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- ***RELOADING***
  THE 10MM CARTRIDGE
- ***THE SURPLUS MARKET***
  THE WALTHER P1 PISTOL



- ***PRODUCT SHOWCASE***
  NEW GUN STUFF!
- ***CODREA'S CORNER***
  - DISPARAGING ARMED CITIZENS UNDERMINES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S CREDIBILITY
  - CEKADA HEADING ATF STILL A NO-WIN SCENARIO FOR GUN OWNERS
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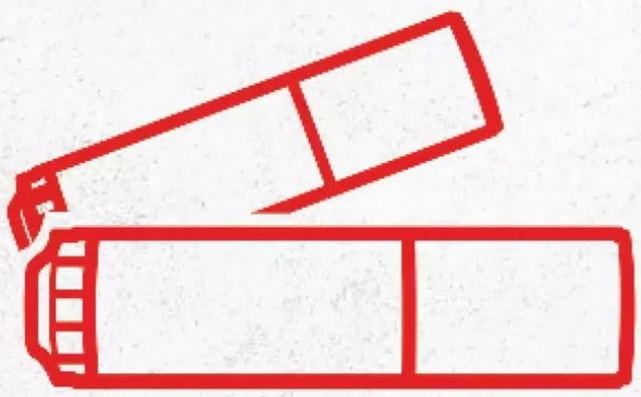
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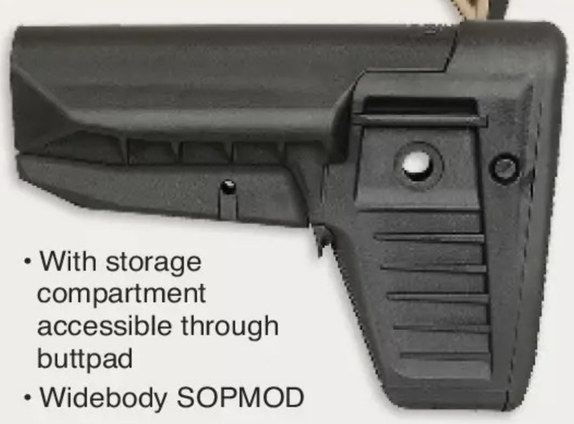
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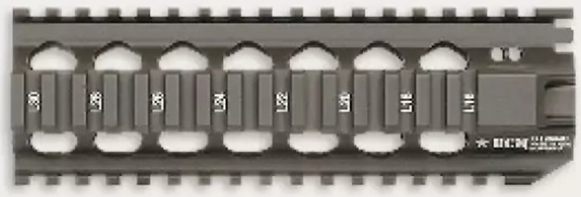


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TRUMP DOJ STANDS IDLY BY
AS STATES DESTROY THE SECOND AMENDMENT

Democrat-Run States Adopt Foreign Gun Laws in Defiance of the U.S. Constitution, and Trump Couldn't Care Less.

By Darwin Nercesian, News Field Editor, Long-Range Rifle Field Editor



(Artwork by Darwin Nercesian)

The race to establish which Democrat-led vestige of an American state leads in subjugation, totalitarianism, and treason is heating up. Virginia is going full Gestapo as citizens brace for legislation so extreme that confiscation of firearms and magazines in common use is on the menu, while Colorado seeks to force serialization and regulation of gun parts, starting with barrels. We've all seen the traitors scoff with contempt as they gaslight Americans, telling us they're not coming for our guns, but those of us who know better saw this coming, and history tells us exactly where it's going.

Of deeper concern is where fascist lawmakers receive their inspiration as they seek to conquer the American citizen. Any person of humble literacy can tell you that their ideas are not derived from the United States Constitution. Take the regulation of barrels, an idea California has been kicking around, and one that I am sure Gavin Newsom will be envious of if his Colorado comrades beat him to the punch. Laws such as this exist in Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, places where it's safe to say most red-blooded Americans would find undesirable, whether they are willing to admit it or not.

These are the baby steps that lead to total domination over a society that once boasted freedom as its core initiative. Americans need to pull their heads from the proverbial sand and realize that the continued erosion of our Second Amendment will ultimately have us making comparisons to China, North Korea, Russia, and Somalia.

Most disturbing of all is the Trump administration's lack of response to this metastasizing disease of states ripping up the Second Amendment while Washington, DC looks the other way. However, this is nothing new as was pointed out in David Codrea's 2018 article entitled, *Where is Trump as States Reduce RKBA to Sub-Foreign Levels?* It seems the President's words, "*Fight, fight, fight!*" mean now, more than ever, that he is fighting to chip away a lot more of our Second Amendment, or at least stand by as the Bolsheviks do it for him. I recently wrote *One Big Beautiful Update, Part 1*, detailing the Department of Justice's challenge to the *One Big Beautiful Lawsuit*, which seeks to remove silencers, short-barreled firearms, and AOWs from the National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA). President Trump and the ongoing actions, and inactions, by his DOJ are diametrically opposed to what he promised Americans in return for their votes.

Where is that plan of action that was due 30 days after the President's Executive Order, Protecting Second Amendment Rights, dated February 7, 2025? Where is the DOJ on these grave violations of Americans' gun rights? Why is the subversion of our Constitution so commonplace that lawmakers feel free to adopt infringements from countries that do not recognize a God-given right to defend life and liberty from tyranny?

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—

Darwin Nercesian is a long-time gun rights advocate and shooter of targets far, far away. As the News Field Editor and Long-Range Rifle Field Editor at Firearms News, *Darwin writes about the Second Amendment, firearms, and related gear. Follow him on Instagram, X, and YouTube @DTOE_Official.* FN

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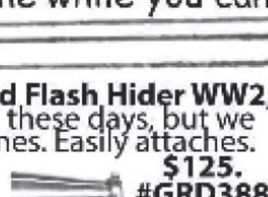


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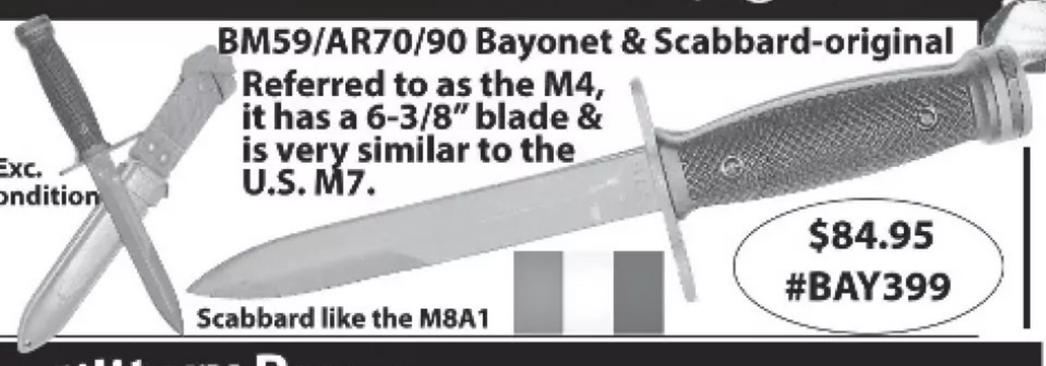
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SPECIAL REPORT

By Darwin Nercesian | News Field Editor

Darwin Nercesian is a long-time gun rights advocate and shooter of targets far, far away. As a News Field Editor at Firearms News, *Darwin writes about the Second Amendment, firearms, and related gear. Follow him on Instagram, X, and YouTube @DTOE_Official.*

TRUMP ENFORCERS REJECT SECOND AMENDMENT AFTER MINNEAPOLIS SHOOTING

Trump's "Best People," Gun Grabbers in Conservative Clothing…



(Shutterstock/Joey Sussman: Patel photo, Shutterstock/Daniel Hernandez-Salazar: Noem photo, Shutterstock/DT phots 1: Bessent photo, Darwin Nercesian: artwork)

As Democrats continue to organize groups of agitators bent on disrupting federal efforts to apprehend and deport those who have violated the sovereignty of America's borders, it is becoming clear that more and more on the left are arming themselves in preparation for violent confrontations with law enforcement. This dangerous disposition is becoming increasingly prevalent as leftists brag about turning Second Amendment tables on conservatives without realizing that our motivations could not be further at odds. It is also cause for concern as it seems many within the Trump "best people" inner circle have used it as an excuse to speak out against gun owners carrying in public, with comments so incongruent to this administration's stated stance on gun rights that one might think the remarks came from Obama himself.

Why Do Conservatives Take Issue With Democrats Exercising Their Second Amendment Rights?

The simple answer is that we don't, but as cries of hypocrisy litter social and mainstream media, it is time someone points out that there is a real difference between our motivations and intent. For years, conservative gun owners have espoused the principles of responsible firearms ownership, whether for sporting purposes or home and self-defense. When we discuss the real reason for the Second Amendment as the Founders intended, providing the means for citizens to defend against a government gone tyrannical, the discussion is often met with scoffs of derision from the left, either mocking the idea that the government would ever deteriorate to that state, or making fun of the notion that citizens would ever stand a chance in such a conflict. I can even remember when California Representative Eric Swalwell thought it prudent to tell a United States veteran that any such confrontation would be short-lived for Americans because the government has nuclear weapons at its disposal, "And it would be a short war my friend. The government has nukes," said Swalwell in his 2018 Twitter post, ostensibly bragging about using weapons of mass destruction against the American people. This traitor (my opinion) is still a member of Congress. Let that sink in.

Why is it then that the left has now decided that such tyranny can and does exist? It's an abrubt about face if I've ever seen one, but it follows a familiar pattern of behavior. In their utter lack of integrity, Democrats only need to disagree with a position before hitting the reset button and changing all the rules. If you don't agree with Black Lives Matter burning down cities across America, they say it's because you're a racist. If you don't like the idea of biological men beating up women in sports, then you're transphobic, even though the use of that term is a misnomer, as not a one of us fears anyone in the trans community.

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Now that fraud and violence have become rampant due to a disastrous four years of Biden's open borders policy, we must work to reverse the negative effects of this invasion by returning people who are here illegally to whence they came, and this push to restore law and order is exactly what has Democrats outraged today and screaming tyranny. To be clear, maintaining law and order while standing firm against an illegal invasion, fraud, and violence committed against American citizens is not what the Founders meant by tyranny, and challenging law enforcement as they are doing this difficult job is certainly not why conservatives carry guns.

Therein lies the disconnect, and I refuse to play dumb about it as do the talking heads on television. It isn't that we don't respect your Second Amendment rights. We do, and we've been trying to preach them to you for years while you've been trying to take them from us for longer. We simply don't respect your intent, which is to break the law, cause disruptions, interfere with law enforcement, block our roads and highways, cause utter chaos and destruction, rob the taxpayer blind, and then claim self-defense when you get in trouble.

Make no mistake, Democrats are using the Second Amendment much like the American Communist Party perverts the First Amendment, neither of which provides the right to commit treason by way of overthrowing our Constitution Republic or threatening people when you don't get your way. In fact, the government is responsible for protecting and defending our nation from lawlessness and invasion, a duty of the highest order with significance beyond a simple yet undeniable fiduciary obligation to American citizens. That said, the mission undertaken by law enforcement at this time is well within the scope of their duties, and any obstruction of these legal activities not only constitutes criminal behavior but also robs American taxpayers of the services they work hard for and are entitled to. Stop breaking the law!

As you can see, the conservative position, as I have laid it out, is consistent. It is congruent with our values and applies to all Americans at all times, while the left's principles ebb and flow on a whim to justify their crimes and forward their anti-American agenda. The hypocrisy is clear, and it is a staple of the Democratic Party.

Foot, Meet Mouth

In the aftermath of the fatal shooting of Alex Pretti on January 24 by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, I would have thought the most offensive prevailing rhetoric would belong to the left, but that isn't the case. I'm not saying it is coming from real conservatives either, as the drivel has sprouted forth from the mouths of duplicitous figures I would never dare associate my American values with. In a million years, I would never have bet that the liberal ladies of *The View* would sound like more patriotic supporters of the Second Amendment than a Republican administration. Despite the fact that I know their motives are of a nefarious nature, I'm happy I never made that bet, because I would have lost.

Kash Patel

Let's start with Kash Patel, the featured speaker at the 2024 inaugural GOALS conference, hosted by Gun Owners of America (GOA), and applauded by the gun-rights advocacy group for his confirmation as FBI Director in February 2025. "Kash Patel's confirmation is a massive win for gun owners across America. Unlike his predecessors, he understands that the FBI must serve the American people—not act as a political weapon against them. We look forward to seeing Director Patel restore integrity to the Bureau while standing firm in defense of our Second Amendment rights," said Tim Macy, Chairman of GOA.

"For years, we've watched the FBI trample on the rights of law-abiding gun owners who the Biden Administration designated as 'Militia Violent Extremists' for their belief in the Bill of Rights and use of patriotic imagery like the Gadsden Flag. Kash Patel has made it clear that those days are over. He is a true constitutionalist, and we are confident that he will work to rein in the agency's abuses and ensure the FBI upholds, rather than undermines, the Second Amendment," according to Erich Pratt, Senior Vice President of GOA.

This is a mountain of praise for a guy that most of us have hardly ever heard of before we were asked to support his confirmation to one of the highest law enforcement positions in the land, and I'm not one to jump in bed over lip service, especially when you come to me hat in hand on our first encounter. Is there any evidence that Kash Patel defended the Second Amendment before needing our support? What is his personal history as a gun owner? Did he shoot .22 LR rifles as a youth? When and what was his first gun purchase? Does he collect guns? Has he ever or does he own an AR-15? What do we really know about Kash Patel as a gun owner prior to his ascent into MAGA politics?

It's been just shy of a year since that confirmation, so it's time to check back in and see if the President's Kash is where his mouth used to be."You cannot bring a firearm, loaded, with multiple magazines to any sort of protest that you want. It's that simple. You don't have that right to break the law and incite violence," Patel told Fox News. Trump has the votes, and Kash is confirmed. They no longer need us, but I can't let this guy off

Let's start by noting that Kash is wrong multiple times.

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the hook when he doesn't sound like any genuine supporter of the Second Amendment I've ever spoken to.

Let's start by noting that Kash is wrong multiple times. Minnesota, like many other states, has no law prohibiting a concealed carry permit holder from carrying a firearm at a demonstration or protest. The presence of Pretti's firearm was in no way a violation of the law, as he was permitted to carry his gun. Even if there were a law prohibiting concealed carry at such events, the real criminals would be the legislators who created a law in violation of the Second Amendment, and the law enforcement and judicial subversives who enforce it.

When it comes to inciting violence, I will agree that the action of impeding law enforcement in the line of duty while blocking public roadways and obstructing justice could be construed as incitement, especially when putting yourself between a federal officer and another agitator whom they are trying to clear from the road. If protestors do not gather peacefully and do not obey lawful orders, it stands to reason they may ultimately invite physical force from ICE agents seeking to maintain authority over their area of investigation. This has nothing to do with an American citizen who exercises their Second Amendment right to bear arms, as neither the presence of the firearm nor extra magazines constitutes incitement short of being brandished or displayed in a threatening manner.

By the way, depending on the gun, wardrobe, and where I intend to go, I carry anywhere from one to three spare magazines for my firearm at any given time, and I know this to be true of many who carry on a daily basis. For your real take on the Second Amendment, Kash, I declare you the biggest loser, but don't worry, you've got company.

Scott Bessent

"I am sorry this gentleman is dead, but he did bring a 9mm semi-automatic weapon with two cartridges to what was supposed to be a peaceful protest… I've been to a protest. Guess what? I didn't bring a gun, I brought a billboard," said the Secretary of the Treasury and Trump "best people" appointee, Scott Bessent.

Scott Bessent "I am sorry this gentleman is dead, but he did bring a 9mm semi-automatic weapon with two cartridges to what was supposed to be a peaceful protest…"

I'll keep the laughter to a minimum on the "two cartridges" nomenclature since we already know these empty suits are just about as empty up top when it comes to any knowledge of firearms, but I digress. Bessent didn't even realize that he touched on the real problem in his own statement, only to come off sounding stupid for blaming it on the gun. He's right that this was "supposed to be a peaceful protest," but it wasn't, and it rarely is with the left, and there's the problem. Had Pretti and the others stayed out of the way and protested from the sidewalk without approaching ICE officers or obstructing roadways, his lawfully concealed firearm would never have been cause for concern or even notice.

Kristi Noem

"I don't know of any peaceful protester that shows up with a gun and ammunition rather than a sign," said Kristi Noem, United States Secretary of Homeland Security. With this remark, Noem ties for the runner-up position as the anti-Second Amendment subversive of the day, alongside her previously mentioned cohorts.

With this remark, Noem ties for the runner-up position as the anti-Second Amendment subversive of the day, alongside her previously mentioned cohorts.

I know and have personally attended peaceful gatherings for conservative causes (as conservatives do) on multiple occasions while carrying a concealed handgun and several spare magazines. The difference is that I do so knowing full well that I may need to defend myself or others in the event of violent attacks from the left, for which they have a reputation. Fortunately, these types of people typically don't dare to spread their filth to the neighborhoods I choose to live in, which may prove to be an occupational hazard if they did. I know, I know. I'm only one example.

"I have attended protest rallies while armed, and no one got injured," said GOA's Erich Pratt on CNN. State Representative Jeremy Faison, who leads Tennessee's GOP caucus, added some patriotism to the conversation, recognizing that perhaps the two most important rights enumerated in the United States Constitution are the freedoms of expression and gathering, and the freedom to defend those rights. "Showing up at a protest is very American. Showing up with a weapon is very American," Faison said on X.

Donald Trump: A Top-Down Issue

Face it. The buck stops with one man, and I'm sure he'll let you know it. President Trump ran for office on promises to the American people, much like any politician, and much like the swamp he claims to detest, he abandoned his word once he got what he wanted. For that reason, the President himself wins the anti-Second Amendment subversive award today,

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which works out for him as he loves being credited above all else.

If the watering down of our efforts to completely remove silencers, short-barreled firearms, and AOWs during the reconciliation process wasn't enough, the Trump administration is now defending the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934 by challenging the Big Beautiful Lawsuit, a legal effort by Silencer Shop, Silencer Shop Foundation, GOA, B&T USA, SilencerCo, Palmetto State Armory (PSA), and Firearms Regulatory Accountability Coalition (FRAC) to address Supreme Court precedent that states a tax is not valid or legal if it does not generate revenue. For those who still think President Trump is pro-Second Amendment, it's time to come out from under that rock, read my latest update on the lawsuit, One Big Beautiful Update, Part 1, and adjust accordingly. That debate is over.

I'm not even sure why it has taken so long to settle the argument. President Trump has been telling us how he feels for a long time, from his years as a New York Democrat sweetheart to his appointment of red-flag enthusiast and now United States Attorney General, Pam Bondi. Who remembers President Trump's embarrassing 2019 interview with Piers Morgan? Allow me to refresh your memory. When asked about his view on silencers and whether they should be banned in the wake of the Virginia Beach shooting, in which one was used, here's how Trump responded.

"I don't like it… Well, I'd like to think about it… No one's talking about silencers very much. They did talk about the bump stock and we had it banned. And we're looking at that. I'm going to seriously look at it," Trump said to Morgan during the interview.

When he said, "They did talk about the bump stock," I have to wonder who the "they" is that he seems to be taking his marching orders from. It certainly wasn't anyone in the Second Amendment community, at least nobody credible, cough-NRA-cough.

The President, however, isn't finished letting the Second Amendment community know what he really thinks of us. In fact, perhaps it is the boss's rhetoric that has permeated the underlings. "I don't like that he had a gun. I don't like that he had two fully loaded magazines. That's a lot of bad stuff," President Trump said to reporters after the Alex Pretti shooting.

How could you possibly say that and still claim allegiance to millions of conservatives who voted for you based on the promises and the principles you committed yourself to espousing while asking for our votes? What happened to blaming the criminals, not the guns? Perhaps Pete Townshend said it best in 1971, "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

Turning the blame on firearms and those who exercise their rights is a .gov pastime. The practice has been around longer than fleecing Americans for taxes only to ship our hard-earned money off to countries that hate us and provide nothing in return other than helping to embezzle that money right back into the pockets of our politicians. Other than insider trading, how do you think these public servant salaries turn into untold millions? That's right, we know, but it's adorable that the government thinks we don't. Keep underestimating Americans, and you'll never see the chickens come home to roost until they've occupied your living room.

"I don't like that he had a gun. I don't like that he had two fully loaded magazines. That's a lot of bad stuff," President Trump said to reporters after the Alex Pretti shooting.

Final Thoughts

I'm glad we don't have another four years of Joe Biden, and I'm certainly thrilled not to see Kamala Harris at the helm, but we can't set the bar that low. I understand that there's no crystal ball and confess that I favored Trump among the realistic options in the last three general elections, although he was not my choice in the 2016 primary.

As a community, we will fail if we divide ourselves among political idols when our commitment should instead be to America's Founding values, and we need to collectively reject any man or woman seeking a position of leadership within our great nation who does not demonstrate that same commitment. I'm positive that this simple notion is something we can all agree upon; however, our ability to act in unison is severely hindered when swaths of individuals choose to devote their loyalty to a politician rather than their principles, especially in light of so many indicators telling us that we are being lied to.

Remember all of this in three years when they tell us to vote for JD Vance, who sold us down the river when he chose not to stand up to the Senate Parliamentarian as she stripped Hearing Protection and SHORT Act provisions from the One Big Beautiful Bill, turning it into nothing more than a big betrayal. Also, remember that neither the office of the Vice President nor the President himself came down on Senate Majority Leader John Thune to fire or overrule the Parliamentarian. The bottom line is that our current leadership believes the Second Amendment community exists to serve them when they need the votes, but it is our responsibility to send candidates the message early on that they serve our will, and that any less will see them to the unemployment line. MAGA! FN

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CODREA'S CORNER **By David Codrea** | Politics Field Editor

David Codrea is the winner of multiple journalist awards for investigating/defending the RKBA and a long-time gun owner rights advocate who defiantly challenges the folly of citizen disarmament. In addition to being a regular featured contributor for Firearms News, *he blogs at "The War on Guns: Notes from the Resistance," and posts onTwitter: @dcodrea and Facebook.*

DISPARAGING ARMED CITIZENS
UNDERMINES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S CREDIBILITY

President Trump, Along With Kristi Noem and Kash Patel, All Made Anti-2A Statements Regarding Pretti Shooting, but Jeanine Pirro Is the Most Outspoken "Best People."



(Joey Sussman/Shutterstock)

"I don't know of any peaceful protester that shows up with a gun and ammunition rather than a sign," Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Neom asserted in the aftermath of federal agents fatally shooting Minneapolis protestor Alex Pretti.

"As Kristi said, you cannot bring a firearm loaded with multiple magazines to any sort of protest that you want. It's that simple," FBI Director Kash Patel echoed.

"I don't like that he had a gun, I don't like that he had two fully loaded magazines, that's a lot of bad stuff," President Donald Trump added.

Pirro Leads the Charge

"Hold my beer!" United States Attorney for the District of Columbia and Fox News/administration darling Jeanine Pirro weighed in.

Not really. What she actually said was. "You bring a gun into the district, you mark my words, you're going to jail," Pirro said in the interview. "I don't care if you have a license in another district, and I don't care if you're a law-abiding gun owner somewhere else. You bring a gun into this district, count on going to jail and hope you get the gun back."

It sounds like "the most pro-gun administration in history" is channeling late leftist syndicated columnist/cartoonist Ted Rall, who notoriously called for extreme sanctions against armed protestors.

"These town hall terrorists could be declared enemy combatants and bundled off to Bagram with the stroke of a pen," he wrote in 2016. "If ever there were a reason for suspending civil rights, this is it."

Backlash from gun owners mindful of their rights, and who had heard enough, elicited all kinds of walking back and "clarifications," none more so than from Judge Jeanine, who treated it all like an overreaction in a non-apology video on X, where she tried to deflect and redirect the conversation to being one about her 2A creds.

"Put your safety back on," she literally smirked, putting the onus on gun owners objecting to her initial threat. "Let me be clear: I am a proud supporter of the Second Amendment."

"Washington, D.C. law requires handguns be licensed in the District with the Metropolitan Police Department to be carried into our community," Pirro elaborated. "We are focused on individuals who are unlawfully carrying guns



"You bring a gun into the district, you mark my words, you're going to jail," Pirro said in the interview. "I don't care if you have a license in another district, and I don't care if you're a law-abiding gun owner somewhere else." (Joey Sussman/Shutterstock)

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and will continue building on that momentum to keep our communities safe."

She's been pulling her "I believe in the Second Amendment BUT…" act for years, and "shall not be infringed" has never been a factor.

In 2000, as Westchester County (NY) District Attorney, she administered a "gun buyback/amnesty" program. In 2004, she joined with New Yorkers Against Gun Violence "to commemorate the five-year anniversary of the Columbine High School Massacre… and strengthening of the federal assault weapons ban." By 2006, with her sights set on higher political office, she began trying to distance herself by touting her gun owner creds. By 2013, she was wowing the crowd at NRA's Second Amendment Leadership Conference, and then in 2019, she was arguing for "expanded background checks" while asserting, "I'm in Australia, they don't have problems like this. This is starting to be a uniquely American situation. I am a gun owner and strong Second Amendment person." How strong?

''The fact that I'm Republican doesn't have anything to do with this," Pirro told *The New Y ork Times* in 2004. ''I've been in law enforcement 29 years and there is no legitimate purpose to have an assault weapon. These are weapons employed by drug operations by gang enterprises. 'This is about killing as many people as possible in as short a period of time as possible.''

Hey, put your safety back on. And then note she's never disavowed that position and apologized, and she's absolutely for citizen disarmament enforcers deploying with superior firepower to that.

"Best People" Need to Read Our Founder's Writings

As for the contentions by top administration officials that guns and protests don't mix, that discounts peaceable protests where armed demonstrators have had no problem exercising the First and Second Amendments at the same time.

This correspondent spoke at an armed rally at a park in Virginia in 2010—a complementary gathering to the Second Amendment March across the Potomac in Washington DC, where armed citizens were prohibited at the time. I also attended a 2013-armed protest in Oberlin, Ohio, after the city chose to violate state preemption laws and ban guns in public spaces. Both incidents were peaceful, and the presence of arms was appropriate.

The danger, as exemplified in the Pretti case, appears to be when an armed protestor physically engages with law enforcement and a gun gets revealed in the altercation. Chances are rational discourse will not be the immediate reaction. Whether authorities end up being charged or not, a rule of thumb emphasized by firearms rights lawyers and trainers is for armed citizens to survive the encounter, even if perceived unjust at the time, through compliance, and mount vigorous resistance afterward, in court.

Seizing on that concept, though, there are some gun influencers amplifying Pirro's emphasis on "unlawful" actions, and this is also where true Second Amendment advocates need to push back, and recognize that the "conservative" mantra to "enforce existing gun laws" is every bit as tyranny-abetting as if colonists in 1775 had demanded to "enforce existing Intolerable Acts."

"Don't like bad gun laws? Tell Congress!" Assistant Attorney General and DOJ's Civil Rights Division Second Amendment Section honcho Harmeet Dhillon posted in response to Gun Owners of America announcing a lawsuit because Republicans failed to fully repeal National Firearms Act registration and AG Pam Bondi defended the decision. Dhillon's tone-deaf comment evokes nothing so much as the image of Pontius Pilate washing his hands.

What's a gun owner to do when denied the right to bear arms by draconian permitting schemes or "sensitive area" bans? How about when a Democrat state with gun bans on its mind requires registration of arms?

Thomas Jefferson chose the motto "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God" for his personal seal. Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" argued a moral duty to disobey unjust laws. In *Marbury v. Madison*, Chief Justice John Marshal declared "a law repugnant to the Constitution is void." And as much as "law and order conservatives" might not want to admit it, a growing "I will not comply" movement among Second Amendment advocates is fed up with "a right delayed" being "a right denied."

"You gotta win the midterms 'cause, if we don't win the midterms, it's just gonna be—I mean, they'll find a reason to impeach me," an anxious Donald Trump told Republican lawmakers at a Washington retreat in January.

Maybe it's time to stop dousing the fire in gun owner bellies, especially with top administration officials making inane comments that spit in the faces of Second Amendment activists—the very people Republicans need to win. Maybe it's time the widely publicized "Second Amendment Task Force" included some subject matter experts who actually understood Founding intent behind the Second Amendment and that comments, legal positions, rules, laws, and appointments got vetted through such advisors before administration apparatchiks started blurting out obnoxious absurdities that can't be walked back.

