

SPAS 12: Awesome Auto/Pump

SURVIVAL GUIDE

11308

FDC

SEPTEMBER 1983 VOL. 5 NO. 9

\$2.25



SNAKEBITE:
Venom Avoidance

NEUTRALIZER:
Tunnelpoint Thunder

HURRICANE:
Here It Comes!

**SURVIVAL
GAME:**
Shoot a Friend

**ARMSON
O.E.G.:**
The Red Dot
Does It

WIN

THIS SURVIVAL SETUP! FREE!
M6 Rifle • Food Supply
• Medical Emergency Kit
Super Sweepstakes Drawing No. 9
See Pages 39-41, Inside





Auto/Pump:

SPAS 12

Either way,
this one's an
awesome street fighter . . .

BY JIM THOMPSON
PHOTO BY DAVE EPPERSON

Human flesh, in the presence of a shotgun, especially the scattergun that's aimed in the direction of one's self, develops a sort of predictive Karma. The flesh seems to know exactly where those pellets will strike. Whatever the reason, the uglier and shorter the shotgun, the more pronounced becomes this shrinking feeling.

Thus it was with a particularly goose-bumpy sensation that I regarded the SPAS 12. It is the most intimidating of all shotguns. With its vented handguard and hard polymer forearm/slide-action sleeve, it looks like nothing so much as the resulting offspring from a night of passion between an M-60 and a flamethrower.

The weapon works well enough, which is what the greater portion of this article is about. In the urban violence situation, however, just the sight of an awesome shotgun such as this can prevent a whole lot of trouble before it starts—sort of like the major world powers' concepts of nuclear deterrence or, if you prefer, balance of terror. To paraphrase a British officer discussing the flamethrower: There are many more men alive today, telling how terrible it was—or might have been—than there are lying dead because they offered challenge.

Until recently, I owned an ancient 10-gauge with 18-inch twist barrels, and enormous side hammers. I fired it only once. It blew down a fairly large sapling. However, on the single occasion when I was constrained to draw it in self-defense—I don't recall now whether its 4½-inch black powder chambers were loaded—a would-be robber who accosted me in a traffic jam needed only one glimpse of those tubes inches from his face to melt like ground fog into a sunny morning New York crowd. No shots were fired. No one was hurt. Yet, a weapon had been deployed successfully, and a tactical victory won. This is why, when a combat gun is shown to me, my first question is completely theatrical: Is it ugly enough to play the part? Then I set out to see if it works.

Tests—Simply put, the SPAS 12 is a fire-support and assault shotgun, capable of either semi-automatic or slide-action (pump) operation. Despite its appearance—people kept asking if I was going to shoot my “machine gun”—it doesn't take a feed belt or a drum

magazine, but holds eight conventional 2¾-inch 12 gauge shotgun shells in its non-reflecting black tubular magazine. The SPAS 12 owner's instruction manual says this is a “Sporting Purpose Automatic Shotgun.” Its slug capability and sensible sights give it some potential for deer-sized game at short ranges, and, of course, some bird hunting, but its natural prey walks on two legs, and may even possess the capability to shoot back.

This weapon is more military than most U.S.-issue firearms. *Everything* has a catch, latch, stop, and/or release, and there are multiple safeties. There is a “quick employment” safety to the left of the trigger guard, which is a serrated bar, and a safety lever to the right, an elongated lever easily found in the dark, a magazine cutoff button on the right, also checkered and easy to locate, plus a floorplate release button on the left, directly opposite the cutoff, and also easy to find. As a rule, every time a loading, dry-firing, or chamber-loaded-check operation is carried out, a release or safety somewhere must be engaged.

Shooting the SPAS 12 is quite conventional. However, in the usual familiarization/checkout procedures done by almost every gun owner, there is considerable fumbling and stumbling until, at length, one memorizes the routines. Remember, this weapon's closest relative sits not on

some sylvan Midwestern duck pond, but atop a ringmount on an armored personnel carrier somewhere.

