

Podcast #216 Transcription: Green Beret Collapse Survival Secrets

Jeff Anderson: If you were my age, which some mornings feels like about the same age as dirt, you might remember that one of the most disturbing television movies that ever aired on television was called *The Day After*, and it was a fictional version of the horrifying effects of nuclear war. Most importantly, it painted a bleak picture of life the way that it would be for those surviving such a disaster.

Jeff Anderson: The movie seemed to really touch off a golden age of cold war post apocalyptic entertainment. While it was by no means, the first disaster movie or apocalypse film, it remains one of the most famous. Since then, disaster and apocalypse movies and television series like *The Walking Dead* or movies like *The Road* have made apocalypse entertainment very much mainstream. But have you ever stopped to wonder why we enjoy disaster entertainment? I think it's because we always ask ourselves, what would I do in that situation? And somewhere deep down inside, we know that many of these scenarios are very real threats that we could face today.

Jeff Anderson: But an area where most people believe that they know about a topic because of the entertainment they consume, can you really learn something about survival from entertainment? If, say, a Green Beret wrote a novel about a fictional disaster, could you learn how to survive real emergency based on his take on that scenario? Well, the answer is yes, and that's what we're here to discover today. [inaudible 00:01:23] This is Jeff Anderson, editor for *Modern Combat & Survival Magazine* and executive director of 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.

Jeff Anderson: In this episode, my question isn't just theoretical. Today, we're here to talk with Jeff Kirkham, who's written a novel that is a survival based fictional that covers some of these hard earned lessons that he's learned on the battlefield and how it applies to apocalyptic events. Jeff, welcome back to the program.

Jeff Kirkham: Hey Jeff. Thanks so much for having me on again. I really appreciate it.

Jeff Anderson: It's always great. Anytime I can tap into this kind of experience is great, and congratulations on the release of the new novel. My copy is on its way, so I'm looking forward to checking it out. And for those of you out there, if you haven't learned from our past interviews with Jeff who he is, he spent almost 29 years as a Green Beret was just over eight years of boots on the ground experience in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Jeff Anderson: He was, in fact, a member of a counter-terrorist direct action unit, and somehow he managed to still study six foreign languages, earn a bachelor's degree, write multiple books, earn multiple registered patents, one of which is

the RATS tourniquet, which I'm sure many of you have heard of, and manages passion project Readyman, which is a member based community for developing survival skills based on his military experience and communicating those to even everyday citizens.

Jeff Anderson: In fact, the joke around the Readyman office is that if a neanderthal James Bond and Q had a baby, that would be Jeff. And now he's written a novel that just my teach you how to survive in an emergency. It's called Black Autumn, and it covers the journey of a team of ex Green Berets who pulled together to face a new world after a nuclear event takes down our country's infrastructure. And you can watch the trailer for the new book and pick up your own copy at www.blackautumn.com.

Jeff Anderson: Alright, Jeff. I'm really curious about this because I do believe that you can learn a lot, even from the entertainment, but it's hard to really kind of decipher between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, for those people that haven't had the kind of experience that you had. So what I love about this book is that you incorporate a lot of lessons learned in this, but it's in a really great format that people can really learn from.

Jeff Anderson: Again, for everybody out there, this is basically, I'm giving you the nutshell with no spoilers here, but basically a nuclear event takes down our country's infrastructure and a team of ex Green Berets pull together and really have to kind of journey through this and work out how they're going to protect one another and sustain, things like that. I haven't read the book yet, but you can watch the trailer and it will show you, almost like a movie trailer, of what the book actually covers. Go check that out over at blackautumn.com.

Jeff Anderson: But Jeff, here's my thing. With your history of high levels of leadership within the military, this is about a nuclear event, but what do you see as the major, like shit hits the fan, events that really could literally change our world as we know it? Of that, which one do you think is the most critical that it kind of keeps you up at night? Like, I know this one was about a nuclear event, but what are the things that people should really know? These aren't just fantasy, these are events that could happen. Which one do you think is really the most, I guess, probable? I know it's kind of a roll of the dice sometimes, depends on what's going on, but I'd like to get your opinion about what's the one that you think really is kind of on the horizon most.

Jeff Kirkham: You know, overwhelmingly, when we were putting this book together, and I think folks should know that when we were writing this book, it started out and stayed a war gaming exercise where we said, "What would we do? What do we think? The knowns, the unknowns, how would we deal with those? What have we forgotten? What haven't we taken into consideration?" So the book really is our take on what we think would happen and how we'd handle it intermixed with some great entertainment as well.