Maybe it's time they all understood that no matter what happens in politics, a growing critical mass of Americans will not disarm, even (especially) for Republicans. FN ▶▶▶

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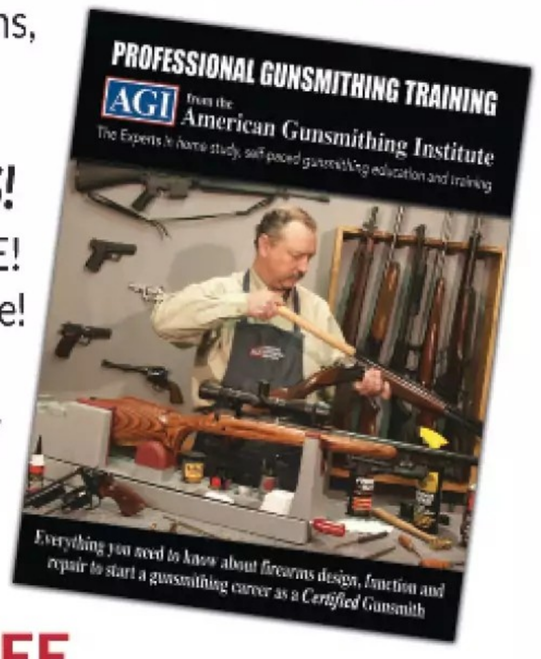


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CEKADA HEADING ATF

STILL A NO-WIN SCENARIO FOR GUN OWNERS

Trump's Newest "Best People" Have Been Enforcing Unconstitutional Gun Laws for Over Two Decades.



Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives headquarters in Washington, DC. (Mark Van Scyoc/Shutterstock)

"Simply put, ATF is an agency that ensures violent criminals are put behind bars," Sen. Jerry Moran explained in his introduction/testimonial for Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Director nominee Robet Cekada, appearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Feb. 6 confirmation hearing. That he was stumping for the guy is hardly surprising, because while widely regarded as "a strong proponent of Second Amendment rights, consistently voting against gun control legislation and advocating for gun owners' rights," he also asserts "We must redouble our efforts to enforce all existing gun laws, which are extremely effective in protecting law-abiding citizens…" How that differs from a colonist in 1775 saying "Enforce existing Intolerable Acts" is unclear.

No matter, at least as far as the "gun rights" establishment is concerned. Cekada appears to be a shoo-in:

> "Trump ATF Director Nominee Faces Little Pushback in Confirmation Hearing," *The Reload* reports. "President Donald Trump's pick to head the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) experienced smooth sailing through his Senate examination this week."
>
> "President Trump's ATF pick clears Senate hearing easily," the Second Amendment Foundation echoed.
>
> "An ATF Director Republicans Can (Finally) Support," the *National Review* gushed.

And why not? Recognized "gun rights leaders" were out there heaping praise! Here are some examples:

> "NSSF-Supported ATF Director Nominee Cekada Questioned at Senate Hearing, Vows 'Not to Burden Law-Abiding Gun Owners'" the National Shooting Sports Foundation effused. "This morning NSSF sent a letter to Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Ranking Member Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) expressing the industry's 'strong and unqualified support' for confirming Deputy Director Cekada to be the Senate-confirmed director of the bureau that regulates the firearm and ammunition industry."
>
> "In his role as Deputy Director, we have worked closely with Robert Cekada to ensure law-abiding gun owners have a seat at the table in shaping policy," the American Suppressor Association weighed in. "If confirmed, he would be the first ever truly pro-Second Amendment nominee to head the agency."

Would he be? Is he "truly pro-Second Amendment"? Because you can't really tell from the questions put to Cekada by the Committee, nor from his carefully qualified answers.

Democrat "Grilling"

That Democrats didn't push harder, as in hardly pushed at all, was the first clue. This is the party of citizen

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disarmament, and if they were interested in blocking the nominee, it wasn't reflected in their interrogations.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) asked Cekada about the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network. Missing from that is for it to "work" presumes guns used in crimes can be traced to the criminals who used them, and Democrats then use that as "justification" to press for registration and more. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Sen. Adam Schiff (D-CA) basically concerned themselves with why ATF was lending agents to help with "the diversion of agents to conduct immigration enforcement," and trying to get him to go on record with an opinion critical of the president's deportation agenda. That's hardly surprising considering their party opened the floodgates and implemented incentives with the admitted goal of a "pathway to citizenship" for illegals. Schiff also questioned him on 3D printers and "ghost guns," leading Cekada to volunteer, "I'll include in your definition of guns … is we also look at personal privately made firearms is the description we use for 3D printed firearms and for drop in auto sears, which can convert firearms to shoot uh fully automatically." You know, "arms."

Another Committee Democrat, Hawaii's insufferable Sen. Mazie Hirono, continued to prove herself a rival to Rep. Hank "Tip Over Guam" Johnson's (D-GA) idiocy by focusing her query on if Cekada would confess that he had "ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature."

It was "No," to that one, and the nominee's stock answer to the other "concerns" was that "The number of agents that have been diverted to uh focus on Title 8 enforcement is actually averaging somewhere between 75 and 100 agents per day" and "these efforts have been very much focused on violent crime, specifically assisting HSI and ICE illegal aliens that are members of MS-13, 18th Street, illegal aliens that are carrying firearms."

That Cekada considers possession and carrying firearms to be the issue, rather than how they are used and abused, recalls a warning issued 20 years ago by the Project Exile Condemnation Coalition, with signatories including Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America, and Aaron Zelman of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership.

"We condemn any program that involves enforcing unconstitutional 'laws,' even if such 'laws' are enforced only against violent criminals," the group's statement argued. "Unconstitutional 'laws' are illegal, harmful to public safety, tyrannical, and are inevitably enforced against ordinary, non-criminal citizens."

That citizens can find themselves to be "prohibited persons" for any variety of "offenses," including non-violent ones, and that the government refuses to define standardized criteria for restoration of rights recognition, shows a clear danger not only with the current administration, but especially should Democrats regain executive power and instruct ATF to implement their priorities.

"Unconstitutional 'laws' are illegal, harmful to public safety, tyrannical, and are inevitably enforced against ordinary, non-criminal citizens."

Republican Inquiries

Republican questioning was moderately "better" than the Democrats, but the focus on "law and order" emphasizes different concerns than focusing on the right to keep and bear arms.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) called "the elimination of the $200 National Firearms Act tax stamp … a significant victory for Second Amendment" but noted "we still have pretty significant restrictions in place, including various registration requirements that exist under the National Firearms Act," including for short-barrel rifles, and short-barrel shotguns and suppressors. Cekada acknowledged that, replying "ATF is bound by the law at this point, and if Congress chose to move suppressors out of the NFA into the GCA [Gun Control Act], ATF would be supportive of Congress's decision." That means he'd enforce existing infringements. And whatever else Congress elected to impose.

Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) wanted to talk about what Cekada would do "to support the effort of the Memphis Safe Task Force," and he replied, "We have about 40 ATF agents in Memphis that are assigned to this task force, and we've made up for about 32% of the federal cases that have been brought forward in Memphis for federal firearms violations."

Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-MO) was concerned with arbitrary, conflicting, and punitive rulemaking, citing his lawsuit as state attorney general for Missouri against the frame and receiver rule, and citing, "similar rules such as the stabilizing brace rule and the engaged in business rule that threatened to make responsible law-abiding Americans into criminals and left gun owners with vague difficult to follow mandates."

Citing the Administrative Procedures Act, Cekada declined to elaborate on any specific rule but in general committed to, "following President Trump's Second Amendment executive order [and] undergoing a thorough review of all regulations." Which regulations they'll

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prioritize and when they'll get around to it is anybody's guess.

Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) praised his home state of Missouri, saying, "we've got to be the strongest protector of the Second Amendment anywhere in the country, citing how, "the Biden DOJ actually asked local sheriffs across Missouri for records of concealed carry permit holders, which state law explicitly forbids the sheriffs to turn over." He asked Cekada, "Can you commit that under your leadership ATF will go in a different direction than the last administration, that you'll focus your law enforcement resources on criminals as opposed to law-abiding citizens who have rights under both the federal and state constitutions?"

"First of all, under my watch as a deputy director since April of last year [ATF] has 1,000% been focused on holding people accountable who have committed violent crimes," Cekada responded. "We're not here trying to burden unnecessarily the American citizen who has the complete right to exercise their Second Amendment right to bear arms and we will not be doing that in the future if I am so confirmed."

That presupposes "shall not be infringed" acknowledges NECESSARY burdens and excuses the current infringements that citizens exercising their right can be entrapped with for "violating."

Sen. Katie Britt (R-AL) finished up the questioning, but her focus was on "illicit Chinese vapes" and on explosives training ATF is conduction at Huntsville's Redstone Arsenal in her home state of Alabama.

Better Than...

To be clear, Cekada is a definite improvement over anyone the Democrats would be putting in that position, especially noting out-and-out citizen disarmament fanatics like David Chipman being considered in the past and anti-gun lumps like past Director Steve Dettelbach making infringing on citizens' rights a priority. Noting the legal environment the nominee is part of and stepping into, he's as good as we're going to get, but hardly measures up to the superlatives of being "truly pro-Second Amendment." You can't be and still work for ATF, which is why none of the NRA A-rated senators lobbed anything but softballs that he could generalize his way around. You'll note none of them asked him to define the Second Amendment and what the Founders meant by it or asked him which gun laws ATF enforces that he personally considers to be constitutional or unconstitutional. No one asked him why machine guns shouldn't be legal, or why the Militia of the whole people was deemed necessary to the security of a free State.

No one put him on the spot over what he intends to do about an illegal database ATF is alleged to have built that holds up to a billion-gun registry records in violation of federal law.

None of them asked him what Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA) asked of Andrew B. Davis, nominee for United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas, at the same confirmation hearing Cekada appeared at: "I want to buy a bazooka, and I found a good deal on one in Europe. Can I buy it and own it and use it here in America?"

"The ATF shouldn't exist," Gun Owners of America asserted in a Facebook post announcing the Cekada hearing. "But since it does, grab the popcorn and watch the confirmation hearing for its next would-be director."

As long as they brought up popcorn entertainment, there's a life-imitates-art kind of vibe the whole Cekada show—and that's what it was—recalls. In the movie *Star Trek II, The Wrath of Khan*, cadets were subjected to the Kobayashi Maru test where their choice was to let a freighter in distress meet its doom or try to rescue it and be destroyed. It was a character test, to see how they would respond to a "no-win scenario," and it was revealed that Captain Kirk was the only student who ever beat the simulation, and he only did that because he cheated. Leading an agency that's unconstitutional on its face is a no-win scenario for the Second Amendment. It can't be done.

As gun owners, we can either submit to the destruction of our rights, or we can have our lives destroyed. Some, a few, will just not comply, and some of those, if smart and lucky, will not get caught. Just understand—the game is rigged against us, and the guy playing for the government—praise from prominent "gun rights" influencers notwithstanding—is working for the Klingons. FN

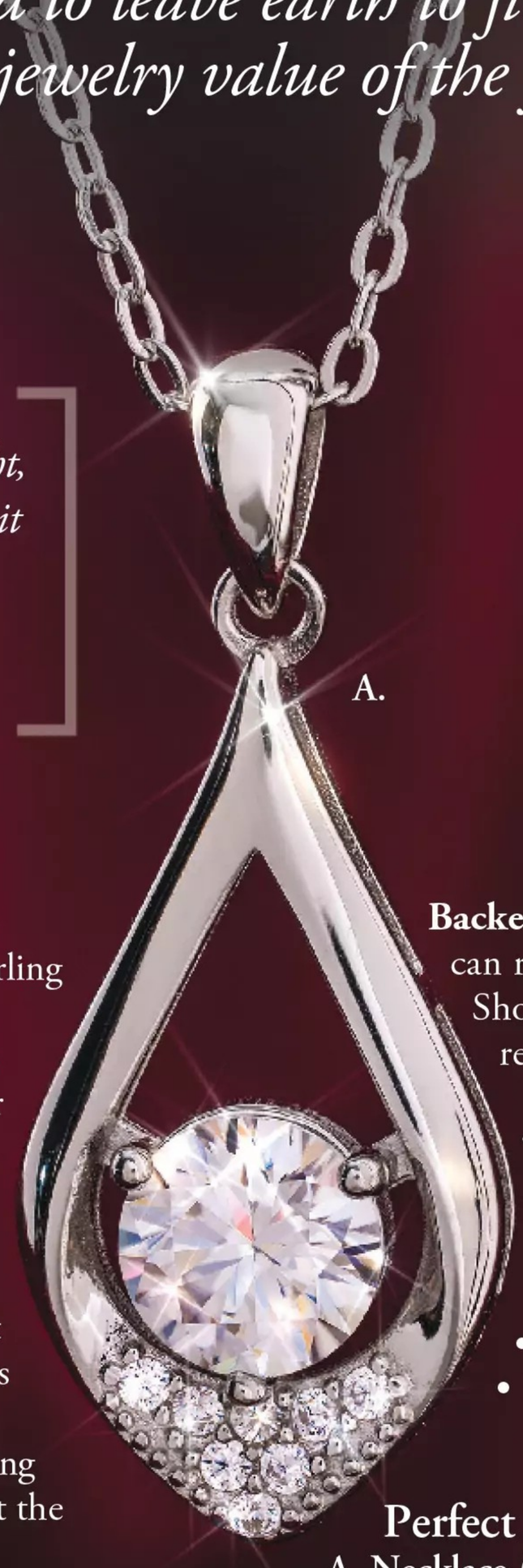
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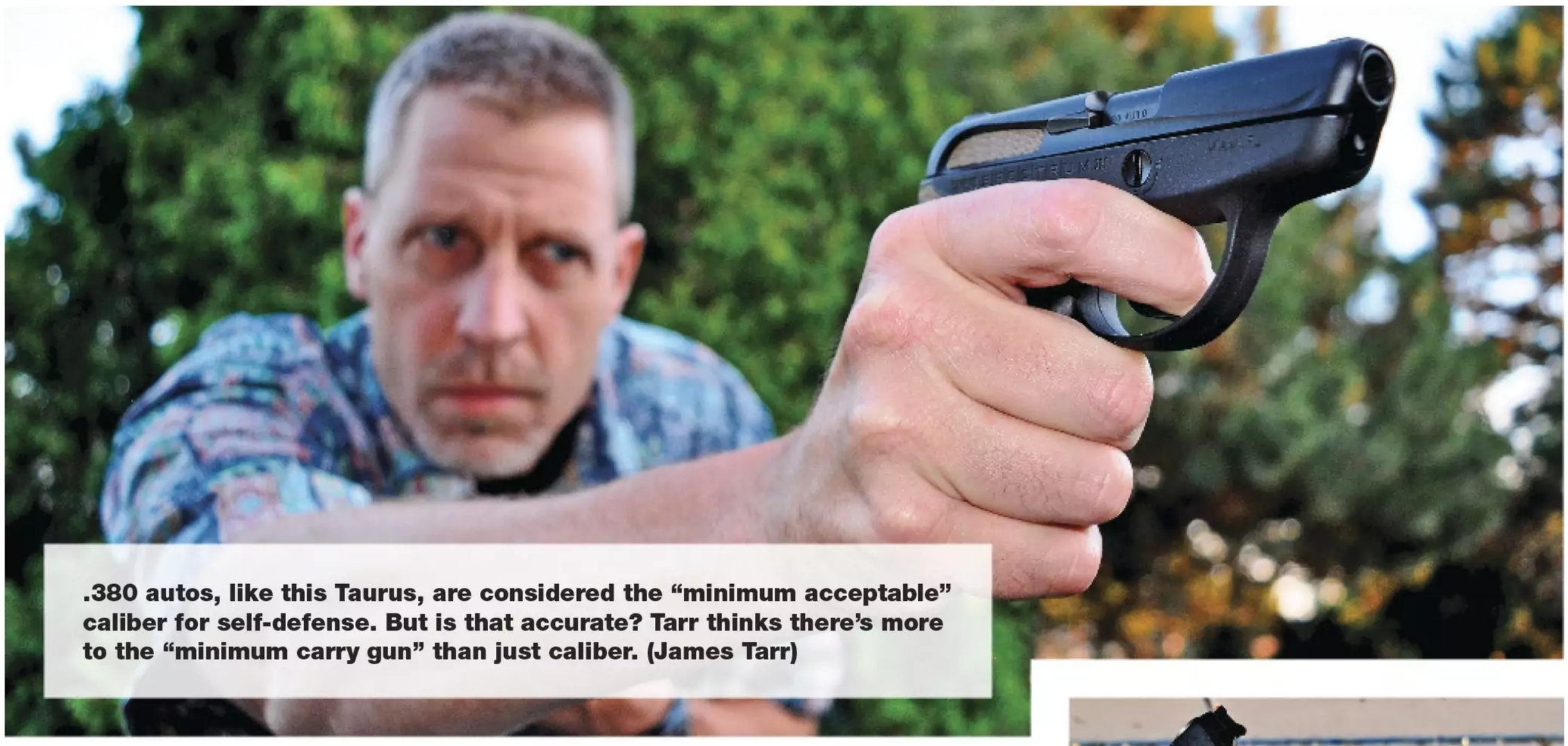
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By James Tarr | Field Editor



.380 autos, like this Taurus, are considered the "minimum acceptable" caliber for self-defense. But is that accurate? Tarr thinks there's more to the "minimum carry gun" than just caliber. (James Tarr)

MAC

(MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE CALIBER)



The gun which prompted this column, Beretta's new 80X chambered in .32 ACP, is currently available through LTT. Yeah, it's "only" a .32, but it's a low-recoiling 13+1 .32 ACP.... (James Tarr)

What's the smallest chambering that's acceptable in a CCW pistol? This is, perhaps, more a philosophical question than one which can produce a hard, specific, scientific, "right" answer, but it's one we should at least ask.

Huge numbers of people have been killed by .22 Long Rifle-caliber handguns. The same with the .25 ACP. More soldiers were killed in World War I by the .32 ACP than the .45 ACP. Ian Fleming early on in the James Bond books had his British secret agent swap out his jamming Beretta .25 for a Walther PPK in .32 ACP, and Q infamously described the cartridge as hitting "like a brick through a plate glass window," which is patently ridiculous. That said, pretty much any handgun cartridge, even the lowly .22 Short, has enough power, if it hits in just the right spot, to fatally wound someone.

However, having to wait ten minutes for someone to bleed out while they continue to do whatever prompted you to shoot them in the first place is less than ideal. Pistols are horrible fight-stoppers to begin with. Unlike rifles and shotguns, they simply poke holes. So, you (usually) need to poke a lot of holes in the right spots to convince bad guys to stop.

Beretta, a year ago, announced that they would be bringing out their 80X in .32 ACP, and what prompted this article is small numbers of those guns finally being available, exclusively through Langdon Tactical (LTT). I mentioned this to a peer, and he looked at me dubiously and said, "*Yeah, but would you carry it?*" Currently, the accepted minimum caliber for self-defense is the .380 ACP, and the .32 ACP is a significant step down in power from that.

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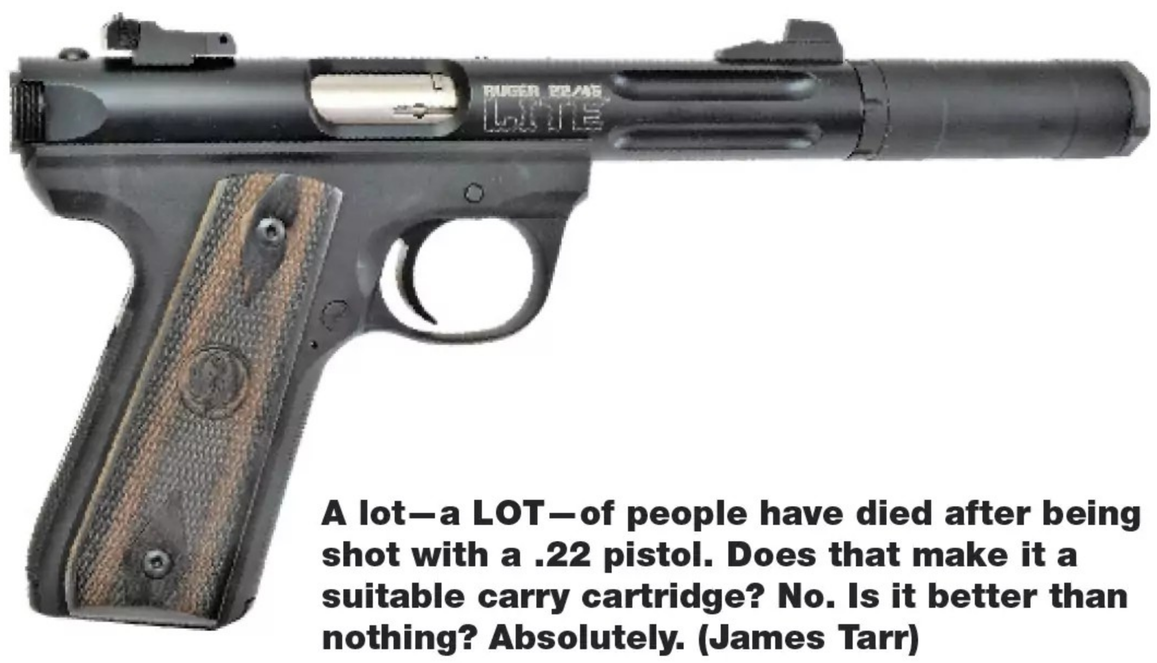
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Tarr thinks the gun it's chambered in—including capacity and shootability—is as or more important than the caliber of your carry gun. From left—9mm, .380 ACP, .32 ACP, .25 ACP, .22 Long Rifle. (James Tarr)



A lot—a LOT—of people have died after being shot with a .22 pistol. Does that make it a suitable carry cartridge? No. Is it better than nothing? Absolutely. (James Tarr)

Let's look at the numbers. The 9mm Luger/9x19mm is the most popular handgun cartridge in American, and the world. It generally offers bullets between 115–147 grains in weight, travelling between 950–1,250 fps. The .380 ACP, which uses the same 9mm diameter projective, traditionally sends bullets between 85–99 grains downrange at 800–1,000 fps, depending on how short the barrel is on your gun. Traditional .32 ACP loads offer bullets between 60–71 grains at velocities between 800–1,000 fps, again depending on the barrel length. Which means the .32 ACP is the same speed or a hair slower than the 9mm, with skinnier bullets weighing half as much, but…the power upon impact is only one part of the equation.

Those tiny 9mm pistols (SIG P365, Springfield Armory Hellcat, etc.) are easy to conceal, but often hard to shoot, especially if you have small hands or compromised grip strength. That's why every manufacturer of micro-compact 9mms is now offering upsized versions of them. What if you can't shoot or carry something larger? Perhaps a smaller/less powerful caliber is for you. That's why some manufacturers are offering .380 ACP versions of small 9mms—S&W Shield, Hellcat .380, etc. The capacity is the same, but recoil is less.

I don't care what caliber you're using; you can't miss fast enough to win a gunfight. Shot placement has always been more important than caliber, so having a gun that you can shoot accurately and fast is far more important than any other consideration. If you struggle with the recoil of a 9mm, perhaps a .380 is a better choice for you. That LTT Beretta 80X .32 ACP, between its size and weight, has very mild recoil, and magazines hold 13 rounds, which is another point. You need to hit the bad guy, and probably you're going to need to hit him multiple times no matter what caliber you're using. So, you want a pistol that not only is easy to shoot fast and accurately but which holds a lot of rounds. That tends to favor smaller calibers such as 9mm, .380, and (maybe?) even .32 ACP. Even most micro-compacts offer double-digit capacity. Remember, the number one rule in a gunfight is HAVE A GUN. If you hate shooting your carry gun, there's a significantly lower chance you'll have it with you when you need it, or practice with it as much as you should.



A .38 Special +P is definitely more powerful than the .380 ACP, but Tarr prefers the capacity, shootability, and reduced reload time of a semi-auto, like this S&W Bodyguard 2.0, over any revolver. (James Tarr)

Finally, we get to a more esoteric point. Humans are unique in the animal world because we know what it means when we are shot. Animals out in the wild don't know that they've been shot by a bullet out of a gun, they just know something has gone terribly wrong. Humans, on the other hand, they see the gun/hear the gunshot/feel the pain, and that produces a psychological response in addition to whatever physical damage the bullet does. You don't get that with any nonsentient species, and that psychological response—fear, shock, anger—is often just as important as that physical wound. Some people hit once with a .22 fall to the ground, cry, and give up. Others have continued to fight after being fatally wounded with multiple hits from a .44 Magnum. You never know what you're going to get, which is why it's best to have enough ammo onboard that you can shoot bad guys until they get the message to stop.

To me, the caliber of the gun I'm carrying is far less important than the shootability and capacity of my carry gun. I would carry the .32 ACP 80X before any revolver of any size in any caliber, simply because they are harder to shoot, have low capacity, and take forever to reload. I'd also take it over any micro compact pistol upon which I couldn't fit my whole hand. That said, no matter what gun I was carrying, I'd load it with the finest defensive hollowpoints available. Leave the FMJ ammo for your practice sessions. FN

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By Patrick Sweeney



A pair of twenty-five-yard targets, fired with hog-thumping 10mm loads. There were (LEFT) a 220 L-TC cast at 1,175 fps, and (RIGHT) a 200 gr. HAP at 1,100 fps. (Patrick Sweeney photo)

10MM, THE BREN TEN, AND THE FBI

A Fine Mess. Finely Settled.

One might consider the 10mm to be the feline pistol cartridge. No, not because it roars, but because it is currently working on its fourth or fifth life. The 10mm came to us in the early 1980s (although much of the work had already been done in the 1970s in *Guns & Ammo* magazine) with the Bren Ten pistol. It was encouraged by Jeff Cooper, and the idea was simple: to get .45 ACP performance in a pistol that felt like the CZ75 but held more rounds than a 1911 could. As with most endeavors, the results exceeded the initial desires. Instead of a 185 or a 200-grain bullet at 1,000 fps, Norma (the first company to make 10mm ammo) at the urging of Jeff Cooper, delivered 200s at 1,200-plus fps. I shot one of the first ones out and dropping the hammer on what amounted to a self-loading .44 Magnum wasn't fun.

The Bren Ten had the great misfortune to be selected as the sidearm of "Sonny" Crockett in the TV show *Miami Vice*. Orders piled in, but the manufacturer; Dornaus & Dixon, couldn't deliver—they weren't big enough. Dead once. Just as the Bren Ten project imploded, the FBI tangled with a pair of "no quit" bank robbers in Miami and when the smoke cleared, the FBI was no longer enamored of the 9mm cartridge. Luckily, Colt already had a 10mm in the works, the Delta Elite, but no way was the FBI going to adopt a single-action pistol. Nice try, dead twice.

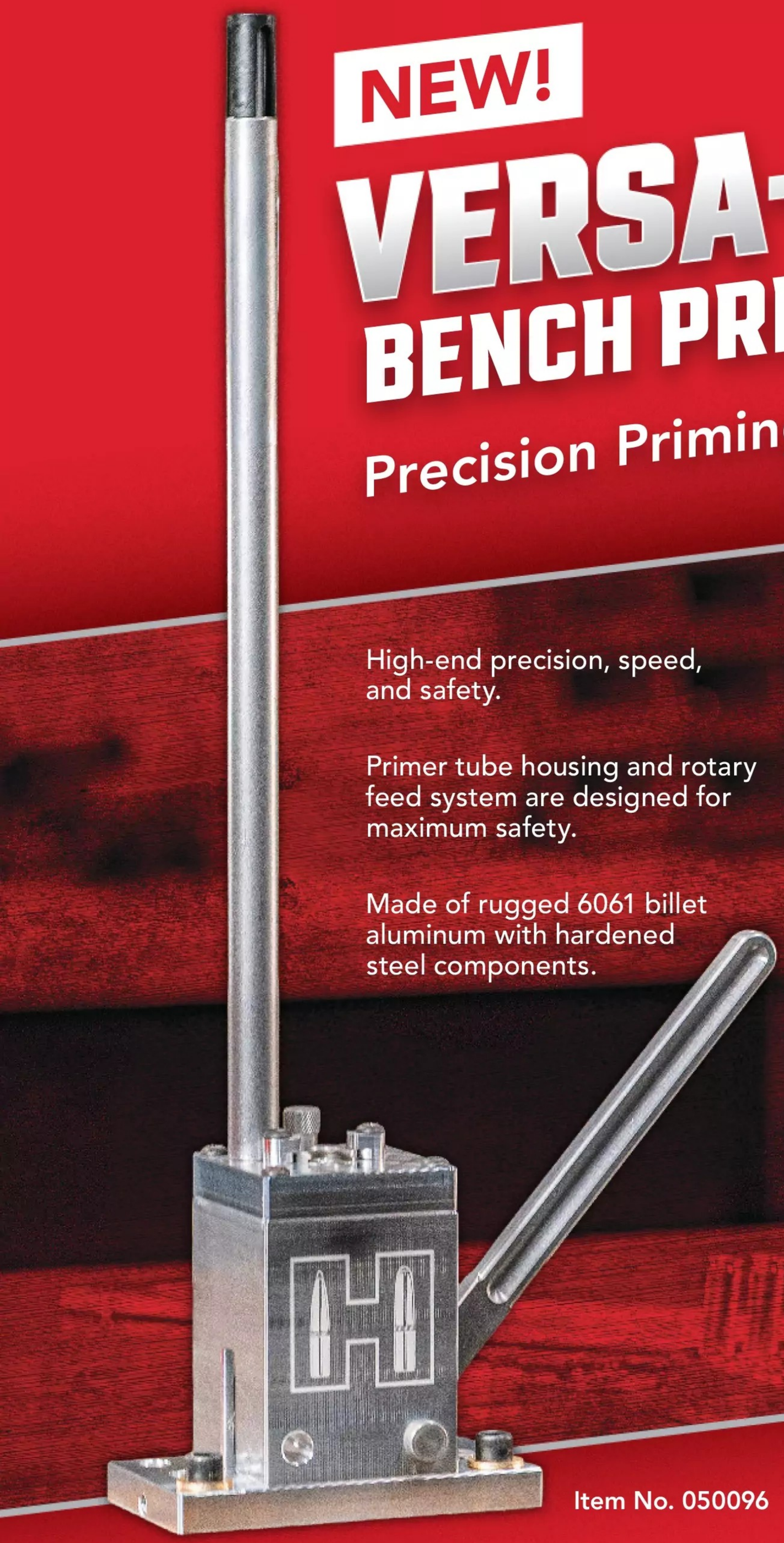
However, S&W made double/single-action pistols, and they offered up an all-steel 10mm the FBI could adopt. This was great except that the FBI insisted on their own design of hammer/sear geometry, and the 10mm pistol with that lockwork didn't work. Not dead, but life-support. Then, the FBI decided their special S&W model,

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Once the smoke had cleared, the FBI was no longer happy with the performance of the 9mm cartridge. They wanted more, and the 10mm was the "answer." (Miami Dade government crime scene photo, public domain)

the 1076, was too heavy, and S&W needed to make one with an aluminum frame. S&W looked again at the maximum average pressure of the 10mm and gave the FBI a flat "No." Dead three times.