The SPAS 12's most important control of all, another huge button half-way rearward on the forearm/slide-action sleeve, mounted on its own plastic bump, and also easily located in the dark, is the auto/manual fire selector. By depressing this button and sliding the forearm to its forward position (“A” for automatic) or its rear position (“M” for manual pump action), the shooter selects the mode of operation. The mode selection also alters the use of certain controls—the quick employment safety lever, for example, becomes a bolt release in the safe position in the automatic mode.

The folding stock employs a set of massive locks, also of button-release configuration, one to lock the stock in the folded position at the right rear of the receiver, and another push-pin of the massive spring variety which holds the stock in the folded position, using the rear sight as the latching point. The only problem related to folding and unfolding the stock is the fumbling necessary to locate the release pin which is positioned rearward of the rear sight. This is complicated somewhat by the enormous carrying-handle/arm-shoulder-brace—which, incidentally, is not illustrated in the instruction manual—mounted in the buttstock with a huge coil spring holding it in place. This hook may be removed, or its position changed by

SPAS 12: TECH DATA

Overall Lengths:

With stock folded, inches, (mm)	31.0 (787)
With stock extended, inches, (mm)	41.0 (1,041)
Barrel length, with muzzle sleeve, inches, (mm)	(21.5) 546)

Weights:

Without accessories, pounds, (kg)	9.6 (4.37)
-----------------------------------	------------

Safety Systems:

Trigger guard, left side
Trigger guard, right side

Action:

Slide (pump)
Semi-automatic

Magazine Capacity:

With 1 round in chamber	9
-------------------------	---

Ammunition:

Standard 12 gauge, 2 3/4-inch maximum length	
Charge weight, ounces, (grains)	1½-1½ (547-656)
Powder charge, grains, (drams)	89 - 96 (3¼ - 3½)

SPAS 12

application of pressure and rotation in 90-degree increments. A spring button holds the buttplate in either of two positions.

Field stripping is relatively conventional, as compared with the procedure for other semi-auto shotguns, though bolt removal is less complex than with some. Barrels can be changed quickly without tools.

Disassembly of the SPAS 12's trigger mechanism requires only a punch. A nail would suffice in an emergency. The only cautions with regard to field stripping are the usual: make sure the weapon is not loaded, and don't let the breech block or recoil/operating spring pop loose.

The manufacturer, the distinguished old Italian firm of Luigi Franchi, advises that any load (maximum length 2 inches) may be used in the pump action mode. However, for semi-auto operation, only loads with a minimum of 1¼ ounces of shot and 3¼ drams (89 grains) of powder be used to produce recoil sufficient to cycle the action. This advice proved to be exactly accurate. In point of fact, this shotgun never jammed with Winchester/Western 0 and 00 buckshot, and roughly equivalent handloads with No. 4 shot. Neither was there a hang-up problem with Rottweil-Brenneke rifled slugs. But the bolt simply didn't react to light game loads. These weren't jams, really; the bolt just didn't respond.

Shooting—Absence of recoil was the most pleasant surprise delivered by the SPAS 12. The expectation was that this weapon would display all the finesse of an overage mule who's just been tweaked. That's kick, recoil, whatever. When one is shooting just enough game to eat, recoil is of no great consequence. However, when one is dealing with a dangerous beast, especially of the species *Homo sapiens*, every instant the muzzle is up, off target, for a heartbeat of vulnerability, this effect of recoil can be hazardous to one's continued health. The SPAS 12 keeps its nose down, tending to the business at hand. Moreover, the rate of fire of which this weapon is capable is incredible.

