

**Strategic Packing v12.3**  
**NDMS Gear Guide/Personal Equipment List**  
**By: Jonathan Malloch, TN-1 DMAT**



**Greetings Motivated and Prepared Team Members:**

Hopefully here you will find some assistance in putting together your deployment kit.

**When Alert Status is issued, simply print out the checklist of choice and check it off as you pack. Drop it in your bag and zip it up. You will know you are packed and ready.**

**And for seasoned team members, the best time to pack is after you return, that's when you really know what you needed and didn't need.**

**As always, take from the knowledge of your teammates and leadership. Never hesitate to ask questions. As well, share your knowledge. This is a living document; dynamic and always improving. Your feedback is welcomed.**

**This guide Contains:**

**Section 1: Fast Pack” List: the essential gear checklist. Pg. 2.**

This “Fast Pack” is the basic kit and includes a checklist of the essential gear you will need for a deployment. Several on the team carry this entire list plus, carried in one 2600 cubic inch (medium) backpack, the Camelbak BFM.

**Section 2: Objectives / Bag and Gear Selection. Pg. 3-5.**

This is a general discussion of luggage, size and design requirements and the rationale for such.

**Section 3: Personal Equipment Checklist – Comprehensive Print Out. Pg. 6-10**

This is a comprehensive list, essentially a compendium of extensive feedback and personal and team experience. While it is lengthy, and perhaps excessive, **it is only a guideline for the development of your personal deployment kit.**

**Section 4: \*Personal Equipment Issues and considerations\*. Pg. 11-15**

This is a discussion of particular items on the list in an effort to help you select the best product for the conditions and obtain the best value for your money.

**Disclaimer:** No list or gear guide is 100% comprehensive. All deployments, both National and International require consideration of items and issues not listed here. Feel free to email with comments/considerations and product reviews.  
[jrmalloch@yahoo.com](mailto:jrmalloch@yahoo.com) jm

## **FAST PACK LIST v12.3**

### **Minimum essential gear checklist**

#### **Main Bag**

##### **Clothing:**

- ☐ Uniforms – 2 sets: (2 BDU blouses, 2 BDU pants, 2 team shirts - name tagged and labeled\*)  
(Depending on travel orders, you may be wearing one full uniform)
- ☐ Hats, Boonie type and/or Team Ball Cap – (Both are preferred).
- ☐ Underwear – 3 \*
- ☐ Socks\* NOT COTTON - 3
- ☐ Belt, Black – 1 (2 preferred)
- ☐ Boots\*
- ☐ Civilian Clothing: 1 set (pants, shirt, and socks)

##### **Toiletries:**

- ☐ Toothbrush
- ☐ Toothpaste
- ☐ Razor w/ blades
- ☐ Shave cream
- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Shampoo
- ☐ Deodorant: (unscented attracts less insects)

##### **Sleep Gear:**

- ☐ Sleeping bag \*

##### **Miscellaneous:**

- ☐ Water\*: 4 quarts if travel by ground. Restricted for commercial air travel.  
(See discussion in section 4 regarding water and air travel)
- ☐ Rations/Food: at least 2 MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat) or similar "heater meals".
- ☐ Flashlight: (it doesn't have to be big, just reliable and water tight)
- ☐ Batteries: (don't buy "Heavy Duty" they last ½ the time of regular batteries)
- ☐ Mug and Spoon (any travel type mug, plastic or metal)

##### **Jump Bag:**

- ☐ Rain Jacket and Pants
- ☐ Gloves, work type.
- ☐ Eye Protection/safety glasses (required for work in/around aircraft)
- ☐ Hearing protection: (soft ear plugs for work in/around aircraft and day sleeping)
- ☐ Headlamp \* (if not LED type, a spare bulb is recommended)
- ☐ Batteries, spare.
- ☐ Medical Equipment, Personal/work: (Stethoscope/EMT Scissors/hemostat/gloves etc.)
- ☐ Water\*: 2 quarts if travel by ground. Restricted for commercial air travel  
(See discussion in section 4 regarding water and air travel)
- ☐ Snacks: High energy, Snickers, Peanut M&M's,
- ☐ First Aid Kit, Individual type.
- ☐ Wipes, (baby wipes) personal travel type packet.