So, the FBI stuck with the all-steel pistols, and then found out that a bunch of accountants, lawyers, insurance investigators and surveillance techs could not pass a firearms qualification test involving a 200-grain bullet at 1,200 fps. Even worse, recruits would fire some 5,000 rounds during their time at the FBI Academy. One shudders at the thought of doing that with Norma-level ammo. They asked for a lighter load, and lighter, and lighter, until they were asking for a 180-grain bullet at 950 fps.

At that point, the Winchester internal ballistics boffins took one look at how much dead air space was in the resulting cartridge, and thought, "*Just shorten the whole thing until it will fit into a 9mm magazine,*" and together with Smith & Wesson they called it the 40 S&W. The FBI, and anyone else considering the 10mm ditched it for the new .40 overnight. Dead four times.

The 10mm then wandered in the wilderness. Colt still made 10mm handguns, others did as well. However, it was "Mr. In-Between Forty" for defensive carry. In full power, which was more than a .45 ACP, it either offered no real advantage in capacity, or it offered it in a much bulkier package. Plus, if you downloaded it to the ballistics of a .40, well, there came onto the scene an ever-increasing number of 9mm-sized-but-holding-40s pistols to choose from. What happened next should not have surprised anyone but did. The 10mm became a hunting cartridge.

Why not? Properly built, a 10mm pistol is going to be close enough to a revolver in accuracy to be eminently suitable for hunting. It held more rounds, it could be fired faster, and it comported with game-hunting regulations on straight-walled cartridges for handgun hunting. I'm not sure any handgun is "suitable" for bear defense (I'll defer to *Firearms News* Hunting Field Editor Rikk Rambo on that one), but given the choice between a DA revolver holding six .44 Magnums, and a 10mm pistol holding nine 10mms, I'll choose more ammo, Alex.

The 10mm provides plenty of power. In a five-inch government-sized 1911, you can expect a 200-grain

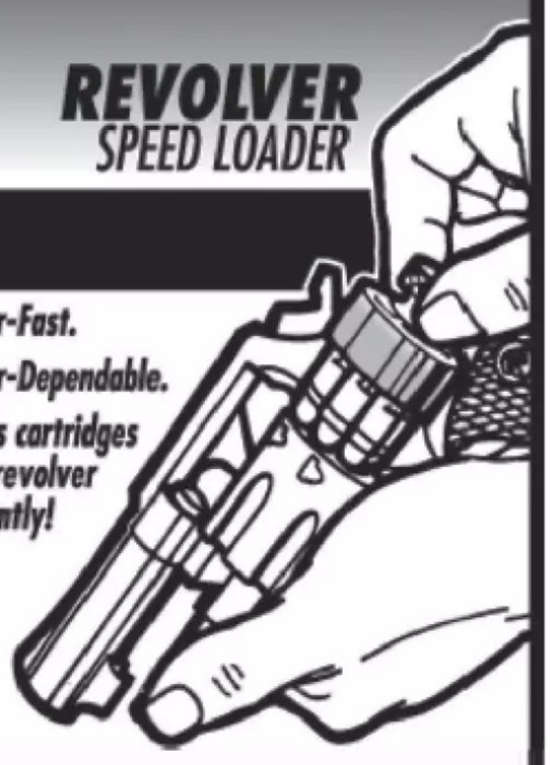
The 10mm provides plenty of power.



The longslide, top, will net you more fps than the government-sized Delta Elite on the bottom. (Patrick Sweeney photo)

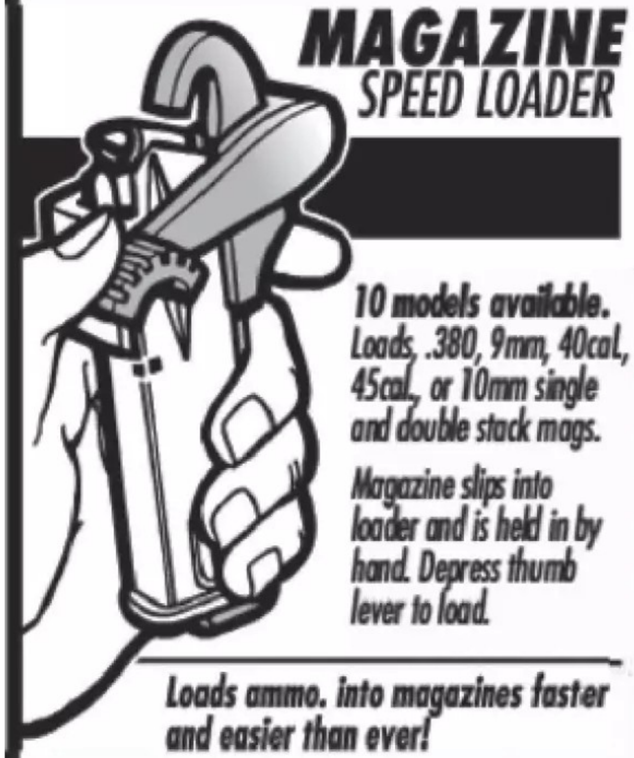
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From left to right: a 135-, 155-, 180-, a loaded 200-, and a 220-grain hard-cast 10mm bullet. (Patrick Sweeney photo)



► Be careful of top end loads in a standard barrel. This can happen if you work at the red line with a regular-ramp barrel in 10mm. (Patrick Sweeney photo)

Accuracy depends on your skills at crafting ammunition, and the built-in accuracy of the pistol.

bullet to leave your immediate vicinity at over 1,100 fps, in some instances approaching 1,200 fps. Out of a six-inch longslide, even more. Now, I'll grant you that you can get that same 200-grains weight of bullet to a higher velocity out of a .44 Magnum, but that is due more to the case volume (almost 75% more) allowing the use of slower-burning powders, so the extra velocity costs you a lot more muzzle blast. If it is penetration you want, then a 200-grain FMJ-FN 10mm bullet at 1,200 fps will deliver it.

The 10mm uses large pistol primers, to be expected when it was designed. Had I a time machine, I'd go back and suggest a small pistol primer. (Oh, let's not kid ourselves, first I'd go back and take a gander at the Grassy Knoll, then invest in Apple in June 2003.)

There is no lack of bullets. The 10mm uses .400" jacketed and .401" coated, plated and lead bullets. Weights to be found range from 135 grains to 220 grains. You want to create a sufficient crimp to prevent setback and give a strong neck tension for full powder burn with heavy loads. So, aim for a .422" crimp. The Colt Delta Elite pistols used the traditional feed ramp, which does not offer full support to the case head. If you are going to explore the top-end loads for hunting, you would be wise to ensure your barrel has an integral ramp and provides much more case support. (Glocks in particular are poor in this regard. You were warned.)

Unlike revolvers, pistols don't permit the use of shorter cartridges, so unlike a .357 Magnum revolver and the use of .38 Specials, you *cannot* safely use 40 S&W ammunition in a 10mm pistol. If you want to shoot 40 S&W-level ammunition for practice, you have to load .40 S&W level ammunition in 10mm cases and use those.

Accuracy depends on your skills at crafting ammunition, and the built-in accuracy of the pistol. With the widespread adoption of red-dot sights for handguns, a 10mm pistol is easily a 50-yard hunting gun, and in the right hands can reach out to 100 yards. From a blind in woods, that is as much reach as you'll need.

The cases are straight-wall, so you would be wise to opt for a carbide sizer or a TiN coated sizing die. They last forever. I cannot recall seeing a cracked 10mm case, ever. FN

10MM LOAD DATA

Brand & Type	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Powder	Powder Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Power Factor
Berry's FP	155	Bullseye	5.0	921	143
Hornady XTP	155	AA #7	12.1	1,273	197
Hornady HAP	180	Titegroup	5.8	1,098	198
Hornady XTP	180	CFE Pistol	7.1	1,041	187
Berry's FP	180	Autocomp	7.6	1,148	207
Blue Bullets	200	Bullseye	5.4	989	198
Colorado L-TC	200	Titegroup	5.2	973	195
Hornady XTP	200	VV-3N37	6.3	1,001	200
Colorado L-TC	220	AA #9	11.6	1,146	252

SOURCES

Berry's Manufacturing, Inc.:
BerrysMfg.com, (800) 269-7373

The Blue Bullets:
TheBlueBullets.com

Hodgdon Powder Company:
HodgdonPowderCo.com

Hornady Manufacturing:
Hornady.com, (800) 338-3220

Colorado Cast Bullets:
SanjuanShootingRange.com, (970) 249-4227

VihtaVuori Powders:
VihtaVuori.com

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1787 Brasher Doubloon with Initials on Wing
Sold in 2021 for $9.36 Million



1793 Flowing Hair Large Cent
Sold in 2015 for $2.35 Million



1794 Flowing Hair Silver Dollar
Sold in 2013 for $10.02 Million



1795 Draped Bust Eagle — reverse with 13 leaves
Sold in 2015 for $2.59 Million



1796 Draped Bust Quarter Eagle — no stars
Sold in 2022 for $2.16 Million



1798 Draped Bust Half Eagle — small eagle reverse
Sold in 2015 for $1.18 Million



1804 Class I Silver Dollar
Sold in 2021 for $7.68 Million



1804 Draped Bust Eagle — plain
Sold in 2021 for $5.28 Million



1808 Capped Bust Quarter Eagle
Sold in 2016 for $2.35 Million



1822 Capped Bust Half Eagle
Sold in 2021 for $8.40 Million



1849 Liberty Head Double Eagle
Estimated value of $22.50 Million*



1854-S Liberty Head Half Eagle
Sold in 2021 for $2.40 Million



1855-S Indian Princess Three Dollars
Sold in 2011 for $1.32 Million



1861 Liberty Head Paquet Double Eagle
Sold in 2021 for $7.20 Million



1873-CC Liberty Seated Dime — no arrows
Sold in 2012 for $1.84 Million



1877 Half Union Pattern
Estimated value of $15.00 Million*



1880 Coiled Hair Stella Four Dollars
Sold in 2013 for $2.57 Million



1885 Trade Dollar
Sold in 2019 for $3.96 Million



1907 Indian Head Double Eagle — rolled edge
Sold in 2011 for $2.19 Million



1907 Indian Head Double Eagle
Valued at $15.00 Million (privately owned)



1907 Saint-Gaudens Double Eagle
Estimated value of $8.50 Million*



1913 Liberty Head Nickel
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1933 Saint-Gaudens Double Eagle
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By Patrick Sweeney | Suppressors



Just a puff of smoke, and the Banish 30 Gold has done its work. Lightweight, quiet, and easy to clean. What's not to like? (Patrick Sweeney)

THE BANISH 30 GOLD SUPPRESSOR

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Do you want the lightest-possible hunting suppressor for your big-bore rifle? You're in luck—Banish has just the silencer for you. The Banish 30 gold is as valuable as gold, even if it doesn't have an atom of gold in its construction, or even cost like it was made of gold.

The way Banish does this is simple: titanium. A titanium tube and titanium baffles, and to make sure the Banish 30 Gold stands up to use, the tube is constructed to create a huge expansion chamber. At the risk of getting ahead of ourselves, take a look at the exterior of the Banish 30 Gold. Notice that there is a smaller-diameter section of the outer tube? Well, the baffles when you install them (yes, the 30 Gold is user-serviceable) have the baffle stack stop at the lower, raised, diameter of the tube. So, that means that the whole rear section of the tube is the expansion chamber.

Okay, back to the start. The 30 Gold is H.U.B. compatible, but it ships with a muzzle brake mount that threads onto your barrel. The 30 Gold then threads onto the muzzle brake.



The Banish 30 Gold comes with a QD taper mount and rear cap, but the tube itself is HUB threaded, so you can reassemble it for a direct-thread cap if you wish. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Banish 30 Gold also comes with flat washers so you can correctly time the muzzle brake/mount when you install it. (Patrick Sweeney)

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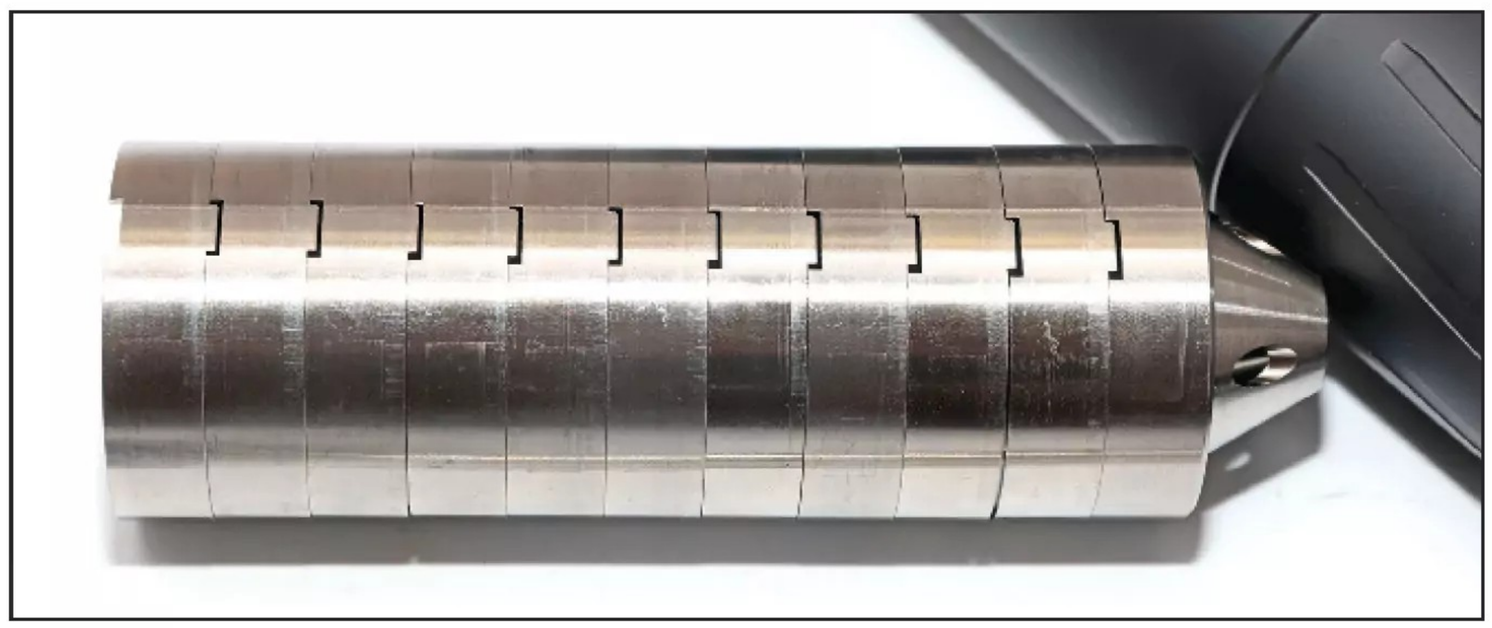
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The Banish 30 Gold with its takedown "wrench" and replacement o-ring. (Patrick Sweeney)



The blast baffle is the one with the four holes in it. (Patrick Sweeney)



The baffles stacked in the Banish 30 Gold are tabbed so you get them together correctly. It also makes sliding the stack back into the tube a lot easier. (Patrick Sweeney)

However, since the 30 Gold is H.U.B. compatible, you can change that out for a direct-thread rear cap, or some other HUB-compatible system, quick-detach (QD) or otherwise. The supplied system doesn't have a locking ratchet system, but those add weight, and if you are counting the ounces you don't want or need such a setup.

Banish also makes your life easier by including a set of flat washers in the box. This way you can properly index the muzzle brake when installing it, and have it dampen recoil without adding un-needed muzzle movement.

The front cap is a relatively plain (no flash-hiding fripperies here) with a socket machined into the front face. The socket is a three-lobed inset, and that's where one of the extras that come in the box enters the picture. The torx-wrench-socket that is also included fits into the disassembly plate, which has the matching raised part to the front cap socket. There's a rubber o-ring on the front cap, so when you go to remove the cap you will find it tough going at first. Once the o-ring clears the tube, it gets easier. (There's also a spare o-ring in the box, in case you mangle the one that is already installed, or it wears out, or you lose it. Banish thinks about these things.)

Once you have the front cap off, you can slide the baffle stack out of the tube. What you will find is a ten baffle stack and a blast baffle, all made out of titanium and all indexed to be assembled in proper orientation. The blast baffle is the one with four holes drilled through the tapered side of the cone on the baffle. The others have turbulence-inducing grooves machined on the side of the central axis hole. These help decrease the muzzle blast, and makes the Banish 30 Gold quieter.

The baffles are indexed and keyed so that when you reassemble them, you will get them back together properly. The indexing keys are also a clue. If you get it wrong, the finished stack won't provide clearance for the front cap. So if you put it back together, and there's no room for the cap, something slipped when you were stuffing baffles back in. Pull them out and start over.

The all-titanium construction makes the Banish 30 Gold really light, despite its size. At a mere 13.2 ounces (for the suppressor itself, the muzzle brake adds a bit of weight), the size is deceiving. You'd expect something as big as it is to weigh more, but it doesn't.

The Banish 30 Gold is rated all the way up to the 300 RUM and all the way down to .22 LR, it is also full-auto rated. Yes, .22LR, you read that correctly. You will obviously need different rear caps for the big bore and the rimfire, but the HUB threaded rear makes that easy, or, .17HMR, 5.7x28, whatever makes the day fun. Since it is user-serviceable, you can shoot rimfire all day long, then take



The Banish 30 Gold is easy to disassemble. Once apart, it is easy to clean. (Patrick Sweeney)


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The Banish 30 Gold is made of titanium, and that makes it light. (Patrick Sweeney)



One thing you can count on using a suppressor on a bolt-gun—clean brass. Oh, and no gas-face either. Thank you Banish. (Patrick Sweeney)



Of course, the Banish 30 Gold works on semi-autos. Here it is on an Aero Precision in 6.5 Creedmoor. The Banish 30 Gold is full-auto rated, but considering it is meant as a hunting suppressor, I would take it easy on bursts. (Patrick Sweeney)

the Banish 30 Gold apart and clean it. Well, I'd suggest you not spend all day shooting rimfire. That would make wrestling it apart a lot more difficult. Once apart, you can spend the rest of the weekend scrubbing, or you can dump the parts into an ultrasonic tank and make the task a whole lot easier. As far as the finish, the Banish 30 Gold can be had in either a Black Cerakote, or FDE.

In testing, the Banish 30 Gold proved to be quiet. Banish lists it as chopping 36 dB off of the muzzle blast, but my testing showed it to be doing a bit better than that. So quiet, in fact, that I was comfortable testing it without hearing protection, something I usually forget to take off. In the course of a testing day, I'll be putting a few hundred rounds downrange, and even suppressed that adds up.

Just in case you are not always going to be using the Banish 30 Gold on a bolt-action hunting rifle, I used the current AR-10 in-house, an Aero Precision in 6.5 Creedmoor, and it too proved to be fun and quiet. For the price, the Banish 30 Gold is hard to best. Almost impossible, in fact. FN

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By David M. Fortier, Executive Editor



Can this old veteran of the Cold War make a suitable hiking companion and woods gun today? (Photo by David Fortier)

THE WALTHER P1 AS A WOODS WALKER

Can This Old Surplus Pistol Serve as a Worthy Hiking Companion?

It was many years ago when I purchased a surplus Walther 9x19mm Parabellum P1 service pistol from Century International Arms, Inc. A veteran of the Bundeswehr, it had served during the Cold War when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact had threatened Europe and the Free World. It was dated February 1980 and came with two eight-round steel magazines (one dated 3/64 and the other 5/76), a black leather military flap holster (dated 9/59), and a cleaning kit (dated 1987). Recently, while chatting with *Firearms News* magazine Editor-in-Chief Vince DeNiro about "woods guns," the Walther came to mind. While it may seem odd, this old Bundeswehr vet has been a fine hiking companion.

The Walther P1's story begins with the defeat of Germany in April 1945, and the rising threat of Communism. In the aftermath of World War II, Germany was demilitarized, the German Army disbanded, and the country divided into four occupation zones according to the Potsdam Agreement as Europe began the arduous task of rebuilding. However, just as General George S. Patton predicted the Soviet Union, and their Communist ideology, immediately became a threat. On March 31st, 1946, a Communist uprising embroiled the Kingdom of Greece into a bloody civil war, Turkey was threatened by the Soviets in 1947 and on February 2nd, 1948 the Soviet's backed the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the first forced Communist take-over in Central Europe.

From 1945 through 1953, the Soviet espionage networks were busy establishing deep-cover agents in the U.S., United Kingdom, France and other Western countries. Financial

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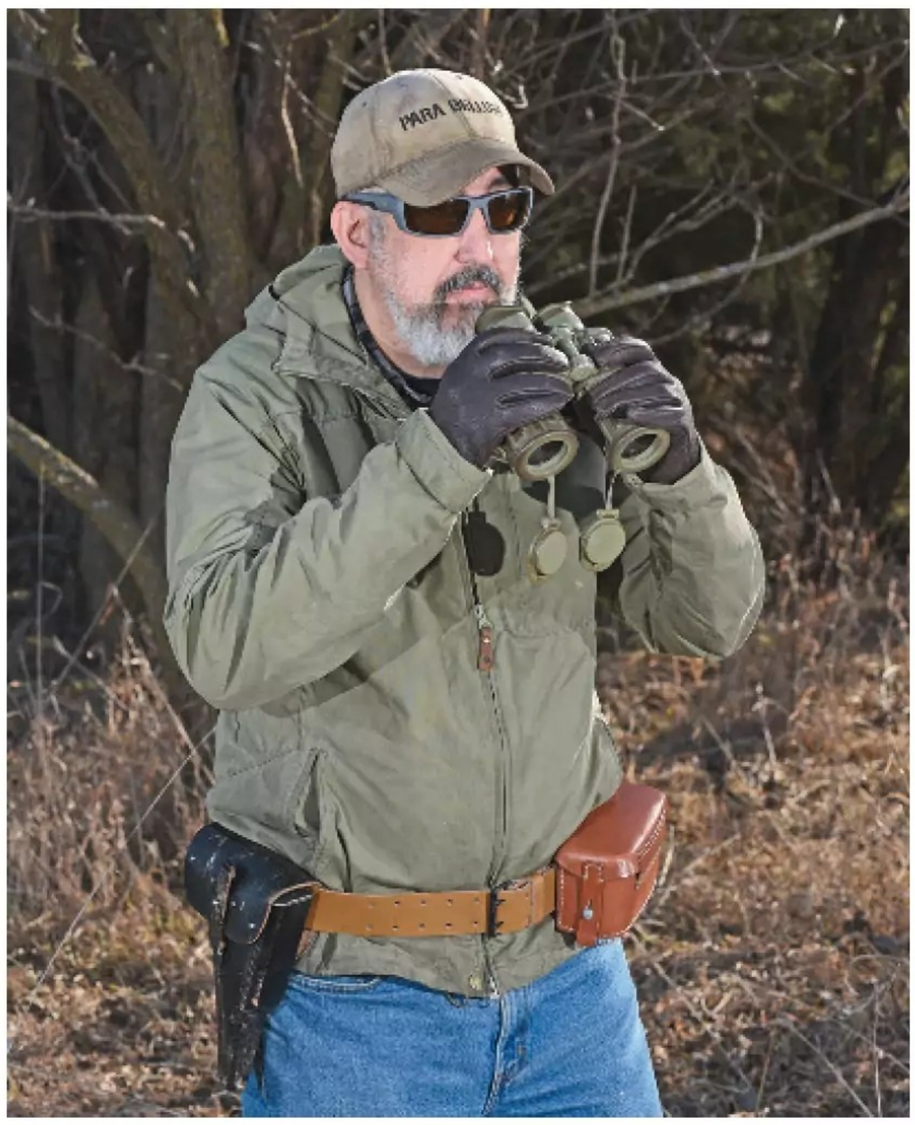
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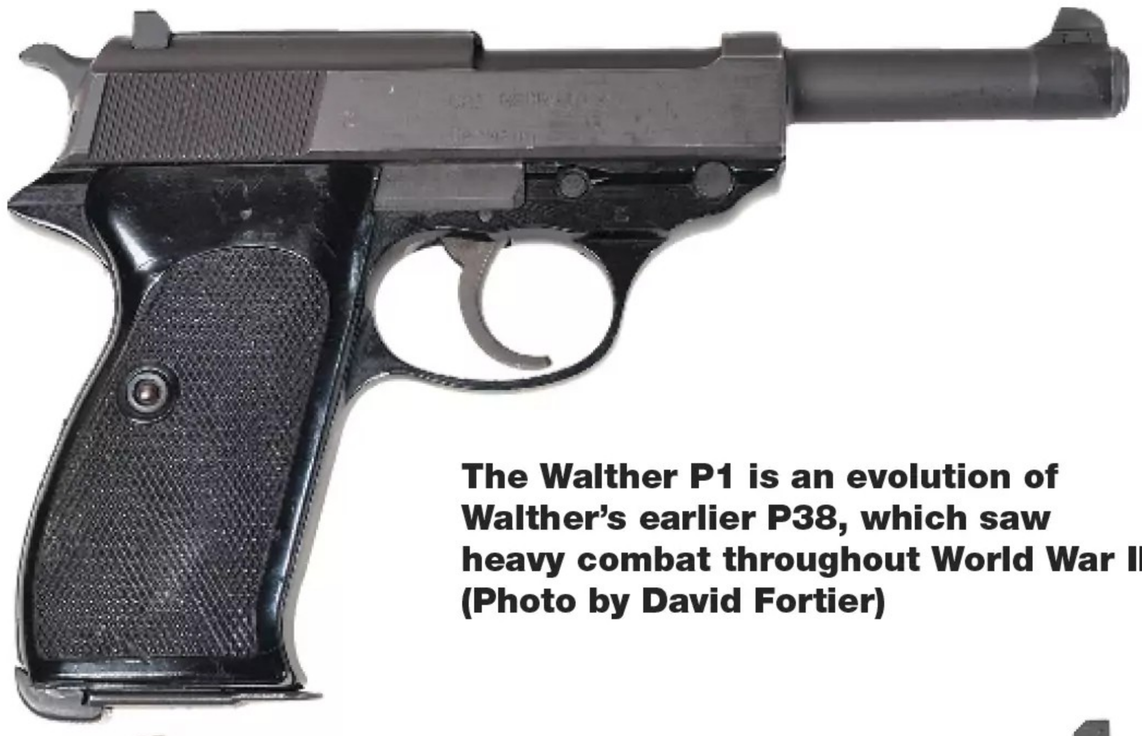
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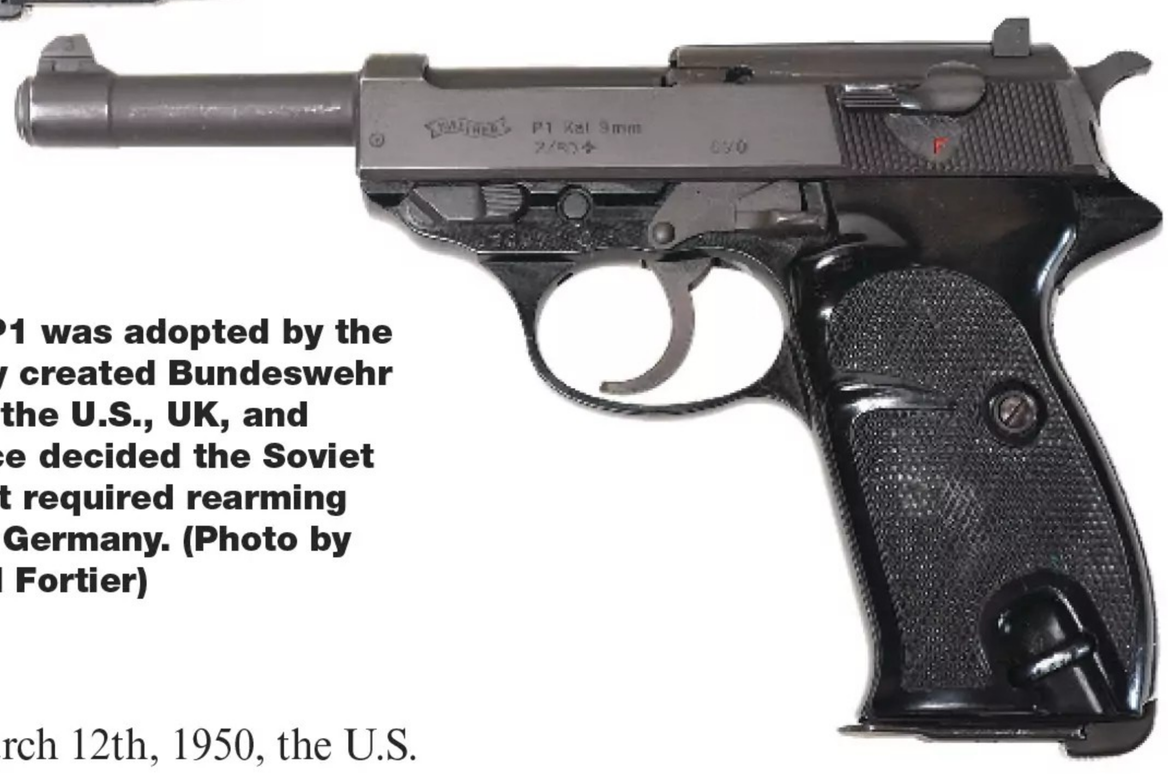
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Sometimes the latest "tacticool" is not the order of the day when hiking, exploring or wandering about. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



