

Podcast #193 Transcript – Bug-Out Mistakes With Jeff Kirkham

- Jeff Anderson: Once you got serious about prepping, it was most likely the first thing that you put together to prepare for a crisis, disaster, or collapse. It's your bug-out bag. In an emergency, it's supposed to be the one thing that will get you through and help you survive, but surviving a forced evacuation requires more than just a cool looking battle backpack and a case of MRE, even though that's exactly what you will see in so many online blogs, forums, and Facebook pages.
- Jeff Anderson: The reality is that in many cases, the information you find littered all over the web can do more to create more danger for you than it can to help you protect yourself and those you love during a crisis. What is the right way to prepare your bug-out bag and your evacuation plan for a disaster, crisis, or collapse? Well, who better to ask than a Special Forces soldier who had actually had to bug-out for his very own survival. The answers are coming right up in this week's episode.
- Jeff Anderson: Hello everyone, this is Jeff Anderson, Editor from Modern Combat & Survival Magazine and Executive Director the New World [inaudible 00:00:54] with another podcast to help you better prepare for any threat you may face in your role as a protector and a patriot. With us today to talk about the critical bug-out bag mistakes and bug-out plan mistakes that you might be making, is my guest Jeff Kirkham. Jeff, welcome to the program.
- Jeff Kirkham: Hey, thanks Jeff. I appreciate being on here.
- Jeff Anderson: No, it's great. I'm really looking forward to this. I've been following your stuff for a long time now. I'm really excited about getting your information out to our audience and I know this is going to be awesome because I have some really cool questions for you. Listen everyone, if you aren't already aware of his work, the joke around their office is that Jeff ... If a Neanderthal James Bond and Q had a baby, it would be Jeff, all right? He's spent about 29 years as a Green Beret doing multiple classified details for the US Government, with just over eight years boots on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq as a member of the Counter-Terrorist Direct Action Unit.
- Jeff Anderson: Now, Jeff has had more training and real life experience in survival and tactical situations than just about anyone and has turned his experience into multiple published books, a few registered patents, such as the well-known RATS Tourniquet, and his passion project ReadyMan, a member based training platform that taps into the experience of multiple real world operators looking to become better prepared and help others become better prepared as well. Now, you can find out more about Jeff and ReadyMan at www.readyman.com.
- Jeff Anderson: Jeff, I really have been looking forward to this conversation. This is a passion topic for me and I always like to get other military members as well in here because I'm sure like you, well, I know you'd had to at times, literally live out a

backpack. I know you know what it's like. You've also had the unique experience of actually having to but-out to safety when you had foreign troops that you had befriended as a Special Forces operative and in a war zone, they decided to actually turn on you and kill you. These experiences have led you to determine that 90% of all bug-out plans people are putting together are death traps. What was it about your experience that led you to this conclusion?

Jeff Kirkham: I think the biggest thing that folks run into or that people run into is first and foremost, they don't have a plan. A lot of people that are out there, certainly none of the listeners, but I think the problem that a lot of people have is they're like, "Well, I've got my bug-out bag and I've got my food supply and I'm good to go." Essentially, the planning ends from there.

Jeff Kirkham: The reality is, when a critical situation happens, it's like all of a sudden you start figuring out how many holes are in your plan and even some of the best thought out escape and evade plans or bug-out plans, like what is the common term now, you all of a sudden start finding out it's like, "Man. I didn't think of that. I didn't think of this and I didn't of ... "

Jeff Kirkham: A lot of people have bug-out bags, but they haven't taken into account that they can't carry it or they've never taken it out or they've never tested it or they've got three or four small children that they've got to live out of that bag too. It's like, first and foremost, I think what we've seen is planning, is the big shortfall.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Everybody seems to become very gear focused because it's really like a false sense of confidence. You think if you've got the gear, then all you have to do is just put it into action whenever the time might come. I'm sure when you were evading other operatives in a battle zone that were coming after you, it wasn't just about, "Thank goodness I have my trusty Swiss Army knife on me out of my back pocket," or whatever. It really is more about, well, not just the planning, but it sounds like also the contingency planning. Like, being prepared for whatever might come your way as well, right?

Jeff Kirkham: Yeah, absolutely. It's like the old saying Jeff. You'll remember this from the military, the old saying of, "100 pounds of lightweight gear still weighs 100 pounds."

Jeff Anderson: Yeah.