##### **On Your Person:**

- ☐ Federal I.D., Federal Credit Card, Immunization card and drivers License, etc. (wallet)
- ☐ Phone, cell.
- ☐ Emergency Contact card, team.
- ☐ Watch
- ☐ Dog tags (Some military pilots will not allow you aboard without dog tags)
- ☐ Critical Medications/Allergy Information-bracelet or allergy dog tag

## Objectives / Bag and Gear Selection

### OBJECTIVE

**The objective in developing your personal gear is to enable you and your team is to be self sufficient in nearly any conditions for approximately 3 days or 72 hours.** After that time it is generally accepted that additional supplies will become available. To somewhat complicate this is the fact that team members are somewhat limited in how much weight we can carry and how many bags are allowed. **Whatever you take, YOU must be able to move it.**

**A basic personal deployment kit should include: 2 bags, sufficient for 3 days, ideally including 6 quarts of water.** (Current NTSB restrictions on water may require flexibility when on commercial aircraft. This is discussed in section #4. Also, we assume and some type of shelter will be available, hence personal tents/shelters will not be discussed here)

### **Recommended Equipment Bags/Luggage:**

**One large, main bag;** 6,000-10,000 cubic inches or a bag with dimensions of approx. 15x30x15 inches to 16x36x16 inch or a similar sized suitcase) **WITH WHEELS**. **This main bag will be checked** for air travel and/or may be palletized for transport via military air or ground convoy; hence, it may not always be readily available to you

**One small bag, backpack style “Jump bag/Ready Bag”;** 1200-3500 cubic inches. **This Jump Bag will always stay with you,** on the plane **and** in your immediate area of operation or in your vehicle.

### **Main Bag Considerations**

With a minimum Fast Pack your main bag can run 25-35 lbs. For the Comprehensive Pack out, your main bag may weigh 50-70+ pounds fully loaded depending on how you outfit yourself. Wheels are very useful most of the time. Likewise, I have seen team bags come off the luggage belt in shreds, with straps broken, seams burst, or simply abraded through not due to abuse, rather it was simply not the quality needed for this type of travel and weight. Standing in an abandoned airport with no power for 300 miles with your gear in a pile is the wrong time to figure out the \$50-100 dollars you saved buying a “bargain” bag was a bad idea. It may be impossible to get a replacement for some time.

I have personally purchased and test packed and abused no less than ten Main Bags before some great ones emerged. They have ranged from \$60-\$300. You DO NOT have to spend \$300 for a good bag. I have below linked a few excellent bags. **THESE ARE ONLY SUGGESTIONS** to get you pointed in the right direction and provide visual examples of what we are discussing. The final decision is yours. I’ve tried a lot of bags that failed to support the weight or volumes loaded in them. I’m sure there are many more excellent bags not listed here yet to try.

Additionally, I’ve tried many bags that have excellent zippers, good wheels and tough nylon that failed at the frame due to weight. As in, the bottom simply bends under the weight of the load. Avoid bags that don’t have very rigid bottoms or full length internal frames or rails that run the length of the bag to the wheel end. Some very excellent examples of good bags are listed below.

## **Main Bag Examples:**

**High Sierra 36" Drop Bottom Rolling Duffel:** This can usually be seen at Sierra Trading Post.com, Campmor.com and Amazon.com. The High Sierra 36" Drop Bottom Rolling Duffel is a very nice bag with a Lifetime Warranty. This bag normally retails for near \$200, but can sometimes found for under \$70 here. I have one with several deployments on it as do several team members and it's a great bag for the money.

<http://www.sierratradingpost.com>

<http://www.campmor.com>

**BlackHawk Enhanced Diver's Travel Bag w/ Wheels #21DT03BK:** Several of the team members have these and are very happy with them. I've seen them for less than \$150. This is an outstanding bag w/ a lifetime warranty (if you register it) There are two versions of this bag. The one with wheels is #21DT03BK.

<http://www.blackhawk.com/>

**Cabelas Extreme Wheeled Duffel:** This bag is utterly bombproof, has a lifetime warranty and is expensive. Most agree it is worth it. You will likely never need another one in your lifetime.

[www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)

SEE ALSO:

L.L. Bean and Lands End also have some higher quality very rugged rolling duffels. While I believe there high end to be rugged enough for deployment, retail of near \$200 makes other bags a better value. These have lifetime warranties. Look for them on sale

[www.llbean.com](http://www.llbean.com)

[www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com)

The North Face, MountainSmith, Mountain Hardware and Eagle Creek are some of the finest rolling duffel bags available. They tend to be expensive at retail and come with lifetime warranties. Look for them on sale.

