

Podcast #201 Transcription: Bug-Out Convoy Tactics

Jeff Anderson: It's one of the hardest decisions anyone has to make in the panic and desperation of a natural disaster or any crisis that hits close to home. Should I stay or should I go? Now, as you probably heard me say before, if you have to ask the question, the safest answer is most likely to go. Now, while your home is most often the safest place to be for protection, any number of circumstances can force you from your home to offer a safer location for you and your family. Yet, making the decision to go is only part of the problem. Getting there, especially during a mass evacuation that can transform once lonely highways into stop and go, bumper to bumper traffic jams that will challenge even the most equipped mad max monster truck in getting past the flaring tempers and panicked citizens who are all trying to escape destruction at the same time.

Now, one of the tactics that we've discovered in the past is the benefit of taking multiple vehicles, either with your family or even a coordinated survival team. But what are the benefits of bugging out in a convoy? How do you prepare your vehicle and your group for the task? And how do you coordinate your travel? And what happens if one of you gets stuck? If you lose your way and get separated from your group? Well, the answers to these questions and more are all in store for you in this week's podcast episode. Hello everyone, this is Jeff Anderson, Editor for Modern Combats Survival Magazine and Executive Director for the New World Patriot Alliance 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 bug out convoy tactics is the newest member of our trainer network, Russ Adler. Russ, welcome to the program.

Russ Adler: Thank you, Jeff. Good to be here.

Jeff Anderson: Really good to have you on board. I've been checking out your stuff lately and the magazines and everything. I love what you got going for the training. I'm really excited about getting our audience over to check out your website and everything. Listen everyone, if you haven't seen Russ in any of the magazines or read his articles or anything like that, he has over 28 years of combined experience in law enforcement, tactical units and military contracting. With deployments in sensitive leadership positions in Iraq and Afghanistan as a superiority contractor. He holds multiple high-liability instructor certifications and has conducted protective security operations in major national disaster recovery efforts. He currently consults for Fortune 500 companies and manages security operations for high net-worth individuals. On top of all that, Russ specializes in high-risk training packages for law enforcement, SWAT and military spec-op personnel through his company which is a registered government contractor. To learn more about Russ and his training make sure you visit him online at his website at www.fastnation.us.

All right, so Russ, when we've talked about evacuations in the past, one of the things we have talked about is the benefit of people, most people are thinking about, just get the whole family, grab the kids, the dog, shove everybody in one vehicle and you head out. And it's logical right? Because people are panicked, they're afraid, they're desperate. Your family wants to be together, but we've talked a bit in the past about some of the benefits of perhaps taking, if you have more than one vehicle, taking more than one vehicle, or somebody might be part of a survival team or something like that and going in a convoy. But I wanted to get your opinion on it. It seems like you're in the same mindset. From your standpoint, what are the benefits of traveling, like evacuating during a disaster in multiple vehicles?

Russ Adler: Well, the benefit, Jeff, is very similar to what you mentioned prior to us starting here. Your best bet is to shelter in place if you can. If you're having to leave, if you're having to bug out, there's obviously something really wrong going on, especially in a mass evacuation or mass casualty evacuation scenario. You want to have as much of what you normally have in your shelter, in your castle with you. Redundancy is key. One is none and two is one. That's an old spec-op adage that they carry on deployment and in their training. It's good to have options. You can double your capacity. Splitting up equitably between your vehicles as much as you can carry. Now, you want to have a plan. The worst time to execute a plan is when you need it most obviously. Just throwing a bunch of crap in the car because you think you need it, could actually prove to be counter-intuitive and counter-productive during a disaster. You should always have that plan before you go during this scenario and then when you get to the location that you plan to be at.

