

PREMIUM LIFESTYLE

# Former SWAT Commander, Royal Marine Share Tips on How to Secure Your Home

Put yourself in the shoes of potential intruders and assess your home for weak points.



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By following a few simple, often DIY steps, you can transform your home into a fortress that can safeguard your family and your possessions. (Peter Dazeley/The Image Bank/Getty Images)

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**By Bill Lindsey** | May 04, 2024 Updated: May 04, 2024

Whether your home is a sprawling estate, a house in the suburbs, a high-rise condominium unit, or a tiny apartment, effective security requires precautions beyond locking the door. The solution is to make your home a fortress. Luckily, much of this can be a DIY project.

Digging a moat around the house may seem like a great idea, but Gene Petrino, co-owner of [Survival Response](#) and a former SWAT commander with 30 years of law enforcement experience, has a better suggestion.

“The idea is to be prepared, not paranoid,” he told The Epoch Times.

“There is much the typical homeowner can do that will empower them and help reduce the chances of becoming a victim of burglary, or even home invasions.”

“Envision your property as a dartboard, where the home is the center target and the boundary is the outer ring,” he said. “From the perimeter, assess potential weak points, such as gaps in the fencing. Check if the lighting adequately covers every area, deterring intruders.”

## Setting Up Security Around Your Home

To create the outer deterrence zone, “trim back or remove any overgrown trees or shrubs that could offer concealment for burglars,” he said. “Don’t give them a place to hide while they wait for you to leave. If you can see them, call the police, making sure all doors and windows are locked, and turning on exterior lights.”

Since all burglars want to avoid being seen, motion-activated lights that illuminate the yard and all doors are a good idea. Those who want to avoid the effort and expense of installing traditional 110-volt motion-activated or dusk-to-dawn lighting might consider solar-powered systems that are quick and easy to install, and powered by rechargeable batteries that typically provide about a year of service before requiring replacement.



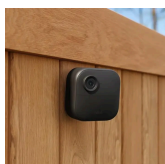
Because burglars like to work in the dark, easily-to-install motion-sensing lights are essential for illuminating doorways, windows, and the yard. (Bernie Perkins/iStock/Getty Images)

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Sound is another deterrent. Few sounds are as effective in scaring off bad guys as a barking dog. For almost all people though, a snarling guard dog is not appropriate; the intent is not to have an attack dog, but rather one that barks to deter burglars. According to home improvement website [BobVila.com](http://BobVila.com), whether it is a yappy chihuahua or a growling German shepherd, most burglars avoid homes with dogs. Even if the dog is mild-mannered, post a “Beware of Dog” sign to help scare off bad guys. Don’t have or want a dog? No problem; prominently display “Beware of Dog” signs, and place a large dog bowl at the front or rear door to give the perception that there is a dog inside.

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No burglar wants to mess with a dog. “Beware of Dog” signs are a great way to keep criminals at bay. (Anton Prohorov/Shutterstock)

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## Alarm Systems

Dene Josham, co-founder of [Streetwise Defence](#) based in England, was in the Royal Marines before going on to spend 30 years in the security industry, including 15 years as a bodyguard to celebrities Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, and Russell Crowe.

“We teach people how to secure their homes; the basics are the same whether it is a mansion or a normal house,” he told The Epoch Times. When Ms. Jolie and Mr. Pitt were still together and living at their southern France estate, Miraval, “they had just had their twins, and there was a \$1 million price tag on the first photos of the babies,” Mr. Josham explained. “We utilized the basics, using security systems such as CCTV and alarms, patrolling the grounds, being alert, and being aware of what was occurring at all times.”

“Your home is your castle,” he said. “You don’t want anyone invading it. Install an intruder alarm system in your home. I recommend a combination of motion sensors and shock sensors on windows and doors.”

He also suggested to always set your home alarms, “even if you’re just popping out or if you have a house full of people. And get some sort of CCTV so you can see what is happening on your phone.” He also recommended installing a doorbell camera that can allow you to speak with the people who appear at your front door, even when you’re not home. [Ring](#), as well as many other firms, offers a wide variety of DIY security systems, sensors, and cameras, including several that provide real-time monitoring without monthly subscriptions.