[www.thenorthface.com](http://www.thenorthface.com)

[www.mountainsmith.com](http://www.mountainsmith.com)

[www.mountainhardware.com](http://www.mountainhardware.com)

[www.eaglecreek.com](http://www.eaglecreek.com)

### **Ready Bag/Jump bag**

This can be a simple tactical style backpack/daypack (preferred) or medium size duffel. However, experience proves that having your hands free makes the backpack a better choice. It should be between 1200-3500 cubic inches. It will generally always be with you. You may carry it aboard for air travel and may check it at the aircraft door or put it under your seat or in the overhead bin. It will stay with you in your vehicle and be with you in your work area. Depending on circumstance, it should be able to hold at least 1 quart of your water supply. (Water transport is discussed in section #4. ALSO, many bags now incorporate internal hydration systems, which are great for field work in conditions where you may be at risk for dehydration). It will also need to be able to accommodate sufficient gear for you to remain fairly comfortable and operational should your main bag be lost or delayed. Contents should include the basics: Energy food/snacks, water and basic comfort essentials such as a zip lock w/ dry socks, dry underwear, and baby wipes etc. It should contain basic protective essentials such as a rain poncho/parka, gloves, eye protection, hearing protection, sun block, along with the basics essential to perform your job such as stethoscope, medic scissors, personal protective equipment, etc., and a few other things that will be specifically outlined later.

### **Jump Bag Examples:**

**Camelbak BFM, HAWG and the Motherlode:** These are excellent bags and have extensive field use. Several team members use the BFM and the comfort, versatility and value is exceptional. They are worth the price and hold up very well. They can be seen at any police/military supply shops. Available nearly everywhere online, the best price on BFM is around \$140 if you look.

[www.camelbak.com](http://www.camelbak.com)

**BlackHawk Tactical 3-Day Assault Pack** offers excellent value and function: Several styles and sizes are available and all offer value and function. These packs run between \$100 and \$200 depending on style.

[www.blackhawk.com](http://www.blackhawk.com)

**Spec Ops** makes very good equipment, and is U.S. made. The "T.H.E. Pack" (The Holds Everything Pack) is a very tough bag. This bag tends to fit smaller folks best. The team members who carry this pack are very happy with it and agree it is bombproof. This back can be found for about \$100 if you are patient.

<http://www.specopsbrand.com>

**The Kelty "Redwing"** is a very popular and very rugged backpack and has year after year proved to be an excellent pack for both deployment and personal travel. These are also available at Dicks and REI and other outdoor equipment stores. They can be had for as little as \$50.

[www.kelty.com](http://www.kelty.com)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com)

## Personal Equipment Checklist – Comprehensive: V12.3

**CHECKLIST: BOLD is your essential load out, I.E., “The Fast Pack” list).** The rest is often useful but entirely optional. ( \* see reference notes for discussion of certain items)

### Main Bag:

#### **Clothing:**

- ☐ **Uniforms – 2 sets: (2 BDU blouses, 2 BDU pants, team shirts – name tagged and labeled\*)**  
(Depending on travel orders, you may be wearing one full set of uniform clothing)
- ☐ **Hats, Boonie type and/or Team Ball Cap** – (Both are preferred).
- ☐ **Underwear – 3 \***
- ☐ **Socks\* – NOT COTTON - 3**
- ☐ **Belt, Black** – 1 (2 preferred)
- ☐ **Boots\***
- ☐ Sock Liners 3 \*
- ☐ Compression Bag, Clothing type: (Eagle Creek makes some of the best)\*
- ☐ Shower shoes / Flip-flops / Tevas etc. 1
- ☐ Civilian Clothing: 1 set (pants, shorts, shirt, socks etc.)
- ☐ Sleepwear (scrubs, shorts, t-shirt etc.)
- ☐ Swimwear (for co-ed shower facilities)
- ☐ Tennis Shoes or similar (allow your feet/boots some time off from each other)
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- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
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#### **Cold Weather Clothing:** (optional and weather dependent)

