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GUN SALES, REVIEWS & 2A INFORMATION / JULY 2026



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■ **IN HUSHED TONES**
CANIK'S VOID-556 SUPPRESSOR

■ **RELOADING**
THE .40 S&W

■ **THE WAR GUNS**
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■ **CODREA'S CORNER**
FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD HAVE REJECTED MODERN 2A INFRINGEMENTS

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THE US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL WITH EOS SUPPRESSOR



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Full-Size Results from a Compact Firearm!

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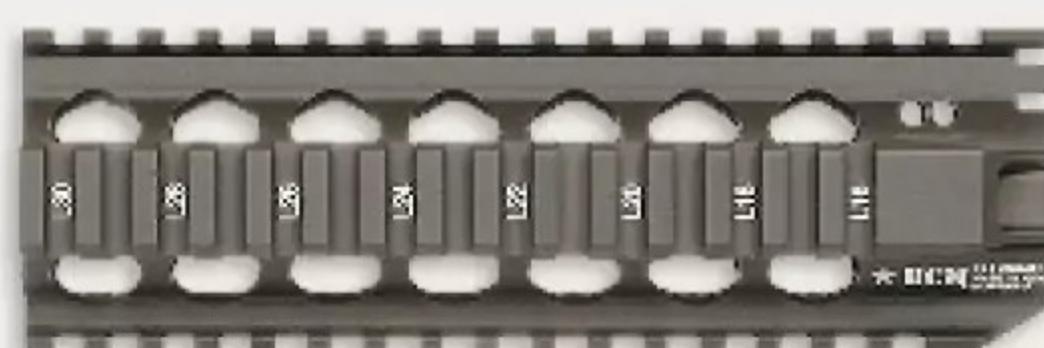
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ATF ACTING HEAD DRISCOLL LITERALLY SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

Driscoll's Wife Made Maximum Donation to Anti-2A Democrat Congresswoman

By David Codrea, Gun Politics Field Editor

“[Army Secretary Daniel]

Driscoll is someone the system can work with. He's Yale Law with cross-partisan relationships,” Data Republican, the investigator that tracks and follows money to uncover government waste and corruption, noted in an April 20 post on X, substantiated with a detailed and sourced Threadreader analysis. Driscoll is favored by the forces trying to impeach Secretary of War Pete Hegseth for reasons documented in the thread.

“The true reason Pete Hegseth is being targeted is because he's standing between President Trump and a coup,” the report documents. “You cannot topple a government unless the security forces defect. And a loyal Secretary of Defense [War] is the one person who makes sure they don't. I have the receipts. Their own documents. Their own training sessions. Their own words on camera,” the post shows, and then notes an interesting comparison: “His confirmation vote... 66–28 versus Hegseth's 51–50. Zero organized opposition for Driscoll. Why?” And why is this enough of a concern for gun owners that it rates being mentioned in *Firearms News*? Because in addition to being Secretary of the Army, Driscoll is Acting Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

(Mirza Kadic/
Shutterstock)



He's the one tasked with making decisions, charting direction, prioritizing policy, and enforcement. The current nominee to become “permanent” Director, Robert Cekada (see *Firearms News* analysis, “Cekada Heading ATF Still a No-Win Scenario for Gun Owners”), reports to him as Deputy Director. But that's not the only reason.

“Daniel Driscoll's wife donated over six thousand dollars to Maggie Goodlander, one of the Seditious Six,” Data Republican continued. “EXCLUSIVE: Army Secretary Dan Driscoll's Wife Gave Max Donation to Member of ‘Seditious Six’,” Red State corroborated in an April 10 report.

Dr. Cassandra Driscoll, a plastic surgeon specializing in upper extremities, had to be well aware of Goodlander's political positions when she contributed to Maggie for Congress. It's inconceivable that her husband was oblivious to her donating such a substantial amount, or that the Trump administration, in its vetting process when they picked him to ramrod ATF, would have not investigated his immediate family politics.

“In Congress, Goodlander will respect the Second Amendment while still taking action to challenge the gun lobby and prevent senseless shootings and suicides—including advancing legislation to require universal background checks, close the ‘Charleston loophole,’ keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, get illegal guns off the streets, ban assault weapons, and increase accountability measures for the gun industry,” Giffords announced. “We are proud to endorse Maggie Goodlander for the US House of Representatives.” That should have raised some conflict-of-interest questions from national “gun rights” organizations and leaders, at least an admission of the whole picture, had they known about it. Instead, we got premature kudos.

What Did the Gun Rights Groups Say About the Latest “Best People?”

“President Trump's decision to appoint Acting Director Driscoll is indicative of his resolve to bring reform to the ATF and protect the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding

citizens and the industry that makes it possible to exercise those rights,” National Shooting Sports Foundation Senior Vice President and General Counsel Lawrence G. Keane declared. “NSSF is confident Acting Director Driscoll will view members of the firearm industry, including licensed retailers, as ATF’s partners...”

“The Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms is applauding President Donald Trump’s appointment of Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll as acting director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, replacing FBI Director Kash Patel, who had been filling that role temporarily since early February,” CCRKBA announced. “President Trump’s decision to appoint Acting Director

Driscoll is indicative of his resolve to protect Second Amendment rights and bring much needed reform to the ATF,” CCRKBA Chairman Alan Gottlieb proclaimed.

For their parts, the National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America did not offer similar welcoming platitudes. Neither did they, with their staffs and media operations, note the conflict between an ATF head responsible for overseeing and enforcing “gun laws” being married to someone who donated the maximum amount to a known extreme gun prohibitionist in 2024. That was well before her husband’s appointment and certainly something the ostensibly “pro-gun” Trump administration would have known from candidate vetting and

should have disclosed to its “gun lobby” supporters.

That’s literally sleeping with the enemy, and it makes suspect all the bipolar disconnects we’ve seen from ATF, just like from its parent Department of Justice.

NOTE: Robert Cekada was confirmed on 4/29/26 by the U.S. Senate to lead the BATFE.

—
*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***

ATF’S NEW ERA OF REFORM... REPEALING THE PISTOL BRACE RULE AND WHY IT MEANS NOTHING

Keep the Cork in the Bottle as It’s Not Time to Celebrate.

By Darwin Nercesian, News Field Editor

The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) held a press conference on April 29th to announce 34 rule changes, with great care taken to frame these as a meaningful effort to ease burdens on firearms dealers and restore the agency’s commitment to the Second Amendment. The ATF even made sure to invite some recognizable faces from Second Amendment advocacy

groups to stand in support of the affair. Naturally, many in the gun community were ready for champagne and celebration, but I’d advise you to leave that champagne corked, because not everything is as it seems.

I’m not going over all the rule changes today, but I do wish to address one that is fresh in mind since my article, *Biden... Excuse Me, I Mean Trump Administration Coming After Pistol Braces... Again*,

[Cont. to page 88]



(Photo by Andy Grossman)

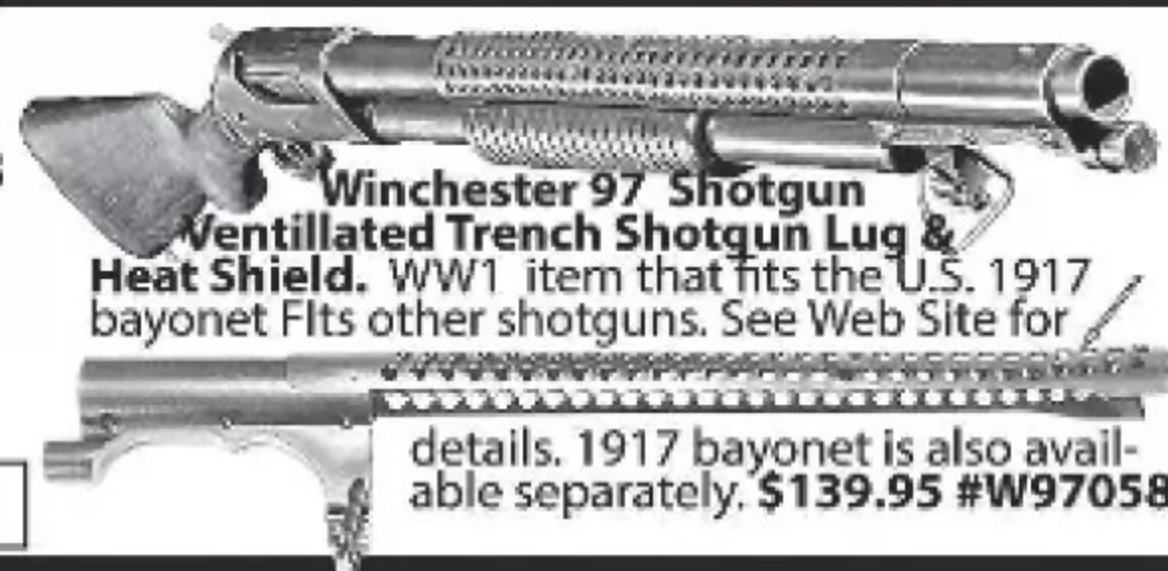
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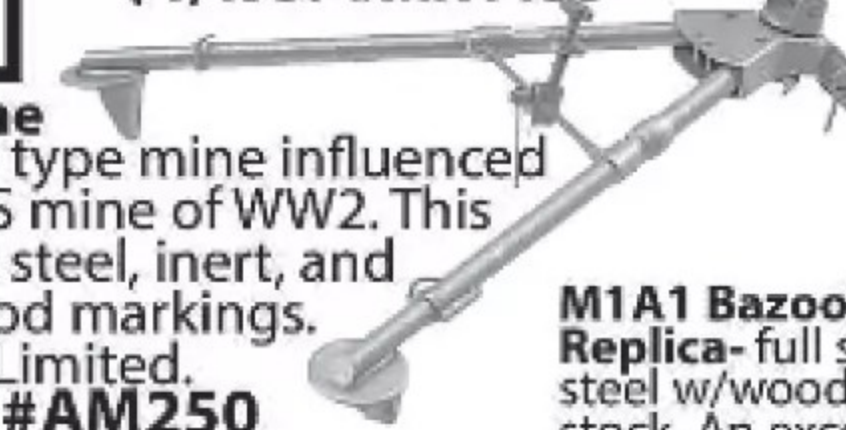
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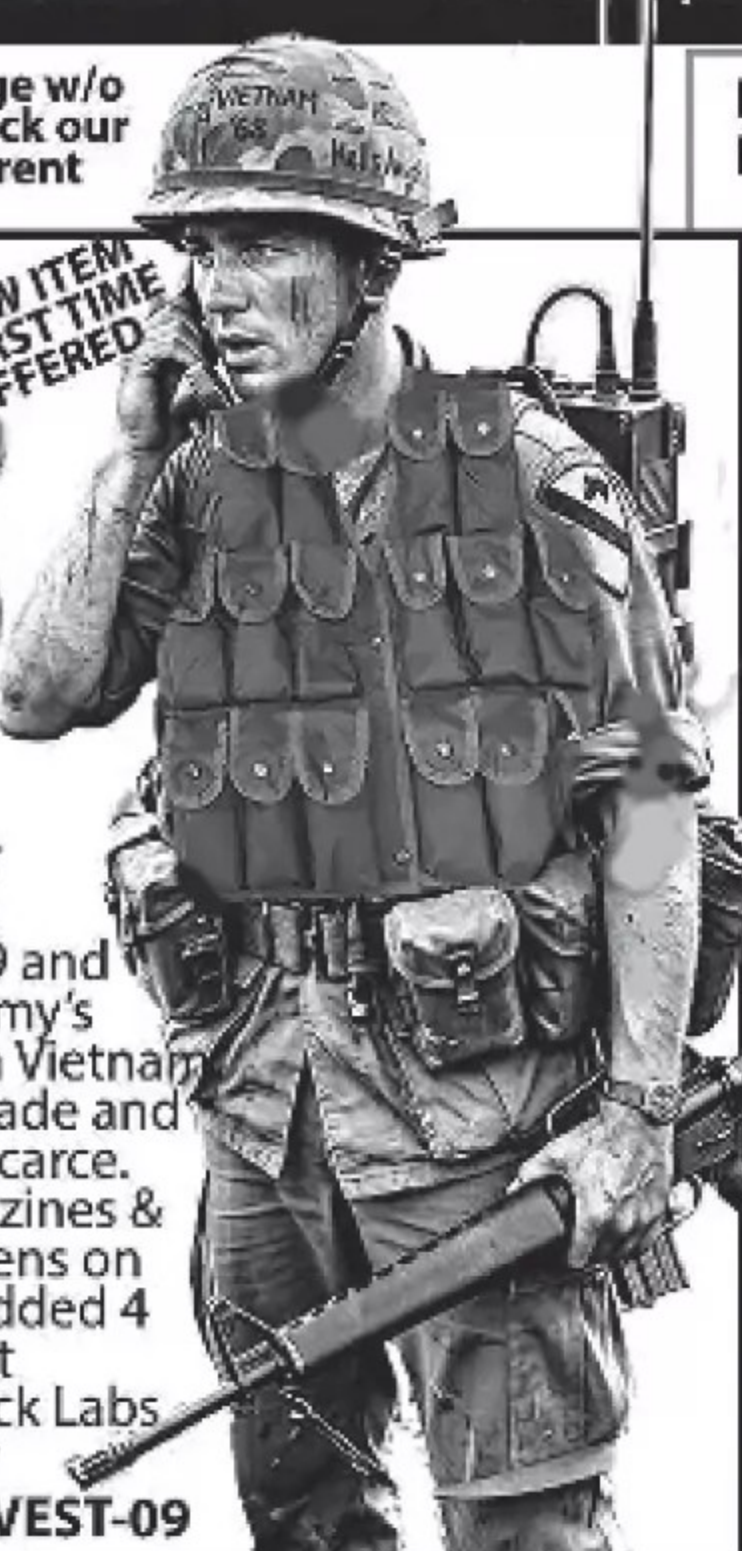
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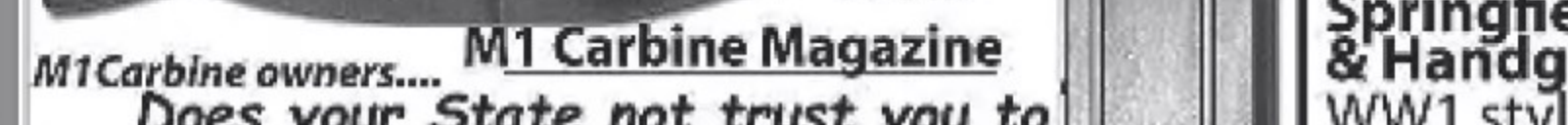
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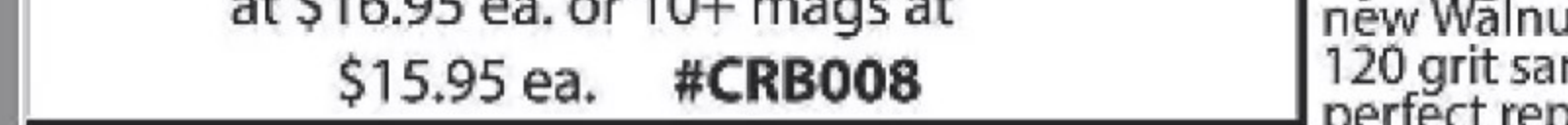
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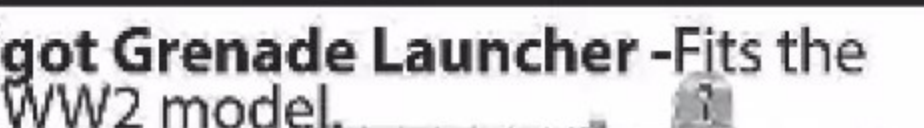
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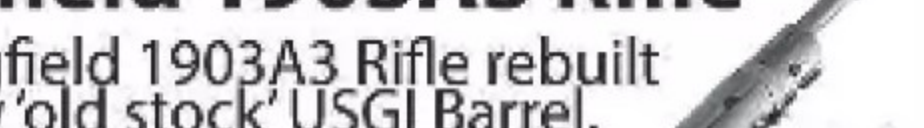
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David Codrea is the winner of multiple journalist awards for investigating/defending the RKBA and a long-time gun owner rights advocate who defiantly challenges the folly of citizen disarmament. In addition to being a regular featured contributor for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

FOUNDING FATHERS WOULD HAVE REJECTED MODERN SECOND AMENDMENT INFRINGEMENTS

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"Not to put you on the spot but this is important, what does the Second Amendment say?" Rep. Eli Crane asked new ATF Director Robert Cekada during a May 14 House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement hearing on firearms policy and Second Amendment protections.

"Uh sir, I wouldn't be able to uh, uh, I wouldn't be able to," Cekada stammered. That should be even more of a concern than his predecessor, Steve Dettelbach, admitting "I ... am not a firearms expert..." when challenged in a 2023 congressional hearing to define "assault weapon."

"Why do you think that our Founders wanted to give our citizens the right to defend themselves?" Crane followed up, showing he has rights comprehension issues of his own. As cited by the Supreme Court, "The right to bear arms is not granted by the Constitution; neither is it in any manner dependent upon that instrument for its existence."

"At the time the citizenry did not have a guarantee that government would protect them, and they wanted to have the opportunity to protect themselves against a tyrannical government," Cekada replied, giving



"The Bridge" by John Falter.

a better answer than the question. The director then made another statement meant to ease concerns of "law and order über alles" types, but one that should raise flags with advocates who understand what rights are.

"I think ATF makes sure that we keep our focus on any infringements that would come out of the Gun Control Act that it stays focused on those persons [criminals]," he offered. The mandate is "shall not be infringed," and such thinking opens a dangerous door.

"We condemn any program that involves enforcing unconstitutional 'laws', even if such 'laws' are enforced only against violent criminals," the Project Exile Condemnation Coalition, endorsed by dozens of leaders from national, state and advocacy groups declared back in 2001. "Unconstitutional 'laws' are illegal,

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

Yet that's exactly what is happening, not only with "prohibited person" gun bans that criminals ignore, but also with innumerable infringements, prior restraints, location restrictions and outright bans on arms, none of which do what they purport to, and all done in the name of "gun safety" to mask their true purpose: A government monopoly of violence, the very thing the Second Amendment was intended to safeguard against.

"The Founders would have been horrified by modern weapons technology," the gun prohibitionists lie, declaring if they could only see the future they'd have rethought the Second Amendment (a review of technology of the time that disproves that ignorant deception is a whole



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'nother discussion). Then again, they also lie about Founding intent.

Back before the *Heller* decision, the citizen disarmament lobby's main argument was that the Second Amendment was never meant to be an individual right, but an exclusively collective one for states to organize militias. And those weren't needed any more since we have the National Guard (another discussion to debunk)!

That was the position of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California Executive Director Ramona Ripston, and I wrote her in 2001 challenging her to prove this. Since her position was based on the concept of original intent, my challenge centered on that issue, i.e., I asked her to provide evidence based on writings from America's Revolutionary era to substantiate her claim (23 years before the Buren decision codified history,

text, and tradition as the standard for determining constitutionality).

What the ACLU sent back was unsupported modern claims and flat-out propaganda echoing their position. Conversely, the individual rights argument has a wealth of documentation from the era, literally the words of the Founders and their contemporaries. I could have foregone everything written in this article so far and just filled the allocated page with quotes and still not had enough space.

What the Founders actually would have been horrified by are modern infringements, knowing they were enacted by representatives of the people, oftentimes with their full consent and demands for even more from unworthy heirs of liberty. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, it's a good time to refresh ourselves on the question asked of Director Cekada and

what that means to us as individuals charged by our forebears to preserve our own freedom and to stand up to would-be tyrants (enabled by local, state, and national citizenship malpractitioners through activism or apathy).

One quote comes to mind as best representative of what the men who lit the torch and passed it down to us hoped their sacrifices would secure, and it comes from Tench Coxe, a Continental Congress delegate from Pennsylvania:

"Their swords, and every other terrible implement of the soldier, are the birth-right of an American... [T]he unlimited power of the sword is not in the hands of either the federal or state governments, but, where I trust in God it will ever remain, in the hands of the people."

Have a contemplative Semiquincentennial Independence Day. If you're not armed, you'll be doing it wrong. **FN**



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This is the CANiK Prime Radian with the Ramjet compensator. It's very effective. However, do you want a comp on your carry gun? Do you need it? (Photo by Andy Grossman)

COMPS AND PORTS

It seems like half of the new pistols I've reviewed this past year have had ported barrels or compensators. I want to use this column to explain why that is, what they do, and how they work, so you can make fully informed decisions as to whether you want them on your carry gun.

First, porting or compensators on carry guns, or "carry comps," are nothing new. Twenty years ago, Glock was offering factory ported models. Forty years ago, gunsmiths were building custom carry-comp 1911s, but they've never been more popular than they are now, and I've read a lot of really bad takes on social media about why that is. It's not because Americans suddenly don't have the upper body strength to handle the recoil of the 9mm. They became popular when everybody started putting red dot optics on carry guns, and then losing the dot in the window

due to recoil shaking things up. That is a very real and common problem. Ports/comps reduce the chance you're going to lose that dot under recoil, and that is why they are now, like red dots on carry guns, everywhere.

Whether you're shooting a stock or comped pistol, that slide cycles and the pistol is down out of recoil before you're ready to pull the trigger again. What the comp does is provide less disturbance to your sight picture, so you can get back on the sights/target/trigger faster. Compensators, all things being equal, allow you to shoot faster with the same accuracy. The same is true of pistols with low (versus high) bores. The question is how important that is to you. It is definitely less important in the real world than it is in competition, where you're firing lots of ammo very fast at a lot of targets, and hundredths of a second can separate the winners from the losers.

Ports are simply holes put into the top of a barrel (and perhaps the slide). Compensators have expansion chambers and baffles where the expanding gas impinges and is then redirected. I've also seen ports machined into barrels/slides that act like compensators, but generally you get one or the other.



Ports, like those seen here in a Beretta 92, are simply holes put into the top of a barrel to vent some of the gases upward. (Photo by James Tarr)

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The ports in the Beretta's barrel can be seen here venting upward. They did reduce muzzle rise...but they also broasted the white dot on the front sight. (Photo by Andy Grossman)

With a standard barrel, the bullet heads out toward the target, propelled by ever-expanding gases. Physics tells us for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, and so the force of that bullet heading out is turned into recoil back into your hand. Your hand becomes a pivot point, so the pistol will rotate up in your hand (muzzle rise). Ports/comps vent some of those gases upward, counteracting that muzzle rise. Muzzle rise is reduced a certain percentage. Felt recoil in your hand is also reduced as there is less force shoving backward.

I've known Shay Akai, of Akai Custom Guns, forever, and when I was talking to him a few years ago about gun tech, he gave me a huge education on comps. He told me, *"In general, and all things being equal, big ports are better than small ports, no matter how many there are. As the bullet passes through, the flat back of the bullet creates a vacuum force. The bullet pulls gases behind it. Large ports break that seal and divert gases better than small ports. Those big comps you see on competition guns will reduce muzzle rise 80% or more. Generally, 'carry-comps' will reduce muzzle rise 15-30%."* Competition "race guns" have such reduced recoil from their big comps that they need greatly reduced recoil springs to cycle, but

generally that's not necessary with the smaller carry comps.

Generally, the noisier a compensator is to the shooter, the more effective it is at diverting gases/reducing muzzle rise. And yes, that can also increase flash. But I've found that there's a much bigger difference in flash between cheap/bulk ammo and expensive premium defensive hollow points than there is between a standard and a comped/ported barrel. With quality defensive ammo, generally, you won't see any flash at all out of a comp unless you're shooting in very low light or actual darkness.

How well ports/comps work is hugely dependent upon ammo velocity as well. Comps work off gas velocity, and you get more of that with lighter bullets being pushed fast than you do heavy bullets going more slowly. You'll barely notice the comp working with 147-grain bullets, and see the most difference when shooting 115-grain +P ammunition. Generally, 1,000 fps and above is where you'll see that comp working.

Recently I've played at both ends of the spectrum—I tested a pistol with a big carry comp on it, and bought a minimally-ported barrel for my carry gun (Beretta M9A1). The test pistol was the CANiK Prime Radian, with the Radian Afterburner/Ramjet barrel/comp combo. This is a compensator with two very big ports and was



Some ports, like what's seen here on the TISAS PX-9 Duty, can also work as a compensator. The front of the cut in the slide works as a baffle, helping to redirect gases. (Photo by James Tarr)



Carry comps like this Radian Ramjet can only be so big and still fit in concealable holsters, which is not something you need to worry about with competition guns. As a result, they can only be so effective. (Photo by James Tarr)

shockingly loud, but very effective in reducing muzzle rise. There was a lot of smoke, but even with cheap ammo I couldn't see flash with my naked eye. The Beretta barrel was ported by LTT, and features six small ports in the exposed barrel behind the front sight. I barely noticed a difference in noise, or recoil reduction with 147-grain bullets, but with faster 115-grainers, the ports cut about 20% off muzzle rise, with no real increase in smoke or flash. However...those venting gases really did a number on the white dot of my Beretta's front sight.

As for whether or not you should get a comp for your pistol, or a pistol with a comp...compensators and ported barrels are cool, just like red dots. Do you need either on a carry gun? Absolutely not, but the more you like your carry gun, the more likely you are to practice with it and, most importantly, carry it. **FN**

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.40 S&W

Why Not?

Yes, yes, yes, the FBI done and killed the 40 S&W. Except, they didn't. There are still pistols being made in .40 S&W. There are a huge number of them that have already been made. The ammo companies still make lots of ammo for them. It still delivers the same ballistics it used to before the FBI snubbing, and it will be a good, long, time before it is a historical item. Like when the grandkids of current 20-year-olds are getting interested in shooting. If that soon. So, reloading is a good thing. Plus, it lets you practice with softer ammo, at less cost. However, as a cartridge designed to be a compromise, the 40SW has some details you need to be aware of.

First, there never has been, and there never will be, a +P loading for the .40. The .40 has a Maximum Average Pressure (MAP) of 35,000PSI, the same as that of the 9mm. However, since the .40 is generally shoehorned into a 9mm-sized pistol, no-one feels comfortable upping it to the equal of the 9mm+P MAP of 38,500 PSI. There just isn't enough brass and steel for everyone to feel there are comfortable safety margins.



The weight range for the .40 is from 135- to 180-grain projectiles. Lead, plated, coated, they all work. (Patrick Sweeney)



There have been a lot of pistols made in .40, like this G22 and the S&W M&P below it. There are still .40s being made, like the SAR from Stoeger. (Patrick Sweeney)

Second, the typical bullet weight is 180 grains. You will see loading data for lower weights, but not higher ones. The heavier-bullet approach was one we USPSA/IPSC shooters tried in 1990 when the .40 was new and had given up by 1991. No, I'm not exaggerating. The case left only enough room for fast-burning powders. Heavy bullets and fast powders blew cases. So, don't go there.

Third, you might run into bulged brass. Called "guppy-belly" by some it is due to some chambers being, shall we say, generously reamed. (We're looking at you, Glock and the G22). If you run into this with the scrounged brass, you find at the range you have two choices: ditch it, or set it aside and treat it with a pass through the Redding G-Rx die. This full-length resizes the brass by pushing it completely through the die. You have to do this as a separate process, not as part of your progressive-press reloading plan, which is why you have to set them

aside and do them separately, and they will still need to go through the resize die on your progressive afterwards.

Fourth, you don't have much variation in overall length (OAL). Unlike, say, a 9mm, where a flat-point bullet and a round-nose will have differing OAL, the .40 is the .40, and that means as short as 1.135" and as long as 1.140" OAL. This is a function of the magazine size, bullet weight and shape. (STI-based pistols may favor longer OALs, but that's another column.)

As long as you keep those things in mind, you will have a fun time with the .40. Treated to proper pressures, the brass lasts forever. Components are common and easily found, it uses all the usual suspects in pistol powders, and it uses small pistol primers, which are not exactly rare. Oh, there are shortages from time to time, but small pistol bounces right back once the makers catch up to demand.

The .40 is a true forty, using jacketed bullets of .400" and lead, coated and plated of .401" diameter. The first generation of .40 pistols, being basically 9mms with a .40-bored barrel fitted, didn't like it. Parts broke, and magazines lacked capacity. I have an S&W 4046, a first-generation .40, and the magazines hold a whopping 11 rounds. (The later M&P upped that to 15 rounds.) Pistol makers re-designed the pistols and magazines, and soon they were all fifteen-shot magazines, like the G22, and they stood up to the workload.



The OAL of the .40 is severely limited, with this one right in the limited range. (Patrick Sweeney)

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RELOADING



Left to right, the 10mm, which the .40 was derived from. A long-loaded .40 for use in an STI competition pistol, and a standard-length .40 for everything else. (Patrick Sweeney)



The .40 uses small pistol primers, no need for magnums, nor small rifle. And the brass will last forever if treated right. (Patrick Sweeney)

Early on, the G22 gained a reputation for being unhappy (sometimes in the extreme) with lead bullets. If this is a concern, it is easy enough to find drop-in barrels with regular rifling, barrels that are not at all concerned with lead bullets, or just load with plated or coated bullets, which is an easy fix. I've got Bar-Sto and Wilson Combat barrels for my G22, so I use them with anything that isn't jacketed.

In competition, by the mid-1990s the standard Limited Division pistol for USPSA was one or another STI

frame, designed originally to hold the .45ACP, and when built as a .40 was a tank-like pistol in durability. If you ever get a chance to buy a second-hand USPSA Limited gun in .40, you can be pretty sure that you won't be able to wear it out with proper loads. I built one in the late 1990s and it is still a tack-driver. Flush-mags hold 16 to 19 rounds, depending on if you want the mag to lock the slide open or not.

As far as power is concerned, while the .40 can improve on the 9mm, it can't quite match the 45 ACP. Not



The taper crimp on the .40 is simple and not subject to much change. So, strive for .418" and you'll be in the ballpark. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Glock G22 has a reputation for not liking lead bullets. If you are worried, a drop-in barrel with regular rifling is the answer. Or use plated or coated bullets. (Patrick Sweeney)

that people haven't tried, but it just isn't possible. The maximum average pressure (MAP) of the .40 and the lack of a +P option means your 180-grain bullet can't be pushed faster than 1,025 fps or 1,050 fps. I've seen data that crowds 1,100 fps, but I'd be cautious about it. In the .45, a 185 can easily be pushed to the upper 1,100s, approaching 1,200 fps, but down-loading to 9mm levels is a snap, either by slowing down a 180, or simply booting a 165 to normal velocities. If you favor speed, well there are the 135s to consider. The .40 uses a taper crimp, and the dimension that you'll be looking for is .418".

Not abused or not subjected to max loads in a Glock chamber, the .40 brass lasts forever. It should, since it was derived from the 10mm, and those cases just don't quit. **FN**

.40 S&W LOAD DATA					
Brand & Type	Weight (gr.)	Powder	Powder Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Power Factor
Nosler JHP	135	True Blue	8.8	1,299	175
Berry's Plated	150	AA#2	5.0	961	144
Hornady XTP JHP	155	WW-231	5.8	1,099	170
Blue Bullets Coated	165	Titegroup	5.5	1,090	180
Berry's FP Plated	180	VV-320	4.1	942	169
Hornady XTP JHP	180	Autocomp	6.1	1,057	190
Hornady XTP JHP	180	Power Pistol	6.5	1,033	186

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The CANiK VOID-556 comes with two front caps, a low back pressure and a standard, and a direct-thread rear cap. (Patrick Sweeney)



CANiK'S VOID-556 SUPPRESSOR

Let's Get Quiet!

