

SHOTGUN SHOOTOUT

THE SKINNY ON MODERN 12-GAUGE SEMIAUTO & PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUNS

BY NICK JACOBELLIS

The 12-gauge shotgun remains one of the most popular weapons used in law enforcement. When loaded with tactical ammunition (00 buckshot or slugs), the 12-gauge shotgun is a formidable weapon. Shotguns loaded with buckshot are effective at close ranges, while slugs can address targets as far as 100 yards away. Tactical teams can use the shotgun as a breaching weapon to blow locks and hinges off doors and metal gates. Corrections officers can use shotguns to deploy non-lethal munitions to control unruly prisoners.

The current trend in law enforcement is to use patrol rifles and limit shotgun use. Personally, I think this is a huge mistake, especially when your agency operates in a crowded urban environment. When properly loaded, the shotgun is a devastating weapon in the average close-quarters battle (CQB). Of course, shotguns can be uncomfortable for some people to shoot, even with low-recoil tactical ammunition, and I suspect the main reasons why patrol rifles and carbines have grown more popular is because a shotgun can produce a fierce recoil and deafening noise.

In the old days, our shotgun choices were limited. Today, however, it's possible to use low-recoil tactical ammunition, a ported barrel, specially designed shotgun stocks and specially designed butt pads to help reduce recoil and make the experience of shooting a police shotgun more bearable.

Below, I share what I learned during my field tests of 12 different shotguns.

SHOTGUN TEST STANDOUTS

During my tests, I found several semiautomatic shotguns to be relatively comfortable to very comfortable to shoot while using low-recoil tactical ammunition. These weapons included the Remington 1100 Tactical with the 22" barrel, the Remington 1100 Tactical with the 18" barrel, the Mossberg 930 and the FNH USA Self Loading Police (SLP) shotgun.

The Remington 1100 Tactical semiauto with a 22" ventilated ribbed barrel and the Mossberg 930 SXT were also amazingly comfortable to shoot when using full-strength, standard velocity shotgun ammunition. And even though the semiautomatic FNH USA Self Loading Police (SLP) wasn't

as comfortable as the Remington 1100 Tactical/22 or the Mossberg 930, the FN model was more comfortable to shoot than a number of other shotguns.

As far as pump-action shotguns are concerned, the Remington 870 Desert Recon with a factory ported barrel and the Mossberg 590A1 with the recoil-reducing Knoxx stock proved to be the most comfortable pump-action shotguns. In fact, the ported Remington 870 Desert Recon and the

Mossberg 590A1 with the Knoxx stock were more comfortable than several semiautomatic shotguns.

Clearly, the ported barrel and the R3 Recoil Pad on the Remington 870 Desert Recon do an excellent job of dampening harsh recoil. The R3 Recoil Pad was also very effective in dampening recoil on the semiautomatic Remington 1100 Tactical shotguns with the 22" and 18" barrels. The Knoxx stock significantly reduced recoil as well. I suspect a law enforcement shotgun equipped with a ported barrel

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shotgun
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and a Knoxx stock would be even more comfortable to use with standard velocity and specially designed low-recoil tactical ammunition.

Both the Remington 870 and the Mossberg 590A1 have been widely used by law enforcement officers and military personnel for some time now. In addition to being flawlessly reliable, these pump-action shotguns are incredibly rugged and highly serviceable, even when used in harsh battlefield conditions for long periods of time.

The Benelli Nova is another well-made pump gun deserving recognition. According to a recent press release, the Georgia State Patrol purchased 1,000 of these weapons. Another Benelli product worth your consideration is the semiautomatic Benelli M4 (also known as the 1014). The Benelli M4 is the current issued combat shotgun of the U.S. Marine Corps.

To get the scoop on all the shotguns I tested, check out "The Specs," p. 110.

PUMP ACTION OR SEMIAUTO?

As far as shotguns are concerned, the biggest decision you'll ever make is whether you should use a pump-action/slide-action shotgun or a semiautomatic. Both pump guns and semiautomatic shotguns are easy to fire quickly as long as you have ammo in the ammo tube or magazine. You can also easily reload both pump guns and semiautos under stress when it's necessary to engage additional targets.

Still, they both have pros and cons, so let's take a moment to examine both systems.

PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUNS

Pump-action or slide-action shotguns are manually operated and are perhaps the simplest shotgun to use. They can be as accurate as semiautos and can use the same ammunition.

You can manually cycle a pump-action shotgun and use less-lethal ammunition. You can combat-reload a pump shotgun by placing one round of ammunition into the open receiver and sliding the fore-end forward to load the round into the chamber. And you can unload a pump shotgun very quickly by racking the fore-end back and forth until the shotgun is completely empty.

On the negative side, a 12-gauge pump shotgun can produce fierce recoil unless you use some type of device to reduce recoil. This includes ported barrels, thick butt pads fitted on the end of the stock and replacement stocks specially designed to dampen the teeth-chattering effects of recoil.