The Walther P1 is an evolution of Walther's earlier P38, which saw heavy combat throughout World War II. (Photo by David Fortier)



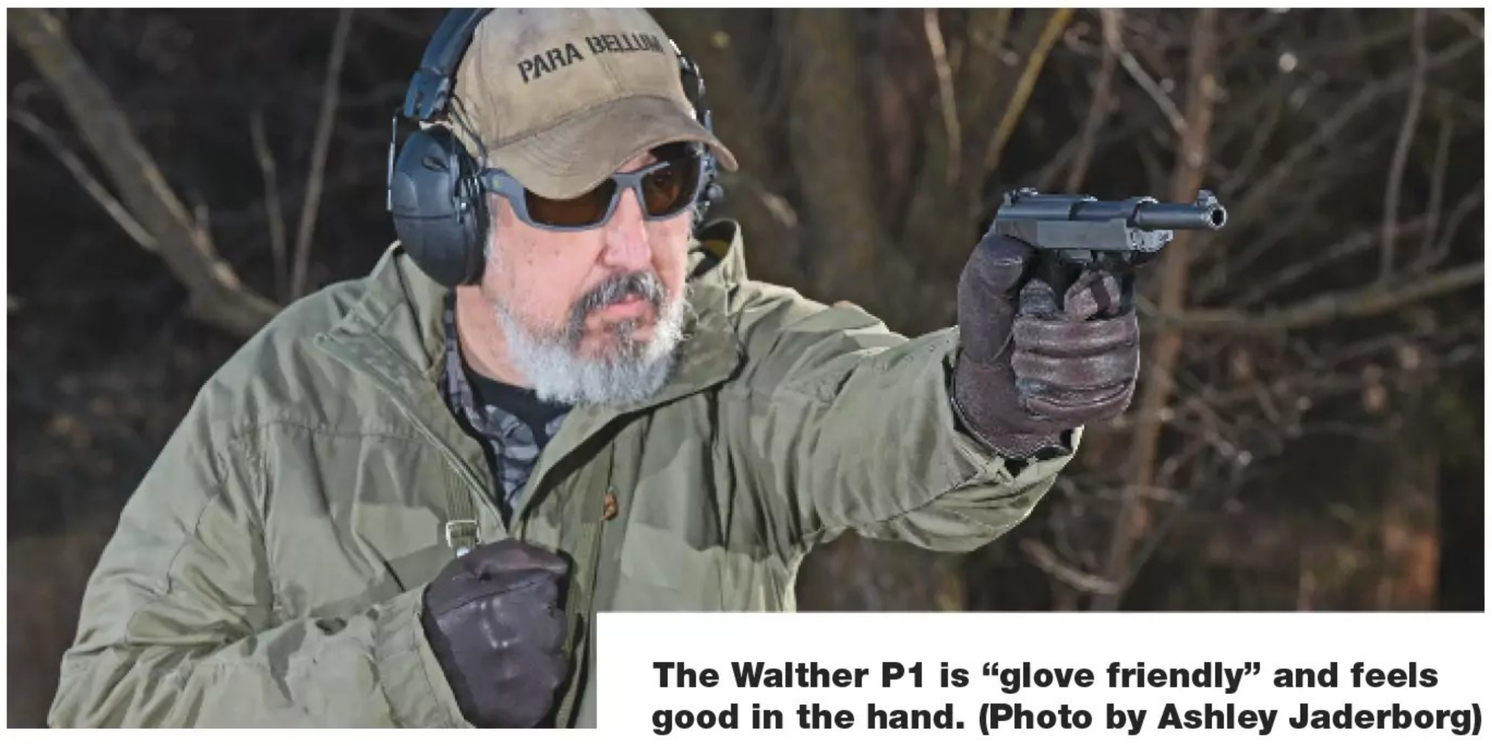
The P1 was adopted by the newly created Bundeswehr after the U.S., UK, and France decided the Soviet threat required rearming West Germany. (Photo by David Fortier)

aid, training, and propaganda were supplied to the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*—PCI), French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*—PCF) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) as the Soviets intensified their efforts to influence and subvert Western political parties.

With the Soviet blockade of Berlin in June 1948, the Western Allies had to reconsider Germany's future role in protecting Europe. The country of West Germany (Republic of Germany —FRG) was established on May 23rd, 1949 and by March 12th, 1950, the U.S. was pressuring the United Kingdom and France to allow West Germany to rearm and form an army. At this time, a German military was forbidden by Allied regulations, and France in particular, was reluctant to allow Germany to rearm. Discussions and negotiations took place over the next five years as tensions with the Soviets grew and Communist revolutions spread.

In light of the Communist take-over in China, Malayan Emergency, Korean War, and war in Indo-China, attitudes among the UK and France changed as each one became embroiled in fighting Communists. This led to the Federal Defense Forces (Bundeswehr) being created on November 12th, 1955. This new West German military force did not consider itself to be a successor to either the Weimar Republic's Reichswehr (1921–1935) or the Wehrmacht (1935–1945), and did not adhere to the traditions of either of these former German military organizations. Their motto became, "Wir. Dienen. Deutschland." ("We. Serve. Germany."), and the Eisernes Kreuz (Iron Cross) became their official emblem.

The seeds of a new West German military force were actually planted in 1950 when former high-ranking German Wehrmacht officers were tasked by West Germany's first Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to discuss the options for rearming. The growing Soviet threat could not be simply ignored. The results of this meeting in the monastery of Himmerod formed the conceptual base to build the new armed forces in West Germany. Hasso von Manteuffel, a German General who had commanded the 5th Panzer



The Walther P1 is "glove friendly" and feels good in the hand. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)

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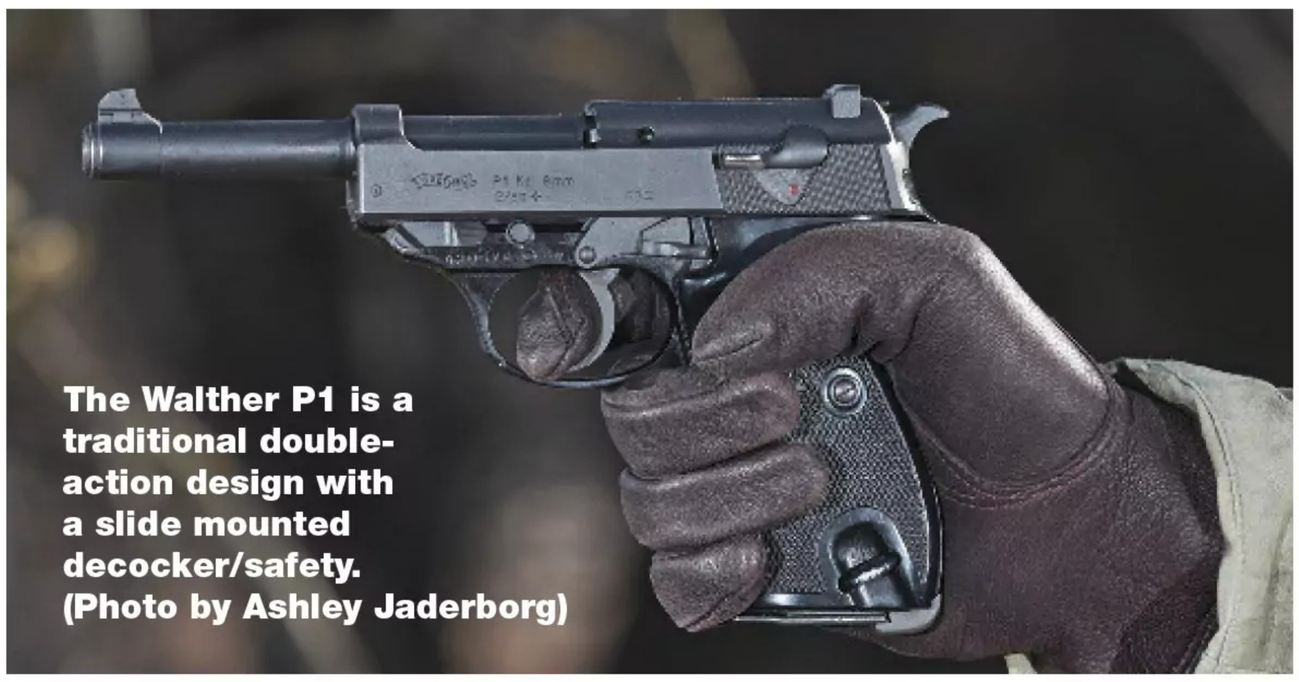
Fortier's pistol came with a black leather flap holster seen here along with his Hella knife. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



While the flap holster does an excellent job protecting the handgun from the elements, and carries one spare magazine, it is slow to draw from. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



The P1 feeds from steel single-column eight-round magazines with witness holes. (Photo by David Fortier)



The Walther P1 is a traditional double-action design with a slide mounted decocker/safety. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)

Army, submitted the name Bundeswehr for the new forces. The 200th birthday of Prussian Army General Gerhard von Scharnhorst was selected for the date to establish the new military force.

One of the first tasks facing Germany's newly formed army was selecting suitable weapons. In some cases they looked to the future. However, when it came to a service pistol, the Wehrmacht's 9x19mm P38 pistol had performed well, so they decided to update it. If you are unfamiliar with it, the roots of the Walther P38 stretch back to the 1930s when the newly formed Wehrmacht began looking for a suitable replacement for the aging P.08 Parabellum service pistol which dated from Imperial times. Service in the Great War had shown the P.08 to be both slow and expensive to manufacture as well as being somewhat temperamental in the mud of the trenches. The German firm of Carl Walther Waffenfabrik thought they could do better and developed and submitted a number of models to the German military for consideration.

Walther had first begun producing handguns at a plant in Zella-Mellis in 1908. Following the Great War, Walther produced two designs which made the company justly famous. These were the PP-Polizei Pistole introduced in 1929 and its smaller sibling, the PPK-Polizei Pistole Kriminalbeamte, introduced in 1930. Both of these designs were well received due to their compact size, innovative double-action operation, reliability and accuracy.

Initially, Walther's military design failed to satisfy the German ordnance officials. However, it's AP (Armee Pistole) was improved and refined until it was adopted as the Pistole 38 or P38. A full-size double-action service pistol, it chambered the standard 9x19mm cartridge. Not only was the double-action trigger unique in a locked-breach service pistol at the time, but the pistol's operating system also stood out. Rather than having the barrel lock into the slide, Walther used a locking wedge under the barrel. This held the slide and barrel together as they recoiled a short distance. Then the wedge was driven down by striking against a frame transom. The slide, now released, was free to recoil backwards and complete the reloading cycle.

Controls consisted of a decocker/safety mounted on the left side of the

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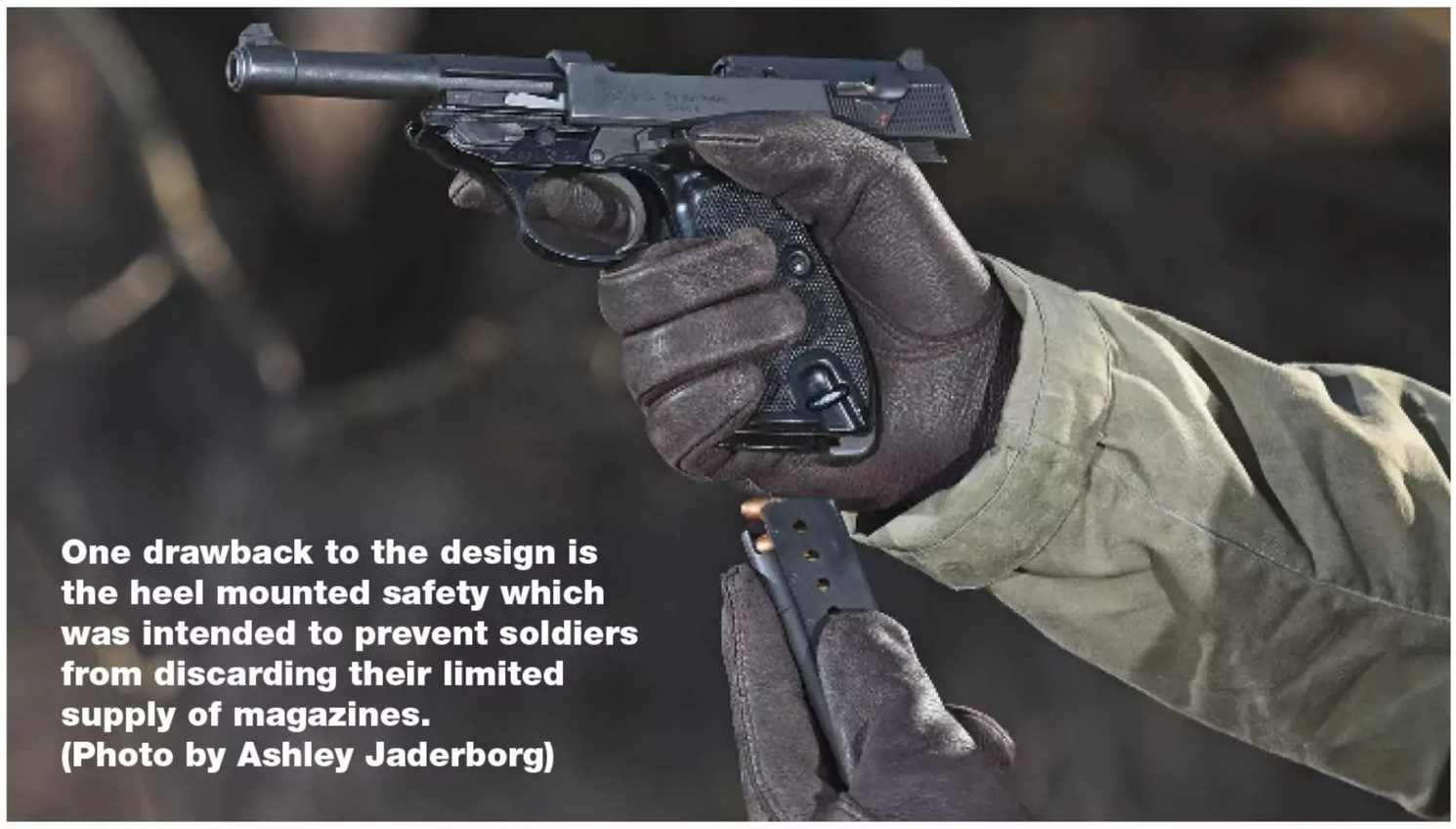


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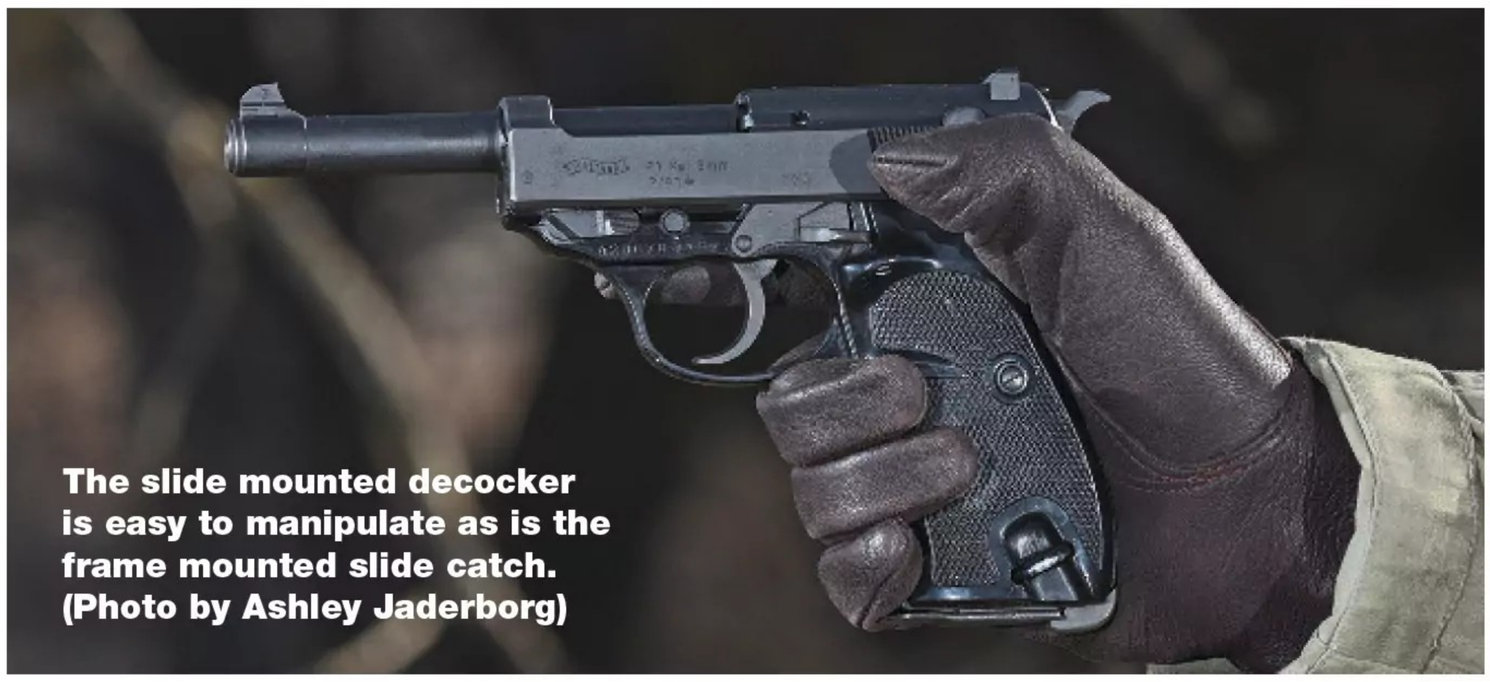
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One drawback to the design is the heel mounted safety which was intended to prevent soldiers from discarding their limited supply of magazines. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



While speed reloads are slower than with other designs, with a bit of practice you can get fairly quick. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



The slide mounted decocker is easy to manipulate as is the frame mounted slide catch. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)

slide, a slide release on the left side of the frame, and a magazine catch located on the heel of the butt. Feeding was from an eight-round magazine. Military production began in 1939, with the first issues being made to Panzer (tank) crews.

Walther, Mauser-Werke (starting in 1941), and Spreewerke GmbH (starting in 1943) churned out over one million P38s during World War II. P38s went on to see combat in every theatre where German soldiers were engaged. Heavy field use in incredibly harsh conditions quickly proved it to be a tough and durable weapon which soon became popular with the troops. Unfortunately for the German soldier in the field, there were never enough available. Due to this shortage, the older P.08 remained in service until the end of the war.

When the Bundeswehr expressed interest in it, Walther updated the design. Relatively slight changes were made, the biggest of which was replacing the steel frame with a lightweight 'Dural' aluminum alloy unit. This reduced the weight of the original design from 34 ounces to 27 ounces. The updated design was subsequently adopted in 1957 as the Pistole 1. The design was improved with the addition of a bolt reinforcing the frame in 1975 and an improved slide. This model served not only the various branches of the Bundeswehr, but also the Austrian Army, well for decades.

Eventually, like all warhorses, the P1 grew long in the tooth and the German military began replacing it with the HK produced P8 in the 1990s until it was phased out in 2004. Surplus P1 pistols, parts, magazines, and accessories then hit the U.S. commercial market. My example was one of the thousands imported and sold to American shooters, collectors, and sportsmen. For many years, the P1 was considered a best buy



The sights are big and bold making them easy to see even with older eyes. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)

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Recoil is fairly mild and the P1 is fun to shoot. (Photo by Ashley Jaderborg)



These two five-shot groups fired from a rest at 25 yards demonstrate the level of accuracy the author's example is capable of. (Photo by David Fortier)

WALTHER P1 PISTOL — ACCURACY AND VELOCITY CHART

Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	SD	25 yards (in.)	50 yards (in.)
Aguila FMJ	124	1,102	25	3.1	NA
Aguila IQ	65	1,559	23	2.4	5.2
Black Hills JHP +P	124	1,153	13.6	3.5	NA
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,179	13.9	3	5
Magtech FMJ	115	1,191	17	3.2	NA
PMP FMJ	115	1,091	18	4.6	NA
Triton Quik-Shok	135	1,317	29	2.6	3.9
Winchester FMJ	115	1,218	13.2	2.8	5
Winchester SXT	147	977	16	2.6	NA
Wolf FMJ	115	1,186	22	3.6	NA

Groups are an average of four five-shot groups fired from sandbags. Velocity readings were recorded 12 feet from the muzzle with an Oehler 35P chronograph at an ambient temperature of 70 degrees F or using a LabRadar Doppler chronograph at an ambient temperature of 52 degrees F at 1,030 feet above Sea Level.

for those in the know, with spare magazines and parts readily available.

Examining my example, you'll note the metalwork is finished in an even dull gray parkerizing and the lightweight alloy frame is anodized black. The only real wear is on the grips and lanyard ring. The double-action pull on my example is a bit heavy but smooth. The single-action pull is light, fairly crisp, and quite good. Handling a P1, you note the decocker/safety is easy to operate from a firing grip. Thumbing it down, the safely decocks the hammer and places the weapon on safe, up is fire. The slide release is also easy to reach. The feature most Americans will not like is the heel magazine release.

The sights are excellent being large, rugged and easy to see. The rear is a large square notch with a white post. The front sight is a large square post with a white dot. Windage adjustments are made by simply drifting the rear sight. Just above the hammer is a loaded chamber indicator, which protrudes to indicate the pistol's condition. A quick glance or a touch will instantly reveal the weapon's state of readiness. Located on the left side of the receiver is the weapon's take-down lever. This allows the pistol to be easily stripped for cleaning and routine maintenance.

This Walther P1 pistol is not new to me; I've owned it for over 20 years. During this span of time I have learned a few things about it. These include it can be a bit fussy when it comes to the nose profile of bullets regarding feeding. It definitely prefers a traditional round nose profile for FMJ and JHPs. In addition, very lightly loaded 115-grain 9mm ammunition may not function 100%. Otherwise, the P1 has proven very reliable and quite accurate. Just remember to keep it properly lubricated. Over the years, I have tested a number of loads through it from the bench at 25 and 50 yards. Some of these loads are now discontinued, but I included them anyways in the accuracy chart just to show what this example is capable of.

Operating a P1 is pretty simple. Snap a loaded eight-round magazine into the butt until it locks into place, thumb the decocker down and work the slide to chamber a round. The pistol is now loaded with a round chambered, the hammer is decocked and the safety is on. After drawing thumb the safety off, index the prominent front sight onto your target and squeeze. The double-action pull is quite acceptable once you get used to it, and recoil is light. After your first shot, the pistol switches to single-action mode and the trigger pull is quite light allowing very good work to be done.

When the slide locks back, it's time to depress the mag release located on the pistol's heel while digging the empty magazine out. Go for your spare mag, insert it cleanly, depress the slide release and back at it. Recoil is light and brass flies everywhere. Ejection is best described as erratic, and like previous German military designs empty cases occasionally land on top of your head and even whack you in the forehead.

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The Walther P1 is very easy to field strip for cleaning, note the frame mounted dual recoil springs. (Photo by David Fortier)

Negatives? The P1, like the P38, has two major shortcomings for a fighting pistol. These are the eight-round magazine capacity and heel mounted magazine release. The heel mounted release was intended to allow soldiers to easily retain empty magazines. With practice, reloads can be smooth and fairly quick, but it is what it is. I've noted my P1 doesn't like to be run dry. During one range session, I put about 400 rounds of ball through it when it suddenly started to experience failures to feed. A quick squirt of lube immediately cured this problem. Also, keep in mind this is a surplus pistol and recoil/magazine springs may be tired. Replacing the old springs with new aftermarket Wolff springs is cheap insurance.

My thoughts on the P1 as a hiking companion and woods gun? There are no lions or tigers or bears (oh my) here in Kansas, so I have no issue with its 9mm caliber when wandering over hill and dale. There is a plethora of 9mm loads to choose from, ranging from snake shot to heavy hard cast bullets intended for deep penetration. Typically a good 124-grain JHP will suffice for most things, but selecting the proper load for the task at hand simply requires a modicum of thought. Whether for small gun hunting, recreational shooting, dispatching poisonous snakes or predators around the farm or personal protection, the old 9mm Parabellum can do it all.

The flap military holster is slow to draw from, but does an excellent job of protecting the pistol from scratches, rain, snow, debris and mud. In addition it carries a spare magazine. While P1 prices have gone up, deals can still be found and watch Gunbroker.com. Sarco, Inc. has P38/P1 holsters, parts and accessories in stock. Otis Technology has modern cleaning kits. Overall I like the old Walther; while it's not perfect it's been a good companion when out and about. FN

SOURCES
Century Arms (CenturyArms.com)
P38/P1 surplus steel cleaning rod - $4.95
Charlie's Surplus (CharleysSurplus.com)
P38/P1 leather surplus holster - $44.99
Royal Tiger Imports (RoyalTigerImports.com)
P38/P1 surplus leather soft-shell holster - $39.95
P38/P1 surplus leather hard-shell holster - $34.99
P38/P1 surplus pebble-grain leather soft-shell holster - $24.99
P38/P1 surplus flecktarn canvas holster - $9.99
P38/P1 magazines - $44.99
Sarco, Inc. (SarcoInc.com)
Walther P1 Pistol - $829.00
P38 surplus hard-shell leather holster w/belt - $34.95
P38 surplus leather police holster - $24.95
P38 surplus leather paratroop holster - $16.95
Wolff Gun Springs (GunSprings.com)
P38/P1 new recoil springs - $11.99
P38/P1 new extra-power recoil springs - $11.99
P38/P1 new hammer spring - $4.29
P38/P1 new magazine spring - $8.99
P38/P1 service springs pack (contains new springs for: recoil mech., hammer, extractor, firing pin lock, retainer latch, and cartridge indicator.) - $18.99

WALTHER P1 PISTOL	
Caliber:	9x19mm Parabellum
Operation:	Short Recoil, Double-Action
Barrel Length:	4.9 in.
Barrel Twist:	1-10 inches, RH twist Six Groove
Trigger:	Double-Action
Feed:	Detachable Eight-round box magazine
Overall Length:	8.5 in.
Weight:	27 oz.
Sights:	Front post and windage adjustable rear square notch
Finish:	Hard Coat Anodized and gray parkerizing
Manufacturer:	Carl Walther Waffenbrik
Status:	Obsolete, replaced by P8 in 2004
Value:	$570–$900

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AUTO-ORDNANCE'S

THOMPSON

.50 BMG RIFLE TAKEN

American Heritage Meets Big Bore Supremacy!

