

# TC 31-29/A

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U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

**CACHING TECHNIQUES**

U.S. ARMY

JOHN F. KENNEDY

**SPECIAL WARFARE CENTER**

**CACHING**

Caching is the process of hiding equipment or materials in a secure storage place with the view to future recovery for operational use. The ultimate success of caching may well depend upon attention to detail, that is, professional competence that may seem of minor importance to the untrained eye. Security factors, such as cover for the caching party, sterility of the items cached, and removal of even the slightest trace of the caching operations are vital. Highly important, too, are the technical factors that govern the preservation of the items in usable condition and the recording of data essential for recovery. Successful caching entails careful adherence to the basic principles of clandestine operations, as well as familiarity with the technicalities of caching.

## **Section 1**

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### **Caching Considerations**

Caching considerations that are vital to the success of the caching operation may be done in a variety of operational situations. For example, cached supplies can meet the emergency needs of personnel who may be barred from their normal supply sources by sudden developments or who may need travel documents and extra funds for quick escape. Caching can help solve the supply problems of long-term operations conducted far from a secure base.

Caching also can provide for anticipated needs of wartime operations in areas likely to be overrun by the enemy.

### **PLANNING FOR A CACHING OPERATION**

Caching involves selecting items to be cached, procuring those items, and selecting a cache site. Selection of the items to be cached requires a close estimate of what will be needed by particular units for particular operations. Procurement of the items usually presents no special problems. In fact, the relative ease of procurement before an emergency arises is one of the prime considerations in favor of caching. When selecting a cache site, planners should always ensure that the site is accessible not only for emplacement, but also for recovery. When planning a caching operation, the planner must consider seven basic factors.

## **1. Purpose and Contents of the Cache**

Planners must determine the purpose and contents of each cache because these basic factors influence the location of the cache, as well as the method of hiding. For instance, small barter items can be cached at any accessible and secure site because they can be concealed easily on the person once recovered.

However, it would be difficult to conceal rifles for a Guerrilla Band once recovered. Therefore, this site must be in an isolated area where the band can establish at least temporary control. Certain items, such as medical stock, have limited shelf life and require rotation periodically or special storage considerations, necessitating easy access to service these items. Sometimes it is impossible to locate a cache in the most convenient place for an intended user. Planners must compromise between logistical objectives and actual possibilities when selecting a cache site. Security is always the overriding consideration.

## **2. Anticipated Enemy Action**

In planning the caching operation, planners must consider the capabilities of any intelligence or security services not participating in the operation. They should also consider the potential hazards the enemy and its witting or unwitting accomplices present. If caching is done for wartime operational purposes, its ultimate success will depend largely on whether the planners anticipate the various obstacles to recovery, which the enemy and its accomplices will create if the enemy occupies the area. What are the possibilities that the enemy will preempt an ideal site for one reason or another and deny access to it? A vacant field surrounded by brush may seem ideal for a particular cache because it is near several highways. But such a location may also invite the enemy to locate an ordnance depot where the cache is buried.

## **3. Activities of the local Population**

Probably more dangerous than deliberate enemy action are all of the chance circumstances that may result in the discovery of the cache. Normal activity, such as construction of a new building, may uncover the cache site or impede access to it. Bad luck cannot be anticipated, but it can probably be avoided by careful and imaginative observation of the prospective cache site and of the people who live near the site. If the cache is intended for wartime use, the planners must project how the residents will react to the pressures of war and conquest. For example, one of the more likely reactions is that many

residents may resort to caching to avoid having their personal funds and valuables seized by the enemy. If caching becomes popular, any likely cache site will receive more than normal attention.

#### **4. Intended Actions by Allied Forces**

Using one cache site for several clandestine operations involves a risk of mutual compromise. Therefore, some planners should rule out otherwise suitable caching sites if they have been selected for other clandestine purposes, such as drops or safe houses. A site should not be located where it may be destroyed or rendered inaccessible by bombing or other allied military action, should the area be occupied by the enemy. For example, installations likely to be objects of special protective efforts by the occupying enemy are certain to be inaccessible to the ordinary citizen. Therefore, if the cache is intended for wartime use, the caching party should avoid areas such as those near key bridges, railroad intersections, power plants, and munitions factories.

#### **5. Packaging and Transportation Assets**

Planners should assess the security needs and all of the potential obstacles and hazards that a prospective cache site can present. They should also consider whether the operational assets that could be used for packaging and transporting the package to the site. Best results are obtained when the packaging is done by experts at a packaging center. The first question, therefore, is to decide whether the package can be transported from the headquarters or the field packaging center to the cache site securely and soon enough to meet the operational schedules. If not, the packaging must be done locally, perhaps in a safe house located within a few miles of the cache site. If such an arrangement is necessary, the choice of cache sites may be restricted by limited safe house possibilities.

