

SAGA SNIPPETS

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Firearms and Ammunition Amnesty

By John Welch
28 November 2019

On 27 November 2019 the Minister of Police (MinPol) gave notice of an amnesty in Government Gazette No. 42858 in terms of section 139 of the Firearms Control Act, No. 60 of 2000 (FCA). The purpose of an amnesty is to allow people who so wish to surrender to the police any unwanted or unlicensed firearms and ammunition, without fear of being arrested and prosecuted for the illegal possession of such firearms and ammunition.

No amnesty has ever succeeded in removing illegal firearms from "real" criminals – those who use them to commit violent crime.

Although the Constitutional Court (in the Minister of Police v SA Hunters & Game Conservation Association case) has ruled that section 24 of the FCA was not unconstitutional and that people who had failed to renew their firearm licenses were in illegal possession thereof, we do not classify them in the same class as murders, robbers, rapists and the like. In fact, not unlike drivers' licenses, car licenses, et cetera, there ought to be provision for the late application for the renewal of firearm licenses.

On 28 November the MinPol formally announced the amnesty at a media briefing in Centurion. He alluded to various crime-fighting initiatives over the festive season, especially regarding the



so-called trio-crimes and gender-based violence. He then alluded to the purpose of the amnesty and to the fact that people who are in possession of unlicensed firearms would have only themselves to blame should they be hunted down after the expiry of the amnesty. As he put it, after the amnesty the police would "go after" those in possession of unlicensed firearms and they will have "no mercy".

What the MinPol did not explain was how that would be done if GOSA's interim interdict still has effect. We are aware that SAPS will seek condonation for the late filing of heads of argument in the Supreme Court of Appeal, after they had been granted the right to appeal directly to this court, and that they will strenuously argue that the interdict was wrongly granted against the police.

GOSA informed that, should condonation be granted, the appeal will probably not be heard before mid-2020. This is unfortunate since this may be after the expiry of the amnesty and should the appeal be upheld, that people who had failed to surrender their unlicensed firearms and apply for new licences, may face the possibility of being charged with

being in possession of unlicensed firearms and ammunition.

The seeking of amnesty by the MinPol started in 2017; continued in 2018; and eventually concluded in November of 2019.

The process and the notice are not without flaws, for instance, it appears that the MinPol signed the published notice on 28 August 2019, while parliament only approved in principle the amnesty a week ago; the Annexure to the notice lists three police stations where firearms may (for whatever reason – corruption, no safe-keeping facilities, serious criminal activities by police officials at such police stations, etc. – not be surrendered, whereas the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police heard that some 46 police stations ought to be excluded; and there are questions as to whether the current form of the notice of the amnesty has been approved by parliament as specified by section 139 of the FCA.

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Continued....Firearms and Ammunition Amnesty

When SAGA asked the MinPol to explain these discrepancies, he acknowledged the mistakes but stated that they will be rectified in a follow-up notice that will be published.

SAGA and other members of the United Firearms Forum will consider the consequences of the mistakes; peruse the amended notice when it is published; and then consider whether to litigate or to deal with the matter administratively.

Since the amnesty period is 6 months, starting on 1 December 2019, there is ample time to consider the consequences and processes. These will be explained in the December edition of Snippets.

In the meantime, unless a member wishes to dispose of an unwanted or even unlicensed firearm and ammunition, which he/she could do any time after 1 December, we advise members to wait for further clarity which we shall provide in mid-December.

The Government Gazette No. 42858 will be available on SAGA's website at www.saga.org.za in the next few days.

Can Ammunition "Go Bad"?

by Jeff Johnston

Monday, October 28, 2019

We know you love to stash ammo, because no gun owner wants to be without a few rounds when they need it most. But does it have a shelf-life? When does it go bad, if ever? In this article we'll examine what causes ammo to peter-out, and what you can do to prolong its life.

I remember the day I asked my father if we could shoot "the old .303." To my delight, he said yes. (I guess he'd had a good day at work, because I'd been asking him for years!) He'd bought the Lee Enfield WWI-era bolt-action at a pawn shop for \$5 when he was 18, and he used it to take his first buck. He'd bought several boxes of military surplus .303 British ball ammo to go with it.

