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P 36

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Canik Mete MC9 9mm

P. 86



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NANCE

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Shooting the
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— Kaya C., on Stauer Opals

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XS SIGHTS F8 NIGHT SIGHTS: \$121

SIGHT CORREX

Guns & Ammo has been my favorite magazine for 40-plus years. I have a question about XS Sights F8 tritium night sights. I just had some mounted, but they are very tall. All my groups are about 8 inches low. Besides aiming at the top of the outer ring on a bullseye target, what sight picture should I use with these unusual sights? I didn't have this problem with my Springfield Armory XD-S factory sights. I'm perplexed.

Mike Kalcher

Colorado Springs, Colorado

XS Sights F8 night sights feature a tritium front with high-contrast orange-glow dot and a square-type notch above a center-located, single tritium dot. The resulting sight picture appears as an "8" when the dots are aligned and stacked, hence the "F8" moniker. XS Sights offers the F8 for the XD, XD-M, XD-S and Hellcat. They do not fit the XD-S Mod. 2 OSP. You didn't indicate the distance that you experienced the 8-inch difference versus your point of aim, so I'll assume you observed the dispersion when shooting between 10 and 15 yards. Your front sight might be too tall in relation to the rear. A gunsmith can evaluate and shorten the front sight (if needed) to raise the point of impact, but given the sight is filled with tritium I would first

email tech@xssights.com for guidance. To aim, center the front sight vertically and horizontally in the rear sight notch. Equal-size bars of light should appear adjacent to the front sight as seen through the rear sight notch. The top of the front sight needs to be aligned horizontally with the top of the rear sight. The front and rear dots provide a coarse reference for shooting quickly or in low-light conditions.

— E. Poole

KALASHNIKOV CONSPIRACY?

The AK47 was not designed by Mikhail Kalashnikov, a peasant farm boy with no high-level education, no knowledge of engineering, no knowledge of metals, and no ability to even design a single-shot

.22, nevermind a reliable selective-fire battle rifle. How could such an individual thrown into a tank, drove into combat and wounded conceive of something so out of his realm? On the other hand, the Soviets grabbed many German scientists and engineers and kept them in slave labor, among them Hugo Schmeisser, who was a successful firearms designer. My information suggests that Schmeisser designed the AK47. Kalashnikov was likely a convenient arrangement so that the U.S.S.R. could say it was Russian designed. The M43 round, 7.62x39mm, must have also come from German minds. Being Germans were desperate, they could have used existing tooling to make a stop-gap round, the 7.92x33K, based on a shortened 8x57mm case, and shortened 8mm bore-size bullets. The Germans took this and designed a next-generation round with a heavy extractor rim, tapered case body and short neck; they named it the 7.62x38mm. This was 1943, which is when Soviets overran the arsenal in Warsaw where this was being developed. Shortly after, the Soviets announced their new military round, the 7.62x39. No gun was available to chamber it until Sergei Simonov scaled down his anti-tank rifle in 1945 to make the SKS. A couple of years later, the AK47 was introduced.

According to Russians, everything was invented in Russia. German designs may be the true origin of the

FEBRUARY '88

In "Sizzling 7mms," Field Editor Bob Milek examined the utility of 7mm cartridges, including 7mm-08 Rem., 7mm B.R. Rem. and 7-30 Waters in the Remington XP-100 and Thompson/Center Contender single-shot pistols. Milek concluded, "It wasn't until specialty pistols hit the American market that handgunners began giving 7mm serious consideration."



AK47 and 7.62x39.

Chris Hatzipanagiotis
Mount Morris, Illinois

SNIPER SERIES

Well done to Dave Emary for his excellent series on World War II sniper rifles. Having had the privilege of owning each of the evaluated rifles, I generally concur with Emary's conclusions in "Part V." Reading the entire series caused me to lament the fact that I no longer own any of these rifles, financial considerations having prompted selling them as values increased beyond expectations. However, I miss the 91/30 PU more than the others. It was more consistent when shooting Russian military ammo than the others in my trips to the range. On one fine

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day with favorable conditions, and shooting off a backpack rest, I scored four out of five headshots from 300 yards on a B-21 silhouette target. The feat surprised me because I was unable to obtain that result with the other rifles. Though not the prettiest, if I were asked to take one of those rifles to war today, my selection would be the Mosin-Nagant.

Richard W. Dommers
La Luz, New Mexico

FOLLOW-UP REQ.

I want to let you know that I thoroughly enjoyed the article on sniper rifles in the June 2025 edition. I am fortunate to own one of these fine rifles that I have used for hunting whitetail and mule deer. If possible,

I would like to read a follow-on article about these rifles with a modern scope and ammunition to see how they would perform today. The one I have is accurate to at least 200 yards.

Dr. Max Denton
Marion, Ohio

MEXICAN LAWFARE

In my June 2025 issue of Guns & Ammo, Keith Wood took on the “Mexican Standoff” in his backpage column. He described the actions of Mexico filing a \$10 billion lawsuit in the U.S. courts against American firearm manufacturers and one distributor, claiming these companies are the cause of the cartel violence epidemic. How was the lawsuit even

recognized by U.S. courts? This is ridiculous at best. The U.S. Supreme Court should throw this so far that no country would ever consider filing such a far-fetched idea in the future. Mr. Wood, please keep us up to date on these issues.

Al Robb
Nephi, Utah

FRANGIBLE FOR DEFENSE?

My neighbor states he only uses frangible ammo in his home-protection firearms, saying that, in case of a worst-case scenario where he must use a firearm and he misses a target, the round will not penetrate a wall and possibly hit someone in another room. I was wondering what your thoughts are

on the use of frangible ammo for home protection based on his philosophy. Personally, I have jacketed hollowpoints in my .38- and .40-caliber home-kept firearms.

Bruce Snyder
Cocoa, Florida

Frangible largely solves the problem of a missed round. However, frangible ammunition can have a serious lack of penetration on a threat depending on the size of the person and how they might be facing. It is risky from the standpoint of being able to end a fight.

— D. Emary

Al v. Ti

I was reading Keith Wood’s “Spent Cases” column on the Smith & Wesson 632UC



in the May 2025 issue of Guns & Ammo. He stated the aluminum and stainless-steel revolver weighs 16 ounces, adding "Lipsey's also released a 2025 version built on a titanium frame instead of an aluminum one; it shaves another 3 ounces." Isn't titanium denser than aluminum? 4.5 grams per cubic centimeter for titanium versus 2.7 grams per cubic centimeter for aluminum?

Jerry Tarble
Marshall, Illinois

Now that the S&W 632 Ti has been released, I can clarify that it uses a titanium cylinder but maintains the aluminum frame. The weight savings comes from replacing the steel cylinder with one made from titanium.

Apologies for any confusion. Full specs for that model were not available at the time that the May 2025 issue went to press.

— K. Wood

S&W STRIKERS

Longtime reader! I was stunned to read in "Proof-house" (July 2025) that the Smith & Wesson M&P9 M2.0 Compact was said to be the brand's first foray into the striker-fire, polymer-pistol segment in 2005. I bought a S&W Sigma 40F in the 1990s and still have it today. Do I not understand my gun, or is this date off by a decade?

Frank Squires
Mt. Vernon, Ohio

You identified an error. Thank you for bringing it to

our attention. The contemporary polymer-frame, striker-fired M&P series was introduced in 2005. The Sigma series was Smith & Wesson's first polymer-frame striker-fired action. The first-

generation Sigma pistol was designed in 1993. The SW9F and SW40F were introduced in 1994. After two generations, they were discontinued in 2012.

— A. Rico 

IN MEMORIAM

Stanley J. Skinner

Former Guns & Ammo Contributor Stan Skinner, and subsequent editor of Safari Club International's "Safari Magazine," died on May 7, 2025, at the age of 80 in Tucson, Arizona. After receiving a Journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma, Skinner joined the U.S. Army and served as a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War.

Wiley Clapp

Former Guns & Ammo Handgun Editor Wiley Clapp passed away on June 4, 2025, in Nevada. Clapp was a 1957 graduate of Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and commissioned in the U.S. Marines before serving as a platoon commander in the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1969. He transitioned to work 17 years for Orange County Sheriff's Office in California. In 1986, he began contributing for "Gun World," and then various Harris Publications in the 1990s until hired by G&A in 2000. He left Guns & Ammo for NRA's "Shooting Illustrated" magazine in 2006 where he penned the "Fighting Iron" column, becoming an industry consultant and authoring several books until his death.

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Johnny “Joey” Jones, a pro-gun journalist.



ERIC R. POOLE

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SUMMER READING

HE LOST HIS LEGS. That’s history, but there’s more to retired Staff Sergeant Joey Jones than his combat experience in Iraq and Afghanistan as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) tech, or his career as a contributor to Fox News. We met while sitting next to each other over dinner during the 2024 SHOT Show. He was just “one of the guys,” an authentic person. Jones is from Dalton, Georgia, and a U.S. Marine, which meant there was no language barrier between us. For several hours, we tuned out the surrounding commotion and related tales of hunting, shooting and service overseas with an increasingly Southern accent.

Anyone reading Jones’ biography can get a sense of the man he is, but I found his resilience, drive to succeed, and steadfast values inspiring. To no surprise, he’s become a motivational speaker, using his fateful experience to positively affect the lives of veterans and those of us who know veterans. Inspired by his example, I worked with Kimber to design a one-of-a-kind Rapide 1911 in 9mm that appeared in the August 2024 issue of Guns & Ammo, which was then donated for auction on GunBroker.com to raise \$4,500 for Boot Campaign (bootcampaign.org). Boot Campaign is a non-profit that provides programs to help veterans and families transition to civilian life. Though special to me, the project was nothing new for Kimber as they were already offering its 1911 Hero Custom as a special edition model to exclusively raise money for Boot Campaign (\$1,124, kimberamerica.com).

While I write on guns, Jones has been authoring books to increase public awareness of stories from American heroes. Based on a decade of interactions with other veterans, Jones wrote the New

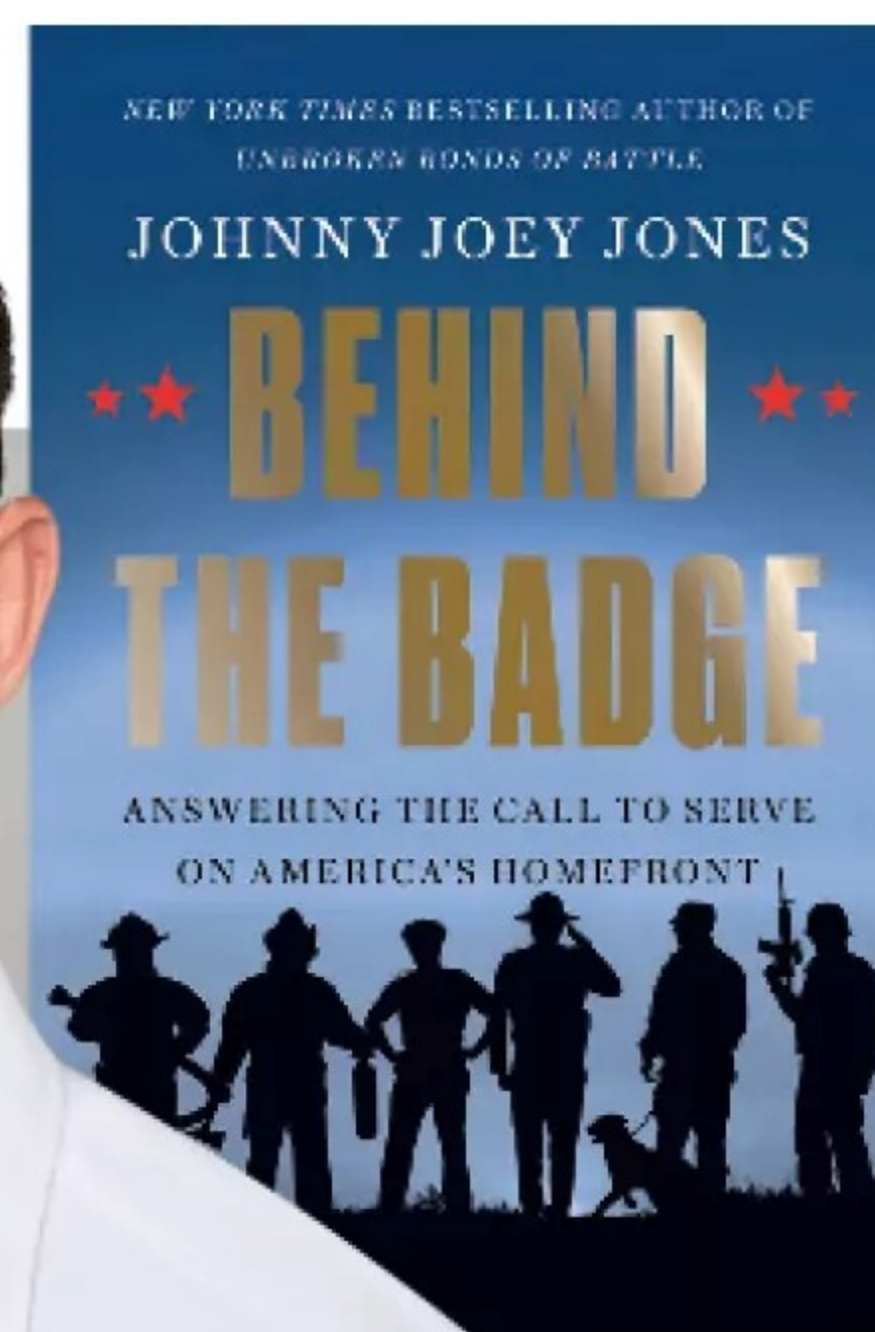
York Times-bestseller “Unbroken Bonds of Battle” in 2023, highlighting the friendships that endure after warriors leave the battlefield. His latest book, “Behind the Badge: Answering the Call to Serve on America’s Homefront,” was released on June 17, 2025, and published by Fox News Books. This quick read relays the dramatic heroism and sacrifice more frequently demonstrated by first responders, including law enforcement officers and firefighters. Each chapter also contains life lessons threaded through the personal histories of those who wear a uniform. It’s a 250-page reminder that we’re surrounded by everyday heroes. Thanking my sister, Rachelle, came to mind; she’s a nurse practitioner working

trauma in a hospital’s emergency room. A special person runs towards a critical situation that most others run away from.

On May 30, 2025, Jones joined Guns & Ammo’s Buzz Podcast for an interview where he spoke on marksmanship, shooting as therapy, duck hunting, the military, coaching tips, and the Second Amendment. Listen to

his words, and you’ll know he’s a “gun guy.” He’s one of us. Available on Guns & Ammo’s YouTube channel, Spotify and other podcast mediums, the interview is a reminder that it’s rare to see a person succeed in such a public forum as news broadcasting, especially one who possesses his wit, integrity, values and knowledge of firearms. I

hope you’ll join me in supporting his continued success. 



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ITHACA MODEL 1911A1, .45 ACP

ITHACA 1911A1 MARKING

Q: I have a question about an Ithaca 1911 that I own. Do you know what the designation “D44” stamped on the slide signifies? I’ve seen this on one other military 1911 listed on an auction site, but the seller didn’t know its meaning. I realize the slide doesn’t match the frame (although both are Ithaca), and the serialization is incorrect for the slide and frame to have the “M1911 A1 U.S.ARMAY” marking. I am wondering if this D44 is an arsenal rework marking or has some other significance?
D. H., Email

A: I’ve seen these markings on other Model 1911A1s, many with different numbers. I did considerable research on this one and came up with nothing but speculation. I also checked with a couple of M1911/M1911A1 experts, and they couldn’t solve the puzzle either. Our only hope is that perhaps one of Guns & Ammo’s astute readers has the definitive answer. No guessing, please!