Jeff Kirkham: If people think that they're going to move ... Remember when bugging out, one of the things that we like to tell our folks is, "Look. If you're bugging out, that means you have some place to go." Like, just arbitrarily running into the hills is essentially a plan for failure at that point. You've got to have some place that you're going. We're big fans. We tested out quite a few of the different bug-out bag systems that were out there. That's where we came to the conclusion and then based off of my experience as well was, "Hey. Lightweight gear is the way to go," because remember, you're going from point A to point B. You're bugging

out to go somewhere, whether that's an emergency preparedness area or your church or your neighbor or your cabin in the mountains or whatever that is.

Jeff Kirkham: Being lightweight and being able to move faster means that you have less time under stress. The longer you are out in the field, the longer that you're in the mountains, the longer you're out in the open, the more time exists for the situation to deteriorate. In our case, the longer it was for people to catch up with us. Then also, the longer your body is under that stress as well, because first and foremost that I think that people run into is they are absolutely not prepared for the level of exhaustion that comes to play when doing one of these type of activities or doing one of these type of events.

Jeff Kirkham: Because if you think back Jeff, when you were in basic training and that's probably the best example I can think of, is basic training, you're absolutely bone tired all of the time and that is starting to meet the level of exhaustion that you run into at that time. A lot of people aren't prepared for that and if you're humping around or carrying around 100 pounds of lightweight gear, that exhaustion comes on oh so much faster.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. That's a really good point. Also, it is one of the reasons why people, they find themselves unprepared when the time comes is because they might be training for something entirely different or they might think that their training will transfer over to something like that. We talk like the worse case scenario of carrying a backpack for many miles because the roads, they're one big parking lot.

Jeff Anderson: We're going to talk more about the planning process, but just to feed off of what you're saying with the training, if somebody is out there and they go to the gym a lot and they're lifting weights a lot and okay, "Well, I'm strong. I know I can handle a backpack on my back because I can do squats and things like that."

Jeff Anderson: That doesn't translate. Same thing is you are a long distance runner or you're doing interval training or something like that. The only way we've ever been able to train for going long distance with a backpack is putting on a backpack and going for long distances. It does work your muscles differently. It programs your body's energy systems differently. It is different. That's why a marathon runner looks different than a body builder who is trying to go out on stage and stuff like that. It's a really good point that unfortunately, people might find out the hard way when it actually comes time to put that into place.

Jeff Anderson: You touched on a few other things that I want to talk about here. Whenever I'm talking about bugging out and even in our webinars and stuff like that, I always talk about viewing it like it's a military mission, especially if it's during a real 'shit hits the fan' type event where you have other people around you that aren't prepared, that might be a threat. In other words, like a military mission, your goal is to get from point A, which might be a danger area or it's your starting point and you want to get to point B, which is your safety zone. You talk about

where you can go and what to do and things like that. Right now, what I'm thinking about are the threats.

Jeff Anderson: In the military, you're going from point A to point B. Your goal is to get there safely as well, so you have to evade all kinds of threats along the way. Now, the threats may be different in a disaster or collapse than they are on the battle field, but they can be just as dangerous. In your opinion, what would you say are the top external threat factors that people don't think about and how do you cope with those when bugging out?

Jeff Kirkham: You know, we had one of our good friends that's part of the ReadyMan community that was in Florida just recently when the hurricane was hitting. We had put out some information to folks. It was like, "Hey. Have X, have Y with you when you're moving." I was really disappointed. We live in the world of social media and so anybody can get on and read a threat and I was really disappointed in that there were more than a few people that got on there that said, "I don't need anything. I've got a Glock and I'll just take what I need."

Jeff Kirkham: I think it really showed the point of, when we live in society or the society that we live in right now, there is a thin line between savagery and civility that exists that's out there. When somebody is hungry or somebody is trying to provide for themselves or their family, they will go to worse case scenario to make sure that they're not the one suffering. To take from somebody else to provide for themselves. The problem and really the disheartening thing to me was, there were people that were already putting that together as their plan. Where they're like, "I don't need to carry anything because I've got a gun and I'll just take what I need along the way."

Jeff Kirkham: With people when they're going through and they're planning, we really see a reduction or a lack of planning for self-defense. Now, whether that's a gun or pepper spray, whatever that is, that's with a person or mixed martial arts or whatever. That's probably first and foremost, one of the deficits that we see with folks is, they don't have a plan to protect themselves and protect their family members from potential and probable threats that are going to exist while they're moving.

Jeff Kirkham: Again, my good buddy, he evacuated Tampa during the hurricane. It was interesting, where he said, "You know, the gas was running out and gas stations were closed and people were lined up." He could see some places. He had a car that got great gas mileage and he could see some people in the gas stations yelling and starting to get disgruntled and the police were trying to control the situation.

