

Shockwave Skirts Rules, Saves Lives

Photo and Text
By T.J. MULLIN

A few years ago, when discussing a variety of issues with the noted and very talented Class 2 manufacturer of firearms, Len Savage of Historic Arms, we discovered an oddity in the firearms law.

Now, everyone knows that a shotgun with a barrel length of less than 18 inches can be legally made as long as the appropriate tax is paid to the government. (Why exactly you should have to pay a tax

to exercise your constitutional right is another question, of course, as it is rather like a poll tax down south pre-1964, isn't it?).

Similarly, we all know one aspect of the definition of "any other weapon" which requires a \$5 tax to be made is that it is concealable. The

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Enforcement and Explosives (ATF) has determined that anything 26 inches or longer is not concealable. Thus "any other weapon" has to be less than 26 inches long.

Adding to this mix of legal definitions, a firearm receiver

that has never had a shoulder stock attached to it transfers as a "firearm" and not as a pistol or shotgun, even though it may fire cartridges similar to those fired in such weapons.

Lastly while weapons of any type with a bore larger than .50, or one-half inch, are determined to be "destructive devices," this definition by legislative or administrative fiat does not apply to conventional sporting ammunition. Thus 20-gauge or 12-gauge shotguns, although they shoot projectiles larger than one-

But, fortunately, a major manufacturer, Mossberg, must have learned about our project



Car gun choices, from top to bottom, include SIG MPX, Mossberg Shockwave and Smith & Wesson M&P.

half inch, are not destructive devices requiring a \$200 tax to be paid upon manufacture or transfer.

THE RESULT

Now when you put this mix all together, you get an interesting result. A receiver or firearm capable of shooting shotgun shells, if over 26 inches in length, can have a barrel shorter than 18 inches and not require any more federal paperwork or taxes to be paid than any other conventional rifle or handgun.

With this seeming oddity discovered, Len made up an example and submitted it to the ATF to get their blessing that it was National Firearms Act-exempt. After waiting

like they might try to do when only a few custom makers are involved. Then, of course, Mossberg makes fine, high-quality, if inexpensive weapons, for they are commonly found both in military units and law enforcement agencies.

SELF-DEFENSE TOOL

Besides the clear "neatness" factor of having such a weapon, the Shockwave is a viable self-defense tool especially useful in closely confined spaces such as vehicles. Being able to fire it equally easily with either hand also allows you to avoid awkward twisting about when seated in your vehicle. True, the four-shot capacity is limited,

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a while, the determination came back that our analysis was correct and the world of a less-than-18 inch barreled, over-26 inch shotgun shell firing weapon was born.

Len, of course, immediately passed the word to other similarly minded Class 2 manufacturers and many proceeded to make equal weapons. But, of course, these were all custom jobs and limited in number.

But, fortunately, a major manufacturer, Mossberg, must have learned about our project and now offers what they call the "Shockwave." It is a 12-gauge, 14-inch barrel firearm over 26 inches. Being a Mossberg, it has a convenient top-mounted safety, allowing either hand to operate the weapon easily. Being made by a major manufacturer, it is relatively inexpensive.

The ATF will not be able to change the opinion letter

but that should be sufficient to permit you to access your handgun (you do carry one or two, right?).

It is unfortunate that the Shockwave is currently available only in 12 gauge, as the first one made of this breakthrough design by Len Savage was in 20 gauge. It also had a more effective grip, giving better support but, hopefully, additional models will soon appear. Still, it is pretty effective as is, priced right, neat in the best meaning of the term, and there is just something about getting around these pesky NFA rules that appeals to everyone who sees one.

As I once said down at court, "Anyone who cannot figure out a way around a rule should comply with it," but if you can figure out a way around it, you do not have to comply. The Shockwave allows you to figure a way around the rule.

Thankfully.

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