The suppressor market is hot, and there are a lot of names you may not have heard of now offering a can for your blaster. Well, you've heard of CANiK, and they offer a line of suppressors. They are hot off the presses (so to speak) and cool until you heat them up.

The suppressor here is the VOID, in 5.56, although it is also rated for the 6 ARC, in case you have a rifle chambered in that. The VOID is made out of 17-4 stainless, which is a precipitation-hardening alloy known for its toughness and resistance to heat. Not exotic, like the nickel alloys, it also doesn't cost as much, since the mills make 17-4 in a huge volume compared to the low-volume production of the exotics. That means your VOID doesn't break the bank.

This suppressor is designed from the get-go for low blowback, and there's

even a choice in front caps for a solid cap if you want the maximum number of decibels scraped off the muzzle blast, instead of the low backpressure front cap. You know, for use on bolt guns.

The middle of the VOID, its tube and baffle stack are sealed, so you aren't going to be taking it apart.



You can see the heat-treated 17-6PH stainless construction of the CANiK VOID-556, in the color of the alloy. (Patrick Sweeney)

This is fine, as you "clean" a 5.56 suppressor by heating it up enough to burn out whatever residues might have accumulated.

On the rear, the VOID-556 is H.U.B. compatible. That is, it is threaded 1.375"x24, so you can use whatever rear assembly you want that is also H.U.B. compatible, as long as your alignment gauge says the front cap is on center when mounted to a rifle. It comes from CANiK with a direct-thread rear cap, so you are good to go once it is on and you check alignment.

This VOID suppressor (there are others in .308 and 9mm) comes in two flavors, the VOID-556 and the VOID-556K. The difference? The K is shorter, being one inch shorter, and 2.6 ounces lighter than the VOID-556. Obviously, the longer one is going to be a small amount quieter than the short one, but this is most likely within



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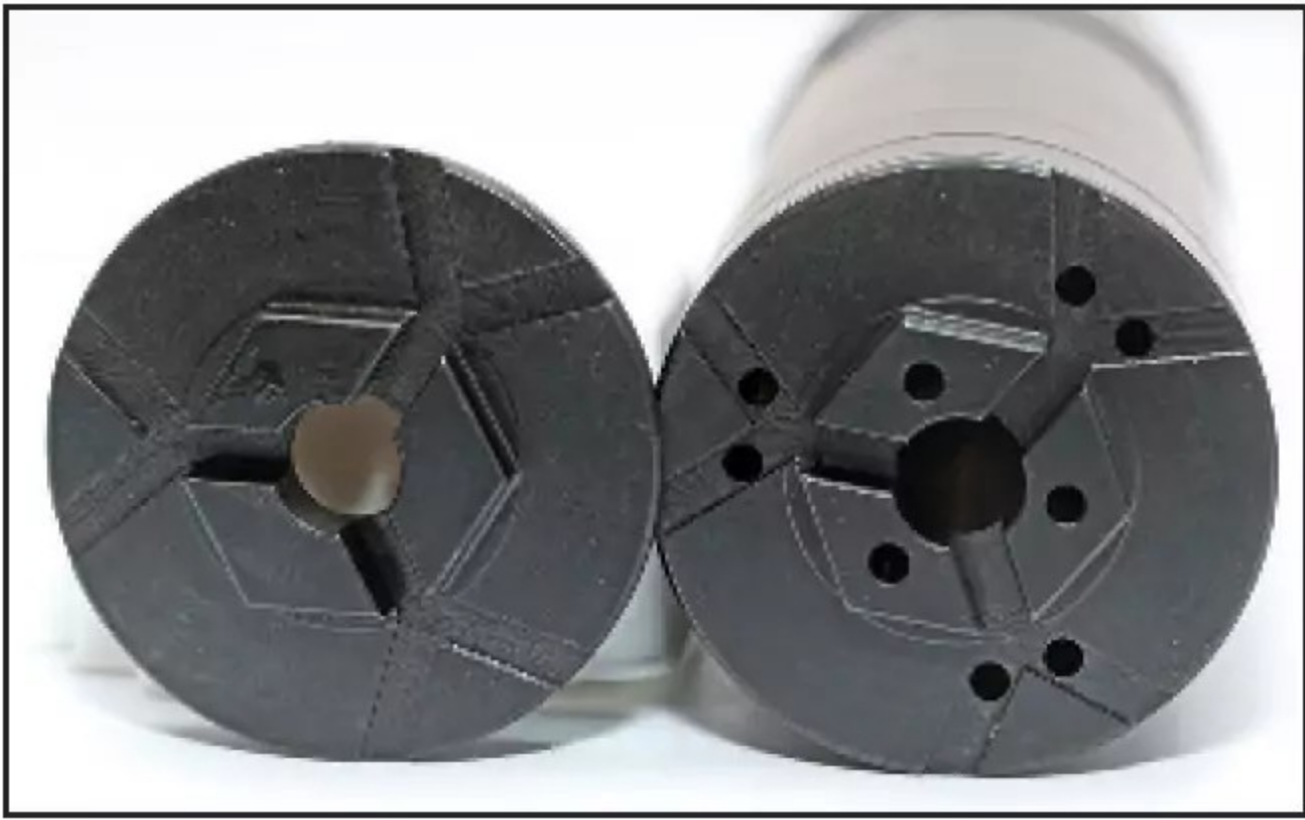
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The rear cap is direct-thread, but it is screwed into a HUB compatible rear of the VOID-556. (Patrick Sweeney)



The front caps are threaded into the VOID-556 tube and are swappable. (Patrick Sweeney)



Two front caps (the low-back pressure one is installed) and you get both. (Patrick Sweeney)

the “can’t hear the difference” range of our hearing. As mentioned, many times before, you are hard-pressed to discern a decibel difference of three dB or less. So, if two suppressors, side-by-side, have only a three dB difference, you probably can’t hear it. That’s with good hearing. Those of you who have shot a lot, it might be four or five dB.

Why select one over the other? Length, balance, and weight. If you were, for instance, running an SBR, and wanted to keep your carbine as light and handy as possible, then you’d opt for the VOID-556K. If you want the maximum sound reduction (even though it is a small difference) and don’t really care about the extra

inch on the end of a full-sized rifle, then you go with the VOID-556. While it may have taken rocket science to design one, selecting a suppressor isn’t rocket science.

I put the CANiK VOID-556 onto my Bravo Company carbine and found the balance was not changed enough to notice much—and it was quiet. Testing with and without, I did not see a shift in the point of impact.

The VOID-556 (and the VOID-556K) is rated for full-auto. While not many of us have access to a select-fire lower, it is easy to really heat up a suppressor especially if you have a forced-reset trigger installed in your AR-15. Full-auto rating is good for long-term service life. The two VOIDS in 5.56 are also rated down to barrels down to 10.5 inches, so those with SBRs will be covered. **FN**



No shift in point of impact between suppressed and un-suppressed, always a good sign. (Patrick Sweeney)



Low back pressure, quiet performance and low cost, the CANiK VOID-556 offers you plenty. (Patrick Sweeney)

CANiK VOID-556 SUPPRESSOR	
OAL:	5.1 in.
Net Added Length:	4.6 in.
Diameter:	1.625 in.
Material:	17-4 stainless steel
Weight:	12.3 oz.
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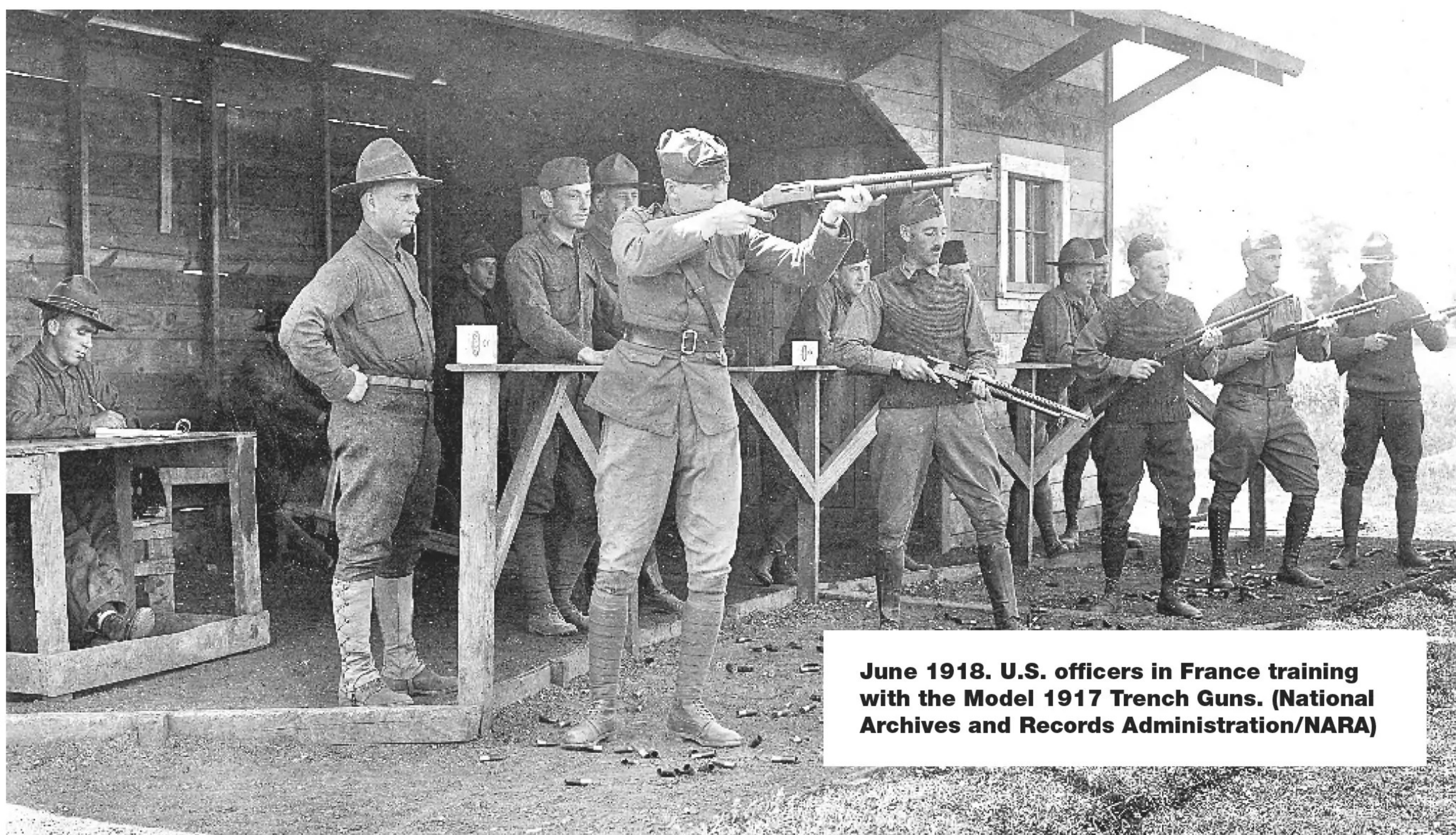
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June 1918. U.S. officers in France training with the Model 1917 Trench Guns. (National Archives and Records Administration/NARA)

THE U.S. TRENCH GUN, MODEL 1917

From Mindanao to Khe Sanh

Photos by James Walters (unless otherwise noted)

I think I am on safe ground when I claim that the most “American” of all fighting firearms is the shotgun. American soldiers have long been fond of multiple projectile weapons. The so-called “buck & ball” cartridges were issued to musket armed infantry through the end of the American Civil War.

With the development of self-contained cartridges, the shotgun’s popularity grew even faster.

On the western frontier, U.S. troopers carried shotguns in preference to the issue carbine. General George Crook, the most successful Indian fighter of the era, always carried a shotgun, and permitted others in his command to arm themselves in a similar manner.

The first official combat use of cartridge firing shotguns by the U.S. armed forces took place in the Philippine Islands. After the U.S. had cap-

tured the islands from Spain in 1898, many Filipinos did not relish the idea of meekly exchanging Iberian masters for North American, resulting in a savage insurrection that took several years to put down.

During the fighting, American troops became acquainted with the Moro tribesmen of the southern islands of the archipelago. Strict Muslims, the Moros had spent centuries fighting



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1906. This grisly photo of the aftermath of the siege of the Moro fortress of Bud Dajo shows the fierceness of the fighting against the Moros. (John R. White Papers, Knight Library, University of Oregon)

Spanish and Christian Filipino attempts to subjugate them.

Fanatical Moro warriors, known as “Juramentados,” had sworn to die killing Christians. Working themselves in a religious frenzy they would ambush American soldiers in the jungle or barrios, cutting them down with razor sharp barong and bolo swords. In this state of mental and physical excitement, they were often capable of absorbing multiple .38 revolver and .30 caliber rifle bullets and still keep on coming. American soldiers were carved up with such alarming regularity that the brass finally took note of the situation.

In his Annual Report of June, 1904, General Leonard Wood commanding American forces engaged against the Moros in the PI, stated his opinion on the subject: “It is thought that the .45 caliber revolver (Constabulary Model 1902) is the one which should be issued to troops throughout the

Army... Instances have repeatedly been reported during the past year where natives have been shot through-and-through several times with a .38 caliber revolver, and have come on, cutting up the unfortunate individual armed with it. It is also recommended that each company be furnished with 12-gauge Winchester repeating shotguns... There is no weapon in our possession equal to the shotgun loaded with buckshot.”¹

The army quickly discovered that no handgun cartridge of the time—not even the highly regarded .45 Colt—could be counted on to stop a determined Juramentado, while the high velocity .30 Krag bullet was only effective if a major bone or organ was hit. Orders were hurriedly placed with Winchester for a quantity of their M1897 shotguns.

Designed by John Moses Browning, the M1897 was a slide operated



Both the Colt .38 and .45 revolvers proved inadequate at stopping a Juramentado. (James Walters photo and Rock Island Auction Co.)

(“pump action”) shotgun with an external hammer and a five-shot tubular magazine under the barrel. The action consisted of three parts: bolt, a cam operated lifter, and the sliding forearm with an integral action bar. When the forearm was pulled to the rear, the action bar, operating in the lifter cam track, forced the lifter downward, which unlocked the bolt. Continued rearward movement of the forearm moved the bolt to the rear, cocking the hammer, extracting and ejecting the spent shell. At the same time, the lifter was cammed downward to receive the next shell from the magazine.

Pushing the forearm forward cammed the lifter upward, positioning the fresh shell so that the forward moving bolt would chamber it. As the bolt went into battery, the lifter was cammed upward behind it, securely locking the bolt in place. An action slide lock, which prevented inadvertent bolt unlocking, was automatically unlocked by recoil inertia. The



An early Model 1897 Riot Gun. Note the slim wrist stock and rounded pistol grip. (Rock Island Auction Co.)

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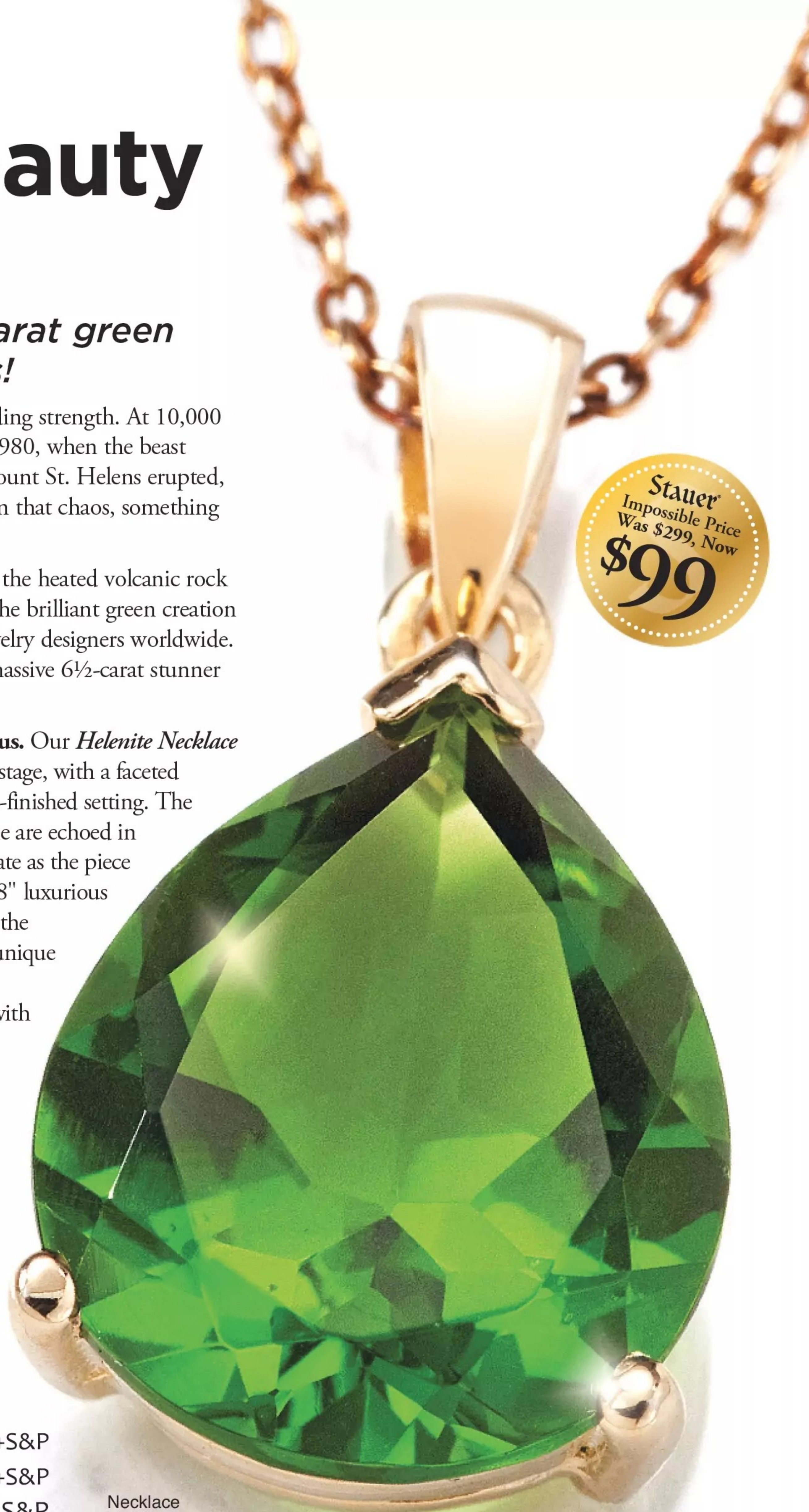
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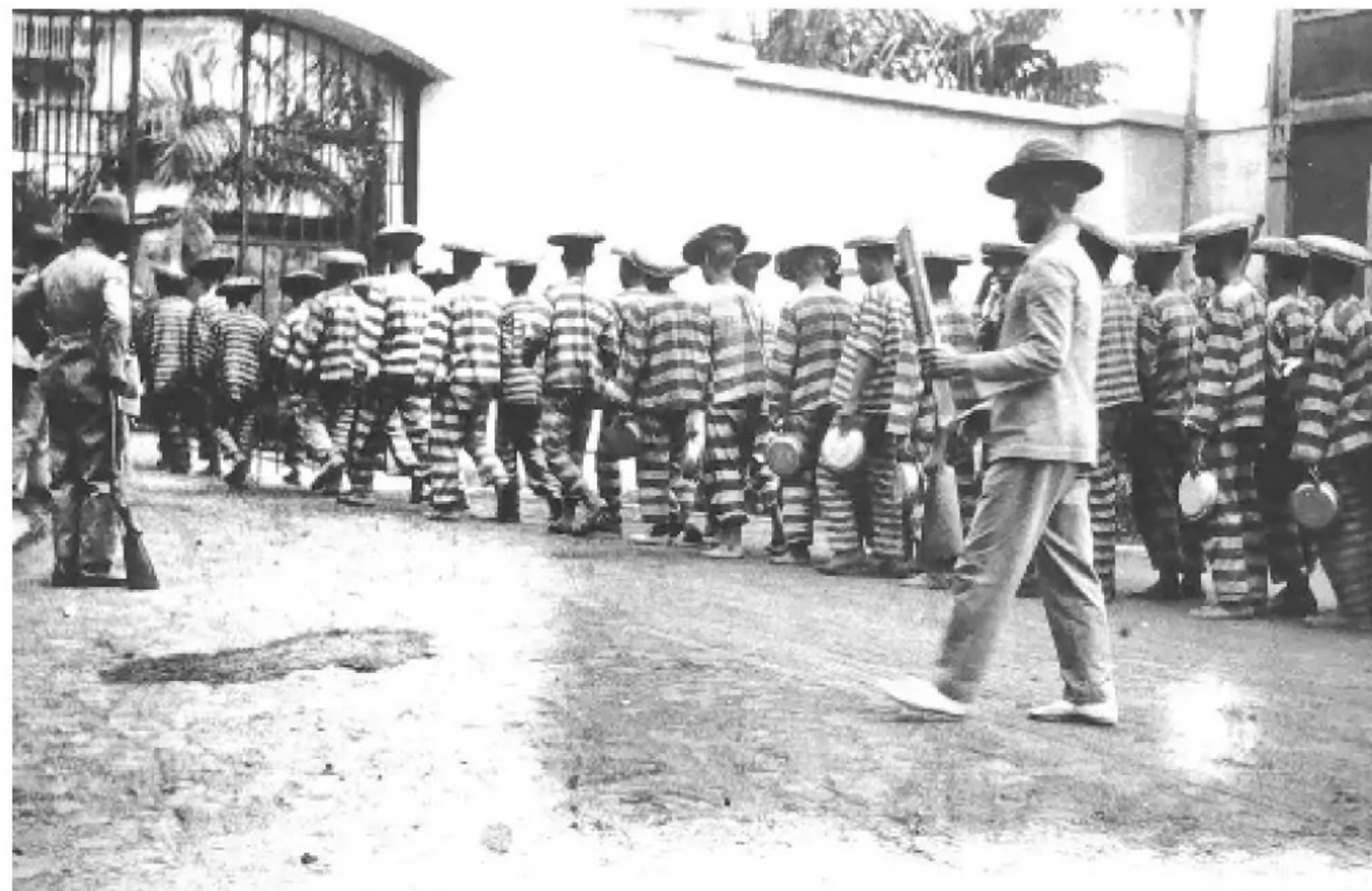
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A squad of American soldiers during the Philippine Insurrection. The man, third from the right back row, is holding a M1897 Riot Gun. (author's collection)



Model 1897 Riot Gun armed members of the Philippine Constabulary guarding prisoners. (author's collection)



1900. A Filipino woman with a Model 97 shotgun. (author's collection)

magazine was loaded by pushing shells into the tube where they were held in place by a catch that was activated by the lifter. There was no trigger disconnect so the gun could be fired by holding the trigger to the rear and pumping the forearm.

The M1897 Riot Gun was a solid frame gun and came standard with a 20-inch cylinder bore barrel and proved extremely popular with police forces.² Military-issue shotshells were loaded with nine .33 caliber 00 buckshot lead pellets. At close range, this load produced massive on-target damage and proved capable of stopping the most determined foe. Soldiers and Marines, fighting the Moros, often

worked in two-man teams, one armed with a Krag-Jorgensen rifle and the other with a M1897 Riot Gun. If the rifleman did not stop the Juramentado at a distance, the shotgunner took him down when he got close.

Numbers of M1897s were also issued to the Philippine Constabulary, an American officered national police force that enforced the law throughout the archipelago.

The U.S. commander during WWI, General John Pershing, had served in the Philippines and was well acquainted with the lethality of the shotgun and felt they would be useful for trench warfare. Accordingly, he ordered quantities of M1897 shotguns be issued to American Doughboys.

Tactical theory of the day placed great emphasis on the bayonet, and it was felt that shotguns should also be equipped with them. Winchester, in cooperation with Springfield Armory, designed a ventilated, metal handguard 12.25 inches in length, that was



The Trench Gun was modified to use the M1917 "Enfield" bayonet. (James Walters photo)



The Trench Gun, Model 1917 had a ventilated metal handguard and lugs to accept a bayonet. (Rock Island Auction Co.)

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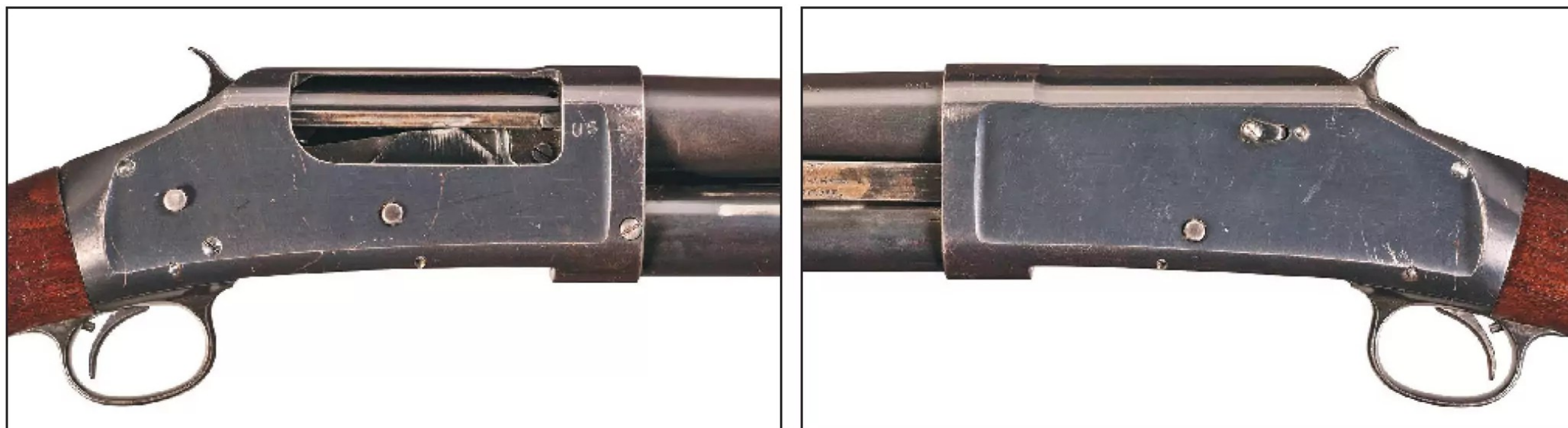
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Close ups of the Model 1917 receiver show the exposed hammer, bolt release buttons and narrow trigger guard. Note the “US” markings. (Rock Island Auction Co.)

attached to the muzzle end of the M1897’s barrel and had mounting lugs for the U.S. M1917 “Enfield” rifle bayonet. This provided extra protection for the thin shotgun barrel and protected the soldier’s hand from a hot barrel when bayonet fighting.

The army designated it the “U.S. Trench Gun, Model 1917.” Approximately 20,000 Trench Guns were produced and those shipped to Europe quickly earned a reputation as the deadliest, close-range weapon of the war, being especially useful for night patrol work and defending fixed positions.³

In his book, *UNITED STATES COMBAT SHOTGUNS*, Bruce Canfield quotes a U.S. army officer’s description of the effectiveness of the Trench Gun, “...his men had one good chance with them at a German mass attack...a charge obviously intended to overwhelm the defenders with its solid rush of men. They let them come on; and when those shotguns got going—with nine .33 caliber buckshot per load, 6 loads in the gun, 200-odd men firing, plenty more shells at hand—the front ranks of the assault piled up on top of one another in one awful heap of buckshot drilled men.”

