FIREARMS NEWS®

GUN SALES, REVIEWS & 2A INFORMATION

JUNE 2025

THE KUNA!

HOW DOES THIS NEW 9X19MM PDW FROM SPRINGFIELD ARMORY STACK UP?
REVIEW BY DAVID FORTIER

SMITH & WESSON'S SPEC SERIES V M&P PISTOL

THE PRECURSOR: SOUTH AFRICA'S NEOSTEAD TWIN-TUBE SHOTGUN

THE KEENE RIFLE

REMINGTON'S FIRST BOLT-ACTION RIFLE!

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- *CARRYING CONCEALED* APPENDIX CARRY
- *MUSINGS FROM THE AMMO BUNKER* THE .32 ACP TODAY
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- *NFA COLLECTING* STEN SUBMACHINE GUN
- *CODREA'S CORNER* ATF AND DOJ CONTINUE ABUSES WHILE BEING BIPOLAR ON GUNS
- *SPECIAL REPORT* UNDERSTANDING THE *BONDI V. VANDERSTOK* DECISION
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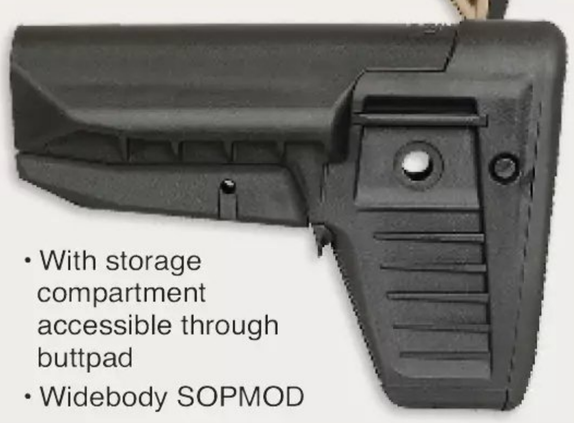

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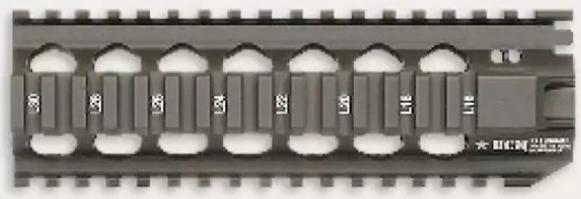

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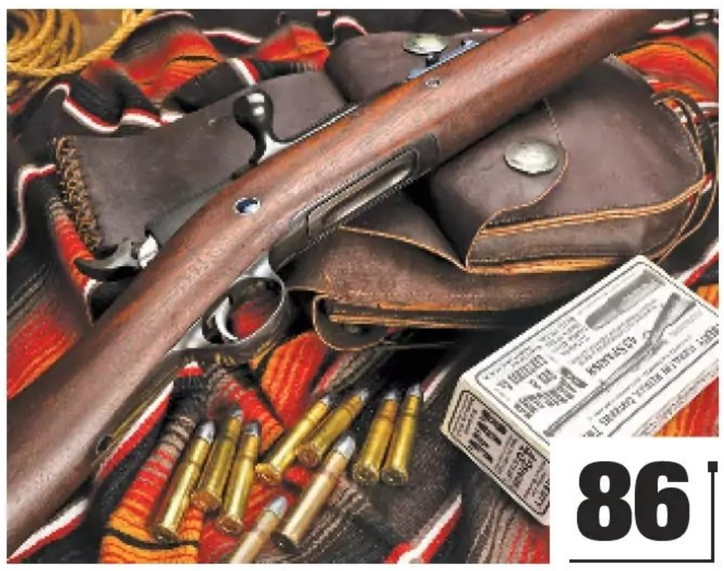

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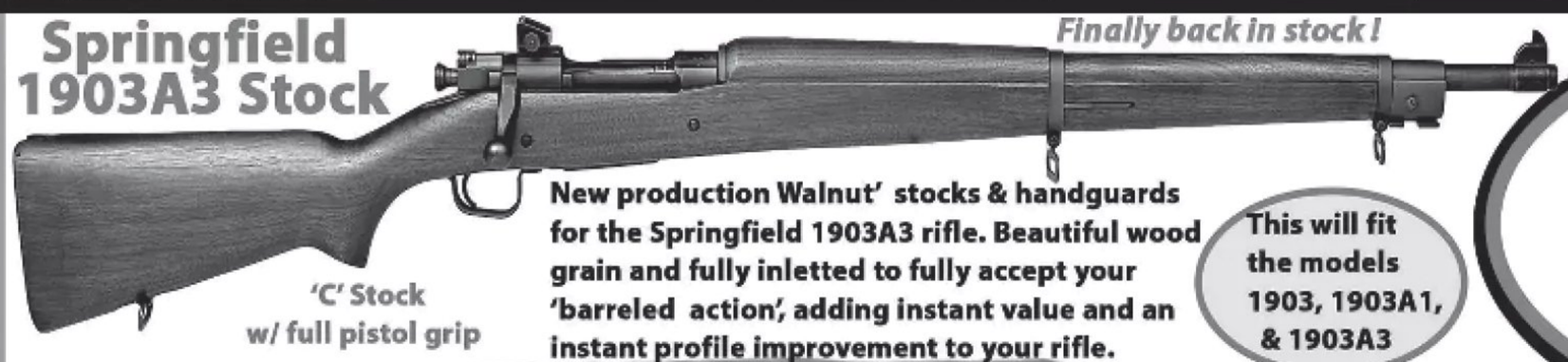

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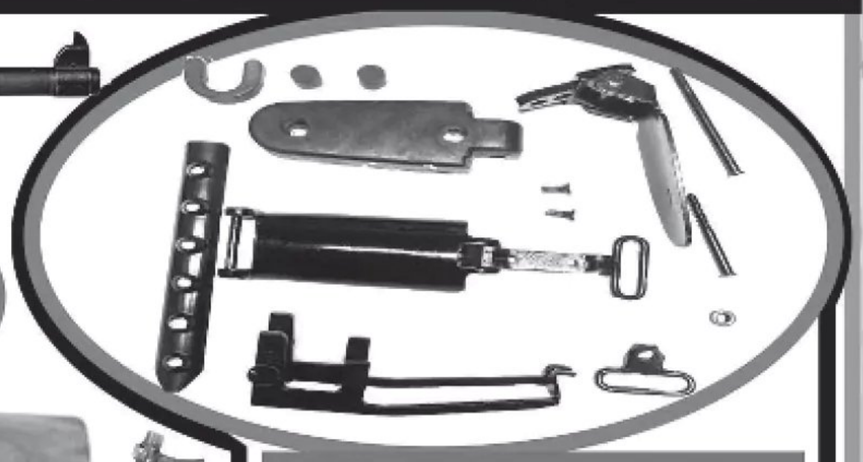

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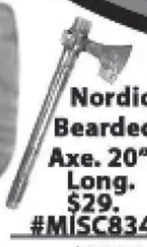

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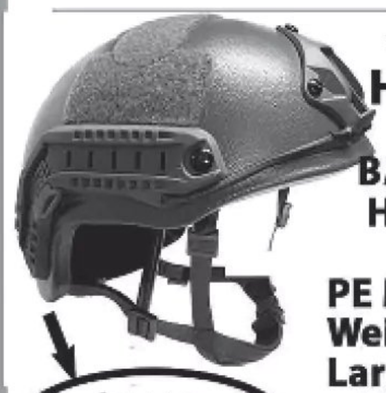

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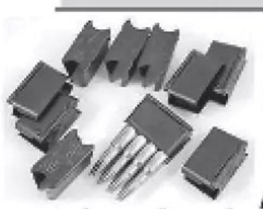

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SUPREME COURT AVOIDS NEW YORK SECOND AMENDMENT INFRINGEMENTS

This Ensures Gun Rights Will Continue to Be Denied

By David Codrea,
Politics Field Editor

(Shutterstock/Bob Korn)

"The US Supreme Court refused to question New York's 2022 gun restrictions, including the state's limits on concealed-carry licenses and its ban on weapons in buses, parks and crowded venues," *Bloomberg News* reports. "The justices without comment turned away an appeal by six New York residents who said the restrictions infringe the Constitution's Second Amendment and fly in the face of recent Supreme Court rulings bolstering gun rights."

They do, of course, obviously and blatantly.

"The disputed law requires applicants for concealed-carry licenses to show they are of 'good moral character' and aren't a danger to themselves or others," the report adds. "Applicants must provide character references and a list of people who live in the same home, undergo an in-person interview and complete 18 hours of in-person training."

Just like the Founders intended when they wrote "shall not be infringed," right? Just like the Supreme Court intended in its *Bruen* decision, and its "text, history, and tradition" standard…?

That's another thing. Any rational reading would conclude SCOTUS meant consistent with the time the Bill of Rights was ratified. Hoping to legitimize subsequent discriminatory restrictions, gun prohibitionists are still arguing for 19th Century/Reconstruction era infringements. So why did the High Court reject the Petition for the Writ of Certiorari in the *Antonyuk* case?

It was an interlocutory appeal for a preliminary injunction, legal apologists tell us. Denial of cert doesn't rule on the merits, and there are other cases in the works raising the same issue. SCOTUS won't look at a case until there's a final judgment and conflicts between districts. That and they'll eventually get around to it. We think. While the *Bruen* majority is still there… There's a reason the Constitution calls them "inferior Courts," but that's stopping no one.

In the meantime, because procedure is prioritized over justice, Americans will continue to be at risk of having their lives destroyed if they claim rights we know they have, the justices know they have, and significantly, those trying to eviscerate them know they have. It's the same for gun owners at risk for owning semiautomatic firearms and standard capacity magazines banned by states. SCOTUS keeps kicking that can down the road.

"A right delayed is a right denied," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." "We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that 'justice too long delayed is justice denied.'"

Along with that, the violence monopolists are emboldened to impose more restrictions, confident that they won't be slapped down by the High

[Cont. to page 102]

HORIZONFIREARMS

FIND A DEALER NEAR YOU

By David Codrea | Political Field Editor

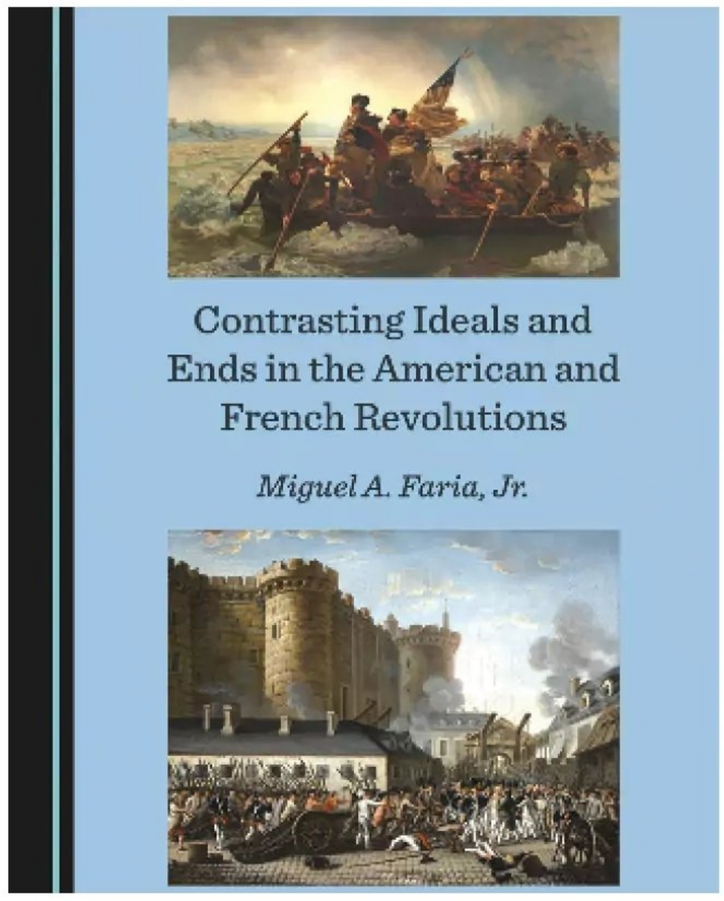
David Codrea is the winner of multiple journalist awards for investigating/defending the RKBA and a long-time gun owner rights advocate who defiantly challenges the folly of citizen disarmament. In addition to being a regular featured contributor for Firearms News, *he blogs at "The War on Guns: Notes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

A TALE OF TWO REVOLUTIONS

As monarchs go, Louis XVI of France wasn't such a bad guy. He was a devout Christian who wanted to better his subjects' lives by abolishing torture and involuntary servitude, granting "liberty of conscience" to Protestants, improving conditions in prisons and hospitals, and arguing against warrants that allowed for imprisonment without trial, among other reforms. And as acts of overthrowing naked tyranny go, the storming of the Bastille is hardly the definitive blow for liberty it's been made out to be. At the time it was overrun, it held "only seven inmates who had been well kept," including the "unusually disgusting" Marquis de Sade, who, with a "makeshift megaphone," would shout lies to passersby from his window that a prisoner massacre was imminent.

These are but two historical clarifications explained in *Contrasting Ideals and Ends in the American and French Revolutions*, a painstakingly researched and comprehensive analysis of ideologies and personalities steering events in both. It makes clear why one gave birth to a national recognition of individual rights such as the world had never seen and the other quickly devolved into totalitarian hell.

The book is one of many by prolific author Miguel A. Faria, Jr., a retired neurosurgeon and medical journal editor, who as a boy escaped from Castro's Cuba with his father. Having lived under the evils of communism, he has become a fierce and knowledgeable advocate for freedom. As one of the foremost defenders of the Second Amendment ("The Perversion of Science and Medicine: Public Health and Gun Control Research," and *America, Guns, and Freedom*, are among his works, and he



***Contrasting Ideals and Ends in the American and French Revolutions*, by Miguel A. Faria, Jr., a painstakingly researched and comprehensive analysis of ideologies and personalities steering events in both revolutions. (Cambridge Scholars)**

devotes an entire chapter in this book to "The 'Troublesome' Second Amendment—The Right to Keep and Bear Arms"), Faria's testimony before Congress on Centers for Disease Control bias against guns was instrumental in persuading them to cut funding for anti-gun advocacy masked as "research."

In *Contrasting Ideals*, Faria not only introduces us to key "players" in both revolutions, like Maximilien Robespierre and other Reign of Terror figures like Jean-Paul Marat, whose differences with "Founding Fathers" like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson could not have been more pronounced. For rebellions that seemingly had so much in common at the outset, the goals of those driving them were antithetical.

"The American revolutionaries were nationalist patriots, who wanted independence from Great Britain and to create a new nation based on the principles of classical liberalism and Natural Rights theory," a Cambridge Scholars Publishing synopsis explains. "Their goal was the attainment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, inherent in the God-given or Nature-derived rights of free men."

"The French revolutionists adopted the revolutionary slogan Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, but they did not grasp the fact that the leveling of society was incompatible with liberty," the synopsis continues. "And regarding fraternity, they did not mean the brotherhood of all men because the nobility and common citizens who did not hold the purest aims of Jacobin ideology were exterminated."

The horrors of that extermination campaign, with key figures ultimately turning on each other (fearful of his designs for them, Robespierre's rivals sent him to the guillotine first) are recalled in detail, and one can't continue reading without seeing parallels to modern times and to the ideological heirs of collectivism, right down to phenomena and tactics being used by subversives today. Those include power-hungry elites bent on total control, widespread propaganda/disinformation campaigns (now known as "fake news"), provoked/manipulated self-entitled mobs ready to destroy without cause beyond ignorant covetous fury, and no shortage of useful idiots swallowing and spreading lies oblivious to the historical reality that their turn would come as soon as they're no longer deemed useful. Equal rights do not mean equal outcomes, and fueling expectations that they do has been a

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Then urge your friends to read it. And contact your local library and ask them to carry it.

For more, go to the Cambridge Scholars website (cambridgescholars.com) and enter the book's title in the search field. From there, you can read an excerpt that includes the Contents and goes well into Chapter 2. Because that's a UK site, U.S. readers can avoid a credit card foreign currency conversion fee and order a copy of *Contrasting Ideals and Ends in the American and French Revolutions* by entering the title at Amazon.com. FN

ATF AND DOJ CONTINUE ABUSES WHILE BEING BIPOLAR ON GUNS

What Good Is 'See Something/Say Something' If No One Is Listening?

(BATFE and US DOJ)

"Federal prosecutors now using ATF's lies and fake evidence to harm former sailor's legal appeal," Lee "The Gunwriter" Williams documents for the Second Amendment Foundation's *Investigative Journalism Project*. "It now appears that the only way former American sailor, Patrick 'Tate' Adamiak, may get out of his undeserved 20-year prison sentence is through a presidential pardon, because federal prosecutors are now using the lies and fake evidence created by the ATF to fight an appeal filed by the 31-year-old former Navy E-6, who had just been accepted by Naval Special Warfare before his arrest."

So much for "Thank you for your service." And "lies and fake evidence"…? Over what?

"Because Adamiak's possession of an unregistered machinegun fell outside the scope of the Second Amendment, the district court properly denied his motion to dismiss," Assistant United States Attorney Jacqueline R. Bechara claimed.

"Adamiak had gun parts but not any illegal firearms, and he certainly had no machineguns," Williams, citing the appellant's attorney, counters.

So why is the government saying that he did? And what's with the official position of the Trump/Bondi Justice Department, that arms suitable for Militia use and uninfringed keeping and bearing, are "outside the scope" of 2A?

To answer the first question, it's because ATF's informant lied, and because ATF's Firearms Enforcement Officer "actually turned toys into firearms, legal RPGs into destructive devices and 100% legal semi-autos into machineguns," by "insert[ing] a real STEN action and a real STEN barrel into Adamiak's toy STEN submachinegun … [classified] five of Adamiak's … legal semi-autos … as machineguns … ruled that several receivers that had been cut in half were actually machineguns [and] rebuilt … inert RPGs … add[ing] parts from ATF's real RPGs until they would fire a single subcaliber 7.62x39mm round."

If that sounds inventive, it really wasn't. It's a time-tested (and filthy) ATF practice to entrap, counting on defendants not having the wherewithal to expose it and judges not having the knowledge and/or the inclination to know any better or to care.

Case in point from 2008, ATF tried to entrap firearms designer Len Savage over a part he submitted that would allow for cheaper ammunition to be used. The Firearms Technology Branch declared it a machinegun after adding "metal, a length of chain, some duct tape and some plastic wire ties for the agency to make his gun part operate in that fashion."

And Savage makes a compelling case that this was retaliation for his expert testimony in an earlier trial, when another veteran's loaned rifle malfunctioned at a range, firing off short bursts before jamming. It didn't matter that the rifle in question had not been intentionally modified for select fire. It didn't matter that the government had repeatedly failed to replicate automatic fire until

they replaced the ammunition with a softer primer type. The manipulated jury returned a "guilty" verdict.

To answer the second question, it's because the government is operating based on limited knowledge, past practice, ingrained biases, and from within a closed echo chamber that insulates decision makers from outside influences. That's why we see current wild swings of the gun control pendulum, with the administration proposing good things, like investigating California pattern and practice infringements, accompanied in the same timeframe by stupid, offensive, and outright tyrannical crap like AUSA Bechara is pulling.

The people in charge seem to keep being taken by surprise. Why? And how do we change that?

"Pam Bondi and the others are extremely busy with a lot of things," You Tube's *popular Four Boxes Diner* notes in its "Important: How You Can Help Protect 2A!" video. "But the reality is we in the Second Amendment community are going to have to work hard to bring things to their attention. If you see anything out there that seems inconsistent with the right to keep and bear arms … you observe it, you report it to everyone in the Second Amendment community. You let all the Second Amendment groups know, you let the YouTubers know, you let the Second Amendment influencers know, you let everyone know about this situation…"

"Senior officials at the Department of Justice and in the White House can't track everything going on in America right now," the video continues. "We in the Second Amendment community need to help them do their jobs. We need to pull this information together. We need to identify problems for them, recommend solutions, and then bring it to the people that count."

In other words, if you see something, say something. That's great advice and I agree completely. The question that remains is "HOW do we get it to 'the people that count'"? Comprehensively and consistently? How do we get the president's ear?

Some of us have tried and our efforts have proven as effective as screaming at his passing limousine from the sidewalk crowd. I'll cite my own experiences, and while I don't kid myself about being an influencer of any importance, between the national gun magazines and websites I have and continue to write for, it ain't nothin'. That's why I was disappointed during Trump's first term, when I lobbed the administration a no-brainer softball, pointing out an easily correctable error on the White House website, where it claimed, "The Second Amendment gives citizens the right to bear arms." I wrote an article that got national exposure. I created a petition using the White House's own petition tool. Thousands of gun owners signed it. And it was all over social media, with @realDonaldTrump copied on Twitter.

To no one's surprise, it was never acknowledged, and nothing ever was done. (By comparison, I actually got a good response when I contacted George W. Bush's administration and got them to issue a significant correction to a Federal Register entry: "When the FAA issued a final rule on human space flight, it described one rule as consistent with the Second Amendment of the Constitution because, among other things, the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment is a collective right. The FAA now withdraws that characterization and amends its description.")

Recently, I've reported on two complaints made to the DOJ Civil Rights Division, one about an Illinois Supreme Court Judge with blatant financial and political conflicts of interest who ruled to uphold the state's "assault weapons" ban, and more recently, one asking them to investigate civil rights violations inherent in the state's Firearms Owner Identification card (FOID) requirement. DOJ showed deliberate indifference to the first complaint. The second is still outstanding at this writing.

I don't hold my experiences out as unique. Every 2A writer, blogger, and video influencer out there, at least the ones who produce original reports and ideas, can cite examples of their own. The point of sharing personal reflections is to illustrate how trying to get the attention needed to bring change is an ineffective approach unless recognized and organized. "Gun rights" groups and influencers are all apprised of these efforts, but invariably place their own agendas and interests first, and the ones with the loudest voices and most connections are the ones that get on the administration's radar—meaning worthy alternative priorities and approaches never make it to the top of the pile.

So, what's the solution?

Democrats know. It's to organize. A viable way to present a coordinated front representing gun owner interests and having the president's ear is by the White House replacing Joe Biden's Office of Gun Violence Prevention with an Office for Second Amendment Protection. ATF's newly appointed Chief Counsel, Robert Leider, "a Scalia Law professor & Second Amendment legal expert" per Gun Owners of America, would be the logical choice to act as liaison for a group of select prominent advocacy and legal influencers introduced as "Gun Owners for Trump" during the presidential campaign.

They should hold regular, publicly accessible online meetings (save for executive sessions where advisable), serving as informed advisors on gun issues, helping shape agenda priorities, including ATF practices and rules oversight, federal and state bill analyses, legal strategies, responses, and action items. They should establish a means to report their efforts and progress to us "ordinary" gun owners, providing a conduit to communicate and make our hopes, concerns, and objections known. Leider, in turn, would act as the voice of the administration, making sure the right administration functionaries would attend meetings, and reporting group recommendations and concerns to Kash Patel, Pam Bondi, and Donald Trump so there would be no more surprises.

Such an office would be an invaluable safeguard. It's also the only organized, consistent, and coordinated way to say something when we see something. FN

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SPECIAL REPORT

By Darwin Nercesian | News Field Editor

Darwin Nercesian is a long-time gun rights advocate and shooter of targets far, far away. As the 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.*

UNDERSTANDING THE *BONDI V. VANDERSTOK* DECISION

Breeding Bureaucratic Overreach and Confusion Over the Second Amendment.

We all look at grey areas of the law differently. For example, some of us see them as convenient, providing just enough room to know where we can bend without breaking, while others have understandably lost faith in government agencies and the judicial system, preferring less grey area so that we are always on sure footing when it comes to legal challenges. I'm not here to criticize either way of thinking, but I will admit to being a member of the latter, wanting to know precisely what the law is, whether I agree with it or not, and remain on the side that does not threaten my family's safety or freedom. It does not escape me that I am clearly speaking about the fear of my government, a vessel for tyranny that sailed a long time ago, a tragedy that, ironically, the Founding Fathers tried to preempt with the Second Amendment.

The unfortunate reality is, however, that those in government know the Founder's intent also and have been hard at work for years attempting to pervert and dismantle it to protect their own interests through subjugation. Whether you're a gun owner or work in the firearms industry, you know the feeling of being hunted day after day by this ominously dark cloud constantly shifting the landscape in its favor to cast a shadow of criminality upon Americans posing no threat to anyone while exercising their Constitutional rights through law-abiding activities.

Darwin Nercesian also gives an analysis of who the Supreme Court Justices are in relation to the Second Amendment. (Shutterstock/PT Hamilton)

Well, the United States Supreme Court just tipped its hat to the tyrannical thunderstorm by broadening that grey area and giving the ATF even more discretion to play gotcha games with the law against American citizens. While this is a bad thing, I'll also explain how we've come full circle back to where we started. So, what tangible difference did all of this make in the end? Not a whole lot, is the answer. But it did foster a more unstable foundation for those who sell and purchase parts kits, waste a ton of taxpayer resources, and prove that the majority of the United States Supreme Court gives far more reverence to corrupt infringements upon the Second Amendment than they do to the plain text and spirit of the Constitution.

Whose Case Is This?

While I don't back down from holding feet to the fire with the Trump administration, Pam Bondi, or anyone regarding the Second Amendment, I have to point out that the case, now known as *Bondi v. VanDerStok*, is a holdover matter from the Biden

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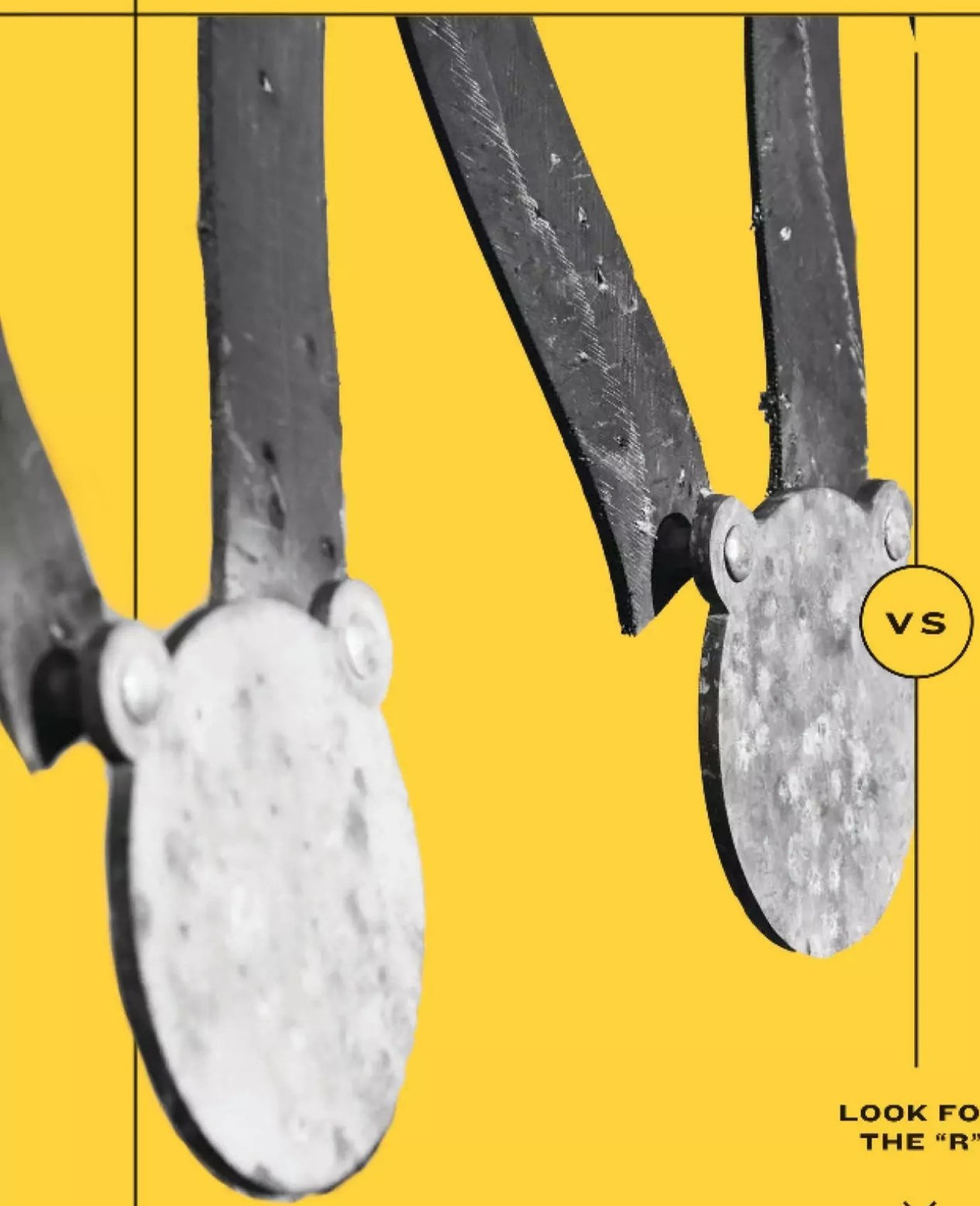

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administration that was originally *Garland v. VanDerStok*. It was entirely litigated by that regime, with the government losing in the district court and the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals before taking the case to the Supreme Court. Only the ruling itself has been issued during President Trump's second term with Pam Bondi at the helm of the Department of Justice.

THIS IS WHERE THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND DO THE RIGHT THING, OR THEY WON'T. WE'RE WATCHING…

I don't make this distinction to absolve the current administration or the DOJ of all responsibility, as they are now involved whether they like it or not. Between the recent hiring of Robert Leider as ATF Chief Counsel and Assistant Director, slamming the brakes on acting U.S. Attorney Michael Simpson's argument against silencers being protected by the Second Amendment, the repurposing of ATF personnel to aid the FBI at the border, and reinstatement of the Second Amendment rights restoration provision for the first time since 1992, it may seem like we are headed down a better path than the previous four years, but time and substantive change will be the judge of that. In the meantime, Pam Bondi could step into the fray, thank the Supreme Court for its opinion, then shut the rule down anyway. It isn't a codified law, and doing so would send a clear message to Americans about this administration's stance. This is where the current leadership will take responsibility and do the right thing, or they won't. We're watching…

What Is a Facial Challenge?