Jeff Anderson: One of the other things I know we've talked about before is just what if one vehicle breaks down? If you're only in one vehicle, you're basically shit out of luck right there. If you have two vehicles then, you do have the ability to shuttle some stuff, you may have to make some gear changes or things like that, but it's better to have, like you said, one is none and two is one. Having a second vehicle might be the one, one of those vehicles hopefully is going to get you where you need to go. It's another benefit we talked about before too. Let me ask you, in some of the major considerations that people need to have, we talk about mindset, we talk about gear, we talk about all these things, but this is kind of a new concept for a lot of people to go out in convoys, even to leave their home when there is an evacuation going on, when there might be other vehicles out there. What are some of the major considerations that people need to know before they even get on the road when it comes to evacuating in mass?

Russ Adler: Well, everyday driving is a great training scenario. When you go on your family vacations, it's not real comfortable to have one vehicle packed with everybody in it and all the crap they're going to carry for a week or two for summer break. One of the things people can do that folks are considering, now of course, now gas prices have gone up a little bit, but when they were reasonable, and even if you want to plan to be even more prepared for something bad when, if or when it happens, is to use two vehicles in your everyday life planning.

In particular on vacations because of that redundancy aspect and because it's a great training opportunity. The mental fortitude is where everything begins. It doesn't matter if you're talking about vehicle convoys, if you're talking about firearms training, if you're talking about dealing with a violent encounter in the workplace or at home, or out and about in your daily travels. Training is key and mental fortitude is key because in a mass casualty evacuation scenario, you know during hurricane Rita, right after hurricane Katrina in 2005, over a million people evacuated the Houston area. It caused a one hundred mile long traffic jam. A hundred miles-

Jeff Anderson: Wow!

Russ Adler: Can you imagine that? Imagine the mental fortitude you're going to need to be able to fathom something like that happening. Cars were breaking down, they were overheating, they were stuck on the side of the road, so when you bring up your mental capacity and preparations that's very key to a situation like this because having worked in the most major disasters our country's had in the last fifteen years from Katrina to Maria, I just did two months in Puerto Rico seeing traffic patterns, seeing people on foot carrying things that make you go, huh. Wow, I never saw that coming. It's going to kind of make you trip over yourself for a minute, make you hesitate when you should really be focused on your surroundings and what's happening. You should have that understanding that really bad things are going to happen, you're gonna see some really bad things. Having those explanations up front, especially if you have young children, whether they're your kids or grandkids or your friends kids or neighbors kids. Having your answers preplanned like, "Hey folks, we're going to see some really weird stuff here and we need to be ready for it."

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, that's really interesting too because if you think about how frustrating it is just to get to work in traffic jam. You get all angry and it's like you're checking your watch, ah, I'm going to be late, my boss is going to be mad at me. Multiply that, think about that in a hundred mile traffic jam, that's crazy. Setting that expectation for look we are going to see some weird stuff out there and you're going to see some angry people. I've heard you say this before, the rules of the road kind of go out the window like if you're a happy go lucky driver before letting people, oh, I'll let them in. You might have to be a rude obnoxious jerk when you're thinking about the survival of your family. It's always interesting to me how it comes back over and over again to the mental foundation that you have for facing any disaster, attack, or anything like that. It's really interesting.

Russ Adler: Absolutely. You mention the rules of the road. When you're traveling in convoy or in concert with another vehicle, this is what you need to think about. We want to be courteous to each other, so communication is key. First off, communication between your vehicles. That could be anywhere from having some preset or pre-practiced hand signals. Either through the windshields or even leaning out the windshields, safety and environmental considerations permitting. Communicating with the people around you, if you come up on an intersection per say, and you might have someone directing the traffic, you may

want to hand signal out to them saying, "Hey I have five cars behind me or I have three cars behind me we're rolling through." They may tell you no, as someone in a position of authority is going to put their hands up and stop, but having been in these situations in several occasions, you just don't stop.

They aren't going to stand in front of a car, they're not going to draw their weapon and start shooting, people are going to be honking given the old California salute to you, using some foul language, obviously of course because it's a high-stress situation for everybody. But the key is, think in these terms, do the math, if you're in a four-way intersection and you let the guy to your right go, then you let the guy in front of you go, then you let the guy to your left go, because you're being courteous, you're observing the rules of the road. By the time you get to go, your next vehicle in front of you is four vehicles ahead. Then you come up on a detour a couple miles ahead and they get routed straight and you get routed to the right or to the left or you get turned around. Then you've exponentially increased that distance and that uncertainty as to where you are.

