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Gun Digest

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THE MAGAZINE

EVERYDAY CARRY ISSUE 2020
VOLUME 37 • ISSUE 15

EVERYDAY CARRY 2020

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About
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BEAM ME UP!

7 EDC light myths ... debunked.

“A light will give away my position.” Have you ever heard a fellow gun owner utter these words? There are more than a handful of myths about lights and guns, rooted in a poor understanding of using them effectively together.

The reason most gun owners don't understand how a light works when paired with a firearm is simple: It's difficult to practice in low-light conditions. But, it's *very* important that every gun owner shoot in low-light conditions at least once ... if, for no other reason, than to experience the challenges first hand. Ideally, you should seek out a reputable trainer with a low-light course.

There just isn't a good reason to not join the 21st century and embrace high-performing lights, regardless of the myths. Bad things happen all the time—especially when the sun isn't out.

SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON DEFENSIVE LIGHTING

There are some basic concepts and terms that, if you're familiar with them, will help you spot those nasty myths.

Photonic Barriers: Photonic barriers are anything that makes your light



less effective than it could potentially be. Examples of these performance-stealing variables are the very same ones that impact how well your car's headlights work: fog, rain and even how clean the lens is. Other more extreme examples of photonic barriers include gun smoke, dust in the air and other light sources being aimed back at you. Most of these barriers can be overcome with a sufficiently powerful light, but others might require you to change how you use a light.

Umbrella or Baseboard Lighting:

Just because a light has a high output doesn't make it unusable in confined spaces. Instead of pointing it directly where you're looking, pointing the light at the ceiling and creating a reflective umbrella of light that covers everything in that room is a great way to make sure you don't overwhelm your eyes with a ton of light.

What if you're in a place with a super-high ceiling? Point the light at the baseboard, floor or ground. Sure, you aren't

going to get the same level of illumination as umbrella lighting, but it'll work in a pinch. Umbrella lighting is best employed with handguns and handheld lights; baseboard lighting is better suited for long-guns because they often have more powerful lights mounted to them.

Constant-On and Momentary-On:

Most of the time, momentary light activation is best paired with a long-gun, where pistol lights are best employed with a constant-on switch. Depending on your individual use case, a handheld light can be used effectively with both a constant-on and a momentary-on. The reason constant-on is preferred with a pistol is simple: It can hurt the fingers after a bit. A long-gun, on the other hand, isn't anywhere near as difficult to use in momentary mode.

Lumens vs. Candela: You might have heard the term "lumens" thrown around a lot, but what about its lesser-known but more important brother, candela? Lumen is the measurement unit for the total amount of light coming out of the lens. More lumens *technically* means brighter, but that light might not harness those lumens efficiently and leave you with a less ef-

fective light than you think you have. Candela is a measurement of the amount of light in a particular spot in the beam pattern, which can be used to determine how efficiently that light projects.

