



# APACHE BOOBY TRAPS

BY KEVIN REEVE

**I was working with a U.S. Army Special Forces A-team for a training project in the desert.**

I was their quarry, and they were tracking me. I had an hour head start and I had to make some choices: I could move fast, but fast movement leaves obvious tracks. I could move slow and hide my tracks, but that would keep me in closer proximity of the trackers—or I could set a booby trap. In this case, I could emplace a noisemaker to let them know they had triggered a trap and that they needed to be more careful.

I ended up using all three techniques. I traveled fast in the wrong direction to get some separation, then altered my vector towards my destination going slow and hiding my trail, then I set a booby trap. This was one motivated group of soldiers and they caught me, but in the after-action discussion, they conceded that the booby trap had been the most effective countermeasure.

The game played between trackers and their prey is usually talked about in terms of the time/distance gap. Trackers want to close the gap, and evaders want to extend it.

The evader can increase his speed, but that results in an easier trail to follow. He can hide his intent (destination) by direction changes. But one sure way to force a tracking team to be cautious, typically slowing their movement, is the clever use of booby traps.

The trap does not even have to hurt or kill someone to be effective. A trap that triggers and misses the target can have the same psychological impact as if it hit the target. It causes the target to have to stop, assess the situation and be more cautious.

Booby traps are indiscriminate. They kill or injure whoever comes across them. Great care must be taken to ensure that the individuals

targeted are the only ones who trigger the trap if deterring pursuit is appropriate, such as in the case of an isolated soldier avoiding capture overseas. Civilian casualties from a booby trap set for enemy combatants is unacceptable.

The use of booby traps in the USA today is generally unlawful. They cannot be used as long as the rule of law is in place, but criminals make use of them and it is wise for citizens and students of history to understand the tools commonly used by insurgents. These insights are at the heart of seeing and avoiding danger. I believe that the Apache were tactical geniuses, and their traps have been evolved by insurgents such as the Viet Cong. Illegal drug fields in the U.S. and abroad have been protected by similar traps, and IRGC and Hezbollah operatives and associates have provided numerous groups and individuals around the world ad-

vanced training in booby traps updated with the use of electronics, batteries, sensors and improvised explosives.

Primitive man-traps are classified into three categories: Drop traps where an item drops from above, pit traps where the individual drops into a hole of some type and the miscellaneous category of traps that meet neither of the previous criteria.

### THE APACHE LIMP WIRE TRAP

One of the common identifiers in most trip-line activated traps is the presence of a taut trip line stretched across a trail. The symmetrical, straight line of the trip wire is not natural, and it stands out.

The Apache Limp Wire trap does not require a taut line, which makes it much harder to detect. A twenty foot line is tossed over a strong branch at least 10 feet above the trail. It should be centered over the trail. A rock or weighted log is tied to one end and hoisted up to the branch. The other end is directed around a branch to provide a vertical pull. The pull must be directly vertical over the trigger mechanism, and it must be straight up from the stake.

The main stake is driven into the ground close to the tree. A four-inch long by half-inch thick crossbar is placed under the nose of the stake. A peg that will span from the crossbar to a rock on the ground is measured and cut, and the trip line is firmly attached and laid in place close to the rock. The trip line should be run across the trail and staked into place on the other side of the trail.

The weight is lifted by pulling on the rope until it is as high as it can be raised. Going around the branch from the tree trunk, measure down to the crosspieces with the rope and tie a loop. While holding the weight of the rock on the line, put the cross piece in place and slip the loop over the crosspiece. Bring the loop right next to the stake and slide the cross piece so that there is a short end with the line loop over the end. Holding the long end of the cross piece, you would now feel very little pull down from the weighted line. The trapper would make sure to maintain the cross piece in a horizontal position so the loop does not slip off. The peg is set between the long end of the cross bar and the rock on the ground and the horizontal bar is slowly allowed to add pressure to the peg. Once it is let go, the peg will hold the cross bar steady. The key here is that the weighted loop goes straight up from the stake. Any side pull will make the cross piece want to rotate and trigger the trap.

If the set-up is right, the trap will be steady.

One way this is practiced is to mark out with sticks a kill box (the area the weight will drop onto) while making sure neither the trapper nor anyone in their party gets near the kill box. This is a deadly trap, and it is an indiscriminate killer.

The trigger is very sensitive and even the slightest tug will trigger it. To properly place the trigger, the trapper has to estimate the time it takes for the weight to drop and take into account the walking speed of the individual targeted.

A head or shoulder strike typically does the most damage, but a close call will likely shake the pursuer and force them to be much more cautious.

Making easy to follow tracks, called sucker tracks, can sometimes cause a tracker to speed up. That conversely lowers his awareness of a trip line.