I cannot stress enough how important it is to understand what is meant by the legal term "facial challenge." This is when a law is argued unconstitutional on its face, inherently flawed, and invalid in any application. In this case, the Supreme Court majority asserts that plaintiffs argued the ATF's frame or receiver rule, 27 CFR § 478.12, is inconsistent with the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA), particularly 18 U.S.C § 921(3):

"(3) The term "firearm" means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm."

The majority opinion contends that some kits are so close to being a completed firearm or receiver that, in those instances, the statute allows the ATF to regulate them as such, according to the Court's opinion written by Justice Gorsuch.

"(.a) Section 478.11's provisions addressing weapon parts kits are not facially invalid under §921(a)(3)(A). That subsection contains two requirements: a "weapon" must be present, and that weapon must be able to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, designed to do so, or susceptible of ready conversion to operate that way. Some weapon parts kits meet that description… While other kits may be so incomplete or cumbersome to assemble that they cannot fairly be described as weapons capable of ready conversion, the facial challenge fails because kits like Polymer 80's clearly qualify." Gorsuch writes.

But just as it seems, I have perhaps provided vindication for the Court's decision. Think again, because this was an irresponsible handling of the issue, and hiding behind a very narrow scope will not absolve the Justices of their duty and responsibility to Americans and the Constitution. They just kicked that can down the road in what has to be one of the biggest chicken turd rulings I've ever witnessed.

Here's where things start to smell pretty bad. The Supreme Court majority will have you believe that they were obligated to approach and answer *VanDerStok* as a facial challenge, whether or not the ATF frame or receiver rule exceeded the agency's regulatory authority granted by the GCA, placing a heavy burden of proof upon plaintiffs to prove that this law could never be Constitutionally applied to any set of facts.

In his dissent, Justice Samuel Alito disagreed with the Court's approach as a facial challenge because the case was initiated to address an Administrative Procedures Act violation, meaning that the ATF was changing definitions within the law that the agency did not have legislative permission to engage in. Justice Alito also points out that the Court's majority was wrong in "Asserting that the plaintiffs conceded to having brought a 'facial' challenge," saying they "never conceded that point."

"They did not address the issue at all in their briefs, and at no point during the lengthy oral argument in this case were they asked about that question. Holding that they conceded the point is unwarranted and extremely unfair," wrote Justice Alito.

So, why would the majority choose to ignore this fact and approach the case as a facial challenge rather than how it was presented?

Understanding the Justices…

We know that Justices Sotomayor, Kagen, and Jackson are in the leftist bag, and their decisions on any firearms-related cases are predetermined, however, it would take more than the three blind mice to pull off this level of judicial activism. Chief Justice Roberts

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has been seen as a "swing vote" on the Supreme Court and, in my opinion, is more or less likely to side with Democrats. He has drifted far from anything I would consider conservative and likely forgot most of what he ever knew about the Constitution because he seems to regard it as irrelevant.

As far as I'm concerned, Amy Coney Barrett makes it five Democrats on the bench as she has continually sided with the Court's liberals. She voted against Trump's petition to stay sentencing in his New York kangaroo court trial. She voted in favor of a restraining order that would prevent the President from pausing foreign assistance due to USAID corruption, which frees up $2 billion in taxpayer funds to be distributed overseas as if the money was burning a hole in America's imaginary surplus. She sided with the left on *Rahimi*, ignoring due process and asserting that federal law prohibiting subjects of domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms is constitutional, even though these restraining orders are often issued in civil proceedings as a tool for leverage in marriage dissolutions without any evidence, and in some cases without any claims, of actual violence. She voted with Democrats against a voter ID initiative requiring Arizona residents to show proof of U.S. citizenship when voting. These are just some examples leading up to her decision on *VanDerStok* and giving context to CNN's sentiment that she is "The last best hope for Supreme Court liberals."

Barrett, like Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, has claimed to be an "originalist," believing the U.S. Constitution should be interpreted based on the meaning of the text at the time it was adopted, however, this could not be further from the truth for all three, who view judicial precedent much more favorably than they do the plain text of the Constitution, especially when it comes to the Second Amendment. This was evident during confirmation hearings and is readily visible in the *VanDerStok* ruling, as reverence is issued in abundance regarding the GCA, without any hesitation as to whether the precedent itself is unconstitutional. This should not come as a surprise, however, as all three of these self-proclaimed "originalists" have, at one time or another, supported anti-Second Amendment legislature like the 1968 Gun Control Act, the National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA), and the 1986 Hughes Amendment.

While Alito joined Justice Clarence Thomas dissenting in the 7-2 minority with a strong legal foundation, Thomas remains the only true originalist on the Court, adhering to the spirit and text of the Constitution as if it were his sworn duty. There's a reason for that. It is not only his sworn duty, but that of all the Justices. In his dissent, Thomas argues that the majority incorrectly interprets the GCA regarding the terms "frame" and "receiver," pointing out that they do not encompass unfinished frames, receivers, or parts kits. Justice Thomas also highlights the gross overreach of agency authority, pointing out that Congress could have authorized the ATF to regulate any part of a firearm or any object readily convertible into one, but did not, thus limiting regulatory power to the defined items in the GCA. Additionally, Justice Thomas took issue with the Court effectively rewriting statutory text, arguing against the majority's substitution of novel linguistic labels, such as "artifact-noun," for traditional statutory interpretation.

What is an "artifact-noun?" I'm glad you asked. It is a linguistic concept describing nouns that refer to objects created by humans. The Supreme Court's majority argued that the term, "weapon" is an artifact noun, meaning that it can describe an object even if it's not yet fully finished or assembled, in this case referring to an incomplete frame or receiver.

UNFORTUNATELY, AS I'VE ALREADY POINTED OUT, ROBERTS AND BARRETT FEEL COMPROMISED TO THE POINT I AM NOT SURE I EVEN CONSIDER THEM SWING VOTES.

Why This Stinks…

With liberal activist Justices Sotomayor, Kagen, and Jackson being a moot point, we turn to the so-called conservatives, Roberts, Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett. Alito has referred to himself as a "practical originalist," while Thomas is more of an absolute originalist. These two Justices have held firm to the Court's conservative voice for some time. Unfortunately, as I've already pointed out, Roberts and Barrett feel compromised to the point I am not sure I even consider them swing votes. This leaves Gorsuch and Kavanaugh who I once thought of as conservatives and who have both called themselves originalists, but now feel more like swing votes. This is especially true with the Second Amendment where it seems they are quick to kick that proverbial can I talk about down the road before truly disrupting the debate with a solidified Constitutional foundation.

VanDerStok questioned the ATF's lawmaking authority, making this narrow approach inappropriate and practically guaranteeing the agency would prevail. To be clear, they took the weasel's way out, helping the majority narrow the scope enough to hand the ATF a victory that the district court and the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals could not find Constitutionally palatable. I would argue that this choice is too

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deliberately off-track to not be purposefully agenda-driven, especially in light of lower court rulings, and lends reason to keep a very watchful eye in the future on anyone claiming to be an originalist or a conservative for that matter.

How Else Did They Get It Wrong?

I'll start by saying the Supreme Court did not delineate where any line might be drawn as to which kits would fall under regulation, which would not, or why. This leaves discretion on the matter to the ATF, who are no strangers when it comes to overreach violations of the APA. Great call! Now, we're left wondering what constitutes a violation and on what agent's whim one might be levied, a purposeful indistinction prohibited by the Constitution's "void for vagueness" doctrine rooted in due process, which states that a law is invalid if it is not sufficiently clear. Laws are typically found void for vagueness if they do not specify what is required or what conduct is punishable. Of course, the ATF will argue that the frame or receiver issue is a "rule," not a law. But what is a rule punishable by the full extent of the law, including fines and imprisonment? You guessed it. It's a law. But is the ATF a legislative body? No, it isn't, but that's exactly what they are doing, and it is exactly what the Supreme Court just let them get away with while hiding behind such a narrow scope.

What the Supreme Court did, in effect, is unleash the ATF in the grey area, where the agency can not be trusted historically, and open up another likely round of taxpayer-funded lawsuits regarding the application of the "rule." This isn't much different from where we first started, with the ATF having the ability to make up laws as they go and then define what they mean to suit every challenge.

Where Does This Leave Us?

The ruling tells us much more about the Supreme Court than it does the ATF. The High Court's ruling exposes most of the Justices as smarmy legal elites who are either too afraid or too corrupt to uphold their duty to Americans and the United States Constitution. We now know that Roberts, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett favor precedents like the NFA and the GCA over the document they swore their oath to. It also seems that the Justices are now handing interpretation of this matter over to the ATF less than a year after the Supreme Court overturned "Chevron deference," a 40-year-old precedent requiring courts to defer to federal agency interpretations of ambiguous laws. Take this legal contradiction combined with the artificially narrow scope applied to *VanDerStok* and, like an autostereogram, the agenda appears.

Should we be surprised? Not really. Gorsuch and Kavanaugh have previously indicated that they would support bans on machine guns, and both have found allegiance behind judicial over Constitutional precedent.

"In disapproving D.C.'s ban on handguns, in approving a ban on machine guns, and in approving longstanding regulations such as concealed-carry and felon-in-possession laws, *Heller* established that the scope of the Second Amendment right—and thus the constitutionality of gun bans and regulations—is determined by reference to text, history, and tradition," according to Justice Kavanaugh

So, Do We Have a Constitution or Don't We?

But *Heller* didn't establish the scope. The Second Amendment did, and it did so with such simplicity and character that any American who denies its meaning or pretends the single sentence requires any deeper interpretation behind its plain text is either disingenuous, obtuse or morally corrupt.

Anti-Second Amendment activists will argue that the Constitution is a living document, designed to be adaptable and evolve, allowing changes in interpretation and application to meet the needs of a changing society, even without formal amendments. Be aware of the wool pulled over your eyes, as those who decide what way it must adapt or evolve are typically the ones in power, and they rarely make such judgments based on what's best for you, but rather what's best for them.

The Constitution, and especially the Bill of Rights, is truly designed to serve as the foundation for the freedom and liberty that America claims to represent. In fact, the Bill of Rights exists not necessarily to grant those first ten Amendments, but to recognize that they are inalienable or natural rights, fundamental entitlements inherent to all individuals, the concept of which stems from the belief that people possess certain fundamental liberties by virtue of being human, not granted by the government. Inalienable means they cannot be taken away or surrendered, and are considered inherent to human existence.

How then could such a foundational concept be fluid? Would you build anything meant to last upon a foundation so fragile as to flow like the tide?

If the Spirit Is Dead, So Is the Letter…

One mustn't ever discount the spirit of the law in the manner that we see being done today. Regulations, restrictions, and bans, whether issued by local, state, or federal governments who pretend to find hidden and misunderstood meaning in the Second Amendment that only they have the omniscience to interpret are nothing more than perversions of that spirit. We know through history that the Second Amendment is not a hunting right or one meant merely to guarantee home or personal protection. It is an inalienable liberty recognized by the Founding Fathers, designed to prevent a tyrannical government from using a standing army to oppress the people. As such, would historical analysis suggest that people be restricted to an overwhelming disparity in arms compared to that of said standing army? But the Constitution is so 1776, right? FN

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SPECIAL REPORT

By Darwin Nercesian | News Field Editor

Darwin Nercesian is a long-time gun rights advocate and shooter of targets far, far away. As the 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.*

D&M HOLDING COMPANY, PART 1: THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL AMMUNITION MANUFACTURING

Building Turnkey Ammunition and Component Facilities at Home and Abroad.

Dan Powers and James Jones of D&M Holding Company. (D&M)

Firearms have been used to defend and preserve life and liberty since the advent of the fire lance in 10th-century China during the Jin-Song wars. They are used today for that very same purpose in the hands of civilians concerned for personal safety and putting food on the table, law enforcement officers keeping a watchful eye over their communities, and soldiers defending the sovereignty of their homeland. Arguably, the lifeblood of any firearm is ammunition, without which the most venerable weapon is reduced to nothing more than a medieval clubbing device. Any imbalance between demand and supply is cause for concern, from great to grave, putting pressure on a relatively niche industry where mistakes can lead to fatal accidents. With 25 years as a pioneer in the industry, Dan Powers has founded D&M Holding Company and assembled a team to address these challenges and teach others how to be successful in the ammunition trade.

To paint an honest picture of D&M, its CEO Dan Powers, and his talented team who work around the clock to build and support ammunition manufacturing infrastructure around the world, is to tell the story of a broad range of skill, compassion, perseverance, and dedication, not just to the craft, but to the clients who depend on their expertise and professionalism. From helping develop the domestic commercial market to a special operations infiltration into a country in the throes of war, this two-part series will look at a company working tirelessly behind the scenes to build state-of-the-art

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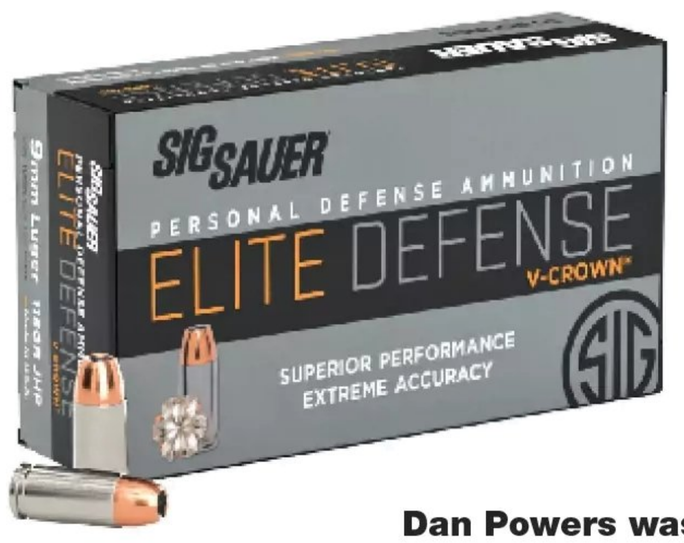

Dan Powers was responsible for SIG SAUER's V-Crown projectile, as well as creating the ammunition manufacturing plant.

ammunition plants while modernizing safety and proficiency standards with the goal of delivering a reliable supply of high-end ammunition and related components to support NATO allies across the globe and American shooters right here at home.

Thank Goodness for Gun Shows!

The story begins with Dan, an accountant at the time, attending a gun show at the behest of a friend when a vendor selling bags of ammunition catches his attention. With interest piqued, and as fate might have it, this experience led to his founding of Tampa-based Precision Ammunition in 1997, specializing in frangible copper matrix ammunition with a primary focus on the law enforcement market. Starting out of his garage, like many great American stories, Dan fostered success in over a decade's work, selling the company in 2009 to then Swiss Government-owned giant and defense conglomerate, RUAG.

Dan stayed on as President and CEO of RUAG USA, managing US operations as well as traveling extensively to RUAG-owned ammunition plants across Europe to evaluate dated systems, sharing an understanding of quality control from a US market perspective, and assisting to modernize facilities and processes.

SIG SAUER

Having remained with RUAG for almost five years, the next logical step would see Dan continue traveling as a freelance consultant, but this part of the worldwide adventure would be short-lived. A conversation with SIG SAUER CEO Ron Cohen would bring Dan's focus back to the US as president of SIG's new ammunition manufacturing division, building and developing those operations from the ground up. In fact, it was Dan who shared his patent with SIG on a round that prioritizes weight retention, controlled expansion, and energy transfer. You know it today as V-Crown.

Knowing full well SIG SAUER has its reputation to uphold, with an understanding that the project had to put out nothing less than a formidable product in its debut for a company that did not have the ammunition pedigree of industry giants like Remington and Winchester, Cohen instructed Dan to miss manufacturing projections if necessary to maintain the highest quality standards, music to the ears of a mad scientist bent on ballistic perfection.

"Quality is everything, especially when you come out the first time with it. You have one chance," Dan said to me in an interview.

Work began in Kentucky in 2014, ultimately moving to Jacksonville, Arkansas, in 2017. When humming began on the production floor, SIG SAUER's ammunition operation started with just five products, including V-Crown.

"Ron Cohen gave me a blank piece of paper and allowed me free reign. My team and I could decide how to be most efficient in rolling out an entirely new ammunition division from the ground up, which included everything from the layout of the plant and types of equipment to the manufacturing processes and procedures. We learned to be nimble and react quickly to ever-changing market conditions, and this experience was invaluable. The association with SIG SAUER and positive media attention my work there brought has opened a lot of doors for me," says Powers.

After over two decades of innovation and success in ammunition production, Dan decided it was time to hang up his spurs, buy a boat, and sail off into… Wait, that's not what happened.

The Birth of D&M

In 2018, D&M Holding Company, Inc. was created with a business plan to specialize in Greenfield Projects—new ventures started from scratch and built from the ground up. A pattern emerges. Dan's vision was to build factories all over the world, with an initial focus on international business. Together with 20-year defense industry executive James Jones, D&M's Co-Owner and Vice President of Business Development, who has worked in over 50 countries spending most of his career representing US defense and ammunition companies in international contracts, a new adventure was born over the ensuing two and a half years of nonstop travel.

Manufacturing ammunition cases from brass cups. (D&M)

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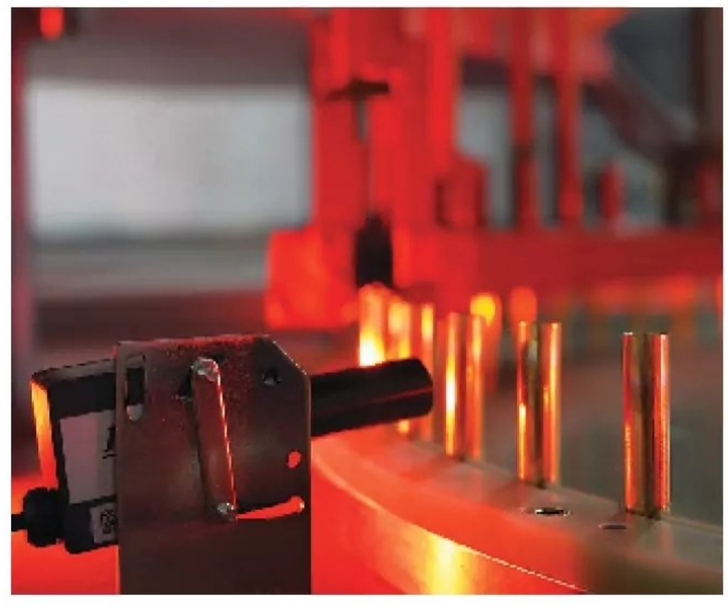
Shaping ammunition cases. (D&M)



Annealing process. (D&M)

River Energetics in 2021, D&M's own primer manufacturing facility.

Vice President of Energetics, Jason Lawhon, came to D&M from St. Marks Powder where he spent over 30 years in both engineering and sales positions. Jason is the driving force behind D&M's push into the world of propellant manufacturing.

Team Philosophy

To fully understand D&M, however, is to understand Dan's passion for people and his appreciation of their skills and dedication. Another pattern emerges, demonstrating Dan's commitment from the ground up to his team right here at home, the clients they nurture to success, and those ultimately fighting for the freedom to live their lives peacefully and without oppression, a point that strikes an undeniable chord that we will expand upon in part two of this story.

"People make this business what it is. My people make D&M what it is. At the end of the day, it's the people behind me. It was the people behind me at SIG. It was the people behind me at RUAG. You know, they kind of let me be who I was," Dan says.

It is with that understanding that Dan is fully aware of how paying that forward to the team at D&M will allow them to find joy, purpose, and success in their work. Leslie Weber, Vice President of D&M, holds advanced degrees from the University of Washington and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). She spent five years with Raytheon Missile Systems before joining Alliant Techsystems Inc. (ATK) during the transition of the Sporting Group division into VISTA where she worked for 11 years, starting as a manufacturing engineer at the CCI primer production facility and then as head of Federal's centerfire pistol ammunition plant.

"Dan has a knack for finding the diamonds in the industry and convincing people to follow him, and we all do," says Weber.

BJ Rogers is a Co-Owner and Vice President of Operations at D&M, having spent 15 years in the industry, first with Remington Ammunition as a ballistics engineer before becoming the company's Centerfire Engineering Manager, transitioning later to the position of ammunition division Plant Manager and Director of Operations at SIG SAUER. BJ speaks to Dan's trust in his team and his commitment to their abilities and contributions.

"He never asks us to bend to what he wants, he just asks us what we need to succeed, gives it to us, and lets us be creative," says Rogers.

Chief Chemist, Don Pile, joined D&M after 20 years at Remington and another five at SIG SAUER. Don is one of the most recognized names in primer chemistry in the world and was one of the key individuals involved with the founding of White

Projectile manufacturing. (D&M)

Safety

However, what does success mean for D&M, throwing the past out the window and paving a newer, better road to global ammunition production? It means a lot, starting with the safety of their team and those who will ultimately take the reins at the primer, powder, and ammunition plants D&M builds. The primer business being especially dangerous, D&M has pioneered technology that removes personnel from the equation during the more hazardous aspects of the process. Members of the team initially introduce the elements in the room but are not present during the reaction phase. That is when all personnel are cleared from the premises, with everything handled remotely by pressing buttons in another building.

"We started with a blank slate, which is important. I call it a green field. We sat down with the engineers and said, we all know how it's been done. Let's forget about that. How do we make it safer for people in that environment? So, for all the energetic labs, whether it's T&R, lead styphnate, tetrazine, or a mix, when those chemical reactions are occurring, there's nobody physically in the room," Dan explained to me.

While D&M supports continued expansion and upgrades for their customers, any and all updates that address matters of safety are provided to every client for free, no questions asked.

To put the risks into perspective, a primer plant exploded two days before Christmas last year in the village of Kavakli in the Karesi district of

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Completion of the ammunition manufacturing process includes automated packaging. (D&M)

The White River Energetics facility in Des Arc, Arkansas. (D&M)

Balikesir province in northwest Turkey, killing eleven people and leveling an entire factory, a tragedy that Dan laments, wishing his team could have been called in to prevent it.

"If they called us and asked us for help, we'd get on a plane and go over there. We don't have any secrets, you know? This is like the airline industry. If somebody has a problem, let's all learn from it. What do we need to add? How do we prevent and just make it safer for everybody? Because the last thing we need is loss of life," Dan said to me.

Quality Standards

Another factor that sets D&M apart is a remarkably stringent standard of quality and consistency, one that Dan admits they are able to achieve not just from skill and experience but through a rigorous testing regiment to which they expose every machine D&M manufactures. While most machine builders will run off 50,000 or 100,000 rounds in the testing phase, Dan is distinctly aware that new designs are prone to missing or overlooking things.

"What does it do when it hits 50 million or 100 million? That's where we have experience. So, if it's a new machine that we've designed, I run millions of rounds before I release it to the public… We want it to be right, so we take the guesswork out of buying a factory from us because all these machines will run out of the gate. They've all been proven. We run hundreds of thousands of rounds with the customer in our own factory making good product, and then we replicate that on-site at their factory."

Delivering on Time

Getting the job done doesn't end there, however, as Dan hates being late, and doesn't make any distinction between delays being a fault of his own, a pandemic, a war, or a supplier. But what can you do? I'll tell you what D&M did. While working at RUAG and SIG, Dan developed the knowledge and the know-how to design and manufacture his own tooling and machinery in order to avoid supply chain issues, a lesson that has come in handy.

"We're not in the business of mass-producing tools. That's not what we want to do, but what we can do is develop a tool very quickly within weeks, turn it around, and make the spare tooling until key suppliers can do it. We can be the stopgap because how do you sell a machine to somebody like Palmetto State Armory and say, 'Hey, by the way guys, here's your tooling, but you have to wait eight more months for it.' That doesn't work, you know, so we had to be that stopgap," Dan explains.

The explosive magazine at White River Energetics. (D&M)

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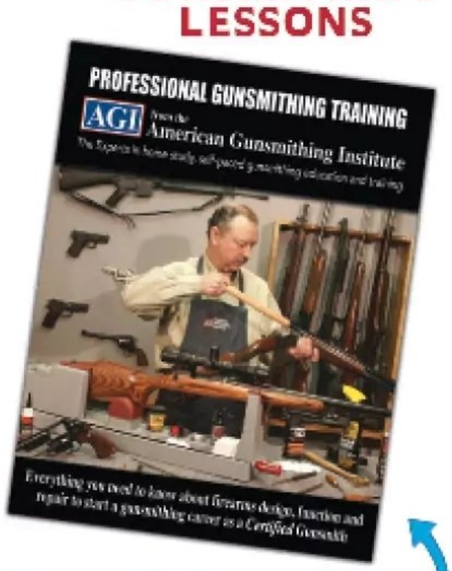

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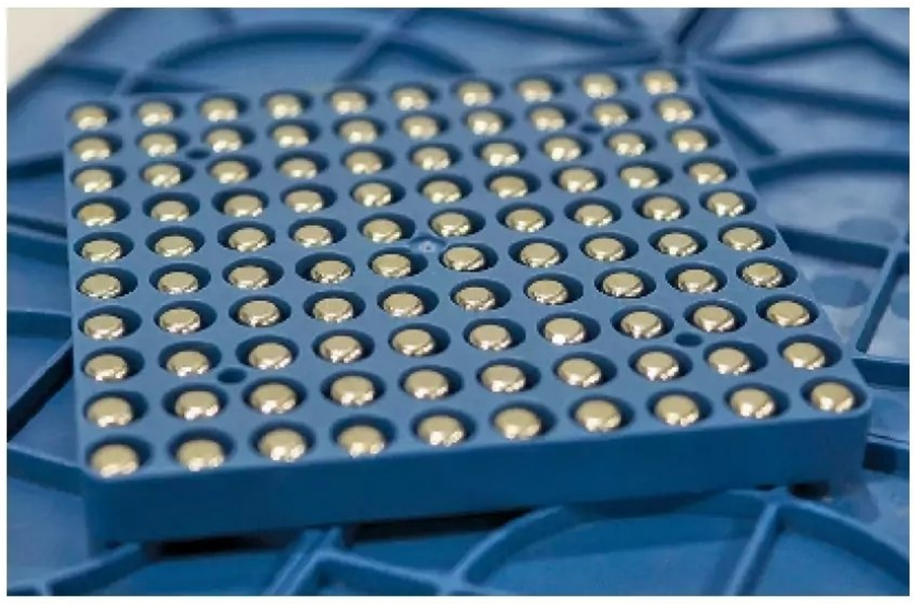
Primers, showing primer anvils, manufactured at White River Energetics. (D&M)



Completed primers completed and ready for packaging (D&M)

You read that correctly. When Palmetto State Armory decided to build what Dan notes is one of the top four largest ammunition factories in America right now, with room to grow, they called in D&M to make it happen, and building such a massive factory during COVID-19 proved to be quite the challenge. For the Palmetto State Armory plant, Dan decided to ramp up production of D&M's tool room in Arkansas, spending $8 million and hiring 35 of the best tool makers who now run that tool room seven days per week. Yeah, I'd say it's safe to say he really does take issue with anything keeping D&M from delivering on time.

D&M specializes not only in ammunition plant manufacturing from the ground up without the help of outside contractors but also in the transmission of that knowledge to their customers. They don't just build a factory, the machines and software, the tooling, the processes, and leave. They are dedicated to seeing success come from the result, and they stick around to make sure that their clients are well-trained and ready to run the facility safely and with confidence that boosts efficiency and speeds up ROI.

"We basically lived there for three years. I mean, for three years, every week, we had people on the ground," Dan says, speaking about the 300,000-square-foot Palmetto State Armory facility.

Speaking of Palmetto State Armory CEO Jamin McCallum, Dan calls him a visionary and says the company has a healthy project schedule planned for years to come.

Training and Support

The team at D&M doesn't take paychecks lightly, as Dan tells me, D&M owes it to their customers to make them successful. When commenting on how impressive I found the company's drive to get clients to the finish line to ensure their success, I learned yet another lesson about D&M's philosophy from James Jones.

"There really is no end. It's not about reaching the finish line. Every company that we've done something for has future expansion plans. In Ukraine, we're now on our third contract, and at least two more that we know of are coming, so you continue on a path with somebody, continue to help them train, continue to help them grow, and they will grow. And helping our commercial customers to be profitable, I think, is important as well, and that's one of the things that Dan brings to the table with all his years of experience running ammunition factories. He can go into a plant and tell them, 'I think there are some things you can do better, not just in manufacturing, but in how you run your factory,'" says Jones.

This led to an in-depth conversation detailing the support provided after building and training, leading me to understand that these phases never end. D&M maintains over four-million dollars in tooling, at any given time, in case a client has an issue or tooling suppliers run into a backlog, more evidence that the company is not just in the business of getting clients up and running, but that they take pride in keeping them up and running through all the curveballs and "what if's." They take this responsibility seriously, providing 24/7 support worldwide. Always being on call means that D&M is able to remote in for the rare occurrence of a software issue, which only happens when slight adjustments are needed upon running a new product.

"We're happy to go there as well. If it's a bigger issue and we've done everything we can remotely, we'll hop on a plane and go help them," Dan tells me.

It has never occurred to me that the scope of what goes on behind the scenes to keep the global ammunition supply churning is truly this massive.

"It's worth mentioning that we keep a fleet of two planes, and we have three pilots, two full-time pilots, who will get us to any factory we need to get to," explains Jones.

Powder and Primer Guarantees?

But the rabbit hole goes deeper. How deep? How about an ammunition plant manufacturer who guarantees their customers primer and powder supplies?

"I told my guys, I said look, we've got to get primers, because how do you take somebody's money and build them a factory knowing they can't succeed? To me, it's unethical. I know people do it. They don't care. But I care. So, we built WRE, White River Energetics… The primary purpose isn't to compete with any of our customers, but any factory we build, we'll guarantee they have primers, and they'll have them at a price where they can make money. And if they happen to be building a primer factory, then we'll definitely be the stopgap for them until their primer factory is up," Dan explained.