When I think about Thompson, I naturally drift into a world of wood and steel coming together with a cartridge so iconic it could only have been designed by the Godfather himself, John Moses Browning. With the need for increasingly effective small arms during World War I, it was Brigadier General John Taliaferro Thompson whose vision, accompanied by the powerful .45 ACP, led to the creation of the Thompson submachine gun in 1919, just three years after he founded the Auto-Ordnance Corporation.

Having missed the window at the conclusion of World War I on November 11, 1918, the Thompson's initial focus on military sales shifted, leaning on its distinction as the first commercially marketed "submachine gun." According to an agreement between Auto Ordnance and Colt Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company, 15,000 Model 1921 Thompsons were produced in 1921 and 1922, leading to the Thompson submachine gun's Prohibition-era notoriety as a favored tool of lawmen and criminals alike and the popular-culture moniker "Tommy Gun."

TAO50 OUT TO ONE MILE

By Darwin Nercesian,
News and Long-Range Rifle Field Editor

The Auto-Ordnance Thompson TAO50 will have you calling around looking for a longer range. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)



World War II dramatically increased demand for Thompsons, with Auto-Ordnance and licensed partners stepping up production to supply U.S. and Allied forces, solidifying the submachine gun as a staple of close-quarters combat. Since then, the Tommy Gun's legacy has endured among shooters and enthusiasts, thriving after its 1999 acquisition by Kahr Arms and leaving an indelible mark on 20th-century history. Obviously, I was honored when Auto Ordnance asked me to review…Wait… TAO50? A bolt-action .50 caliber sniper rifle?



It takes a lot to make a .338 Lapua Magnum look small. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

Owning a .50 BMG is a milestone on the bucket list of many shooters. I'm insistent on only shooting .50 caliber rifles from manufacturers I trust. Have you seen the size of these cartridges? They look more like hand grenades! Auto-Ordnance fit that bill, and I appreciate them giving me the opportunity to review the TAO50.

.50 BMG History

Few cartridges in firearms history wield the battlefield authority of a .50 caliber, from the roar of a Browning M2 machine gun to the skilled sniper, able to destroy an engine block from more than a mile away. With over a century under its belt, however, the .50 caliber's journey is more nuanced than modern applications suggest, with the roots of its evolution taking hold not in a machine shop or military arsenal, but on the American frontier.

Early .50s appeared just after the Civil War, when black-powder cartridges such as the .50-70 Government and .50-90 Sharps became popular among soldiers and buffalo hunters, proving that momentum plus mass would accomplish what smaller rounds could not. These half-inch projectiles delivered more terminal energy at greater distances, although early applications would not meet modern precision standards. During World War I, demands for a cartridge capable of defeating tank and aircraft armor at longer ranges prompted John Moses Browning to develop the Browning M2 .50 Caliber Heavy Machine Gun, affectionately known as Ma Deuce, which was adopted in 1921 and has since become a permanent fixture in global conflict.

The .50 BMG, or 12.7x99mm NATO, spent most of the 20th century contributing to battlefield supremacy via belt-fed application. In 1967, however, during the Vietnam War, legendary Marine Scout Sniper Carlos Hathcock mounted a scope on a Browning M2, achieving a





The TAO50 sits atop the custom-fitted case it ships with from the factory. (Photos by Darwin Nercesian)

record-setting confirmed kill at roughly 2,500 yards (1.4 miles), demonstrating the cartridge's untapped potential. The concept of a .50 caliber sniper system was born, but it would take two decades for technology to catch up.

That breakthrough came in 1982, when Ronnie Barrett invented the first purpose-built .50-caliber anti-material rifle. In 1991, U.S. forces deployed the Barrett M82A1 in the Persian Gulf, rewriting doctrine by offering a single shooter the ability to disable vehicles, destroy equipment, and provide overwatch at distances once reserved for artillery fire. Today, .50 caliber machine guns and precision sniper systems remain pillars of long-range warfare, and while the caliber's primary mission is hard target interdiction, a Canadian sniper recorded a confirmed kill at 3,540 meters, or approximately 2.2 miles, while deployed to Iraq in 2017.



I'm not sure what I'd mount on those M-LOK slots, but I know I don't want to be in this break's blast radius. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

Features and Specifications

The Auto-Ordnance TAO50 is available chambered in .50 BMG and .416 Barrett. Other options include a black or flat dark earth (FDE) anodized finish, a Magpul PRS Gen 3 precision-adjustable stock, or a side-folding adjustable aluminum stock with integrated monopod. For this review, we'll focus on the .50 Caliber model with side-folding adjustable aluminum stock, which Auto-Ordnance provided in FDE.

The TAO50 measures 61 inches in length and weighs 27.5 pounds out of the box (25.5 pounds if you go with the Magpul PRS Gen 3 precision-adjustable stock), but by the time I mounted an optic and loaded the magazine, we were tipping the scales at approximately 36 pounds. Trust me when I tell you, however, that you don't want a lightweight platform when shooting one of the most powerful rifle cartridges in common use.

Starting up front, the Auto-Ordnance TAO50 features a high-efficiency muzzle brake with its own zip code. Normally, I would avoid having a cinder block hanging off the front of my rifle, but rumor has it this break is remarkably effective at reducing felt recoil. Auto-Ordnance recommends using the TAO50's factory brake and to avoid suppressors designed specifically for semi-automatic platforms, as bolt-action rifles produce higher pressures due to gases not being expelled through a reciprocating action. Without a .50 caliber suppressor lying around, I prepared to rattle my own cage while seeing if the rumors were true.

Underneath this behemoth are 1″-14 TPI threads on a 29-inch precision-rifled barrel with a 1:15 twist rate. The handguard features a Picatinny rail running the full length at 12 o'clock and cooling slots that allow the massive barrel to breathe. M-LOK slots are available at 3, 6, and 9 o'clock, and the TAO50 comes equipped with a Picatinny



All this with two Allen keys and just as many minutes. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

accessory rail attached to the bottom, hosting a heavy-duty Accu-Tac bipod from the factory. Nice touch!

Loosening three screws in the handguard and pulling a quick-release pin allows the barrel to be changed on the fly, adding to convenience and serviceability. This will be an attractive feature for those hoping to run .416 Barrett as well, or to facilitate the integrally suppressed, hearing-safe barrel setup that Auto-Ordnance has been teasing at trade shows this past year.

The TAO50's upper receiver sets itself apart with a left-side bolt handle. Auto-Ordnance is not the first to implement this, but it is a clever feature designed to optimize performance for right-handed shooters, keeping them target-focused with their grip and trigger finger in place for faster follow-up shots.

Arguably, an even more interesting feature is the TAO50's action, gliding along the inside of the receiver via eight patent-pending roller bearings affixed to the outside of the bolt carrier. From a simple physics standpoint, reduced friction alone should make a difference, and there is considerably less surface area for dirt to burrow into. This may prevent the action from becoming gritty during field use. Once removed from the rifle, two of the roller bearings are easily pulled from the carrier, releasing the bolt, handle, and firing pin, for easy takedown and maintenance.

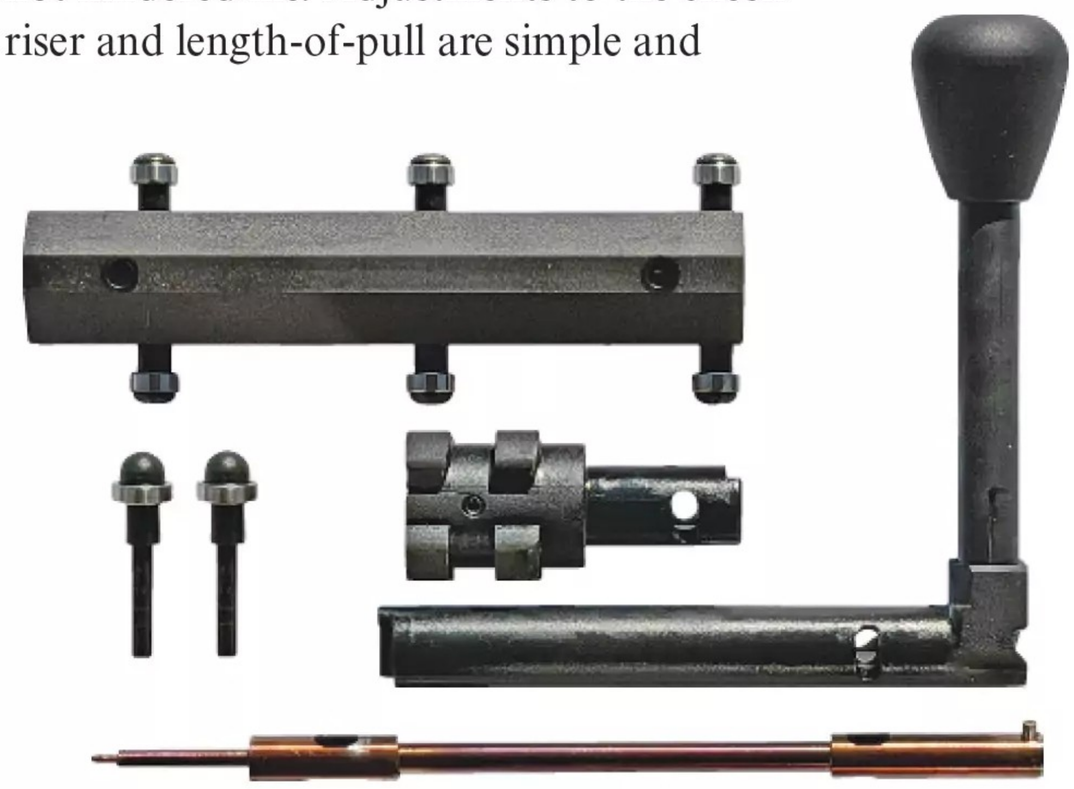
The lower receiver, reminiscent of an AR-15, features forward and rear takedown pins, an AR-15-compatible ambidextrous safety selector, Magpul MOE+ grip, and a Timney AR-style trigger, providing familiar ergonomics for most shooters. The TAO50's trigger is based on a Timney AR-10 drop-in, but it uses heavier spring weights to reliably ignite .50-caliber primers. The result is a single-stage trigger with a crisp, albeit heavy, eight-pound break.

The lower receiver's most significant departure from the AR-15 is its enlarged magazine well, which accepts a 10-round Barrett M107A1 magazine. Another difference is the paddle-style magazine release located at the lower rear of the magazine well, just forward of the trigger guard.

If you take home a TAO50 with the Magpul PRS Gen 3 stock, setting up a comfortable position behind the rifle should be straightforward thanks to its adjustable length-of-pull, cheek comb height, buttpad height, and cant. If you elect to go with the folding aluminum stock, you will only do so at the cost of those buttpad movements, which have not hindered me. Adjustments to the cheek riser and length-of-pull are simple and



Roller bearings keep this carrier running slick and quick. (Photos by Darwin Nercesian)



It sounds complicated, but in practice, this bolt carrier assembly is simple to disassemble and maintain. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)



AR controls include an ambidextrous safety selector, grip, and Timney AR-10 trigger with heavier springs for reliable ignition of .50 caliber primers. (Photos by Darwin Nercesian)



The folding stock made stowing and deployment as easy as the push of a button. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

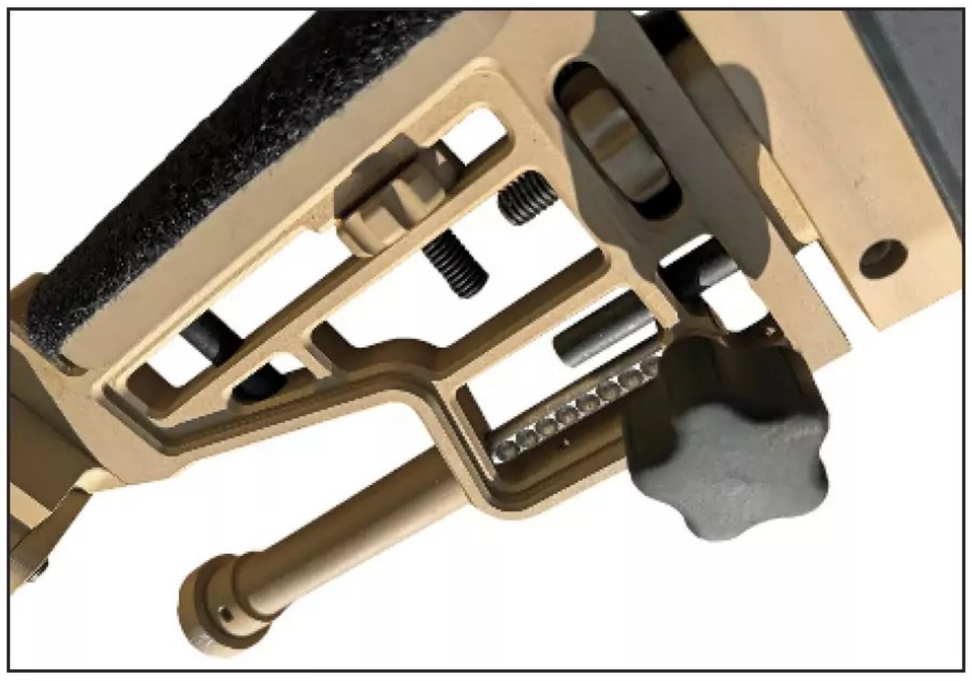
toolless, and the buttpad is thick in all the right places. The trade-off here in favor of the folding stock is convenience. Hard cases that fit most cars and trucks don't exist for a rifle this large without disassembly. That is precisely what you have to do with the Magpul PRS, which is simple enough. For the folding stock, it's a matter of pressing a button.

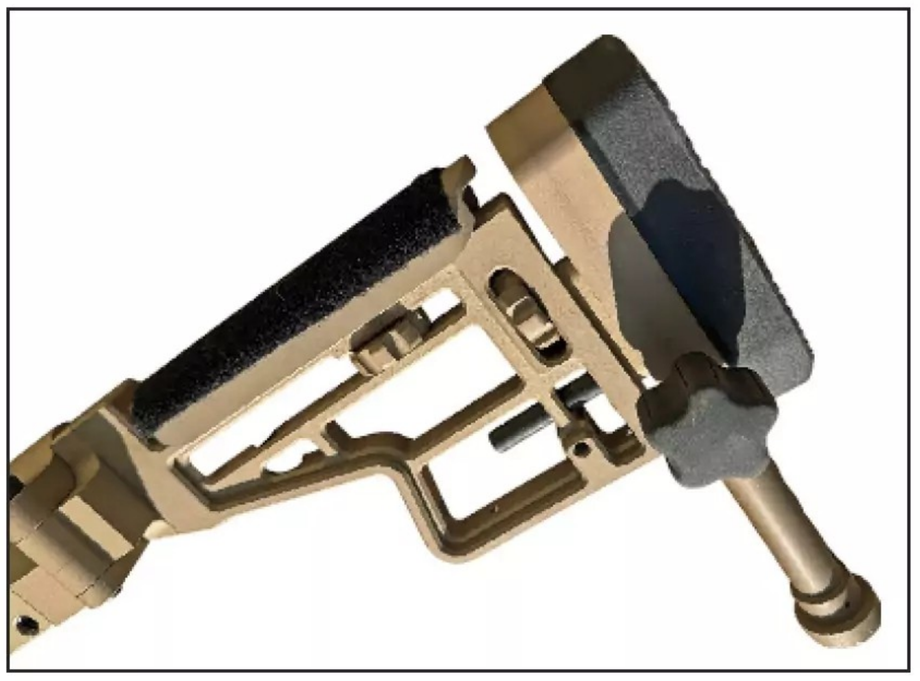
Another addition to the folding stock is a built-in monopod, stowed and secured within the stock via a thumb screw, and easily deployed. Larger elevation adjustments are made by selecting which detent the thumbscrew engages, and finer adjustments are made by reaching back with my left hand and twisting the monopod's base in either direction.

Auto Ordnance ships the Thompson TAO50 in a wheeled, heavy-duty rifle case to protect the rifle during transport, but the TAO50 isn't fragile and is more likely to damage the inside of your vehicle if left to bang around in the back. My rifle came with one magazine, a manual, a gun lock, a 5/32" Allen key, safety glasses, and a pair of foam earplugs that made me laugh a little as I threw them back into the case.

Additional Components

An overbuilt AccuTac bipod would likely have been my choice for a rifle like this if Auto-Ordnance had not beaten me to it from the factory. That didn't leave much to do before heading to the range, but optic and mount decisions





Leave your rear bag at home? No problem. The built-in monopod was easy to deploy and operate for fine elevation adjustments on target. (photo by Darwin Nercesian)



Big boy games require big boy gear. The Vortex Razor Gen III 6-36x56 FFP EBR-7D MRAD and American Defense Manufacturing Delta Mount were easy choices here. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

are important when working with .50 BMG, and it is recommended that you select these components based on their explicit rating for this caliber.

Fortunately, my inventory includes an American Defense Manufacturing (ADM) 34mm Delta, selected to secure optics on SOCOM's Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle program winner, the MK17 (SCAR 17), which is known for being rough on optics due to the harmonics generated by the closing of its heavy bolt.

For optics, I went with the Vortex Gen III Razor 6-36x56 First Focal Plane (FFP) rifle scope with an EBR-7D MRAD reticle. This Razor provides more than enough magnification for the longer shots I had planned, plenty of clarity and resolution, precise turret tracking, and is rated for .50 BMG. Setting up the Razor 6-36x56 with Vortex's L-Tec+ Zero System was intuitive and precise.

Ammunition for the .50 BMG is both expensive and a critical consideration if we're going to engage at distance. That's why I'm thankful to Hornady for providing me with 750-grain A-MAX Match. These have been the best .50 caliber loads in my experience, and one of the only commercially available match-grade BMG rounds I am aware of.

At the Range

When the TAO50 arrived, the look on my delivery driver's face as he hefted the enormous package to my front door was a window into my own future for the next several weeks. One learns to respect the sheer mass of the TAO50 from the moment you attempt to lift it from the case, like an Arthurian legend attempting to free Excalibur from the stone. Since we're not shoulder-firing the TAO50, and we're certainly not taking it for long walks on the beach, that'll be it for the body shaming.

The TAO50 feels solid, and the rifle is subjectively handsome, especially in this configuration and color. Aesthetics aside, it was time to head for the range, where the rubber meets the road. Notably, that road was approximately 22 degrees throughout this review, so conditions were amusingly adverse.

It's best to lift the TAO50 from the case, then rest the rifle on the bipod and grip before unfolding the stock and pressing the release button to secure it in the open position. You will do the same in reverse when stowing the rifle, with the folded stock's buttpad securing under the bolt handle.

I began the review by establishing an average velocity of 2,647.1 fps over 12 shots while zeroing the rifle, with a standard deviation of 5.4 fps and an extreme spread of 17.5 fps. Very well played, Hornady, especially in the extreme cold.

Now that I had data and the rifle was zeroed, it was time to test the TAO50's accuracy. The cold and wind left me a bit miserable, and the .50 BMG is not so much a surgical cartridge as it was designed to defeat tank and aircraft armor, but the range isn't a place for excuses. My first three-shot group at 100 yards came in sub-MOA, which was impressive. I made one quick elevation adjustment and shot a second group beneath it, which measured around 1.4 MOA. I was less stingy on ammunition for the next group, taking five shots instead and opening things up to 1.5 MOA, which is excellent for factory .50 BMG.

As expected, the action ran very smoothly throughout the review, though I didn't really have another big-bore

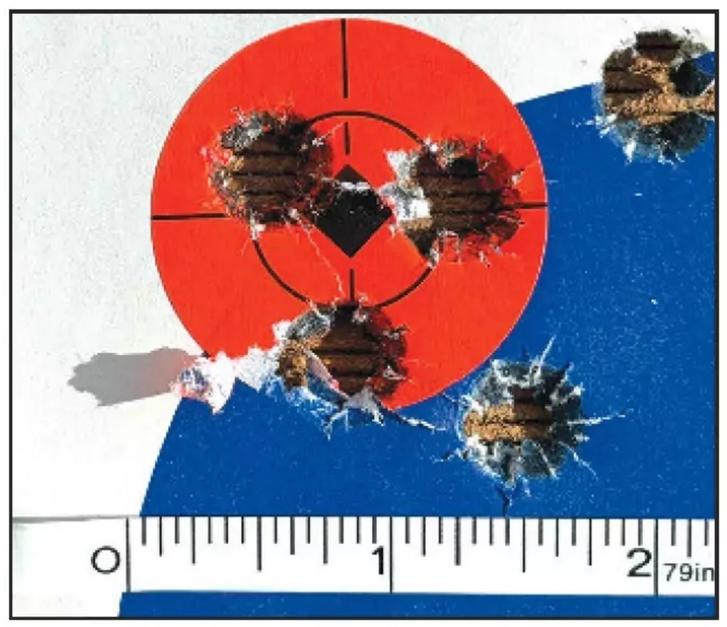


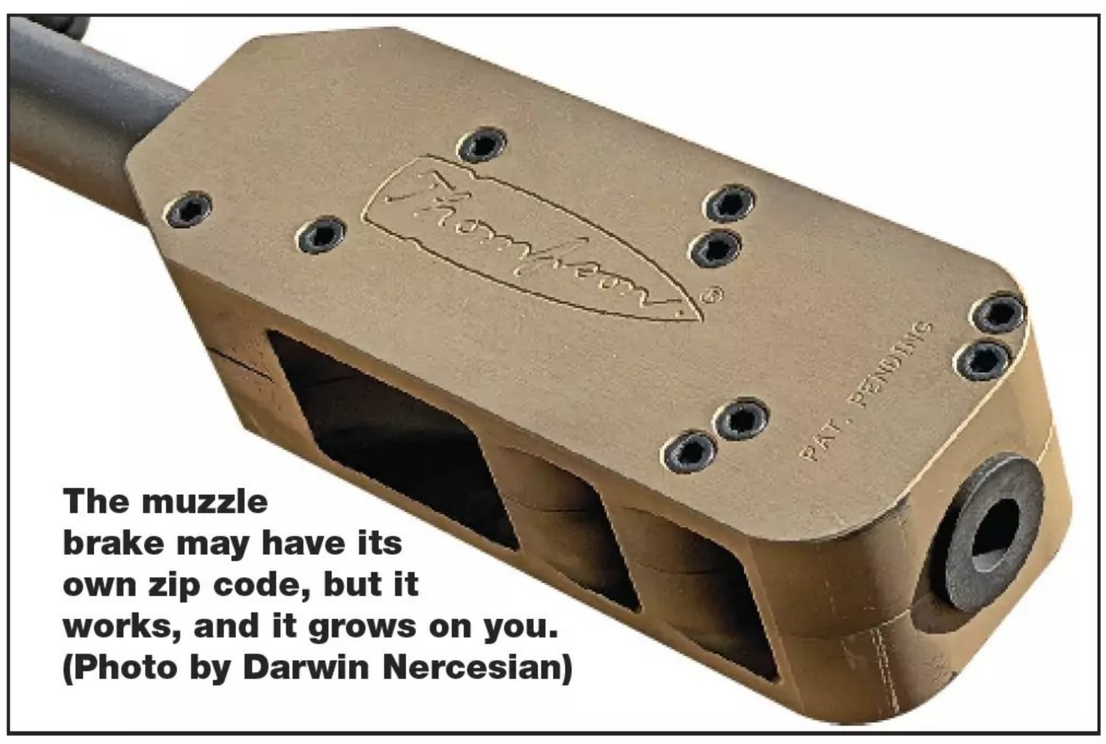
Shooting, as far as I was planning to, requires match-grade ammunition you can trust. As you can see, this wasn't an issue. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)



◄ The first three-shot group was excellent, measuring just under an inch center to center at 100 yards. The group below measured 1.4 inches after making a small elevation adjustment to my zero. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

► Moving to five shots, I was able to keep my rounds herded into a 1.5-inch group. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)





The muzzle brake may have its own zip code, but it works, and it grows on you. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

bolt-action to compare it to. How much difference the roller-bearing design makes is hard to quantify, but it ran fast and smoothly once I got used to cycling the bolt with my left hand, which, after shooting this review, I'm happy to report wasn't much of a challenge.

Follow-up shots sped up as I became more familiar with the TAO50's surprisingly mild recoil impulse, which felt more like a .308 Winchester. That muzzle break isn't just there to encourage you to work out. Additionally, I doubled up on inner and outer hearing protection, and although life was pleasant in the shooter's "pocket," I would not want to be within the blast radius of this unconventionally attractive muzzle brake, bearing the classic Thompson "bullet" logo. Bottom line, it works as advertised, but temper your expectations because it's a .50 caliber BMG, so you'll still have to do your part.

What does "doing your part" even mean? Many courses teach that, but you should start by taking care when setting up your optic to optimize eye relief and get comfortable behind the rifle. Make sure the buttstock is firmly tucked into your shoulder pocket while loading the bipod ("loading the bipod" is the process of applying slight forward pressure on the rifle using your body weight while in the shooting position, which creates a stable platform that



The included Accu-Tac bipod and built-in monopod provide stability and confidence in the field. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)



Your firing solution will be as good as the data you put into it. Always collect accurate velocity, environmental, and ballistic data to be successful at distance. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

helps to mitigate recoil and stay on target for follow-up shots). This position will help mitigate recoil, get you back on target faster, and make sure you don't take a shot to the orbital bone by your ocular lens. When you get good at it, you'll be able to follow your own trace on those longer shots, making impacts easier to call at longer distances.

I mentioned earlier that the trigger breaks crisply at what sounds like an imposing eight pounds. All of that remains true, but gravity has a lot to say about a 35-plus-pound rifle. If your shooting position and fundamentals are remotely adequate, the eight pounds of rearward pressure on the trigger shoe will go unnoticed, or at least that was my experience. Could it be slightly lighter for my preference? Absolutely, but the crisp break and the platform's stability made the TAO50 very shootable.

With below-freezing temperatures taking their toll, I quit playing arctic warfare for the day, but I'd soon find myself facing the frigid formidability of Thunder Valley Precision in Kimbolton, Ohio. This time, I'd have steel to shoot at 600 yards, 1,000 yards, and one mile. I sat in the warmth of my truck with the snow-covered landscape mocking my reluctance to step out as I reminded myself that being miserable about the weather before shooting this rifle without having to pay for the ammunition (thanks again, Hornady) is why my friends hate me.



A thousand yards is a long way to reach out, but the TAO50 performed admirably with Hornady 750-grain Match ammunition. (Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

It was time to cheer up anyhow, because shooting steel at long distance has to be my favorite thing in the world to do. Between outings, I had developed a firing solution based on velocity, ballistics, and environmental factors to make things as predictable as possible. As I walked to the bench, I was thankful that I remembered to leave the engine running so I'd have a warm place for my next coffee break.

Setting up my initial rounds at 600 yards, I dialed 3.3 mils of elevation and determined there would be neither enough wind, spin drift, nor Coriolis effect to bother with windage correction. In case you're not familiar with the Coriolis effect, it is the apparent deflection of a bullet caused by Earth's rotation while the projectile is in flight, or to put it simply, it is a very small adjustment that is only relevant at longer distances to correct for the Earth's horizontal and lateral rotation. I let three shots off in steady succession, about five seconds apart, each stacking at the target's center mass. Before taking a pat on the back, I reminded myself that this was only 600 yards, so it's best to move on and not waste time or ammunition at such close range.

I moved on to the 1,000-yard target, dialing 7.3 mils. Since I know someone will ask, I set the magnification to around 10x to 12x for these shots. The glass clarity and resolution were more than enough to get my reticle on target, and backing off the magnification helps me see the bullet trace on longer shots. This time, I dialed my windage to compensate for spin drift and Coriolis, because .2 mils doesn't sound like much, but at 1,000 yards, you're looking at a difference of about 7.5 inches. I had a relatively straightforward wind call that had me holding half a mil to the left, and then I sent it.