Battle-hardened German Sturmtruppen feared the barrage of buckshot put out by shotgun-armed Doughboys more than they did machine guns. The Kaiser’s government lodged a protest claiming that shotguns and buckshot ammunition violated the Hague Decrees of 1899 against weapons that are “...calculat-



A period newspaper cartoon ridiculing Germany’s protest against U.S. use of shotguns. (author’s collection)

ed to cause unnecessary suffering.” The Germans then went on to state that any American soldier captured “...with such guns or ammunition belonging thereto forfeits his life.”⁴

The U.S. government’s response stated quite unequivocally that shotguns had long been a traditional weapon of American soldiers; they were not prohibited by the Hague Decrees; and, added quite bluntly, that “...for every American soldier executed, one German soldier would suffer a like fate.”⁵

While Germany continued to use stories of the shotgun’s “inhumanity” for propaganda purposes, they never carried through on their threats to execute Trench Gun equipped American prisoners.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: no official photographs can be found of Doughboys carrying trench guns during WWI. It has been reported that photos of trench guns in combat be censored



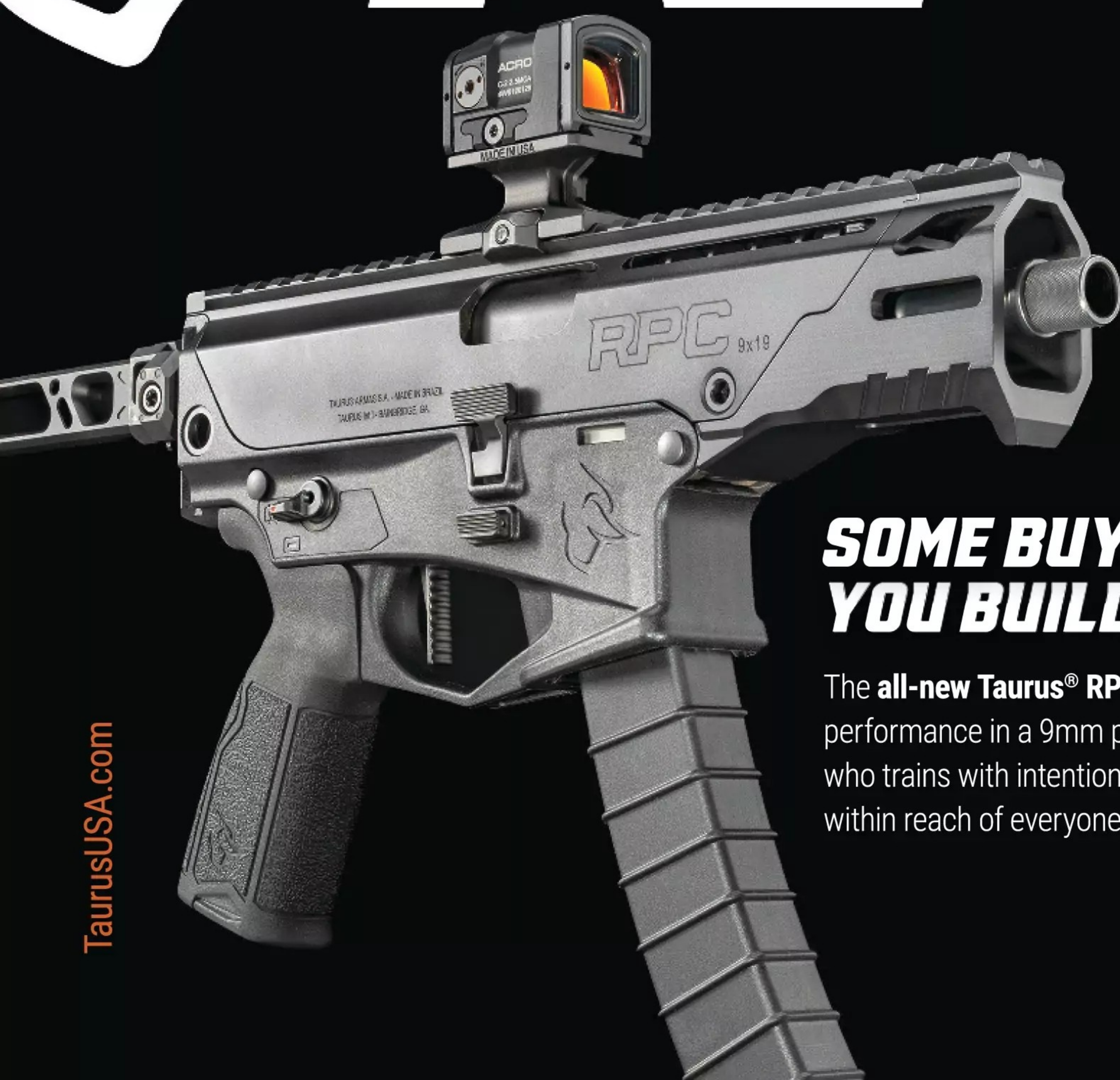
Sailors of the Yangtze Patrol. The sailor left rear is holding a Trench Gun. (author’s collection)

and ultimately eliminated. This effort would make certain that the press could not accidentally print any “embarrassing” images of the Doughboys equipped with shotguns. The trench guns would remain in France and continue to do their deadly, effective work, but there would simply be no photographs allowed to document it.⁶

One problem arose with the Trench Gun during the war. Like commercial shotshells of the time, the army-issue shells used cardboard hulls that were impregnated with wax as a waterproofing. However, in the vile conditions of trench warfare, they often swelled up which prevented them from being chambered. Shotgun-armed Doughboys took pains to ensure their ammunition was kept dry, it was



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Tarawa. U.S. Marines taking a well-deserved rest during WWII. Note the Trench Gun. (USMC)

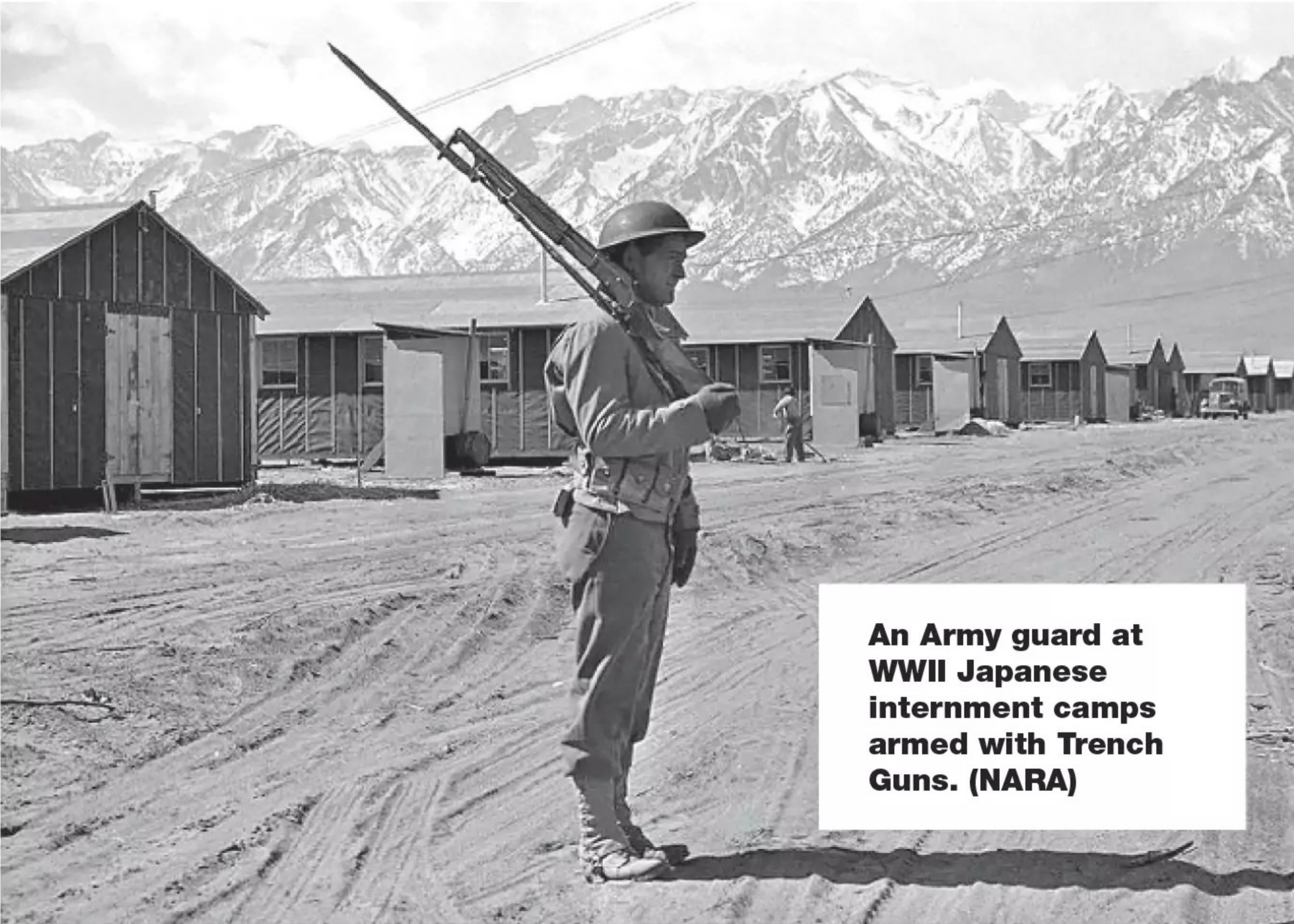


Germany, 1945. A Trench Gun-armed GI watching over German prisoners. (NARA)

regular practice for soldiers to chamber check all their shells before they went on patrol or if an attack was expected. To rectify the situation, the army ordered all brass shotshells, but the war ended before any were delivered.

During the inter-war years, U.S. Marines serving in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua found the Trench Gun well suited for anti-guerilla operations in the jungles common to those countries. They were standard issue with the Philippine Constabulary—an American officered national police force that enforced the law in the islands.

The U.S. Navy’s Yangtze Patrol used them to arm gunboat boarding and landing parties. Others were used by the U.S. Coast Guard during the rum running days of Prohibition. During this time, the government disposed of surplus Trench Guns



An Army guard at WWII Japanese internment camps armed with Trench Guns. (NARA)

and there are period photos of local police forces using them. In the 1920s, during a period of increased criminal activity, Trench gun armed U.S. Marines were deployed as guards to protect the U.S. Mail from robberies and theft, targeting mail shipments.

When they entered WWII, American armed forces obtained additional shotguns including new Winchester Trench and Riot Guns. Most were used by the Marines in the Pacific campaign where they again showed themselves useful for jungle fighting and repelling mass Japanese attacks. Others were used by guards at POW camps and storage depots.

As during WWI, problems arose with the cardboard-hulled shotshells swelling up which led to the adoption in 1945 of the Shell, Shotgun, Brass 12 Gauge No. 00 Buckshot M19. These all brass shotshells remained standard issue with U.S. forces until the adoption of a plastic hulled shell during the Vietnam War.

Numbers of Trench Guns also saw service during the Korean War where they proved effective against Chinese human wave attacks. Shotguns proved especially useful in the close-range jungle warfare that characterized the Vietnam War and large numbers were issued, including Trench Guns left over from WWI and WWII. During

the conflict in Vietnam the army replaced the brass case M19 shotshell with the Shell, Shotgun, Plastic Case, 12 Gauge, No. 00 Buck, XM162.

Winchester ended production of the M1897 in 1957 with approximately 1,024,000 being produced. **FN**

1 <http://www.scout.com/military/deadliest-blogger/story/1426550-juramentado-moro-suicidal-assassins>
2 All WWI Trench Guns utilized solid frames. In the 1930s Winchester switched to take down frames and the majority of WWII Trench guns were so equipped.
3 Winchester also supplied numbers of Model 12 Trench Guns to the armed forces during WWI and WWII.
4 Canfield, Bruce. *UNITED STATES COMBAT SHOTGUNS*, p. 41
5 Poyer, Joe. *U.S. WINCHESTER TRENCH AND RIOT GUNS AND OTHER U.S. COMBAT SHOTGUNS*, p. 79.
6 www.americanriflesman.org/content/the-trouble-with-trench-guns/

SPECIFICATIONS	
U.S. TRENCH GUN, MODEL 1917	
Caliber:	12 gauge
Overall Length:	39.3 in.
Barrel Length:	20.25 in.
Weight:	8 lbs.
Magazine:	5-rd. tubular
Sights:	Front: brass bead Rear: none
Bayonet:	16-in. single-edged blade

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Little did I know that decades later I'd be writing for *Firearms News*, the newer name of *Shotgun News*. (David Fortier)

80 YEARS OF *SHOTGUN NEWS/ FIREARMS NEWS*

I've Read More Than Half, for Sure!

By Patrick Sweeney

I started reading *Shotgun News* when I started working at The Gun Room, in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. As the new guy and part-timer, I thought I knew a lot. Well, I did, but not nearly as much as I thought I did. Along with the various firearms collections Mike the owner had bought, apparently came a stack of gun magazines. Decades of them. It was almost as if there was some dictate from above: "If you sell more than two firearms to a gun shop, you have to include ten year's worth of gun magazines." When I wasn't stocking shelves or polishing nicked guns with Simichrome ("They sell better when they shine"), I was reading.

As modern readers might binge streaming shows or even ones on cable, I was binging on *Shotgun News* issues. When I wasn't doing that, I was eavesdropping on the conversations with customers, many of whom were Detroit Police Department (DPD) officers, or combat veterans. A lot of overlap there, in Detroit in the early 1980s. The Gun Room, under Mike Karbon, was focused on defensive use, and on military collectibles. One of the interesting things I noted was the sometimes disparity between what was written, and what the customers recounted.

From the reading I accumulated an encyclopedic knowledge of things firearms, ammunition, and ballistic.

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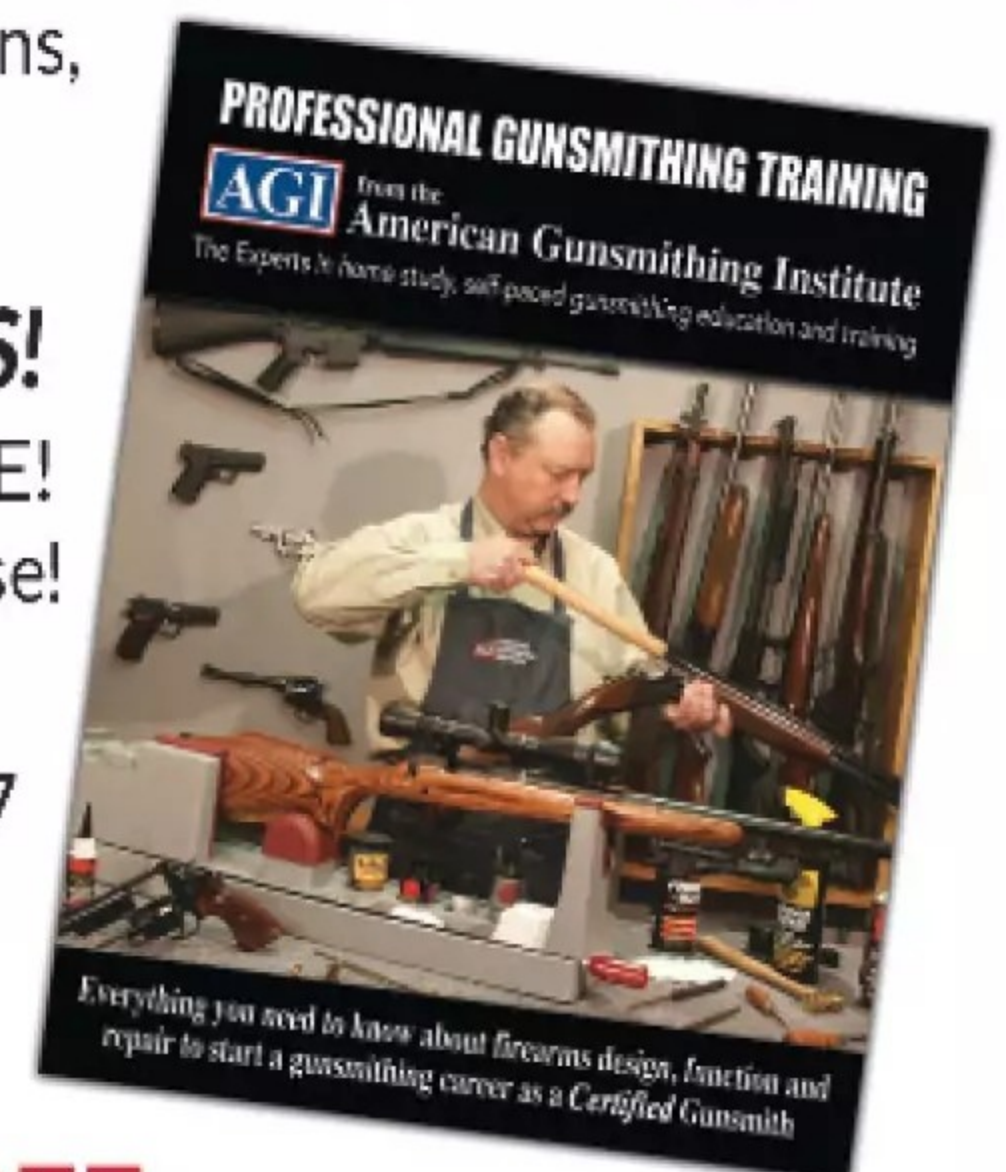
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Nickeled guns sold better when they were polished up. Well, at least that was the case in Detroit in the 1980s, anyway. (Patrick Sweeney)

From the customers I learned certain details, like a lot of Vietnam vets were dismissive of the AK-47 from having survived being shot by one. After showing the scars left by the wounds, “*The other guy ended up dead*” was a typical conclusion to that particular discussion. While various articles extolled the virtues of the latest design of bullet, sure to expand, I was talking to DPD shootout survivors who were less concerned with expansion, and more with hitting the right spot. While Wyatt Earp may have said “*Fast is fine, but accuracy is final*”, our customers lived it on each shift.

I also had the auditory experience of working at The Gun Room, which was only a quarter mile from Detroit, proper. We were close enough to the DPD range that we could tell when quarterly qualifications were on, just from the noise. And we had, of course, stocked up on the ammo they’d need. When you need ammo, it has to be there, “soon” isn’t soon enough.

There was also the game we played, well, not a game, but a serious life lesson: “*Where’s the gun?*” Despite Detroit being extremely parsimonious with carry permits, half the customers who walked in were packing. The first scan was “*Where?*” the second scan was “*Will this one be trouble?*” Some were. Like the guy who knew nothing about M1 Carbines but had to have one. Having bought a carbine, and a box of ammo, Mike strolled up to the front window to watch him walk to his car. In a moment, he was calling out “*Call 911!*” I grabbed the phone and dialed 9-1-1 and then snatched the house gun (a two-inch S&W M-10) out of its holster that was mounted on the wall. “*He was on the front walk, loading the magazine, with the carbine out of the case.*” Mike remarked, as he walked back, grabbed the Ithaca model 37 loaded with buckshot (on the other side of the entrance to the back room) and we took up positions on either side of the door. When the guy walked back in, holding the carbine, Mike ordered him prone, and there he stayed until the Dearborn Heights patrol car arrived to arrest him. Just another day adjacent to Detroit.



Some thirty years later, I met up again with my Marex SMG inventory, hanging on the wall of the Knight’s Armament museum. (Patrick Sweeney)

When it seemed that I had exhausted the supply of *Shotgun News* issues, a fresh batch would arrive, with the missing issues from previous batches, or a new tranche of issues that I had not seen/read/consumed before.

The reading, and the accumulated knowledge gained, ended up netting me two different jobs soon afterwards. One was as a traveling salesman for the Marex Corporation, an importer of submachine guns (SMG) and suppressors (yes, that happened in the early 1980s) and getting to be a gunsmithing apprentice at Northwest Gun Shop, under the sharp eye of Dan McDonald. Selling SMGs wasn’t the glamorous job you’d think, as it involved a whole lot of schlepping, but it did teach me a few other things. Like, how to shoot an SMG well, and how to keep the LE customers from doing unsafe things.

From Dan, it was dealing with a different set of customers, non-sworn concealed pistol license holders, and hunters. Again, the knowledge base gleaned from *Shotgun News* helped there as well. I could talk carry guns with one customer and then switch to deer-hunting calibers with the next one.

Little did I know that I’d be writing for *Shotgun News*, and then under its new name of *Firearms News*. And, little did I know that I’d meet up with my sales samples from the Marex days, those guns and that suppressor hanging on the wall of the Knight’s Armament Museum. And, I’d be writing up my experiences and knowledge of things gunsmithing, learned from Dan, in this magazine.

Those issues I pored over in the Reagan Administration have long since been pulped as recycled paper, or shoved into a landfill, but the knowledge they contained has been squirreled away in my brain, stored there for use today. Let’s keep this going for the new guys at gun shops across the country, those who have to soak up their own encyclopedia’s worth of firearms info. **FN**

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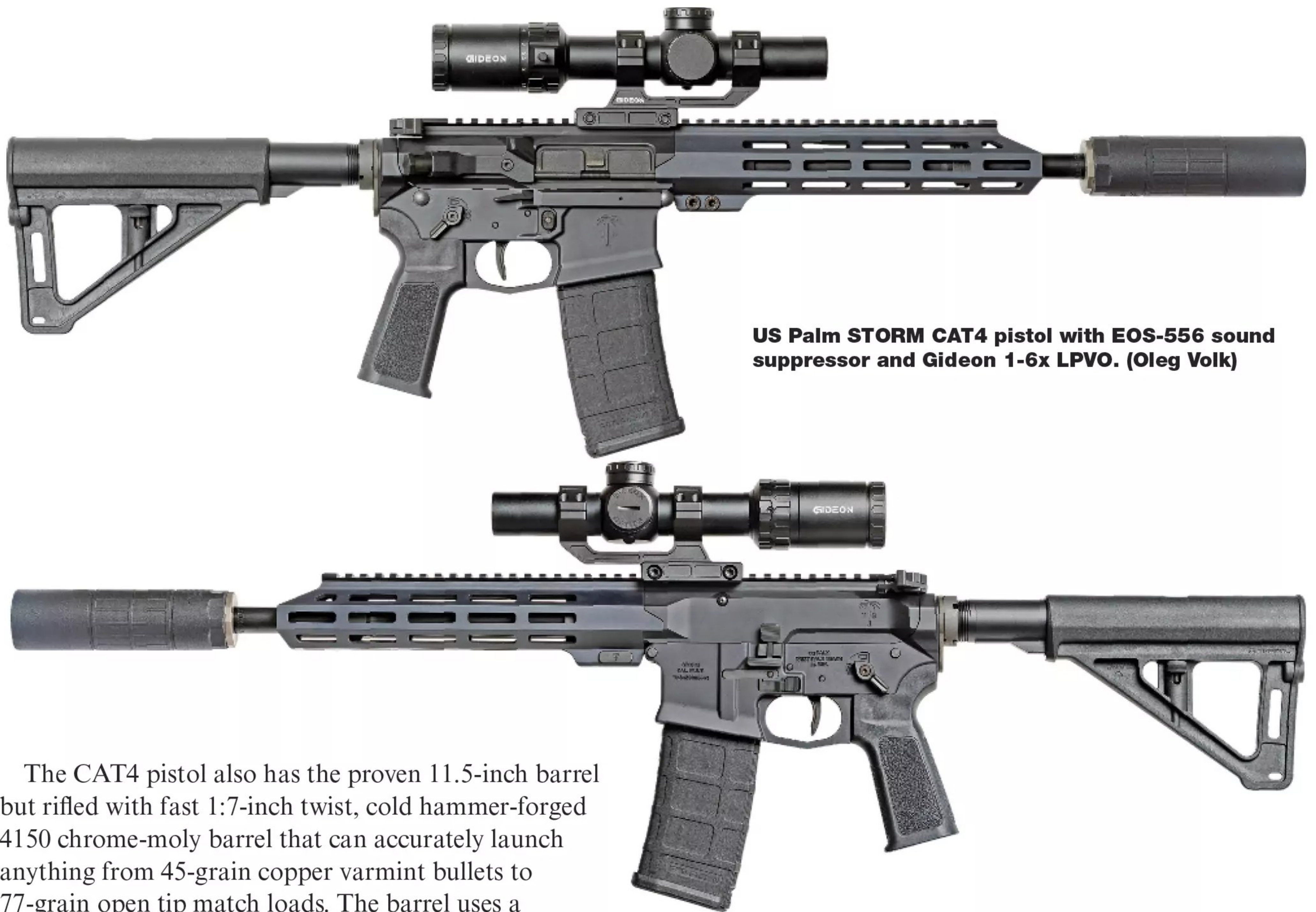
Short length, high reliability, and moderated sound and flash signature make the STORM CAT4, with EOS-556 suppressor, a strong option for mobile firepower. (Oleg Volk)

THE US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL WITH EOS SUPPRESSOR

Full-Size Results from a Compact Firearm! By Oleg Volk

Historically, short-barreled 5.56mm direct impingement AR-15-type weapons, such as the XM177E1, suffered from several problems: lack of reliability, blinding muzzle flash, and deafening report, as well as reduced lethality due to reduced velocity. As a result of testing and field experience with the XM177E1 during the

Vietnam War, the barrel length had to be increased from unsatisfactory 10 inches to 11.5 inches due to insufficient dwell time of the projectile, which caused cycling malfunctions. The new model, with longer barrel, came to be known as the XM177E2. The CAT4 does a better job in all categories.



US Palm STORM CAT4 pistol with EOS-556 sound suppressor and Gideon 1-6x LPVO. (Oleg Volk)

The CAT4 pistol also has the proven 11.5-inch barrel but rifled with fast 1:7-inch twist, cold hammer-forged 4150 chrome-moly barrel that can accurately launch anything from 45-grain copper varmint bullets to 77-grain open tip match loads. The barrel uses a medium profile, designed for sustained fire without undue heft. From the factory, it comes with a Hurricane Hybrid Muzzle Device, a combination flash hider and compensator. It works very well: the gun stays put during rapid firing, with neither muzzle rise nor sideways movement. Flash hiding works extremely efficiently, with neither

high-speed photography nor the eye detecting not a hint of fire in the muzzle signature.

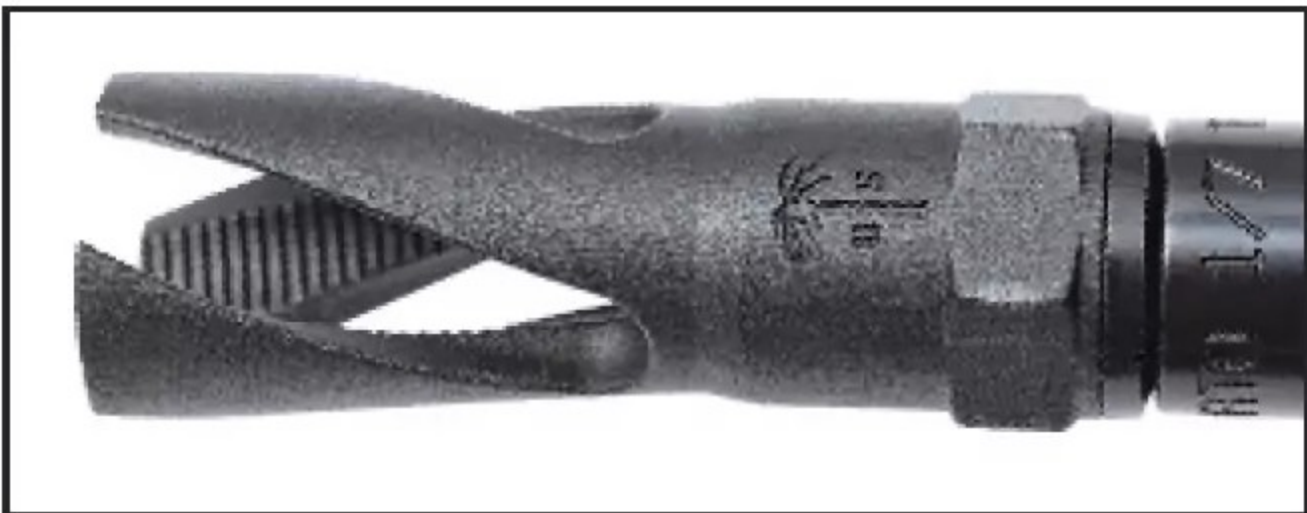
Both XM177 models used a 4.2-inch sound suppressor of moderate effectiveness. So, to keep with the theme, I mounted a slightly longer 5.5-inch, direct-thread, sealed Inconel EOS-556 suppressor of far greater effectiveness. This 12.5-ounce 3D printed sound suppressor proved effective in eliminating most of the muzzle flash, with just a dim little flame visible from the side and none from the shooter's perspective. Very little information about its internals is available beyond "unique flow through, low back pressure, offset stacked baffle design," but it works very well. My equipment isn't set up for accurate measurement of transient noises, but perceived report attenuation is superb. The shot sound is much reduced, and the pitch of it is lower in tone. The noise reduction is sufficient for Lab Radar to not trigger from a foot away despite its microphone set to maximum sensitivity. The sound suppressor reduces recoil overall, so rapid fire is even more controllable than with the standard comp. EOS-556 is a very low-blowback design, allowing an AR-15 to be used without an adjustable gas block. Recoil and noise reduction happen mainly by cooling the gases behind the bullet, heating up the suppressor in the process. One shot warms it noticeably, five in a row make it too hot to touch at over 150°F. Inconel makes perfect material for this design, allowing multiple magazines to be fired



A U.S. troop showing off an XM177E1 during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Archives)



Better accuracy, reduced blast, and perfect reliability. (Oleg Volk)



From the side, the Hurricane looks like any flash hider. Two slots at the top make it a compensator as well. (Oleg Volk)

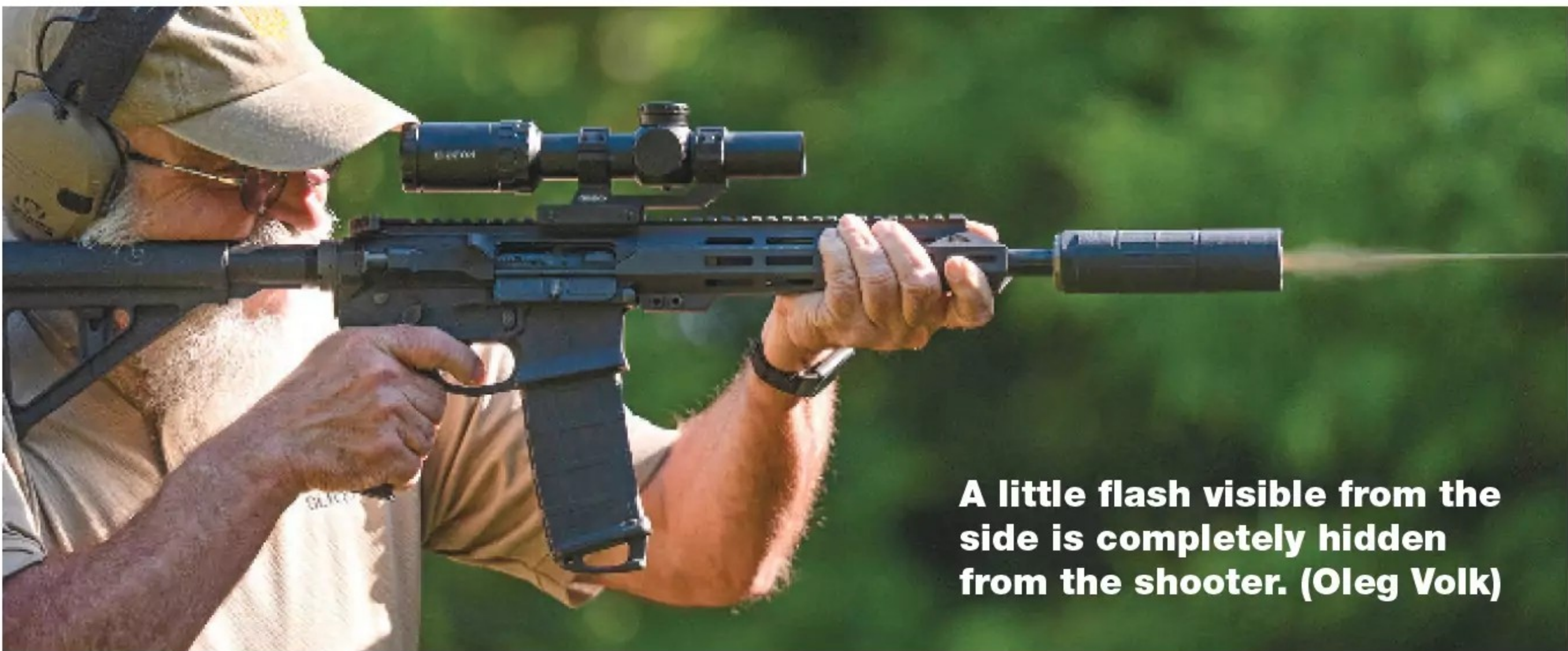
without damaging the suppressor. The suppressor should be threaded on quite tightly to avoid loosening during firing due to even thermal expansion between Inconel and barrel steel. A silicone cover is recommended to avoid burns if the pistol is slung after firing. The forend stayed cool even after prolonged firing,



Well-defined jet streams dissipate flash while stopping muzzle climb. (Oleg Volk)

but an angled grip, such as Magpul or FAB Defense, is highly recommended for improved control. Reduced muzzle velocity remains a factor: Wolf WM193 load that typically clocks at 2,950 fps from a 20-inch barrel, whereas the CAT4's 11.5-inch measured an average of 2,570 fps from, below reliable fragmentation range. We can expect about 100 fps extra from results from canonical M193 loads, such from

◀ EOS-556 full-auto rated Inconel suppressor directly mounted. (Oleg Volk)



A little flash visible from the side is completely hidden from the shooter. (Oleg Volk)



Additional front vents and recessed muzzle opening. (Oleg Volk)



Rapid fire with full control. (Oleg Volk)



Right side bolt release lever is very helpful for locking the bolt back with the right hand staying on the pistol grip. (Oleg Volk)



Ambi bolt release. (Oleg Volk)

or another support, while a left-side mag release is more for left-handed shooters: the button is smaller and stiffer than the right-side main release to prevent accidental mag drops from mag pouches of other worn items depressing the button by accident. Left-side mag release is extra handy for reloads with magazine retention. The magazine well is flared for easier reloading. Ambi 45-degree safety levers stay out of the way during firing but provide control from either side. Hiperfire EDT Designated Marksman Trigger drops



Flared mag well. (Oleg Volk)

as Federal Ammunition. In any case, American civilians aren't limited to ball ammunition: most hunting and self-defense loads perform very well at that velocity, as do long bullets from 75- to 77-grain match loads supported by the fast 1:7-barrel twist rate. Those lose proportionally less velocity from the short barrel than lighter bullets and produce excellent terminal results with 16-inch penetration and half-inch expansion. Magtech 77-grain OTM reaches around 2,400fps from the 11.5-inch tube, supporting violent bullet fragmentation out to 75 yards, and decent expansion past 200 yards.