WRE not only serves as a stopgap and a supplier to keep D&M customers stocked with primers, it provides a unique opportunity for the space to

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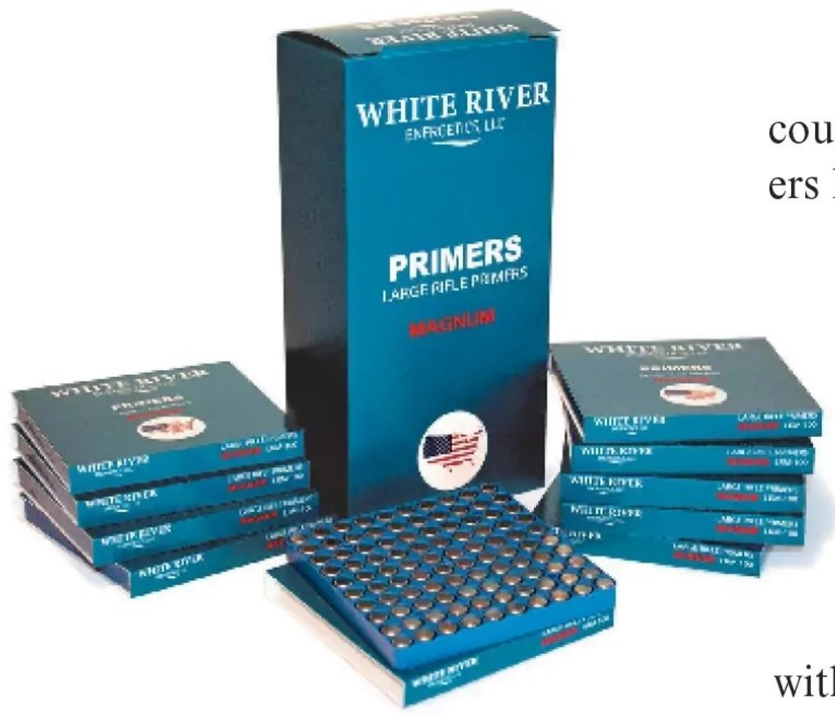

White River Energetics primers ready for customers. (D&M)

be used to train customers in primer manufacturing and have them ready to hit the ground running by the time their facility is operational. Meanwhile, plans to expand WRE primer production to 1.5 billion per year are on track to meet the company's goals, with new primer facilities recently built and running domestically for Grind Hard Ammo and Palmetto State Armory.

Dan also commented on the ability to guarantee powder supplies, which was supported initially through decades of relationships within the industry, but now it seems as if it is becoming more of an issue due to increased demand. In response, D&M has announced an expansion of the White River Energetics facility to include a new powder factory to help clients keep up with production. Dan notes that artillery needs are heavy at the moment due to overseas conflicts, which he plans to address with the new facility, while also addressing the rifle and pistol powders needed by D&M's other clients. He tells me that D&M does not intend to be the sole source for powder and primers for its customers but that they can be if necessary.

The Future

Dan and his team are full steam ahead building and supporting turnkey ammunition plants around the globe, and I'm pretty sure that is the only pace they know. D&M is now working with a greater number of NATO allied countries, with the exception of players like France, Germany, and the UK, for the time being, that have larger existing defense industries.

In Alberta, Canada, plans for four plants are under way—a double-base powder plant, single-base powder plant, nitrocellulose plant, and primer plant. D&M is also working with potential clients in Western and Eastern Europe, looking to modernize aging defense industries and older Soviet-era factories that have nowhere near today's quality and safety standards due to available technology when they were built. D&M sees no incentive for governments to bring more efficiency to the industry, offering themselves up instead to take on that role.

To support overseas efforts, and due to post-war logistics changing how goods and personnel get into certain parts of the world, D&M International was born, operating as a hub and European sales office out of Poland.

"We love what we do. I absolutely love what I do… I had a vision when I started this company. I was going to have 20 employees. There are 250 people. I mean, I was way off," Dan shares with me, also noting that the company will be adding 100 more full-time staff with the expansion of the WRE primer plant and addition of D&M's propellant manufacturing facilities.

Part 2: On the Map

D&M's first Greenfield Project came when the company won a highly competitive contract with the Ukrainian government to build a multi-million-dollar ammunition production plant after the country's existing factory was lost in the original 2014 Russian invasion. In need of a modern facility that is capable of producing multiple NATO and Russian calibers, those in charge of the project believed that what D&M had to offer would be Ukraine's best solution. By early 2022, D&M had delivered all the equipment necessary and was in the process of building and installation when the U.S. State Department directed them to evacuate Ukraine due to imminent Russian invasion. *"We were on one of the last flights out of Kyiv before Russia invaded on February 24, 2022,"* says Jones.

If you've followed this far, then you know that Dan and his team at D&M are not going to let a war stop them from completing their mission. In fact, they weren't willing to entertain a delay, as Ukraine needed them more than ever.

Coming in part two of this story is a heroic tale of dedication against all odds and the compassion for life that drove D&M's determination to get the job done. For more information, visit D&M Holding Company at DMHolding.com. FN

James Jones, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and Dan Powers. (D&M)

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By James Tarr | Field Editor

At a media event rolling out the Savage Stance XR, veteran trainer Chris Cerino demonstrated the proper way to draw and reholster while carrying appendix. Note how far out he keeps his trigger finger.

APPENDIX CARRY

Appendix carry is like dating a stripper; it is arguably both stupid and dangerous to your reproductive organs, but there are certain perks to the arrangement that some guys just can't pass up. Appendix carry is now THE hot thing for a number of reasons, and a few of those are very good reasons. Still, I don't recommend it, just like I don't recommend dating a stripper, but if you're going to do it there are certain things you can do to make it less unsafe. Prophylaxis, the doctors would call it—preventative care.

First, there are two reasons why AIWB (Appendix Inside the Waistband) is popular. The less important reason is that it allows as fast a draw as you can get from anywhere on your body. However, that's not what most people care about. Most people who conceal carry are interested in comfort and convenience, and there is no better way to conceal a medium-to-large handgun at your belt line than through appendix carry. You can conceal the pistol usually with just a t-shirt, and it's generally more comfortable than having that pistol inside your belt on your hip. I've never found a way to sit comfortably while appendix carrying, so I've only ever used appendix carry while on my feet—usually while jogging. And then I deliberately only carried a snubnose revolver. Which leads me to number two.

Second: type of gun. Currently, the most popular type of gun on the market (striker-fired) is the most problematic when it comes to reholstering. Whether it's a Glock, S&W M&P, CZ P-10, FN 509, whatever, the only external safety you'll find on most of these guns is the little lever on the trigger to keep it from going bang when you drop it. Which means if something gets wedged inside the trigger guard while you're putting it back in the holster—bang. This is especially concerning if you're shoving

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Like with any inside-the-waistband carry, you will need to buy both pants and belt a little bigger than usual to make room for the gun, especially if you're carrying a spare magazine.

it down the front of your pants at the time. The number of (truly accidental) discharges police departments experience every year when officers get a drawstring or thumb break or something else wedged inside their trigger guard as they're putting their guns away would astound you.

Considering what the muzzle of that gun is pointing at when you're carrying appendix, I recommend you go with a different type of pistol for crotch carry. Double-action (DA) revolvers are good as are double-action-only pistols (like the Ruger LCP), as well as double-action/single-action autos where the first trigger pull is that long/heavy DA one. I also recommend pistols which have external manual safeties, such as the 1911. A 1911 has both a grip safety and manual thumb safety, and both of them will be on when you're holstering/holstered.

If there ever was a time to learn a safe draw, it's while carrying appendix. Get a full grip on the gun before it ever comes out of the holster, and make sure your finger stays outside of the trigger guard until your sights are coming onto the target. And you need to practice this—with an unloaded gun, of course. The impulse is to try to go as fast as possible, but if you simply go smoothly, eliminating wasted motion, you'll find your draw will naturally speed up, and there's no hurry to reholster. You shouldn't be putting that drawn gun away until there's no more threat, so when it's time, look that gun into the holster to make sure it has a clear path—no wads of fabric, no drawstrings, no belt tips, and no fingers. Keep your index finger far and away from the trigger guard so it doesn't get accidentally pushed toward the trigger by your belt. I know a few people who refuse to holster their appendix carry gun when the holster is in their pants—they pull the holster out, stick the gun in it, then stick the whole rig back in their pants. That is the best and safest way to do it. Make sure you're using a quality holster, which properly and fully covers the trigger guard.

As for specific holster recommendations, I don't have one, and unless you're very lucky you'll have to try a few before you find one that works for you. As appendix carry is the new hotness, just about every holster maker is offering a dedicated AIWB rig, if not twelve. Some of the holsters have a bump or a stand-off at the bottom on the inboard side, to help prevent the mouth of the holster from digging into you as you sit down. I think women have a far easier time carrying appendix than men do, as they keep all their reproductive organs out of the way on the inside.

Pretty much every holster maker makes a holster specifically for appendix carry. Safariland introduced their IncogX last year, an AIWB holster produced in a partnership with Travis Haley, and it made big news (Safariland.com). It is polymer with a soft exterior layer.

Tarr thinks the main reason people love appendix carry is there is no easier/comfortable way to carry a big gun at your waistband, and have it disappear under just a simple shirt. Here Galco's Mike Barham demonstrates a full-size Glock in their Paragon AIWB holster.

Most holsters require a good belt for mounting, but not all. Some of the holster makers offer optional magazine pouches which mount to the side of the holster in front, for easy access. Between holster, gun, and spare magazine, you can have a lot of things stuffed down the front of your pants. Even if it's just a minimalist holster and a subcompact pistol, you might need to size up your pants and/or belt to comfortably wear it.

Even if an errant bullet somehow doesn't hit any valuable real estate, I can't think of any part of my body (other than my eyes) I'd less like to torch with powder burns. Guns are inherently dangerous, as is carrying them, but if you are careful, and attentive both when drawing and reholstering, you can maximize the safety of appendix carry while reaping the rewards. FN

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By David M. Fortier | Executive Editor

Dating from 1899, the .32 ACP is a classic "pocket pistol" cartridge, but is it still viable today?

THE .32 ACP TODAY

Is There Still a Need for This Small Auto-Loading Pistol Cartridge Design From John Browning?

When it comes to small easily concealable "pocket pistols," the three most common calibers in the days of old were .25 ACP, .32 ACP and .380 ACP. Of these three, the .32 Automatic Colt Pistol is actually the oldest, dating back to 1899. The .25 ACP was introduced in 1905, and the .380 ACP introduced a short time later in 1908. This trio of cartridges was designed by John Moses Browning and they became not only successful but hugely popular around the world. A wide variety of small auto-loading pistols were chambered for them, and these were used by armed citizens for personal protection, by law enforcement, and they even saw military use.

Today, the .380 ACP remains very popular, while the .25 ACP seems to have fallen by the wayside. What about the oldest of the three, the .32 ACP? While certainly not as popular as it once was, the .32 ACP remains a viable alternative to the .380 ACP in very small pistols intended for personal protection.

The .32 ACP, also known as the 7.65mm Browning, was introduced in 1899 by Fabrique Nationale. The first pistol chambered for it was the Browning designed M1900. The cartridge itself is based on a small

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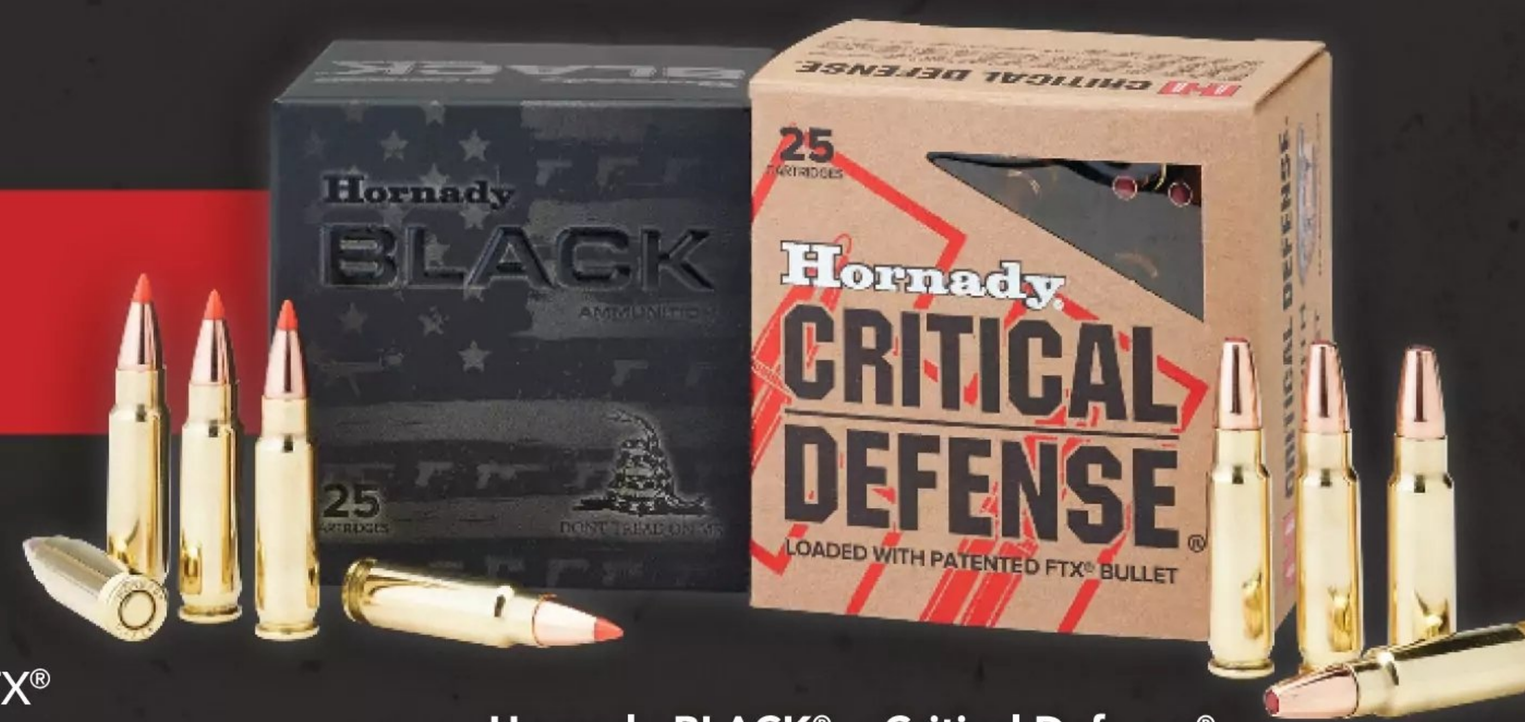

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A comparison of the .32 ACP with some of its peers (L to R): 7.62x25mm, .38 S&W (.380 Revolver), 9x19mm Parabellum, .32 ACP 60-grain Silvertip, .32 ACP 71-grain FMJ, and .25 ACP.

semi-rimmed straight-walled case. Yes, it is a semi-rimmed and not a rimless design which belies it dating from the 19th Century. It was actually John Browning's very first pistol cartridge design. He would retain the semi-rimmed case when designing the .25 ACP, but dispensed with it on the .380 ACP. The semi-rimmed design is perhaps its only real fault.

The small cartridge features a case length of 0.680 inch while the rim diameter is 0.358 inch and it features a base diameter of 0.337 inch. A small Boxer pistol primer is used. Cartridge overall length is 0.984 of an inch and it is loaded with a 0.312-inch diameter projectile. Standard bullet weight is 71 grains; however loads ranging in weight from 55 to 75 grains are often encountered. Typical performance is a 71-grain FMJ projectile at 900 fps, but keep in mind shorter barrels may reduce this. At 900 fps a 71-grain bullet generates 128 ft-lbs. of energy at the muzzle.

Intended for use in simple blow-back operated pistols, the .32 ACP cartridge went on to become extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic. FN produced a whopping 500,000 pistols chambered for it between its introduction and 1909. In the United States, Savage Arms, with their Model 1907, was one of a number of companies that produced popular handguns in .32 ACP. In Europe, it was widely adopted by both police and military forces. The French Army issued over a million 7.65mm Ruby type pistols to front-line combat units during World War I. These saw heavy fighting in the trenches and were often used during nighttime raids.

In the years after World War I, small .32 ACP pistols became very popular for personal protection due to their small size, light weight and ability to be easily concealed. In 1929, Walther introduced their PP or Polizeipistole (Police Pistol) for law enforcement use. They followed this up in 1931 with the smaller PPK or Polizeipistole Kriminal, referring to the Kriminalamt crime investigation office, for use by detectives. During World War II, Germany issued large numbers of various 7.65mm pistols. In the post-war years, it was a popular cartridge with various European Law Enforcement agencies until it was eventually replaced with the 9mm Parabellum.

Perhaps one of the most interesting firearms chambered for this cartridge was the Samopal vzor 61 (submachine gun model 1961) better known simply as the "Skorpion." The vz. 61 Skorpion is a select-fire, straight blow-back operated machine pistol which fires from the closed-bolt position. Its small size and light weight, 10.6 inches long with the stock folded and only 2.8 pounds, was achieved by using a telescoping bolt and the low-powered 7.65mm cartridge. The Czechoslovakian Ministry of Interior issued 7.65mm service pistols in the 1950s and so when they needed a compact PDW, this caliber seemed logical.

In recent years, the .32 ACP cartridge's popularity has waned as both 9mm Parabellum and .380 ACP

The vz. 61 Skorpion is a select-fire machine pistol chambered for 7.65mm (.32 ACP) developed as an ultra-compact Personal Defense Weapon.

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The .32 ACP has less recoil than the .380 ACP and typically holds one more round in the magazine giving it an edge in capacity as well.

pistols have grown smaller and lighter. The .380 ACP cartridge especially has proven a serious challenge to the .32 ACP. Even so, the .32 ACP has a number of good features. It provides superior reliability over any rimfire cartridge for personal protection and offers superior terminal performance over the .22 LR, .22 Magnum, and .25 ACP fired from a handgun. Practical accuracy is typically good and recoil is less than a .380 ACP. The 32 ACP also typically provides a higher magazine capacity over the .380 ACP.

A number of companies still produce compact pocket pistols chambered in .32 ACP including Beretta and Keltec. A great example of these is Beretta's recently introduced 30X Tomcat. A more user-friendly updated version of their older 3032 Tomcat, the 30X features easy to see sights, a threaded muzzle, 8+1 capacity and double-action design. The 30X is a bit on the beefy side and weighs in at 16.2 ounces. If you are looking for something smaller and lighter, Keltec's P32 is only 0.75 inch wide and weighs just 6.9 ounces while offering 7+1 capacity.

When it comes to ammunition selection for personal protection, your three main options are a traditional Full Metal Jacket load, a modern expanding Hollow Point or a non-expanding load solid. Proper ammunition selection is always critical when it comes to handgun loads intended for personal protection, and with the .32 ACP it is even more important.

Why? The relatively low muzzle velocity and light weight of the projectiles combine to reduce the depth of penetration of expanding bullets. Due to this, many if not most expanding HPs in this caliber will fail to meet the FBI's minimum penetration depth of 12 inches in calibrated 10% ordnance gelatin. Many modern 60-grain designs will reliably expand between .40 and .50 caliber, but they may only penetrate nine to 11 inches.

Traditional 71- to 73-grain FMJ loads on the other hand will not expand, but they will provide deep penetration. These loads typically penetrate to between 16 and 25 inches of gel, retain all their weight, and are capable of reaching the vital organs of an attacker. Their downside is a smaller permanent wound channel diameter compared to an expanding bullet.

One option is a load like Buffalo Bore Ammunition's 75-grain Hardcast Flat Nose +P load. This has an advertised muzzle velocity of 910 fps from a 2.5 inch barrel and will penetrate deep (20+ inches) while causing more tissue damage than a FMJ load. Another option is Underwood Ammo's 55-grain Extreme Defender solid monolithic with nose flutes. This 950 fps load will reduce recoil while still providing penetration within FBI guidelines and more tissue damage than a conventional JHP.

While not as popular as it once was, the .32 ACP remains an option for small ultra-compact pistols for concealed carry and personal protection. It tends to be accurate and easy to shoot, but keep in mind load selection is critical. FN

.32 ACP PERFORMANCE FROM BERETTA 30X TOMCAT "GET HOME BAG"

15 YARD ACCURACY AND VELOCITY CHART

Load	Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Group (in.)
Hornady XTP JHP	60	823	2.3
Winchester Silvertip JHP	60	900	2.5
Winchester FMJ	71	784	2.5
Norma FMJ	73	845	2.8
Sellier & Bellot FMJ	73	871	3.0

Groups are result of four five-shot groups fired from a rest at 15 yards. Barrel length is 2.6 inches. Velocity readings measured using a LabRadar Doppler Chronograph at 75 degrees F at 1,030 feet above Sea Level.

7.65MM VZ. 61 SKORPION

25 YARD ACCURACY AND VELOCITY CHART

Load	Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Group (in.)
Hornady XTP JHP	60	968	2.2
Winchester Silvertip JHP	60	1,036	2.5
Federal Hydra-Shok JHP	65	960	3.0
Winchester FMJ	71	860	2.8

Groups are an average of four five-shot groups fired from a rest at 25 yards. Barrel length is 4.6 inches. Velocity measured with a LabRadar Doppler Chronograph at the muzzle at an ambient temperature of 60 degrees F at 1,030 feet above Sea Level.

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By Will Dabbs, MD

THE BRITISH STEN GUN

America's Adopted Recreational Machinegun

The British Sten gun was designed from the outset to be simple to produce in austere spaces. At a time when the British were pressed on all sides, Major Reginald V. Shepherd and Harold J. Turpin contrived a weapon that could be thrown together in bicycle shops and automotive garages by the millions. In so doing, Shepherd and Turpin unintentionally created the ultimate American recreational machinegun. It was the Sten's innate simplicity that made it so amenable to civilian consumption on this side of the pond.

The Sten gun helped save the UK from the Nazis during WWII.

The quirky world of American machinegun collecting is unique on Planet Earth. There are surprisingly large numbers of folks who are into it, but the astronomical sums involved leave many potential enthusiasts on the sidelines. All that arose due to two unfortunate pieces of legislation.

The National Firearms Act of 1934 set out to tax private ownership of machineguns out of existence. The inaptly-titled 1986 Firearms Owners' Protection Act actually outlawed production of automatic weapons for sale to civilians. The cumulative result was to cap the number of transferable machineguns at around 180,000. Each year, more young Americans come of age and covet a stuttergun of their own. With the pool of guns irrevocably fixed, that causes prices to soar astronomically. Residing right in the middle of that sordid milieu is the humble British Sten gun.

Origin Story

In the desperate months following the evacuation at Dunkirk, England bought all of the American Thompson submachine guns that they could get. However, the M1928A1 Thompson cost $200 in 1939. That's about $4,500 today. The Brits also had to run the gauntlet of German U-boats to get these guns to the war. Our allies desperately needed something cheaper they could build at home.

The Thompson was meticulously machined out of big blocks of forged steel. By contrast, the Sten was utilitarian in the extreme. The receiver was little more than a length of muffler pipe. The bolt, trunnion, and barrel took a little machine work, but most everything else was formed from steel pressings. When British industry finally found its stride, they could produce Sten submachine guns for $11 apiece. That's about $130 today.

Details

The Sten went through seven production versions along with several experimental subtypes. The Mk III, with its welded magazine well, was the cheapest and most austere. It is arguably the rarest variant in American civilian

The Sten gun was the very image of simplicity. It was designed for ease of use and rapidity of manufacture.

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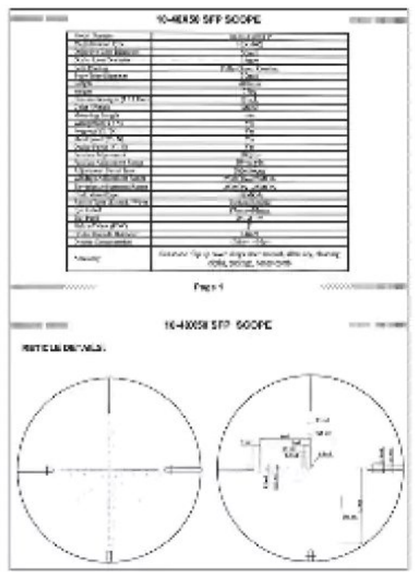

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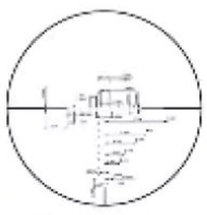

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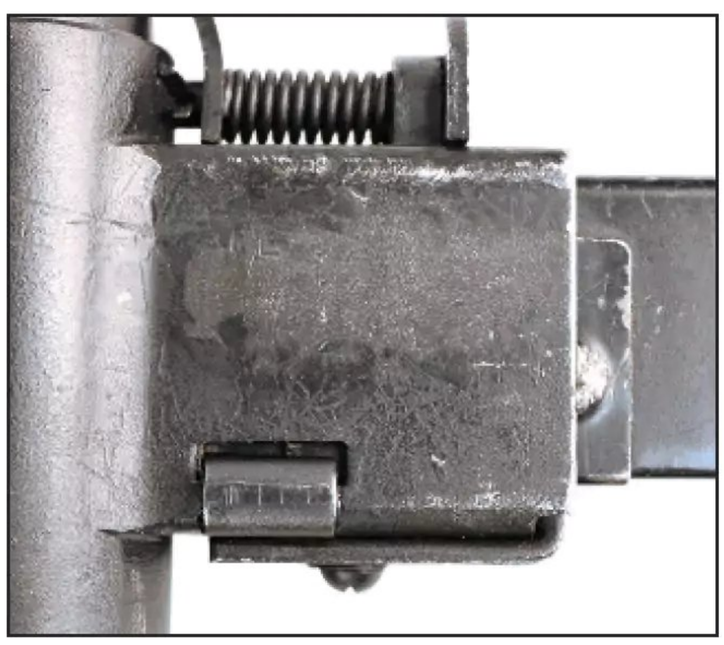
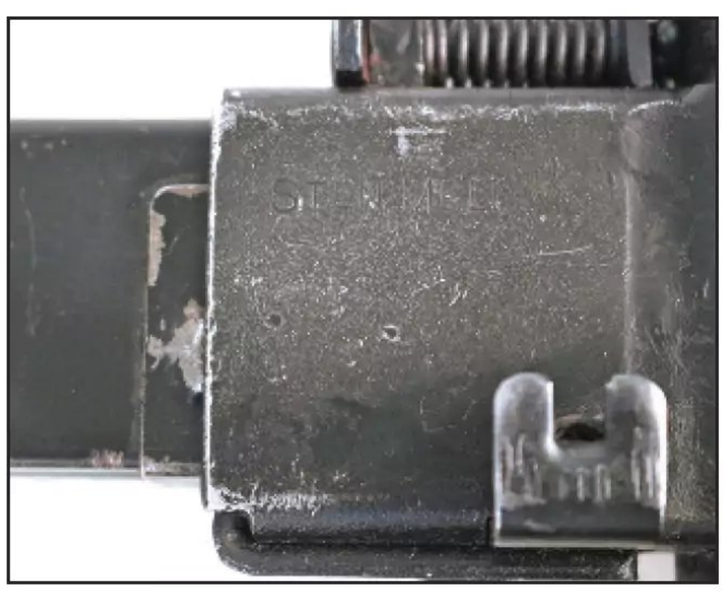
The British could buy 36 Sten guns (bottom) for the cost of a single M1928A1 Thompson. And they didn't have to sneak them past German U-boats in the North Atlantic.

The sound-suppressed Sten Mk II(S) was indeed a prescient design. It would be decades before the rest of the world caught up.





The magwell on the Sten Mk II rotated around to seal the ejection port. Original wartime Stens had very few markings.

hands, because of the way the receiver is formed. Roughly half of the total production run was the Mk II. The Mk V was a similar gun that sported fenced sights along with wooden furniture. The sound-suppressed Mk II(S) and Mk VI versions were light-years ahead of their time. All Stens operated around a common chassis.

The Mk V is the most refined of the various marks. Curiously, the receivers of the Mk II and the Mk V are not interchangeable. The basic tube is the same, but the relief cuts are made in different places. The fire control unit on the Mk V rests 1.3 inches farther forward than that of the Mk II. All these issues are surmountable, but it takes a little engineering to do so. I found that out myself when I built a Mk V out of a virgin transferable Wilson Arms Mk II tube.

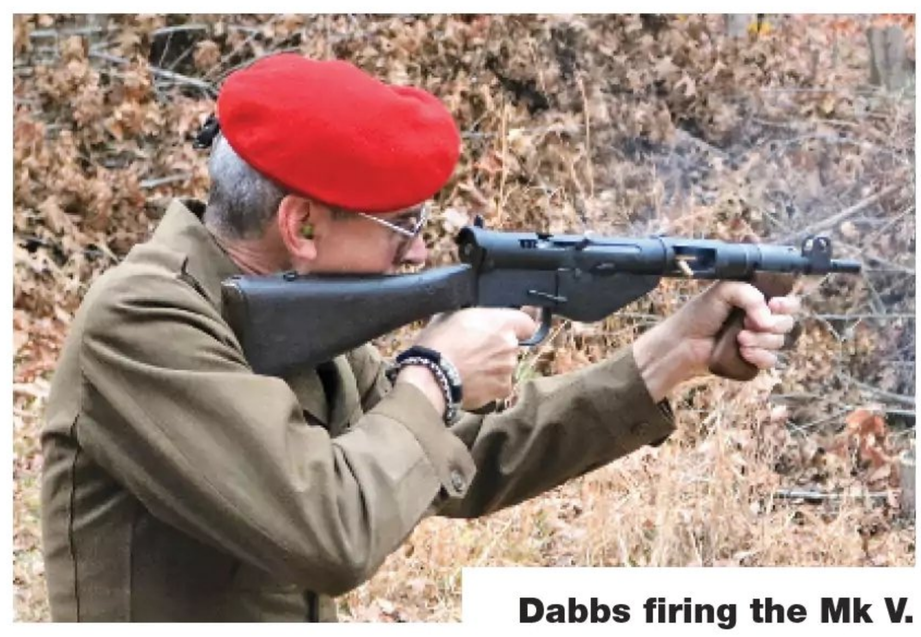
The Sten gun hits way above its weight, particularly when compared to more expensive weapons like the American Thompson and the German MP40. It is crude and ugly, but the comatose 550 rpm rate of fire makes burst control easy. That makes the Sten the perfect civilian starter MG.

Modern Treatment

Transferable machineguns in America come in two broad flavors. Most transferable Stens were produced by American gunsmiths prior to 1986 using demilled wartime parts kits and seamless muffler pipe. With more than four million militarily superfluous Sten guns floating around international arms markets, demilled parts kits have always been relatively cheap. I bought several for $60 apiece some fifteen or so years ago. The same attributes that made the gun easy to produce in wartime made it easy to produce by gunsmith hobbyists on this side of the pond. Prior to the 1986 ban, small American gun manufacturers registered Sten tubes by the thousands.

