

FIREARMS NEWS®

GUN SALES, REVIEWS & 2A INFORMATION

DECEMBER 2025

PATRICK SWEENEY REVIEWS **BENELLI'S M4 EXT SHOTGUN!**

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COMPLIANT!
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GOT BETTER WITH
EXTENDED MAG TUBES
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■ **CARRYING CONCEALED**
.380 ACP AMMUNITION

■ **MUSINGS FROM THE
AMMO BUNKER**
IS HORNADY'S 6MM ARC
THE BEST OF THE
INTERMEDIATE CARTRIDGES?

■ **THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS**
HI-LUX OPTIC'S PR5 5-25X56MM

■ **THE WAR GUNS**
LE FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE
MODÈLE 1917 SEMI-AUTO RIFLE

■ **NFA COLLECTING**
THE AMERICAN 180 RIMFIRE
SUBMACHINE GUN

■ **PRODUCT SHOWCASE**
IT'S BACK!

■ **NEWSSTAND**
2ND AMENDMENT NEWS!



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BARREL LENGTH // 4.3"
GOOD TO EXCELLENT



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VP, SHOOTING GROUP PUBLISHER

Chris Agnes

EDITORIAL

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COLUMNISTS

Gun News

Darwin Nercesian

Political Field Editors

David Codrea, Jeff Knox

ART

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR

Bill Smalley

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Caleb Ackers

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Michael Anschuetz

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Terry Boyer

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Ashley N. Honea

ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Pat Bentzel (East Region) (717) 695-8095

patrick.bentzel@outdoorsg.com

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE

Sue Fitch (309) 679-5064

Western Region

Hutch Looney & Associates, email: hutch@hlooney.com

VP, ENDEMIC SALES

Michael Savino, mike.savino@outdoorsg.com

NATIONAL ENDEMIC SALES

Jim McConville (440) 791-7017

NATIONAL AD SALES

Senior Director – Non-Endemic Sales

Kevin Donley, kevin.donley@outdoorsg.com

National Account Executive

Carl Benson, carl.benson@outdoorsg.com

Direct Response Advertising/Non-Endemic

Anthony Smyth (914) 409-4202

Firearms News (ISSN #2691-3259). Published 12 times a year, monthly January through December, by Outdoor Sportsman Group, 2 News Plaza, 3rd Floor, Peoria, IL 61614-8001. Frequency is subject to change without notice. Periodical postage paid at Peoria, IL, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes (Form 3579) to Firearms News, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to 500 Rt. 46, East Clifton, NJ 07011. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 41405030.

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For questions regarding digital editions,
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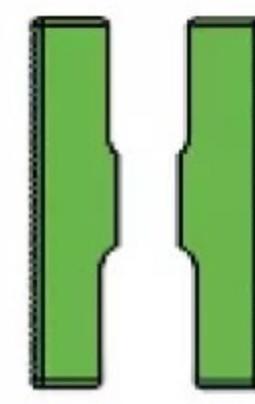
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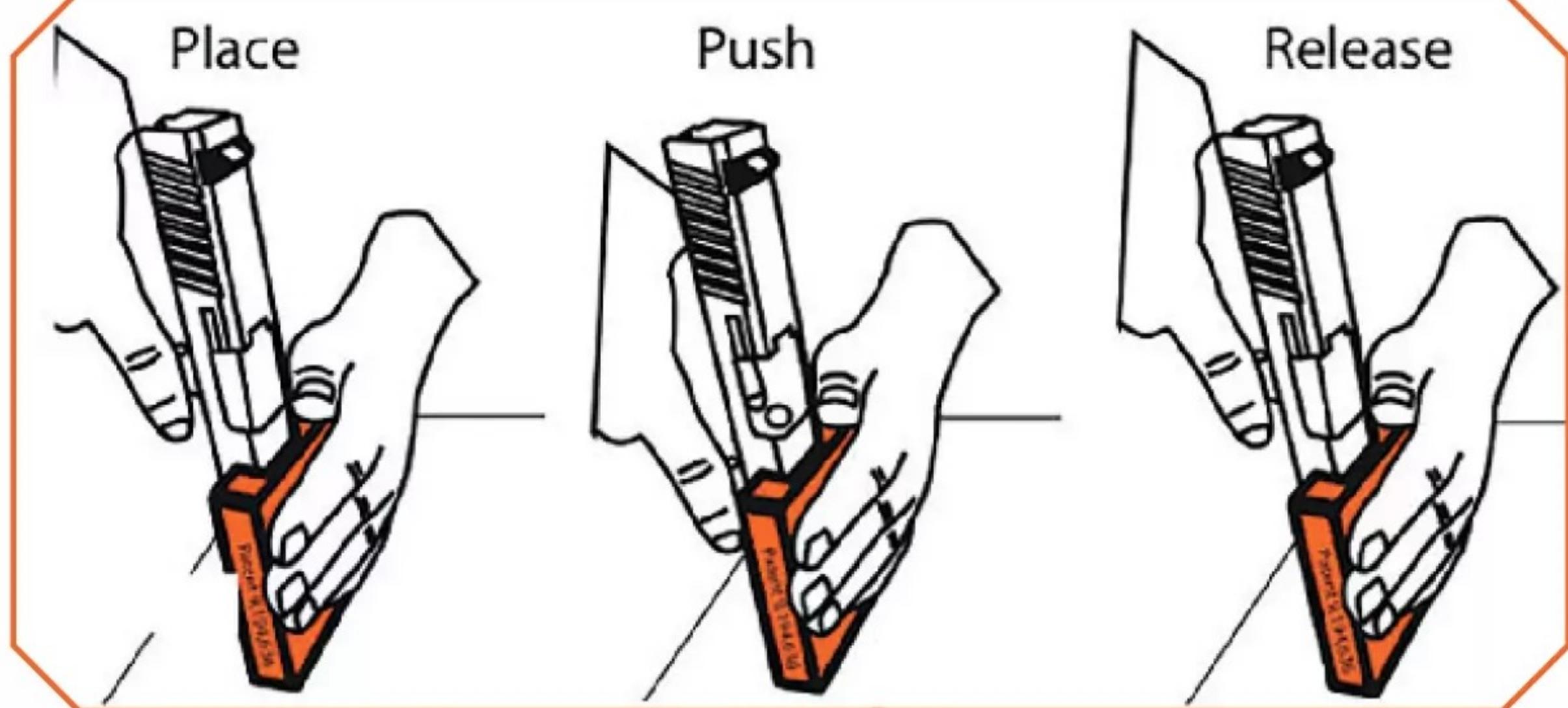
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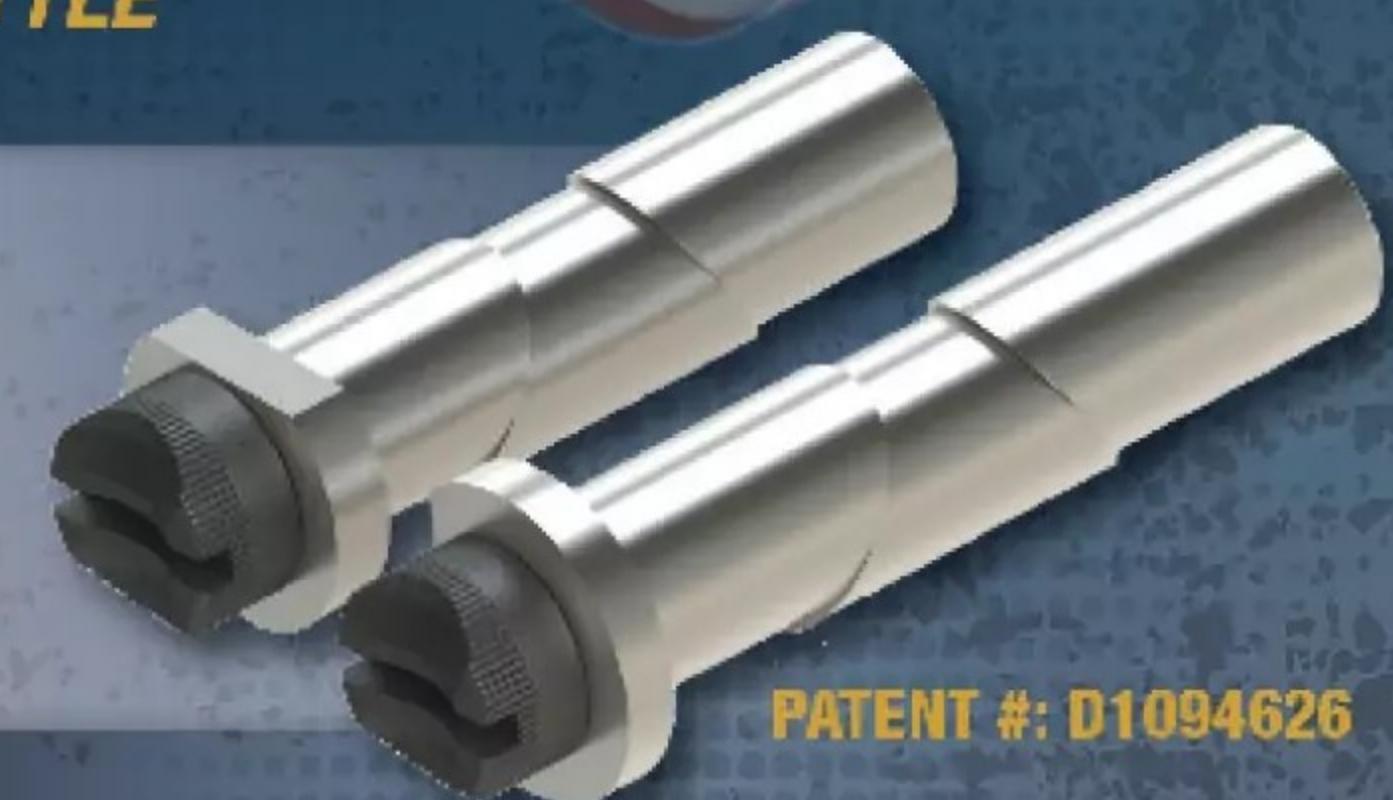


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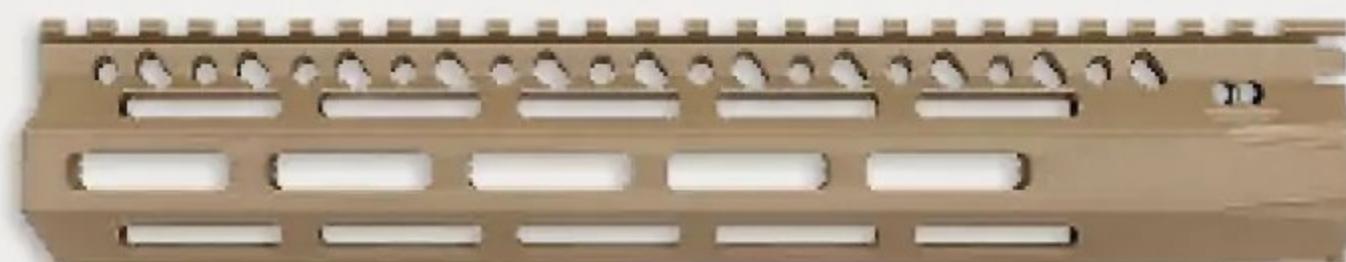
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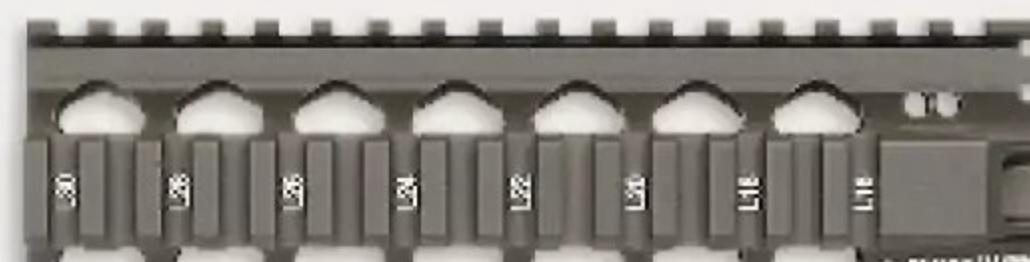
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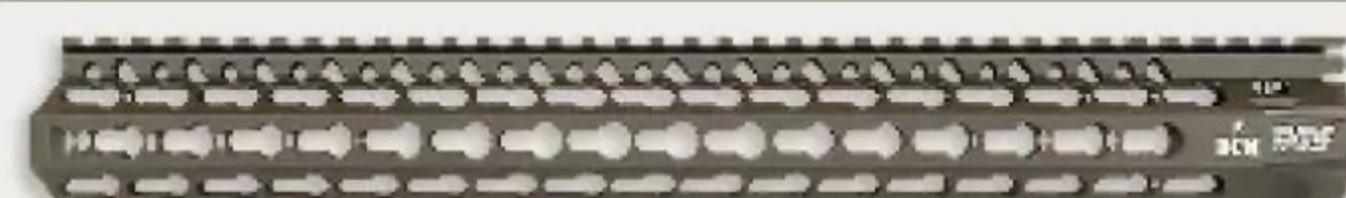
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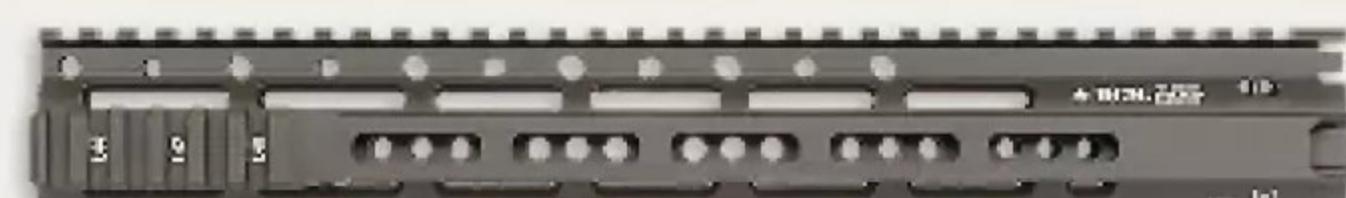
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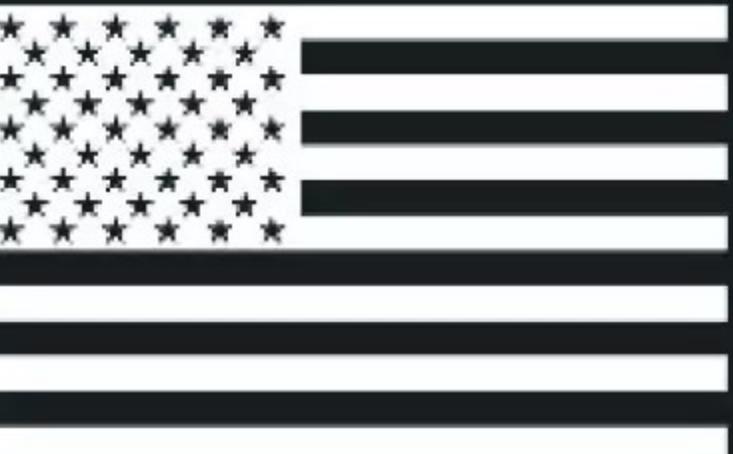
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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY STADIUM'S REPORTED 'PROHIBITED ITEMS' RULES RAISE LEGAL QUESTIONS

YSU, led by former Republican Congressman Bill Johnson, just affirmed that effective self-defense is not legal in the university stadium, which is surrounded by a high-crime area. Even off-duty police are barred from carrying guns!

By David Codrea, Gun Politics Field Editor

Security beefed up at YSU stadium following shooting,” *Youngstown News* reports. “A Cardinal Mooney [High School] student was shot at YSU’s Stambaugh Stadium Saturday evening,” an earlier story reported.

Cardinal Mooney posted an information sheet on Facebook detailing prohibited behaviors and items. Among them are “Weapons of any kind, including off-duty law enforcement, weapons, pipes, knives or chains.” And attendees who obey the rules will go through metal detectors to make sure. (When approached with this information on its Facebook post, the Cardinal Mooney representative replied they would seek clarification from YSU. A review of the Stambaugh Stadium “Football Gameday” page does not include an armed off-duty police ban in its “Prohibited Items” list.)

That the shot student was found on a bench outside the stadium where none of this would have made a difference, seems not to be a factor in the reaction. Neither, evidently, is Ohio law, at least as it applies to “off-duty law enforcement.”

Per Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost in an informational bulletin from

December, 2024, “Officers may carry firearms in public establishments. Under Ohio law, establishments serving the public may not prohibit or restrict a law enforcement officer, investigator or peace officer who possesses valid identification from carrying his/her authorized weapon on the premises. This holds true whether or not the officer is working or in uniform. (Ohio Revised Code Section 2923.1214(A)).” (This also raises questions on if this policy applies to off-duty federal law enforcement officers who work out of local offices and may have children in school they wish to see play.)

NOTE: Open carry of firearms on college campuses is legal in Ohio, as demonstrated in the 2018 *Firearms News* article “Kent State Open Carry Walk Shows ‘Reasoned Discourse’ with Gun-Grabbers Impossible,” but not in designated areas, buildings and stadiums. And while some gun owners may object to off-duty police having an “Only Ones” objection—so named after a DEA agent told a classroom full of schoolchildren he was “the only one in the room ... qualified” to carry a Glock and then promptly shot himself in the leg while trying to holster it—the issue here is



The Youngstown State University sports stadium which has even banned off-duty police from carrying their firearms. (SNEHIT PHOTO/Sutterstock)

YSU officials do not have authority to override state preemption on gun laws and impose local prohibitions. It should also be noted that under a law signed by former Ohio Governor John Kasich, it is legal for citizens to lock their firearm in their vehicles while parking within any state university or state college parking areas.

One would think they’d understand that. After all, YSU President Bill Johnson is a former Republican Congressman considered a “strong ally of the National Rifle Association,” who “often earned ‘A’ or ‘A+’ ratings from the NRA Political Victory Fund for his support of gun rights, including an endorsement in his 2012 campaign.”

Firearms News attempted to contact the State Attorney General’s Office, the Mahoning County Sheriff’s Department, the Youngstown Police Department, and the Youngstown State University Police for their comment on whether the ban on armed off-duty officers is legal and enforceable. The Sheriff’s representative replied that the question should be put to University Police. It appears that even the highest law enforcement officer won’t be defending his deputies’ right and/or

[Cont. to page 16]



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WW1 inspired Trench fighting heat shield with bayonet lug which fits both the P14 & P17 bayonet. Comes with screws and fits best on barrels with the grooves cut in place. \$129. #W97058

Prices may change without notice

U.S. M7A3 Grenade Launcher.....For the M1 Rifle. These were issued in 1952 in an effort to provide the troops with a launcher that would be compatible with standard rifle grenades and the new T34 bursting Energa Rifle Grenade. Longer than the M7 grenade launcher, machined with ribs with numbered increments on the top, it is very difficult to find these on the market today. These are brand new and fits easily onto the Garand in the same manner as the M7. Very Limited. \$74.95 RL024

7.62 Nato

CETME C Rifle Parts Set ,308 cal.

All parts except the receiver, magazine, barrel , barrel pin. & oiler cap. Receivers and barrels are available in the market. A

great looking rifle with its wood handguard and stock.... looks

finer than the G3 ! And 25 parts are interchangeable with the G3 &

HK91 so parts are plentiful on the market. We normally carry new

.308 caliber barrels for the rifle, currently out of stock, but more

should be coming in by the time this ad hits . See our part#CET019.

CETME C Parts Set is In Stock \$154.95 #CET016

STEN GUN ACCESSORIES

Sten Mk2 Barrel, 9mm New in the white. \$74.95 #STN029

Sten Mk3 Barrel, 9mm New in the white. \$53. #STN108

Commando Grip for the STEN Mk2 - replaces the stock for a smaller profile. \$17.50 #STN107

Sten Foregrip for the Sten Mk2 and Mk5 \$34. #STN119

Sten Sling Ww2 style sling,canvas \$9.95 #SLNG109

STEN Mk2/Mk5 Collar w/ Sling

Sten Extractor original exc. cond. \$19.95 #STN006

Sten Stripped Bolt orig.good cond. \$65. #STN009

Canvas Sten Paratrooper Bag, olive drab carries the Sten

Mk2, Mk3,Mk5 guns , mags. & loader. \$34. #STN127

Canvas Sten Magazine Bandolier carried 7 -32 rd.

magazines, khaki color w/strap \$34.95 #STN128

Sten Box Magazine Loader \$24.95 #STN114

Sten Magazine, 20 rd .good cond. \$11.95 #STN007

Stocking Stuffers for Christmas

German Potato Masher

Keyring fits nicely in your hand at 4-1/4" long. \$5. #MISC785

Brass Keyring hour glass w/ antique profile \$9.95 #KEY-03

U.S. D-DAY Paratrooper Signal Cricket... Brass w/ steel flapper & embossed U.S. Helped GIs find each other in the dark and communicate. \$7.85 #MISC784

VIKING NECK RING- A status symbol of the rugged Viking. Wire braided w/ DragonHeads. Solid Brass \$29.95 #MISC847

Brass Compass Antique style w/ working indicator & lanyard ring. 1-3/4" diameter & 5/8" depth. \$14.95 #COMPASS-01

Throwing Spike Steel 8-1/4"long Fun to practice! \$9.95 #MISC999

Handcrafted 3 Cup Set of Buffalo

Horn Drinking Cups...food safe, drink safe & each cup has its own natural color pattern, polished & engraved with Viking runes and patterns. Sizes vary slightly, but are in terms of 3+inches high, & 2" wide. Quite attractive and will make your drinks more fun when friends come over ! \$29.95 #GFT61

VIKING CUP SET

New GI Ammo Cans

Brand New Unissued Ammo Cans - .30 cal., .50 cal., and 'Fat' 50 cal. steel cans with gasket.

Small Can .30 cal type, 10.75" x 3.75" x 7" \$18. #AM236

Medium .50 cal. Can 11.75" x 6" x 7.5" \$22. #AM237

'FAT' .50 cal. Can 12.5" x 7.25" x 8.5" \$32. #AM238

WINCHESTER 97
Shotgun Heat Shield

WW1 inspired Trench fighting heat shield with bayonet lug which fits both the P14 & P17 bayonet. Comes with screws and fits best on barrels with the grooves cut in place. \$129. #W97058

Prices may change without notice

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Trigger Housing Assembly

\$99. #GRD023

USGI Butt-Plate in new condition!

Very Limited \$40. #GRD326



Mitchell Camouflage Cap

Vietnam Era

USMC Cap Profile in Heavy Duty Cotton w/ strong brim.

Sizes Available:

U.S. size 7-1/2" Large(metric size 60)
U.S. size 7-3/4" XL (metric size 62)

\$24. #HAT18

M1 Garand Jeep Scabbard with Lining

Also excellent mounting to a saddle or RV. Safely holds the Garand or similar sized rifle. Comes with 2 fastening leather straps.

\$44.95
#GRD382
(as used in WW2)

Also available w/o soft lining

\$39.95
#GRD137

Prices may change without notice. Please check our Web Site for current prices.



1907 U.S. Leather sling with steel hardware. The standard leather sling as used with the Garand rifle. Solid sling for wrapping around the arm to achieve superior marksmanship. Available in Brown or Black color.

Brown 1907 Sling \$11.95
#SLNG025-BRN

Black 1907 Sling \$11.95
#SLNG025-BLK



Swedish Cheekpad w/bullet loops and velcro pad that can be swapped to either side. Holds 10 rds. Camo color. \$9.95 #CLN249

M23A1 Smoke/Signal Rifle Grenade, inert. new. \$34.95 #AM242

M11A3 Rifle Grenade, inert. Made from original & new parts. \$34.95 #AM125

M7 Grenade Launcher for the M1 Garand. new. \$69.95
#RL020



M7 Launcher with M11A3 Rifle Grenade. \$99.95 #RL021

US WW2 style Garand Cheekpad for use by snipers. Leather. new. Marked MRT TAN leather \$19.95 #GRD124-T BLACK leather \$19.95 #GRD124-B

For original combo tools, bore & chamber brushes cleaning rods, cases, oilers, sight covers, blank adapters and hundreds of other Garand parts - Please check the Web Site

Hi Rise Leather Cheekpad for use on Garands, Mausers, & Similar Stocks

Elevates the cheek higher than normal cheekpads. Especially good for high mount scopes. \$24.95 #MISC862 Color-Black

M1 Garand .30-06 Operating Rods

-Back in Stock-
\$175. #GRD052

Get em'
While you can 'cuz they always sell out quickly!

Bolt, stripped, 2SA marked, VG \$92. #GRD302

Bolt, stripped, WInchester marked, good. \$100. #GRD232

Bolt, stripped, 19SA marked good. \$57. #GRD306

Bolt, stripped, HRA marked VG, \$92. #GRD120

Bolt, complete, Winchester Marked good. \$200. #GRD121

M1 Garand Bolts

Periodically we have collector grade bolts. Check back often. Currently we have the following bolts in Stock.....

Garand Bolt Disassembly Tool
\$44.95 #GRD179

See Garand Bayonets on the Web Site - In Stock now-

M1 Garandfull sized non-firing replica made of metal & wood, is the best replica on the market! Has trigger that pulls & clicks, charging handle that functions & 7-3/4 lb. weight.

M1 Garand Parts

GRD330	Barrel G.I. Orig WWII Dated, poor bore & some rust	\$34.95
GRD002	Barrel "Clunker Grade"	\$20.00
GRD071	Bolt (Complete)	\$89.95
GRD070	Bolt (Stripped Used)	\$69.95

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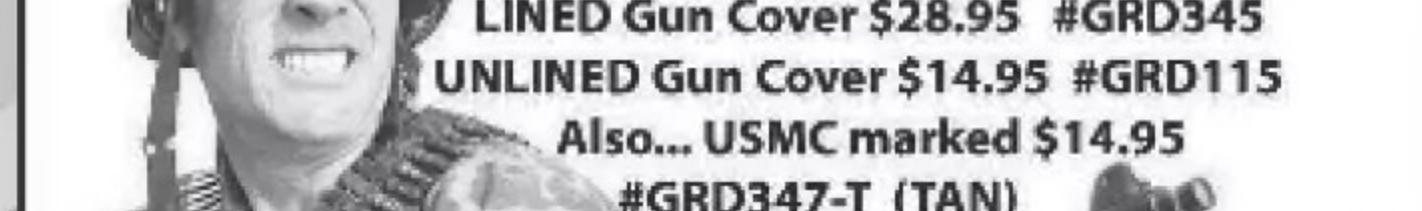
Ph 610.250.3960

CIN172	Bronze bore brush 30 cal 10/..... 100/.....	\$1.25 each \$10.00 \$70.00
GRD198	Bullet Guide, milled, New	\$15.00
GRD065	Bullet Guide, stamped, New	\$12.00
GRD046	Butt Swivel	\$8.00
GRD220	Buttplate Assy, brand new	\$24.95
GRD043	Buttplate Screw Bottom (Long)	\$2.95
GRD044	Buttplate Screw Upper (Small)	\$2.00
GRD115	Carrying Case	\$14.95
GRD021	Clip Ejector	\$4.00
GRD081	Clip Latch	\$24.50

M84 Scope, Mount, & Block Set- See Web Site. Very Limited \$399. #GRD260



M1 Garand Canvas Gun Covers WW2 style in Olive drab U.S. marked canvas in two varieties: Unlined & Lined. Complete with shoulder strap. Nice and light the way the ordnance corps designed them to be. LINED Gun Cover \$28.95 #GRD345 UNLINED Gun Cover \$14.95 #GRD115 Also... USMC marked \$14.95 #GRD347-T (TAN) #GRD347-G (OD)



Original M1 Bayonet U.S. 10" Blade Bayonet as issued in WW2 and during the Korean War. Comes with a new production scabbard

Marked AFH Garand Bayonet w/ scabbard \$89.95 #BAY211 Marked UFH Garand Bayonet w/ scabbard \$89.95 #BAY210

Prices May Change Without Notice

GRD082	Clip Latch Pin	\$2.00	GRD100	Gas Cylinder Lock (Used)	\$20.00
GRD083	Clip Latch Spring	\$1.35	GRD286	Gage GI barrel diameter-gas cylinder .5991,	\$75.00
MISC630	Conversion op rod tip' (modifies .308 to .30-06)	\$8.20	GRD016	Hammer	\$24.95
GRD214	Danish contract Garand oiler	\$3.70,	GRD015	Hammer Pin	\$2.00
GRD076	3 for.	\$8.95	GRD013	Hammer Spring	\$2.00
GRD077	Ejector	\$3.25	GRD014	Hammer Spring Plunger	\$9.00
GRD078	Ejector Spring	\$1.50	GRD041	Handguard Band Rear	\$5.00
GRD086	Ejector w/ Spring	\$4.95	GRD039	Handguard Ferrule Front	\$8.95
GRD363	Elevating Pinion Assy, Meter graduations	\$24.95	GRD032	Handguard, Rear walnut w/o metal, good	\$25.00
GRD075	Extractor-current production	\$15.95	GRD033	Handguard, Front walnut w/ metal, good	\$31.00
GRD310	Extractor G.I.	\$24.95	GRD040	Handguard Spacer Front	\$3.95
GRD079	Extractor Spring w/ Plunger	\$3.45	GRD089	Hooded Rear Sight Aperture National Match	\$45.00
GRD074	Firing Pin orig G.I.	\$19.95	GRD037	Lower Band	\$15.00
GRD186	Flash hider lock bracket G.I. M2	\$25.00	GRD038	Lower Band Pin	\$1.00
GRD111	Flashider T-37 (Pronged)	\$35.95	OIL002	Lubriplate pot, G.I. 3 for	\$3.95
GRD062	Follower Arm	\$25.00	CLN116	M10 cleaning rod handle	\$7.45,
GRD064	Follower Arm Pin	\$4.95	3 for	\$20.00	
GRD068	Follower assy	\$24.95	M84017	M84 Sniper Scope Cover, Orig	\$59.95
GRD061	Follower Rod	\$12.00	OIL035	Oiler, late plastic WWII, new	\$13.95
GRD066	Follower Slide	\$12.00	OIL015	Oiler, brass & throng set, exc	
GRD109	Front Sight	\$12.00			\$35.00
GRD110	Front Sight Screw	\$1.25			
GRD101	Gas Cylinder Lock w/Hump	\$26.00			
OIL016	Oiler, plastic & throng set, used, exc.	\$8.50	GRD375	Stock Ferrule Assembly, New	\$20.00
GRD052	Operating rod G.I.	\$175.00	GRD047	Stock Ferrule Stripped	\$10.00
GRD063	Op rod catch assy	\$30.00	GRD049	Stock Ferrule Swivel	\$6.00
GRD088	Rear Sight Aperture	\$10.00	GRD050	Stock Ferrule Swivel Screw	\$2.95
GRD094	Rear Sight Assembly Late	\$64.95	GRD027	Stock U.S. / G.I. Average, Used Condition, No Cracks	\$49.95
GRD084	Rear Sight Base	\$27.00	GRD024	Stock U.S. / G.I. Select, Used Cond	\$75.00
GRD085	Rear Sight Base National Match	\$46.50	GRD323	Trigger forging, orig G.I. new	\$4.95
GRD093	Rear Sight Cover	\$5.95	GRD009	Trigger & Sear Assembly	\$18.50
GRD017	Safety	\$17.50	GRD019	Trigger Guard Milled	\$25.00
GRD112	Scope Mount M1D	\$59.95	GRD020	Trigger Guard Stamped	\$16.95
GRD011	Sear	\$6.00	GRD023	Trigger Housing Assembly	\$99.95
GRD114	Front & Rear Sight protective cover with muzzle can	\$6.00	GRD022	Trigger Housing Stripped	\$40.00
SING024	Sling Repro WWI Leather, brass hook	\$11.95	GRD152	Trigger Housing, Win. Reparked Stripped	Call
SING025	Sling Repro WWII Leather, steel hook	\$11.95	GRD008	Trigger Pin	\$2.00
GRD107	Stacking Swivel	\$8.00	GRD092	Windage Knob early original	\$25.00
GRD108	Stacking Swivel Screw, new	\$2.95	GRD090	Windage Knob (Late Style)	\$14.00
5/.....		\$11.95	GRD212	G.I. winter trigger in orig. pkg	\$19.95
GRD028	Garand stock for .308 NATO cal gun, new	\$49.95			
GRD048	Stock Ferrule, new GI In the grease	\$15.00			

German Officer Sword

New

German WW2 Officer Sword & Scabbard Standard ceremonial sword of the officer corps. Steel blade of 31-5/8" in EN45 Steel. Has Lion Head leather wire wrapped grip. A beautiful and easy to weld sword ! \$95 #SWRD49

U.S. 1907 M1 Garand Sling Leather w/ steel hardware. \$16.95 #SLNG025 New

Russian Gorka 4 Summer Combat Suit

Perfect for Spring

Thru Fall

Northwoods 'Victor' Hunting Knife

Our Favorite hunting knife because its size and heft in 'cleaving' are hard to beat. At an overall length of 16.5" with a blade of 11" in 3Cr13 Stainless Steel with finely honed edge and a sawback on the spine, it gives great standoff range, and yet excellent kinetic force of its 1.5 lb heft on the target.

\$45.
#BAY394

Classic BOWIE KNIFE
w/ Leather Scabbard

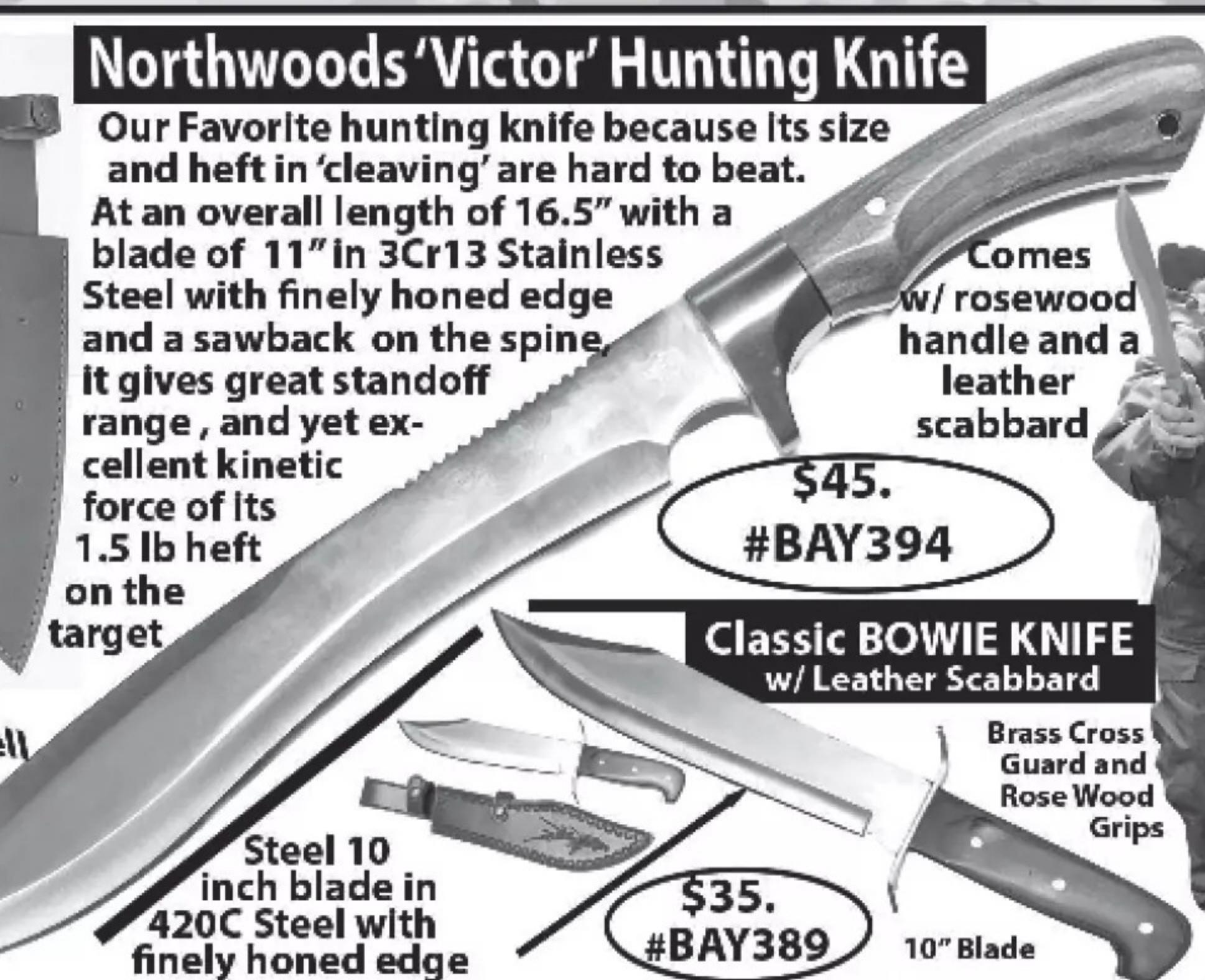
Brass Cross Guard and Rose Wood Grips

\$35.
#BAY389

10" Blade

It throws pretty well too!