TITAN .25 AUTO

Q: My friend gave me the attached photos of a Titan

pistol to research its history and value. Of course, I knew exactly who to turn to! I don’t believe this pistol was ever fired. It seems to be in very good shape. Before I attempt to clean it, I want to get your expert analysis. It comes with the original box, instruction manual and magazine.

M. P., Email

A: Your friend’s Titan pistol was originally manufactured in Italy by G. Tanfoglio and Sabatti, beginning in the late 1940s. When the Gun Control

Act of 1968 came into effect, the sale of Titans in the U.S. was assumed by FIE in Florida, using a combination of Italian and American-made parts. The quality was OK, and the guns seemed to function reasonably well. Titans were available in both blue and chrome finishes. In good condition, a Titan typically sells in the \$100 to \$125 range. They were made until around 1989 to 1990.

SINGLE-SHOT RIFLE ID

Q: I thought I’d forward these photos to you. I’ve had no luck identifying this

rifle my dad brought home from Europe while serving in the U.S. Army during World War II. Other than the symbols on the barrel and the initials above the trigger, I can’t find any other identifying marks. The shape of the barrel and the fact that it has a hair trigger make it unique to me. I would be grateful for any help you can provide.

D. F., Email

A: Unfortunately, the lack of a maker’s name and other identifying details makes this rifle a bit of a mystery. From what I can see of its design

AUCTION BLOCK

An elegant Hamilton Bowen Alaskan, chambered in .454 Casull and based on a Ruger Super Redhawk frame, realized a substantial \$6,000 at a June 5, 2025, Sportsman’s Legacy sale. The revolver mounts a 4-inch L-frame stainless-steel barrel with full lug, serrated rib and integral sight base with Bowen’s white-post blade. Features include a Bowen adjustable rear sight, scalloped frame, custom five-shot unfluted cylinder (serial numbered), and a wonderfully tuned trigger. Weighing 3 pounds, the revolver’s mechanics are superb. The metal finish is approximately 95 percent with only scattered superficial rubbing. For more information about this and future sales, visit Sportsman’s Legacy at sportsmanslegacy.com.



and proofmarks, it appears to be a German drop-block .22 LR rifle manufactured circa 1920 to 1935. I found one similar listed in a German catalog from 1932 under the name “Venus.” In the 1930s, it sold for \$29.75. Assuming your gun is in decent mechanical shape and the bore is OK, despite a somewhat worn exterior, I’d value it at \$350 to \$400.

ELABORATE LLAMA .38

Q: I never thought I’d have something to write to you about until I sat down to clean one of my safe queens recently. I always figured I’d ask someone about this pistol someday but never did — until now. I’m looking for help identifying a revolver that was passed on to me years ago. My father-in-law had retired from the Navy long before I met him. As a U.S. Marine, he would often remind me of our shared brotherhood as Department of the Navy personnel. During one visit home, he pulled me to the side and expressed his desire to pass on a revolver he had acquired from his service days. He gave me a box labeled “Rossi” on the front, but when I opened the presentation box, a Llama revolver with many designs scrolled into the firearm sat inside. He didn’t offer a backstory, and I was so surprised I failed to ask. The pistol has been sitting in my safe for more than 30 years. I’ve never fired it; I just take it out once a year to oil it down. Given the manufacturer, I never thought much about its value or history other than a gift from someone I loved and



LLAMA DELUXE MARTIAL CHROME-ENGR., .38 SPL., 98%: **\$1,250**

respected. Recently, I tried to learn a few things about the item, including its origin, value, and who might have done the scrollwork. Google offered quite a few threads, but nothing I could nail down. Attached are photos. Can you shed any light on my questions?

J. S., Email

A: You have a chrome-plated Deluxe Llama Martial revolver. This very nice .38 Special was offered circa 1969 to 1976. Based on the condition shown in the

photos, your piece appears to be exemplary. I’d value it in the \$1,100 to \$1,250 range.

1878 SPRINGFIELD CARBINE

Q: I’m in my mid-80s now and am in the process of downsizing my gun collection. (My first acquisition was a nice CMP .45 Auto in 1957.) I was trying to determine the current value of my 1878 Carbine when I noticed that the serial number on the receiver didn’t seem right. According to two sites on the internet,



there were 2,000 manufactured in 1878, starting at serial number 76725. However, the serial number stamped on the trapdoor of mine is 225xxx. This seems to be excessively high for a Carbine! The rear sight has the proper “C” stamp, and there’s no evidence of a ramrod hole in the stock. The barrel band has a “U” stamp. Has this Carbine been modified? If so, how does that affect its value? It is in very good condition, overall.

G. L., Email

A: There really is no such thing, per se, as a “Model 1878 Springfield.” That is a common misreading of “1873” stamped on the breechblock. Based on your serial number, you likely have a model 1879, which would fall within the serial number range of approximately 100,000 to 280,000. That range included rifles, carbines and cadet



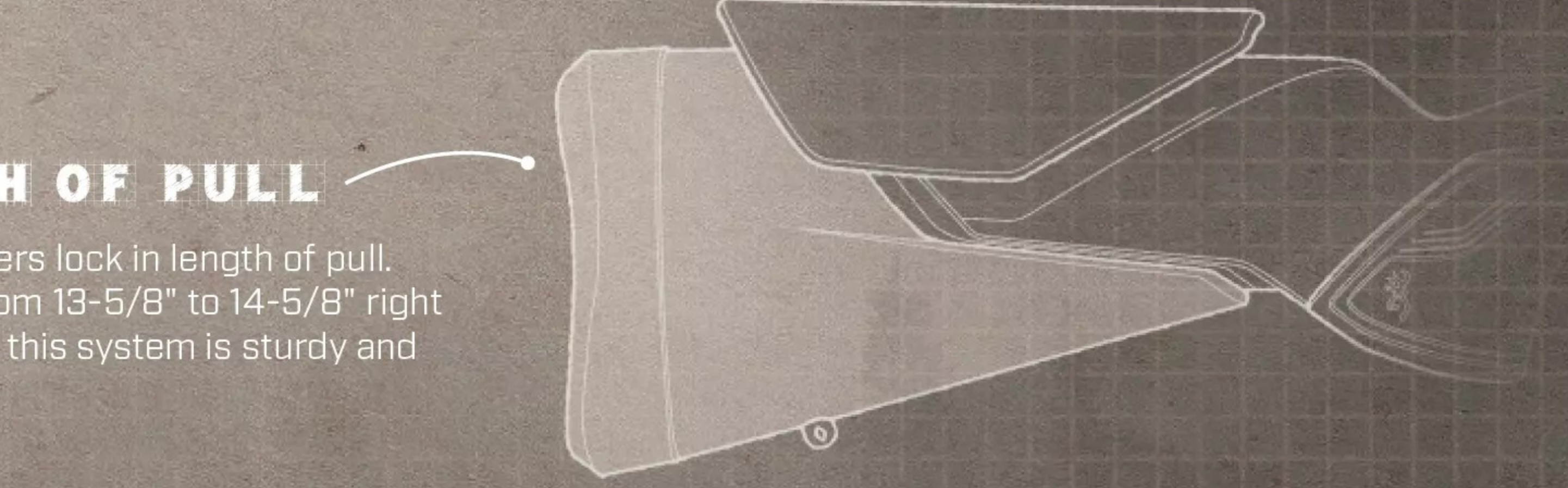
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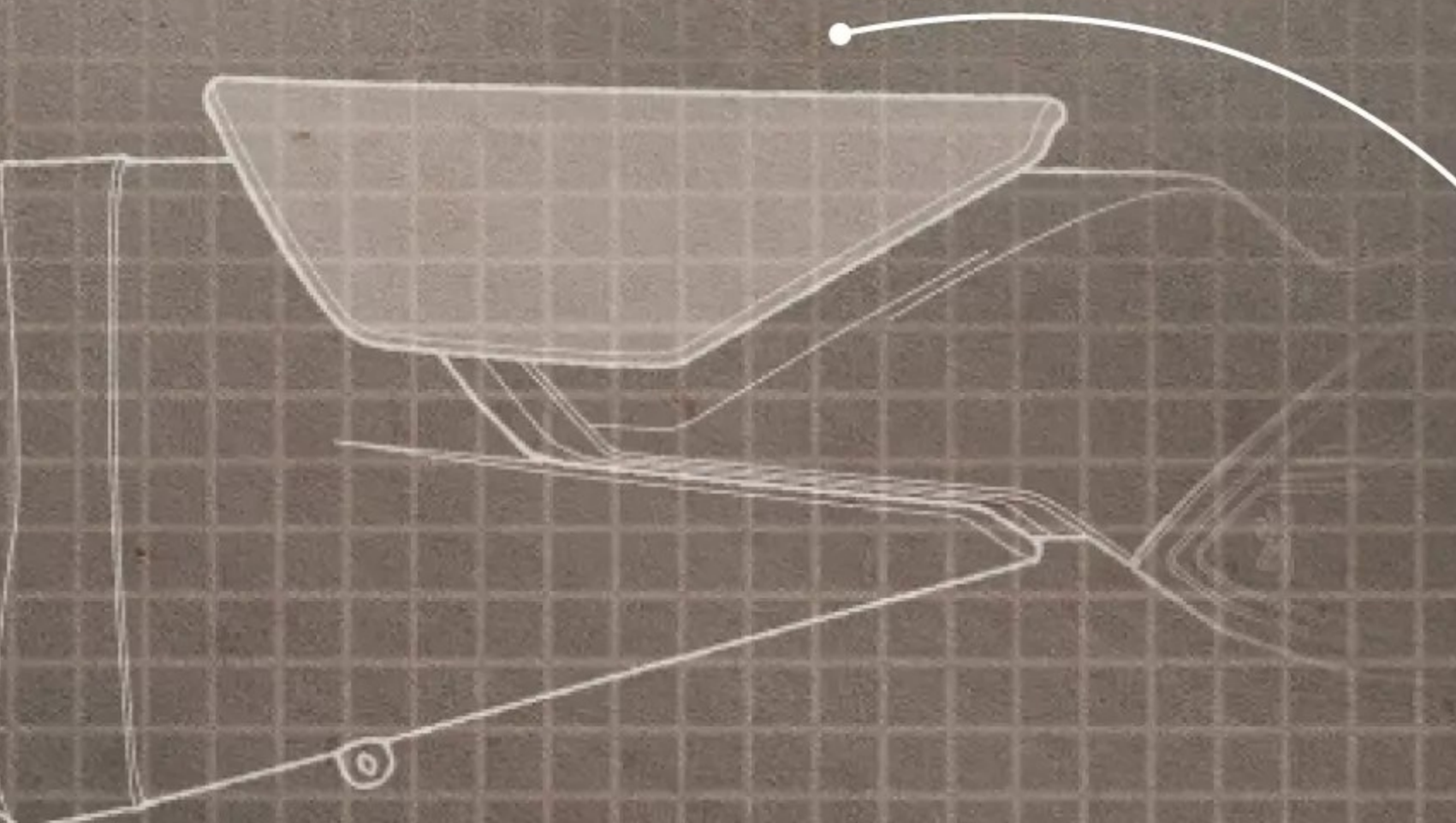
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"HOFBUCH MUNCHEN" RIFLE

rifles. I hope this clears things up. As you do not have some sort of anomaly, the value is unaffected.

SHOTGUN FRONT BEAD QUEST

Q: I have been a subscriber to Guns & Ammo for at least 30 years. Your column is always the first one I turn to when each issue arrives, as I find it most informative and factual. Your experience in tracking down obscure gun parts is a great benefit to subscribers like me who need help finding parts for firearms that we can't locate on our own. As such, I'm seeking your expertise and resources to find a front sight for my shotgun.

I have a Smith & Wesson 12-gauge Model 1000 with a ventilated rib. I'm in need of a replacement front sight, as the one on the shotgun slowly worked its way loose and was lost during a shoot; it could not be found. I'm looking for either an original replacement or an aftermarket option that will fit without alteration. I have been referred to a few possibilities, but to no avail. Numrich's parts list states they are "out of stock."

J. S., Email

A: The semiauto Model 1000 was made for Smith & Wesson by Howa in Japan from 1973 to 1985. While these are decent guns, they're not

exactly collector items, so perhaps you might be overthinking your dilemma. Try to find a similar existing bead that can be adapted to your gun. A shotgun bead is not all that exotic an item, and I can't imagine a gunsmith would charge all that much for fitting one to your gun. Alternatively, you can keep checking the internet, but finding such a specific, prosaic item may take a bit of time. GunBroker (gunbroker.com) is always a good place to start. I've found some rather obscure items there myself. I'll keep your contact information on file. If one of my readers has what you're looking for, I'll be glad to put the two of you together.

HOFBUCH RIFLE

Q: A friend inherited this German bolt-action rifle from his father who won it in a card game. It's marked "Hofbuch Munchen". We're curious to know its origin, caliber and value.

J. S., Marco Island, Florida

A: From the photos you sent, it appears to be a German sporting rifle based on a Model 88 action, which likely dates from around the turn of the 20th century. The quality appears to be decent, though the condition seems to be a bit iffy.

Perhaps a prudent cleaning would enhance some of the gun's charms. Unfortunately, I cannot locate the maker "Hofbuch" in any of my references, but this is not unusual as there were a large number of arms makers working in Munich, Germany, around 1900. Caliber is impossible to tell without actually handling the piece. I suggest taking the rifle to a qualified gunsmith for a chamber cast. Assuming the rifle is mechanically sound, the bore is good, it tidies up well, and is not set up for some obscure round, I'd value it at \$750 to \$1,100.

PRE-'64 WINCHESTER MODEL 70

Q: I inherited a pre-'64 Winchester Model 70 from my grandfather. It was a factory .30-'06, but his Uncle Frank had it rechambered to .300 Win. Mag. It appears to have a custom stock as well.

It's in excellent condition. I believe it was built in 1951 from my research, but I'm not sure. I'm told the action is special, as well. I'm asking your expertise on this family heirloom. Any information you might provide would be greatly appreciated.

R. W., Colorado

A: Based upon the serial number of your Model 70 (160XXX), it was manufactured in 1950. Unfortunately, aside from the rechambering, it certainly has had some stockwork done. Overall condition appears to be only fair, and the old Balvar scope has also seen better days. Still, I'm sure its probably a good shooter, which is where its value lies. I'd value it at \$600 to \$700. 

HOLLYWOOD HARDWARE

Winchester Model 1907, "Public Enemies" (2009)

This modified Winchester Model 1907 autoloader resembles similar rifles created by Texas gunsmith Hyman Lebman for various Depression-era desperados, including John Dillinger. It was used by actor Stephen Dorff, portraying the outlaw "Homer Van Meter," in 2009's "Public Enemies." Such guns were originally created by adding an aluminum forend, compensator and Thompson SMG pistol grip. Interestingly, unaltered Model 1907s in .351 SL and Model 1910s in .401 SL were also popular with law enforcement of the era, and some even saw military use during World War I.