The BATF insisted that a certain amount of machine work be done prior to the 1986 cutoff to allow these tubes into the registry. You couldn't just serialize a piece of 1.5-inch drawn-over-mandrel tubing and call it good. Lots of 07/Class 2 shops made these things. A partial list includes: CATCO, DLO Mfg., Charles Erb, FAKTS, Fleming Firearms, Interport, John Stemple, Pearl Mfg., Qualified Mfg., S&H Arms, Silver Bullet (York), Specialty Weapons, Taylor

The Mk V was the most refined member of the Sten family.



Dabbs firing the Mk V.

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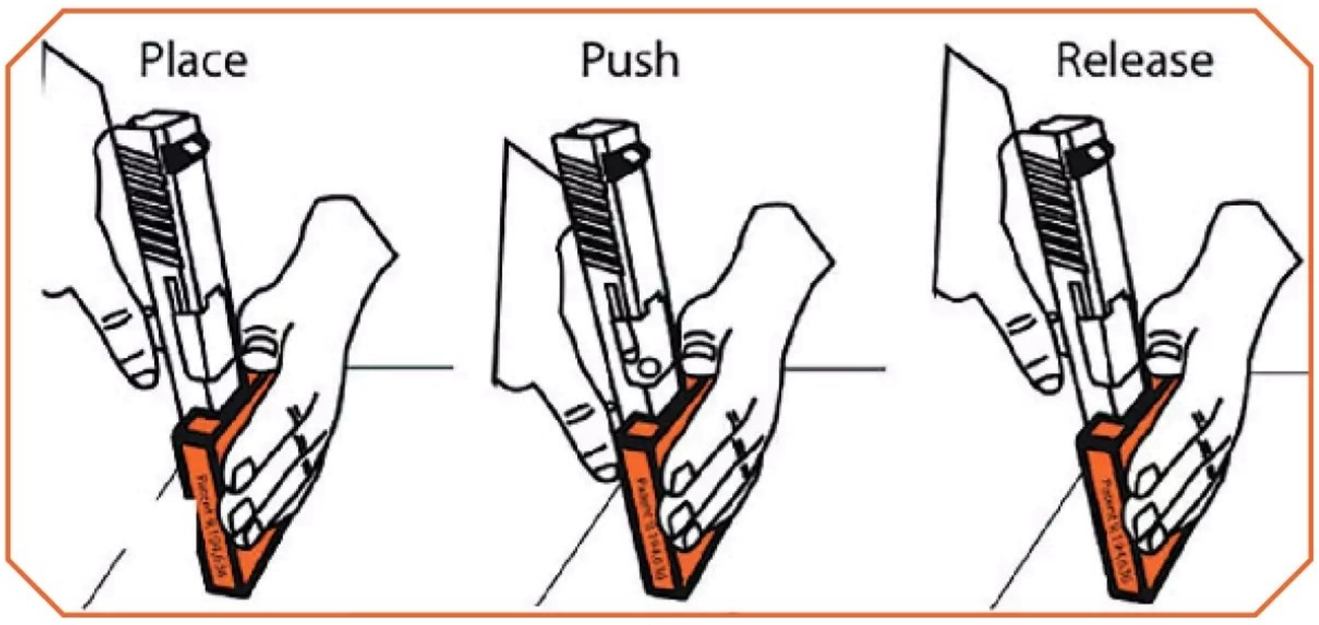

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The Mk II Sten field stripped into four components, making it relatively easy to conceal.

Original factory Sten guns often have this hole drilled in the receiver tube that can be used as a secondary safety when the charging handle is pressed inward.

Manufacturing, Wilson Arms, and York Arms. Stens (as well as other models like the Sterling SMG), when manufactured with tube steel and parts kits, by US gun firms, are known as "tube guns."

There are those who might split hairs over the quality of production, but that really doesn't much matter in this case. The Sten was an intentionally forgiving design. If somebody did a poor job assembling one of these guns, it doesn't take a great deal of talent to strip the tube down and redo it. So long as the slots are pretty close and you have a magazine it likes, the gun should run.

A smaller subset of the population is comprised of original WWII-vintage guns most commonly brought home by GIs serving overseas back when that was legal, but only if there was no magazine, or other major part which facilitated full-auto fire (like the bolt), present with the gun. However, these "bring backs" would have had to be registered under the one-time amnesty program in 1968. Original guns are classified as C&R, short for curio and relic. The BATF defines C&R guns as original firearms over fifty years old. As a result, each year a new crop of legacy weapons is added to the C&R list. Such a designation means that you can transfer these weapons via a C&R FFL.

Every firearms enthusiast needs a C&R FFL. They cost ten bucks a year, and the application process is no more onerous than that required to buy a sound suppressor. You can then have old C&R guns shipped straight to your door. In the case of transferable machineguns, all of the NFA (National Firearms Act) rules still apply. However, if buying a gun from an individual in another state, having a C&R FFL means you avoid one of the two stupid $200 transfer taxes.

Prior to the 1986 ban, a transferable Sten cost about $150 in the mid 1980s. That would be about $440 in today's money. According to Machinegun PriceGuide.com, these guns were selling for around $3,000 in 2004. In the first quarter of 2024, transferable Sten "tube guns" were running between $9,000 and $12,000. Original C&R guns, which had to be imported before the 1968 Gun Control Act, were closer to $18,000. All transferable machineguns are expensive, but the Sten is, believe it or not, cheaper than most.

Another curious angle on the Sten saga is the Stenling. Stenlings are Sterling submachineguns built up on transferable Sten tubes. As the overall geometry is almost but not quite the same, the BATF has blessed this enterprise so long as the receiver slots aren't molested. Building a Sterling out of a Sten tube takes some serious talent. The conversion involves a fair amount of silver soldering to affix the Sterling parts to the host receiver. From the user's perspective, so long as the conversion is done well and the appropriate crinkle finish applied, Stenlings are essentially indistinguishable from the originals.

Despite being crude, ugly, desperate, and awkward, the Sten gun was nonetheless still an exceptionally cost-effective close combat tool. The same attributes that helped the Sten save Great Britain during WWII make it a desirable NFA investment today. FN

The Sten was the very image of simplicity. The gun was designed from the outset to be easy to manufacture in basic machine shops.

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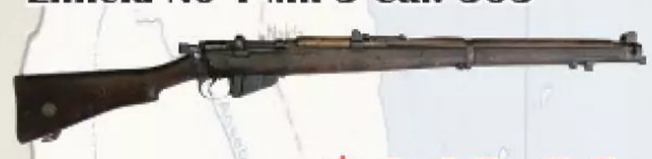

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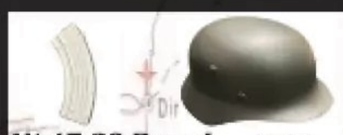

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SPANISH RUBY PISTOLS

Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures!

Photos by James Walters, Paul Budde & Becky Scarlata

Poland, 1944. Members of the Polish Home Army during the Warsaw Uprising. The fighter in the foreground is armed with a Ruby pistol.

World War I is often referred to as a "Handgun War" because the typical infantry rifle was ill suited to the unique conditions of the conflict. In the close confines of a trench, or when crawling through barbed wire entanglements, a long, bayoneted rifle was a hindrance and troops soon realized that a pistol or revolver was a necessity. However, most armies lacked sufficient handguns to equip their rapidly expanding forces.

The situation in *l'armée française* was especially desperate. France's standard issue sidearm, the Revolver d'Ordnance Modéle 1892, could not be produced in sufficient quantities to meet demand. The French ordered revolvers from a number of Basque gun makers in Spain who delivered copies of Smith & Wesson and Colt revolvers chambered for the standard 8mm Cartouche d'Ordnance Mle. 1892 revolver cartridge, but high levels of battlefield attrition meant that more weapons were needed—right now!

The mountainous region around the city of Eibar in northeastern Spain had long been a center of firearms production based upon cottage type industries where a "company" would subcontract out the production of various components to small shops who would deliver them to a central location for fitting and assembly.

Due to Spain's lax patent laws, Eibar's Basque gunmakers were notorious for the manufacture of unlicensed copies firearms. Shortly after the introduction of the first successful semiauto pistols, Basque gunmakers began production of simple, blowback-operated pistols chambered for the 7,65mm Browning (.32 ACP) cartridge that combined features of FN's Modéle 1903 and Colt's M1903 designs, which the Basques simplified to radically degree to reduce production costs and time.

First of all, Basque pistols possessed none of the fine lines and ergonomics of the FN/Colt, and most display a

The standard French handgun in 1914 was the Revolver d'Ordnance Modéle 1892.

92 Espagnol revolvers were provided to the French by a number of Basque gunmakers. (Photo courtesy of Jean Huon)

The Garate, Anitua y Cia's rear sight was basic in the extreme and non-adjustable.

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Collector Tim Hawkins' Garate, Anitua y Cia pistol we test fired for this article differed little in genre, but the quality of manufacture appeared better than many Ruby type pistols I have examined. Note the large lanyard ring.

Ruby pistols could be disassembled into five basic components rather quickly. Note the rather massive construction of the various parts.

1917. French soldiers of the "Groupe de Bombardiers du 163° Régiment d'Infanterie" on the Vosges front, all are equipped with Ruby pistols. And in one case, with a pair of Ruby pistols. (Courtesy of Jean Claude Fombaron)

squared off silhouette with steep grip to frame angle. They replaced the Browning's efficient, but difficult to produce, thumb and grip safeties with a simple lever on the left side of the frame which, when rotated up 45 degrees, blocked trigger movement and did double duty as a slide hold open lever to help disassemble the pistol.

Like the FN/Colt, the Basque pistols had the recoil spring located in the frame under the barrel where it was secured by a guide rod, greatly simplifying the machining of the interior of the slide. Other areas where they copied Browning were a heel style magazine release, ribs on the barrel which mated to grooves on the frame to secure the two units together and a shrouded, internal hammer.

A distinctive feature on some pistols are curved grasping grooves at the rear of the slide which could be cut quickly, and cheaply, with a simple lathe. Because of their place of origin, these handguns became known generically as "Eibar" pistols.

One of the most prominent manufacturers of Eibar pistols was a firm with the typically unpronounceable Basque name of Gabilondo y Urresti, which marketed their pistols in Latin America, the Balkans, and in the Far East under the trademark name "Ruby."

In 1915, Gabilondo offered the desperate French army the Ruby, and quickly obtained a contract for delivery of 10,000 pistols per month. As the situation on the Western Front worsened, the contract was changed to 30,000 pistols per month, which was upped a few months later to 50,000.

While Gabilondo's bank manager must had been ecstatic, it quickly dawned upon Señores Gabilondo and Urresti that their small company (they only had about ten employees in 1914) could not possibly supply such numbers by themselves and they made agreements with a number of other Eibar gunmakers each of whom agreed to produce 5,000 pistols per month for Gabilondo who would oversee the process and be responsible for assuring that standards of quality control were enforced.

Pistols sold to the French had a one- or two-letter mark in an oval on the rear left of the frame which identified the manufacturer, irrespective of trademark name. They were stamped with a star or pair of stars on the bottom of the frame next to the magazine well when they were formally accepted for French service.

As the French—and later the Italians, Serbians, Rumanians and Greeks—clamored for Eibar pistols, additional subcontractors were taken onboard until, but 1918, there were no fewer than thirty-seven companies were either providing pistols to Gabilondo or selling them directly to the Allied armies.[1]

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A French gunner poses with Fusils Mitrailleur Modele 1915 CSRG (the much hated "Chauchat") and Ruby pistols.

The circled "AK" on the rear of the frame indicates this is an Alkartasuma-made pistol.

Three variants of the "Ruby" pistol. The top pistol with the extended barrel and the one below it with the short grip were made by Fabrica de Armas Alkartasuna. The bottom pistol is a wartime production by Azanza y Arrizabalaga. (Courtesy Rock Island Auction Co.)

As each company subcontracted out the production of their own components, the result were pistols whose quality ranged from good to abysmal, while interchangeability of parts was a non-existent concept. Many minor variants exist: e.g. shorter grips for seven-round magazines; longer barrels and slides; barrels that extend past the slide; different shaped grip frames, etc.

In French service, the 7,65mm Browning was known as the Cartouche de 7,65 pour P.A. and consisted of a straight-walled, semi-rimmed case 17mm long whose 71-grain. FMJ bullet was propelled to 900 fps. While the Americans and British felt it was too weak to be a serious military cartridge, most European armies and police forces felt it was a perfectly adequate, close range defensive cartridge.

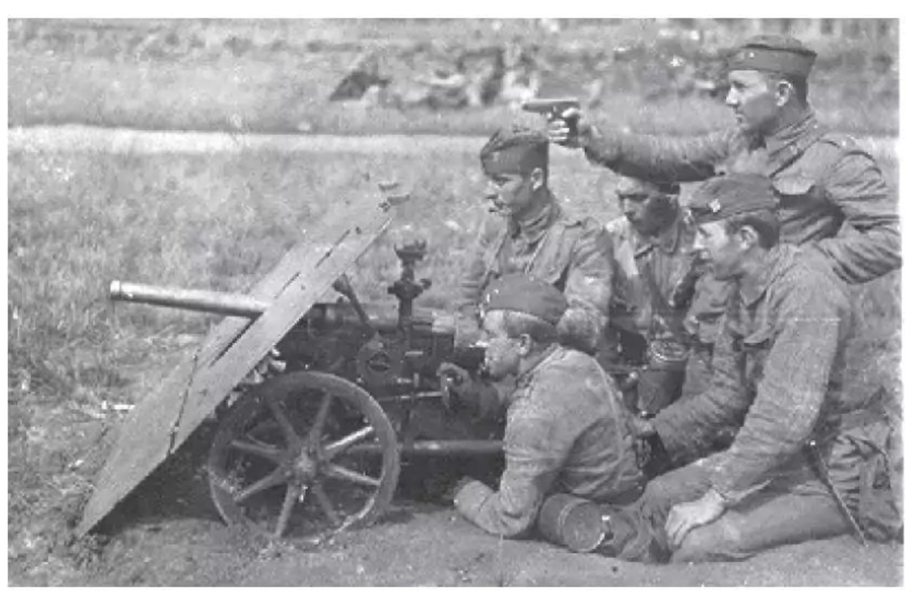
As demand continued to grow, the quality of some pistols fell even further with many being delivered with poorly heat-treated parts which led to high levels of breakage—and thus demand for more pistols. Wait a minute, do you see a pattern here?

While these were indeed good times for the gunmakers of Eibar, the poor quality of many of the French contract pistols would stigmatize Spanish handguns as cheap and unreliable for decades to come.

Regardless of who made them, in French service these pistols were known as the 7,65mm Pistolet Automatique Type Ruby, and were issued by the tens of thousands to officers and enlisted. By the time the Great War ended, the French had purchased in excess of 700,000 Eibar pistols and they saw wide service on all fronts.

In the post-war years, the French continued to issue the Ruby to their army and police forces, in addition to supplying pistols to their new "allies" Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland where they saw service during the civil wars and border clashes of the 1920s and '30s. During the 1930s, the French army reconditioned many Ruby pistols, riveting a stud to the left side of the slide which prevented the safety from accidentally disengaging when the pistol was thrust into a holster. After WWI, Finland purchased 10,000 Ruby pistols from France (7,65mm Pistooli M19) which saw service during the "Winter War" (1939–1940) against the Soviet Union. It is estimated that in

1917. French trench raiders armed with Ruby pistols and daggers.



A Czech anti-tank gun crew in the early 1930s. The officer is holding a French supplied Ruby pistol. (Courtesy of Solomon Adler)

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In the 1930s, most Ruby pistols still in service with the French army had a stud riveted on the slide to prevent the safety from being pushed off when the pistol was thrust into a holster. (Courtesy Ian McCollum of ForgottenWeapons.com)

1939. Finnish officers during the Winter War. The man on the left is wearing a holstered Ruby pistol. (SA-KUVA)

1937. A Spanish Republican fighter poses with his family. His daughter is holding a Ruby-type pistol.

excess of one million Ruby/Eibar type pistols were manufactured before the general breakdown of industry during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

When World War II erupted, many French reservists were still equipped with Ruby pistols. After the Fall of France, many of these surrendered pistols were issued German occupation forces as the 7,65mm Pistole 624(f). Ruby pistols also saw wide use with the army and police of the collaborationist Vichy government—and Free French military units and resistance forces. Some even showed up—on both sides—during the post-war colonial conflicts in Indochina and Algeria.

Fellow collector Tim Hawkins kindly lent me a Gárate & Anitua y Cia pistol to photograph. It was fitted with a lanyard ring, had large sights, and one of the most horrible triggers I've ever felt. It was sadly lacking in the ergonomics department, the steep grip to frame angle made it necessary to consciously lift the muzzle when aiming; the safety lever was poorly positioned and difficult to manipulate; and the sharp lip of the magazine base plate galled the shooter's hand.

Markings on the left side of the slide included, "PISTOLA AUTOMATIC CALIBRE 7^{65}" surmounting "GÁRATE ANITUA & CIA - EIBAR (ESPANA)." At the left, rear of the frame was the manufacturer's code "G.N." in an oval while stars were stamped on either side of the magazine release proving this had indeed been issued to the French army during WWI.

Considering the age and condition of this Pistolet Basque, I decided to err on the side of caution and did not test fire it. After all, discretion is the better part of damaging someone else's pistol. Or myself! In conclusion, I must admit that even though Ruby pistols were quite possibly the most widely used combat handguns of World War I, I can find few redeeming things to say about them. If I was a mud splattered, Gauloises smoking Poilu I would have gotten my hands on a Modéle 1892 revolver even if I had to beg, borrow, buy, or steal one.

—

I would like thank the following for providing materials and information used to prepare this report: Tim Hawkins, Jean Claude Fombaron, Jean Claude Kempf, Thompson Knox, Jean Huon, Eugene Medlin and Ian McCollum. FN

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1 A complete list of makers of the Ruby-type pistols can be found at: https://www.gunboards.com/threads/pistolet-automatique-de-7-millim%EF%BF%BDtre-65-genre-ruby.88044/?id=88044

1944. Members of the French resistance man barricades during the Paris Uprising. Several of them are armed with Ruby-type pistols.

SPECIFICATIONS
7,65MM PISTOLET AUTOMATIQUE TYPE RUBY (GÁRATE, ANITUA Y CIA)

Caliber:	Cartouche de 7,65 pour P.A.
Overall Length:	6 in.
Barrel Length:	3.125 in.
Weight (Unloaded):	30 oz.
Magazine:	9 rounds
Sights:	Front: Blade Rear: V notch
Grips:	Checkered wood

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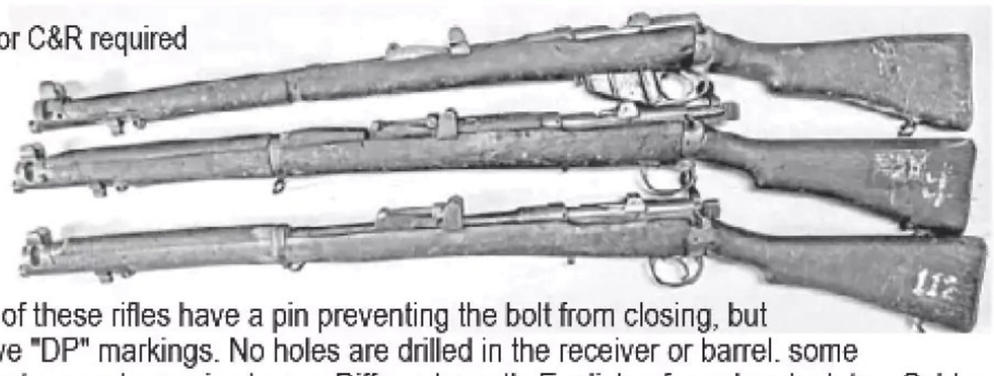

Many of these rifles have a pin preventing the bolt from closing, but all have "DP" markings. No holes are drilled in the receiver or barrel. some appear to even have nice bores. Different mostly English mfg and early dates. Sold as is. A treasure trove for only **$74.88.** $20.00 hand select while supplies last.

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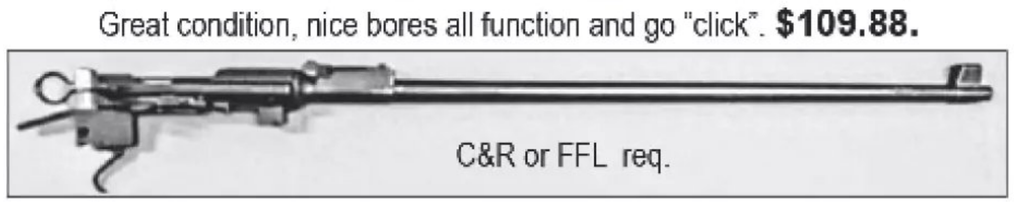

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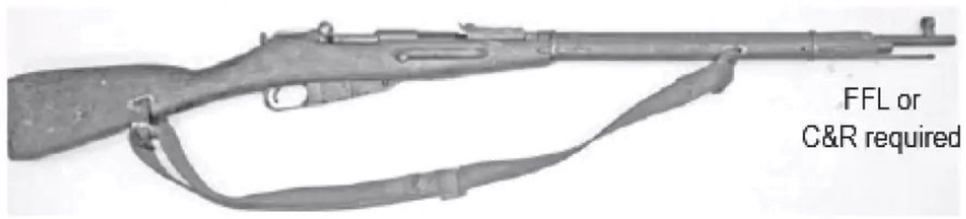

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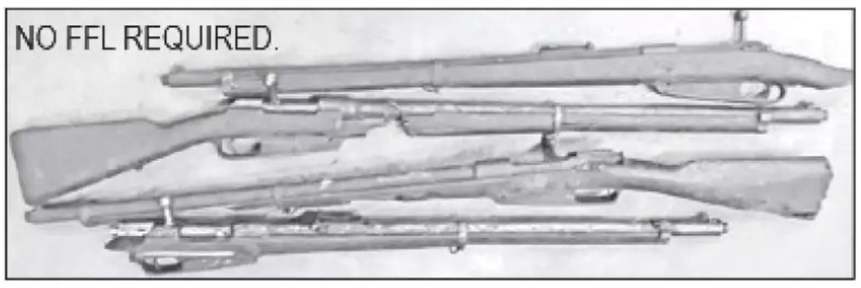

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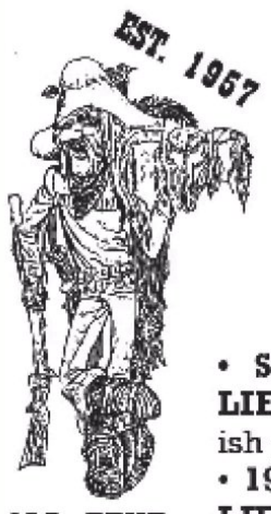

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THE KUNA

How Does This New 9x19mm PDW from Springfield Armory Stack Up?

By David M. Fortier, Executive Editor
Photography by Ashley Jaderborg

Firearms News Editor-in-Chief Vincent DeNiro calls them a "bag gun," referring to a compact piece small enough to be carried discreetly in a modest bag or pack for personal protection. Often pistol caliber, "bag guns" are intended to provide "a bit more" than your normal concealed handgun, which they complement. Their purpose? Specifically they have a higher hit probability than a typical CCW pistol, but without the length, bulk and weight of a rifle. DeNiro, a former deputy sheriff, also likes the intimidation factor of a submachine gun-looking firearm as well.

I typically refer to something along these lines as a personal defense weapon (PDW), but no matter what you call it, they can be a valuable addition for personal protection.

One new offering along these lines is the Kuna from Springfield Armory. This is a modern looking pistol available in 9x19mm with a number of interesting features. A compact piece with very well laid out controls, it is designed to be easy to operate and user friendly. Unlike the norm though, this design's method of operation is not straight blow-back. Rather it features a roller-delayed system. A good looking piece that is sure to turn heads, I was interested to examine it and see how it performed.

Let's begin this review by taking a quick look at Springfield Armory's partner manufacturing the Kuna for them, HS Produkt of Karlovac, Croatia. Neither Springfield Armory nor HS Produkt is unfamiliar to me. I purchased my first 7.62mm M1A rifle from Springfield Armory many moons ago when I was in high school. Looking at some old notes, I see that I reviewed my first HS Produkt firearm, the HS2000 9mm pistol, back in May of 2000. 25 years ago the company was known as IM Metal, and

(Lead and cover photo by Andy Grossman)

no one at the time suspected their polymer pistol would become such a success.

The Hrvatski Samokres 2000 (Croatian Pistol 2000) was actually the third pistol IM Metal had designed and manufactured. The company was established in the town of Ozalj which is a short drive southwest of Croatia's capital, Zagreb. It began as a privately owned company manufacturing industrial metal parts. The company designed and produced its first service pistol, the PHP, in 1991 amidst wartime conditions. The PHP, while a good design, had some disadvantages due to the conditions under which it was produced.

In 1993, IM Metal began development of a new model, the HS95. This pistol featured a 15-round magazine, new safety, and new firing pin construction, among other

New from Springfield Armory is the 9mm Kuna pistol, seen here with its optional brace.

◀ "Bag guns" continue to grow in popularity and the Kuna is compact enough to carry discreetly for personal protection.

▲ The Kuna features a roller-delayed blowback operating system and a six-inch barrel.

changes allowed by the continued development of improved production technology. Designed by a team of engineers led by Marko Vuković, the HS95 evolved into the HS2000. This new service pistol was developed specifically for military use and it was subsequently adopted by the Croatian Armed Forces as well as their police.

Introduced in 1999, the HS2000 became a commercial success and was imported into the US. In 2001 IM Metal changed its name to HS Produkt. It wasn't long before the design was noticed by Springfield Armory. Recognizing the pistol's potential, Springfield Armory worked with HS Produkt, gave it a facelift and introduced it to American shooters as the XD or eXtreme Duty in 2002. Since its introduction into the US, the XD has proven very popular and been hugely successful for both HS Produkt and Springfield Armory.

Springfield Armory's new Kuna is another interesting product from HS Produkt. Available as a select-fire submachine

The Kuna can be carried in a bag, but the 30-round mag is a bit long, a 15 or 20-rounder would be a better option for an initial magazine.

A look at the Kuna's bolt (shown upside down here) and its top-mounted roller-delayed locking system.

gun for military and LE use and as a semi-automatic pistol for armed citizens, I will focus on the semi-automatic version now available in the US. Kuna is "Marten" in Croatian, referring to the small European Pine Marten, a carnivorous animal, which happens to be one of the national symbols of Croatia. The pine marten also appeared on the currency of Croatia, also known as the kuna, from 1994 until it was replaced by the Euro in 2023.

To examine the various features on the new Kuna, and try it on the range, I requested a sample on short-term loan from Springfield Armory. This was then returned to Springfield Armory after testing. I was interested to see how user-friendly the new design is, how the controls are placed, and what the recoil impulse is like. I was also interested to see how it compares to legacy designs. The most obvious design to compare it to is the HK MP5 and its various modern semi-automatic clones such as Century Arms' MKE manufactured AP5, or the MAC 5 from SDS Arms. How does the Kuna stack up to the competition?

I was also interested to see how Springfield Armory's new Kuna would perform as a PDW carried discreetly off body in something like a messenger bag. Back in 2017, I wrote about PDWs and my thoughts on what would be desirable for the armed citizen. In that article, I published a list of 10 desirable features for a "bag gun" to have. I was looking

The Kuna is available both with a Strike Industries FSA folding arm stabilizing brace and without.

The arm brace seems fairly robust and locks solidly into place.

The six-inch barrel is fitted with a multi-port muzzle brake to reduce felt recoil. Note the M-Lok slots.

▲ The Kuna features two sets of folding sights for use when firing it as a traditional pistol and as seen here, for when using a brace.

► A look at the open "U" notch rear sight.

for a complement, not a replacement, for my daily carried concealed carry pistol. Here are my thoughts from 2017:

1. **Very compact-** This was the most important part, it needed to be small enough to easily carry stored inside a small bag. Desired length was less than 15 inches.
2. **Reliable-**The design needed to be well proven, robust and reliable.
3. **Chambered for a common and effective cartridge-** It needed to be chambered for a cartridge which was economical to buy and practice with yet terminally effective.
4. **High hit probability-** It needed to have a higher hit probability than a handgun, which dictated the need for a shoulder stock or a brace.
5. **Capable of mounting modern accessories-** A red dot sight, white light, sound suppressor and other modern accessories are required as they can increase survivability.
6. **Adequate reach-** A minimum effective range of 100 yards was needed.
7. **Well-supported-** I wanted spare parts and aftermarket support readily available.
8. **Light weight-** A maximum unloaded weight of 4.5 pounds was desired.
9. **Blue collar price-** The price needed to be within reach of a blue-collar worker.
10. **High capacity magazines-** It needed to have magazines with a capacity of 20+ rounds readily available at an economical price.

The Kuna features a monolithic aluminum upper receiver which houses the roller-delayed operating system.

The non-reciprocating charging handle is comfortable to operate and easy to reach.

Basically, I was looking for a very compact firearm I could carry discreetly in a small bag, in addition to the pistol on my hip. Over the years, I have tried a number of different designs as possible solutions. These include Kel-Tec's SUB-2000 in 9x19mm, Century Arms imported MKE manufactured 9mm AP5-P MP5K clone, a Glock 35 (9mm, .357 SIG and .40 S&W) in a Flux Defense chassis, SIG Sauer 300 AAC BLK Rattler with 5.5 inch barrel, and a Glock 19 (9mm) in a Micro Roni chassis. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. If size and weight is of

Controls are ambidextrous and mirrored on each side.

paramount importance, the Glock in a Flux chassis gets the nod. If size and weight are less important, SIG's Rattler provides 300 BLK performance. For an all-around solution, Century Arms' AP5-P (MP5K clone), with B&T collapsible stock, is hard to beat.

What about Springfield Armory's Kuna? At first glance, it is a more modern design compared to the Cold War era MP5 series. When HKs roller-lock system was developed, everyone was right-handed, bolts didn't need to lock-open on the last round, and stamped sheet metal welded together was considered high tech. Times change. The Kuna is constructed using modern manufacturing techniques and features ambidextrous controls.

The Kuna is being launched in 9mm but I suspect other calibers will soon follow. Operation is not by the typical blowback system, but rather the Kuna utilizes a roller-delayed operating system. Utilizing a roller-delayed system reduces the reciprocating mass and felt recoil. The reduction in weight also contributes to the Kuna's handling. Initially, two basic models will be offered, one with a Strike Industries FSA folding arm stabilizing brace as seen here, and one without a brace but with a MIL STD 1913 rail at the back of the receiver.