MYTH 1: 200 LUMENS IS ENOUGH

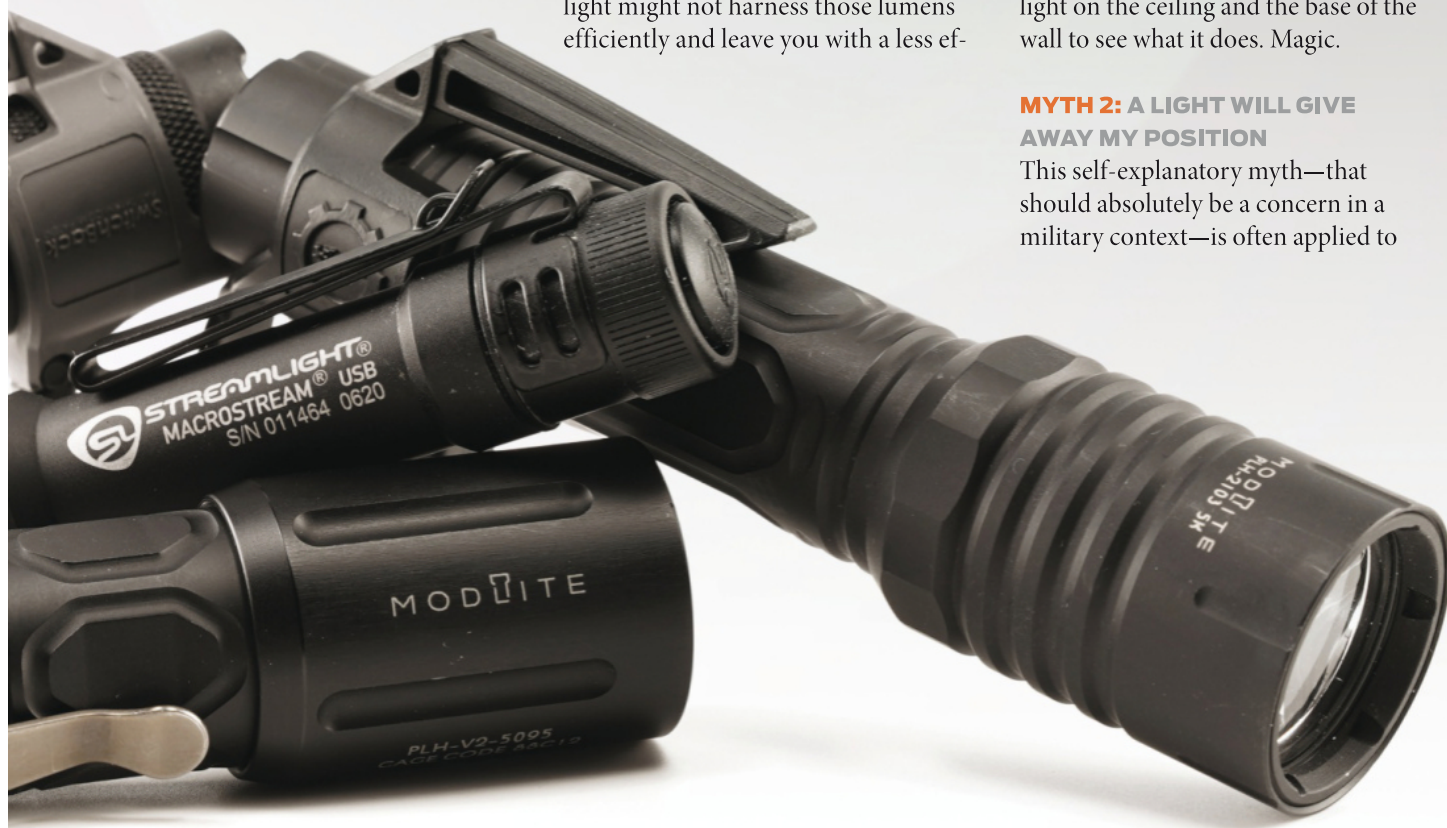
As lights have become more powerful, there's a growing segment of folks who believe there's such a thing as too much light. The idea that "X lumens is enough" is that if you have too much light you might blind yourself if you shine your light on a white wall or mirror.

Why It's Wrong: Even with a very low output light, bad technique can blind you. Learn your home's layout, identify what surfaces reflect enough light to impair your vision—and practice. The umbrella and baseboard lighting techniques ensure that even if you have a Modlite Archimedes Death Ray slung under your pistol, you aren't going to blind yourself.

If you haven't already, turn the light out in the bathroom and shine a flashlight on the ceiling and the base of the wall to see what it does. Magic.

MYTH 2: A LIGHT WILL GIVE AWAY MY POSITION

This self-explanatory myth—that should absolutely be a concern in a military context—is often applied to



One light isn't going to solve every problem. Balancing size, output and throw is just as important as selecting your defensive carry ammunition.

civilian defensive use. The idea is that turning a light on to see is like flipping on a neon sign above your head.

Why It's Wrong: There's some validity to the argument if we're talking about a SEAL Team conducting a night-time snatch and grab, but the legally armed citizen likely isn't going to be presented with a situation that requires a high level of light discipline while making a late-night Arby's run.

Because the use of a high-output weapon light can control a threat in some cases, the possibility to avoid being forced to use deadly force is a welcome tool. Plus, the information you can gather with light is a hell of a lot more thorough than what you can gather without ample lighting.