In the end, this was a fun review, and shooting steel at these distances makes this outing especially Zen for this long-range shooter. (photo by Darwin Nercesian)

AUTO-ORDNANCE THOMPSON TA050 RIFLE — 50 BMG				
Manufacturer	Weight (gr.)	Bullet Type	Average (in.)	Best (in.)
100 YARDS: TWO THREE SHOT GROUPS				
Hornady	750	A-MAX	1.15	0.9
100 YARDS: THREE FIVE SHOT GROUPS				
Hornady	750	A-MAX	1.66	1.5
600 YARD STEEL - 3 SHOTS, 3 HITS				
1,000 YARD STEEL - 10 SHOTS, 8 HITS				
1 MILE (1,760 YARDS) STEEL - 10 SHOTS, 4 HITS				
Vortex Razor Gen III 6-36x56 FFP EBR-7D MRAD scope set to 10x at 600y, 12x at 1,000y, 18x at 1 mile. Fired from bench on bipod and rear monopod. Conditions: 10 MPH 90-degree crosswind shooters left to right. 22 degrees during zeroing and groups. 24 degrees F when shooting steel (seperate days).				

I went through a box of Hornady 750-grain A-MAX Match on this poor target, ringing its bell eight times out of ten and earning myself a trip back to the truck for an earlier-than-expected heater break. As I sit there enjoying the spoils of weekend war, I started thinking about that one-mile target, and how it mocked me from atop its isolated perch, knowing there would be some tricky wind in the valley beneath. I'm also aware that this is where things start to open up, as velocity slows to around 1,375 FPS and the bullet becomes more susceptible to deflection.

I caught myself preparing excuses again, so I took one more sip of coffee, which you should never drink before long-range shooting because of caffeine jitters, and headed back for the main event. Leaving the conditions out of the mix, if you've ever done this, you know it isn't very easy, with many variables at play, and some that don't like to hold still. Now throw in the weather, and it can be a real crap shoot.

This time, I set my magnification at around 16x to 18x, dialed my Vortex Razor's elevation turret to 17.6 mils, and compensated .4 mills of windage for spin drift and Coriolis. The wind call wasn't as straightforward for this shot, but you can sit there reading the changing directions and speeds until you're blue in the face, and at these temperatures, I don't think it would take that long. I made my best determination and held 1.4 mils left of the target, hoping for a Christmas miracle but falling short, literally. Of all the surprises and silver linings, however, it looked like whatever voodoo math I used to calculate that wind hold was dead on. This could be easier than I thought.

I dialed the elevation to 17.8 mils, decided that all else should stay the same, and reengaged. This was another splash in the snow, but it looked like it was right there. I decided to push the elevation to 18 mils and found my shot just over the target, scolding myself internally for wasting such expensive ammunition in the dirt. I dialed back to 17.9 mils and made the same wind call once again. Oh, how the sound of steel ringing is music to my ears. To be fair, the sound from a mile away with doubled-up hearing protection and a balaclava wasn't the giveaway, but watching the trace sail into the target and seeing it sway a bit from the impact was more than satisfying enough.

This day went by quickly, and I got home to my wife, dogs, and cozy living room at a very decent time. In the end, I made four out of the ten shots I took at the one-mile target. I was pleased with the results, though I'd like to get another crack at it under the sun.



(Photo by Darwin Nercesian)

Conclusion

If you're still reading this, my opinion may be of interest to you, and it may be evident at this point. The TAO50 is a great rifle, though it wouldn't be one of my high-round-count affairs that sees the range regularly. I do have access to Thunder Valley Precision in Kimbolton, Ohio (ThunderValleyPrecision.com), and that place is superb, but for me, the TAO50 is one of those "special occasion" rifles you take out either to push your long-range limits or to share with friends in awe of its formidable novelty. You'll make most guys' day like this.

That said, I could see myself wanting to strap a suppressor to the TAO50, and the fact that Auto-Ordnance engineers have called their integrally suppressed pre-production barrel hearing safe strikes me as a potentially expensive addition to my bucket list. They could do the same thing in .416 Barrett, and that's a not-so-subtle hint. I can't really think of anything I would change, other than to say that I am curious how much weight could be reduced while maintaining shootability. That last part is essential, as stability and recoil management are paramount to having a good experience with a rifle like the TAO50. If this rifle belonged to me, I might be tempted to fine-tune the trigger, which works great out of the factory but could possibly be lightened without sacrificing reliability.

A .50 caliber BMG is a considerable commitment. From merely paying for one to the cost of equipping and feeding it, this is an expensive proposition. Remember my comment about the cartridge being more like a hand grenade, however, and you'll understand why I'd rather not cheap out on a rifle like this. Even lifting and carrying the TAO50 has got to be something you want to do, and having a place worthy of its capabilities within driving distance is also a privilege. If the stars, sun, and the moon align upon a conclusion that puts one of these rifles in your arsenal, however, then you won't be disappointed. If you like to shoot things far, far away, you won't be disappointed. And if you want to impress your friends with an awesome piece of American-engineered heritage, combined with contemporary design, features, and modularity that the .50 caliber BMG rifle deserves, then the Auto-Ordnance Thompson TAO50 may be the choice for your long-range precision outings.

—

Darwin Nercesian is a long-time gun rights advocate and shooter of targets far, far away. As the News Field Editor and Long Range Field Editor at Firearms News, *Darwin writes about the Second Amendment, firearms, and related gear. Follow him on Instagram, X, and YouTube @ DTOE_Official.* FN

AUTO-ORDNANCE THOMPSON TAO50 RIFLE	
Caliber:	.50 BMG
Action:	Bolt-Action
Magazine:	10-round Barrett M107A1 (1 included)
Barrel:	29 in. Precision Rifled, 1:15
Muzzle:	High Efficiency Muzzle Brake
Sights:	Optics Ready
Stock:	Folding aluminum with adjustable cheek riser and length of pull.
Overall Length:	51.25 in. (stock folded) 61 in. (stock deployed) 62 in. (Stock deployed, buttpad extended)
Weight:	27.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull:	8 lbs.
Finish:	FDE (Anodized)
Additional Accessories:	Magazine, manual, gun lock, 5/32 in. Allen key, safety glasses, foam earplugs, custom rolling hard case
MSRP:	From $8,699.00
Contact:	Auto-Ordnance.com, (508) 795-3919



FOUND!

Cache of 1,193 First-Year 1964 Silver Kennedy Half Dollars

A DARK DAY WITH A SILVER LINING

On Friday, November 22, 1963, the nation was shaken by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Just a month later, Congress passed a special law to allow Kennedy to appear on a coin, circumventing the normal two-year waiting period, due to how loved he was. The first coins were struck in January 1964 and released to the public on March 24, 1964. Demand for the coin was off the charts and led to hoarding by both collectors and the public due to its silver content and as a cherished keepsake.

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Collectors LOVE "firsts" as no collection is complete without the very first coin. First-year coins are almost always the most coveted coins and the 1964 First Year Silver Kennedy Half Dollar is no exception, especially when you consider the coin has been struck for over 60 years! But there's something else that makes the First-Year 1964 Kennedy Half Dollar hoarded by all…

The Only Silver Kennedy Struck in 90% Silver

What makes the 1964 Silver Kennedy Half Dollar stand out is its silver composition. While Silver Kennedy Half Dollars were issued from 1964-1970, the 1964 Silver Half is the ONLY YEAR made in 90% silver!

Coins struck from 1965-1970 were made from only 40% silver, with the silver being completely removed from 1971 on, making the 1964 Silver issue unique amongst what may be the most beloved coin of all modern US coins.

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Rarcoa, America's Oldest Coin Company, is announcing the public release of 1,193 of the very first year and only 90% silver year, 1964 Silver Kennedy Half Dollars. What may be even more impressive is that each coin is in Brilliant Uncirculated condition, pristine as the day they were released.

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This same 1964 Silver Kennedy Half Dollar sells nationally for as much as $103.00. But thanks to Rarcoa's buying power and deep numismatic expertise, you won't have to pay $100. You won't have to pay $90. You won't even have to pay $75.



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Known for many things, John F. Kennedy is perhaps most famous for inspiring the Space Race, with his famous "We choose to go to the Moon" speech, delivered at Rice University on September 12, 1962. It would take almost seven more years to achieve, no other nation has landed men on the moon.

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Brilliant Uncirculated

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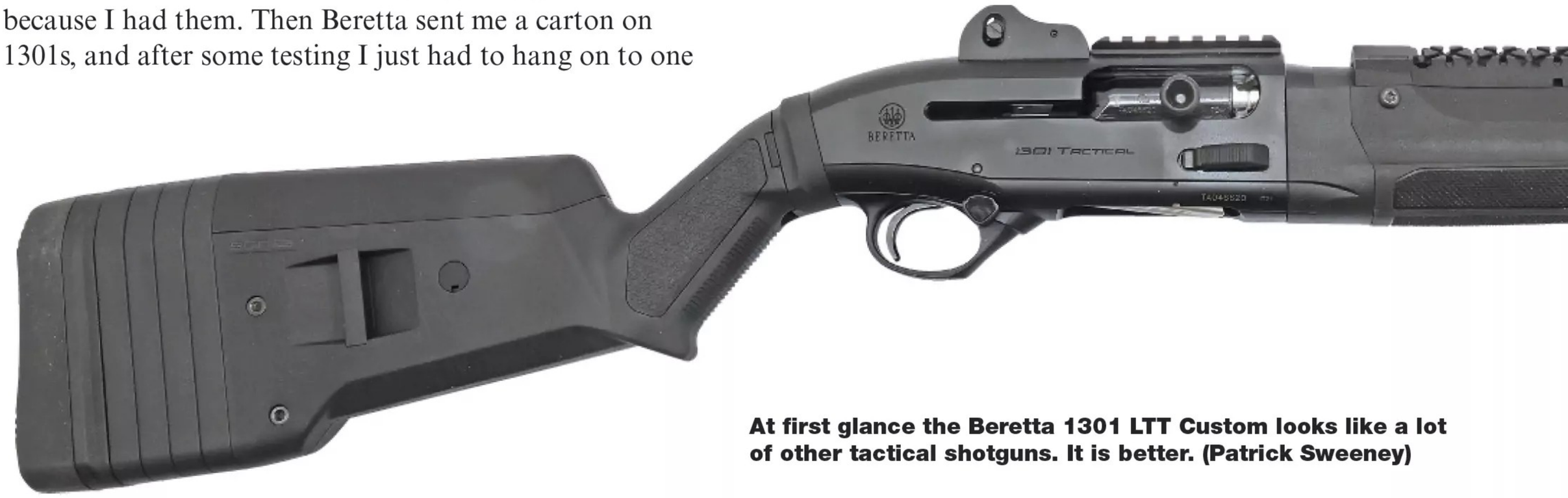
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Does the LTT Custom Beretta 1301 eject the empties with enthusiasm? You betcha. (Patrick Sweeney)

My fondness for big smoothbores hurling heavy payloads is well-known by the readers of *Firearms News*. After early heavy use with a Remington Model 11 and various M500s, I settled on a couple of 870s and a rack of 1100s. The 870s never failed. The 1100s were legion because they needed to be. I had heard of the Beretta 1301 when it came out but kept using the 1100s because I had them. Then Beretta sent me a carton on 1301s, and after some testing I just had to hang on to one of them. At the annual SHOT Show, I ran into Ernest Langdon. He spent twelve years active duty in the USMC in some pretty spicy jobs, but I had originally met him years ago shooting USPSA with a Beretta M92. And shooting it well. "*You have a 1301? You have to send it to me so I can make it perfect!*" so I did. Wow. Just, wow.



At first glance the Beretta 1301 LTT Custom looks like a lot of other tactical shotguns. It is better. (Patrick Sweeney)

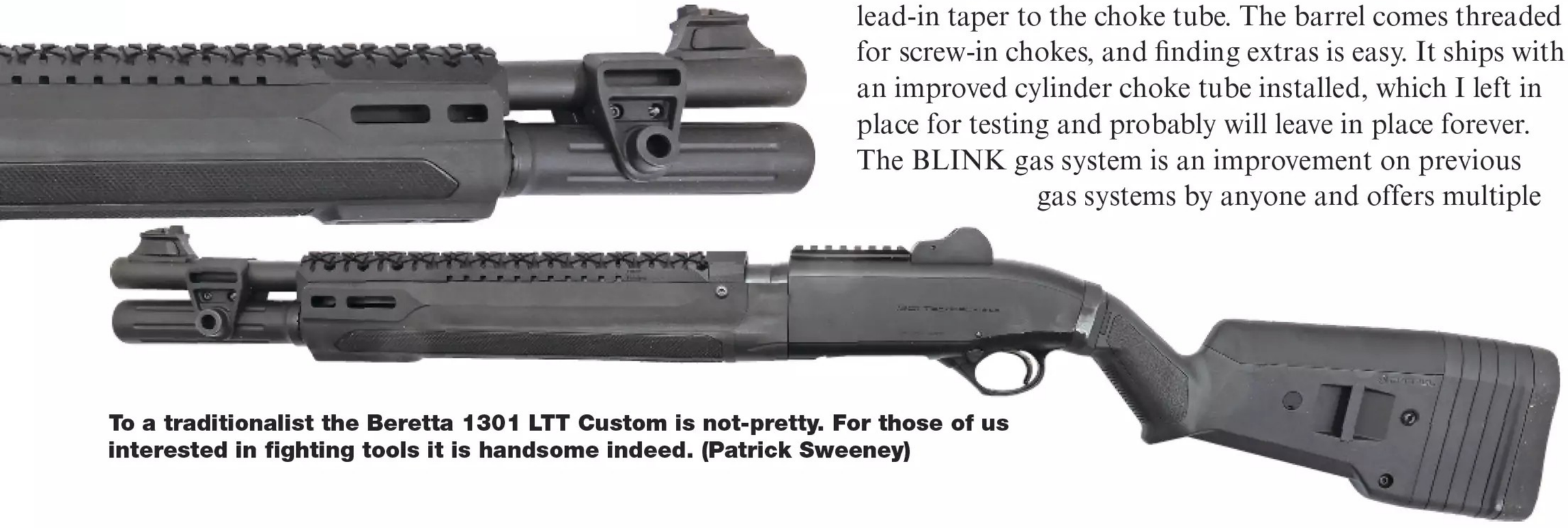
BERETTA'S 1301 LTT CUSTOM SHOTGUN

Asgard Gets A New Heimdall!

By Patrick Sweeney

Okay, first things first. The 1301 is a gas-operated shotgun evolved from the Beretta A400. Beretta redesigned the gas system to be around the magazine tube, and this made it possible to make the 1301 a tactical shotgun, capable of holding more than four or five shots. A quick check with Beretta shows something like eighteen variants of the 1301 Tactical, so be sure you know which you want and are getting.

Mine was the basic one with the product code ending in 18C, but "basic" hardly begins to describe it. The 1301 has a cold hammer forged back-bored barrel, so you get softer recoil and more-consistent patterns. The bore also has a long forcing cone ahead of the chamber, and a long lead-in taper to the choke tube. The barrel comes threaded for screw-in chokes, and finding extras is easy. It ships with an improved cylinder choke tube installed, which I left in place for testing and probably will leave in place forever. The BLINK gas system is an improvement on previous gas systems by anyone and offers multiple



To a traditionalist the Beretta 1301 LTT Custom is not-pretty. For those of us interested in fighting tools it is handsome indeed. (Patrick Sweeney)



Shotguns have blast, and if you catch it right, flash as well. (Patrick Sweeney)

advantages. First, it is softer in recoil. Second, it is cleaner-running and third it is fast. In test photos, I was running the camera at 15 frames a second. I could easily capture an image with an empty a few inches away from the ejection port, and the next one halfway chambered. Recoil guns run that fast, but gas guns don't. Until BLINK.

Underneath the barrel, there is a full-length magazine tube, bringing the capacity of the 1301 up to seven plus one. What looks like an extension is just a cover to hold the barrel on and provide a place for the front sling swivel to clamp onto. Unless you insist on abusing your shoulder, cheek and wallet by stuffing the 1301 with three-inch shells, in which case capacity drops to six plus one.

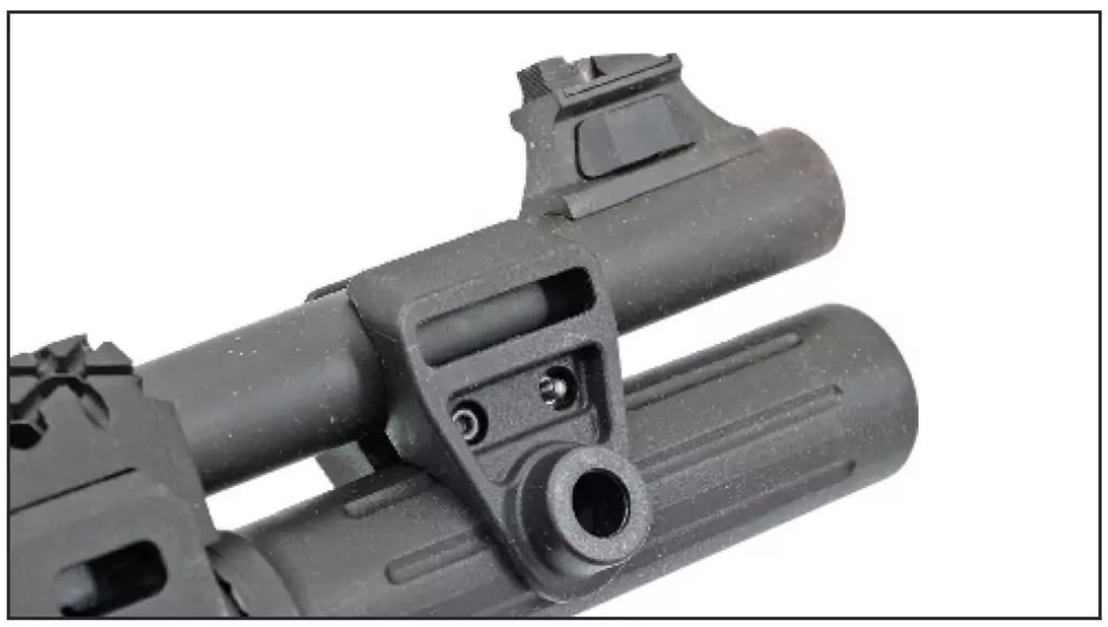
The controls are large and easy to use. The charging handle is oversized, ribbed and tapers larger away from the receiver. The bolt release is a large-ish lever below the ejection port. Big enough to easily hit, small enough not to get hung up on stuff. The safety is a large button that is shield-shaped, contoured and checkered. It is perfectly positioned to be ready for your trigger finger. Speaking of your trigger finger, most shotguns have what pistol shooters and rifle shooters would describe as a "meh" trigger. This is a hold-over from the task of whacking birds out of the sky. If you are swinging through the moving target, and sending a cloud of shot, slapping the trigger works. Precision shooting? Not so much. So, Ernest takes care of that. The 1301 received one of his trigger jobs, which



◄ The 1301 barrel is machined for screw-in choke tubes. The 1301 Tactical comes with an IC tube, but you can swap that for whatever you like, or what works for you. (Patrick Sweeney)



▲ There are two system springs in the 1301 BLINK action, and they work to soften the recoil and make the action cycle faster. (Patrick Sweeney)



The full-length mag tube makes the LTT Custom 1301 seven plus one. The mag tube support also has a sling swivel QD socket. (Patrick Sweeney)



The smooth-faced trigger shows that the 1301 received a trigger job from LTT. And a nice trigger it is, by the way. (Patrick Sweeney)



The safety button is large, checkered, and easy to use. The trigger is smooth, since LTT Custom did a trigger job on it and replaced the parts they needed to. (Patrick Sweeney)



The GG&G adapter marries the Magpul Mossberg stock to the Beretta 1301 receiver. (Patrick Sweeney)

includes swapping out the original trigger for one made to suit the task. How to tell, besides dry firing? The LTT trigger is smooth, not grooved like the factory one.

The only original shortcoming on the 1301 that stayed here was the stock. Like my love of 12 gauge, my dislike of pistol grip stocks for shotguns is known here. Well, Ernest took care of that, along with the handguard and a few other things. Off went the pistol grip stock, and in its place, he installed a Magpul Mossberg stock, using an adapter from GG&G. The Magpul stock has spacers to adjust length, but me being long-armed, I left them all in place. It fits me. The handguard that Beretta sends the 1301 out with is comfortable and has a small section of rail to attach gear, but that's it. So, Ernest replaced it with his LTT Heat Shield and the Beretta Patrol Forend.

The Patrol forend has M-LOK slots on the sides which is a better way, and place, to mount a light or laser. The heat



The Magpul stock comes with spacers to adjust length of pull. I left them all on. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Magpul stock, installed, and the factory pistol-grip stock that came off and will not be missed. (Patrick Sweeney)



If you need to shoot quickly, the 1301 runs fast. You are not going to out-run the BLINK gas system. (Patrick Sweeney)

shield does more than keep you from burning your hand, (which is important), but it would be great even if that was all it did. The top is grooved in an Escher-like pattern called the Labyrinth Cable Management, and it is there to guide and lock in place the cable for the remote switch of your light. Regarding the original mag tube clamp, that also has a QD sling swivel socket? Ernest leaves that, it works, it is tough, and it would be difficult to improve.

The ghost ring sights of the 1301 are good, but the front sight Beretta installs makes me crazy. It is a blade with a white dot on it and protective wings. Looking through the rear aperture, the front sight is so busy it is distracting. You'd think, with every rifle since the M1 Garand with an aperture sight having protective wings on the front blade, it would be no big deal. It is, and apparently not just to me. Ernest changes the front sight to a fat blade with a tiny notch in the middle of the top edge. Now, you can have a fast sight picture, or if you need it, you use the notch to refine your aim, and get a finer sight picture. With all due respect to Ernest, I think I'm going to explore a narrower front sight for this 1301 in the future.

I have used a bead sight or a ghost ring sight for shotgun shooting since Day One, with the exception of the slugs only BCBC at The Pin Shoot. I figured that would continue to be the case, but the Meprolight rep, upon hearing I was getting to work on the 1301 sent a base and red-dot optic to include in the testing. The base is their adapter



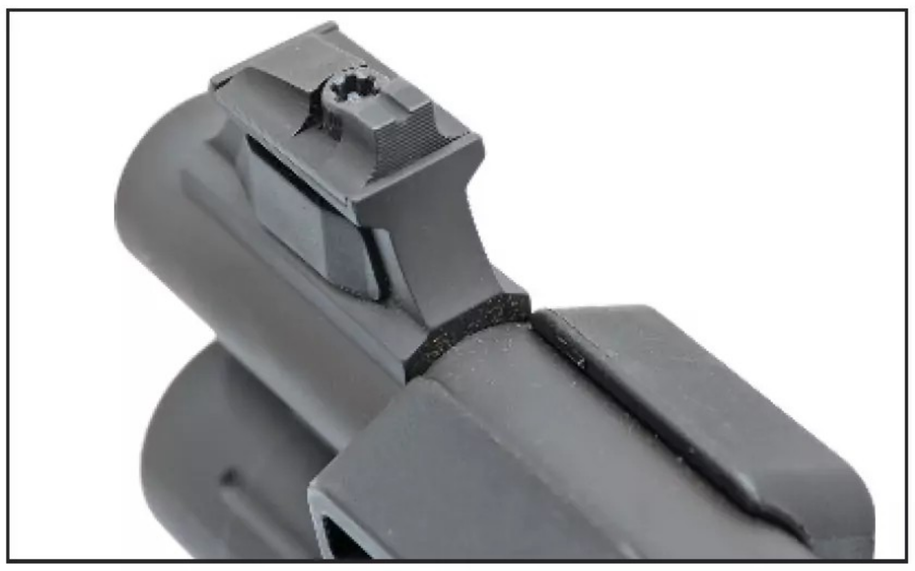
You can clearly see the Labyrinth heat shield, and the grooves for power cables, and the M-LOK slots on the handguard. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Labyrinth heat shield, showing how you press your power cable down into the grooves and it stays there, out of the way. (Patrick Sweeney)



◀ The factory front sight is on the left, with its protective wings and distracting white dot. Installed in its place is the LTT custom sight, which is much easier to use. (Patrick Sweeney)



The LTT front sight, not as busy as the original, and its fine-notch center groove for that last bit of accuracy when you need it. (Patrick Sweeney)

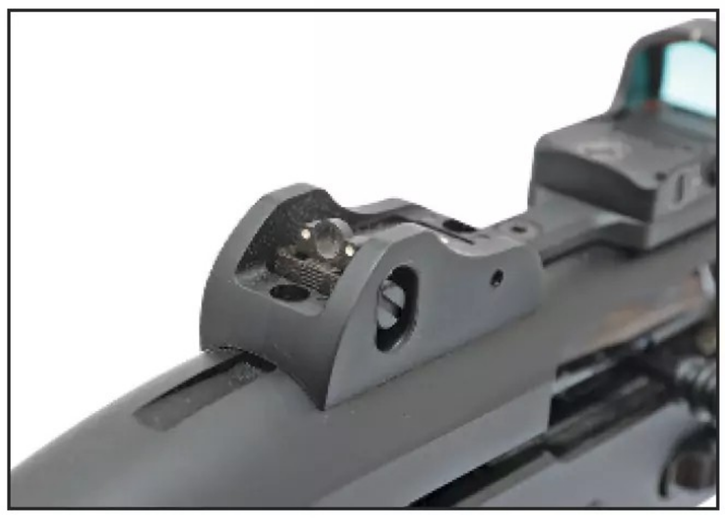
to the 1301 receiver, and the red dot is their MPO0Df, a handgun optic, but one that works just dandy on the 1301 LTT. It meant I had to remove the Beretta-installed rail on top of the receiver, but that was an easy fix. Oh my! The result, a fast-handling shotgun with soft recoil, great accuracy, and a 3.5 MOA red-dot optic as an aiming system, which beats all other options. I'm hooked.

Disassembly is involved, but not anything that requires a PhD in small arms mechanics. Hang on to the owner's manual, it will be helpful here.

Loading up the 1301 LTT Custom is easy. The loading port is large and has rounded edges. The lifter moves out of the way easily, and it is no big deal to stuff more shells in as needed.

The LTT 1301 ate everything, from light skeet loads to full-power slugs and buckshot. Now, while I'm having fun during the testing hosing buckets of skeet loads at steel plates, I usually shoot only as much of the full-power stuff as I absolutely have to for testing. Yes, after decades of shooting almost everything, I'm pretty inured to recoil, but heavy recoil still isn't fun. Short of some recalcitrant bruin, I'm not sure there's anything I dislike enough to expend an ounce of lead at 1,600 fps on it as part of an attitude adjustment process. Well, the typically thumping Hornady Critical Defense, and the even more so Fiocchi Exacta Aero slug proved to be no big deal in the LTT 1301. No, really, I was surprised at how soft they were in recoil even with no muzzle brake or porting. I shot perhaps more of them than I should have, given my limited supply. (Note to self: Gotta order more.) The Beretta BLINK gas system and the Magpul stock in combo make the 1301 fun to shoot even with thumper-grade ammo. With the pistol grip stock, it would have been an ordeal.

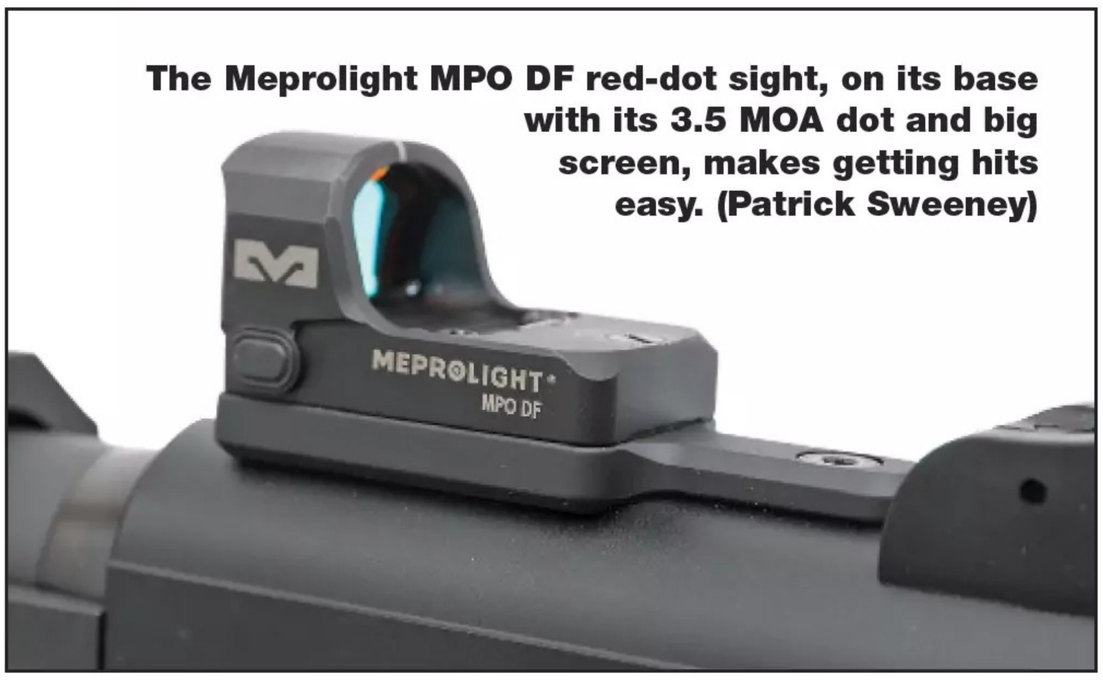
The patterns were as expected, with the Fiocchi Exacta slugs shooting superbly. A red-dot optic, at 50 yards, with five slugs through one ragged hole is brag-worthy. I only had Ernest do a small part of what he offers, and I think I might send it back for more work. I've got a slew of all-black firearms, and I figure it might be nice to opt for one of his Cerakote jobs, in bronze, grey or OD green, and maybe a sidesaddle. I've got to wring one of those out one of these days I figure I might as well test the best.