All aspects of the design point to it being made for business. Bolt release levers, charging handle, and magazine release buttons are all duplicated for ambidextrous use. Bolt release comes in quite handy when shooting from a bench

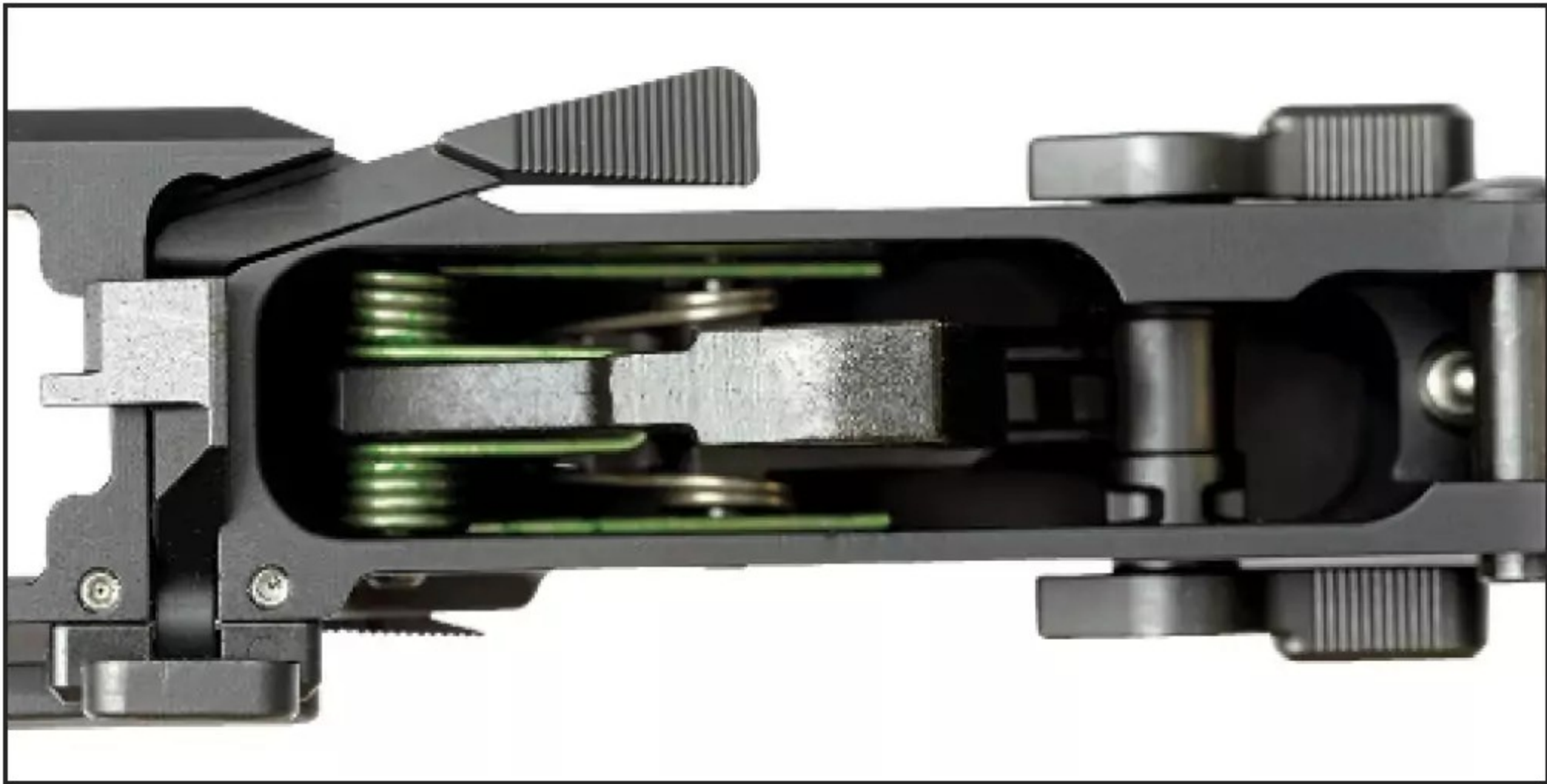
US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL WITH EOS SUPPRESSOR



◀ Ambi safety lever. (Oleg Volk)

▶ Distinctive Hiperfire trigger mechanism in the lower receiver. (Oleg Volk)

▶ Receiver tensioner. (Oleg Volk)



the hammer at 4.3 pounds, but feels crisp and precise, a major contributor to the practical accuracy of this gun. To the same end, an adjustable rounded steel pin inside the lower receiver puts pressure against the upper to keep the two parts consistently aligned with no wiggle.

Plain gray and black finish of CAT4 hide the premium construction for long-term durability. At six pounds, CAT4 feels serious and dense. Unlike certain ultralight compact builds that sacrifice longevity and durability

for the bragging rights of “the lightest,” the CAT4 adds weight with steel inserts in high-wear locations, such as the charging handle lockup area at the back of the upper receiver and shell deflector. That ensures longevity and also permits replacement of just the steel block rather than the entire upper receiver, if necessary. Full-length Mono-Loc handguard and sound suppressor adding another



The CAT4 field-stripped. (Oleg Volk)

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US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL WITH EOS SUPPRESSOR



◀ The shell deflector, one of the replaceable high-wear parts. (Oleg Volk)



▶ A long handguard, with gas block visible. (Oleg Volk)

▶ Slotted integral handguard can receive an elongated Arctic trigger, if necessary. (Oleg Volk)



A Magpul BTR brace was chosen by US Palm for the CAT4 pistol. (Oleg Volk)

12.5 ounces keep the balance of a pistol with a full-size red dot a little aft of the front of the mag well, making it less front-heavy than a standard AR-15A2. Single point sling attachment goes right behind the red dot sight, providing correct balance when hanging hands-free. With optics, sight radius is less of a concern, but the long forend gives it the same 14.5-inch spread as the M4 carbine. The forend keys directly into the upper receiver for a monolithic-level lockup, offering extra rigidity and minimal flex, for better accuracy from a bipod and consistent laser and light alignment. The trigger guard is machined into the lower receiver for greater strength, with a slot for weight reduction.

While its minimal recoil makes the adjustable-length Magpul BTR brace entirely adequate to the task, a heavier buttstock and a vertical foregrip legal for SBR configuration would make it even better. The brace may be placed against the shoulder collapsed or extended to 13.5-inch length of pull or used brace-like with a QD single-point sling stud inserted into the receptacle on the back, with the vertical fin touching the forearm for stability.

Reliability has been 100%. I fired brass case Wolf 55-grain FMJ, SIG Sauer 60-grain all-copper HT, IMI 55-grain M855 Green Tip, Magtech 77-grain OTM, and Hornady 68-grain BTHP. All performed well, with accuracy favoring Hornady Match with a 1.7-inch best average group. Functional accuracy is made of four factors: ergonomics, ammunition, barrel, and sights. For testing, I



Brace in use with a loop sling for a pistol-style hold. (Oleg Volk)

used Gideon 1-6x Guardian illuminated LPVO (low-power variable optic) as a compromise between getting the best sight picture and staying realistic (Gideonoptics.com).

This kind of short AR would either wear a red dot for urban and house defense use, or an LPVO for suburban or rural situation. Reduced blast, good trigger, minimal recoil, reduced angle grip, flat forend that fit well on a

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Width

**11.2
OZ.**

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Developed through Ruger's ongoing collaboration with Magpul Industries, the LCP MAX with Magpul EHG offers the same proven performance shooters expect from the LCP MAX, now paired with a premium grip frame engineered for improved control, comfort and consistency. Initial models will feature a manual safety, a 10-round magazine, and a new, 13-round magazine purpose-built for the EHG.



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US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL WITH EOS SUPPRESSOR



For accuracy testing at 100 yards, Volk used Wolf 55-grain FMJ, SIG Sauer 60-grain all-copper HT, IMI 55-grain M855 Green Tip, Magtech 77-grain OTM, and Hornady 68-grain BTHP. His optic of choice was the Gideon 1-6x Guardian illuminated LPVO. (Oleg Volk)



Hornady's Match 68-grain BTHP had the best average group at 1.7 inches. This group measured in at 1.45 inches. (Oleg Volk)

US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL — 100 YARDS			
Brand	Weight (gr.)	Type	Average / Best (in.)
Hornady Match	68	BTHP	1.7 / 1.45
Magtech	75	OTM	2.03 / 1.5
SIG Sauer	60	Copper HT	2.23 / 1.9
IMI	62	Green Tip	2.73 / 2.4
Wolf	55	FMJ	2.97 / 1.4
A Gideon 1-6x Guardian illuminated LPVO scope, set at 6x, was used for all testing.			

sandbag, all helped get better results than could have been realistically expected from a “shortie” at 100 yards. As an aside, I had to interrupt the range session twice for wildlife sitting under the target stand, once a doe, another time several turkey hens. They paid no attention to bullets cracking overhead!

cle or a tight corridor where touching off an unsuppressed 16-inch barrel of the same overall length would amount to a flashbang at the end of a stick. With a clear bullseye and a steady hand, a rifleman can expect about 1.5 MOA with several ammunition loads. On steel, hits usually all overlap at 100. In combat situations, the same qualities facilitate

The US Palm STORM CAT4 pistol is a convincing entry in the field in which most competitors sacrifice some aspect of functionality to achieve compact size and reduced weight.

The main niche of this pistol is defense in tight quarters. For CQB, sufficiently good handling for getting hits on target first seems like the overwhelmingly important factor. At exactly nine pounds with a full 30-round magazine and Gideon Mediator XL red dot, CAT4 can be easily fired with one hand. Greatly reduced muzzle blast and recoil allow its operator to retain effectiveness even inside a vehi-

handheld A-zone hits past 50 yards, which covers almost all realistic deadly force encounters in the US. Several people fired this pistol at the range. One, a relative newcomer to the gun world, greatly appreciated the absence of concussion to which she had been accustomed with short-barreled ARs. This improved comfort enabled her to hit steel consistently from a



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Oleg Volk testing the CAT4 with the Gideon 1-6x LPVO scope. (Photo by Miguel Gonzales)

hundred yards standing. A more experienced shooter, who normally favors AK47 and pump shotguns, noted how easily he could keep the pistol under control while firing eight shots per second. Crisp trigger with normal reset combined with much reduced recoil made split times of 0.125s an easy achievement. Another recreational shooter with extensive AR experience loved being able to go from 1.5 MOA accuracy benched with six-power magnification to far faster close-range plate ringing at one-power with illuminated reticle giving red dot like experience. Although the suppressor got quite hot, we had not experienced problems with heat mirage over it. All shooters appreciate complete reliability with every ammunition selection, minimal gas blowback, and almost non-existent recoil.

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Finish:	Matte black (corrosion-resistant, low-profile)
MSRP:	\$899.99
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The US Palm STORM CAT4 pistol is a convincing entry in the field in which most competitors sacrifice some aspect of functionality to achieve compact size and reduced weight. My testing of this 11.5-inch barreled AR-15 pistol showed balanced all-around competent performance. It lists at MSRP \$1,399.99 and comes with a well-made soft case and a 30-round Magpul magazine. The EOS-556 sound suppressor lists at MSRP \$899.99. With the cessation of \$200 for the tax stamp and turnaround times of just a few days, it has become are far more practical proposition than just last year. **FN**

US PALM STORM CAT4 PISTOL	
Caliber:	5.56mm
Capacity:	Any AR-15-type magazine (30-rd. included)
Overall Length:	29 in. (brace collapsed), 32.3 in. (brace extended)
Overall Height:	7.3 in.
Overall Width:	2.7 in.
Weight Unloaded:	6 lbs.
Barrel Length:	11.5 in.
Twist Rate:	1:7
Furniture:	US Palm 7-Sided M-LOK Rail, US Palm Grip, Magpul BTR brace
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RUGER'S AMERICAN GEN II SCOUT:

Perhaps the Best Scout Rifle Ever Made?

By James Tarr

The first time I ever fired one of the new Ruger American Rifle Generation II Scouts was at our company's "Editorial Roundtable" last summer, where dozens of manufacturers come to show off their new products. The shooting part of the week-long event is held at the Cameo Education and Shooting Complex in Grand Junction, Colorado. They have steel targets arrayed across a steep rocky hillside out to 600 yards. The rifle wasn't wearing a scope, and just sported the factory iron sights. There was a magazine loaded with one round on the table beside the rifle as I walked up. I picked up the rifle, loaded it, and aimed at a target on the slope I knew to be 240 yards away. The front sight was as wide as the white target. I was standing upright, and shooting offhand, unsupported. I fired the shot, and had to wait just a fraction of a second to hear the satisfying clang as the .308 bullet hit hard against the steel.

For those of you who don't know what to do in such a situation, do what I did, which is the textbook correct male response—nod decisively, work the bolt to eject the case, set the rifle back down, and then walk away, into the distance, without firing another shot. The confident look on your face should tell everyone, "That wasn't luck, I meant to do that, and can do it again any time I want."

The scout rifle, a "general purpose" rifle concept as put forth by Col. Jeff Cooper, is fascinating, and discussing scout rifles is sure to cause a fight with both the tactical types and the "Fudds" who don't like this weird-looking bastard of a bolt action rifle. Ruger, for years, offered a scout rifle version of their Model 77, and for part of that time it was the "Gunsite Scout Rifle," Gunsite of course being the largest and oldest privately-run firearms training facility in the world, founded by Cooper 50 years ago. In the past few years, the Model 77 has been eclipsed

Ruger's American Rifle Gen II Scout is their latest scout rifle offering, and Tarr feels it is the best factory scout rifle ever made. (Photos by Andy Grossman)



Ruger's new Scout Rifle is based on their American Rifle Gen II, and offered in four calibers. Here it's chambered in the original .308 Win. (Photo by James Tarr)

As bolt actions go scout rifles look odd, but every deviation from the usual is done for a reason. A scout is a general-purpose rifle, meant to do just about everything pretty well. (Photo by James Tarr)

in Ruger's lineup by their American Rifle, and this year Ruger has introduced a scout rifle version of their Gen II American Rifle that is different in a lot of ways and, I would argue, better, while being less expensive.

Let me give you the specs on this rifle, and how this new version compares to the previous model. Then, we can dive into the details on what Jeff Cooper felt constituted a "Scout Rifle," and whether the concept is still a valid one in the 21st century.

First, a version of this rifle has been available for a year or so as a limited-run distributor exclusive through Lipseys. That is the Gun Talk 30th Anniversary edition, with a Kryptek Obskura Nox pattern stock and a "smoked bronze" Cerakote barrel/receiver. It was only available in .308, and if you like the looks, and the caliber, you might be able to find some samples out there.

Now, however, the Ruger American Rifle Gen II Scout has entered Ruger's standard catalog, and is available in 5.56 NATO and .350 Legend (both fed by AR-pattern magazines), 7.62x39mm, and .308 Winchester. Interestingly, the 7.62x39 version is fed by standard AK-pattern magazines. As .308 was Cooper's original caliber choice for the Scout rifle, I went with that. It is fed by Accuracy International (AI)-pattern magazines, which are commonly available. Ruger supplies one five-round magazine with the rifle. Magpul sells five- and 10-round PMAG versions in this pattern, and they tell you that you can cut the tab off the bottom of the magazine follower to turn the five-round magazine into a six-rounder, which works if you're not using it for hunting somewhere that has five-round magazine capacity restrictions. Normally, I am a "max capacity" kind of guy, but I bought one of the 10-round



The factory stock offers you one spacer for either a 13.75-inch LOP (probably too long) or 12 inches (likely too short). However, you can buy this spacer kit from Ruger which gives you two options in-between. (Photo by James Tarr)



From right—the factory five-round magazine, the Magpul five-round (convertible to six) magazine, and the Magpul 10-round magazine. Tarr always likes additional capacity but thought that the 10-rounder ruined the lines of the rifle. (Photo by James Tarr)



◀ The AR-style post front sight (adjustable for elevation) is protected by beefy steel wings, serrated to reduce glare. (Photo by James Tarr)



The rear sight has two protected apertures and is click adjustable for windage, at the rear of 11.25 inches of rail space. (Photo by James Tarr)

Magpul magazines for testing and, honestly, I think it ruins the lines of this rifle. The shorter magazines simply look better, and the Magpul five-rounder (now six) has become my standard.

This rifle has a 16.1-inch cold hammer forged medium-weight barrel with 5/8"x24 threading at the muzzle. There is plenty of clearance between the stock and barrel for its entire length. The stock is light, but because the barrel is a bit beefy, and you've got that long rail atop it, empty weight of this rifle is six pounds 13 ounces with an empty magazine in place. The barrel is tipped with a Ruger-pattern flash hider that extends just over an inch past the muzzle. Overall length of the rifle is 37.4 inches. These standard scouts have a splatter-finished "Leaf Green" stock. The receiver and barrel have a "Cobalt" Cerakote finish, which is a dark gray. I really like the look of it.

From the factory, the rifle comes with both iron sights and a long, 11.25-inch MIL STD M1913 aluminum picatinny rail, secured to both the barrel and receiver, for mounting whatever optic you want, including long eye relief scout-style scopes. The front sight is an AR-15 post, adjustable for elevation, protected by beefy steel wings. The rear of the wings, facing you, are serrated to cut glare. The steel rear sight has two protected flip apertures, large and small, easily click-adjusted for windage using a knob. Distance between the front and rear sights is 20.5 inches, more than enough to run them effectively at—well, out to at least 240 yards, I discovered.

The stock's forend has a groove for gripping and a bit of texturing. The groove really helps, and if it wasn't there the texturing wouldn't be enough, at least for me, and I'd want to pull out the soldering iron for a bit of stipple work. When you carry the rifle one-handed, you'll have your hand

wrapped around the belly of the stock just forward of the magazine, and the stock there is shaped perfectly for that. There are sling swivel studs at the bottom of the stock, front and back. An old-school rifle like this screams for an old-school leather sling, at least to me. The Ruger American stock has a very soft rubber butt pad to absorb recoil, and a spacer. I think the toe of the butt pad should be a bit more rounded to prevent snagging, but that's personal preference.

You can remove the stock spacer if you want. As shipped, with the spacer in place, length of pull is 13.75 inches. If you remove the spacer, it's 12 inches. In my opinion, that's really the only misstep Ruger has made with this rifle. For most people, 13.75 inches is a bit too long, and 12 inches is more than a bit too short. FYI: Jeff Cooper thought a short length of pull was better for a compact general-purpose rifle like this, but his recommended "short LOP" (length of pull) for a scout rifle was 12.5 inches. Ruger does sell a spacer kit for the American rifle for \$29.95 (ShopRuger.com) and I bought one as part of this review as I wanted to see if I could adjust it to fit me correctly. The spacer kit (black, so it works with every color stock) allows you to adjust LOP to either 12.75 or 13.25 inches. I thought the shorter option would be the one, but discovered that put my thumb right up against my nose, and settled on the spacer for a 13.25-inch LOP, which is perfect for me. Ruger also offers a stock weight accessory



The three-position safety, new to the second generation of the American Rifle.

▲ Safety engaged, trigger and bolt locked. ▲ Safety on, trigger locked, bolt can be worked. ▲ Safety off. (Photos by James Tarr)

RUGER'S AMERICAN GEN II SCOUT



A limited-run distributor's exclusive version of this rifle has been available for a year or so. This is the Gun Talk 30th Anniversary Edition, with a Kryptek Obskura Nox pattern stock and a "smoked bronze" Cerakote barrel/receiver. (Photo by James Tarr)

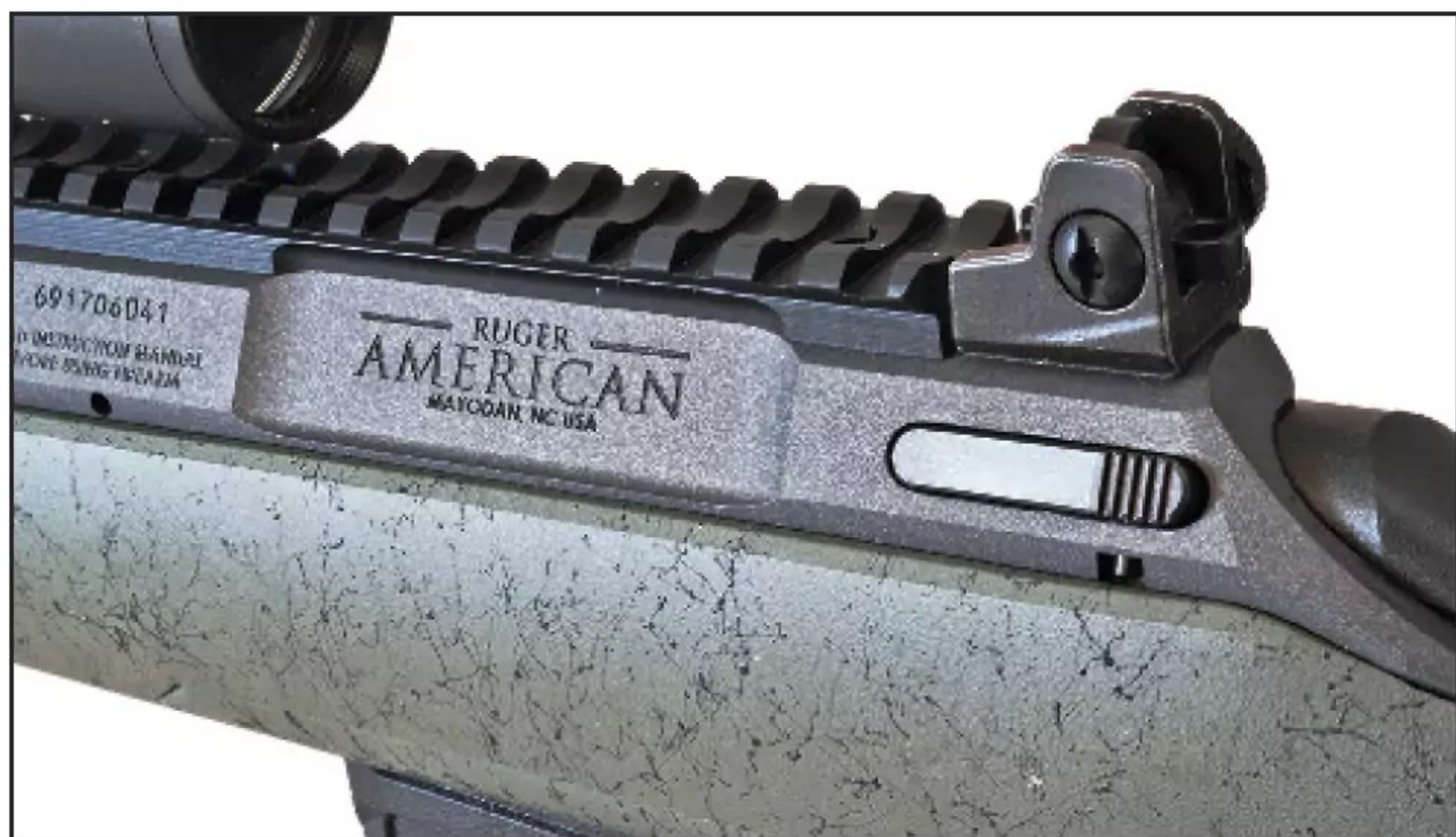
kit that adds 1.6 pounds to the butt if you feel you need to counterweight a heavy suppressor.

The rifle also ships with a removable click-on black comb. Without it, the stock is set up at a perfect height to run the iron sights. Attaching it rises the comb about half an inch, and works better if you're running any kind of optic. It still allowed me to get my head down far enough to use the iron sights.

For the Gen II version of the American Rifle, Ruger tweaked a few things with the design, and the setup of the safety is a little different. This is a tang safety, and a

three-position model. All the way back is safe, revealing two white bars. This locks the bolt and the trigger. All the way forward is fire, revealing a red line. The middle position, where you can see one white indicator line, still locks the trigger, but you can work the bolt. FYI: if the action isn't cocked, you can't engage the safety.

The bolt and bolt body are stainless steel, and while I love the durability of stainless, I wish it had been given a dark finish to match the rest of the gun. The bolt handle is smooth and round, 0.85-inch in diameter. The bolt is three-lugged, and it has a 70-degree throw.



Push the button to remove the bolt from the receiver. This rifle was made in Ruger's Mayodan, North Carolina facility. That's a cobalt gray Cerakote finish on the receiver and barrel. (Photo by James Tarr)



The bolt comes out of the rifle quick and easy for cleaning. Note the modular magazine well insert in the receiver, for other caliber variations. (Photo by James Tarr)

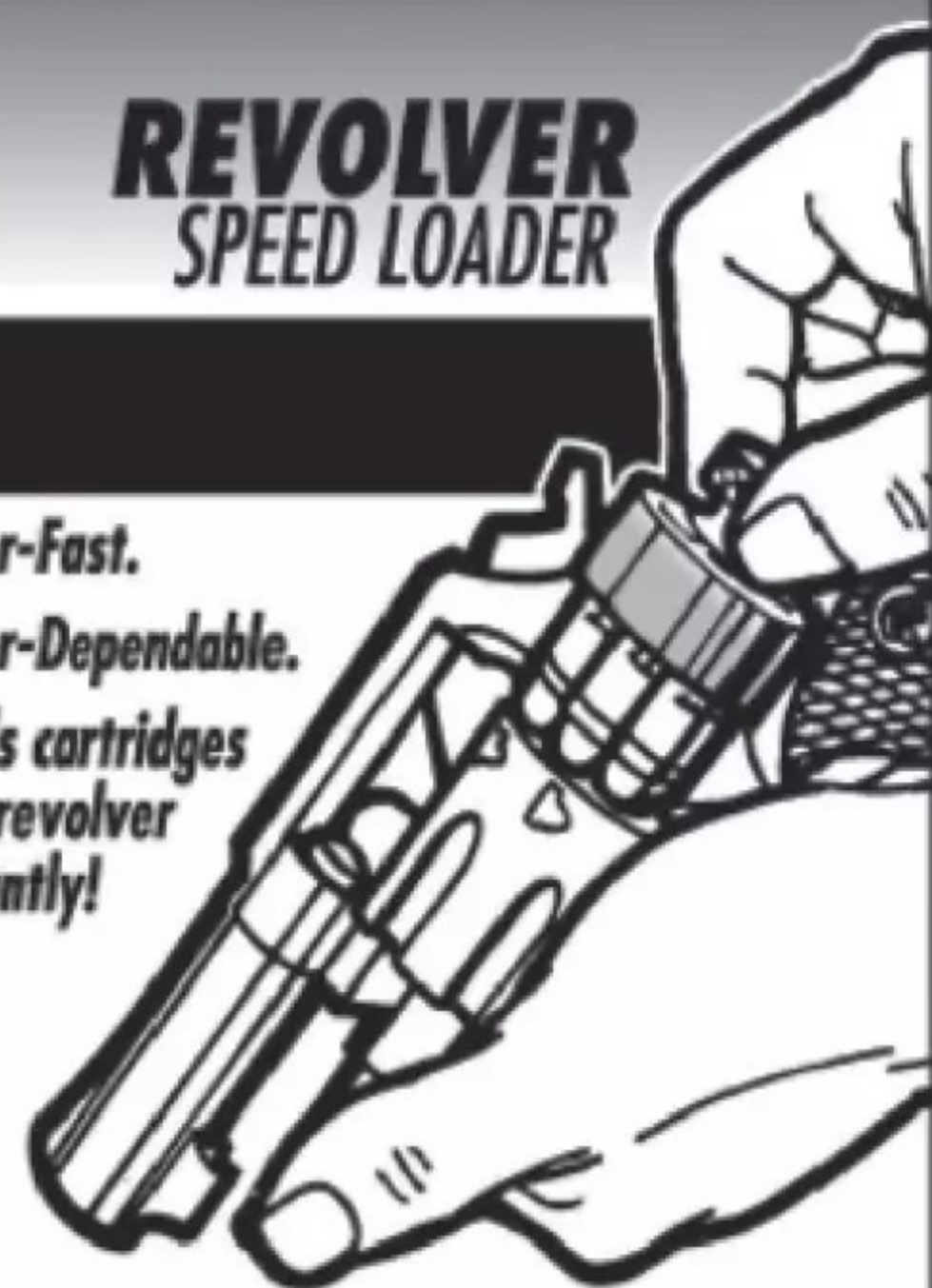


Jeff Cooper envisioned the scout rifle as a general-purpose rifle, and a lot of people in the south and west have embraced them as good truck guns. Here, it wears the first-generation Hi-Lux 2-7X scout scope. (Photo by James Tarr)

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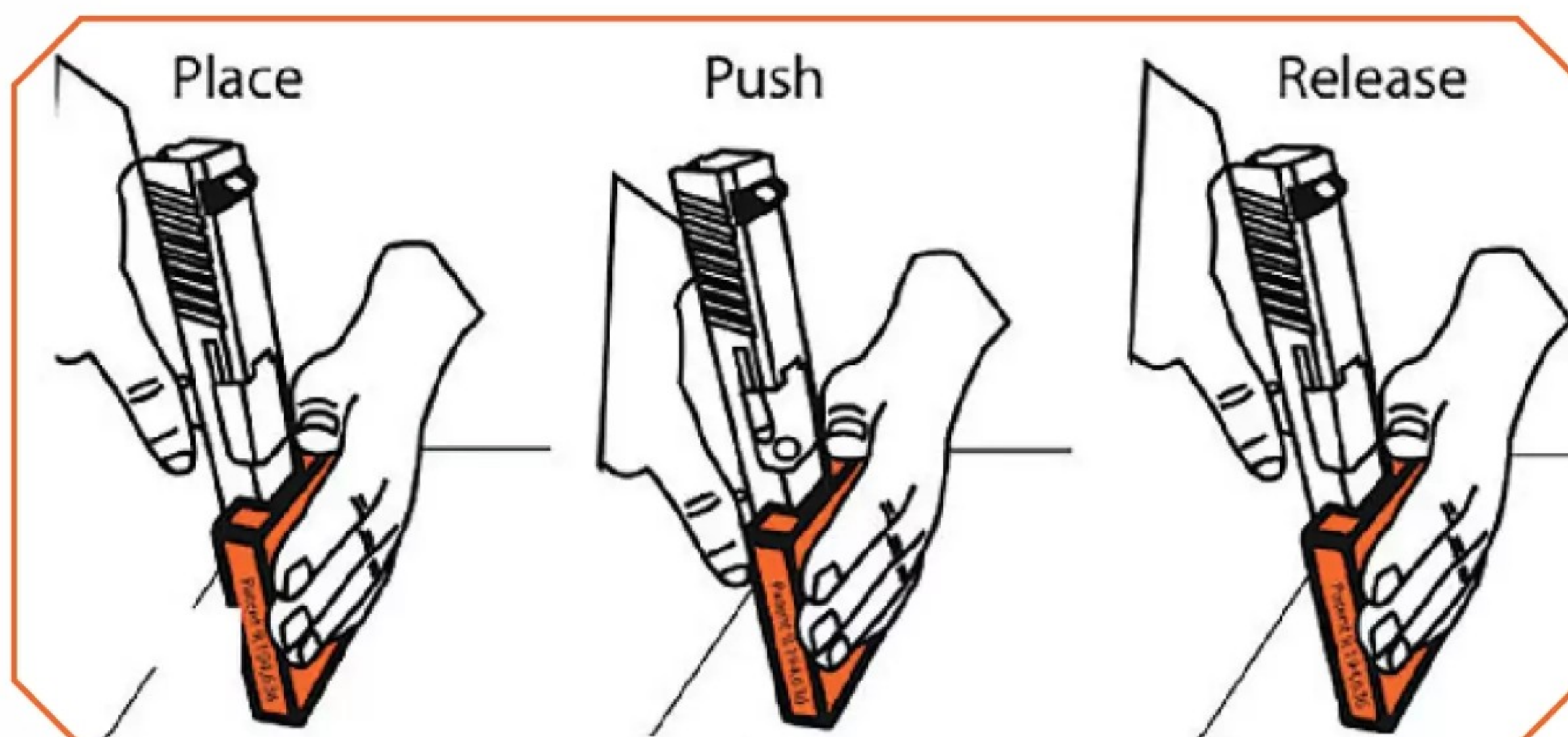
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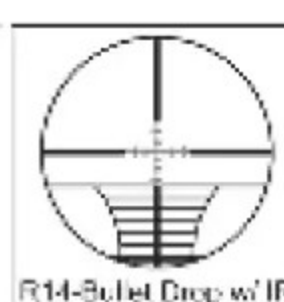
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The Germans fielded a Scout-like optic in the form of the ZF41 1.5x long eye-relief scope. (Photo courtesy of David Fortier)

There is a drop safety lever in the center of the trigger. This rifle has a single-stage trigger pull. The pull was crisp on this sample, but at five pounds, it was a little heavier than I prefer.