Ambidextrous controls make operating the Kuna fast and easy. Note the bolt locks back on an empty magazine.

Barrel length is a short, but not too short at six inches. The barrel is cold radial hammer forged, Melonite coated for corrosion resistance, features a one turn in ten inches rifling twist and 1/2x28 threads at the muzzle. The Kuna comes fitted with a multi-port muzzle brake. So, the end-user has the option to use the factory muzzle brake or swap to a different muzzle device or a sound suppressor using the 1/2x28 muzzle threads.

The barrel mounts to a monolithic aluminum upper receiver which is Type III hardcoat anodized. This features an integral full-length MIL STD 1913 rail at 12 o'clock and M-LOK slots at 3, 6 and 9 o'clock. This facilitates easy mounting of optics and accessories. The ejection port is located on the right side of the blocky upper receiver while the fixed ejector is bolted to the left side. Two slots run down the left and right side of the upper receiver for the non-reciprocating low-profile folding charging handle. This is nicely contoured, spring-loaded, and folds neatly out of the way when released. It can be mounted onto either the left or right side of the receiver depending on the desires of the user.

The polymer lower receiver attaches to the upper receiver by two cross-pins, similar to an AR-15. The controls consist of a bolt catch/release, magazine release and safety lever which are mirrored on the left and right side for ambidextrous use. The safety is placed similar to an AR-15 and is very easy to manipulate from safe to fire and back again without having to change your grip. The magazine release is a push button and placed similar to an AR-15 so it is easy to operate with your trigger finger. The bolt catch/release sits above the magazine release and can be used to lock the bolt to the rear or to release it. It is easily manipulated with your trigger finger or the thumb of your non-dominant hand as you change magazines. The pistol grip is textured for a secure hold and can be replaced if you so desire with an AR-15 pistol grip.

The Kuna strips easily for cleaning with no tools required.

The Kuna is very easy to take down, and I did it easily without instructions. After removing the magazine and verifying the pistol is empty with no round in the chamber, you simply push the two captured take-down pins out, remove the lower receiver, and slide the back plate of the receiver down until it can be easily removed. This allows the captured recoil spring assembly with its guide rod and buffer to be removed. Then the bolt can be withdrawn.

With the bolt in hand, if you look at the top of the bolt assembly above and forward of the breech face you'll see a simple spring-loaded stainless steel roller. This drops into a recess in the top of the barrel above the chamber. The roller delays the bolt opening hence the term "roller delayed" blowback. Keeping the bolt closed longer is also a plus if you are shooting suppressed, as there is less chance for gas to escape out the ejection port. The overall design appears simple, robust and easy to maintain.

A look inside the Kuna's lower receiver and at the magazine's steel feed lips.

The sample I received on loan for review is chambered in 9x19mm Parabellum. I prefer the 9x19mm cartridge over other common service pistol handgun cartridges for a few basic reasons. Chief among these are availability and cost of ammunition. Both economical training ammunition and modern expanding personal protection loads are widely available. 9mm FMJ ammunition is less expensive than other calibers, facilitating economical practice. In my opinion, this is extremely important. More range times leads to greater proficiency. The 9mm cartridge has mild recoil, is easy to suppress, has both subsonic and supersonic loads readily available, and is capable of excellent accuracy with high-quality ammunition. With modern defensive ammunition, it can be effectively employed at 50+ yards.

Springfield Armory's Kuna feeds from detachable polymer magazines with a capacity of 30 rounds. The design is double-column with dual-feed, so they are easy to load cartridges into by hand. The design appears robust and features stainless steel feed lips. The magazines are translucent and feature round count numbers on both sides. The follower activates a bolt hold-open on the last round. Magazines insert and lock into place with a simple upward push into the magazine well and drop free with the push of a button. The Kuna ships with two 30-round magazines.

To check the Kuna's performance, I collected four different 9mm loads. These consisted of Black Hills Ammunition's 115-grain TAC-XP +P, SIG Sauer's 124-grain V-Crown JHP, and Federal's 150-grain Syntech subsonic. To these three modern loads, I added Wolf Performance Ammunition's steel case 115-grain FMJ. These four loads were intended to both check the Kuna's accuracy and reliability.

▲ The single-stage trigger is a bit "mushy" on its initial take-up, but it has a nice reset.

Best accuracy was achieved using Federal's 150-grain Syntech load.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA —
50-YARD ACCURACY AND VELOCITY CHART

Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	SD	Group (in.)
Black Hills Ammunition TAC-XP +P	115	1,299	21	3.5
Wolf FMJ	115	1,291	31	4.8
SIG Sauer V-Crown JHP	124	1,288	17	3.9
Federal's Syntech	150	947	21	3.2

Groups are an average of four 5-shot groups fired from a rest at 50 yards. Velocity readings recorded using a LabRadar Doppler chronograph at an ambient temperature of 77 degrees F at 1,030 feet above Sea Level.

► Practical accuracy of the Kuna is very good as this five-shot group, fired offhand, at 25 yards shows.

Accuracy testing was conducted from off a bag on my bench. I would expect most who buy a Kuna will outfit it with some type of red dot sight, so I mounted an Aimpoint H-1 in a LaRue Tactical mount. A quick zero on a steel silhouette and I got to work. Accuracy testing was then conducted at 50 yards with four five-shot groups fired with each load and velocity measured using a LabRadar Doppler chronograph.

As I began testing, I noted rounds load easily into the magazine until the last two rounds, which require a bit more force. Magazines lock securely into place with a firm upward push. The ambidextrous controls make operating the Kuna simple and straight-forward. The bolt retracts easily and the charging handle is nicely contoured, comfortable in the hand, and automatically folds out of the way when released. The bolt catch/release, mag release, and safety are all well-placed and easy to reach from a firing grip. Handling-wise, the Kuna feels good with an overall length of just 16.5 inches with the brace folded, and 24.25 inches with it extended and a weight of just five pounds five ounces.

Rounds load smoothly into the chamber, and I found the pistol grip comfortable in the hand. The Aimpoint H-1 provides a nice clean dot for aiming. Getting to work, I noted the trigger is straight with a nearly flat face. The trigger pull is slightly long and what James Tarr best described as "mushy," but not gritty or heavy. The reset is short though and total pull weight is 5.5 pounds on my sample. The operating cycle of the Kuna is smooth and it is a very comfortable and fun pistol to fire.

Accuracy from the bench was quite good at 50 yards. Federal's 150-grain Syntech subsonic load provided the best accuracy averaging 3.2 inches at 947 fps. Black Hills Ammunition's 115-grain TAC-XP +P averaged 3.5 inches at 1,299 fps, while SIG Sauer's 124-grain V-Crown JHP averaged 3.9 inches at 1,288 fps. Wolf's 115-grain steel case FMJ load averaged 4.8 inches at 1,291 fps. Following my 50-yard groups on paper, I next engaged steel silhouettes from the bench at 80 and 100 yards. The Kuna/Aimpoint combination proved capable of making consistent hits on a silhouette at 100 yards without issue.

Moving from the bench, I ran the Kuna through a variety of drills shooting from seven to 100 yards offhand, kneeling, rice paddy prone (squatting), and prone off the magazine. It was during these drills that the Kuna really showed the thought that went into the design. I noticed it is a very smooth shooting piece compared to a typical blowback 9mm PCC. It's easy to make rapid multiple hits with due to how easy it is to control.

The bolt locks back on the last shot and the magazine drops free with the push of a button.

Thanks to its short length and relatively light weight, the Kuna is easy to carry and fast to get into action.

Operating the Kuna is faster and easier than an MP5 due to the modern well-placed controls; the bolt hold-open and the bolt release levers, magazines also drop free with the push of a button rather than needing to be tugged free. The mag well design facilitates faster magazine insertions compared to a MP5. I also find the safety is easier to reach and manipulate compared to an MP5.

Once it is unlimbered and in the game, the Kuna provides a definite advantage over a typical carry pistol such as a Glock 19. How? The Kuna is easier to make rapid hits with, especially as the distance to the target increases. Hitting a man-sized silhouette at 25, 50, 75, and 100 yards with the Kuna is substantially faster and easier than with many handguns. Basically, it provides a higher hit probability. Making precise hits at distance, such as head shots, is also easier.

My experience with Springfield Armory's new Kuna was positive. It proved soft shooting, easy to operate, accurate and reliable. No issues were encountered during testing. The one negative to the Kuna is the need for a proprietary magazine. If you are heavily invested in MP5, Glock, Colt-pattern, or other magazines, well, here is another to add to your pile.

The Kuna appears well-made, but only time will tell how it holds up to long term use. Yes, it is only a 9mm and lacks the exterior ballistics, penetration, and terminal performance of a rifle. However, it is substantially less expensive to shoot and train with than a 5.7x28mm, 5.56x45mm, 300 AAC BLK, or 7.62x39mm. The MSRP of the Kuna without the brace is $999 and with the brace is $1,149.

While not inexpensive, the Kuna is an option to consider to complement your CCW when a full-size rifle is simply too much. Plus, from a recreational standpoint, my time on the range with it proved very relaxing and enjoyable. Shooting doesn't always have to be serious, it can be fun too. When it comes to fun, the Kuna proved to be a real winner. FN

SPECIFICATIONS
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA

Caliber:	9mm
Operation:	Roller-delayed Blowback, Semi-Automatic
Barrel Length:	6 in. w/Melonite finish
Barrel Twist:	1-10, RH twist
Trigger:	Single-Stage, 5.5 lbs.
Feed:	Detachable 30-round box magazine
Overall Length:	16.5 in. collapsed, 24.25 in. ext.
Weight:	5 lbs., 5 oz.
Sights:	Open and aperture flip sights
Finish:	Hard Coat Anodized
Accessories Included:	Two 30-round magazines, cable lock, manual
MSRP:	$1,149 ($999 without brace)
Contact:	(800) 680-6866, Springfield-Armory.com

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V FOR VICTORY!

Smith & Wesson's Spec Series V M&P Pistol

By James Tarr

Smith & Wesson's Spec Series has been various fancy iterations of the M&P, and the latest, the Spec Series V (as in Roman numeral 5) is the biggest, the heaviest, and the most likely to grab your attention.

Both the 3rd (2022) and 4th (2023) generation Spec Series guns are still available, but with the V, S&W really decided to step it up a notch. All the Spec Series guns are produced by Smith & Wesson's Performance Center, offer looks and features just not available in other models, and are sold as packages with lots of extras nicely fitting into foam cutouts in locking hard cases. The 3rd gen Spec Series was built on a compact M&P with a polymer frame, extended threaded barrel, and offered in a Bull Shark Gray Cerakote. The 4th gen Spec Series was the first to feature S&W's new metal (aluminum)-framed M&P on a full-size model. It had an OD Green Cerakote finish and a small compensator. For the 5th gen S&W went even bigger and bolder.

The Spec Series V is a full-size M&P C.O.R.E. (optics ready) chambered in 9mm, with a steel frame, with an extended threaded 4⅞-inch barrel mounting a big compensator, and a removable steel magwell. It comes with three 23-round magazines, four backstraps, a nice liner-lock folding knife, and a challenge coin, all in a tough hard case. The frame and slide are dark gray Armornite (S&W's version of nitride), and certain controls and parts are multi-hued blue, the color the result of a PVD finish. The combination is perhaps even more impressive and striking in person than it is in photos.

Let's start with the base gun and work up from there. S&W introduced their first-generation M&P in 2006. It was an American-made polymer-framed striker-fired gun

You get everything you see here with the Spec Series V, including seven adapter plates for mounting just about every red dot on the market.

The fifth in S&W's Spec Series, the V is the first with a steel frame. It's made in S&W's new Maryville, TN facility.

The Spec Series V has a dark gray slide and frame with blue PVD accents and S&W's Performance Center upgrades.

You'll get some very stylish serrations with the V, as well as slide cutouts on the sides and top.

The aluminum compensator is made by Strike Industries, and user-removable. The barrel is fluted, and threaded, but not ported.

and has been a huge hit for them. It has been offered in .380 ACP, 9mm, .40 S&W, .45 ACP, and now 10mm, in everything from sub-compact pistols to full-size models. In 9mm, standard capacity in the full-size pistol is 17.

After a decade or so, S&W introduced the second-generation M&P, the M&P M2.0. These pistols featured a reduced beavertail, improved grip texturing and slide serrations, a longer steel chassis inside the frame, and improved trigger pull.

Polymer is light, inexpensive to manufacture, resistant to chemicals and immune to rust. And yet…metal-framed pistols seem to be making at least a small comeback. There is renewed interest in the Beretta 92. Browning Hi-Power clones are all the rage, as are CZ 75s. Not quite four years ago SIG introduced an aluminum-framed version of their P320. And just over two years ago, Smith & Wesson debuted metal-framed models of their M&P, first aluminum…and now steel. Metal frames are stiffer and slightly change the recoil impulse, and also add some weight.

I will say that the aluminum frame doesn't add as much weight over polymer as you might think, just one-plus ounces depending on the size of the gun, but steel adds that much or more again, and then once you add the mag well and the compensator and the loaded extended magazine

The steel slide cover plate sports the Spec Series logo, stars and stripes on a shield. You'll see something similar on the side of the barrel's chamber.

The tall suppressor-height sights have tritium inserts around which you'll see white rings. If you are running an optic the three white dots might be a bit distracting.

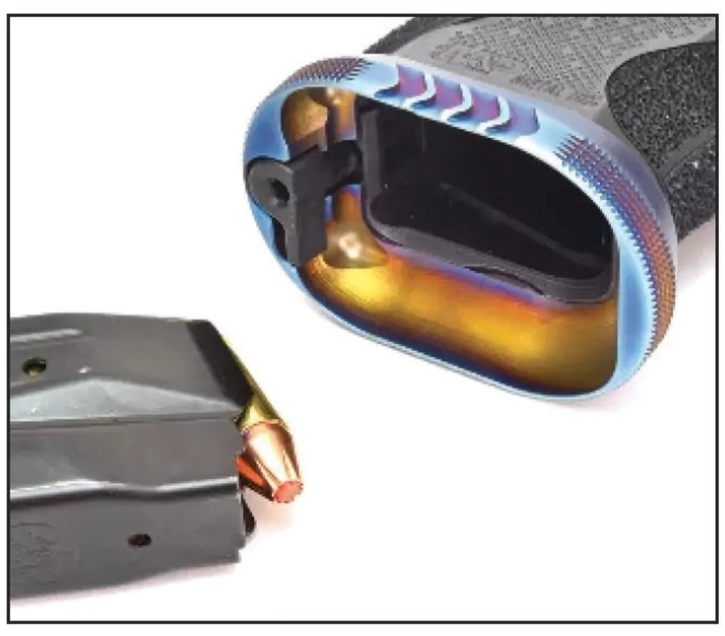
The steel frame sports some digital-ish texturing/design between the replaceable backstrap, and the polymer front strap insert, both of which are aggressively textured.

If you don't like the mag well it comes off, and a separate take-down/backstrap retention tool is provided.

and, perhaps, an optic, this is a big, heavy pistol. Far too big and heavy for carry, but for competition, or home defense, or just having fun and showing off at the range (and the blue does really stand out), it works. Overall, it is 8.75-inches long, 5.8-inches tall, 1.7-inches wide (at the mag well) and weighs 41.9 ounces with an empty magazine in place. This is far from light, but if you look at the weights of some Government-model 1911s with frame rails, they're roughly equivalent. FYI: the barrel, slide, and frame are all machined from stainless steel before being given their coatings, so this pistol is about as corrosion-resistant as pistols get.

The barrel is 4.875-inches long, threaded 1/2x28, and spiral fluted. It also sports a blue PVD coating, as does the mag well, the slide plate cover, the slide stop, takedown lever, and magazine release. Mounted on the barrel, from the factory, is a sizable aluminum compensator made by Strike Industries with a single port at the top. S&W provides instructions on how to remove the comp from the barrel if you so desire, and the tools to do it, and supplies a thread protector. There is more of a gap between the comp and slide than I find aesthetically pleasing, but then again, some people may hate the blue accents—I really like them. There's no accounting for taste.

There are decorative cuts in the sides and top of the slide to show off the blue fluted barrel, but the barrel itself is not ported. The slide has very aggressive texturing forward and rear, and in fact at the rear of the slide the sides are cut in deeply and there is a wide lip at the back. S&W equips their easy-to-rack EZ .380 models with the same



The blue PVD coating has various hues, adding depth, and the interior of the magazine well is a nice golden color.

Tarr had an opportunity to mount the new Banish 9K suppressor on the Spec V while at Gunsite recently. The can doesn't have a booster but is supposed to be so light it doesn't need it, however recoil on the gun was so light Tarr experienced some cycling issues.

ledge at the back of the slide to make it easier to grab/cycle, and it's a neat feature on this slide you might miss unless you're running your fingers along it.

There are no markings at all on the right side of the slide. On the left, you'll see the M&P logo, the S&W Performance Center logo, and the markings indicating this pistol was made in S&W's new Maryville, Tennessee, headquarters facility. I've been given a tour of S&W's original historic facility in Massachusetts, and enjoyed the experience, but it always bothered me that under onerous unconstitutional state laws, the employees weren't allowed to own half of the guns they were making. They don't have that problem in Tennessee. Bad laws have driven a lot of firearms manufacturers out of hostile northeastern states. And citizens.

The sights on this model are tall "suppressor-height" night sights made by TruGlo, tritium inserts which glow green inside white circles for the traditional 3-dot sight picture. Forward of the rear sight is the steel slide cover plate engraved with S&W's Spec Series logo, which sports a design similar to what it etched into the side of the barrel's chamber.

This pistol offers S&W's Competition Optic Ready Equipment (C.O.R.E.) feature which give you the option of mounting a mini-red dot to the rear of the slide. As it comes from the factory there is a steel plate on the slide covering the mounting area. S&W provides seven different adapter plates which allow you to mount any optic you desire atop the slide, as they accommodate pretty much every footprint on the market—Trijicon RMR/SRO, Docter/VortexVenom/Burris FastFire, C-More STS, etc.

The magazine release is reversible, and the slide stop is bilateral. This slide stop is wider than on the standard M&P, although you might not notice unless you compared the two pistols side by side. As for lefties attempting to release the slide using the right-side lever, you're going to be disappointed. The leverage needed is so great you'll need two thumbs to drop the slide even on a loaded mag using the right-side lever…which is maybe why S&W calls it an ambi slide stop, not an ambi slide release.

With the standard M&P, the curved trigger itself is the pivoting safety lever, hinged in the middle. The metal-framed M&Ps sport flat-faced triggers with safety levers in the middle. The trigger bow itself is nearly straight, with a gently rounded face, and on this model is aluminum. The safety lever is wider than you see with a lot of striker-fired guns, and it helps give the trigger a flat feel. Behind the trigger on the frame is a polymer overtravel stop. This trigger breaks at a ninety-degree angle which, combined with the flat, straight profile, helps to keep the muzzle from wiggling as much during the trigger break. Trigger weight on my sample was at 4.75 pounds, a little lighter and crisper than a standard M&P.

The three 23-round magazines are steel with full-length bodies, with oversize sleeve-like base pads to prevent over insertion. The magazine well is easily removable if you so desire, you just have to remove the takedown tool

Tarr first went hands-on this gun while filming at Gunsite in Arizona. Whether equipped with a comp or a suppressor it was a lot of fun to shoot.

You can see how much the slide stop protrudes, further than with a standard M&P. This angle also provides a great view of all the cuts that have been done to the slide, giving it serious chartacter.

In addition to the fabulous blue highlights with the Spec V you get a semi-straight Performance Center trigger with a lighter, crisper break. Note the overtravel stop on the frame.

Above the backstrap you'll see a polymer insert in the frame to go easier on your hand under recoil. Note the Spec Series logo etched on the side of the barrel too.

With traditional disassembly you won't be able to get the barrel out of the slide. You'll have to remove the comp from the barrel for that, but that won't be necessary for regular cleaning.

inside the backstrap of the gun and the mag well slides off forward, and then you can swap out the backstrap if you so desire. The pistol ships from the factory with the medium backstrap installed. If you run the gun without the magazine well, you'll need to use the included alternate takedown tool to keep your backstrap in place.

First-generation M&Ps came with three backstraps, small, medium, and light. M2.0 M&Ps added one more size, the medium-large, which added some material under the web of the hand but had the same size palm swell as the medium. With the metal-framed M&Ps you get the same four polymer backstraps, but a glance at the frame might make you a bit confused. At the top rear of the frame there is a polymer insert. This is not part of the backstrap and stays in place when swapping out backstraps. It presses against the web of your hand, and I'm guessing that volunteers during the design and testing process complained the metal frame wasn't as soft or warm or forgiving as the polymer frame of the original M&P, so they added this polymer insert. It looks good, and I don't notice it's there while shooting, which is what you want.

The metal-framed guns also have a polymer insert at the front of the frame. It has the same aggressive texturing as the backstrap but is not meant to be user-removable. You'll also spot some minimal digital texturing on the frame in-between the backstrap and the front-strap insert. I don't know that you'll ever feel it while shooting, but: 1. Texturing on the frame is always better than smooth metal if you're actually going to, you know, shoot the gun, and 2. It looks cool.

As I said, the Spec Series guns have always been sold as packages. In addition to the three magazines and the four backstraps, you get a knife. It's an assisted flipper with a spring-loaded modified reverse tanto blade and a liner lock, with aggressively textured G10 grips. The pocket clip is positioned for tip-down carry. If you know anything about knives you know the S&W knives have always looked cool but have been entry-level on quality and below Civivis-brand knives in fit and finish, but as an added extra when buying a gun, it's nice. The gray challenge coin has a picture of the gun on one side and the Spec Series logo on the other.

The Pelican-type case in which everything comes is very nice. Hard plastic with two latches and a pressure purge valve. There are metal-reinforced holes on either side for padlocks—and a quick public service announcement about the TSA and flying with guns. Within the last few years, they've unilaterally decided that however many spots your gun case has for padlocks, it needs to be equipped with that many padlocks. And I don't recommend using TSA-approved locks, as that means they can open your locks/case when you're not there, and you'll never know. If I wanted strangers to be able to open my gun case when I wasn't there, I wouldn't put locks on it, and I don't trust the average TSA agent to get my order right at Starbucks. Anyway….

Inside the case there are two layers of foam with cutouts for the various items. On the top level is the pistol, the knife, and the challenge coin. On the lower level is everything else.

The first opportunity I had to shoot this model it wasn't actually the sample sent to me for testing. I was at the

Tarr's best group, at 25 yards, was this 1.5-inch pure luck masterpiece using Hornady Critical Defense 115-grain FTX.

SMITH & WESSON'S SPEC SERIES V M&P PISTOL

Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	ES	SD	Accuracy (in.) (Best & Avg.)
SIG Elite FMJ	115	1,155	40	27	2.6 / 3.6
Hornady Critical Defense	115	1,139	29	18	1.5 / 2.5
Black Hills JHP+P	124	1,169	30	15	2.2 / 2.9
Winchester JHP	147	963	34	20	2.4 / 3.1

Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of ten shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P 12 feet from the muzzle.

legendary Gunsite in Arizona, filming for Guns & Ammo TV. Doing full mag dumps for the high-speed (i.e. slow motion) cameras so they could catch brass in the air was fun, and really showed off how little recoil there was with this pistol.

Then, we removed the compensator and threaded on the new Banish 9K suppressor from Silencer Central. This is a fascinating little 9mm suppressor—4.1 inches long, and just 2.7 ounces as it's 3D-printed from titanium. It directly threads onto 1/2x28 barrels and is so light it doesn't feel real. It is so narrow that the suppressor-height sights on the M&P are unnecessary, but as small and light as it is, it has eight baffles. It is so light that it is advertised as not needing a booster/Nielsen device. Let me explain. With semi-auto pistols, under recoil, the barrel moves backward as well. Not a lot, but it does move. If you add a bunch of weight to that barrel (suppressor) it stops it from moving and chokes the gun. A piston/Nielsen device adds a spring and allows the barrel to move backward, briefly independent of the weight of the suppressor. I found, surprisingly, that the weight of the 9K was enough to prevent the Spec V from cycling properly no matter what ammo we used, and I think it's because that gun has so little recoil to begin with that adding just that little amount of weight was enough to induce a malfunction.

I had fun punching paper at Gunsite, seeing just how fast I could run the gun with the comp—the answer was (unsurprisingly) pretty darn fast, as there was very little muzzle rise. Of all the tweaks that have been done to the M&P since the first-generation guns, none of them have been to improve reliability, as Smith & Wesson seems to have nailed that out of the gate. Even with the comp mounted on the barrel, the gun ate everything I fed it, from subs to supersonics. The magazine well has a big mouth, and if you're one of those people who "looks" your reload into your gun, you'll appreciate the fact that the inside of the magazine well has a nice golden hue.

Back at home, I took out my sample and did the requisite accuracy testing, which isn't nearly as fun as shooting fast, but it's a lot better than washing dishes in a seafood restaurant for $3.35/hr., which was my first job, so I should keep my whiny spoiled mouth shut. The Spec V wasn't really any more mechanically accurate than the other M&Ps I've tested over the years, but between the improved trigger and the reduced recoil due to the weight/compensator you should be able to shoot it faster and more accurately—mechanical accuracy (what the gun can do locked in a vise), and what I'll call practical accuracy (how well you can shoot it) are not the same thing. It was great fun hammering down steel basically as fast as I could pull the trigger.

If you've got an open-mouth holster built for a full-size M&P with tall sights, it will work with the Spec V, but a lot of those are meant for carry, and this isn't a carry gun. If you're the kind of person who wants to run it in competition, you'll be going to one of the dedicated competition holster makers for something specifically made for this model.

As I've written, this pistol is fun to shoot and has an interesting collection of features that make it suitable for competition or for home defense, if you want a handgun for that role. At the front of the frame, you'll see a three-slot MIL STD M1913 "picatinny" rail, and that is perfect for mounting a flashlight if you wanted to use the Spec V as a staged home defense weapon. With a flashlight, the night sights, and a 23-round magazine, whether or not you mounted a red dot atop the slide, the Spec V would serve you well.

The Spec V is the most expensive of the Spec series, but it's also the biggest and provides the most accessories, so you're getting what you paid for. FN

Tarr thinks with a white light like this Surefire X300 Turbo the 23+1 Spec Series V would also serve well as a home-defense handgun.

SMITH & WESSON SPEC SERIES V M&P PISTOL	
Type:	Striker-fired semi-auto
Caliber:	9mm Luger
Capacity:	23+1
Barrel Length:	4.875 in. (not including compensator)
Overall Length:	8.75 in.
Height:	5.8 in.
Width:	1.7 in.
Weight:	41.9 oz. (with empty magazine)
Slide Material:	Stainless steel with dark gray Armornite
Frame Material:	Stainless steel with dark gray Armornite
Safeties:	Sear block drop safety, trigger safety lever
Sights:	3-dot tritium night sights C.O.R.E. optics ready
Trigger:	4.75 lbs. (as tested)
Accessories:	Three 23-round magazines, 4 backstraps, optics plates, folding knife, challenge coin, thread protector, lockable case
MSRP:	$1,699
Contact:	Smith-Wesson.com, (800) 331-0852

A result of the rich season of domestic firearm development of South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Neostead 2000 shotgun would leave a deep mark on the global firearm industry.

THE PRECURSOR:

SOUTH AFRICA'S NEOSTEAD TWIN-TUBE SHOTGUN

Before the UTAS UTS-15, Before the Kel-Tec KSG, and Before the Smith & Wesson M&P-12, There Was the Neostead. Developed and Manufactured in South Africa, This Twin-Tube Pump-Action Shotgun Was Way Ahead of Its time!

By Pierangelo Tendas **Photos by Roberto Allara (unless otherwise noted)**

Twin-tube shotguns such as the Kel-Tec KSG, the Smith & Wesson M&P-12, and the massive Standard Manufacturing DP-12, or Turkish creations such as the UTAS UTS-15 and the Hunt Group MH-12, are all the rage today. That's undeniable. Just as undeniable are their common roots in the abortive NS-2000 "Neostead" shotgun from South Africa.

1980s and 1990s South Africa, at the pinnacle of their fight with an internal insurgency and under UN arms embargo, was the focal point for a vibrant season of firearms development meant to make the country as self-sufficient as possible. Security forces needed firearms to quell civil disturbances and armed movements tied with the insurgency, and the civilian population, particularly the white civilian population, needed guns to protect themselves and their properties from guerrilla attacks.

In 1990, a trio of local designers, engineer Tony Neophytou, CAD engineer Willie Pelser, and designer and producer Heyns Stead, started to work on a radically new pump-action shotgun design, which would have to offer maneuverability in confined space, high capacity, and ammunition flexibility for all civilian defense and military or law enforcement needs.

The futuristic look and appeal of the Neostead would make it the unofficial star of many movies, TV series, videogames, and animated shows in the years following its launch; Heyns Stead and Tony Neophytou, the designers of the Neostead shotgun, could of course not have foreseen that.

The cover of the original flyer for the Neostead shotgun back from when it was still a pre-production prototype: the Neostead Corporation of Tony Neophytou and Heyns Stead would try and find interested buyers in the United States and Europe for more than a decade, before settling with Truvelo Armoury of South Africa.

The left side of the Neostead shotgun; despite the short overall length, it sports a 22.5-inch barrel, which provides a good level of accuracy at longer range.

The Neostead shotgun, seen from the right side: standing at approximately 27 inches of overall length, it was indeed a very compact firearm.

The process they started would drag itself on for over a decade, and its results would be underwhelming when it came to market success but would definitely leave a mark in the global comings and goings of the firearm industry.