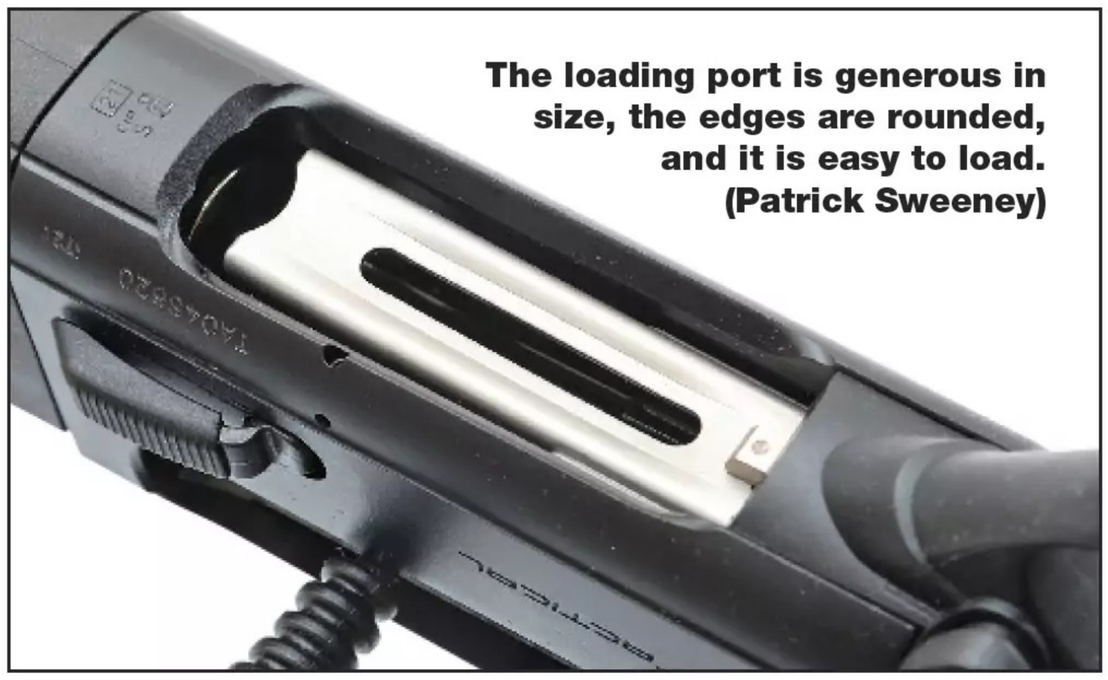
◀ The Langdon Tactical Super Duty Shotgun sight. If your red-dot fails, the anvil-tough irons will still be there. (Patrick Sweeney)



A soft-recoiling load of 00 buck that patterns in the classic manner, S&B and its traditional load without pattern-tightening extras. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Meprolight MPO DF red-dot sight, on its base with its 3.5 MOA dot and big screen, makes getting hits easy. (Patrick Sweeney)



The loading port is generous in size, the edges are rounded, and it is easy to load. (Patrick Sweeney)



It takes some work to get the 1301 apart, but the parts are big and easy to clean. (Patrick Sweeney)

Now, you can do as I did and send in your 1301 for an overhaul and upgrade, or you can just buy one from Langdon Tactical, and save the hassle of buying, shipping, waiting and then having fun. In an interesting twist, you can get yours from LTT at a lower total cost than buying and shipping. No, I'm not pulling your leg. A 1301 runs $1,800 to $1,900 these days. The work and parts LTT did to mine would run you an extra $442. However, if you



The hot gases coming out of the ejection port are sometimes luminescent. This is interesting but not worrisome. (Patrick Sweeney)



For all of the expected ferocious recoil (that wasn't a big deal), the Fiocchi Exacta Aero slug is clearly the first choice for serious thumping in the 1301 tested. (Patrick Sweeney)



Each buckshot loading will require its own choke tube to deliver the pattern you want. If you want a goodly spread at ten yards with Federal Force X2, then IC in this gun is the way to go. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Hornady Critical Defense load of eight 00 buck projectiles at ten yards is impressively tight. That huge hole on the side? That's the wad. Shotguns will do that. (Patrick Sweeney)

just log on, order and have shipped to your FFL, you can get one just like mine for $1,982. How does Ernest do it? I have no idea, but unless you already have a 1301 (or an A300) the smart thing to do is order one from LTT.

So, the long-time 1100 resting in the ready rack is going to be replaced and retired. In its stead, will be the Beretta 1301 LTT Custom. I'm still thinking on what load to use, but since they all shoot softly, it is a matter of what kind of downrange performance I'm looking for, which the LTT Custom 1301 will readily deliver. I have, from time-to-time named the firearms I use. My original Remington 11, the one that started me on this path was "Thumper." I think I'll call the 1301 LTT Heimdal. FN

BERETTA 1301 LTT CUSTOM SHOTGUN

CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA – 10 YARDS			
Ammunition	Payload	Velocity (fps)	Avg. Pattern (in.)
S&B	9P 00B	1,091	9
Hornady Critical Defense	9P 00B	1,449	3
Federal Personal Defense	9P 00B	1,187	8
CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA – 50 YARDS			
Fiocchi Exacta Aero	1 oz. slug	1,471	2

Pattern results were to be averages of four shots at 10 yards off a Champion shooting rest. Slug group five shots. Velocities are averages of five shots measured on a Garmin Xero chronograph.

BERETTA 1301 LTT CUSTOM SHOTWGUN

Type:	Hammer-fired semi-automatic
Caliber:	12 Gauge, 2-3/4 in. & 3 in.
Capacity:	7+1 rounds
Barrel:	18.7 in.
Overall Length:	40 in.
Weight:	7 lbs. 13 oz.
Finish:	Anodized aluminum, polymer
Sights:	Ghost ring, Picatinny rail
Trigger:	3 lbs. 15 oz.
MSRP:	$1,983
Contact:	LangdonTactical.com, (571) 385-2979

SOURCES

Federal Premium Ammunition: FederalPremium.com, (800) 831-8100

Fiocchi Ammunition: FiocchiUSA.com, (417) 725-4118

Hornady Ammunition: Hornady.com, (800) 338-3220

Seller & Bellot Ammunition: SellierBellot.us

Meprolight: Meprolight.com



The Shield X is the latest—and maybe greatest—version of the Shield from Smith & Wesson. Upsized, with improved looks and features. (Photo by James Tarr)

SMITH & WESSON'S M&P

SHIELD X PISTOL

Third-Generation Home Run!

By James Tarr, Field Editor

One of the earliest media events I remember attending as an aspiring gunwriter was in 2012 at Smith & Wesson. They flew a bunch of us out to tour their historic factory in Massachusetts, but the reason for the junket was the introduction of their new, super-secret pistol—the Shield.

The Shield was and is a subcompact, polymer-framed striker-fired 9mm fed by flush seven- and extended eight-round magazines. It was thin and sized perfectly for concealed carry. Best of all, and setting it apart from pretty much every other small 9mm on the market at the time, it was built to the same tough standards as S&W's full-size M&Ps, making it suitable for not just CCW carry by private citizens but also a great choice for law enforcement as an off-duty or backup gun. The barrel and slide were stainless steel and given S&W's Armornite coating, their version of



The new S&W Bodyguard 2.0 (bottom) was clearly an inspiration for the Shield X (top) in both looks and ergonomics. (Photo by James Tarr)

nitride. It was a huge success, and if wasn't for the Shield the modern pistol landscape, now dominated by subcompact striker-fired 9mms, would look completely different.

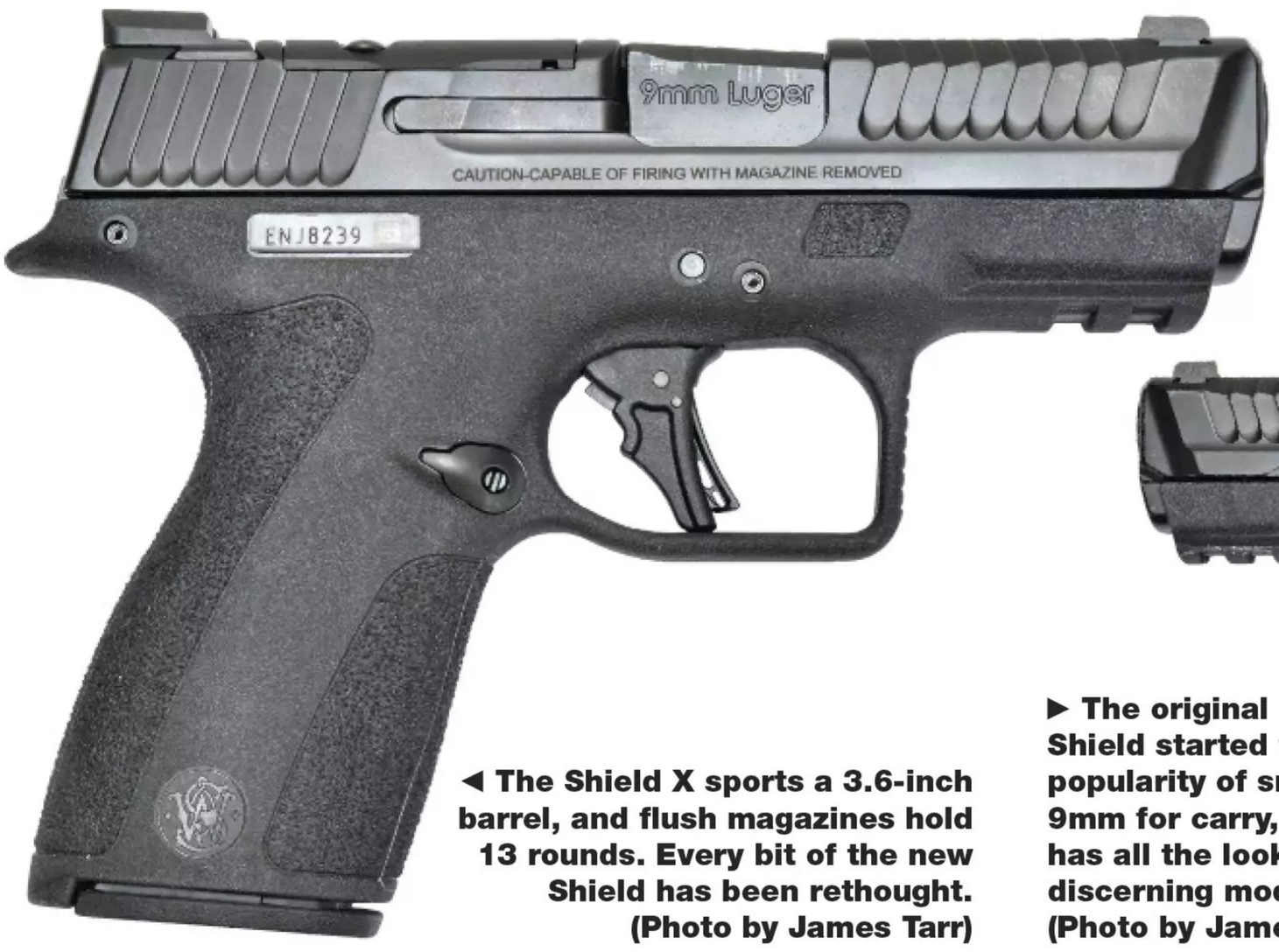
In the subsequent years, Smith & Wesson revamped the M&P line with the second-generation M2.0. S&W introduced line extensions for the Shield, and then about five years ago introduced the Shield Plus, an otherwise-identical pistol with a double-column magazine for increased capacity. Last year, S&W introduced the Bodyguard 2.0, which got a huge amount of attention and which I think is the best .380 ACP currently on the market.

The Shield X takes everything great about the Shield, Shield Plus, and the new Bodyguard 2.0, and combines it into a new gun that in looks, features, and performance is an improvement over current Shield models. Technically, I think it would be best described as a Smith & Wesson Shield Plus 2.0, but Shield X is shorter and easier to remember. I predict that S&W's new M&P Shield X will be their most popular Shield.

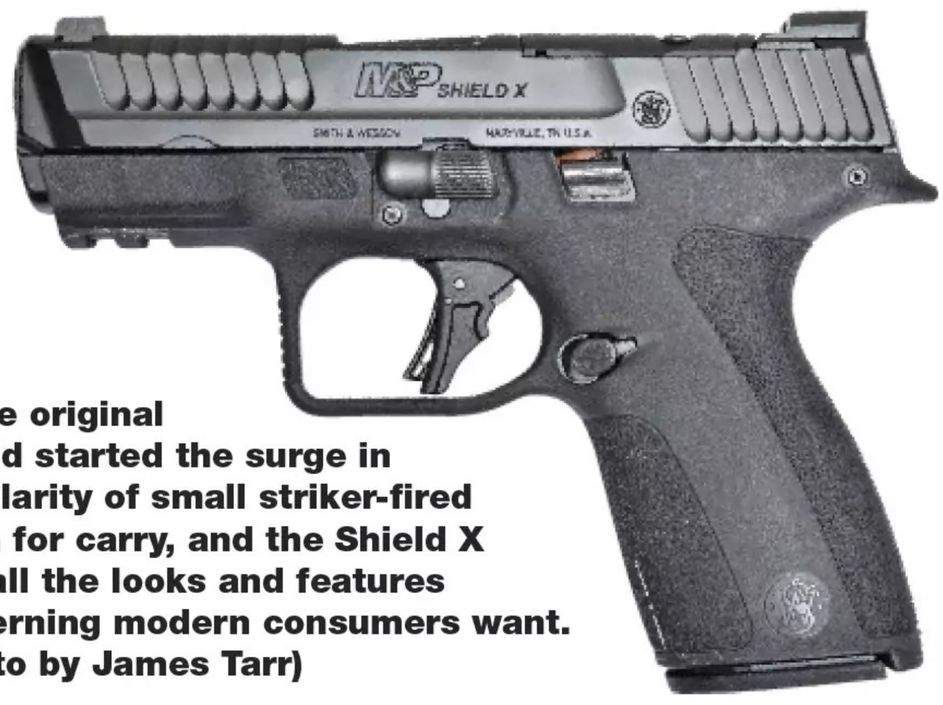
Modern consumers who don't just buy CCW pistols but actually carry and shoot them discovered that small, light guns are convenient to carry, but not so easy or pleasant to shoot. Plus, these gun owners began to want and ask for slightly upsized versions of those pistols. Barrels got longer, but mostly the size increases were to the grip frames, so the average consumer could fit all of his or her fingers on the gun, for vastly improved comfort and control while shooting. SIG's most popular P365 isn't the small original version, but models which have the longer XMacro frame. Springfield Armory's most popular pistol (across all lines) is the upsized Hellcat Pro. Just like they did when designing the original Shield, S&W engineers looked what was out on the market, and popular with consumers, and designed something to fit their needs and wants.

The original Shield and Shield Plus sported 3.1-inch barrels. The barrel on the Shield X has been extended half an inch to 3.6 inches. Flush magazines in the Shield held seven rounds, flush magazines in the Shield Plus held 10 rounds. The frame of the Shield X has been lengthened, so that flush magazines hold 13 rounds. The Shield X ships with one flush 13- and one extended 15-round magazine. Almost everyone will be able to fit their entire hand on the frame of the Shield X. The length of the grip on the Shield X is roughly the same as the original Shield with the extended eight-round magazine in place.

Currently, the Shield X is only available in 9mm. The .40 S&W cartridge has never been less popular, and I can't remember the last new pistol model where that caliber option was even offered. S&W has a few model variations—you can get the Shield X with or without a thumb safety, and with standard magazine



◄ The Shield X sports a 3.6-inch barrel, and flush magazines hold 13 rounds. Every bit of the new Shield has been rethought. (Photo by James Tarr)



► The original Shield started the surge in popularity of small striker-fired 9mm for carry, and the Shield X has all the looks and features discerning modern consumers want. (Photo by James Tarr)



An original, first-generation Shield on the left, with the Shield X on the right. Both are great guns, but the Shield X has almost double the capacity, better texturing on the frame and slide, better sights, better everything... (Photo by James Tarr)



The grip frame of the Shield X has been extended so that most everyone will be able to fit all their fingers on it with the flush magazine inserted. (Photo by James Tarr)

capacity or neutered 10-round magazines for people in certain states content to live under bootheels. S&W shipped me a standard capacity NTS (No Thumb Safety) model for testing.

The striker-fired pistol has a 3.6-inch barrel and a polymer frame. With an empty flush 13-round magazine in place, this pistol weighs 20.9-ounces according to my scale. Overall, it is 6.87-inches long, 4.9-inches tall, and 1.1-inches wide at the base of the grip and at the magazine release. Most of the pistol is just an inch thick.

Like all the pistols in their M&P (Military and Police) line, the Shield X has both a stainless steel barrel and slide. Both have been given Armornite coatings, S&Ws version of nitride. That's just one example of how things are now so good that people take them for granted—this CCW pistol has a stainless-steel slide and barrel with an anti-corrosion finish, and the sights on these "basic" models are excellent night sights.

The AmeriGlo Trooper LumiGreen front sight has a tritium insert which glows in the dark, surrounded by a bright green ring of photoluminescent paint. In any light, it is pretty darn visible, but if you take it from direct sunlight into a dimly lit room (or hit it with the beam of a flashlight for a few seconds) that green ring will light up for several minutes like it's battery-powered.

The rear sight is plain black and serrated, with a sizeable U-shaped notch and a vertical front face, so you can rack the pistol one-handed on a hard surface if necessary. Forward of the rear sight is a polymer plate. Remove that and you'll find the slide of the Shield X has been cut for direct-mounting of optics with a Shield RMSc/Holosun K footprint.



The texturing doesn't look like much, but it is surprisingly aggressive, and much better than the nearly smooth surface found on the early Shields. (Photo by James Tarr)



The Shield pistols have always been purpose-built for CCW, and sport low-profile controls. (Photo by James Tarr)



The scalloped serrations on the slide look good, and work. They've been brought over from S&W's fabulous Bodyguard 2.0. (Photo by James Tarr)



The trigger guard is squared off and enlarged. The trigger has a nearly flat face with a safety lever, and there's a texture point on the frame above the front of the trigger guard for the thumb of your support hand. (Photo by James Tarr)



Each pistol shipping to a free state comes with one flush 13- and one extended 15-round magazine. (Photo by James Tarr)



With the extended 15-round magazine in place the grip is long enough for everyone to fit their hand on it. It comes with a grip extension. (Photo by James Tarr)

The Shield X has benefitted from the ergonomic prodigy that is the Bodyguard 2.0, and the first of those benefits are the slide serrations. These wide, angled serrations look great, but they also work. You can find them at the front and rear of the slide, and at the front they go up to the top and wrap over just a bit.

The Shield X, like every Shield S&W has produced, was designed and built for concealed carry. The takedown lever is low-profile and rounded. The single-sided slide stop is even smaller, and doesn't really work as a slide release. The magazine release is steel and textured, but it doesn't protrude any further than the side of the grip. It is reversible, for left-handers.

If I had any complaints about the original Shield Design it was that the grip felt a little narrow for its length, and the bore was a bit higher off the hand than I would like, increasing muzzle rise. With this redesign of the frame, Smith & Wesson addressed both those issues—your hand sits a little bit higher, and as the Shield X has the same width frame as the very slightly wider Shield Plus, it doesn't feel narrow like it used to. It still has a small, slender grip—but don't worry, the texturing on it is outstanding.

In fact, they changed every dimension in the grip of the Shield X, and the first thing I noticed was the reach to the trigger. Front to back on the frame, right behind the trigger guard, is significantly shorter on the new gun. In the original Shield, the frame there is 2.03 inches long. For the Shield X, that has been shortened to 1.87 inches. The center of the straighter trigger on the X sits a hair further forward, but not enough to mitigate the length difference in the frame. This means it's easier for people with small hands or short fingers to reach the trigger of the Shield X.

Unlike the original Shield, the non-textured areas of the frame aren't smooth, they are matte, with a tiny bit of grab. The textured areas have some serious grip. They are front and rear on the frame, and you'll also see small areas above the front of the trigger guard meant for the thumb of your support hand. Whether you've got big or small hands the



◄ S&W didn't just work on features and function, but on looks as well. Every bit of the Shield X has been tweaked for modern aesthetics, and Tarr thinks it looks good. (Photo by James Tarr)



► An original flush seven-round Shield magazine on the left, versus the 13-round flush Shield X magazine on the right. The original magazine wasn't a true single-stack. (Photo by James Tarr)

grip frame on the Shield X should work for you. Because your hand sits higher on the gun, they added a small beavertail in the back to reduce the chance of slide bite.

All the additional changes to the Shield X improve ergonomics and functionality (and looks, as far as I'm concerned), but they didn't need to do anything to tweak reliability as the Shield ran great from day one. When S&W flew a bunch of us media types out to their facility in 2012, they had us put 700 rounds each through our Shields in two days, without cleaning, because they had so much faith in their reliability and durability. I took that gun home and still own it—that's the one you're seeing here in the comparison photos.

The trigger guard on the Shield X has been enlarged and squared off. The front of it is horizontally serrated. I wish instead that they'd put the grip texturing there as it would be more aggressive, but that's a small complaint—and one I could rectify in five minutes by stippling it with a soldering iron if this was my gun.

At the front of the frame, you will see a two-slot rail for mounting accessories such as lights or lasers. However, you will need a small unit meant for sub- or micro-compact pistols, as there's not a lot of room on this small gun. While I appreciate the option to mount a light and an optic on the gun, the Shield X isn't really that kind of pistol, and both will seriously affect concealability, but go ahead and do whatever makes you happy. If you like your carry gun, you are more likely to carry it, and *that's* what's most important.

Instead of the hinged trigger found on the original Shield and M&Ps, the Shield X sports the semi-flat trigger with a safety lever in the middle originally only seen on Performance Center guns. Trigger pull on my sample was unremarkable, at least as far as modern striker-fired pistols go. After a short take-up, there is a heavy, hard wall, and the trigger breaks at close to ninety degrees. There's not much overtravel, and reset is somewhat short. Total pull weight on my sample was 5¾ pounds.

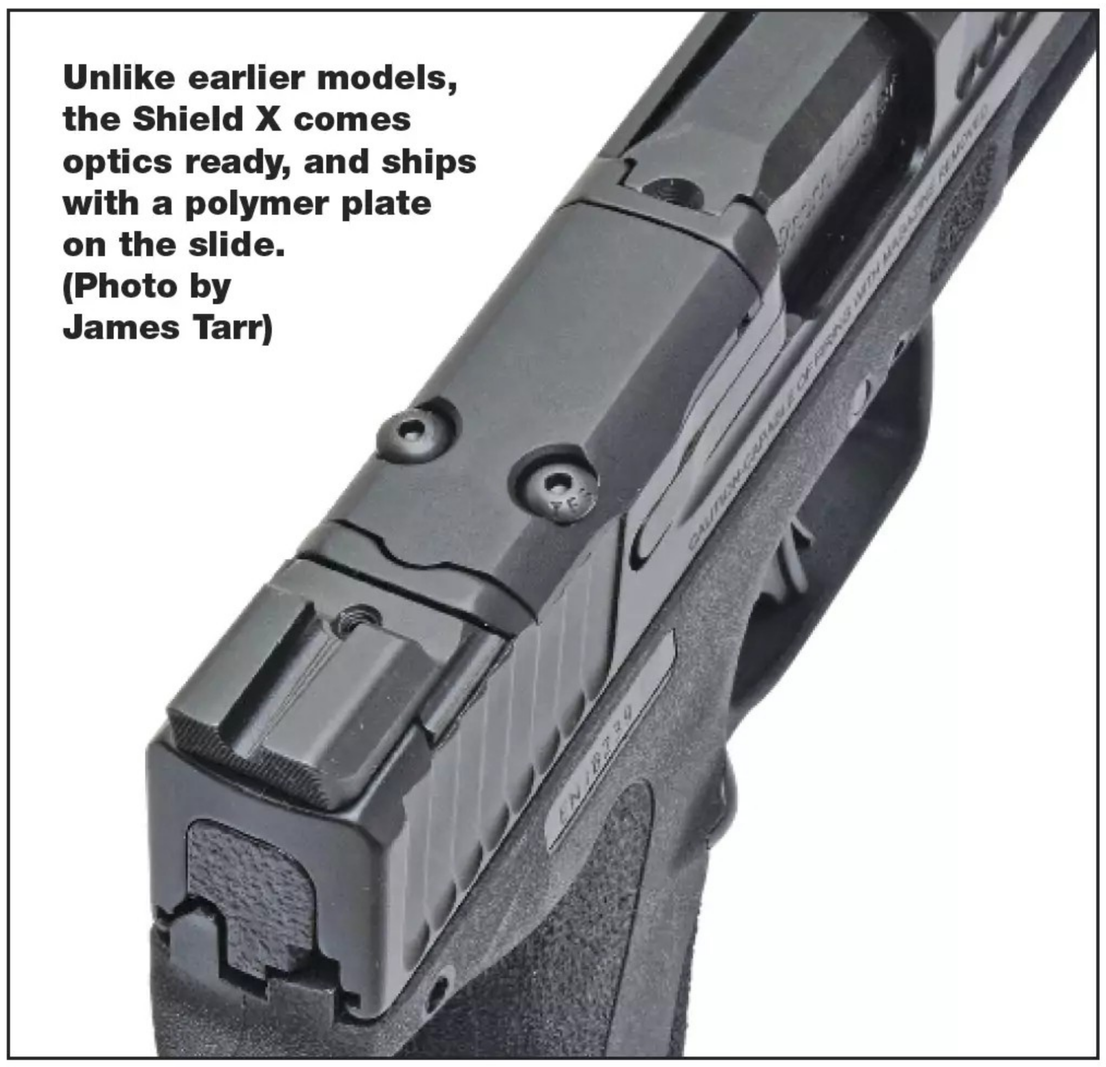
The original Shield was not fed by a single-stack magazine. The magazine was a bit wider—I called it "a



The slide serrations on the Shield X wrap around the top, which looks good and works. The same is true for the day/night sight at the front. (Photo by James Tarr)



The rear sight is plain black and serrated, with a U-notch. There is a small beavertail to help prevent people with big hands from getting slide bite. (Photo by James Tarr)



Unlike earlier models, the Shield X comes optics ready, and ships with a polymer plate on the slide. (Photo by James Tarr)



The slide of the Shield X is cut for direct mounting of optics which use the common RMSc/Holosun K footprint. (Photo by James Tarr)



The serial number is on a plate at the rear right of the frame, an unusual location. The front of the rear sight is vertical, so you can use it to rack the pistol one-handed. (Photo by James Tarr)

stack and a half" magazine, and that extra width allowed one more round than you'd get with a true single column magazine. The magazines found in the Shield Plus and the Shield X are true double-stack magazines, although they have long necks at the top which help keep the grip frame thinner up near the slide. The 13-round magazines for the Shield Plus are the same ones as found in the Shield X, minus the grip extension. Magazines are steel, with numbered index holes on the right side, which is the least useful spot for right-handers.

Between the frame rail and the square trigger guard, any holsters built for the previous Shield pistols likely won't fit the Shield X. As I write this, the Shield X is so new only a few holster manufacturers are yet making holsters for it. The internet told me about six smaller companies (plus Galco Gunleather) were making holsters for the Shield X when I went looking, but by the time you're reading this more manufacturers will probably be on that list.

At the range, the Shield X was reliable, and the big dot on the front sight made it easy to run at speed. I ran arrays of falling steel targets, and practiced double-taps and target transitions using IDPA cardboard silhouettes. I've found I prefer the round-center circle of IDPA targets to the rectangle A-zones of USPSA targets as I think it's better/more realistic for training, but as a general rule any time spent shooting/training at the range is good for you.