- ☐ Field Jacket/ Parka, Polarguard or similar insulation. (Weather dependent)
- ☐ Jacket/sweater, synthetic fleece
- ☐ Pants, synthetic fleece
- ☐ Gloves, synthetic fleece
- ☐ Socks, Synthetic: winter weight NOT COTTON
- ☐ Thermal underwear, synthetic NOT COTTON
- ☐ Hat/cap, wool or synthetic
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## **Main Bag Continued:**

**Toiletries:** (a toiletries bag that hangs up is preferred)

- ☐ **Toothbrush**
- ☐ **Toothpaste**
- ☐ **Razor w/ blades**
- ☐ **Shave cream**
- ☐ **Soap**
- ☐ **Shampoo**
- ☐ **Deodorant:** (unscented attracts less bugs)
- ☐ Personal hygiene products
- ☐ Handi wipes (travel pack)
- ☐ Floss: (can double as high strength sewing thread)
- ☐ Foot powder (**Gold Bond** or similar works well for any/all hotspots or friction issues)
- ☐ Moleskin
- ☐ Toilet Paper/paper towels: (several yards inside a zip lock to keep it dry)
- ☐ Insect repellent: (3M Ultrathon 2oz gel available at Wal-Mart or sporting goods store)
- ☐ Sun block (REI brand is excellent, tasteless, odorless, greaseless and works well on lips)
- ☐ Chapstick
- ☐ Tums/antacids
- ☐ Comb/brush
- ☐ Washcloth/Loofa \*
- ☐ Towel \* (no cotton)
- ☐ Safety pins (3 large)
- ☐ Small Mirror: (unbreakable travel type)
- ☐ Meds: Prescription and non-prescription pain relievers; (Tylenol, Advil, etc.)
- ☐ Spare Glasses in hard case
- ☐ Spare Contact Lenses
- ☐ Contact Lens Solution
- ☐ Hearing protection: soft earplugs (essential for day sleepers during shift work)

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## **Sleep Gear:**

- ☐ **Sleeping bag \***
- ☐ Compression Bag\*
- ☐ Mattress Pad, Foam or Air \*
- ☐ Pillow \*
- ☐ Ground Cloth (A military poncho doubles as an excellent ground cloth and shelter)
- ☐ Space blanket

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## **Main Bag Continued:**

### **Miscellaneous:**

- ☐ **Water\*: 4 quarts.** Restricted for air travel  
(See discussion in section 4 regarding water and air travel)
- ☐ **Rations/Food: at least 2 MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat) or similar "heater meals".**
- ☐ **Flashlight/area light:** (it doesn't have to be big, just reliable and rugged/water tight)
- ☐ **Batteries:** (don't buy "Heavy Duty" they last ½ the time of regular batteries)
- ☐ **Mug and Spoon** (any travel type mug, plastic or metal)
- ☐ Rope: 50 ft. ("550 Paracord" is a great multi-use rope)
- ☐ Laundry Bag
- ☐ Laundry Detergent: \* (concentrate type)
- ☐ Sewing/repair kit: small kit with 2-3 large safety pins
- ☐ Duct Tape/gaffers tape: (a10 yard roll is about the size of a deck of cards)
- ☐ Garbage Bags:\* (3, large, 45-55 gallon type)
- ☐ Zip lock Bags:\* (3, one gallon freezer bags. 3, one-quart freezer bags.)
- ☐ Fire: (Lighter, Waterproof Matches, magnesium starter and striker, etc.)
- ☐ Knife: (Folding pocket type)
- ☐ Leatherman type tool (optional)
- ☐ Strip plug\* (optional) (Wal-Mart \$5 or less)
- ☐ Netting, Mosquito type. (Optional)
- ☐ Chemical hand warmers (2-4) (will dry out wet boots overnight)