#### **6. Personal Assets**

All who participate directly in emplacement will know where the cache is located. Therefore, only the fewest possible and the most reliable persons should be used. Planners must consider the distance from the person's residence to the prospective cache site and what action cover is required for the trip. Sometimes transportations and cover difficulties require the cache site to be within a limited distance of the person's residence. The above considerations also apply to the recovery personnel.

#### **7. Caching Methods**

Which cache method to use depends on the situation. It is therefore unsound to lay down any general rules, with one exception. Planners should always think in terms of suitability, for example, the method most suitable for each cache, considering its specific purpose; the actual situation in the particular locality; and the changes that may occur if the enemy gains control.

#### **Concealment.**

Concealment requires the use of permanent man-made or natural features to hide or disguises the cache. It has several advantages. Both employment and recovery usually and be done with minimum time and labor, and cached items concealed inside a building or dry cave are protected from the elements. Thus, they require less elaborate packaging. Also, in some cases, a concealed cache can be readily inspected from time to time to ensure that it is still usable. However, there is always the chance of accidental discovery in addition to all the hazards of wartime that may result in discovery or destruction or a concealed cache or denial of access to the site. The concealment method, therefore, is most suitable in cases where an exceptionally secure site is available or where a need for quick access to the cache justifies a calculated sacrifice in security.

Concealment may range from securing small gold coins under a tile in the floor to walling up artillery in caves.

### **Burial.**

Adequate burial sites can be found almost anywhere. Once in place, a properly buried cache is generally the best way of achieving lasting security. In contrast to concealment, however, burial in the ground is a laborious and time-consuming method of caching.

The disadvantages of burial are that-

- \* Burial almost always requires a high-quality container or special wrapping to protect the cache from moisture, chemicals and bacteria in the soil.
- \* Emplacement or recovery of a buried cache usually takes so long that the operation must be done after dark unless the site is exceptionally secluded.
- \* It is especially difficult to identify and locate a buried cache.

### **Submersion.**

Submersion sites that are suitable for secure concealment of a submerged cache are few and far between. Also, the container of a submerged cache must meet such high standards for waterproofing and resistance to external pressure that the use of field expedients is seldom workable. To ensure that a submerged cache remains dry and in place, planners must determine not only the depth of the water, but the type of bottom, the currents, and other facts that are relatively difficult for nonspecialists to obtain. Emplacement, likewise requires a high degree of skill. At least two persons are needed for both emplacement and requires additional equipment. In view of the difficulties - especially the difficulty of recovery - the submersion method is suitable only on rare occasions. The most noteworthy usage is the relatively rare maritime re-supply operation where it is impossible to deliver supplies directly to a reception committee. Caching supplies offshore by submersion is often preferable to sending a landing party ashore to bury a cache.

## **SELECTION OF THE SITE**

The most careful estimates of future operational conditions cannot ensure that a will cache will be accessible when it is needed. However, criteria for a site selection can be met when three questions are answered.

### **Criteria for Site Selection**

Can the site be located by simple instructions that are unmistakably clear to someone who has never visited the location? A site may be ideal in every respect, but if it has no distinct, permanent landmarks within a readily measurable distance it must be ruled out. Are there at least two secure routes to and from the site? Both primary and alternate routes should provide natural concealment so that the emplacement party and the recovery party can visit the site without being seen by anyone normally in the vicinity. An alienate escape route offers hope of avoiding detection and recovered at the chosen site in all seasons? Snow and frozen ground create special problems.

Snow on the ground is a hazard because it is impossible to erase a trail in the snow. Planners must consider whether seasonal changes in the foliage will leave the site and the dangerously exposed.

### **The Map Survey**

Finding a cache site is often difficult. Usually, a thorough systematic survey of the general area designated for the cache is required. The survey is best done with as large-scale map of the area as is available. By scrutinizing the map, the planners can determine whether a particular sector must be ruled out because of its nearness to factories, homes, busy thoroughfares, or probable military targets in wartime. A good military-type map will show the positive features in the topography; proximity to adequate roads or trails, natural concealment (for example: surrounding woods or groves), and adequate drainage. A map also will show the natural and man-made features in the landscape. It will provide the indispensable reference points for locating a cache site: confluences of streams, dams and waterfalls, road junctures and distance markers, villages, bridges, churches, and cemeteries.

### **The Personal Reconnaissance**

A map survey normally should show the location of several promising sites within the general area designated for the cache. To select and pinpoint the best site, however, a well-qualified observer must examine each site firsthand. If possible, whoever examines the site should carry adequate maps, a compass, a drawing pad or board for making sketch maps or tracings, and a metallic measuring line. (A wire knotted at regular intervals is adequate for measuring. Twine or cloth measuring tapes should not be used because stretching or shrinking will make them inaccurate if they get wet.) The observer should also carry a probe rod for probing prospective burial sites, if the rod can be carried securely. Since the observer seldom completes a field survey without being noticed by local residents, his action cover is of