The previous Ruger Scout Rifle had the same length barrel but weighed a few ounces less. The stock had a more easily adjustable LOP with provided spacers, but the iron sights weren't as good. The rail didn't go over the receiver, reducing your options when it came to optics. Most importantly, it used steel magazines that weren't as reliable, and then there's the bolt... On paper, the rifles seem pretty equal, but in fact I prefer this one, simply due to how sloppy the bolt was on the Mk 77 Ruger Scout Rifle. With the bolt all the way back it moved back and forth a surprising distance, and I could jam it up by pushing on it at a slight angle, and induce feeding jams out of the magazines if I

was ugly when working the bolt. The bolt of this American Rifle-based Scout, on the other hand, has far less play, the magazines seem to work better, and I couldn't get it to misfeed either on purpose or by accident. This new rifle is also less expensive. Ten years ago, the Ruger Gunsite Scout was \$1,075 (\$1,422 today, adjusted for inflation), whereas this rifle is \$929.

And now it's time to dive into exactly what is a "scout rifle." In short, a general-purpose rifle is one that is short, light, and handy. As Cooper said, a rifle "...that will do a great many things equally well...". Cooper envisioned a rifle that could be used for hunting, plinking, and even self-defense if necessary. As he wrote in *The Art of the Rifle*, "The general-purpose rifle will do equally well for all but specialized hunting, as well as for fighting; thus it must be powerful enough to kill any living target of reasonable size."

While his specifications evolved over the years, Cooper's general specifications for a scout rifle included:

1. Unloaded weight of three kilograms fully equipped (preferred) but definitely no more than 3.5 (that's 6.6 to 7.7 pounds)
2. No more than a meter (39 inches) in length
3. Ghost ring iron sights
4. Forward mounted low power scope to allow reloading with stripper clips
5. Sling
6. Standard chambering of .308 Winchester.

Cooper didn't invent the idea of short rifles with low power scopes or backup sights; the Germans fielded a Scout-like version of the Mauser in World War II (specifically the Mauser 98k carbine with the tiny ZF41 1.5x long eye-relief scope). Cooper used this and other examples as a springboard for his ideas.



The Scout rifle is short and handy. Tarr found it to be completely reliable, and the bolt much tighter with less play than on Ruger's previous Scout based on the Model 77. It's wearing the new Hi-Lux 2-7X LER scout scope.(Photos by Andy Grossman)

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A short, handy rifle chambered in .308 is suitable for hunting just about any game in the western hemisphere and works well inside a blind. (Photos by Andy Grossman)

A scout scope has very long eye relief. The original versions were fixed power, usually 2.75X, and Burris still offers one of those scopes. Unlike traditional scopes, the combination of long eye relief and low magnification allowed you to aim and shoot with both eyes open, which got you on target quicker and allowed for true “snap shooting.” These early scopes usually sported simple thick duplex reticles.

While there are not many scout-type scopes on the market these days, most all of them offer variable magnification. I had a first-generation Hi-Lux on hand, and its 2-7X range hugely improves the versatility and capability of the scout rifle. *Firearms News*’ own Dave Fortier helped with the design of this scope about twenty years ago. But it’s not perfect—it’s hard to adjust the power, glass quality/light transmission could be better, and the simple duplex reticle is almost crude by modern standards. Still, for \$160, it’s a great deal.

However, right when Ruger announced this rifle, Hi-Lux announced a second generation of this scope, the Long Eye Relief 2-7x32 Mk2. This new scout scope has a fiber optic illuminated (daylight bright) center dot with six brightness levels. The throw lever to adjust magnification is longer, allowing you to much more easily work it with the thumb of your support hand. The glass is much improved, with better coatings. This scope is the same length as the original, but it’s about two ounces heavier, with a \$299 MSRP. That red dot really allows for very quick two-eyes-open close-range shooting, superimposing the dot over the target and ignoring the magnification.

Since getting this rifle, I’ve talked to a lot of people who have owned various Scout rifles over the years, and the one consistent complaint is stout recoil. A .308 in a light rifle can be a thumper (especially if you’re used to semi-auto

5.56s), so the very soft butt pad Ruger put on this rifle helps noticeably and keeps it from being abusive.

I found that unlocking the bolt (and cocking the firing pin) after firing a shot takes a bit of effort, enough to make the rifle want to come off my shoulder, and I found placing my thumb atop the bolt shroud for leverage while working the bolt was a quick and easy fix. Doing that, the bolt worked quick and sure, and I never had any feeding



The Scout is a general-purpose rifle. Cooper’s original specs called for under a meter in length and 3 kilos in weight (including optic). The Ruger makes the length but doesn’t quite make the weight. (Photo by Andy Grossman)

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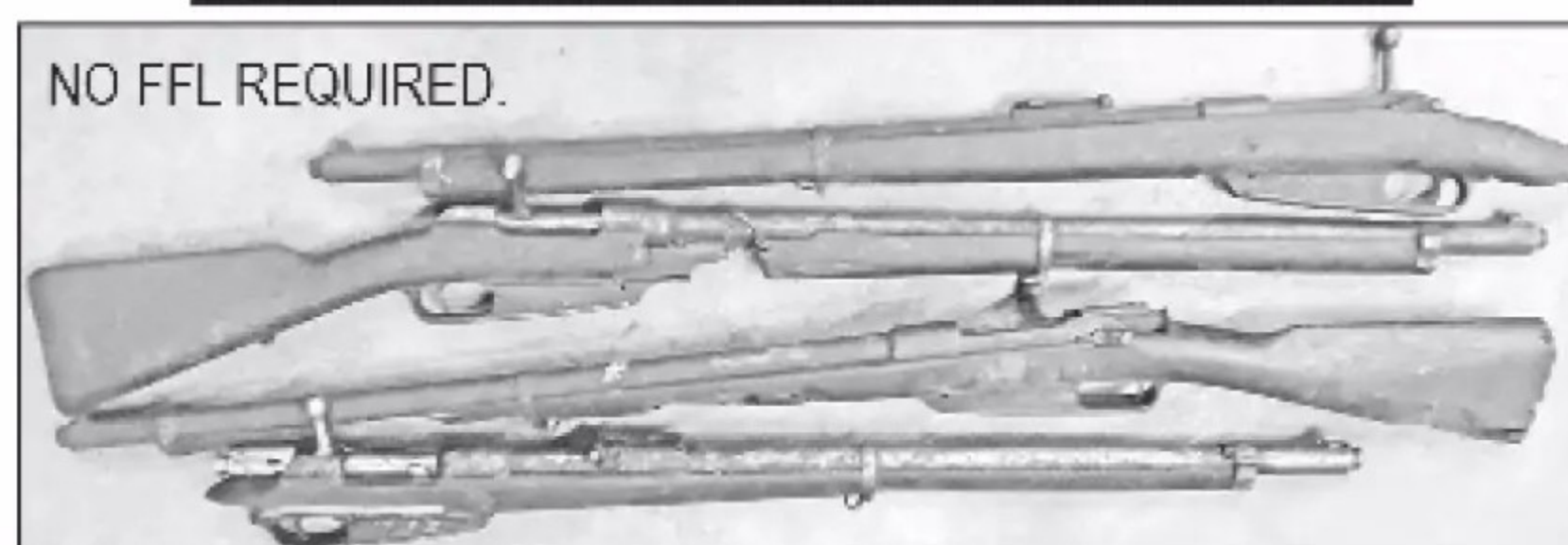
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issues. This short rifle is very handy and even with the scope mounted feels lighter than it is because of how well-balanced it is. It is more than powerful and accurate enough to take any game in this hemisphere.

As for the scout rifle concept in the modern era—truly, a .308 SFAR with a 12 to 16-inch barrel meets almost all of Cooper’s criteria except for weight. Detachable box magazines and modern LPVOs have negated the need for long eye relief scopes, but that doesn’t mean a scout rifle, with or without a scout-style scope, is non-functional or ineffectual. *Firearms News* Executive Editor Dave Fortier and I like to go back and forth about scout rifles. He says it’s an obsolete design in general, but especially for self-defense. I respond with, “*You mean like revolvers, and pump-action shotguns?*” All of them arguably offer obsolete operating systems when compared to modern semi-autos, but they are still in regular use, and effective. No one born in the last century would choose a bolt action for self-defense over a semi-auto...but during the Balkan War photos surfaced of fighters with Steyr Scout rifles, presumably using them as urban sniper/counter sniper rifles.

The best, shortest, and most succinct description of scout rifles I’ve ever heard comes from gun writer Neal Shera— “The scout rifle at its core is a firearm that you can take anywhere in the world to hunt and it will do reasonably well, eliminating the need for a pile of specialized platforms. Its most restrictive space is in combat. It is purely a defensive firearm, meant to keep a threat far enough away so you can escape. People who demean it as a ‘combat weapon’ completely misunderstand the concept.”

Almost ten years ago, I did a scout rifle roundup for this magazine, comparing the offerings from Ruger, Mossberg, Steyr, and Savage. Honestly, I liked various features on different guns, but they were all disappointing in one way or another. I like everything about this new Ruger, and don’t have any criticisms except for factory LOP options. Other than wishing they offered it with a slightly longer/thinner barrel to get a bit more velocity at the same weight, I don’t even have any recommendations for Ruger. I’ve been wanting a good scout rifle of my own for a while, and will be buying this rifle—so that’s my honest appraisal of it, I’m voting “yes” with my wallet. **FN**



The best group from the scout was this .88 of an inch group fired with Hornady’s reduced recoil load. The rifle averaged 1 to 2 MOA, which is solid performance. (Photo by James Tarr)

RUGER AMERICAN GEN II SCOUT RIFLE	
Action Type:	Manual rotating bolt
Safety:	Three-position
Caliber:	.308 Win (5.56 NATO, 7.62x39, and .350 Legend also available)
Capacity:	5-rd. detachable AI-pattern box magazine
Barrel:	16.1 in. cold hammer forged, flash hider, threaded 5/8"x24, cobalt Cerakote finish
Overall Length:	37.4 in.
Weight w/Magazine:	6 lbs. 13 oz.
Stock:	Composite polymer with adjustable LOP, removable riser, and rubber recoil pad
Finish:	Leaf Green with splatter finish
Trigger:	Single-stage, 5.0-lbs. (as measured)
Sights:	Protected front post adjustable for elevation; Rear sight—two apertures, adjustable for windage; 11.25 in. MIL STD M1913 optics rail
Accessories:	Cheek riser, two stock spacers, one 5-rd. magazine
MSRP:	\$929
Contact:	Ruger.com

RUGER AMERICAN GEN II SCOUT RIFLE					
Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	SD	ES	Best Grp. / Avg. Grp. (in.)
Fiocchi SBR	125	3,006	9	24	1.15 / 1.63
Hornady Custom Lite	125	2,519	9	26	0.88 / 1.26
Hornady Critical Defense	155	2,543	26	68	1.06 / 1.40
Black Hills BTHP	175	2,390	18	51	0.95 / 1.83
Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of ten shots measured witha Garmin Xero C1 chronograph.					

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY ECHELON 4.5F COA PISTOL

Ready Right Out of the Box!

By Patrick Sweeney

I hate to say, “*I told you so*,” but I did. Some twenty-plus years ago, I predicted that the then-competition Open Guns seen in USPSA competition would be the normal guns in the future. So, here we are, with comped/ported and red-dotted hi-cap 9mm pistols being the new normal. Common. Average, even. The new Echelon COA may be the new normal, but there’s nothing average about Echelon.

The Echelon we all know. Or do we? A lot of you might not have kept up on things, and so you might not know the details of the Echelon that make it way above average. The Echelon is a polymer-framed pistol, but the “frame” is merely a shell to hold the Central Operating Group (COG). The COG is a self-contained assembly, often called a chassis that contains the trigger and fire-control parts that connect up to the striker system in the slide. As such, the COG *is* the firearm and thus it bears the serial



The Echelon is a chassis pistol, and the viewport in the grip frame shows the serial number on the internal assembly. (Patrick Sweeney)



The grip frame and its backstrap are textured for a non-slip grip. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Echelon COA comes with two magazines; one already set up as an extended-capacity magazine. (Patrick Sweeney)

number, not the shell that you grab on to. This makes it easier for Springfield Armory to provide you with a much better trigger than polymer-frame designs where the fire control parts are assembled into the polymer shell itself. That polymer shell is called the grip module, and it comes in different lengths and can be changed for size. So, if you find the one it came with not to your liking, you can change to a different circumference with the provided backstraps, or a shorter length for better concealment.

The Echelon 4.5F COA came with a medium grip module. While the Echelon 4.5F COA did not have a 1911-level trigger press (few pistols other than the 1911 do) it was much better than what I've come to expect from polymer pistols that do not use a chassis design.

The next big Echelon advance was to use steel magazines. Yes, polymer is tough, but polymer is only so tough, and steel is tougher. Also, polymer must be thicker than steel in order to provide sufficient strength, and using steel allowed Springfield Armory to pack more rounds into a compact magazine and thus keep the grip area small enough to be comfortable. Springfield Armory has been using steel magazines all along, starting back in the early days with the XD. So, seeing them in the Echelon was not a big surprise. Those of us with big hands might not care about grip size (well, some of us do, I hate overly large gripping areas) but those with average-sized hands will find the Echelon a lot easier to grasp.

The Echelon 4.5F COA came with the standard full-size Echelon

compliment: a flush 17-round magazine, and an extended 20-round magazines. If you opt for an Echelon 4.5F COA as your daily-carry pistol, you'll leave the house with 38 rounds of 9mm before you even have to consider buying more magazines. Plus, if you prefer your 9mm to be of the +P persuasion, all Echelons are fully up to the task.

The Echelon (even the ones that are not the 4.5F COA) has a non-slip grip on the shell, so your hand will find a solid grip easy to manage, and the slide is extensively machined to provide gripping to manipulate the slide. Inside, the Melonite-finished barrel has an integral feed ramp, so the case is fully supported. While it is melonite-treated, making it harder than sin, it is hammer-forged and machined to match dimensions, so you get as much accuracy



The Echelon COA is easy to disassemble. It comes with a mag loader, extra backstraps, and another magazine extension, should you want one. (Patrick Sweeney)



Not only is the slide serrated for a solid grip, but the serrations are machined at an angle back, so there's a ledge in front of the ejection port for more purchase. (Patrick Sweeney)

out of the Echelon as you can manage. Really, if the groups are not small, it is probably you or your ammo that are likely the cause. (Nothing personal, but most of us don't practice enough, and if you load your own, you probably could do better in creating accurate ammunition.)

I remembered this recently when I was running an Echelon COA through the Bianchi Cup stages, on the Bianchi Cup range. When I smoothly tracked (on the mover) or held tight on the bullseye (on the barricades), my groups were tens and X's. When I slacked off, they were not. My fault, not the Echelon COA.

The Echelon is a superb 9mm hi-cap pistol for daily carry, but if you want a red-dot optic for your jaunts about town, there's a new one for you: Aimpoint COA. The "COA" is the Aimpoint red-dot reflex sight, one with a 3.5 MOA red dot using a CR2032 battery. It's now standard battery for use with red-dots, due in part to it being so small, but also for offering plenty of run time. The mounting system here? This is where it gets not just good, but excellent. The COA uses the Aimpoint A-Cut interface. The A-Cut gets me all geeky in a pistolsmith and mechanical engineer way, because it solves all the problems that previous red-dot mounting systems came with. The main mounting problem? Screws. Unless the machined pocket on the slide that holds the red-dot is cut to exactly fit the red-dot frame, the screws take the shear load of slide movement, not the red-dot frame or housing. Lacking that support, every time you fire a round, the weight of the red dot hammers the screws, trying to snap them off. Using adapter plates doesn't help, unless the whole assembly fits tightly-enough to take the load off of the screws.

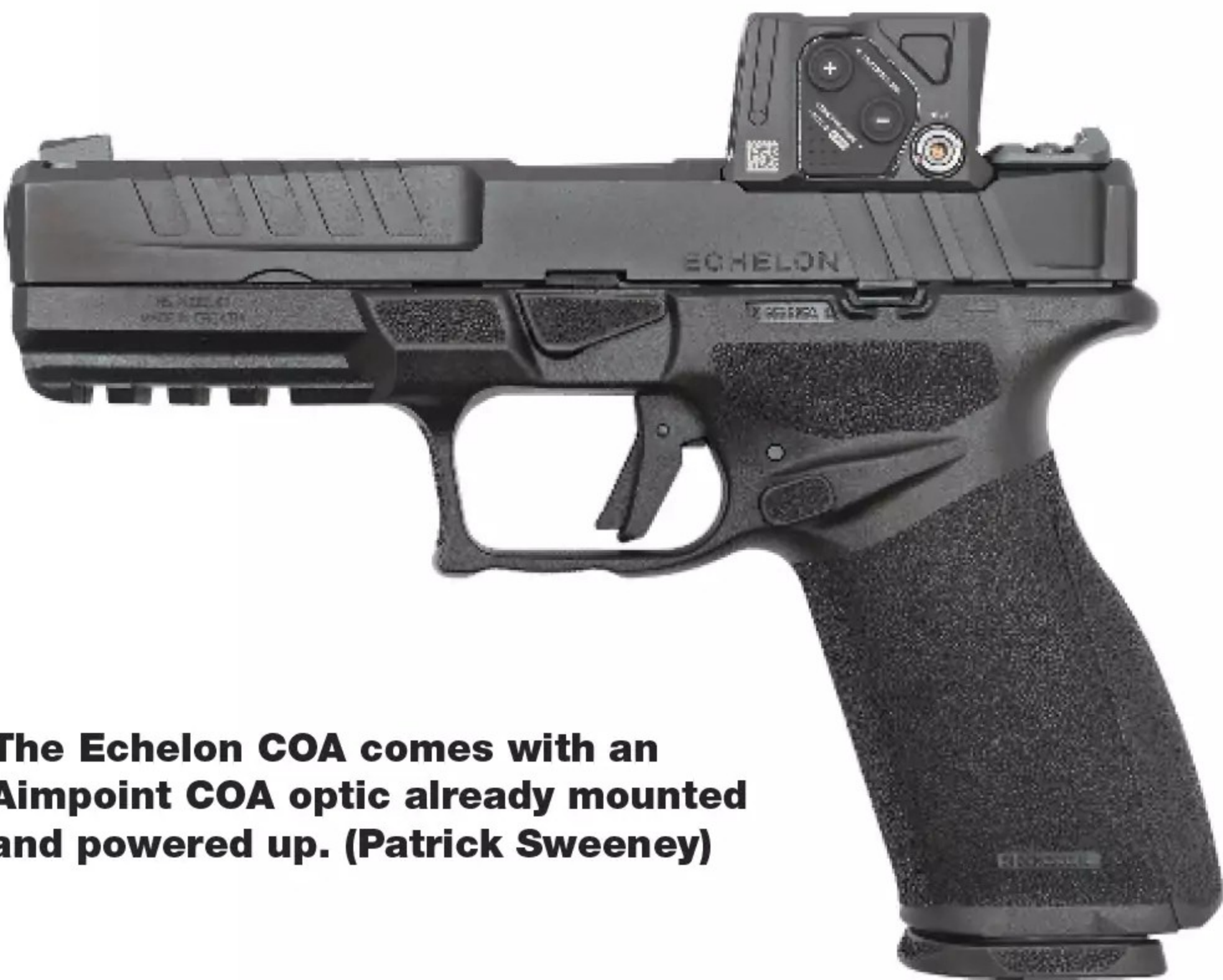
I was in one of the first group of gun writers to see the A-Cut, before it had even hit the market. We were all impressed. The A-Cut design? How does it solve this

► The Echelon barrel has an integral feed ramp and is machined to match dimensions before being given a Melonite treatment. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Echelon and its match barrel have no problem delivering tight groups. Find what your Echelon likes and you'll be very happy. (Patrick Sweeney)

problem? First, the front edge of the CAO has a curved lip, a lip that snugs underneath the overhang machined in the slide. At the rear, the COA has an angled lip. The rear clamping plate (which also holds the rear sight on



The Echelon COA comes with an Aimpoint COA optic already mounted and powered up. (Patrick Sweeney)

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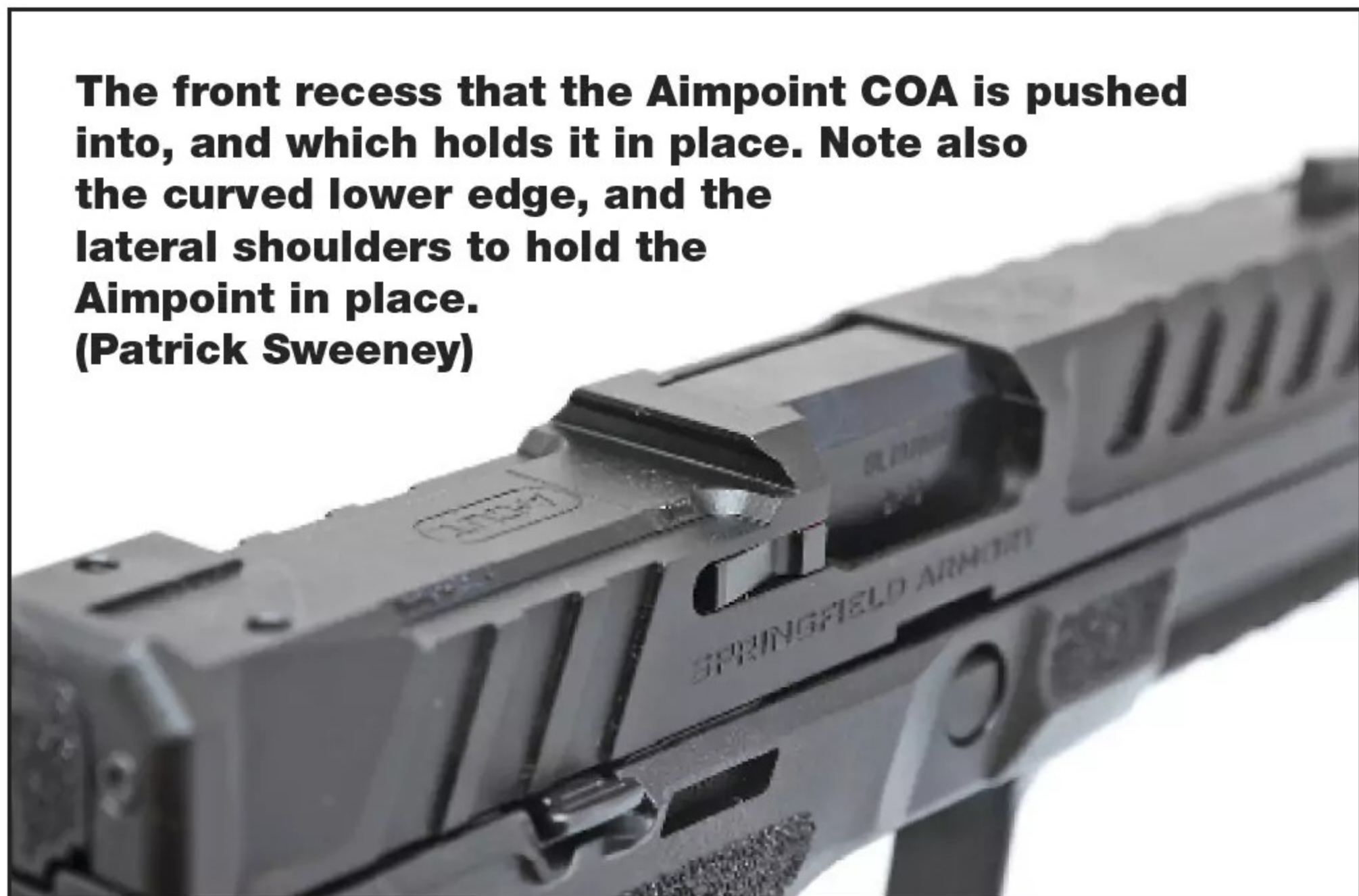
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The front recess that the Aimpoint COA is pushed into, and which holds it in place. Note also the curved lower edge, and the lateral shoulders to hold the Aimpoint in place. (Patrick Sweeney)



the Echelon) clamps downwards on the angled lip, the force pushing the COA forward into the overhang. Using the clamping plate also allowed Aimpoint (they designed the A-Cut, they patented it, they are clever designers) to use larger screws than those that typically hold a red-dot down onto the slide. But wait, it gets better. Underneath the COA, the A-Cut is machined with beveled sides and a curved front shoulder, and the COA is machined to match them. So, the A-Cut cradles the COA in the machined recess, and those beveled sides also take some of the shear load of slide movement.

The COA housing takes the shear load, the clamp screws do not, and as a result, the COA does not depend on two or four tiny screws to stand up to the G forces of recoil. The Echelon COA in all three sizes comes with the slide already machined to the A-Cut, and the COA already mounted and ready to go. All you have to do (once the



The high G forces of a slide cycling require a solid attachment method for a red dot to stay in place. The A-Cut is all that. (Patrick Sweeney)



The rear sight is also the A-Cut clamp, and it holds the Aimpoint on with larger screws than usual red-dot mounts do. (Patrick Sweeney)



You can see the angled surface the clamp bears down on, to hold the Aimpoint COA in place, and push it forward into the recess on the front. (Patrick Sweeney)



The brass is gone, the slide is closed, and the muzzle is still coming down from recoil. The Echelon is not slow to cycle. (Patrick Sweeney)



The slide stop and the mag button on the Echelon are ambidextrous, so lefties will be happy about that. (Patrick Sweeney)



The Falco holsters hybrid carbon fiber holster and mag holder. Light, strong, good looking, and secure. (Patrick Sweeney)

paperwork is taken care of) is go out and check the zero with your ammo and hold. Springfield Armory has even installed the battery in the COA for you.

For me, the Echelon 4.5F COA required a minor adjustment of the zero. I do not find this at all unusual. My grip is, shall we say, odd, and I have found that no-one else can zero a pistol for me. My long-suffering pistolsmith doesn't even try any more. He zeros it to his hand when he has wrapped something up and leaves the front sight tall on purpose. I then check it on target and calculate how much I need to trim down the front sight. Which is a reminder to all readers; there is no such thing as "one zero for all shooters." Springfield Armory does their best, but you're going to have to check for yourself, and if you have to do some adjusting it is not the fault of Springfield Armory. Maybe you're just odd, like me.

The 4.5F is the full-sized Echelon, with a (surprise) 4.5-inch barrel and slide to match. You are not limited to the 4.5F for your COA desires, Springfield Armory is also offering it on the 4.0FC, with a compact slide and full-sized frame, and the 4.0C, which is both compact slide and frame, using a 15-round flush-fit magazine.

The 4.5F COA that was sent functioned flawlessly, which is the standard I would expect from the Echelon. The magazines both locked the slide open when the last shot was fired and dropped free when the magazine button was pushed. The magazine button is bi-lateral, working from both sides, a boon to southpaws.

Disassembly is easy; lock the slide open, drop the magazine. Rotate the disassembly lever (on the left side) ninety degrees, then ease the slide off after you press the slide release. (Get a hand on it and ease it off, if you just press the slide release you'll shoot it off, and that won't be fun.)

A pistol this cool requires a holster to match. Falco makes a hybrid carbon fiber OWB that is cool as can be. The back is leather, for comfort and breathability. No more puddles of sweat dripping down from your holster on a



The back of the Falco hybrid carbon fiber holster is leather. This is for comfort and humidity control. (Patrick Sweeney)

summer day. The carbon fiber front is slick, so it won't catch on clothing and print, and it is excellent on retention, keeping your pistol in place during exertions. The top is open, so this is not an open-carry holster, and the bottom is open in case you have an extended, threaded barrel. As an extra bonus, carbon fiber is stronger and lighter than kydex, so you get a thinner shell and less weight.

Now, you might be thinking, "*That's all well and good, but dots cost money. What's the up charge?*" Yes, dots do. However, in this instance you are getting not just an exemplary pistol and a first-rate red dot optic, but a bargain as well. The MSRP of the Echelon COA is more than \$200

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY ECHELON 4.5F COA PISTOL



Performance and accuracy. What’s not to like?
(Patrick Sweeney)



If you want to shoot small groups, you have to practice because fliers like this one are usually the shooters fault, in this case, not the Echelon. (Still under two inches, by the way.) (Patrick Sweeney)

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY ECHELON 4.5F COA PISTOL CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA					
Ammunition	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	ES	SD	Accuracy (Avg. & Best) (in.)
Black Hills Honey Badger	100	1,289	29.1	11.0	1.9 / 1.7
Winchester Target & Practice USA 250th	115	1,205	8.5	3.4	2.1 / 1.9
Hornady Critical Duty	135	1,020	28.9	11.0	1.9 / 1.6
Federal Syntech	147	1,035	25.1	9.4	2 / 1.9
Accuracy results were to be averages of four, five-shot groups at 15 yards off a Champion shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph.					

less than buying the Echelon and COIA separately. (We’ll overlook the fact that you can’t get the slide machined to the A-Cut.) I did a quick search for bulk ammo buys, and the \$208 you save would net you almost 1,000 rounds of steel-cased practice ammo. Or, if you plan to load your own, then 750 brass-cased rounds you can reload after you’ve fired them. If you want a red-dot but don’t go COA, you’ll have to spring for a red-dot of some kind. You might as well get one already installed and ready to go.

