

By: Orlando Wilson

# TACTICAL FIREARMS THE BASICS

If you plan on working internationally in close protection or the security industry, you will be expected to know how to handle firearms.

What most people, especially Americans, don't realize is that most civilian, non-government close protection jobs are unarmed due to the legal restrictions on firearms in most countries. Part of your threat assessment for any assignment needs to take into account laws on the use of force and weapons in the locations you are going to be working in. Being caught with an illegal weapon, especially a firearm, will get you thrown in jail very quickly, no matter how important you think you are!

So, what do you need to know about firearms if you are looking to work internationally in the close protection and security industry? Well, first and most, the important thing is knowing how to use firearms safely. To become proficient with firearms, like everything else takes practice and time. You're not going to become an expert after a few hours of instruction and tuition.

Many firearms-related accidents happen because those handling the firearm are not complying with ►



basic safety rules, including 1) keeping the firearm pointed in a safe direction and 2) keeping their fingers off the trigger. If you ensure you always follow these two safety rules, you will be acting more responsibly than many others who are working with and carrying firearms. Remember, if you're the one in control of a firearm that accidentally discharges and injures/kills someone, you will be held responsible. Aside from these necessary safety measures, a thorough understanding of firearms and range safety is essential before you even start any shooting with live ammunition.

Here is a complete list of firearms safety rules and considerations to bear in mind:

### **WEAPON SAFETY DEPENDS ON KNOWING YOUR WEAPON, CONFIDENCE, ALERTNESS**

- Safety considerations for firearms must always be followed
- Always keep firearms pointed in a safe direction, especially when loading and unloading.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until the weapon is pointed at your target.
- If the action or slide on the weapon is closed, always treat the gun as if loaded and carry out the
- unload drills.
- Always show that a firearm is unloaded to a person before you hand it to them.
- When someone hands you a firearm, always check the chamber and make sure it is unloaded.
- Never take a person's word for whether a firearm is loaded or unloaded, always check!
- Never point a firearm at anyone just for fun or play games with firearms.
- Always know what is behind your target and have a good backstop.
- Only fire-controlled shots. You can rapid fire but make sure you are hitting your target.
- Always practice tactical drills with unloaded firearms until you're confident and competent enough
- to use live ammunition.
- Always unload firearms before dry-fire tactical training.
- Only use dummy ammunition or blank-firing firearms for demonstrations or dry-fire drills.
- Never mix blank, dummy, and live rounds.
- Always check that the gun is unloaded before cleaning.
- Never tamper with

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- ammunition, and only use reloads from reliable sources.
- Never use damaged rounds, and always dispose of them safely.
- Keep guns and ammunition in secure storage when not in use.
- If you do not know how to operate or are having problems operating a firearm, get professional help.
- Never used drugs or alcohol when using firearms.
- Always check and comply with local firearms law

### **Types of Firearms**

It would be best if you tried to train with and get to know as many different types of firearms as possible because you never know what you will come across. You might be working unarmed on an assignment in a hostile environment, but you need to know how to use any variety of firearms you might encounter in that environment in case things go wrong. For example, imagine that your hotel is attacked, in which case you will likely have no choice but to use the firearms of the local security, police, military, and bad guy.

### **Pistols:**

The two main classification for pistols are semi-automatic and revolver. ►



Sadly, most people these days tend to only train with semi-auto safe action guns such as Glock and S&W M&Ps. You need to know how to safely use revolvers, single and double action semi-autos, single-action semi-autos and at least be familiar with derringers and sub-compact pocket pistols.

**Shotguns:** Unfortunately, I have heard quite a few close

protection experts, usually from police backgrounds, dismiss the requirements for shotgun training. I believe the reason for this is their experience within a government agency has not required or given them many opportunities to use shotguns or travel to locations where they are used. Having worked in Europe, South & West Africa, the Middle East,

U.S., Caribbean, and Latin America, I have come across shotguns being used for security details in all of those locations. In fact, shotguns are probably the most widely used firearm used for legal security purposes globally. Since shotguns come in various configurations, you should at least understand break action, pump, semi-auto shotguns and the various types of ammunition and chocks.