Jeff Kirkham: Now, it wasn't a full blown riot. I'm not trying to paint that picture, but really, it doesn't take too much. It's a very small spark to ignite that fire. Then once it goes, where does it end? I think first and foremost, the thing that people run into is they're not prepared for self-defense and that's an equipment issue. That's a mindset issue. Then of course, that's a physical fitness issue.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. I'm glad you brought up the mindset part of it also because even just recognizing that people can turn that way I think is a big shock for most people that are living behind the white picket fence and paying their taxes and all that stuff. I had an Uber driver one time. I think I was down in Florida. He was Puerto Rican and I was asking him if he had family back in Puerto Rico. He said, "Yeah." I said, "So how are things going over there with the recovery?" He's like, "What recovery?" He's like, "People will go to the gas station waiting for the fuel truck to come in and they get held up with armed robbery while you're there in line for gas." He said, "It's just basically it's accepted now because there's no law and order."

Jeff Anderson: That doesn't just happen in Puerto Rico or in other nations that we might not see as thriving as the United States is or something like that, but that is an advanced ... It is a populated advanced society if you will and it breaks down very, very quickly. I think you're right. People aren't really prepared for that. Okay. We've been talking with Jeff Kirkham of ReadyMan.com about overcoming the biggest mistakes most people make when preparing for a forced bug-out evacuation scenario.

Jeff Anderson: Now, we have a lot more coming up for you, including deciding on where to bug-out to and when to plan, how to actually get to your bug-out destination, and finally, lessons from the battle field on what you should and shouldn't have incorporated into your bug-out bag gear. All that and more coming up, but first, check out this special message.

Jeff Anderson: Okay, we're talking with Jeff Kirkham of ReadyMan.com about real world tactics for prepping your bug-out action plan, so let's go ahead and jump back into our interview now. Now Jeff, over and over again, we've told our readers and our listeners that they can't just bug-out without a place to go to. You've brought this up as well. You've got to have a destination in mind otherwise you're just another refugee in the storm. What are some of the ways that I can prevent myself and my family from becoming a refugee when the spit hits the fan and it's a forced evacuation scenario?

Jeff Kirkham: You know, that's a great scenario and I think a lot of times, people confuse bugging out with some cataclysmic event. Allow me to illustrate. I've got a buddy of mine that I've worked with. He works for a nonprofit organization where they rescue kids from slavery around the world. Just a phenomenal organization. Actually, he was in a foreign country and as luck had it or bad luck had it, he had a home invasion that happened with him and his fiancé at that time. Two men, armed with a machete and a butcher knife. In the ensuing attack, he lost one or two of his fingers, got stabbed multiple times, or cut multiple times, but he was still able to get to medical treatment and to the law enforcement because he had preplanned his bug-out plan.

Jeff Kirkham: When we start talking about a bug-out plan, it doesn't have to be a flood or a tornado, an alien apocalypse. In this case, it was the case of where they had tried to do a robbery, a home invasion or this place that they were staying, but

he had preplanned his bug-out where he had identified where the local law enforcement was. He had identified where the local medical care was and he had prepared his vehicle in such a way that he could get there.

Jeff Kirkham: For example, here he is literally was caught in bed in his underwear and then was fighting for him and his fiancée's life. In the process, was able to fight off these attackers, physical fitness, mindset, and then after he had fought off these attackers, the vehicle he was in, it was a squirrely driveway. If he had had to have backed out, or his girlfriend, because he was missing two fingers at this point or they were barely being held on, he would not have been able to make it out there driving backwards. Because he always backed in, so that he was prepared, and part of that, because they had identified where the local law enforcement and medical care was, they were able to drive straight there.

Jeff Kirkham: I think a lot of times when people think about bugging out, they think, "Well, this is going to happen in case the Russians invade the United States or there's a nuclear bomb that goes off from North Korea." It's like, no. It could be something literally as simple or as horrific as a home invasion where you save yourself and the lives of your family, but somebody is wounded that you care about, and you've got to get to the hospital or to higher care.

Jeff Kirkham: That's where I put out, it's like, how many of you folks that are out there, and hopefully all of you, but how many folks of you out there or know somebody out there that don't know where medical care is? Are you going to stand there and wait for the ambulance and however long it takes for them to get there or are you going to load up this person that is injured and get to the hospital even faster, so that you can get care?

Jeff Kirkham: Then taking that a step further, how many people know how to do that first aid that is so essential in a case like this? Because that's all part of bugging out too. You've got to make it to your bug-out location and it doesn't matter if that's a hospital because you've been the victim of a crime, all the way up to some cataclysmic event that has happened in your area.