Courtesy of the National Firearms Museum, Fairfax, Virginia, and Independent Studios Services (ISS), Sunland, California.



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Running a light on an EDC pistol requires practice.



JAMES TARR

LIGHT DISCIPLINE

AS READERS of this column know, I'm not a fan of lights mounted on concealed-carry pieces of citizens because it's almost impossible to employ them without violating one of the four basic gun safety rules. With the light attached to a pistol's accessory rail, you're pointing a loaded gun wherever you point the light.

They're mostly a fad, I believe. That said, I agree with the "better to have it and not need it" philosophy of personal defense, which is why I carry a gun everywhere and always. I'm not saying, "Don't put a light on your pistol." If you love your carry gun and think a light is necessary, you are more likely to carry it. That's important.

The first rule of a gunfight is to have a gun. Whatever gear you choose to carry for self-defense, whether that's a gun, a knife or a light — handheld or gun-mounted — you should be proficient in its use. That's not as easy as it sounds.

Turning a light on and off is simple. Learning how to properly employ a handgun-mounted light requires acquiring several techniques — then you need to practice them. The first time you need to operate a light under stress isn't in a parking lot after dark with shots cracking past your head!

TRAINING WITH NIGHTSTICK

By invitation, I attended a training event hosted by Nightstick (nightstick.com) in April 2025. Nightstick is a division of Bayco Products, Inc., a commercial and industrial lighting company in business since 1984. Bayco currently has more than 550 products sold in 70 countries. You can't wander into a big-box retailer of home improvement products — or even a local hardware store — without seeing something they produce.

More than a decade ago, Nightstick began manufacturing tactical lights specifically for law enforcement. Nightstick

NIGHTSTICK
TCM-10 \$210

lights are authorized or in use by more than 10 state police agencies and dozens of other departments, from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to the Boston PD SWAT. Already a success in the law enforcement sector, the company expanded into the larger commercial side of tactical lighting, specifically the personal defense segment.

The event was held at GRITR Sports (gritrsports.com) near Dallas, Texas, in a large, upscale gun store featuring an indoor range and training facility and hosted by instructor Kelly Hardin. During the two-day event, we were taught room clearing using airsoft-like AR-15 paint markers with mounted long-gun lights (LGL). The remainder of time was spent at the range performing live-fire drills with Ruger RXM 9mm handguns wearing a Nightstick TCM-10.

The TCM-10 was announced in 2024, and it is likely to become one of the brand's most popular models. It's a compact light that fits many pistols, and is available in black or FDE. It was tested and approved by the National Tactical Officers Association (NTAO), and was smartly sized to be roughly the same as the popular TLR-7. This is important because holsters meant for pistols wearing the TLR-7 will generally be compatible with the TCM-10.

Nightstick's TCM-10 provides an advertised 650 lumens of output with a 2-hour runtime. That's competitive with other lights for compact pistols, as well. It offers a high beam or programmable strobe mode, too.

If you haven't handled or shot the new Ruger RXM yet,

I highly recommend that you find one (\$499, [ruger.com](https://www.ruger.com)). The RXM was a joint effort developed between Ruger and Magpul. (I reviewed it for Guns & Ammo's February 2025 issue.) It's sort of a Glock 19-style pistol featuring a removable chassis and trigger housing, which is the serialized part inside the replaceable Magpul-designed grip housing. It is reliable, shootable, accurate, and compact enough for carry. It was the perfect choice for this event.

The Nightstick TCM-10 has bilateral toggle switches positioned at the front of the trigger-guard when the light is mounted to the gun.

Press them to activate the light in momentary or constant-on modes. You can activate one side with the support-hand thumb, or the other with the tip of a trigger finger. That was the first thing we focused on, too.



HOW TO ACTIVATE THE LIGHT WHILE DRAWING AND SHOOTING.

If you're holding a pistol with one hand, the only way to activate a pistol-mounted light is with your trigger finger. If you're using two hands, the best way to turn the light on and off is with the thumb of the support hand — after you've got a firm two-hand grip. If you're practicing how or when to activate the light as part of the draw, that's basically after your two hands come together in front of your body on the gun, and after you start to push it towards the target. That way, you've got a solid grip and you're not splashing the light down on the ground or onto a barrier in front of you.

CLEAR OF COVER

The class practiced with unloaded guns first, activating our lights from the draw. After many repetitions, we added ammunition. After even more repetitions, the instructors shut off the overhead lights; all we had were the Nightstick TCM-10 units on our pistols. Then they added some barriers.

Working a light around barriers (or cover) is a skill that requires practice, but probably not for the reason you'd think. If you've ever fired your handgun from behind cover, through a doorway or window, you'll know that it's surprisingly loud. A significant portion of that muzzleblast is redirected into your face. The same principle applies when running a handgun-mounted light.

If you activate a handgun-mounted light before the muzzle clears the object of cover, white light illuminates the

surface in front of you and is reflected back to your face. Some surfaces reflect more light than others, so you may end up half-blind for a moment, not to mention the fact that the backslash will illuminate you for the potential threat to see.

Move your gun from behind cover before activating the light. This is one of those concepts that's simple, but execution demands practice and repetition before it becomes smooth and second nature.

We practiced working around both sides of different barriers, including doorways, barrels and more. For the final exercise, Nightstick instructors had us move from barrier to barrier and engage targets from behind cover while using the TCM-10.

LIGHT ON/ LIGHT OFF

Moving with a

light-bearing handgun is another not-so-simple thing. Do you keep the light on as you're moving between rooms or various pieces of cover? A light can help illuminate obstacles and shadowy figures hiding behind them. Do you shut it off and only turn it back on when you're behind cover or engaging a threat? Some trainers teach that keeping your light on while moving provides bad guys something to shoot at. Others suggest that if you need a light, turn it on and leave it on until the danger is over; therefore, light activation is one less thing to worry about. Just focus on threats down-range and working the gun. In reality, the right decision will mostly depend on your situation.

CRAWL BEFORE YOU WALK.

If you want to slap a light on your carry gun, practice activating it as you present. "Practice" means doing that with an unloaded gun — a lot!

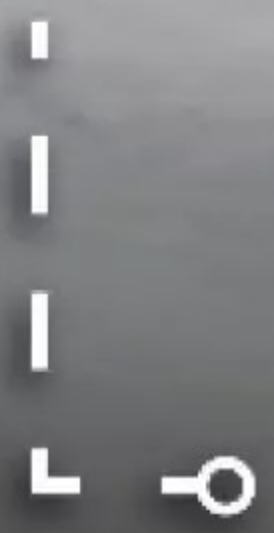
I know many will tire from hearing this, but the way skills become ingrained isn't with dozens or even hundreds of repetitions; it can take thousands of times doing it correctly. No, you don't have to perform thousands of repetitions during the same day. In fact, that's probably a bad idea. What you should do is practice the basics of drawing and working your light; I would suggest 10 to 15 minutes a day, for several days a week. Within a few weeks, you'll be surprised at how fast and smooth you've become at engaging a target in a low-light environment. **G&A**

A LEGEND REBORN

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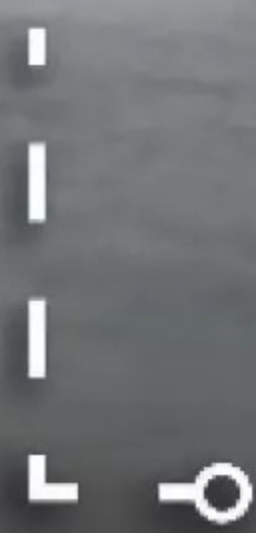


AP5-SD



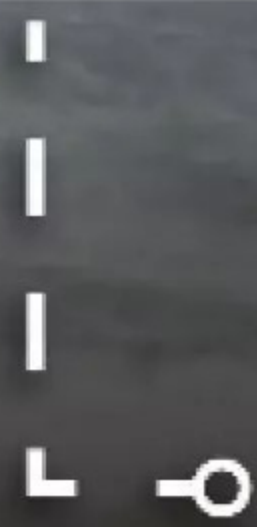
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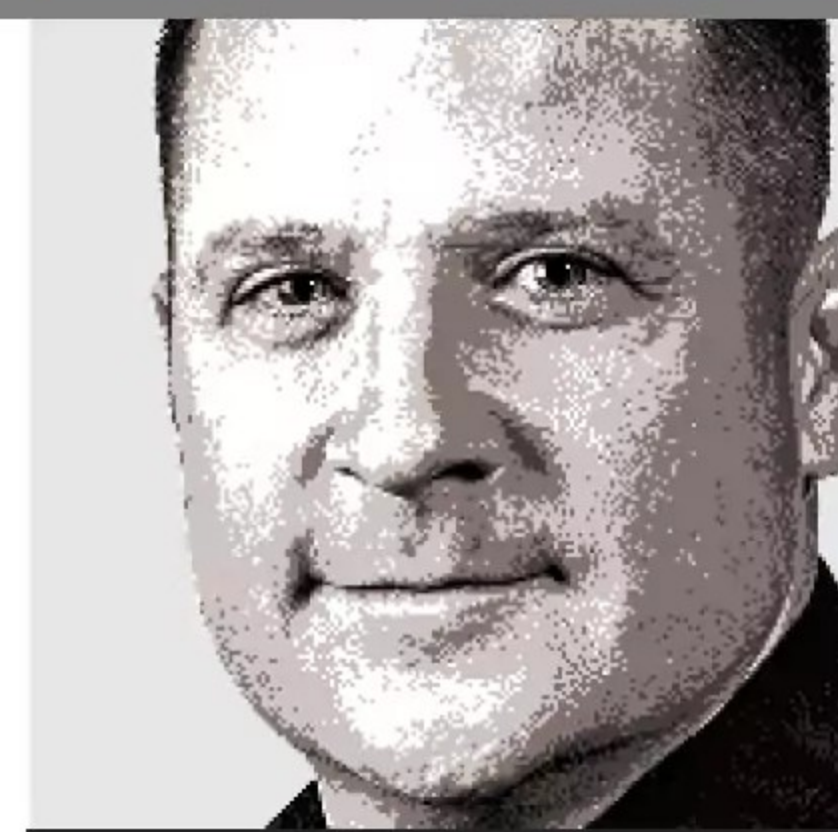
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Meprolight MCO PRO



RICHARD NANCE



The Meprolight MCO PRO mounts to the optic rail of a carbine, rifle or shotgun using an integral 1½-inch riser. (A 1.93-inch riser is available separately). The unit features a 7075-T6 anodized aluminum body that encloses the emitter for environmental protection. Three reticles can be selected with 10 daylight and two night vision (NV) settings. The intensity levels can be set to adjust automatically or manually. A CR2032 battery powers the MCO PRO for more than 25,000 hours on manual setting 5 using the 2-MOA dot reticle. A sleep mode helps to preserve battery life, and a shake-awake function ensures the MCO PRO is powered on when needed. The optic is available with a red or green reticle. **\$440**

ON TARGET

OPTICS MAKE IT EASIER to aim a firearm than traditional sights. They provide an intuitive and efficient aiming method, which explains the demand for them. Instead of aligning front and rear sights, an optic allows the user to simply overlay the reticle on the target. However, optics are not equal. Some are chintzy in terms of quality and design, while others are cumbersome to operate. Many are cost prohibitive. Meprolight's MCO PRO is none of these.

The MCO PRO is a closed-emitter, three-reticle optic that mounts to a Picatinny, M1913-style rail, intended for carbines, rifles and shotguns. It ships with a 1½-inch riser, but Meprolight also offers a 1.93-inch riser (\$55) for those using night vision, wearing a plate carrier, a gas mask or who simply find a higher sight picture more comfortable. If you've used the MPO PRO pistol optic, you already know how the MCO PRO operates. If not, don't worry. It couldn't be easier.

After mounting the MCO PRO and installing the provided CR2032 battery into the side-loading compartment, turn the unit on with a 1-second press of either the up or down arrow button on the left



The battery location means that the CR2032 battery can be changed without removing the optic and forfeiting zero.

side of the housing. To turn the unit off, press and hold both arrow buttons for 3 seconds. After an hour with no motion, the MCO PRO enters sleep mode to preserve battery life. The slightest movement reactivates it, ensuring the MCO PRO is ready when you need it. A low battery indicator causes the reticle to blink every half second as a warning.

To select a reticle, press and hold the down arrow for 3 seconds to toggle through the options: A 2-MOA dot; a 2-MOA dot surrounded by a 68-MOA speed ring; or a 2-MOA dot surrounded by a 68-MOA speed ring and 1.5-mil holdover dots. The 2-MOA dot provides the simplest sight picture, in my opinion. The 68-MOA ring helps bracket targets for faster acquisition. The holdover dots assist with bullet drop and sight-over-bore issues in close quarters.

Unlike most optics, the MCO PRO allows for automatic or manual brightness adjustment. To adjust manually, press the



To adjust the brightness level of the aiming dot or circle-dot reticle, press either the up or down arrows on the left side.

up or down arrow briefly. When you've reached the brightest or dimmest setting, the reticle blinks twice. For automatic brightness, press and hold the up arrow for 3 seconds. In this mode, the reticle



The MCO Pro is compact, even on the 1½-inch riser. The battery tray on the right side is secured by Torx fasteners.



The light sensor is located at the lower-right of the housing's front. It auto-adjusts the reticle's brightness setting.



The riser is attached to the bottom of the MCO PRO. The clamping rail screw is threaded into the mount's recoil lug.

brightness changes based on lighting conditions.

Meprolight recommends a 50-yard zero for sighting in the MCO PRO. Elevation is adjusted by turning the screw just under the optic window. The windage adjustment is located on the right side of the housing, behind the battery compartment. Each click equals a half MOA adjustment at 100 yards. A recoil block ensures proper alignment and zero hold.

Measuring 2.06 inches long, 2.28 inches tall and 1.59 inches wide, it weighs 5.33 ounces. The MCO PRO is compact and lightweight, which is great when you want to keep your rifle or shotgun nimble. It's also built tough. The

precision machined 7075-T6 aluminum housing wears an anodized matte-black finish. The large, multi-coated glass lens provides a wide field of view for excellent situational awareness. The IP67 rating means that it is water- and dust-proof, ensuring it will function in the harshest environments.

The Meprolight MCO PRO is available with a red or green reticle. Each unit ships with a 1½-inch riser, a CR2032 battery, a flathead/T8 Torx screwdriver, a T20 Torx wrench, a cleaning cloth and user manual. It's also compatible with the MMX3 3X Micro Magnifier (\$330) and MMX4 4X Micro Magnifier (\$390). For more information, visit meprolight.com. 

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* Comparison made between LCDS1239 and equivalent payload 12ga 3" #2 steel shot

EVOKE

PURSUE YOUR LEGACY™

Son,

It's going to be hard. Never quit.

There will be mornings you question what you're doing out there. Keep going. It's not just about the final shot. It's about the miles before it, the silence that surrounds it, and the responsibility you carry with it.

The land teaches you in small, quiet ways. It teaches you to pay attention. To slow down. To respect what you can't control. One day you'll look back and realize this wasn't about hunting. It was about growing into the kind of person who shows up even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard.

Pursue your legacy.

I trust you'll do it well.

*Love,
Dad*



Leupold VX-5HD Gen 2

TOM BECKSTRAND

NEEDS & WANTS

I LOVE AMERICA AND ITS FREE MARKETS. Competition forces companies to continuously improve. One of the many benefits of this system is the exceptional products created to catch consumers' attention or meet our demands. Leupold's new-for-2025 VX-5HD Gen 2 scopes are a prime example of taking a good product and making it better to please the customer. (That's us.)