Jeff Kirkham: So it's an easy fast read for folks, and it's also a series of books. So this isn't the first one. We've got multiple books that are on the way. We actually have a companion novel called Black Autumn Travelers that's a, we're giving them out as a thank you to people who buy the book. When we looked at this, we said, "Hey, in the nuke on the cover of the book is the grabber." And really, the book is inconsequential, but it causes a chain reaction of problems. And so all of this, the term was coined by somebody else. It was called the Black Swan event, where you have a bunch of inconsequential events that take place that, all of a sudden, become overwhelming and lead to a critical incident.

Jeff Kirkham: So one thread would not pull things down, but you bind enough threads together and you have a rope, and that can anchor and pull stuff down. And so what we do, and how we put this together when we were originally talking about it was, how would this happen? And we looked at history, and lo and behold, there were several incidents that were just like that all throughout history. And on average, about every 60 years it's happening in the US. It just hasn't caused the topple.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. So the nuclear event you think ... And it really kind of depends on the news, right? Like one day, you know, North Korea is just sending missiles in any which way just to kind of get everybody's craw, but there are other events, I know. We've seen how natural disasters hit, but are there other events that you think really could have an effect on our country's infrastructure and cause nationwide crisis?

Jeff Kirkham: Absolutely. I mean, we saw that. World War I is probably the best example that we can think of. World War I by itself was horrible, but the thing that turned it into a war to end all wars wasn't bullets. It was the Spanish flu. And so now the sudden, we had the perfect storm that came together. We had war that attracted a bunch of young healthy men that were kept in close quarters, that then traveled. And by best accounts, the Spanish flu actually originated in Kansas.

Jeff Kirkham: So US doughboys took the Spanish flu across to Europe, and the Spanish flu is kind of particular in that it attacks the healthy more than it attacks the young and the old because a young healthy immune system will fight back so strongly it creates scar tissue in the lungs and essentially kills people almost within hours. So there were 25 percent of some army units that were killed by the Spanish flu. So now the sudden, when you start talking about 100 million people died of the Spanish flu, not to mention all the other people [inaudible 00:08:23] you have a horrendous event that took place and that was compounded by the government wouldn't talk about it, and it was actually only the Spanish government that would talk about it. It's why they got the finger pointed at them and it was called the Spanish flu.

Jeff Kirkham: All of this while World War I was going on, that compounded and made this huge cataclysmic event that took place. And we've actually, we see this repeatedly in history. As early as 2009, the financial collapse had happened. We

had a couple of events that, by themselves, would not have been a big deal, but the fact that all of a sudden, banks were investing in bad debt and whatnot, and the insurance companies were starting to fall. All of a sudden, we came very close to toppling or entire financial system. We've seen this over and over again. The Great Depression is yet another one.

Jeff Kirkham: And so what we did with the book as we said, "What is the probability of threat?" Whenever we teach close quarter battle, we say, "Hey, always seek the probability of threat." The muzzle should go towards the probability of threat. So we took that line of thinking and we said, "What is the probability of threat in the United States that could cause a topple that would then, in turn, cause the rest of the world to stumble as well?" And that's what we wrote into the book.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Wow, that's really interesting because most people just look at direct cause and effect. When there is a chain of things that ... It's pretty amazing how things combined at just the right time can just magnify the effect on our infrastructure.

Jeff Kirkham: And literally everybody who's read the book has come back and overwhelmingly, the feedback we get from people is, "Oh my gosh, this is terrifying because this could actually happen," because it's not just one event. It's a few inconsequential events that, tied together, become so huge. So the example that I like to tell people is, think about the drain that Katrina was on the resources of not just the state of Louisiana, not just the states that were surrounding Louisiana and their citizens that we're trying to help, but also of the federal government. So you had this huge drain on resources.

Jeff Kirkham: So now think about if Katrina happened. Now, let's add something else that very likely could happen, a massive earthquake in California that they say that we're 100 years overdue for. That then, in turn, causes a wildfire that we've been witnessing all summer long right now. So we've got two natural disasters that are taking place that are huge resource drains, and then just throw in maybe a Russian or a Chinese or just some fat kid in his basement with his finger over a button that goes, "I wonder what would happen if I shut off the power in New York right now." Then the cataclysmic or the domino effect of what could potentially happen, it doesn't take much imagination to go, "Oh my gosh. That would be cataclysmic."

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, totally. Well, let's talk about these types of events and drawing off of the book also. Because I know Black Autumn is a fictional novel, but it's also based upon observations that you've made with real boots on the ground experience, with 29 years being in the military and being in combat. So for those people out there who haven't been combat soldiers, it's really hard for them to imagine what life would be like living in that kind of environment where there's no real infrastructure. So what are some of those eye opening factors that you've introduced in the novel as challenges that the characters face that you think most citizens really would be shocked to see after a real world collapse or an event like this?