Loosing slugs at 2x6 lumber, seven boards placed perpendicular to the floor, ahead of a backstop, firing the eight rounds in the magazine, every stick of lumber was reduced to flying

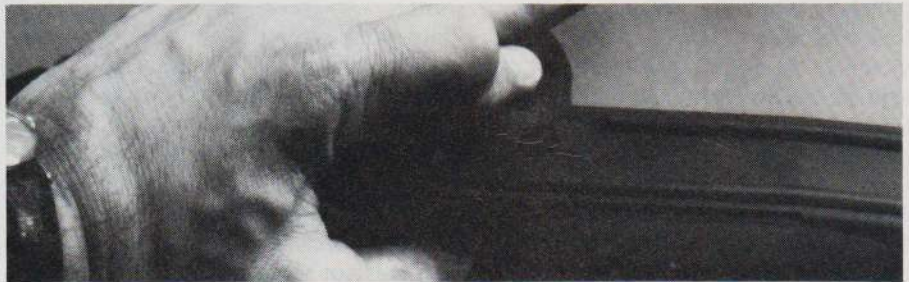
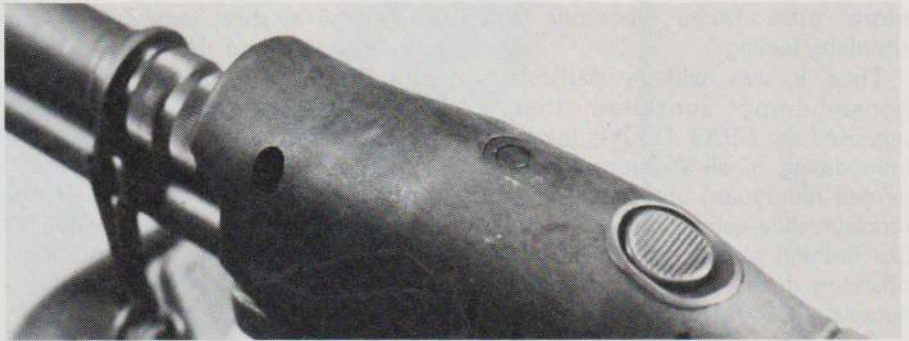


LEFT—For loading, the SPAS 12's floorplate must be released separately.

BELOW—The action selector button is positioned on the bottom fore-end of the slide.

MIDDLE—Folding stock lock pin is stoutly sprung, and holds well.

BOTTOM—Folding stock, in folded position, uses rear sight as latch point.



splinters in just 5.5 seconds—shooting from the hip. I was unable to duplicate this feat shooting from the shoulder. Though the capability to employ the SPAS 12's effective sights was there, the overly long shoulder stock does not permit the weapon to swing fluidly from the shoulder. With shotshells, the rate of fire and hit percentages are, of course, much higher. One can wreak greater havoc with this weapon—in a hurry—than with a submachine gun. Only a top-notch light machine gun, the German MG. 42, for example, in the hands of a first-class, practiced combat infantryman can really do greater damage in less time. Fire is more precise from the shoulder, but

unlike other shotguns, the SPAS 12 seems slower, less natural, to point and train, even when the sights are not employed.

The impression is that perhaps a shooter of larger frame would experience less difficulty. For this reason, several larger men—and a woman—were prevailed upon to fire the SPAS 12. All reported similar results: "The SPAS 12 is a pussycat to shoot, but a bit clumsy from the shoulder." The most apt description is that it feels as though the shooter's right arm is overly extended, and the left arm is at too flat an angle.

Perhaps, in the future, Franchi will produce a shorter folding stock, or an

optional fixed stock, or eliminate the stock altogether on a version or versions of the SPAS 12.

Another apparatus which draws damnation with only the faintest of praise is the sling—or, rather, the odd position of the rear cutout for the sling snap. No matter what, no matter how carefully one folds and unfolds the stock, the sling becomes tangled in the process. Perhaps by accident, Franchi provides a much better place to secure the sling—any of the eight 7/8ths-inch holes cut in the stock metal.

That hook, the handle, fully 5 3/4 inches long, is handy for military field carry, and for one-armed, around-corners shooting, but is best removed and left at home when the weapon is being hauled from place to place in the city.