Steel 10 inch blade in 420C Steel with finely honed edge



Comes w/ rosewood handle and a leather scabbard

\$39.95
#BAY390

Best Price Around!

7" Blade

USMC FIGHTING KNIFE & SCABBARD

Classic combat knife of the Marines in the Pacific, Korea and Vietnam. Steel 3Cr13 blade with 'honed' edge. Leather embossed scabbard.

V25 STILETTO

Straight out of the office of 'Dark Arts', this V25 Stiletto was born out of the union of the famous Fairbairn-Sykes Fighting Knife & the U.S. V42 Stiletto. Double edged blade in 440C steel I. Adopted by at least one African Army, this knife continues the legacy born of WW2 operations.

(Sold for 'utility use'. Check your local/State laws on Stiletto use.)

Pg.4

#BAY391
\$49.95
Overall Length @12" Long
*Blade 7"
*Finely Honed Edge on each side



www.SARCOINC.com

Ph# 610.250.3960



7.62mm Bandolier w/ Strap, new, 6 pockets for 5rd. stripper clips. \$6.95 ea., or 10 to 24 pcs at \$5.95, or 25+ at \$4.95 ea. #MISC1067



.30-06 Garand Bandolier w/Strap, new. 6 pocket. \$6.95 ea., or 10-24 pcs. at \$5.95 ea., or 25+ at \$4.95 ea. #MISC1068

Springfield 1903A3 Barrel, .30-06, 4 groove, new. \$149.95 #SPF387

G3 Rifle Barrel, .308, new \$189. #G3108
CETME C Barrel, .308 new \$195. #CET019

Luger 9mm Barrel
Brand new and the perfect replacement for your old barrel. \$175. #LGR002



new
German M24 Stick Grenades
The infamous 'Potato Masher' -available in Tan & Green. \$24.95 each
TAN #MISC464-T
GREEN #MISC464-G
Steel&wood Inert



new
U.S. M23A1 Smoke/Signal Rifle Grenade
Steel / Inert w/ markings.
\$34.95 #AM242



new
U.S. M31 Rifle Grenade Steel / Inert / New
Fits on Garand, Carbine, M14 grenade launchers.
\$53.95 #MISC875



new
U.S. Claymore Mine with Carry Bag w/ Instructions
sewn into the flap. New & full size. \$69.95
#MISC589



U.S. Grenades, New, Inert
A. V24 Vietnam Era \$29.95 #AM216
B. M67 Baseball \$29.95 #AM198
Training model in steel, GI
C. M26 Lemon Grenade in steel. \$18.95 #AM191



Best Price Around!
'FAST' HELMET Ballistic level NJI IIIa in PE material & large size which fits US size 7-1/4" thru size 7-5/8. Comes with bungee, front mount and side mount and liner/ chinstrap suspension set up. \$150. #HLM095



new
U.S. MK2 GAS GRENADE (WW1) Steel w/ GI Fuze INERT
\$58.95 #AM227



new
U.S. M11A3 Rifle Grenade Inert USGI
\$42.95 #AM125



new
WW2 Jap. Mortar Round for the Type89 Knee Mortar -Steel, Brass & Copper \$65. #AM240
Inert



new
U.S. Pineapple M1 Hand Grenade Steel with inert USGI fuse
\$18.95 #AM240



new
Japanese WW2 Type 97 Hand Grenade New steel & brass. Inert
\$35.95 #AM243

Original!!!! BELGIAN 'CONGO' AFRICAN/TROPICAL BUSH HATS FROM THE 1960s - Almost impossible to find, these were extremely well made with spiral embroidery and removable chinstraps. A staple of Mercenaries during the Congo Rebellion. Only size 7-1/2" Large available. \$124.95 #HAT26



Rare Find!
Very Limited!
Unissued
Beretta 92 parts pack
Super Savings!
Insurance for breakdowns
www.wwmm.mil

U.S. 1917 Trench Knife
Full size with leather scabbard. Blade @9" long.
New. \$54.95 #BAY400

M1 Carbine Flash Hider
new. \$34.95 #CRB097



Russian Spade Mortar 37mm Round made from steel. Has a hollow cavity & fuse is removable
\$29.95 #MISC356
New / Inert

Most economical builder parts set on the market, provides you with all parts to build up an AR15/M4, except the lower receiver. Comes with 16" barrel, telescoping butt stock, and removable carrying handle! Our Best Selling Kit!



LOWEST PRICES
ANYWHERE!!
BEST DEAL
#AR150
\$385.

A. KIT w/ Flat top upper rec. w/ carry handle and rear sight
SALE!! \$385. \$399.95 #AR150 (shown above)

B. KIT w/ Flat top upper rec. without carry handle & rear sight
This Kit comes with an optics ready barrel. \$325. #AR224 *See on Web Site

Beretta 92 Pistol Parts Pack....13 original Beretta factory parts to safeguard your pistol for when a malfunction occurs. Parts as shown above. \$59.95 #BR9219



AR15/M16 Spring Set - all the springs for the rifle and a life saver when you are in the woods or range and need a fix! New. \$12.95 #AR397

AR15/M16 Pin Kit
13 replacement pins to keep your rifle running.
\$14.95 #AR133
M7 Bayonet & Scabbard for the AR15/M16. New. \$34.95 #BAY229



Model 1911 .45 Holster nicely oiled finish, & rugged.
\$20. #HOL211

See WEB SITE for Hundreds of Holsters

Walther P38 Hardshell Hip Holster Rugged black leather holster w/markings. \$18.95 #P38054

Model 1911 Hip Holster Canvas Model. \$20. #HOL233

Happy Holidays

www.SARCOINC.com

[Cont. from page 10]

duty to carry firearms when they are disarmed before entering the stadium.

The Deputy Press Secretary for AG Yost sent a copy of the above-referenced information bulletin with the comment "Please see the attached document from our office. It speaks for itself." When queried "if enforced will AG Yost challenge it? And do you have a feel for if this would also apply to off-duty

federal LE assigned to local offices who may have family reasons to attend the games?" he replied, "You would need to contact the local law director, as they would handle any potential legal action in a local matter such as this."

At this writing, there has been no response to voicemail messages left with the YSU Police Department and the Youngstown Police Department.

—
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 on Twitter: @dcodrea and Facebook. **FN**

SUPPORT LT. COL. ROBERT K. BROWN FOR THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By Darwin Nercesian, News Field Editor

Now, more than ever, it is essential that Second Amendment advocacy groups, which purport to defend our freedom, be led by individuals with a proven track record of integrity, transparency, and a commitment to American values. For this reason, *Firearms News Magazine* is honored to support Lt. Col. Robert K. Brown in his nomination to the National Rifle Association (NRA) Board of Directors. As a decorated veteran and defender of the Second Amendment, Lt. Col. Brown has dedicated a lifetime of service, sacrifice, leadership, and unwavering support to the Constitution of the United States and Americans' right to bear arms.

Lt. Col. Brown was first elected to the NRA Board of Directors in 1983 and appointed to the Publications Committee due to his experience as founder and publisher of *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* since 1975. Throughout his 39 years on the committee, Lt. Col. Brown uncovered multiple instances of questionable expenses related to NRA publications, including *First Freedom*, bringing the issues to the attention of Wayne LaPierre and then-NRA Treasurer Woody Phillips in the late 1990s.

"I have tried to resolve this problem over several years and have got no satisfaction. This is gross corruption and incompetence. When our

members find out, they will be outraged," Brown explained.

An Ammoland article published this past July highlighted recently leaked emails demonstrating Lt. Col. Brown's efforts to raise awareness about the NRA's spending and governance issues from as early as 2011. Brown, not one to mince words, explains that concerns over at least a decade's worth of expenditures went largely ignored by NRA leadership.

"It's a lot of pure, unadulterated bullshit!... You totally refuse or fail, either due to incompetence or sucking up to Wayne and management... over the last 10 years we have paid between \$5,000,000 and \$10,000,000 to Ack Mac for their providing about 10 to 15 pages of editorial copy per issue. You have failed to address [the] main question I have raised over the years which is 'Why are we paying so much for so little?'"

That's correct. Years before LaPierre would expose the organization to the scrutiny of its political enemies, Lt. Col. Brown was sounding the alarm on fiscal responsibility and accountability to the NRA's membership. In fact, much of what was uncovered in New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit matched issues that Brown had fought to resolve in the years prior. Had someone been listening, it may have saved the NRA countless millions in legal fees, humiliation, and trial rev-

elations that LaPierre had misappropriated funds for lavish expenses like private jets, yachts, and luxury travel.

With the NRA being but a shell of its former glory, the time has come to decide if we're going to pivot or waste every inch ever gained simply to throw the baby out with the bathwater. An organization can never succeed without steadfast leadership, and Lt. Col. Brown embodies the principles necessary to help guide the NRA to a brighter future, making him an outstanding candidate to support during this election and a leader in the fight for the Second Amendment that Americans deserve.

If you are an NRA voting member in good standing, you may e-sign the following petition to get Lt. Col. Brown on the ballot. The deadline is October 7th, 2025, so vote now, and forward this to anyone else who may be eligible. If you are unsure, verify your membership or voting eligibility by calling the NRA at 866-672-3000.

UPDATE: Robert K. Brown is now one of the 38 candidates of which 25 NRA Board of Director members will be chosen in 2026.]

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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. **FN**



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.380 ACPs, like this S&W Bodyguard 2.0, are still very popular as carry guns, and you have a large choice of quality defensive ammo to feed them. (James Tarr)

.380 ACP AMMUNITION

People were definitely carrying .380 ACPs, but they were an oft-ignored subset of carry guns, not given much respect...and then Ruger introduced the LCP. In short order, Ruger sold a million of these guns, and the success of that pistol actually caused a nationwide shortage of .380 ammo. The sudden popularity of .380 pistols (because not only did Ruger keep selling them but other manufacturers offered competing designs) pushed ammo makers to develop modern JHPs for that cartridge which actually performed.

.380 ACPs have since been eclipsed by micro compact 9mm like the SIG P365, but all those millions of .380s

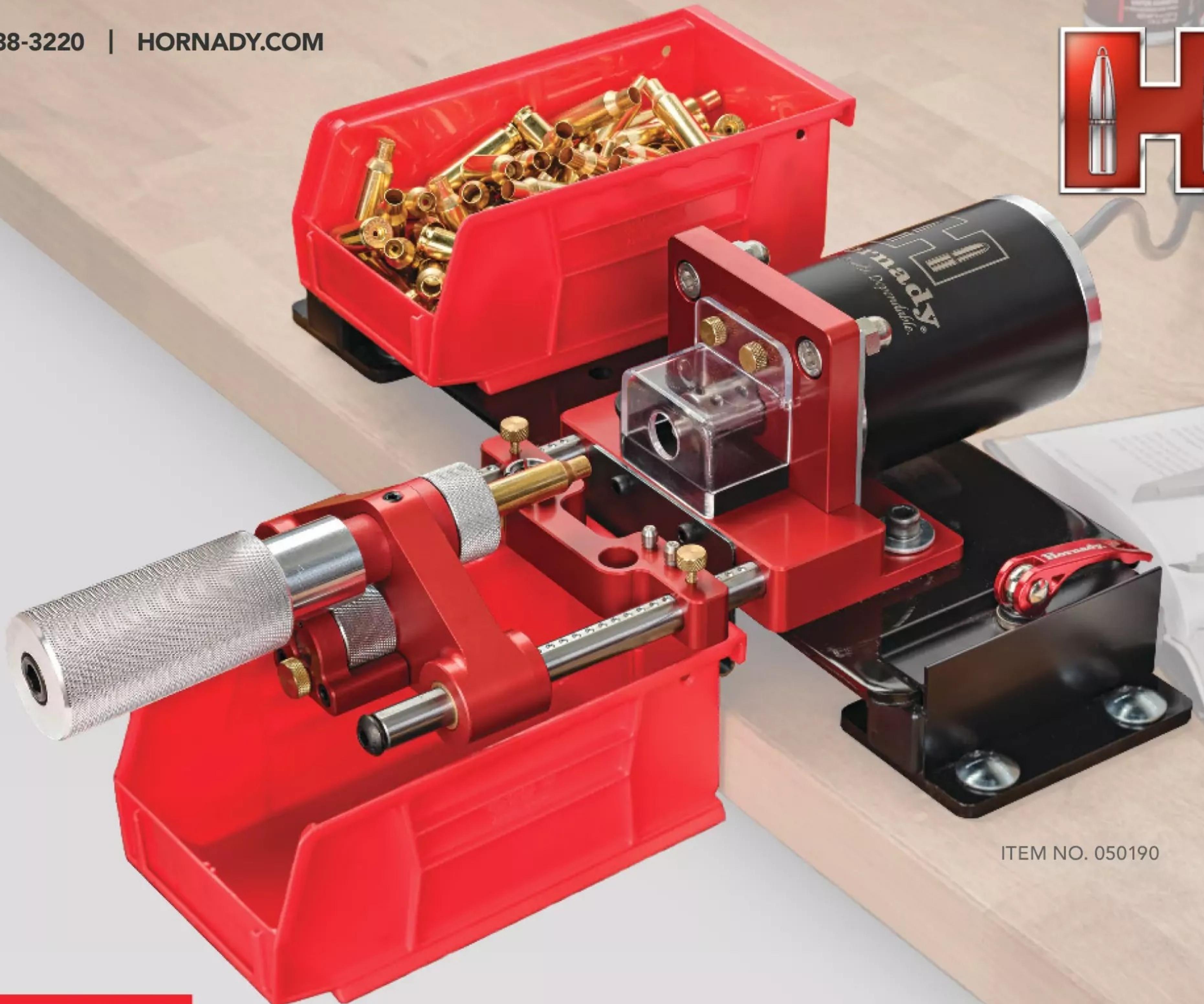
are still out there and being carried, and there are more choices than ever when it comes to good defensive ammo to feed them. Here's just a small sample of products I recommend, in no particular order:

Fiocchi USA

Fiocchi's new CovertX line of handgun ammunition (FiocchiUSA.com) is built for a specific purpose—proper

Just some of the great choices on the market for defensive .380 ammo. From top: Fiocchi 95-grain CovertX, Black Hills 60-grain Xtreme Defense (now Honey Badger), Hornady 90-grain Critical Defense, Federal 99-grain Hydra-Shok Deep, Federal 99-grain HST. (James Tarr)





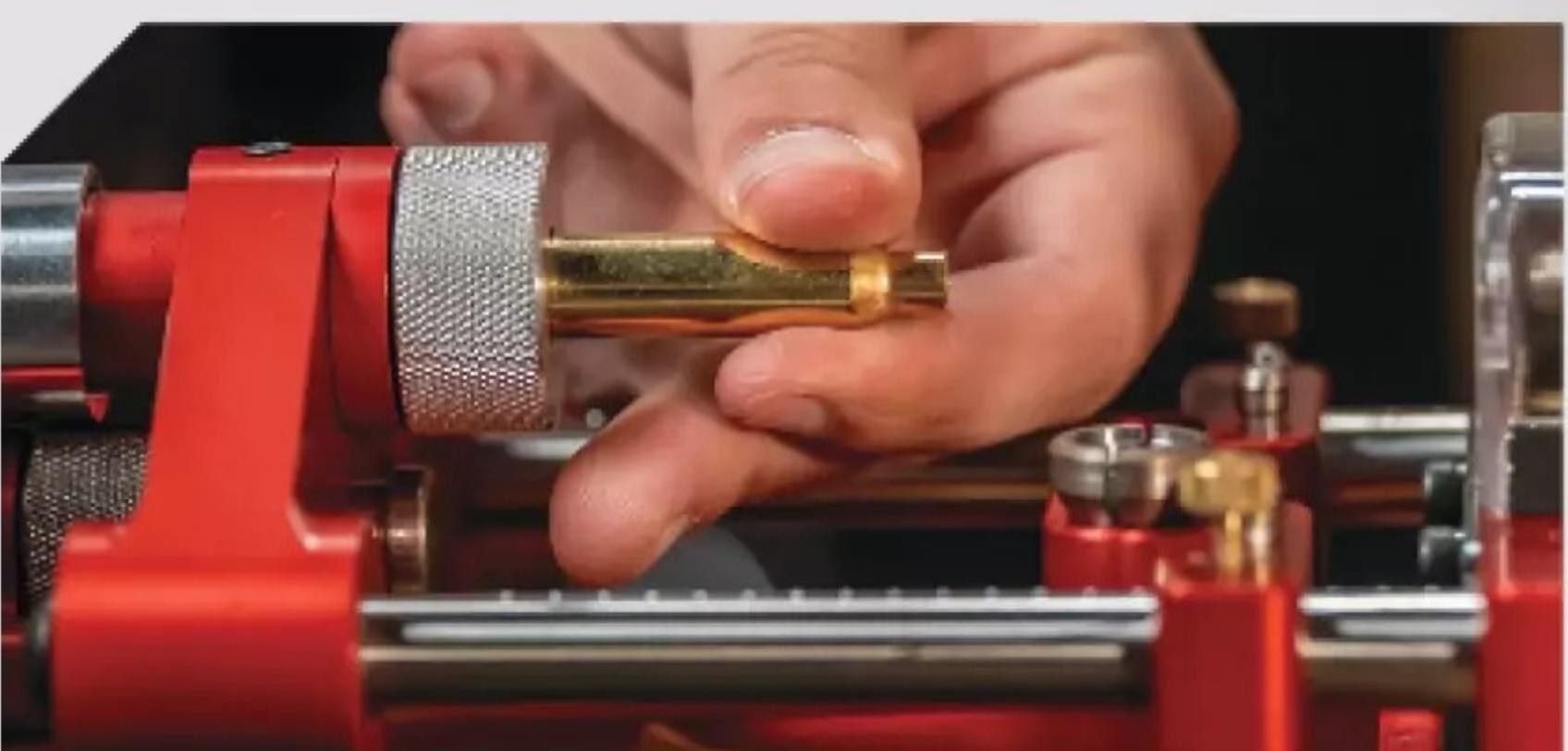
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Fiocchi's new CovertX line features a .380 load that performs even out of short barrels. Tarr fired this bullet out of the 2.75-inch barrel of the S&W Bodyguard 2.0 and it penetrated the gel block 11.5 inches and showed this perfect expansion. (James Tarr)

performance out of the shorter barrels (producing slower velocities) usually seen in concealed carry handguns. Fiocchi currently offers five different loads in their CovertX line, including a 95-grain .380 ACP at 1,015 fps. The bullets in the CovertX line have traditional construction—a copper jacket over a lead core—but their proprietary design is meant to ensure expansion at lower velocities.

The copper jackets are skived a short distance down the curve of the bullet, and that's where they'll peel apart/open upon impact. However, inside the cavity you'll find that the lead itself is serrated to more easily



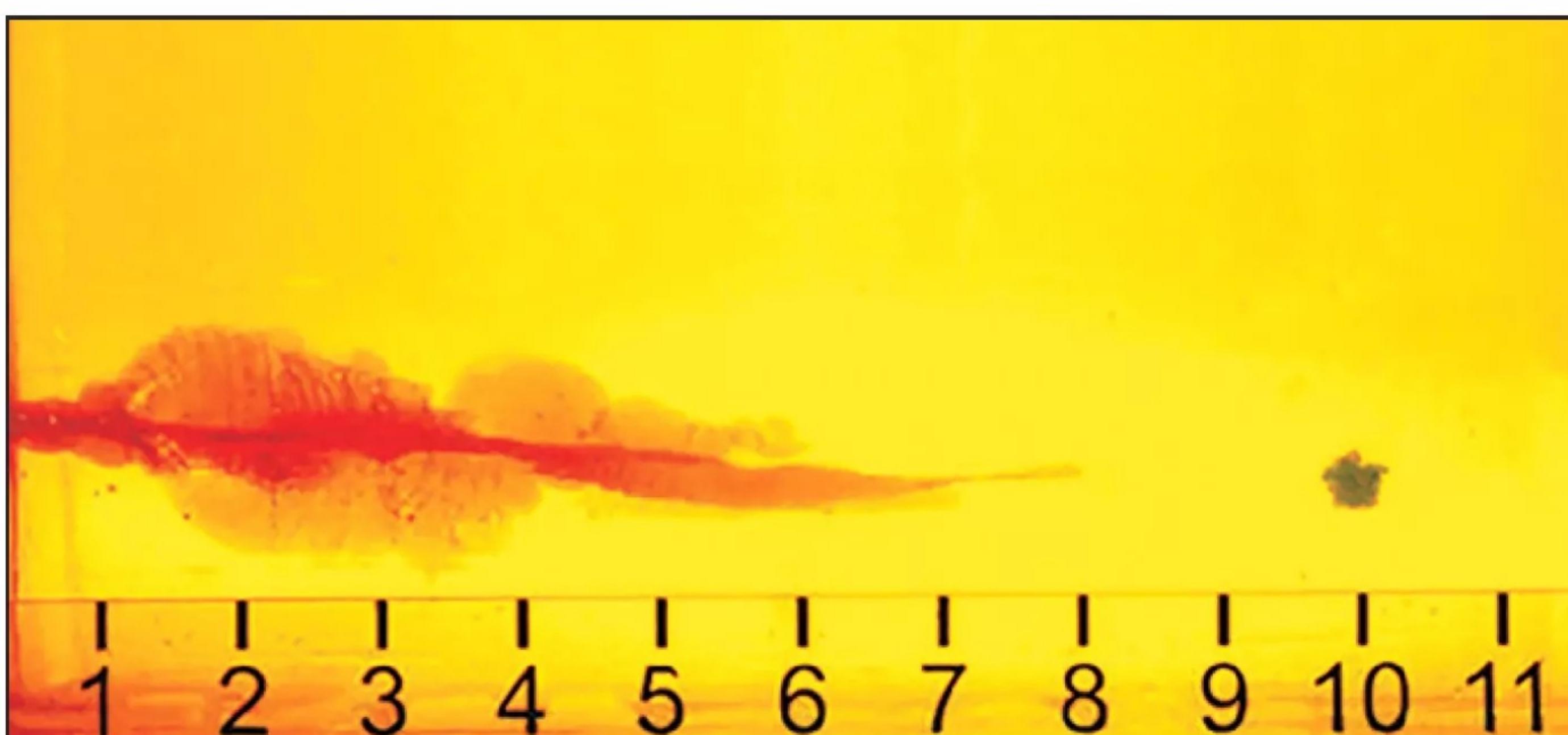
A gel test of Fiocchi's 95-grain .380 ACP CovertX. It penetrated the block ten inches and expanded significantly. (James Tarr)

spread apart with the jacket, ensuring expansion even at the slower velocities you'll see out of CCW guns.

I did some gel block testing of the Fiocchi load using the new S&W Bodyguard 2.0, which in my opinion is the best .380 on the market. It sports a 2.75-inch barrel, and out of that barrel the 95-grain bullet in Fiocchi's CovertX load produced a velocity of 853 fps. The bullet penetrated the Clear Ballistics block 11.5-inches (which is pretty typical for a .380) and provided beautiful, full, textbook expansion. Weight retention was 100%, and the bullet expanded to an average diameter of 0.52 of an inch. Recoil was very controllable.

Hornady Manufacturing

Hornady has two "Critical" lines, Critical Duty and Critical Defense. The Duty line is full power ammo meant for full-size guns, and designed to pass the tough FBI Ammunition Testing Protocol. The Critical Defense line, on the other hand, is loaded a bit softer, and meant specifically for smaller CCW guns. Hornady offers a 90-grain .380 ACP Critical Defense load, with an advertised velocity of 1,000 fps, although it will do significantly less than that out of real-world short barrels. The hollow point cavities in these FTX bullets have Hornady's rubber filling meant to ensure expansion when fired through



Hornady gel tested their Critical Defense .380 in true FBI-spec gel blocks. The bullet penetrated just over 10 inches and showed textbook expansion. (Hornady)



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Manufacturers use different methods to get their bullets to perform. Hornady stuffs the cavity in their Critical Defense bullets with polymer to initiate expansion. This is their 90-grain .380 bullet. (Hornady)

clothing. I've seen and done a number of gel tests of this load over the years and the bullets will do 850–900 fps out of most carry guns, penetrate gel blocks 10–12 inches, and expand fully, while having minimal recoil.

Federal Ammunition

In .380 ACP, Federal Ammunition has a number of excellent offerings, and I'll cover three: a 90-grain Hydra-Shok Low Recoil, a 99-grain Hydra-Shok Deep, and a 99-grain HST load. The Hydra-Shok was their premium hollowpoint design, introduced in the 1980s and since updated. The low recoil load features a 90-grain bullet at an advertised 1,000 fps (so reduce that by 10–15% out of

the average carry gun) and might be a good choice if you're recoil sensitive or carrying a very tiny/light pistol. The Hydra-Shok Deep variation is loaded with a tougher bullet that provides a little better penetration, in this case a 99-grain bullet at an advertised 975 fps. The HST is Federal's most modern JHP design and is as street-proven as any hollowpoint out there, and generally offers massive expansion, usually close to 2X diameter. The 99-grain .380 ACP HST has an advertised velocity of 935 fps.

Black Hills Ammunition

Black Hills Ammunition's 60-grain Honey Badger load is something completely different. I've mentioned

it before in these pages, as I'm a big fan. This is a light-for-caliber solid copper machined bullet loaded to an advertised 1,150 fps out of a 3 1/4-inch test barrel, and even at that velocity it has reduced recoil. This bullet is not designed to expand—rather, it has flutes machined into it that penetrate clothing very well and then shove the body's water-heavy tissues aside to create large temporary cavities. It usually penetrates a foot or more.

I know some people carry FMJ ammo in their carry guns, especially if that gun is something small or inexpensive like a .380 ACP. Any gun loaded with any ammo is better than no gun at all, but unless you're so poor you can't afford food you should pony up the \$\$ to buy a box of JHPs for your carry gun.

Just about all centerfire handgun ammunition is powerful enough to send a fully jacketed bullet all the way through a bad guy, even .380 ACP, but if that pointed bullet is zipping all the way through somebody without stopping, without hardly slowing down, it is transferring less energy, and that's not what you want—especially if you missed a vital organ. In a defensive shooting situation, whether you're a private citizen or a cop, you're not really shooting to kill, in fact you're shooting to *stop*. The best way to get this done fast is to hit them as hard as possible so that the bad guy stops doing bad things. That is the very purpose of a hollow point bullet. You owe it to yourself, and the people you might be protecting, to load your gun with the best ammo possible. **FN**



Two premium defensive loads for the .380 ACP that are completely different. On the left is Federal's 99-grain Hydra-Shok Deep, heavy and built for penetration, a traditional hollow point. On the right is Black Hills' Honey Badger, a light fast copper solid that doesn't expand at all. (James Tarr)

SOURCES

Black Hills Ammunition:
Black-Hills.com, (605) 348-5150

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

Fiocchi USA:
FiocchiUSA.com, (417) 449-1042

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

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IS HORNADY'S 6MM ARC THE BEST OF THE INTERMEDIATE CARTRIDGES?

According to statements from Hornady a few years back, a specialized entity within the Department of Defense ("cough" Delta Force) requested a cartridge with certain capabilities. We can deduce these as greater effective range and better exterior and terminal ballistics with increased penetration over the 5.56x45mm. Basically, it sounds like they were looking for the benefits of the 7.62x51mm but in a smaller and lighter package. The result of this request led to Hornady introducing the 6mm Advanced Rifle Cartridge, or ARC.

Hornady's 6mm ARC is based off another very popular design, the 6.5mm Grendel. The 6.5mm Grendel was developed for use in the AR-15 and makes sense as a parent cartridge. However, the 6mm ARC is not simply a necked down Grendel case with a 6mm bullet stuffed into it. The engineers at Hornady examined the 6.5mm Grendel cartridge case design, and then made some changes to optimize it for their specific application. So, it does share the same 0.441-inch diameter case-head with the 6.5mm Grendel, .220 Russian and 7.62x39mm.

The shoulder though has been moved back to facilitate loading very long for caliber 6mm projectiles. Shoulder angle is 30 degrees, case



Hornady's 6mm Advanced Rifle Cartridge is specifically designed to extend the range and improve the performance of an AR-15 rifle. (David M. Fortier)

length is 1.49 inches and it has an overall cartridge length of 2.26 inches. Max pressure is a mild 52,000 psi to ensure a 6mm ARC AR-15 has a long service life. The 6mm ARC also shares the thicker 0.059-inch rim of the 6.5mm Grendel which is significantly more robust than the 0.038-inch rim of the 5.56x45mm. This aids reliability. As they have the same case-head diameter, the 6mm ARC utilizes the same AR-15 bolt as the 6.5mm Grendel. These are readily available and of known quality.

The 6mm ARC is designed around modern 0.243-inch projectiles running from about 80 to 108 grains. It was specifically designed to utilize very long for caliber projectiles with very high Ballistic Coefficients to enhance exterior ballistics and maximize retained velocity and energy on target. By using very efficient

projectiles the 6mm ARC doesn't need to chase after muzzle velocity.

Let's take a quick look at this. For example, the Hornady 108-grain ELD-Match bullet has a G1 BC of .536. This is higher than either a traditional .308-inch 175-grain open-tip match (OTM) bullet (G1 .496) or a .224-inch 77-grain OTM (G1 .372). It is very close to Hornady's .224-inch 88-grain Extremely Low Drag (ELD) Match bullet, with a G1 BC of .545 as loaded into the .224 Valkyrie. The major advantages the 6mm ARC has over the .224 Valkyrie is a larger diameter and noticeably heavier payload delivered at a higher velocity.

Advertised velocity of the 6mm ARC 108-grain ELD Match load is 2,750 fps from a 24-inch barrel, but in the real world it will average about 2,660 fps from a 20-inch barrel, 2,600 fps from an 18-inch barrel, 2,530 fps cutting it back to 16-inches, and about 2,350 fps from a short 12-inch tube. While at initial glance the 12-inch barrel's velocity looks rather ho-hum, exterior ballistics are actually pretty good compared to traditional intermediate cartridges like the 7.62x39mm. The 6mm ARC is by no means a magnum, but it is an efficient cartridge for use in an AR-15.

How does it stack up compared to a 5.56x45mm Mk 262 Mod 1 77-grain



A look at how the 6mm ARC compares to other intermediate cartridges L to R: 5.45x39mm, 5.56x45mm, 6mm ARC, 7.92x33mm Kurz, 7.62x39mm, 300 AAC BLK and 6.5mm Grendel. (David M. Fortier)

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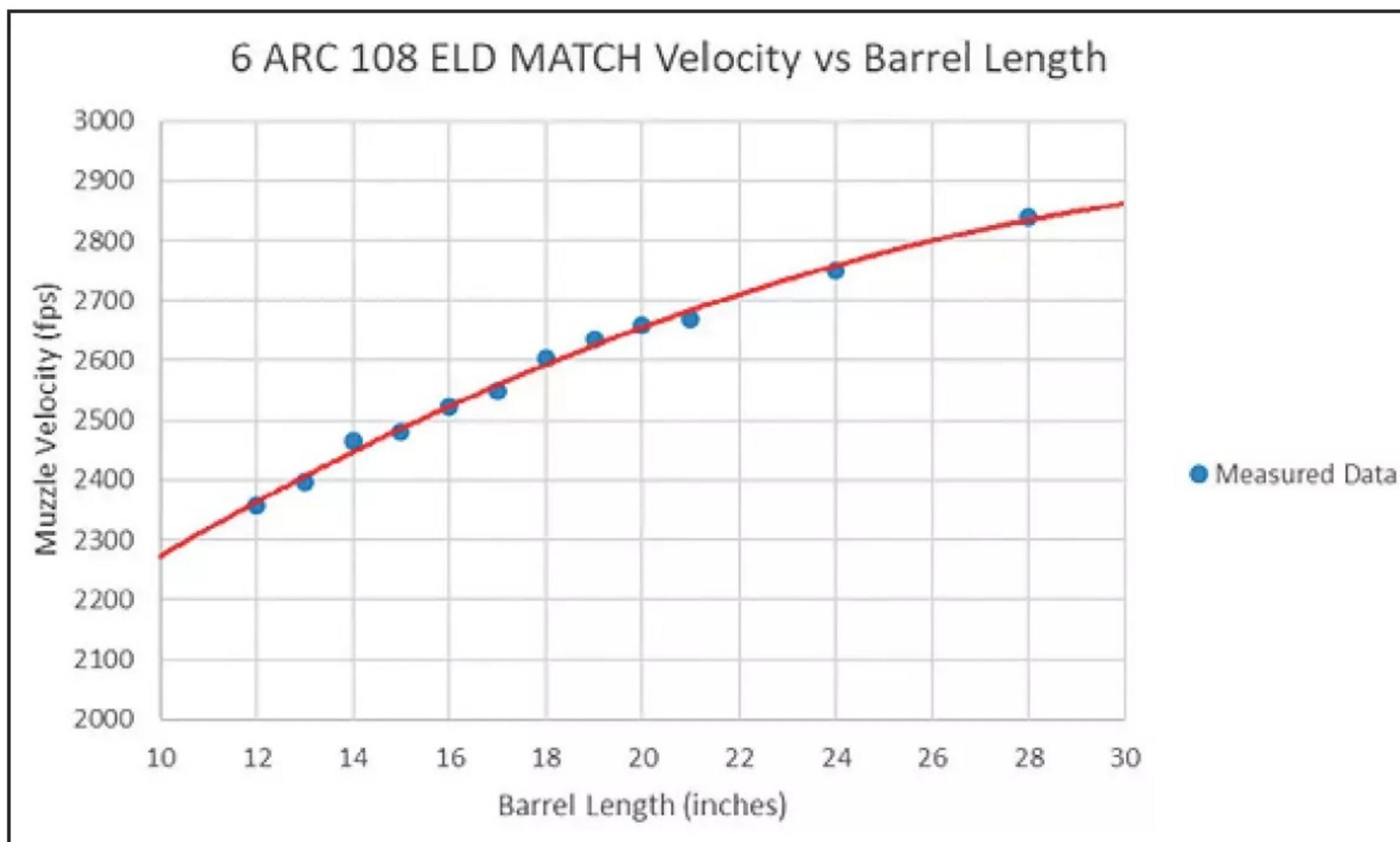
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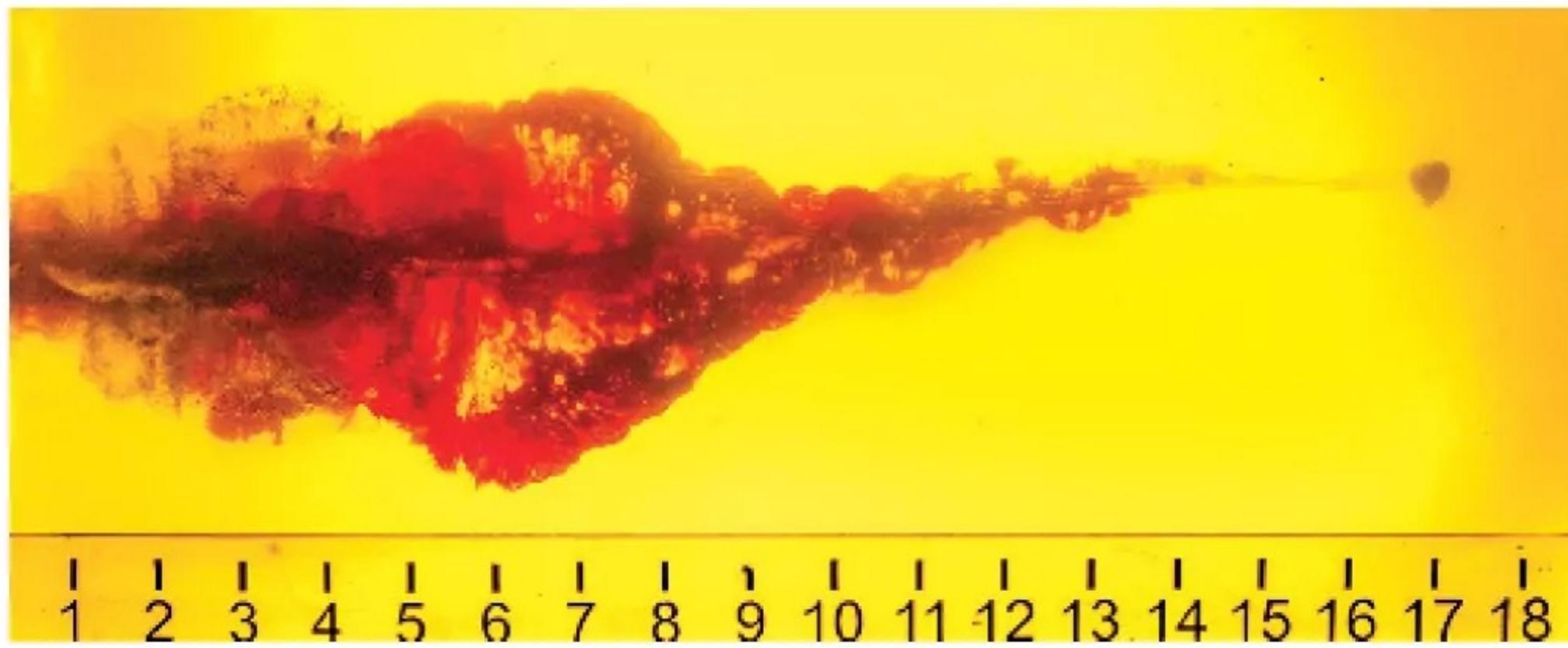
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◀ A look at how barrel length affects velocity of Hornady's 108-grain ELD Match load in 6mm ARC. (Chart courtesy of Hornady)

► One weakness shared with the 6.5mm Grendel is magazine reliability due to the internal dimensions of the STANAG magazine well. (David M. Fortier)



◀ Hornady's 106-grain TAP load expanded well while reaching a depth of approximately 17 inches in the FBI sheet metal barrier test. (Photo courtesy of Hornady)

OTM? The 6mm ARC's more efficient projectiles, with their high BCs provides superior exterior ballistics with noticeably less wind drift, higher retained velocity and greater retained energy. So, the 6mm ARC outperforms any magazine length 5.56x45mm NATO load simply through a combination of sheer horsepower and more efficient projectiles. As such, it will also outperform the Russian 5.45x39mm and Chinese 5.8x42mm.

