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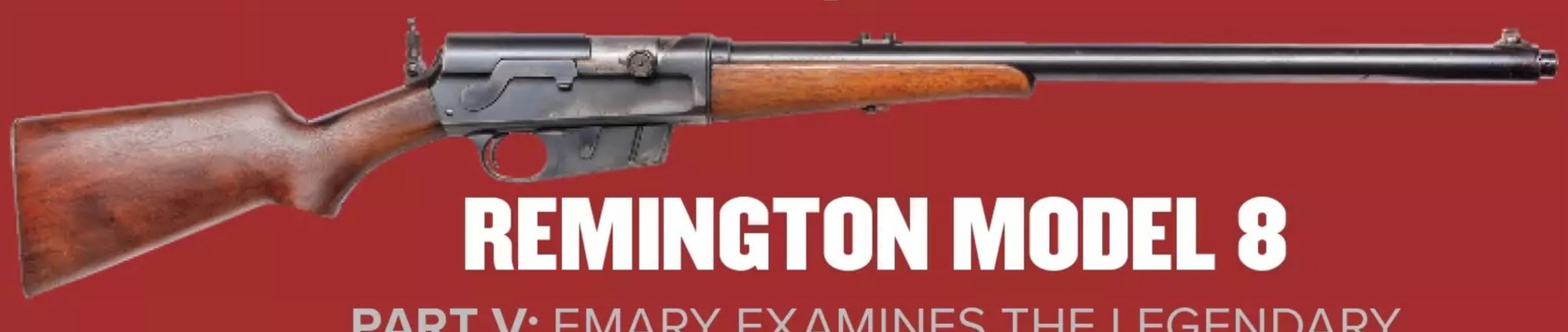
.338 ARC VS. 8.6 BLACKOUT

WHICH ONE IS FOR YOU? BECKSTRAND COMPARES ACTION SIZE, TWIST RATE, LOAD OPTIONS, BULLETS, SUPPRESSOR USE, MAGAZINES AND UNCLE SAM'S INPUT.

P. 42

\+



REMINGTON MODEL 8

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SHOT·SHOW

2026 SHOT SHOW PREMIERE

NEW PRODUCTS FROM NSSF'S CONVENTION IN LAS VEGAS!

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Signs of High Pressure on Cartridge Cases

P. 21
TARR
My Carry Ammo Through 40 Years

P. 80
WOOD
Story of Smith & Wesson's Performance Center

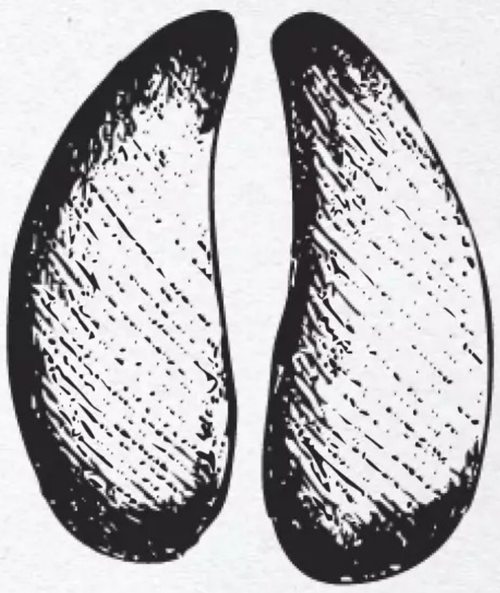
MODERN CARBON RIFLE

DAY 1

42°46'44.4"N 110°25'55.6"W
Overcast, 28°F, wind from NW

Fresh rub line 200yds above camp
Hit dirt at 0500. Ridge is steeper than mapped. Saw three cows. Bull sign old. Wind swirled hard around noon. Left knee barking as always. Good day to have a good day.

Roughly 4.75 in



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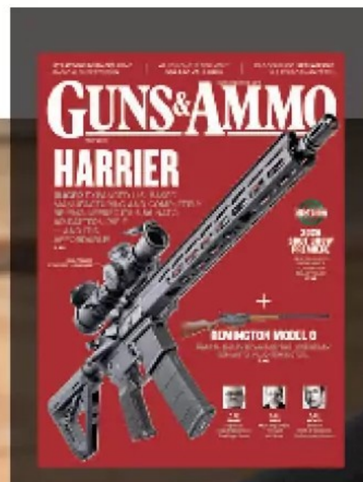

The subscriber cover features the Ruger Harrier in 5.56 NATO, a re-engineered AR-pattern rifle manufactured in Kentucky. The Harrier is scoped with a Sightmark Presidio 1-10X CRED-10. p. 50

THE RUGER HARRIER IS A HARDWORKING AND AFFORDABLE SEQUEL TO THE AR-15.

BY RICHARD NANCE

BLUE COLLAR, BLACK RIFLE 50

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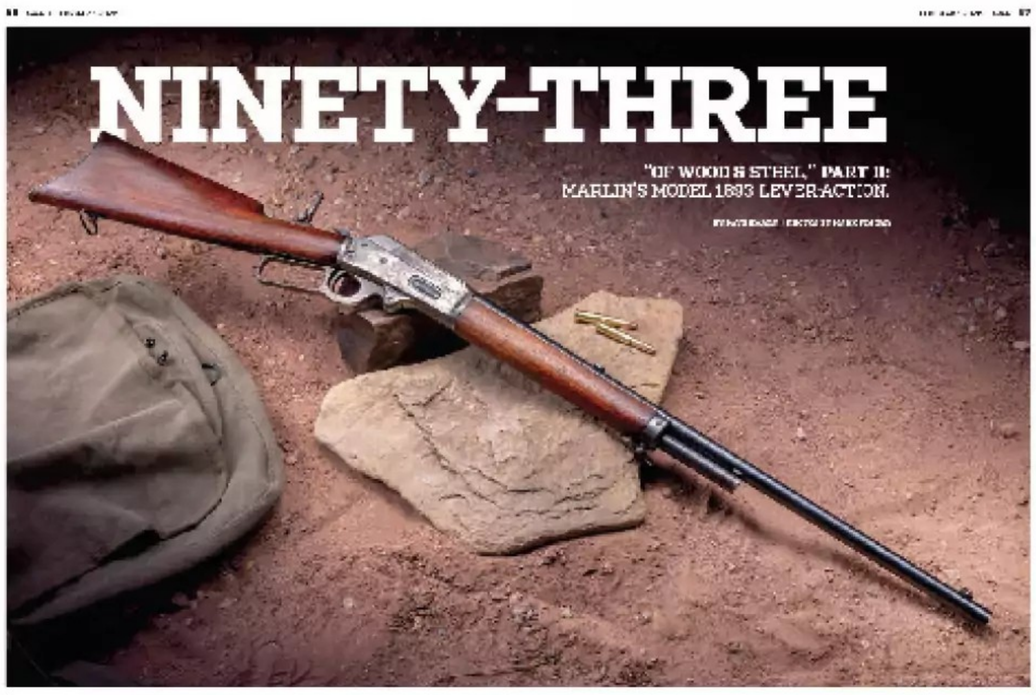


FIREARMS PRODUCTION

In Dave Emary's article "Ninety-Three" (February 2026), featuring the Marlin Model 1893, it was claimed that the 1894 Winchester is the most successful commercial firearm in history with more than 7 million produced. What about the Ruger 10/22 (10 million) and the 870 Remington (11 million)?
Todd Dwire
Baxter, Minnesota

The Ruger 10/22 has been in continuous production since 1964. Author Walt Kuleck estimated that some 7 million were produced as of 2015. If that number is accurate, it is possible that nearly 3 million more have been produced since. Ten million is the number indicated by a Google search, but our sources have not certified the total number of 10/22s produced.

The Remington Model 870 was in continuous production from 1950 until 2019. Though a version of Remington firearm manufacturing exists (remarms.com) — and some Model 870s have been produced — we are unable to verify how many add to its commercial sales figures. Google estimates that more than 11,000,000 Model 870s were produced by Remington, but that online data was sourced from a Remington Arms Company webpage created in 2009 and that no longer exists. Conflicting sources estimate that 8,000,000 to 11,000,000 Model 870s were produced to 2019, but certifiable records are currently unavailable. Mr. Dwire, your assertion that both the Ruger 10/22 and Remington 870s are more commercially successful than the 1894 Winchester is likely correct. — G&A Staff

PACEMAKERS

I suffered a seemingly never-ending string of age-related indignity when it became necessary to have a cardiac pacemaker implanted. The potential problem is that the location is exactly where the stock would rest when firing a long gun. I was fortunate to have encountered a gentleman with a similar incident. He said he could no longer shoot a long gun. When I needed a pacemaker, I instructed the cardiologist to implant the device on my right side. (I shoot left-handed.) The preferred location, I was told, is on my left side. For right-handed shooters, this is not an issue. If you are going to have a cardiac pacemaker implanted, be aware that you have options. Choose the best site for you. It might be prudent to discuss this matter with a companion to make sure your wishes are carried out.
Rick Smith
Newmarket,
New Hampshire

ANOTHER DOOZY

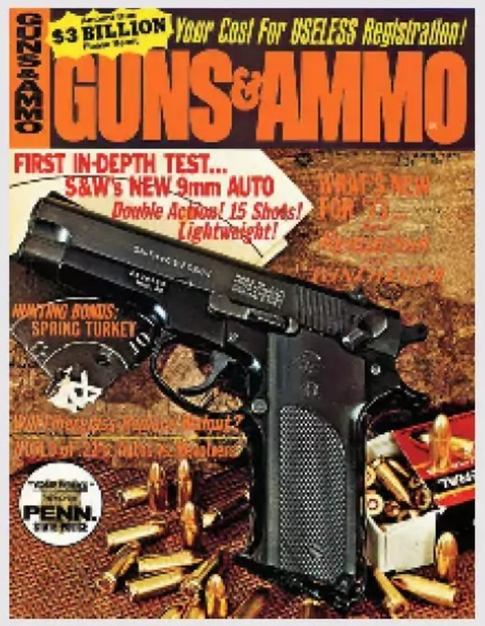
I usually read Keith Wood's last-page columns first because I enjoy them. With "Doozies" (March 2026), he knocked it out of the park. I enjoyed it, although it was all sadly true. In 2022, I remember former President Joe Biden saying, "a 9mm bullet blows the lung out of the body" while discussing gun legislation.
Norm Cooter
North Carolina

RELATIVE OBSOLESCENSE

I take exception to Mr. Beals' letter to the editor in the March 2026 edition. Beals stated, "... revolvers do not carry enough rounds for adequate protection." Exactly how many rounds is that? I consider five, six or seven rounds of .357 Magnum plenty. If I find myself needing to reload — which I can easily carry in my pocket, no magazine required — then I have to seriously reconsider why I am still there in the first place. While I may have to use both hands to reload, odds are that I won't have to clear a jam or experience a magazine issue. Though armed, the best self-defense weapons I have available to me are my eyesight, awareness and my feet. I carry just in case those are not enough, and a revolver fits the bill for me.
Matthew Sims
Gray, Georgia

APRIL '73

Guns & Ammo was the first to test the Smith & Wesson Model 59, the brand's first-generation double-action semiautomatic 9mm produced until 1982. Based on the Model 39, it featured a 15-round capacity with magazine disconnect, aluminum-alloy frame and steel slide with slide-mounted safety/decocker. These characteristics mirrored the trend for duty pistols that replaced service revolvers through the 1990s.



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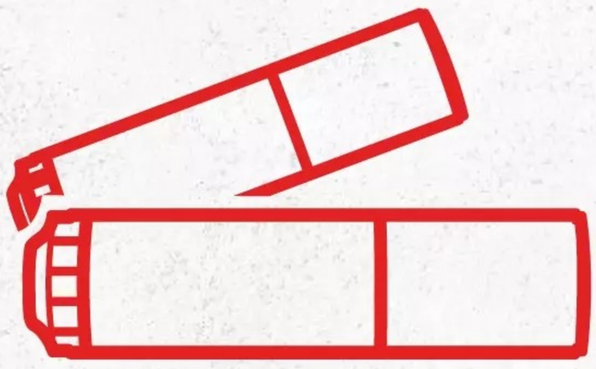

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Exactly. A Roman Gladius has been obsolete technologically for something like 1,500 years, but you're dead if the other guy has a clue how to use it. — P. Sweeney

Revolvers and pump-action shotguns are technologically obsolete, yes, but they still put bad people in the ground every year.
— J. Tarr

NEED A SAVAGE MAG

I recently purchased a J. Stevens Arms .410 bolt-action shotgun, Model 238A. The gun is missing its magazine, though. Where might I find a magazine for this model and caliber shotgun?
Ken Olney
Email

From old parts books that I have, the 238A was a 20 gauge. The 38A was a .410. Numrich offers a three-round magazine for the 38A for $41.55 (gunpartscorp.com). Availability is subject to change.
— RJ Contorno,
Savage Arms

CALIFORNIA FREEDOM

I'm always ecstatic when a new issue of Guns & Ammo arrives in the mail, and I appreciate the recent coverage concerning the challenges that firearms aficionados face in the Golden State. Every year, the state legislature goes out of its way to make gun owners frustrated and marginalized. I cringe when I hear phrases such as "Commiefornia." Despite some silly bans and restrictions, 40 million hard-working people make California home. Many of us love shooting, hunting and exercising our 2nd Amendment rights. Having taught college and university kids for more than 30 years, I believe education is a strategy to preserve our rights. Thanks to legal challenges sponsored by groups including Gun Owners of California and the California Rifle and Pistol Association, we've seen a few freedoms restored. The state may never embrace constitutional carry, but the more people we can interest in shooting sports the more likely we'll preserve our rights.
Randal Beeman
Ventura, California

I, too, cringe at the word "Commiefornia." It implies that the fight for the Second Amendment in California is over. The temporary suspension of the microstamping amendment of the UHA shows that many are still fighting.
— A. Rico

1911 MASTERS

Kudos to Keith Wood for his article "Mastering the 1911" in the November 2025 edition, and for describing his time at Rio Salado Sportsman Club. I love the 1911 platform and own three. The article was a 1911 enthusiast's dream, in my opinion. Spending several days with some of the best shooters for this platform and learning their secrets on how to best utilize this special gun. Rob Leatham is, in my humble opinion, the greatest 1911 shooter in the world. That's saying a lot if you consider legends including Jeff Cooper, Bill Wilson and Ken Hackathorn. Some guys have all the luck.
Tim Smothers
Glasgow, Kentucky

NEWSSTAND ERROR
The April 2026 cover for newsstand issues featuring Dan Wesson's DWX and Specialist pistols displayed an incomplete image of the DWX magazine basepad and the Specialist trigger. No, the Specialist is not a double-action M1911.

MODEL 1899 CHAMBERINGS

Dave Emary's article, "Ninety-Nine" (March 2026) surprised me with several omissions. The Savage 1895 or 1899 was chambered for the .25-35 Winchester in addition to the .30-30 Winchester and .303 Savage. This occurred before the .250 Savage and .300 Savage were developed. The Savage 99 was also chambered for the .384 Winchester, which gave shooters .270 Winchester ballistics in a lever-action rifle.
Leroy Fuchs
Email

HATS OFF TO HENRY!

I would like to give a shout-out to Henry Repeating Arms for its Supreme rifle. They have hit a home run with this platform for us lever-gun hunters. Around the time of the Supreme's release, I was waiting on the new Ruger-made Marlin 336 Classic to arrive at my local dealer. When I saw that Henry offered the Supreme in .300 Blackout, I did my homework to see if the cartridge was capable of cleanly and ethically dispatching whitetail deer inside 150 yards. I rarely shoot beyond 100 yards. There were mixed opinions, but I took the leap and made the purchase. I have been more than impressed. Accuracy has been phenomenal with excellent groups out to 200 yards. The action is smoother than any external-hammer lever gun I've owned or shot. I successfully harvested three does and two bucks with this rifle, all inside 100 yards. It's nothing short of amazing. The ammunition that has proven most successful for me is the Hornady Custom 110-grain CX. I believe that copper bullet has a significant role in my success. This has been the closest I've come to tagging out and I couldn't be happier!
Justin Munkus
Cropwell, Alabama G&A

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ERIC R. POOLE

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GONE, TOO YOUNG

LEE J. HOOTS was the 10th editor of Guns & Ammo, the youngest to achieve its editor-in-chief position at age 33. He helmed 53 issues of the magazine from October 2001 to February 2006 — including the 500th Special Issue in March ’06. He serviced readers for more than 4 years, becoming a respected western writer regarded for his hunting and shooting passions.

Hoots was 20 when he started his writing career, eventually catching the attention of the Petersen’s Publishing Group (PPG) in 1997.

Lee J. Hoots, Guns & Ammo’s 10th editor, passed February 6, 2026.

“As group editorial director, I hired Lee as an associate editor for Petersen’s HUNTING,” recalled former G&A Editor-in-Chief Kevin Steele, now-publisher for the Outdoor Sportsman Group (OSG). “He came from ‘Western Outdoor News,’ and worked on RifleShooter magazine also. When Garry James needed to step away from Guns & Ammo, I appointed Lee to replace Garry in ’01.”

“He was a very capable and affable chap,” Senior Editor and former Editor-in-Chief Garry James fondly remembered. “He was a great guy and well-liked by staff, manufacturers and contributors.”

Steele added, “As the company’s ownership changed from EMAP to Primedia, Lee left Guns & Ammo for the opportunity to join me on Petersen’s HUNTING as its editor in late ’06. He stayed with us until 2008, which is when he moved to Wolfe Publishing.”

In 2009, Hoots relocated from Los Angeles, California, to Prescott, Arizona, and resumed his passion for outdoor writing. From his desk and afield, he worked on “Handloader” and “Rifle” magazines for Wolfe Publishing, managing to hunt the west and throughout the world — Africa, Asia, Europe, and several countries in North and South America.

Sadly, Hoots passed away from early-onset dementia on February 6, 2026. In addition to many examples of his outdoor storytelling and firearm reviews, Hoots left behind his wife Linda of 31 years, three adult children, Amanda, Logan, and Dakota, his mother Winifred, sister Robin Kite, and nephew Jacob Kite. He was 57.

MARTIN O. TUASON was the third generation to lead Armscor, a Philippines-based family business. Martin turned his passion for shooting toward the development of innovative products such as the powerful .22 TCM cartridge and the RIA 5.0E pistol, not to mention other handguns, rifles, shotguns and ammunition.

Martin Tuason, CEO of Armscor/RIA, left us on November 19, 2025.

Armscor was once singularly regarded for its affordable Model 1911s and ammunition until Tuason changed public perception. He guided the modernization and expansion of Armscor and Rock Island Armory (RIA), most notably after being appointed president in 2012 and chief executive officer in 2014.

Martin’s prudent business acumen steered the company to secure international military contracts, resulting in Armscor becoming one of the largest small arms and ammunition producers in the world.

Establishing a manufacturing plant in 2016 at its U.S. office in Nevada, Armscor constructed its third U.S. manufacturing operation in Cedar City, Utah. Such decisions seemed prophetic and proved timely. U.S. manufacturing mitigated overhead, decreased wait times, prevented supply shortages, improved customer service constraints, and addressed import and export challenges. RIA-USA builds premium products for the Armscor brand featuring the latest CNC machining technology while utilizing in-house engineering capabilities. Just like the fierce competitor he was, Martin’s focus resulted in unprecedented growth and opportunity for Armscor. His leadership enhanced the brands’ reputation for customer service and satisfaction.

Unfortunately, Martin died unexpectedly on November 19, 2025. He was 51. He is survived by his wife Camille, sons Ignacio and James, and daughter Olivia. In the wake of her brother’s death, Lisa Tuason was designated Interim Chief Executive Officer for U.S. operations. Alongside Martin, Lisa witnessed the strategic growth and became integral component to the company’s success. Armscor and Rock Island Armory are committed to move forward and serve responsible gun owners for future generations. G&A

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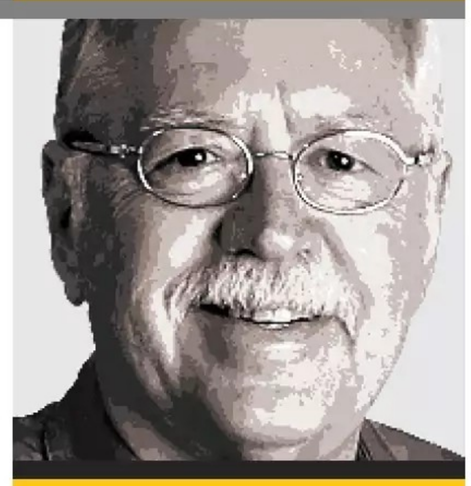

GARRY JAMES

GARRY.JAMES@OUTDOORSG.COM

EDWIN PHILIP "PHIL" SCHREIER 1962-2025

It is with much sadness that I report the passing, on December 29, 2025, at age 63, of firearms industry luminary Phil Schreier. With his demise, family, friends, multitudes of fans, and business associates have lost one of the most admired, knowledgeable and charismatic individuals to ever grace the gun scene.