Thirty-some-odd years later--with his gun cabinet now flush with modern .308s, .243s and .30-06s--we dusted off the old rifle and marched out of the house with two stripper clips full of greenish-colored .303 ammo to shoot. I raised the rifle to my shoulder, aimed through the peep sights and Blam! The rifle fired as if the year were 1925 and the ammo was shiny-new.

Twenty-five years later, I was asked to write this story. I trekked back to my now-departed father's gun cabinet, grabbed the .303 and a few cartridges and marched down to the pond-dam range. Blam! The gun fired! The ammo is at least 75 years old, if not 100.

"I've shot factory loads from the 1870s, and they went bang and hit the target accurately," said NRA Museums Senior Curator Doug Wicklund, affirming that ammo can indeed last a long, long time, and the .303 wasn't a fluke.

So why, then, do ammo companies tell us the shelf life of their ammo is 10 years?

Fact is, the life of ammo is relative and unpredictable. It's based on the quality of the manufacturer's loading techniques and its components, including powder and primer type and their proper sealing. But after manufacturing, a round's life comes down to the conditions under which it lives.

Ammo, like good wine, should be stored in a cool, dry place without sunlight. It should have no drastic temperature changes and shouldn't be jostled a bunch. You should never store it with or near oils or solvents. That's because both can eventually infiltrate the cartridge and void the powder.

Ammo should never be stored in super-high temperatures, like in a car trunk in the summertime where temps can exceed 135.

Over time, doing so can break down the chemical structure of the powder and lead to degraded performance, if not outright failure to fire.

Will it fire if it's been stored in a dank basement? Probably, but maybe not. Will it fire after 50 years if it's been stored in a cool, dark, airtight container? Again, probably, but maybe not. The point is, you should do what you can to make sure the odds are in your favor that it fires. And if it's ammo that you may trust your life upon--such as rounds for your concealed carry gun--shoot it for practice after three to five years and buy more. It's just smart policy.

Fact is, all modern ammo will last more than 10 years if it's been stored reasonably well. Ammo companies push a conservative message, likely because they don't want the liability if it fails to fire (and, hey, they'd like to sell more ammo...fair enough). Still,



however, you should practice the following tips to make sure your ammo is in tip-top shape when it's finally loaded into the breech.

* Store your ammo in a climate-controlled place that seldom to never fluctuates higher or lower than a 20-degree temperature change. "Around 70 degrees with 50% humidity is ideal," said Wicklund. This rules out attics and non-climate-controlled garages.

* If the area where you must store ammo is humid, store it in an airtight canister or o-ring sealed plastic container. Throw a silicon anti-humidity pack in there as well.

* Consider purchasing a dedicated dehumidifier that's powerful enough for the size of the area where the ammo is stored.

* Practice the milk-at-the-supermarket technique wherein the first ammo you place in storage is the first to be fired. This way you'll keep all of your ammo as fresh as possible.

* If you must get rid of ammo that just looks too corroded to use, call your local shooting range to see if they can accept it for disposal.

Extracted from:
<https://www.nrafamily.org/articles/2019/10/28/can-ammunition-go-bad/>

4 Self-Defense Myths (That Could Ruin Your Life)



<https://www.nrafamily.org/articles/2019/11/8/4-self-defense-myths-that-could-ruin-your-life/>

by Sheriff Jim Wilson

Friday, November 8, 2019

Due to handed-down stories and the movies, there have always been a lot of myths floating around about personal defense. Aside from the movies, people just tend to get reckless with the truth when they are telling about their adventures, adventures of associates, and adventures that they're heard about. I guess it is human nature and there is not much that we can do about it. But I'm here to tell you that many of these personal defense myths can get people hurt, or get them in big trouble. Here, in no special order, are four personal defense myths that just won't die. I've heard them all of my life and they just don't seem to ever go away.

1. WOMEN NEED SMALL GUNS AND LIGHT CALIBERS!

I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, or challenge their manhood, but the fact is that a woman can shoot any handgun that a man can. All you have to do is observe just about any professional defensive school to see the ladies clean their targets with their .45 ACP autos. Or attend an IDPA match and watch the fairer sex rock & roll with .45's, .40 S&W's, and 9mm's. I even know one 100-pound woman who hunts successfully with a .454 Casull revolver.