What about compared to the .308 Winchester? As the 6mm ARC is a dramatically smaller cartridge than the .308 Winchester, at first glance you wouldn't think there would be any comparison at all, and in some respects (payload on target) there isn't. However, in some areas the 6mm ARC does dominate the .308 Winchester, or at least maintains parity.

As a cartridge is part of a weapons complex, everything must be taken into consideration. In this regard, the 6mm ARC neatly fits into a weapon platform that is dramatically smaller and lighter than a traditional AR-10 platform, required by the .308 Winchester. So, the weapon system is smaller and lighter,

more maneuverable and less fatiguing to carry. The ammunition is also dramatically lighter allowing more rounds to be carried/transported compared to a .308 Winchester platform. Recoil impulse is also significantly less than a .308 Winchester, allowing a rifleman to easily spot his own shots, while also decreasing his time between shots. All of these points increase a soldier's survivability on the modern battlefield.

Unfortunately, all is not roses though. One drawback to using the 6mm ARC in an AR-15 are the internal dimensions of the STANAG magazine well. This obviously dictates the cartridge's overall length, but in practice it does much more than that. As the width of the magazine well is not optimum for the diameter of the 6mm ARC cartridge, rounds do not stack perfectly. Due to this, they push out against the walls of the magazine more than desired. This leads to drag. Plus, they also push out on the feed lips, trying to spread them apart. Due to the 6mm ARC's case diameter being substantially larger than the 5.56x45mm, it also limits how thick the walls of the magazine can be. This in



turn limits the type of materials which can be utilized to construct magazines.

For commercial sales, the ability to fit a 6mm ARC magazine into any existing AR lower receiver is a selling point. However, while it works, it's a less than ideal solution, especially for military use. It should be noted the 6.5x38mm Grendel and 6.8x43mm Rem SPC suffer from similar issues. The optimum solution is to cast aside the standard 5.56x45mm AR lower receiver and to design a magazine well specifically for the 6mm ARC cartridge. I even proposed this idea to Alexander Arms regarding their 6.5x38mm Grendel many years ago. This is exactly what LWRCI did about 13 years ago with their SIX8 family of 6.8x43mm Rem SPC weapons. It also appears to be the solution Surefire and Magpul came up with for Surefire's 6mm ARC Intermediate Combat Assault Rifle (ICAR).

Overall, I like Hornady's 6mm ARC cartridge. I think it offers definite advantages over traditional intermediate cartridges. In the hunting field it works well and my friend Jack Oller, the Managing Editor at our sister title *Guns & Ammo*, has used it effectively on 200+ pound pigs and good-sized white-tail deer. A definite downside to the 6mm ARC is the current lack of economical training/plinking ammunition. Hopefully this changes in the future. While not perfect, the 6mm ARC brings some interesting things to the intermediate cartridge table, making it a contender to consider. **FN**

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HI-LUX OPTIC'S PR5 5-25X56MM

Whether for Competition, Long Range Shooting, Western Hunting or Plinking This Impressive Scope Delivers!

As someone who has professionally tested riflescopes for almost 30 years now, I have to say the improvement in recent years of both their design and build quality has been simply incredible. Over the last two decades, partially due to the Global War on Terror, riflescopes have continually become more user friendly and effective as a system to put rounds on target. Daylight illumination speeds making hits under a variety of lighting conditions while modern reticle designs aid shooters in ranging and ballistic/lead compensation. In conjunction with this, magnification ranges have also been pushed to the absolute limits of current technology.

Lens coating technology, especially hydrophobic coatings, has been improved and today fully multi-coated lens are the norm. Lens quality, their design, and the materials used in their construction has also been improved. Sealing, especially on variable power scopes, is substantially better and internal mechanics have been refined and become more robust. This increase in



Hi-Lux Optics' PR5 5-25x56mm FFP is a very impressive flagship scope packed with features and performance for a reasonable price. (David Fortier)

quality and performance is not limited to the most expensive brands either. Perhaps the best part of this increase in technology is the trickledown effect for the average shooter. Many reasonably priced scopes today offer performance and features not available on even the most expensive scopes 25 years ago. We are currently in what I consider the Golden Age of riflescopes.

An excellent example of this is Hi-Lux Optics' flagship scope, their PR5 5-25x56mm seen here. A thoroughly modern design, the PR5 showcases not only Hi-Lux's design and manufacturing prowess but also their understanding of what the modern precision rifleman demands for features in a riflescope. Riflemen today are incredibly



The Hi-Lux Optics PR5 is a large scope at 16 inches in length and a 40-ounce weight, but it packs a lot of performance in its size. (David Fortier)

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Magnification runs from 5x up to 25x and a fast focus eye piece is fitted, note the magnification throw lever is included in the box. (David Fortier)



The adjustment turrets are very large, feature a zero stop, and positive audible and tactile 0.1 MRAD adjustment clicks. Internal elevation adjustment range is 32 mils. (David Fortier)

fussy when it comes to which model they will fork out their hard earned cash for. They will not even consider a scope which lacks the reticle style or turret design they desire. They simply click to a different manufacturer's website. The PR5 was designed to compete with the big dogs to give today's rifleman what he wants in a precision riflescope.

To learn more about this model, I contacted Hi-Lux Optics directly. The company was founded by John Wu and today his son Christopher is their Marketing Director. Chris is an avid outdoorsman and shooter who literally grew up in the optics and firearms industries, and he filled me in on the development and design: "The PR5 5-25x56mm has been a passion project for my father and I at Hi-Lux since day one. We set out to build the kind of scope we'd want to use on our own rifles — something that combines clarity, rock-solid tracking, and durability, all without compromise. We went with an APO objective using a three-element design — a doublet paired with an aspherical lens — to significantly reduce chromatic aberration and improve image resolution. The result is a crisp, high-resolution sight picture that makes spotting impacts, reading mirage, and trace much easier, even in harsh light or low-contrast conditions.

We also made it a point to bring the parallax focus down to 10 yards. With the growing popularity of air rifle and NRL22-style competitions, we wanted to allow the PR5 scope to cater to their needs and requirements as well. Mechanically, we've probably overbuilt this scope. The main tube is CNC machined from solid 7075-T6 bar stock — not extruded — giving it excellent tensile strength and fatigue resistance. That's not something you often see at this price point. Internally, the turrets components are stainless steel. The clicks are super tactile and the elevation turret also has a multi-turn zero stop."

All this sounded great, so I was interested to see how the big Hi-Lux PR5 would actually perform. To find out, testing was conducted over a period of months, and it was used to engage targets out to 1,000 yards, and for observing out to 1,500 yards. Multiple shooters, including two PRS competitors, used it in a wide variety of lighting conditions and provided feedback on its performance. I wanted to provide as clear a picture as possible on its capabilities.

Built on a 34mm one-piece tube turned from 7075-T6 bar stock, the PR5 features magnification running from 5x up to 25x and it has a large 56mm objective lens with ED glass.

The adjustment turrets are very large, feature a zero stop, and positive audible and tactile 0.1 MRAD adjustment clicks. Internal elevation adjustment range is 32 mils. A parallax knob on the left side of the mechanism block allows adjustment from 10 yards to infinity. Reticle illumination is controlled by two buttons to the rear of the parallax knob.

The TRACR reticle design is delineated in mils. Located in the first focal plane, this design sports a very fine center dot and hold points for elevation and windage/lead. The 3 and 9 o'clock center stadia each feature 8 mils which are broken down with 0.2 mil marks for the inner 6 mils and 0.1 mil marks for the outer 2 mils. The bottom portion of the reticle features a windage tree with 20 mils for elevation holds. This section features dots and + marks for windage holds. Dots indicate 0.2 mils while the + marks indicate full mils.

From a user's standpoint, it's big. Measuring about 16 inches long and weighing in at 40 ounces it's no lightweight. Size-wise it is similar to, but five ounces lighter than my Vortex 6-36x56mm Razor HD Gen III, but without the sticker price shock. It's a user friendly design with its big turrets, easy to read markings, and it zooms

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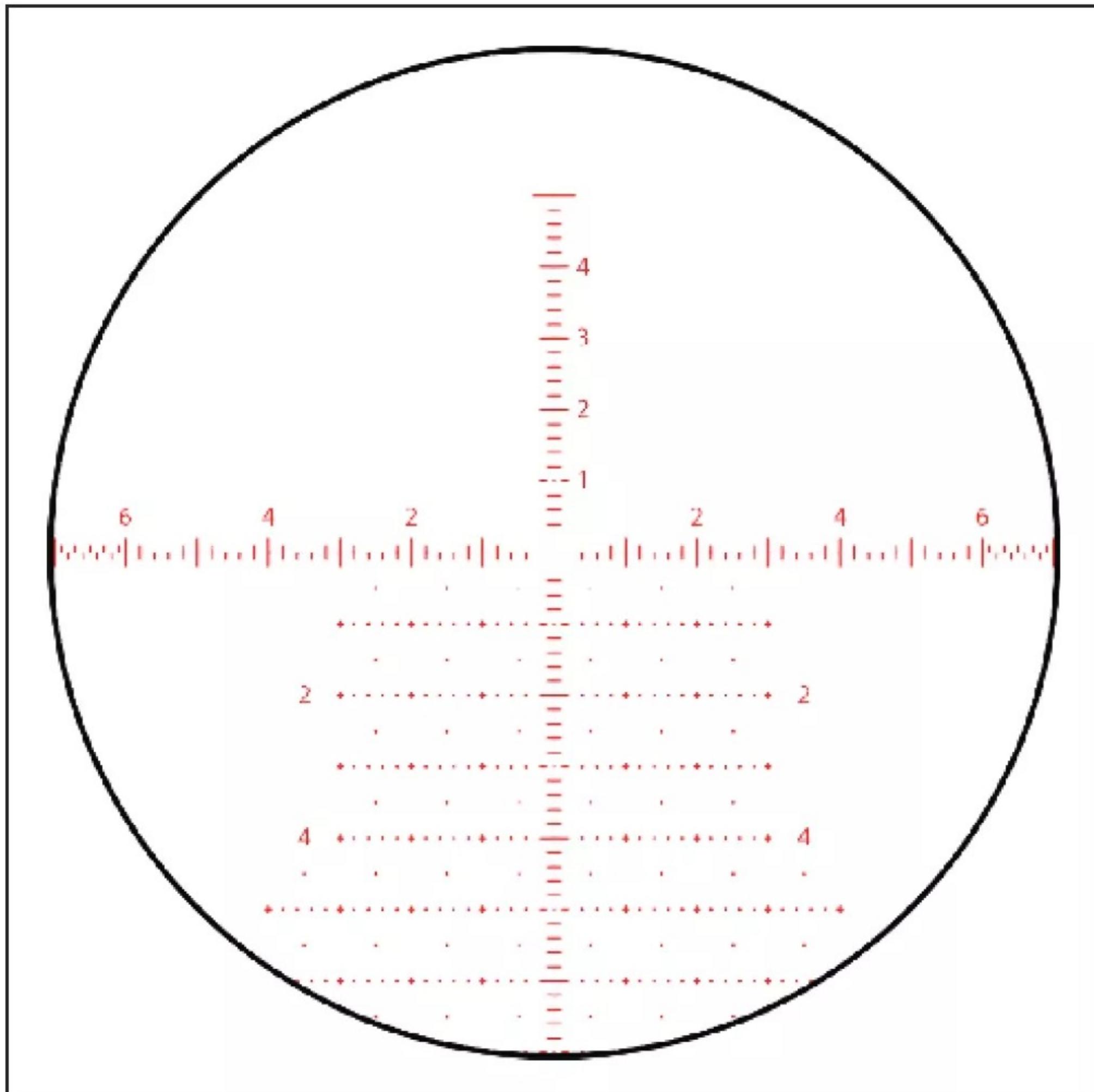


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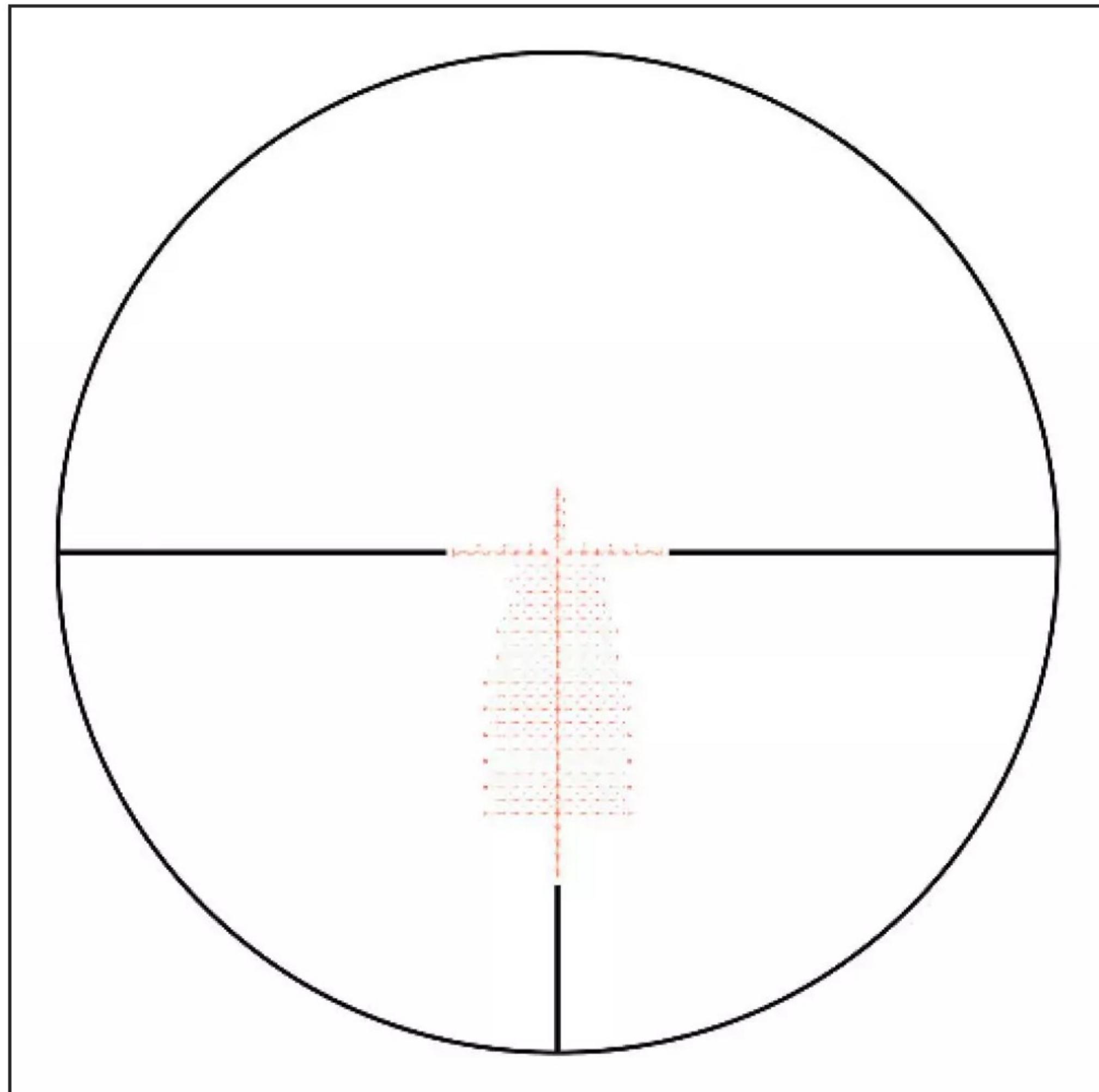
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A look at the TRACR reticle at 25x.
(Image courtesy Hi-Lux Optics)



TRACR reticle with the magnification reduced to 5x.
(Image courtesy Hi-Lux Optics)

smoothly. All in all, it looks, feels, and functions like a flagship optic.

A .22 LR and a 5.56x45mm allowed me to fire a large number of groups economically while checking the scope's adjustments and tracking. Zero issues were encountered, the big Hi-Lux Optics PR5 tracks properly. I did quite a bit of shooting as the sun set and the light faded away to darkness. Here the PR5 impressed me with its light transmission. I was able to shoot some very good groups at distance in low light by dialing the magnification back.

Submerging the scope underwater for one hour had no negative effect, and the PR5 shrugged off a steam bath as well. A week spent in a freezer posed no issue mechanically. During the higher temps of summer, especially with a hot barrel, magnification needs to be dialed back due to mirage. This is to be expected.

Even cranked all the way up, the image quality and resolution of the PR5 is very good. Everyone who used it commented on how good the image quality of the PR5 is. Resolution is very good and thanks to the ED glass the image is bright and

color rendition is accurate. Plus, the optical design is fairly forgiving to eye placement.

Negatives? I found the parallax knob to be rather stiff and it took more effort than I would prefer when making fine adjustments. Also, when looking into piercing sunlight glare (specular reflection) off the large 56mm lens can be an issue. However, the simple fix for this is the sunshade included in the box. Use it.

On the positive side, the locking turrets are great, easy to zero, and precise. The illumination system works well and is night vision compatible. I like the TRACR reticle and found it fast and easy to use. Optical performance is very good, in a variety of lighting conditions. With an MSRP of \$849, it is economically priced considering its features and performance, but not cheap. If you are looking for a rifle scope in this magnification

range for use on a precision rifle then the Hi-Lux Optics' PR5 5-25x56mm FFP is one to consider. **FN**

SPECIFICATIONS

HI-LUX OPTICS' PR5 5-25X56MM FFP SCOPE

Magnification Range:	5-25x
Focal Plane:	First Focal Plane
Reticle:	TRACR (MRAD)
Body Tube Diameter:	34mm
Overall Length:	16 in.
Weight:	40 oz.
Click Value:	0.1 MRAD
Adjustment Range:	Elevation 32 MRAD
Zero Stop:	Yes
Illumination:	Yes, powered by CR2032 battery
Eye Relief:	3.5 in.
FOV at 100 Yards:	5x: 24 ft., 25x: 4.8 ft.
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The American 180 .22LR submachine gun is one of the most unusual tactical weapons ever created. (Will Dabbs)

THE AMERICAN 180 RIMFIRE SUBMACHINE GUN

Swarms of Angry Bees

Dick Casull was born in 1931. While names like Colt, Glock, Luger, Ingram, and Browning are burned into the lexicon, that of Dick Casull remains a bit more obscure. However, Casull was nonetheless a gifted and influential designer.

Casull's forte was big bore cartridge development. He expanded the classic .45 Colt into the behemoth .454 Casull and then crafted his own enormous single-action revolver to fire it. He also designed the first adorable little

stainless steel mini-revolvers that eventually morphed into the tiny pistols offered by North American Arms today. Along the way, Dick Casull also dabbled in some pretty exotic rimfire long guns.

Source Material

Dick Casull designed the semi-auto Casull 290 .22LR rifle in the early 1960's. The gun fed from a 290-round top-mounted drum magazine in the manner of the Lewis machinegun.

However, these weapons were expensive and a bit awkward at a time when conventional semi-auto .22 rifles were both ubiquitous and cheap. They only made 87 copies. Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos bought one. Casull then crafted an open-bolt, selective-fire version of the gun that found some legs.

In 1972, the \$200 transfer tax on a transferable machinegun was the modern-day equivalent of about



Dick Casull helped develop the adorable little North American Arms mini revolvers that seem so ubiquitous today. (Will Dabbs)



The Thompson influence is fairly obvious. The American 180 is quite compact with the buttstock removed. (Will Dabbs)

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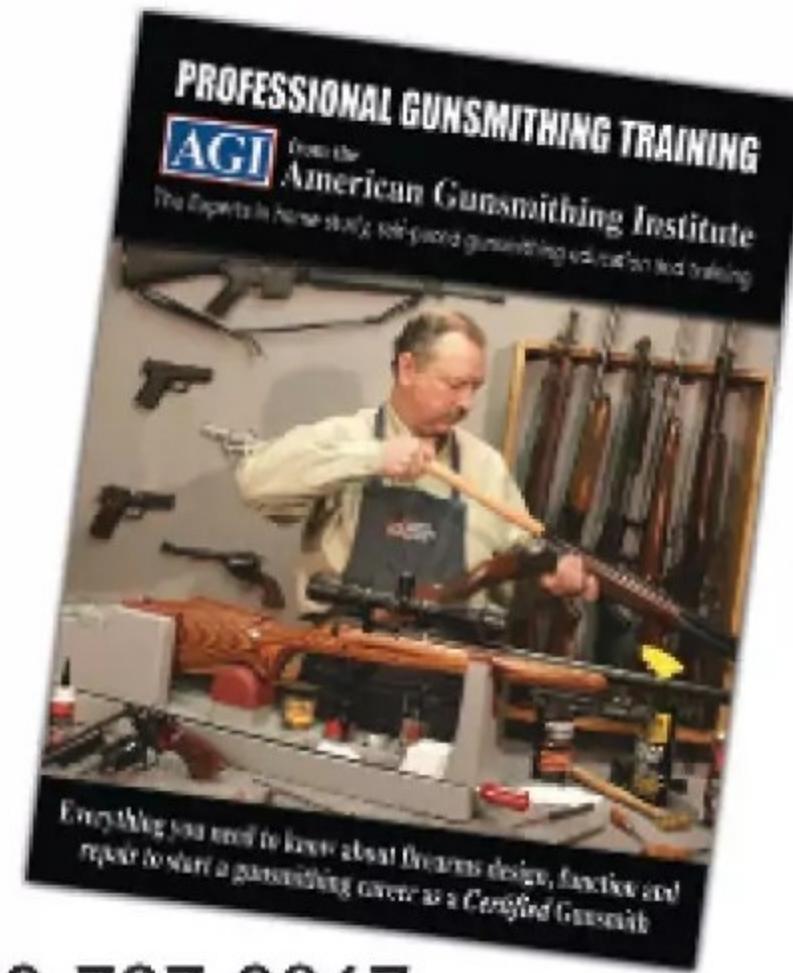
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Early examples of the American 180 SMG were made by Voere in Austria. (Will Dabbs)

\$1,550. As a result, there was no market for civilian automatic weapons. However, the 1960's seemed apocalyptic. By the 1970's, law enforcement (LE) agencies were gearing up for civil unrest and domestic terrorism. The cop market for serious full-auto weapons was subsequently doing fairly well. Somebody somewhere thought a drum-fed full auto .22 rifle might be just the ticket for LE use.

Production Guns

Production was farmed out to Voere in Austria. Imported machineguns could not be sold to individuals, but they were fair game for American LE agencies. In 1972, the American Arms Company headquartered in Utah began production domestically and christened this unconventional rimfire machinegun the American 180. Their marketing angle was novel.

These open-bolt guns were selective fire via a simple crossbolt. The safety

was a separate rotating switch. They fed from a steel 177-round pan magazine that was driven by a removable, spring-powered winder. The company offered the 180 in .22LR as well as a proprietary .22 Winchester Short Magnum Rimfire cartridge. There were supposedly not more than a million rounds of .22 WSMR ever produced.

While courting the military and LE market, the company also offered the guns in both twin and quad mounts that would fire off of a standard M2 tripod, which is just crazy. The American 180 was also one of the first handheld weapons to be offered with a laser sight. This bulky Laser Lok Helium-Neon gas laser fit in lieu of the forearm and would run for about two hours on a battery. Curiously, the sight could also be plugged into wall power for protracted use in prisons. The Utah Department of Corrections bought several for use by their prison guards.

Practicalities

One .22 LR round seems a bit underwhelming, but 177 of them delivered in a continuous burst is something else entirely. The American 180's utter lack of recoil allowed exceptional accuracy. The company advertised that a seasoned operator could put 177 rounds through a three-inch hole at 20 meters. Promotional



The top-mounted drum magazine is the American 180's most distinctive feature. This original steel version packs 177 rounds of .22LR onboard. (Will Dabbs)



The controls are easily mastered, but the ergonomics are suboptimal. The safety is located on the right side of the receiver. The nubbin behind the safety is the crossbolt fire selector. (Will Dabbs)

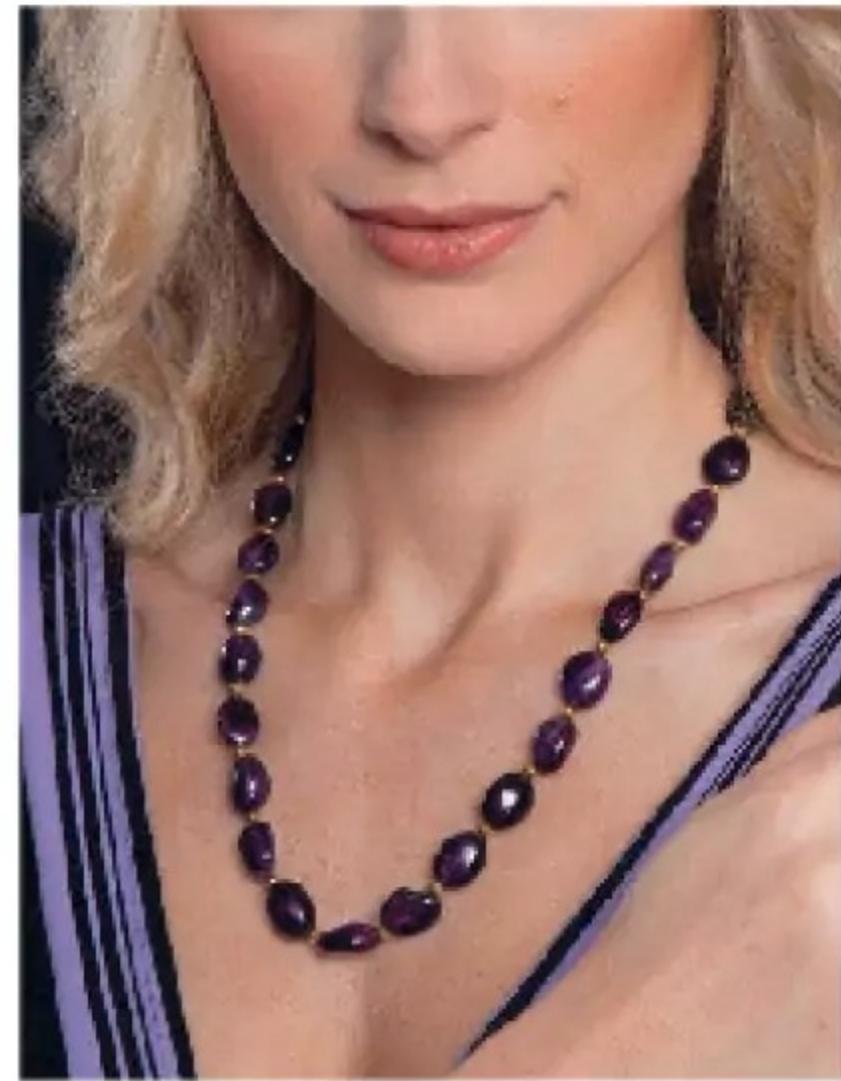


Google states that SD DCI stands for South Dakota Department of Criminal Investigations. (Will Dabbs)

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◀ The American 180 is a crazy fun gun to shoot. (Will Dabbs)

videos showed the gun chewing through car doors and cinder blocks, though that obviously presupposes a pretty cooperative target.

A good many American 180's did make their way into LE armories, and the Rhodesian SAS used a few. That laser dot sweeping from the wall of a prison was undoubtedly motivational. In 1979, Rhodesian SAS operators successfully engaged FRELIMO terrorists at close range with their 180's during an operation in Mozambique. Legendary actor Steve McQueen owned a copy, and a similar gun produced in Slovenia was titled the MGV-176.

There was one documented case of cops using the American 180 as intended. In November of 1974, Officers Mike Gilo and Gary Jones, of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, were chasing a pair of violent criminals in a Chevrolet Camaro. The passenger produced a handgun and fired. Gilo responded by unleashing a roughly forty-round burst into the back window of the suspects' car while Jones engaged with his 12-gauge shotgun loaded with buckshot. The 12-bore failed to connect, but the 180 found meat. The passenger was fatally ventilated, while the driver was apprehended later suffering from multiple .22-caliber gunshot wounds. In the 1970's, apparently there



Put down your pitchforks. This is one of the very few places on Planet Earth where it is actually safe to shoot into the water. The backstop is a 65-foot, tree-covered bluff. (Will Dabbs)



That lever on the winder motor controls a clutch that keeps things locked in place until you are ready to shoot. (Will Dabbs)

kurz *adj.* Deutsch. 1a. A comparatively short length.
1b. **Kompakt.**



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◀ The non-reciprocating charging handle is located on the left side of the receiver. (Will Dabbs)

► The American 180 is a curious footnote in the pantheon of 20th century small arms. (Will Dabbs)



were not quite so many trial attorneys as there are today.

Trigger Time

Shooting the American 180 is an experience unlike any other. There is literally no appreciable recoil. The gun is reputed to cycle at around 1,200 rpm, though I'd put it faster than that. The mechanism is simple, but it gunks up quickly. The weapon has to be cleaned frequently for reliable operation.

On the subject of magazines, loading those bad boys is the very definition of tedium. Each round has to be positioned individually. No kidding, it takes me more than ten minutes just to get 177 rounds stacked into the drum. You then engage the removable winder that powers the action. A clutch lever will keep the winder powered until the drum is in place on the gun. Releasing the clutch while the magazine is off of the weapon will spontaneously spit all of your rounds out onto the floor. As me how I know this.

Ruminations and Collecting

Production of full auto guns ceased with the machinegun ban of 1986. Sem-auto versions followed, but never really caught on. However, Editor-in-Chief of *Firearms News*, Vincent DeNiro sold them in his gun store in the late 1980s.

Nowadays, E&L Manufacturing (ELMfg.com) still offers parts and magazines. Their magazines are polymer and pack either 165, 200, or 275 rounds onboard. They all use

the same winder mechanism. As the drums protrude prominently above the action, larger drums require elevated sights for accurate operation. E&L offers threaded barrel assemblies, and the American 180 is adorable with a sound suppressor installed. However, the open bolt design is fairly ammo sensitive. Reliable operation with subsonic ammo demands an underpowered recoil spring.

According to MachinegunPriceGuide.com, the American 180 was averaging about \$10,000 apiece back in 2004. There were only about 10,000 copies produced in total, and relatively few of those made it into the pool of civilian transferable machineguns. The novel nature of the design also demands a premium. These same guns will bring around \$24,000 today.

Curiously, the gun we reviewed for this project is an Austrian-made transferable. Between 1968 and 1986, imported machineguns could be transferred to licensed machinegun dealers as sales samples. These guns are called "Pre-86 Dealer Samples." They can be freely transferred between dealers but not to individuals. Dealer samples made after 1986 can also be transferred to a licensed dealer, but only with a request letter from a LE agency. Yeah, it really is pretty complicated.

In 2024, BATF decided that pre-86 imported ma-

chineguns that originally went directly to LE agencies without having been dealer samples were now transferable to individuals. Depending upon what you read, this affected between 1,200 and 4,000 guns. This particular Austrian-made American 180 apparently served with an LE agency and subsequently met the criteria for inclusion.

The American 180 is great fun to run, but a massive pain to service. It is disheartening to spend half an hour cleaning and loading a weapon only to empty the magazine in four seconds. However, those four seconds are admittedly pretty freaking awesome. If you're patient and like loading magazines, the American 180 is the rimfire MG you can use to write your name in the backstop. Noting else really even comes close. **FN**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

AMERICAN 180 M-2

Caliber:	.22 LR
Finish:	Black Paint
Barrel Length:	17.5 in.
Overall Length:	35.5 in.
Weight (Empty):	5.7 lbs. (10 lbs. with a loaded 177-round drum)
Operating System:	Open-bolt blowback
Selector:	Semi-automatic, full-automatic
Magazine Capacity:	165, 177, 220, and 275
Cyclic Rate:	1,200 rpm
Sights:	Fixed Blade Front, Adjustable Rear
Value:	\$24,000



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1918. A group of French soldiers. The Poilu in front is holding a Fusil automatique Modèle 1917 while his comrade is armed with a Fusil Mitrailleur Modèle 1915 CSRG, more commonly known as the "Chauchat."
(Paul Scarlata collection)

LE FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE MODÈLE 1917

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France shocked the military authorities of the day when they announced the general issue of the Fusil d'Infanterie Modèle 1886, the famous "Lebel" rifle, firing the revolutionary, smokeless powder 8mm Balle M cartridge.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the French high command realized that the Lebel had been rendered obsolete and embarked upon a secret, long term plan to develop a semi-automatic rifle, using a rimless cartridge.