Optically, there were no changes to the VX-5HD; it's only a few years old. Developing optical designs is tremendously expensive, and it takes selling a lot of scopes to pay for all that engineering and overhead. The Gen 2 is available for 1-5X, 2-10X, 3-15X, and 4-20X magnification ranges.

MECHANICAL IMPROVEMENTS

However, diligent and innovative scope companies are continuously learning. Many of those lessons learned can be applied to the mechanical aspects of a scope to make it better. For example, Leupold built the Mark 5HD, a tactical scope that is issued on multiple rifles for the U.S. and international militaries. It has been tested and vetted like few optics in the world, and it continues to be a strong performer. Leupold learned a lot about what it takes to build such a scope and figured that commercial scopes should benefit, too. Since abusing a scope doesn't affect the optics, just the mechanics, updating the commercial lines with certain military features isn't that cost prohibitive.

The most impactful change to durability that Leupold made is one that the customer will never see. Leupold significantly increased the amount of spring tension the erector spring places on the erector. There is an internal tube inside the maintube that houses several lenses, and those lenses slide back and forth as the shooter adjusts magnification. That tube is the erector assembly. Turning the turrets to sight in a rifle pushes one end of the erector around until the crosshairs point where the bullets impact. Since one end of the erector has to float and be able to move, a spring pushes against it to keep it snug against the turret screws. Spring tension is what ensures the scope holds its zero through all the bumps and drops of field use, and it also immobilizes

the erector during recoil. That's asking a lot from one spring.

I've long felt that the Mark 5HD was Leupold's most durable scope, so I wasn't surprised to learn that the erector springs in the VX-5HD Gen 2 are almost identical to those in the Mark 5HD. This was done to ramp up spring tension and ensure the erector assembly only moves when the shooter spins the turrets. While I've never felt the VX-5HD was fragile, the Gen 2 just got a lot more robust.

Part of the mechanical redesign that made the more powerful erector spring possible was the redesign of the turret housing. The part of the maintube where the turrets attach seems to always look the same, but a closer inspection shows the asymmetrical shape of the Gen 2 turret housing. Slightly altering the shape created room for the new erector spring and allowed the erector assembly an additional 10 percent of travel. Where the scope once had 75 minutes of adjustment, the Gen 2 has approximately 82 minutes of travel.

The turret internals also received attention. Many customers will adjust turrets and comment on how "clicky" they feel, usually with the assumption that the more defined the click, the better the scope. This is completely false. The only important aspect of the click adjustment in a turret is that it stays put. Once it clicks into place, it shouldn't move or be able to wiggle back and forth. I learned long ago not to argue with people who get emotional about how the turrets feel, and Leupold decided to extend them an olive branch. They put a stronger spring inside the turret that gives a manly *click* when adjusted. Scope molesters, rejoice.

CUSTOM TURRETS

The star of the Gen 2 show is the SpeedSet adjustment dial that sits atop both windage and elevation turrets. This little gem is going to single-handedly reduce profanity at the range at least 30 percent, by my mostly scientific estimate. Many turret caps attach to the scope by two or three small Allen screws that require the use of a small wrench. I shudder to think of all the hours I've spent digging through glove boxes, consoles and range bags looking for the elusive and diminutive wrench. I've dumped my range bag more times





The push-button ZeroLock features a silver tab on the CDS turret, protruding from the elevation cap when zeroed (top) for quick reference. It retreats at the second revolution (bottom).

than I can count because the wrench can hide and become almost invisible. The SpeedSet adjustment turret means we can say goodbye to Allen screws and their cursed wrenches.

The Gen 2 turret requires the shooter to depress the push-button ZeroLock and rotate the locking arm up and away from the turret cap. This allows the turret cap to spin freely for easy removal. There are slots cut into the turret body that allow the shooter to spin the turret with the cap removed and, once zeroed, drop the cap back into place. The initial zeroing of the rifle is streamlined, but this also helps when changing loads where it becomes necessary to move the point of impact a few clicks.

The SpeedSet turret also makes using Leupold’s Custom Dial System (CDS) more convenient — no tools required! Each VX-5HD Gen 2 includes a free CDS turret. Contact Leupold (leupold.com/custom-dial-system) and



The left knob adjusts parallax. Markings range 50 to 600 yards, to infinity and beyond.



The knurled throw-lever supports coarse or fine adjustments to magnification.



The parallax-adjustment knob also houses the CR2032 battery. The logo'd button on the cap activates the illuminated reticle.

annotate the bullet, muzzle velocity, approximate elevation and temperature. Then, Leupold creates a custom dial that measures in yards. All the shooter needs to know is the distance to the target in order to dial and shoot. As much as I appreciate the precision of ballistic solvers, the CDS-SZL2 SpeedSet is absolutely the way to go for hunting medium and large game within 500 yards — hopefully well inside.

The Leupold VX-5HD Gen 2 scopes will have the same

magnification ranges and objective lens sizes as the first generation, with the exception of a 3-15x50mm model. There is also a 3-15x44mm for those who worry about weight and a 3-15x56mm for those who want this magnification range in dimmer light. The middleweight would be my choice for deer-stand hunters looking for that big whitetail on the edge of a corn field during last light. While there is only the one additional model for magnification, all the Gen 2 scopes get the full complement of upgraded features that guides and shooters demand.

LEUPOLD VX-5HD GEN 2	
POWER	3X-15X (tested)
OBJECTIVE	50mm (tested)
TUBE DIAMETER	30mm
ELEVATION ADJUSTMENT	.1 mil per click or .25 MOA per click
WINDAGE	.1 mil per click or .25 MOA per click
RETICLE	Illu. FireDot Duplex (tested)
LENGTH	13.5 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 5 oz.
EYE RELIEF	3.9 to 4.2 in.
MSRP	\$1,600
MANUFACTURER	Leupold, 800-538-7653, leupold.com



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Savage AccuCan AC30 B.O.B.



SAVAGE ACCUCAN AC30 B.O.B.	
CALIBER	.30
MAX. RATING	.300 Win. Mag.
THREAD PITCH	5/8-24
LENGTH	8 in.
DIAMETER	2 in.
WEIGHT	13.7 oz.
MATERIALS	7075 aluminum, Grade 5 titanium (thread insert)
FINISH	Hardcoat anodized
MSRP	\$999
MANUFACTURER	Savage Arms, 800-370-0708, savagearms.com

“BACK OVER BARREL”

RENOWNED FOR ITS RIFLES, shotguns and handguns, Savage’s foray into suppression is a compelling next step for the company. Dubbed the “AccuCan” line, the initial release includes a lineup of suppressors built to work with everything from rimfire cartridges to large-caliber hunting rounds. Savage offers five modular suppressors with the small-

est being the AC22, a 3½-ounce can for .22- and .17-caliber rimfires (\$449, savagearms.com). Its largest suppressor, the AC338 (\$999), is rated for use up to .338 Winchester Magnum and .338 Lapua Magnum.

The AC30 B.O.B., the acronym standing for “Back Over Barrel,” provides shooters with an additional advantage that similar suppressors lack. As an over-barrel design, the threads are recessed, so a portion of the barrel is integrated into

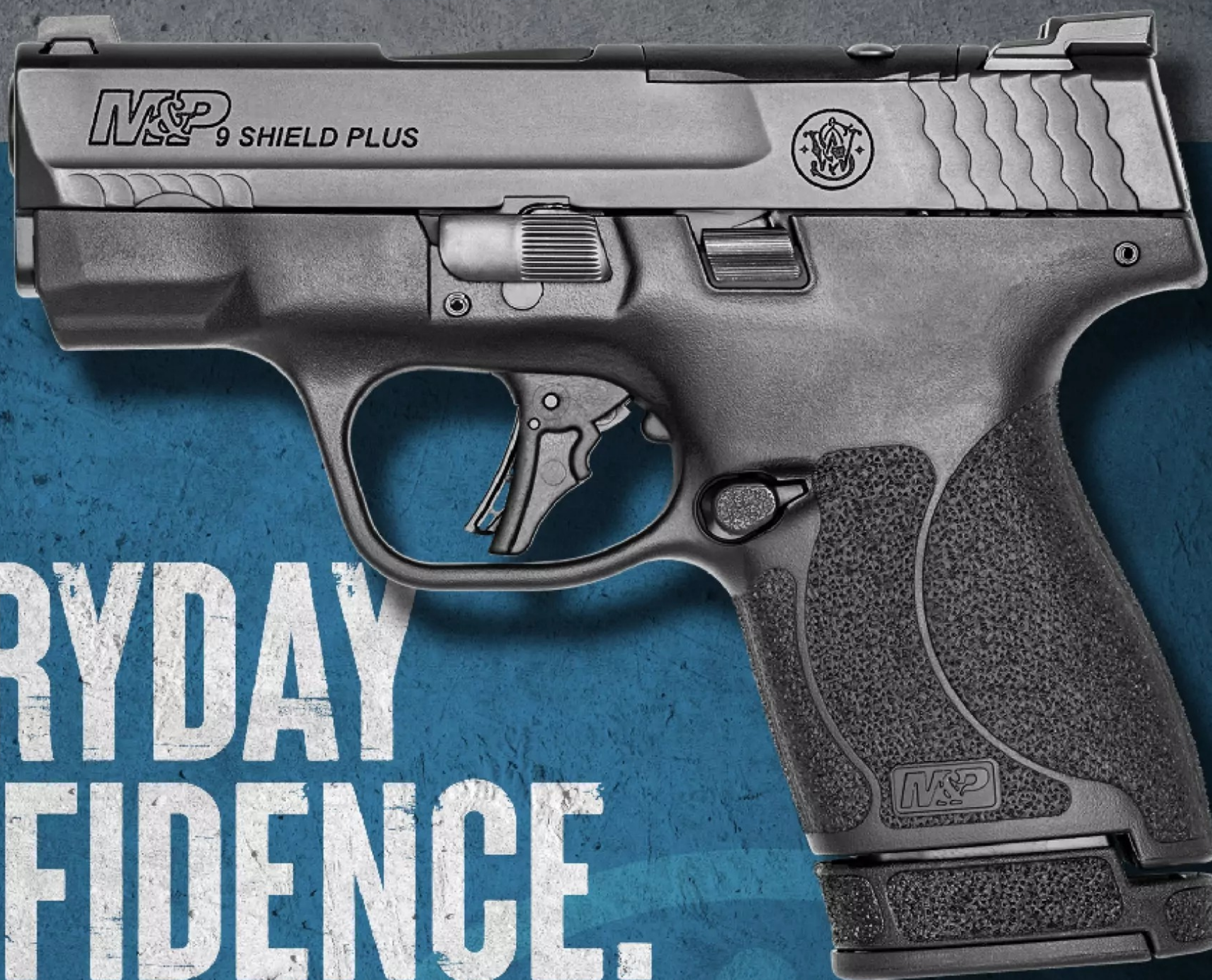
the can. The result is reduced overall length of a given rifle, making it more maneuverable and better balanced while still providing ample sound suppression. How “ample?” According to Savage, decibel (dB) levels from its over-barrel suppressors aren’t much higher than recordings from its standard cans. In testing, the AC30

B.O.B. had a 133 dB rating from a 20-inch barrel on a .308-caliber rifle. Even though it’s shorter, the baffle design quiets sound substantially. The AC30 B.O.B. is constructed using 7075 aluminum and a Grade 5 titanium thread insert, which is the serialized portion. This translates to light weight (13.7 ounces) and lasting durability. It is also user-serviceable and is composed of three simple pieces, making maintenance



Sliding over the first few inches of barrel, the Savage AC30 B.O.B. offers the benefits of a full-size can with the reduced length of a shorter model.

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The endcap and core can be replaced. Only the threaded mount is serialized.

easy to complete without the need for specialized tools. Additionally, Savage builds AccuCan suppressors with integrated self-cleaning carbon cutters, so cleanup isn't a concern until round counts are high.

To put the AC30 B.O.B. to the test, I flew it to remote Alaska for a Spring black bear hunt. With thick underbrush to navigate, it needed to be paired with a short rifle that I could deploy quickly. Savage's Model 110 Ultralite Elite is a new-for-2025 hybrid hunting gun built on a folding MDT HNT26 chassis. When strapped into a pack, it didn't extend



The portion that exists overtop the barrel is slightly oversized to accommodate most .30-caliber barrel diameters.

far above head height.

The can measured just less than 8-inches long, but its after-muzzle length was only 4.9 inches. Compared to a standard AC30 suppressor, the AC30 B.O.B. cut another 3 inches from this specific setup, bringing it down from 48 to 45 inches with the stock deployed. Folded, its total length was only about 37 inches.

Typically, point of impact shift is minimized with over-barrel suppressors, so if you prefer to carry the can and rifle separately and a rushed shot needs to be made, trust the



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PASSION FOR PRECISION



The AC30 B.O.B. is not designed for rapid fire. Savage recommends only shooting one round per one second up to 20 rounds. After that, the can should be allowed to cool to the ambient temperature to ensure optimal performance.

rifle will perform similarly with or without the suppressor attached. It sports common $\frac{5}{8}$ x24 threads, making it compatible with most rifle barrels. This, coupled with its ability to cut down on sound, muzzle flash and recoil, makes the AC30 B.O.B. an advantageous tool for hunters.

Field use proved the suppressor's value for hunters. Despite my rifle being chambered in .300 Win. Mag. — the top end of the AC30 B.O.B.'s operating range — shots were so quiet that nearby hunters hardly heard them; some didn't hear them at all. Magnum knockdown power and hearing-safe reports. Game is less likely to spook easily, so if a follow-up shot is needed, opportunities are multiplied. Plus,

its ability to lessen recoil helps keep game in the crosshairs.

My bear, a mature boar, didn't require an additional round from this stealthy, effective setup. It rolled at the first shot, and not more than a few feet. The scene played out in a clear view through the scope as I was able to keep steady on him through the triggerpull. I'm sold on folding stocks and short cans such as the AC30 B.O.B. for large-caliber hunting rifles.

Give this over-barrel suppressor a try and see the difference for yourself. When hunting big game, having the upper hand makes the slight extension in length and marginal addition of weight well worth it. **CA** — J. Kadoun

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ULTRA LIGHT & ULTRA FAST

AVAILABLE IN THE SPEEDY 7MM BACKCOUNTRY,
THE **SAVAGE 110 ULTRALITE ELITE** HAS ALL THE
OPTIONS FOR HARD HUNTING.

BY TOM BECKSTRAND | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





Even with a 90-degree lift, the bolt throw leaves room to cycle without optic interference. Note: The bolt knob is carbon fiber.



Even the bolt assembly is weight-conscious. Fluting in the bolt body reduces weight. The dual ejectors ensure reliable ejection.

A QUICK GLANCE at the Savage 110 Ultralite Elite, and it's easy to think it's a more expensive chassis rifle made in a boutique gun shop. If it had a Remington 700 footprint, I'd also be inclined to think that it's just like the others. However, the combination of a Savage action with a Proof Research barrel and MDT HNT26 chassis results in a different approach to producing a lightweight package with exceptional performance. In fact, the Savage receiver has more action screw engagement than any Model 700, meaning fewer unexplained flyers when shooting groups. Anyone spending this kind of money on a rifle needs to consider that.