Women don't need tiny pink guns in .25 or .32 caliber. What they need is the same thing that we

men need—professional training and the most powerful handgun that they can shoot quickly and accurately. Guys might best refrain from shopping guns for the little lady and, instead, take her to a shooting range, let her shoot a number of good guns, and pick what she likes best. You'd just be amazed at the positive results.

2. IF YOU HAVE TO SHOOT THEM OUTSIDE, DRAG THEM INSIDE BEFORE YOU CALL THE COPS!

This one has been around since the days of flintlocks, at least. The presumption is that it is somehow illegal to shoot someone outside your home, but everything is okay if the criminal is inside your home. In personal defense, the question is, "were you justifiably in fear for your life and were your actions reasonable?" Any law-enforcement officer worth their salt will know within five minutes of their arrival if you have lied to them about the actual location of the incident. And, if you are lying about that, you may be lying about other stuff. Hello jail house! The guy at the gun store, or shooting range, may tell you to drag an attacker inside. I seriously doubt that a criminal defense attorney will do so.

3. LOAD ROCK SALT IN YOUR SHOTGUN AND TEACH 'EM A LESSON!

We used to hear this a lot regarding kids stealing apples from a farm. However, it has somehow managed to become part of the urban legend, too.

A shotgun loaded with rock salt can cause serious injury and even death. In addition, regardless of what the gun is loaded with, you are discharging a firearm at a person. Your only justification for ever doing this is to prevent death or serious bodily injury. If your defense is that you used rock salt

because you only intended to scare them and teach them a lesson, you may be surprised at the attitude of the court. Good luck with that defense.

4. JUST HAVE A GUN, ANY KIND OF A GUN, IT'LL SCARE 'EM AWAY!

Guns are not magic wands. Yes, the sight of a gun in the hands of an armed citizen may cause the crooks to cease and desist. The trouble is that it doesn't always work. And, if that is your only plan, you are liable to be in big trouble.

We don't carry a defensive handgun for when everything works out right. We carry a defensive handgun for when nothing works out like it was supposed to. Your defensive handgun should be adequate for handling the worst-case scenario. This is the reason that trained individuals carry the most powerful handgun that they can shoot quickly and accurately.

Yes, a .22 can be lethal. But personal defense is not about killing the person; it is about stopping the attack as quickly as possible, before anyone else is injured. Only a real defensive handgun can be expected to do this when properly applied.

We may chuckle at these and other personal defense myths, but they are out there and are believed by too many. The solution is to get your defensive information from trained individuals. You have made a commitment to carry a defense gun, but you should also make a commitment to get the necessary training needed to use it properly, safely and effectively.

The Very Serious Business of Keeping Shooting Fun

by Sheriff Jim Wilson

Tuesday, November 5, 2019

Sometimes I think that we spend too much time focusing on the personal defense side of shooting. Oh, don't get me wrong, perfecting our defense skills is certainly important and requires practice. But we don't always have to be so uptight and serious about the whole thing. Besides, as an instructor, I have observed that people seem to learn more when they are having fun.

Now before I get into some fun shooting ideas, let me emphasize the importance of safety any time we are handling guns. Whether you are in a defensive shooting class, going hunting, or just enjoying an afternoon of plinking, the same rules of gun safety always apply. It's particularly important to ensure that you have a proper backstop, and that none of your impromptu or "fun" targets can cause ricochets with the ammunition you're using. However, once you've established that your range, targets and shooters are all safe...it's time to bring back the joy of target shooting for fun.

Instead of concentrating on improving your skills at controlled pairs or timed fire, just relax and think of ways to have a little fun competition with your fellow shooters...or even against yourself.

For example, get a roll of those little orange paste-on bullseyes – the ones that are about the size of a quarter will do nicely. Paste one up on the target frame for each



shooter. Then, shooting from 15 yards with as many rounds of ammo as needed, see who can be the first to completely obliterate their orange dot.