The Fusil Meunier A6 (a.k.a. Fusil semiautomatique Modèle 1916), chambered for a rimless 7mm cartridge, was tentatively adopted in 1910 it proved incapable of standing up to the rigors of combat. When

8mm Lebel" cartridge (L to R): 8mm balle M, 8mm balle D and 8mm balle N. Beginning with the 8mm balle D, a groove around the inside edge of the rim prevented bullet/primer contact in the Lebel's tubular magazine.
(Becky Scarlata photo)



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The Fusil semiautomatique Modèle 1916 proved not overly reliable.



The Fusil automatique Modèle 1917 was the first semiautomatic military rifle to be used in large numbers. (Courtesy of Rock Island Auction Co.)



Close up of the Modèle 1917's receiver shows the large bolt handle, full-length opening in the receiver, the bolt hold open catch, exposed operating rod and bulbous magazine housing. (Courtesy of Rock Island Auction Co.)



A rotating safety catch was located on the left side of the receiver. (Courtesy of Rock Island Auction Co.)



The Modèle 1917's bolt had six interrupted screw type locking lugs. (Nathan Reynolds photo)

WWI erupted, most French soldiers were still armed with the Lebel, supplemented with some clip loading Berthier carbines and rifles.

The Fusil semiautomatique Modèle 1915 CSRG rifle was provisionally adopted, but proved to be a failure,

and in 1917, the high command approved the issue of the Fusil Automatique Modèle 1917.

The Modèle 1917 was a gas operated rifle chambered for the 8mm balle D cartridge. It was developed by the design team of Monsieurs Chauchat, Sutter, and Ribeyrolles. The same who were “responsible” for the, Fusil Mitrailleur Modèle 1916 CSRG, the “Chauchat.”

Modèle 1917s utilized the Lebel’s stock, sights, fittings, barrel and the bayonet of the Modèle 1916 Berthier.

A long, tubular upper receiver housed the bolt and had a slot for the bolt handle to reciprocate in, which would prove to be a major design fault as it allowed dirt and debris to enter the action of the rifle. A threaded cap at the rear of the receiver permitted removal of bolt for cleaning and maintenance.

The upper receiver was welded to a rectangular lower section, which contained a simple trigger mechanism with a single coil spring serving as both the hammer and trigger springs. Rotating a safety lever on the left side of the receiver forward blocked the hammer while a bolt hold open catch was located on the right side. A gas cylinder under the barrel contained a gas piston and spring. The piston

was attached to a flat operating rod, which was exposed on the right side of the receiver and was connected to the bolt handle.

Upon firing, as the bullet passed the gas port near the front of the barrel, a small amount of gas was bled off, which pushed the piston/operating rod unit rearward, compressing the operating spring and pushing the bolt to the rear. The two-part bolt head had six, interrupted screw-style locking lugs and a shaft at its rear with dual cams, which was inserted into helical channels in the bolt carrier. As the bolt carrier moved rearward, these cams rotated the bolt head, unlocking it from mortises in the receiver, extracting and ejecting the spent cartridge case.

The stamped steel magazine housing contained a spring-loaded follower and was hinged to the bottom of the receiver and gave the rifle a distinctive “pregnant guppy” silhouette. In operation, the magazine housing was pulled down, compressing the follower. A five-round clip was inserted into the bottom of the receiver and the magazine housing closed, releasing the follower so it could push rounds up so they could be picked up by the forward moving bolt.

There was no automatic bolt hold open device. So, after the last shot was fired, it had to be retracted and released each time a new clip was inserted into the rifle. The bolt hold-open catch on the right side of the receiver had to be manually pushed up



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The five-round clip used in the Modèle 1917 (L) and that used in the Modèle 1916 Berthier and semiauto Modèle 1918 rifles. (Nathan Reynolds photo)



The Modèle 1917's magazine housing was opened, a five-round clip inserted into the bottom of the receiver and the housing closed. (Nathan Reynolds photo)

to enter with a notch in the operating rod holding the bolt back.

Production commenced in April, 1917 at a number of arsenals: Manufacture Nationale d'Armes Tulle (MAT) produced the receiver, barrel and trigger

guard; Manufacture Nationale d'Armes de Châtellerault (MAC) made the trigger mechanism; Manufacture Nationale d'Armes de St-Etienne (MAS) was the source of the bolt, bolt carrier, piston, gas cylinder, stock and additional barrels; lastly, a private company, Manufacture d'Armes de Paris (a subsidiary of Fabrique Nationale) produced the bolt handle, magazine housing and follower assembly.

Except for a few hundred rifles assembled at MAC, all of the 85,333 Modèle 1917s were assembled at MAS.

The French army realized that with the pressures of the war, it would be impossible to reequip the whole army with the Modèle 1917 and the plan was to issue sixteen rifles per company to platoon leaders and selected marksmen.

Field service showed the Modèle 1917 still had issues. Debris entering the receiver caused continual functioning problems. In addition, the primers of the 8mm Balle D cartridge

frequently backed out jamming the rotating bolt. The clip proved prone to bending while the numerous small parts of the bolt broke with alarming regularity. Lastly, the violent operation of the gas system tended to damage the stock and loosen metal parts. The latter problem was solved, to a degree, by the installation of a gas regulating screw, but soldiers often tended to overcompensate when adjusting it resulting in insufficient power to operate the rifle. A special cartridge was developed — the 8mm balle D (a m) (amorçage modifié — modified primer), which had the primer crimped in place.

The Modèle 1917's length and weight made it poorly suited to the conditions of trench warfare. Trials were conducted with Modèle 1917s having shorter barrels proved successful and in 1918 the improved Mousqueton (short rifle) automatique Modèle 1918 was adopted. It was almost ten inches shorter and approximately a pound lighter and featured sheet metal dust covers that could be rotated over the bolt handle slot, a catch that automatically held the bolt open when the magazine was empty, modified bolt, gas system was strengthened, and it used the stronger



1918. A group of French Poilus. The soldiers kneeling second and third from the right are armed with Fusils automatique Modèle 1917 with dust covers protecting the receivers. (Paul Scarlata collection)



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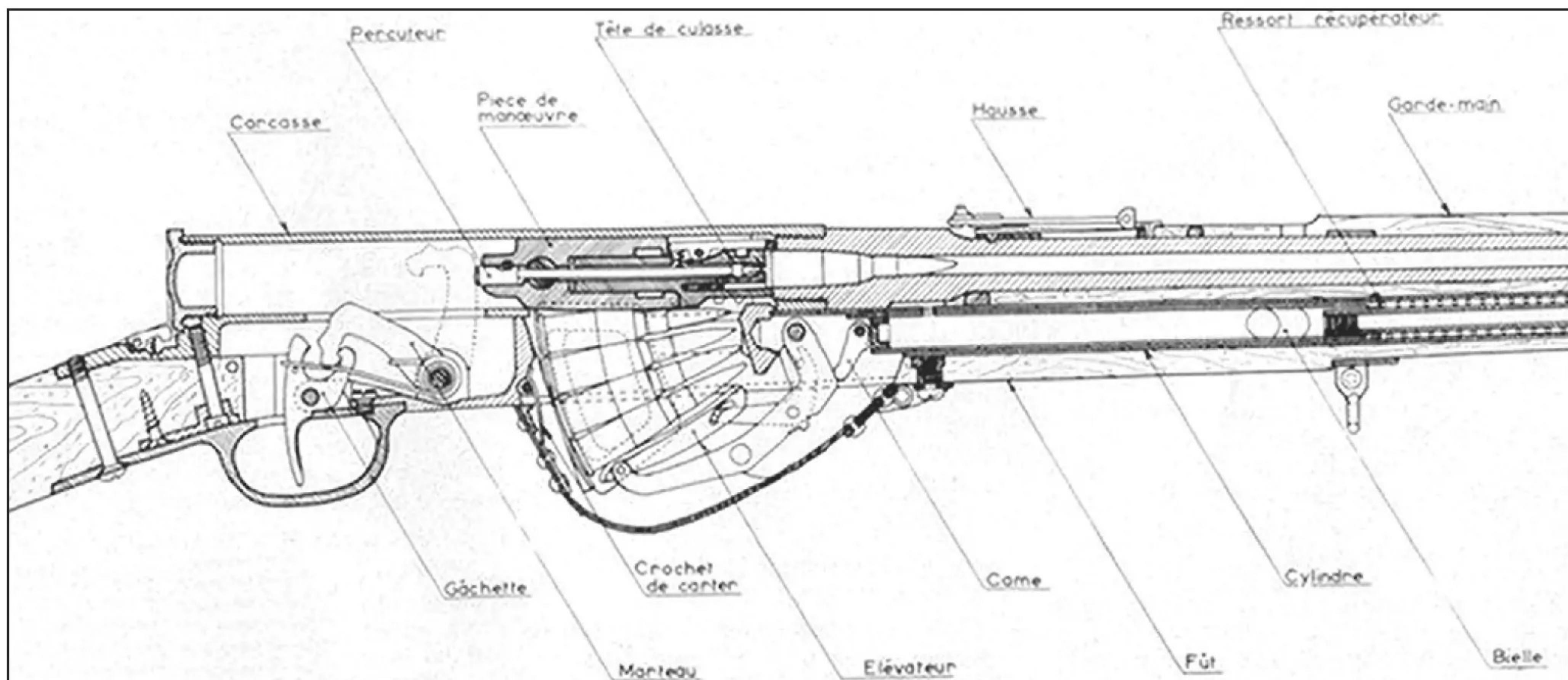
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A cutaway view of the receiver and magazine of the Modèle 1917. (Paul Scarlata collection)

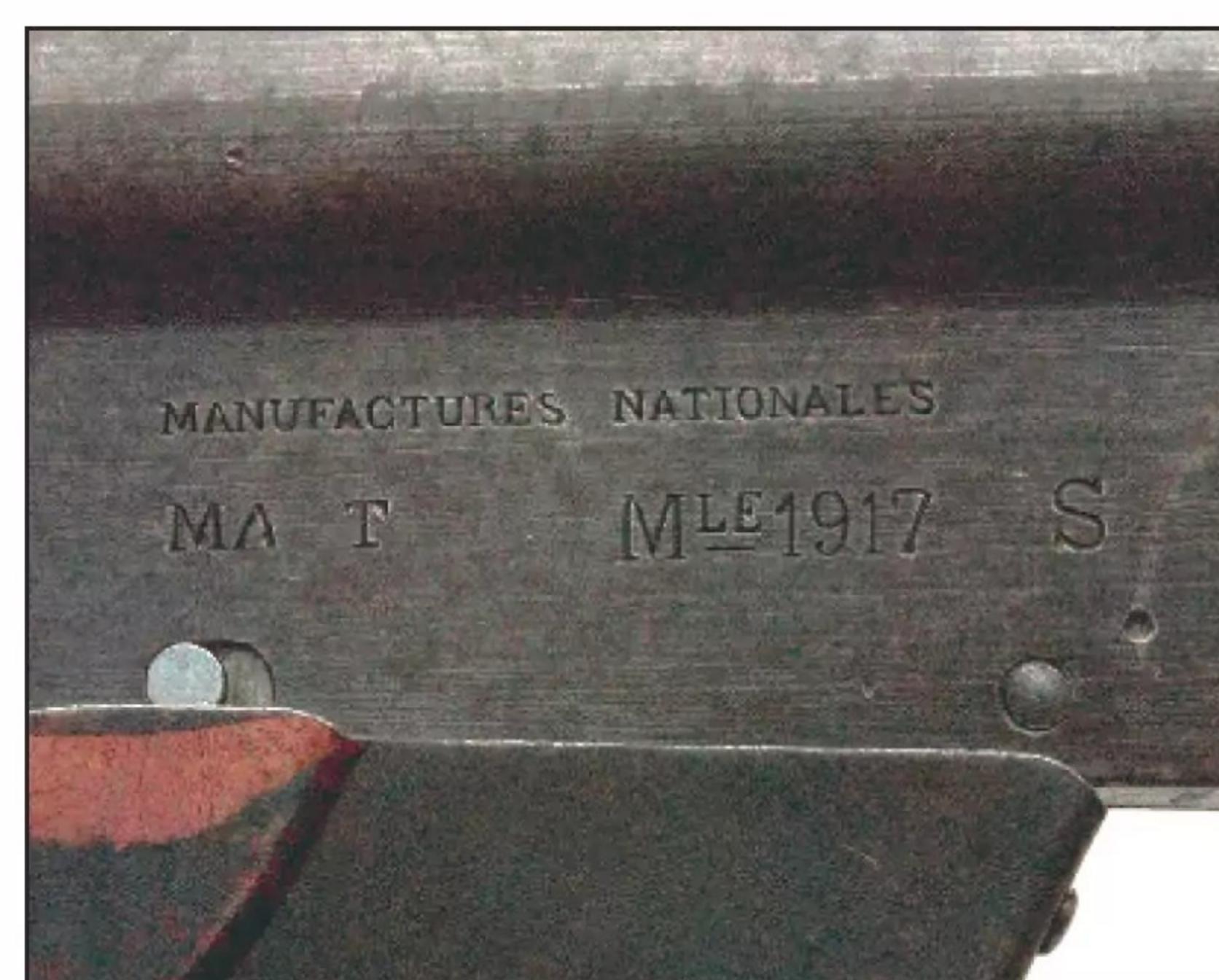


The Mousqueton automatique Modèle 1918 was shorter than the Modèle 1917, it featured a sheet metal dust cover that could be rotated over the bolt slot, plunger type magazine catch and used the widely available Modèle 1916 Berthier clip. (Courtesy Rock Island Auction Co.)

Modèle 1916 Berthier clip. Only 4,000 units had been produced by the time Germany surrendered. During service in North Africa during the Riffian Wars (1921–1926), they reportedly gave "...complete satisfaction."

In the post-war period, most Modèle 1917s were modified with a bolt hold open catch on the right side of the receiver. In 1935, most of the surviving Modèle 1917 and 1918s were modified into straight pull rifles by inserting a length of steel rod into the gas vent and securing it in place with the gas regulating screw.

These Fusils Modèle 1917/35 et 1918/35, as did many Modèles 1917 and 1918, had the throats of their chambers relieved to permit the use of the 8mm balle N cartridge with its longer bullet. Rifles so modified had an "N" stamped on the receiver and chamber of the barrel. Some were issued to French reservists, but most apparently went to native troops in Algeria and Equatorial Africa.



Manufacturer's markings shows this Modèle 1917's receiver was produced at Manufacture Nationale d'Armes Tulle. (Nathan Reynolds photo)

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Vince's Modèle 1917 was test fired from a rest on my club's 100-yard range. (Becky Scarlata photo)



Loading was fairly easy but would have allowed dirt and debris to enter the rifle's receiver and magazine housing. (Becky Scarlata photo)



A three-inch group fired from one hundred yards with the Modèle 1917. (Becky Scarlata photo)

Test Firing

My friend, Vince DiNardi, provided a Modèle 1917 to test fire that was made by MAT in 1918. Vince has fired it in semi-auto mode, but while operation was reliable it was also very violent. So, as to lessen the chances of my damaging it during test firing, he had reinserted the plug into the gas vent so it functioned in straight pull rifle mode. Vince sent me a supply of French surplus 8mm balle N ammunition dated 1948 in addition to some of his handloads concocted from currently manufactured 8mm Lebel brass.

From 100 yards, I was able to produce well centered groups in the three- to four-inch range. Recoil was fairly soft, bolt manipulation was easy, it chambered rounds smoothly and spent cases were ejected reliably.

While the Modèle 1917 must be considered a crude, first effort, one

must take into consideration the time of its development, the fact that France was engaged in the bloodiest war in history and fighting for her very survival. The pressures to provide sufficient weaponry for its

armed forces were enormous, and the fact that this rifle was developed at all speaks volumes for the determination of the French army and industry. Ce n'est pas parfait, mais il a fait c'est le travail. **FN**

SPECIFICATIONS FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE MODÈLE 1917 RIFLE

Caliber:	8mm balle D (a m) and 8mm balle N
Overall Length:	52.3 in.
Barrel Length:	31.5 in.
Weight:	11.45 lbs.
Magazine:	5 rounds, clip loaded.
Sights:	Front: block with groove Rear: square notch adj. by ramp and leaf from 250 to 2,400 meters
Bayonet:	16 in. cruciform blade

SPECIFICATIONS MOUSQUETON AUTOMATIQUE MODÈLE 1918 RIFLE

Caliber:	8mm balle D (a m) and 8mm balle N
Overall Length:	43.25 in.
Barrel Length:	22.8 in.
Weight:	10.5 lbs.
Magazine:	5 rounds, clip loaded.
Sights:	Front: block with groove Rear: square notch adj. from 250 to 2,000 meters
Bayonet:	10 in. cruciform blade

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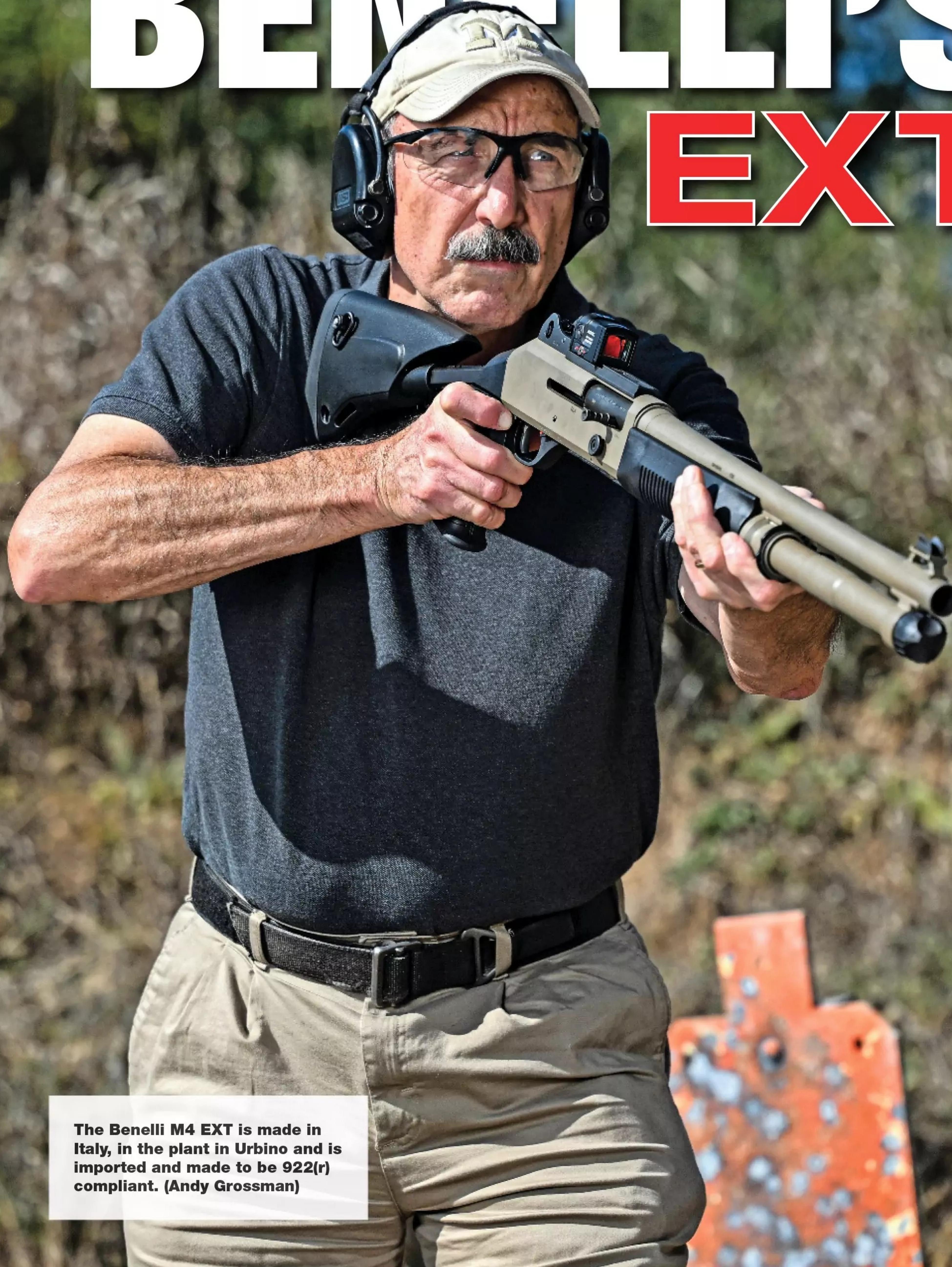
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BENELLI'S EXT



The Benelli M4 EXT is made in Italy, in the plant in Urbino and is imported and made to be 922(r) compliant. (Andy Grossman)

M4 SHOTGUN

The Best Got Better!

By Patrick Sweeney

Shotguns, as weapons, have been with us pretty much since the beginning of gunpowder. Opting for a payload instead of a projectile makes sense when the distances are close and the time for precision aiming might not be available. Plus, for a long time, with a few exceptions, the US military choice for shotguns meant a pump shotgun. That changed back in the 1990s when the request for a self-loading shotgun went out to those interested in having Uncle Sam as a customer. The result was the first Benelli shotgun that was gas-operated and became the M1014.

For those of us interested in such a tool, there was one problem: import regs. The importation of a self-loading shotgun within the regulatory limits meant that the end result was a five-shot magazine. Now, if my choice was between a five-shot shotgun and a sharp stick, I'd gleefully grab the scattergun, but this is America, we're supposed to have choices. Most of Benelli M4 EXT is made in Italy, in the plant in Urbino (been there, often enough to have a favorite restaurant) and is imported. However, to comply with US manufacturing regulations in regard to President George H.W. Bush's 1989 imported "assault weapons" ban, still in effect unfortunately, final assembly with US-manufactured parts is done in order to be 922(r) compliant. In a nutshell, this Benelli M4 can legally have the extended magazine tube and collapsible stock.

Benelli has now done it. The new Benelli M4 EXT is a seven-plus-one shotgun just like the M1014, and the stock even collapses and extends, as well. Let's take a walk around the new M4 (oops, M4 EXT) to see what we see, kick the tires, slam the doors and take it for a test-drive, shall we?

Externally, all is as-expected. We have a barrel with a front sight post to match the ghost ring rear on the receiver. The barrel is cylindrical, that is, it is not ribbed. Beneath the front sight housing is the magazine tube band, where the magazine nut tightens down to hold the assembly together. On an interesting note, the M4 EXT comes equipped with internal choke tubes. These are on



the Benelli/Mobil pattern, so you will be able to find them everywhere. Unlike the military M1014, which has a fixed, cylinder-bore choke, you can change yours to what you want. I'm going to steal a line from Jim Tarr, and note that the USMC (the first adopter of the M1014) did not spring for screw-in chokes, in part *"because they knew marines would lose them, break them, or make them pregnant"* and decided fixed was better. This one came with a modified choke tube installed.

Once you wrestle the M4 EXT apart for cleaning (and you are going to have to read the manual to do it), you'll see the A.R.G.O. system that drives things. This is a pair of self-contained pistons attached to the barrel (not user-serviceable) that are self-regulating and that self-adjust to

the widest variety of payloads. The barrel is chambered for three-inch shells, so you have the full gamut of 2-3/4- and three-inch shells to choose from, from light skeet loads to three-inch goose loads suitable for finishing off crippled B-17s coming back from Schweinfurt. If you are going to use less-lethal and other loads, you'll have to learn to get good at hand-cycling the action. The A.R.G.O. system is patented and does not require disassembly for cleaning.

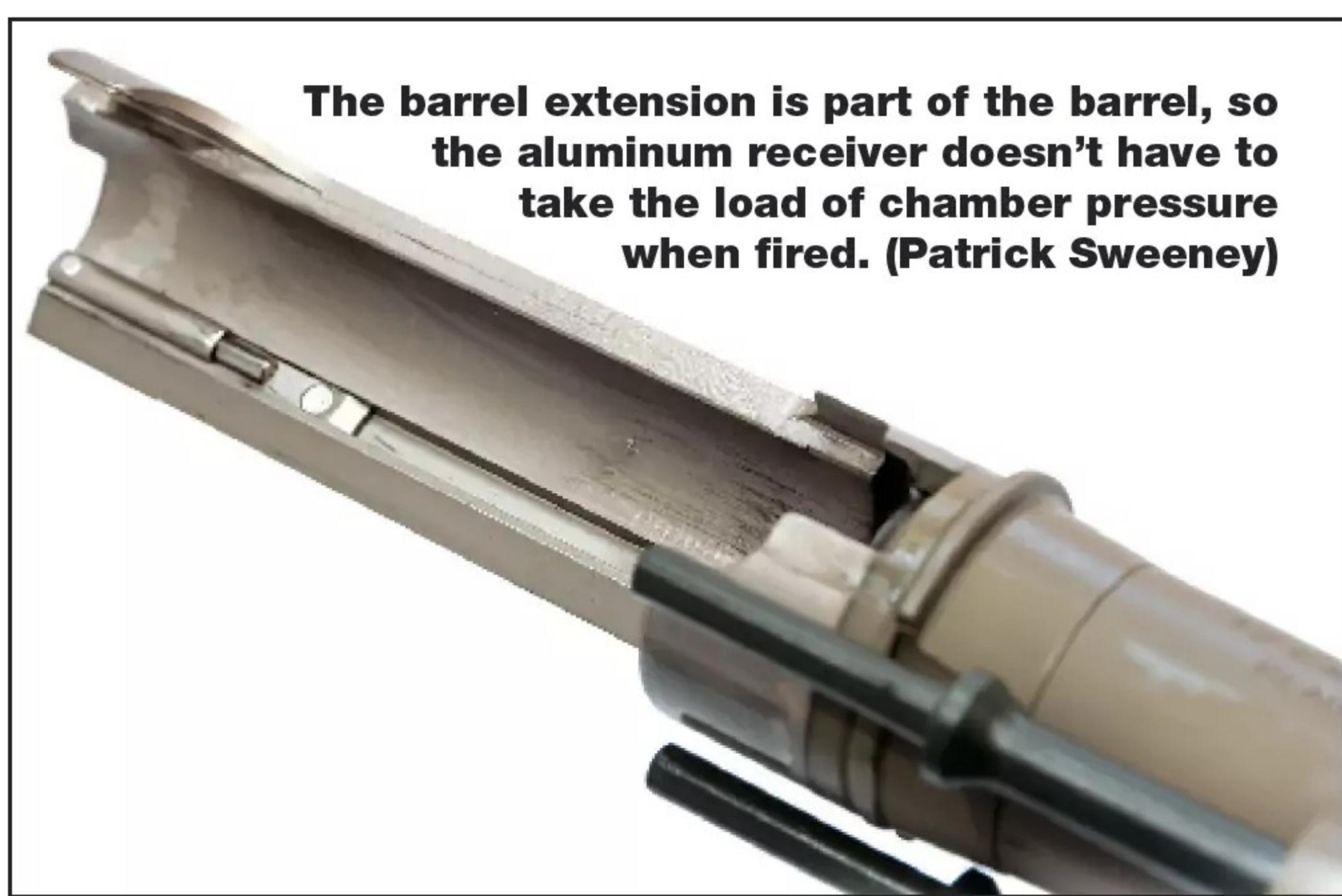
The handguards are polymer and clamped in place between the magazine tube assembly and the barrel gas system housing. The gas system housing also has a sling loop assembly in it, which can be reversed to let you



◀ The drilled and tapped receiver means you can install a mounting plate like this one, and then a red dot optic. Mesa Tactical and Aimpoint for the win. (Patrick Sweeney)

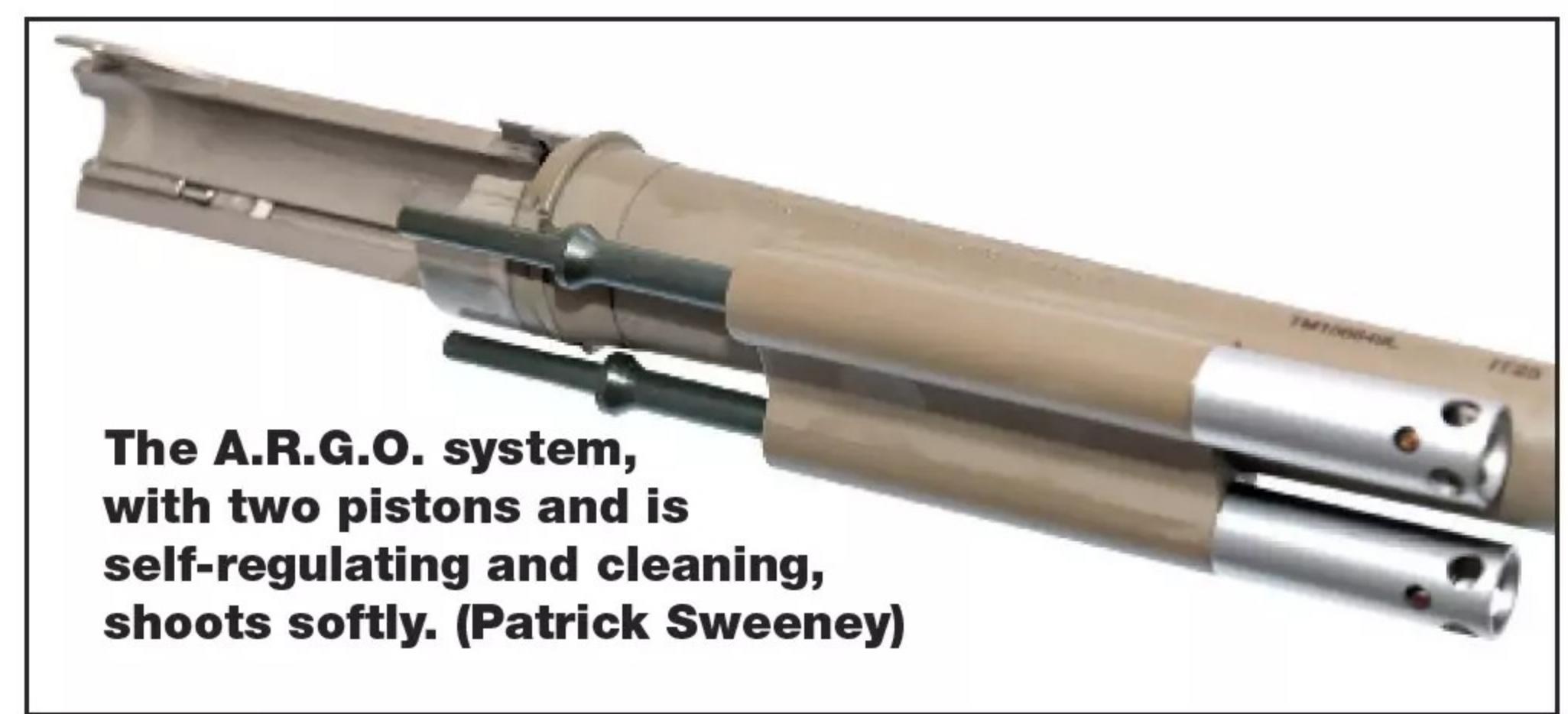


► The M4 EXT comes built for screw-in choke tubes. It comes with a modified choke in place. (Patrick Sweeney)



The barrel extension is part of the barrel, so the aluminum receiver doesn't have to take the load of chamber pressure when fired. (Patrick Sweeney)

The A.R.G.O. system, with two pistons and is self-regulating and cleaning, shoots softly. (Patrick Sweeney)

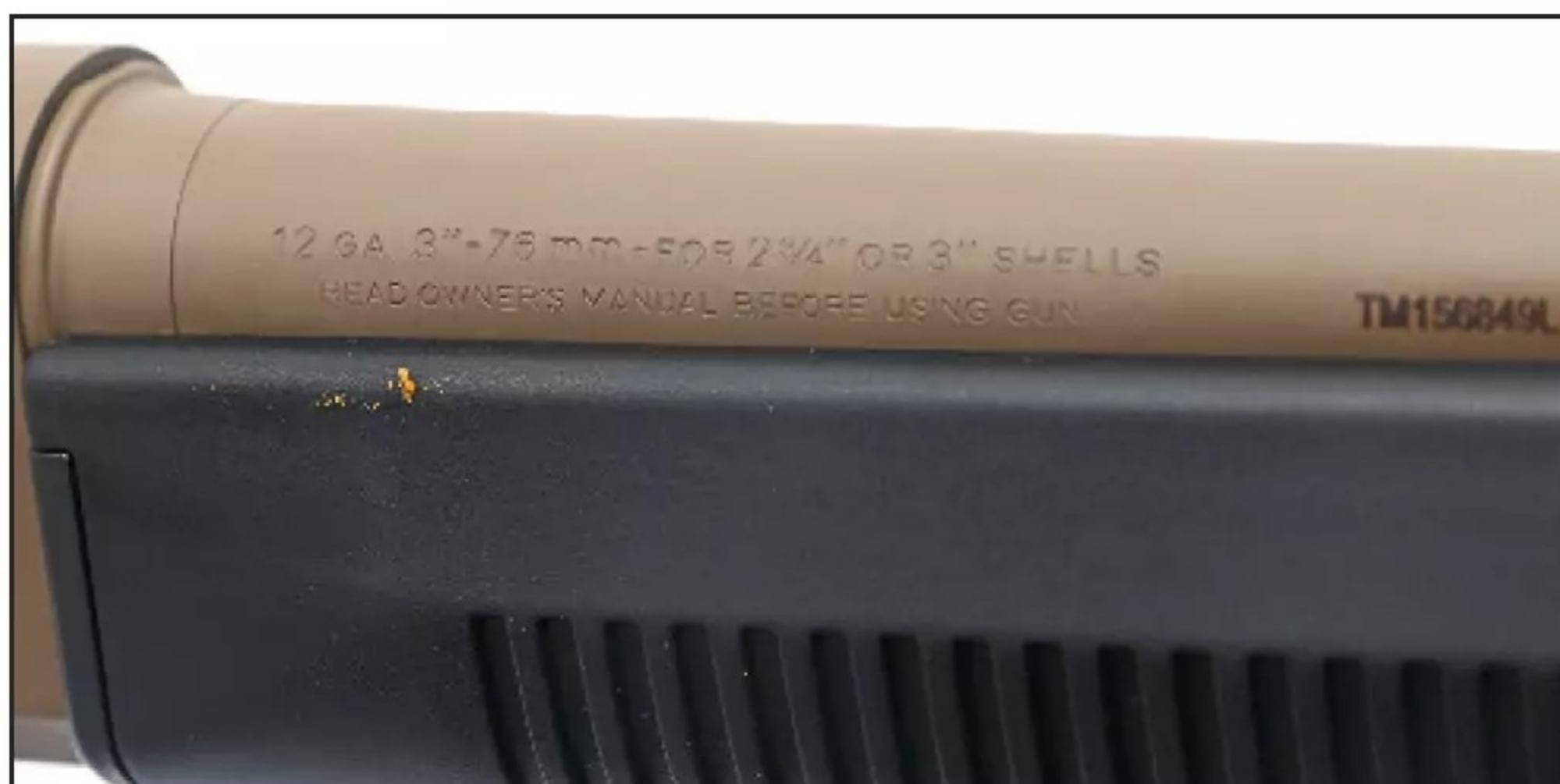




Out of the box the M4 EXT is sleek and ready for action. (Patrick Sweeney)



install a sling on either the right or left side. Being right-handed, I left it where it usefully was, even though I don't use slings on shotguns. More on that in a bit and why. The handguards are slim, which I like, but do not have any provision for a light system, which I find curious, but there are lots of ways to mount lights on shotguns, so not a problem.



The M4 EXT is chambered for 2-3/4- and three-inch shells. I've never felt the need for three-inch shells. (Patrick Sweeney)



The sling swivel attachment on the barrel gas system loop. (Patrick Sweeney)

The aluminum receiver has a generous ejection port, and Picatinny rails bolted on top. Behind it is a ghost ring sight, and the sight is adjustable for windage and elevation. The adjustment screws have slots that fit the rim of a shotshell, so you don't have to have a screwdriver on hand in order to make changes. The charging handle sticks out of the bolt on the right side, and while it is not big, it is big enough and you are unlikely to miss it. Directly below the charging handle when the bolt is closed you'll find the large but flat bolt-closing button. When the bolt is locked back you press that button to close the bolt.

