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Week 51 of 52: Home Defense

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"If you can't protect it, you don't own it;" this popular prepping phrase describes the mentality the unprepared have about you and your preps. I'm not saying it's fair that people could steal from you, but it's a reality, and a concern you should not take lightly. The fact is that crime seems to escalate in the aftermath of a disaster; something we have seen with many disasters, and as recently as [Hurricane Isaac](#) ^[1].

Over the last year, we have discussed how important it is for security measures to be in place especially during and following a wide-spread disaster. In an earlier [newsletter](#) ^[2] written on the subject of external security measures, I wrote, "a 'bug in' scenario may be our only choice after a disaster strikes and we must prepare not only for our basic needs, but also for our safety. Since the grid may be down following a disaster, each household should prepare for crime."

I realize there are some who believe a gun does not belong in the home; and in all honesty, that is your God given choice; be that as it may, if we are talking about protecting ourselves in a short-or long-term disaster, then we have to assume that local emergency responders will not be as readily available and crime could be a threat to our livelihood and well-being. If that is the case, then a firearm should be as much a part of your preparedness plan as having the coveted beans and Band-Aids. I don't know about you, but if someone kicked in my door, I know they aren't looking for a cup of sugar. Their motivation is purely to take something that you have or cause harm to you or a family member, and you must assume the worst. Trying to communicate with him or her will not do the trick if they are inside your home. On the other hand, a rifle pointed directly at the intruder's chest, however, would make a very clear statement, wouldn't it?

I would like to emphasize that a gun should never be in the home of someone who does not know how to [properly handle or understand gun safety protocols](#) ^[3]; this is an accident waiting to happen. That said, if you plan on owning and keeping a gun in the home, it is my recommendation that every family member, including children learn the gun safety and handling rules. Further, every time you pick up a firearm, you must assume that it is loaded. Checking the magazine and gun chamber to make sure a bullet is not lodged is going another step further in ensuring safety measures.

Lisa Bedford, [the Survival Mom](#) ^[4], also believes in teaching her children about the importance of gun safety. In her article, "[Two Things My Kids Know about Gun Control](#)" ^[5], she doesn't want guns to be a mysterious forbidden fruit. "After all, what is more alluring to a child?... So, our kids have been taught how to shoot. Both have shot a thousand rounds or more from their .22 rifles." Lisa also recommends visiting the NRA website to use their [Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program](#) ^[6] which is available to individuals, schools, and groups and priced affordably.

Lisa also has a great article geared toward women on [the 23 Truths of Firearms](#) ^[7] you should consider reading.

Best Firearm for Children or First Time Users

So what's the best all-around gun for the entire family? In my humble opinion, the .22 rifle or .22 pistols are the best choices for first time gun owners or for teaching children how to shoot. A great selling point of this caliber is it has little to no recoil, and can be used in a

multitude of situations including home protection and used in hunting small game (and even large game from a certain distance).

An added benefit is the ammunition is reasonably priced, which means that a .22 can be an excellent practice rifle to learn basic rifle shooting skills at a fraction of the cost of other rifles.

Best Firearm for Home Protection

My #1 choice for overall home protection is the shotgun. Either a 12-gauge or the slightly smaller 20-gauge are excellent choices. In the article, "[An Introduction to SHTF Home Defense, Guns and Safety](#)"^[8], at www.SHTFPlan.com, the author agrees with these sentiments and goes on to suggest that the best all around shot gun to purchase is a 12-gauge.

"During my concealed weapons permit course, the instructor said something to the effect of "for a home defense shotgun, you can pick any gauge you want...as long as it is 12-gauge."

First, 12-gauge shotguns offer a generous spread (i.e., you don't have to be that accurate) and/or stopping power, depending on the type of ammunition of course. Second, 12-gauge shells are BY FAR the most common and the easiest to find (compared to .410, 20-gauge, etc.) and often the least expensive. Wal-Mart (where I buy much of my ammo) usually carries everything in 12-gauge from very light loads for hunting birds and clay shooting to 00 buckshot and slugs."

As far as what bullets to use, the author explains that 2 ¾ shells are the most common, and most shotguns can use them.

For a SHTF scenario, as opposed to home defense, 00 ('double ought') buckshot, which is essentially 7-9 pellets (for a 2 ¾ shell) similar in size to a 9 mm bullet, is probably the way to go, as it offers some spread and SERIOUS stopping power, and decent range (maybe 50 yards or so). If you want more penetration (but no spread), you may want to consider a rifled slug.