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## **Jump Bag:**

- ☐ **Rain Jacket and Pants**
- ☐ **Work gloves**
- ☐ **Eye Protection/safety glasses**
- ☐ **Hearing protection:** (soft ear plugs for work in and around aircraft and day sleeping)
- ☐ **Headlamp \*** (if not LED type, spare bulb is recommended)
- ☐ **Spare Batteries**
- ☐ **Medical Equipment, Personal/Work:** (Stethoscope/EMT scissors/hemostat/gloves, etc.)
- ☐ **Water\*: 2 quarts** (if by ground, two Nalgene water bottles or hydration system or similar.  
Restricted for commercial air travel - See discussion in section #4 regarding water and air travel)
- ☐ **Snacks: High energy** (Snickers, Peanut M&M's, power bars, etc.)
- ☐ Notepad w/ pen or pencil ("Rite in the Rain" notepads are excellent)
- ☐ Sharpie / Waterproof marker
- ☐ Team Ball cap
- ☐ ZIP-LOCK bag with the following:
  - ☐ Dry Socks
  - ☐ Sock Liners
  - ☐ Dry underwear
- ☐ Rations/Food: Food for 24 hours (1-2 MRE's, coffee/chocolate ("java juice/stomping grounds"))
- ☐ ZIP LOCK with the following:
  - ☐ Medications: Prescription and Non-Prescription
  - ☐ Personal hygiene products
  - ☐ Extra Contact lenses/glasses
  - ☐ Sun block
  - ☐ Chapstick
  - ☐ Hand wipes
  - ☐ Band-Aids: Fabric type
  - ☐ Lighter/Matches, Waterproof.
  - ☐ Water Purification tabs
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sleep Mask / Bandana (for night shift day sleepers)
- ☐ Camera (charger and/or batteries)
- ☐ Reading material
- ☐ Playing cards/travel games
- ☐ Cell phone charger (car and wall or converter)
- ☐ Trash Bag, large 1: (use as a bag cover, emergency rain gear or bivy)
- ☐ Duct Tape/gaffers tape: (a 10 yard rolls is about the size of a deck of cards)
- ☐ Rope: Paracord, 50 ft
- ☐ Chemlights/Chemsticks, 3
- ☐ First Aid Kit, Individual type.
- ☐ Mask, Particulate Type, N-95.
- ☐ Wipes, personal travel type packet.
- ☐ Zip Ties
- ☐ Helmet (optional)
- ☐ Knee Pads (optional)
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

**On Your Person:**

- ☐ Federal I.D., Federal Credit Card, Immunization card
- ☐ Driver's License, Professional licenses,
- ☐ Emergency Contact card, Team/Agency, etc..
- ☐ Dog tags (Some military pilots will not allow you aboard without dog tags)
- ☐ Watch
- ☐ Critical Medications / Allergy Information-bracelet or allergy dog tag
- ☐ Deployment Orders/Travel Authorization (consider storing copy on jump drive)
- ☐ Money/Credit cards
- ☐ Pocket size notebook / log book ("Rite in the Rain" recommended)
- ☐ Pen / Sharpie / Waterproof marker
- ☐ Cell Phone
- ☐ Cell Phone Carrier:\* (Soft, unbreakable type. NOT PLASTIC)
- ☐ Compass (optional)
- ☐ Whistle\* (optional)
  
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**BEFORE YOU TRAVEL:**

- ☐ Make a photocopy of all important documents and cards (including your passport): Lay the contents of your wallet on a photocopier and copy front and back. Leave a copy at your home in a secure place and a copy with someone you trust who you can contact if your wallet is lost or stolen. (If possible, email a copy to yourself)
- ☐ Print deployment orders and TA and Itinerary (hard copy and digital copy to jump drive)
- ☐ Provide orders as needed to employer.
- ☐ Leave team emergency contact information with your home base contact/family.
- ☐ Make arrangements for Pet Care, Home care, Bills, Mail pick-up, lawn care, etc.
- ☐ Refill critical prescriptions/meds.
- ☐ Notify credit card carriers of pending travel
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Personal Equipment Issues and considerations\***

Given the very nature of our mission, we are often working in less than ideal conditions. Plan on high heat, high humidity and long hours. As well, laundry service or facilities may be unavailable. Clothes washed in a trash bag or buckets and hung to air dry may be the norm. At times uniforms may be worn for 2-3+ days, depending on how dirty it gets, how stinky one's teammates think they are and/or the lack of facilities. As well, these conditions wear out the body. Moisture and heat can break down the healthiest team member. As you build your kit, consider the following two issues:

**Cotton Sucks:** Cotton sucks up moisture and holds it. Once it's damp or wet, it tends to stay that way a long time, particularly in the heat and humidity we typically deploy in. It doesn't efficiently wick moisture away from the skin. With the exception of our B.D.U.'s, we have options in selecting high performance synthetics for our base layer that are easily washed and dried. Synthetics air dry relatively quickly, even in high humidity. One can bucket wash good synthetics and line dry and wear within a few hours. If things get really pushed, one can very comfortably put on damp synthetics and they will dry within minutes while wearing them.