The trigger housing has the rest of the controls. Obviously, there's the trigger. Behind it, in the housing portion behind the trigger, is the safety. Safety button out to the right is safe, pressed to the left is fire. On the right side, ahead of the trigger, is the cartridge drop lever. If you



The Benelli M4 EXT comes with iron sights and a Picatinny rail for optics. (Andy Grossman)

BENELLI'S M4 EXT SHOTGUN



◀ The front sight is a blade with a white dot in it. It is mounted on a very sturdy housing. (Patrick Sweeney)



► The rear ghost ring sights are made to be adjusted using the rim of a shotshell. No screwdrivers needed. (Patrick Sweeney)



The charging handle isn't the biggest, but it is plenty big enough. The bolt-close button below it is more than big enough. (Patrick Sweeney)



The safety is a button behind the trigger, in the trigger guard. Ahead of it, with the red dot, is the cartridge drop lever. (Patrick Sweeney)

want to lock the bolt back you have to press that little lever back. Otherwise, yanking the charging handle back just cycles the bolt back and forth, and it won't lock open. It's all in the manual and some practice with the M4 EXT unloaded will soon have you getting things right.

The stock is where things get really interesting. I have to 'fess up, when I first pulled the M4 EXT out of the box,

I took a look at the stock and thought "*Well that's ugly, it probably feels as bad as it looks.*" I was wrong. It feels great. I have come to really dislike pistol-grip shotguns, but the stock on the M4 EXT actually feels right. The adjustments for me, anyway, are to full extension. For those with shorter arms, or wearing body armor or heavy clothing, then the multiple steps in-between full extension and fully collapsed will be useful. The stock locks securely in each



The stock extends, and the button to unlock it is the square one above and behind the pistol grip. (Patrick Sweeney)



The six-position stock, showing the notches for the other five besides fully extended. (Patrick Sweeney)



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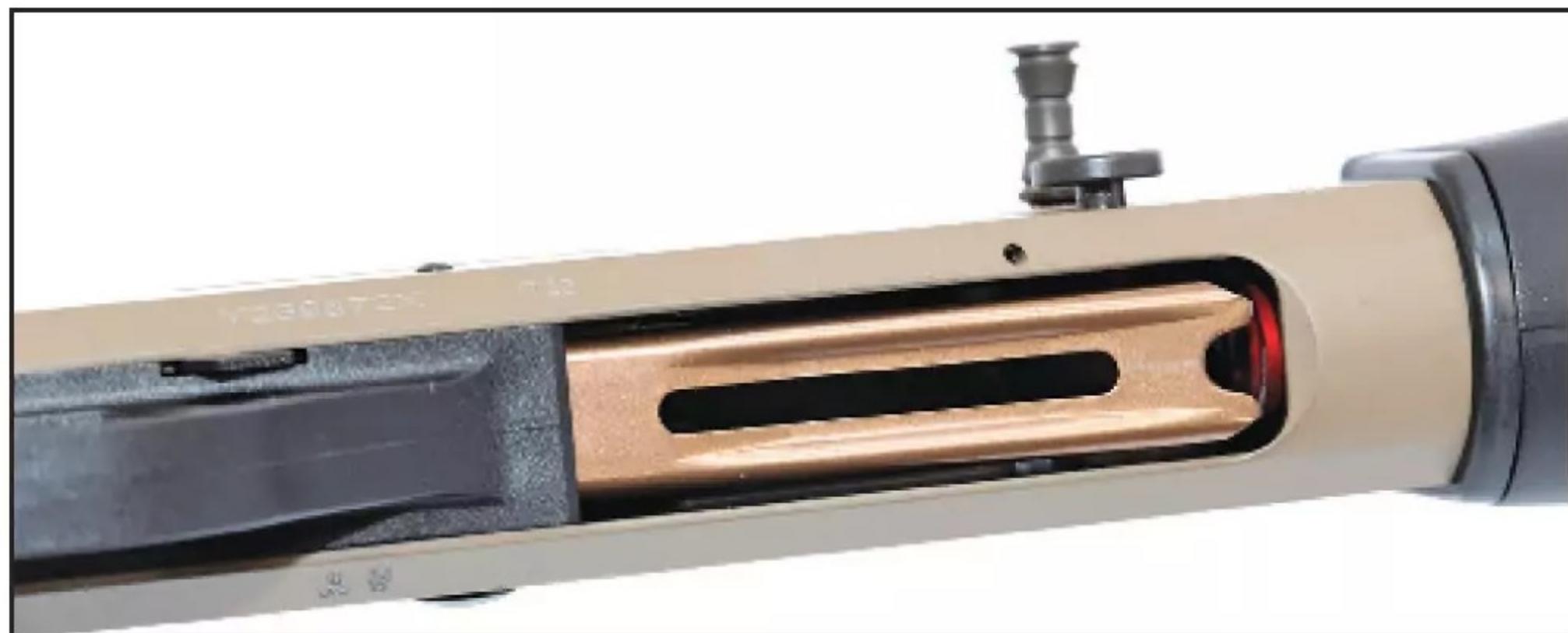
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BENELLI'S M4 EXT SHOTGUN



◀ The lifter on the M4 EXT is slotted, so you can see if there's a shell waiting there or gain access in a malfunction (as if that would ever happen with a Benelli). (Patrick Sweeney)

► I use the sling swivel as a hand stop for recoil control and consistent positioning. (Patrick Sweeney)



setting, and the button on the side of the stock is your control to unlock and slide in or out. The butt of the stock has a rubber recoil pad.

Loading the M4 EXT is easy. Cycle the bolt to make sure the hammer is cocked. Safety on. Shove shells into the loading port, past the lifter, until they lock in the magazine tube. There's something about the geometry of the parts there (or maybe I need to put a bunch more ammo through the M4 EXT than I already have), but the rim will catch at the magazine tube opening and you have to make sure you shove it past. Just be brisk about it, and don't baby the effort. Once the tube is full, press the cartridge drop lever back. A shell will pop out of the mag tube. Now work the charging handle and you have a chambered round. Shove another shell in to replace the fed one, and you're fully-loaded and set to go. If you didn't click the cartridge drop lever, cycling the bolt won't cause a shell to be fed out of the magazine tube. That's a difference from earlier designs of competitors shotguns that you'll have to learn.

The finishes of the previous versions have been black anodized aluminum and phosphated steel. The M4 EXT shipped here was done up in Desert Tan Cerakote. I yanked the Picatinny rail off of it and installed a Mesa Tactical base, then clamped an Aimpoint Acro on top. For a lot of

competition, I still use beads. The ghost ring system is fast and easy (I earned an "E" ticket at Gunsite a long time ago, with ghost ring sights on a shotgun) but red-dots are the modern, and the modern this time is better. Wicked fast and accurate. Oh, and the sling swivel out front? I use such extras as a hand stop to get my hand positioned the same way every time, and to get more recoil control.

When it comes to performance, every shotgun is a law unto itself, or so it seems. The modern wads we now get have tightened up the patterns to a great deal, but you still have to test. I was also fortunate to have on hand a new chronograph, the Garmin Xero C1 Pro, which is fully capable of chronographing shotgun payloads. My previous radar one could not—skyscreens were a fraught proposition, as the wads and other stuff would scrape the skyscreens off of my sensors. Now I know how fast the "bucket o'shot" I'm launching is going, and it can be eye-opening. The Benelli M4 EXT is listed as weighing eight pounds, and when you are hurling over an ounce of lead at Mach 1.4, your shoulder tells you about it. I happened to have another shotgun along to test one day, and



The M4 EXT is fast-cycling. One empty is barely clear, and the bolt is halfway closed on the next one. (Patrick Sweeney)



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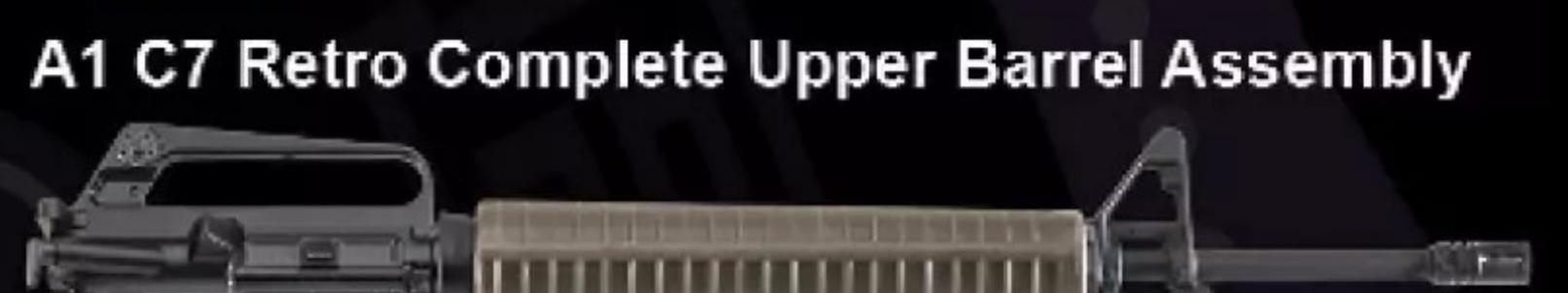


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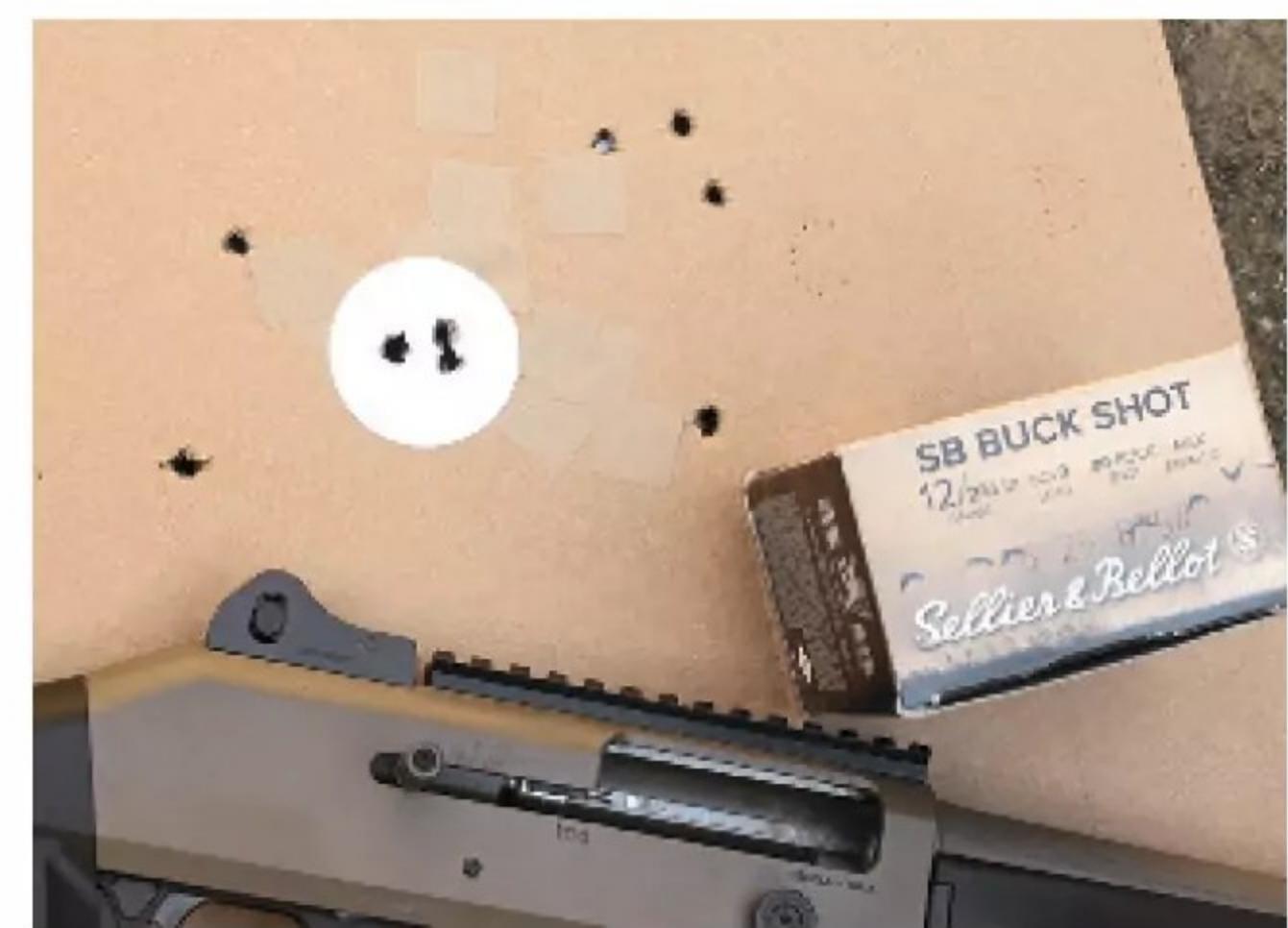
Shotguns don't usually show flash, but if you shoot enough, you eventually get some. With the soft recoil of the M4 EXT, a lot of shooting is no big deal. (Andy Grossman)



The Federal Flitecontrol wad often produces patterns like this, or even tighter. (Patrick Sweeney)



If you want a dense pattern with 00 buckshot, then Critical Defense is a good starting point. (Patrick Sweeney)



For a more-open pattern for use on bowling pins, I often opt for S&B, old-school constructed buckshot shells. (Patrick Sweeney)



► One session with slugs was enough, and the M4 EXT shoots slugs well. (Patrick Sweeney)

BENELLI M4 EXT SHOTGUN CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA

Ammunition	Payload	Velocity (fps)	Pattern (Avg.) (in.)
Sellier & Bellot	9P 00B	1,094	8
Hornady Critical Defense	9P 00B	1,487	4
Federal Personal Defense	9P 00B	1,199	4
Federal Premium	16P 1B	1,271	5
Federal TruBall	1 oz. slug	1,251	5 in. at 50 yards

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.

the M4 EXT was decidedly softer in recoil than the other, despite both being gas operated.

I also have to point out that while this is America, and you have choices, one of those choices is not "all of it." You cannot both have wide-open "alley sweeper" patterns and super-tight patterns of all the 00 buck pellets covered by the palm of your hand. As Goethe once said, you must choose. However, you can choose by selecting ammunition.

The Federal loads, with their Flitecontrol wad, deliver tight patterns, but for some uses I opt for the S&B, a traditional construction, because I want the spread. So, at ten yards, I was getting four-inch patterns, ditto with the Hornady Critical Defense load, and their wad. With the Sellier & Bellot, I was getting eight to 10-inch patterns, which is perfect for use on bowling pins. So, test, know, and choose for your needs. I walked over to the rifle range and set up a target at 50 yards to try the Federal TruBall, and it shot well. Centered, a tad low, and about five inches on average. I didn't want to do more because shotgun slugs from the bench are more than work, and I just wanted to get an estimate. You will not be disappointed.

Now, on taking the M4 EXT apart for cleaning. First, it won't need much, since the bore is chrome-plated and the



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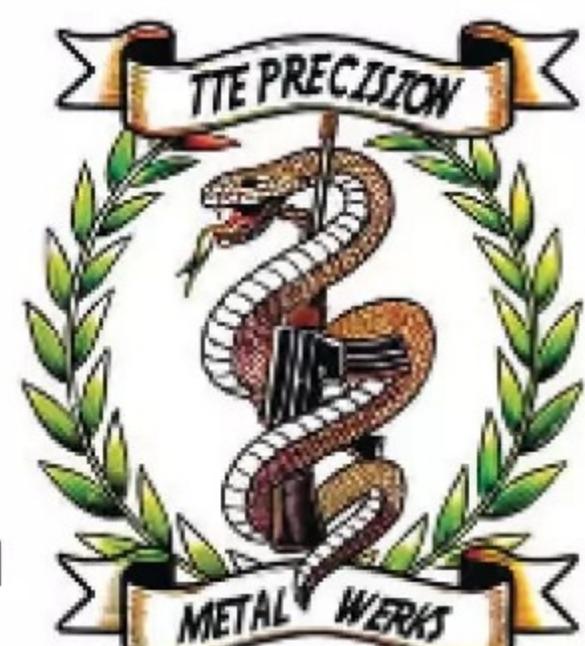
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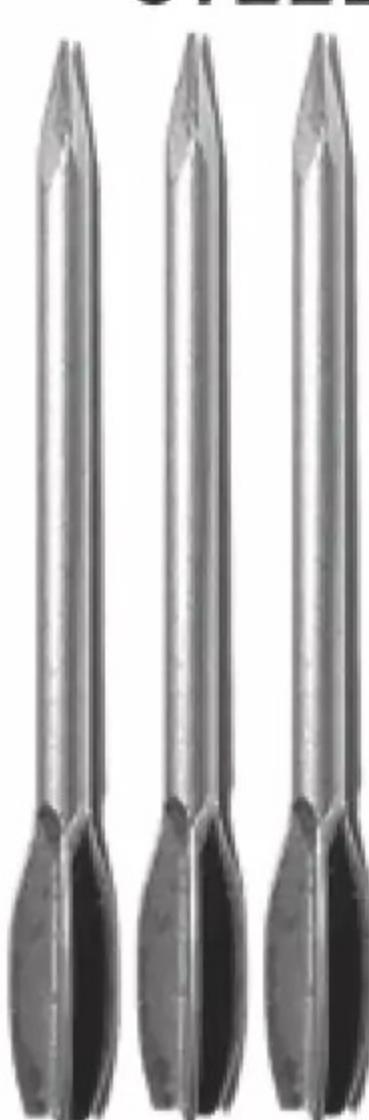
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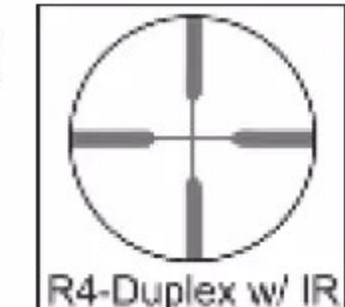
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BENELLI'S M4 EXT SHOTGUN



The M4 EXT is elaborate in disassembly. Pay attention, read the manual, and even take notes if you have to. Once you know how, it is easy. (Patrick Sweeney)



A.R.G.O. system is self-cleaning. However, you will have to do some. You will have to read the manual. You will have to pay close attention to what comes off of where, and at times, you will feel like you need three hands. At one point, I was juggling four parts while compressing the magazine tube spring, and thought I was going to actually have to ask for help. So, you have been warned.

The Benelli M4 EXT is a home run. You get all the details that the mil-spec model has, plus interchangeable choke tubes and no D.I. screaming at you. **FN**

SPECIFICATIONS BENELLI M4 EXT SHOTGUN

Type: Hammer-fired semi-automatic

Caliber: 12 Gauge, 2-3/4 in. & 3 in.

Capacity: 7+1 rounds

Barrel: 18.5 in.

Overall Length: 40 in.

Weight: 7 lbs. 13 oz.

Finish: Anodized aluminum, polymer

Sights: Ghost ring, Picatinny rail

Trigger: 5 lbs. 9 oz.

MSRP: \$2,599

Contact: BenelliUSA.com

SOURCES

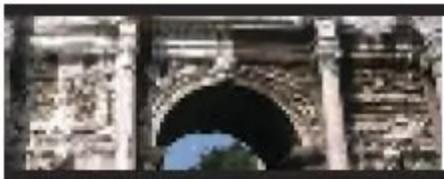
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The Gladiators Paycheck

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The Latin inscription surrounding the gladiators reads: "Happy Days are Here Again" (Fel Temp Reparatio). You see, at

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BRÜGGER & THOMET'S SPC9

The Best of All Worlds in a Pistol-Caliber Carbine

By Patrick Sweeney

If you want to have the most fun and shoot the fastest, short of splurging on something select-fire, the best option is a pistol-caliber carbine (PCC). Let me tell you about Brügger & Thomet (B&T) a Swiss defense manufacturer that got started back in the old days—as in 1991. B&T does things differently. They build what customers ask for. They will build it to the best quality standards, to the precise dimensions, and to be as reliable and durable as possible.

So, enter the B&T SPC9. This looks, at first glance, to be another AR-15-based 9mm carbine. Yes, and no. It handles like an AR-15, and it shoots 9mm ammo, but there's more, a lot more, here. Why? Because a particular law enforcement agency in Europe wanted an AR-15-

based carbine because a lot of their officers were familiar with that platform—they also wanted MP5 controls. They wanted it in 9mm because it was lower-cost training and because some of the ranges they used were not rated for 5.56 or .300 Blackout.

The designers at B&T sharpened their pencils and came up with the carbine I'll call the SPC9, but it really is at least thirty different carbines, the design is so adaptable. The sub-model that was sent to me is known in the catalog as the BT-500010. It is a carbine, with a sixteen-inch threaded barrel, a telescoping AR-15 stock, and uses the B&T-designed magazines. (But with a swap of the non-serialized lower receiver, I could use Glock, SIG P320 or



The B&T SPC9, in this version that I call “fifty-ten” (due to its stock number), is a full-sized carbine, but a lot handier than you’d think. (Patrick Sweeney)

Walther P99, or soon to be HK MP5 magazines). I opted for B&T mags for several reasons, one of which was it was readily available.

Let's start with the upper, as an upper assembly. The upper is aluminum and hard-coat anodized Type III. As the firearm, the upper is the serialized part, and has the serial number in at least two places. The flat-top upper has a full-length rail on top, for mounting sights or optics. Everything that fits on a rail of an AR-15 will fit on top of an SPC9. The rest of the handguard has M-LOK slots on it, so you have all kinds of choices. On the “fifty-ten,” which is the term I coined for this variant based on its stock number, the handguard goes out almost to the end of the barrel, with clearance enough for a flash hider, muzzle brake or suppressor.

Inside the upper is a hydraulic buffer-assisted blowback action, which should come as no surprise as the 9mm has proven amenable to a blowback design for more than a century now. You'll note the lack of both a forward assist (but the bolt has been serrated to manually close the bolt with a thumb, if necessary) and a hinged dust cover over the ejection port. The agency took a pass on those, since they had not felt disadvantaged by the lack of them on

previous 9mm carbines and submachine guns. The hydraulic buffer softens the impact as the system bottoms out at the end of the recoil stroke.

The buffer tube is AR-15 compatible. Since this buffer tube is mil-spec in diameter, the world is your oyster as far as aftermarket stocks are concerned.

Now that we're at the back end of the upper receiver, we can talk about the two different charging handle systems. “Say what?” You're thinking. Yes, there's an AR charging handle at the rear of the upper receiver, but there is also a non-reciprocating HK/MP5/APC9 charging handle on the left side of the handguard, out in front of the receiver. The agency figured it would be easier to have carbines with both, than to re-train MP5 officers to the AR-15 charging handle location. There is one difference, and that is that the SPC9 MP5-location charging handle does not have a lock-open notch. However, since the bolt locks back on an empty magazine, you don't need one. Alas, on the SPC9 there's no sexy “MP5 slap” to chamber a round, sometimes style has to give way to substance.

Before we get to the interior of the lower, let's talk magazines, as in B&T magazines. The magazines are polymer except for the spring. The tubes are translucent, and the



There is no dust cover door, no forward assist, but there are ambidextrous controls for everything. (Patrick Sweeney)



The handguard on fifty-ten extends almost out to the muzzle, but there's still room for a brake, suppressor, or flash hider. (Patrick Sweeney)



There's also an MP5-like charging handle, for those who learned on that iconic submachine gun. Sweeney chose the Aimpoint T-2 as his optic. (Patrick Sweeney)



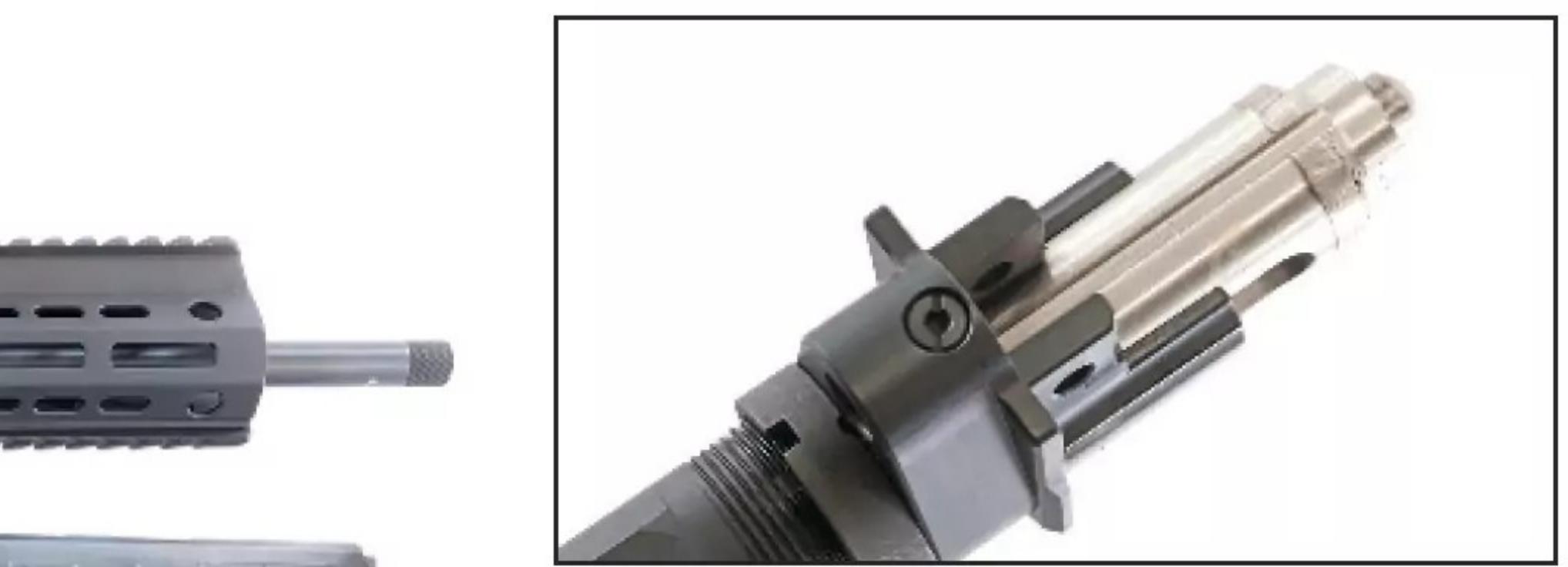
The upper is the firearm, the lower is just a polymer shell that holds the magazines and fire controls. Pick the magazine type you want, and you're set. (Patrick Sweeney)



The SPC9, taken apart enough to do all the cleaning you'll need to do. (Patrick Sweeney)

feed lips are the same material, thicker, but not metal reinforced. “*Not needed*” was the reply to my question of their lack of metal reinforcement. Instead of a rolled lip at the bottom that a baseplate slides over, B&T made the tubes with a set of holes in the front and rear. The baseplate extends up into the magazine, and two arms on the baseplate flex into the holes and hold the baseplate in place. I have to tell you I was leery of this at first. I mean, really? First, no metal reinforcements and now a spring-plate retention design? But, I resisted my urge to wrap the baseplate in place with strapping tape and duct tape, and used them as-is. They never failed.

The magazines fit into the lower as you'd expect and are held in place with a magazine catch lever that is located in the same place as an AR-15, but works as a lever not a spring-loaded plunger. The lower has controls where you'd expect (it does follow the pattern of the AR-15 after all) so the bolt hold-open (also located on both sides) lets you



The stock assembly and the buffer assembly are a unit, and you won't need to take them apart but a few times in your life. (Patrick Sweeney)

lock the bolt back without a magazine, and the safety is ambidextrous (or as Jim Tarr likes to hound us about it, bilaterally symmetric) and the trigger and pistol grip are right where you expect as well. Since the pistol grip is a separate part, you can readily swap that one out for something else, which I would do were this blaster staying here. But inside it has some real differences, and great improvements, over the AR-15.

First of all, the trigger mechanism is the one-stage design of your basic mil-spec AR trigger setup, but it feels



The hammer can be cocked with the safety on, which is an interesting design addition. (Patrick Sweeney)



The bolt is a big piece of Swiss steel, and the extractor looks stout enough to pull a Buick. (Patrick Sweeney)



The magazines are polymer except for the spring. Yes, no steel in the feed lips. If Swiss engineers say it isn't needed, then it isn't needed. (Patrick Sweeney)



The baseplates are flush and fit into the tubes by means of circular holes. A clever system that is made tighter when loaded. (Patrick Sweeney)

a whole lot better than a rack-grade M4 trigger, for sure. The second one was a surprise to me, in part because I customarily do my initial range trip and testing without reading the owner's manual. I loaded up, tested, did my chrono and accuracy work, and handled it as if it were just another AR-15 based PCC. Imagine my surprise when, on reading the literature I encountered the fact that the safety can be applied regardless of the hammer being cocked or not. *"Wait, what? You're kidding!"* When I read that, I had to stop reading, run down to the shop and check that out for myself. Well, I'll be dog-goned. You can not only apply the safety regardless of the hammer being cocked or forward, but you can also work the action and thus cock the hammer with the safety applied. This allows loading

and unloading, chamber-checking, disassembly, all without having to move the safety from the safe position.

Okay, this is the point where we have to go into the disassembly, because there are a few things that are different. Unload and ease the bolt forward. Just as on an AR-15, press the two captured pins out to the right, and pull the trigger group down from the receiver. Oh, wait, the stock assembly does not come with it? That's right, the trigger assembly is a polymer shell with the needed parts installed in it. So, there you are, you have the trigger assembly off, now what? Easy. Just pull the stock assembly straight back out of the upper receiver. It should slide out without any fuss or muss. Then you can pull the charging handle and bolt out. The charging handle comes out as a



Add a suppressor to a PCC (like this Silent Legion 9mm) and you have a giggle-worthy combo. (Patrick Sweeney)



The B&T SPC9 is a perfect tool to clean up at The Pin Shoot, in the PCC events. Yes, now there are two of them. (Patrick Sweeney)



This is the array you will face, at 25 feet, when you step to the line for the PCC Optional at The Pin Shoot. (Patrick Sweeney)



Fifty yards with a red-dot and this is what you can do with the B&T SPC9. (Patrick Sweeney)

standard AR-15 handle does because unlike some companies, B&T doesn't hate you. The bolt is your basic big piece of Swiss steel, machined with a recessed breechface, and a husky extractor. For ejection, there's a slot in the bolt for the fixed ejector to ride in, and if you wonder where the ejector is, it's the bolted-on plate on the left side of the receiver, just ahead of the B&T logo.

I tested the SPC9 in the usual way, spending fun times at the range generating chrono and accuracy data, and mowing down the club plate racks with merry abandon, but I also hauled it up to The Pin Shoot, because there is a very much fun event at the shoot called, not surprisingly, the "PCC Optional." The layout is simple: twelve bowling pins, on three shelves of four, with a pair of penalty pins in the middle of two of the three shelves. The process is simple: on the start buzzer, lift your PCC up off of the rail and shoot to knock the twelve pins in front of you off the table as quickly as possible. The fastest shooter in that event, at the end of the week, gets to be first to walk up to the prize table for the PCC category and pick what they want. You get to put as many rounds in the magazine as you wish, but if you need more than one or two extra in a run, you won't win.

Now, I already had a really tuned-up PCC to compete with, but fun is fun and not everyone has a PCC. So, I took the SPC9 along to use as a backup, and a loaner. I posted a time with my main gun that got me on the prize table, and a few of my friends thrashed the SPC9 heinously, sluicing

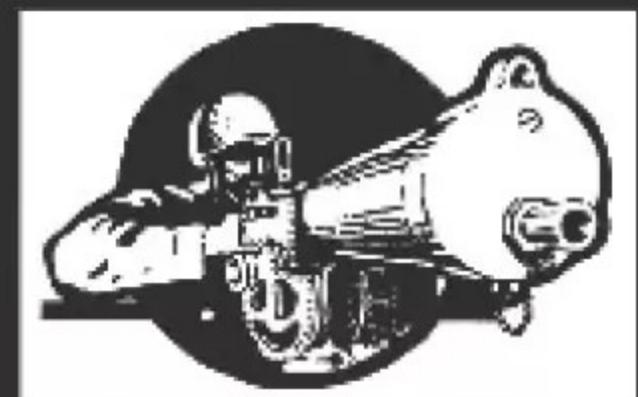
B&T USA SPC9 SPORT CARBINE CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA

Ammunition	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	ES	SD	Accuracy (Avg. & Best) (in.)
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,289	38	15.2	1.6 / 1.2
Barnaul FMJ	115	1,199	29	13.7	1.9 / 1.5
American Eagle Suppressor	124	1,029	11	5.7	1.7 / 1.2
Hornady Subsonic XTP	147	1,057	21	9.9	1.5 / 1.1

Accuracy results were to be averages of three, five-shot groups at 50 yards off a Champion shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a Labradar chronograph set to read 15 feet from the muzzle.

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With a few runs, I was within a few tenths of my time with my purpose-built PCC 9mm. (Maybe I should switch?)
(Patrick Sweeney)

a few gallons of ammo through it without a failure. The Aimpoint T-2 was a big help here and was loved by all. When they had a break, I took it to the line myself, and within a few runs (you get to re-enter the Optionals as much as you want) I was within a few tenths of a second to my best time using my main gun. Hmm... this will require some re-thinking. One of the things that made the SPC9 so wicked fast on the pins was the softer recoil the hydraulic buffer provided.

Now, all this goodness and competitive advantage does not come cheap. The lowest price I could find for the model that is the fifty-ten was \$2,600. However, this is not out of line with top-notch AR-15-based PCCs, and I know of a slew of models that can run as much as a grand more than the price of the SPC9. Nothing in its quality tier will beat the price of the B&T SPC9, and anything that does beat it in price is going to come with something as a hindrance. Simply put, if you are ready to pay for quality, you will not find something in the PCC that delivers as much as the SPC9 does without paying more. **FN**

SPECIFICATIONS

B&T USA SPC9 SPORT CARBINE

Type: Hammer-fired semi-automatic

Caliber: 9mm

Capacity: 15, 20, 25, 30+1

Barrel: 16 in.

Overall Length: 34 in.

Weight: 6 lbs. 6 oz.

Finish: Blued steel, anodized aluminum, polymer

Sights: Aimpoint T-2 (as tested)

Trigger: 4 lbs. 8 oz.