SEMIAUTOS

Generally speaking, semiautomatic shotguns have a reputation of producing less recoil due to the nature of their firing

mechanism. Semiautomatic shotguns can also be equipped with specially designed butt pads to help soften recoil. Some semiauto law enforcement shotguns also come equipped with removable chokes.

Like pump shotguns, each time you depress the shell stop, one round of ammunition can be eased out of the ammunition tube until it's empty.

Initially, semiautomatic shotguns can prove more complicated to use but can be easily mastered with the proper training. Generally speaking, loading a semiautomatic shotgun is no different than loading a pump shotgun because both designs use an ammunition tube fixed to the underside of the barrel (unless your piece uses a magazine). When loading a semiauto, the operator can place one shell or round of ammunition in the open receiver before they depress the bolt-release button to load the round into the chamber.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Pump-action and semiautomatic shotguns use the same type of sights. Of all the shotguns I tested, the adjustable ghost ring sights on the Mossberg 930 and the FN SLP and the fiber-optic front sight on the Remington 1100 Tactical with the 22" barrel proved to be the best to use with 00 buckshot and slugs. Mossberg also uses excellent high-visibility fixed ghost ring sights on their MIL Spec 590A1 pump shotguns.

Recoil-sensitive shooters will appreciate heavier shotguns, while shooters not as affected by recoil can tolerate and use lighter guns. If an officer is recoil-sensitive, they

should try using a heavier shotgun before they give up on using this type of weapon. The same goes for using accessories that help limit the recoil.

Law enforcement agencies that want their sworn personnel to use shotguns should make the experience as comfortable as possible. In fact, in this day and age, there's absolutely no reason to suffer when firing a 12-gauge shotgun.

I've provided you this information to let you know it's possible to find comfortable-shooting 12-gauge shotguns. During my law enforcement career, I was injured in the line of duty on several occasions and permanently physically disabled. To make matters worse, my physical injuries are compounded by arthritis, all of which makes me recoil sensitive. If I can comfortably shoot these shotguns, a healthy rookie cop or a veteran officer without painful injuries can too. **LOM**

NICK JACOBELLIS is a medically retired U.S. Customs agent and former police officer. He was physically disabled in the line of duty while working undercover as a federal agent.

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check out THE SPECS next page →→

THE SPECS

SEMI-AUTOMATIC SHOTGUNS



REMINGTON 1100 TACTICAL

The 1100 Tactical is a 12-gauge semiautomatic shotgun with a 22" ventilated rib barrel, a green fiber-optic front sight and easy-to-install and remove interchangeable chokes. Tactical models use 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " shotgun shells. It weighs 7.75 lbs. and has an overall length of 42.5 inches, a 14" pull length and an ammunition capacity of eight rounds in the ammo tube plus one in the chamber. 1100 Tactical shotguns are fitted with a black nylon stock with a very effective R3 Recoil Pad attached.

The 1100 Tactical with the 18" barrel is a semiautomatic shotgun with an 18" Improved Cylinder barrel with a plain-bead front sight. It weighs 7.5 lbs. and has an overall length of 38.5" and a 14" pull length. Like the longer model, the 1100 Tactical/18 is limited to using 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " shells. It has an ammunition capacity of six rounds in the ammunition tube plus one in the chamber. The 1100 Tactical/18 has a pistol grip nylon stock with a R3 Recoil Pad attached.



MOSSBERG 930 SHOTGUN

The 930 Model is Mossberg's newest semiautomatic shotgun. The SXT Model is a 930 that includes options such as high-profile and adjustable ghost ring sights on an adjustable rail, and an extended ammunition tube. The 930 is chambered in 12-gauge and has an 18.5" barrel, a 39" overall length, an ammunition capacity of seven rounds in the tube plus one in the chamber and 14" pull length. The 930 weighs 7.5 lbs. unloaded and uses 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 3" shells.

The Mossberg 930 proved to be an extremely comfortable and reliable semiautomatic shotgun. However, I was able to induce this shotgun to jam by depressing the bolt-release button while there were two or more rounds of ammunition in the ammunition tube under the barrel.

This potential jamming problem occurs when the depressed bolt release button triggers the shell-stop to release ammunition from the ammo tube into the bottom of the receiver above the elevator. Unfortunately, more than one round of ammunition is automatically ejected. The presence of the second round of ammunition in the bottom of the receiver jams the elevator and prevents the Mossberg 930 from functioning normally. However, at no time during my tests did the Mossberg 930 jam during actual firing operations.

The jammed elevator is relatively easy to clear with a small pocketknife or screwdriver once you learn how to depress the round of ammunition closest to the ammo tube back into the tube until the shell-stop locks the round of ammunition into position.

Hopefully this design flaw will be corrected in the near future.



BENELLI M4 (M1014 Joint Service Combat Shotgun)

This semiautomatic 12-gauge shotgun holds six rounds in the tube plus one in the chamber, measures 39.8" long, weighs 8.4 lbs. empty, features a 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " pull length and an adjustable rear sight with a fixed-post front sight, and can fire 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 3" shells. The M4 can be configured with either a fixed or retractable stock. It's currently used by the U.S. Marine Corps.