Jeff Kirkham: Well, I think first and foremost that the big, the number one shocker would be the emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion that takes place. Because you ended up with a group of people, they're working like they've never worked before by pure survival. Whether they're moving their family, caring their sons and daughters on their back to a place of safety, or digging out their homes.

Jeff Kirkham: You've got physical exhaustion taking place, then you've got the psychological exhaustion that takes place because you can never ... Anybody that's ever been in a combat zone can identify with this. You never really get good sleep. You're always kind of somewhat awake. You're always kind of ... And depending on the level of the danger that's around you determines how much real you get. So that thousand yard stare that we talk about with soldiers and stuff, that comes from days and days and days, weeks and weeks, of lack of sleep and just starting to drone out and really getting lost a little bit in your own head so that you can survive.

Jeff Kirkham: And then finally, the emotional exhaustion that take place, loss of family members, loss of neighbors and friends and community, loss of all of your earthly possessions. All of those things compounded together, psychological, emotional, and physical exhaustion combined together that give us that ... If you think about the iconic photos of soldiers with the thousand yard stare, that's where that comes from, those three things that are just all of them put together.

Jeff Kirkham: So I think number one, that's the biggest thing that people just don't, that they're not prepared for. And we try to capture that in the book. There are those that immediately accept what's going on and said, "Yep, this is just like combat," and then all the way to those people that resist, resist, resist until they reach the point where it's like, "No, the world's not coming back, and we're going to have to accept this new paradigm."

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. And even just for those people out there that think, "Well yeah, but I'm mentally strong. I'm tough." Maybe people ... You know, we have a lot of police officers that listen to our podcast. We have a lot of military contractors overseas who listen to our podcast. We have a lot of soldiers who listen to it. And so people that have this kind of inoculation distress think, "Well yeah, I'm not too worried about that." But then there's also your family members or other people, maybe it's even your elderly parents that you're taking care of. That might be a strain that it might be stressful to you that you didn't think about that stressor, or you have to be there for your family that's not, they haven't had the experiences you've had.

Jeff Anderson: And so it's all of a sudden, what you think is manageable when it's just you as part of like a military squad or your police, you and your partner, all of a sudden, that changes when you're looking at civilians who haven't been inoculated like this. And that's even more draining as well, and taking care of them. So yeah. You know, I think it's really natural-

Jeff Kirkham: You know, that's really the power.

Jeff Anderson: Go ahead.

Jeff Kirkham: I was just going to add to that. I think that's really the power of what we did with this book because I didn't write this alone. There's a co-author, Jason Ross, who is the co-author. He'd never been in the military, never been a police officer, but dyed in the wool survivalist and prepper, and a very accomplished outdoorsman. But he very much ... My paradigm after having dealt with the military for so long is that military law enforcement mindset.

Jeff Kirkham: He brought in the other mindset where he would say, he would ask me, "What do you think would happen at a scenario like this? Or how would we defend in a scenario like this? Or how would you keep people from breaching the wire in a scenario like this?" And I'd go, "Well, you know," and I'd give the textbook military answers. And he'd go, "Okay, but regular people don't think that way and you're going to run into problems because you've got to convince them."

Jeff Kirkham: Because we don't want, all the sudden, throw our hands up in the air and go, "I guess the military and police are involved at this point." We didn't even see that in Afghanistan. We didn't see that in Iraq. We didn't see that in Haiti. There was still the communities that were around, so there's that human psychology, that human portion that was in there that we worked really hard to capture in the book to give it balance. So it's like the military versus hey, this is the reality here though of when you're dealing with other human beings who you care about.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, and that's interesting you bring that up and [inaudible 00:16:57] to bring in somebody that's not a military person because it's natural for soldiers to approach any kind of crisis from a tactical mindset, right? From experience. So for a former Green Beret, it makes total sense to place security as a primary concern and band together in this book these combat hardened soldiers to kind of journey through and be able to sustain themselves. But not everyone has that convenience of having their own SPEC ops assault team on speed dial. Right?

Jeff Anderson: So my next question for you is, how critical is it for the average citizen to build this kind of like defense squad for personal protection after a cataclysmic event like this? I mean we've seen this even in, now it's commonplace. Even if you see like a natural disaster, like a hurricane coming in, guys grab their AR's and two cases of beer and spray paint a sign of like, you know, anti-looter defense Zombie squad or whatever. But how important ... And we even saw this like even during the Rodney King riots. That was where we really started to see it when the Korean shopkeepers banded together and their shops weren't burned.