Jeff Anderson: You're right. I wonder for those people that are thinking about if my home is no longer safe and I have to go, let's ramp up the threat level a little bit and people have decided, okay, whether I'm in the path of a disaster or whether it's been an extended disaster and things are heating up in my area, I might be in a more urban area or something like that, and most people might be thinking, "I'm going to grab my bug-out bag, throw it in my car, I'm going to head off to the wilderness or I'm going to head off to grandma's house down the road." That plan, as nonexistent as it might be, are there any general guidelines you have for how far away people should plan for safety or how close, especially given the threats that might be in the area or on the way to safety?

Jeff Kirkham: Absolutely. Here in Utah, we live essentially ... Emergency preparedness is part of the culture here with the Mormons and stuff. It's very much part of the culture. Your initial bug-out location, if it's not family or friends, it's the local

church and there are churches all over, so there's a level of government inside of the government. It's not government, that's harsh, but there's a place where people can assemble, where neighbors and community will help each other out. That exists intrinsically here in Utah.

Jeff Kirkham: What I like to tell people is, we look at bugging out in concentric rings. You've got bugging in where essentially, your home is your castle, and you stay there if you can because then you don't have to carry anything with you. Then the next level is your vehicle because why would you start on foot if you could drive? That doesn't make any sense. The next level would be your vehicle and then your vehicle has got your everyday carry for your vehicle, your vehicle EDC. Then it also has those materials and tools that you need, that you can throw into your vehicle. They may be bulky, they may be heavy, but it doesn't matter because you're moving inside this vehicle with you and your loved ones. Remember, loved ones all of a sudden change what a bug-out plan can be.

Jeff Kirkham: I've got young boys. I've got a four year old and a six year old that are on there, so guess what? Part of my bug-out plan is the red wagon that sits at my house, because those little guys, they're only going to walk so far and then they're going to stop. If you've got to keep moving, then you're going to have to put them in the wagon and you have to keep moving.

Jeff Kirkham: Vehicle is the first line and then after that, we go to typically it's a two-wheeled. The next concentric ring is the two-wheeled vehicles, which would be a motorcycle possibly or a bicycle that you can peddle and keep moving with that, so that you can gain distance. We're all about gaining as much distance as possible because the thing that differentiates you from everybody else is you're getting away from the threat. Distance equals safety. You get further away from the threat, whatever that is. Whether that's a mob or that's Mother Nature with mudslides or flooding, you've got to be able to get away from that.

Jeff Kirkham: Then of course after the two-wheeled means or the cart means, then you've got the foot. That's where you've got make sure you've got not only the right footgear, but the right footgear that you have used, you've practiced with. Then also the knowledge of how to take care of your feet because you could have 200 dollar Solo Boots, but if you've never used them and you give yourself a blister, guess what? When your feet are bleeding, you're not going to walk very far or very fast and you're losing that time advantage that you need to get away from the threat. That's where understanding of how to take care of your feet and using the equipment that you have, so that you know. It's not just cool stuff that you bought and threw in a bag and forgot about, but it's stuff you use.

Jeff Kirkham: That's where we really encourage people, it's like go on weekend camping trips with your family. One, it gets your butt off the couch, so you're out there doing stuff, so you're creating that physical activity to keep yourself healthy. Two, you're building community because you're out there with your family as well as you'll probably bring some friends with you as well. Three, camping really like that, is just a dry rehearsal to bugging out because you get used to, "I need this,

this, this, and this, so that I can go out camping for the next three or four days out in the mountains or wherever it is that I'm going to go."

Jeff Kirkham: Then four, it's a learning experience because every time you go camping with your family, you learn little things about camping that you wouldn't have learned unless you were out there experiencing it yourself or with your family. Then it also, it gets your family, if you have little ones, it gets them in tune or acclimatized to what the situation is going to be. Then all of a sudden when they're living in a tent, they're having a fun time, but instead of, "Oh junk, we're living in a tent. This stinks," now all of a sudden it turns into something that is less stressful because stress equals exhaustion. Exhaustion equals death.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Good points. I know there's a saying out there like, embrace the suck. I did an interview once with a friend of mine, Stu Smith, who was a former Navy Seal instructor. We basically said, "Seek the suck." Put yourself in situations where you are going to go outside your comfort zone. Bring your family outside your comfort zone. It doesn't need to be like, you bring them to Antarctica and just shove them out there in an igloo. Just little things outside of the comfort zone can make a big difference in alleviating the stress because it's not a new experience when they might have to use it for the real thing.