MSRP: \$2,600

Contact: BT-USA.com, (813) 653-1200

SOURCES

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Hornady Ammunition

Hornady.com, (800) 338-3220

Federal Ammunition

FederalPremium.com, (800) 831-8100

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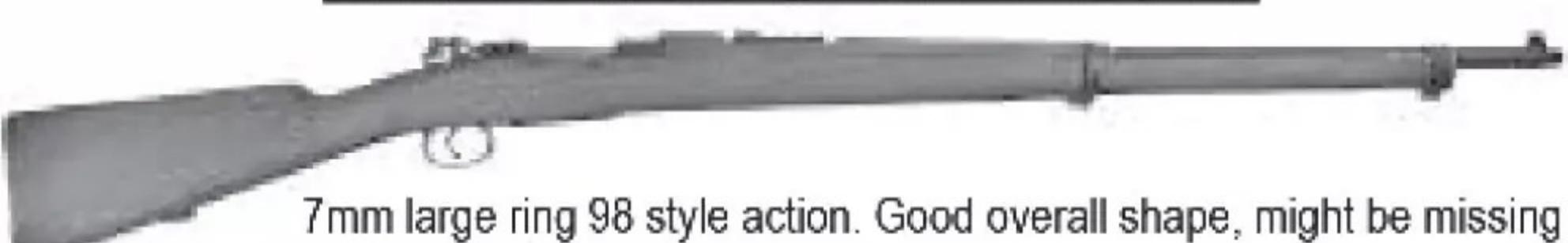
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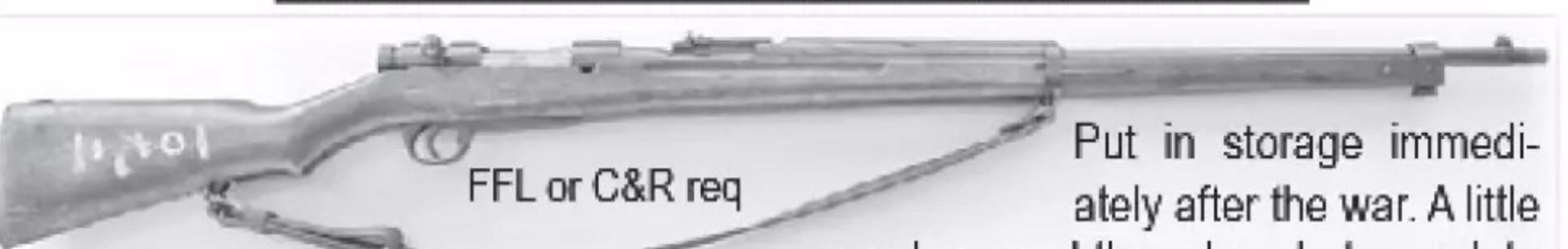
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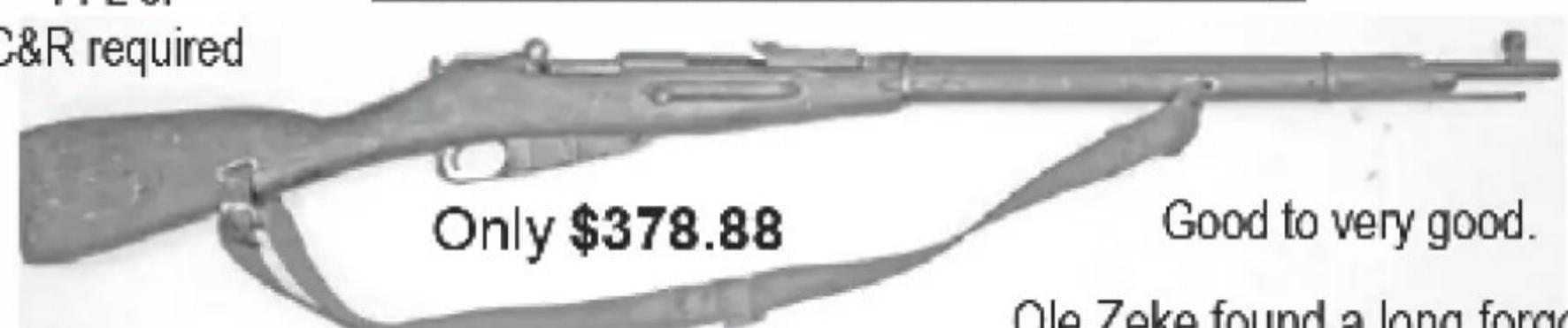


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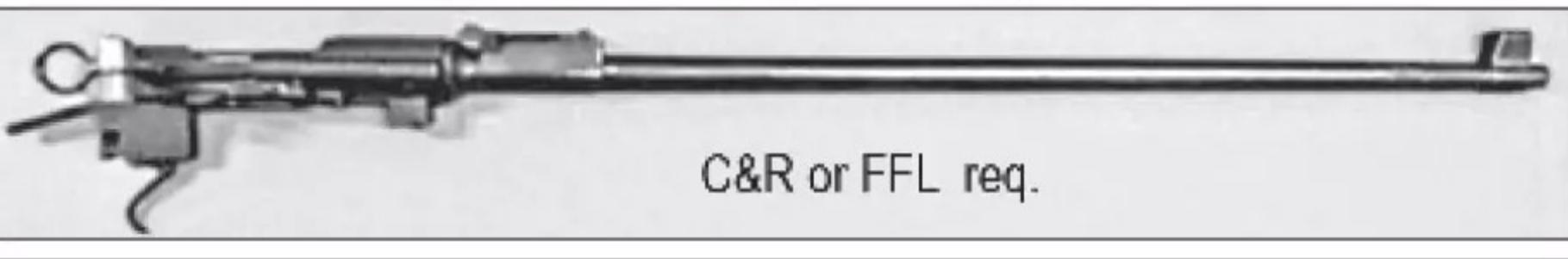
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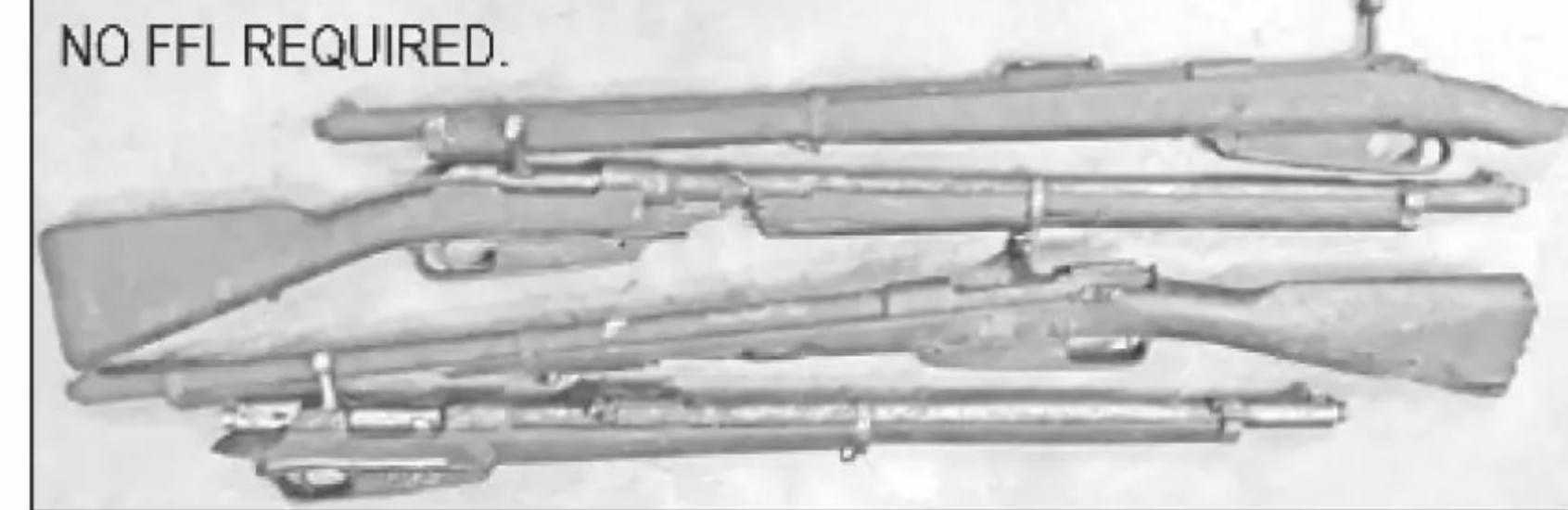
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The Big Badger from Chiappa Firearms, available in .30-30 Winchester, 350 Legend, and .410, is a single-shot foraging and outdoors rifle in the tradition of survival rifles of the mid-20th Century. (Pierangelo Tendas)

CHIAPPA FIREARMS' BIG BADGER RIFLE: THE BIGGER, MEANER BADGER

Chiappa Firearms upscales the popular Little Badger single-shot rifle into a bigger platform: the Big Badger is available in .30-30 Winchester, .350 Legend and .410, a perfect cost-effective tool for foraging or survival!

By Pierangelo Tendas

Established in 1958, Chiappa Firearms has long been known as one of Italy's foremost manufacturers of blank and signal guns, rimfire and small-caliber sporting firearms, and most importantly, historic replicas: the passion that the founder Ezechiele "Oscar" Chiappa harbored for the epics of the Old West led him to start the manufacture of a long, well-appreciated line of single-action revolvers, lever-action rifles, break-barrel and lever-action shotguns, and muzzleloading rifles, all replicas of the guns that wrote history in the American West.

As time went by and new generations of the Chiappa family succeeded him in the control of the family business,

the Chiappa Firearms product line saw a steep modernization as focus shifted towards meeting the needs and tastes of modern-day hunters and sport shooters: the early 2000s saw the launch of a whole slew of .22 rimfire training carbines and pistols patterned after modern designs such as the M1911-A1 and M9 pistols, and the AR-15 rifle.

In 2010, Chiappa Firearms launched the Rhino line of revolvers—quite possibly the design that can be single-handedly credited as projecting revolvers in the world of 21st Century-viable defensive firearms. These would be followed shortly by a long list of centerfire defensive pistols and semi-automatic PDWs such as the RAK-9 and



▲ The Big Badger is a larger-size version of the popular Little Badger rimfire carbine, conceived as an entry-level or backup hunting rifle, as a survival rifle, or a training rifle for the younger generations of outdoorsmen. (Pierangelo Tendas)

► All Big Badgers sold on the US market are manufactured in Chiappa USA's plant in Dayton, Ohio. To this date, the only Big Badger variant, not entirely made in the U.S., is the .410 variant, being temporarily manufactured in Chiappa Firearms' Turkish subsidiary while manufacturing is set up stateside. (Pierangelo Tendas)



the CBR-9 "Black Rhino" dedicated to home and property defense and to private security.

The most popular new entry in the "new wave" of Chiappa Firearms' 21st Century products, however, was and still definitely is the "Little Badger" single shot rimfire carbine. This unassuming design was first launched at the 2013 SHOT Show and was inspired by the vintage M6 Aircrew Survival Weapon issued to USAF nuclear bomber pilots who, in the early years of the Cold War, could be tasked to hit targets in the USSR by flying the Arctic route.

A single shot rifle chambered in .22 Long Rifle, the minimalist Little Badger would later evolve in a whole family of rifles with the addition of .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire, .17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire, .17 Winchester Short Magnum, and 9mm Flobert.

Featuring a simple wire stock, a polymer quad-rail handguard, and a set of M1 carbine-style polymer sights, the Little Badger conquered the hearts and minds of shooters



The Chiappa Firearms Big Badger single-shot rifle, seen from the right side: the 350 Legend and .30-30 Winchester variants are essentially identical in all but caliber. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)

The right side of Chiappa's .410 Big Badger, which is identical to all other variants, except for the caliber and a fixed red fiber optic front sight. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)



The overall length of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is cut exactly in half when folded, making it easier to transport or store anywhere. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)

worldwide as the perfect modern garden gun, ideal for backyard plinking, small-game hunting, and outdoors.

A key feature of the Little Badger it retained all through its iterations, including the “Deluxe” wooden furniture versions and the limited editions with OD green furniture, is its folding design. This handy 31-inch carbine can be folded exactly in half, making it extremely packable for



All receivers of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger series are manufactured in stainless steel, finished in black. They're sturdy enough to withstand long-term use of .30-30, 350 Legend, or .410 shotshell while keeping overall weight just over five pounds in all variants. (Pierangelo Tendas)



The Chiappa Firearms Big Badger, in all its variants, features an external hammer that must be manually cocked before firing; the hammer can also be manually set to a half-cock position to dub as a safety, but all versions also come with a crossbolt manual safety for good measure. (Pierangelo Tendas)

easy effortless transportation and reducing its bulk for safe storage.

Halfway through the 2010s, Chiappa had already brought the concept of break-open survival guns one step further with their M6 line. In 2024, the Italian company decided to up their game by developing a scaled-up version of the Little Badger itself that would be much better suited to small- and medium-game hunting, foraging, and outdoor survival, owing to a higher stopping power.

The Same Badger... Only Bigger

While Chiappa's M6 combination rifles were based on a completely different design; internal hammer, double trigger, lever-actuated break action, the new Big Badger is straight-out a scaled-up Little Badger in centerfire rifle or shotgun configuration.

Three calibers are available so far: .30-30 Winchester and .350 Legend for the rifled bore variants and .410 for the smoothbore version. While the .410 and .30-30 Winchester are more or less universally available variants and sold wherever Chiappa distributes its products, the .350 Legend is a distinctly American import given the higher popularity of the straight-wall cartridges in the U.S. due to state restrictions on hunting deer with bottle-necked cartridges. This restriction is foreign to the European, South American, or Australian markets.

The Chiappa Big Badger is manufactured entirely out of steel, with a full matte black finish. Given the higher power of the calibers it's chambered to, compared to the Little Badger, Chiappa went for heavier-gauge steel and provided all variants with a remarkably sturdy locking lug that engages a metal bar within the receiver.

Chiappa Firearms operates one of the largest sets of multi-axis CNC machines of the Val Trompia known as Italy's “Gun Valley” within its headquarters in the town of Azzano Mella. This allows the company to manufacture the receivers and most other metal components for the



The trigger guard of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is squared and tight in front of it is the break-open lever, easily activated by the shooter's index finger. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)



The position of all controls is such that the Big Badger is readily ambidextrous; a horizontal extension can be placed on the hammer crest for manual cocking when using a magnified scope. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)



As all Big Badger models are built around the same receiver, all feature a notch cut just in front of the hammer: it is meant to dub as a rear sight for the .410-caliber shotgun version, which comes from factory with a fiber optic front sight, but serves no practical purpose on the other variants. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)



The wire metal stock of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger features a rubberized recoil pad and a black polymer riser, adjustable on three different positions for a proper and comfortable cheek weld. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)



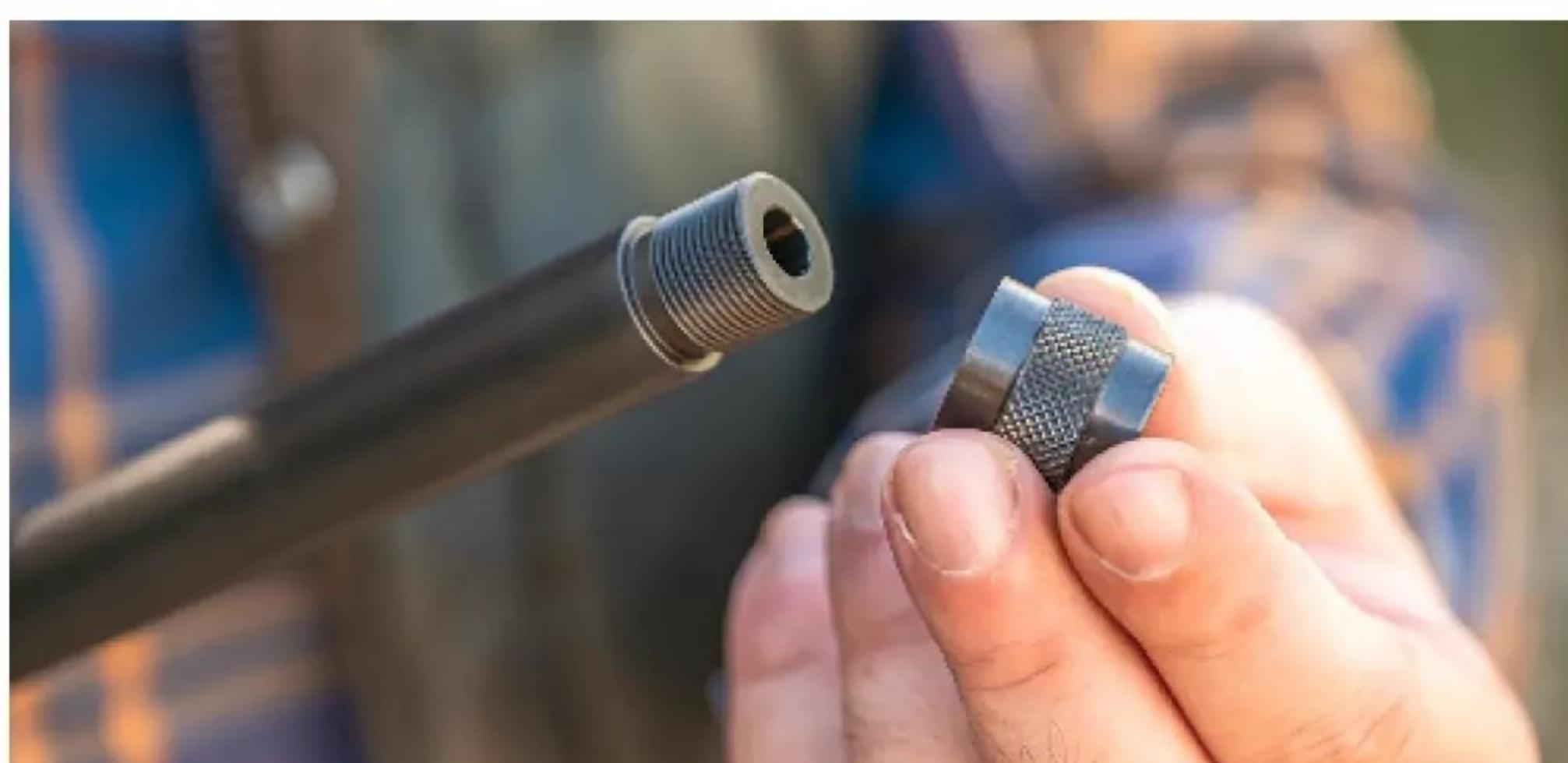
The black polymer handguard of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is clamped by four screws, two at the front and two at the back. It comes with full-length top and bottom Picatinny rails and two sets of M-LOK slots on the sides. (Photo provided by Chiappa Firearms)

Big Badger in high numbers and at a low cost, without allowing quality to slip and retaining the highest level of consistency and tight specifications.

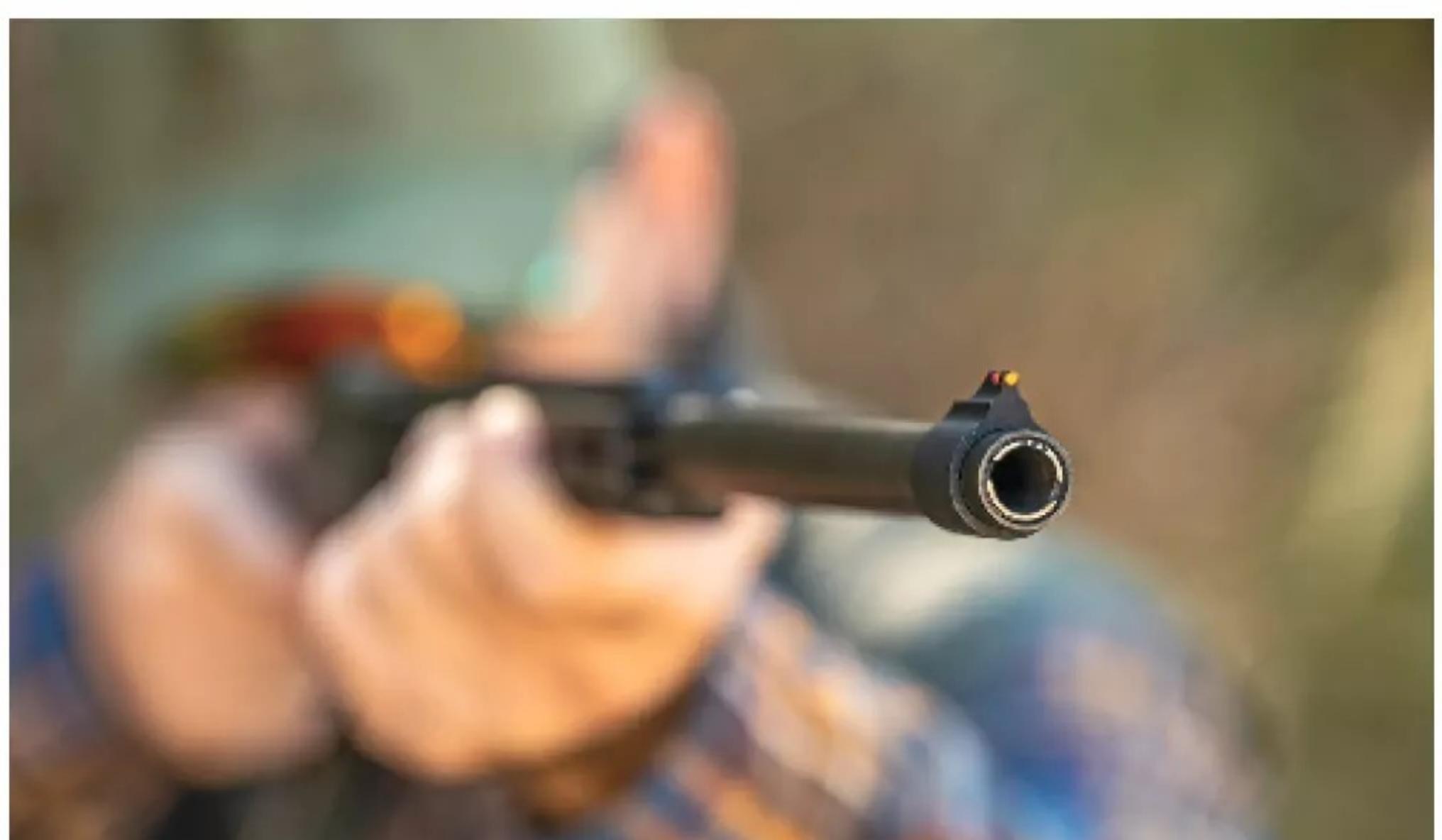
A curved lever, located in front of the trigger guard, can be depressed just like a trigger to free the locking lug and allow the barrel to pivot open for loading. A spring-loaded automatic extractor engages the case at the rim (or extractor groove, for the 350 Legend) and forcefully extracts it for manual removal when the barrel tilts open.

Unlike classic Boxlock designs, and much like the Little Badger and most single-shot break-open rifles and shotguns out there, Chiappa's Big Badger rifle does not cock automatically, either or open or close. The external hammer must be cocked manually to fire each shot. A "T"-shaped extension can be installed on the hammer to make it easier to cock when the rifle is used with a scope.

The single-action trigger breaks at two to 3.5 pounds. It is not, as one may expect, as crisp and fluid as a well-tuned



The 350 Legend and .30-30 Winchester versions of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger feature a $\frac{1}{2} \times 28$ " thread at the muzzle, covered by a black steel screw-on thread protector, to allow the use of sound suppressors or other muzzle devices. (Pierangelo Tendas)



The .410 Big Badger comes with a Mobilchoke MC1 modified choke and a fixed red fiber optic front sight. (Pierangelo Tendas)

CHIAPPA FIREARMS' BIG BADGER RIFLE



The .30-30 and 350 Legend versions of the Big Badger feature absolutely no sighting arrangement from factory; the use of an add-on optical sight is a necessity more than an accessory. (Pierangelo Tendas)

bolt-action rifle, but it is nonetheless impressive for a break-open single shot rifle, or shotgun, that was designed from the ground up to be simple and budget-priced.

Like with the Little Badger, shooters can manually position the hammer of the Big Badger rifles and shotguns to half-cock, which will dub as a safety. For additional peace of mind, the Big Badger also comes with a separate manual safety in form of a conspicuous crossbolt button located right smack in the middle of the receiver, which completely blocks the trigger and is easily accessible by the shooter's thumb and index to engage and disengage.

The handguard of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is a separate component, manufactured out of black polymer and clamped to the barrel by two sets of screws, front and rear. Unlike the stubby quad-rail handguard of the Little Badger, this one provides a full-length MIL-STD 1913 Picatinny rail at both 12 o'clock and six o'clock positions, offering plenty of room for optics and other accessories.

Keeping it simple, the Big Badger handguard does without the side rails, opting to replace them with two sets of six M-LOK slots. Whether or not the user needs side-mounted accessories on a small break-barrel survival rifle, it will be his or her responsibility to attach the required rail segments.

Made in America for America

The original Chiappa Firearms Little Badger comes with a straight two-strut wire metal stock, featuring a horizontal



The Chiappa Firearms Big Badger must be loaded and unloaded manually after each shot; the chamber is fluted to prevent cases to stick to the walls in case of pressure spikes. (Pierangelo Tendas)



A large extractor extends automatically when the barrel breaks open, speeding up the process of manually removing spent cases for reloading. (Pierangelo Tendas)

stubby Picatinny rail segment just behind the trigger guard, just in case the user wanted to add a vertical grip. A polymer buttpad that also doubles as a shell holder.

The stock of the new Big Badger represents a different take on the same concept. The metal wire is sturdier and heavier in gauge, meant to withstand the heavier recoil of .30-30, .410 and 350 Legend (compared to .22, that is), and for the same reason it features a steep drop at comb (once again, for what it is) and a curve that dubs as a pistol grip.

The buttstock is manufactured out of black polymer and features a black rubber pad to, once again, assist in recoil control. The shape of the Big Badger stock will remind the oldest among us of the odd "Bronco" skeleton gun distributed by Firearms International and manufactured starting circa 1967; the mindset behind it, after all, is basically the same: doing its job in a simple and effective way.

A touch of sophistication—one that a shooter wouldn't expect to find in such a simple rifle—is provided by the adjustable cheek riser, manufactured out of black polymer; screwed on to the buttplate to the rear and clamped



When the Big Badger is closed, the barrel assembly and receiver are held together by a single, massive locking lug manufactured out of steel. It's sturdy enough to withstand even the highest levels of pressure that .30-30 Winchester, 350 Legend or .410 can develop. (Pierangelo Tendas)



On the 350 Legend and .30-30 Winchester versions of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger, the rear portion of the top Picatinny rail extends all the way back to the top of the chamber to accommodate any sort of optical sights. The same can't be said for the .410 variant, so that the rear portion of the handguard does not get in the way of the rear sighting notch cut on top of the receiver and the red fiber optic front sight. (Pierangelo Tendas)

to the top stock strut, it can be adjusted to three different positions via two knurled plastic knobs.

Now, we talked about the Big Badger manufacture in Italy, which is true for the European and otherwise international market. American readers will however be happy to know that the samples sold in the US are entirely manufactured in the United States. More specifically, the .30-30 and 350 caliber Big Badger rifles sold in the US are already entirely manufactured by Chiappa Firearms' north American subsidiary, Chiappa Firearms USA Ltd.

On the other hand, the .410 Big Badger shotguns distributed in the United States are currently manufactured by a Chiappa Firearms factory in Turkey as a stop-gap measure for the time it will take for the production to be fully transferred to the Dayton, Ohio plant. The demand for the Big Badger is high enough for Chiappa Firearms to run manufacturing of the Big Badger in no less than three separate plants at the same time; moving manufacturing

► **In all available calibers, the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is pleasant to shoot and on the higher end of accuracy levels in terms of what one could reasonably expect from a gun built to be this simple (Pierangelo Tendas)**



to the U.S. will also allow Chiappa Firearms to dodge any tariff-related complication.

All three variants of the Chiappa Big Badger feature the same type of barrel: 20-inch, button-rifled in house by Chiappa out of stainless steel and finished in matte black. The .410 barrel is smoothbore, while the .30-30 and 350 Legend barrels feature six right-handed grooves with a 1:12-and 1:16-inch twist rate respectively.

The .30-30 Winchester and 350 Legend come with a $\frac{1}{2} \times 28$ thread at the muzzle, protected by a screw-on cap, allowing the use of muzzle brakes, flash hiders, compensators, or above all, sound suppressors. The .410 barrels come instead with a fixed red fiber optic front sight, making it the only Big Badger version to come from factory with any sort of iron sight.

The .410 version is also internally threaded to accommodate Beretta's Mobilchoke system chokes. A modified MC-3 choke is issued with each .410 Big Badger shotgun, fully certified for use with steel shot.

All versions of the Big Badger are built around the exact same receiver, which is why all versions feature a notch cut on top of it, between the rear end of the top Picatinny rail and the hammer; such notch serves a function only in the .410 version, dubbing as a rear sight.

Like the Little Badger, all variants of the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger can be folded completely, reducing their overall size from 35 inch to approximately half that (19 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches). And like the Little Badger, the purpose here is to make the gun extremely packable and unobtrusive, ready to effortlessly carry anywhere. The diminutive package of a fully folded Chiappa Firearms Big Badger will not take too much room in a gun safe, even a particularly crowded one; it will fit nice and snugly in your favorite camping backpack, or in the hard bag of a motorbike or ATV; and will make for a very inconspicuous truck gun. Weighing in at 5.3 to 5.5 pounds depending from the variant (and that's unloaded and without accessories), the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is as lightweight as it can get without becoming too unpleasant to shoot.



On a hot Italian summer day, at a 50 meters distance (approximately 54 yards), using Federal's Power Shok 150-grain Jacketed Soft Point ammunition, the .30-30 Winchester Big Badger returned a group of approximately 1.5 inches: that amounts to approximately 2.7 MOA, a decent level of accuracy for a rifle built to be minimalist and to hunt mid-to-large size prey at relatively short distances. (Pierangelo Tendas)

Made for the Field.

Let's be crystal clear here: shooting a gun like the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger will never be as comfortable as shooting a semi-automatic or bolt-action rifle chambered in the same calibers. The .410 shooting experience is definitely the softest of the three, but the shooter will definitely feel the generous recoil of .30-30 and .350.

This said, felt recoil and muzzle climb with the Big Badger are tamer than one would expect from such a roughly simple and down-to-earth gun at a glance. It is a rough, "sincere" kind of feeling—a less "domesticated" experience, if you will, compared to what you'll get with your favorite lever-action, bolt-action, or self-loader, but it will be definitely manageable.

It's not a coincidence if Chiappa Firearms choose to chamber the Big Badger in two calibers known for their mild-to-moderate recoil (350 Legend, with its nine to 11 ft/lbs., and .30-30 Winchester, with its stouter but still tame 12 to 14 ft/lbs.). Other calibers used to hunt deer-sized or slightly smaller-sized game (think wild boar) in brushy areas at short to mid-range, such as .308 Winchester or .30-06 Springfield, would definitely be too snappy to comfortably bear in such a minimalist rifle.

Accuracy is on par with what you'd expect—that is, if you realize that the Chiappa Firearms Big Badger is particularly well built for being what it is, and thus far from the lackluster levels of better-known budget-priced

break-action rifles of the past. It's a 2.5 to 3 MOA rifle, which one *must* admit, it's not too shabby for what it is: an emergency survival, foraging, and hunting training rifle meant to be used on short to mid ranges.

In the context of modern, mass-produced, general-purpose single-shot break-action rifles, discounting the high-budget, niche Kipplaus or the creations of the likes of Merkel or Fanzoj, one could definitely argue which one is the best overall, whether it's the Bergara BA13, Ruger No.1, Henry Single Shot, or the Thompson/Center Encore; but there is little doubt that the new Big Badger rifles fit snugly in the top five.

Sure thing, it's not meant to be your main hunting gun, but it can be a perfect first hunting gun. If you're introducing the younger generations of your family to the basics of safe firearms handling and marksmanship, and taking them out to their first hunting trip, the Big Badger is an excellent choice.

Experienced hunters may also want to remember how lightweight and easy it is to just stick in a backpack: if your main hunting rifle has any issue on the field, packing this inconspicuous little thing may make the difference between a hunting trip saved and a wasted day. Think of it as a spare tire: it may take some room in the boot of your car, but *not* having one is just a silly risk to take. And for a manufacturer's suggested retail price ranging between a minimum of \$225 and a maximum of \$362 depending on the variant, not *wanting* one is just as silly. **FN**

CHIAPPA FIREARMS BIG BADGER RIFLE

Type:	Single-shot rifle, single-shot shotgun
Caliber:	.30-30 Winchester, 350 Legend, .410
Capacity:	One
Operation:	Break-barrel, automatic extractor
Weight:	5.3 lbs. (.410), 5.50 lbs. (.30-30, .350)
Finish:	Matte black
Stock:	Steel rod with adjustable comb
Sights:	None from factory; MIL-STD 1913 Picatinny rail for optics or back-up iron sights (.30-30, .350), MIL-STD 1913 Picatinny rail for optics or back-up iron sights, fixed fiber optic front post, rear sight notch cut onto receiver (.410)
Barrel Length:	20 in., 6 grooves, RH – 1 turn in 12 in. (.30-30); 1 turn in 16 in. (350 Legend)
Overall Length:	35 in. (unfolded); 19.25 in. (folded)
Trigger:	Single-action, hammer-fired
MSRP:	\$225.19 (Big Badger .410), \$362.96 (Big Badger .30-30 Winchester, Big Badger 350 Legend)
Contact:	ChiappaUSA.com

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The Walther MPL is a controllable and efficient close combat tool. Employed by West German police agencies, America's fledgling Delta Force, and sundry international military and Law Enforcement users, the MPL never got the credit it deserved. (Will Dabbs)

THE WALTHER MPL

A Great Submachine Gun Few Have Experience With

By Will Dabbs, MD

On September 5, 1972, eight members of the Palestinian terrorist group Black September slipped into the Olympic Village in Munich, West Germany. They were dressed in tracksuits and carried bulky duffle bags containing AKM rifles, Tokarev pistols, and Combloc hand grenades. German Neo-Nazis provided their logistical support.

In their initial assault, the Black September terrorists killed Israeli athletes Yossef Romano and Moshe Weinberg before seizing another nine of their countrymen. In exchange for the safe return of these captured Israelis, the terrorists demanded the release of several hundred incarcerated terrorists as well as safe passage out of Germany. Faced with the prospect of a political disaster of Biblical proportions, West German police staged an immediate armed rescue.

The post-war German constitution prevented the use of the West German armed forces within the confines of the

country during peacetime so responsibility for the rescue mission fell to the police. At 4:30 in the afternoon, a group of 38 German police officers carrying distinctive Walther MP submachine guns moved into position. Unbeknownst to them their approach was captured by the news media and broadcast to the world as well as the terrorists inside the compound. Their cover blown, the German police officers retreated without firing a shot.

After protracted negotiations the terrorists moved by helicopter to a nearby NATO base to board a waiting Boeing 727. Five German police sharpshooters were stationed around the area armed with standard-issue G3 service rifles that lacked sound suppressors or optical sights. Sixteen German police officers dressed as flight crew aboard the 727 precipitously decided to abandon their mission without con-



The Walther MPL submachine gun. (Will Dabbs)



Economically produced of pressed steel with a minimum number of machined parts, the Walther MPL represented the apogee of open bolt submachine gun design. It is a compact SMG with stock folded. (Will Dabbs)

sulting their superiors. This left five German snipers armed with infantry rifles to confront eight heavily armed terrorists holding nine hostages. The result was a bloodbath.

All nine Israeli hostages died in the exchange along with Anton Fliegerbauer, a German police officer positioned in the control tower. German police killed five of the terrorists. On October 29, 1972, Palestinian terrorists seized Lufthansa Flight 615 and threatened to blow it up unless the remaining Black September operatives were released. The German government complied. Two of these three men were subsequently eliminated during a wide-ranging Israeli Mossad operation titled, appropriately enough, Operation Wrath of God.