#### Assault Rifles:

Even though most of the tactical firearms training videos on the internet put an emphasis of training with AR-15s and AK-47s, in reality, there are not many places you can legally use them for security purposes unless you are in the military, on a government-related assignment, or working illegally. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the laws were put in place for security guards to carry assault rifles, but in most places, if you are lucky enough to have firearms legally, there is a greater chance of it being a shotgun or a pistol rather than an A.K., etc.

#### Sporting Rifles:

In a lot of countries semi-auto firearms are banned or significantly restricted, and the only legal firearms available will be sporting

shotguns and lever or bolt-action rifles. The only time most tactical operators will consider learning how to use a bolt-action rifle would be if it were a tricked-out sniper rifle. Well, I don't mean, but all hunting rifles, even with wood stocks, can be used as sniper rifles and for tactical applications. If someone is trained how to shoot properly, understands individual tactics, and is armed with a decent lever or bolt action .22 rifle, I would class them as far more valuable than the tactical shemagh wearing operator who uses optics on their tricked-out AR-15 to hit paper targets at 15 meters.

#### Other Firearms:

The types of firearms you could encounter will depend on where you are planning to work. In hostile environments, you may need to have the rudimentary knowledge of how to operate belt-fed machine guns. Or, if you're in an area where hunting is popular, it might make sense to learn a little bit about black powder rifles and pistols, which in some places have a lot fewer restrictions on them than cartridge firing firearms.

#### Tactical Firearms Training

I have my own views of ►

firearms training and the state of the firearms training industry, but I will reserve my judgment for the sake of this article. My basic advice to anyone looking at attending any firearms training courses is to ensure that the course is relevant and that the instructor is experienced enough to teach it.

The best place to get a good grounding in firearms training is in the military because you will be given thorough training, the bullets will be free, and you will also be getting paid for your time. There is no way you can replicate a few years of military firearms training experience by taking a two-week tactical firearms course. However, one of the issues with those who have only had regular military training is that they are only used to dealing with a limited range

of firearms. Personally, I only really started to learn and use handguns other than a Browning Hi-Power after I left the British Army and worked in South Africa, Eastern Europe and then joined a gun club in the U.K. before handguns were banned.

You must ensure the training you will be getting is relevant for what you are going to be doing and is of a good standard. In the U.S., the general standard for training is what's put out by the National Rifle Association (NRA). Most people don't realize when taking a training course from an NRA instructor that it only takes a one-day course to become an NRA instructor or Range Safety Officer.

In the United States, it's easy as a one-day course for a novice shooter to become an NRA firearms instructor!



With another one-day course they can become a Range Safety Officer. And after that with another one-day course, a Chief Range Safety Officer who will be able to certify Range Safety Officers! All this without any experience of ever running a firearms course or any understanding of actually working on a shooting range. In fact, I have come across NRA instructors who could not field strip their own firearms and Chief Range Safety Officers who had never used revolvers or shotguns. This defies their certifications, which would lead you to expect them to be experienced professionals!

You cannot gain the experience required to be a decent RSO or instructor by just attending a few theory classes or by watching tactical YouTube videos and belonging to Gung-ho online chat forums. The schools issuing these NRA certifications are making money. It's business, but how many of their students then go on to market themselves

as "firearms experts" after just a few one-day classes? I think this can be classed as fraudulent in anyone's books. It's just like taking a first-time driver, giving them a two or three-day theory on how to drive, showing them a car, starting the engine and then certifying them to set up a driving school. Scary, right? Always verify the real-world experience of the instructors who you're intending to pay good money for quality training.

Firearms training can be very expensive so ensure you're not wasting your money and understand that after just a few days training you're not going to be at a professional level, regardless of what your certificates say! Ongoing dry and live firearms training and weapons familiarization are essential if you are serious about working in hostile environments. But the key is to learn to differentiate the difference between tactical holidays and worthwhile experience and relevant training!

*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.*