

THE MARTIALIST: YEAR THREE MEGA ISSUE

Survival Plinker: The One Gun .22

Solution

By Phil Elmore

One of the perennial topics among shooters, especially in online discussion sites, is the old and overdone topic, “If you could have just one gun, what would it be?” Weary as many of you might be of these hypothetical exercises, there is some benefit and some truth to be found in even the most trite of mental exercises. In this case, the lessons to be learned center on resource management. Why do militaries standardize on the fewest types of ammunition possible, at least in theory? Remember that the United States switched from the .45 ACP to 9mm in order to conform to the NATO standard for pistol ammunition. One of the reasons this is a good thing is that it’s easier (and cheaper) to supply troops in the field with one kind of ammunition than it is to try and provide a greater variety of consumables.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Mark Twain once said to put all your eggs in one basket – and WATCH THAT BASKET. Consolidating your personal firearms – getting as close to the “one gun solution” as it is possible to do this side of a hypothetical scenario –

makes good sense from an economic, logistic, and preparedness standpoint. If you’re going to standardize on a single caliber and perhaps then on a single weapon, I can think of only one choice that makes sense from all angles. That choice is the .22 Long Rifle.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Concealed carry as an armed citizen is about more than just having a medium-sized 9mm, .40, or .45 tucked away under a tasteful vest while one poses for wholesome-looking pictures with one’s handsome family. It’s about being prepared – prepared for the unexpected, for emergencies, for any of several possibilities that could include self-defense. I’m not suggesting that you progress to a “one gun solution” in order to be prepared for some future collapse of society through which only your stockpiled resources can see you – but you might want to pare down your gun vault for the sake of cost, simplicity, and planning.

The term “concealed carry” doesn’t normally extend to .22 caliber long guns, but the over-arching concept – armed preparedness – surely applies. By now you’re asking, “What is the point of this article?” I am suggesting that, to reduce cost, make it easier to stockpile

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ammunition, and thus facilitate long-term emergency preparedness, it would be beneficial to consolidate one's firearms in a single caliber and a single platform. I am further suggesting that some variant of .22 rifle, or a .22 rifle in conjunction with a .22-caliber handgun, would be the best choice for this standardization.



Photo by Phil Elmore

To my knowledge, there is no more common cartridge than the .22 LR, making it the lowest common denominator in ammunition in the United States (if not the world). Thus it is the easiest to find. I theorize, in fact, that in one of those "The End of the World As We Know It" (TEOTWAWKI) scenarios, .22 cartridges might make a good substitute for then-useless paper currency. Setting aside Y2K-redux fears of the coming collapse, however, the .22 is also among the cheapest ammunition you can buy because it is so common. This means that you can stockpile more of it on the same budget. (The small size of the cartridge also makes it easy to store because it doesn't take up much space. "Bricks" of .22 ammunition are very convenient for stacking.)

The advantages of the .22 in stockpiling cannot be emphasized enough

because, in almost every emergency (a natural disaster, civil unrest, an extended power outage, TEOTWAWKI, etc.) the first thing you *won't* be able to do is go to the local gun store or Wal*Mart and purchase enough ammo to get you through the crisis. If the stores aren't inaccessible or cleaned out already, they'll be told to suspend the sales of firearms and cartridges by well-meaning but stupid bureaucrats trying to take control of the situation. The confiscation of privately held arms in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina was a sore point among many law-abiding citizens. It was also nothing less than these citizens should have expected. You've read news stories about runs on guns and ammo that happen in areas experiencing disasters or social problems, and you've read about local governments trying to stop people from buying weapons. The time to buy ammunition – and firearms, for that matter – is *before* you need both.



Photo by Phil Elmore

A cartridge you're likely to have to use in an emergency is very likely one to which you'll be exposed without hearing protection. If you've done much shooting without your earplugs, you know how painful this can be. A lot of people with whom I've shot targets

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have, however, expressed surprise when I insisted on wearing my earplugs while plinking with a .22 rifle. This is because a .22 long gun isn't so loud that it can't be shot reasonably comfortably with "naked" ears. I don't recommend this, but it's a common practice. It also means that if you were toting a .22 survival piece and had to use it – perhaps repeatedly and over a period of time, such as in warning off looters while stationed atop your home or business – you could do so without going half deaf or bleeding from your eardrums.