MYTH 3: A GUN WITH A LIGHT IS HARD TO CONCEAL

Adding a light to your EDC pistol will add bulk. That's fact. However, the idea

that a light added to your pistol transforms it into something you couldn't possibly conceal most certainly is myth.

Why It's Wrong: Advancements in holster design over the past decade have made concealing a gun with a light attached much easier than ever. Additionally, lights like Streamlight's excellent TLR-7 A add nearly no bulk to the pistol while still delivering acceptable performance.

Holster makers to investigate for concealing a pistol with a light attached are Bawidmann, Tenicor and PHLster for AIWB; Raven Concealment's Perun LC is a great option for OWB if you aren't comfortable with appendix carry.

Still can't seem to pack a gun with a

light? Carry a handheld like Streamlight's ProTac HL-X USB or Modlite's PLHv2 and get proficient using it.

MYTH 4: A GUN ISN'T A FLASH-LIGHT

While the argument that you shouldn't use a gun as a flashlight is sound, this





argument against weapon-mounted lights is most commonly delivered as: “I wouldn’t want to point a gun at my family if I was clearing the house.”

Why It’s Wrong: Your firearm isn’t a task light, and Jeff Cooper’s rules for firearm safety always apply. Don’t point your firearm at anything that you don’t intend to destroy. Just about any modern light from a reputable manufacturer is more than capable of lighting up a large room when using a technique like umbrella lighting. This misconception

is rooted in a lack of understanding in how to use a light effectively.

Still worried about it? The answer is adding a handheld light to your EDC and nightstand.

MYTH 5: IF I CAN’T SEE, CRIMINALS CAN’T SEE

If you can’t see, obviously criminals won’t be able to see you either ... right? This myth seems to make sense if you take it at face value.

Why It’s Wrong: A criminal only cares that you appear to be an opportune target; they don’t need to see exactly what’s in your hands. You, on the other hand, not only need to see the outline of the criminal, but you also

need to know *exactly* what’s in their hands. If you use deadly force, no one’s going to care that the banana the bad man was pointing at you *looked* like a gun; all that anyone will care about is that it *wasn’t* a gun.

MYTH 6: THE STROBE FUNCTION DISORIENTS ATTACKERS

The myth that the strobe function on a flashlight disorients an attacker has roots in the theory that rapidly flashing light will overload the visual system and cause confusion.

Why It’s Wrong: There’s a reason most top low-light instructors don’t teach the use of strobe in their classes—and very few serious duty-rated lights actually include a strobe function—it doesn’t work. You have a far better chance at disorienting someone with a



constant blast of lumens than throwing them a disco party.