Guns & Ammo readers likely remember his superb photographic contributions to my articles, though his facility with the camera was but one facet of his prodigious store of talents.

For the past several years, Phil had been director of the National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Virginia. Previously, he worked in several different fields and then joined the National Rifle Association (NRA) as a helper in its gift shop. His innate abilities being duly recognized, Phil transitioned to the position of curatorial assistant in 1989, later becoming curator of exhibits and then, some 33 years on, museum director.

Phil was a man of many parts: museum director, an eagle scout and active participant in the Boy Scouts of America; manager of the NRA Gun Collecting Department; consultant and on-screen personality for scores

of television productions, and respected writer of authoritative articles that appeared in NRA publications as well as in collector and organization journals and general firearms publications.

I first met Phil some 35 years ago when I was assigned by my boss, the late Robert E. Petersen, to transport a magnificent collection of antique Colt firearms to the NFM for an exhibition at its previous location in Washington, D.C. Phil came to Mr. Petersen's private jet to meet me. In the drive from the airport to my hotel, we engaged in an animated conversation, sharing our many common interests. It was obvious to both of us that we had already become close comrades. During the ensuing years, including the times we were not engaged in some adventure together, Phil and I had daily talks on the on the phone swapping stories about guns (of course!), old movies, books, history, British comedy, and life's vagaries. I was with him at the hospital on March 7 of last year when, after being admitted for a totally disassociated ailment, he was diagnosed with leukemia that 10 months later claimed his life.

As well as being a recognized figure in the gun field, Phil was, simply put, one of the most magnetic, fun and entertaining figures a person could encounter. A facile raconteur, wherever he went, cigar in hand, he was a delight to those around him. There were few who knew Phil for any period of time who did not consider him their "best friend" — and he was, he truly was.

ROLLING BLOCK CARBINE

Q: I have an old Remington Rolling Block that I need some information on. It's a .50-caliber rimfire carbine with a 20-inch barrel and a saddle ring. There are no markings on the barrel. The only marking is on the tang: "Remingtons Ilion, N.Y. U.S Pat. May 3d[?] Nov. 18th 1864 April 10th 1866." The rifling is in great shape as is the action and stock, but the outside of the barrel and action have lost most of their bluing. The barrel has a rear sight that is convertible with a "1" for the open sight, a "3" for the pop-up leaf sight, and a "5" for the top of the pop-up sight. The front sight is simple barleycorn type. What can you tell me about this rifle? I am curious about why there are no markings on the barrel and about the .50-caliber rimfire chambering.

B. W.
Email

A: *The Remington Rolling Block is one of the great success stories of the mid-19th century. After the U.S. Civil War, Remington was in some financial difficulty. Around 1867, the firm began producing guns with the Leonard M. Geiger-designed Rolling Block action in sporting and military versions, and huge numbers were eventually turned out by both Remington and others under contract, thus saving the firm from going under. The way your carbine is marked is completely appropriate. The fact that it is rimfire is confusing. A number of the precursors to the Rolling Block, the "Split*

Breech," were chambered in .50 rimfire, but the patent dates indicate you may have a Navy Model 1867, which was made in .50-45 centerfire. I would need additional photos to be more specific. New York also bought some carbines in .50-70 CF for its National Guard. Please recheck your carbine and make sure it is not a centerfire. This .50 rimfire chambering is something of a puzzlement.

TWO 1911A1S

Q: I have two military 1911A1s that I would like to learn about and have evaluated so my kids will know what they are and how much they are worth when they inherit them. I'm attaching one picture of both sitting on my grandmother's player piano, as well as a couple of emails with close-up pictures. One is a Remington Rand that was passed down from my wife's uncle. The Colt I have had for 20-plus years, but I don't know anything about it. My curiosity was piqued when I took the Colt to a gun show and a "dealer" showed an extreme interest in it. The serial number on the Colt is 849XXX and on the Remington Rand 1507XXX.

R. T.
Email

A: *During World War II, the two most prolific manufacturers of Model 1911A1 pistols were Remington Rand and Colt. Next, in descending order, were Ithaca, Union Switch & Signal, and Singer Manufacturing Company. Both of your pistols appear to be in nice shape, I'm guessing in the 85- to 90-percent range. As such, the Remington Rand would be worth a good solid $2,000 to $2,250, and the Colt $2,000 to $2,250 if the slide does not match the frame. (Look beneath the firing-pin stop to determine this.) If it does match, $2,500 to $3,000.*

AUCTION BLOCK

An elegant Rigby .450 Nitro Express double rifle achieved a respectable $37,500 at a January 24, 2026, Sportsman's Legacy sale. Made in 1906 for the Honorable Captain Guy Wilson, the gun is a Class C double wearing 28-inch barrels with a beaded blade front sight, filed rib, dovetailed rear leaves — one fixed express and three folders left green — and ejectors. Additional features include a barrel-mounted sling loop, mechanical safety, bushed strikers, long forend, drop points, steel grip cap, sling button and a blank initial plate. The action is graced with bordered vine to 25 percent, the pattern continuing over the tangs, guard, grip cap and screws. "SAFE" appears in gold on the upper tang. The bores are strong and bright. The chambers are smooth. Barrel finish appears to be a vintage refresh. Engraving remains sharp. The guard appears to have refreshed blue with a hint of softening to its engraving. Seventy-five fired cases were included. The rifle's vintage leather takedown case has new interior. A sling, oil bottle and decocking block are present. For more information about this and future sales, visit Sportsman's Legacy at sportsmanslegacy.com.

HOPKINS & ALLEN NO. 6, .32 CF, <60%

EXCAVATED REVOLVER ID

Q: I have attached three photos. This old revolver was found in a farmer's field in the 1970s. The farmer's sons were walking across the field when they noticed something sticking out of the soil. They dug around and pulled this gun out of the ground. They took it home to their father. He cleaned it as best he could and hand-carved a set of grips for it and put it up on the shelf in his house. This all took place in southeast Saskatchewan. The Souris River runs through the area near Roche Perce, and the North Dakota border at Portal is only 4 miles south of the field. Older residents around this area talked much about there being bootlegging and whiskey trade taking place during in the 1920s and into the early 1930s when the U.S. and Canada were in the Prohibition era. One other point, it was said, that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had set up a camp along the banks of the Souris River (in this area) during these times. My good friend owned the land next to the field described in this story.

B. K.
Email

A: *A very interesting story. Excavated guns have a mystique all their own. Regarding your query, I spent a considerable amount of time investigating a number of circa-1900 double-action solid-frame revolvers. The one that most resembles your field-find is the .32 CF Hopkins & Allen No. 6. The No. 6 first appeared in the 1880s and was made until around the turn of the 20th century. I'd guess yours dates from circa 1895 to 1900. The No. 6 came in different variants and barrel lengths, in both blue and nickel finishes.*

DOUBLE-BARREL PERCUSSION PISTOL

Q: Here is what I know (or think I know) about the pistol in my photos. I am thinking the gun is a Powell percussion side-by-side

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pistol. It looks similar to a Williams & Powell pistol I viewed on the internet. My cousin described it as a "cap-and-ball" pistol. I measured the inside diameter of each barrel, approximately a half-inch. I am not sure what caliber that would be. I have attached a diagram I made of the pistol showing the overall size measurements of the gun. I got the gun from one of my cousins who said it came to him by way of our common grandfather. The markings on the underside of both barrels are the same: "STUPS TWISTED". I have attached a photo of the markings. That's about all I know. Anything you can determine about the pistol would be greatly appreciated.

D. W.
Tyler, Texas

A: *You have a relic-condition British double-barrel percussion pistol dating from circa 1850. As the back action locks are only engraved "Powell" and there were at least four Birmingham makers by that name operating in the mid-18th century, it is difficult to determine which one actually produced this .50-caliber smoothbore. Interestingly, the latch on the top of the barrel tang and catch at the muzzle indicate at one time the piece was fitted with a spring bayonet.*

BULLPUP HAKIM

Q: I recently picked up an oddity and was wondering if perhaps you or any readers know what it is or how it came to be. At its core, it is a Hakim rifle in 8mm Mauser, but somehow it got put in a black plastic bullpup stock. I did find some markings on the safety, the magazine, the bolt and the bolt carrier, but I'm unsure of the serial number and have found no markings on the stock.

G. C.
Kalispell, Montana

A: *What an interesting piece! The Hakim, which was a variant of the gas-operated Swedish M42 semiautomatic service rifle, was used by Egypt from the 1950s into the 1960s. Caliber was 8mm Mauser, unlike the M42 that was chambered in 6.5x55mm. Numbers of Hakims were eventually sold as surplus in the United States. I must admit, I have never seen a bullpup alteration such as yours! It's quite ingenious. My research has not turned up anyone offering such a conversion kit.*

We'll run a few photographs of the rifle in this column and see if Guns & Ammo's readers can offer some insight into its origin.

CLASSIC ARMS COLLECTION VALUE

Q: From my photo, you can see I have all of the Classic Arms Pistols and also the Bowie knife. All have been plated, as I work in a field that gets things plated.
I also have most of the original boxes, as well. I was just wondering what the collection would be worth.
I started collecting these when I was a young man in the 1970s.

D. C.
Email

A: *Your collection of Classic Arms is quite impressive. I don't believe I've ever seen such a complete assemblage of Classic Arms products! Unfortunately, Classic Arms items don't have much collector interest. Most of the pistols usually bring less than $100 each and can be a slow sell at that. From what I can see, I would value your guns and knives at around $400 to $500.* G&A

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What do you feed your carry pistol?

JAMES TARR

HUNGRY PISTOLS

I CARRY A GUN EVERY DAY. I may swap firearms frequently, but I always have one on my person. I carried a cocked-and-locked .45 ACP 1911 daily for more than a decade before carrying a 9mm pistol uninterrupted for the last 20 years. Ninety-eight percent of the time, it's a full-size pistol. I've carried a Glock 17, G34, SIG Sauer P226, and others. Currently, my everyday carry (EDC) pistol is a customized Beretta M9A1, partly in honor of Beretta's 500th anniversary in 2026 but mostly because I shoot it well.

Since I get the question a lot, here's a list of the various loads I've used in my different 9mm carry guns, more or less, and in the order I've carried them.

SPEER GOLD DOT 124-GRAIN JHP +P

Introduced in 1991, the Speer Gold Dot load is perhaps the most street-proven 9mm load on the market. An updated Gold Dot G2 was released in 2019. The Gold Dot set the terminal performance standard against which other defensive 9mm loads are judged. The Gold Dot bullet got its name from the tiny gold dot at the bottom of the hollowpoint's cavity. When expanded, the dot is easily visible. This bullet is bonded, meaning the jacket is less likely to separate from the core when shooting through tough barriers such as auto glass, sheet metal and leather. The +P velocity supports consistent expansion and penetration in tissue. Advertised velocity is 1,250 feet per second (fps) through duty-length barrels. It remains the duty load for many police departments, including the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Chris Laack, senior product manager for handgun ammunition at Federal and Speer, told me, "I keep trying to get [NYPD] to upgrade to a more modern bullet, but it's hard to convince them when every bad guy they shoot with that Gold Dot stops doing bad."

WINCHESTER RANGER 127-GRAIN JHP +P+

Winchester has changed the packaging through the years, but the Ranger line it's now part of Winchester's T-Series duty ammunition. The Winchester Ranger 127-grain +P+ load is iconic for its unusual bullet weight and its +P+ loading, "+P+"meaning "extra extra pressure." For a long time, I refused to write about this ammo simply because it was available only to law enforcement. Winchester didn't market it to the public. That's not due to any anti-2A motivations but because of the cartridge's pressure; John Q. Public might unknowingly use +P+ rounds in grandpa's 80-year-old Luger to disastrous effect. With accredited (insured) law enforcement agencies, the Ranger load should only go into newer-manufactured guns that are regularly inspected and maintained. This load can be found online through various retailers, but not Winchester directly.

I replaced the Gold Dot load with Ranger ammo because in the 1990s bullet technology wasn't what it is today. To put it nicely, heavy 147-grain 9mm bullets would not consistently expand, and 115-grain bullets were often too light to reliably punch through intermediate barriers such as car doors and auto glass. Mid-weight bullets were where success was found, and faster +P loads meant better expansion. These were my reasons for carrying the Ranger and the Gold Dot. Advertised velocity of the Ranger was 1,250 fps, and it does at least that. Out of my daily carry — at the time a G34 with

PHOTOS: ANDY GROSSMAN

5.31-inch barrel, it produced 1,310 fps. That's nearly .357 Magnum territory and the recoil wasn't bad at all.

The author currently carries a Beretta M9A1 loaded with Federal Premium 9mm 147-grain HST.

HORNADY CRITICAL DUTY 135-GRAIN FLEXLOCK +P

Hornady introduced its Critical Duty line in 2011 and I was immediately taken with the 135-grain +P load. The Critical Duty line is full-power ammunition marketed to law enforcement. It passed the FBI Ammunition Testing Protocol in 2018. Critical Duty bullets are bonded and are built to penetrate more than they are to expand. We've seen expansion, but not remarkably so. The petals don't open as wide as other projectiles, but the bullets always penetrate 12 to 18 inches into a gel block — regardless of the barrier — and they don't shed the jacket.

When Hornady rolled out Critical Duty to Guns & Ammo, the demonstration included the FBI Ammunition Testing Protocol. FlexLock bullets were shot through various barriers into 10-percent ballistic gelatin. One of the writers challenged them to also shoot my carry ammo for comparison, Winchester's 127-grain +P+ Ranger. The older Ranger bullet held its own until it was time to penetrate auto glass. The non-bonded Ranger bullet lost its jacket.

The 135-grain +P load offers a balance of bullet weight and velocity. Hornady went with 135 grains because that's what delivered the performance that was needed.

For a number of years, the 135-grain FlexLock bullet was pushed to 1,115 fps from 4-inch and longer barrels, but it seems that the load has since been reduced to 1,070 fps. Why? Probably because it found the extra velocity wasn't needed to do the job. The 135-grain FlexLock 9mm is the current load issued to the FBI, and the only difference between the ammo Hornady sends to the FBI and what we buy is the packaging.

BLACK HILLS AMMUNITION 115-GRAIN TAC-XP +P

The 115-grain TAC-XP is a fascinating bullet for 9mm. It is a

copper solid bullet made by Barnes Bullets and loaded by Black Hills Ammunition. It has a deep and wide cavity. The petals spread impressively upon impact. Solid copper bullets don't have jackets that can get ripped off, so they tend to punch above their weight. In every gel test I've seen, the TAC-XP expands consistently while penetrating deeply, usually performing like a bonded 124 grainer. Advertised velocity is 1,200 fps, and felt recoil isn't bad. It's loaded a little long and some pistols might not like that. (I know of a SIG Sauer P365 that won't feed Black Hills' TAC-XP load reliably.) I think it's a great choice, but I tend to prefer heavier bullets. You'll never find bullets that function more consistently than monolithic copper solids, though.

The author recommends Hornady Critical Duty, Black Hills TAC-XP, Speer Gold Dot, Winchester Ranger and Federal HST.

FEDERAL 147-GRAIN HST

I was biased against 147-grain 9mm bullets for a long time. When I first started carrying a gun, they didn't seem to work well. They were too heavy and too slow for caliber, and the bullets of the 1980s and '90s couldn't be counted on to expand. While a police officer, the first bullet I ever saw pulled out of a human being was a 147-grain Federal Hydra-Shok. Of the seven bullets recovered, only one properly expanded. That was 1990, and things have changed.

Some experts today consider Federal's 147-grain HST at 1,000 fps to be the best 9mm defensive handgun round on the market. They might be right. The heavy bullet has a deep cavity, and that means when the hollow-point expands the petals grow long. HST bullets for 9mm often expand to .70 caliber, and they penetrate deep due to its weight. HST is one of Federal's most popular loads with American law enforcement. The only reason why more departments don't adopt it is the lack of a bonded core, so it doesn't perform quite as well as others when shot into cars. If you're a carrying citizen, there is perhaps no better choice. The HST is my current EDC load. That said, I would, without complaint, still carry any of the loads on this list. G&A

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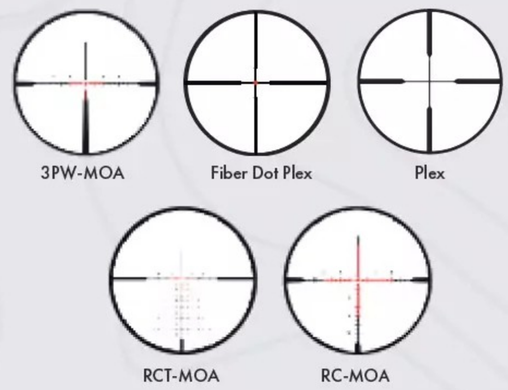
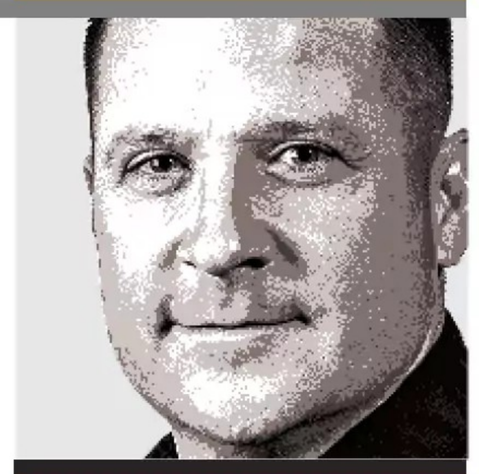
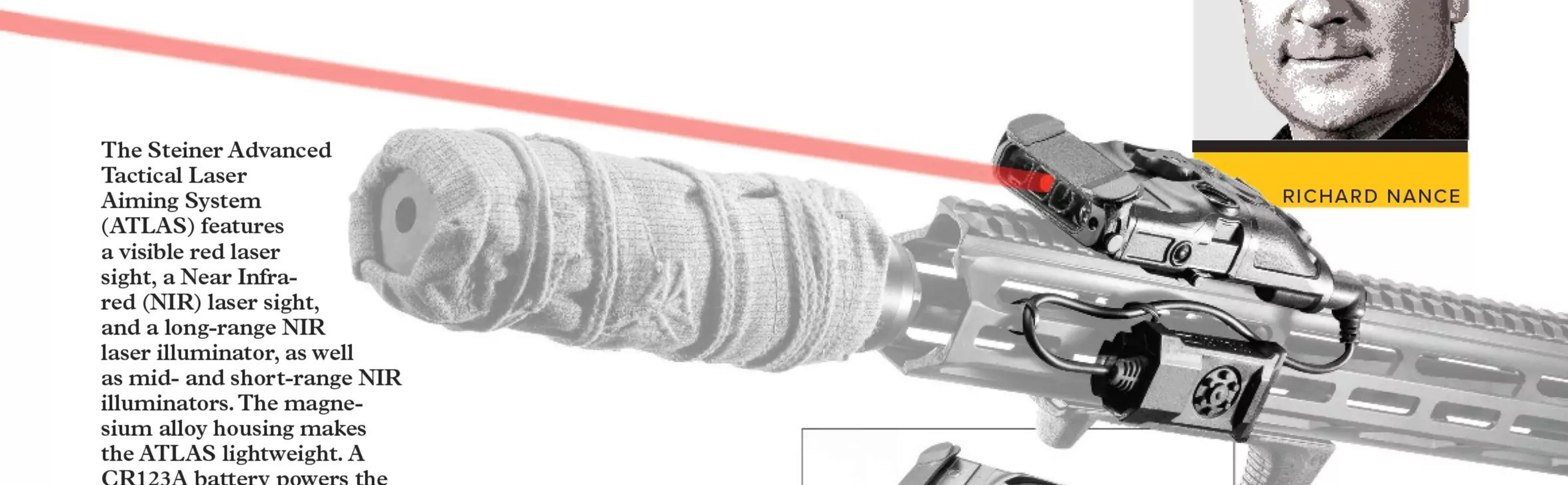


Steiner ATLAS



RICHARD NANCE



The Steiner Advanced Tactical Laser Aiming System (ATLAS) features a visible red laser sight, a Near Infrared (NIR) laser sight, and a long-range NIR laser illuminator, as well as mid- and short-range NIR illuminators. The magnesium alloy housing makes the ATLAS lightweight. A CR123A battery powers the unit for more than 3 hours. The ATLAS is available in black and Flat Dark Earth (FDE) with a red or green visible laser. $4,025

An optional remote pad can be positioned for ergonomic activation, but control buttons are intuitive to operate.