And when you're dealing hand-held communication devices, they have limits, especially in metropolitan areas. These are all considerations to think about when traveling in concert with loved ones, family and friends, is having a good communication plan and staying together. That is key sticking together.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah, that's a great tip. I hadn't heard that before about really using your hand signals, it's not just about communicating with the people in your group, but also finding ways to easily communicate to people around you, so you can get everyone together and keep them going through the intersection or wherever it is. That is awesome. I haven't heard that before. Listen everybody, we've been talking with Russ Adler or fastnation.us about bug out convoy tactics. And of course we have a lot more in store for you including dealing with that common rush hour traffic dilemma, what do you do when all the other lanes are moving faster than yours. Also, swimming upstream, how to change directions when your best escape avenue is behind you. And how to respond when you're separated from your family or friends in a sea of angry, panicked, disaster refugees are in between you and your loved ones. All that and more coming right up, but first check out this special message.

Okay, we're back with Russ Adler of fastnation.us talking about how to evacuate to your safe zone during a disaster and navigate the traffic challenges along the way with other vehicles that are in your group. It's time to really start getting into the nuts and bolts of convoy driving tactics, so let's go ahead and jump back in now.

Russ, I'm sure everybody has at one time in their lives been in that stop and go bumper to bumper traffic. Trying to get to work somewhere in an urban area. It never fails. You're sitting there, you're stopped and all of sudden that lane next to you starts zooming, and you're wondering, "What's so special about that lane?" So you jump over into that lane and usually it's like a last, you're checking your mirror, you're checking your mirror, and it's like oh you see an extra three

inches you might be able to get, you just quickly swerve out front of there, but if you're evacuating and you have multiple vehicles in your convoy, taking that last second thing, the other people might not have that same opportunity to be able to do that. What's the best way to change lanes if you need to? If you're in area that's multiple lanes, or maybe it has the highways closed off in one direction, or they're using both lanes, but what's the best way for you and the other vehicles that are in your evacuation convoy to make that lane shift together so you don't get separated?

Russ Adler:

The short answer is don't make hasty decisions. Don't make that quick lane change. You are driving for every car behind you. If you're in the lead vehicle, you're actually driving for the rear vehicle. If there's two cars, if there's five cars, you're driving for the person at the very end. If you're the last vehicle in the convoy, you're the steering wheel. We use what we call blocking procedures. It's part of your TTP's or tactics, techniques and procedures. You want to go as slow as you can, but as fast as you have to. That sounds like an oxymoron because it kind of is, but when we're training for these type of operations in particular, guys who are going down range on deployment sent to hostile non-permissive environments, which certain types of mass evacuations could turn into those type of scenarios very, very quickly, so you have to treat them as such. You got to be careful of your surroundings and the other operators in that scenario.

One of the ways to do that, is your moving as one unit. You might have two vehicles, you might have ten vehicles, but each one of those vehicles is moving as one. Especially when you're interacting with others in that traffic pattern. The rear person is going to decide when to change the lane. If the front person is getting antsy or sees something up ahead, if the navigator is like, "Hey, we got a bad situation coming up here, let's try to get in this other lane and move out." Once again going back to your communications plan, that is key. If not, everybody has a hand-held unit, if you've got two the front vehicle and the rear vehicle need to be the ones holding the units because they are driving for the rest of the convoy. If not, your hand signals work, your vehicle signals, something as simple as using your blinker. That's what they're designed for. The front vehicle uses the blinker, when the rear vehicle makes that move and blocks that lane, that's when everybody moves in unison as one. That is the best approach to take when looking at route alterations or lane changes.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah. That's a great tip. Let me ask you, what if you do reach that dead stop traffic? Again, I think everybody can identify with this, they're on a trip to somewhere and you're trying to read the map and all of a sudden you realize you missed the exit, and under other circumstances you might be able to take a different exit and do a u-turn and do stuff like that, but in this type of situation, that might not be necessarily an option for you. And you might need to change direction. I always wonder about, let's say you are with your convoy and you do realize that whether you're not going to be moving forward what's up ahead, you're not going to be able to take the median, or maybe there was an alternative route you can use that is behind you. What strategies do have for

being able to literally, basically make a u-turn in mass traffic with a convoy? I know it's a tough challenge, but what strategies could help somebody?