...BUT for home defense, 00 buck and slugs MAY not be the best choice. One of the concerns with firing at an intruder in your house is what happens to the bullet/pellet if you miss the bad guy, or it goes through the bad guy? Some ballistics tests have indicated that various types of buckshot can easily pass through several layers of sheetrock because of the relatively high momentum of the projectiles.

Therefore, some experts recommend a lighter load if the shotgun is intended only as a "under the bed" weapon. One commonly recommended load is No. 4 birdshot, which has a higher number of smaller pellets compared to 00 buck. While still offering 'decent' stopping power, it will spread a bit more than buckshot and really cut down the possibility of injuring a family member in another room or a neighbor.

Another thing to keep in mind is that you can load your shotgun with alternating rounds (e.g., #4 bird, slug, 00 buck, #4 bird, etc.) just be sure to have the series memorized.

Two of the most popular, reliable and cost effective shotguns available are the classic Remington 870 and the Mossberg 500. Both are pump shotguns that have been tried and tested in real life situations with excellent results.

Best Pistol for Home Defense

Pistols are another popular choice for home defense weapons. Some of the most popular pistols to purchase are .9 mm, .40 cal., and .45 cal., which means that the ammunition is also widely available. In a situation where ammunition becomes scarce, having one of these three calibers, especially 9mm and .40 caliber, may allow you to use it as a medium of

exchange to trade for other goods. Likewise, it will be much easier to find than other 'specialty' ammunition.

Before you purchase a weapon for home defense, you want to take into consideration:

- The price of the firearm, magazine and ammunition
- How much recoil it will have
- Whether or not there is a safety mechanism on the firearm
- What type of firearm offers up the highest capacity for magazines
- And of course, which firearm offers the most stopping power

9 mm firearms recoils the least, so it's generally the easiest of the three to stay on target after pulling the trigger, and usually offers higher capacity magazines compared to the other two. 9 mm is usually the least expensive of the three. A con to this type of firearm is it does have the least stopping power.

.40 caliber firearms offers (in a defensive round) more stopping power than 9 mm, but usually 'snaps' (or recoils) more than BOTH 9 mm AND .45. Many law enforcement personnel have switched from 9mm semi-automatic handguns to the .40 caliber in recent years because of the increased stopping power.

.45 caliber firearms offers the most stopping power but you'll generally have to sacrifice a few rounds of magazine capacity and a bit a penetration (which might be a good thing depending on the situation). Comparably speaking, between the three calibers discussed, there usually isn't that much of a price difference between the three calibers discussed, although the .45 is the most expensive.

Handguns come in numerous price points ranging from \$300 to \$1000, so there is certainly a good, reliable weapon out there for anyone who needs to acquire one. The Beretta 92FS 9mm is a favorite in our family and has been used by officers in the United States military since the early 1980's. Glocks in 9mm or .40 caliber are proven in the field as well. The 1911 model .45 caliber is an excellent choice for those looking for more serious stopping power and has been standard issue (M-45) for the Force Recon element of the United States Marine Corp. since 1985.

Assault Rifles / Long Range Weapons

When discussing home defense preparedness we can't ignore the possibility of a total breakdown of law enforcement capability in our immediate local region. In an event such as this we may be faced with multiple attackers attempting to overtake our homes and land. While a shotgun or handgun are both excellent close proximity defense weapons, they will not fare well at longer distances. If you have a property with acreage that needs to be defended you'll want to seriously consider acquiring an assault rifle.

It would be quite difficult to neutralize a target at 100 – 200 yards with a handgun or shotgun, but for an assault rifle it becomes much more feasible.

Like handguns, there are numerous choices available. Here are a couple of excellent options we have found for our own personal defense.

One of the more popular "zombie weapons" out there is the AR-15, made by multiple manufacturers and based on the military version of the M-16. This rifle is chambered in 5.56mm x 45mm round, which is essentially a .223 caliber (there are some special circumstances here, so do your research on ammunition for this rifle if you choose to go with this model). The recoil on an AR-15 is negligible compared to other assault rifles of higher caliber, so it's easier to control. It is highly customizable allowing operators to add force multipliers that include after-market equipment like scopes, magnification, night vision, flash lights, suppression, etc. Because of its popularity, the AR-15 is fairly inexpensive with base models starting in the \$800 range. It's also widespread in the United States, so parts are readily available. So, too, is the ammunition (for now).

Most families will want to have the same weapons platform – a his and hers model, so that you can share ammunition, after- market equipment and parts. If one gun breaks, you can

always use it for parts for your other weapon. Buying two AR-15's would run at least \$1600 for basic models, so cost may be an issue for some.

