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GEARING UP

Battle Tested Gear

Hunting and fishing equipment that our soldiers want, right now.

by Bill Heavey

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Our armed forces in Iraq are finding that civilian gear often does the job better than what Uncle Sam issues. Here, F&S takes a look at what's standing up to the rigors of combat.

[1] GPS Unit

Tommy Morrow, a helicopter crew chief with the 101st Airborne, says guys buy their own GPS units if they aren't issued one. "Southern Iraq consists of miles and miles of sand. In a lot of places, there just aren't any reference points to orient yourself. A GPS can keep you from heading into trouble and help you find your way home." Garmin's handheld GPSMap 60CS (\$536) is peace of mind in a package. It has an electronic compass, altimeter, route calculator, and barometric pressure sensor, plus a feature that tells you when to hunt and fish. garmin.com

[2] Sunglasses

Wiley's impact-resistant SG-1 sunglass-tactical goggles (\$100) have lenses treated with antifogging and antiscratch coatings. The face-hugging frames seal out dust. They're ideal for explosive ordnance disposal teams, as well as for mourning dove hunts. They come with interchangeable smoke-green and clear lenses. Running a boat? Consider upgrading to polarized lenses. wileyx.com

[3] Energy Bar

When the military found soldiers buying civilian energy bars, it decided to develop something that met the military's shelf-life requirement and provided



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ADDITIONAL INFO

What You Can Do

While stationed around Kirkuk in Iraq, Sgt. Brian Horn (right) of LaPlata, Maryland, had an idea that would let folks at home help the troops: recruit volunteer service members to receive packages and distribute them within their units. Horn's father, Marty, then created a website with mailing instructions and contact addresses in Afghanistan and Iraq. To donate the gear in this story, go to anysoldier.com and follow the directions.



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a prolonged release of energy instead of a spike and then a crash. The 280-calorie Hooah! (Army-speak for "Heard, understood, acknowledged!") has the same ingredients as other bars, only in different proportions, and it tastes good. In apple cinnamon and chocolate crisp, they're sold at 7-Eleven or on Amazon.com (\$2 each; \$21 for a box of 15). hooahbar.com

[4] Hydration

A pack with a hydration system is about as practical a piece of gear as you could ask for in the sandbox. Invented by a paramedic who attached tubing to a water-filled IV bag, stuffed it into a sock, sewed it to the back of a T-shirt, and dubbed his invention the CamelBak, these hydration systems are now worn by nearly every soldier in Iraq. I carry a Ranger (\$80), a hunting pack with a 100-ounce reservoir and 1,647 cubic inches of storage, with a main compartment, side pockets, and an external pocket with slots. camelbak.com

[5] Knives

Strider's SNG folder features a blade (drop-point or tanto) that's almost 3 inches long and a stout .165 inch thick. Solid, balanced, and light (5 ounces), it has a handle made of black G-10 fiberglass machined out to hold the blade. The SNG (top) is \$400, but Strider and Buck Knives have a real-world version, the 889 Military Folder, for \$80. striderknives.com

[6] Fleece

Fred Chan of the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center flew soldiers to Alaska to test Malden Mills' new fleece. He invited them to wade into the ocean wearing the stuff, then strip down, wring it out, put it back on, and walk it dry. They did. Then they didn't want to give it back. Polartec Thermal Pro is lighter, warmer, more breathable, and faster drying than its predecessor. L.L. Bean uses it in its Katahdin fleece jacket (\$79) and pullover (\$69); Bass Pro, in its RedHead Gold fleece jacket (\$60), pants (\$50), and vest (\$40).

[7] Underwear

Soldiers toting body armor and 100-pound packs in 110-degree heat agree that Under Armour's HeatGear is essential. Featherweight and stretchy, it's made of moisture-wicking polyester, and it's what you want next to your skin if you expect to sweat on a hunt. Shirts are \$25 - \$60, depending on pattern and weight. underarmour.com

[8] Combat Bath

These 7 1/2x8-inch disposable cloths come in resealable bags of eight. Soap and alcohol free, they kill germs, eliminate odor, and nourish skin. You can microwave them for a warm "bath," refrigerate them for a cold one, or leave some on a buddy's bunk as a subtle hint that he smells like a wildebeest (\$10 for three bags). 800-777-7172; uscavalry.com

[9] Multitool

Utility has made a Leatherman - especially the Wave, Super Tool, Crunch, and Charge models - a must-have item for troops in the field. They are used to disarm bombs, cut wire, and tighten whatever rattles. Soldiers will be quick to snap up this newest model, the Super Tool 200, which has been beefed up with stronger pliers, longer knife blades, three wire-cutting surfaces, and more ergonomic handles (\$55). leatherman.com

[10] Flashlight

SureFire lights are expensive and eat up lithium batteries, but in equipment-defeating dust and sand, they still work. One GI had five different lights fail before he got the SureFire G2 Nitrolon, a 5-inch, 4.6-ounce, 65-lumen powerhouse (\$34) bright enough to temporarily blind an enemy- or a buddy between you and the last beer in the cooler. Hunters may want the smaller and lighter E2O Outdoorsman (\$95), which offers 21 1/2 hours of run time with a 25-lumen bulb. surefire.com



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[11] Headlamp

The Zenix IQ (\$48) has a conventional design and cool new features. It lets you choose between two Superbright LEDs and a single Hyperbright LED. Each has four power settings to match the illumination level to your needs. The Zenix weighs 5.7 ounces with batteries and has a flashing indicator light, so you can find it. blackdiamondequipment.com

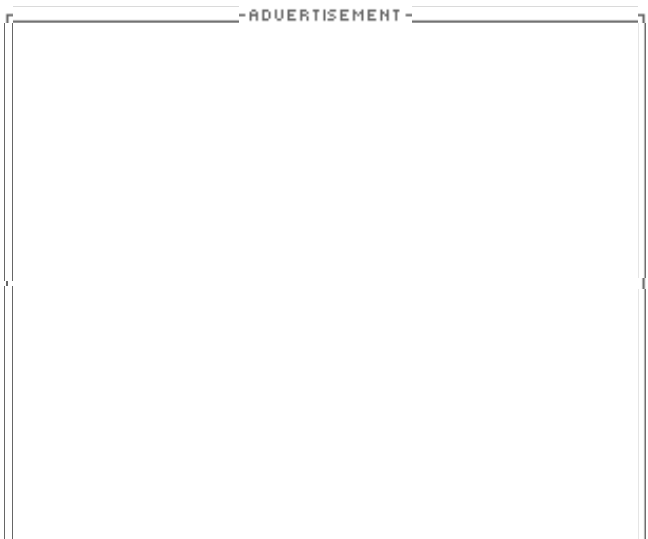


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