How good a deal is this? Well, I have an Echelon of my own already, but I am sorely tempted to ship the one I have back, keep the COA one they sent, and ask Springfield Armory to send me an invoice for the difference. Yes,

that’s right, a gun writer actually spending money to buy a firearm. Shhh, don’t let my union steward find out. **FN**

SOURCES
Aimpoint: Aimpoint.us, (877) 246-7646
Black Hills Ammunition: Black-Hills.com, (605) 348-5150
Falco Holsters: FalcoHolsters.com
Federal Ammunition: FederalPremium.com, (800) 831-8100
Hornady Manufacturing: Hornady.com, (800) 338-3220
Winchester Ammunition: Winchester.com

SPECIFICATIONS	
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY ECHELON 4.5F COA PISTOL	
Type:	Striker-fired semi-automatic
Caliber:	9mm Parabellum
Capacity:	17+1 rounds (comes with one 17- and one ext. 20-rd. magazine)
Barrel:	4.5 in.
Overall Length:	8 in.
Height:	5.5 in. (with flush mag)
Width:	1.2 in.
Weight:	25 oz.
Finish:	Black
Grips:	n/a.
Sights:	Black serrated front & rear, COA red dot
Trigger:	4 lbs. 4 oz.
MSRP:	\$1,119
Contact:	Springfield-Armory.com, (800) 680-6866

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The Vektor CR-21 is a weird derivative of that era, around the turn of the 21st Century, when the world was genuinely convinced that bullpups were the way of the future; it now survives as a kit rifle, and as a movie star, but it has a lot more going for it. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

VEKTOR CR-21: SOUTH AFRICA'S SCI-FI BULLPUP RIFLE

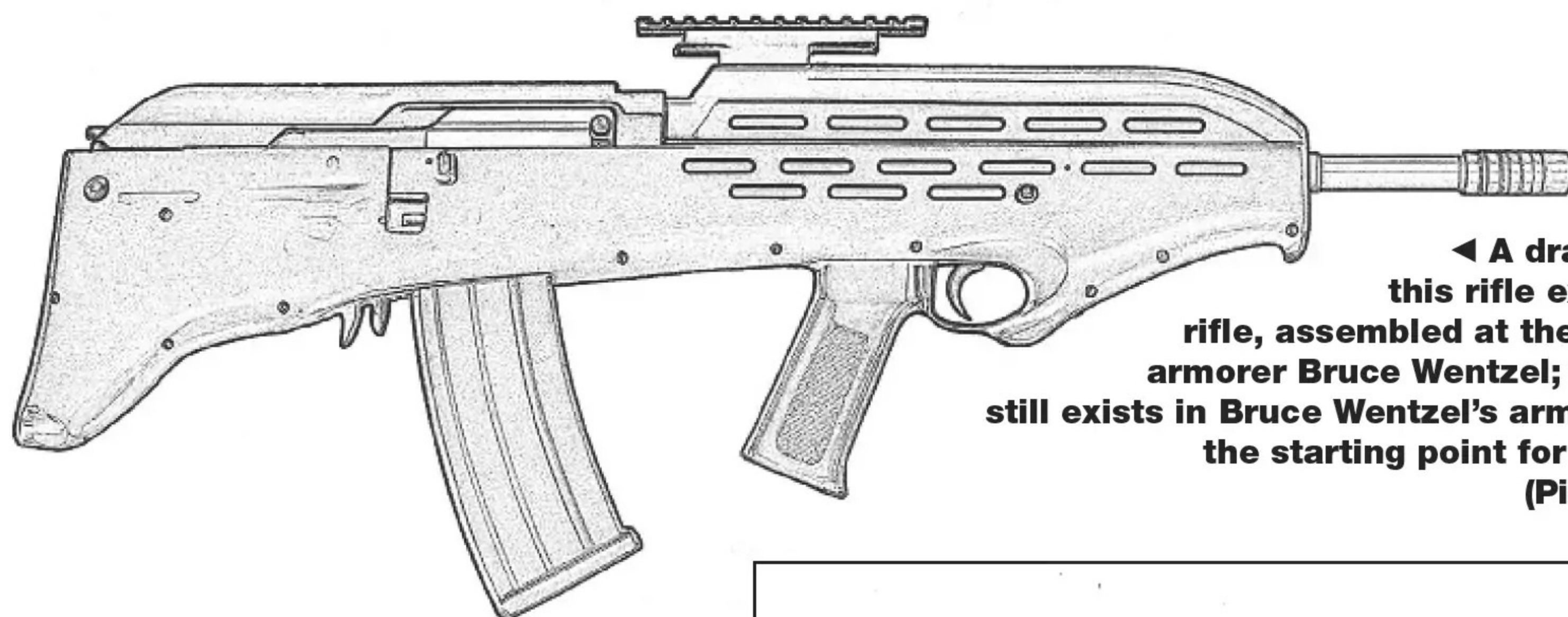
An Abortive Project From the Late 1990s, the Vektor CR-21 Was a Product of Its Time With a Very Interesting Story, Whose Legacy Survives on the Silver Screen. **By Pierangelo Tendas**

The early 1990s were the time of the bullpup. While the three best-established bullpup service rifles, the French FAMAS, Austrian Steyr AUG, and British SA-80, had debuted during the 1980s, if not in the late 1970s, it was in the 1990s that the bullpup design became so well established that, for a few years, many felt bullpups would become the global standard for military service rifles in the future.

Indeed, the late 1990s saw the launch of quite a handful of bullpup designs, some of which, like the Israeli Tavor and the Singaporean SAR-21, genuinely stuck and are still around, while others faded

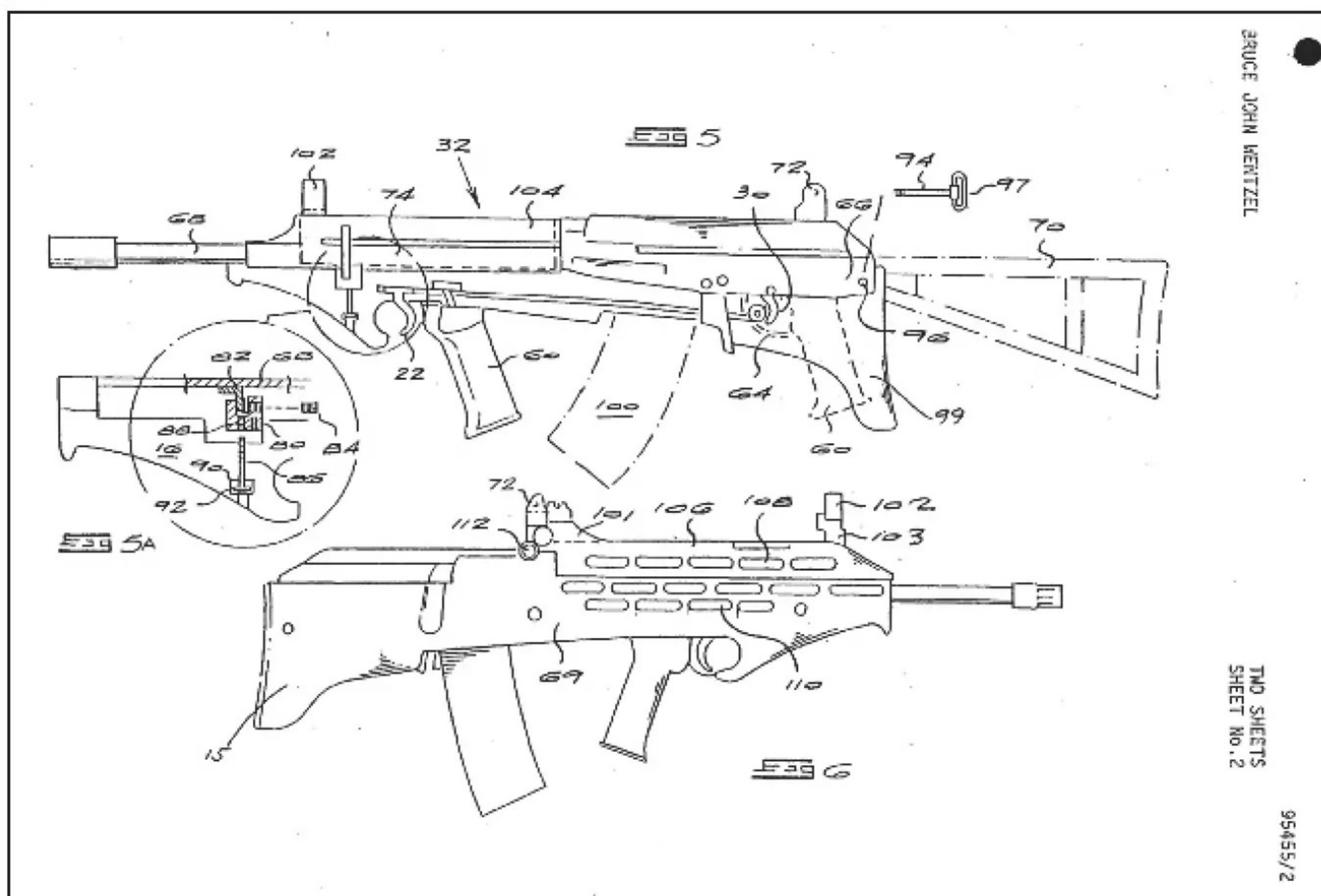


The R4 5.56x45mm assault rifle was a clone of the Israeli Galil ARM, manufactured under license in apartheid South Africa and adapted to suit the physique of tall Afrikaner soldiers; two shorter versions, dubbed the R5 and R6, didn't ease things too much in terms of length of pull. This is where the story of the CR-21 starts. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



◀ A drawing (no high-resolution images of this rifle exist) of the BW90 prototype bullpup rifle, assembled at the end of the 1980s by South African armorer Bruce Wentzel; the only surviving prototype, which still exists in Bruce Wentzel's armory at the Hire Arms company, was the starting point for Denel's development of the CR-21. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)

► A technical drawing from the BW90 patent application filed in 1990 in both Israel and South Africa: the rifle was clearly intended as a conversion kit right from the very get go. (World Intellectual Property Organization—WIPO and the Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission of the Government of South Africa—CIPC)



into obscurity despite having potentially a lot going for them. Among those is South Africa's fling with the bullpup design: the Vektor CR-21.

South Africa Tries a Bullpup

The fall of the apartheid government and the subsequent opening to the global markets found the arms industry of the Republic of South Africa tempered by years of home-brewed ingenuity and good to excellent technical capabilities, owing to the need for solid national self-reliance during the seventeen years of the mandatory global arms embargo imposed by the UN in 1977.

Israel had been one of the very few countries in the world to maintain commercial and military relationships with South Africa in the previous decades; and indeed, Israel had supplied South Africa with the technical know-how to locally manufacture a copy of the UZI sub-machine gun, dubbed the S1, and to replace their aging R1 rifles,

a.k.a. FN FAL, in 1980 with a local version of the Galil assault rifle, dubbed the R4.

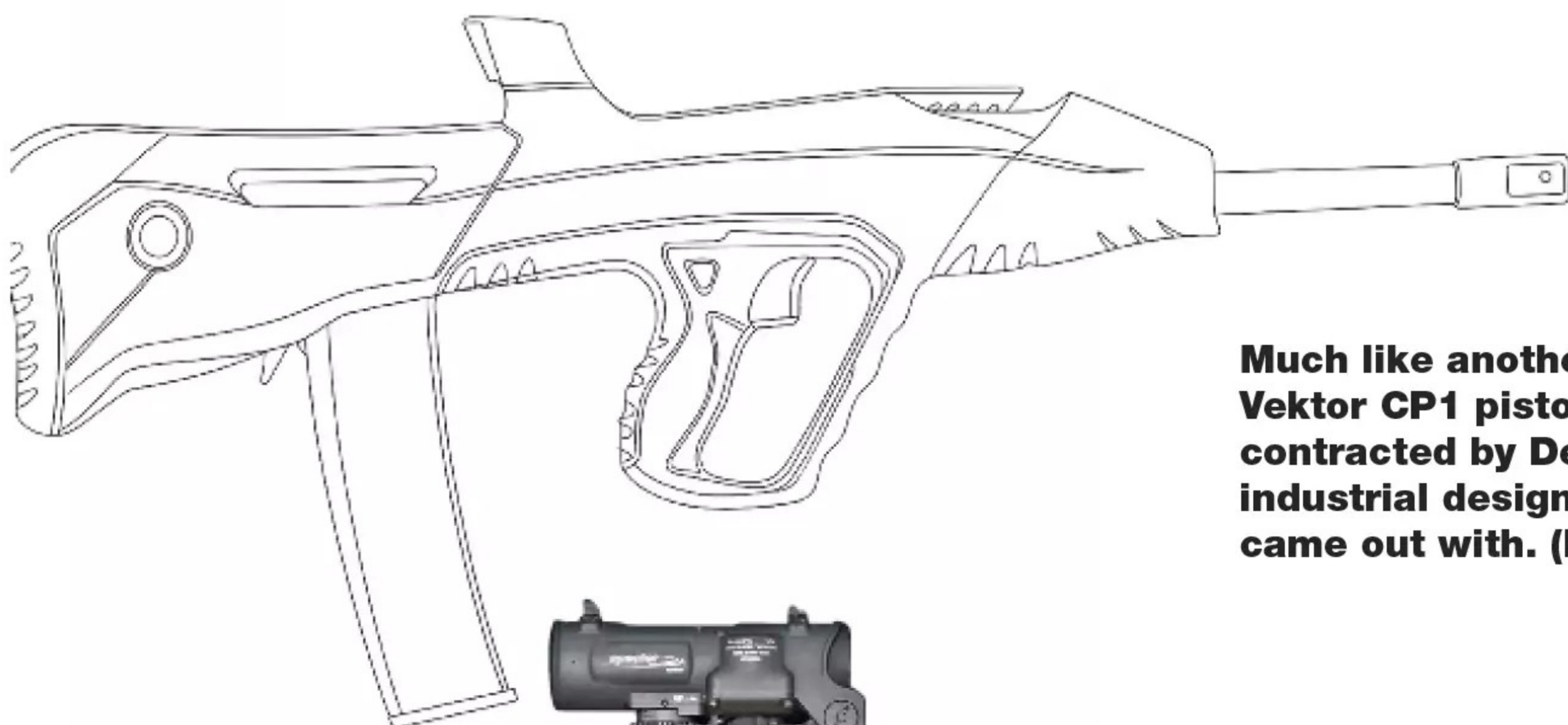
The R4 was slightly modified over the original Israeli design, specifically tailored in terms of length of pull around the typically very tall physique of Afrikaner, or Boer, soldiers (white South Africans descending from the early Dutch settlers in the Cape Colony). However, there was a need for a more compact firearm for the newly established South African National Defence Forces (SANDF), these being the R5 and R6 carbines that featured shorter barrels. This gave the South African arms industry a variety of assault rifle models to offer on the global markets.

Individual South African designers had already tried, in the past, to engineer a domestic bullpup rifle: most notably Bruce



The Valmet M82 bullpup rifle. Bruce Wentzel took inspiration from this design to create the BW90, and used Valmet parts in its assembly, being close to the Galil/R4 he intended it for. Denel would later go on to use original Galil parts for the CR-21. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)

VEKTOR CR-21



Much like another South African firearm of the day, the Vektor CP1 pistol, the original design of the CR-21 was contracted by Denel to Pentagraph, a Johannesburg-based industrial design company. This is a rendition of what they came out with. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



The right side of the Vektor CR-21: a sleek, lightweight polymer chassis under which one would be hard-pressed to realize, an AK derivative heart is beating. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

The Vektor CR-21, seen from the left side: our sample mounts an ELCAN Specter 1x-4x variable magnification sight, given the basically unobtainium nature of the original tritium sights. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

Wentzel, currently the owner and operator of Hire Arms, a specialist movie armorer company. In 1989, he assembled his own bullpup rifle dubbed the BW90. A long-stroke piston-driven rifle chambered in 5.56x45mm, the BW90 was put together using Valmet components and was, indeed, inspired by the Valmet M82 bullpup rifle.

In August 1990, Wentzel applied for a patent for his BW90 as a “rifle conversion kit” for Galil rifles in both South Africa (ZA1990/06641) and Israel (IL95455), but nothing came of it until the end of the apartheid era, when its principle intersected with the work of South Africa’s most important manufacturer of small arms: Lyttelton Engineering Works (Lyttelton Ingenieurswerke/LIW), a subsidiary of ARMSCOR, reorganized in 1992 as the “Vektor” brand of the state-owned defense company

Denel. Today, this company is operating out of Centurion, Gauteng, as “Denel Land Systems.”

Circa 1989, LIW had been tasked to develop a new domestic assault rifle that would meet the needs of future



The handguard of the Vektor CR-21 hosts a heat sink manufactured out of a different polymer blend that will resist temperatures over 600°C. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



The Vektor CR-21 is built on a chassis manufactured out of high-impact black polymer, injection molded in three components: the two shells that are then screwed together to compose the main receiver housing, and the cheek riser/receiver cover. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



The heat sink embedded in the handguard gives it its “bulbous” shape and makes it irremovable; it is wrapped around the gas block area and protects the outer polymer chassis from direct heat transfer. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

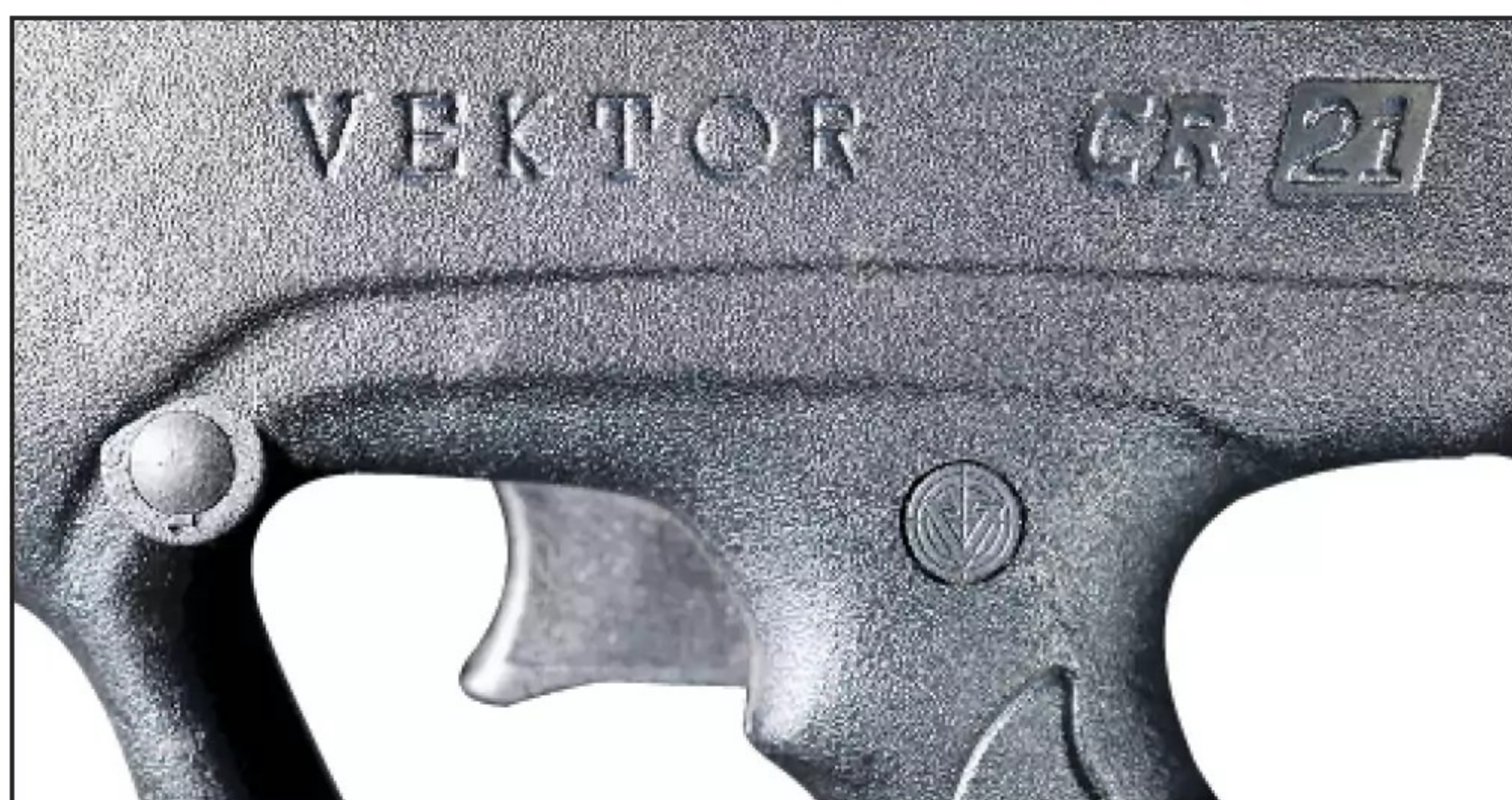


The grip and cutlass-type trigger guard of the Vektor CR-21 were integral to the polymer chassis. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

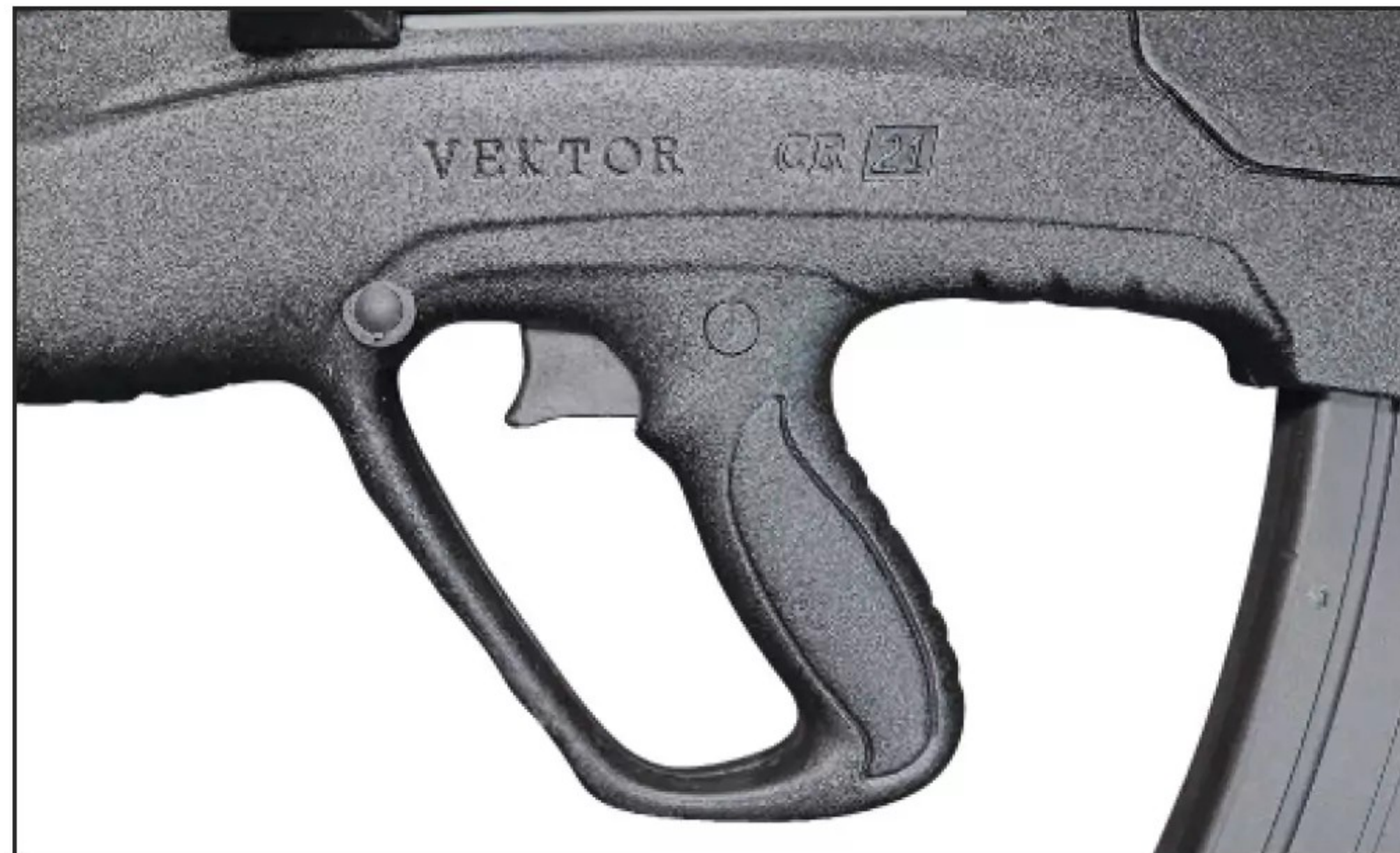


The magazine well of the Vektor CR-21 is located well behind the grip assembly; the magazine release is a standard Galil/Vektor R4-style paddle, extended to one side for easy reach. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

warfare, which, as it was already widely understood in the day, would be fought largely on close quarters and in urban terrains. It's unclear when LIW/Vektor decided to opt for a bullpup conversion of the R4 rifle. To this day, Mr. Wentzel will swear to anybody, who will speak to him directly (including this writer), that his idea for the BW90 was copied verbatim, while Denel always insisted that the choice was made independently.



Original markings on the CR-21 frame. Only 200 rifles were manufactured overall by Denel, with an additional 200 being later assembled by Nobleteq in semi-automatic only form for civilian sales. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



Early Vektor CR-21s had difficulty in magazine seating, due to both the grip design and interference between the polymer chassis and spot-welded locking tab. The issue was soon corrected, but Denel also developed a special 20-round short magazine for the CR-21. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



The Vektor CR-21 was compatible with 30-, 35-, and 50-round polymer or steel Galil or Vektor magazines. A special 20-round magazine was also developed for the CR-21, as well as a 5-round magazine with a bright yellow band marking for blank ammunition. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

Regardless of which one of the two sides is right, by the mid-1990s, Vektor had had the layout of the future rifle designed for them by Pentagraph. Pentagraph, a prominent branding and design consultancy company based in Johannesburg, would also cooperate for the design of the Vektor CP1 pistol around the same time, and decided to turn it into a conversion system for the Galil and R4 rifles.

Futuristic Design, Classic Heart

Denel's work culminated with the 1997 unveiling of the Vektor CR-21 rifle ("Combat Rifle for the 21st Century"). A sleek design with no sharp edges that looked straight out of a sci-fi comic book, at a glance it looked like a radical concept. One would need to handle it and appreciate its not insignificant albeit not excessive overall weight of 8.2 pounds when empty. Hidden inside was a very classic, solid steel heart beating underneath its shell in the form of a Galil rifle.

We specifically say "Galil" because, while the CR-21 was indeed designed to be a conversion unit that would use components from existing R4 rifles from South African military stock, the rifles that Vektor actually manufactured used original Galil receivers sourced from Israel. All



◀ The charging handle of the Vektor CR-21 is manufactured out of polymer, and connected to a push rod that impinges on the bolt carrier group; this model does not have its own return spring on the rod, while later samples had. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

▶ The charging handle was not permanently connected to the action, but pushed on a stud that was obtained by cutting and grinding down the original cocking handle off the Galil/R4 bolt carrier. As a result, it was not reciprocating. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



metal components were finished in black SCK6 Gun-Kote applied over a zinc phosphate primer layer.

The chassis was manufactured out of injection-molded high-impact black polymer and consisted of a lower receiver (molded in two halves held together by screws) and a detachable cheekpiece that dubbed as a receiver cover. A Galil or R4 receiver and barreled action was seated inside the stock, with very few modifications, the sear connected to the CR-21 trigger via a long linkage.

The grip assembly is integral to the polymer chassis and features a cutlass-style guard for easy use with gloves, a sliding trigger (similar to that of, to say, a 1911 type pistol), and a crossbolt manual safety. On select-fire versions, the selector for semi-automatic or full-automatic fire was a separate component, in form of a switch located on the stock and directly connected to the sear within the receiver hosted in the polymer chassis, its positions indicated with pictograms.

The polymer charging handle, located on the left side, was connected to a rod that impinged on the original Galil/R4 bolt by pushing on a stud that was obtained by cutting and filing off the original cocking handle from the bolt carrier. The early samples didn't come with a return spring on the cocking rod; it was added later, and our sample doesn't

feature it. The charging handle is not permanently affixed to the bolt carrier, meaning that it doesn't reciprocate, but this also means that it can't be used as a forward assist. Also, no last round bolt-open function exists.

The CR-21 rifle was made to feed through Galil and Vektor R4/R5/R6 magazines; it would accept both metal and polymer hull magazines, available in 20-, 30-, 35-, or 50-round variants. The magazine release is the standard AK/Galil type paddle, basically unmodified, which means it requires a standard "nose-in, rock-back" motion to insert. This can be problematic with longer magazines on a bullpup.

The Genetic Quirks of An Unusual Rifle

Like most bullpups, the Vektor CR-21 rifle comes with an ejection port only on the right side, and unlike some other bullpups of the era, it cannot be converted for left-hand shooting at the armory level. The top cover features a pretty large molded brass deflector, which may not really do well for left handed shooting, but the gun naturally pitches brass pretty far forward. It has an ambidextrous selector, so it could possibly be used from the left shoulder in a pinch, and probably better than the Steyr AUG. Denel did assemble a single experimental prototype with



The Vektor CR-21 ejected only from the right side, and the cheek piece and receiver cover featured a molded brass deflector. The steep angled ejection pattern and very violent brass ejection made it possibly usable by left-handed shooters in a pinch, but cases would often be damaged beyond reuse and reload. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



Our Vektor CR-21 is assembled on one of the kits sold for the civilian market: those were all marked "Semi-auto Cal .223." Some were converted from the original full autos by Denel, others assembled by Nobleteq. Notice the red tab of the crossbolt safety, which works by blocking the transfer bar. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

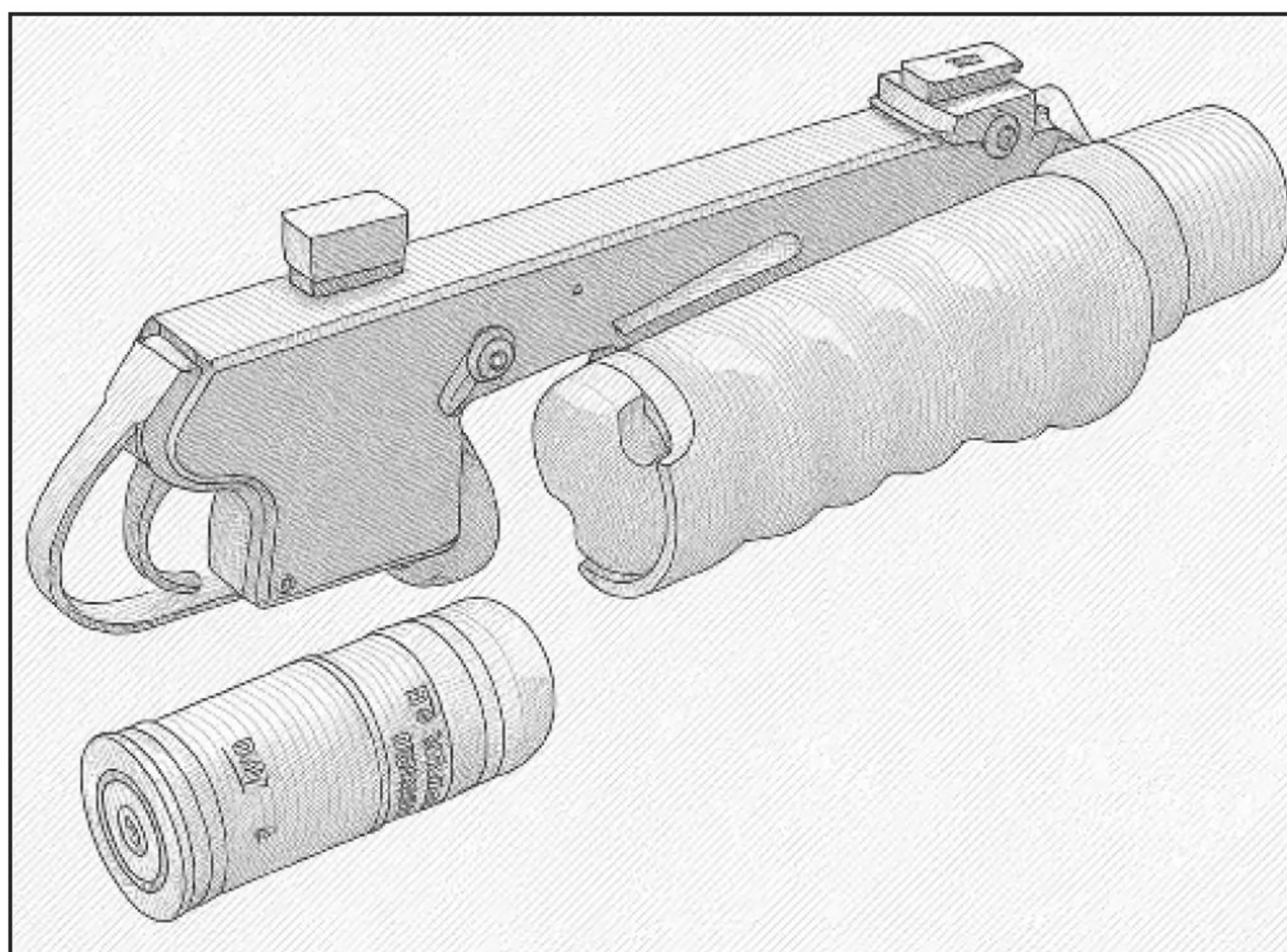


The select-fire Vektor CR-21s had a separate fire selector for semi-automatic or full-automatic fire located on both sides of the stock, its positions indicated clearly by pictograms. In the semi-automatic variants, the selector seat was covered by a plug that was obtained by taking the original ambidextrous selector switch and smoothing it down. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

an ejection port on the left side in development phase, but nothing further came of it.