THE SAVAGE WAY

The magic of the Savage bolt-action receiver, especially when placed in a chassis, lies in the amount of action screw engagement it offers. Two action screws are all that attach almost all barreled actions to the stock or chassis. The amount of screw engagement, or lack

SAVAGE 110 ULTRALITE ELITE	
TYPE	Bolt action
CARTRIDGE	7mm Backcountry (tested)
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	Proof Research, 18 in., 1:8-in. twist, Sendero contour
LENGTH	39.1 in.
WEIGHT	6 lbs., 1 oz. (tested)
STOCK	MDT HNT26 chassis, adj.
GRIP	MDT, carbon fiber, pistol
LENGTH OF PULL	13.5 in., adj.
TRIGGER	1 lbs., 10 oz. (tested)
FINISH	Cerakote Elite Series
SIGHTS	None; 20-MOA optic rail
SAFETY	Lever, three position
MSRP	\$3,299
MANUFACTURER	Savage, 800-370-0708, savagearms.com

thereof, is frequently startling. The Model 700 footprint, for example, is the worst offender. Savage's receiver has about 60 percent more action screw engagement than a Model 700, which is crucial for a chassis rifle because almost no one uses bedding compound when installing a barreled action inside this type of stock. When the rifle fires, the barreled action bucks and snorts and wants to jump around. The higher the chamber pressure, the more it moves. It's hard for action screws to immobilize the barreled action through the firing sequence, so the shooter sees the occasional flyer and wonders, *Why?* Increasing action screw engagement results in fewer

flyers because more engagement equals better immobilization. The internet may scream when I write this, but bedding a barreled action to a chassis is also a great way to eliminate flyers. Thank you for your attention to this matter. The receiver in the Savage 110 Ultralite Elite sees



M-Lok attachment points surround the handguard. There are also front quick-detach sling-swivel sockets on the left and right sides.

Removable for suppressors, the Savage Omniport radial muzzle-brake greatly reduces felt recoil from the 7mm Backcountry.



The mag release is a bilateral lever that's positioned forward of the trigger guard. The trigger guard is skeletonized for tool access.



The foam-filled carbon-fiber MDT stock is adjustable for comb height and length of pull. Four quarter-inch spacers are included.

the most stringent quality control Savage offers. For the money, that's unsurprising. Each of these actions is blueprinted, with the bolt head being held to tight tolerances. This ensures the floating bolt head, when the action is closed, sits perfectly perpendicular to the centerline of the bore. This arrangement prevents runout in the cartridge when chambered and that the bullet is pointed straight down the barrel.

The bolt head is one of my favorite parts of Savage rifles. This particular 110 model has dual ejectors

for positive ejection. The use of dual ejectors means the load placed on each ejector is minimal, creating a long and trouble-free service life. The extractor is a sliding plate that sits in the outboard bolt lug. I've spoken with numerous rifle manufacturers on the subject of extractors and they all agree that this type of sliding plate is — by far — the strongest. As more high-pressure rifle cartridges hit the market, we should expect to see more extractors like this one; rifle manufacturers are realizing its superiority.



Attached to the receiver is a Proof Research carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel in the Sendero Light contour. The barrel is 18-inches long, threaded $\frac{5}{8}$ -24 at the muzzle, and comes with a radial muzzle-brake attached. Lightweight performance is the goal for the 110 Ultralite Elite, and this barrel fits that bill perfectly. It's also an accurate barrel, with Guns & Ammo's test rifle printing the smallest 7mm Backcountry group I've fired using the flagship round:

Federal Premium's 170-grain Terminal Ascent. A .43-inch group for three shots at 100 yards off a bipod with a rear bag from a rifle that weighs 6 pounds is no small feat.

The chassis is another key component in creating the rifle's great accuracy while still minimizing weight. MDT's HNT26 folding chassis uses a magnesium center section that has been skeletonized for light weight while maintaining rigidity. The adjustable stock, pistol



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVERAGE GROUP (IN.)
Federal Terminal Ascent 170-gr. Tip.	2,963	21	9	.43	.71
Federal Barnes 168-gr. LRX	2,976	69	27	.78	1.03
Federal Fusion Tipped 175-gr. Bond.	2,962	20	7	.82	.96

Notes: Accuracy is the average of three three-shot groups fired from a rest at 100 yards. (Three-shot groups were used due to limited ammo availability.) Velocity is the average of five shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

grip and forend are all made from carbon fiber, too, to keep weight down. The length of pull adjusts through the use of spacers, and the chassis includes an adjustable comb for height behind the scope, and to ensure the rifle fits the shooter. It's a thoughtful consideration on a light-but-powerful rifle.

THE BACKCOUNTRY

The 7mm Backcountry is about the size and shape of the .280 Remington, but it was designed to be loaded to a maximum pressure of 80,000 pounds per square inch (psi). The high pressure allows the Backcountry to generate 7mm Magnum performance in a smaller package while still using a shorter barrel. The rule to use when thinking about the 7mm Backcountry is "20, 170, 3,000"; a "20-inch barrel" will push a "170-grain bullet" at "3,000 feet per second" (fps). Getting that kind of performance took a lot of engineering and testing to achieve.

The secret sauce is the case material, a substance Federal calls "Peak Alloy." It's a high-performance steel that should not be confused with



The receiver and bolt are finished in Cerakote's Blackout Elite Series. The MDT chassis features the Gun Metal Grey finish.



The low-profile, detachable AICS-pattern magazine holds three rounds of 7mm Backcountry. Add another for the chamber.

For the Man Who Gives Everything and Expects Nothing

If you're anything like my dad, you give your family everything. Your name, your time, your values — the people in your life know they can depend on you for practically anything. In exchange for imparting all of this energy and experience, you expect nothing in return.

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and the 110 Ultralite Elite tested here. The 110 Trail Hunter Lite presents the lowest barrier to entry at just \$669. Being able to fit the stock of the 110 Ultralite Elite to my body, though, made it easy to manage recoil — but know for sure that there will be recoil! The radial brake does a decent job of taming it without being abusive to others on the firing line. The recoil is far from abusive. I think an 8-pound .300 Winchester Magnum hurts more than this rifle does.

While there is the ever-elusive 195-grain Berger EOL projectile slated for 7mm Backcountry, I've yet to see a box of it. I was able to test the other three loads containing the 170-grain Terminal Ascent, 175-grain Fusion Tipped and 168-grain Barnes LRX. If I had

the cheap steel cases that have been around forever.

An important consideration when upping the chamber pressure is the impact it will have on pressure put against the bolt's face. Pressure in the chamber will likely never be high enough to rupture the barrel, but it can push the bolt back towards the shooter enough to allow the case to rupture. Manufacturers measure this phenomenon and call it "lug setback."

The 7mm Backcountry solves this problem in two ways. The first is to limit the diameter of the cartridge case head that pushes against the bolt face. By staying to the standard .473-inch diameter, the cartridge (at 80,000 psi) can only push against the bolt as hard a magnum cartridge with a .532-inch case head at 64,000 psi.

The second way to limit lug setback is through shear transfer, which occurs when the cartridge case pushes against the chamber wall. The more the cartridge pushes against the chamber wall and sticks temporarily to it, the less force it can put on the bolt face. Since steel doesn't deform like brass under pressure, it's much more difficult for the Backcountry to generate unsafe lug setback than it is for a high-pressure brass competitor.

Increasing the pressure certainly increases muzzle velocity, which means recoil and muzzle blast increases also. Just as the math shows that the bolt thrust generated by the 7mm Backcountry is almost identical to the bolt thrust generated by a magnum cartridge, the recoil is almost identical. My scale has this test rifle weighing in at 6 pounds, 1 ounce, which is about as light as I'd ever want to go for a 7mm Backcountry rifle.

As of this writing, Savage offers five models that chamber 7mm Backcountry, including the 110 PPR, 110 Timberline, 110 Ultralite, 110 Trail Hunter Lite,



to choose my favorite Backcountry projectile for hunting, it's the Terminal Ascent. It's also the bullet I've had to work the hardest to get to shoot well with other rifles. Three-shot groups usually hover 1 MOA. This 110 Ultralite Elite, however, loves

the Terminal Ascent bullet. The best group with G&A's test rifle measured a scant .43 inch for three shots at 100 yards! That cartridge-bullet combo in this rifle is ideal for anything in North America.

I was surprised at the absence of punishing recoil when shooting it. The chassis is comfortable and handles it well. Savage also spent time to ensure this is its best effort in regard to the shooter's experience. Savage purchased new broaching machines and cutting lubricants so that the internal cuts on the receiver are smooth. Hence, bolt cycling was effortless. Savage also did a lot of testing on coatings and learned that the Elite Series Cerakote offers identical corrosion resistance as a nitride finish, and some lubricity. The bolt body is also finished in Elite Series Cerakote to enhance an already improved bolt cycle. Savage included a 1½-pound trigger to make it as easy as possible to shoot this lightweight rifle accurately.

NORTH AMERICA'S ONE-GUN

The 110 Ultralite Elite and 7mm Backcountry are a great choice for most hunters. Mountain climbers will enjoy the light weight; travelers will appreciate the ability to fold the rifle for transport. I can think of no other package that offers more flexibility for the ballistic horsepower. **G&A**

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SIMPLE PLEASURES

THE NEXT GENERATION OF
KIMBER'S 1911 BUILDS ON LEGACY.

BY ERIC R. POOLE | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ



WITH THE BUZZ surrounding the Kimber 2K11, introduced in Guns & Ammo's January 2025 issue, and the KDS9c first seen in the August 2023 edition, you wouldn't be wrong for assuming the Model 1911 has become a double-stack. A priority to increase capacity continues to dominate the headlines throughout firearms media. The 2K11 utilizes 20-round magazines for the 9mm chambering, and 13-round mags for the .45. The KDS9c — only in 9mm — carries 15 rounds in its magazine well. However, if you subscribe to the everyday carry (EDC) lifestyle, a half-pound of follow-up shots on your belt plus another in a spare magazine isn't always convenient or comfortable. It may not even be legal to carry more than 10 or 15 rounds for those living in restrictive areas. The truth is there's nothing wrong with depending on a quality Model 1911.

I worked for a company first sergeant who was one of the last Marines to insist on being issued a Model 1911.

Though the M9 was adopted in 1985, it took more than 15 years for the U.S. Marine Corps to collect and dispose of its M1911s and M45s from its Reserves and specialized units. When I went through armorer school in 1998, we were still trained to service both the M9 and M1911A1. If we had them in the racks, elder Marines who enlisted during the 1970s and '80s checked these pistols out and wore them like a coveted badge.

"Old Slabside" was the pistol's nickname, and each seemed to have personality traits distinguished by a rack number on the grip. The .45 was a trusted companion. Each of us measured ourselves against the heroics of Col. Walter Walsh, a former FBI agent, combat legend and National Match champion. Following the invasion of Okinawa, Walsh shot a Japanese soldier at 80 yards with one shot from his .45. We never asked it to recoil less, because we knew it hit like a hammer. It was the shooter's responsibility to train and get stronger, to learn how to manipulate the trigger and manage the recoil. If a Marine couldn't shoot an Expert score at the range, he resigned to carry an M9.



NEXT GEN (OR)

The pendulum has returned for the 1911, as it enjoys a renewed interest. For those who prefer the slimmer circumference of the grip, hybrid walnut panels, balanced handling and familiar controls, the Next Gen is a pistol possessing durability, function and style for a relatively modest retail of \$999.

“‘Next Gen’ was chosen for the name because this pistol was priced and developed for those looking to enter the pistol market,” said Director of Product Management, Assembly and Finishing Pedi Gega. “The Next Gen 1911 may be the first step in attracting new marksmen. It’s like what we did with the 1911 in the 1993, ’94, timeframe. People customized Colt 1911s then, and a shooter would have to step up to one made by the likes of Ed Brown, for example, to find features that are now standard on the Next Gen 1911s. Even back then, most people were not able to order all of these features at the same time.”

Introduced in 2025, the Next Gen (OR) series is configured as the Custom Two-Tone Next Gen (OR) or the Stainless Next Gen (OR). The two-tone model is CNC’d from inherently corrosion-resistant stainless steel and given additional protection with a KimPro II black finish on the slide and a satin silver finish on the frame for contrast. The controls are also finished in KimPro II black for accents on the Custom Two-Tone Next Gen model. The Stainless Next Gen version is first blasted with a matte finish and then horizontally brushed along the sides of the frame and slide for a subtle contrast. The only black accents are the skeletonized combat hammer, sights, optic plate and extractor.

KIMBER NEXT GEN (OR)	
TYPE	Recoil operated, hammer fired, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm (tested), .45 ACP
CAPACITY	9 rds. (9mm), 8 rds. (.45)
BARREL	5 in., stainless steel, 1:16-in. twist
LENGTH	8.6 in.
HEIGHT	5.4 in.
WIDTH	1.35 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 4.2 oz.
FINISH	KimPro II Black/Satin Silver or brushed stainless steel
GRIPS	Black walnut, G10 inlay
SIGHTS	Fixed post, red dot (front); fixed notch, black (rear); optic ready, C&H plate incl.
TRIGGER	GT Performance Trigger 4 lbs., 12 oz. (tested)
SAFETY	Thumb lever, bilateral; grip lever
MSRP	\$999
MANUFACTURER	Kimber, 888-243-4522, kimberamerica.com

Both models are available in 9mm or .45 ACP. The 9mm barrel is ramped to ensure feeding, while the .45 barrel is stainless. They have swinging links, bushings and a traditional lock-up design. Disassembling the Next Gen 1911s sent for evaluation was a throwback to yesteryear. Kimber provides a bushing wrench to assist with depressing the plunger while rotating the bushing and unlocking it from the slide. If you’ve fieldstripped a 1911 before, you should be able to accomplish

this with your thumb and without the wrench. Lining up the slide-lock lever with the notch at the bottom of the slide allows it to be removed, followed by the slide assembly. This reveals either a ramped 9mm barrel or a standard .45 barrel. The barrel also has a hood with a notch as a witness hole. (It’s a loaded chamber indicator.) There’s a slight pronounced ring at the muzzle to tighten the relationship between the muzzle and the bushing, but these are not hand-fit so-called “match” parts. The muzzle is flush to the bushing face and has a deep 11-degree crown to protect the integrity of its accuracy potential.

With the slide assembly off the frame, it’s easy to remove the guiderod and recoil spring. The spring is a yellow-marked 12-pound type for 9mm and 16-pound for the .45. The spring weight accommodates the many loads and grainweights of ammunition available, which I verified by shooting a random mix of projectiles during function testing. I call it the “Typewriter Test.”

The guiderod is stainless steel and is the conventional, short Government profile. This detail is wel-

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In addition to the thumb-safety lever, the beavertail grip safety protects the hand from hammerbite. Though it is smooth, there is a subtle rise at the bottom of the arch to ensure reliable deactivation when the safety is grasped.



Controls are familiar to 1911 users. The GT trigger averages between 4 and 5 pounds, and features a curved and serrated shoe. The cut behind the trigger eases a finger's reach to press it.



Kimber's Next Gen 1911 (OR) 9mm models were developed on a Series 70 system, including a swinging-link ramped barrel, bushing, conventional-length guiderod and 12-pound spring.



comed by those who don't enjoy figuring out how to disassemble varying full-length guiderod designs. (Many of us have debated when the 1911 even needs a full-length guiderod.)