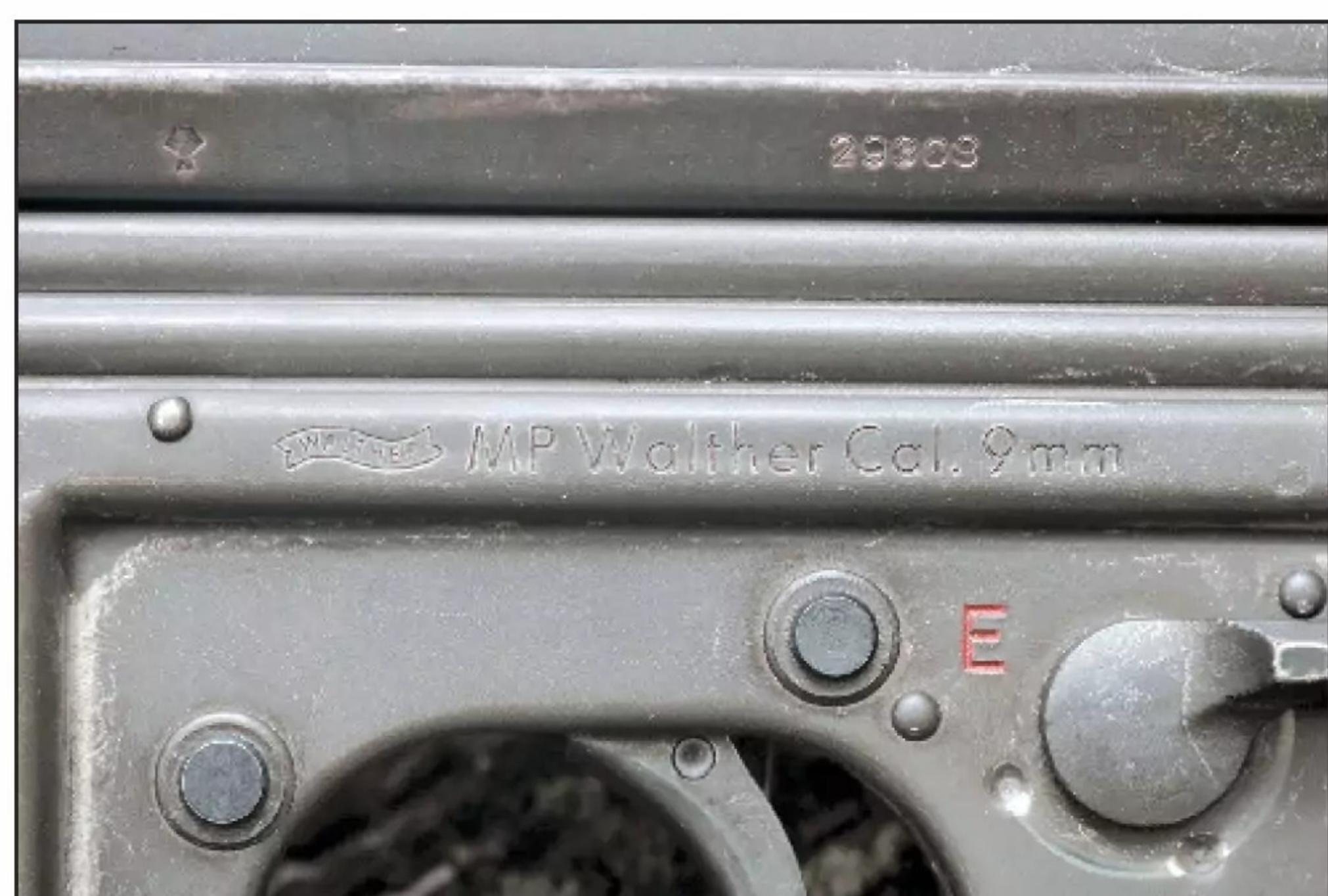
The list of regrettable failures that folded into the Munich Olympic Massacre is long. With the notable exception of Israel, nobody really maintained dedicated counter-terrorist units back then. The Munich operation was therefore a come-as-you-are affair. Within two months the West German government had organized GSG9, the superlative West German police counter-terrorist unit then commanded by Ulrich Wegener.

The Free World responded quickly to this new challenge, and the influence can be felt all the way up to the present day. Nowadays even small American police departments typically maintain some sort of tactical capability. Despite the many failures manifest during those fateful days in 1972, one piece of critical gear used on that operation has long been under-appreciated. That is the superb Walther MP submachine gun.

An Unappreciated Jewel

Manufactured by Carl Walther from 1963 until 1985, the MP submachine gun represents the pinnacle of open-bolt submachine gun design. Feeding from a superb double-column 32-round box magazine, this weapon comes in two variants. The MPL (Maschinenpistole Lang) is the longer version sporting a 10.2-inch barrel and weighing 6.6 pounds. The stubbier MPK (Maschinenpistole Kurz) features a chopped 6.8-inch tube and weighs some seven ounces less. Stemming from more than half a century of martial evolution, the MPL is a superb piece of kit.

The balance and ergonomics of the gun eclipse anything manufactured during World War II. The center of gravity rides where it should, and the weapon is finished in a robust dull Parkerizing. The overall chassis strikes a nice balance between modest weight, compact dimensions, and controllability.



The Walther MPL is formed from sheet steel pressings folded and welded into shape. This allows the gun to be produced quickly and economically. The receiver also sports the famous Walther logo. (Will Dabbs)

THE WALTHER MPL



The US M3A1 Grease Gun pioneered the technique of crafting guns out of folded steel components welded together. The Walther MPL perfected the concept. (Will Dabbs)



The steel forearm is liberally imbued with cooling slots. (Will Dabbs)



The Walther MPL's safety selector has three positions. Pointing backwards is safe, downward is full auto, and pointing forward is semi-auto. Also note the plastic grip and sling swivel. (Will Dabbs)

Morphology

The gun is manufactured from steel pressings welded together in much the same manner as the M3 Grease Gun. The upper receiver is a single flat folded around trunnions and welded at the bottom. The lower receiver is formed from two clamshells welded along the length of the seam. The upper and lower are secured via a spring-retained push-

pin. The grips are formed from unremarkable black plastic. The steel forearm is liberally perforated with cooling slots. The WWII-era MP44 assault rifle clearly influenced the gun's manufacture.

The selector switch is in the same spot as that of an M4 and is replicated on both sides of the gun. However, two of its three positions are reversed from the Colt standard. Straight back is safe, the first 90-degree notch is full auto, and the reversed 180-degree position is semi-auto. The gun's sedate rate of fire helps reduce profligate ammunition expenditure, so this is appropriate for a pistol-caliber submachine gun.

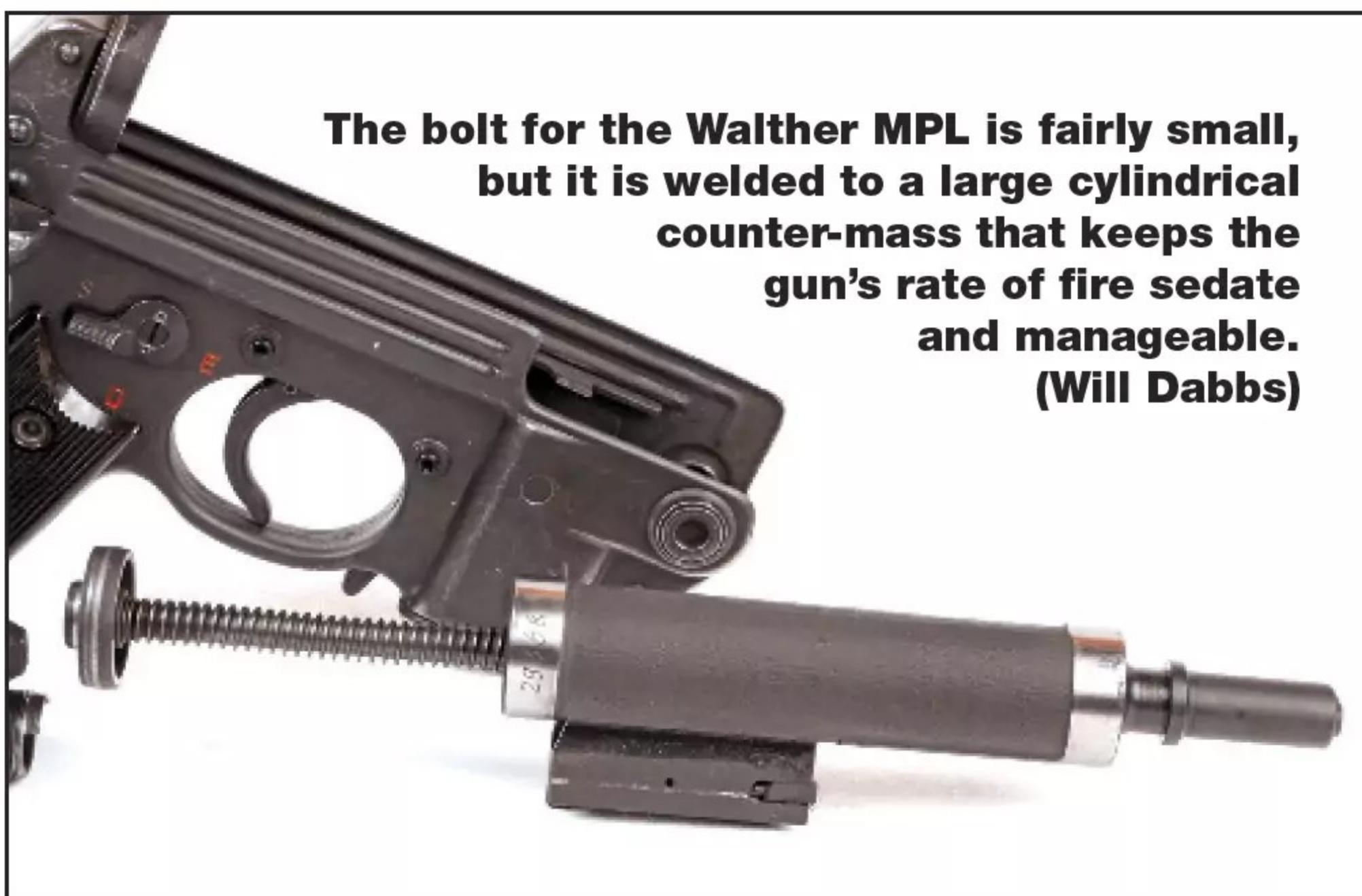
The magazine well is located just ahead of the



The MPL's selector is ambidextrous and the takedown pin is of the same type as the MP5 SMG. The hinge of the folding stock is adequate. (Will Dabbs)



The heavy wire stock folds to the right when not in use. Strangely, the stock strut runs across the bottom portion of the ejection port and can adversely affect reliability. (Will Dabbs)



The bolt for the Walther MPL is fairly small, but it is welded to a large cylindrical counter-mass that keeps the gun's rate of fire sedate and manageable. (Will Dabbs)



both the MPK and MPL and folds to the right when not in use. Oddly, the stock partially occludes the ejection port when closed and adversely affects reliability as a result.

The bolt design is quite clever in that the modest bit that manages the rounds is quite small. However, this piece is welded to a much larger component that reciprocates within the upper tubular portion of the upper receiver. This substantial mass is what keeps the rate of fire slow and contributes to the gun's remarkable controllability.

Pertinent Particulars

The non-reciprocating charging handle is spring-loaded and located at the left front akin to that of the HK MP5, the MPL's primary competition. This makes it imminently accessible by the weak hand when firing right-handed. As near as I can tell, left-handed people seem not to have been invented until the mid 1980's...

The sling swivels are located on the left side as they should be. Unlike the MP5, the barrels are easily exchanged via a knurled muzzle nut retained by a spring-loaded catch. Swapping out barrels or adding a sound suppressor is easily managed at the user level.

The sights on the MPL are quite curious. Both front and rear are heavily fenced against rough handling. There is an open groove both front and rear for rapid engagements. After a little practice, they are easily acquired. However, there is



The pressed steel Walther MPL strips easily via a single pushpin. (Will Dabbs)



The charging handle on the Walther MPL rides at the left front of the gun for easy access. This appendage is spring-loaded and does not reciprocate with the bolt when firing. (Will Dabbs)

a second sighting system built underneath the first. This rig consists of a simple front post combined with a rear peep. For precise semi-auto work in the days before widespread optical sights this would have been fairly revolutionary.

Practical Tactical

While the shorter MPK is purportedly a bit of a handful, the longer, front-heavy MPL is a serene and comfortable gun to run. With a cyclic rate of around 550 rounds per minute, the MPL is imminently controllable and fun on the range. Doubles are fairly easy for an experienced trigger finger, and three- to four-round bursts flow forth naturally. Out to fifty meters, or more, such bursts will typically disperse to about the area of a standard tactical target.

Magazine changes are fast if perhaps a bit more cumbersome than those of your favorite M4. Once the gun runs dry the bolt remains forward. Lock the bolt to the rear manually and release the charging handle to slide forward of its own accord. Drop the empty magazine and insert a fresh one, point the gun, and squeeze. The magazine release is located behind the magazine for easy access with either thumb. The ample mag well just ahead of the trigger guard is easy to find, even in the dark.

If the MPL has a dark side it is its perforated forearm. After two magazines burned rapidly the forearm gets uncomfortably hot. The solution is simply to move the sup-

The steel sling swivels are mounted on the left aspect of the weapon. (Will Dabbs)



port hand back to the magazine well, but the gun would benefit from a polymer handguard of some sort.

The MPL is not terribly concealable, but concealability is not its mission. This gun is intended to fulfill the role of the wartime MP40, and it remains a superb general-purpose submachine gun. Rugged, accurate, and versatile, the MPL is what all open-bolt subguns aspire to be.

Regarding rate of fire, the MPL runs much more slowly than many competing designs. The gun's 550 round per minute rate puts it into the same family as the Sten, MP40, and American M3 Grease Gun. By contrast, a modern M4 or MP5 typically cycles at around 750–850 rounds per minute. For a general purpose subgun to be used in protracted combat, such as that experienced in Europe during World War II, the MPL is a superb tool. For the counter-terror mission in the hands of well-trained operators, a faster-firing weapon might be preferable.

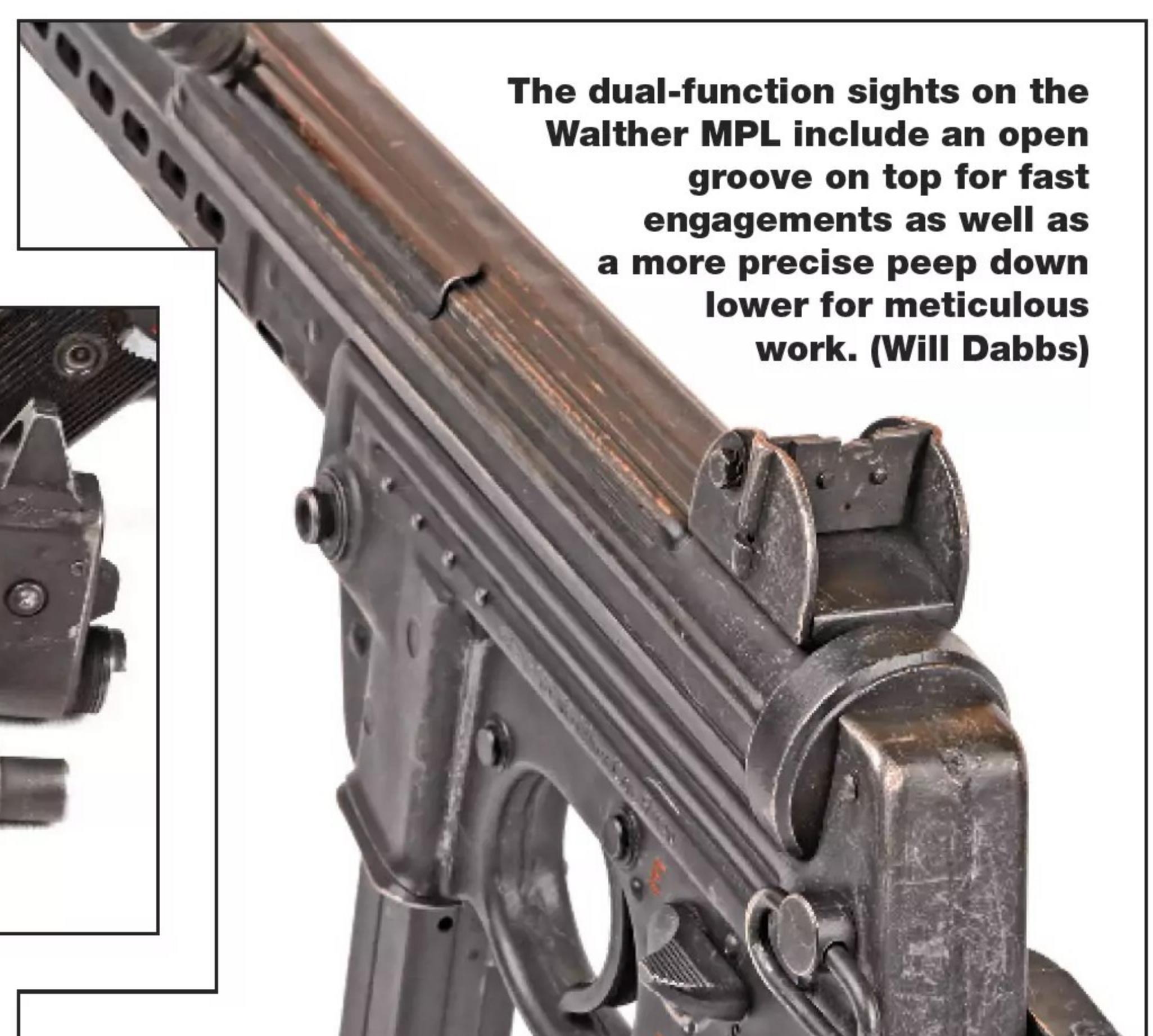
Denouement

The Portuguese used the Walther MPL through their sun-dry colonial wars as well as during the Carnation Revolution

The dual-function sights on the Walther MPL include an open groove on top for fast engagements as well as a more precise peep down lower for meticulous work. (Will Dabbs)



Swapping the barrel out on the Walther MPL is a simple chore that requires no tools. (Will Dabbs)





The Walther MPL is a sedate and controllable close combat tool. In experienced hands, the gun shoots straight and tight. (Will Dabbs)



You do something long enough and eventually something cool happens. This shot caught the streak of the bullet leaving the barrel. (Will Dabbs)



◀ **Firing on semi-auto at fifteen meters produced these tidy little groups using the peep sight from a simple rest. (Will Dabbs)**

► **When firing off-hand on full auto at fifteen meters, it was an easy chore to keep all of our rounds on a standard silhouette. (Will Dabbs)**



in April of 1974, the largest peaceful civilian evacuation in human history. This gun saw service in the Congo as well as during the Lebanese Civil War and the various brushfire conflicts in Colombia. The West German police obviously used the gun extensively as well. The most famous users of the Walther MP, however, were also some of the most secretive.

The U.S. Army's Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta was the brainchild of a Special Forces Colonel named Charlie Beckwith in the late 1970's. After training with the British SAS, Beckwith returned to America convinced of the need to establish a dedicated counter-terrorist capability within the United States Army. Early Delta operators used American M3 Grease Guns before transitioning to the Walther MP.

Delta used these weapons during the ill-fated attempted rescue of American hostages in Iran. However, soon thereafter HK MP5's and stubby rifle-caliber assault rifles like the CAR-15 filled this role. Ultimately, the HK 416 undertook this mission.

The world's counter-terrorist units began shifting toward rifle-caliber weapons in the 1980's. Meanwhile, the HK MP5 was selling as fast as Oberndorf could produce them. As a result, the Walther MP submachine guns died a natural death. However, the argument can be made that the Walther MPL was actually the most effective general-purpose submachine gun ever produced. **FN**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

WALTHER MPL SUBMACHINE GUN

Caliber: 9mm Parabellum

Action: Blowback open bolt

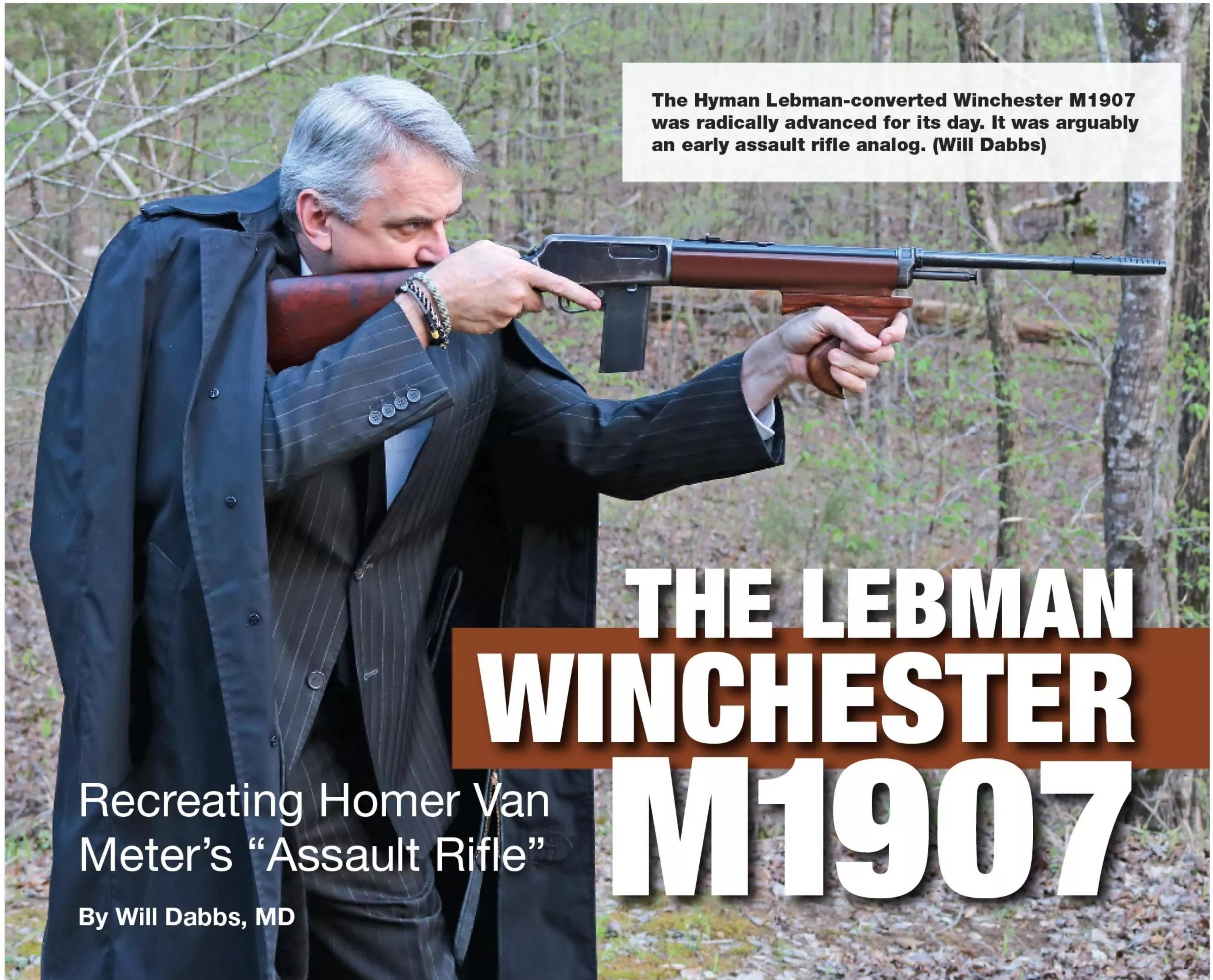
Weight: 6.6 lbs.

Length: 29.4 in. stock open, 18.2 in. closed

Barrel Length: 10.2 in.

Rate of Fire: 550 rpm

Feed System: 32-round box magazine



Recreating Homer Van Meter's "Assault Rifle"

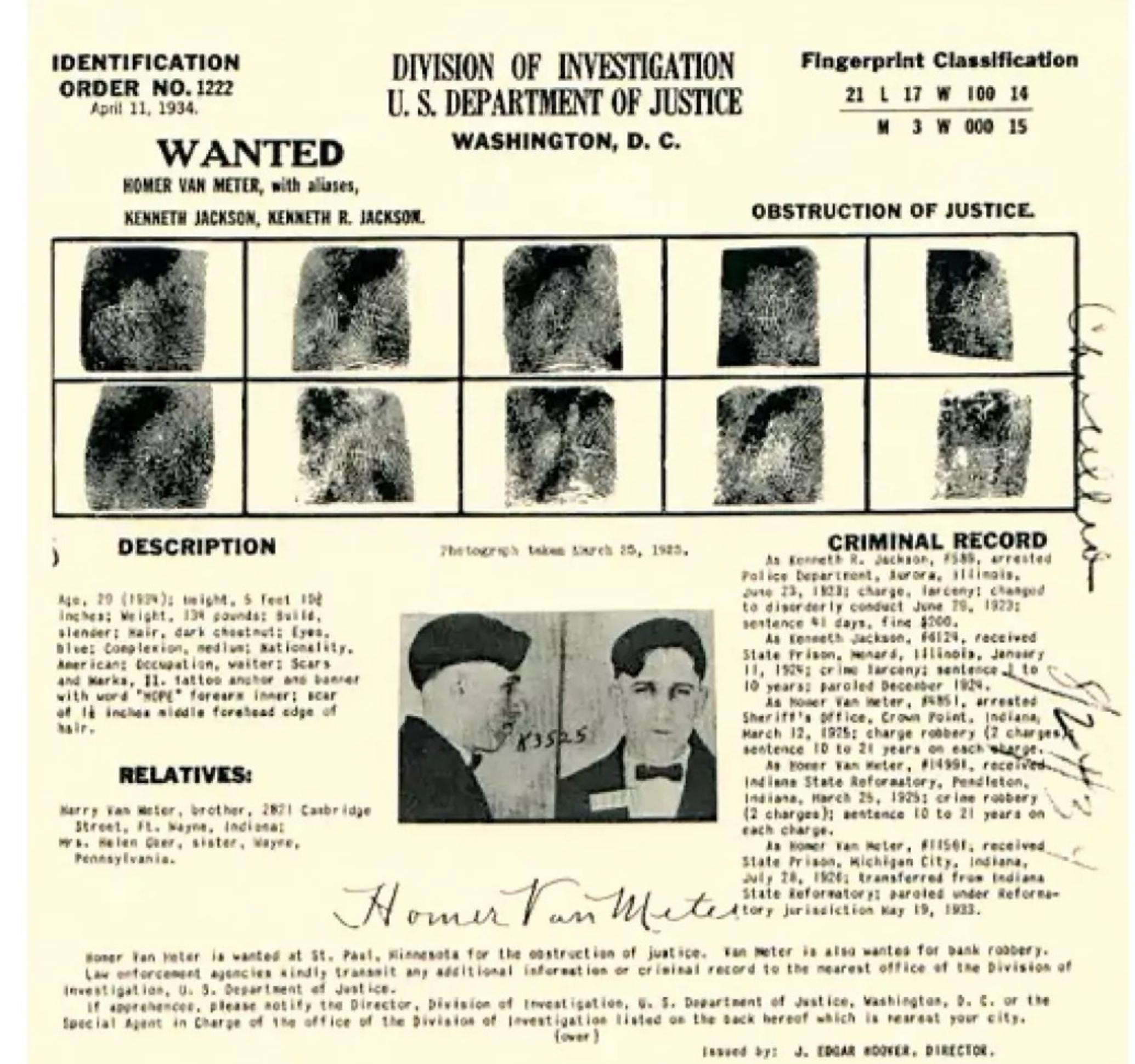
By Will Dabbs, MD

THE LEBMAN WINCHESTER M1907

It would be possible to feel sorry for Homer Van Meter were he not such an utter psychopath. Born in 1905 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, young Homer was the son of an alcoholic train conductor. He ran away from home in the Sixth Grade, eventually landing in Chicago. Van Meter kept himself fed early on working as a waiter and bellhop.

With the crystalline clarity of hindsight, Van Meter likely suffered from antisocial personality disorder. In the vulgar tongue, this simply means that he was born without an operational conscience. Those so afflicted invariably end up in prison. In Van Meter's case, his first arrest came as a teenager for being drunk and disorderly. His first of several jail sentences came at age eighteen for larceny. In 1924, Van Meter was remanded to the Southern Illinois Penitentiary for automobile theft. When first incarcerated it was found that he had the word, "HOPE" tattooed across his forearm.

Van Meter was paroled a year later. Three months after that, he and his cellmate robbed a passenger train in Crown Point, Indiana. That earned him a lengthy sentence at the Indiana Reformatory. That's where he met John Dillinger.



Homer Van Meter had a pretty terrible life. However, not everybody with a terrible life ends up a cold-blooded murderer. (FBI)



These were some of the more common gangster weapons used by the motorized bandits of the 1930's. From top to bottom we have the Browning Automatic Rifle, the Lebman mini machinegun, the customized Winchester M1907, and the M1921 Colt Thompson. (Will Dabbs)

Prison is like grad school for the career criminal. It is a place to learn new skills and network with your peers. In Van Meter's case, he escaped a couple of times, beating a guard unconscious in one case. Once caught, he spent two months in solitary confinement and was beaten severely himself. After claiming to be a reformed man, Van Meter was released in 1933, one week after his buddy Dillinger got out of the joint. Alongside Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, and a few other career reprobates, Van Meter then hit the big time. He began knocking over banks.

One bank yielded \$30,000, which is about \$725,000 in today's money, another brought in \$32K. In March of 1934, Van Meter and company netted \$52,000 from a bank in Mason City, Iowa. That one score would be \$1.2 million in today's money. These guys were rolling on cash.

Professional, well-funded motorized bandits in the 1930's sought out professional-grade firepower. In April of 1934, less than a month after the big bank heist in Iowa, Dillinger and Van Meter knocked over a police station in Warsaw, Indiana, making off with guns and body armor. However, sourcing the truly good stuff required a road trip down to Texas.

Gunsmith to the Stars

Hyman Lebman ran a gun shop and saddlery shop in San Antonio, Texas. Prior to the National Firearms Act of 1934, firearms of any sort were cash and carry in the United States. If you had the money, you could walk out of your local hardware store with a full-auto Thompson submachine gun or Browning Automatic Rifle without so



John Dillinger was the apex predator among 1930's-era gangsters. (Everett Collection/Shutterstock)



Lester Gillis, aka Baby Face Nelson, was an inveterate killer but a devoted husband. (Everett Collection/Shutterstock)

THE LEBMAN WINCHESTER M1907



The modified Winchester M1907 rifle and the mini machinegun made from a Colt M1911 in .38 Super were Hyman Lebman's two most distinctive creations. (Will Dabbs)



The Winchester M1907 rifle was a prescient design. However, it lacks much of a cult following today. Used examples in decent shape are available online at fairly reasonable prices. (Will Dabbs)

much as flashing a driver's license. Part of this was because not a whole lot of people had driver's licenses. Even fewer had money. Amidst this curious milieu, Hyman Lebman sold customized social guns to all comers.

Dillinger, Van Meter, and Baby Face Nelson all frequented his establishment. Van Meter and Nelson actually once took Thanksgiving dinner with the Lebman family. They went back home with Tommy guns, customized full-auto M1911 machine pistols, and what was arguably the world's first assault rifle. This highly-modified Winchester M1907 autoloader offered rifle-caliber firepower in a compact controllable package.

Source Material

The M1907 was patented by Thomas Crossley Johnson in 1901 while in the employ of Winchester. Firing the

straight-walled .351 Winchester Self-Loading (WSL) cartridge, the M1907 was a semiautomatic blowback-operated rifle that originally pushed a 180-grain bullet to around 1,850 fps. Most modern loads are produced by boutique

From left to right we have the .45ACP, the .351WSL, and the .30 carbine. The straight-walled .351WSL was a powerful round for its day. (Will Dabbs)



The M1907 Winchester exhibits superlative Old-World workmanship. (Will Dabbs)



Recreating a Lebman M1907 isn't terribly challenging. The compensator has to be crafted from scratch, but everything else is both plug-and-play and available online. (Will Dabbs)



The distinctive compensator was turned out of a piece of steel bar stock. (Will Dabbs)

manufacturers and are somewhat underpowered compared to the originals. The gun offered comparable ballistics to the .357 Magnum or .35 Remington rounds. For folks like Homer Van Meter, that meant excellent performance against body armor and car door panels.

The M1907 fed from a five-, 10-, or 15-round single-stack box magazine and charged via a plunger located at the front of the forearm. The gun featured a semi-pistol grip stock and sold for \$28 apiece when first introduced. That would be about \$2,100 today.

The M1907 saw action with Pershing's forces fighting Pancho Villa in Mexico. The French bought 2,200 copies that were supposedly capable of full auto fire that saw action during WWI. The British and the Russians bought several hundred of the weapons for use during the First World War as well. However, it was Hyman Lebman who really put the M1907 on the map.

The Lebman M1907

Lebman's conversion of the M1907 involved shortening the barrel slightly and adding a custom slotted compensator to help control muzzle rise. The original wooden forearm of the M1907 was a notorious failure point, so Lebman replaced his with a machined aluminum version configured to accept the foregrip from an M1921 Thompson submachine gun. He also supposedly converted his guns to fully automatic.

Lebman supplied the Dillinger gang with at least three of these customized Winchesters. Two were seized by law enforcement in a raid in Tucson, Arizona. However, in June of 1934, Homer Van Meter was packing a Lebman M1907 while serving as lookout outside the Merchants National Bank on Michigan Street in South Bend, Indiana.

The Hit

It was a hot sunny Saturday morning in South Bend when Dillinger and an unidentified accomplice pushed



The distinctive modified forearm is a rugged polymer piece I found on GunBroker. The aftermarket Thompson foregrip was unfinished and cheap. (Will Dabbs)

their way into the crowded bank. They carried Thompson submachine guns wrapped in pillow cases they intended to use to pack out their cash. Van Meter posted outside with his modified M1907. Baby Face Nelson stood alongside with a Thompson.

One of the two inside men loosed a burst from his Tommy gun into the ceiling just to get everybody's attention. At first, bystanders thought this was fireworks in anticipation of the upcoming Fourth of July celebration. However, a local patrolman named Howard Wagner was directing traffic nearby and went to investigate. As Wagner approached the bank, Van Meter riddled him with bullets. The policeman bled out in short order.

There, followed a full-bore gunfight on the streets of South Bend. A local jeweler named Harry Berg center-punched Nelson with a revolver round that was stopped by his armored vest. An insanely-brave 16-year-old passerby named Joseph Pawlowski leapt onto Nelson's back and

THE LEBMAN WINCHESTER M1907



The adventures of John Dillinger and Homer Van Meter were immortalized on the big screen in the superlative Michael Mann gangster epic *Public Enemies*. The 30-round magazine in Johnny Depp's Thompson was obviously a mistake on the theatrical armorer's and/or director's part. (MovieStillsDB.com)

I really didn't want to go to the trouble of shortening and threading the barrel. As the original tube was 20 inches, there weren't any NFA barrel length considerations, but all that machine work would have been a hassle. As a result, I had a machinist friend make me a faux slip-on compensator that telescoped around the original front sight. He tapered the interior to match the host barrel and cut the outside dimensions to approximate those of the original. We cut the slots with a cutoff wheel, and I finished the part with cold blue. We secured the compensator in place with a set screw. The end result looks right and didn't cost me a fortune.



The custom M1907 compensator began life as a piece of cylindrical steel scrap bored out and turned to shape. (Will Dabbs)

began beating him with his fists. Nelson threw the young man through a glass window and gave him a squirt from his Thompson for good measure. Miraculously, the boy was hit only once in the hand. Pawlowski ultimately recovered and went on to a successful career as a concert violinist.

Van Meter caught a round to the head and was put out of the fight. Dillinger pulled him into their nearby idling Hudson and successfully made his getaway. Van Meter recovered in time. The final take was one dead cop, four injured civilians, and \$29,890 in cash.

Building the Lebman Gun

I have coveted one of these Lebman conversions for years. I landed a decent M1907 Winchester on GunBroker for not a lot of money. There's a gent on GunBroker who sells polymer renditions of the Lebman forearm. These are also not terribly expensive and seem fairly robust. Mine dropped in place without fitting and came in a nice brown color that matches the buttstock. Aftermarket Thompson foregrips are available from a variety of sources for around \$25. The forearm comes with the mounting base for the foregrip.



We used an end mill to cut the slot to accommodate the existing front sight. (Will Dabbs)

The tough piece is actually the extended magazine. Those things cost \$300 or so online when they can be found. In my case, a great buddy just gave me one that he no longer needed. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Triple-K offers a reproduction 10-round magazine for \$56 via their website: TripleK.com.]

Trigger Time

The M1907 Winchester has been rightfully compared to the M1 carbine. However, the M1907 fires a markedly heavier bullet. Additionally, the M1907's unlocked blowback action produces a sharper, more vigorous recoil impulse than does that of the G.I. weapon.

The Lebman conversion is at least as accurate as I am with iron sights these days. The foregrip does enhance control, and the compensator would help keep the muzzle down in rapid fire. I haven't fired this rifle a great deal—.351WSL ammo is both rare and expensive—but it has been reliable during our range time together. At a time when the alternative was an ungainly Thompson or an obese BAR, the Lebman M1907



A thin cutoff wheel was adequate to form the slots. (Will Dabbs)

would have offered hard-hitting accurate firepower in a handy portable package.