The receiver was not the only part to be internally secured to the polymer chassis; so was the barrel. More specifically, the barrel would be modified by removing the bipod and bayonet lugs, then a fiber-impregnated ceramic barrel bushing would be installed just in front of the gas block to prevent direct heat transfer to the polymer shell.

The handguard owed its bulky, “bulbous” design to an internal heat shield manufactured out of a different polymer blend capable of withstanding temperatures in excess of 350°C/662°F (like the barrel bushing) with top and bottom ventilation holes surrounding the gas



The ML-40 was a short sized, side-opening under-barrel 40x46mm SR grenade launcher manufactured in the late 1990s by Milkor Marketing of South Africa. This was the design chosen to be installed on the Vektor CR-21. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



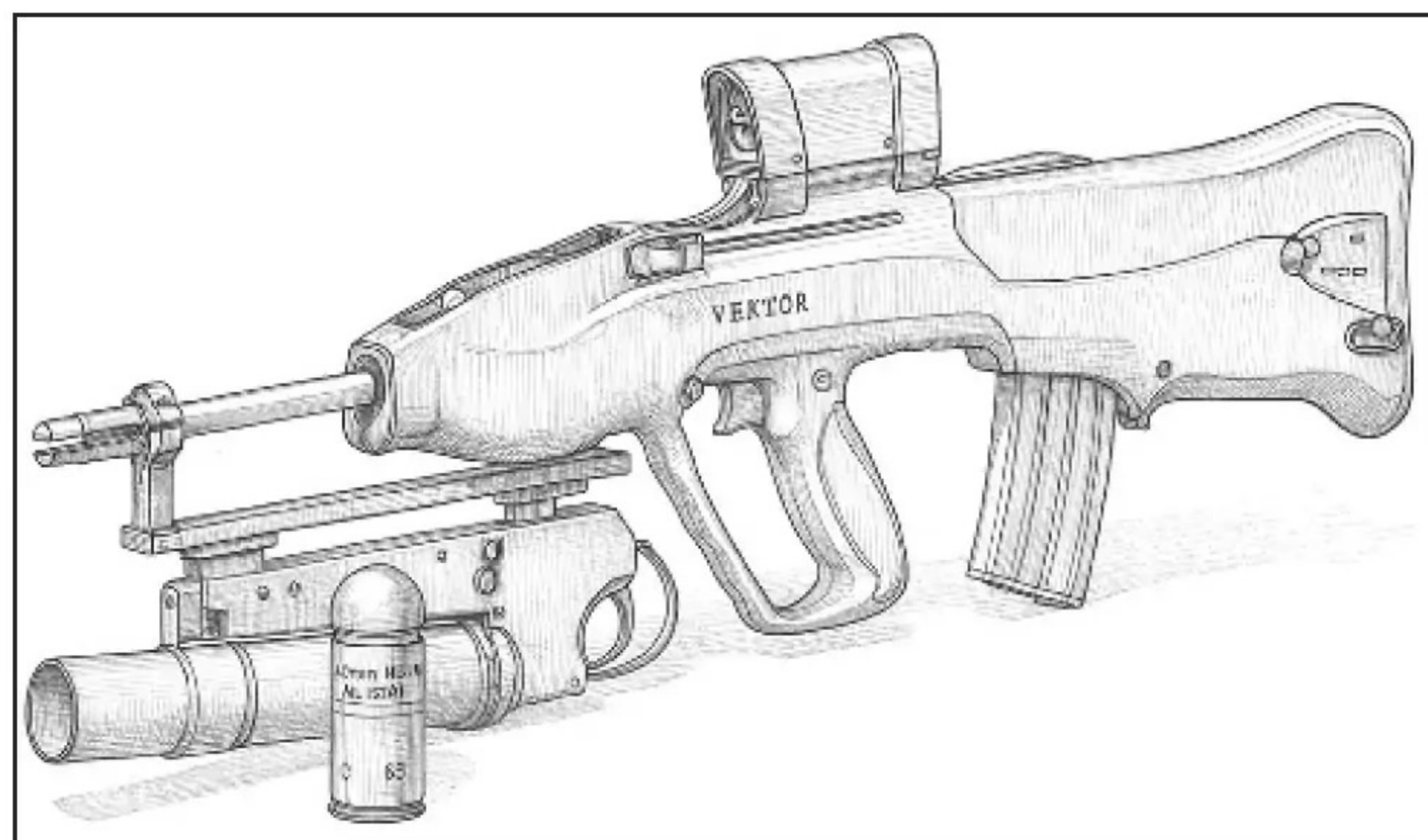
A KCB-77 bayonet, manufactured in Germany by Eickhorn and widely used by NATO forces. An adapter allowed its installation on the CR-21, above the barrel. The use of the R1 / FN FAL spike bayonet was considered during development but rejected. (Photo by Eickhorn Solingen)

block area. A front hole allows easy removal of mechanical components.

The barrel of the CR-21 was the same as a standard Galil ARM or Vektor R4 back in the day, 18.1-inches long, and featured a vortex-style flash hider. An adapter would allow the installation of an Eickhorn KCB77 bayonet above the barrel rather than underneath it. Denel also assembled two carbine prototypes fitted with the 13.1-inch barrel from the Vektor R5 rifle, to be tested by the South African Police Service (SAPS). This version could not mount a bayonet adapter and was modified to attach a brass bag to the ejection port so that it could be used from inside an armored vehicle, but once again, nothing came of it.

Accessories and Optics

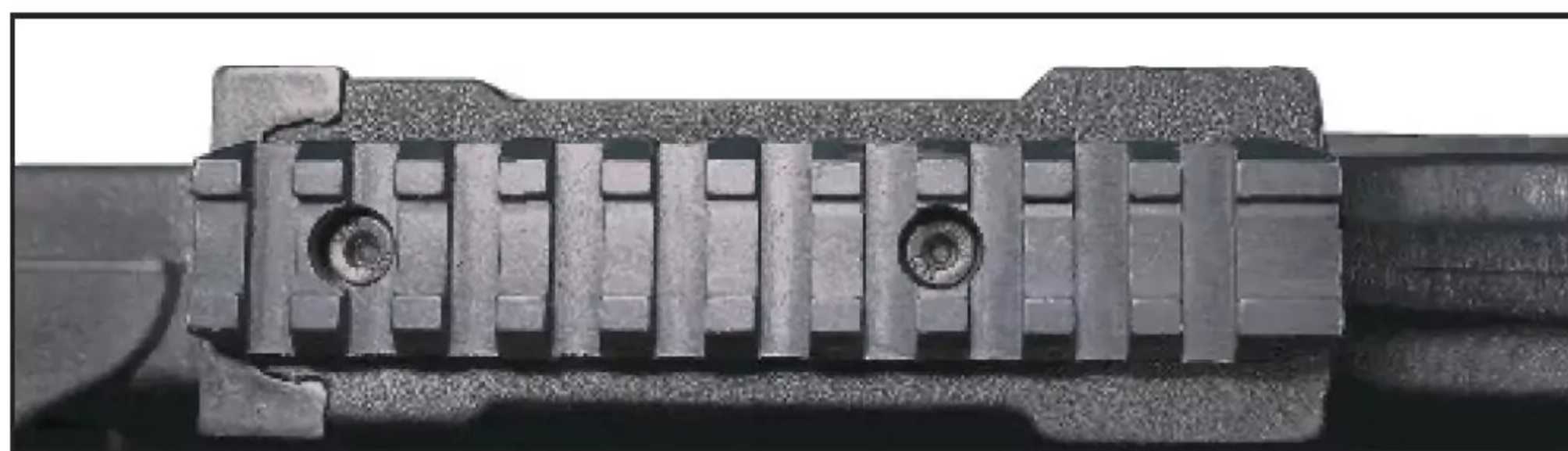
Despite what some sources online state, the handguard of the CR-21 is a single-piece component that cannot be adapted or removed to better interface accessories. The original Vektor literature for the CR-21 listed factory accouterments such a dedicated suppressor and a barrel clamp for the kind of lasers and flashlights that existed back in the day.



As the single-piece handguard could not be adapted due to the internal heat shield, a mounting bracket was designed that could accommodate the grenade launcher. This artist's rendition of an original Denel publicity photo shows the ML-40 installed: the combination would be unwieldy and very uncomfortable to operate. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



The muzzle device of the Vektor CR-21 could be used to mount a proprietary Denel silencer for the purpose of launching bullet-trap Swartklip rifle grenades or other types of rifle grenades. Even a line thrower can be launched with ballistite blank cartridges. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



The sight mounting block of the Vektor CR-21 is attached directly to the barreled action within the polymer shell; only the Weaver rail protrudes from the top. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

The attachment of an under-barrel grenade launcher (UBGL) was even more difficult. For that purpose, Denel designed a bracket that would attach frontally to the barrel right behind the flash hider, and clamp to one of the bottom vent holes of the handguard. The grenade launcher, the 40x46mm-SR ML-40 manufactured by Milkor, would be installed underneath such bracket; this would put it way too much under the barrel, making the combination unwieldy.

However, UBGLs weren't in widespread use with the South African National Defense Forces back in the day. As such, the CR-21's flash hider could fit rifle grenades such as the Israeli AP65 or its South African copy, the M791A1, to be launched with blank ballistite ammunition. The same blank rounds, along with a dedicated muzzle attachment, could be used for a maritime line thrower. The latter South African Swartklip M8811 bullet-trap rifle grenades would still fit the CR-21's flash hider and could be launched with standard 5.56x45mm ball ammunition.

Aiming-wise, the Vektor CR-21 depended on a proprietary 1x tritium sight that used a green fiber-optic to illuminate a reticle composed of an inverted chevron with two hash marks on the sides. From the standpoint of technology and reticle shape, it could be described as a modernized SUSAT, and probably that's what Denel engineers took inspiration from. The sight was protected by a black polymer shell with integral emergency iron sights.

Truth be told, the sight was not integral to the polymer chassis, but installed on a Weaver rail. Remember, Weaver, not Picatinny as the MIL-STD-1913 was not a common international standard at the time. Indeed, the Vektor CR-



The Vektor CR-21 was originally designed around a 1x tritium illuminated reflex sight, protected by a shell with molded-in emergency iron sights, installed on a top Weaver rail. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



The original 1x sights are essentially impossible to find, with very few circulating in the South African civilian market with Nobleteq-assembled samples. Thankfully, the Weaver rail is solid enough for alternatives, such as Cosmic Tactical's Saturn 2.0 4x prism. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

21 was showcased multiple times with sights such as the Trijicon ACOG. And that's a good thing, because if there's something even more rare than surviving Vektor CR-21 rifles or chassis kits, that's its proprietary tritium sight.

The optics mount is integral to the barreled action, installed at the rear end of the gas piston tube before the final assembly of the rifle. This allows whatever sight is attached to the CR-21 to hold zero in most conditions.



Disassembly of the Vektor CR-21 begins by removing the receiver cover, held in place by a latch located behind the buttplate. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



Once the cover is lifted away, the user will find himself in front of an almost unmodified Galil/R4 action. The rod you see protruding here, right above the action, is a cleaning rod. Behind it, the charging handle rod impinges on the bolt carrier group. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



From here, all components can be removed just like on an AK or Galil variant. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

Disassembly

Field-stripping the Vektor CR-21 isn't difficult at all. It is, after all, a bullpupped Galil/R4 is really a bullpupped AK.

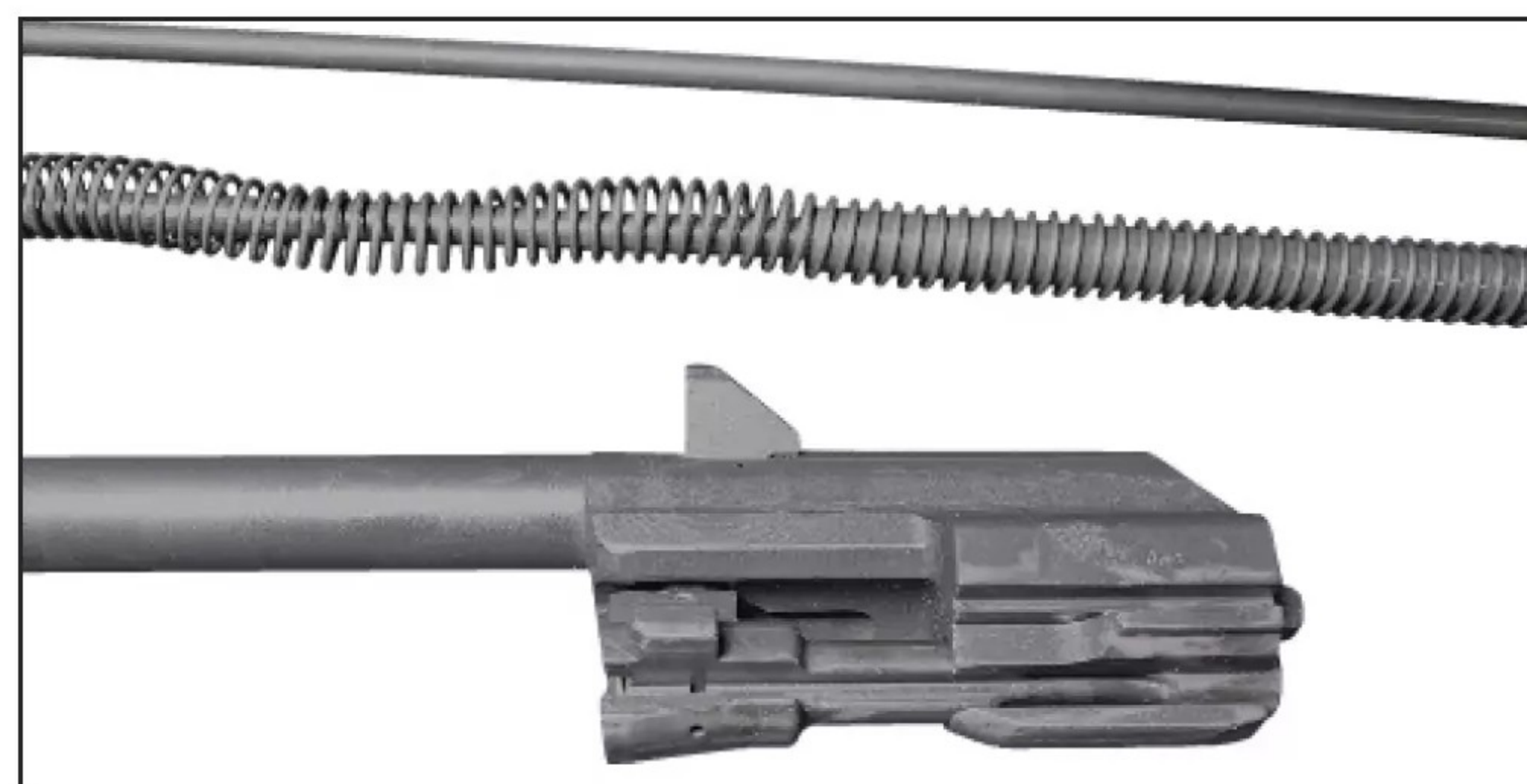
At the end of the Galil receiver inside the polymer shell, in lieu of the original stock, is a receiver extension necessary for a correct interface. Underneath it, just under the butt plate, is a latch that allows the cheekpiece/receiver cover assembly to be removed.

Once the component is lifted away, the user will find himself in front of, you guessed, essentially a bullpupped AK/Galil action, with its guide spring and rod, plus two additional rods above it: one on the left, where the charging handle impinges on the bolt carrier; and one on the right, which is a cleaning rod. A small cleaning kit is held just underneath the action, in a small black canvas bag, in a slot in the receiver extension.

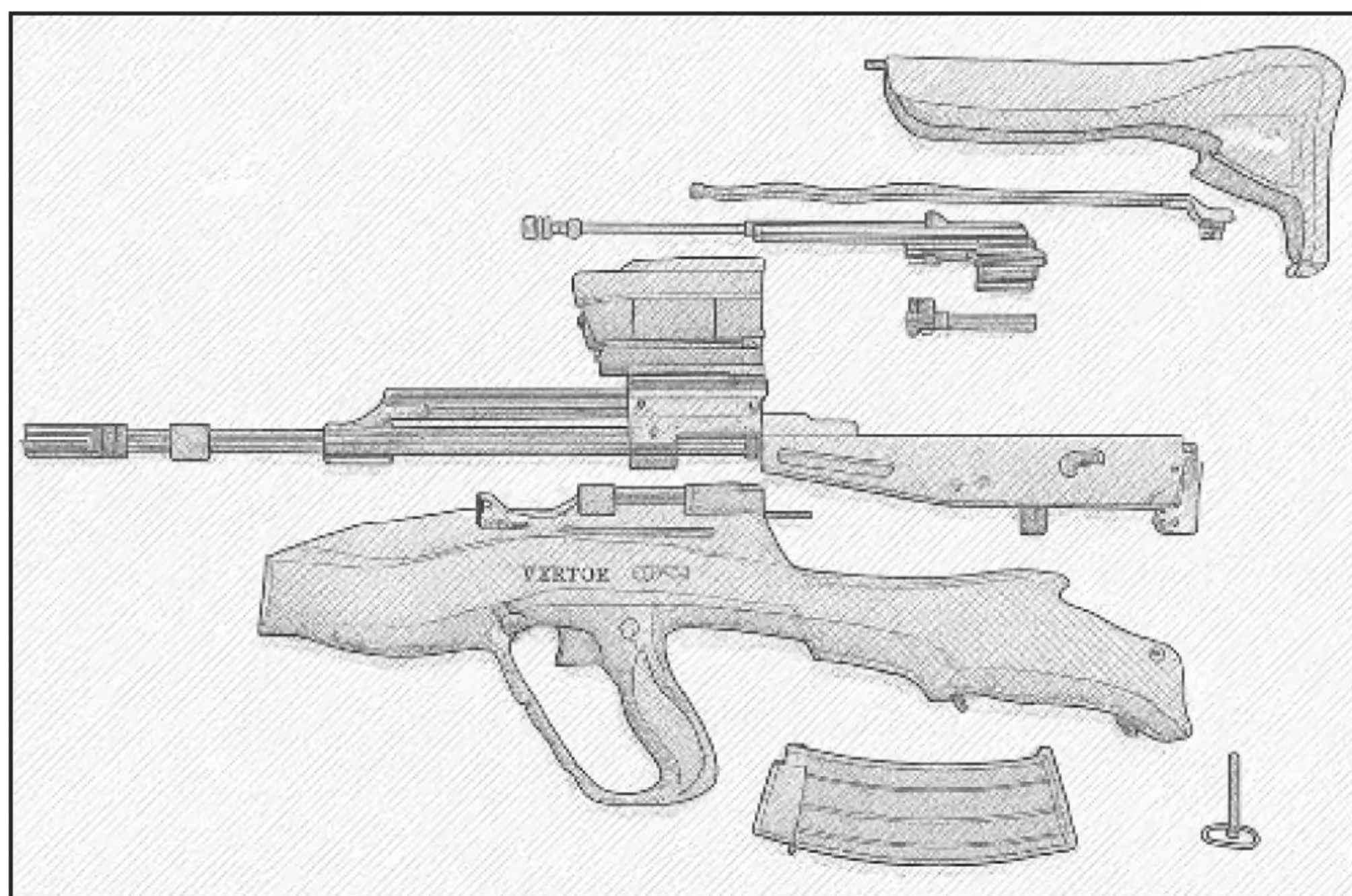
To proceed to field strip, the user will remove the cleaning rod from its seat, push the recoil spring guide rod latch



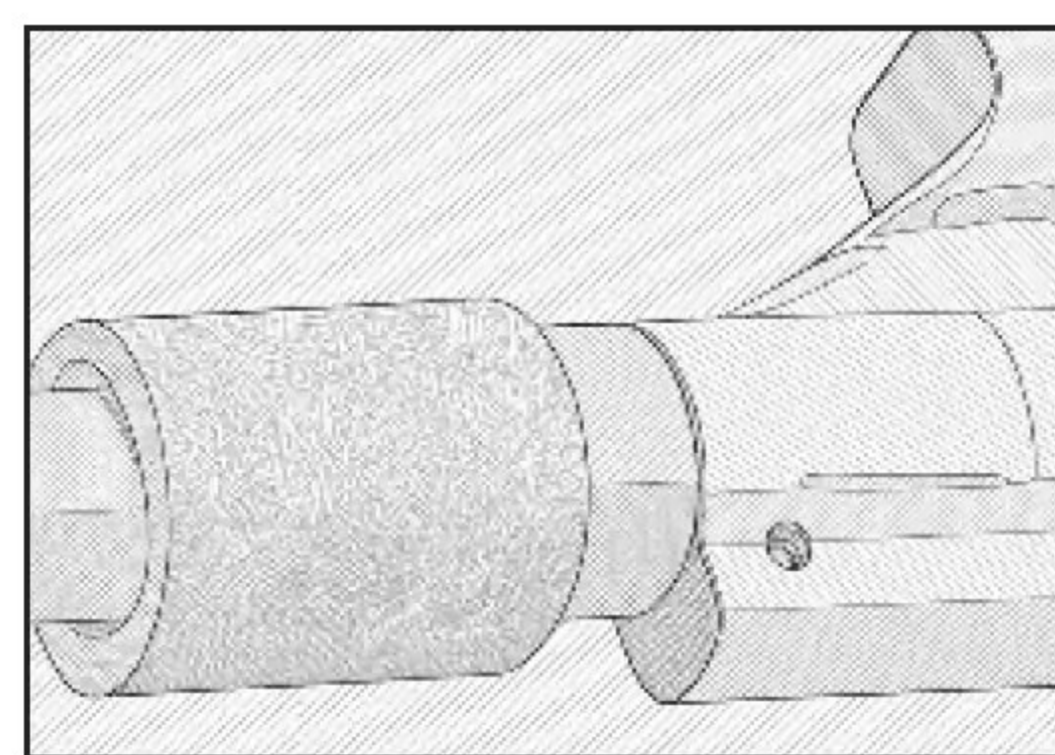
The Vektor CR-21 field-stripped. Despite the futuristic looks of the rifle, there's nothing radical underneath the polymer shell. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



A close-up of the stud where the charging handle rod impinges. It was created by cutting and grinding down the original charging handle. The rotating bolt is an unmodified Galil/R4 component. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



If required, the user could remove two retaining pins and take out the entire barreled action from the polymer shell. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



◀ Upon assembly, the barrels of the original Vektor CR-21s were equipped with a fiber-reinforced ceramic bushing that prevented direct heat transfer to the polymer chassis. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)



The owner of the Vektor CR-21 shooting the rifle, in a solid stance. Despite the height-over-bore of the 1x-4x ELCAN sight, the Vektor CR-21 remained very well balanced, pretty controllable, and accurate. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)

to remove it, then rack the charging handle to pull the bolt carrier group all the way back, after which it too can be removed. That, and the removal of the rotating bolt from the bolt carrier, is as far as the user should go. The removal of two cross-bolt pins, one of which is connected to the rear sling swivel, will however allow the entire barreled action to be extracted from the polymer chassis if need be.

Our Test and Impressions

The story of how a solitary Vektor CR-21 conversion kit reached icy Minnesota and spent years in wait before being assembled into a functioning rifle would warrant an article on its own. It was a brisk late autumn day when the gun was finally brought to the range and put through its paces.

Despite the oddball design, or maybe because of that, the Vektor CR-21 is very well balanced, which helps in controllability. The trigger pull is a tad bit squishier than the Steyr AUG (the shooter didn't have a trigger pull gauge at hand), but the slightly longer pull makes it feel lighter.

On target, the gun behaved well specifically with low weight ammunition, which to be fair was to be expected. Customers, both military and civilian, could (at least in Denel's plans) order the Vektor CR-21 with a 1:7" or 1:12" twist rate barrel, to stabilize standard ball ammo or newer NATO standard M855 rounds. However, basically, all the original 200 CR-21 rifles manufactured by Denel were assembled with Vektor R4/LM4 barrels, which had a 1:12 twist rate.

Upon assembling his CR-21, the owner of the gun we tested opted for the latter, wanting to keep faithful to the

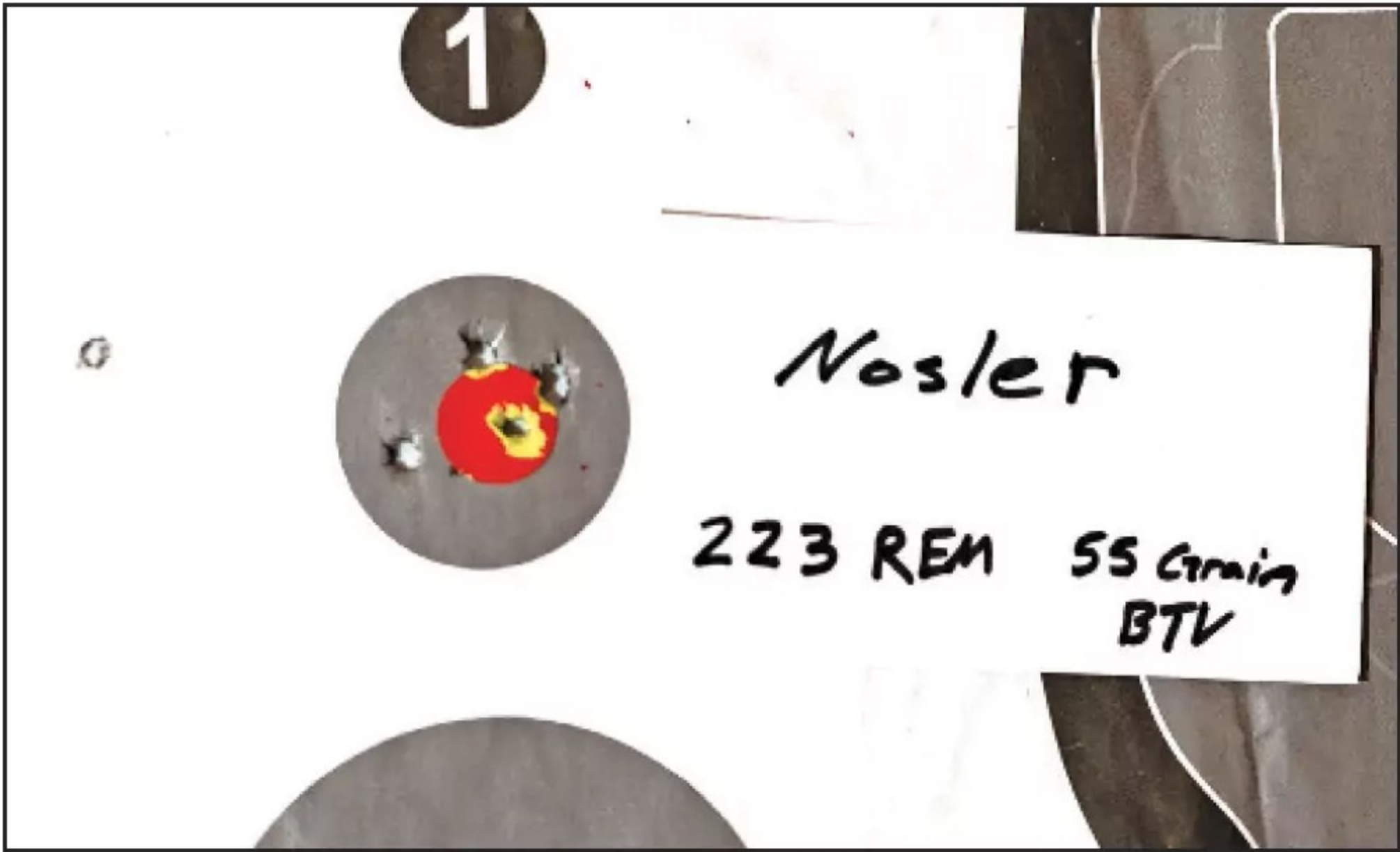
original. As a result, anything 62 grain and above wouldn't group at all, and average spread would be measured in *feet*. By contrast, the average group at 100 yards was three inches, which is pretty standard for a military service rifle. Some loads even getting closer to one inch. Due to the unavailability of the original 1x reflex sight, we opted to install a 1x-4x ELCAN Specter, and later a Cosmic Tactical Saturn 2.0 4x prism sight on our rifle. Both fit pretty snugly on the Weaver rail, with no wobble and no issue holding zero.

Reception

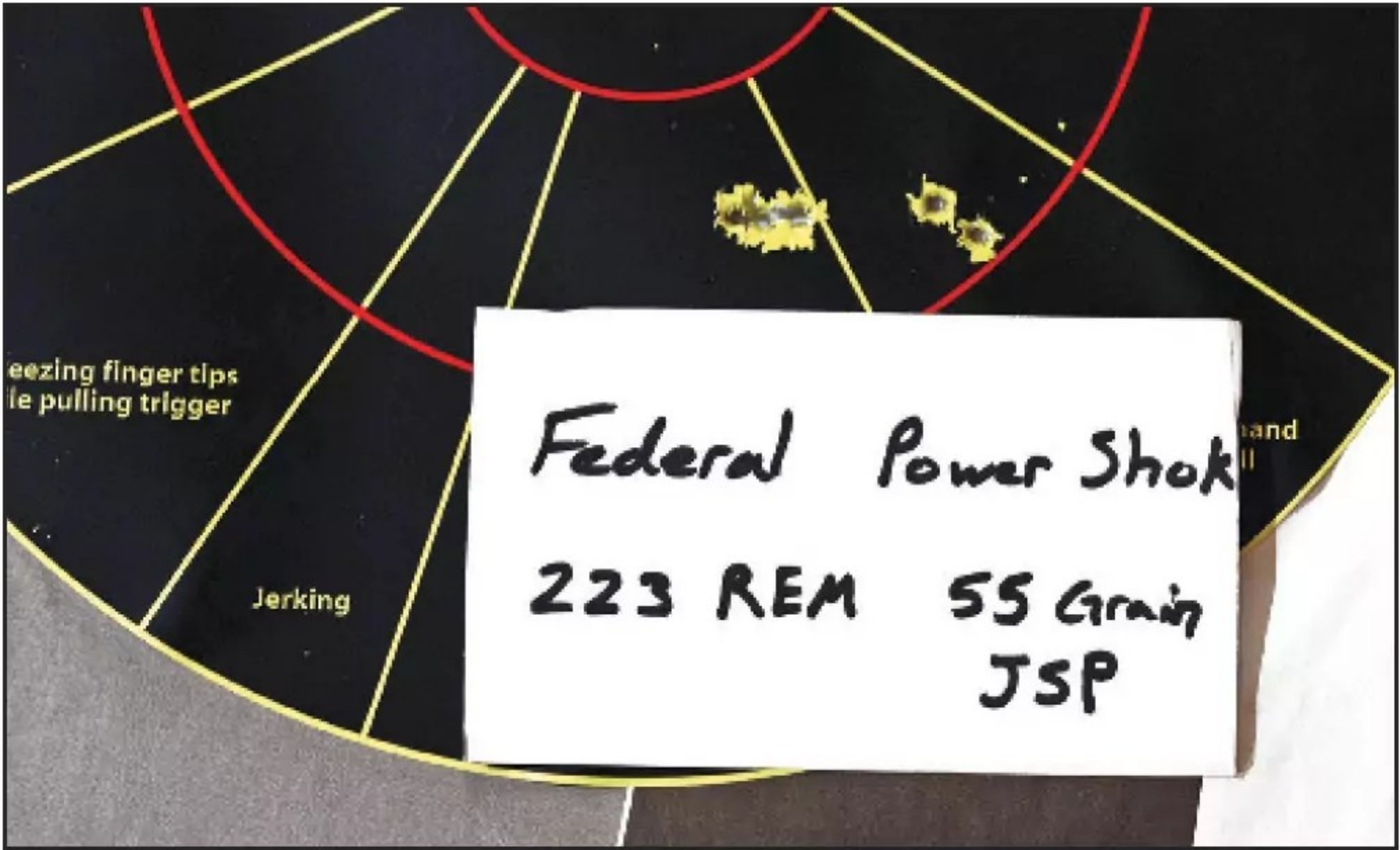
The overall technical simplicity was due to be one of the things going for the Vektor CR-21 when it was demonstrated to the SANDF and SAPS, another was its solidity. During SANDF evaluation, the CR-21 passed a test that included being capable of firing after having been run over by a three-ton truck.