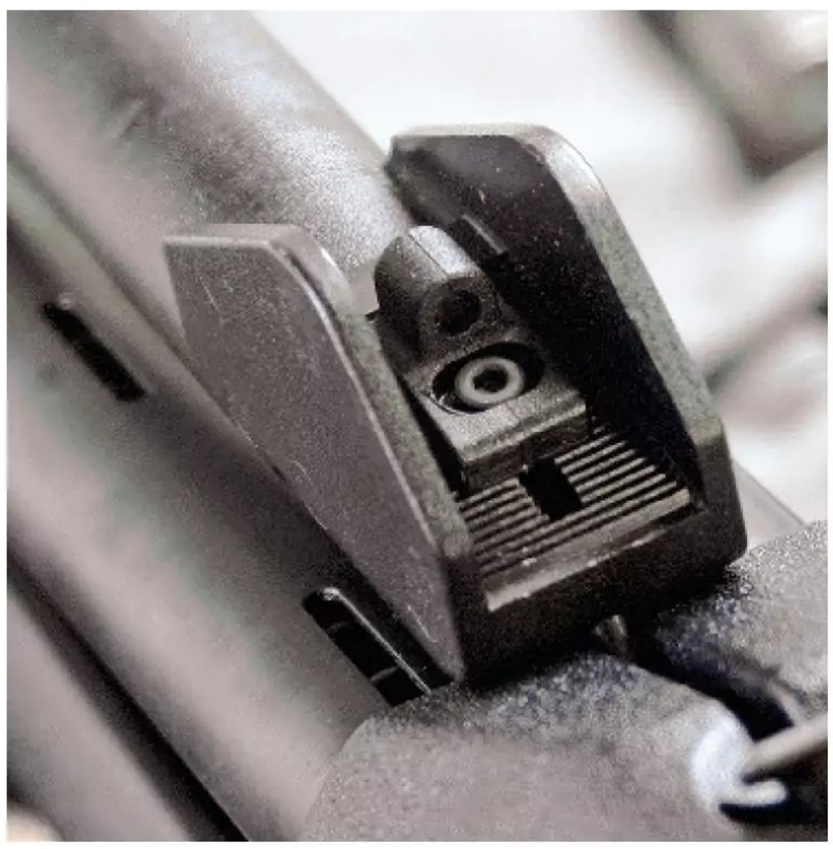
A Long Struggle

Starting from a wooden mock-up presented by Tony Neophytou to Heyns Stead in March 1990, the newly formed "Neostead Corporation" began the construction of five prototypes from July 1990 to July 1994. From the bulky, futuristic Neostead 2000 (or NS 2000 for short, from the names of Neophytou and Stead) to the XDM, EDM, ADM and ODM, the design conceptualized and solidified the two main features that would become the staple of the design: a set of twin top-mounted, flip-up opening magazine tubes; and a forward-moving barrel, which implied a bottom ejection pattern, making the gun fully ambidextrous, and a reverse pump-action operation for chambering a fresh round, more akin to the opening of an M-203 or other under barrel grenade launchers than to a classic pump-action shotgun.

To be fair, neither of the two technical solutions were unique or completely new in concept, but they were indeed very rare and most unusual. Before the Neostead shotgun would come to market in its final form, another shotgun based on a reverse pump-action system would be launched, this being the RMb-93 manufactured by the KBP Instrument Design Bureau of Tula (Russia), once again met by a less than stellar market reception.

Between 1993 and 1995, the ADM and ODM prototypes of the Neostead were demonstrated in the US at the ADPA Small Arms Convention, at the Trexpo East Show, and of course at SHOT Show, not mentioning separate demonstrations to members of the US Marine Corps and of the FBI Hostage Rescue Team in August 1994. Nevertheless, in 1995, the partnership with Tony Neophytou came to an end leaving Heyns Stead and Willie Pelser alone in their effort to finalize the design and bring it to production. Between December 1993 and late 1998, Heyns Stead and the Neostead Corporation were approached by, or otherwise entered talks with, companies such as Beretta, Colt, CZ Strakonice (now known as Luvo Prague), Ithaca Gun Company, Ramo Defense Systems, Sigarms, and Smith & Wesson.

As all attempts to license the Neostead design for manufacture in the US or in Europe fell through, Willie Pelser supervised the work of third-party suppliers to manufacture the parts necessary to the Neostead Corporation to assemble twenty PPM (Pre-Production Manufacturing) samples; essentially identical to what would be the final production model, all twenty PPM samples would be completed between March and June of the year 2000 and publicly demonstrated in South Africa in the same month. Following said demonstration, Heyns Stead finally reached an agreement



◀ The raised carrying handle of the Neostead shotgun hosts the fixed front sight; a somewhat crude metal blade and the adjustable ghost ring rear sight.

▶ Sling loops were installed on both sides of the stock; the prominent metal blade located in front of the receiver, at the magazine pivot, is actually an ambidextrous front sling attachment point.

A close-up of the buttplate. The straight-line stock of the Neostead was manufactured out of injection-molded polymer and constituted a separate sub-assembly.

The manual safety of the Neostead shotgun is located within the trigger guard; the Neostead also offers several automatic safety features against slam-fire, out-of-battery ignition, and accidental discharges.

Opening the latch located right behind the charging handle will pivot the dual magazine tube assembly open, under the energy of a flat spring.

An external selector allows the shooter to decide whether he/she wants the Neostead to feed from just one of the two tubes or from both, alternating between the left and the right until both are depleted.

with Joe Gebert—founder and, back in the day, CEO of Truvelo Manufacturers (Pty.) Ltd. of Midrand, Gauteng, known commercially as Truvelo Armoury—to manufacture and distribute what was ultimately dubbed simply the Neostead Shotgun. Around this time, the *Jane's Defense Infantry Weapons* Associate Editor, Charles "Charlie" Q. Cutshaw, contacted his friend and current *Firearms News* Editor-in-Chief, Vincent DeNiro, regarding the Neostead shotgun. Cutshaw was a friend of the Neostead owners and DeNiro was the president of CTS, Inc. at the time, a large Title II importer and well-known NFA manufacturer and distributor. DeNiro spoke to the owner of Neostead and was interested in a manufacturing partnership for the USA, but he said that the ownership of CTS decided to pass since the company was very busy with defense projects with Singapore Technologies at the time.

Most Unusual

According to Heyns, Stead's own write-up about the Neostead shotgun published in 2017 in the book "*Firearms developed and manufactured in Southern Africa—1949–2000,*" edited by Chas Lotter for the Pretoria Arms and Ammunition Association, the Neostead shotgun is "constructed using glass-filled polymer injection moldings, machined components, machined metal castings and pressed metal components." Most of that technology was already available to Truvelo Armoury, although some parts had to be outsourced; this may be the reason why, according to the same publication, the Neostead was manufactured in limited runs of one hundred samples at the time, equivalent to each lot of barrels, breechblocks, and receivers, while lots of small parts amounted to 1,000 pieces each.

The bull-pup, boltless design of the Neostead made it indeed the all-rounder Neophytou and Stead had in mind when they designed it: from urban operations to room sweeping

The reverse pump-action was the signature feature of the Neostead shotgun.

The action of the Neostead was notoriously particularly stiff to operate.

A pump lock latch had to be depressed to allow the pump to slide to chamber the first shot; for the following shots, recoil energy would unlock it automatically.

A takedown pin located in the grip allows the polymer stock assembly to be removed; that's basically all it takes to strip the Neostead for maintenance and cleaning.

and from crowd control to intense firefights in the jungle, the 22.5-inch fully-ambidextrous configuration, downwards ejection through a slot located behind the grip and underneath the stock assembly, and double six-shells magazine tube with manual selection capability would get all bases covered. "*Wait, did you say boltless?*" Yes, let me explain.

Normally, in a pump-action shotgun, when you operate the handguard, you send the breech bolt back and forth; this also extracts the spent case from the chamber and ejects it (if there is one) and leaves room for the elevator to bring a round up to be chambered once the breech bolt goes forward. That's not what happens in the Neostead.

In the Neostead, when you push the handguard forward, you're basically moving the entire barrel assembly forward with it. So, pushing the handguard forward moves the barrel away from the breech, allowing a shell to be chambered and the empty case (if there is one in the chamber) to be dropped out. A bushing on the front of the receiver, and two machined lugs at the rear end of the barrel, guide its travel when the shotgun is chambered. The barrel reciprocates inside the receiver tube while the breechblock is fixed in place to the rear of the receiver and doesn't move: the cartridge is brought back to it. When the trigger is pulled, it actuates a pressed metal sear link to release the sear, causing the shotgun to fire.

So, while the Neostead does have a breechblock, it lacks the sliding bolt assembly typical of standard pump-action shotguns—a technical solution called a "boltless design" by the engineers. Such action is reportedly very stiff and requires a high amount of force for cycling; the Neostead isn't a "ladies' gun" by all means.

At the front end of the handguard, just behind the hand stop, is a pump lock lever that must be pushed in to unlock

The Neostead shotgun ejects from the bottom, empty shells falling down through a slot in the stock; this, and the location of all other controls, make the Neostead an inherently ambidextrous design.

When the pump handle of the Neostead is pushed forward, the dispensing unit releases a single cartridge, which in turn activates a tripper on the feed unit to release the actuating arm; this component, in turn, pushes down a paddle that feeds the cartridge to the sliding gate. Once the pump handle is pulled rearwards, the barrel slides over the cartridge, chambering it against the breechblock.

The dual magazine tube system was at the time a patented Neostead feature and was something that the successors of the design quickly changed into a fixed set of twin tubes, located either above or under the barrel. While a top break set of magazines may be more convenient to reload, fixed tubes allow the use of a standard pump action mechanism; plus, any additional moving part is an additional component susceptible to breakages...

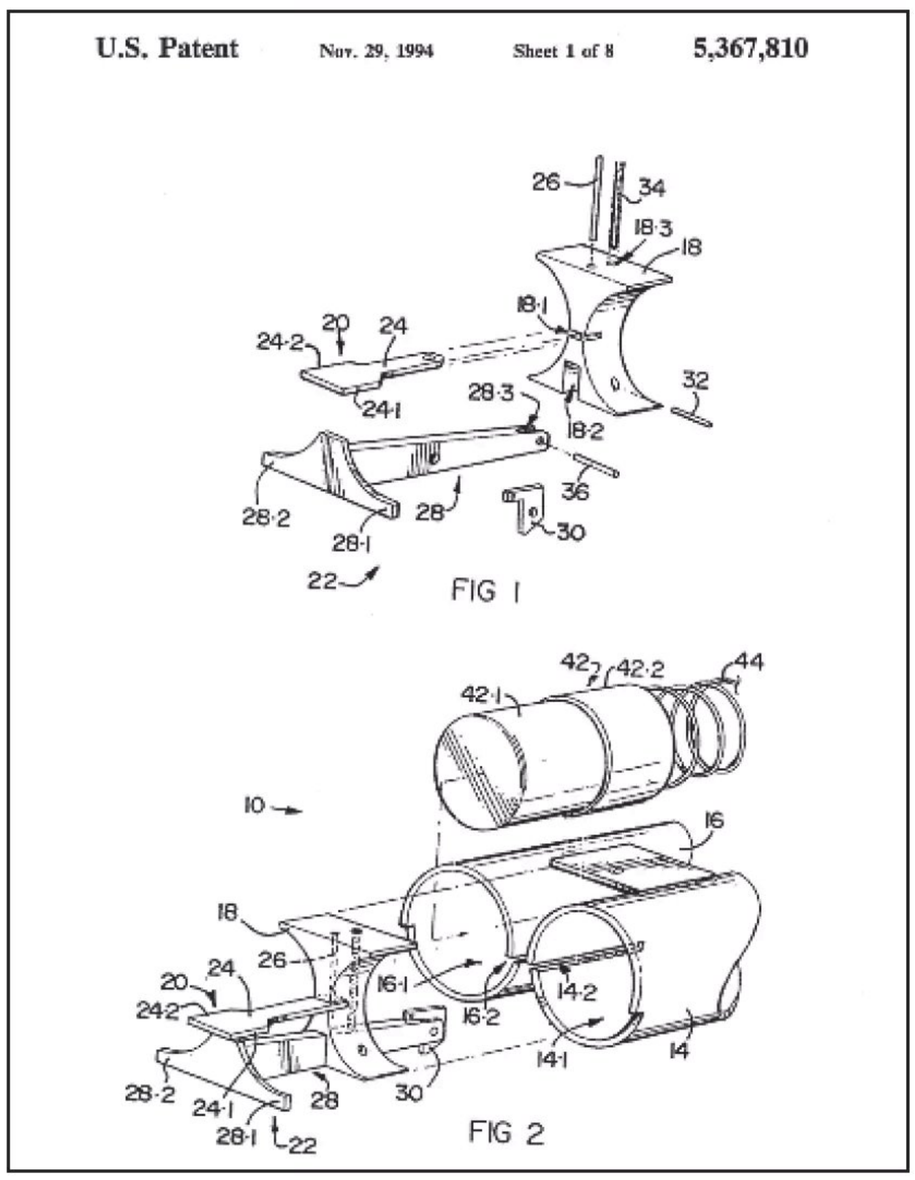
the action and chamber the first round; it will automatically self-engage again once the action is closed, to prevent accidental opening. The pump lock release is recoil-operated, meaning that recoil energy will unlock it automatically after a round is fired.

The twin tube assembly, located over the barrel, is unlocked by a flat lever located just behind the carry handle; when such latch is pushed forward, the twin tube assembly flips up under the pressure of a leaf spring. At the end of the magazine dispensing unit (the "mouth" of the twin tubes) is a lever-controlled gate that needs to be pushed aside before each tube is loaded independently, and then brought back to central position before the twin tube assembly is closed. After which, it can be pushed to any position: if the lever is kept to the center, the Neostead will feed alternatively from both magazines until both are depleted; if set to the left or the right, the shotgun will feed solely from the selected tube. This feature prevents double feeding and allows the Neostead to be loaded with different types of ammunition—eg. less-than-lethal in one tube, lethal in the other—for additional operational flexibility. This feature is now familiar to many shooters, who have grown to question its real utility in the face of possible confusion in the heat of the moment, but back in the early 2000s it was absolutely novel.

The carry handle integrates an adjustable ghost ring rear and fixed leaf front sight. The Truvelo Neostead shotgun comes with a manual safety located within the trigger guard; a trigger and pump lock, a trigger disconnector operated by the pump handle and a firing pin retractor to prevent slamfire act as additional safety measures. The Neostead also features an anti-rotation hammer design and a sear link block to prevent out-of-battery discharges or accidental discharges in case the gun is dropped.

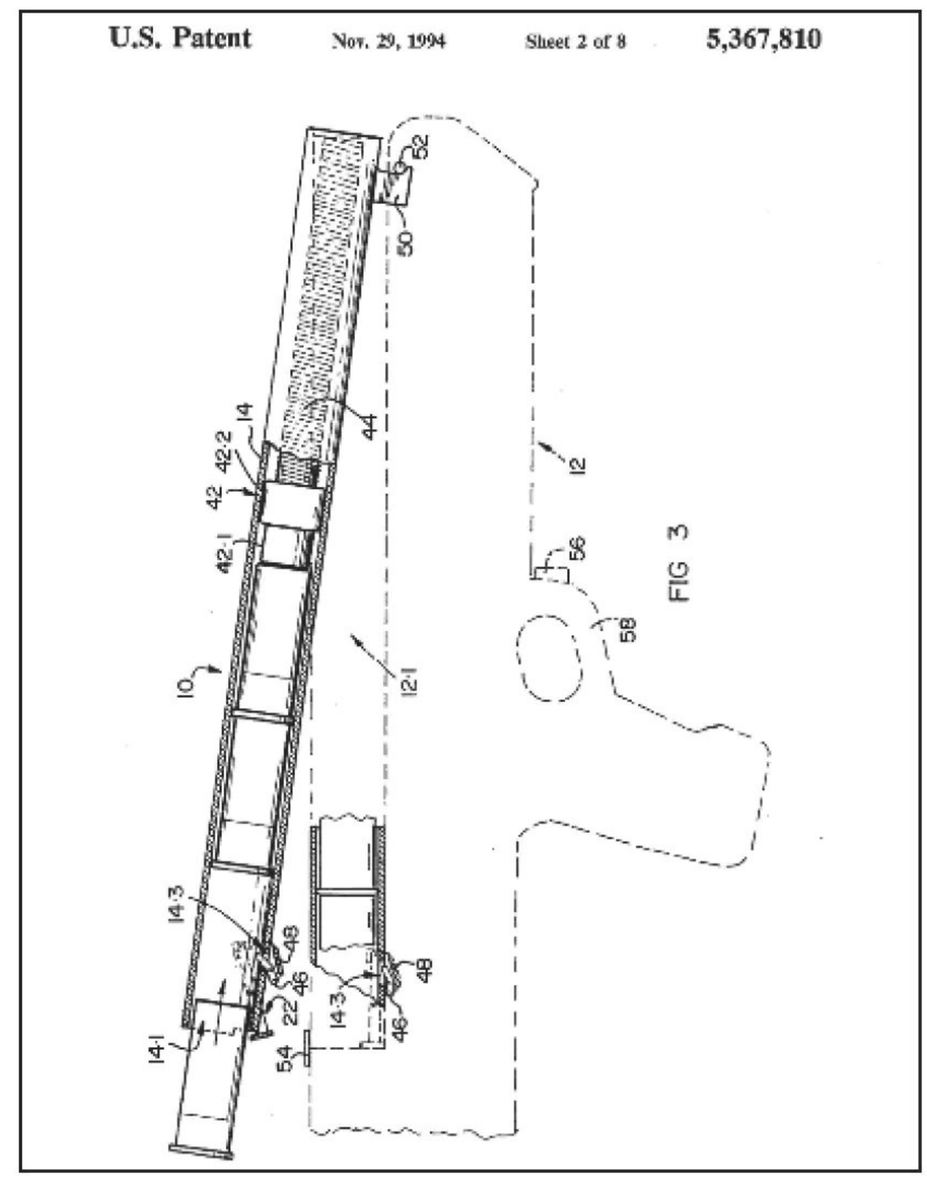
Not Meant To Be?

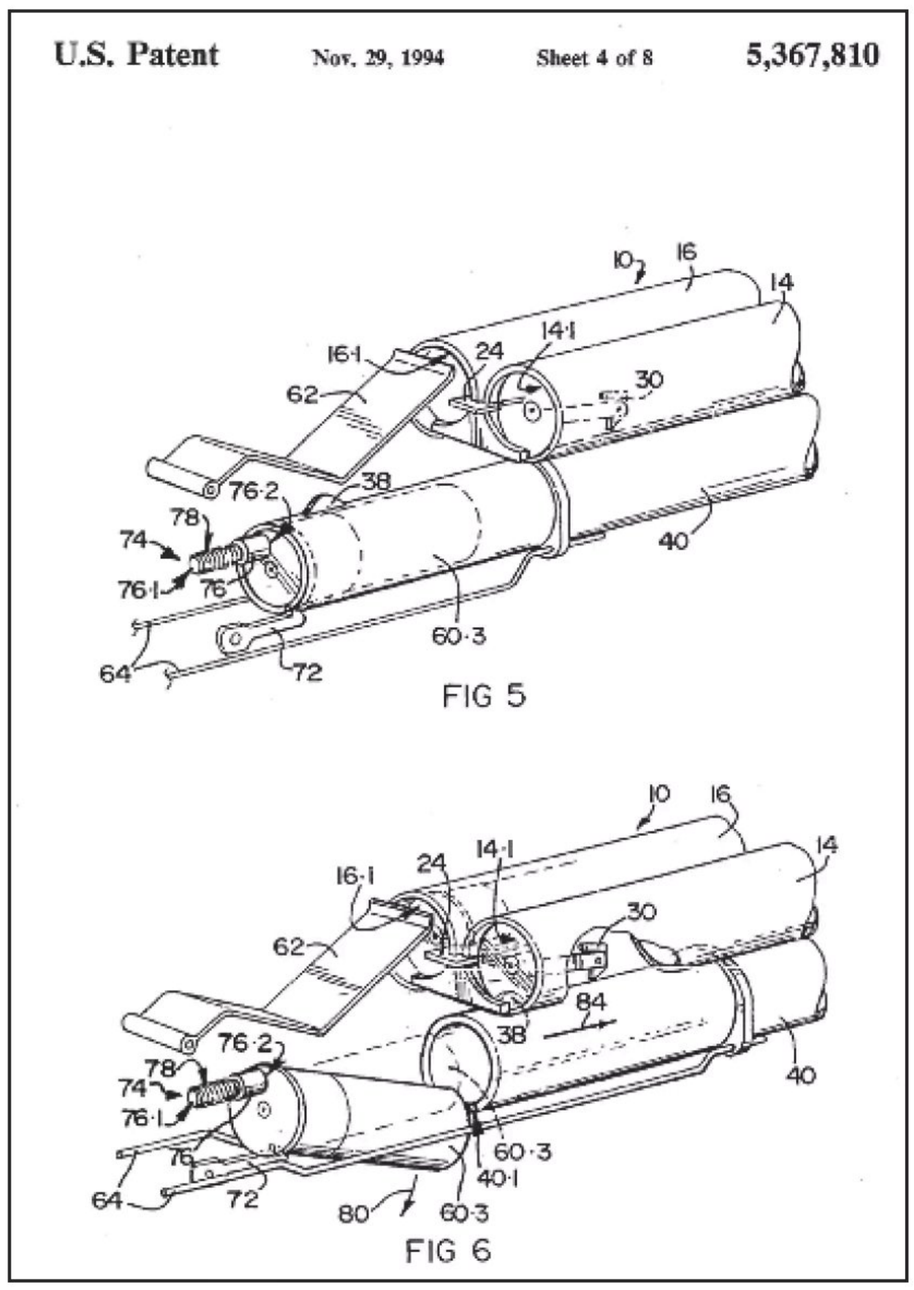
The inherently ambidextrous design, bottom ejection and straight-line stock would have normally made the Neostead a no-brainer for anybody looking for a high capacity, tactical combat or defensive shotgun. It was short (27 inches-long overall), lightweight (just 8.6 pounds when empty), and each tube held up to six 12-gauge, three-inch shotshells. A short Picatinny rail interface could even be attached on top of the receiver to install accessories such as tactical gun lights.



◄ A drawing from the original US5367810A patent, demonstrating the operation of the magazine feed unit.

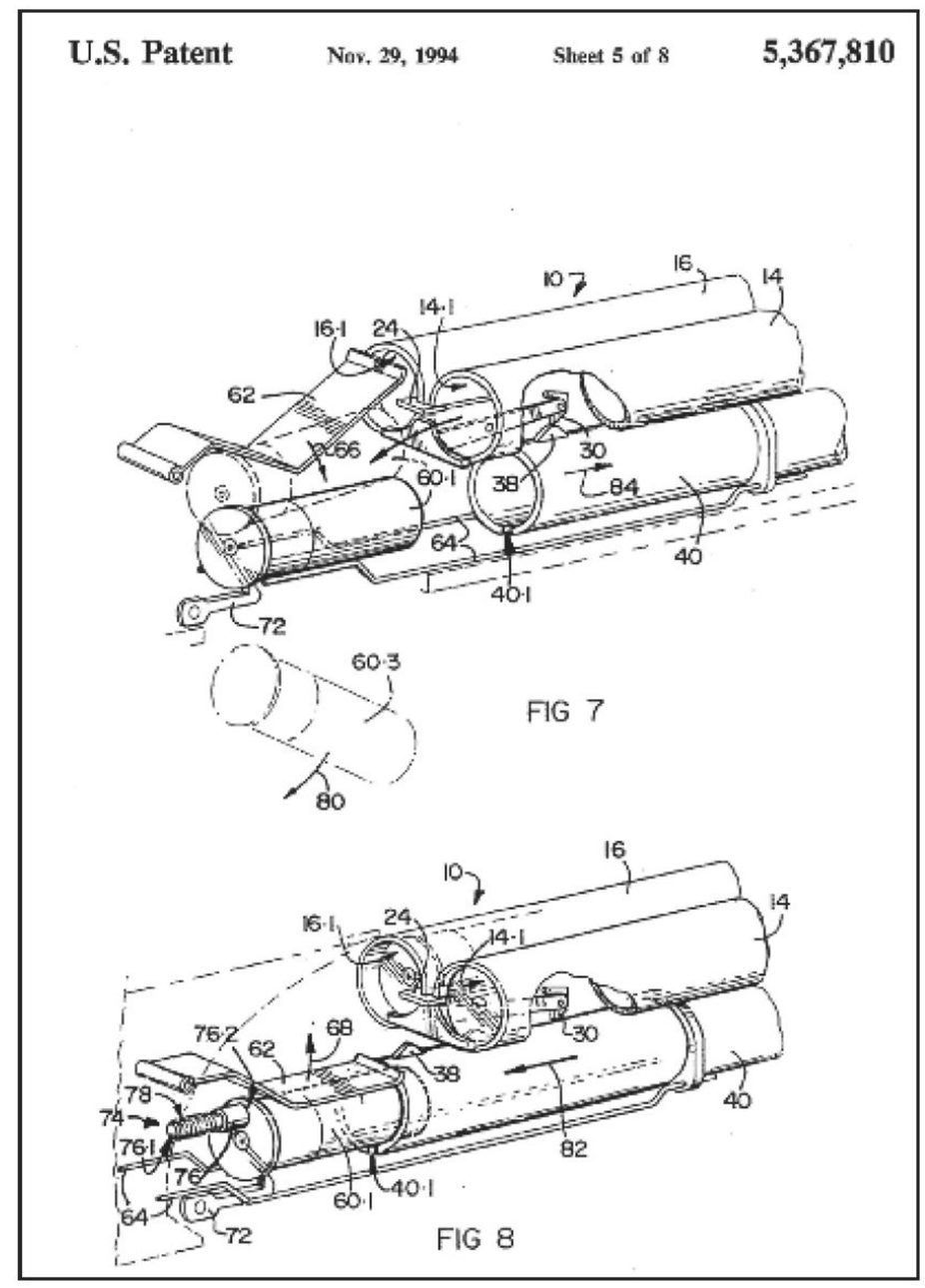
► A patent drawing demonstrating how the magazine assembly pivots open for loading; USPTO lists the patent as having been reassigned from Heyns Stead to UTAS of Turkey in February 2010, and now being permanently expired.





The patent drawing demonstrating how a spent case is extracted and ejected...

...and a fresh one chambered.



Unfortunately, the unusual design and the stiff reverse pump-action operation turned out to be deal breakers for many potential military and law enforcement customers; and the tightening of gun laws in the Republic of South Africa after the end of the long insurgency phase greatly reduced potential local sales. What was left to the Neostead were exports; the biggest single buyer was a distributor in Italy, which imported a grand total of fifty-two samples. The pictures illustrating this article were taken in Italy and date back to 2003, when that lot was imported and before the shotguns were sold, at a retail price which then amounted to €1,560.00 — just over US$1,500 adjusted for inflation.

The fifty-two Neostead shotguns today survive in private collections in Italy, as well as in the stocks of movie armorers in the country. While the vast majority of movie gun buffs regard the British sci-fi horror blockbuster *Doomsday* to have been the first to feature the Neostead, back in 2008, in reality the honor goes to the (somewhat lackluster) Italian movie *Milano-Palermo, il ritorno*, directed in 2007 by exploitation meister Claudio Fragasso, featured the Neostead in the hands of a Mafia hitman during a fierce firefight scene at the Montecatini thermal hot springs.

Other "significant" buyers included Angola (50 samples) and Germany (21 samples), while ten samples were exported to Japan, of all places, and smaller numbers to other countries in Europe and the Middle East.

Five Neostead shotguns were shipped to the United States, where they were tested in February 2002 and passed the US DOD MIL-STD-810F environmental tests; all samples were subsequently seized for forfeiture by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) which ruled the Neostead to be a "destructive device" as per the provisions of the 1934 NFA and 1968 GCA. It also violated the 1989 imported assault weapons ban ordered by President George H.W. Bush, as well as the domestic assault weapons ban of 1994 within the infamous Brady Bill (expired in 2004). As a result of the potentially most lucrative market being shut down, and local and international sales failing to take over, Heyns Stead and Truvelo sadly had to take the decision to shut down the manufacturing lines. The Neostead shotgun went out of production in December 2010 with the relevant patents expiring around the same time.

George Kellgren's Kel-Tec KSG, albeit somehow controversial among shooters and gun enthusiasts, was originally meant to improve on the Neostead design, and is now the best known and most popular among the many shotguns that owe their existence to the brainchild of Tony Neophytou. (Photo by Kel-Tec CNC Industries, Inc.)

The UTAS company of Turkey was actually licensed by Heyns Stead to use the dual-magazine system before the original patent expired; the system was tweaked with by American designer Ted Hatfield, leading to the creation of the UTS-15, launched in 2012. (Photo by UTAŞ Savunma Sanayi ve Ticaret, A.Ş,)

Not the End

As we previously mentioned, the Neostead design left a deep mark in the way pump-action shotguns are conceived, and manufactured, in the modern world; particularly those aimed towards the military, law enforcement, and otherwise "tactical" markets.

The M&P-12 is manufactured by Smith & Wesson — a company that was interested in the production or distribution of the Neostead twice, in 1995 and in 2002, and that employed Ted Hatfield in 2006 to design what should have been the "ultimate" police shotgun. (Photo by Collectors Firearms)

In 2011, a little less than one year after the Neostead was pulled from production at Truvelo Armoury and its patents expired, Kel-Tec introduced the KSG pump-action bull-pup shotgun, featuring George Kellgren's take on the selectable twin-tube system, this time located underneath the barrel and actuated by a standard, not reversed, pump action.

Declaredly, the KSG had been developed with the goal to "improve" over the Neostead design. Truth be told, in the 1970s, George Kellgren had worked on several prototype pistols, sub-machine guns, and assault rifles at the NIDR, the National Institute of Defense Research of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Republic of South Africa; and later, while owning and operating Grendel, Inc. in Florida, he had toyed with the idea of a bull-pup pump-action .410-gauge shotgun in the form of the GSG-41, which never materialized despite being scheduled for a tentative market release of Summer 1993.

The author was unable to find any conclusive evidence as of whether or not George Kellgren had had the chance to interact with Tony Neophytou and become aware of his twin magazine tube concept. What is known, as admitted by Heyns Stead himself in the book *Firearms Developed and Manufactured in Southern Africa—1949–2000*, is that in February 2009, before the exclusive patents expired, Truvelo Armoury licensed the twin tube design to UTAS Defense of Antalya, Turkey, which would have it slightly tinkered with by American engineer Ted Hatfield resulting in the launch of what is currently known as the UTS-15 shotgun.

It is interesting to note that, in 2006, Ted Hatfield himself had been contracted Smith & Wesson to develop what was to be the "ultimate police shotgun" and reportedly, his concept was very similar to the Neostead and to what we know today as its developments. Smith & Wesson had interacted twice with Heyns Stead twice about the Neostead. In 1995, Stead tried unsuccessfully to interest Smith & Wesson in purchasing a license to manufacture the shotgun in the United States; then again in 2002, Smith & Wesson attempted to have it manufactured in South Africa under the Smith & Wesson brand for international exports. This failed because the Neostead Corporation and Truvelo didn't have the necessary manufacturing capabilities to produce the Neostead shotgun to the scale Smith & Wesson requested. In 2021, Smith & Wesson entered the fray with their own take on the design: the M&P-12.