The Rest of the Story

Howard Wagner was the last of thirteen lawmen murdered by members of the Dillinger gang. Three weeks after Homer Van Meter killed Howard Wagner in South Bend, John Dillinger fell in a hail of G-man bullets outside the Biograph Theater in Chicago. Less than a month later, Van Meter was shot to pieces in a Saint Paul alleyway by local police. He was 28 years old. Dillinger was 31.

History has sanitized a great deal of the darkness from the stories of these Depression-era gangsters. Reality, as



The end result is a slip fit. We used a setscrew to keep everything snug after tapping it into place. (Will Dabbs)



This is an extended 10-round magazine shown alongside the original stock 5-round. These things are expensive. (Will Dabbs)



This was a pretty typical 25-yard group. (Will Dabbs)

Howard Wagner found out, was that most of these guys were old school psychopaths—inveterate killers who never let a little cold-blooded murder get in the way of their unfettered greed. In the hands of such monsters as these, the Lebman M1907 Winchester was indeed a gun well ahead of its time. **FN**



The end result is indeed maneuverable and hard-hitting. (Will Dabbs)



Once the full weight of American Law Enforcement was unleashed upon Homer Van Meter and his cronies, they went down hard. (Public domain)

PERFORMANCE SPECIFICATIONS		
LEBMAN M1907 WINCHESTER .351 WSL		
Load	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (in.)
Handloaded 180 gr. Plated Round Nose	1,745	1.7
Group Size is the average of three five-shot groups fired off of a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocity is the average of fifteen rounds measured by a Garmin Xero C1 chronograph.		

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS LEBMAN M1907 WINCHESTER

Type:	Unlocked Blowback
Caliber:	.351 Winchester Self-Loading
Barrel:	20 in.
Overall Length:	43 in.
Weight:	9 lbs.
Finish:	Blued
Sights:	Rear Sliding Notch/Front Post

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The Finnish 7.62x39mm RK 95 TP rifle, seen here during a training exercise, was an improvement over the older RK 62. (Courtesy Finnish Defense Forces)



FINLAND'S RK 95 TP ASSAULT RIFLE

The Post-War Rifle that Defended Finland from Russian Aggression!

By David M. Fortier, Executive Editor

Bringing the rifle up, I triggered off a short burst. The sights danced as the rifle snorted and 123-grain FMJ-BTs impacted the target. I sent another burst down-range and the rifle flung steel case empties in a high arc. The cyclic rate was a textbook 650 rpm and with proper technique good work could be done at reasonable distances. While Kalashnikov based, the assault rifle in question is not very well-known in the US. Designated the Rynnäkkökivääri 95 taittooperä (Assault Rifle 95 Folding Stock) or simply RK 95 TP, it's the rifle protecting Finland from its historically violent Eastern neighbor. Both this

rifle and the country it defends have an interesting history, so let's dive right in.

For the last few years, threats, intimidation, and aggression by Russia towards its European neighbors has continually grown in intensity as it wages a war of attrition against Ukraine. While this may puzzle some Americans unfamiliar with Russia's long, dark history of menacing, invading, and subjugating its small independent neighbors, it's no surprise to anyone familiar with Russia's blood-stained history. One people very familiar with it are the Finns. Geographically caught between Russia and the



The author had a chance to handle and fire an RK 95 TP while on assignment in Finland in 2005. He found it much to his liking. (David M. Fortier collection)

West, Finland finally grew alarmed enough to forsake its long-held neutrality and joined NATO on April 4th, 2023.

Finnish troops have traditionally been armed with service rifles chambered for Russian military calibers, first 7.62x54mmR, and then 7.62x39mm. This is currently changing with the adoption of the Sako M23 family of assault and battle rifles chambered for NATO's 5.56x45mm and 7.62x51mm. These will be replacing Finland's robust 7.62mm RK 95 TP assault rifle I'll be covering here.

Before we dive into the 7.62x39mm RK 95 TP though, let's take a quick look at events which influenced Finland's thoughts regarding the need for a rugged and effective combat rifle. From the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 to the end of World War II, Finland was repeatedly confronted by Bolshevik-inspired political agitation, armed incursions, and covert operations. Finland's borders were drawn in the aftermath of World War I, when the newly independent Finnish Republic (declared December 6, 1917) found itself adjacent to a revolutionary Soviet state determined to export communism. Over the next three decades, the Soviet Union employed a mixture of direct military force, covert espionage, and political agitation to advance these goals.

On January 27, 1918, a "Red Guard" unit organized, armed, and financed by a Soviet government in Petrograd

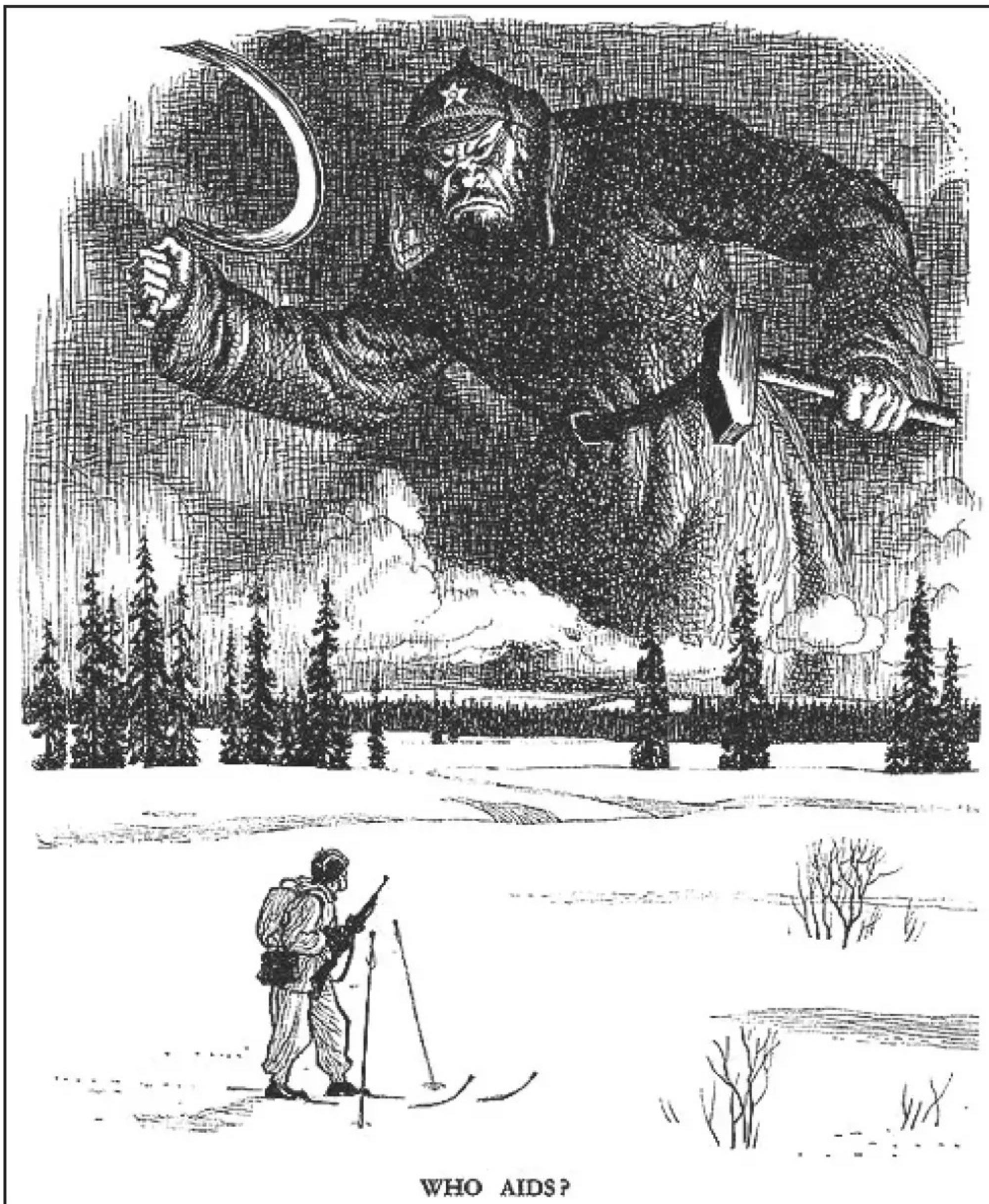


Armed with a M1891 rifle and a M1895 revolver, a Finnish "White Guard" and a Gew 1898 armed German soldier in Helsinki during the Finnish Civil War, April 19th, 1918. (Public domain)



Two fighters of the Bolshevik "Red Guards." The one on the right armed with a 7.62x54mmR M1895 Winchester, photographed in Atelier Nyblin in Helsinki during the Finnish Civil War, April 8th, 1918. (Public domain)

FINLAND'S RK 95 TP ASSAULT RIFLE



A British cartoon published in *Punch* magazine Feb 21st, 1940, showing a lone Finnish soldier standing against a colossal Soviet soldier with the caption, "Who aids?" (Public domain)

(Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) crossed the Karelian frontier with a convoy of 3,000 rifles, 500 mules of ammunition, and several hundred Bolshevik volunteers. Their stated aim was "to liberate the Finnish working class," but the reality was a violent seizure of power that plunged Finland into a civil war.

The Red forces, bolstered by Soviet artillery and a handful of Bolshevik officers, captured both Helsinki and Tampere along with several industrial towns. Their brutality is documented in the Finnish police reports of April 1918, which record summary executions of 1,200 alleged "class enemies" and the burning of civilian homes in the Karelian Isthmus. The anti-communist "White" troops of the Senate of Finland launched a counteroffensive, led by the legendary Finnish General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, and eventually defeated the Reds. However, the episode left a deep scar: a foreign-backed communist insurgency had almost toppled the newborn Finnish Republic.

Even after the 1918 defeat, the Soviet Union refused to abandon its Finnish agenda. The Communist International (Comintern) established the Finnish Communist Party (SKP) as a legal front in 1919, funneling monthly cash transfers of 5,000 rubles and broadcast clandestine radio messages into Finland. Soviet intelligence (the GRU) cultivated a network of Finnish agents (students, railway workers, and journalists) who regularly



Armed with a captured Soviet PPSh-41 submachine gun, a Finnish soldier defends his position in Vuosalmi, Karelian Isthmus against the Soviet invaders during the Continuation War, July 1944. (Courtesy of SA-Kuva)

reported on Finnish defense plans and attempted sabotage of critical infrastructure.

A concrete example of the Red insurgency was exposed during the Mäntsälä Rebellion of February 1932. Although the uprising was led by the rightwing Lapua Movement, the Soviet press seized the crisis to portray the Finnish government as a "bourgeois dictatorship" vulnerable to popular revolt. In response, Finnish authorities arrested 120 suspected communist collaborators, confiscated 440 pounds of explosives hidden in Helsinki warehouses, and



AK-47 armed Finnish soldiers on maneuvers in the 1960s, note the early slab-side magazines. (Courtesy of the Finish Defense Forces)



Located in Joensuu, Finland, this is a monument to fallen Finnish soldiers who fought the Soviet Union during the Winter War and World War II. (Liesker/Shutterstock)



The RK 62, seen here, was adopted to replace the obsolete bolt-action 7.62x53mmR m/39 rifle. It proved tough and reliable. (Courtesy of the Finnish Defense Forces)

exposed a KGBstyle cell that had been preparing a second insurrection in the summer of 1933.

The Soviet Union also pressed territorial claims. In 1932, it demanded the return of the Petsamo region (a strategically vital Arctic port) citing the 1920 Treaty of Tartu as “void” because the Finnish government had “betrayed the working class.” Finnish diplomatic cables to London and Paris repeatedly warned that Soviet intimidation was a genuine threat to their national sovereignty.

The most blatant manifestation of Soviet hostility arrived on November 30, 1939. Two months after invading and annexing part of Poland, the Red Army launched a massive artillery barrage on the Mannerheim Line and poured 350,000 troops into Finnish territory starting the

“Winter War.” The Soviet justification for the war, “to protect Leningrad,” masked a clear intention to subjugate Finland and install a proMoscow puppet regime.

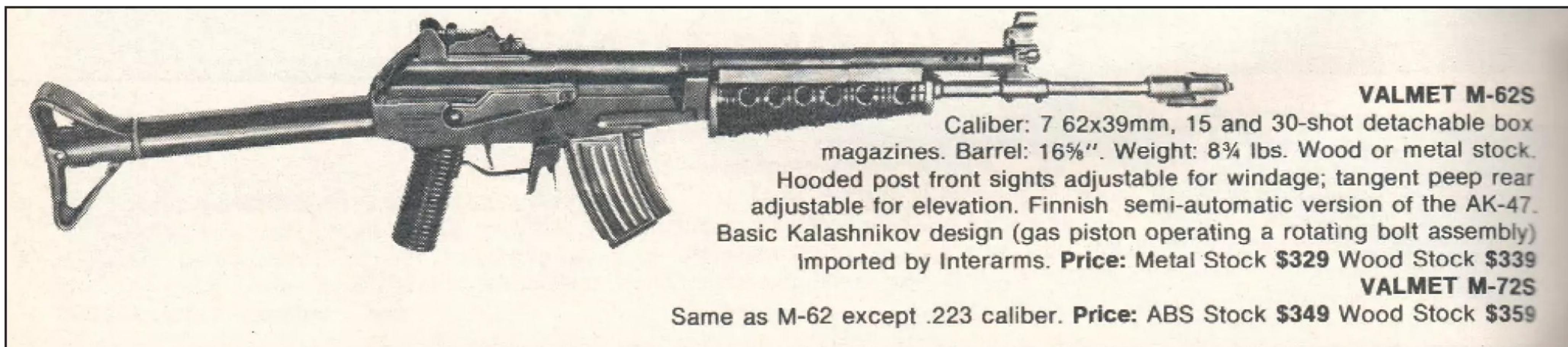
This conflict was short but brutal. Fought in temperatures as low as -45 degrees F, Finnish troops initially not only repelled Soviet attacks but inflicted enormous casualties on the invaders. Due to the Great Terror of the 1930s, during which Joseph Stalin had many of his best and brightest Red Army officers executed (these included three of five marshals, 220 of its 264 division or higher-level commanders and 36,761 officers of all ranks), the Soviet troops were initially poorly led. Despite the Soviets fielding overwhelming numbers of tanks, armored vehicles, and aircraft, they suffered approximately 381,000 casualties compared to the Finns 70,000.



The M-62S was the semi-auto version of the RK 62 and was manufactured by Valmet. These rifles were exported to the U.S. from the late 1960s through the 1980s. (Leroy Thompson)



FINLAND'S RK 95 TP ASSAULT RIFLE



VALMET M-62S
Caliber: 7.62x39mm, 15 and 30-shot detachable box magazines. Barrel: 16". Weight: 8 1/4 lbs. Wood or metal stock. Hooded post front sights adjustable for windage; tangent peep rear adjustable for elevation. Finnish semi-automatic version of the AK-47. Basic Kalashnikov design (gas piston operating a rotating bolt assembly). Imported by Interarms. **Price:** Metal Stock \$329 Wood Stock \$339

VALMET M-72S
Same as M-62 except .223 caliber. **Price:** ABS Stock \$349 Wood Stock \$359

This listing for the Valmet M-62S appeared in the *Guns & Ammo* 1976 Annual magazine. Today, these rifles sell for over \$8,000. (Guns & Ammo)

Eventually, the Soviets reorganized, adopted better tactics and simply overwhelmed the Finnish defenders.

The Winter War ended on March 12, 1940, with the Treaty of Moscow, which forced Finland to cede 11% of its territory, including the vital city of Viipuri, to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union achieved its territorial aims, but failed to install a compliant government; Finland remained an independent, albeit weakened, state. Others were not as lucky, as the Soviets next turned their attention to the small independent Baltic States. On June 15, 1940, the Soviets invaded and annexed Lithuania and the following day invaded and annexed Latvia and Estonia. The Presidents of Estonia and Latvia both died as prisoners in Siberia. However, the Red Army wasn't done yet. On July 28, 1940, they began seizing and annexing Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in Romania.

Finland's alignment with Germany in 1941 was motivated by the Soviet threat and a desire to reclaim their lands seized by the Soviets. Three days after Germany launched Operation Barbarossa and invaded the Soviet Union, Finland declared war on the Soviet Union, beginning what is now known as the Continuation War. The Finns initially succeeded in driving the Soviets from the territories stolen during the Winter War. However, they again faced simply overwhelming numbers. While they inflicted some 944,000 casualties on the Soviets while sustaining some 225,000 casualties, they were eventually simply over-powered and signed an armistice in September 1944.

Even after the 1944 armistice, the Soviets retained a military base at the Porkkala peninsula in the Gulf of Finland, a clear reminder that any deviation from Moscow's wishes could be punished with renewed occupation. The Soviet-backed Finnish Communist Party received steady financial subsidies, estimated at some two-million rubles per year, to keep a loyalist bloc in the Finnish parliament.





Adopted in 1995, the 7.62x39mm RK 95 TP rifle has proven to be a reliable combat rifle, but it's showing its age today. (David M. Fortier)



The RK 95 TP is chambered for the 7.62x39mm cartridge seen here with its peers L to R: 7.92x33mm Kurz, 5.56x45mm, 5.45x39mm, 7.62x39mm, 300 AAC BLK, 6.5mm Grendel. (David M. Fortier)

This financial dependence ensured that the SKP could block any legislation perceived as hostile to Soviet interests, effectively subverting Finnish democratic autonomy.

From the Red Guard's invasion in 1918 to the occupation of Porkkala in 1944, the Soviet Union pursued a consistent policy of aggression, subversion, and territorial coercion against Finland. The Bolsheviks supplied weapons, money, and agitators to foment revolution; the Soviet state repeatedly threatened Finnish sovereignty with outright military force; and the Communist party they nurtured inside Finland acted as a political Trojan horse, ready to undermine any independent decisionmaking.

These facts demonstrate the Bolshevik and Communist threat was not a peripheral annoyance but a systematic, state-directed campaign that sought to destabilize, dominate, and ultimately control the Finnish nation. Finland's survival through the turbulent first half of the twentieth century required a vigilant defense not only of its borders,

but also of its political institutions against a relentless Soviet onslaught.

Following their defeat at the hands of the Red Army during the Continuation War, Finland had to pay heavy war reparations and their military was limited. When the Finnish Defense Forces (FDF) were able to begin re-equipping, one badly needed item was a replacement for their obsolete 7.62x53mmR Jalkavakikivari m/39 (Infantry Rifle M1939). This Mosin Nagant-based bolt-action rifle was badly outclassed by the AK-47s facing them from across the Soviet border.

While the West focused on fielding battle rifles chambered for their new 7.62x51mm cartridge, the East chose



Although the Finn's tested a thumb operated selector, in the end, they stuck with the standard Remington/Kalashnikov selector lever design. (David M. Fortier)



The RK 95 TP's magazine release is extended on the right-side allowing manipulation by the rifleman's trigger finger. (David M. Fortier)



The RK 95 TP features a combination muzzle brake/flash suppressor, which doubles as a spigot grenade launcher.
(David M. Fortier)

7.62x39mm M43 chambered assault rifles. After carefully considering both concepts, the FDF selected the 7.62x39mm round. In 1956 and 1957, quantities of AK-47 rifles were purchased from Poland for testing. Although the Finns liked the AK-47's general layout and robust nature, it was not completely suitable for their needs. A domestic model was needed, so both Sako and Valmet (formerly VKT) were solicited by the FDF to develop a suitable combat rifle.

A Valmet engineer, named Lauri Oksanen, was largely responsible for developing an improved rifle based on the Soviet operating system. It needed to be both easier to manufacture and less expensive while being suitable for the specific needs of Finnish troops and their terrain. Oksanen's first model, the m/58, was accepted for testing by the FDF. This was followed by the RK 60 which was utilized for field trials. Testing and feedback led to the RK 60 evolving into what can best be described as the classic Finnish assault rifle, the RK 62. Officially adopted in 1962, this model is re-

liable and very rugged with practical improvements over the Soviet design. It featured improved sights, a simple stock, synthetic furniture and a flash suppressor.

Sako and Valmet both received contracts and production of this model began in 1963–64. Valmet's production run began with serial number 100,001 while Sako's production run began with serial number 200,001. Delivery of the RK 62 to the FDF began in 1965 and it remained in production until 1988. Although small improvements were made throughout production (grip, handguard, and magazine to name a few), the nomenclature remained unchanged. This model provided excellent service through the Cold War and performed so well Yisrael Galili and Yakov Lior used it as the foundation for their Galil rifle.

While the RK 62 was a solid performing rifle, by the 1980s the FDF was interested in further improving it. In 1986 and 1987, testing was conducted, and the information gathered was used by the FDF in 1988 to layout requirements for a new assault rifle. The firms of Valmet and Sako had been merged in 1987, with Valmet eventually disappearing so work on the new rifle was performed by Sako. In August of 1989, Sako submitted three different prototypes for evaluation.

Following field tests, two models were selected for trials. The Army then ordered 10 rifles, of which five had conventional RK 62 type fire control selectors and five had a thumb operated selector mounted on the left side of the weapon's receiver. These were known as 7.62 RK 90 proto I and proto II. Over the next couple of years, further testing refined and evolved the design, and in some cases, back towards the original RK 62. Two prototypes designated RK 92 were produced for testing and delivered to the FDF in the spring of 1993. Eventually, the design was finalized and adopted as the RK 95 TP in 1995. Production of the new rifle began in the summer of 1995 with the first rifle bearing serial number 960,001. The manufacturing of this model was completed in 1997.

Regarding RK 95 manufacturing, it should be noted that there were reports around 20 years ago of thousands of Norinco AKM-type rifles purchased by the Finnish government for their reserves. One would wonder why. *Firearms News* Editor-in-Chief Vincent L. DeNiro may have the answer. DeNiro worked for Beretta USA from 2006 to 2014 serving at different times as the marketing manager for pistols, tactical



A semi-auto variant of the RK 95, the M92S, was made in limited quantities and is seen here with a suppressor mounted directly to the muzzle device.
(David M. Fortier)



The RK 95 TP's gas block features a two-position valve allowing the gas flow to be shut off. (David M. Fortier)



A simple yet comfortable synthetic handguard is fitted. (David M. Fortier)

product manager for government sales, and founded and ran the international sales division. Beretta Holdings owns Sako, and DeNiro told me this story:

"I was in my office in 2007, and Franco Beretta came in asking me about the commercial AK market. He had seen reports that semi-auto AK rifles were selling quite well and wanted to know my thoughts about producing an AK in the states. I was working on the Beretta Rx4 rifle project at the time, which ended up becoming the Benelli MR1, in part because of me as I really wanted us to make a semi-auto ARX-160, which was still in validation stages with the Italian army at the time. Anyway, I perked up and said, 'You have the best AK in the world!' Franco listened as I enthusiastically raved about the Valmet M-62S as the Sako RK 95 rifle. He then asked me to call Sako and to look into it. I called Raimo Karjalainen, CEO of Sako, and told him about a possible project to produce a US-made semi-auto RK 95. I also detailed what 922(r) was, which is President George H.W. Bush's 1989 assault weapon import ban, and if there was any way we could borrow or get duplicate tooling for certain components. He said that he would get back to me. A couple of weeks later, the answer was that Sako could not locate the tooling. I pushed a little more, even speaking to Beretta Italy to see if they had the tooling in storage, but it was not found. Around that time, I remember a defense publication report which stated that Finland had purchased an initial order of 200 Norinco AKs for their reserves. Possibly, this was why as Sako could not produce any more RK 95 rifles due to the lack of tooling. I have also read reports that the Finnish reserves have tens of thousands of the Chinese-made AKs." Interesting.

Like the earlier RK 62, the RK 95 TP utilizes a long-stroke gas system and carrier controlled rotating bolt.



A rail allows day/night optics to be easily mounted. Also note the top cover retainer. (David M. Fortier)

Caliber remains the 7.62x39mm, which provides good penetration of intermediate barriers and terminal performance at typical infantry engagement distances. The rifle is built on a heavy machined steel receiver. This is profiled to provide additional support to the magazine compared to the RK 62. To make charging the weapon with the left hand easier, the bolt handle is angled up at approximately 45 degrees. The magazine release is an AK-style lever extended on the right side. The extension allows a rifleman to depress it using his trigger finger, speeding reloads. Feed is from polymer 30-round magazines.

Although the Finns evaluated thumb-operated selector levers, they eventually returned to the traditional AK design Kalashnikov stolen from the Remington Model 8 rifle. The top position is safe, the center position is full-auto, and the bottom position is semi-auto. This design can be manipulated with heavy gloves or mittens in extreme cold.



One drawback to mounting optics onto the RK 95 TP is that they tend to sit fairly high. (David M. Fortier)

Fitted to the front of the receiver is a 16.5-inch hammer-forged barrel with four groove rifling and a 1:9.4-inch twist rate. The FDF wanted the ability to easily launch rifle grenades, so Sako developed a new muzzle brake for the RK 95 TP. Designed to reduce both muzzle rise and flash; it also acts as a spigot launcher for rifle grenades. Plus, it accepts a sound suppressor and a blank firing device.

To facilitate launching rifle grenades a two-position (on/off) valve was added to the gas system. This is actuated by a cut-off lever mounted onto the right side of the gas block. Rotating this perpendicular with the barrel shuts the flow of gas off to the operating system allowing grenades to be launched using special blank cartridges.

A protected front sight is located on the gas block. This is adjustable for both windage and elevation when zeroing.

The rear sight is located on the rear of the top cover and has dual 150m and 300m apertures. Sight radius is 18.3 inches long. To ensure there is no loss of zero, an additional rotating lever has been added to secure the top cover to the receiver. To facilitate fighting in low-light, Tritium night sights are standard. The front night sight is housed at the rear of the front sight block and must be flipped up for use. Flipping the rear sight to a middle position allows the rear night sight to be viewed. Attached to the left side of the receiver is an optics rail for mounting day/night optics.

In place of the RK 62's odd tubular stock is one that is contoured so it resembles a Galil's stock. While it

folds to the right for storage like a Galil, the locking mechanism is different. The upper tube of the stock features a storage compartment for cleaning gear. With the stock folded, the rifle measures only 26.5 inches long. With the stock unfolded, the RK 95 TP measures just 36.6 inches. A synthetic pistol grip and handguards are fitted. Weight is 8.3 pounds without a magazine.

The RK 95 TP feels good in the hands, and it handles and balances well. However, the stock is a bit long with body armor. The sights are simple, robust and well-suited for use on a combat rifle. The rifle is easy to operate and has a cyclic rate of fire of 650 rounds per minute. Muzzle velocity of the standard S309 ball round is 2,345 fps. Also issued is a VJ313 tracer load, color coded with a white bullet tip, AP479 armor piercing load, color coded with a blue tip, blank, identified by a blue colored wooden bullet, and a dummy identified by nickel plating and longitudinal



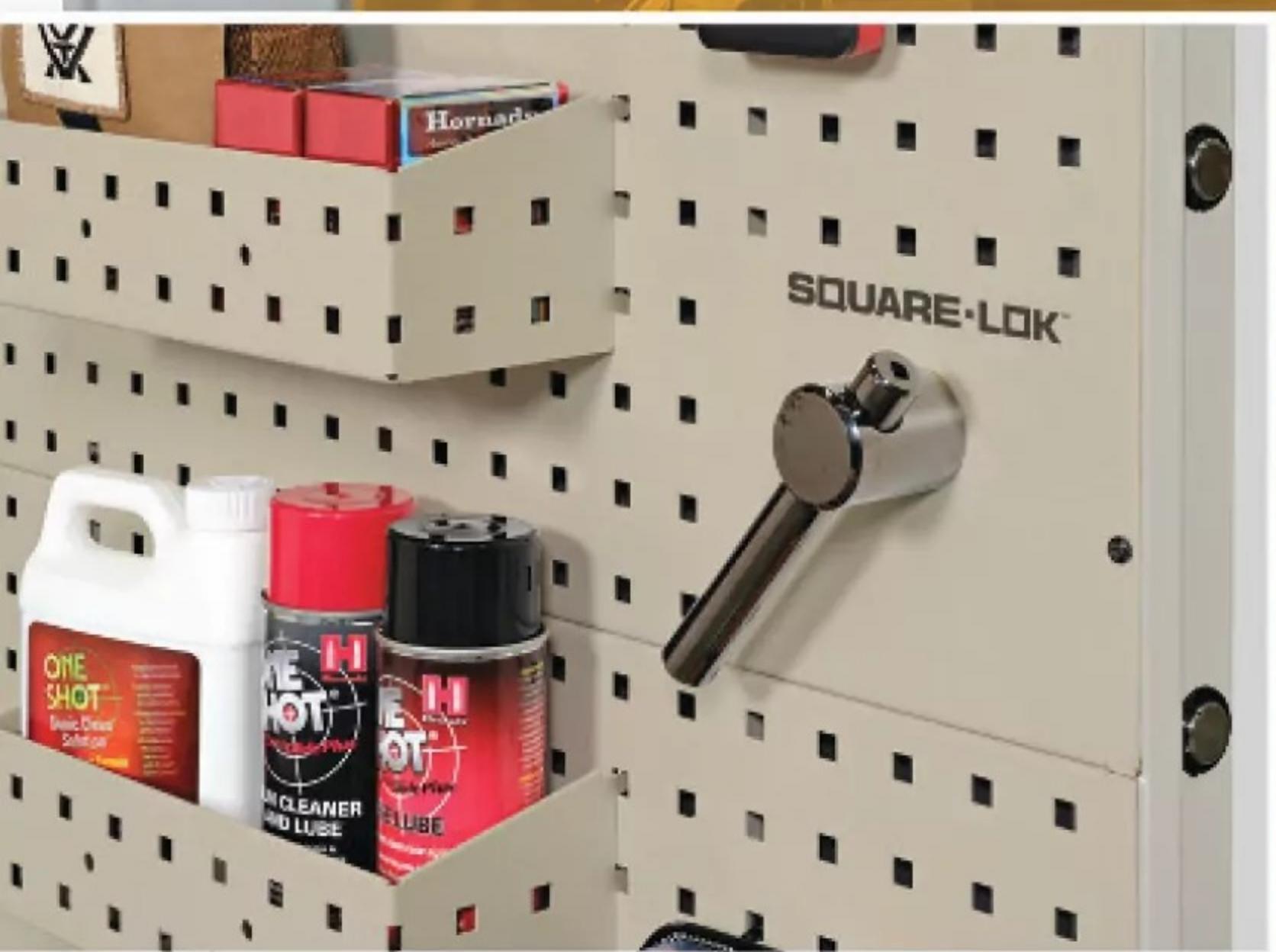
The RK 95 TP is fitted with a robust side-folding stock. (David M. Fortier)



While the stock looks similar to the one used on the Galil, the hinge mechanism is different. (David M. Fortier)



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The author successfully engages a pop-up target at 450 meters with an RK 95 TP rifle. (David M. Fortier)

grooves. Standard packing is a 30-round cardboard box. Effective range is listed as 300 meters. Reliability, as to be expected, is excellent.

The accuracy of this model is quite good. During a trip to Finland, I had the chance to test fire an RK 95 TP from a benchrest on Lapua's 600-meter outdoor range. I averaged 1.5 inch five-shot groups at 100 meters using 123-grain Lapua ball ammunition and the iron sights. Firing from a sitting position at 300 meters I was able to keep all my shots well inside a silhouette target. During my range time, I noticed this design is not violently over-gassed like most Kalashnikovs, which reduces recoil and aids recoil. On fully automatic, it's noticeably smoother than your typical 7.62x39mm AK-47, but stay on the trigger and it jumps about.



Janne Pohjoispaa, one of the designers of the 6.5mm Grendel cartridge, is seen firing his very rare Sako M92S semi-auto variant. (David M. Fortier)



A five-shot 100-meter group fired from a rest using Lapua 123-grain S309 ball. (David M. Fortier)

ACCURACY CHART RK 95 TP

Load	Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	100 meters (in.)
Lapua S309 Ball	123	2,341	1.5

Average of four five-shot groups fired from the bench using the issue iron sights at 100 meters. Velocity readings recorded at the muzzle using Lapua's chronograph.

Today, the RK 95 TP has grown a bit long in the tooth. While still an effective design, its 7.62x39mm chambering is not compatible with Finland's new NATO membership. Due to this it is being replaced in Finnish service by a new family of rifles from Sako, the M23 series. I suspect it will soldier on with reserve forces for some time before fading away. **FN**

Acknowledgments: Much thanks to Janne Pohjoispaa and Lapua for making this article possible.

RK 95 TP SPECIFICATIONS

Action:	Kalashnikov long stroke gas with rotating bolt
Caliber:	7.62x39mm
Barrel:	16.5 in. long cold hammer forged
Rifling:	Four groove rifling with a 1:9.4-inch twist
Overall Length:	26.5 in. stock folded, 36.8 in. ext.
Trigger:	Single-Stage
Feed:	30-round detachable box magazines
Sights:	Front protected post, dual aperture rear
Night Sights:	Yes, Tritium
Stock:	Side-folding
Weight:	8.8 lbs. w/out mag
Cyclic Rate:	650 rpm
Finish:	Phosphate
Manufacturer:	Sako Oy
Status:	Out of production and being replaced from front line service.

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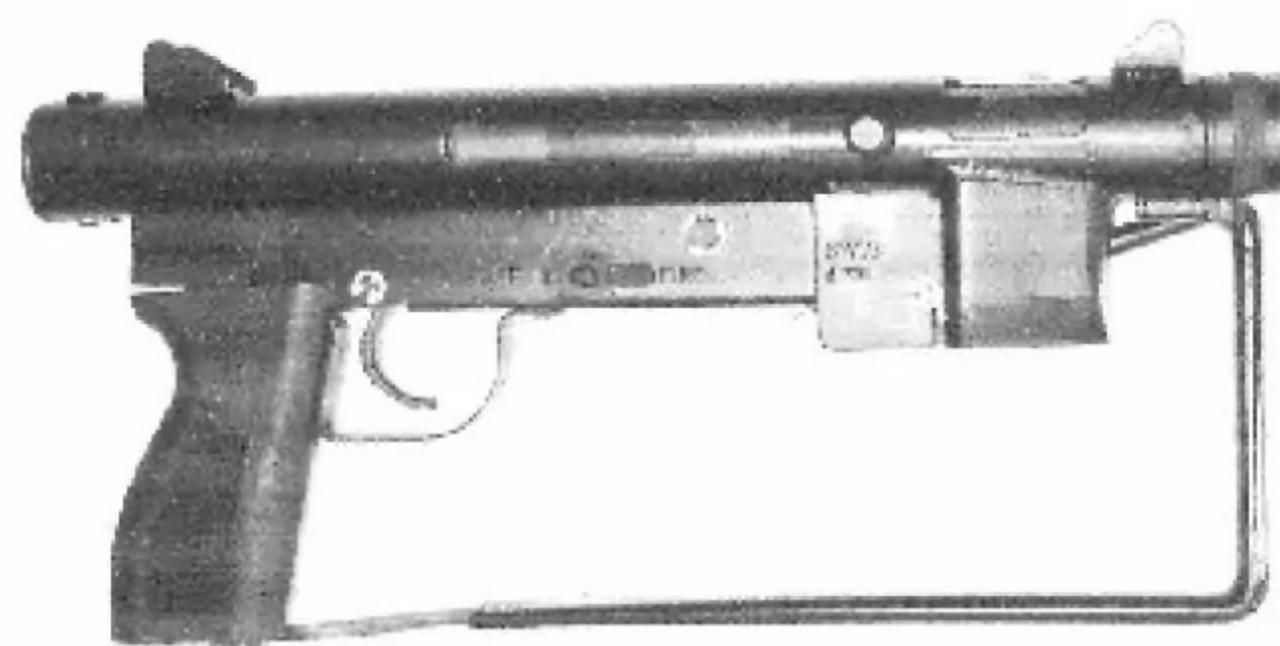
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