One of the nicest features of the Next Gen 1911 is seen in its detailed disassembly. The action is the lauded Series 70, which means it lacks the additional safety plunger and firing pin block that worsens the feel of the trigger experienced in Series 80 models. The Next Gen 1911 comes apart like a traditional 1911A1, too, albeit with notable improvements.

The hammer is the skeletonized "combat hammer," which evolved from the ring hammer first appearing on the early Commander model in 1949 — also initially chambered in 9mm. Further protecting the hand from hammer bite is the smooth grip-safety lever. Though it does not feature a bump, it is slightly raised for positive deactivation. As with most 1911s, the Next Gen features a bilateral thumb-safety lever that's used to lock the hammer back. The extended, serrated pads are not too wide but long enough to also offer additional support for the thumb to press against to help counter muzzle flip during multiple-shot strings. (Downward pressure on the safety lever with our thumb also

ensures that we don't unintentionally push it up and unintentionally reengage the safety when firing.)

Kimber refers to the trigger as its "GT" trigger. It's aluminum and given a two-slot skeletonized profile with a traditional curved and serrated face. At the bottom is a hole to insert a small Allen wrench to adjust the trigger's overtravel. A slight amount of pre-travel is evident before 4½ pounds of pressure is required to fire. The GT trigger displayed a crisp snap rather than a spongy break. The firing control group is precision machined and finished to achieve that trigger press without the need of stoning. It also helped Kimber reduce the cost of the product tremendously while maintaining the same level of cleanliness with respect to the trigger's travel. The trigger is adjustable by adjusting the leaf spring tension, but it should be done by a qualified gunsmith.

We see 1911s with both internal and external extractors. Browning designed pistols in his era with both. Though a few of the 1911 prototypes were submitted with external extractors, the U.S. Army specified internal extractors on the final version. Though the 1911 served the military with an internal extractor, commercial offerings with external extractors became

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Thin serrations on the flat-top slide dull the surface between the red-dot front sight and the ejection port.



The bobtail grip offers comfort and reduces printing when concealed. The mainspring housing is aluminum with 32-lpi checkering.



The rear of the slide has an external extractor and was cut for optic mounting. The coverplate integrates the rear sight.



Stocks are a hybrid black walnut with a G10 inlay and a "frag" pattern for grip. Front-strap checkering is 32 lines per inch (lpi).



The Next Gen 1911 features a dovetailed front sight, front slide serrations, a deeply crowned muzzle and angular edges.



The Next Gen 1911 can be carried "cocked-and-locked" with a round in the chamber. The thumb safety lever is slim and bilateral.

common in the '80s. Internal extractors require an eye for quality control to ensure proper spring tension. The external extractor is easier for the modern manufacturing process. In my 30 years of servicing 1911s, I have not observed a practical advantage either way.

Standard sights on the Next Gen 1911 are a dovetailed, red-painted dot at the front — also meaning that it can be adjusted with a sight pusher for windage corrections. Out of the box, the rear is an integral, non-adjustable, serrated, all-black U-notch on the coverplate. The coverplate is secured to the slide by two T-10 fasteners. With an external extractor and Series 70 design, Kimber was able to lower the cut to make it optic ready (OR). This approach lowers the optic's height over bore. With an optic mounted, it's still not low enough to use the front sight as a backup, which is why there's no rear sight behind the optic. Kimber provides a C&H adapter plate for an RMR footprint, which accept numerous products from Holosun, Riton and Trijicon, to name a few. A Trijicon SRO was mounted to the Custom Two-Tone Next Gen 1911 for this evaluation, while the Stainless Next Gen 1911 was tested with iron sights only.

FEATURE RICH

The Next Gen 1911 has several notable features that affects its practicality in handling and shooting. The frame lacks a triggerguard undercut, a trend that encourages a high grip. Typically, this can improve recoil management and speed effective follow-up shots. Undercuts aren't necessary for single-stack frames.

This article would be incomplete if the bobtail to the mainspring housing and frame wasn't discussed. Championed by Ed Brown in the 1990s, the bobtail is a curve that eliminates the sharp angle at the bottom-rear of the frame. The rounded frame and mainspring housing reduces the risk of printing against thin-layered clothing such as a t-shirt, and it makes the pistol more comfortable to grip. The benefits are subjective; some feel that pressure from the corner of the grip against the palm is important to aid in control during recoil.

Also notable is that there is no accessory rail integral to the dustcover. Despite continuing interest among the public and law enforcement regarding lights on a pistol, there are still more holster options for 1911s that lack a rail or light. Even with the aesthetic treatments of the Next Gen series, these fit in standard 1911 carry rigs.



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The grips are a blend of old and new. Starting with smooth black walnut panels shaped to the bobtail contour, each have a G10 inlay featuring a “frag” pattern for texture. They are secured to the frame by $\frac{3}{32}$ Allen-head fasteners. Notably, the top is low enough not to interfere with the extended thumb-safety levers.

Besides the aforementioned external extractor, sight and optic cut, the Government-length slide wears additional details. The ejection port was deeply lowered and flared to accommodate the optic-ready slide.

“With optics, there are many sizes and varieties,” said Gega. “The Trijicon SRO and Vortex Defender are popular, and these sit forward and slightly over the ejection port. By lowering the port on the slide, a cartridge case does not get caught between the optic and the slide. It has a cleaner path to escape and get out of the way.”

The sides have thin serrations at the front and rear, and the top of the slide has angles that lead to the flat top. The flat-top seems appropriate given the optic cut coverplate, but there are fine serrations between the front sight and the ejection port. These are tastefully executed details that are reminiscent of features on hand-made custom pistols between the 1970s and 2000s.

Inside the high-quality ballistic-nylon soft case is the manual, cable lock and empty chamber flag, as well as a sticker, two magazines and C&H Precision accessory pouch with RMR adapter plate. As-is, the Next Gen is an excellent proposition for less than a grand. Plus, unlike many 1911s under the glass counter, these wear a Kimber brand and are made in Troy, Alabama.

THINGS I WISH FOR?

I’d recommend a default front-sight color being a bright day-glow yellow, orange or green, or a small paint kit to allow users to change the color. As it is, the red-



Kimber provides two stainless-steel magazines with the Next Gen 1911s. Spares are available at kimberamerica.com. \$45



Some pistols — especially those with optics — are not reliable with unusually lightweight projectiles. Even with a Trijicon SRO mounted, the Custom Two-Tone Next Gen (OR) demonstrated flawless reliability with NOVX 65-grain +P poly-copper projectiles. These averaged 1,718.6 fps.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
CUSTOM STAINLESS STEEL NEXT GEN (OR)					
Browning BPT 147-gr. FMJ	1,027	44	15	2.25	3.49
Winchester USA Ready Defense 124-gr. JHP	1,265	52	18	2.43	2.51
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,225	34.9	12.9	2.6	3.66
Fiocchi Range 115-gr. FMJ	1,203	18	6	2.96	3.79
CUSTOM TWO-TONE NEXT GEN (OR)					
Fiocchi Range 115-gr. FMJ	1,190	51	20	1.45	2.56
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,20	39	12	1.47	2.2
Winchester USA Ready Defense 124-gr. JHP	1,270	31	11	1.6	2.47
Browning BPT 147-gr. FMJ	1,020	29.6	10.9	1.86	2.31

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups fired from a sandbag rest from 25 yards. The Custom Two-Tone model was tested using a Trijicon SRO optic. Velocity is the average of five shots measured using a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph set adjacent to the muzzle.

painted dot on the front sight was hard to see quickly. Besides altering the front sight, I would have appreciated a lighter trigger feel to extract more of its accuracy potential. However, I approve of the Next Gen’s Series 70 system. Tested at 4 pounds, 12 ounces, the trigger was more than acceptable, especially if you aim to carry it. As time moves on, I could

change these details. Part of the fun in owning a 1911 is the ease in personalizing it to make it uniquely yours.

SAVED ROUNDS

A lot has happened to John M. Browning’s design since 1911. Browning might not recognize it, or have fathomed the multi-axis, computer-numerical controlled (CNC) machines the stainless-steel components are now shaped from. Front slide serrations, optic-ready slides, ambidextrous thumb-safety levers, protective grip safeties, a bobtail frame, beveled edges and magazine well. Are simpler times ahead? Given the advancements the KDS9c and 2K11 have contributed to modern pistol design, it would be easy for a casual eye to look beyond the Kimber Custom Next Gen (OR) models. That would be an unfortunate oversight.

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A FINE FIELDER

THE TRISTAR RAPTOR II IS AN AFFORDABLE FIELD
SHOTGUN THAT SHOOTS ABOVE ITS CLASS.

BY JACK OLLER | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ





The texture on the grip and forend is a tactile, laser-engraved honeycomb pattern. It may not be as distinguished as hand-checkering, but it is a cost-conscious manufacturing method that enables effective control of the gun.



The recoil pad on the Raptor II features a soft rubber material that is shaped to match the lines and blend with the stock.

WHAT DOES THE consumer get when purchasing a new, modern-production shotgun? The answer became apparent after firing a few rounds of skeet to test the TriStar Raptor II. My shooting partner brought a 1970s-era Browning Auto-5, so we inevitably compared the two for function.

The Auto-5 is, of course, the more desirable of the two among collectors, and it’s not really in the same class as the Raptor II though both are semiautomatic field shotguns. However, the comparison highlighted the advancements in features and functions of modern shotguns.

My shooting partner agreed. The Raptor II was the superior field gun that day. It cycled faster than the Auto-5, and the Raptor II has a ventilated rib and fiber-optic sight for easier aiming. Its lighter handling was due to its substantially less weight compared to the the Auto-5, yet it produced less perceived recoil.

The nostalgic mind would first reach for the Auto-5, perhaps for an upland bird hunt or round of sporting clays; it is the more beautiful of the two. The average shooter will take more birds and break more clays with the Raptor II. Why? I think it’s the amalgamation of contemporary touches that enhance its shootability.

SEMIAUTO VS. SEMIAUTO

Now, I acknowledge that the Belgian-made Auto-5 is not a reasonable comparison for the Turkish-made

TRISTAR RAPTOR II	
TYPE	Gas operated, semiautomatic
GAUGE	12 (tested), 20
CAPACITY	2+1 rds. (w/ plug); 4+1 rds.
BARREL	28 in., steel, chrome lined
CHOKES	Full, Modified, Improved Cylinder; Mobil pattern
LENGTH	48.5 in.
LENGTH OF PULL	14.5 in.
DROP AT HEEL	3 in.
DROP AT COMB	1.5 in.
STOCK	Turkish walnut (tested), black synthetic, Mossy Oak (MO) Country Roots camo.
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 1.6 oz.
TRIGGER	5 lbs., 6 oz. (tested)
SIGHT	Fiber-optic bead, red (front), 6mm ventilated rib
SAFETY	Crossbolt, two positions
MSRP	\$579
MANUFACTURER	Kral Arms, Turkey
IMPORTER	TriStar Arms, 816-421-1400, tristararms.com

TriStar Raptor II. Technology has advanced extensively since the ’70s, even among the most affordable shotguns today. A more current comparison of the Raptor II would be the Viper G2 series, also imported by TriStar. Reviewed in the February 2024 issue of Guns & Ammo, contributor Bob Hunnicutt found the Viper G2 to be a reliable value-priced shotgun. The Raptor II is manufactured by Kral Arms in Beysehir; the Viper G2 is manufactured by Armsan in Istanbul. While they are functionally similar, Kral can manufacture the Raptor II at a lower cost, resulting in TriStar’s \$579 suggested retail price for the walnut stock. The wood-stocked Viper G2 is \$779.

At a glance, both share many features, including chrome-lined steel barrels, Mobil-type chokes, capacities, length, weight, ventilated ribs and fiber-optic sights. It’s also hard to visually discern the aesthetic differences without close inspection.

The value proposition of the Raptor II comes from a simpler lineup versus the Viper G2’s long list of additional camo models including turkey versions, different gauges and a left-hand option. The Raptor II is only chambered for 12 or 20 gauge, and in black synthetic (\$499), Mossy Oak Country Roots (\$599), or Turkish walnut.

At the time of this writing, TriStar had no plans to expand this lineup. After putting a flat (250 rounds) of Fiocchi White Rino (spoken “rhino”) through the



The TriStar Raptor II may appear similar to the Viper G2 line, however, details set apart the two series. Note the subtle downturn curve along the comb of the stock and honeycomb-pattern checkering, unique for the Raptor II.



The enlarged charging handle and bolt release are expected for modern semiautomatic shotguns. The carrier release lever has a distinctive round shape that looks like a crossbolt safety button. It is easy to find with the support hand without risking accidental activation.



The crossbolt safety is a triangular shape located behind the trigger. When pushed right to left, a red mark indicates “ready to fire.”

Raptor II, I can say these models can do it all. If you're determined to have more options, explore the Viper G2 series.

THE TALONS

The grip and forend texture on the Raptor II is distinctive. Forgoing the typical checker pattern of vintage field guns, there is an almost “honeycomb” series of shapes that produce a fantastic feel in the hand. It grips your palm and fingers without being overly abrasive, and it is undoubtedly less expensive to impart into the wood than the labor necessary to create hand checkering.

The stock is a utility grade of straight-grain walnut, but that's to be expected of a working-man's gun. It's not hard to look at, though, given its darker stain and glossy polyurethane finish; I would have no qualms to subject it to the scars of labor. I love my high-end shotguns, but it always hurts to see a new scratch or mark on the wood. Therefore, the Raptor II is meant to be run hard. Fresh dents or dings from the field are badges of honor for a gun like this.

I'm glad to see enlarged controls on the bolt and release. Of course, these are expected on modern-production shotguns. Enlarged controls ensure rapid and faultless operation. They make reloading and

malfunction clearing faster to keep us shooting — not fumbling.

There were no surprises in manipulating the trigger. The trigger housing is molded polymer that can be removed for cleaning the assembly, though that is not likely to be necessary. The trigger tested cleanly at 5 pounds, 6 ounces, which is equal to or better than other shotguns I've enjoyed.

MAINTENANCE & PREP

A field gun such as the Raptor II doesn't need a frequent deep cleaning, but you should wipe it down thoroughly after the first flat. Unsurprisingly, I found a lot of metal shavings inside the receiver and behind the bolt once I disassembled it. This is normal — and a good thing. I like to run semiauto shotguns dry during the break-in period and avoid applying any lubricant to the action unless it's necessary for function. This manifests where metal rubs metal, the points where any gun should be lubricated. You'll find less shavings after the parts wear in.

Fieldstripping is a simple process, too. Upon removing the forend and barrel, slightly push the bolt into the receiver and pull out the bolt handle. The bolt can then be slid forward and out of the receiver, to be separated from the dual-rod action bar. The action bar easily



The gas-operated piston-driven action is a familiar and proven concept with contemporary shotguns. It worked well and proved reliable. The gas-operated system allows the Raptor II to operate with the entire assortment of shotshells, for hunting or dusting clays.



Three Mobil-pattern chokes are included with the Raptor II. A choke installation tool and polymer carry case complete the kit.



Few current-production field shotguns leave a factory without a ventilated rib. The Raptor II has a 6mm-wide rib on the barrel.



The forend cap is large with deep grooves for a secure grip. With or without gloves, it is easily tightened or loosened afield.