NIGHT TITAN

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, Atlas was a Titan of unmatched strength and endurance condemned by Zeus to hold the sky for eternity. Art most often depicts him hoisting the world on his shoulders. Of course, the word "atlas" also refers to a collection of maps that can help one navigate to a destination. For a police officer or a warfighter, arriving on scene isn't enough. You'll need to find a way to win once you get there, and that's where Steiner's Advanced Tactical Laser Aiming System (ATLAS) has its purpose.

Weighing less than 7 ounces, the ATLAS features a magnesium alloy housing that's lightweight and strong. At 4½-inches long, 2½-inches wide and 1.4-inches tall, the ATLAS is unusually compact for a laser and infrared sight and illuminator. An integrated bolt system mounts the ATLAS to a rail securely with a low-profile design that allows the unit to be used in conjunction with standard optics.

The ATLAS has five emitters including a visible laser pointer, a Near Infrared (NIR) laser pointer, a long-range NIR Vertical Cavity Surface Emitting Laser (VCSEL), a mid-range NIR LED illuminator, and a short-range NIR LED illuminator. The visible laser sight facilitates rapid target engagement with precision, available in red or green depending on model. The other emitters require use of night vision devices (NVD) to see.

The NIR laser works the same as the visible laser, except that it's not visible to the naked eye. The long-range VCSEL laser illuminator has a 2- to 3-degree beam divergence that enables its user to see and aim at extended distances with minimal speckle. The short-range NIR LED illuminator has a wide 40- to 50-degree fixed LED beam divergence; It's is ideal for close-quarter applications. The mid-range NIR LED illuminator has a 10- to 15-degree LED divergence that splits the difference.

Despite its versatility and features, the ATLAS is activated by ambidextrous controls; They're easy to operate with either hand. The rotary switch atop the unit allows users to toggle between modes. From left to right, there is a "V", which stands for "visible" laser, "Off" powers the unit down, "IR-P" produces a NIR laser pointer, IR-L emits a short-, mid- or long-range NIR illuminator. IR-B combines a NIR illuminator with a NIR laser pointer.

Three rubberized buttons atop the ATLAS are easy to reach and intuitive to operate. The larger button in the middle is called the "fire" button. Pressing it activates the unit in whatever mode the rotary switch is set to. When you release the button, the unit turns off. For a constant-on mode, click and release the fire button twice in quick succession. Tapping and releasing the button again turns the unit off.

The illuminator's tactile button is located behind and to the right of the fire button. It enables you to select short-, mid- or long-range illumination as designated by the color of the LED indicator on the back of the unit displaying green, orange or red, respectively. To the left of the illuminator tac-

The ATLAS includes a visible laser sight, NIR laser sight and a long-range NIR vertical cavity surface with emitting laser, plus a mid-range NIR illuminator.

PHOTOS: ALFREDO RICO

The ATLAS button layout is convenient and intuitive for left- or right-hand operation.

The switch was designed for quick mode selection. It is recessed within a marked housing to prevent unintended bumps.

The windage and elevation adjustments allow zeroing multiple laser sights while aiming the illuminator, simultaneously.

tical button, you'll find the tactile power button. It allows you to cycle through power levels from low to medium to high. As with the illuminator tactical button indicator, the power level is displayed by a green-, orange- or red-indicator light on the back of the unit.

An auxiliary power-level switch on the back of the unit enables you to operate in low-, medium- and high-power modes. When the blue (turquoise) screw is installed, the unit will operate only in a low mode (i.e., training). To switch to a high power mode, the blue screw must be removed. The screw can be retained in storage at the right side of the unit, above the battery compartment.

The elevation adjustment screw is located atop the unit, left of the rotary switch. The windage adjustment is on the right side of the unit, forward of the battery compartment. A single adjustment to elevation or windage zeros the visible laser pointer, NIR laser pointer and the long-range NIR illuminator, simultaneously.

A remote port enables users to operate the ATLAS using the supplied cable and pressure pad. A plastic housing encapsulates the pad for secure mounting. A laser window cover protects the glass when the unit is not in use. The ATLAS is waterproof rated for 2 hours at 20 meters.

When paired with NVDs, the ATLAS is a gamechanger, allowing police, military and tactical gun owners to thrive in any environment. The ATLAS is designed, machined and assembled in the USA, and it comes with a 2-year warranty.

Visit steiner-optics.com for more information. G&A

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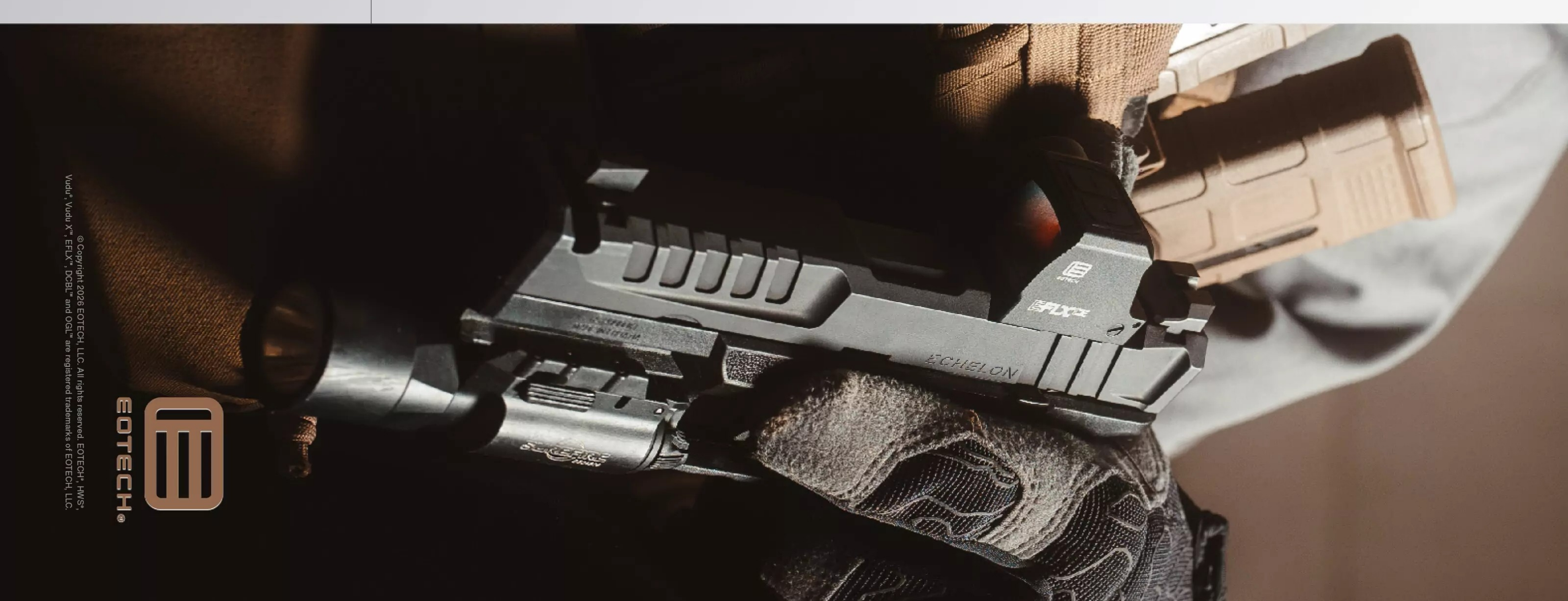

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Sightmark Presidio 1-10x26mm CRED-10

TOM BECKSTRAND

LOADED

THE OPTICS WORLD is changing quickly. Five years ago, I would have felt differently about Sightmark's 1-10x26mm Fiber CRED-10 riflescope. That's a mouthful, but there are some clues in the name that this scope brings features to the table that aren't usually offered at such an economical price point.

The key word is "Fiber." As 1X-to-10X optics are all the rage, that benefits the customer through economies of scale. The more manufacturers produce 1-10X optics, the less expensive they become. Since most scopes sold in the U.S. are produced by a handful of overseas manufacturers under various brand names, the Presidio 1-10x26mm sent to Guns & Ammo for evaluation might be new to Sightmark, but it's not a ground-up new optic. That means someone else already absorbed the engineering costs. Sightmark found an optical design they liked from an overseas manufacturer, and then set the specifications for how it wanted the scope made. Sightmark receives the scopes from overseas, inspects them, and then distributes them for sale.

STRONG FIBERS

Unique to the Presidio 1-10X is the second focal plane (SFP) reticle with a fiber-optic illumination system. The reticle is a mil-based crosshair that subtends in .5-mil increments. There are four mils of windage and 10 mils of elevation delineated on the reticle. Since this is a sensible SFP reticle, Sightmark made the wise decision to pair it with a fiber-optic illumination system. Low-power variable optics (LPVO) with first focal plane (FFP) reticles are all the rage, and they make sense when paired with a diffractive illumination system, otherwise the dot isn't visible at low magnification. Those scopes start at $2,000 and go up. A more economical solution that is superior to every other illumination system in a LPVO is the SFP reticle with fiber-optic illumination, which is what's in the Presidio. This system runs a fiber-optic cable up the vertical stadia and points the end of the fiber back toward the shooter's eye. Any light being pumped into the fiber gets routed directly to the view of the shooter. This is the most efficient illumination system available. It means

SIGHTMARK PRESIDIO CRED-10	
POWER	1-10X
OBJECTIVE	26mm
TUBE DIAMETER	34mm
ELEVATION ADJUSTMENT	.1 mil per click
WINDAGE ADJUSTMENT	.1 mil per click
RETICLE	CRED-10, illuminated
LENGTH	11 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 11 oz. (tested)
EYE RELIEF	3.5 in.
MSRP	$600
IMPORTER	Sightmark, 817-225-0310, sightmark.com

The Presidio CRED-10 reticle features a fiber-optic illuminated reticle powered by a CR2032 battery. With Shake Awake activation, it turns on quickly while saving battery life.

The left-side turret features a parallax adjustment inner dial, ranging 10 yards to "infinity." The reticle illumination adjustment turret features 12 graduated intensity levels with an off position between each.

Windange and elevation adjustments on the Presidio 34mm maintube are easy to zero but do not have a zero stop. Adjustments for each are one-tenth mil per click.

the battery will last a long time and that the red dot will be visible under even the brightest conditions. The illumination settings are "1" through "12" with off positions between each setting.

MECHANICS

Other turret controls include a side-focus knob that allows the scope to focus on objects as close as 10 yards, as well as lockable windage and elevation turrets. Lifting the turret cap away from the maintube allows the turret to spin freely; pushing it down toward the tube locks it in place. Zeroing the turret is as simple as loosening the inner cap, lifting the turret body and moving it until the "0" is in the right place, and then tightening the inner cap. There is no zero-stop, but I wouldn't expect one at this price. The power throw lever is removable for those who choose to take it off.

Chinese-produced scopes are far better than they were even 5 years ago. Back then, I'd be wary of using a Chinese scope because manufacturing limitations made it difficult for these scopes to track correctly. Current-production scopes I've tested now track beautifully. Sightmark has even tested its Presidio model to 1,200 Gs on a recoil simulator with no adverse effects.

Optically, I'd rate the performance as very good. Mechanically, the Presidio appears exceptional. If I were looking for a quality scope with a great illumination system, reticle and durability tested to a high standard, I would consider Sightmark's 1-10x26mm Fiber CRED-10 Presidio. G&A

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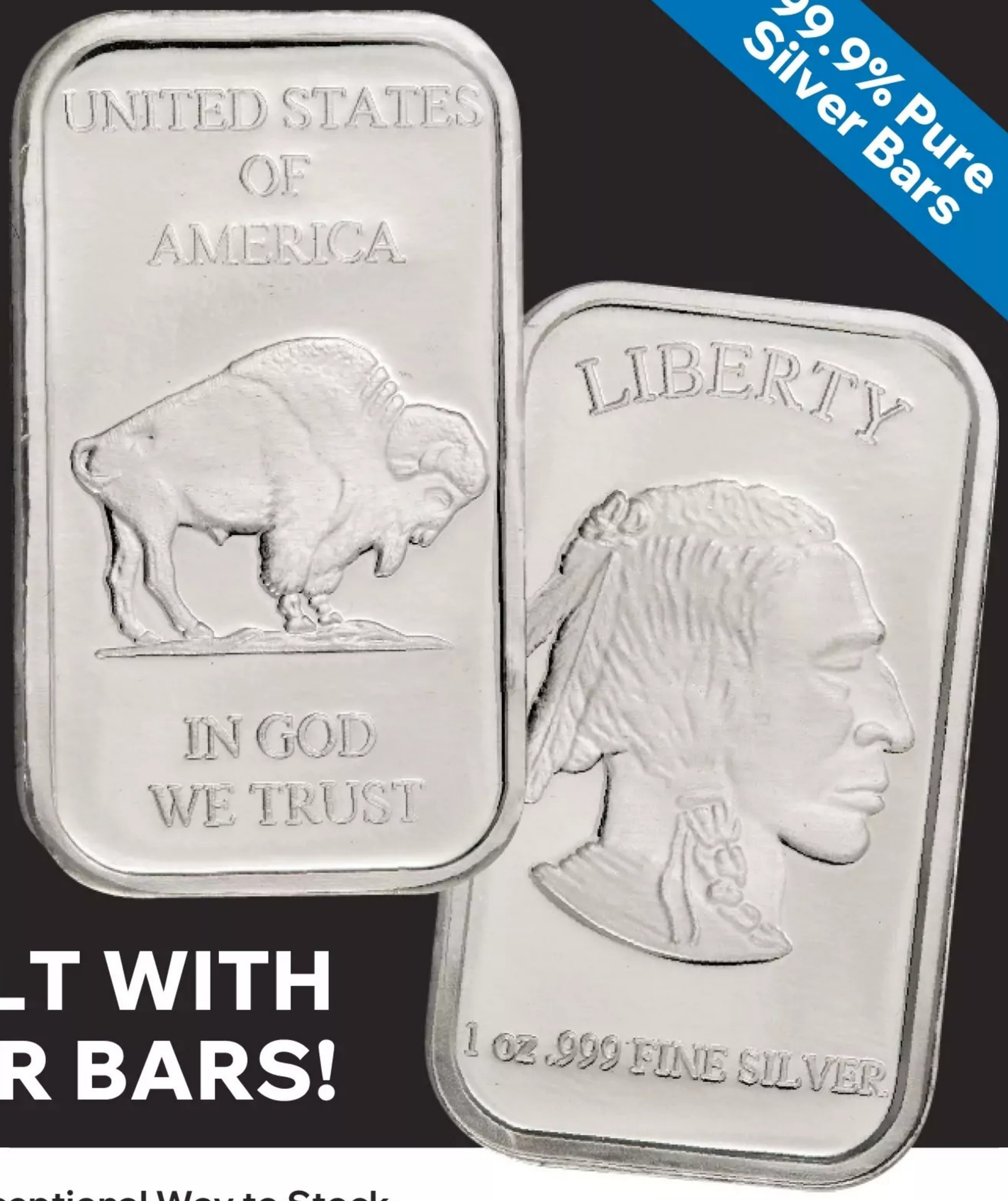

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High-pressure indicators on cartridge cases.

DAVE EMARY

SUBTLE SIGNS

"HOW-TO" SECTIONS at the front of reloading guides include good information. Most of these contain a section discussing pressure signs, usually with associated pictures. Diagrams or descriptions often illustrate when the reloader needs to stop or back off. I would like to approach the topic from a slightly different angle and discuss some subtle aspects of pressure signs, including how to look at several indicators that show things moving in the wrong direction. It's important to head off high-pressure problems before they reach the obvious point. Signs can show up under particular conditions and in certain firearms. They can be caused by other problems, too, not necessarily high pressure. Generally, high-pressure signs on cartridge cases show up as one or more of several indicators on the case or primer.

Let's get into identifying the physical signs of high pressure on a fired cartridge case. This entire column applies to any ammunition you shoot, whether reloaded or factory-loaded ammunition.

STIFF BOLT OPENING

A hard-to-open bolt is often a problem associated with bolt-action or lever-action rifles. When it occurs, the pressure in the cartridge case is well beyond any appropriate pressure for the cartridge and gun. Hard bolt or lever opening in a gun is almost always accompanied by several of the cartridge-case pressure signs described later. A lever action may not always show dramatic evidence of pressure on a spent case. Stiff lever opening on a lever action is usually the first obvious sign of high pressure.

On rare occasions, a stiff bolt opening can be caused by a poor finish on the bolt face or locking lugs, or by a small burr on the ejector cut in the bolt face. If you suspect firearm issues, take the firearm to a gunsmith. Legitimate high-pressure signs almost always come with multiple indicators on the cartridge case or primer.

An example of a fired case showing a sooty, flattened primer and ejector mark.

EJECTOR MARKS ON THE CASE HEAD

An ejector mark or bright burnish mark on the cartridge case head is almost always an indicator of high pressure. These are caused by excessive pressure that exceeds the yield strength of the brass, which begins to flow into the unsupported ejector cut in the bolt face. In a bolt action, such a situation is almost always accompanied by other signs of high pressure on the cartridge case. An actual impression of the ejector bolt face cut on the cartridge head is usually a high-pressure sign. A shiny burnish mark on a cartridge head is usually a pressure indicator, but it can also be caused by a poorly finished ejector cut into the bolt face.

In a semiautomatic, these issues can occur and are usually true for the condition. However, if an ejector mark or shiny burnish mark is the only sign present on a fired cartridge in a semi-auto, it's usually a sign of poor timing. The bolt may be trying to open too soon while a lot of pressure remains inside the case. The first thing to address this is to try a different load.

CRATERED PRIMER

A cratered primer can occur when the primer cup flows into the firing pin hole in the bolt face. Ultimately, this can lead to a pierced primer. Excessive pressure can cause this, but it should be accompanied by other pressure indicators. It can also be caused by excessive headspace or a weak firing-pin spring. It is commonly caused by an oversized firing-pin hole or erosion of the bolt face around the firing-pin hole. An eroded firing-pin hole is usually caused by either wear, pierced primers, leaking primers, or both. Figure 1 illustrates a cratered primer on a 7.62x39mm case, most likely from the firing-pin hole in the bolt being too large.

LEAKING PRIMER

An early indicator of excessive pressure is what I call a "sooty primer." If this occurs, you'll see a dark ring around

PHOTO: HORNADY MFG.

Figure 1: Example of a cratered primer.

Figure 2: Example of a pierced primer.

Figure 3: Example of a blown primer.

the primer in the primer pocket when you look closely. This indicates a small amount of gas escaped around the primer, usually because the primer pocket started to enlarge due to excessive pressure. This is usually accompanied by a cratered or flattened primer.

PIERCED PRIMER

A pierced primer (Figure 2) occurs when the firing-pin indent has been blanked out, leaving a hole the size of the firing pin in the primer. It can be an early sign of excessive pressure, but you should always look for other indicators. A pierced primer is commonly caused by a weak firing-pin spring and a large firing-pin hole in the bolt face, or it could be excessive headspace. Pierced primers may also be caused by thin or soft primer cups. I've seen this occur commonly when using some European primers without high pressure.

You should not continue shooting ammunition that results in pierced primers. The flow of hot gases out of this small hole will erode the firing pin tip and the face of the bolt. Switch ammunition or primers if you have no other signs of high pressure. If the problem persists, take the gun to a 'smith and have it evaluated. This issue is a somewhat common problem with old lever-action rifles due to wear, excessive headspace and a weak firing-pin spring.