A star by its own merit, despite being gone for good for over a decade now, the Neostead is by no means dead: its drawbacks fixed, the brainchild of Tony Neophytou lives on, and despite what some think of it, it's destined to stay with us for a long time. FN

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Roberto Allara. Roberto was an influential gun writer in Italy ever since the 1980s and was a great support in the first years of my career as a gun writer over 20 years ago. He is also the one who did the photography for this article. – Pierangelo Tendas

TRUVELO ARMOURY NEOSTEAD SHOTGUN	
Type:	Pump-action shotgun
Caliber:	12-gauge
Capacity:	12 rounds in twin magazine tubes
Barrel:	22.5 in.
Overall Length:	27 in.
Weight:	8.6 lbs.
Finish:	Matte black
Grips:	Vertical, integral to the injection molded stock assembly
Sights:	Fixed front, adjustable Ghost Ring rear
Barrel Length:	6.14 in.
Trigger:	Approx. 5 lbs.

THE REMINGTON KEENE

By Jeff John

Remington's First Bolt-Action Rifle Was a Design That Ran Out of Time!

History

New Jersey inventor John W. Keene began developing his bolt-action repeating rifle in 1870 acquiring numerous patents by the dawn of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. The Keene was a sturdy, well balanced, smooth, reliable, and accurate rifle capable of handling most military cartridges then in use. Worldwide, few countries fielded repeaters, but most were awakening to the need.

The International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine, generally referred to today as the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, opened May 10, 1876 at Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Fair must have been a truly magical event with the many pavilions covering more than 938,008 square feet over 21.4 acres. Thirty-seven countries displayed their nation's wealth, resources and manufacturing prowess and was visited by nine to ten million people before closing on November 10, 1876. Considering the 1870 census showed just a little more than 38,500,000 people living in the United States, the number of attendees is impressive.

Displays included cutting edge small arms. Benjamin B. Hotchkiss displayed a turn-bolt repeating rifle capable of handling the current centerfire military cartridges and the rights to make it were corralled by Winchester. Civil War

▲ A cattleman or a trader plying the U.S.-Mexican border would be well served by the big-bore nine-shot Remington Keene in .43 Spanish. The sturdy 1875 Remington revolver would be a good choice for a sidearm.

The 1876 Centennial Exhibition opened May 10, 1876, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the many pavilions covering more than 938,008 square feet over 21.4 acres. Thirty-seven countries participated and the event was visited by some nine to ten million people before closing on November 10. (Picture courtesy the Library of Congress)

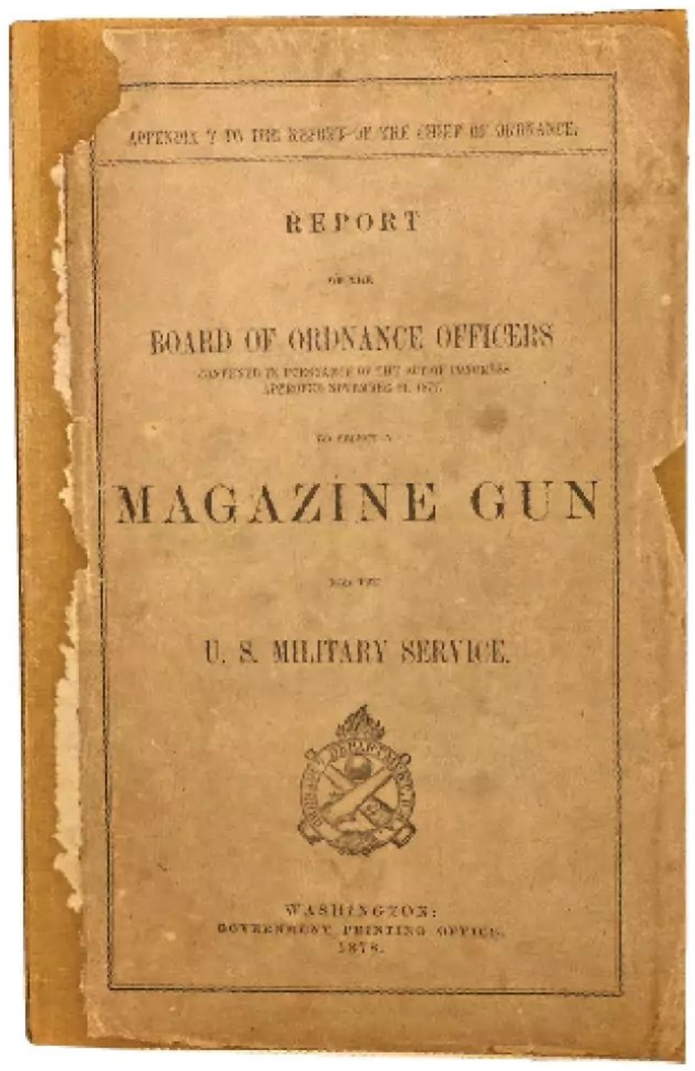
John W. Keene's bolt-action was capable of handling the day's powerful military cartridges such as the .45-70 and .43 Spanish. Along the Mexican border, arms in .43 Spanish were popular since the cartridge was available on both sides.

Smooth and fast in operation, the Keene was designed from the get go with military contracts in mind, since so many countries fielded their Rolling Block. Note the military style rear sight and magazine cutoff just behind the receiver ring.

photographer, turned arms designer, Andrew Burgess displayed his new magazine firearms just a few booths away from Eli Whitney. The Whitney-Burgess Model 1878 became the first lever action repeater capable of handling our .45-70-405 Gov't.

John W. Keene didn't display at the Fair, but I suspect he may have walked his patent drawings or even a model of his new bolt-action rifle around. Even with continuing worldwide success of the Rolling Block single-shot rifle, Remington was "keenly" aware they lacked a repeater, and rival Winchester had not only corralled the Hotchkiss but was showcasing their new big-bore Model 1876 Centennial lever-action rifle in the new, powerful, bottleneck .45-75-350 that offered ballistics similar to the other military cartridges then in use worldwide.

Attendees from the U.S. Army quickly realized how obsolete our Trapdoor rifle had become in


APPENDIX Y TO THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF ORDNANCE.

REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF ORDNANCE OFFICERS

CONVENED IN PURSUANCE OF THE ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED SEPTEMBER 21, 1877,

TO CONSIDER A

MAGAZINE GUN

FOR THE

U. S. MILITARY SERVICE.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1878.

◄ **The U.S. Army convened an Ordnance Board in April 1878 to review 27 new repeating rifles from 19 makers to replace the obsolete Springfield Trapdoor. In this very rare report, the Winchester Hotchkiss won and was recommended for further development, while the Remington Keene showed well enough that 600 would be purchased for the Indian Police.**

► **This Keene passed cursory inspection upon purchase, but the first shot fired showed the chamber badly eroded along with first four inches of an otherwise pristine barrel that a full restoration was the only answer. In for a penny, in for a pound!**

the face of all these new, faster-loading single shot and repeating rifles. An Ordnance Board was convened to explore modernization of the U.S. infantry rifle beginning in April 1878. Remington completed a prototype of the Keene, and on July 9, 1878, and John W. Keene personally presented the new .45-70 rifle to the board on behalf of E. Remington & Sons. Twenty-seven other magazine arms were submitted by 19 manufacturers.

The Report to Congress thoroughly tested all the entries. Some of the Keene's deficiencies were fixed on the spot by Keene, but others required work at the factory. When the dust settled, the Keene lost to the five-shot Hotchkiss, but the 9-shot Keene performed well enough that the United States Interior Department purchased some 600 in .45-70 to arm the U.S. Indian Police along with a quantity of Remington's 1875 revolvers in .45 Colt. Both are rare collectibles today.

The order for 600 rifles was a good start for Remington. The Keene was soon offered in an Army and Navy version and a carbine in .45-70-405 or .43 Spanish. Civilian rifles also came chambered in .40-60-260 Marlin and they were offered in the Carbine, Sporting or Frontier models. Deluxe models were offered with fancy wood and engraving.

The .43 Spanish was quite popular along the U.S. side of the Southern Border. Remington sold quite a few

The "hammer" (cocking lever) drops to half cock and locks the bolt closed. Lowering the lever to rest or fully cocking it releases to bolt to be cycled.

The magazine cutoff is shown in the "repeater" position. Pushing it forward turns the rifle into a single shot holding the magazine in reserve.

The Keene (top) lost out to the Winchester Hotchkiss (bottom) during the 1878 trials. The Hotchkiss proved problematic during troop trials and the Army stayed with the sturdy Trapdoor.

civilian Rolling Blocks in .43 since the ammo was readily available on both sides, and the Keene upped the ante as a nine-shot repeater.

The Cartridge

The .43 Spanish cartridge is a simplified version of U.S. General and Civil War hero Hiram Berdan's revolutionary and sophisticated .42 Berdan cartridge. In the late 1860s, Berdan's cartridge offered eye-popping technology little appreciated today. Many countries fielded a bolt action using some form of paper cartridge, but the Berdan metallic cartridge electrified warfare. Berdan—whose invention was eschewed by the U.S. Army—barnstormed Europe with it and his Colt-Berdan bolt-action rifle.

Only Russia bought rifles and ammunition from Berdan, but militaries adopted his drawn-brass, rimmed bottleneck cartridge, paper jacketed lead bullet ignited by his Berdan primer worldwide. Roughly 15 countries adopted the basic design in .41-, .42-, .43-, .44-, or .45-inch bullets—some with a plain lead bullet like the .43 Spanish, but most using a paper patched one weighing about 370 grains over some 77 grains of powder plus-or-minus with velocities in the 1,450-fps range. Winchester's 1876 rifle, in .45-75-350, duplicated this in a repeater, and such military-grade power was likely why Canada's North-West Mounted Police adopted it.

"This Is My Rifle…"

Our example in the very rare .43 Spanish at first appeared to be a plain $25 Sporting Rifle with the 24½-inch barrel, the only clue separating it from a $22 24-inch Frontier Rifle. It also sports the sling swivels standard on the Frontier Rifle, but a $2 extra for a Sporting Rifle, along with straight-grain wood and only that and 1/2-inch in barrel length separating the two models.

Frankly, I believe it was ordered as a Frontier Rifle and the use of the 24½-inch Sporting barrel was an expedient to fill the order quickly. The barrel, fore-end cap, tapered rib between the barrel and mag tube all come together without play and are locked in place by the front barrel band. They are a set fitted together during construction and aren't interchangeable between models. That tapered rib follows the contour of the barrel and is a marvel of

In the late 1860s, U.S. General Hiram Berdan barnstormed the world with his Colt Berdan bolt-action rifle featuring his revolutionary .42 Berdan cartridge with its bottlenecked, centerfire-primed brass case and paper jacketed bullet (left). Many nations fielded a bolt action using some form of paper cartridge, and the metallic cartridge was such a quantum leap forward in ammunition that it electrified the world's militaries with about 15 countries quickly adopting some version of Berdan's round using either a paper patched or plain lead bullet like the .43 Spanish (right).

Worked briskly, the carrier rises and is held upright by a latch. Pushing the bolt forward feeds the cartridge smoothly and trips the carrier to fall forward. Note the large gas escape port atop the receiver.

Folded, the Keene rear sight is graduated from 100 to 300 yards, and sliding the elevator forward raises elevation. With the ladder raised, the scale ranges from 400 to an optimistic 1,000 yards.

The front sight sits in the barrel/magazine band. Note the barrel band is split and acts as a pressure spring to keep the front sight in place.

▲ The fore-end band is held in place by the rib between the barrel and magazine tube with all locked in place by a single screw through the front barrel band. This complicated dance required skilled craftsmen!

◀ The Frontier rifle buttplate is similar to those used on the military Rolling Block rifles. Deluxe models often have a trap for a segmented cleaning rod.

machining skill! There is no play between all these parts even some 140 years later. Such tight interplay shows one aspect of the construction sophistication that required dedicating solid craftsmen to the Keene's production.

This rifle has been completely redone. John King came out of retirement to help, with finish work done by your humble correspondent. The gun passed my initial inspection and looked to have a pristine bore, but the chamber was so badly rotted it was irreparable, and the only option was

The Keene loads smoothly and easily through the carrier/loading gate on the bottom. Remington says it can be loaded from the top as well, but the author found it difficult.

replacement by turning down a .43 Spanish Remington Rolling Block barrel. It's such a rare gun that returning it from doorstop to eye-popping Range Queen was worthwhile. Back to the Keene.

Keene's rifle was a turnbolt design using the bolt root as the sole locking point. The bolt handle is on a slight upward angle and the short throw easily pops it open. Upon cycling, the cocking lever (which looks like a hammer) falls to half cock and locks the bolt closed. Officers and sergeants liked that the Keene was obviously on half cock at a glance, and the men were long used to cocking a hammer. To open the bolt, the striker must be fully cocked or lowered to rest. This feature was activated by a fly under the striker. Removing this fly leaves the striker at full cock.

The magazine was a tube under the barrel holding from six (carbine) to nine cartridges (military and civilian rifles). A switch on the left side of the receiver turned the Keene from repeater to single shot. The magazine was advertised as loading from the top or bottom, but I found trying to load from the top very difficult since you must reach deeply into the action.

Range Time

In running the gun, the action must be worked briskly. The carrier is held upright by a spring catch on the right side, and the ejector activated when it hits the back of the carrier to eject spent cases about a foot or so away. Run weakly, the spent round will fall back into the action, and the carrier won't be trapped upright. The ejector proved to be an "Achilles' heel" when it broke halfway through the test. John King acquired an ejector from a Keene collector. While mine had been hardened to brittleness, the one pulled from the other bolt proved butter soft. Which of

The action must be worked briskly to lock the carrier in the upright position and eject a spent shell. The British P1853 Enfield one-hand adjustable sling would be easy for any saddler to make, and many Enfields served with Texas infantry during the Civil War.

The Achilles' heel of this Keene proved to be a brittle ejector, and gunsmith John King was able to borrow one from a collector to replicate. Surprisingly, it was butter soft, but his reproduction is made of good, modern steel.

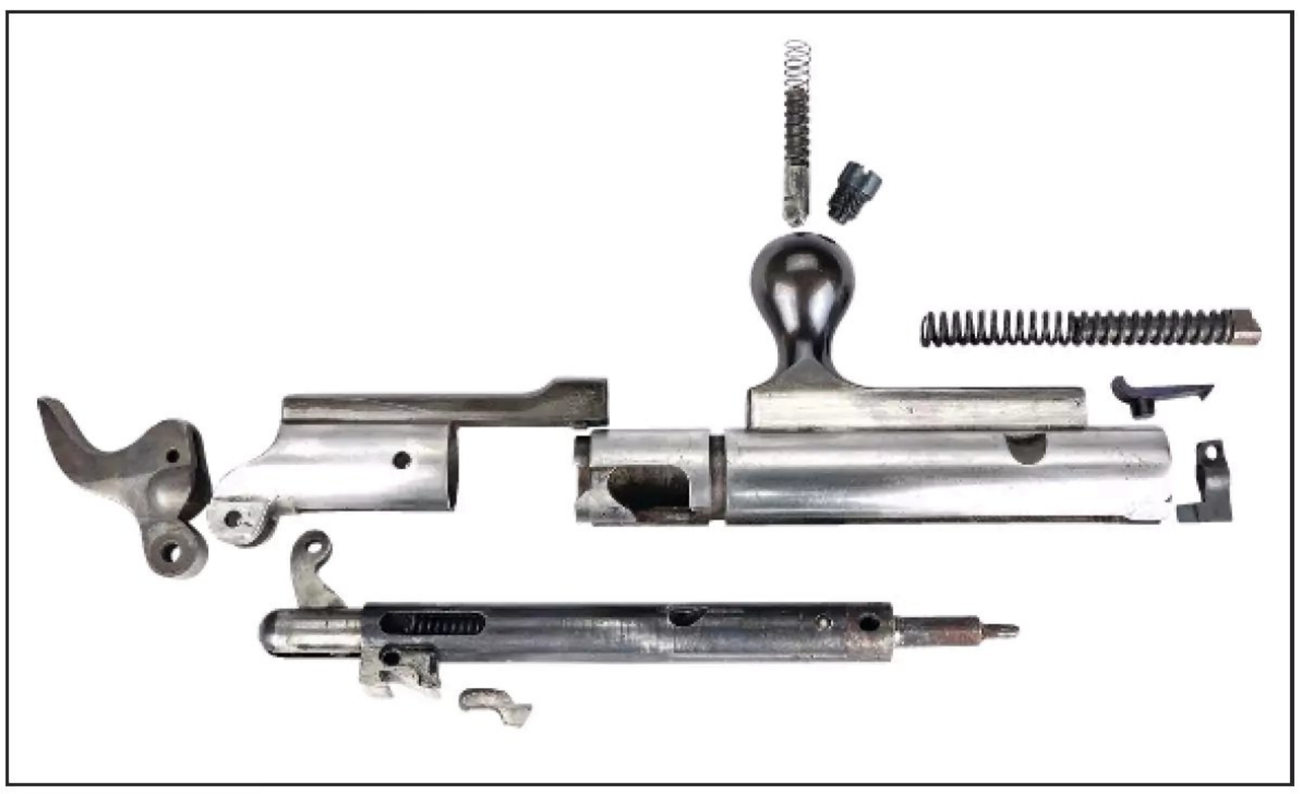
these is the "norm" is only a guess, but it is a complicated part to reproduce, and the gun won't work without it! The new one is far better than either original.

One other oddity is the rear sling swivel wouldn't pass a standard Trapdoor sling. The rear swivel loop is tighter than those on U.S. arms and must be the same as those used on the Rolling Blocks for export to Spain and Mexico. The sling present is the Enfield P1853 lace on sling by Dells Leather. Enfields were used by the Confederates in the Civil War, and one would be easy to replicate by any saddler, since it uses no metal. It is one-hand adjustable, quiet and sure in use.

The rear sight is optimistically graduated to 1,000 yards. The front and rear sights are the period-popular "V" shaped rear notch with corresponding inverted "V" front scaled very small. Practical range is 100 or maybe 300 yards even for young eyes. The elevation adjustable rear is attached with two flat-head screws. Windage is corrected by drifting the front. The front sight is fitted to the front

The fine sights might be good enough for a 20-year-old, but not for aging eyes. Wiping the barrel between shots, concentrating on sight picture, and counting the best five of six gave a decent three-inch 100-yard group albeit a full 10 inches over point of aim!

The Keene fieldstrips easily by removing the big screw in the side. It has lefthand threads and unscrews the opposite way. Separating the bolt halves is rarely necessary.



The bolt lock and spring resides in a tunnel in the bolt handle. It only goes in one way and has a slot to aid alignment. The bolt is shown disassembled *almost* completely. Even five days in Kroil wouldn't unfreeze the pin holding the firing pin spring, but finally loosened the bolt's screws, so the striker/firing pin was submersed in an ultrasonic cleaner. Note the fly at the bottom of the striker. This lowers the striker to its safety position upon closing the bolt. If removed, the striker will stay cocked.

The complexity of the gun is evident out of the wood. The carrier doubles as lifter, bolt stop and ejector trip. Note the complex shapes and cuts for the cutoff mechanism and the trigger.

band and has an unusual feature. The band is split in the center of the dovetail and acts as a spring to keep the front sight tightly in place.

The sights are fine enough that it took all my concentration to keep the small front blade even with the top of the rear's "V" shooting at 100 yards. With two eight-inch Shoot-N-C targets on the paper, aiming at the lower bull put the shots into the top target. To ensure accuracy, I cleaned between rounds, and the first three shots were a mere 1⅛-inch apart. With such a difficult sight picture, I took friend John Taffin's advice for old eyes: Shoot six and count the best five. Doing so gave me a three-inch, 100-yard group. Another six delivered five into a 3½-inch 100-yard group.

To test it as a repeater, I fired four rounds without wiping. The first shot from a clean barrel hit where I expected, but the next three were progressively wild. That wasn't completely unexpected, since the air in northern Nevada is so dry, but disappointing, nonetheless. I hoped I might get two or three shots close together before the accuracy fell off.

Keeping It Fed/Making Ammunition

Handloading held a few surprises. There were only two makers of brass: Buffalo Arms (BA) redrawn from Starline .50-110 and Bertram. I snagged 40 pieces of BA brass. Acquiring Bertram lead me on a merry chase ending at Northern Shooter's Supply in Australia. Even with international shipping the price was reasonable, and soon I had 60 pieces of properly head stamped brass.

Buffalo Arms offered SPG-lubed bullets cast 1:20 tin to lead alloy. Graf & Sons had black powder and Lee dies, and I almost had all the pieces. The first hitch was the Lee dies are a 2-die set for use with jacketed bullets. I needed an expander die for cast bullets. Fortunately, Buffalo Arms had one. Second hitch was the Lee shell holder worked with the Buffalo Arms brass but not the Bertram. Bertram Brass needed an RCBS No. 22. Last hitch was finding the Buffalo Arms brass was too thick in the neck to properly release the bullets in my chamber and needed reaming, but the Bertram brass fit perfectly.

Sources say the old balloon-head cases held 77 grains of black powder. Both new cases held only 67 grains under the 370-grain lead bullet. Because this is a repeater, cartridge overall length is crucial on the maximum end. The

original style round nose bullet from BA cast in Lyman mold 439186 has a crimp groove in the perfect spot. The loads in Bertram brass delivered an average of 1,320 fps, but the same load in Starline brass was surprisingly slower at 1,266 fps.

A Deluxe half-magazine Sporting Keene rifle appears in the 1950 version of *King Solomon's Mines* in the hands of actor Richard Carlson (on the right). (InternetMovieDB.com)

Disassembly

The Keene fieldstrips easily. First, ensure the chamber and magazine are unloaded. If the carrier is in the feed position, push the bolt over it to press it down. Leave the bolt upright. Remove the one big screw on the right side. This screw has left-hand threads and turns out in the *opposite* direction of all the others. Remove the screw and the carrier drops free. The cartridge carrier triples as lifter, bolt stop and ejector activator. Withdraw the bolt from the receiver. To take the bolt apart (although rarely necessary), pull back the cocking lever and rotate the bolt head to the right until the part separates from the body. Reassemble in reverse order. The bolt lock is under the big screw in the center of the bolt handle. You may have to remove it if the striker won't go past it. It has twin flanges that engage matching cuts in the bolt and a screw slot to orient it properly. The bolt lock is very soft steel. Do not use force!

More tips: Complete disassembly needs specialty thin blade screwdrivers (Brownells has them), but is rarely necessary. A few tips: Removal of the front band allows removal of the tapered rib and fore-end band. Doing so first releases pressure on the small screw through the stock in front of the receiver easing its removal. The magazine tube cap is braised in place and the tube is threaded into the receiver. The mag tube must be unscrewed from the receiver before the stock can be removed. After removing the triggerguard, lift the barreled action straight up. *Do not rock the receiver out of the stock!* You will crack the stock. If very tight, a non-marring punch will help gently tap it free from underneath. The carrier latch stud is only held in place by the stock. Don't lose it! Do not try and remove the barrel without the proper fixtures to keep the receiver from twisting.

Final Thoughts

The tube magazine and single lug bolt of the Remington Keene and many others were dead ends in firearm technology, and quickly obsoleted as militaries worldwide adopted smallbore smokeless powder rifles and cartridges. Never achieving worldwide military sales or public acceptance, only 5,000 Keenes of all models were made. It was discontinued after E. Remington & Sons went into receivership in 1888.

Yet, for a rifle made in such few numbers, the Remington Keene bolt action continues to stir emotions in aficionados of the Old West fueled by movie propmasters. A telescopic-sighted Keene shows up between James Gregory's hands in the *Sons of Katie Elder*. One of the finks in *Joe Kidd* uses a scope-sighted Keene with a late-model Weaver shoehorned on, and a Deluxe half-magazine Sporting Keene appears in the 1950 version of *King Solomon's Mines* between the hands of two different actors. The Remington Keene lives on as a beautiful, functional arm born in the earliest days of modern rifles! FN

KEENE FRONTIER RIFLE	
Manufacturer:	E. Remington & Sons, Ilion, New York
Action:	Bolt action repeater
Caliber:	43 Spanish, (.45-70 and .40-60 Marlin)
Capacity:	8+1
Barrel Length:	24½ in.
Overall Length:	43⅞ in.
Weight:	8 lbs., 11 oz. (unloaded); 9 lbs., 9 oz. (loaded)
Finish:	Blue and case-hardening
Sights:	V-notch Ladder rear; inverted V front
Stock:	Walnut, oil finished
Value:	$2,500 to $5,000 for basic models, more for Indian Police issue, substantially more for highly finished models.

BERETTA'S 92XI SAO TACTICAL PISTOL

Single-Action for the Win!

By Patrick Sweeney

Once a year, the earth completes a circuit of the sun. Once a century or so, the US Army selects a new sidearm. Back in the 1980s, the sidearm selected was the Beretta Model 92, to be known after as the M9. It was the very model of a modern major transition. From single-action to double-action, from seven rounds to fifteen, and from .45 to 9mm. Ever since then, Beretta has been upgrading, improving and adapting the 92, until we arrive here today with the 92XI SAO Tactical.

In addition to serving as the M9 for our military, the Beretta 92 was widely adopted by law enforcement across the country. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was a good time to upgrade from a six-shot revolver to a sixteen-shot 9mm pistol. Crime was at an all-time high, and everyone wanted to be better-armed. The Beretta did that for LE. On duty or on a SWAT team, the 92 was often the tool of choice. The 92XI SAO Tactical improves on that history.

The Beretta 92XI SAO Tactical is a pleasure to shoot and very accurate.

Okay, the basics: the 92XI SAO Tactical (and I'm just going to call it XI, to save my fingers and my keyboard) uses much of the old 92, but also has the improvements since then. And the big thing is a leap to the past: single action.

What Beretta kept was the open-topped slide, which makes the designation "ejection port" a complete non-entity. The whole forward half of the slide top is the ejection port. The barrel is the same, with a tilting block locking system that was derived from the Walther P38, but improved, repeatedly. The frame is much the same, but there are tweaks and improvements there as well. The back strap on the 92, and the M9, was slightly arched. Later Beretta models changed that to a straight back strap, for better indexing and recoil control. This was part of the Beretta Vertec model line.

Another upgrade is the accessory rail, another Vertec change, one that was also part of the military M9A1 change as well. With the rail, and the multiple cross slots, you can now mount a light, laser, combo or whatever on the frame of your XI. (And other Berettas as well, they have not been asleep at the switch on this subject.)

What hasn't changed is the slide stop and disassembly lever locations and designs, or the magazine release. The slide stop is just on the left side of the frame, no ambis here, and the disassembly lever is the same as it has been

On the left side, the 92XI SAO looks mostly like a regular 92. There's that thumb safety, however...

...on the right side you can see that the 92XI does not have an ambidextrous slide stop, nor an ambi magazine release.

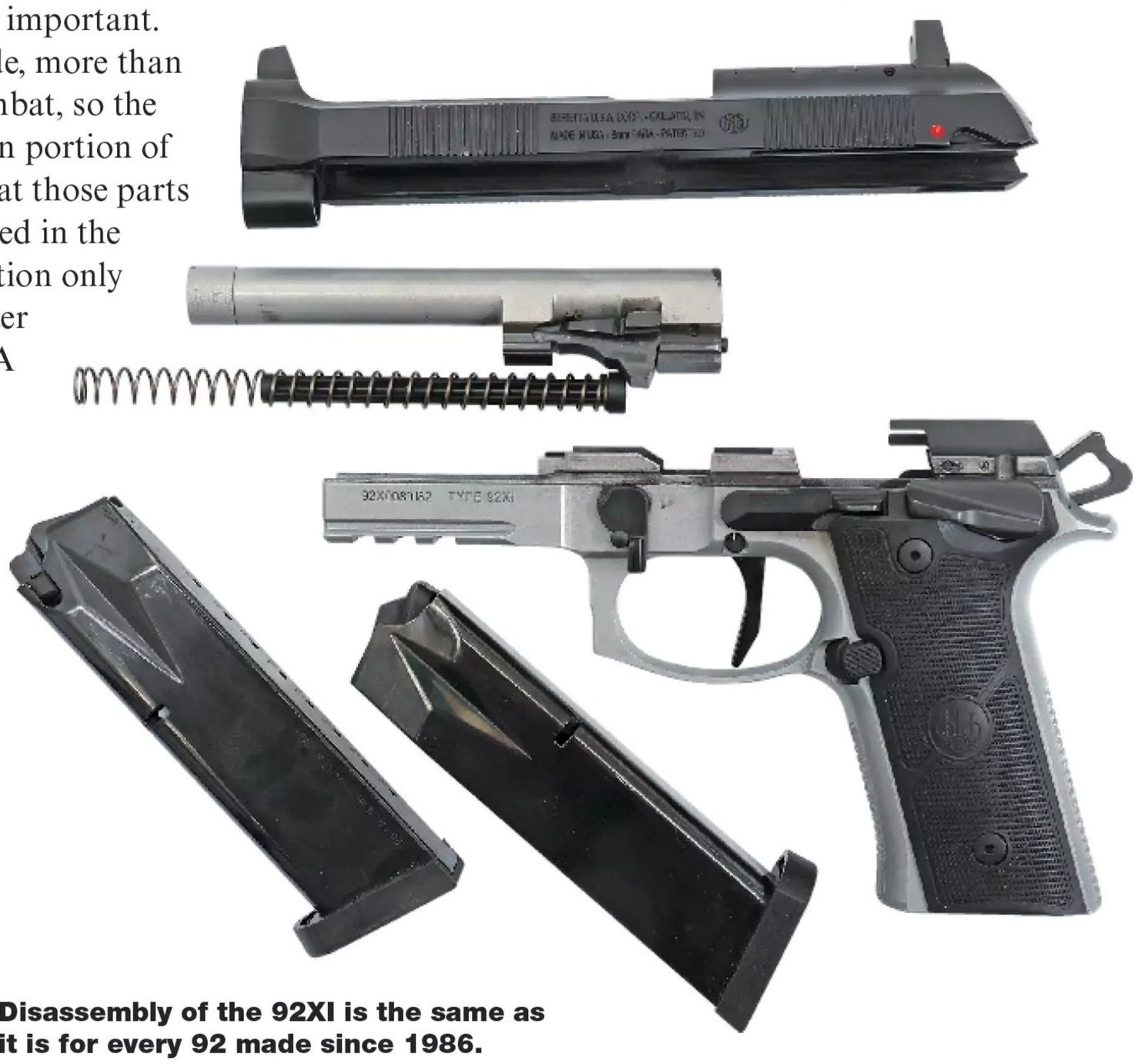
on the many, many Beretta 92/M9 pistols since that day in America in 1986. (Actually, the lever was there even before then, as the 92 entered production in 1976.)

