

THE MARTIALIST VOL. TWO NO. SEVEN

The 4D Maglite: Still Worthwhile

By Phil Elmore

It was a typical day in the windowless cubicle farm that is my place of employment. I was sitting at my computer tapping away at well over a hundred words a minute when, suddenly, everything went black. The power had gone off and the entire department – housing perhaps forty people in my immediate area was without light.

Observers across the office saw two twin beams of light shining up out of the artificial night. It took only a second or two before someone shouted, “Phil! It’s Phil!”

“Who’s laughing now?” I shouted back.

My penchant for being prepared is something of a running office joke, as my office is easily equipped with more tools and survival gear than you’d find in the trunk of a police cruiser or in the back of a locksmith’s van. The two flashlights I keep around at work are a rechargeable Streamlight Strion (a Xenon-bulb tactical light) and a 4D Maglite. The two produce roughly equivalent illumination. The Maglite (which at this point can be considered outdated technology considering the current market for tactical torches) is many times the size of its Xenon-bulb counterpart.

The multiple D-cell Maglite was once the king of the flashlights, in my mind. I owned one in college and it was the only “weapon” our campus security guards (who were students working part time in blue windbreakers) were allowed to carry with them. Tempting as it might be to dismiss this tool as obsolete, the 4D Maglite should not be discounted. This is a sturdy and relatively inexpensive tool available almost anywhere. Unlike it’s smaller tactical siblings, the multiple D-cell light is large enough and heavy enough to be used as a club. It therefore occupies a self-defense niche not filled by smaller torches.



The 4D Maglite, loaded with alkaline batteries, can be wielded like a club.

Photo by Phil Elmore



The 4D Maglite, which is still worthwhile.

Photo by Phil Elmore

The 4D Maglite is a knurled aluminum barrel attached to a focusable (spot to flood) head. Powered by four alkaline D-cells, it produces 59 lumens of incandescent light from its Krypton bulb. Total runtime is estimated as 15 hours with a rough lamp life of 36 hours.

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The Maglite is a straightforward implement. Removing the tailcap allows the user to load batteries. With rechargeable NiCad batteries the light is much lighter, diminishing its authority as a club (but making it a little easier to wield as you would a stick if you're a Kali, Arnis, or Escrima student). A foam container in the tailcap spring contains an extra Krypton bulb from the factory.



Photo by Phil Elmore

A simple push-button switch on the barrel activates the light. If the light is to be used with a firearm, the Chapman posture is appropriate. This is a simple matter of holding the light in tandem with the firearm and activating the switch with the thumb of the off hand.



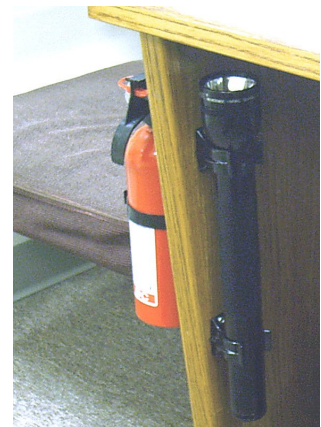
The focusable beam of the Maglite throws well and puts a defined spot of light on walls and street signs at considerable distances. In the photo shown here I'm standing across a warehouse floor. The doorway over my

left shoulder should give you a sense of the distance. The Maglite beam, focused tightly, is clearly defined.



Photo by Phil Elmore

There are a few accessories available that make the 4D Maglite a little more user-friendly in terms of carry and storage. One is a simple belt ring that attaches to the



belt with a leather loop, allowing the light to be carried swinging from the belt like a baton. Another consists of a pair of mounting brackets that you can use to mount your Maglite in a car, on a wall, or anywhere else you might like to keep it. I prefer to mount a light like that to my desk where it will be immediately ready.



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The true strength of the Maglite as an impact weapon was not driven home to me until I saw it used by one of my fellow Kali students. Norm, an assistant instructor at my Kung Fu school, brought in a disabled Maglite for use as a practice club specifically to see how it would hold up.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Norm squared off with another student performing a full-contact, full-intent pattern using his non-functional Maglite as a stick. His opponent was armed with a thirty-inch piece of rebar wrapped in grip tape. As they “fought,” the *CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!* of metal on metal rang throughout the school, prompting every last student to pause and look to see what on Earth was going on.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Now, I should point out that the manufacturer of the Maglite does not advocate its use as a striking implement (and wanted no part of this article when I queried them on it, given the product liability issues involved). The fact is, though, that the Maglite held up remarkably well. There’s no telling if the impacts would have broken the Krypton bulb or the actuating mechanism because the light was already broken, but the body of the light was intact and no worse for wear than the grip tape on the rebar.



Photo by Phil Elmore

While the current crop of small, super-bright tactical torches surpasses conventional flashlight technology in most ways, the 4D Maglite is a reliable tool that does something none of those smaller lights can do. It is one hell of a fighting implement at the most primal level – a heavy club that stands up to steel beatings and would put a serious dent in an attacker’s head and day.

I have a whole shoebox full of tactical lights. I also own a 4D Maglite, sold to me for half of what the cheapest light in that box cost. If you don’t have one amongst your gear, you should seriously consider adding it. It may be an “old” design, but it’s still worthwhile. ♠