BACKED-OUT PRIMER

I mention backed-out primers because they commonly appear in older and worn rifles, particularly lever-action designs. It is not a sign of high pressure. If you've ever shot many old lever actions or well-used bolt guns, you may encounter a cartridge that looks normal but the primer is not flush. It protrudes slightly from the head of the cartridge case. This is almost always caused by excessive headspace. I would have the gun checked to make sure the headspace is not beyond safe limits. If you reload, you can salvage the situation by not full-length sizing the cases and only size them slightly shorter than the shoulder position of the fired case. This will prevent further case stretching, increase the life of the case, and prevent the primer from backing out. I have also encountered this situation frequently when shooting Enfield rifles.

Example of a separated case head with a flattened primer.

BLOWN PRIMER

Blown primers (Figure 3) occur when the pressure is quite excessive. The case head swells and cannot hold the primer. The primer usually falls out when the case is extracted. At this point, the pressure is usually above 75,000 psi. In a semiauto, blown primers can result from poor timing and the bolt opening too soon. The fix? Try a different load.

EXCESSIVELY FLATTENED PRIMERS

Flattened primers are one of the primary indicators I have used for a long time to determine where I am pressure-wise with developing a load. I look at the amount of original radius left on the edge of the primer, a generally good

PHOTOS: HORNADY MFG.

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Figure 4: Above left, an unfired primer is compared to cases subjected to an increase pressure from 40,000 to more than 70,000 psi (above right).

Figure 5: Cross section of a case web.

indicator as to the relative pressure on the cartridge. Not all primers are created equal, though. Almost all U.S.-manufactured primers — CCI, Federal, Remington and Winchester — have a fairly generous radius on the edge of the primer cup before they are fired. The amount of radius remaining after the cartridge is fired is a good indicator regarding the relative pressure on the cartridge. There are no absolutes, of course. I just use this as a guide.

Some European primers are very flat before they are ever fired, so keep in mind that it is relative. On the whole, if a primer is completely flat and/or fills the primer pocket, the cartridge was subjected to high pressure. For most U.S.-made primers, the primer will be in this condition at pressures above 70,000 pounds per square inch (psi).

As a guide for U.S. primers, a cartridge such as the .30-30 Winchester, which operates at 40,000 psi, would have most of the original radius remaining after firing. A .223 Remington cartridge operating at 50,000 to 55,000 psi should have about 50 percent of the original radius after firing. A .30-'06 Springfield- and .308 Winchester-class of cartridge that operates at 60,000 psi, or slightly above, will exhibit 25 percent or less of the original radius on the primer. Magnum cartridges that operate at 65,000 psi should still have some radius left at the edge, but not much. By 70,000 psi, the radius is gone. Above 70,000 psi, the primer starts to completely fill the primer pocket. As I've said, these numbers aren't absolutes but a guide.

Observing how much radius remains on the primer after firing can tell you roughly where its at and keep you out of trouble. You should always look for other pressure signs along with how flat the primer is. Excessive headspace can result in very flat primers, so know the condition the gun is in. Figure 4 show cases and primers that were fired with steadily increased pressures in a pressure-test gun. The cases compare an unfired primer, 40-, 50-, 60-, 70- and above 70,000 psi of pressure.

DECREASING LENGTH OF UNEXPANDED WEB

The web of a cartridge case is the area where the interior of the case transitions from the thin walls to the solid head. There is usually a large radius of brass material that transitions from the thickening wall to the solid case head. Due to the rapidly thickening material in the web region, the case does not expand to touch the chamber walls. As the pressure increases, more of the thick material expands to touch the chamber walls. Subjected to extreme pressure, the solid portion of the web expands. Figure 5 features a cutaway of a cartridge to illustrate the web area of a case.

If you keep a fired case that functions normally and produces normal velocity, you can get a measurement of how much of the web region of the case has not expanded by measuring from the top of the extractor cut to the line where you can see where the case has contacted the chamber — and where it hasn't. Use the length as a general guide to try and match. As the pressure increases, the length will shorten. Having a normal pressure-fired case and comparing the length of the unexpanded web to another fired case will keep you honest.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

When evaluating what you're getting for pressures from inspection of fired cases, you must know the condition of your gun. Examine the bolt face and make sure it is smooth and that the extractor cut has no burrs. Make sure the firing-pin hole is clean, sharp, and not showing signs of erosion or wallowing out. If your gun is newer, the headspace is probably fine.

If you are going to reload spent cartridge cases, I would urge you to try Hornady's Lock-N-Load Headspace Comparator gauge set ($61, hornady.com). Use this to measure the headspace of a fired case and then compare your cartridge headspace specs at saami.org to see if the headspace of your cases are in the specified range for the chamber — not the cartridge.

The earliest signs of a problem are cratered primers, flattened primers, or both. These are followed by a pierced primer. After that, the web length will show noticeable signs of shortening, followed by a stiff opening bolt and ejector marks. Don't keep shooting if you're experiencing these increasing signs! Soon after these signs, a primer will blow or a case will fail. A blown primer or failed case can injure your gun — and possibly you! G&A

PHOTOS: HORNADY MFG.

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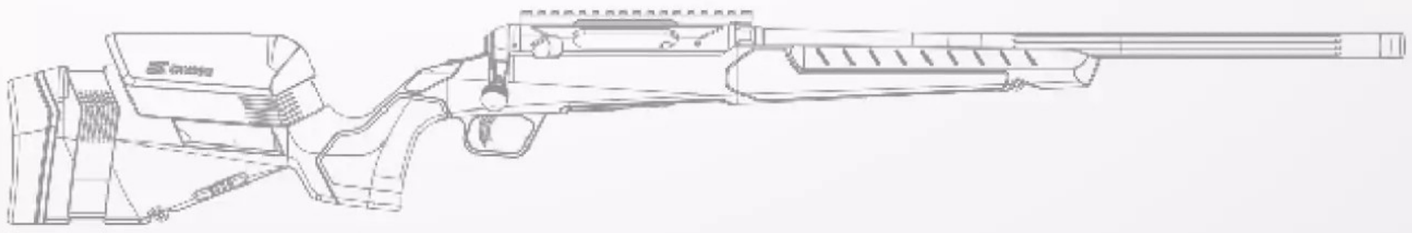

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QUIET TIME

Strategic Sciences Multi-Function Muzzle Device

Strategic Sciences' Multi-Function Muzzle Device (MFMD) is a modular muzzle device, suppressor and recoil reducer. It was designed as a single system to address sound, flash and recoil through energy and gas-flow management. The muzzle device stays attached to the barrel and is generally hearing safe. Detachable modules increase suppression.

SCIENCE REALITY

ONE LOOK AT THE MFMD and it becomes obvious that Strategic Sciences did things differently. While it appears to have come off the set of a Hollywood science-fiction movie, the Multi-Function Muzzle Device (MFMD) is a modular device designed to provide optimal recoil reduction, eliminate flash, and reduce toxic material blown toward the shooter. It supports either bolt-action or automatic firearms. Of course, it is also an effective sound suppressor. A look at how it happened is in order.

ACRONYMS

"ASD/SOLIC" is jumble of letters that stands for the "Assistant Secretary of Defense/Special Operations Low Intensity Conflict." ASD/SOLIC oversees all U.S. Special Operations across all branches and, in 2022, it stated the need for a multi-function muzzle device that would provide Special Operations a muzzlebrake that reduces recoil and flash simultaneously. Two units sponsored the effort, one Canadian and one American. (Discretion was requested.) "Sponsorship" means a unit said, "We want this," and then it helps shape the requirement. While both units didn't agree on the exact order of priorities, both needed the device to reduce recoil, eliminate flash, minimize gas moving around the shooter, work on all types of small arm platforms, and suppress sound.

The new device had to support four cartridges: .300 Blackout, 5.56x45mm NATO, 7.62x51mm NATO and .338 Lapua. (It's currently available in 13 calibers and 68 configurations.) Specifications required at least a 40-percent recoil reduction while yielding no more than one millicandela (mcd) of flash. When the requirement list was coming together, toxicity to the shooter was measured by increased bolt velocity in automatic small arms. Faster bolt speed meant more gas was sent toward the shooter, so the new device could offer no more than a 2-percent increase in bolt velocity.

STRATEGIC SCIENCES MFMD-5.56-1.3-MDSDX-1/2X28

CALIBER	5.56mm
HEIGHT	2.5 in. (MD); 3.125 in. (w/ SDX)
WIDTH	1.6 in.
LENGTH	4.7 in. (MD); 7.5 in. (with SDX)
MOUNT	Integral 1.3 in. back over the barrel, ½x28 connect.
WEIGHT	15.5 oz. (MD); 26.5 oz (SDX)
FINISH	Cerakote
MSRP	$2,499 (MD+SDX)
MANUFACTURER	Strategic Sciences, 801-590-8810, strategicsciences.us

Notes: Test configuration included Muzzle Device (MD) and removable Suppressor Device Extended (SDX).

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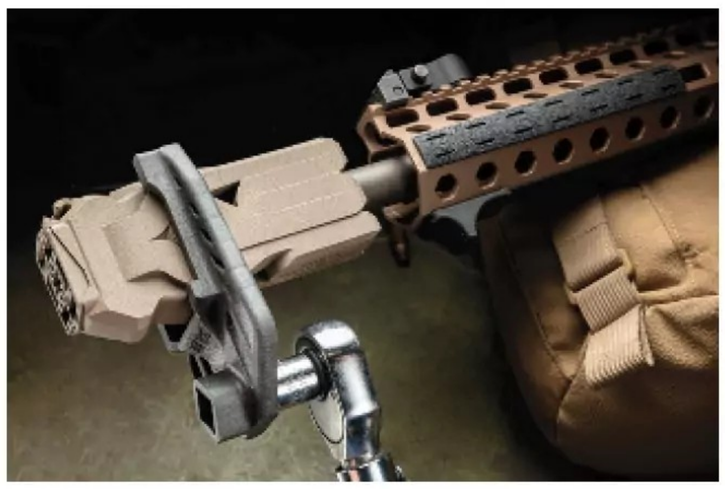

Tools are provided with the MFMD to time and orient the suppressor when threaded onto the muzzle.

SD and SDX modules attach to increase the level of sound suppression and are secured by a QD lever.

The QD lever features integral slots designed to use spent cartridge cases as leverage if the mechanism is too hot.

What ASD/SOLIC didn't know was that Russ Oliver had been working on just such a device since around 2008. Oliver was a Green Beret who knew what was needed for his rifle and started designing it. He quickly realized that the initial design was not manufacturable, so he moved to simpler designs that could be made. That second product launched his former suppressor company, OSS, which would later be acquired and now goes by the name of Huxwrx.

Between 2008 and 2022, a lot of things changed. Manufacturing advanced significantly and 3D printing made possible what was once impossible. Oliver launched a new company, Strategic Sciences, and finished what he started in '08. The result is the Multi-Function Muzzle Device (MFMD).

The MFMD uses four flow paths that spin the gas away from the muzzle in opposing directions. The gas never stops moving since it isn't trapped, which is one of the reasons why the suppressor is so effective at recoil reduction. The flow paths wrap around and folds over, creating more than 10 feet of flow path in a suppressor that measures only 4½ inches in length. Longer suppressors have even longer flow paths. All that runway allows gas to cool and slow down without stopping.

Stopping is what causes some trouble, though. When gas is trapped in a suppressor and stops moving it exerts backpressure, forcing gas back through the bore on semiautomatic and automatic firearms. Having 10 feet of flow path results in less than a 2-percent increase in bolt velocity due to minimal backpressure, not to mention recoil reduction. This is an ideal outcome when trying to contain the gas from a fired cartridge.

Recoil reduction is one of the distinguishing features of Strategic Sciences suppressors. Depending on the model, recoil diminishes between 60 and 80 percent. Other suppressor companies can get close to this amount of reduction by attaching brakes to the end of the can, but those cans get noticeably louder and frequently exceed the hearing-safe threshold. The Strategic Sciences suppressor comes in two parts, the MFMD and an extra suppression attachment. Almost all MFMDs are hearing-safe without the attachment — but they all become even quieter with it.

Strategic Sciences' suppressors handle recoil and noise suppression well, but muzzle flash was a top priority set by ASD/SOLIC and both sponsors. One key component of

The muzzle of the MFMD also allows gas to flow directionally out the front of the suppressor.

The muzzle vents on the module are evidence that controlling gas is no longer necessary for performance.

managing the flash — which can reveal a shooter's position — is the lengthy gas flow paths. Covering that much distance ensures that all the gunpowder burns before it leaves the muzzle, and that's a crucial first step. The final step in flash mitigation is the 7-18 Inconel alloy used in the printing process. It won't spark or burn as titanium can. I asked Oliver if they'd ever consider using titanium to reduce weight and his answer was "Maybe." They've done some models in titanium by request, but the issue with titanium is that it will spark and flash eventually. It can be coated to eliminate sparking and flash for a time, but sooner or later it will flash. The requirement is for near total flash elimination, and the MFMD succeeded when it was made using Inconel.

Strategic Sciences has an original approach to suppression, driven by a Special Operations requirement to reduce recoil and muzzle flash. Thanks to advancements in manufacturing, it can now build what existed only in concept more than a decade ago. The MFMD is a suppressor is unlike any other on the market, and it looks like it. When asked about its appearance, Oliver replied, "We gave zero effort to aesthetics. The MFMD is 100 percent about function with no concern for form." Maybe it's the uniqueness of the MFMD, but function has an aesthetic of its own. Regardless of feelings about its appearance, the MFMD offers a list of capabilities and performs at a level like no other suppressor I've seen. G&A — *T. Beckstrand*

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ARC VERSUS BLACKOUT

COMPARING THE **8.6 BLACKOUT** TO THE **.338 ARC.**

BY TOM BECKSTRAND | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

7

GORILLA
8.6 BLACKOUT
300-GR. SMK
SUBSONIC
GORILLA
8.6 BLACKOUT
342-GR. PUNISHER
SERIES SUBSONIC
EXPANDING

The .338 ARC has more than a 100 fps advantage when loaded to a subsonic velocity. The 8.6 Blackout has more than 100 fps advantage at a supersonic velocity. The .338 ARC fits within most common AR-15 platforms benefiting from typically uniform components. The 8.6 Blackout cartridge length fits within AR-10 platforms that are generally subject to more expensive components and feature less compatibility between platforms.

THERE'S A BIT OF A BATTLE going on between the .338 ARC and the 8.6 Blackout. These cartridges exist due to a requirement from the U.S. Special Operations community. The details are tightly held, but they center around the need for subsonic accuracy and terminal performance at extended ranges. Supersonic performance is considered a bonus.

A quick trip around the firearms community quickly shows that the purses are swinging over this one. There's lots of feeling and entertainment surrounding the debate, but there is little qualitative analysis available. Enter Guns & Ammo. We put these two cartridges head-to-head to see where one has the advantage when compared to the other.

VELOCITY COMPARISON

A key metric of how a subsonic cartridge will perform — especially as the range to the target increases — is the size of the velocity standard deviation (SD). The more deviation between rounds, the more the bullets will string vertically. Subsonic cartridges expected to hit targets at 300 — and maybe even 400 yards — need consistent velocity because the time of flight is so long. Where a deviation of more than 20 feet per second (fps) is no problem for a supersonic cartridge at 400 yards, that same deviation for a subsonic cartridge at 400 yards results in pronounced vertical stringing that's even visible from the shooting position. A deviation more than 20 fps at 400 yards causes about 2 feet of vertical stringing.

The .338 ARC has a theoretical advantage because its case capacity is better suited to firing bullets at subsonic velocities. Empty case capacity is a bad thing when consistent velocity is required. Variations in the location of the powder inside the case can cause velocity swings, so it's best if the case is as full as possible so that the powder is always in the same relative location.

The test for this is simple: I used bolt-action rifles with 16-inch barrels for both cartridges and fired 10 rounds to collect velocity data. I chose 16-inch barrels because of the nascence of regulation for these firearms and the ready availability. It is what most civilian shooters are likely to have access to. Prior to firing each round, I alternated between pointing the muzzle skyward or at the ground before slowly leveling the rifle and firing. This put the powder in the case either as close to the primer as possible or as far away from the primer as possible. Alternating ensured that I induced as much variation as possible. The subsonic results are as follows:

Hornady's subsonic Sub-X round for .338 ARC features a 307-grain cup-and-core projectile with tip. CMMG's magazines for AR-15-pattern carbines in .338 ARC are recommended for having a heavier spring to support heavier bullets.

The 8.6 Blackout is more limited in bullet options, but Gorilla Ammunition offers a 300-grain SMK load. The increased case capacity of the 8.6 Blackout did not result in a higher velocity standard deviation (SD).

PERFORMANCE

LOAD (SUBSONIC)	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD
.338 ARC			
Hornady 307-grain Sub-X	1,030	74.8	24.1
8.6 BLACKOUT			
Gorilla 300-grain SMK BTHP	891	73.6	23.6

To my surprise, the test was a wash. Neither cartridge has an advantage versus the other when firing at subsonic velocity from a bolt-action rifle. Unexpectedly, supersonic velocity results told a slightly different story.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD (SUPERSONIC)	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD
.338 ARC			
Hornady 175-grain HP	2,095	22.6	6.8
8.6 BLACKOUT			
Gorilla 190-grain Punisher	2,171	58	15.8

This is where the smaller case capacity of the .338 ARC was likely completely full of powder and produced more consistent velocity figures. The 8.6 Blackout bullet is 15 grains heavier and moves about 75 fps faster, so it delivers more energy on target. However, it also strings more vertically. That said, due to the supersonic velocity and shorter time of flight, the vertical stringing will only be about 4 inches at 400 yards at its worst. The difference is measurable, but likely insignificant. Consistent velocity performance was a draw.

TERMINAL PERFORMANCE

The terminal performance between these cartridges at subsonic velocity will have similar effectiveness, but how each accomplishes that goal is different. Using the same barrel lengths and almost identical bullet weights to chronograph velocity — Hornady's .338 ARC bullet was slightly heavier at 307 grains versus the 300-grain Sierra

A 342-grain Punisher projectile in 8.6 Blackout as recovered from Clear Ballistic gelatin (clearballistics.com). The 1-in-3-inch twist allowed the bullet to expand to a 1.34-inch diameter.

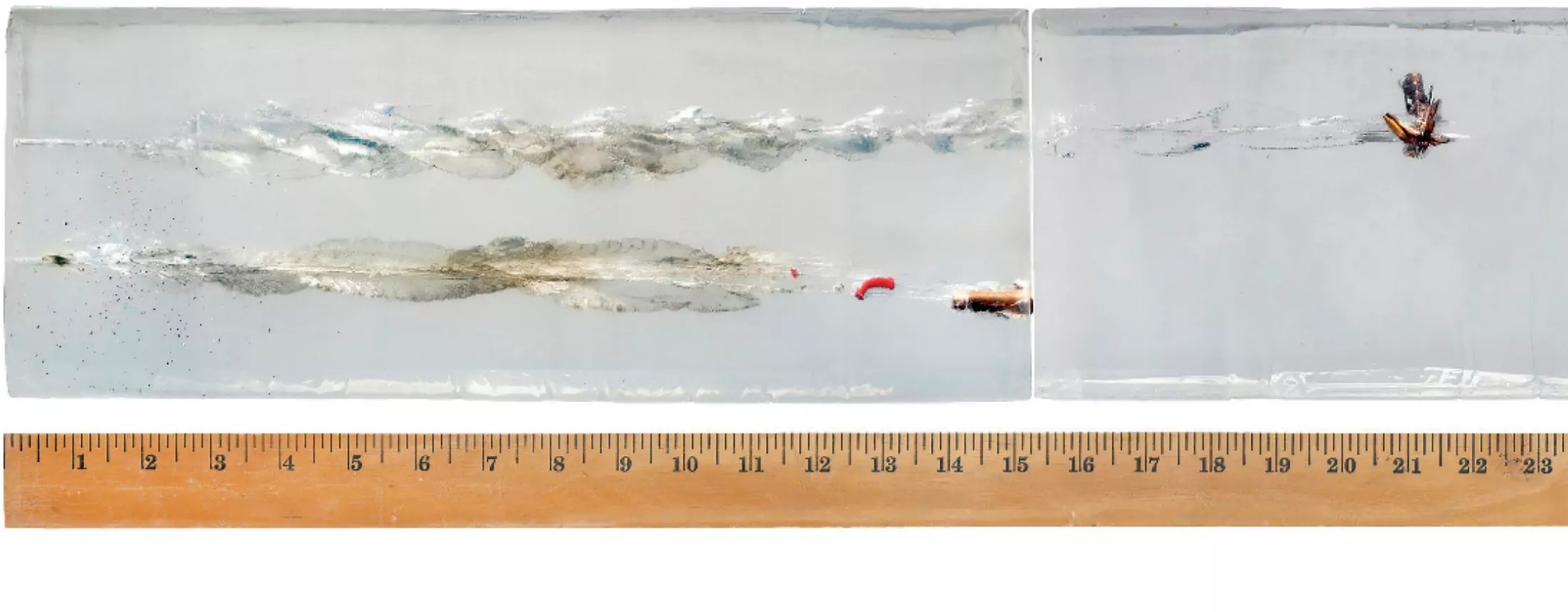
Hornady's 307-grain-Sub-X bullet expanded to .66 inch and penetrated to 15½ inches. The more mild 1-in-8-inch twist rate allows for cup-and-lead core bullet types to expand at all velocities.

in the 8.6 Blackout — the .338 ARC left the muzzle with an additional 140 fps while remaining subsonic. It uses traditional cup-and-core lead bullets that generate wonderful temporary crush cavities. In contrast, the 8.6 Blackout traveled slower — with bullets near the same weight — yet it still penetrated about 50 percent farther and produced a beautiful spiral wound channel that appeared to slice and dice as it moved through gelatin.