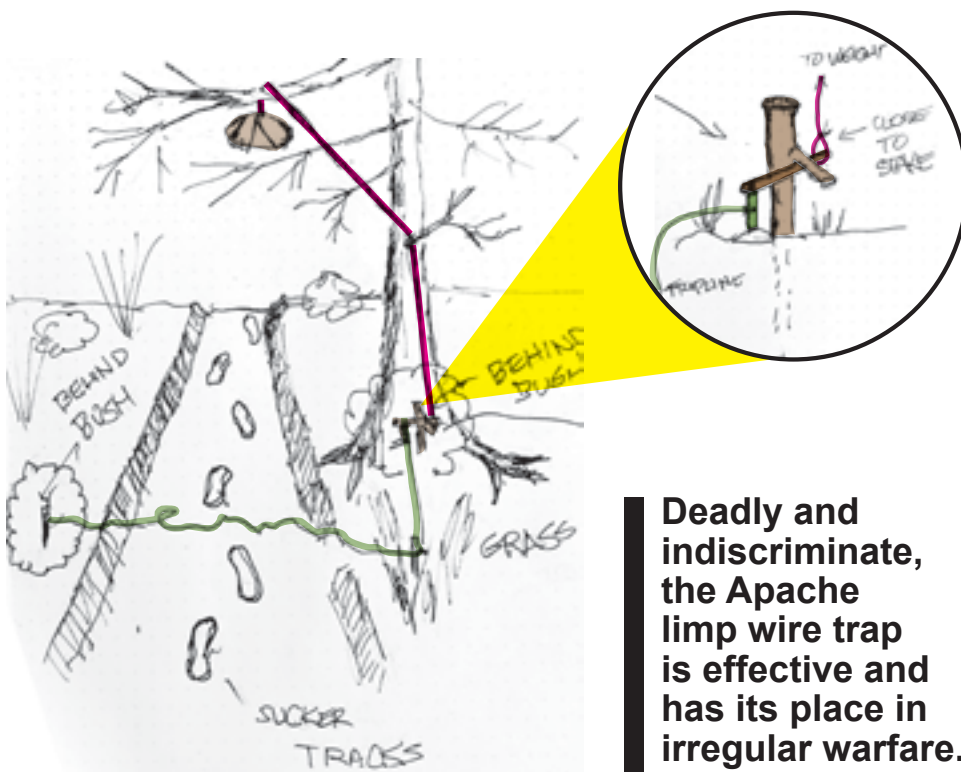
Other options for the trip line are to set the line past the trap so that the point man or tracker triggers the trap that drops on another member of a pursuit team. This will cause the point or tracer to doubt themselves. In areas of dense vegetation along an overgrown trail, the trip line is tied to a bush protruding out onto the trail and brushing against the bush causes the trip to trigger. A treble hook placed on a branch protruding into the path will hook on clothing and pull the peg as well.

If I have the parts ready (I carry a couple of sets in my trap pouch), from start to finish, I average 6-7 minutes total setup time. Considering the effect on a tracking team of killing or injuring one of their members, that is six minutes well spent if I am forced to evade an enemy tracking team or teach these skills to others.

Booby traps have their place in irregular warfare. They are commonly used to slow pursuits or as a low cost, simple tool to attrite and deter an enemy. Good guys will use them where only appropriate combatants involved will trigger them and in accordance with relevant U.S. laws. Once you set a trap, you lose control over it; you can no longer control who triggers it. Booby traps may have limited value for citizens under normal circumstances, but understanding how booby traps are used by criminals and insurgents helps us all hone the ability to see and avoid danger. ✓

### BIO

Kevin Reeve ([www.onpointtactical.com](http://www.onpointtactical.com)) is the founder and Director of OnPoint Tactical Tracking School. Kevin has provided training to law enforcement, SAR teams and the U.S. military in the arts of tracking, survival, escape and evasion and urban operations. Kevin also worked at Apple Computer for five years doing organizational development and executive coaching, as well as platform training and curriculum development.



**Deadly and indiscriminate, the Apache limp wire trap is effective and has its place in irregular warfare.**

# TACTICS PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

## LOW LIGHT

## MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING WITH RPGi

BY **BRENDAN SOUDER** PHOTOS COURTESY **RPGi**

**Let's pretend that we live in a world where bad scenarios involving gunfights are entirely predictable based on collected statistics.**

**N**umerous studies across the world state that the highest percentage of gun battles occur between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., yet most training courses focus primarily on daytime marksmanship applications. It is our belief that fundamental training is critical for all shooters, but can also provide a false sense

of security and surprise those who are required to demonstrate the same skills in hours of limited visibility. The skills and drills executed in the daylight should be equally trained at night.

The history of low light shooting for me began with my time as a kid using flashlights from my Dad's garage taped to my

old .22 marlin for shooting soda cans on the back of our farm. Now this isn't a great option, but back then I perceived it as a groundbreaking technique for a 12-year-old kid in rural Virginia. Shortly after graduating high school, I was fortunate enough to secure an enlistment into a high-speed army unit. We had all kinds *continued next page*