Russ Adler:

Well it is tough, and keep in mind I'm going to hammer this, you don't want to try this when you absolutely need it. When your life is at stake. These are things you want to go to a parking lot where a business is not open in the evening or early in the morning or on the weekend or something. A school parking lot, a church parking lot, and you can practice these things, or if you got a friend with a lot of property that you can actually do these maneuvers in, and we actually do these in our courses. We have vehicle fighter courses, we have vehicle driving courses and stuff like that.

I'm not trying to give a shameless plug, I'm just trying to emphasize the importance of practicing this before you actually need it. And the way you do it, is very similar to the lane change, your first car becomes your rear car, because they're going to block the oncoming traffic lane, while the rest of the cars in the convoy make the u-turn, make their three point turn, or ten point turn, or six point turn, or however many turns it takes or just a straight u-turn and they block the on coming traffic. When everybody in the convoy's reversed out, the rear vehicle becomes the first vehicle and your first vehicle falls into the rear. Everybody proceeds as directed. You know, down the road if they want to change out if the first vehicle is, that's your driver/navigator, your best driver who's got the best reaction time, and your most skilled driver needs to get back up front, they can make those arrangements as far as leap frogging everybody else in the convoy as such.

But the key is practicing this stuff. You really want to preplan these type of actions on the objective. The objective being the route that you're on.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah. You know it really brings to mind also, one of the things you talked about before was about making sure everybody is in the right mental, has the right mindset of what to expect out there. Even in rush hour traffic trying to get to work, tempers can start flaring. When we're talking about these types of things where you're stopping people in traffic, it's not just people that are trying to get to work in time so their boss doesn't yell at them, you're talking about people that are panicked, like that's not fair. If you're closing off traffic and stopping it, people that are trying to move forward, and you three or four vehicles or even two vehicles that you're stopping everyone behind you, it's really just-

I think it's a whole other topic for us talk about at some point of security during this time. Other people really can be a threat during this. Road rage even under the best circumstances is a reality for a lot of people out there. In this type of a situation, really understanding that you need to protect yourselves, keep your windows rolled up, those type of things are simple ones. You're not just going to pull out your Uzi and start mowing down the citizens that are out there. It definitely needs to be part of that mindset where, realize you are going to be pissing some people off with these kind of driving tactics. Just knowing what it is and being prepared for it seems a huge part of the preparation as well, right?

Russ Adler: You're absolutely right, Jeff. Here's the thing. I kind of have a mantra that says, twice is nice or twice as mean. You know you're going to piss people off. Why pick a fight if you don't need to, if you don't have to? Hands up, hey, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Apologize. Be not really submissive, but empathetic. Show some empathy. Say, "Hey, I'm sorry, I know I'm screwing up your plans but my plans are screwed up. We'll be out of your hair in just a second." Now if they want to up the ante, or up the threat level, then you respond in kind. You have to be ready for that.

That's where the mental fortitude comes in is being ready to respond to any threat as it presents itself. Hopefully seeing the threat beforehand. If you're being nice, saying hey, "Us five vehicles are going to turn around and go this way. Just stand by. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." If they're just not having any of it, you may need to take other measures. You gotta to keep in mind you're in a 3,000 to 10,000 pound weapon with the vehicle itself. Gun play should be the last thing on your mind during a scenario like that. It should be an option. It should be in your kit. In your tool bag. Stick with the vehicles. Drive them until you can't and then go from there. Slow as you can as fast as you got to.