Clear Ballistics gel was used to evaluate bullets from the .338 ARC and 8.6 Blackout (clearballistics.com). The ARC bullet was a 307-grain Sub-X and the 8.6 Blackout bullet was the 342-grain Punisher. I used the Punisher bullet to compare expanding subsonic bullets against one another and the 300-grain Sierra in the 8.6 Blackout for velocity because I was the one tasked with buying ammunition, and 8.6 Blackout ammunition is expensive!

The 342-grain Punisher expanded to a 1.34-inch diameter and penetrated about 22 inches. This bullet would make a hell of a mess on target! Weight upon extraction from the gel was 341 grains. The 307-grain Sub-X penetrated 15½ inches, expanded to a .66-inch diameter and weighed 310 grains when extracted. This bullet is going to rely on traditional wound metrics to generate terminal performance. I presumed the weight increase with the Hornady bullet was due to gel stuck to and in the bullet. The 8.6 bullet expanded to a larger diameter and penetrated farther, but field experience has taught me that velocity also kills. While remaining subsonic, the additional 140 fps of the Sub-X would be felt on target and should not be marginalized.

If I were to hunt with subsonic loads in either cartridge, terminal performance of the 8.6 Blackout would likely have the advantage according to the wound channel observed in the Clear Ballistics gel blocks. The larger-diameter bullet and the deeper penetration indicate a higher probability of good terminal effects. At supersonic velocity on game animals, the 8.6 Blackout is going to have a noticeable velocity advantage. This is a result of case capacity and, as the old racers like to say, "There is no replacement for displacement." The larger case capacity of the 8.6 Blackout means the bullets will be heavier and/or faster. I'd expect bullets of the same weight to offer about 150 fps advantage to the 8.6 Blackout. However, the 1-in-3-inch twist rate of the 8.6 Blackout means that supersonic bullets need to be monolithic. Traditional cup-and-core bullets



are unlikely to survive such an aggressive twist rate at supersonic velocity and may come apart in flight to the target or before exiting a suppressor. You'll know this is no longer a concern when ammunition manufacturers offer cup-and-core lead bullets at supersonic velocity in 8.6 Blackout. Nothing says "we know this works" like putting the company name on the side of the box.

Hornady's .338 ARC bullets at supersonic velocity were slower, but still offer plenty of terminal performance for deer, black bear and smaller game. Hornady offers factory loadings featuring its 170-grain Monoflex with a muzzle velocity of about 2,200 fps and a 215-grain FTX bullet at around 1,900 fps from 16-inch barrels. These are great hunting bullets that are also readily available at a reasonable price.

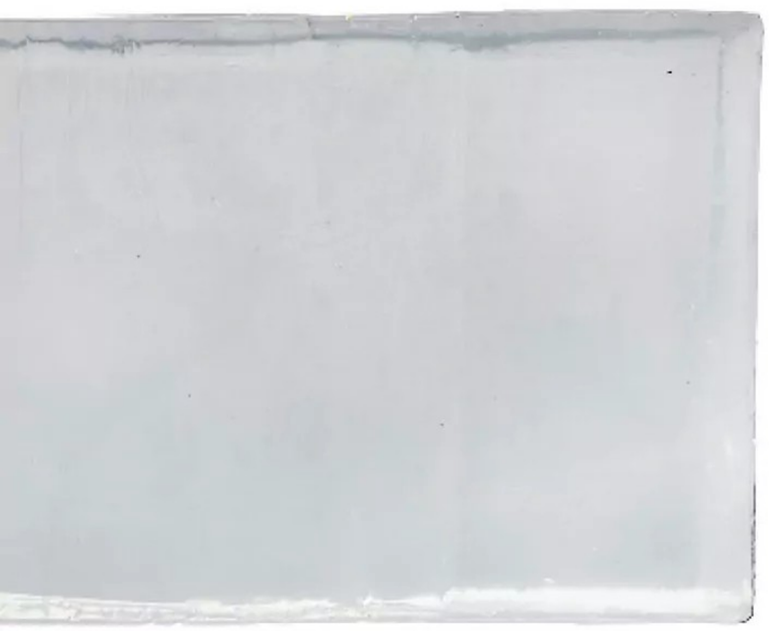
RELIABILITY

One of the biggest determining factors about how reliable a rifle will be in any chambering is the design of the magazine. Detachable box magazines are the most convenient way to feed rifles because they allow the shooter to quickly load and unload the rifle. After a few range sessions with a Proof Research Conviction chambered in .338 ARC, which feeds from a Hawkins ARC detachable box magazine, and a Q Fix with a Magpul PMAG, I prefer the .338 ARC for bolt-action rifles. The ARC fed wonderfully from the Hawkins Grendel/ARC magazine.

When the debate shifts to semiautomatic rifles, I prefer the 8.6 Blackout because it feeds from a PMAG. Semiauto rifles need magazines designed around the cartridge because cartridge taper and diameter determine how the rounds stack on top of one another. The 8.6 Blackout cartridge case is the same diameter as a .308 Winchester, and it has a similar case taper. This allows 8.6 Blackout cartridges to sit comfortably in any magazine designed for a .308 Winchester.

There are ribs inside just about every magazine that grab it at the case shoulder and hold it in place. The ribs are not there for the cartridge's pleasure. They ensure the ammo column stays orderly as the rounds cycle through the chamber. Stuffing cartridges with bullet diameters greater than that for which the magazine was designed will cause the rounds to sit on top of each another and not adjacent. The 8.6 Blackout makes ingenious use of these ribs by using them on the bullet's bearing surface just forward of the case mouth. Where the ribs would hit a .308 cartridge on the case neck and the diameter measures about .348 inch, those same ribs hit the 8.6 Blackout on the bullet's bearing surface that measures about .342 inch in diameter. Any magazine designed for the .308 Winchester will like the 8.6 Blackout just as much, and feeding reliability are almost identical. There is no subsonic ammo column anywhere that is happier and more reliable in a magazine than 8.6 Blackout in a PMAG. The match was made in heaven.

One reliability consideration in semiautomatic rifles is how well the cartridge handles the differences in pressure at the gas port when moving from subsonic to supersonic loads, both suppressed and unsuppressed. Both cartridges cycled well with subsonic loads and unsuppressed, with fired brass landing at about the 5 o'clock position relative to the muzzle. Supersonic unsuppressed had .338 ARC brass at 3 o'clock and 8.6 Blackout brass at 2 o'clock. Suppressed, .338 ARC brass loaded to subsonic velocity landed at 3 o'clock while supersonic brass landed at 2 o'clock. The 8.6



A Clear Ballistics gel block revealed that a 342-grain Punisher projectile fired from an 8.6 Blackout penetrated 22 inches. The .338 ARC 307-grain Sub-X penetrated 15½ inches.

A Proof Research Conviction was fitted with a carbon-fiber-wrapped stainless-steel, 16-inch barrel chambered in .338 ARC to test the cartridge in a bolt-action platform. The stock was also made of carbon fiber. $8,500

The 8.6 Blackout was fired in The Fix by Q to evaluate the cartridge in a bolt-action platform. The 16-inch barrel is quickly interchangeable. The Fix also features 45-degree bolt throw, as well as an adjustable and folding stock design. $3,475

An Aero Precision M4E1 complete upper receiver with 18-inch barrel and 15-inch Enhanced M-Lok handguard was mounted to an Aero Precision lower receiver and used to evaluate the .338 ARC. The price for the upper only: $400

The Q Boombox with 12-inch 416R stainless-steel barrel was used to evaluate the 8.6 Blackout in a semiauto platform. Boombox rifles and pistols come with a 1-in-3 twist rate and a pistol-length gas system. Yes, it's an SBR. $4,400

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady 175-gr. HP	2,084	22.6	6.8	.9	1.27
Hornady 307-gr. Sub-X	1,030	74.8	24.1	1.09	1.9

Notes: Accuracy is the average of three five-shot groups at 100 yards. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Gorilla 190-gr. Punisher	2,171	58	15.8	.71	1.15
Gorilla 300-gr. SMK	891	73.6	23.6	1.02	1.44

Notes: Accuracy is the average of three five-shot groups at 100 yards. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

Blackout landed at 3 o'clock and 1 o'clock, respectively. The bolt velocity varied a lot more across the suppressed/unsuppressed and subsonic/supersonic spectrum with 8.6 Blackout. While Q's Boombox rifle used in the evaluation was totally reliable, variations in bolt velocity are never preferred. Aero Precision provided upper receivers for our Aero Precision AR-15 lower to evaluate the .338 ARC in a semiautomatic carbine.

WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

You'll need to decide which cartridge suits your needs. I prefer the .338 ARC from a bolt-action rifle for three reasons: It fed well from the Hawkins magazine, ammunition was readily available and inexpensive, and Hornady offers enough bullet types and velocities to plink or hunt anything I want. On the other hand, I prefer the 8.6 Blackout in a semiautomatic because there is no subsonic round that feeds more reliably from an SR-25-pattern magazine. Any old AR-10 can be chambered for 8.6 Blackout with just a barrel change. Unfortunately, if you choose 8.6 Blackout, your wallet will softly weep because ammunition costs twice as much. G&A

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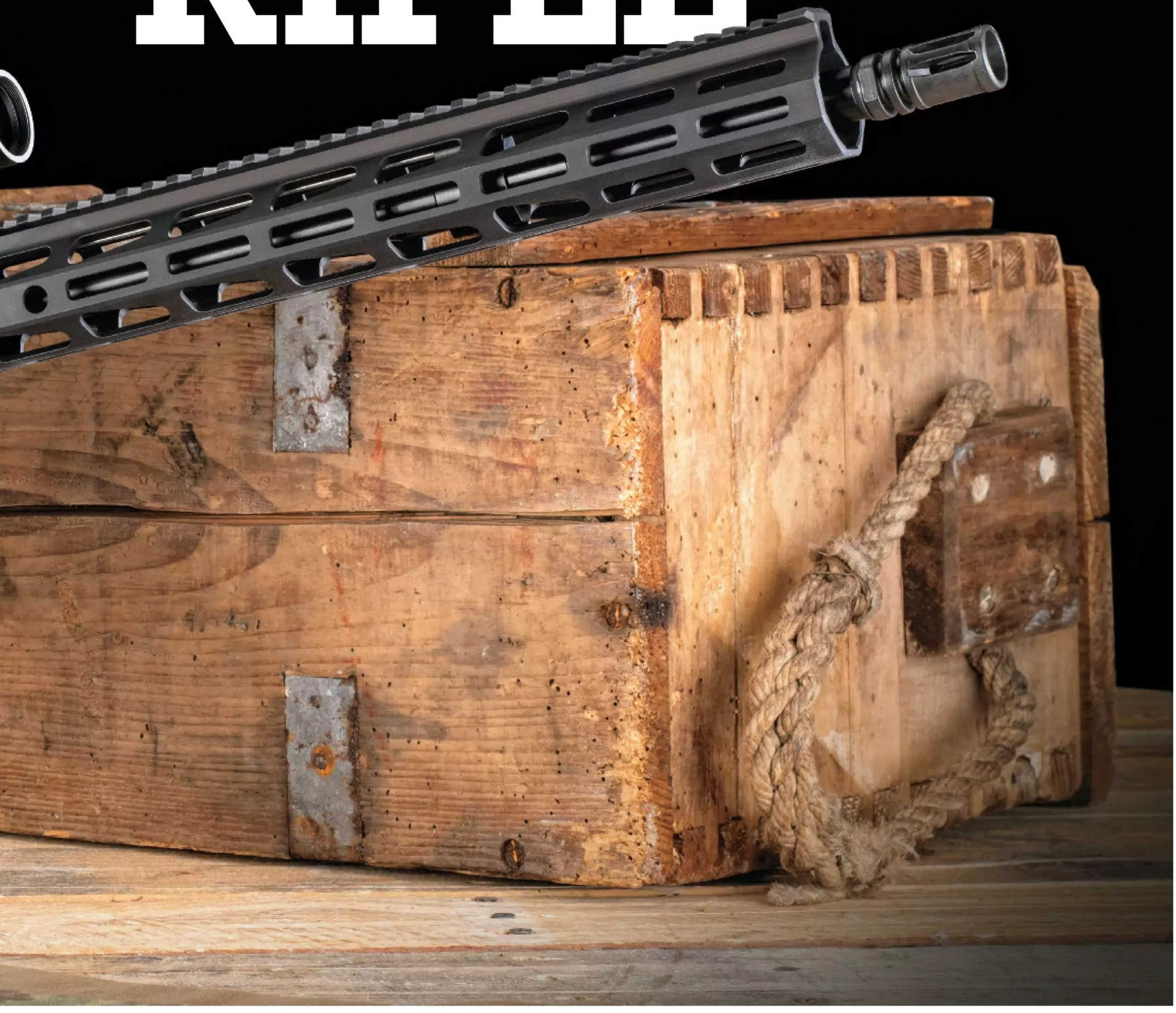
THE **RUGER HARRIER** IS A HARDWORKING AND AFFORDABLE SEQUEL TO THE AR-15.

BY RICHARD NANCE | PHOTOS BY YAMIL SUED

BLACK RIFLE



Though it is priced affordably, the Ruger Harrier is an entry-lever AR-pattern rifle with a contemporary feature set. Tested with a Sightmark Presidio 1-10x26mm CRED-10 low-powered variable optic (LPVO), the pairing proved suitable and complementary in price. $600

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC and unrest of the early 2020s, firearms were in high demand — especially Black Rifles. Ballistic performance, capacity, modularity and ease of use made the AR a popular choice for self-defense-minded individuals wanting a means of protecting themselves during a violent, unpredictable time in our nation's recent history. Of course, school and business closures, travel restrictions, limits on social gatherings and mask mandates ended as the world slowly normalized by 2024. Consequently, firearm sales waned. Anyone with the means and desire to own an Black Rifle had at least one. Like toilet paper, a surplus of ARs sat on the shelf and firearm manufacturers began to feel the pinch.

For 2026, the Black Rifle market is still slow when compared to the boom years that began in 2004 after the sunset of the 1994 Assault Weapon Ban. That could change with offerings such as the new-for-2026 Ruger Harrier. Since acquiring Anderson Manufacturing and its machines, and absorbing its workforce in 2025, the Harrier represents the first all-new firearm Ruger has produced in Hebron, Kentucky.

According to Ruger President and CEO Todd Seyfert, "This move reinforces Ruger's position as a leader in the industry, and reiterates my focus on continued growth, even as others scale back."

Yes, the Harrier is an entirely new offering. It replaces the Ruger AR-556, which supplanted the older piston-driven SR-556. Like the AR-556, the Harrier is direct-impingement gas operated.

NOT THE JET

At launch, the Harrier arrived in two models, though Ruger plans to expand the line. Both models are 5.56 NATO chambered with just a few differences. Guns & Ammo received the Model 28600, which features a mid-length gas system. It wears Magpul furniture and a full-length rail. The rail is backward-compatible with Picatinny-style rail accessories and has a retail of $749. The Model 28601 uses a carbine-length gas system, an A2 grip, M4-style adjustable stock, and a partial rail. The 28601 has a retail of $699. (Expect the actual sale price for both models to be less than suggested retail.)

Upper and lower receivers are forged from 7075 aluminum alloy that is anodized with the proven Type III hardcoat finish for durability and corrosion resistance. To keep the wiggle out, a tension screw on the lower receiver can be adjusted to eliminate play between the receivers.

The lower receiver is considered "military spec," but it's actually semiauto only. The safety selector is on the left side, and when it is horizontal it's on "SAFE". To switch to "FIRE," flip the lever to the vertical position.

The bolt catch is where we'd expect it to be, on the

A Magpul MOE-K2 pistol grip is standard on the Harrier Model 28600. It is hollow with a trapdoor underneath allowing access for internal storage.

Harrier Model 28600 includes a Magpul DT Carbine Stock with features from the SL and CTR stocks. The DT Carbine Stock incorporates dual-tensioning technology and a flat toe for riding a bag.

left side of the receiver. The magazine release is the familiar push-button on the right side. The single-stage trigger was tested at 6 pounds of pressure. It's not "mil-spec" because the trigger assembly components are not made of the military's select-fire, full-auto or burst components. It's a misnomer to call the trigger "mil-spec," but that's the term Ruger uses to describe it.

The Magpul MOE-K2 grip has a 17-degree grip angle. It is more vertical than an A2 pistol grip, which has an approximate 25-degree angle. The shallower grip angle provides a more comfortable grip, in my opinion, especially for a rifle such as the Harrier, which has a relatively short length of pull. (Length of pull measured 11 to 14 inches.)

A beavertail and aggressive Trapezoidal Surface Projections (TSP) texture support positive control of the grip. Another benefit of the Magpul grip is that when combined with Magpul's Storage Core — sold separately ($16, magpul.com) — it will store batteries for an optic or light, or even an extra bolt, firing pin or lubrication.

The Magpul Dual Tensioning (DT) Carbine Stock is adjustable, of course, which makes the Harrier comfortable and wieldy for shooters with different physiques, or for the same shooter with and without body

RUGER HARRIER (MODEL 28600)	
TYPE	Direct impingement, gas operated, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	5.56 NATO
CAPACITY	30+1 rds.
BARREL	16.1 in., button rifled, 1:8-in. twist
LENGTH	35.87 in.
WEIGHT	6 lbs., 12 oz. (tested)
FINISH	Nitride (steel), hardcoat anodized (aluminum)
STOCK	Magpul DT Carbine
GRIP	Magpul MOE-K2
TRIGGER	6 lbs. (tested)
SIGHTS	None
SAFETY	Selector lever, two position
MSRP	$749
MANUFACTURER	Sturm, Ruger & Co., 336-949-5200, ruger.com

The aluminum handguard attached to the barrel nut by two tensioning screws, one also an indexing and alignment screw. The handguard offers many vents, M-lok slots, and QD ports.

The A2 “birdcage” flash hider also functions as a compensator. With its closed bottom, it prevents dust-ups when shooting prone and redirects gas up to keep the muzzle down.

The bolt carrier group includes notches on the right sight for the forward assist, a properly staked gas key, mil-spec cam pin, chrome firing pin, and bolt assembly with standard extractor and ejector.

The charging handle is the conventional mil-spec pattern with the latch on the left side. Different though is the Ruger mark visible atop the rearmost portion of the upper receiver.

armor or thick layered clothing. Wobble is eliminated by the auto-engaging friction lock providing tension on the buffer tube. The sloped cheekweld provides comfort and a non-slip buttpad with optimal curvature to ensure a comfortable and secure shoulder mount. A rotation-limiting quick-detach (QD) swivel mount and a 1¼-inch loop provide options for attaching a sling.

In typical AR fashion, the right side of the upper receiver is home to the forward assist, dust cover and brass deflector. The Harrier doesn’t come with sights, but the upper’s continuous top rail (or partial top rail on the 28601 model) provides ample space to mount sights, an optic or combination thereof. For accuracy testing, we topped the Harrier with a Sightmark Presidio 1-10x26 CRED-10 scope, which paired well.