**Skin Breakdown:** Experience has shown serious skin breakdown related to retained heat and moisture that could have been avoided by selecting better undergarments. Obviously, this is a very personal choice but almost without exception, particularly in men, there have been significant issues related to this. Some effects were severe enough to render these individuals nearly immobile and essentially non-functional in the field. A quality synthetic undershirt can be very effective at controlling heat and moisture. In addition, it can quickly and easily be bucket or sink washed and air dried. It will keep the 'funk factor' down in your team shirt and BDU blouse and may extend the days between uniform washings. Additionally, a skin drying agent such as Gold Bond powder can be effective in preventing moisture and heat issues.

**Points to consider:**

Cotton will absorb up to 8% of its weight in water. Most synthetics will absorb less than 1%.

A good synthetic will allow air to pass through (breathability) at five times the rate of cotton.

Synthetics move moisture away from your skin. Cotton traps and holds it next to your skin.

A synthetic T-Shirt weighs about 60% of a cotton t-shirt.

Synthetics wash easier, dry much quicker, and last much longer than cotton.

**Bottom Line: Synthetics Dry quickly, maintain support, help control heat and moisture in the skin. They are easy to care for and they will take care of you.**

**\*Following you will find a discussion of essential gear selection as noted in the checklists**

**Underwear suggestions:** UnderArmor brand is incredible stuff. They sell an extensive line of under uniform clothing for military, police as well as sport equipment for men and women. It's not cheap but it's worth every penny. Pieces can run \$16-20 per item. Many don't care for synthetic underwear but most would not deploy without them. There are many manufactures of this type of clothing such as UnderArmor, 5.11, Duofold, Starter, etc. Dicks Sporting Goods, RockCreek outfitters, REI, or any good hunting/outdoor/police/military supplier should carry what you need. Look for good quality stitching, very flat seams and NO COTTON CONTENT.

Additionally, when in a crunch, you can hand wash this stuff in the shower, ring it out, put in on and wear it. It will dry in 15 minutes and retain its shape, support and comfort.

[www.underarmor.com](http://www.underarmor.com)

[www.511.com](http://www.511.com)

[www.duofold.com](http://www.duofold.com)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com)

[www.exofficio.com](http://www.exofficio.com)

**Socks:** **quality matters.** Consider wearing socks that contain no cotton while in operations (after hours is fine). Cotton absorbs and holds moisture. Heat, friction and skin maceration issues can be greatly reduced if not eliminated. Consider purchasing a good quality combat type boot sock. Advantages include lower friction, increased moisture transport away from the skin, fast drying, extended wear with no loss of shape or support, lower boot temperatures and ease of cleaning. Good synthetic/synthetic wool blend socks can be hand washed and ready for wear by the start of your next shift. **Two of the best socks you can buy are: Darn Tough Boot Socks and Drymax Hiking HD (go to their website and be amazed).** SmartWool and Thorlo boot socks are also great choices.

[www.Darntough.com](http://www.Darntough.com)

[www.Drymaxsport.com](http://www.Drymaxsport.com)

[www.Smartwool.com](http://www.Smartwool.com)

[www.Thorlo.com](http://www.Thorlo.com)

**Sock Liners:** These are optional, but again, heat and moisture control are issues here. Field experience has had NDMS personnel with rapidly developing, and at times severe foot breakdown to the point of needing wound care. Heat, moisture and friction even in good fitting boots were the problem. A thin synthetic liner sock reduces all of these issues. Most significantly, it reduces skin maceration and friction. They are cheap insurance against issues and some injuries that can cause a lot of discomfort while deployed or possibly even render you immobile. **Fox River makes some of the best sock liners available.** UnderArmor, Thorlo, Smartwool, etc are some of the other many producers of excellent socks and liners. Any good sporting goods store should have some to choose from.

[www.foxrivermills.com](http://www.foxrivermills.com)

[www.underarmor.com](http://www.underarmor.com)

[www.thorlo.com](http://www.thorlo.com)

[www.smartwool.com](http://www.smartwool.com)

**Boots:** **quality matters.** Your first deployment is **NOT** the time to break in your new boots or discover friction or discomfort issues. Wear them around the house and in the yard ALOT before you deploy. Boot selection is highly personal discuss with your local “gear head”.

