

DESERT SURVIVAL



To survive and evade in arid or desert areas, you must understand and prepare for the environment you will face. You must determine your equipment needs, the tactics you will use, and how the environment will affect you and your tactics. Your survival will depend upon your knowledge of the terrain, basic climatic elements, your ability to cope with these elements, and your will to survive.

TERRAIN

Most arid areas have several types of terrain. The five basic desert terrain types are—

- Mountainous (High Altitude).
- Rocky plateau.
- Sand dunes.

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- Salt marshes.
 - Broken, dissected terrain (“gebel” or “wadi”).

Desert terrain makes movement difficult and demanding. Land navigation will be extremely difficult as there may be very few landmarks. Cover and concealment may be very limited; therefore, the threat of exposure to the enemy remains constant.

Mountain Deserts

Scattered ranges or areas of barren hills or mountains separated by dry, flat basins characterize mountain deserts. High ground may rise gradually or abruptly from flat areas to several thousand meters above sea level. Most of the infrequent rainfall occurs on high ground and runs off rapidly in the form of flash floods. These floodwaters erode deep gullies and ravines and deposit sand and gravel around the edges of the basins. Water rapidly evaporates, leaving the land as barren as before, although there may be short-lived vegetation. If enough water enters the basin to compensate for the rate of evaporation, shallow lakes may develop, such as the Great Salt Lake in Utah, or the Dead Sea. Most of these lakes have a high salt content.

Rocky Plateau Deserts

Rocky plateau deserts have relatively slight relief interspersed with extensive flat areas with quantities of solid or broken rock at or near the surface. There may be steep-walled, eroded valleys, known as wadis in the Middle East and arroyos or canyons in the United States and Mexico. Although their flat bottoms may be superficially attractive as assembly areas, the narrower valleys can be extremely dangerous to men and material due to flash flooding after rains. The Golan Heights is an example of a rocky plateau desert.

Sandy or Dune Deserts

Sandy or dune deserts are extensive flat areas covered with sand or gravel. “Flat” is a relative term, as some areas may contain sand dunes that are over 300 meters high and 16 to 24 kilometers long. Trafficability in such terrain will depend on the windward or leeward slope of the dunes and the texture of the sand. Other areas, however, may be flat for 3,000 meters and more. Plant life may vary from none to scrub over 2 meters high. Examples of this type of desert include the edges of the