Continuing with the Magpul theme, M-Lok slots surround the slim 15-inch free-float handguard at 3, 6 and 9 o’clock. Intermediate slots provide even more mounting flexibility. Plus, additional QD sockets on both sides of the handguard provide convenient sling-mounting locations.

The rigid handguard shields the 16.1-inch Government profile, six-groove, button-rifled barrel with a 1-in-8-inch right-hand twist. The ½-by-28 threaded muzzle is standard with an A2 compensating flash hider, but it’s ready to be swapped for most muzzle devices, including direct-thread suppressors. The steel barrel, bolt carrier group (BCG), and steel components are complete with a nitride finish.

The BCG is critical to an AR’s operational cycle. If it’s clean and lubricated, the AR can be depended on. The Harrier’s properly staked gas key ensures the screws securing it to the bolt carrier don’t back out, preventing potential malfunctions. Inside, the firing pin is chrome-plated for corrosion resistance and lubricity.

While not ambidextrous or oversized, the charging handle is familiar to operate, intuitive for most troops and veterans. It’s consistent with that budget-friendly blue-collar aesthetic.

AT THE RANGE

As appealing as an AR costing less than $750 is, the point is irrelevant if it doesn’t function reliably and shoot accurately. The Harrier was both reliable and

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As expected, field stripping the Ruger Harrier is standard for an AR-pattern rifle. Maintenance is minimal though, as steel components are nitride finished and aluminum is hardcoat anodized.

accurate. It was also comfortable to shoot.

Weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces (sans optic), and having an overall length of 35.87 inches, the Harrier was light, compact and easily maneuverable. The grip, stock and handguard provided ergonomic contact points for control during Guns & Ammo's tests.

Although the traditional 5.56 NATO chambering produces light recoil for most users, the Harrier's mid-length gas system was the perfect balance for a smooth cycle of operation, resulting in a milder recoil impulse than an AR with a carbine-length gas system.

Reassuringly, the staked castle nut won't back out with use, either. Staking the castle nut kept the buffer tube from rotating and leading to the loss of the buffer retainer pin and likely locking up the action. While ARs that are designed for duty use feature staked castle nuts, it's not always that a budget-friendly ARs such as the Harrier has one.

For accuracy testing, I bench-rested the Harrier and took aim at a target posted 100 yards downrange. The rifle felt and performed as well as AR-15s I've shot before, some costing twice as much. My only complaint could be the stiff trigger. Fortunately, since the lower receiver is "mil-spec," sourcing a replacement that's smoother and lighter is easy.

Trigger notwithstanding, the Harrier's accuracy potential was on par with the AR-pattern rifles in its price range. I shot five, five-shot groups with three loads. Fiocchi's Range Dynamics 55-grain boattail (BT) and Black Hills' 60-grain V-Max loads produced an average group size of 1½ inches. Hornady's 75-grain boattail hollowpoint (BTHP) printed an average group of 1.4 inches. The two tightest groups measured 1 inch. The loosest group measured just more than 2 inches. That's plenty accurate for a rifle designed for defensive applications. Best of all, the Harrier was malfunction-free.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Fiocchi Range Dynamics 55-gr. FMJ	2,965	92	32	1	1.5
Black Hills 60-gr. V-MAX	2,864	27	9	1.2	1.5
Hornady Black 75-gr. BTHP	2,587	62	22	1.1	1.4

Notes: Accuracy is the result of five, five-shot groups fired at 100 yards from a Ransom Multi Cal. Steady Rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots recorded from a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

PARTING SHOTS

Offhand, the Harrier was fun to shoot. The grip angle, stock contour and slim handguard made the Harrier feel like an extension of my body. It was easy to keep the muzzle on target, even when firing rapidly. I didn't have access to a suppressor during testing, but I can imagine how soft shooting the Harrier would be if one replaced the A2 birdcage with one.

The Harrier includes a 30-round Magpul PMAG. As mentioned, the Harrier will sell for less than it's suggested retail price of $749. If you're in the market for an affordable, American-made Black Rifle, check out the Ruger Harrier at your dealer. Whether you opt for the 28600 with Magpul furniture, or the more mil-spec 28601, you won't go wrong. If you're looking for an AR in a different caliber or configuration — or perhaps one with more upgrades — standby. Ruger teased us that these two models are only the beginning of what's expected to be a long and diverse product lineup. G&A

One 30-round PMAG is included with the Harrier. There were no feeding issues or malfunctions during its evaluation.

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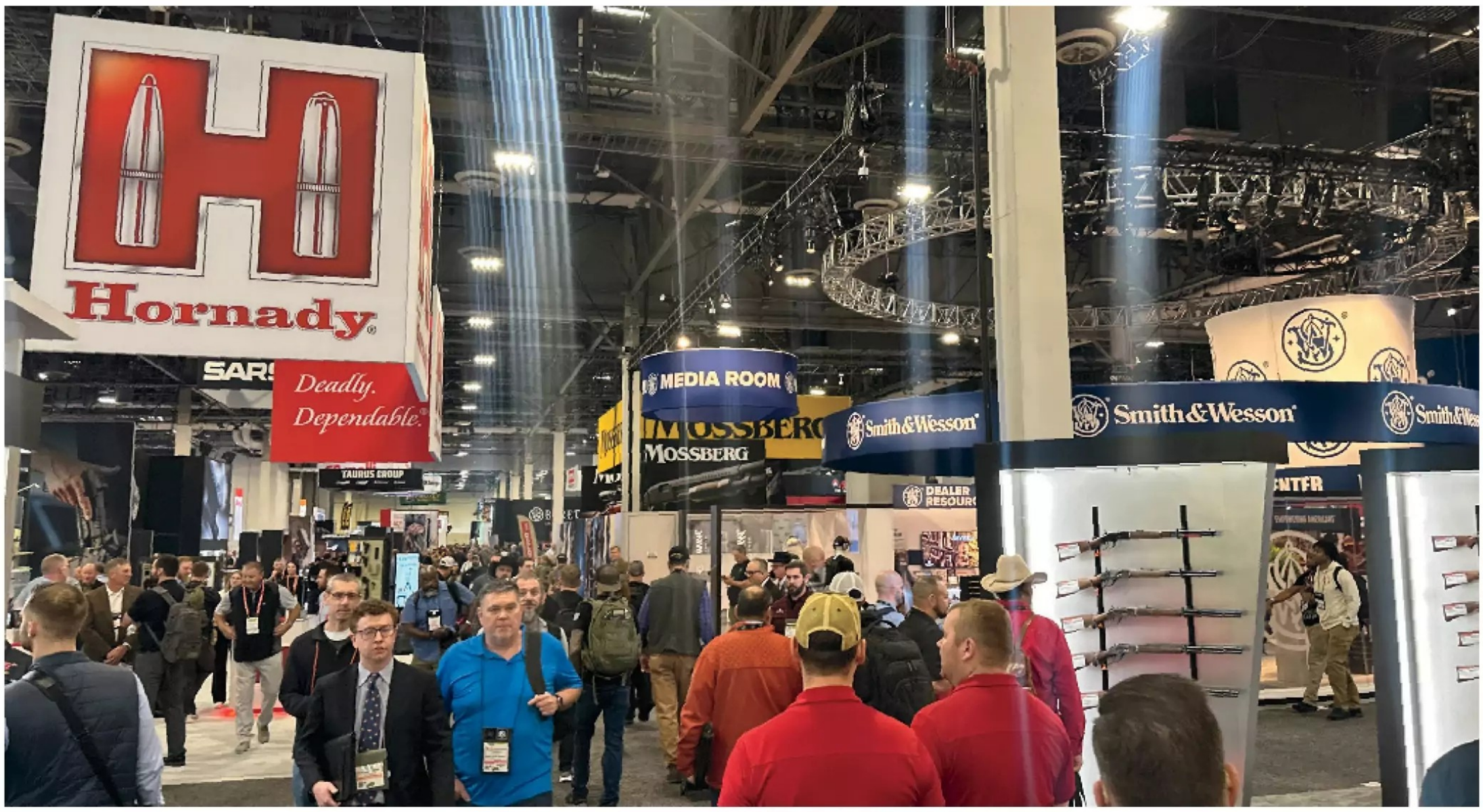

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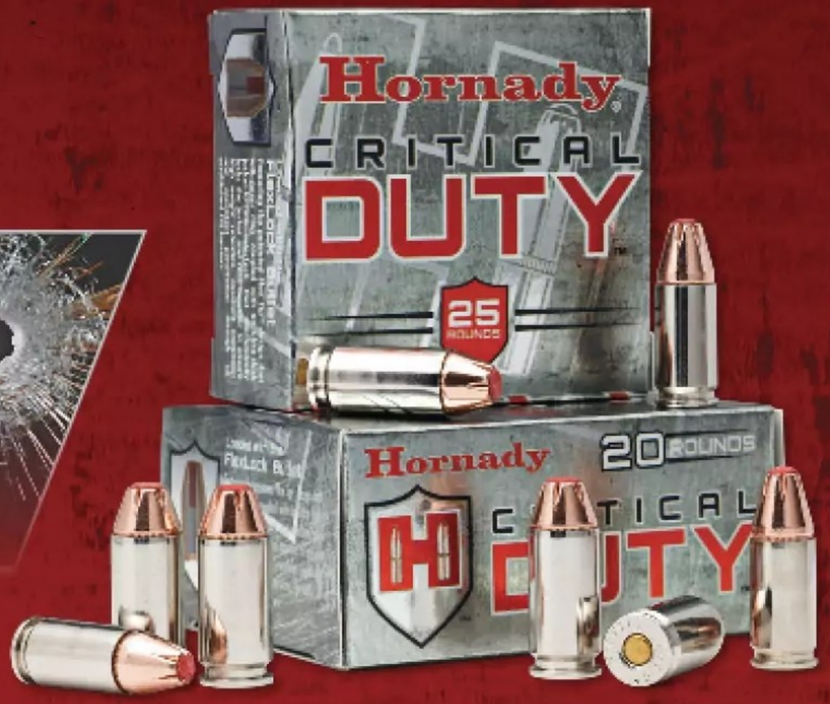

800-338-3220 | HORNADY.COM

ARMSCOR PK-12 "PAK-OUT" LONG

ARMSCOR.COM

It's the age of folding firearms, as we are seeing many folding rifles and pistol-caliber carbines (PCC). For 2026, Armscor introduced a folding shotgun, the PK-12 "PAK-OUT" Long. (A "PAK-OUT" Short with 14.1-inch barrel is also available.) The PK-12 is a 12-gauge pump action. The Long has an overall length of 37¼ inches that folds to a compact 18½ inches.

It is a U.S.-made shotgun designed around a spring-assisted pump action with a four-plus-one capacity. The Long weighs less than 7 pounds and includes a rail for mounting optics. Capable of shooting 3-inch shells, the PK-12 is an easy-to-store and portable package. ■

DEAD AIR CT5P & NOMAD TI OTB

DEADAIRSILENCERS.COM

Dead Air Silencers had two suppressors of note at SHOT Show, one tactical and one for hunters.

The CT5P Patrol is a 5.56 NATO- and 6mm ARC-optimized can developed for duty use. Full-auto rated, the Triskelion baffles reduce backpressure, sound and muzzle flash.

The Nomad Ti OTB is an "over-the-barrel" suppressor that provides full-size suppressor sound reduction without the usual full-length extension beyond the muzzle. When mounted, it adds just 4.6 inches. The titanium construction keeps weight to 10½ ounces, and it's rated to .300 RUM and 7mm Backcountry cartridges. It's a suppressor for the serious hunter that is just as welcome by those who hunt in a blind. ■

FN SCAR 17S & 309 MRD

FNAMERICA.COM

FN gave its battle-proven SCAR series a complete workover. The new-for-2026 SCAR 17S — "17" designating the "7.62mm" version and "S" for "semiautomatic" — received more than 25 functional upgrades. The SCAR still supports the same missions for which the platform was designed. It does so with suppressor optimization, a two-piece bolt carrier, extended receiver and more adaptability to accept accessories.

The FN 309 MRD pistol was engineered specifically for new shooters in search of a handgun possessing FN quality at an entry-level price. The 309 MRD utilizes an internal hammer chambered in 9mm, boasting the modern amenities expected of modern handguns. It has an optic-ready (MRD) slide, 16- and 20-round magazines, grip texture and accessory rail. ■

10/22®

Based on extensive customer feedback, Ruger has upgraded the 10/22 rifle line with enhanced features previously found only in select configurations. These improvements are designed to deliver even greater performance. Select models now feature a BX-Trigger®, lightweight stock, match bolt release and a receiver that incorporates a rear cleaning port. With more than 10 million produced over the past 61 years, the 10/22 has inspired a loyal following and remains the benchmark for rimfire excellence.

LEARN MORE

The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.

RUGER®

GEMTECH NEBULA 5.7

GEMTECH.COM

Suppressors are prevalent, so it makes sense that we are seeing more specialization. The Gemtech Nebula 5.7 is an example. The Nebula 5.7 was designed specifically to support the 5.7x28mm cartridge, a round that has enjoyed renewed interest in recent years. This lightweight, 9-ounce can is full-auto rated and finished in a high-temp black Cerakote.

While engineered to support the centerfire 5.7mm, the Nebula 5.7 is also perfectly suited for rimfire loads, including the .22 LR, .22 WMR and .17 HMR. Built around a 3D-printed titanium core, the Nebula 5.7 mounts by direct thread using a ½x28 thread pitch. Lovers of 5.7mm firearms should give this suppressor a look. ■

SMITH & WESSON M&P 2.0 CARRY COMP 10MM

SMITH-WESSON.COM

The 10mm Auto cartridge endures, so Smith & Wesson launched an everyday carry (EDC) version of the M&P 2.0 in the new Full Size Carry Comp model. As the name indicates, the gun sports an integral compensator to mitigate the heavier recoil of powerful 10mm loads. Feature-rich, the 2.0 Carry Comp is optic-ready, includes a three-slot dust cover rail, and has a flat-face trigger shoe with safety lever.

The 10mm 2.0 Carry Comp includes two 15-round magazines and four interchangeable palm-swell grips. The Smith & Wesson Clear-Sight design pushes gases away from a mounted red-dot sight, keeping the objective clearer longer. The S&W M&P 2.0 Carry Comp gives 10mm fans a contemporary handgun spec we can all get behind. ■

STREAMLIGHT WEDGE SL

STREAMLIGHT.COM

Streamlight took a different approach to the EDC light with its Wedge SL and made it ultra-thin. The rechargeable white light is even easier for more people to carry.

Though it is thin, the Wedge SL is constructed from durable aluminum that won't break even if it's accidentally sat on. It features a constant-on mode and a Temporarily Heightened Regulated Output (THRO) mode at a maximum 500-lumen intensity.

Every tradesman can appreciate the rubber endcap designed to be gripped by your teeth. Bite down and you'll have two hands to work while light keeps what's in front of you visible.

The Wedge SL is available in several colors, and the pen-style clip makes it pocket ready. ■

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TAURUS JUDGE 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

TAURUSUSA.COM

Capable of shooting .410 bore shotshells or .45 Colt cartridges, the Taurus Judge is still a versatile revolver. To commemorate 20 years of production, Taurus announced a unique anniversary edition featuring laser-engraved scrollwork onto the stainless-steel frame, barrel and cylinder. A judge's gavel is outlined within the checkering on both wood grips, a fitting tribute to the gun's namesake.

The Taurus Judge 20th Anniversary Edition is more than just a looker, though. It's as functional as it's always been. The five-shot double-action/single-action (DA/SA) revolver is fun and unique. Collectors wanting an iconic Judge are well served by this addition. ■

VIRIDIAN RFX1 BODYGUARD 2.0

VIRIDIANWEAPONTECH.COM

A favorite among G&A staff, the Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 2.0 earned the 2024 Guns & Ammo Handgun of the Year award. The pistol is too small for a micro-optic-mounting plate, but Viridian developed an optic-mount solution with its RFX1. It's a red-dot system that replaces the rear sight of the Bodyguard 2.0, offering an ultra-compact green-dot sight.

Easy to install, the RFX1 brings a custom fit to the slide's serrations and overall form. The motion-activated 3-MOA green dot features an auto-adjust brightness setting for changing light conditions. The sight runs 30,000 hours using a CR1632 battery, making it a long-lasting option for the Bodyguard 2.0. G&A

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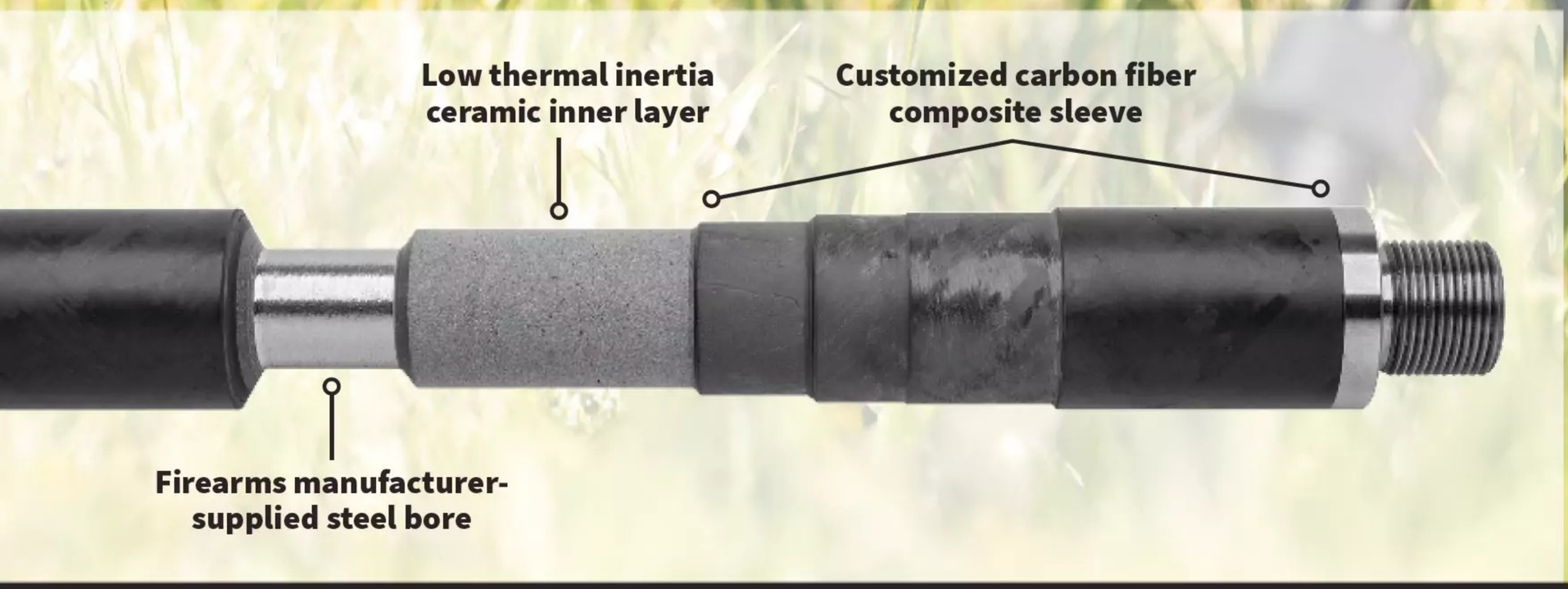

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THUNDER VALLEY PRECISION

THE GRE

AT THE TURN OF THE LAST CENTURY, significant changes to ammunition and firearm designs took place. Low-pressure blackpowder cartridges and the guns chambering them were being replaced by modern smokeless-powder cartridges and new firearm concepts. Several blackpowder cartridges were converted to smokeless powder such as the .45-70 Government. The ".45" denoted the caliber while the "70" indicated that the case was to be loaded with 70 grains of blackpowder for use in the Springfield Model 1873. By 1898, both the military and commercial loads for the .45-70 were introduced with smokeless powder backing up a 500-grain bullet. During the transition, gun manufacturers were forced to evolve stronger steels and designs to accommodate the higher pressure that smokeless powders developed.