One alternative option for an excellent "SHTF weapon" is the SKS. Somewhat similar to an AK-47, the SKS is chambered in a standard round of 7.62mm x 39mm. It is not as easily customizable as the AR-15, but as a perimeter defense assault rifle can be just as effective in the right hands. At a starting price point of around \$350 it is an excellent choice for those on a budget. There are numerous manufacturers of this weapon, all foreign and originating from Russia, China and Yugoslavia. Certain models of this rifle have been banned in some states (making it all the more desirable!), but they are readily available for purchase online or at local gun shows.

For some, home defense also means being able to protect your property at long range. While assault rifles are effective for a couple of hundred yards, a long-range hunting weapon may be a better option for anything exceeding 200 yards.

Like AR's and handguns, you have lots of options. And like AR's and handguns, consider looking into a weapon that utilizes popular ammunition. The .308 is one such caliber and is effective up to roughly 800 yards (though most of us would have a hard time hitting a target at that range). In addition to being able to provide long-range, highly accurate firepower and support, a 308 is an excellent hunting rifle. If society has broken down, there's a strong likelihood that food will become scarce, so you'll want to have a weapon with which you can hunt effectively.

Depending on your personal preference, you can consider looking at a traditional bolt-action single shot 308, or going with an assault rifle model like the Armalite AR-10 (used for guard duty by some military personnel because they can stop oncoming vehicles) or the FN AR semi-automatic 308. A bolt action model can be had for \$300 - \$600 for basic models, and in excess of \$1000 for the semi-automatic rifles mentioned.

Magazines

In addition to the magazines that come standard with your firearm - usually two - you'll want to consider having some in reserve. You can never have too many reserve mags, but stockpiling these can become expensive, so consider having at least three primary magazines and one in reserve.

You can purchase "factory" mags that are manufactured by the same company that made your firearm, or you can purchase after-market magazines manufactured by a number of different companies. The factory magazines are almost always more expensive, and for good reason. They will almost always perform better than those manufactured by original equipment manufacturers. If you have to purchase non-factory magazines, I strongly recommend that you read multiple reviews from others who have tried them. You are depending on your magazine to work to specifications 100% time. Failure can mean death, so it's in your interest to spend the extra money on the best magazines you can buy if at all possible.

Different states have different laws regarding "high capacity" magazines. In some states like California, magazines cannot hold more than ten (10) rounds, while states like Texas have no restrictions. In recent years federal legislation for high capacity magazine restrictions has been introduced, which means at some time in the future owning a 17 round magazine may be illegal in any part of the country. This, of course, poses a problem in a situation where the rule of law breaks down and you are forced to defend yourself against multiple targets.

One solution for those living in states where high capacity magazines are illegal is to only keep parts on hand. Though I am not advocating that you break or circumvent laws in your state, having parts or a parts kit, as opposed to assembled magazines, may be one way to still be prepared for a scenario where you could be threatened by multiple attackers and a higher volume of firepower is required. If you are ever presented with the worst case, you could re-assemble those parts.

Certain states, like California, also have laws that require "fixed magazines" in rifles that cannot be removed with a simple push of the magazine release. They require a special, external tool (like a screw driver) to remove the magazine. This, of course, poses a serious

problem when dealing with an external threat. Though you'd never want to circumvent these laws, in a situation where lawlessness reigns, having parts on hand to make necessary modifications may be beneficial.

Note: Research pertinent laws in your state, as firearm restrictions do vary. The better you understand the laws, the better equipped you will be to make quick decisions when under great stress.

Ammunition

Over penetration in a home defense situation, IS a concern, especially with Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) ammunition. A 'nightstand'□ pistol, in any of the above calibers, with a defensive round, such as some sort of hollow point, is STRONGLY recommended, as it increases stopping power significantly and reduces the odds of injuring an innocent party.

Purchase a 'defense'□ type (e.g., hollow point) bullet (as opposed to 'ball'□ or full metal jacket) in any of these three rounds provides plenty of stopping power ([Click here](#)^[9] for a brief description of ammunition types).

How much is enough? In all honesty, you can never have too much ammunition. In a long-term emergency, you will want to have ammunition not only for protecting your home, but for hunting purposes as well. Before we get to a specific number, you need to take into account that you will also need a few thousand rounds in reserve for target practice. At one target practice, one person can easily blow through a few hundred rounds. Having a minimum of 500-1,000 rounds for each of your guns is a good starting point. If you can, purchasing ammunition in bulk will be more economical, but purchasing a box of ammunition every chance you get is alright too. Just stick to what is within your budget!