Charcoal briquettes also make good impromptu targets. And, when hit, they dissolve into a gray cloud that doesn't create a mess on the shooting range. So line a few up, downrange, and see who can bust the most briquettes with the fewest shots. A variation would be to put up a line of briquettes and have two shooters, one starting at each end of the line, see who can hit the most before the other shooter.

If you're on private property outdoors, try old fruit or moldy potatoes as targets. Manky old produce has a way of exploding amusingly when hit...and the local raccoons will take care of any mess you've left behind.

The old-time gunfighters used to use playing cards for targets. They'd shoot a nice, tight group from a given distance and then sign the card – it almost became their calling card. You might stick up several cards and see who can shoot the tightest five-shot group.

Any of these little fun drills that I have mentioned will also improve a shooter's defensive marksmanship. Give it some thought and see what fun drills you can come up with.

<https://www.nrafamily.org/articles/2019/11/5/the-very-serious-business-of-keeping-shooting-fun/>

Watch this space ...for more interesting firearm snippets

Gun Safety: How Passive Safety Systems Work

<https://www.nrafamily.org/articles/2019/10/29/gun-safety-how-passive-safety-systems-work/>

In contrast to active safety systems, which are voluntarily engaged or disengaged by the shooter, passive safety systems function more or less automatically. These safeties take many forms. This article will explore what those passive safety systems are and how they work, to help you make informed decisions about the firearms you own or are considering owning.

A grip safety is an auxiliary device on the grip of some handguns (as well as some long guns) intended to prevent firing until it is depressed by your hands when it is depressed. This occurs when you grip the gun naturally. The Browning .32 Auto and .380 Auto semi-automatic pistols and the Springfield Armory XD pistols, for example, all incorporate grip safeties.

Firing pin blocks, such as the mechanism on later-production Colt Government Model pistols, block forward firing pin travel unless the trigger is depressed, and also qualify as passive safety systems.

Inertia firing pins, in which the forward movement is restrained until it receives the energy from a hammer blow, serve as safety devices in that they help prevent the gun from discharging if it is dropped muzzle-down onto a hard surface.

Most semi-automatic rifles and shotguns are designed such that the hammer cannot contact the tail of the firing pin unless the bolt is securely locked into the receiver or barrel extension. Also, many older bolt-action designs possess an interlock that blocks full for-

ward movement of the firing pin until the action is closed.

Several pistols, such as those produced by Glock, incorporate a pivoting lever in the trigger face which prevents trigger movement unless it is depressed by the trigger finger. Finally, some firearms, such as the Browning Hi-Power, have a magazine disconnect safety, which prevents the firing of a live round in the chamber if the magazine is removed.

Many modern firearms, particularly revolvers, incorporate transfer bars or hammer blocks that are activated by the trigger mechanism. In firearms that use transfer bars, such as Ruger revolvers, the hammer at rest contacts the frame, but sits back slightly from the frame-mounted firing pin. When the trigger is pulled, the transfer bar rises to fill that gap and transfers the blow of the hammer to the firing pin to discharge the gun. This prevents a heavy blow on the hammer from igniting the primer. The safety connector of Colt revolver mechanisms functions in a similar way.

In contrast, the hammer block typical of Smith & Wesson revolvers works the opposite way: The hammer block sits between the hammer and frame when the hammer is at rest, preventing contact of the hammer nose with the cartridge primer even if the gun is dropped on the hammer spur. (A small tab on the rebound slide also serves to limit forward hammer travel at rest.) When the trigger is pulled, the hammer block drops to allow the descending hammer to hit and ignite the primer.

Passive safety systems are built-in safeguards, but you as a user should never rely on them solely for safety. So:

ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction. This means that even if the gun were to fire, it would not cause injury or damage. Common sense will dictate the safest direction, depending upon the circumstances.

ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot. When holding a gun, rest your trigger finger outside the trigger guard alongside the gun. Until you are actually ready to fire, do not touch the trigger.

ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use. Unless the firearm is being kept in a state of readiness for personal protection, it should be unloaded. That said, never assume a firearm is unloaded, *even if you unloaded it yourself*. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded.

by NRA Staff
Tuesday, October 29, 2019