Before 1905, Remington was selling firearm designs that had been around for 30 years, and it was being beaten by Savage and Winchester. The single-shot Remington Rolling Block was an example, a breech-loading rifle produced since 1867. With nearly 1.8 million rifles sold or produced under contract by foreign countries, the Rolling Block was a success, and it accommodated military chamberings such as the .30-40 Krag and .30-'03 Springfield. It continued to be popular with users of blackpowder cartridges into the 20th century, including new cartridges such as Winchester's .30-30 and .32 Special. Smokeless variants chambered the 7mm and 7.65mm Mauser cartridges, too. However, the medium strength action of the Rolling Block limited its use with several new cartridges of the time and became subject to headspace issues. The single-shot Rolling Block did not compete well against the 1892 and 1894 Winchesters.

AT EIGHT

"OF WOOD & STEEL," PART V: REMINGTON'S MODEL 8, .30 REM.

BY DAVE EMARY | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

The Model 8 operates using a unique long-recoil action, which features a rotating bolt that stays locked to the barrel. These components recoil together until late in the recoil cycle.

The barrel of the Model 8 is shrouded, and the recoil spring is contained within the shroud around the barrel. The shroud is fixed to the receiver, even as the barrel and spring recoils inside.

The Model 8 magazine has a five-round capacity, which is fixed and not removable. The small tab between the magazine and triggerguard is the bolt release.

The Model 8 magazine is top loaded and could be fed using five-round stripper clips. Due to the configuration, scopes were mounted offset to allow top loading.

In 1900, Remington also catalogued the Lee bolt-action rifle. Primarily designed and patented by James Paris Lee, it was first manufactured and sold by Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company in 1879 until Sharps went out of business in 1881 and the design was acquired by Remington. The Remington-Lee rifle is noteworthy because it was the first successful detachable box magazine rifle. The underlying rifle design led to the Lee-Metford and the Lee-Enfield rifle. Approximately 20,000 military rifles were sold to China and New Zealand, as well as the U.S. Army and Navy. Military chamberings included the 6mm Navy, .30-40 Krag, .43 Spanish, and .45-70. Commercial chamberings included the .30-30, .303 British, 7mm and 7.65mm Mauser. Remington saw some commercial sales but only 100,000 rifles were sold between 1880 and 1907. Remington needed a modern rifle design and cartridge to address the increasing popularity of the Savage Model 1899 and Winchester Model 1894.

THE BROWNING CONNECTION

Remington decided to pursue the new automatic rifle concept to try and compete. The first commercial semiautomatic rifles were simple blowback designs for .22-caliber rimfire cartridges. Winchester released its Model 1903 in .22 Winchester Automatic rimfire, which was scaled up to the Model 1905 that chambered the centerfire .32 and .35 Self Loading (SL) cartridges. These cartridges were on the power scale of the .327 Federal and .357 Magnum but were never regarded for serious big game.

John M. Browning had been working on a locked breech, long-recoil-operated semiautomatic shotgun, receiving a patent on October 16, 1900. Browning offered the designs to Winchester's T. G. Bennett, but after two years of noncommittal and non-payment, a frustrated Browning demanded a large down payment against future royalties. Unwilling to compromise, Browning parted ways with Winchester until 1918.

The Remington Model 8 was derived from a John Browning patent issued in 1900 for an automatic shotgun. Winchester refused to purchase the patent rights, which led Browning to sell U.S. manufacturing rights to Remington in 1905. The first "Autoloading Rifle" was made in 1906. G&A's sample was made in 1912 and features a tang sight and short stock with a late-model buttplate.

A straight buttstock with "half pistol grip" was typical on the Model 8. G&A's sample was either special ordered or modfied with a shorter length of pull, but the stock retains its matching numbers.

Buttplates for the Model 8 were considered a shotgun style with checker texture. G&A's rifle was fitted with a later Model 81 Remington steel buttplate, which was not numbered to the rifle.

Browning turned to Marcellus Hartley, president of Union Metallic Cartridge Co. and Remington Arms Co. in January 1902, soon after the fallout with Winchester. Hartley saw the opportunity for a new automatic rifle that could chamber high-power cartridges due to its locked-breech action. Remington paid and had Browning develop a centerfire rifle version. The shotgun became the Remington Model 11 but was delayed due to the untimely death of Hartley.

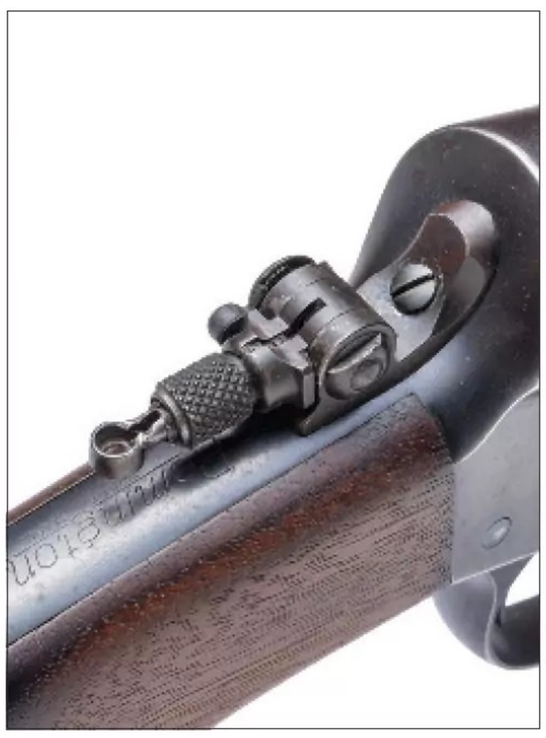
Browning voyaged to Fabrique Nationale (FN) in Belgium and entered a contract to produce the Automatic 5 in 1903. It was exported to the U.S. until the design was licensed to Remington in 1905 and named the Model 11. The rifle design was eventually produced by FN in Belgium and sold in Europe as the Model 1900 in .35 caliber, but production began in 1910 after its appearance in the U.S. When released to the American market in October 1906, the rifle was called the "Remington Autoloading Rifle." It was offered at $30 for a Standard Grade and incrementally priced up to $140 for a No. 6 Grade. In 1911, the world's first autoloading rifle was renamed the "Model 8."

At the same time, Remington designed its own line of cartridges to compete with the Winchester cartridges for the Model 1894. The effort led to the .25, .30, .32 and .35 Remington cartridges introduced with the Model 8 automatic rifle in 1906. The .25, .30 and .32 Remington were rimless versions of the Winchester .25-35, .30-30 and .32 Special. The .35 Remington was a unique development, which lives on today.

Developed in 1906, the .30 Remington could be loaded with pointed bullets and competed with the flat-point .30-30 Winchester.

Remington's 1909 advert reads, "A battery in itself." With a lion and lioness illustrated over the profile of the "Remington Autoloading Rifle," the copy continued, "Even in the face of double danger, you are the master of the situation if you hold the modern Remington which loads itself. It is lightning fast. If you must, you can fire five shots before the first ejected cartridge strikes the ground. Yet your rifle is under such perfect control of the trigger finger that you can exactly time each of the one-ton knock-down blows. The Remington is the modern big game rifle of the world. It loads itself by recoil. After military fashion, you shove the loaded cartridges into the magazine from a clip. Your face is absolutely protected by the solid thick steel breech. There is no hammer to catch. The broad flat safety tells plainly whether it is 'on' or 'off.' It is the latest, safest, and best product of 20th century gun invention. As the modern ocean greyhound, the Lusitania, excels the Clermont, so this modern Remington, which loads itself, excels

The forend features a rotating sling swivel. The swivel also functioned as a bolt to secure the forend to the barrel sleeve.



An adjustable blade rear notch sight and a bead front sight were standard on the Model 8, but tang aperture sights were common.

lever and hammer rifles of the passing generation."

The Model 8 is a rather interesting design, featuring five unique patents. It operates on a long-recoil principle that keeps the rotating bolt locked until the bullet has exited the barrel. The Model 8 appears to have a heavy barrel contour, but, in fact, the barrel has a sleeve over it that contains springs, which are attached to a fixed collar in the sleeve and a collar on the barrel. There is also a spring in the buttstock that is affixed to the bolt carrier. When the gun is fired, the barrel and bolt remain locked and recoil together. When the spring in the barrel sleeve is fully compressed, the barrel stops recoiling and begins to return forward. The bolt unlocks and continues to recoil at this point, extracting and ejecting the spent cartridge. When the bolt spring stops, the recoil of the bolt drives it forward, stripping a cartridge from the magazine and continuing forward until it locks with the barrel. When you fire the Model 8, you can feel and hear a lot of the inner workings. For those interested in the AK47, one

G&A's test rifle was equipped with a 1950s-vintage Stith side mount and barrel mount, containing a Weaver K2.5 scope.

look at the Model 8 safety suggests, perhaps, where Mikhail Kalashnikov got inspiration from.

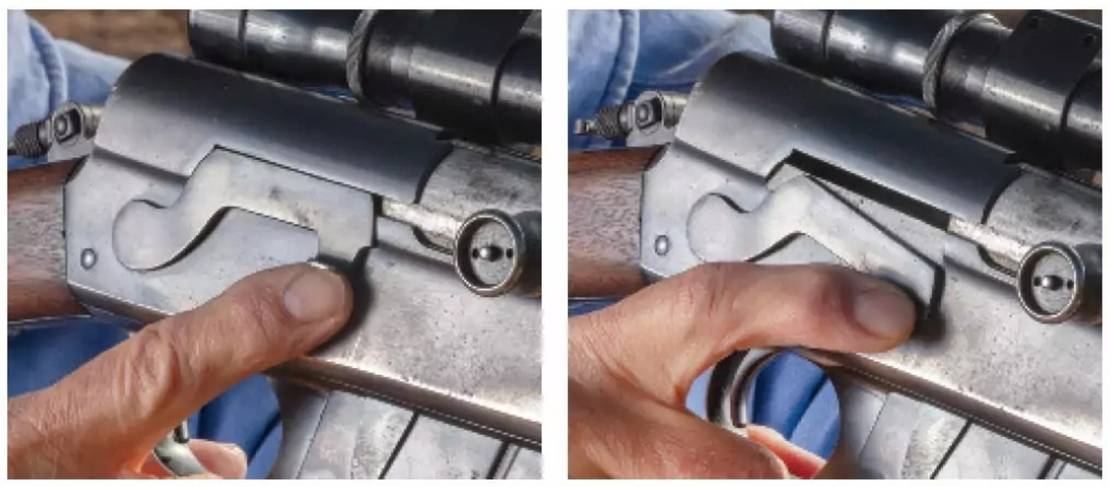
The magazine of the Model 8 holds five rounds. It has a single-stack arrangement and is fixed. The gun was intended to be loaded with five-round stripper clips, which are unique to the Model 8. You'll note a stripper clip guide machined atop the receiver. The gun may also be single loaded by inserting rounds into the magazine through the ejection port. Original stripper clips can be found online but are expensive. Also available are nylon stripper clips.

The standard Model 8 featured a straight-grip stock, shotgun-style steel buttplate and a separate forend that was attached to the barrel with a screw. The screw also doubled as a sling swivel. Special order stocks were available with a pistol grip. The back of the receiver was drilled to accept a Lyman or Marbles peep sight, as well. The gun could be configured as an embellished Premier grade, and some were produced this way.

The Model 8 was also popular with law enforcement

of the time. Guns could be sent to the Peace Officers Equipment Company in St. Joseph, Missouri, to have 20-round magazines installed. Notably, Texas Ranger Frank Hamer used a 20-round magazine-fed Model 8 in the takedown of American outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in 1934. "Hamer's Hammer" was chambered in .35 Remington. Though most of the attention following the ambush featured the BAR, dumping 20 rounds of .35 Rem. through the windshield of the '34 Ford from 10 feet probably could have gotten the job done alone!

The Model 8 became the Model 81 in 1936, and production ended in 1950. The gun sold reasonably well, but Remington wasn't satisfied. Nearly 170,000 rifles were sold between 1906 and 1950, and some 112,000 were Model 8 variants. Sales were probably a bit limited by the guns' rather high cost. Though a bit heavy, the Model 8 was beautifully made and earned a reputation for being extremely reliable and accurate.



Pushing up on the Model 8 safety lever on the right side of the receiver blocks the trigger and prevents the bolt from cycling. Pressing down disengages the safety lever.

G&A'S TEST RIFLE

Our sample was a rather unusual Model 8. The entire gun — other than the buttplate — was original. The buttplate looks as if it was sourced from a later Model 81 with a checkered-type steel plate, the only part that had a mismatched serial number. The stock was special order with a pistol grip and very short length of pull of just 12¼ inches. Whoever spec'd it must have been of small stature. As acquired by us, the gun came with a Lyman receiver peep sight and an early 1950s-vintage Stith scope mount and Weaver K2.5 scope. I found the scope desirable because of my rather compromised near-70-year-old eyes. The short length-of-pull stock was perfect for the eye relief and mounting position of the scope, too. Editor-in-Chief Eric Poole and I tested the rifle with both the peep sight and the 2.5X scope. With serial number 29389, G&A's rifle was made in 1912 and chambered in .30 Rem.

The trigger pull was a crisp 3 pounds, 6 ounces, and the gun weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces

The short bolt can be manually manipulated using the stubby charging handle.

without the scope. The gun balanced well when carried at the receiver and was very tight, showing little wear other than some lack of finish from carrying. I scoped the bore with my Lyman borescope, which revealed that it was in excellent condition. The bore was bright and shiny with no pitting.

REMINGTON MODEL 8

LOAD	VELOCITY (FPS)	ES	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVERAGE GROUP (IN.)
REMINGTON MODEL 8 .30 REMINGTON				
Hornady 170 FP, IMR 4064 @ 30.3	2,090	28	4.7	4.9
REMINGTON MODEL 8 .30 REMINGTON W/ WEAVER K2.5 SCOPE				
Hornady 170 FP, IMR 4064 @ 30.3	2,086	26	1.06	1.41

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five, five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of five shots chronographed adjacent to the muzzle.

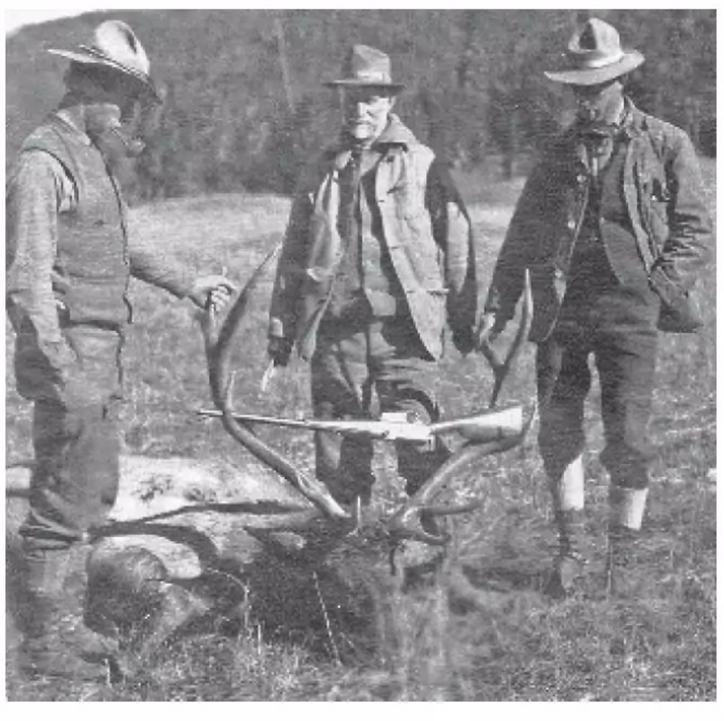
To reproduce vintage ammunition as close as possible, I consulted a 1923 Remington catalog. It describes the .30 Rem. as being loaded with a 170-grain flat-point (FP) bullet for a velocity of 2,020 feet per second (fps). Available powder speeds at that point were equivalent to IMR 3031, 4895 and 4064. The .30 Rem. would most likely have been loaded with 4895 or 4064. I chose to use the Hornady 170-grain FP and CCI 200 primer. After consulting the Hodgdon reloading manual, I tried both IMR 4895 and IMR 4064. I settled on a load of 30.3 grains IMR 4064. However, the gun functioned better with a little more powder in the load than what could be loaded with 4895. The accompanying table shows our results at 100 yards. Poole did the accuracy testing for consistent comparison. Three five-shot groups were fired at 100 yards and another at 200 yards. We had very limited production ammunition available for the Model 8, hence the limited number of groups. The cases for our subsequent tests were made from .30-30 cases by re-cutting the rims in a lathe and reforming them in RCBS dies.

AT THE RANGE

We also wanted to explore the effective range of the Model 8 in .30 Rem. with period sights. The mid-1920s .30 Rem. with 170-grain bullet is ballistically effective out to 225 yards. With iron sights, we confirmed the Model 8's hunting range would have been limited by the eyesight of the shooter or inherent accuracy potential of the rifle and ammunition combination.

We were rather disappointed with the accuracy of our rifle at 100 yards using its peep sight. A small front sight would have probably improved group sizes. We felt the rifle should be capable of better accuracy and decided to re-mount the scope. With the scope secured in place, accuracy dramatically improved. We shot at a steel target at 200 yards featuring a 10-inch circle to represent the kill zone of a deer. The iron-sighted Model 8 was capable of reliably striking the 10-inch circle between 175 and 200 yards. Even with a period scope in place, the Model 8 far exceeded the ballistic capability of the cartridges it was chambered for.

We came to really like the scoped version of the Remington Model 8. This rifle configuration was easy to carry and stunningly accurate. The trigger was very nice for any rifle, too, let alone an automatic. Recoil was noticeable but not uncomfortable.



John Browning (above, center) and his brother Matt (above, right) used a .35-cal. Model 8 on a Wyoming elk hunt in 1910.

PARTING SHOT

I know of several old timers in my part of the world who used a Remington Model 8 throughout their life, and they would never part with them. Perhaps this is why we found so few available for purchase on the used-gun market when preparing for this series.

Part VI of this series, "Of Wood & Steel," will feature the Remington Model 14. Renew or subscribe today to avoid missing a single issue of Guns & Ammo! G&A

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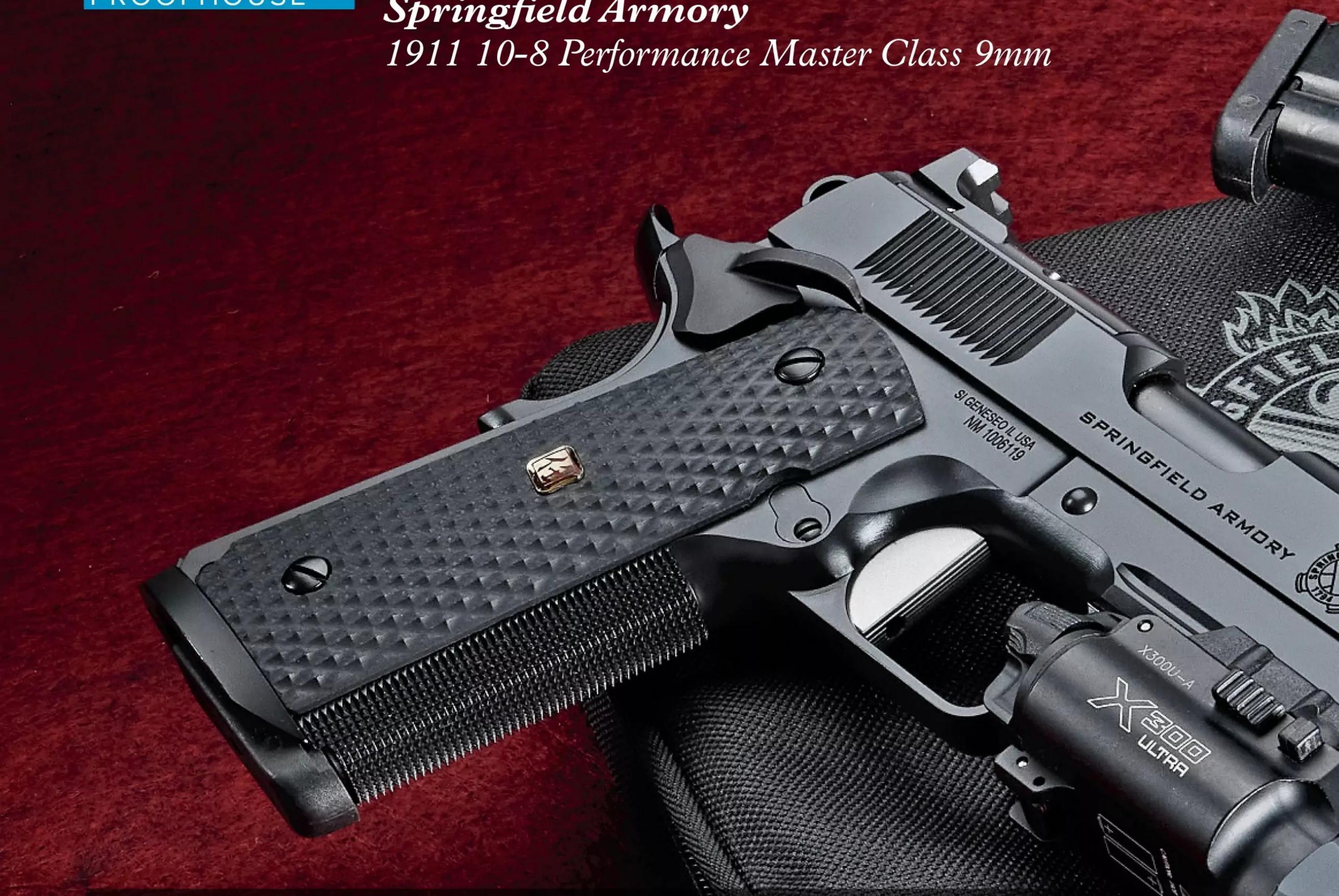
Springfield Armory
1911 10-8 Performance Master Class 9mm



AVAILABLE FOR ASSIGNMENT

THE 1911 PISTOL has been a mainstay of defense and competition for more than a century. In that time, it has been made available in many forms, from minimalistic and functional to exquisite and expensive. The most desirable custom versions often require a patient spirit for fulfillment, but it is now possible to acquire a custom-level Model 1911 built on a quality platform for a reasonable price, as far as custom guns are compared.