## Think Like a Thief

Allen Baler, co-founder of [4Patriots](#), an online provider of preparedness products, told The Epoch Times that “security is not just about locking your doors and installing cameras. It is about having a real understanding of what is happening around you in order to protect yourself and your loved ones.”

“People tend to view their homes from the inside-out instead of how intruders view them—from the outside-in,” he said. “Looking at it from a different perspective gives you a better insight into how to deploy your system.”



Be sure to install cameras in all areas where a thief could possibly enter. (ISEN STOCKER/Shutterstock)

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He explained that though doorbell cameras can monitor front doors, most intrusions happen through back doors or side windows, areas often overlooked for camera installation. “To make your home or apartment more secure, you need to be able to observe every possible point where a thief could enter. DIY-installed cameras linked to the home’s Wi-Fi network make it easy to see everything.”

## Be Prepared for Crisis Scenarios

Mr. Baler said making your home a fortress also requires it to withstand natural disasters, power outages, or being cut off from supplies such as food and fuel. “Whether it’s wind knocking out security cameras and lights, or a power failure rendering the most sophisticated system inoperable, you need an alternate power source to run your system,” he said. A compact gas-powered generator will keep the lights on and the refrigerator running during power outages.



A backup generator acts as insurance against power outages that could shut down a security system and leave a home susceptible to thieves. (JodiJacobson/E+/Getty Images)

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“Think medieval times,” he said. “Castles gave owners and their community the opportunity to shelter in place for extended periods of time. In this sense, societal needs haven’t changed much in hundreds of years.”

His list of home fortress must-haves includes food and personal items, in addition to a security system that can deter, detect, and defend against any type of perceived threat. “There’s no point in having a fortress if you cannot sustain yourself within it,” he said. “This means having a supply of water, easy-to-prepare food, plus hygiene and medical items that eliminate having to venture outside your walls.”

## What to Expect From Your Security System

Security systems come in all different forms. Anything that can deter, detect, and notify of a possible issue is a security system, from a dog to



a high-tech electronic system. Choosing a system that contacts first responders is an added bonus, Mr. Baler said.

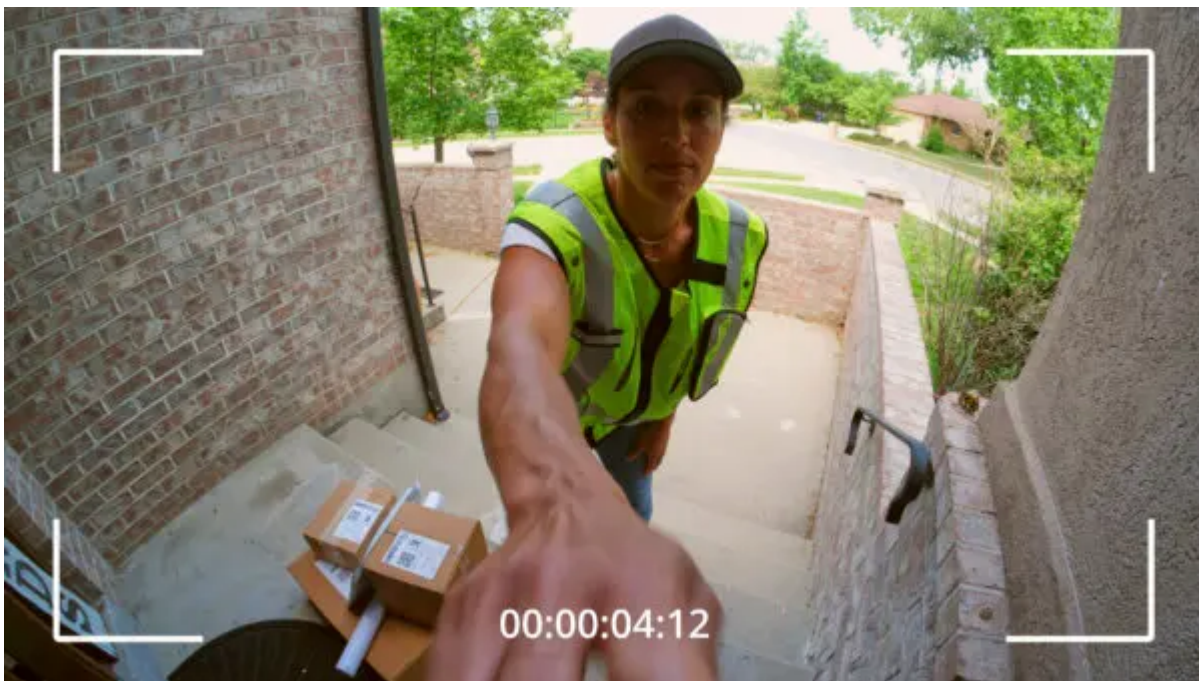
He also addressed the potential loopholes in home security systems, warning that “improperly installed or inadequate systems can create a false sense of security. Also, having a strictly internet-based system or a grid-tied system can leave you vulnerable to power outages. Weak pass codes or unsecure signals can also lead to the possibility of people hacking your system and monitoring you, which is a privacy concern.”