For something like a .22 which can be used for hunting, personal protection and target practice, you can stock even more especially since it is so cheap. Additionally, take into consideration that purchasing bulk ammunition for popular calibers will be a HUGE bartering item.

Practice

You can either panic when confronted with a life threatening situation, or you can be like the security guard in the following video and act without hesitation to thwart an assault by multiple armed assailants:

[View the video here](#)^[10]

Put simply, having dependable accuracy when shooting is a skill that takes practice and will depreciate over time if the skill goes unused. Therefore, visit the target range regularly and take an assortment of firearm training classes to maintain or improve your skill level. Courses such as a hand gun class to teach you the right stance, grip, and how to position your body to absorb the gun firing would be a great starting point for beginners. Here is a [map to find shooting ranges both indoor and outdoor in your area](#)^[11]. One more point I would like to make regarding practicing, is if you or your home comes under attack for any given reason, you will be under a great amount of stress and will need to feel comfortable with the firearm in your hand. When you practice regularly, you become familiar with the gun and subsequently develop muscle memory. If the time comes when you need to use a firearm for defensive purposes, you will be confident in your abilities and your firearm.

One other recommendation for those serious about improving their skills is to attend simulations. Paintball and Airsoft battles add some realism to your training, as you will be firing at live targets (and trying to evade getting shot as well!). It will give you the ability to hone your skills in environments that will be similar to the real thing. Simulated battles like this will also allow you and your team to learn to work together in high stress, high pace environments. What's more, you can purchase your own equipment and work together in learning how to defend your own property by setting up simulated scenarios.

Body Armor

Here is the reality of it: If you are shooting down range or shooting to protect your home there is a very strong possibility that someone will be shooting back at you. This is especially true should the world as we know it fall apart and you are forced to fend for yourself and defend your family, your home and your supplies.

People are going to die when the bullets start flying. As such, one of the absolute best investments you can make to reduce your chance of serious injury or death is body armor. This includes a helmet, a vest to protect your chest, neck protector, groin protector, and even side guards to protect your ribs and vital organs.

As is the case with firearms, there are numerous options for body armor. My advice is that you save your money and go with the absolute best protection you can afford.

Here is a brief breakdown of the different levels of body armor:

Type I (.22 LR; .380 ACP)

This armor protects against .22 long rifle lead round nose (LR LRN) bullets. Type I body armor is light. This is the minimum level of protection. *(Note: In my opinion this is not going to cut it)*

Type II-A (9mm; .40 S&W)

This armor protects against 9mm full metal jacketed round nose (FMJ RN) bullets and .40 S&W caliber full metal jacketed (FMJ) bullets. Type II-A body armor is well suited for full-time use by police departments, particularly those seeking protection for their officers from lower velocity 9mm and 40 S&W ammunition. *(Note: It'll stop a lower caliber handgun, but that's it)*

Type II (9mm; .357 Magnum)

This is the next step up from Type II-A and is worn full time by police officers seeking protection against higher velocity .357 Magnum and 9mm ammunition. *(Note: It's good for lower velocity handguns, but that's about it)*

Type III-A (High Velocity 9mm; .44 Magnum)

This armor protects against 9mm full metal jacketed round nose (FJM RN) bullets and .44 Magnum jacketed hollow point (JHP) bullets. It also provides protection against most handgun threats, as well as the Type I, II-A, and II threats. Type III-A body armor provides the highest level of protection currently available from concealable body armor and is generally suitable for routine wear in many situations. *(Note: For the prepper planning on worst case scenarios my opinion is that this is the absolute minimum in body armor protection)*

Type III (Rifles)

This armor protects against 7.62mm full metal jacketed (FMJ) bullets (U.S. military designation M80), with nominal masses of 9.6 g (148 gr), impacting at a minimum velocity of 838 m/s (2750 ft/s) or less. It also provides protection against Type I through III-A threats. Type III body armor is clearly intended only for tactical situations when the threat warrants such protection, such as barricade confrontations involving sporting rifles. *(Note: If you are in a situation where you are firing an assault rifle at the enemy, they are probably doing the same. You'll want at least this level of protection for those situations.)*

Type IV (Armor Piercing Rifle)

This armor protects against .30 caliber armor piercing (AP) bullets (U.S. military designation M2 AP). It also provides at least single-hit protection against the Type I through III threats. Type IV body armor provides the highest level of protection currently available. Because this armor is intended to resist "armor piercing" bullets, it often uses ceramic materials. Such materials are brittle in nature and may provide only single-shot protection, since the ceramic tends to break up when struck. As with Type III armor, Type IV armor is clearly intended only for tactical situations when the threat warrants such protection. *(Note: If you are digging in this is the body armor you would want. It is expensive. It is also going to be heavier than other types of protection. Combined with other gear you may be carrying when mobile, the added weight with this body armor*

may require serious physical conditioning. But, it will stop high power armor piercing rounds – something other protection levels simply can't do.)