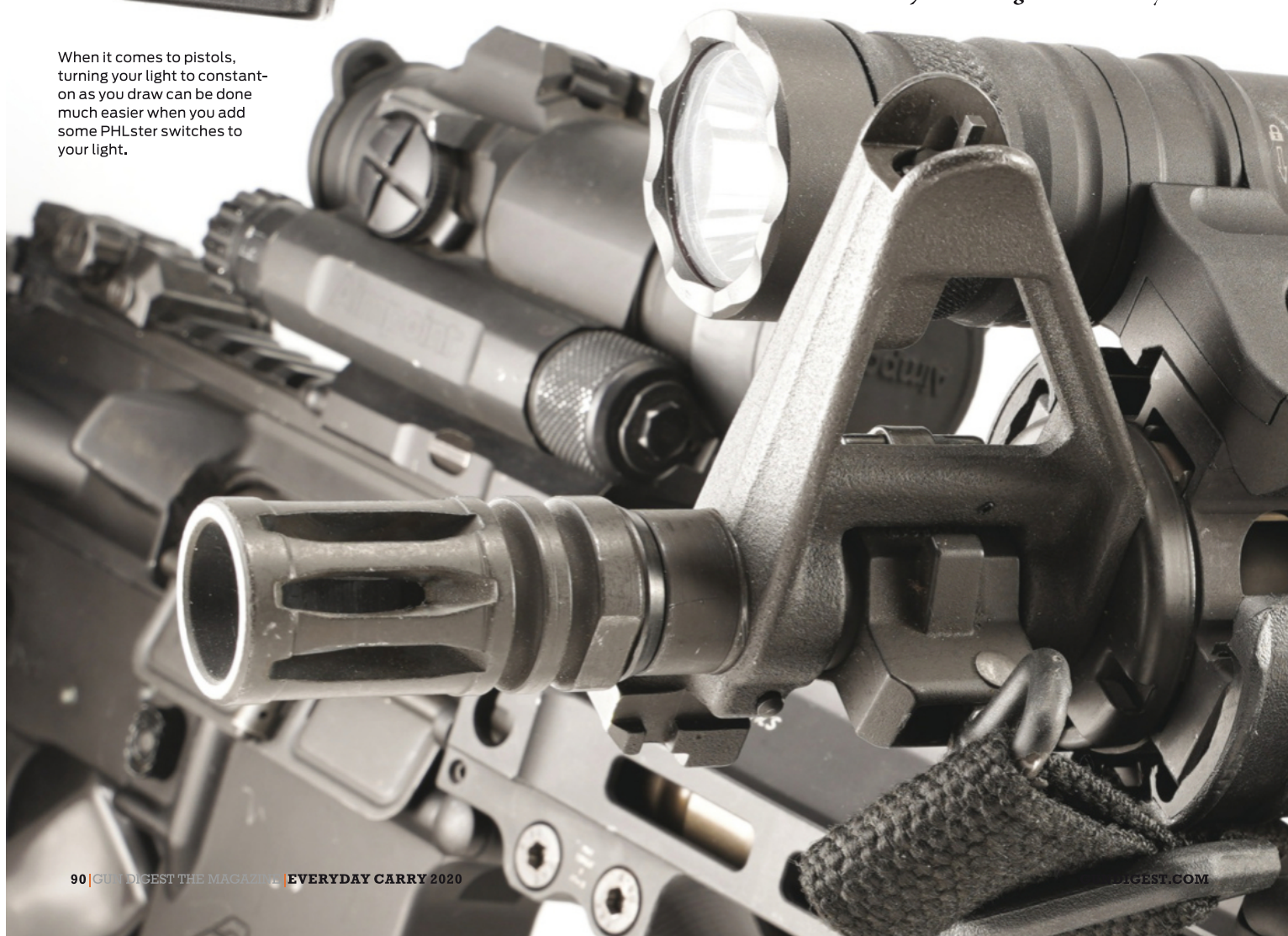
The only result you'll get from a strobe is less information about what the attacker is doing and what's in their hands. The point of adding a light as part of your defensive toolbox is to gather more information to make better decisions.

MYTH 7: I DON'T NEED A LIGHT DURING THE DAY

Daytime is bright. There couldn't possibly be a need to have a flashlight during the day. After all, the sun has way more lumens than any pocket light saber you might be considering ... right?

Why It's Wrong: The idea that you

When it comes to pistols, turning your light to constant-on as you draw can be done much easier when you add some PHLster switches to your light.



won't encounter a situation that would benefit from a flashlight, just because the sun is out, is asinine. How often have you walked out of a dimly lit store and found yourself squinting?

That big glass door that you walked through does a great job of backlighting people. With a high-powered flashlight, you can overcome that photonic barrier and make the best decision for that particular situation. Again, carry a handheld light in public: You don't want to be drawing on anyone unless the threat is eminent.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

The best way to go about determining which particular concepts work best for you is to try them out in your home and in your daily routines.

If in doubt, here are some solid practices to live by:

- › Carry a handheld light regardless of whether you have a weapon-mounted light.
- › Get specific low-light training from a well-respected instructor. YouTube doesn't count.
- › Practice in your home with an unloaded gun. Learn how to get the most out of your tools in a controlled situation. **GDTM**



REASONS TO CARRY A HANDHELD LIGHT

- › It's a flashlight. It's always useful.
- › It can supplement a weapon-mounted light.
- › A high-powered flashlight can be a deterrent.
- › You can gather information when lighting conditions are less than ideal without pointing a gun.

Companies like Cloud Defensive and Modlite are rewriting what we consider acceptable performance from weapon lights.