He said a recent uptick in crime has created a surge in demand for security systems. “Systems used to be purchased to help prevent break-ins while homeowners were away, but they are now needed to prevent everything from packages being stolen from porches to home invasions.”

## DIY Your Home Security

Anyone with basic DIY skills can fortify their homes themselves, whether they live in a house or an apartment. An alternative to a professionally-installed and expensive security system is installing a basic system, which can be surprisingly easy.

For example, a wireless Ring video doorbell that provides video and audio surveillance only requires setting a few screws and periodically recharging the battery. [Ring Stick Up](#) cameras can be mounted pretty much anywhere using screws or adhesive strips. A Ring portable keypad that resembles an oversized TV remote can be carried around the home. Mounting a battery-powered motion sensor is as simple as hanging a painting by using adhesive tape or screws, while a breaking glass sensor can be placed on a shelf within 25 feet of a window.



A doorbell camera lets you see who is at the door; cameras with audio allow you to talk to them too, whether you are at home or many miles away. (RichLegg/E+/Getty Images)

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Mr. Petrino, the former SWAT commander, said that older doors and windows can be easily forced open, and that “updating to steel doors and impact windows is best, but can be expensive.” He offered this more affordable modification: “Replace existing screws in the hinges and strike places with three-inch stainless-steel screws, and add a deadbolt. This makes even old doors nearly impenetrable. Apply security film and add locks to windows to help prevent them from being opened.”

Lighting is the number one nighttime crime prevention feature a home can have, Mr. Petrino said. He recommended installing motion-sensor lighting by all points of entry and perimeter lighting around the property, along with this tip: “use timers to alter the times for the lights to give the appearance someone is inside turning them on and off, especially when you are away on vacation.”

Security cameras can help police identify a burglar should a crime occur. That’s why installing them at visible locations by doors and windows can deter criminals from trying their luck. He added: “Some

cameras feature two-way audio and motion alerts. If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, have a neighbor or friend collect your mail. Put your television on a timer so that it looks like someone is home watching it.”

Garage doors are soft spots in many homes, he told The Epoch Times, “especially if the door leading inside is not hardened and secured, so keep them closed and locked.”

The bottom line is simple: make the home inhospitable to criminals, be aware, and be prepared.



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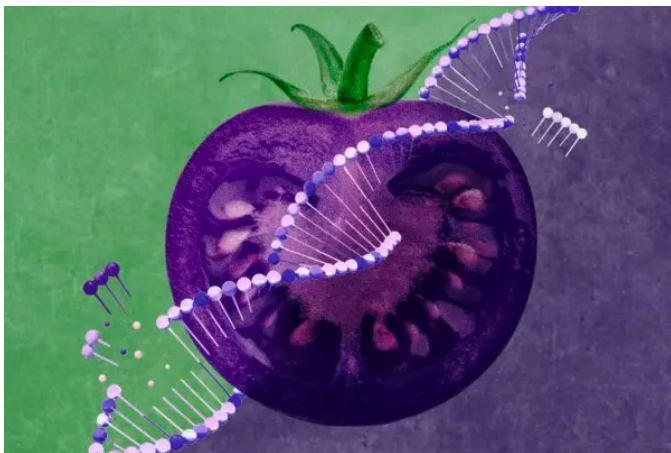
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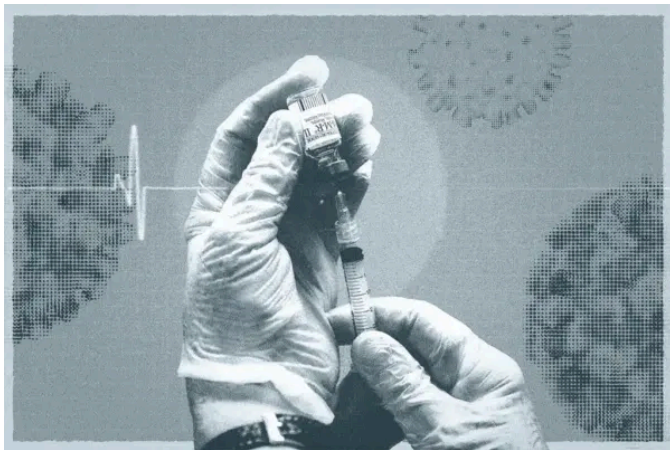