From that solid lineage, that stable base, Beretta has now crafted the 92XI SAO Tactical. Let's go over what all that means. First of all, and the one that gets the most attention, is the single action trigger mechanism. Unlike the traditional double action (aka: TDA) the single action only (SAO) works like, well, let's not beat around the bush, a 1911. In a TDA pistol, you use the trigger to cock and then drop the hammer to fire. After that, the slide cycling cocks the hammer for subsequent shots. On the Beretta, and other TDA pistols, engaging the safety safely drops the hammer, without firing the pistol. This lets you start over again and carry the pistol with the hammer down. With so many shooters familiar only with striker-fired pistols these days, this background info is important. On the SAO (Beretta makes, and has made, more than one SAO-built pistol, one was the 96 Combat, so the XI is not unique in this), the double action portion of the mechanism is not present. Not just that those parts are left out, but that different parts are used in the assembly. The Beretta Xtreme-S single action only mechanism is designed with a much shorter reset in single action than that of the TDA design. So, you do not, and cannot, trigger-cock the hammer. There is no "DA" in the "S" of the "SAO."

This means the safety function and design has to change. The safety is moved from the slide (on the 92/M9) to the frame. It locks the slide closed when the safety is applied, and it does not decock the hammer. It works (again, we can't avoid the comparison) like the 1911. Beretta makes it as an ambidextrous lever, with paddles on both sides of the frame. Regardless of right or left-handed shooting, you have the safety lever there. Since the trigger mechanism is single action, the curved DA trigger of the 92 just isn't needed. Beretta replaced it with a straighter trigger, and its length makes for some interesting changes. (More on that in the testing part.)

The frame is the straight back strap of the Beretta Vertec version of the 92, and there is checkering on the front strap and back strap. The tang is the same as it is on the 92, which does not need changing, so Beretta

The accessory rail has three cross slots, so you can fit most anything there is needed.



Disassembly of the 92XI is the same as it is for every 92 made since 1986.

One of the nice details about the 92XI SAO Tactical is that you do not have to remove the thread protector to disassemble the pistol, but it is on there, only finger-tight, so check now and then to make sure it is still tight.

The 92XI SAO Tactical might be a bit bulky, but you get lots of capacity for that, and great accuracy along with the really good trigger.

didn't change it. The front outside face of the trigger guard (which is capacious and provides plenty of room for gloved fingers) is straight and smooth. Back in the 1980s, we practical shooters were still testing the idea of getting a support index finger up on the trigger guard, to provide leverage to combat recoil. The first video recordings showed us that we could not keep a finger in place, nor it didn't help in recoil, so we gave up on the idea. The magazine opening is also beveled to a useful degree, it isn't a competition-sized opening, but it does help without adding bulk as a competition funnel might do.

On top, Beretta gives the XI in the tactical version, all the bells and whistles. First, the barrel is extended and threaded. For the American market, the barrel is threaded 1/2x28, the common-over-here thread pitch for suppressor mounting. None of this euro-metric-lefthanded threads headache. To make aiming easier, they also installed taller iron sights, so you can see the sights over the suppressor barrel diameter. They also act to help you co-witness if you should install a red-dot optic. The slide has been machined for an optics mount, and there is an adapter plate you can get, that fits the Trijicon footprint. Then the XI gets a Cerakote finish, in silver on the frame, to provide an interesting and eye-catching two-tone contrast. But wait, there's more.

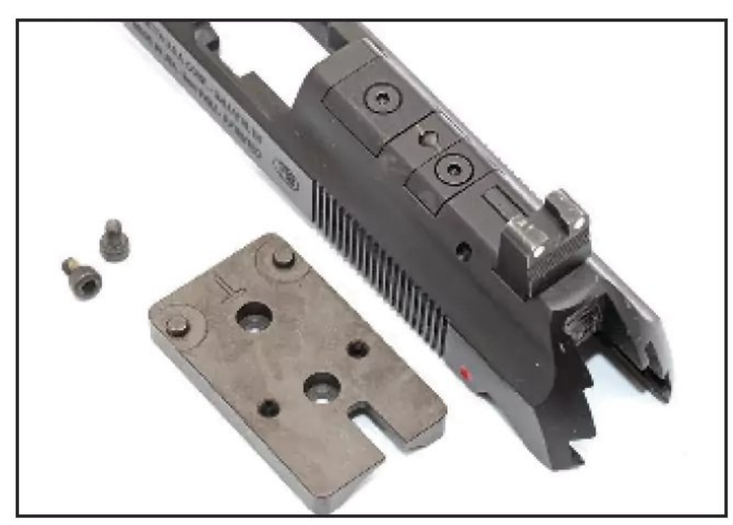
The regular 92/M9 magazines hold fifteen rounds. There has been a bazillion of them made, and since the M9 was GI issue, they needed lots and lots of magazines. However, fifteen rounds is passé these days, so Beretta made a few

The front strap is checkered for a non-slip grip.

The back strap is the Vertec shape, and it too is checkered for a non-slip grip.

The extended, threaded barrel comes with a threads protector screwed in place, as well as tall sights to see over the suppressor.

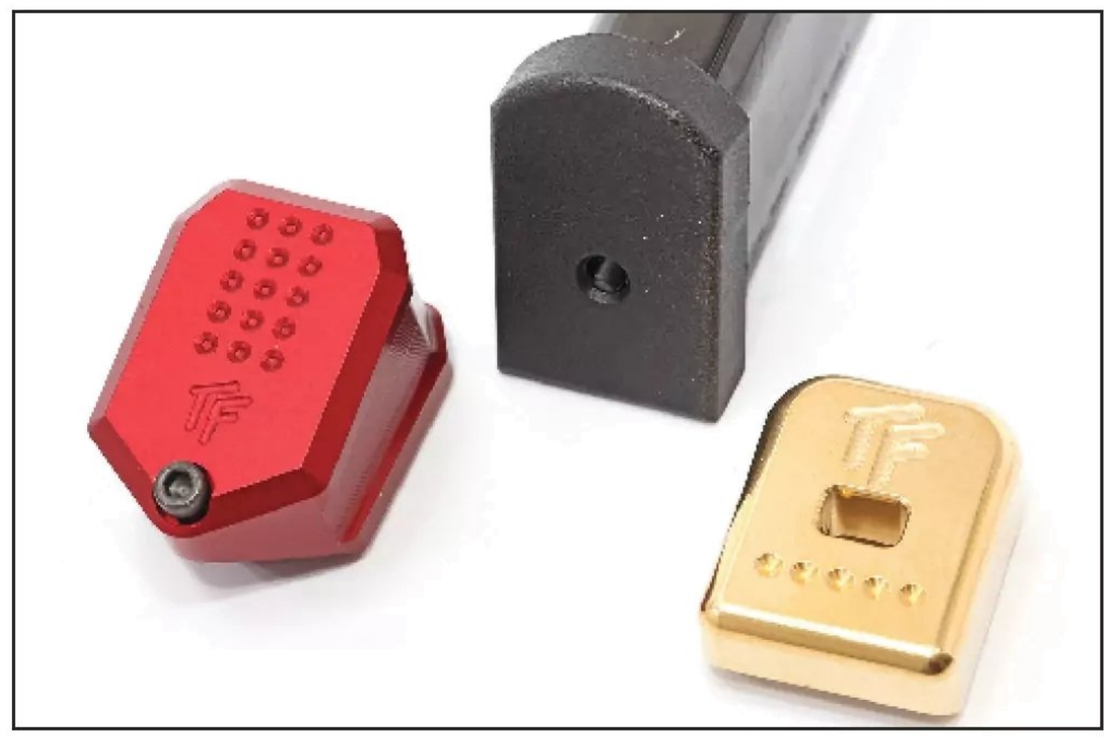
The rear sight is tall enough to match the front, and together they provide co-witnessing with optics.



The adapter plate accepts a Trijicon footprint optic, and bolts onto the slide once you remove the cover plates.

The 92XI SAO Tactical comes with 18-round magazines, with witness holes on the spine to check load capacity.

The eighteen-round magazines do not have the dimples, or creases, at the bottom that preclude capacity increases. The new ones can be bumped up, a lot.



Add weight or add capacity, you can upgrade your Beretta 92XI with new basepads.

tweaks on the magazine for the XI Tactical. You can buy the XI with ten-round magazines for those of you who live behind enemy lines, or fifteen if that's the limit where you live, like Colorado, but the top sku XI comes with eighteen-round magazines, two of them. The ten and fifteen round magazines still work, as do all the other legacy magazines that have been made since 1986, but now you can have more. What they did was remove the crimp in the tube at the bottom, and the sidewalls are now straight down. This also means you can expand capacity with a magazine extension, like the ones made by Springer Precision (SpringerPrecision.com) or Taylor Freelance (TaylorFreeLanceStore.com), which can increase the magazine capacity to 22 rounds. Well, not with all Beretta magazines, but certainly with the new XI magazine and those made by Mec-Gar (as explained on the Taylor Freelance web page, which is a big source of much capacity-increasing options.) The 30-round 90-series Beretta magazine, which was developed for the Mx4 submachine gun (SMG version of the Cx4 carbine) contract for India, will also work.

In testing, the Beretta 92XI SAO Tactical worked as you'd expect: flawlessly. Accuracy is top-notch, and the trigger is nicely tuned to have a clean and crisp release as well as a shorter-than-TDA reset. The trigger itself is grooved, so you won't be sliding around on the trigger face as you press back, which you'll have to do as it has an appreciable amount of take-up, even though it doesn't have a lot of over-travel. Now, my grip is not normal. As regular readers know, I grip a pistol high and hard. So high that my trigger finger does not come to the trigger horizontally. I am reaching down to the trigger. On the XI, what this

A bragging group, the Beretta 92XI and Hornady Critical Duty. OK, the new carry ammo here.

The 92XI really likes SIG V-Crown bullets.

Two empties in the air, and the 92XI SAO Tactical is back on target. The weight of the Beretta helps tame recoil. Not that 9mm has much, but every bit helps. A wide frame and a bit of weight means the felt recoil is soft in your hands, and getting the sights back on target is not a problem.

The ambidextrous thumb safety does not drop the hammer, and it does lock the slide closed.

means is that the pad of my trigger finger isn't pressing on the center of the trigger face but down near the tip. I get much better leverage on the XI trigger, which makes the trigger pull feel lighter to me than the scale would indicate. If you don't grip a pistol this way then the trigger length doesn't help you, sorry about that.

As a counter to the high grip, I find I am jammed up against the frame at the tang. Unlike other "hi-cap" pistol designs, the Beretta magazine has a hard angle from the tube to the feed lips. This means the frame is full width much higher than it is on some other designs. As I try to wrangle higher on the XI, the frame doesn't narrow, and I find the thumb safety then is a tad awkward. Clearly, Beretta designed this for the rest of you, and not for me. It is a minor problem for me and one I noticed only when I was looking for it. Hammering the falling plate rack was fun, and the XI Tactical worked like a champ when I put the Silencer Central Banish 9K on it.

To say the 92XI SAO Tactical is accurate is to state the obvious.

BERETTA 92XI SAO TACTICAL PISTOL
CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY DATA – 25 YARDS

Ammunition	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Velocity (fps)	Es	sD	Accuracy (Avg. & Best) (in.)
Black Hills Honey Badger	100	1,191	43	17.1	1.9 / 1.7
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,080	83	34.5	2.1 / 1.8
SIG V-Crown	124	1,158	52	23.3	1.7 / 1.4
Federal Syntech	124	1,180	5	1.8	2 / 1.8
Hornady Critical Duty	135	910	47	19.5	1.6 / 1.1

Accuracy results were to be averages of three, five-shot groups at 25 yards off a Champion shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a Labradar chronograph set to read 15 feet from the muzzle.

The 92XI SAO Tactical is set up for a suppressor, and when being tested with Silencer Central's Banish 9K, neither gave any problems.

So where does this put the Beretta 92XI SAO Tactical? Well, for capacity it is right up there with any competitor. It matches the Glocks, the various 2011 versions and anybody else for holding lots of 9mm ammo. As far as weight is concerned, the 34 ounces of the XI makes it heavier than a G17 or a lightweight commander, but the trigger on the XI is far superior to that of the G17, and the LWC is not only $200 more, but only holds 9+1 rounds of 9mm. In size, the XI is more in line with a government model, where the steel frame brings that one up to 38–39 ounces, and yet you still have only 9+1 rounds of ammo. With the XI on your belt, and the spare magazine that came with it on the other side, you walk out the door with 37 rounds of 9mm emergency-solving ammunition on your person. For daily carry, something like a Falco pancake holster would easily serve your needs. Comfortable, stylish and secure, the bulk of the XI SAO Tactical will be a lot easier to carry, hide and be comfortable with.

As home-defense tool, the capacity of the XI Tactical, plus the ability to mount a light or laser, makes it a smashing choice. For range sessions, putting a suppressor on it will make it a lot easier for everyone involved to have fun. And through all of this, there is a seemingly endless supply of legacy magazines you can call on, if fifteen rounds per mag is sufficient for your needs. FN

Duty, SWAT, home defense or carry, the Beretta 92XI SAO Tactical covers all the bases. Add a few extra tools and you are set.

SOURCES

Back Hills Ammunition,	Black-hills.com, (605) 348-5150
Falco Holsters,	Falcoholsters.com, (800) 490-7147
Federal Ammunition,	FederalPremium.com, (800) 831-8100
Fiocchi USA,	FiocchiUSA.com, (417) 725-4118
Hornady Ammunition,	Hornady.com, (800) 338-3220
SIG Sauer,	SIGSAUER.com, (603) 610-3000
Silencer Central,	SilencerCentral.com, (888) 781-8778

SPECIFICATIONS
BERETTA 92XI SAO TACTICAL PISTOL

Type:	Hammer-fired semi-automatic
Caliber:	9mm
Capacity:	18+1 rounds
Barrel:	5.1 in.
Overall Length:	8.7 in.
Height:	5.4 in .
Weight:	32 oz.
Finish:	Black and silver Cerakote
Grips:	Polymer
Sights:	Fixed front & rear, 3 dot
Trigger:	4 lbs. 7 oz.
MSRP:	$1,069
Contact:	BerettaUSA.com

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[Cont. from page 10]

Court. Any legal pushback will be tied up in the lower courts leaving infringements in place for years, with Democrats hoping it will be long enough to change the political balance of power and appoint judges who agree.

A predictable example is what's going on in New York right now, with Gov. Kathy Hochul signing three bills to outlaw "pistol converters," coerce gun stores into putting up signs warning of the "dangers" of their products, and imposing merchant codes on (legal) gun purchases. And more disarmament bills are coming. There will never be enough.

Punting cases by prioritizing procedure over its Constitutional obligation to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" once more demonstrates that all the Supreme Court must do to allow blatant infringements of our fundamental rights to persist and prevail is… nothing.

And it reaffirms an observable truism that people in power don't give it up unless there's a credible "or else" behind demands to stop oppressing. FN

WHO'S REALLY IN CHARGE AT THE DOJ?

Will Trump Fire Rogue U.S. Attorneys, or Is This What He Expects of Them Regarding the 2nd Amendment?

By Darwin Nercesian, News Field Editor

(Shutterstock/Heidi Besen)

There is an open revolt currently taking place at the Department of Justice (DOJ), as Biden-era deep state holdovers are ramping up their insubordination campaign against Attorney General Pam Bondi and President Trump. This rebellion follows a growing pattern within the DOJ. Just last month, acting U.S. Attorney Michael Simpson argued in *United States v. George Peterson* that the Second Amendment did not protect suppressors, only to be sent back with his tail between his legs to request a 30-day delay in the court's ruling so the government may "further consider its position."

Now, it seems another acting U.S. Attorney, Matthew Podolsky, is continuing the subversive charge, aided by the United States Supreme Court's irresponsible handling of *Bondi v. VanDerStok*. I broke that decision down in a recent article, *Understanding The Bondi v. VanDerStok Decision*, where I point out that the Supreme Court's proclivity to kick the Second Amendment can down the road would ultimately lead to a continuing onslaught of taxpayer-funded litigation and abuse of regulatory authority by rogue elements in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the DOJ.

It didn't take long to prove the assertion. Podolsky has teamed up with New York Attorney General Letitia James, who has been referred for federal criminal prosecution connected to mortgage fraud allegations in Virginia and New York. This insurgency involves the retroactive application of *VanDerStok* being used to persecute firearms dealers Brownells, Primary Arms, 80% Arms, Rainier Arms, and the Glockstore for selling 80% build kits back in 2016, despite ATF approval of the kits at that time.

As if on cue, online rumor mills have begun circulating stories about internal DOJ discussions prohibiting U.S. Attorneys from participating in these types of actions. Is there some truth to this? It's possible, but President Trump's ability to fire insubordinate underlings at the drop of a hat is well established, and last time I checked, Michael Simpson still has his job.

It's important to note that the DOJ just dropped a federal National Firearms Act (NFA) charge in the controversial *United States v. Taylor Taranto* case, in which the defendant was accused of possessing an unregistered Short Barreled Rifle (SBR) after being found with a CZ Scorpion pistol equipped with a stabilizing brace. The reversal, however, only came after immense pressure from the Second Amendment community and pro-gun advocates.

While it's easy to call out pro-Second Amendment actions and initiatives currently underway, it can be more difficult to identify whether

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we're receiving just enough crumbs to remain hopefully satiated or feasting on an appetizer while the steak is seared to perfection. Could the ATF and DOJ announce that they are vacating the frame or receiver rule? They absolutely could, and given the negative criticism following the *VanDerStok* ruling, one might question why it's taking so long. Let's be honest for the sake of transparency. The DOJ is well aware of legislative and regulatory violations of the Second Amendment on both the federal and state levels, causing me to question why such public outcry is necessary before they take action to reverse even themselves.

Take the 1989 assault weapon importation ban, for example. The Bush administration used this provision to ban the importation of numerous semiautomatic rifles based on "military-style features." The abject absurdity of the ban makes itself clear in the fact that these same rifles with the exact same features become perfectly legal (on a federal level) when manufactured within the United States, shuttering competition and, consequently, innovation in the market. The ban, however, is an administrative action taken by the executive branch directing ATF to declare these firearms as "non-sporting" per the 1968 GCA, not a law enacted by Congress. So, why has the Trump administration not ordered the DOJ to reverse this policy? If the goal truly exists to restore the Second Amendment, why not start with that which you directly preside over?

Along these lines, why not a thorough house cleaning to rid the Justice Department of holdover vermin pushing their own agendas in open defiance of what the DOJ and the current administration claim is an effort to restore and defend the Second Amendment? And what is empowering these supposedly rogue U.S. Attorneys to act out against alleged instructions coming from the Oval Office and the office of the Attorney General?

While these questions remain difficult to answer with any verifiable certainty, they raise concerns about whether the administration is providing conservative gun owners with the minimum necessary to retain their support. Midterms may seem a ways off, but they're always around the corner. Unless meaningful legislation is on the agenda between now and then, we risk having the scraps we've been given taken by the flick of a pen with a future administration and DOJ officials. In the meantime, clamping down on personnel and sending rogue elements to the unemployment line would bolster the mission that the Trump administration and Pam Bondi claim commitment to.

Don't take my tone as a lack of appreciation for what has been done. Instead, understand that it comes in response to a steadfast personal obligation to defend the Constitutional right of all Americans to bear arms. As I approach half a century on God's green earth, I've been privy to my fair share of gamesmanship and the ugly side of what is most often a disingenuous power grab or political maneuvering versus an authentic reverence for the Founding values and principles of our nation.

—

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

BIDEN'S SECRET 'PILLARS' SOUGHT TO SMEAR 2ND AMENDMENT SUPPORTERS AS DOMESTIC TERRORISTS

Tulsi Gabbard Keeps Promise to Declassify Documents

By David Codrea,
Politics Field Editor

(Shutterstock/Dmitri T)

"As promised, I have declassified the Biden Administration's Strategic Implementation Plan for Countering Domestic Terrorism," Tulsi Gabbard, Donald Trump's newly appointed Director of

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National Intelligence, announced on X.com. "Read it here," she wrote, adding a link to the document.

The entire document gives interesting insights into ways the government ensures the order of things remains favorable to the ruling regime. As such, areas of vigilance are divided into four "pillars":

Pillar One: Understand and Share Domestic Terrorism-Related Information
Pillar Two: Prevent Domestic Terrorism Recruitment and Mobilization to Violence
Pillar Three: Disrupt and Deter Domestic Terrorism Activity
Pillar Four: Confront Long-Term Contributors to Domestic Terrorism

All "pillars" merit analysis and scrutiny, especially noting how they have been approached in the past. tectors who saved the day, only to find they were acting as embedded agents provocateur, talking low-hanging fruit, without the skills, resources, or intelligence to pull off a domestic terror plot, into doing something stupid they could bust them for. But of special interest to gun owners is a revealing section under Pillar Four, which, seeks to "increase[e] faith in democracy and government" by imposing infringements on the Second Amendment.

"Rein in the proliferation of "ghost guns," the Strategic Implementation Plan's Action 4.1.1.a. recommends. "[En]courage state adoption of extreme risk protection orders; and drive other executive and legislative action, including banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

"Launch a national public education campaign to improve lethal means safety by expanding access to and use of safe storage of firearms and posted on X.com. "Who would that have impacted more? My friends and I (and millions of other people) or a Domestic Terrorist? Would that domestic terrorist have cared?"

"They CLASSIFIED (not the action itself which was FOUO [For Official Use Only] and already overt, but the overall classification of the document and action 4.1.1a's association with the plan) an intent to take firearms away from people," he elaborated. "Not specifically from domestic terrorists and in certain circumstances, but as 'long-term contributors to domestic terrorism.'"

"That means across the board because (according to this document), it's considered a contributor to domestic terrorism to own those things. Deeper than the action itself, it was basically considered an underlying predictor for domestic terror; owning any of those things," he concluded.

THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT OWNING GUNS AND ADVOCATING FOR THE SECOND AMENDMENT OFFICIALLY MADE YOU A TERROR SUSPECT…

First and foremost is settling on who domestic terrorists actually are and being mindful of Southern Poverty Law Center and Democrat propaganda in defining groups of citizens they oppose as haters, insurrectionists, and worse. We've seen otherwise innocuous activities, such as growing or shaving a beard, and in one case—I'm not making this up—bringing a giant inflatable pink pig to rallies to protest tax-and-spend politicians, treated as terrorism indicators by local/state federal law enforcement "fusion centers." For the last several years, the FBI and DOJ have resurrected an old tactic by using the term "greatest threat" to conflate armed white, conservative freedom advocates with violent racists.

As for recruiting, disrupting, and deterring domestic terrorists, what's needed is an investigation to determine how often plots are exposed to great media fanfare, praising the heroic pro- determine reimbursement opportunities to incentivize use of lethal means counseling in clinical settings," Action 4.1.1.e. continues, calling for implementation of mental health "information sharing to identify individuals at risk in order to target interventions."

Basically, their intent was to "take the guns first, due process later," ban arms suitable for militia service, mandate "lock up your safety" edicts, implement a propaganda campaign, and establish what sounds like dystopian science fiction's "Department of Precrime."

"So, effectively, the by-definition Secret Government plan to 'Combat Domestic Terrorism' included Gun Control over the long term which would have removed the rights of millions and millions of Americans in pursuit of a fallacy," Ronnie Adkins, "US Army Veteran and IC Contractor, host of the Funker530 Podcast, host of History Channel's *Military Mysteries*"

They didn't want you to know that owning guns and advocating for the Second Amendment officially made you a terror suspect while they conducted a propaganda campaign to convince low-information voters that's exactly what you are. The intent here is to impose citizen disarmament edicts on the entire Republic similar to what we find in Democrat states that have given up on the Second Amendment, and as we see in those states, what they've enacted is never enough.

Contrary to what the violence monopolists and their media cheerleaders would have us believe, they really do want to take our guns—all of them. And if that means painting you and me as domestic terrorists who need to be treated as such, so be it. Spook the herd and they'll bleat in approval when you parade some wolf skins in front of them.

Not that "legacy media" will tell any of this to its viewers and readers… FN

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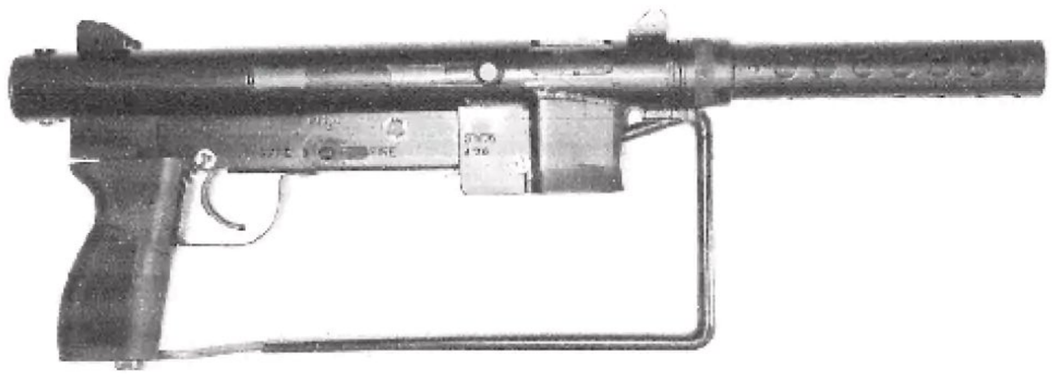

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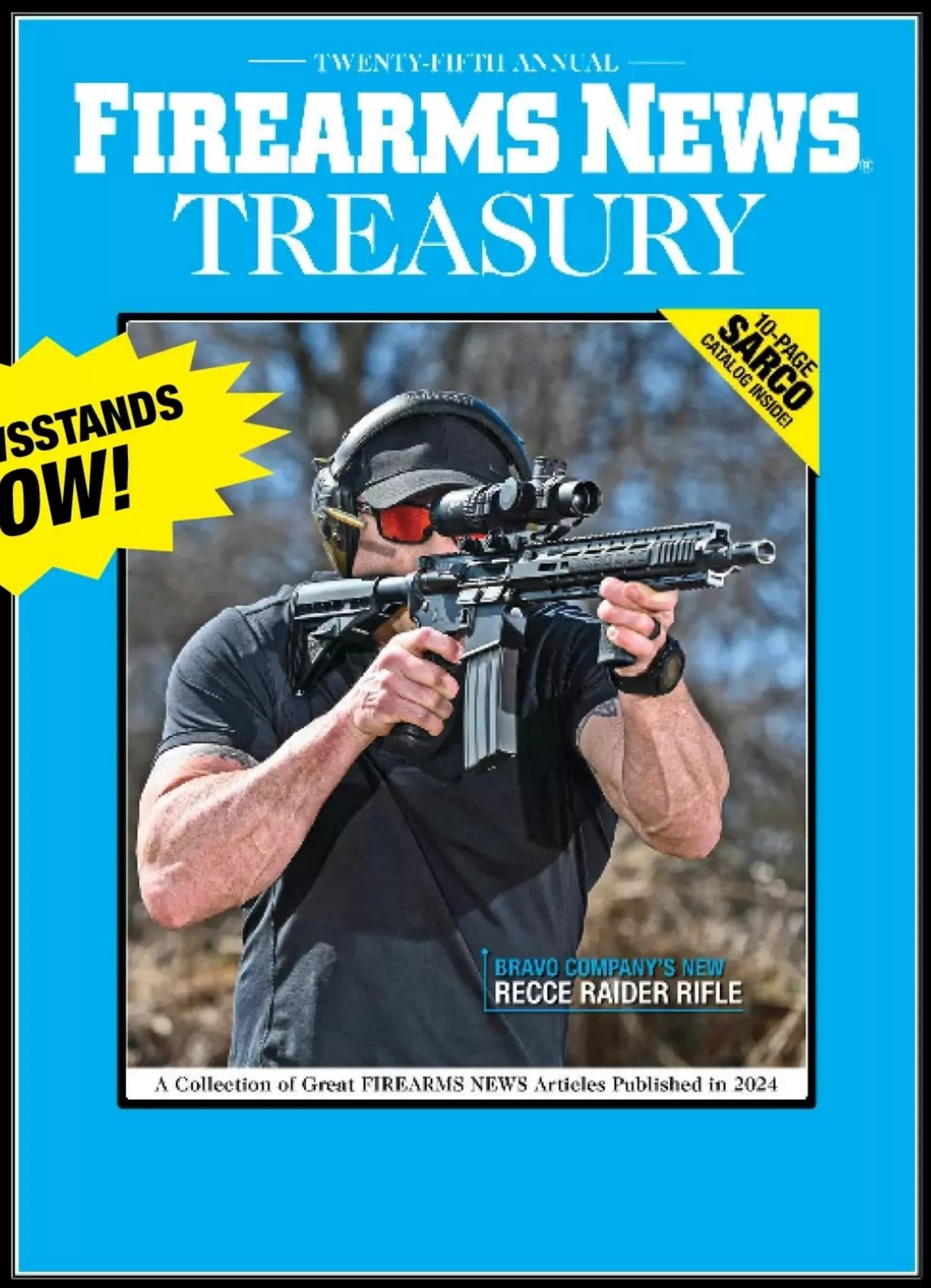

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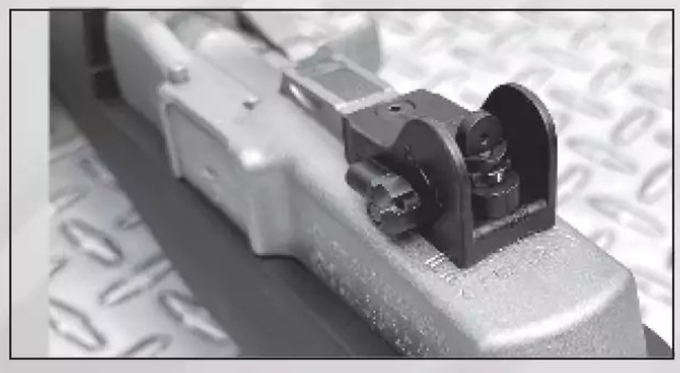

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