The [full article with videos is available for your review here](#) ^[12].

Conclusion

The fact that we have the luxury of discussing this issue means that the proverbial you-know-what has not hit fan. In reality, if we were in the midst of a true shtf scenario, you wouldn't care what firearm you had – just as long as you had something to keep the bad guys at bay. We are lucky that we still have time to research, practice and fine tune this pertinent skill, so use this time wisely.

I leave you with this advice; do not be solely dependent on a firearm for protection. As much as I value my firearm, I know that it can be taken out of my hands and used against me. Learning of other forms of personal protection such as hand-to-hand combat, krav maga, martial arts and other forms to self-defense for last resort measures will only make you more capable of protecting yourself, your loved ones and your preps.

Related Information:

[National Rifle Association](#) ^[13]

[Gun Laws State by State](#) ^[14]

Portions of this article have been inspired by [An Introduction to SHTF Home Defense, Guns and Safety](#) ^[8] written by Rick Blaine

Preps to Buy:

Purchasing guns and ammunition are some of the most expensive items you will be adding to your preparedness supplies, so it's understandable if you can't purchase all of these items in one week. Prioritize what's important and keep your needs in mind when buying items for self-defense. You may need to stretch out these purchases over a longer amount of time. Be sure to do your research on state regulations and considerations for which type of firearm to purchase.

- Firearm for home defense
- Ammunition (500-1,000 rounds per firearm)
- Extra magazines
- Spare parts or kits
- Gun cleaning kits
- Ammunition storage case (waterproof)
- Protective gear (i.e., helmet, a vest to protect your chest, neck protector, groin protector, and even side guards)
- Gun enhancement equipment (i.e., scopes, magnification, night vision, flash lights, suppression)

Action Items:

1. Check the pertinent laws in your state, as firearm restrictions do vary.
2. You may want to consider going to a gun range that rents firearms to test which equipment is best for you and your needs.
3. Take a hand gun course to familiarize with proper stances, grips to gain better accuracy.
4. Consider taking a hand-to-hand self-defense class.
5. Minimize the threat of a home break in or home invasion by adding [layers of security](#) ^[15] to prevent your home from being a possible hit.
6. Designate a safe room in the home and talk with all family members on proper protocols.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Hurricane Isaac:

http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2012/09/new_orleans_police_report_wide.html

[2] newsletter: http://readynutrition.com/resources/week-23-of-52-external-security-preparedness_11102011/

[3] properly handle or understand gun safety protocols:

http://readynutrition.com/resources/the-ten-commandments-of-safe-gun-handling_24022010/

[4] the Survival Mom: <http://thesurvivalmom.com/>

[5] Two Things My Kids Know about Gun Control:

<http://thesurvivalmom.com/2010/01/09/two-things-my-kids-know-about-guns/>

[6] Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program: <http://www.nrahq.org/safety/eddie/>

[7] the 23 Truths of Firearms: <http://thesurvivalmom.com/2011/10/10/just-for-women-23-truths-about-firearms/>

[8] An Introduction to SHTF Home Defense, Guns and Safety:

http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/an-introduction-to-shtf-home-defense-guns-and-safety_10292009

[9] Click here: http://ammo.ar15.com/ammo/project/hist_fmj.html

[10] View the video here: http://www.shtfplan.com/headline-news/no-hesitation-watch-security-guard-quick-draw-and-take-down-three-armed-assailants_09042012

[11] map to find shooting ranges both indoor and outdoor in your area:

<http://find.mapmuse.com/interest/shooting-ranges>

[12] full article with videos is available for your review here:

http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/body-armor-because-if-youre-shooting-down-range-you-can-bet-someones-shooting-back-at-you_04252012

[13] National Rifle Association: <http://home.nra.org/#/nraorg/gallery/3>

[14] Gun Laws State by State: <http://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-laws.aspx>

[15] layers of security: http://readynutrition.com/resources/home-invasion-preventitive-security-layers-to-protect-the-home_30062010/

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