The loading port offers ample room for shells and fingers. The red follower illustrates the magazine tube's empty status.

slides off the piston, and that is as far as one needs to go unless you want to clean the trigger assembly. This gas-operated system is inspired by an Italian-style operating system, tried and true, and Turkish manufacturers, including Kral Arms, mass produce a version of it with consistency and efficiency.

RANGework

Though the action is a “tried-and-true” design, I did experience three failure-to-eject malfunctions; it was the first three shots. Still, I stand by the reliability of this action. The Raptor II shot perfectly after those first three with no malfunctions for the next 247 rounds of combined skeet, trap and sporting clays. Don't be alarmed should this happen to you. Some guns just need a few rounds fired through the action to work them in.

When shooting the Raptor II, I was most impressed with the speed of the action. It cycled quickly and kept up with the fastest true pairs on the sporting clays course. I love sporting clays when testing a new field gun, and the course I frequent has an amazing assort-



The red fiber-optic front sight is easy to acquire in daylight. The topstrap of the receiver is serrated to minimize glare.

ment of stations. Shooting 60mm mini, 90mm midi, rabbits, battues and a variety of standard-size true-pair stations, the Raptor II left me with no doubts in its ability. The gun balanced well, and it swung even better. The recoil was mild, too, which is important when you have a short window to hit two targets that are close together. On that note, the gun pointed well, and I could pick up a target as quickly as any other shotgun.

I didn't give the Raptor II much time to cool down between stations or rounds of trap. I was pleased to

find that the handguard never got too hot to hold.

I didn't shoot my best rounds of trap, skeet or sporting clays with it, but the scores were consistent with my average using guns I'm familiar with. Typically, I expect a lesser score as I get comfortable with a new gun, but not here; I shot this gun well. Misses were entirely the fault of my own.

I patterned the Raptor II with Fiocchi White Rino Lite, a 2¾-inch load with No. 8 shot. Impacts were just below my point of aim, but well-centered. It was more

kurz

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



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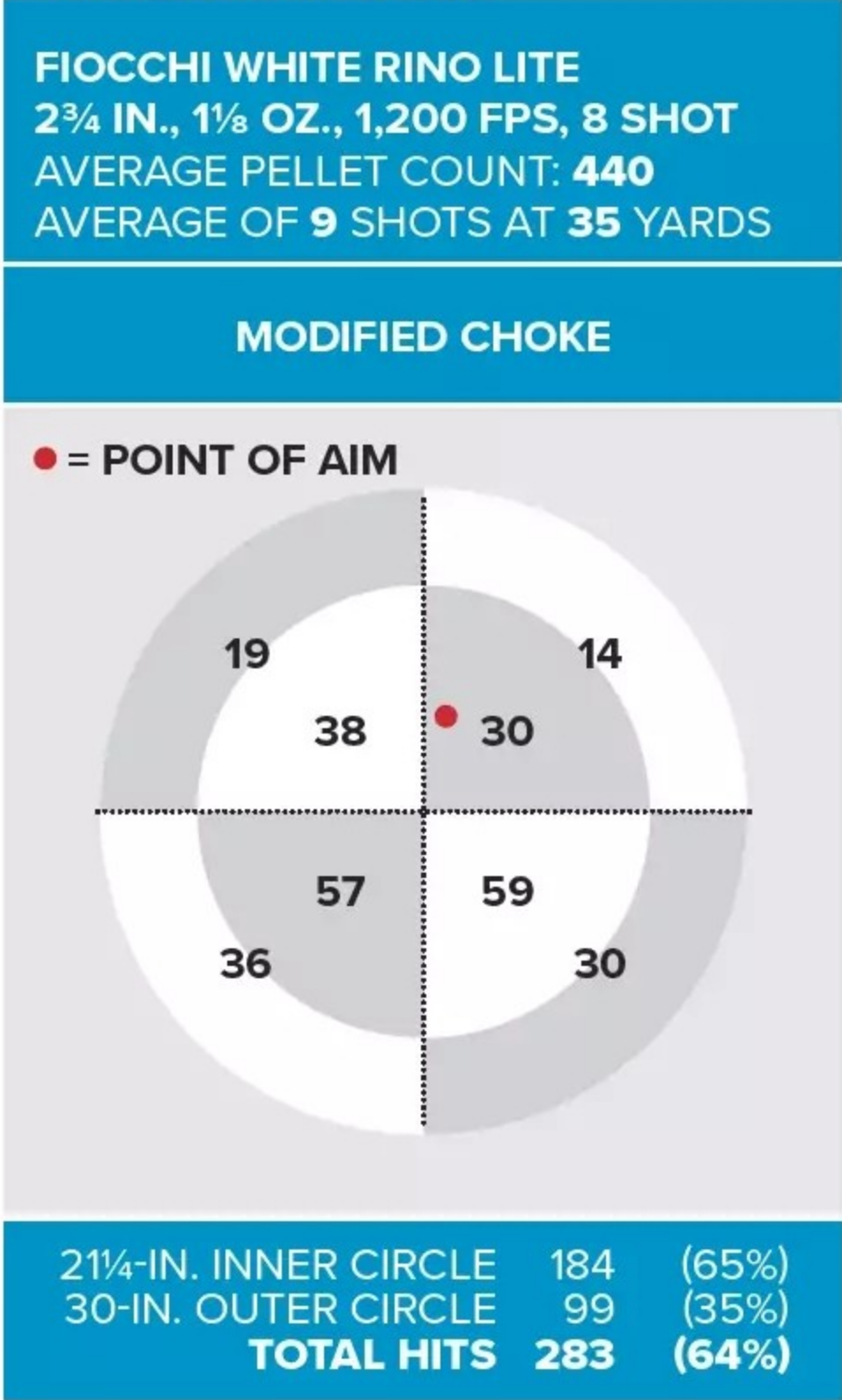
TO THE LAST SHELL

If I had to nit-pick, I wasn't impressed with the provided chokes. They worked, but they limited the performance from the Raptor II's chrome-lined carbon-steel barrel. Superior chokes available on the aftermarket could take this shotgun to a higher level.

Given this shotgun's versatility, I would also ask TriStar to spec sling-swivel studs for the wooden-stock model, especially since they are already included on the black synthetic and camo models. I prefer a sling when I hunt, particularly if I have to hike a lot of ground.

These are small gripes, and by no means dealbreak-

PERFORMANCE



ers. For a semiautomatic field gun listed at less than \$600, a lot more could be forgiven considering the exceptional performance. Typically, G&A refers to the price posted to the manufacturer's website for these firearm reviews. Allow me to make an exception. I've seen the walnut stock Raptor II advertised online for as little as \$485, less taxes and fees. At that price, I think most of us could afford to upgrade the chokes and buy a flat.

For those new to shotguns, the TriStar Raptor II is an affordable scattergun that can do almost anything. It performs reliably and consistently. It would be a good shotgun to learn on, to hunt or compete with, particularly in the 20-gauge model. For an experienced shooter, the Raptor II is a smart choice when you don't want to risk your high-grade or vintage collectible. It's the gun you reach for when work needs to get done.

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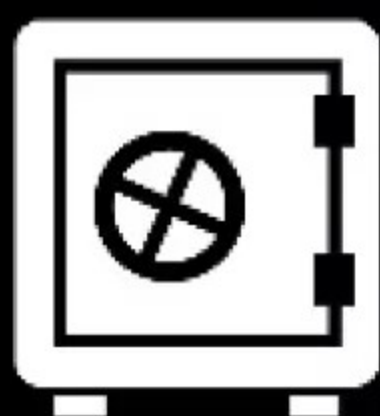
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THE MODERNIZED .32 H&R & .327 FEDERAL GO HEAD-TO-HEAD.

BY PATRICK SWEENEY | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

THERE WAS A TIME when the various .32-caliber revolver cartridges were considered entirely adequate defensive options. When Smith & Wesson introduced its then-new medium-framed Hand Ejector revolvers, they did so with chamberings in .32-20 Winchester. The third most popular chambering for the Colt Single Action Army (SAA) was, again, .32-20. However, the .38 Special got the nod from law enforcement, so the

.32s were soon after relegated to the dusty shelves of history. Federal aimed to change that.

Federal has taken two paths to that end, and the first involves improving the performance of the older of the two: .32 H&R. Yes, it's called the "H&R Magnum," but I just can't bring myself to use "magnum." H&R left so much potential on the table. The .32 H&R is limited to a maximum average pressure (MAP) of 21,000



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Smith & Wesson Model 432 The Ultimate Carry Revolver, .32 H&R Mag., MSRP: [\\$759](#)

pounds per square inch (psi) — just slightly above the .38 Special +P at 20,000 psi. Federal did that because the revolvers H&R made in the early 1980s couldn't safely handle more. Federal has to stick with that, since exceeding those pressures would mean it's no longer technically a ".32 H&R Magnum." Fortunately, bullet technology has advanced greatly since the Reagan era, so advancements come from bullet development.

.32 H&R MAGNUM

The first box I tested (of the embarrassingly large amount of ammo sent to me) contained Federal's Champion 95-grain semi-wadcutter (SWC) bullet. It's called a "semi-wadcutter," but it's really a rounded flat-point with a large meplat profile. It delivers good penetration while not hammering your wrist. The meplat offers increased temporary cavity potential versus a round-nose design, but the flat-point is known for delivering penetration. In the .32s, that seems to be something people worry about not having enough of. So, if you want penetration, you can count on that in the 95-grain semi-wadcutter.

The second box held Federal's Personal Defense 95-grain jacketed hollowpoint (JHP). If you want expansion, this is the one to choose. You can't expect as much penetration from a JHP as you can from a bullet such as the 95-grain lead (L)-SWC, because you are expending some energy expanding the bullet.

I tested both .32 H&R cartridges in the latest hot revolver: The Smith & Wesson Model 432 in .32 H&R Magnum (\$759, smith-wesson.com). This is a J-frame, hammerless model. S&W makes the same revolver chambered in .38 Special, and I've owned that version for a couple of decades. It's the kind of emergency tool you're glad to have — and hope you don't need. Why? Because it's not fun to shoot. Chambering it in .32 H&R, though, does two things: First, it's actually fun to shoot. Second, it bumps capacity from



five to six rounds. Shooting the 432 — despite being double-action-only (DAO) — was fun. It did require extra effort to shoot photographically acceptable groups, though. Fortunately, I had plenty of ammo to indulge.

.327 FEDERAL MAGNUM

Of course, there's only so much even Federal can do within the limitations of the .32 H&R Magnum, so it looked to improve on it the only way it could: A new cartridge. Following the pattern of previous upgrades — such as the .38/.357 and the .44 Special/Magnum — Federal lengthened the case and increased the operating pressure. Making new cases was easy, as Federal makes literally tons of brass cases each year. The H&R at 1.075 inch doesn't call for much extra brass to reach the .327's max of 1.200 inches. The new pressure wasn't a problem, either. The limitation for a designer isn't always the case but often the firearm. In this instance, the limit is case thrust. Each time you fire a round, the case presses back against the breechface. (Math alert!) The maximum value it can be is the chamber pressure multiplied by the surface area of the case head. The .38 Special +P at 20,000 psi has a maximum possible thrust of just less than 3,100 pounds. The smaller head diameter of the .32 case means that when Federal runs it at 45,000 psi, the head thrust has a maximum case thrust potential of just more than 4,900 pounds. For reference, the .357 Magnum delivers more than 5,400 pounds, and the .30-'06



At 85 grains, the American Eagle jacketed soft point (JSP) is comparatively lightweight. It demonstrated superior penetration performance at the range.



At more than 1,400 feet per second (fps), the .327 Federal HST is faster than near-similar-weight 9mm loads.



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Springfield more than 9,000 pounds potential maximum.

To do the initial testing, Federal needed a strong, already-existing .32 H&R revolver. For that, it selected the Ruger SP101. A tougher revolver already in a .32 chambering would be hard to find. The process required disassembly, carefully installing the cylinder in a lathe and reaming each chamber longer in turn. To distinguish it from any other .32 in the armory, the simple expedient of stamping a “7” onto the cartridge marking sufficed. (See photo on pages 62 and 63.) Federal’s ballisticians then proceeded to work out the details of lifting the .32 to .327 status.

With extensive testing, the ballisticians settled the MAP at 45,000 psi. That’s an impressive number, but brass, steel and powders have all been improved since the unveiling of the .32 H&R in 1984. The longer case of the .327 Federal Magnum means you can’t chamber a .327 into a .32 H&R and close the cylinder, which is good. The .327 performance? Very impressive.

Federal sent four .327 loads, two from the American Eagle line and two from the Personal Defense line. The two American Eagle loads are both jacketed soft points (JSP). Considering the velocities the .327 can easily generate, anything but a jacketed bullet would be asking for a heavily leaded barrel. The light bullets are below the weights that a 9mm Parabellum uses, but the heavier ones are within the 9mm weight range, so we can make a fair comparison. In comparison, the 9mm suffers. You might think, *Oh, it’s just a .32. How much velocity can it deliver?* Well, how does a 100-grain JSP at 1,350 feet per second (fps) sound? The one that really opened my eyes was the Personal Defense 104-grain JHP with a blistering 1,421 fps measurement. No, really. I was so surprised to see that come up on the chrono that I shot two more velocity tests and read “1412” and “1419” fps.

Now, performance like that does not come without a cost. You will feel the recoil of a 104-grain bullet leaving your vicinity at Mach 1.27. You will notice

.327 FEDERAL MAG.



the muzzle blast of a cartridge with a MAP of 45,000 psi. That’s the price of performance, and it’s still much like that of a .38 Special +P load, but with an extra round in the cylinder.

In testing, the two revolvers were quite different. They were both a bit more work than your general revolver might be. The S&W because it’s DAO, and the Ruger because it’s running the .327 Federal Magnum. Keeping the sights aligned all the way through the DAO stroke on the S&W required focus, and ignoring the muzzle blast of the .327 required a zen-like state of mind.

For terminal performance, I did some quick testing of the two cartridges at my home range. If I wanted to do the FBI tests, I could do at least the bare gel and clothing portions, but Federal already did that. Instead, I compared them with plastic gallon water jugs, which gives a decent rule-of-thumb comparison and doesn’t take up an entire week of effort. Interestingly, the .32 H&R Magnum with the Personal Defense 85-grain JHP, and the .327 with the Hydra-Shok 85-grain JHP penetrated to the same depth. The conversion to gel indicates about 14 inches of penetration, and when I checked with Federal, that’s in the ballpark of what it was producing with bare gel and heavy clothing in the FBI protocols. The .32 H&R 95-grain L-SWC did a lot better in penetration, so if the 14 inches of the JHP seems a bit too close to the FBI minimum, then the 95-grain load

is a clear choice. The .32 H&R expansion isn’t an “Oh wow!” mushroomed bullet, but it does expand. There’s only so much you can do with a barrel less than 2 inches and a measured velocity of 897 fps. Federal is staffed with excellent engineers and ballisticians — not magicians. The .327 Federal Magnum Hydra-Shok 85-grain expanded into a mushroom. The performance was almost enough to brag about.

The really interesting one as to penetration was the American Eagle .327 85-grain JSP. The test round went through my last six remaining gallon jugs and exited the last with so much velocity



The .32 H&R (above, left) and the .327 Federal (above right) appear almost identical. The Federal produced tighter groups at greater velocities.

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The muzzleblast from shooting the Federal’s modified Ruger SP101 development revolver in .327 Federal was hard work. However, the re-chambered revolver produced excellent groups at 25 yards.