Jeff Anderson: Those are really, really good points. It just reiterates to everybody. We're talking about communication as well. This is another place where having some sort of hand-held communication can really work well. You might have to, you might have somebody that does come up on a car and starts a road rage incident. Being able to communicate. Understanding that phone lines might be down and things like that. Having a secondary form of hand-held communication or that you can use to get back up is going to be really helpful. That's another reason in your preparation you're talking about having a means of communication among the cars, having it so it's not just relying on cell phones is another really good point.

Let me ask you, Russ. The ultimate worst case scenario is when you do get separated. Especially when your loved ones, everybody is scared. It's a really, not an easy situation to be in to begin with. Imagine now your family is now six cars up ahead or the car in front of you broke down and now you're going to be even further up ahead. Things like that are really scary to people. There is even just the mental support of just knowing that you're together, even if you're in separate vehicles, so what does somebody do, if it's the worst case scenario and you do get separated, what are some of the things that people can do if that does happen? How do you recover from that?

Russ Adler: Well, going back to an old military acronym you have to pace yourself. Have a primary plan. You don't just throw a bunch of shit in the car and haul ass. That's the worst thing you can do because if you get separated you are going to be separated for a while trying to figure out where your significant others went. Having a primary plan is key. Different places along the route. I mentioned earlier using your vacation as a training time, if you travel for vacations, you need this anyways. If you're on a route, if you're going more than a couple hundred miles from home, you need to know where things are at. Do your

advance work. We've had tremendous advances in technology that enable you to plan things.

Google Earth and being able to look at a ground photos, current photos of intersections and roadways, travel ways, planning different hotels or different restaurants. If you like a certain chain of restaurants, it could be part of your plan, if we get separated, find the nearest Cracker Barrel or McDonald's or whatever your favorite gas station is. Find the nearest Shell station within a five mile radius. Now if technology is down that's going to be a little bit of a hindrance. Having preplanned rally points. Meet at this exit or meet at this intersection of highway. Plan different intersections that you know certain infrastructure gonna be in place and that's your meeting point.

Have timelines established. Wait there for six hours, if we're not there go to rally point number two. That would be your contingency. You have your primary and that would be your alternate plan. If your alternate plan goes into the trash, then you go to your contingency plan which is after your six hour or twelve hour wait go to the next iteration of the route that you have preplanned. And then your emergency plan is either find some folks where you can shelter in place knowing that after six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four hours, your lead people are going to back track and try to find you from there.

Jeff Anderson: All really good points. Again I guess going back to preparation. One of the things you brought up like rally points, making sure that each vehicle has its own map, and that somebody knows how to read at least a road map, right?

Russ Adler: Exactly.

Jeff Anderson: Redundancy seems to be a big part of this too. I know you probably dealt with that a lot in Afghanistan and Iraq and just vehicle convoys and things like that. Just having that ability to be able to extract yourself quickly and regroup with whoever's in your party. Russ, really, really good stuff man. I think this, you're right, people can go out, this is something you don't have to wait for the next hurricane or whatever to practice. This is something like, "Hey honey, instead of us carpooling to work and facing that traffic head on together let's practice this, let's try and let's take the same route we normally would, we're going to go to your work first. We're going to do it with two vehicles and we're going to practice these techniques." This is something the people can really get out there, whether it's like you said in a parking lot and practice some of these things. It definitely requires practice ahead of time. This is something you don't want to do in the moment.

Russ, really great, great tips here. I really, really appreciate it. Listen I am going to do a shameless plug for you. Listen I've gone over and checked out Russ's website. It's amazing the kind of traffic, I'm sorry training that he, I'm still in traffic mode here, the training that's over there is training I've not really seen, especially all in one place, or one training team that's out there. From vehicle related stuff, firearm training, survival training, there's a lot of great stuff over

there. I highly recommend go check out his website over at www.fastnation.us. And until our next Modern Combat Serial Broadcast this is Jeff Anderson saying prepare, train and survive.

Russ Adler:

Thanks.