes down to what you're willing to carry to be prepared



Making room for a little more boom. The high explosive rounds used in the M-203 grenade launcher pack a powerful punch. Increasing the effective distance of a thrown grenade, many riflemen carry ten or more rounds for this weapon on every patrol.

Photo by Cpl. Shawn C. Rhodes



Packed for war, Lance Cpl. Justin L. Jordan, a machine gunner with E Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, sits in a defensive position several miles from the Iraq border before crossing the line of departure March 19, 2003. With SCUD missiles passing overhead, Echo Co., donned heavy Mission Oriented Protective Posture suits, adding to the burden of gear they carried into battle.

Photo by Staff Sgt. David L. Crockett



Home far away from home, Marines of 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, decorate their living accommodations with ponchos to create a little relief from the searing Iraqi sun at Diwaniya in May of 2003. The two-man tents the ponchos hang from are a new addition to the gear list, replacing the old shelter-halves carried by Marines for years. The new tent is carried by a single Marine and can be setup in several minutes, providing protection from the elements and the ground. Shelter-halves were carried by two Marines, had no floor, and were much heavier and bulkier.

Photo by Staff Sgt. David L. Crockett



Packing Tip:
Prioritize with
"most used"
gear packed
on top.



Goggles: Stylish, especially with the sock cover.



Kneepads: New digital cammies have hidden pockets in the knees to hold padding and replace traditional kneepads



Magazine: Holds 30 rounds. Loading only 28 reduces jams.



Packing Tip:
Mark EVERYTHING.
Really.