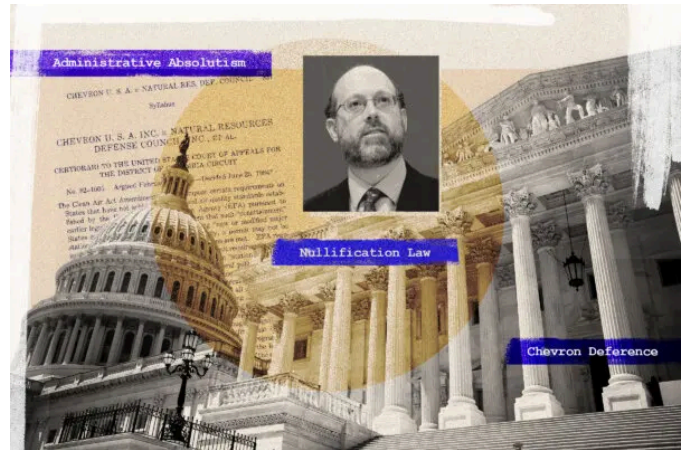
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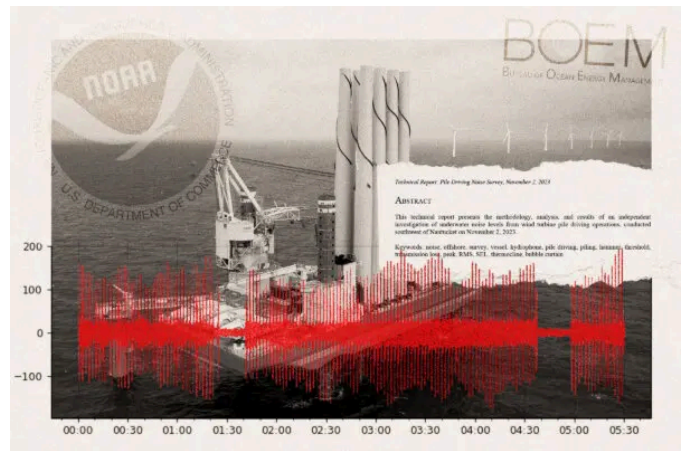
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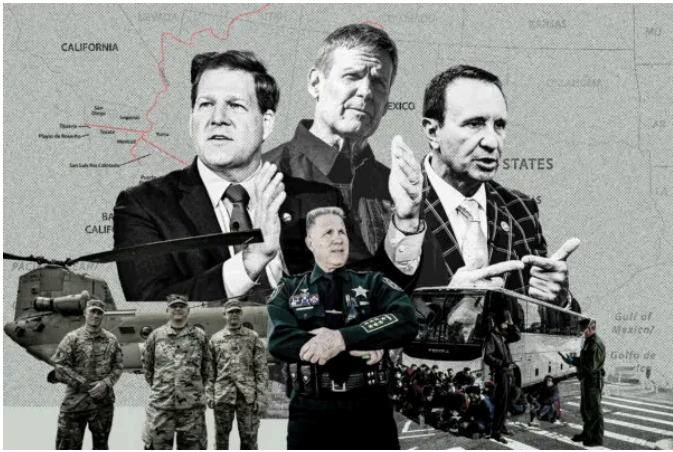
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