

The **Circuit**

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50

For Security And Protection Specialists

ENHANCING
HEALTH & WELLNESS



DRONES IN PROTECTION

SHOTGUNS
TACTICAL FIREARMS

VENEZUELA GOLD
AND THE BUSINESS OF PROTECTION

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**PART 1**

TACTICAL FIREARMS

THE SHOTGUN

I would say the firearm I have encountered the most in the security business, internationally, is the shotgun. I have heard many supposed experts within the close protection industry dismiss shotguns as being "cowboy" and "overkill" and thereby not having an application. Personally,

I would strongly question the experience of these experts.

Over the last 30 years, I have worked commercially in the security and firearms

business in Europe, the US, Africa, Middle East, the Caribbean, and Latin America. I have encountered shotguns being used in all locations where firearms are legally employed for security

and defensive purposes. There are pros and cons to shotguns as there are with all firearms. These need to be understood, and I will try to explain a few of the main points in this article.

Shotguns in The Security Industry

In many places where firearms can be used legally, in the security industry, the first firearm you tend to come across is the shotgun, for many reasons. Shotguns are primarily seen as sporting guns with recreational applications for clay pigeon shooting and hunting. For this reason, they are usually legal to some extent in most countries, and therefore this makes it easier for them to be included in any armed security industry regulations.

Even though shotguns are extremely effective weapons, they have limitations. They are generally not classified as military-type weapons due to their limited range, rates of fire, and tube/magazine capacities. In many places, restrictions are placed on the barrel lengths so that shotguns cannot be shortened and made concealable. Also, restrictions are placed on

the types of ammunition, which can limit availability, legality, and lethality of the shotgun. That said, shotguns are not the type of firearms that will be used to overthrow a government and are not really in the same league when compared to assault rifles for combat applications.

Shotguns are relatively easy to use, durable, and very affordable when compared to handguns, which is a major factor when equipping a guard force. The various types of ammunition available for the shotgun can significantly affect the lethality of the weapon, which I will discuss later. In my time, I have come across many guards who load with birdshot shells, which can be lethal at close range. However, at a distance, they will not cause deadly harm and will more than likely disarm and disable the bad guy.

With all firearms, the golden rule is: if you're using one, then you must understand the gun, the ammunition, its limitations, and applications.

The Guns

Shotguns come in various configurations, and if you're serious about working in ►

the international security industry, you should be familiar with how to at least unload and make safe all the firearms you could come in contact with. I will discuss three main types of shotgun here. To read more on handguns, see my article "Pistol Grip Shotguns" in Issue 47 of the Circuit Magazine.

- **Break Barrel:** These are the guns most people will visualize when shotguns are mentioned, the iconic "Double Barreled" shotgun. The break barreled shotgun come either with side-by-side or over-and-under barrels, and some companies are even offering tripled barreled shotguns. In some places break barreled shotguns

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are the only firearms that are legally available to the general public, so you should know how to operate them. They are generally simple to use, and most models are very similar but what can vary greatly is the price, with high-quality guns costing tens of thousands of dollars. Even though many would dismiss them as not having any security application, I will say that if they are loaded with the right shells, they are as deadly as any other shotgun. Sawed-off double-barreled shotguns have been a criminal's favorite firearms for a long time, and in the right hands, they are a devastating weapon.

- **Pump Action Shotguns:** There are

a lot of myths that surround the use of pump-action shotguns that can end up getting people into a lot of trouble or killed. So, ensure you learn how to use them from an instructor who has actually worked with them and not just been taught how to instruct classes on them. Pump-action shotguns come in a variety of configurations, and what can vary greatly is the location of the safety catches and the action releases. Good quality and well-maintained pump-action shotguns are very reliable as the shells are cycled through them manually by the pump action. When ►

someone can handle and control the gun properly, then double-tapping and rapid-fire is not a problem.

- **Semi-Automatic Shotguns:** In the last few years, there have been significant improvements in the reliability of semi-auto shotguns. A game-changer was the introduction of the Russian Saiga 12 that was originally introduced in the West as a sporting gun and has since been made tactical and copied by other manufacturers. The Benelli M4 is an excellent semi-auto that is in service with quite a few militaries and police units globally. But the issue with this gun is the price tag that generally runs over \$1500.00 USD (MSRP \$1999.00 USD). One of the best semi-auto shotguns of all time is the Browning A5 that was designed in 1898 by John Browning and officially saw services with various militaries and police units from 1905 until 1975. I believe it was used in Rhodesia until the end of the war in 1979. One of the main things that can cause malfunctions with semi-automatics is

the type of ammunition being used. Generally, they prefer "hotter" loads to ensure there is enough force and gas to enable the guns to cycle properly.

Barrel Lengths, Chokes, Tubes & Mags

There are many myths about shotguns, and I can't dispel them all here in this short article. But one of the main ones I hear is that you cannot miss your target with a shotgun. The truth of the matter is, you can miss with any gun! I have seen people miss targets at 2 meters, 25 meters, and everything in between.