**Clothing Compression bag:** **Eagle Creek Pack-It Compressor** - 2 Pack clothing bag will allow you to pack your cloths in ½ the space. These are extremely rugged bags with a lifetime warranty. Item #40119. Generally found at any good outdoor/backpack supplier  
<http://www.eaglecreek.com>

**Washcloth and Towels:** Again, cotton is nice but it’s heavy and very slow to dry. MSR makes very nice synthetics in washcloth and personal bath towel size. I don’t care for the “Original” or the “Ultralight” as they seem too synthetic feeling. The “Personal” however is a very nice soft towel that is light and dries quickly. See it at Dicks, REI, RockCreek and any larger outfitter. I’m sure there are other manufactures of similar products that are just as good. (Consider a synthetic loofa instead of a washcloth, as it scrubs well, rinses and dries fast).  
[www.MSRcorp.com](http://www.MSRcorp.com)

**Sleeping Bag/ sleep kit:** What you sleep in is a personal choice, but you need something. Cotton is not the best choice for all of the same reasons mentioned above. One thing to consider here is weight and size. This one item has the potential to take up the largest percentage of space in your main bag. Another consideration is temperature rating. Deployments in tropical heat are common and billeting may be in a Western Shelter with no AC or it may be on a warehouse floor, gymnasium or similar and the AC is freezing cold. Generally, 30-40 degree bag will meet both needs. Add a sleeping sheet to your bag for increased comfort and range. (See [www.seatosummit.com](http://www.seatosummit.com) for sleep sheets)

**Some of the finest bags available at any price are made by Wiggy’s** in Colorado. Wiggy’s makes bags for spec-ops and military teams all over the world. They are warm even when damp, dry quickly, and are very durable and guaranteed forever. Anything can be custom made to your size for a very reasonable fee. They will sometimes offer excellent pricing to federal employees.

Another good, readily available deployment sleeping bag is the **Kelty Lightyear 3D 45**, a very nice, <2 lb. synthetic bag that gets very small and can be found for around \$90. The below links will often have sales w/ great deals on mid and high end sleeping bags for as little as \$50.

[www.wiggys.com](http://www.wiggys.com) 1-866-411-6465

[www.kelty.com](http://www.kelty.com)

[www.Sierratradingpost.com](http://www.Sierratradingpost.com)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com) (go to the outlet section)

[www.Campmor.com](http://www.Campmor.com)

**Pillow:** Personal choice here again. I like the Therm-a-rest compressible pillow. It compresses very small, is not an air pillow, rather a soft foam filled pillow that’s very comfortable. Sizes range from ½ size to full size pillows and work great. It has a soft flannel cover. The ½ size can be compress to the size of a grapefruit and it goes in my compression bag with my sleeping bag. Campmor.com has them on sale from time to time for around \$12. Retail is about \$25 for the large. There are several similar choices available.

[www.thermarest.com](http://www.thermarest.com)

**Compression Bag for sleep kit: quality matters.** This is what makes your giant sleeping bag small. Essentially, this is a thin nylon or similar bag with straps that compresses your sleeping bag into ½ its size and reduces the amount of space it consumes in your main deployment bag. **Granite Gear makes some of the best and lightest.** Sea to Summit, RockCreek outfitters, REI etc., have some great choices as well. It's a good idea to take your bag to one of these places and try out the size you need. If you get the right size, you might get your pillow and sheet in there as well. Blowing out a lesser quality compression bag mid deployment leaves you with a sleeping bag that you now have to figure out how to pack in its uncompressed state. If you packed that 55gal trash bag, you might be ok.

[www.Granitegear.com](http://www.Granitegear.com)

[www.seatosummit.com](http://www.seatosummit.com)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com)

[www.rockcreek.com](http://www.rockcreek.com)

**Mattress, sleep type. Foam/Air:** This will make that unexpected night on a gym floor or fire hall floor more bearable or can add an extra measure of comfort to your military cot. You don't have to spend a lot of money here unless you want to. There are many "Closed Cell" foam choices out there but one of the best is **Therm-a-rest Z-lite**. Compared to an inflatable, it is relatively bulky when folded, but will not puncture and go flat. It weighs about a pound. It's minimalist to be sure, but it's better than cement or the ground. High end would be the **Therm-a-rest Prolight 3 or 4**. This inflatable is premium and goes for around \$100. It gets very small, weighs about a pound, and is very comfortable and so far very durable. Though I've never punctured one, I know the possibility exists. Another great choice is the Big Agnes. The AirCore is less than 1 lb., gets as small as a quart jar and are about \$50. There is a long list of other choices beyond the three listed above as well as quality manufactures such as REI.