Jeff Anderson: So in this type of an event, based on your book, how important is it for people to really think of security minded like that with their own, I call it a defense squad, but how critical is that?

Jeff Kirkham: Community, we've come to believe after deep diving this now for several years and testing out numerous different scenarios and bug outs and in place, and we've come to believe in our research, looking at past civil wars, looking at civil unrest in Bosnia, the Philippines, Haiti, Africa, Somalia, Kenya, and on and on and on. First and foremost is your community. You cannot do it all alone. The idea of somebody putting on a backpack and going into the mountains of living off the off the wild is a fatal fantasy that will be short lived and ended up dying off very quickly.

Jeff Kirkham: You have to have a community if you're going to survive and history supports this. There's a reason why the families were so big and not that long ago because more family members meant ultimately more security. More security being more hands that could work, more security that could then protect the farm and protect the family. The families gave way to homesteads, the homesteads gave way to villages, villages gave way to cities or towns, towns gave way to cities. All of this was for mutual support.

Jeff Kirkham: Whatever the threat is, whether that's a tiger lurking in the jungle all the way up to the threat of financial issues, we bind together as human beings because that's what put us on the top of the food chain, not because we're the smartest, the fastest, the strongest, the biggest teeth, the sharpest claws, but because we work together as a cohesive group. Consequently, that's why I believe the US military is the best military on planet Earth. Not because we're the strongest, not because we're the smartest, certainly not because we're the most organized because it's chaos half the time, but because we work better as cohesive units than anybody else on planet Earth.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, awesome. I think when it comes to these types of novels, I think when they're written by somebody that really knows what they're talking about based upon experience, not based on media or fantasy or anything like that, they really do offer a lot of valuable survival information that has a real life application, which is where we started this whole podcast, which was, can you really learn something from these fictional novels? I think part of that answer is well, yes, if it's written well and it's written by somebody that knows what the hell they're talking about.

Jeff Anderson: Check and check for you and your book, but without any significant spoiler alerts for anybody, can you give us maybe like a specific, like a brief scenario from the book of a challenge that this team faced where you've subtly programmed in a survival lesson that readers could pull out of that situation, how they dealt with it?

Jeff Kirkham: Absolutely. So at one point, we're trying to control or our area of influence or the homestead is what it's called in the book. And we're trying to control the homestead and have a buffer between us and everybody else that's out there starving so that we can protect our families. Actually, there's a character in there that's Jeff Kirkham that's one of the characters. And he starts off as a pretty rough individual, but throughout the course of the book, realizes that

hitting everything with a hammer ... When you're a blacksmith, everything's a hammer and an anvil, and treating everything like that doesn't work, and that you've got to have both sides.

Jeff Kirkham: And so there's actually kind of a pinnacle point of the book where there's trespassers. We're shooting warning shots at trespassers to keep people away, and the regular citizens that that make up part of the homestead, because you need doctors, and you need nurses, and you need people that, arguably, are a little bit more on the touchy feely side of the profession, all the sudden, they're up in arms because remember, the homestead is kind of living in a little bit of a bubble. They're shooting at, excuse me, shooting warning shots at trespassers.

Jeff Kirkham: Well, one of the trespassers ends up getting shot. I won't tell you exactly what happened there, ends up getting shot and we're right on the edge of total mutiny inside the homestead. But I think it perfectly sets up and shows that it doesn't matter. You could be the baddest Green Beret or SEAL or whatever and live the life of doing whatever, but you can't think of everything. It's almost impossible.

Jeff Kirkham: And we constantly were going back and rewriting in the novel just simply because we would think of something, or read something, or see something, and we'd go, "Oh man, we hadn't thought of that. We have to address that in the book." And we'd go back and put that into the book. So without too much of a spoiler alert, yeah, there's a couple of pretty climatic moments in the book of like, oh my gosh, are these guys can even make it?

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. I think the other thing with that as well, I've talked about this so many times either with our own on like New World Patriot Alliance, presentations that we've done or in podcast interviews about the reality of the psychological aspect of combat itself. But even overseas, even in combat, even shooting the enemy is really hard, like mentally. I just remember, and I think other people may have heard me tell this story before, but that first time I ever pulled the trigger, all I could think about was, "God, I have kids back home. I wonder if this person that I'm pulling the trigger on has kids." Like I wonder if they're as scared as my kids. I wonder if this person's as scared as I am.