Springfield Armory collaborated with Hilton Yam to produce its 10-8 Performance Master Class 1911. The company name "10-8 Performance" is a reference to law enforcement radio codes. The "10-8" code typically means "available for assignment" or "on duty." It's fitting for Springfield Armory's latest 1911, too.

Yam is a former FBI Special Agent, and he spent much of his career on the SWAT team out of the Miami, Florida, office. He was also a principal firearms instructor. His experience building 1911s is rooted in him discovering a need for top-quality 1911 components. His are now available at 10-8performance.com. With Springfield Armory's 1911 selected as as its base, the 10-8 Performance Master Class pistol was born.

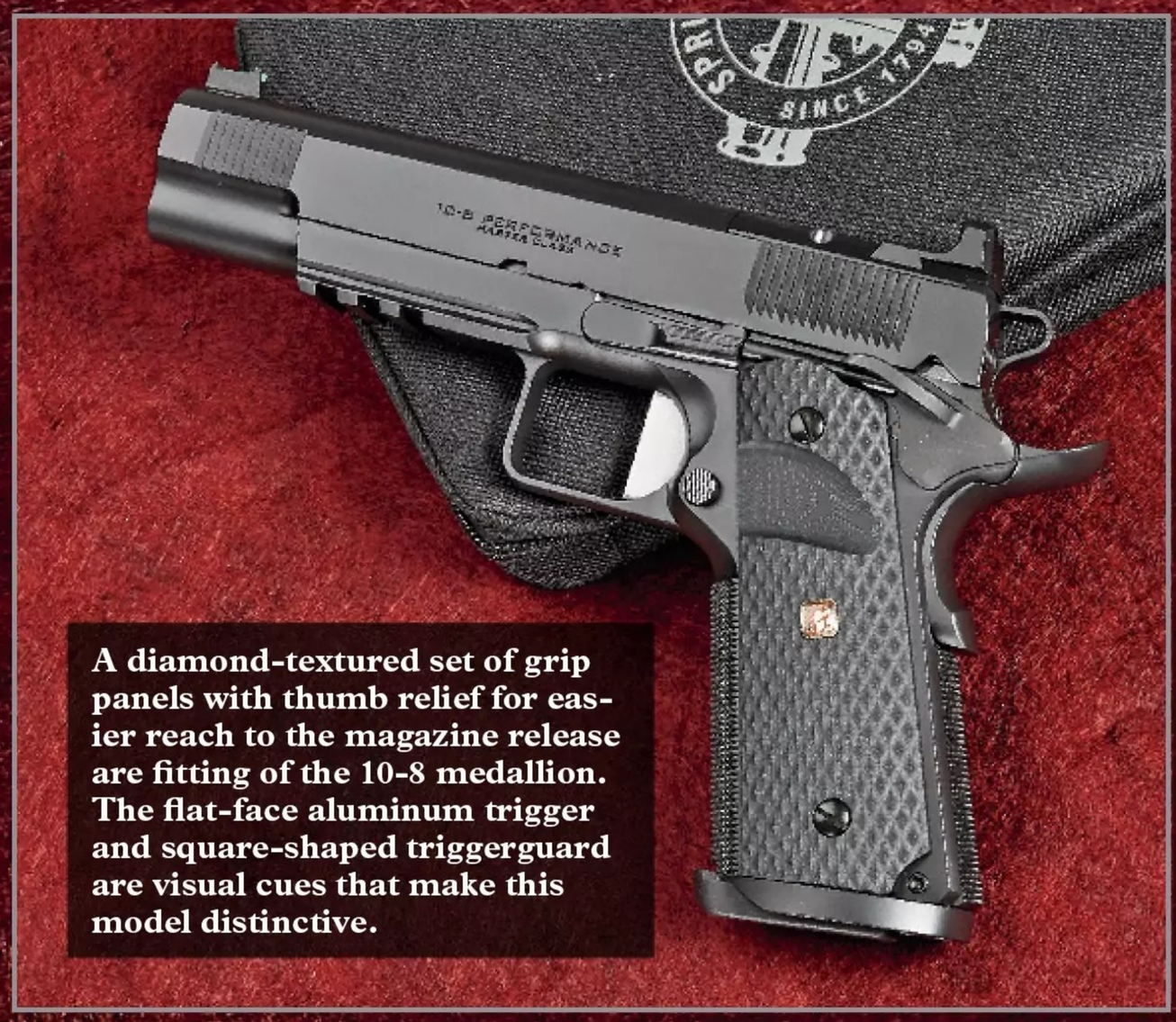
THE BASELINE

Springfield Armory's 1911 starts with carbon-steel forgings, machined to pre-fit status, and complete with an accessory rail and squared triggerguard. Slides and frames were selected and paired for best fit, numbering them to each other. Then a barrel is precisely fit to each pair, numbered to match the slide and frame. The barrel is stainless steel, and the muzzle is coned-shaped to a diameter large enough to fit the interior of the slide. There is no barrel bushing. Yam believes this improves its accuracy potential. The barrel also receives a target crown to protect the rifling near the muzzle. Once fitted, these are treated to a diamond-like carbon (DLC) finish. Since the pistol lacks a bushing, it also means that there is a reverse recoil spring plug to contain the recoil spring.

The ejection port is lowered and flared, and features a notch at the rear of the barrel hood to function as a loaded chamber indicator.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY 10-8 PERFORMANCE MASTER CLASS

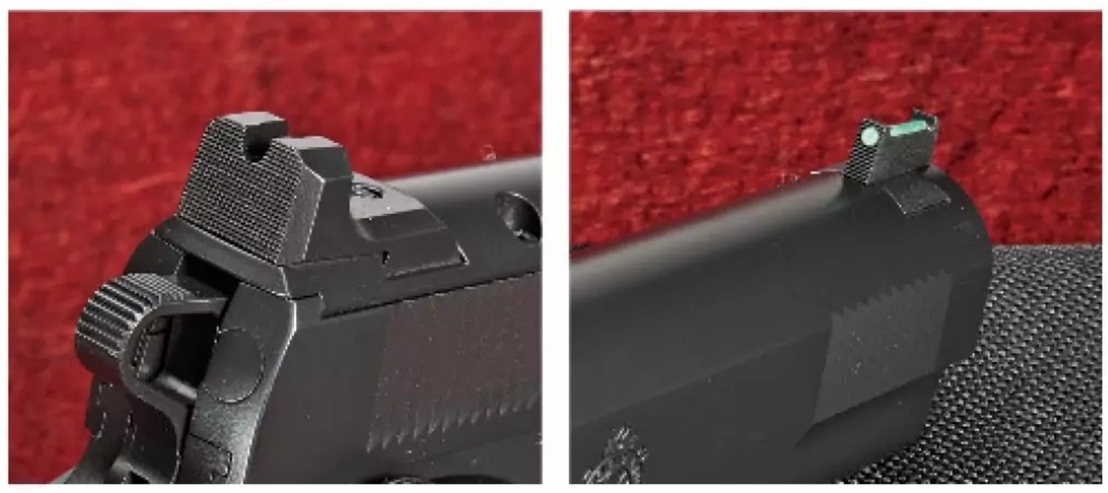
TYPE	Recoil operated, hammer fired, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm (tested), .45 ACP
CAPACITY	9+1 rds. (9mm), 8+1 rds. (.45ACP)
BARREL	5 in.
LENGTH	8.4 in.
WEIGHT	42 oz.
FINISH	Cerakote, DLC (barrel)
GRIPS	VZ Grips, G10
SIGHTS	Green fiber optic (front), U-notch (rear), AOS
SAFETY	Thumb lever, bilateral; grip lever
TRIGGER	3 lbs., 12 oz. (tested)
MSRP	$2,099
MANUFACTURER	Springfield Armory, 800-680-6866, springfieldarmory.com



A diamond-textured set of grip panels with thumb relief for easier reach to the magazine release are fitting of the 10-8 medallion. The flat-face aluminum trigger and square-shaped triggerguard are visual cues that make this model distinctive.

The Springfield Armory 1911 10-8 Performance Master Class blends custom details to Springfield Armory's railed frame.

The 1911 10-8 Performance Master Class has a bushingless barrel. The 9mm target barrel sports an 11-degree crown that blends neatly with the slide face and plunger.



The green fiber-optic front sight is tall enough to co-witness with the rear serrated U-notch through an optic's window. The rear sight is dovetailed to the removeable AOS coverplate.

The slide is machined with forward cocking serrations but the rear serrations stop short of the bottom edge of the slide, leaving them abbreviated. On top of the slide, the 10-8 Performance Master Class has a fixed rear sight dovetailed into coverplate for the Agency Optics System (AOS). The tall frong sight features a green fiber optic.

Springfield Armory's AOS can be adapted to fit all popular pistol optics. The U-notch rear sight is excellent if you do not prefer optics on this 1911. Both sights align and are visible through the red dot for co-witnessing.

The muzzle end of the slide has the recoil spring tunnel recessed, machined to end in a tight radius and matching the forward end of the frame's dustcover.

The frame's accessory rail is slotted on the sides all the way back to the triggerguard. Three cross-slots offer multiple options in accessory location and light/laser choices. If it is meant to fit onto a railed pistol, it should fit on the 10-8 Performance Master Class 1911.

The flat-face aluminum trigger tested at just less than 4 pounds. Within the trigger shoe is an overtravel adjustment screw.

The triggerguard is part of the forging, but it was machined square for the 10-8. Inside is a flat-faced aluminum trigger tuned to a clean and crisp trigger pull. At the rear, the frame has an bilateral thumb safety, an ambidextrous high-ride grip safety with speed bump at the bottom, and a Commander-style hammer. The slide-stop is Yam's design. It was machined from bar stock but the angle, shape and texture of the slide-stop pad was made to 10-8 Performance specifications.

The magazine catch is one-sided, extended and checkered. As an additional aid to speedy reloads, the bottom of the frame has a two-piece magazine funnel installed, too. For a non-slip grip, the frame is machined with 20 lines-

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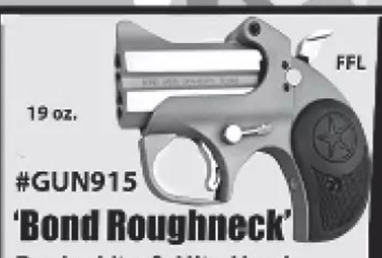

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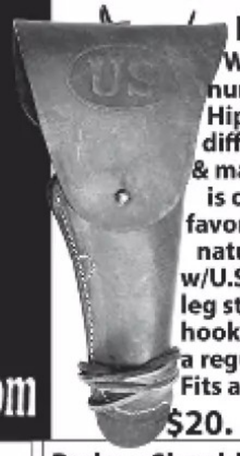

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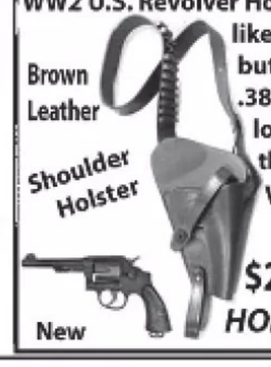

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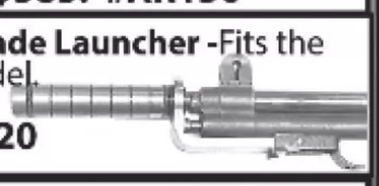

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Offered in either 9mm or .45 caliber, the 1911 10-8 Performance Master Class features a number-matched slide, barrel and frame assembly. Though the plunger is reversed for the bushingless barrel, the guiderod is standard, as is the recoil spring. Three nitride-finished magazines with basepads are included.

per-inch (LPI) checkering on the frontstrap complemented by a set of G10 panels. The mainspring housing is flat and similarly checkered as the front.

Hilton Yam is famous in 1911 circles for his superb parts. We know that many pistolsmiths often use 10-8 Performance products in their own builds. Springfield Armory's 10-8 Performance Master Class model received a full suite of these parts. In addition to the careful inspection and hand-fitting of major components, each 10-8 Performance Master Class receives its own Yam slide-stop, trigger, extended magazine catch, reverse recoil plug, and specially machined front and rear cocking serrations. Yam's flat aluminum trigger is not just installed, but it's fitted without play for a precise release of the sear, minimal overtravel, clean and consistent trigger weight. An overtravel adjustment screw is included.

Once each 10-8 Performance Master Class pistol is built, it receives a black Cerakote finish. After quality control inspections, it's placed into a zippered case with three magazines, a discount card to order the AOS plate needed to fit a red-dot optic of your choice, a trigger lock and manual.

The Springfield Armory 10-8 Performance Master Class can be had in either 9mm or .45 ACP. In 9mm, the barrel is ramped and fully supported, and the supplied magazines hold nine rounds each. In .45 ACP, the feed ramp is the classic frame-and-barrel geometry, and the supplied magazines hold eight rounds each. The magazines are also mated to the Master Class, as each has an extended basepad, made of a tough synthetic, so they extend just enough beyond the bottom of the magazine-well funnel. Reloads don't require reaching up inside in order to get mags to seat.

AT THE RANGE

G&A's sample 10-8 Performance Master Class pistol was chambered in 9mm. An all-steel self-loading pistol in 9mm, it weighs just more than 2½ pounds. For that reason, it didn't produce much felt recoil. The low recoil and clean, crisp

A SureFire X300 Ultra was used to test function with the rail. The light does not extend beyond the full-length slide. $379

Magazines hold expected capacity for a 1911. The 9mm carries nine rounds, and the .45 ACP model holds eight.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVERAGE GROUP (IN.)
Hornady Critical Duty 135-gr. FlexLock +P	1,145	17	6	1.6	1.9
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep 135-gr. JHP	1,087	41	15	1.7	1.9
Fiocchi CovertX 124-gr. JHP	1,149	25	11	1.7	2
Black Hills 100-gr. HoneyBadger	1,278	42	17	1.8	2
Super Vel 90-gr. JHP	1,528	66	22	1.9	2.1

Notes: Accuracy is the average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured using Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the barrel.

trigger made it simple to extract the full accuracy potential from its match-grade, stainless-steel barrel. Of course, it was fitted by those who know the job. The 5-inch length means the cartridge generates almost as much velocity as is possible from a 9mm handgun.

There's one aspect of a Government-size 1911 in 9mm that can be a plus or minus, depending on how you look at things. Some of the loads tested had ejection where the empties fell several feet away. Other loads had the brass barely clearing the ejection port. They all left, though, and there were no failures to eject. If you favor brisk ejection, you aren't going to get it in a Government-sized 9mm.

Accuracy from the 10-8 Performance 1911 was superb, as expected. Despite temperatures in the 20s, all the loads tested produced small, uniform groups. With great looks, a solid build that delivers accuracy and a price that simply shouts, "Take me home!" what more can one ask for? 10-7. G&A

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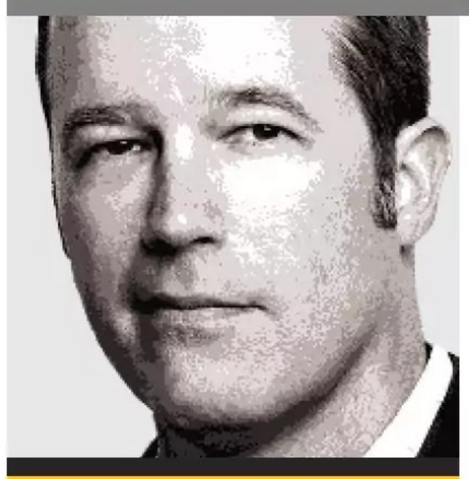

KEITH WOOD

The PPC 9 typified the S&W Performance Center.

A GOOD RUN

IN 1989, a skilled group of men gathered in a hangar across the road from Smith & Wesson's Springfield, Massachusetts, headquarters. Their goal was simple: Build the best guns they could. Started from scratch, they established what became the Performance Center (smith-wesson.com). Led by Chief Engineer Paul Liebenberg, a man who had honed his craft at the famed Pachmayr Gun Works, the Performance Center was a "Skunk Works" of sorts, equipped with skilled gunsmiths, tool-and-die makers, engineers, and the company's first computer-aided design (CAD) systems.

"[Then-CEO] Steve Melvin gave me carte blanche," Liebenberg said. "We started from there. We had no idea how far we could take it."

Working outside of the bureaucracy of the larger corporation, the Performance Center was nimble. Several innovative high-performance firearms were built by the motivated team there, among them the Police Pistol Competition (PPC) 9mm.

PPC was a popular shooting sport at that time and the PPC 9 was built specifically for that niche. Liebenberg had a close relationship with the PPC community thanks to the Bianchi Cup, now operated by the CMP (thecmp.org). Around 1993, when one of S&W's sponsored shooters requested a handgun for PPC use Liebenberg had already configured it in his head. The pistol began with a .40-caliber frame.

"That frame became the basis for all of our [full-size, non-.45] double-stack pistols," Liebenberg recalled. "The slide was unique, machined in-house from S&W forgings, [and] slide blanks were made for 6-inch barrels and cut to fit." (My PPC 9 has a 5-inch barrel, but models were available in 6-inch length.) He added, "The slides began with a 9mm breech face and could be widened as needed for larger diameter cartridges. It was a generic chassis."

The PPC used a single-action system, installed and tuned by skilled hands. The trigger pull was exceptional, testing at a crisp 3 pounds. These guns were fit with Aristocrat rear adjustable sights while the front sights were made in-house. The overall fit and finish were exceptional.

One of the unique elements of the PPC 9 is the floating spherical barrel bushing. The rear-loading nature of the barrel system was a challenge when it came to accuracy. "The bushing was always a weak point," Liebenberg said. "There was no way that you could hold a really tight tolerance."

Liebenberg thought back to the Messerschmitt bushing used on the Pachmayr Signature bullseye guns. He reached out to Claudio Salassa at Briley Manufacturing (briley.com) to produce them. The Briley-made bushings fit into the slides using a modified square thread. These solved the problem. "It took away the major obstacle of having this gun shoot to its best," Liebenberg said.

From a performance standpoint, the PPC was a success. Esteemed PPC teams, including the Los Angeles Police Department and the Mississippi Highway Patrol, used the PPC 9. "Eventually, the gun ruled the PPC scene, becoming the most sought-after pistol," Liebenberg said. "It owned all of the records. If you didn't have that gun, you were starting on your back foot."

The guns were only sold to active law enforcement officers and rarely come up for sale. Liebenberg doesn't know how many PPC 9s were made, but he's confident that there were at least 400. Mine is number 371.

When S&W was sold in 2001, the new owners brought the Performance Center in-house, ending its era as a semi-independent entity. It ceased to exist as a true custom shop. Models such as the PPC 9 were discontinued. It was fun while it lasted. G&A

SMITH & WESSON PERFORMANCE CENTER PPC 9 9MM

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