Shotguns generally fire a certain number of pellets per shell, but can also fire solid singular slugs. When firing shells containing pellets, it takes distance for the pellets to spread out after the shell has been shot. This means that up close, the barrel of the gun needs to be directly on your target. The pellets spread out the further they get from the barrel. Even at 25 meters, you need the barrel centered on the target for the majority of the pellets to hit. Also, if the shooter is not controlling the gun properly, the recoil, especially with pistol grip

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guns or when using "hot" loads, can throw the gun off its aim, causing a miss. If you are using slugs, then the same principals of using a rifle apply because the shells contain one projectile.

If you are using a shotgun, you need to understand how the gun "patterns" with the ammunition that you're going to be using. To "pattern" a shotgun you need to shoot targets at various ranges. For instance, at 5, 10, 15, and 25 meters to see how the pellets spread out and pattern. You will then know the area your pellets will cover when shot at different distances. All guns tend to shoot differently with different types of ammo. I have seen very similar shotguns shoot completely different patterns as the shooters were using different brands of ammo with the same loads.

Things that affect how the shotguns shoot and pattern are the barrel lengths, the chokes, and the types of ammo being used. I will stick my neck out and say as a general rule, a US legal 18-inch barreled shotgun with no chokes should be able to put all 9 pellets from a standard ►



2 3/4", 00 Buckshot shell on a silhouette target at 20 meters. After this and maybe before, pellets will be straying off target, which means they could fly and hit innocent bystanders, etc.

Personally, I think of a shotgun, at a distance, as an area weapon that's ideal for putting down suppressing fire out to 50 meters and beyond. If you have the available shooting ranges, try patterning your gun beyond the textbook effective ranges for shotguns and think about how they can be applied tactically. A 4-meter pattern of #4 buckshot at 100 meters should keep

someone's head down, to say the least!

Other Factors

- **Gauges:** The most common gauge or caliber for shotguns in the security world is 12 gauge (12ga). For those looking for a defensive shotgun and find the recoil of the 12ga too much, try 20ga. Another common gauge or caliber is 4/10, which is very easy to shoot and should be okay for frail people and children. The smaller the gauge means the shells will hold fewer powder charges and fewer pellets.

- **Barrel lengths:** The general rule is the shorter

the barrel of the shotgun, the quicker the pellets from a shell will spread when fired. Simply put, short-barreled shotguns are for close quarters, and longer barreled shotguns are primarily sporting guns for shooting clay pigeons and hunting. But all are equally lethal. Most shotguns used for security applications have barrel lengths from 18 to 20 inches. You should always check the legally required length for a shotgun barrel in the areas your working. Sawing a few inches off the barrel of your 870 might make it a lot handier but could also get you sent to jail!

- **Chokes:** The easiest way to describe what a choke does is to say that it narrows the muzzle of the barrel slightly, which constricts and focuses the spread of the pellets. Tactical and defensive shotguns usually don't have any chokes in the barrels, but sporting guns can come with various chokes; Cylinder (no choke), Improved, Modified, and Full. Hunters and sports shooters can vary the chokes they use depending on the distances they are shooting. From a safety perspective, there

can be issues shooting slugs through barrels with full chokes, always check what the gun and ammo manufacturers recommend. You don't want to end up hurting yourself or, more importantly, damaging a good gun because of your negligence!

- **Tubes & Magazines:** On a pump-action or semi-auto shotgun, the "tube" is the magazine tube that runs under the barrel and holds the shells that are going to be shot. The number of shells a gun can hold will depend on the length of the barrel, the size of the shells, and if there are any legal restrictions. Generally, a pump-action tactical/security shotgun should hold between 5 to 7 shells in its tube and one round in the chamber. When unloading a pump-action or semi-auto shotgun that has a magazine tube, ensure you always check the tube is empty. With the action of the gun to the rear, you can have an empty chamber, but if there is a round in the tube as soon as the action goes forward you would have reloaded the gun. ALWAYS CHECK THE TUBE WHEN UNLOADING! There are also various shotguns these days like the Saiga ►

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12 that load from conventional under the gun magazines. The only issue I have with these is that anything past a 5 round magazine can be very bulky and awkward to use in small spaces. There are some 20 round drum magazines on the market that seem to work fine for security applications.

- **Accessories:** Personally, I am not a fan of people decorating their shotguns and firearms like a Christmas tree with taticool accessories. If you're using slugs for hunting game at a distance, then I see the relevance for a scope or optic on a shotgun to ensure a clean kill. Tactically, there is no

need for optics on shotguns, they are just another gimmick. Flashlights are cool in case you drop your car keys in the dark, or you want to show the bad guys where you are so they can shoot you first, but that's about it. Keep it simple, keep it real, and spend your money on ammo. And most importantly, invest in learning to shoot!

In Part 2 of this edition of Tactical Firearms, I'll be getting into the different types of ammunition available, which is best for different situations, and offering a few other hints and tips for getting the most out of the shotgun as a security and defensive firearm.

Orlando Wilson has worked in the security industry internationally for over 25 years. He has become accustomed to the types of complications that can occur, when dealing with international law enforcement agencies, organized criminal and Mafia groups. He is the chief consultant for Risks Inc. and based in Miami but spends much of his time traveling and providing a wide range of kidnapping prevention and tactical training services to private and government clients.

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