During government accuracy testing, the rifle proved remarkably accurate for what it is (still a Galil, after all). However, that wasn't enough. South Africa's economic and political situation, at the end of the 20th century, was already rapidly deteriorating and too much to warrant a full uphauling of the national arsenals. Aside from token orders from Venezuela and Peru, no domestic or international sales were achieved.

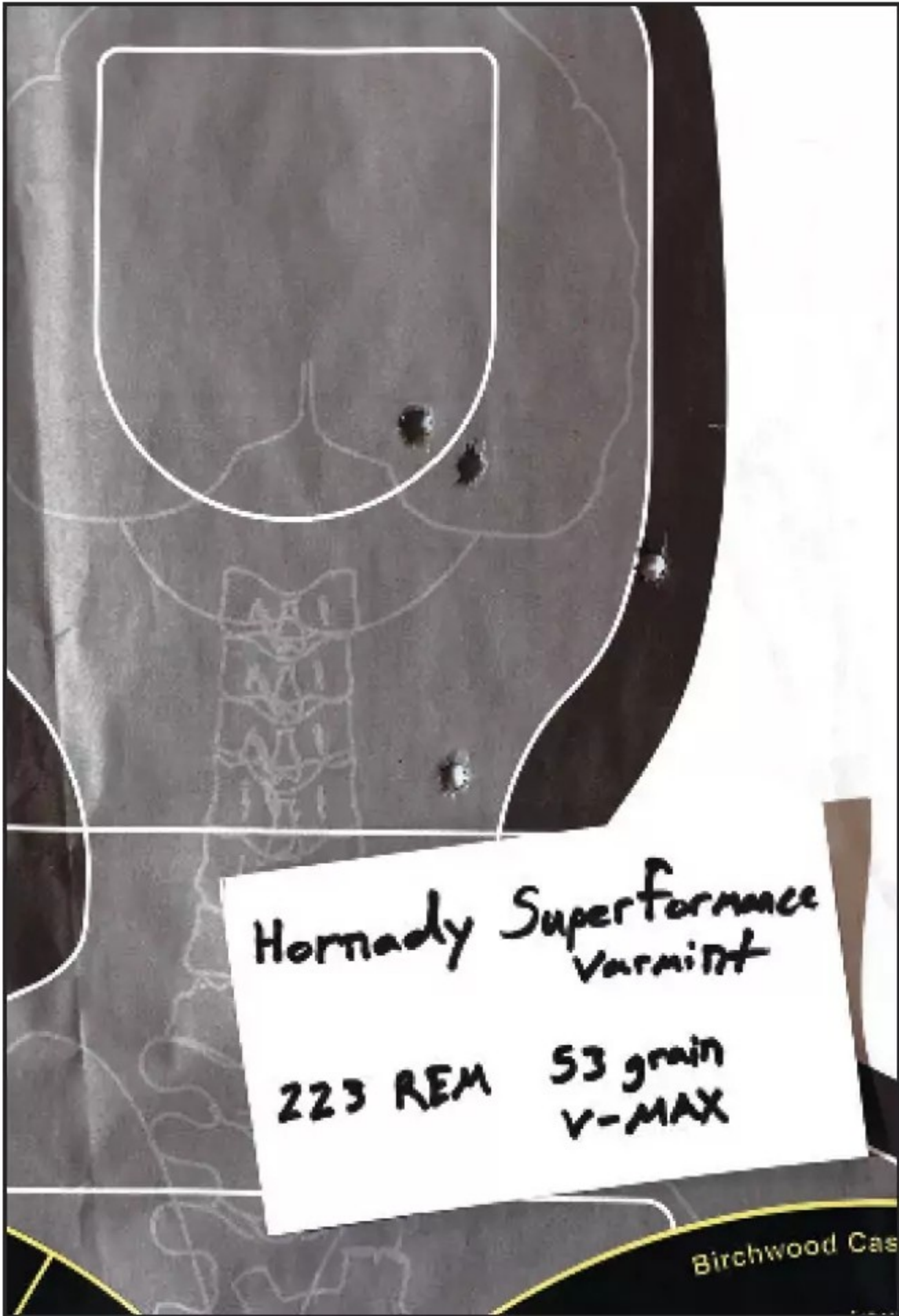
The Vektor CR-21 project was shut down by Denel with only 200 rifles having been manufactured. The select-fire samples that hadn't been sold to foreign customers were



Our first group at 100 yards: Nosler’s 55 grain BTV returned an impressive 1 MOA group! (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



Federal’s Power-Shok 55-grain JSP ammunition returned a 1.53 MOA group. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)



CR-21 RIFLE ACCURACY — 100 YARDS				
Brand	Bullet Type	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Group size (in.)
Nosler	BTV	55	3,200	1.1
Federal Power-Shok	JSP	55	3,240	1.6
Hornady Superformance Varmint	V-MAX	53	3,400	3.0

◀ **Hornady’s Superformance Varmint 53-grain V-MAX, with its 2.86 MOA group, got the Vektor CR-21 closer to standard service rifle performance. Other tests with rounds such as PMC X-TAC and PMC Bronze returned groups closer to three inches, whilst anything heavier would not probably stabilize due to the 1:12 twist rate. (Photo by Connor and Sarah Daine)**

replica. A small red dot sight and a mock-up silencer was added and it was subsequently used on screen in the 2008 Neil Marshall zombie movie *Doomsday*. A few years later it was auctioned off for 2000 Rand (about \$118 USD). Others were used by movie armorers to assemble blank-firing or dummy rifles that appeared in other sci-fi/action movies shot in South Africa such as *Dredd* (2012) or more prominently seen in *District 9* (2009).

converted to semi-auto only using components from the Vektor LM4 rifle (a civilian-grade version of the R4 assault rifle) and sold along with parts and polymer shells to assemble 200 more rifles to another Centurion-based company called Nobleteq Arms & Ammunition (Pty.) Ltd.

Nobleteq assembled a number of additional CR-21 in semi-automatic form for civilian sales. These rifles are distinguished by the words “SEMI-AUTO CAL .223” engraved on the right side of the polymer receiver and by the presence of a smoothed-down cap that blocked the selector slot on the stock to the semi-automatic position. All components within the receiver strictly came from semi-automatic civilian versions of the Vektor R4 or Galil.

Not all the Vektor CR-21 kits sold to Nobleteq were converted into functioning guns. Some were sold away as pure conversion kits, and to this day they float around the market in both South Africa and the US at prices that sometimes exceed \$5,000 US. One was assembled into a functioning airsoft rifle using an electric AKM rifle

Final Thoughts

The Vektor CR-21 is 29.9 inches long overall, which makes it pretty maneuverable; our semi-auto version didn’t allow us to play with the original’s reportedly pretty comfortable and controllable cyclic rate of 700 rounds per minute but gave us some good amount of satisfaction. It is easy to understand why customers in South Africa, who mostly purchased their CR-21s for home protection, or for professional use (mostly in cash-in-transit and private security), cling on to theirs for dear life. The gun had no malfunction on us - it is just as reliable as the Galil at its heart is.

Nowadays, the Vektor CR-21 would be considered a quite dated firearm, not nearly versatile enough for modern military and police needs, but it could be easily updated. Not to mention, collectors would love the retro-futuristic look and feel if anyone were to market a repro. There is no information on where the original molds for the polymer chassis are now, if they survived.

Overall, the Vektor CR-21 fell victim of a system that was changing in a country that could hardly keep up. It

VEKTOR CR-21



Actress Rhona Mitra taking aim with the CR-21 rifle in the 2008 movie *Doomsday*. (MovieStillsDB/Universal Studios)



The highly acclaimed 2009 Neill Blomkamp sci-fi action movie “District 9” was the one where the Vektor CR-21 was most prominently featured. Hire Arms assembled several dedicated blank-firing and dummy CR-21s for the movie. (Pierangelo Tendas personal archives)

was “just another bullpup” at a time when bullpups were indeed all the rage, but at the same time were getting the first very hard push-back. Today, some will say bullpups are either already a thing of the past or are soon to be, and even the most innovative bullpup designs of the past decade (think the ST Kinetics BR-18 and the Desert-Tech MDR) were either abandoned or simplified by removing the features that made them innovative to begin with. The Vektor CR-21 definitely is a thing of the past. But then again, why does still it look like the standard service rifle of the United Federation of Planets?

The author wishes to thank Connor and Sarah Daine of Minneapolis, MN, who generously made their rare gun available, their time, and effort to the making of this article. To them goes the author’s gratitude and friendship. **FN**

VEKTOR CR-21 RIFLE	
Type:	Bullpup assault rifle / bullpup semi-automatic rifle
Caliber:	5.56x45mm (.223 Remington)
Capacity:	20, 30, 35 or 50 rounds IMI Galil / Vektor R4 magazines
Operation:	Semi-automatic or select-fire; Gas-operated, rotating bolt, long stroke piston system
Weight:	8.2 lbs.
Finish:	Matte black
Stock:	Black polymer
Sights:	Select-fire version: fiber-optic illuminated reflex sight on Weaver rail Semi-automatic version: Weaver rail
Barrel Length:	18.1 in., 6 grooves; RH – 1 turn in 7 in. or 1 turn in 12 in. (as tested)
Overall Length:	29.9 in.
Cyclic Rate:	700 rounds per minute (select-fire version)
Trigger:	Single-action, hammer-fired
MSRP:	N/A (out of production)
Contact:	DenellLandSystems.co.za



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[Cont. from page 11]

published around three weeks ago. In that article, I detailed Trump's 2023 promise to rip up the rule in his first week in office. I also quoted a recent DOJ court filing, after the agency lost its case in a federal court, which determined that the ATF had violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) and that the Biden-era pistol brace rule be vacated.

intended to cease said enforcement, even if it should lose the legal proceeding. Instead, their position is simply that they will continue to enforce ATF's own interpretation of the statute under their regulatory authority.

So, What Has Changed?

Absolutely nothing. The new rule: 1140-AA98: Removing Factoring Cri-

we will not even be informed of what is and is not legal under their purview until we have already been indicted.

This is but one of the purposefully flawed rules under the new package, which contains a few Trojan horses that I will discuss in future articles, all of which are designed to once again mock our intelligence while fleecing our support for the administration. If

Ipso facto, we will not even be informed of what is and is not legal under their purview until we have already been indicted.

"Plaintiffs also make much of the fact that defendants continue to enforce the NFA's and the GCA's regulation of short-barreled rifles against some brace-equipped pistols, even though the Rule has been universally vacated. However, that should come as no surprise, as that is consistent with how defendants have always explained how things work if a court vacated the Rule or enjoined its enforcement," according to the DOJ.

Here, the DOJ is responding to complaints about its continued enforcement of some brace-equipped pistols as short-barreled rifles under the National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA). The agency is flaunting the fact that it never

teria for Firearms with Attached "Stabilizing Braces" - NPRM, "removes regulatory language" associated with the vacated rule. So what? That does nothing to restrain this rogue agency from interpreting the statute as they wish while abusing their regulatory authority at the peril of unsuspecting gun owners, which is exactly what they have already said they would do. This disturbing fact is even more concerning because the ATF refuses to answer as to which braced pistols they will consider illegal, having told Gun Owners of America (GOA) that "they will not issue any written guidance classifying braced firearms unless it's in a criminal case against a gun owner." Ipso facto,

you're looking for a reason to bestow blind adoration upon your political decisions as if your self-esteem were on the line, then here's your excuse, rotten as it may be. I would, however, advise you to study these matters in greater depth and keep that Dom Perignon champagne corked. Or don't. It's your \$348.

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

MACHINE GUN RULING SHOWS REPUBLICANS NOT AS PRO-2A AS THEY THINK THEY ARE

Much of the GOP Is Running from
2nd Amendment Intent, Again

By David Codrea, Gun Politics Field Editor

"Circuit shoots down challenge to machine gun ban," Courthouse News reports. "The federal government maintained the Second Amendment

(Gun: Militarist/Shutterstock, Gavel: Alex Staroseltsev/Shutterstock)





(Joe Belanger/Shutterstock)

does not cover machine guns or the machine gun conversion device that led to a two-year prison sentence for a Fort Lauderdale man.”

In *U.S. v. Alenat*, a three-judge panel from the 11th Circuit Court “declined ... to overturn the

That’s consistent with the Trump administration’s position on the matter, his campaign promises that “Your Second Amendment will always be safe with me as your president,” notwithstanding. In 2025, this column cited Assistant U.S.

They came with the intent to match and best a professional military threat. To suggest the Framers meant anything else is to accuse them of being insane, and of codifying into the supreme Law of the Land that sending an ill-equipped citizenry to their slaughter was “necessary to the security of a free State.”

Limiting “common use” to what the government will allow denies the people weaponry the Framers intended. It freezes the armed citizenry in time and denies to them arms employing new technology and capabilities reserved for the standing army. That’s a trap.

The Bill of RIGHTS (emphasis added) does not say “the right of the people to keep and bear commercially popular arms that we allow you to have shall not be infringed.” Who thinks the Anti-Federalists would have agreed to ratify that? Until the term is recognized to mean

Limiting “common use” to what the government will allow denies the people weaponry the Framers intended.

conviction of a Florida man” who sold three of them to an undercover agent. They based their rationale on District of *Columbia v. Heller*, the Supreme Court case that “found a ban on the possession of handguns unconstitutional but allowed for the prohibition of ‘dangerous and unusual’ firearms ‘not typically possessed by law-abiding citizens for lawful purposes.’”

“Because machine guns are not protected by the Second Amendment as weapons in common use for lawful purposes, we affirm,” Chief U.S. Circuit Judge William Pryor, a George W. Bush appointee, wrote for the panel that also included Biden appointee Nancy Abudu, and Trump pick(!) Andrew Brasher. The 11th Circuit joins “several sister circuits in holding that the Second Amendment does not protect the possession of machine guns.”

Attorney Jennifer Case, who, in arguing to overturn a lower court ruling, asserted “Machine guns are not the kind of arms protected by the Second Amendment [and] are not typically possessed by law-abiding citizens for lawful purposes.”

Since context is important, returning to the original rationale in the 1936 case *United States v. Miller* that the *Heller* ruling referenced but never fully explored. That court recognized the militia of the Second Amendment as “all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense [and] bearing arms supplied by themselves and of the kind in common use at the time.” Its function was to field citizen soldiers. And these citizens bore arms that were suitable for that purpose, “ordinary military equipment” intended to be taken into “common defense” battles.

what is in common use by the military (or as Continental Congress delegate Tench Coxe defined it, “every terrible implement of the soldier”), the Second Amendment will be in continued danger of a planned obsolescence that began with the deliberate neglect of the citizen militia.

—

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**

'COMMON USE' CHALLENGE TO DENVER SEMI-AUTO BAN MISSES IMPORTANT POINT

Gun Activists Are Clinging to a Double-Edged Sword

By David Codrea,
Gun Politics Field Editor

“Denver defies Trump administration order to repeal longstanding assault weapons ban.” Denverite reports. The rhetoric is a response to the Department of Justice’s challenge to the city’s 1989 edict making it a crime to “to carry, store, keep, manufacture, sell, or otherwise possess assault weapons.”

True to form, Democrat prohibitionists tyrannically denying individual citizens their birthright under severe penalty of law, are portraying themselves as the reasonable, injured parties. City Attorney Miko Brown called the action “Baseless, irresponsible, and a clear overreach of the federal government’s power.” Mayor Mike Johnston was more specific in his defiance: “We’re here today to let them know that our answer is ‘hell no. No, we will not roll back a common-sense policy that has kept weapons of war off of these city streets for 37 years.”

If that’s what they are (and they’re not), why police deploy with similar firepower is left unexplained, albeit Denver calls such official weaponry “patrol rifles.” Also left unaddressed are the facts that the Second Amendment does not limit “arms” the people keep and bear. And the textual, historical, and traditional understanding at the time of ratification was “every terrible implement of the soldier is the birthright of an American.” The fear was of a standing army. The militia were “the whole people except for a few public officers.” That’s been reversed.

Bearing in mind that to assume office, the mayor, the city attorney, and every politician who enacted



(lucky_pics/Shutterstock)

the ban and/or is “defending” it now (the quotation marks highlight the hypocritical irony of characterizing the perpetuation of aggression as a defensive action) swore an oath to the Constitution that they had no intention of keeping. And sympathetic media lapdogs at the Denverite are happy to help perpetuate the victimhood characterization, writing, “Johnston said Monday the city will not bend the knee to a legal threat.”

Forget that these are the “public officers” ordering citizens to bend their knee and obey them—or be destroyed. The way they twist things to make themselves seem the besieged good guys, and indeed, the very term “assault weapon,” evoke nothing so much as a quote from Orwell: “The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.” For its part, the fedgov has language issues of its own.

“Law-abiding Americans own and use for lawful purposes literally tens of millions of AR-15 style rifles,” Assistant United State Attorney Harmeet Dhillon, head of the DOJ’s Civil Right Division, wrote to Denver officials. “Indeed, it is the most popular

rifle in America. The City has banned an arm in common use for lawful purposes by law-abiding citizens. Therefore, the Ordinance violates the Second Amendment.”

That’s not why the ban violates it. The Second Amendment says nothing about popularity, and an “outlaw” citizen claiming his right in defiance of orders to surrender his arms is hardly viewed by his oppressors as “law-abiding,” albeit the moral case could be made that he’s remaining true to the “supreme Law of the Land.”

As noted in “Machine Gun Ruling Exposes Republican 2A Hypocrisy” (*Firearms News* online publication date May 04, 2026):

[The Miller and Heller courts] recognized the militia of the Second Amendment as “all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense [and] bearing arms supplied by themselves and of the kind in common use at the time.” Its function was to field citizen soldiers. And these citizens bore arms that were suitable for that purpose, “ordinary military equipment” intended to be taken into “common defense” battles.

They came with the intent to match and best a professional military threat. To suggest the Framers meant anything else is to accuse them of being insane, and of codifying into the supreme Law of the Land that sending an ill-equipped citizenry to their slaughter was “necessary to the security of a free State.” In other words, the people are entitled to “weapons of war,” and the ones Denver has banned don’t even rise to that level.

However, Denver’s legal mouthpiece isn’t impressed:

“Therefore, even if your bald, unsupported statement that ‘literally tens of millions of AR-15 style rifles’ are held by private individuals is true

(and you have presented no evidence showing it is), your point is irrelevant,” Brown claims.

A simple Google search will show he’s talking out of his... hat, but he’s right about the numbers being irrelevant, just for the wrong reasons. The semiautomatic rifle and pistol technology that led to what is covered by the Denver ban was initially marketed over 140 years ago, in the 1880s. Where before there were none, they quickly grew in popularity and led to later developments. Ditto for automatic firearms.

Technology, as anyone with eyes who has lived more than a few years can attest, is doing nothing but advancing. If arms can be denied to

“We the People” based on insufficient commercial popularity, then all new developments can forever be withheld. And the Second Amendment will become nothing more than a meaningless relic of a forgotten time.

—

*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***

ATF’S NEW ERA OF REFORM... EASING THE NFA TRANSPORT BURDEN

In a Sea of Nothing Burgers, Here’s Half a Step in the Right Direction.

By Darwin Nercesian, News Field Editor

Continuing my coverage of the April 29th Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) press conference, where 34 rules, said to be in favor of gun owners, were introduced, one proposed change stands out as having a positive effect on transport regulations of National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934 firearms, while simultaneously confirming the federal government’s unwillingness to follow their own laws or abide by the Second Amendment. Previously, I wrote a newa article, *ATF’s New Era of Reform... Repealing The Pistol Brace*



(Photo by Vincent L. DeNiro)

Rule And Why It Means Nothing, detailing the ruse to convince Americans that the pistol brace rule has been abandoned when, in fact, it had been vacated in a federal proceeding. Meanwhile, the Department of Justice (DOJ) boasted that it would continue to enforce the rule under its interpreted regulatory authority, regardless of the decision. Feel that on your back? It’s not rain.

Current ATF regulations require owners of short-barreled rifles (SBRs), short-barreled shotguns (SBSs), machine guns, and destructive devices to submit an ATF Form 5320.20 and wait for approval prior to transporting these NFA firearms across state lines, leaving silencers and AOWs (Any Other Weapons) exempt. A new rule under the Reduce Burden Group proposes updating the administrative process by allowing

“lawfully registered” NFA firearms to be transported without submitting or waiting for form approval, provided the duration does not exceed 365 days. While I am giving credit where it’s due, I find irony in the ATF’s language, “lawfully registered,” as federal law, namely the Firearms Owners’ Protection Act (FOPA) of 1986 and the 1993 Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, prohibits the creation of a national gun registry. More on this later.

Long-term transportation (more than 365 days) and permanent relocation, however, will still require submission of Form 5320.20 but will not require ATF approval prior to transport. There’s the rub. The rule states that it intends to “remove an unnecessary regulatory burden on law-abiding NFA firearm owners,” and to be fair, it does as it purports. My dissatisfaction stems from the fact that law-abiding gun owners have become so disillusioned

by our totalitarian government that we see this as something more than the fleeting scrap it is, and again with the premature champagne uncorking.

Here’s some perspective for the more astute. First, this is a rule, and only a rule, which will most certainly ebb and flow with White House occupancy. Second, and in greater offense of the Second Amendment, is the fact that this DOJ, under the Trump Administration, continues to maintain such a “registry,” their words, not mine, in defiance of the law. This is exactly what I mean when I say rule by “What are you going to do about it?” They went to the trouble of drafting this when they could have ended all transport requirements, short-term and long-term, but they didn’t. Why do you think that is? It’s not enough for a criminal government to know who owns these firearms; it must also know where they are most likely to be at any given time. Again,

why is that, and how has such information served as a tool for tyranny and atrocity throughout history? Combine this with the administration’s current defense of the NFA detailed in my article, *One Big Beautiful Update, Part 1* and Trump’s decisively bad record on the Second Amendment, and the grift is clear. That’s not to say we shouldn’t enjoy what relief we have for the time being, but rather than celebratory high fives and public displays of blind political adoration, it would be wise to heed the government’s purposeful disregard for the opportunity to abide by its own laws, and the Constitution.

—
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 @DFOE_Official. **FN**



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www.TheCarolinaTrader.com**

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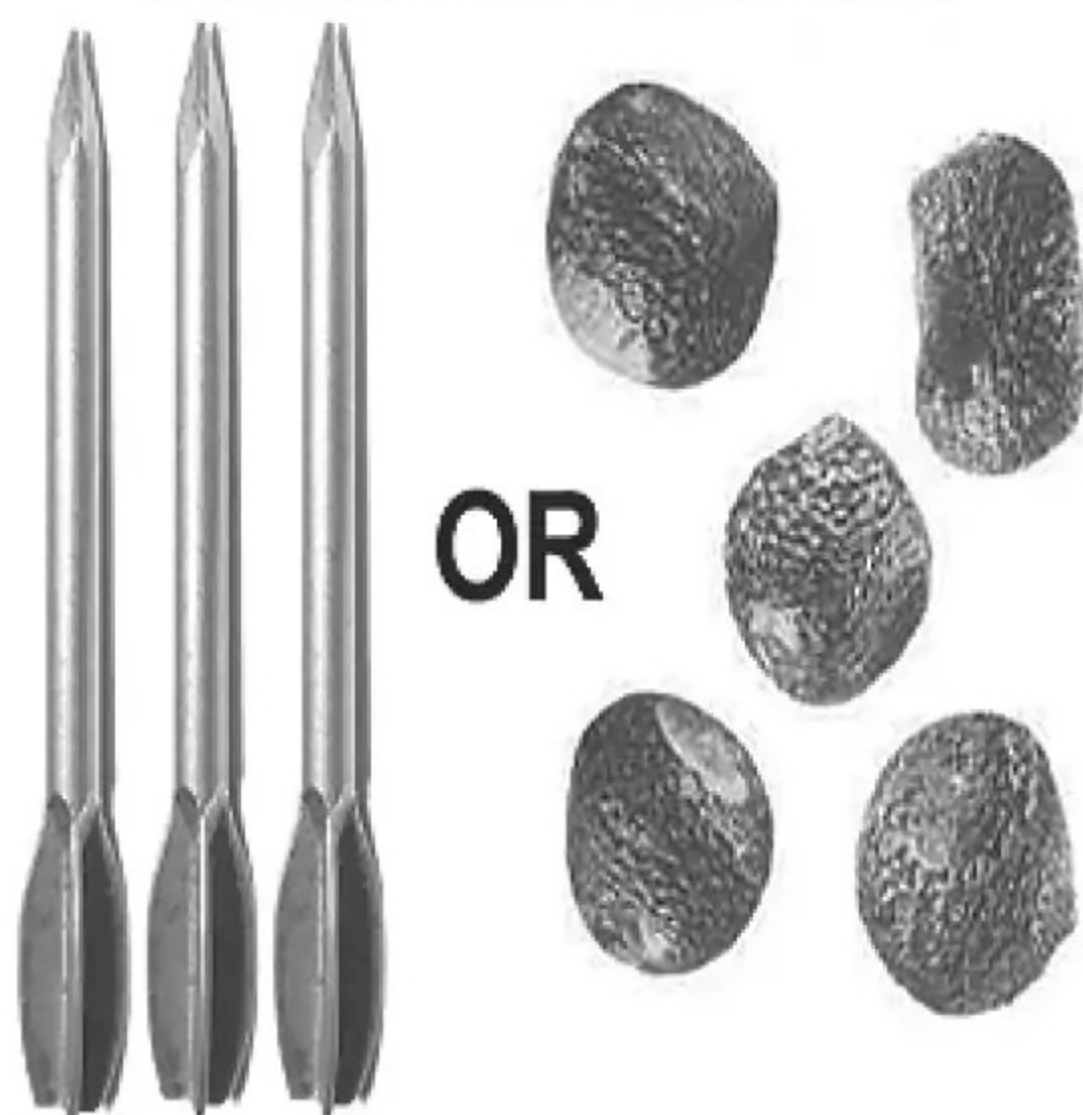
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"The supposed quietude of a good man al-
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arms like laws discourage and keep the in-
vader and the plunderer in awe, and pre-
serve order in the world as well as property.
The same balance would be preserved were
all the world destitute of arms for all would
be alike; but since some will not, others
dare not lay them aside... Horrid mischief
would ensue were one half the world de-
prived of the use of them... (T)he weak will
become a prey to the strong." Thomas
Paine, at 56 (1894).

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— A —

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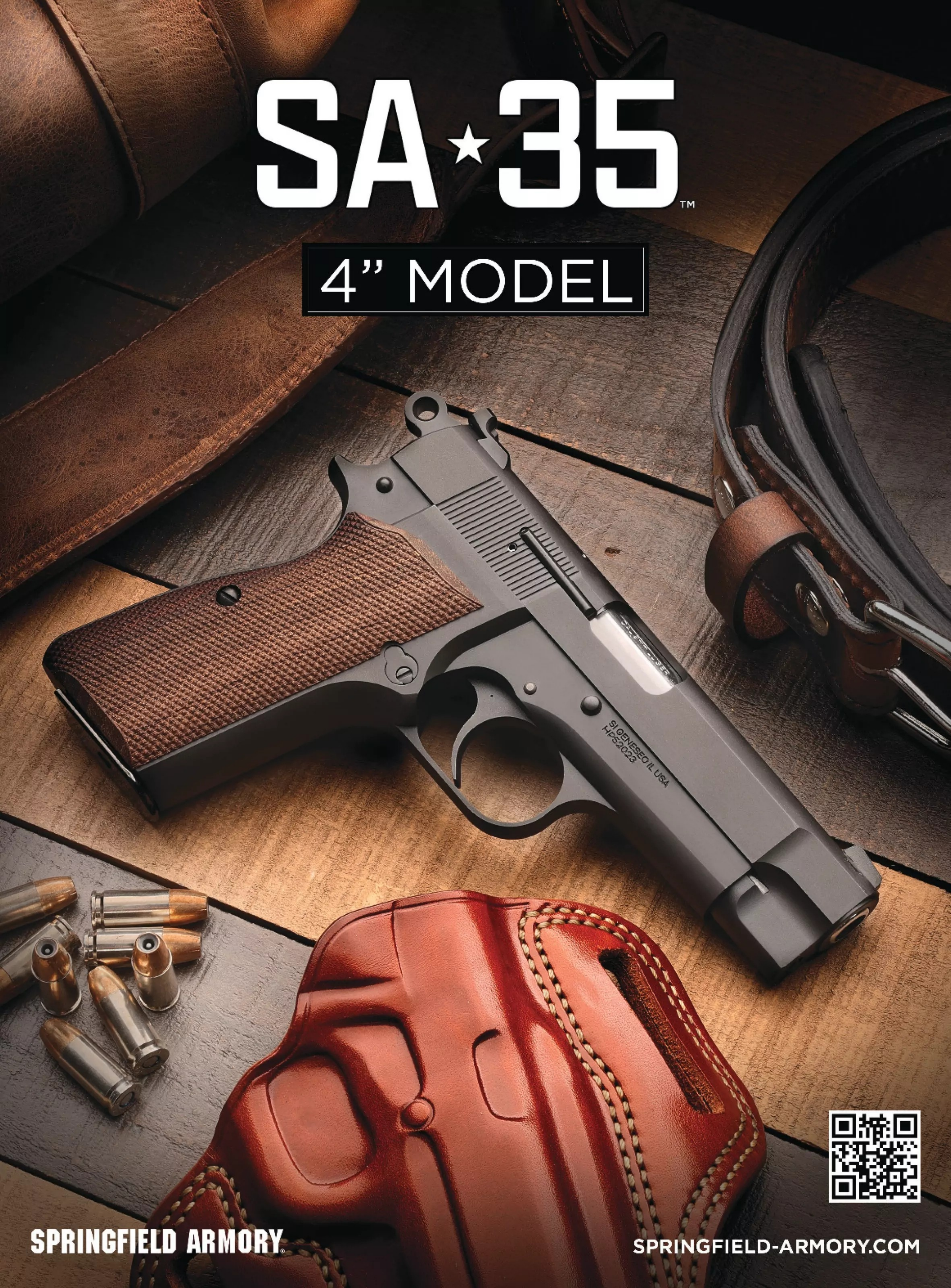


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