FNH USA (SLP) SELF LOADING POLICE

The FN SLP is a gas-operated, semiautomatic shotgun chambered in 12-gauge and capable of firing 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 3" shells. The SLP is based on the Winchester Super X 2 semiautomatic shotgun. The standard barrel for the FN SLP measures 18" long. The SLP weighs 7.75 lbs., has an overall length of just less than 39" and an ammunition capacity of six rounds plus one in the chamber. The SLP also comes equipped with a picatinny rail, adjustable ghost ring sights and a corrosion-resistant finish.

Of all the shotguns tested for this article, the SLP proved the easiest shotgun to unload by depressing the shell stop in the ammunition tube under the barrel. This feature makes the SLP incredibly safe and easy to use, especially when law enforcement officers must load and unload their shotgun before and after each tour of duty.

RUSSIAN SAIGA



The semiautomatic SAIGA has a 19" Improved Cylinder barrel, and interchangeable chokes are available. The SAIGA has an overall length of 41", weighs 7.4 lbs., features a 13.5" pull length, comes with five- or 10-round magazines for law enforcement customers and is chambered to use 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 3" shells.

Aftermarket sights, stocks, magazines and tactical accessories are also available. A 20" drum magazine is also available for law enforcement use.

According to the Russian American Armory Company that imports SAIGA rifles and shotguns, you must be a law enforcement officer to use high-capacity magazines with SAIGA firearms unless certain modifications are made to the firearm.

PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUNS



MOSSBERG 590A1

This pump-action 12-gauge features a 20" heavy barrel, a Parkerized finish, an overall length of 41", a weight of 7.25 lbs., an ammunition capacity of eight plus one, ghost ring sights and the ability to fire 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 3" shells. This shotgun is currently used by U.S. Armed Forces.



REMINGTON 870 EXPRESS SHOTGUN

This pump-action shotgun has rifle sights and a standard four-round ammunition tube. It features a 20", fully rifled barrel, weighs 7.25 lbs., measures 40.5" long, has a 14" pull length and can fire 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 3" shells.



REMINGTON 870 DESERT RECON

There are two models of the Remington Desert Recon. The model with the 20" barrel has a ported barrel with a Tactical Extended Rem Choke Tube breaching device attached and a three-round extended ammunition tube. This model measures 40" long and weighs just under 8 lbs.

The Remington 870 Desert Recon Model with the 18" barrel also has a ported barrel and a Tactical Extended Rem Choke Tube breaching device attached. This model has a two-round, speed-feed stock and a two-round extended ammunition tube. This model measures 38" long and weighs 7.5 lbs. unloaded.

The two shotguns have Tiger Stripe Products digital camo stocks and fore-ends similar to U.S. Marine Corps digital desert camo. The receivers and barrels are coated with a military-style olive drab painted finish.



Remington 870 Marine Magnum

This pump-action shotgun features an 18" barrel and a six-shot capacity, weighs 7.5 lbs., measures 38.5" long, has a 14" pull

length, comes with a bead front sight and can fire 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 3" shells. The Marine model features a nickel finish for extra protection against corrosion.



BENELLI NOVA TACTICAL

This pump shotgun sports an 18.5" barrel, weighs 7.2 lbs., comes with optional ghost ring sights or standard open rifle sights, has a 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ " pull length and can fire 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 3" shells. Benelli also makes a Nova H2O Model ideal for marine operations.

Benelli shotguns have a unique feature that allows the operator to press a button on the underside of the fore-end to prevent ammunition from loading into the receiver/chamber. This feature allows the operator to unload one type of ammunition from the chamber and load another type when necessary to do so, without another shell automatically moving from the ammunition tube into the receiver.



FNH POLICE

FNH makes two pump shotguns, the FN Tactical Police Shotgun (TPS) Collapsible Stock pictured and TPS Fixed Stock. The Collapsible Stock model has a retractable M4 stock with a pistol grip. With an 18" barrel, it weighs 6 lbs. and measures 35–38" long.

The Fixed Stock model uses a standard, fixed, black nylon stock, weighs 6.5 lbs. and measures 39.75" long.

Both models are based on the Winchester Model 1300 pump shotgun. They accommodate 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and 3" shells, feature ported barrels, accessory rails for mounting optics and a black phosphate finish. With the 18" barrel, they hold seven rounds plus one. With the optional 14" barrel, they hold four rounds plus one.

SHOTGUNS FOR LESS-LETHAL FIRE

Shotguns dedicated to fire less-lethal projectiles often have a distinctive colored stock indicating the shotgun is used exclusively for less-lethal purpose. By using a dedicated less-lethal weapons plat-

form, you can prevent the accidental discharge of lethal munitions from a law enforcement shotgun when it's necessary to fire a less-lethal projectile, such as a beanbag or rubber bullet.



Law enforcement agencies and security forces should use dedicated less-lethal firing shotguns for riot control and to cope with non-cooperative individuals.

Taser International has also recently developed a non-lethal Extended Range Electronic Projectile (XREP pictured) you can fire from a shotgun to subdue violent and uncooperative individuals. For more information, visit

www.taser.com/products/law/pages/xrep.aspx.