[www.Thermarest.com](http://www.Thermarest.com)

[www.bigagnes.com](http://www.bigagnes.com)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com)

**Soaps/Detergents etc:** Most carry soap, some don't carry detergent. I carry both, and have used it every time. I've extensively tested and now use the Sea to Summit Trek & Travel liquid Soaps. These are excellent products come packed in leak-proof bottles and are very versatile. The Trek & Travel Wilderness Wash does it all, shower/hair/shave/laundry. If you prefer, the Trek & Travel Laundry Wash does a great job combined with the other personal soaps, they've got it covered. If you prefer, a small 8oz. Nalgene bottle with your detergent of choice will do the job. I do suggest unscented soaps and detergents as scents can attract insects.

[www.Seatosummit.com](http://www.Seatosummit.com)

[www.nalgene-outdoor.com](http://www.nalgene-outdoor.com)

**Garbage Bags:** Choose large trash can size, 40 to 55 gallon size. Rolled up or folded into your pack, they take up little space. These are useful for Emergency rain poncho/bivy sack, Protect your gear from rain, Do laundry in it, emergency shelter, window covers for day sleepers, suffocate a snoring bunkmate, etc... 3-4 is sufficient.

**Zip lock Bags, heavy duty:** The 1 gallon size are useful for storing damp clothes/damp towels in when traveling, smaller bags are handy for holding small loose items, like batteries, matches/lighters/coins/detergents/important documents/passports, etc., that you want to keep dry. The MRE zip lock is very useful for protecting your passport.

**Strip Plug:** Billeting/sleeping-quarters may have limited outlets. The team will need to charge equipment/radios/sat-phones etc. Western Shelters used for billeting have limited outlets near the ceiling. A 3 ft. cord w/ strip will get some power down where you need it and give you more options for charging electronics as well.

**Lights: quality matters:** The choices are nearly unlimited. For \$20-\$50 you can purchase an utterly reliable, lightweight and waterproof light that will allow you to work hands free. It's a good idea to try to keep its battery type similar to your other gear if possible.

Petzl, PrincetonTec, Black Diamond, Pelican and many more make great lights. **My personal favorite is the Petzl Tikka XP line.** Your headlamp must be rugged and reliable. Quality is important. Your safety and your life could at some point depend on it.

**My favorite area light is the Black Diamond Orbit.**

Any good camping supplier or police/military supply house should have what you need.

[www.petzl.com](http://www.petzl.com)

[www.blackdiamondequipment.com](http://www.blackdiamondequipment.com)

**Cell Phone belt holster/carrier:** From the moment you deploy until you return home, you will have a chance to break your cell phone holster every day. During loading and unloading trucks, climbing in and out of aircraft, in and out of vehicles, carrying heavy gear through airports, etc., are all places to break your cell phone carrier. A nylon or canvas type carrier is far less likely to break. The choices are nearly unlimited and can be found at Lowes, Home Depot, many sporting goods stores, police/military and camping suppliers.

[www.timbuk2.com](http://www.timbuk2.com)

[www.mountainsmith.com](http://www.mountainsmith.com) (see accessories section for example)

**Water and commercial air travel:** Given current TSA restrictions, commercial travelers are restricted from bringing outside water through security. Your options include going without water, carry empty Nalgene bottles/hydrations systems and filling once through security, purchasing bottled water once through security or waiting until you are on the ground at your destination to procure water.

[www.nalgene-outdoor.com](http://www.nalgene-outdoor.com)

**SUMMARY:** Effective gear does not have to be expensive but it does have to be carefully selected and functional. Learn from each other. Be prepared and motivated and ready to “**Answer The Call**”.

**Disclaimer:** No list or gear guide is 100% comprehensive. International deployments require consideration of items and issues not listed here. Feel free to email with comments/considerations and product reviews. [jrmalloch@yahoo.com](mailto:jrmalloch@yahoo.com) jm

Discussion Notes:

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