Photo by Phil Elmore

It's true that the .22 doesn't have a lot of power. It won't reliably penetrate a skull and a single shot with a .22 is more likely to wound than kill you, if it doesn't hit someplace important. It is still a bullet, however, and as far as I'm concerned, even my "non-vital" areas are important. A well-placed shot with a .22 will discourage all but the most determined criminal behavior – and for those folks there are follow-up shots.

What the .22 lacks in power, its launching platforms usually make up in accuracy. The Ruger 10/22 equipped with a suitable scope is remarkably easy to use well, as is the Mossberg Plinkster. Both weapons shoot tight

groups and, with a scope sighted in properly, can be used to strike incredibly small targets if one takes the time to line up the shots. One of the reasons it is easy to hit things with .22 bullets is that these cartridges have low recoil. They're fun and relatively easy to shoot, which is why so many people shoot .22s recreationally. A gun that is pleasant to shoot is more likely to be used for practice, resulting in a shooter better able to do what he must if the excrement strikes the oscillating climate control device.



Photo by Phil Elmore

I'm not at all opposed to selecting a good .22 rifle, preferably equipped with a scope, and complementing it with a good handgun in the same caliber. There are lots of inexpensive (or more expensive and very accurate) .22 handguns out there. The first handgun ever registered to my NYS permit was a Taurus 9-shot .22 revolver with a four-inch barrel, one of the nicest little hand-plinkers you could ever want. Another very fun, very versatile survival revolver

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is Ruger's Super Single Six, a single-action .22 that can be had with an interchangeable .22 Magnum cylinder. (A major disadvantage to the Super Single Six, however, is that it takes about eight days to empty and reload, painstakingly ejecting each spent shell and then reloading through the gate over the cylinder). It doesn't matter so much what you choose, as long as the weapon is accurate, reliable, and comfortable for you – and as long as it's a .22.

If you're feeling particularly excited about the concept, you can kit up your .22 rifle almost endlessly. There are a lot of aftermarket accessories available, particularly for the ubiquitous Ruger 10/22. I remember one plastic stock that made the little 10/22 look like a German WWII-era heavy machinegun, complete with bipod. There are high-capacity magazines and folding stocks (check your laws for "assault weapon" restrictions and comply with these), flash-hider barrel extensions, synthetic drop-in replacement stocks (some of which look racier than others), and a host of aftermarket mechanical components and accessories designed to make your .22 rifle more accurate. You can turn your 10/22 into everything from a Bullpup-configuration urban neighborhood defender to a match-grade sporting arm, depending on your preferences.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Using the .22 for emergencies means using it for pest control, hunting, self-defense, or all three. Against anything but smaller targets, the .22 will get the job done with decent shot placement. Against human beings, remember that more is better than less. Advocates of the .22 for espionage-novel-style "wetwork" and other melodrama have coined fanciful terms for this, such as the "zipper technique" and other silliness. The point, however, is that if someone is coming at you with the intent to hurt or kill you and all you have is a .22, you had better make every shot count – or put a lot of shots into the assailant. The face and neck are ideal targets if you can hit them. Shooting until the adversary goes down may or may not be an option, depending on the size of your magazine. Remember, also, that you'll answer in court for your actions – so don't think you can riddle someone with bullets and then just walk away without a very real justification for such lethal force.

I am being hypocritical in writing this because I have no intention of distilling my defensive armament into only .22 pistols and rifles. It makes good sense, however, to do just that if you are contemplating long-term emergency and survival scenarios. Plan accordingly and take the necessary steps ahead of time. Don't forget to practice a lot with your .22s, too.

You'll at least have fun getting ready for whatever may come your way. ♠