

THE MARTIALIST: ISSUE 3.11 SUBSCRIBER

Self-Defense in Context and within Constraints

By Phil Elmore

Many of the articles in *The Martialist* deal with weapons of one kind or another. Weapons are force *multipliers*, enabling the individual to deliver greater force to an attacker than with empty hands alone. To deny the utility of weapons is to evade reality, for success in self-defense requires that you recognize your own weaknesses. You are not stronger, faster, or more skilled than *everyone*. Weapons enable you to stack the deck in the gamble that is self-defense. You cannot win every bet, but you can cheat as much as possible.



Photo by Phil Elmore

For all our recognition of the place of arms in self-defense methodology, there are plenty of scenarios and circumstances in which the martialist must face his or her foes *unarmed*. Our international readers are well acquainted with such constraints, for in many parts of the world the carry of a gun or a blade is a serious offense in and of itself. You may work in an office with a “zero tolerance” policy that forbids such tools on company property even if you live in a US state that allows concealed carry of firearms. You may be a government employee, a visitor to

a government building, a traveler on an airplane, or an even private citizen with a checkered legal past. For whatever reason among the possible explanations, many of us cannot be armed. What, then, are we to do?

First, do not lose hope. Do not feel marginalized or otherwise impotent when faced with the task of self-defense. Society and your legal system may make it more difficult for you to prepare for the threat of violence, but *difficult* is not *impossible*. You still have options.



Photo by Phil Elmore

First, you can be hyper-vigilant. The most important facet of self-defense is *awareness* – being aware of your environment, of those in it, of those near you, of escape routes and areas of conflict, and so on. Nothing is more important than being *aware* – and you can choose to be extra-careful and extremely wary if you know you must go unarmed into areas of potential peril.

A friend of mine who has no fighting skills and no inclination towards violence practices this form of self-defense exclusively. He stays in at night and remains ever-vigilant when he is out of his home. This is not how most of us choose to live – if you did, you would not be reading this – but it is one way and it can work for anyone.

Second, you can focus on unarmed combative skills. At *The Martialist* we’ve profiled and will profile all sorts of

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extremely useful unarmed self-defense curricula. Train hard knowing that your life and the lives of those you love are literally in your hands. A certain amount of conditioning is appropriate if your body and your mind are to be your only weapons.

Third, you can focus on weapons that are improvised or otherwise “politically correct” in nature. A koppo-wrapped Minimag flashlight makes a great pocket stick and is generally legal. Tactical flashlights can be used defensively and also serve well in utility roles. The Super Sharpie is a great improvised pocket stick. Other “covert” weapons include flexible weapons like bandannas and scarves, which can be used to grapple, to whip, as saps (when loaded with weight), and as emergency bandages. Where improvised weapons are concerned, you are limited only by your imagination and the basic principles of physics.

To succeed in self-defense, you don't have to leave your home each day with a .45, three knives, a SureFire light, and a can of pepper spray – though if you can legally do so, you might as well. Use your *mind*, apply what you learn to the context in which you live, and learn to adapt to and work within your legal constraints. Such constraints make self-defense more challenging, but not impossible. You *still* have choices.

Choose wisely. ♠

I am a peace activist. I wish to live in a world in which the rights of individuals are protected and civil liberty is not threatened by random violence. Towards that end, I advocate the appropriate use of force in self-defense – preemptive, proactive, and in response to offered violence.

Brinkmann MaxFire LX

Review by Francis Rook

The lithium/Xenon Brinkmann MaxFire is Brinkmann's offering in the polymer-body Xenon-bulb market. An obvious attempt to emulate SureFire's G2 Nitrolon and similar lights, the MaxFire is arguably a “tactical” light sold in low-cost discount store venues like Wal*Mart and Target.



Photo by Phil Elmore

The light is 5.25 inches overall with a 1.25 inch bezel. The head and shaft of the light have rubber grips for improved traction. These work well. The light feels very secure in my hand.

The tailcap bears a cross-hatched switch that can be pressed for momentary-on (what Brinkman calls a “silent signal”



option) and clicked positively on and off. This arrangement is very popular with some users, though “tactical” consumers may not like it. This is because, under stress, it is possible to press the switch too hard and get always-on light rather than a momentary burst. I don't think this is a concern with