



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

March 3, 2020

Gen. David H. Berger
Commandant of the Marine Corps
Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
3000 Marine Corps, Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-3000

Via e-mail: David.Berger@usmc.mil

Dear Gen. Berger,

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide regarding the crude killing of animals during the annual Cobra Gold 2020 military exercise—the largest joint multinational military exercise in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command region, in which thousands of U.S. troops and Marines are participating from February 25 through March 6 at various locations throughout Thailand. **We urge you to follow the lead of individual U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Army facilities that have previously ended the use of live animals in food procurement survival exercises and instead use more effective and ethical non-animal training methods during Cobra Gold.**

The *Daily Mail* has reported that during Cobra Gold, Marines kill chickens with their bare hands, skin and eat live geckos, consume live scorpions and tarantulas, and decapitate cobras and drink their blood.¹

In 2011, the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center (MCMWTC) suspended its use of live animals in its survival training courses following discussions with PETA.² Nearly three decades ago, the U.S. Army's Dugway Proving Ground also canceled a survival skills training course using animals after PETA asked then–Defense Secretary

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¹James Gordon, "Welcome to the Jungle: US Marines Drink the Blood of Beheaded Cobras and Chomp on Tarantulas and Scorpions As They Learn Survival Skills During Wargame Exercises in Thailand," *Daily Mail*, 2 Mar. 2020

<www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8063555/US-Marines-war-games-exercise-teaches-survive-Thai-jungle.html?ITO=applenews>.

²Col. Phillip Chandler (then commanding officer of MCMWTC), e-mail to PETA, 31 May 2011.

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Les Aspin to intervene.³ Clearly, there are precedents for troops to learn food procurement survival skills without having to use live animals in abhorrent training drills.

Food procurement survival training options that don't use any animals are widely available. For example, in the book *Primitive Wilderness Skills, Applied & Advanced*, the authors—having themselves trained U.S. Army Survival Evasion Resistance Escape (SERE) instructors—explain how to obtain food in nature.⁴ In addition, Gretchen Cordy, a former Air Force survival instructor who appeared on the CBS show *Survivor*, hosts an instructional wilderness survival video series titled *Prepared to Survive*.⁵ SERE specialists are already using virtual reality to prepare Air Force pilots for worst-case scenarios,⁶ and interactive video games that have food procurement components are now on the market. Furthermore, as the *Daily Mail* notes, “There are also vegan options too with the jungle being rich in fruit and other lush, edible vegetation.”

You can contact me at 757-962-8325 or ShalinG@peta.org. I look forward to your response concerning this important matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Shalin G. Gala
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cc: Capt. Oliver Lewis, Executive Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Defense
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³Brent Israelsen, “Animals Live Through Survival Course,” *Deseret News*, 20 Mar. 1993
<<https://www.deseret.com/1993/3/20/19037988/animals-live-through-survival-course>>.

⁴More information about this book is available on Amazon.com at <<https://www.amazon.com/Primitive-Wilderness-Skills-Applied-Advanced/dp/0967877784>>.

⁵More information about this video series is available on Amazon.com at
<https://www.amazon.com/Prepared-Survive-Gretchen-Cordy/dp/B000AOVQZ4/ref=dp_return_1?ie=UTF8&n=2625373011&s=movies-tv&sa-no-redirect=1&pldnSite=1>.

⁶“SERE Specialists Use VR to Prep Pilots for Worst-Case Scenario,” *Military.com*, 14 Mar. 2019,
<<https://www.military.com/video/sere-specialists-use-vr-prep-pilots-worst-case-scenario>>.