Jeff Anderson: It's really weird, but I think for people that haven't experienced, whether you're a police officer or not a police officers, civilians out there, it's always this thing in your mind, and this is where I think there is kind of a departure from fantasy and from the movies, is that it always looks cool in the movies. Yeah, the bad guys should have died, right? And in reality, we're really not programmed that way. It doesn't mean you won't pull the trigger, but we've certainly seen people that have come back with full magazines that just couldn't pull the trigger.

Jeff Anderson: And it doesn't matter, I've told this before on other things, but I've seen like Rambo type individuals roll up into a ball and cry and not be able to do anything, and I've seen guys that were just the total doofuses of our platoon just suddenly go charging somewhere to go help out a fellow soldier. And you really don't

know, no matter how much you think you do, of how you're going to react in this type of a scenario. So the fact that you've put like those psychological dynamics into the novel, people should really look at that. That's not just for drama. That really is reality.

Jeff Kirkham: Yes, yes, very, very much so. And I think more than anything, the goal of this novel was we wanted people to come away from it and think. We really wanted them to kind of put their chin on chest and think, "Holy cow. Where do I fit in all of this?" And even knowing, hey, am I going to rise or am I going to fail at the moment of truth? Well, you know, nobody's going to say, "Well, I'm going to fail at the moment of truth," but you certainly increase your chances of your survivability of yourself and most importantly, your loved ones, your family and your kids, by making sure that you're surrounded by other competent, strong people. And strong, I mean there's a broad brush strokes where it can be anything, emotionally strong. It doesn't have to be physically strong, it can be emotionally strong or psychologically strong.

Jeff Kirkham: And so build that community because these Black Swan events that we wrote about in Black Autumn, these Black Swan events, they happen, and they're going to continue to happen. And the fact that we've managed to kind of skirt what has happened in the past is really a miracle. The more I read about the history of the United States, the more I'm in awe that it's a complete miracle that our country hasn't completely fallen apart. Not once, not twice, but literally dozens of times, and that it's just somehow held together.

Jeff Kirkham: And that's where it's like, man, we're playing roulette. So how much longer can we keep it together? I don't know, but I do know that the self-reliance of its citizens is what will keep it together. And the more that we rely on some ambiguous morphous thing called the government, the more we become dependent on them, the more fragile we become. But as a group, the more that we rely on each other, and our community, our churches, our schools, or just our neighborhoods, actually the stronger that we become.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Well said, man. Well said. So listen, right now you've just launched the novels. So you've got a special thing that's happening right now for people that go ahead and go grab their own copy. So can you explain a little bit about what you've got going on as part of this kind of short-term launch process for you?

Jeff Kirkham: Absolutely. So if they go to Amazon.com or they can go to Barnes and Noble, and they can purchase a book. And we ask probably one of the single best thing you could do to help us out is leave a review because that forces both of those companies to put the book in front of more people's faces when it comes up. So leave us a review, good or bad. I mean, we got thick skin, but leave us a review first and foremost.

Jeff Kirkham: And then when you purchase the book, if you go to blackautumn.com, we've got a bunch of thank yous that are in there. One of them is we've got the companion novel that we call Black Autumn Travelers. When we wrote the

original model, we had so much that we put together that we actually cut out three of the characters, and there was enough there that we made a novel that allowed us to build out the characters on Black Autumn 1 and then Black Autumn 1.5 or Travelers. It allowed us to develop some really cool characters, and those characters ... Actually, it's taking place at the same time, but they're not in Utah. They're trying to get to Utah.

Jeff Kirkham:

So there's some really powerful lessons that are in there as well. So they'll get that, they'll get the digital copy for free, they get entered to win an all expenses paid come to Utah and spend a day or two with me shooting and going over kind of just take on the world on what firearms, pistol carbine stuff can and should look like based off of ... It will be a blast. We'll have a lot of fun too. And then finally, you get access to our our free bug out bag builder, a plan to bug out, and you can get in there and start diving into building your own bug out bag and seeing where you're at on the preparedness level. And it's all based off of stuff that we've tested over at Readyman. And then we're constantly coming up with other thank you stuff for folks too as they get more entrenched or more involved in the Readyman community.

Jeff Anderson:

Awesome. Cool. Alright. Listen everybody, you'll actually find links over to the book as well as all the thank you's that are there. You can check it all out. There's a really great video trailer there that tells you more about the book and you see Jeff and the other author talking about it as well. So there's a lot of information over there. All you have to do is just go over to the website for it, which is at www.blackautumn.com. Go check it out. I'm really excited about getting my copy. Go over there and grab a copy. And until our next Modern Combat & Survival broadcast, this is Jeff Anderson saying, "Prepare, train, and survive."