At the end of the barrel is a "thread protection bushing" ahead of a "protection bushing washer," sort of an O-ring for what may be an interesting series of front-end accessory equipment. Chokes? Of course: both full and modified choke tubes are optionally available. Far more appropriate, however, would be a grenade and flare launcher, flash hider, or, perhaps, an effective silencer similar to those built for shotguns by Hiram Maxim early in this century.

For those who're interested, the SPAS 12 fired somewhat tighter, more uniform patterns than a similarly barreled domestic shotgun, a Winchester "Trench Gun," an on-loan cylinder bore beast of World War I vintage.

Somehow, its difficult to picture one's self crouched with a SPAS 12 in Horicon Marsh, awaiting honkers from overhead—though the weapon might frighten those geese to death without a shot being fired. On the other hand, those who dwell in some of the crime-ridden cities of America would find the SPAS 12 at home—and a welcome assurance of continued survival.

The Franchi weapon is manufactured in Bresica, Italy, and is brought into the U.S. by F.I.E. Corp, P.O. Box 4866, Dept. SG, Haileah, FL 33014.

In addition to the SPAS 12, F.I.E. supplies a broad variety of semi-auto handguns, sporting shotguns, replica revolvers, and various law enforcement equipment. The company will, on request, provide additional information on the SPAS 12 and a catalog of firearms and accessories. ●

SURVIVAL TOOLS



EASY TO COCK ELASTIC ARROW GUN
120 lb. PULL WITH POSITIVE SAFETY

\$134.95 Handier than a crossbow
Only 12 inches wide
Even works underwater
Uses 18 inch or longer standard arrows
200 lb. Pull Conversion Unit \$9.50

HORNET Crossbow

150 LB. DRAW



\$165.00

USES 16" BOLTS Gets over 250 f.p.s.

Scorpion Crossbow



"Best
Factory Crossbow"
Over 300 f.p.s. with 19" Bolts
38" Fiberglass Bow
150 LB. DRAW **\$335.00**

We have the most
complete crossbow
catalog available.



OVER
200
F.P.S.

Com Bow Sling



Twice The Power Of A
Standard Slingshot.
\$43.50

Each Com Bow Sling comes with:
sling w/ medium pouch band, 25
steel balls, medium short arrow
band, 3 short arrows, allen wrench
and instructions.

Send \$1.00 for Catalog
of Special Weapons & Survival Aids.

M & M ENTERPRISES
P.O. Box 64, Dept. SSG
ISLAND LAKE, IL 60042

FROM



H&K 91

**A HIGH QUALITY
UNBREAKABLE
COMBAT MAGAZINE**
ONLY \$12.50 each

Run a car over a DME nylon magazine, beat it against a wall, or even drop it fully loaded on its lips. It will still function like new. Do you want to trust your life and that of your family on an inferior magazine or do you want the best!



CLIP CHARGER FOR H&K 91
USES 5 SHOT
M-14 STRIPPER CLIPS
\$15.00

M&M has the Answer®

Weatherproof Urethane (Expanded Molecular Rubber) stock sets will not warp, distort or rot. Many times stronger than wood.



Guaranteed for
Life!

Available in Black, Brown or Green for
Remington® 870, 1100 S&W® 1000, 3000
Winchester® 12, 1200, 1400 Mosberg 500
Ithaca® 37, 51 \$69.00 per set

A TRAVELER'S ANSWER

ULTRA TOUGH LETTER OPENER

Precision construction of space age
plastic. 7" long, 3/4" blade.



THE KNIFE \$5.00 each

SKELETON KNIFE

MACHINED FROM 1/4" STAINLESS STEEL
8" LONG, 3/4" BLADE WITH
LEATHER SHEATH



\$10.00 Prepaid To You

SURVIVAL STRAW

Instantly safe drinking water
The Pocket Purifier

100% germ-free drinking water. Water is purified as you draw it through the straw. No pills or chemicals. Weighs less than 1 oz. Can be used up to 5 years.



Special \$10.00 each