Jeff Anderson: Listen, we've talked about where to go and how to get there now, which is great because most people don't think about that. Most people think, get in the vehicle or put the bug-out bag on your back and they don't think about an alternative means of transportation that you can use if your car is no longer going anywhere or anything like that. Let's talk about when it comes to actually putting that backpack on your back and that's the last, you've got to get as far away as you can or get to safety or it's worse case scenario, it's you and your bug-out bag.

Jeff Anderson: In 10th Mountain, we had a saying where we said, "Travel light. Freeze at night." We did exactly that many times [inaudible 00:24:58]. We always traveled light, but we also froze at night. I've read a lot of your stuff and you seem to have that same alter light philosophy when it comes to putting together your gear for a bug-out bag. What do you see as the most effective ways of dropping critical pounds off of survival gear that someone is normally looking ... Like, from what normally you see out there is what they're packing or how they're preparing their bag and what you think is just absolute garbage that should not be in there that will greatly alleviate the weight they'll be carrying?

Jeff Kirkham: You know, I think one of the first things that people can do is they can look at the actual pack that they have themselves. So many times, guys want to buy tactical Molle packs that are made out of [inaudible 00:25:46] and they've got webbing that's all over the place. The reality is, you're starting with five or eight pounds before you've even put anything inside of that pack. In some cases, some of those packs are like 10 pounds all by themselves. Every pound, we used to like to say that ounces are pounds when we're moving around. The early days of the war when we were relatively inexperienced going in and moving for long

periods of time, we used to carry a whole bunch of stuff that we're like, "Man. I may need this, I may need this, I may need this." We were weighed down heavily.

Jeff Kirkham: Then as the war progressed, man, we started shedding weight wherever we could because we realized pretty quickly that it was, "Hey. I can't have two magazines stacked in front of my chest all across my chest and climb over walls because all of a sudden I've got this huge amount of bulk that's sticking out in front and padding and body armor and this junk." We'd find ways that we could cut weight and even if it was just ounces or half ounces, man, that stuff added up so, so, so fast.

Jeff Kirkham: Then the other thing was this bulk. You could have something that's as light as a pillow, but if it takes up a whole bunch of space, you've still got to maneuver that thing around through narrow doorways and alleys and through holes and in vehicles. It really becomes a time consumption and as well as a management consumption where you really don't have to worry about it. From 2003, I got to the Middle East in 2002 to get ready for the invasion of Iraq. Then my last trip over there was 2013-ish. Boy, I had drastically changed the way that I did business.

Jeff Kirkham: I just had single magazines on the front and then everything that wasn't essential, went into a very, very small backpack that was on my back with just the essential stuff. It was to the point even, we didn't even carry food and even worrying about having to go into an E&E thing. We carried power gels with caffeine and it was like well, all we need is a little bit of subsistence. We need calories to keep moving and water. When we'd go out on targets and stuff, we didn't carry MRE's and food like that.

Jeff Kirkham: We'd carry five, six packets of gels because we knew that we were going to go from point A to point B and be done with it. A very small water filter, enough water to handle us over, and that was pretty much it. Then the rest of it was extra ammo, extra explosives, some medical gear, some foot fix gear, caffeine for energy, so that you could keep moving in the worst case scenarios and some water and gels and that was about it. By the last half or so of the war, we had gotten pretty streamlined in the way that we were doing business because we knew we had to be able to move.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Awesome man. This is really great information. This is the kind of real world stuff that our people need to keep hearing to reinforce what reality is like. I think too often, people go out on the Internet looking for information that's put out there by people that are just regurgitating stuff that they read out of the Zombie Apocalypse Guide or something like that. This is a really good call to not only learn from your experience, but also to go out there, and everything that's listening, create your own experiences.

Jeff Anderson: Like Jeff was saying, take it and use a camping trip as a dress rehearsal or use Friday or Saturday morning as a dress rehearsal. Go ahead and put that bug-out

bag on and plan for just five miles and then 10 miles and feel what that pack is like. Are there friction points? On your feet, do you know how to take care of your feet for that long? There are things that you only learn from experience. Better to learn from somebody else's, but you still have to get out there and do it yourself. Jeff, I really appreciate all of your input and everything, helping us to tap ... Allowing us to really tap into your history and the experiences you've had in the military as well. Awesome.

Jeff Anderson:

Listen everybody, this is only a taste of what you can get from Jeff and the entire team that he's put together over that at ReadyMan. It's a really great site. I've been a member of their site for a while now and it's just first class training based on experience. Definitely go check it out. Again, it's over at www.readyman.com and until our next Modern Combat broadcast, this is Jeff Anderson saying, "Prepare, train, and survive."