Even though it has been upsized a bit, it is still a small, light, thin pistol,



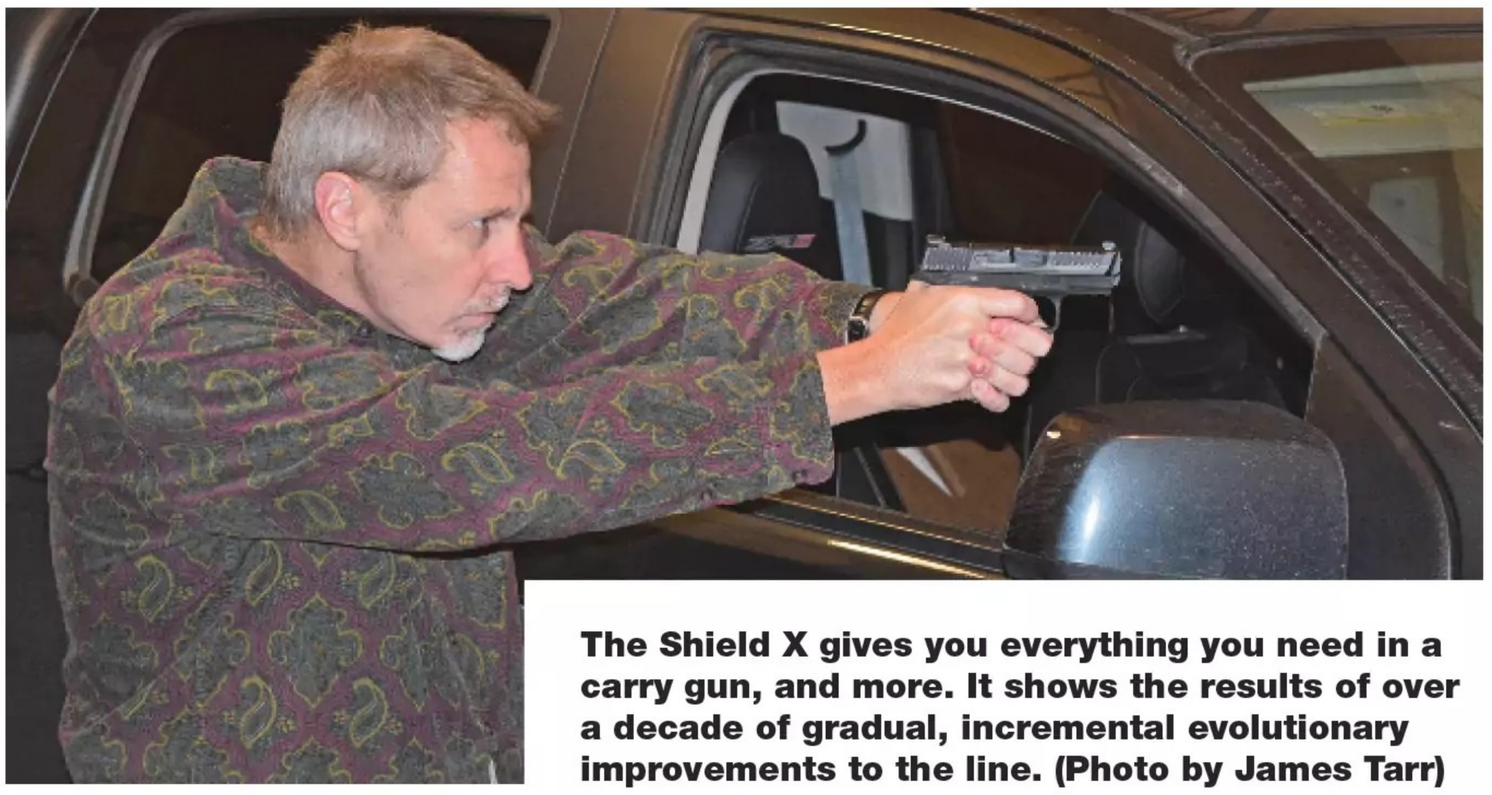
The Shield X disassembles like any other S&W M&P pistol. Both the slide and barrel are stainless steel with a nitride coating for durability. (Photo by James Tarr)

just big enough that you won't hate life if you put more than a box of ammo through it. With the X, S&W has maximized the Shield design for maximum shootability and carryability, which isn't a word but should be.

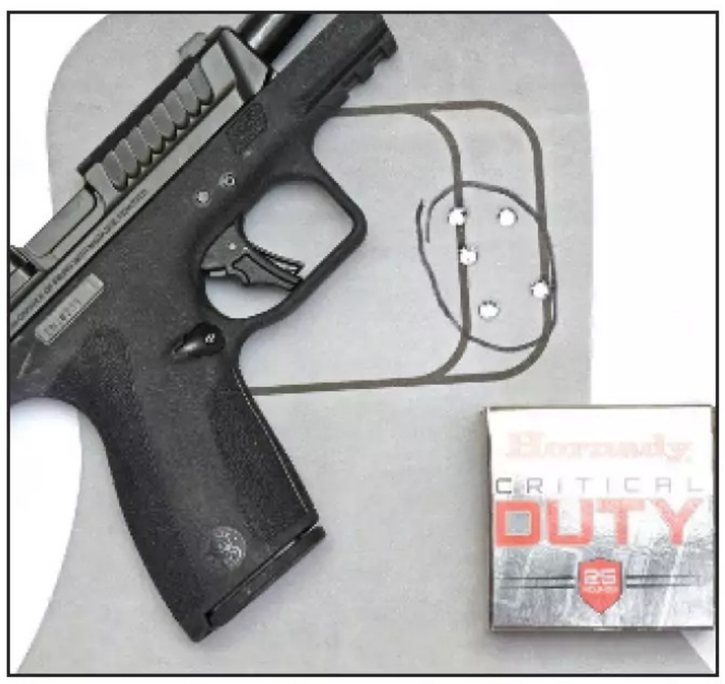
This is a carry gun that's small enough to easily conceal but large enough to shoot well at realistic defensive distances, with double-digit capacity, standard night sights, and good looks. The Shield X checks all the boxes. FN



The Shield X fits into the "Goldilocks" zone of carry guns, big enough to shoot but small and light enough to carry, with double-digit capacity. (Photo by James Tarr)



The Shield X gives you everything you need in a carry gun, and more. It shows the results of over a decade of gradual, incremental evolutionary improvements to the line. (Photo by James Tarr)



◄ This freak 1.3-inch group with Hornady's Critical Duty 135-grain +P was the best Tarr got out of the Shield X. Most of the time it was a three-to-four-inch gun at 25 yards. (Photo by James Tarr)



◄ Not a lot of holsters yet for the Shield X, but there are some. This is an IWB rig for it from We the People Holsters. (Photo by We the People Holsters)

SMITH & WESSON'S M&P SHIELD X PISTOL

Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	ES	SD	Avg. / Best. Group (in.)
Nosler ASP JHP	115	1,073	33	11	3.5 / 3.1
Black Hills JHP EXP	115	1,138	53	18	4.1 / 3.0
SIG Elite JHP	124	1,123	41	15	3.6 / 3.0
Hornady Critical Duty+P	135	1,061	11	4	3.0 / 1.3

Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of ten shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph.

SMITH & WESSON'S M&P SHIELD X PISTOL

Action:	Striker-fired semi-automatic
Caliber:	9mm
Magazine Capacity:	13+1/15+1
Barrel:	3.6 in. stainless steel
Overall Length:	6.87 in.
Overall Height:	4.9 in.
Width:	1.1 in.
Frame:	Black polymer
Slide:	Stainless steel
Finish:	Black Armornite
Safeties:	Trigger, internal drop
Sights:	AmeriGlo LumiGlo Trooper Green front, U-notch serrated rear
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Beretta pro shooter J.J. Racaza putting rounds downrange through the new Beretta 92 LTT Elite II at Beretta's range day at SHOT Show, celebrating 500 years. (Photo by James Tarr)

SHOT SHOW 2026 ROUNDUP

By James Tarr, Field Editor

Every year in January the Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade Show (ShotShow.org) is where you go to see all the latest and greatest products. Some of them turn out to be vaporware, never going into production. Sometimes, you get first-hand glimpses of new products or companies that will end up causing a seismic shift in the market—I remember when Vortex Optics, as a brand-new company, showed up to SHOT. I also remember the massive disaster that was Bushmaster's introduction of the ACR, and signaled the beginning of the end for Freedom Group.

Last year, I wrote that some of the most interesting things were happening on the technology side, with 3D metal printing for knives and suppressors, and that's continuing. However, most of the products which caught my eye at this year's show were unexpected, and run the gamut from suppressors to handguns to rifle cartridge cases…

Beretta 92 Elite LTT II Pistol (Beretta.com, LangdonTactical.com)

I'm a big fan of the 92 Elite LTT, an upgraded version of the Beretta 92 designed by Ernest Langdon of Langdon Tactical Technologies (LTT), and have written them up in these pages. Announced at the show, at Beretta's 500th birthday celebration, was the newest version of this gun, which follows the latest trends. First, the 92 Elite LTT II features the lowest possible slide cut for a red dot optic, as everyone is putting optics on handguns these days, and comes with tall iron sights to match. You'll see distinctive serrations that basically cover the entire stainless-steel slide. The frame sports the flat Vertec-style backstrap, but the pistol ships with two grips—standard panels, and then wraparound ones with added material at the back to simulate the curve of the original rounded Beretta frame, if that's what you prefer. These will be available directly from Beretta (or with optional upgrades (trigger job, carry bevel, etc.) from LTT.



Beretta's new 92 Elite LTT II has aggressive slide serrations, a slide cut for the lowest optic mounting, tall sights, and new grips on a Vertec frame. (Photo by James Tarr)

Elysian Eagle Pistol (CZCustom.com)

Ever hear of Craeperion? Me neither. They are apparently a custom gunsmith house in the Czech Republic, and their new pistol, the Elysian Eagle, will be exclusively imported by CZ Custom which is based in Mesa, Arizona.



◀ **The Czech Elysian Eagle, made by Craeperion and imported by CZ Custom, might have been the weirdest-looking pistol at the show, and close to the most expensive ($11,999!). (Photo by James Tarr)**

This hand-built stainless-steel external-hammer-fired pistol looks like something out of Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon, very old-school sci-fi. It's a 9mm, with a triangular barrel, lattice grips held on by magnets, and a trigger stop which can be moved on the frame to function as a trigger lock. You can mount an optic on the slide or on the frame using a raised platform. Internally, is just as unique as it is on the outside. They will be imported only in small amounts, and while if you have to ask the price you probably can't afford it, one can be yours for the low low price of $11,999.00.

■ .22 LR Conversion Kit for the CZ Scorpion EVO (CZCustom.com)

Since we're already with CZ Custom, another neat thing they had on display was something else they were importing from the Czech Republic—a .22 conversion kit for the Scorpion EVO. The 9mm Scorpion EVO, whether in subgun, rifle, or pistol form, has been a huge success, and this conversion kit gives you everything you need to turn your 9mm into a .22 for practice, training, or just to save a little money on ammo. MSRP is $569, which means if you shoot a lot it could pay for itself in less than a year.



A Czech-made conversion kit that has everything you need to convert your 9mm CZ Scorpion EVO to .22 Long Rifle, available through CZ Custom. (Photo by James Tarr)



◀ **Drone Round Defense's ammunition is full-auto/belt fed/suppressor compatible but every round sends between five and eight projectiles downrange. (Photo courtesy Drone Round Defense)**

■ Drone Round (DroneRoundDefense.com)

Drone warfare is now a part of modern military engagements, and everyone is worried about them. Several companies are offering both shotguns and shotgun ammo (Benelli, Norma, etc.) designed specifically for downing drones, but Drone Round Defense has gone a different route—they sell 5.56x45mm and 7.62x51mm rifle ammunition with specialty projectiles. In the case, the bullets look (and feed/function) normal, but once they exit the barrel, you'll find they contain actual shotgun-type pellets. This ammo is full-auto and suppressor compatible. Either five or eight pellets per round, depending, and they keep a tight pattern, so that most of the pellets will stay on a man-sized target at 100 meters, which means being able to down a drone far enough away that if it does blow up it doesn't take you with it. DRD is part of Freedom Munitions, one of the largest ammo makers in the U.S., and in talking to the folks there, they've already seen a lot of interest on the part of militaries and law enforcement agencies. This ammo is 100% US-sourced and made. They project a production of 100 million rounds of this ammo by Q2 2026, 350 million by Q1 2027.

■ PTR SDM-B SBR (PTR-US.com)

PTR first became known for selling HK-pattern roller-lock guns, clones of the HK MP5, HK 91, etc., and two years ago, they jumped into the suppressor market, where their cans made huge waves. Their neatest product is a combination of the two.

The SDM-B is a purpose-built imitation of and improvement over HK's legendary integrally-suppressed MP5SD. The original HK MP5SD has a vented 4.5-inch barrel inside a long suppressor that was designed to slow down standard 9mm ammo to subsonic velocities. It wasn't without its issues—the HK suppressor got very dirty, and they just drilled holes in the barrel wherever, and that sometimes damaged the rifling, causing damage to passing bullets.

PTR's SDM-B is a suppressed SBR. It comes with a collapsible stock and has a six-inch barrel with oblong ports that go into the grooves of the rifling (not the lands) so they don't touch or damage the passing bullet. It uses a two-stage/two-part Vent SDM suppressor with PTR's patented PIP baffles. I was told that the gun is significantly quieter than their SDM-A tipped with their Vent 2 can, which meant it will likely be the quietest 9mm package on the market. Other



PTR's 9SDM-B is their version of the iconic integrally suppressed HK MP5SD. It has a vented barrel which turns supersonic ammunition subsonic, and a two-stage suppressor making it ultra-quiet. (Photo by James Tarr)



Strike Industries makes some great braces, and this new one specifically meant for the Springfield Armory Kuna is light, inexpensive, and looks stylish. (Photo by James Tarr)

than an M-LOK aluminum handguard replacing the SD's original round polymer handguard, it looks just like an HK MP5SD, and with the addition of an FRT, it might perform as fast as one as well. It ain't cheap, with an MSRP of $4,438, but I suspect they will sell every one they make.

KelTec PR-3AT Pistol (KeltecWeapons.com)

Last year, KelTec broke everyone's brain with their PR57, a 20-shot stripper clip-fed 5.7x28mm pistol, the smallest/lightest handgun in that caliber on the market. This year they've introduced the PR-3AT, a stripper clip-fed .380 ACP. The thinking is that the lack of a detachable magazine will make these pistols legal in some restrictive states, and so their double-digit capacity (otherwise a no-no) skirts around capacity restrictions. The PR-3AT holds 13+1 rounds of .380 ACP and has a 2.85-inch rotating barrel. Empty it weighs just over 14 ounces, and is purpose-built for concealed carry.



◄ KelTec's new stripper clip-fed .380 ACP is sure to get a lot of attention. The lack of a detachable magazine makes its 13+1 capacity legal in places it otherwise wouldn't be. (Photo by James Tarr)

Strike Industries Kuna Brace (StrikeIndustries.com)

Strike Industries makes a lot of firearms accessories for various brands and models, and make a lot of OEM parts behind the scenes. Last year, when Springfield Armory introduced their Kuna, you could buy a version that came from the factory with a Strike side-folding brace, the FSA, which is great. However, the FSA is just a generic brace meant for any and all firearms that have rail sections at the rear of their receivers.

At the show, Strike showed off a new brace meant specifically for the Kuna. It has styling cues which match the lines of the Kuna's receiver, and I think it looks better. It is adjustable for length. While it has metal lockup, the rest of the brace is polymer, making it not just lighter but less expensive—they told me they expected MSRP to be $89. They also expected Springfield Armory would eventually offer it as the standard on their factory brace-equipped model.

Bear Ops Nekema II (BearAndSonCutlery.com)

Most gun guys are knife guys. I was a knife guy before I was a gun guy, in part because I started collecting knives before I was old enough to buy guns. I carry a knife every day. Also, I find that I use it almost every day for average mundane tasks like opening boxes, trimming plastic, cutting cords, etc. I haven't been in a knife fight yet and hope never to be—because that means I've gone through all the ammo in my pistol and my spare magazine—but that doesn't mean I don't appreciate the value of a good "tactical" knife.

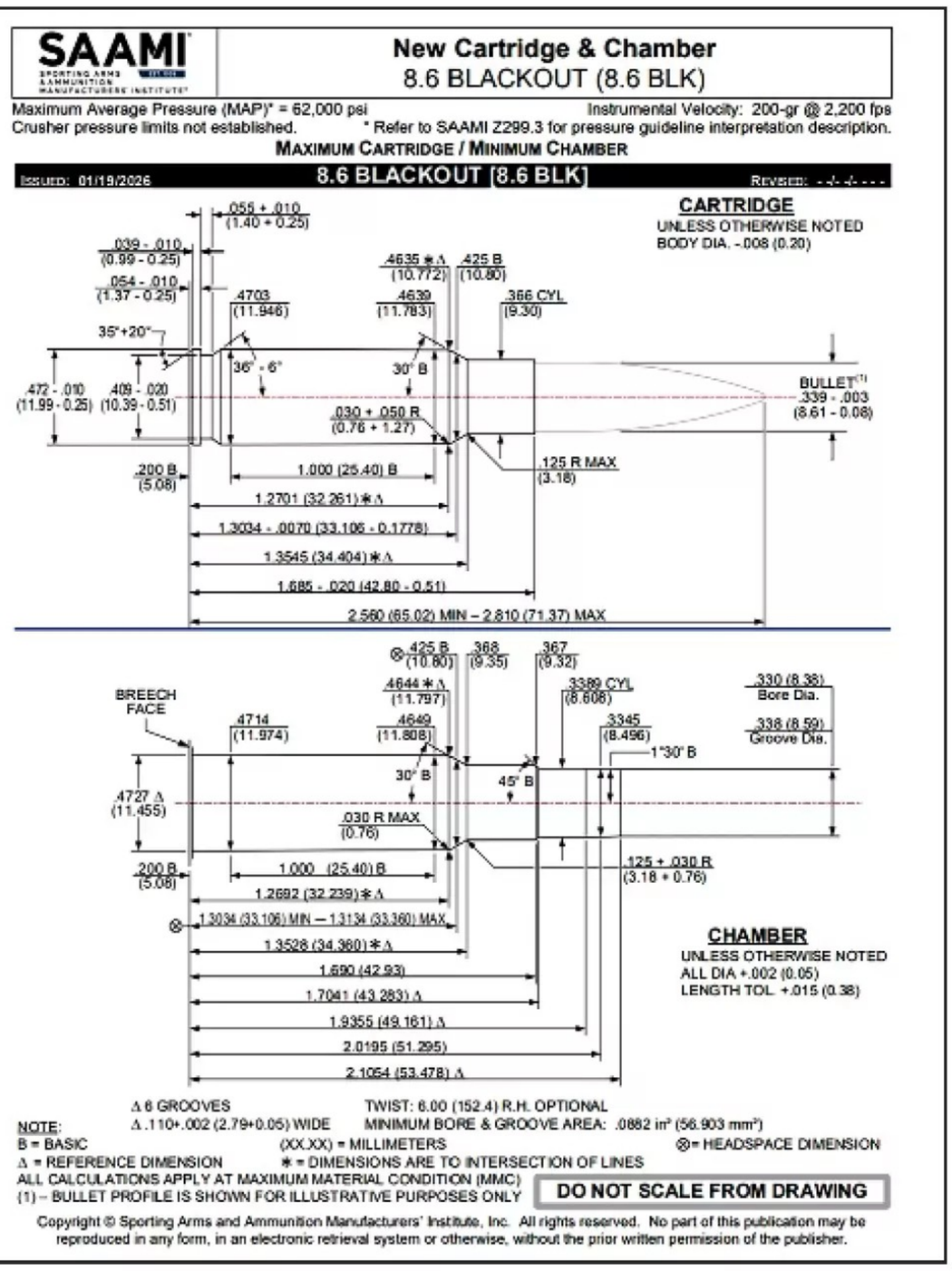
The Nekema II is made in the US at Bear OPS' facility in Jacksonville, Alabama. Bear OPS is the tactical division of Bear & Sons Cutlery. The Nekema II sports what they say is a 3.5-inch drop point blade in the press release, but I measure it at 3.2 inches, which for my needs is perfect. The blade is Sandvik 14C28N stainless steel with a black DLC coating. It deploys on ball bearings. The handle is made of smooth aluminum panels and relatively slender. They fit my hand perfectly, and the knife is surprisingly light. The pocket clip is reversible. The version I saw is black with bronze highlights, but it's also available in gray/blue, and depending on your color choice the knife will run you $92 to $97.



► Bear OPS has a new folder out, the Nekema II, and Tarr really liked it. Sliding lock, aluminum handles, and great looks. (Photo by James Tarr)



► Bear OPS' Nekema II has a 3.2-inch blade, and is slender and light—perfect for EDC as far as Tarr is concerned. The blade has a DLC coating. (Photo by James Tarr)



Just before SHOT, SAAMI approved the 8.6 Blackout cartridge, which means it is no longer a wildcat, and expect to see other gun and ammo makers jumping on board. (Photo courtesy SAAMI)

8.6 Blackout Getting SAAMI Approval

Right at the beginning of the show, SAAMI (Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute) announced approval of the 8.6 Blackout cartridge.

The 8.6 Blackout was designed by Q (liveqordie.com), a company started by Kevin Brittingham. Kevin was at AAC when they turned the wildcat .300 Whisper into the SAAMI-approved .300 AAC Blackout, designing the Honey Badger in conjunction with the new cartridge. Q has an upsized version of the Honey Badger chambered in 8.6 BLK called the Boombox.

If you think of the 300 Blackout as a .223 case shortened and necked-out to .30, think of the 8.6 Blackout as a shortened .308 Winchester case necked-out to .338 (technically it's a necked-out 6.5 CM). Supersonic loads feature +/-190-grain bullets, and subsonic loads feature 300- to 400-grain bullets.

SAAMI approval means it is no longer a wildcat/proprietary cartridge. This means more ammunition companies will start making 8.6 Blackout ammo. And more gun companies will be making SBRs and AR-based pistols chambered in 8.6. SAAMI recommends a 1:6 twist rate for the 8.6, while Q tends to favor the much faster 1:3, but that can cause issues with supersonic ammo using traditional cup/core bullets—they tend to fly apart. This is a relatively new cartridge, and seeing where it goes will be exciting.



Right now just a few small companies, like Gorilla, manufacture 8.6 Blackout, but now that it's SAAMI approved expect that to change. (Photo courtesy Gorilla Ammunition)



The suppressed SBR version of Q's Boombox in 8.6 Blackout with Q's Porq Chop suppressor. Think of it as a 300 Blackout Honey Badger on steroids. There's a pistol version coming soon. (Photo by James Tarr)

Titanium Rifle Cases (Celero3D.com)

For as many crazy, wonderful, interesting things happening on the additive manufacturing side (the technical term for metal 3D printing), the technology is really still in its infancy. At the show, I saw something brand new being shown off that before simply wasn't possible for various reasons—a rifle case made of titanium. A case not made of brass, or aluminum, or steel, but rather titanium, and 3D-printed titanium at that.

Celero is a small metal 3D printing house and they showed me the titanium 5.56 NATO cases they'd printed. They looked like steel, but were noticeably lighter. I found this fascinating, because what's making news on the rifle side are all the new steel/hybrid cases which allow for much higher-pressure rounds (SIG 6.8x51mm, Federal 7mm BackCountry), and a titanium case seems like an interesting addition to this conversation.

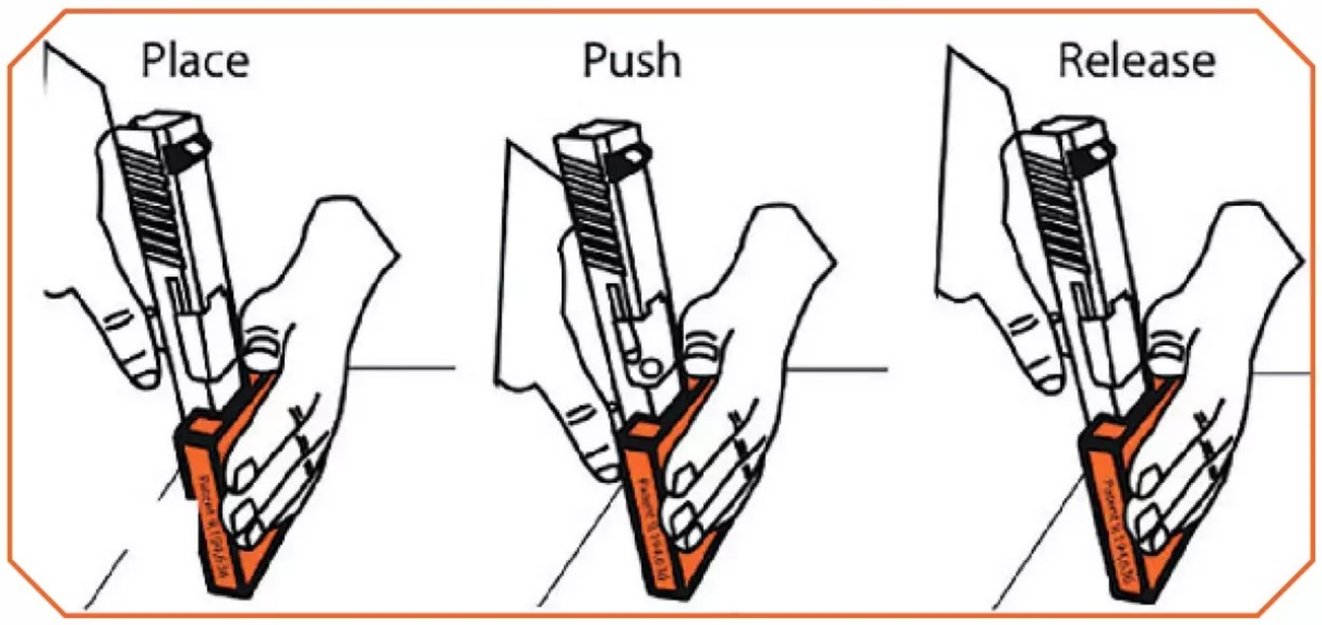
Now, I'm no metallurgist, and don't know the strength and stretch values of titanium versus steel, whether this specific formulation of titanium will work with these high-pressure rounds, or how much they'll cost versus steel/brass—what's important is that this is now possible. It is now an option; one I expect ammo manufacturers to continue exploring. FN



◀ This unremarkable-looking rifle case is anything but—it's not just 3D-printed, but titanium. High-pressure rifle rounds are the hot new thing, and titanium cases might be a part of that. (Photo by James Tarr)

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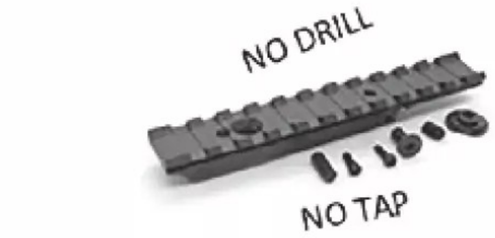
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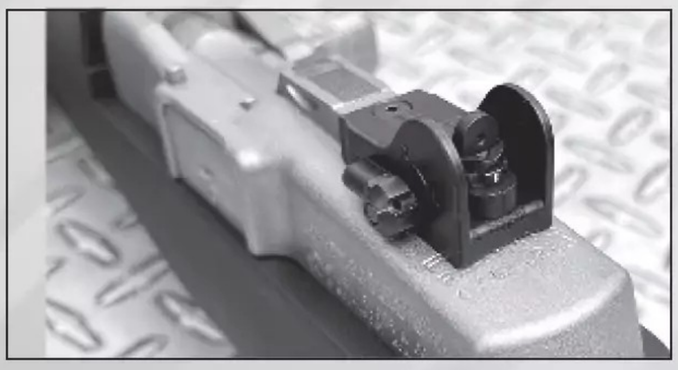
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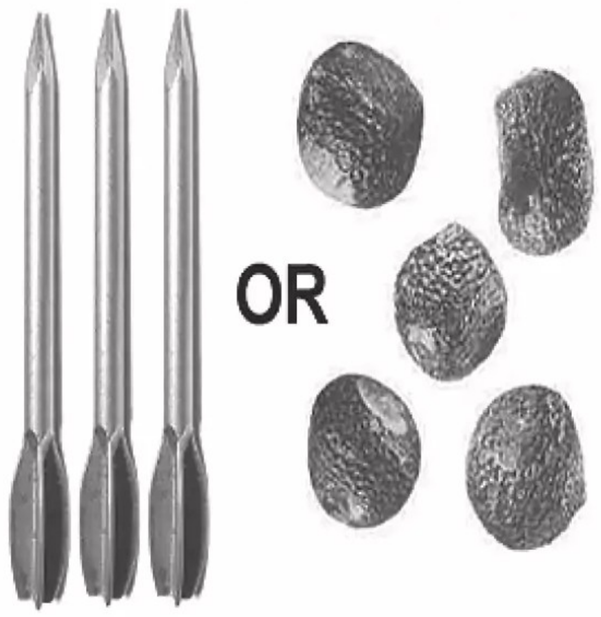
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