Even with a double-action-only revolver such as the six-shot Smith & Wesson Model 432, the .32 H&R Magnum turned in perfectly acceptable groups for a close-range defensive handgun.

I saw the dirt splash on the backstop when it hit. If I was looking for penetration in the .327, that would be my starting point.



The .32s have gotten a bad rap for a long time. To a certain extent, deservedly so. That’s no longer the case. If you want a lightweight, compact carry revolver that is not a beast to shoot, then the Smith & Wesson 432 in .32 H&R Magnum fed with Federal ammunition is a viable choice. As a backup or a lightweight main gun carried in deep concealment, the 432 is an excellent choice. If the ballistics of the .32 H&R are not enough for you, then the .327 is certainly more than enough, and the

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
RUGER SP-101, FEDERAL .327 FEDERAL MAGNUM					
Federal American Eagle 85-gr. JSP	1,393	58	22.5	1.7	2.25
Fed. Pers. Def. Hydra-Shok Deep 85-gr. JHP	1,374	67	30	1.9	2.2
Fed. Pers. Def. Hydra-Shok Deep 104-gr. JHP	1,421	57	24.1	2	2.3
Federal American Eagle 100-gr. JSP	1,349	14	5.7	2	2.5
SMITH & WESSON MODEL 432, FEDERAL .32 H&R MAGNUM					
Federal Champion 85-gr. L-SWC	897	58	22.5	3	3.5
Federal Personal Defense 85-gr. JHP	982	14	5.7	3.5	4

Notes: Accuracy is the average of three five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Labradar chronograph set adjacent to the muzzle.

Federal loads perform. There. You get better-than-9mm or .38 Special +P performance in a compact revolver and six shots in the cylinder. That, plus speedload-

ers for your reload, and you are running old-school. Or, carry both revolvers and, when the Ruger is empty, do a “New York Reload” and switch to the S&W. There was a saying that cropped up in the old days concerning the various .32s. “Friends don’t let friends carry mouse guns.” That may have been true once, but it isn’t the case today. To steal an advertising line from Buick: “These aren’t your granddad’s .32s.” **G&A**

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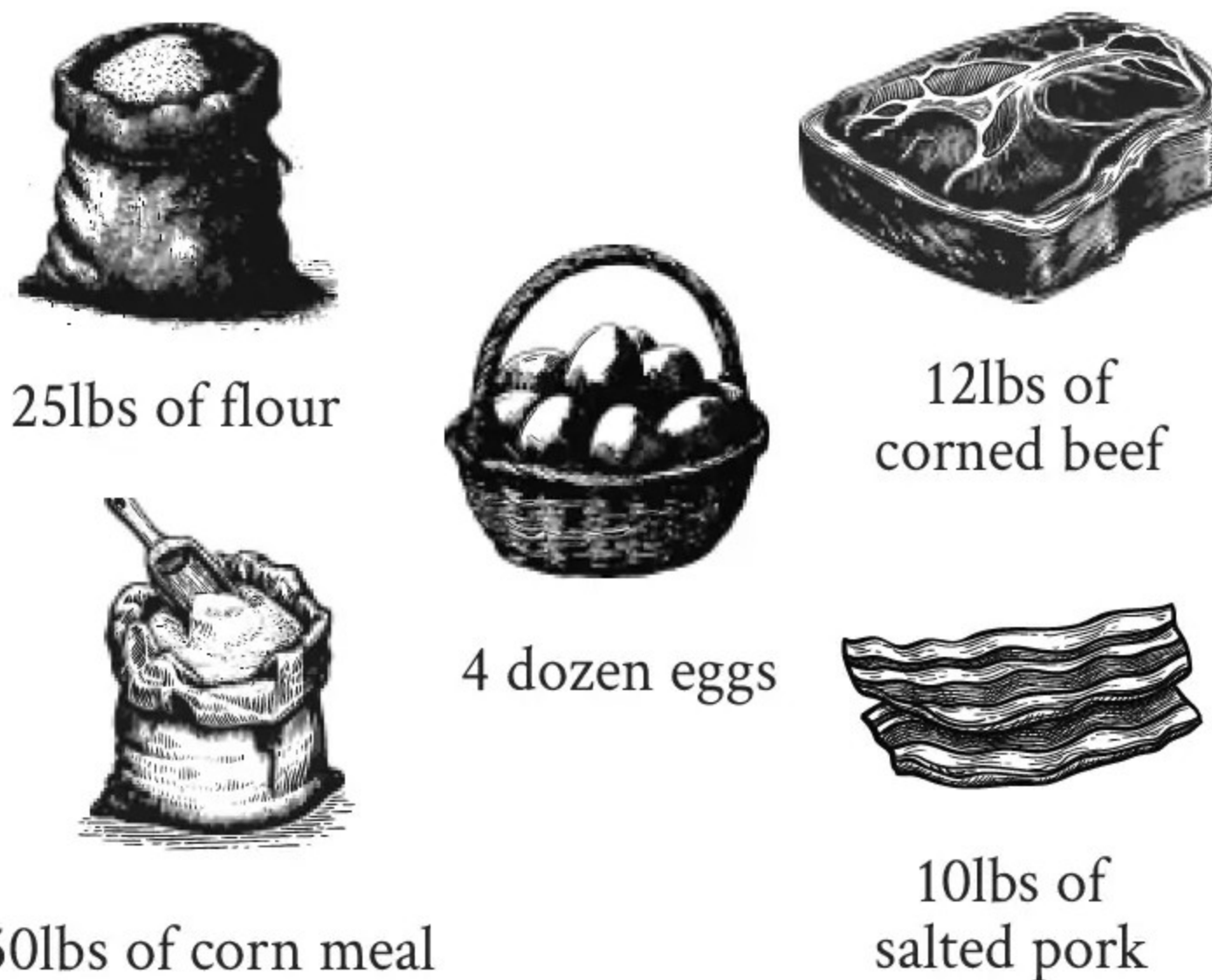
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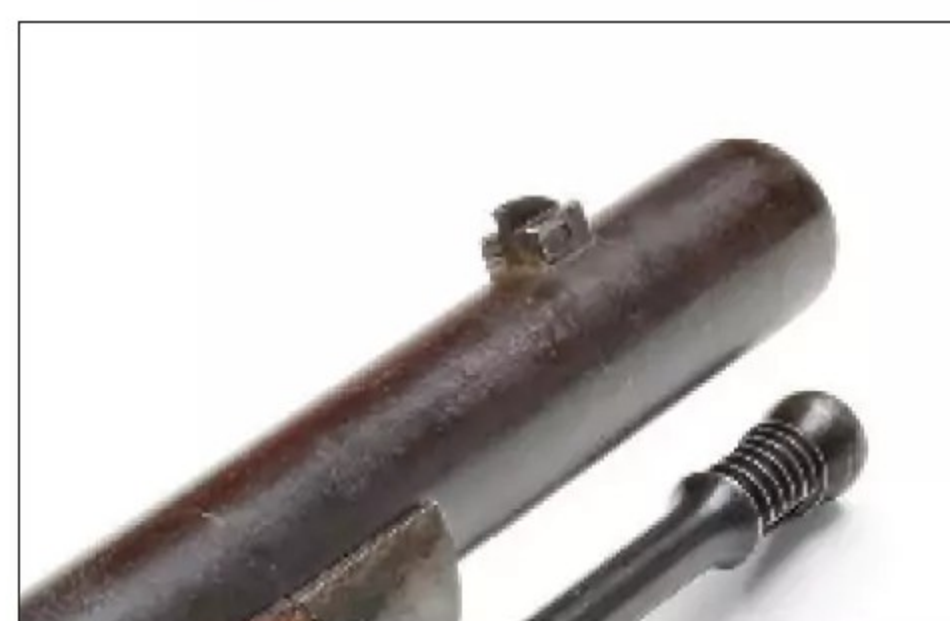
The standard Model 1873 rear sight was mounted to the barrel with slotless screws and set at the same height as the front sight. The steps on the right sight of the base are marked “1”, “2”, “3”, and “4”.



The Model 1884 featured the “Buffington” pattern rear sight graduated to 1,700 yards. The forward knob on the right is the slider lock. The knob behind the slider lock is for windage adjustment.



The Buffington rear sight raised for long-range adjustable fire. The peep is at the bottom of the slider. The buckhorn sight cutout is above the peep. The rear of the base shows windage graduation marks.



The Model 1873 Trapdoor Springfield was equipped with a fine and narrow front sight, more suited for target shooting than combat.

SOME TIME AGO, I came into possession of a Model 1884 Trapdoor Springfield, made in 1889, that appears to be unissued. Produced by Springfield Armory, the Model 1884 was a refined replacement for the Model 1873, also seen on these pages. The bluing is starting to fade just slightly, but there’s still blue. The stock has a crisp cartouche and hardly a mark on it. The bore looks virtually new. In 2024, I took it out and shot it. What a blast! There are a few things to get acquainted with on the Trapdoor Springfield, and the features of the Buffington sight on the 1884 are not instantly obvious, for example. Shooting the big, slow bullets of the .45-70 Government are like long-range artillery fire beyond 200 yards. It’s challenging but fun. Here, I’ll briefly discuss the history of the Trapdoor rifle, perhaps offer some insight on how these historic guns operate, and how to shoot them successfully.

THE HISTORY

The Trapdoor Springfield was born of necessity and extremely limited budgets immediately following the U.S. Civil War. Afterwards, the inevitable lessons learned began in the War Department. It was obvious that breech-loading rifles were the future of small arms

for the U.S. Army.

Many different breech-loading rifles — most notable the Spencer and Sharps — had been used in relatively small numbers during the war. They were found to be reliable and effective with high rates of fire. The Army possessed a large number of .58-caliber 1861 and 1863 Springfield muzzleloading rifles. Many of the 1863 models were in unissued condition. The head armorer at Springfield Armory, Erskine Allin, came up with the ingenious idea of converting these muzzleloaders into breech-loaders rather than designing a completely new rifle.

Allin’s solution was to cut off the rear portion of the barrel and attach a chamber and hinged breech block. The hinged breech block included a firing pin,



an extractor and ejector incorporated into the hinge. The top-opening breech block resembled a trap door, which led to the nickname “Trapdoor Springfield.”

Other than the breech conversion, the first model — the 1865 Springfield — retained nearly all the features of the 1863, including the .58-caliber barrel, 40-inch length and bright polished steel finish. It was chambered for a stop gap .58-caliber rimfire cartridge, though. The Model 1866 Springfield quickly replaced the 1865 model with an improved breech mechanism, a .50-70 centerfire cartridge, and a then-new ladder sight. The .58-caliber barrel was reamed, and a .50-caliber sleeve was brazed into the reamed barrel.

Later models included:

Model 1868, which retained the sleeved barrel but shortened to the now-familiar 32½ inches.

Model 1870, which featured manufactured 32½-inch barrels and a shorter breech. The 22-inch-barrel Carbine model was also introduced in 1870.

Model 1873, which introduced the .45-70 Government cartridge to the Trapdoor and a blued finish.

Models 1877 and 1879, which introduced a stronger stock and slight variations to the rear sight.

Model 1884, the last version of the Trapdoor and featuring the Buffington rear sight. This was the first peep sight adopted by the U.S. Army, which was a rather complicated target-type sight. The improvement the sight brought was windage adjustment.

The 1884 marked the last model of the Trapdoor with production ending in 1893. The Trapdoor served throughout the Indian Wars, and large numbers were issued during the Spanish-American War, as the Krag rifle was in short supply. It was retained well into the 20th century, notably among Reserve units.

TRAPDOOR SIGHTS

The 1865 Springfield retained the 1863 Springfield

two-position flip rear sight. The 1866 Springfield introduced an adjustable ladder-type rear sight that was retained to 1871. There were small modifications and improvements to the 1871 sight. The Buffington rear sight was introduced in 1884. The 1866 to 1884 rear sight was basic and easy to use, featuring a simple slider on a ladder with notches on the sight base for range adjustment.

The Buffington rear sight was introduced in 1884. It was a ladder-type target sight that featured three different sights: A classic buckhorn battle sight with a 200-yard zero was used with the ladder laid flat; a flip-up ladder sight that featured a slider plate with a peep sight having its lowest setting at 200 yards; and an alternate buckhorn-type sight cutout in the slider plate, which had a minimum zero of 200 yards. The flip-up Buffington sight had range markings on it and a lock screw at the top to lock the adjustable slider plate. The sight also incorporated a long-range sight that allowed volley fire from 1,500 to 2,000 yards. (I can’t imagine anyone seriously using this feature.) The sight features a knob at the right front of the sight base that is actually a small rack and pinion to allow windage adjustments. The rear of the sight base has a scale for aiding windage adjustments.

By using calipers and a little trigonometry, I was able to calibrate the windage knob. One turn of the windage screw is essentially 8.5 MOA. The sight allows about 15 MOA of windage adjustment in either direction. The target shooters in the military thought highly of the Buffington sight, while many found the sight irritating and overly complicated. The Army must have seen the sight as a good thing because it continued serving on the .30-40 Krag and 1903 Springfield with minor modifications.

With the sight ladder laid flat, there is a buckhorn-type battle sight that is zeroed for 200 yards.



Trapdoor Springfields were equipped with a two-position conventional muzzleloader-type hammer. The hammer was raised to half-cock (above, middle) for a safe and load position. Fully raised, the hammer is in the ready-to-fire position (above, bottom).



When released, a cocked hammer strikes the firing pin. The lever is lifted and the breech cover swung forward for loading.



With the breech cover in the forward position, the action can be easily loaded with a self-contained cartridge.



The Trapdoor Springfield retained the triggerguard from the 1863 Springfield muzzleloader. Note the rear sling keeper.



The Trapdoor Springfield also retained the curved steel buttplate from the 1863 Springfield.

Raising the ladder allows the use of the peep sight and the alternate buckhorn sight cutout in the slider plate. With the sight slider in its lowest position, the alternate buckhorn sight provides a 200-yard zero. Raising the sight slider a small amount to the 200-yard zero for

the peep sight also allows the simultaneous use of the alternate buckhorn sight that is now at a 325-yard zero. For the realistic effective range of the rifle, the shooter didn't have to adjust the sights. Rotating the windage knob away from you moves the sight to the left; rotating it towards you moves the sight to the right. The front sight is very thin and supports precise aiming.

5.—VELOCITY.

The muzzle velocity of the rifle bullet is 1,315.7 feet. The muzzle velocity of the carbine bullet is 1,150 feet.

Remaining velocity.

Range.	Rifle.	Carbine.	Range.	Rifle.	Carbine.	Range.	Rifle.	Carbine.
	Feet.	Feet.		Feet.	Feet.		Feet.	Feet.
100 yards	1172	1,018	1,000 yards	711.6	500	1,800 yards		344
200 yards	1059.2	913	1,100 yards		473	1,900 yards		331
300 yards	986	827	1,200 yards		449	2,000 yards		320
400 yards	932	757	1,300 yards		428	2,100 yards		308
500 yards	886	697	1,400 yards		408	2,200 yards		298
600 yards	844.5	646	1,500 yards		390	2,300 yards		288
700 yards	806.0	602	1,600 yards		373	2,400 yards		279
800 yards	772.4	564	1,700 yards		358	2,500 yards		271
900 yards	740.7	530						

The period ballistics chart from the U.S. Army manual illustrated retained velocity of the 405-grain standard-issue load. Muzzle velocity was 1,315.7 fps for rifles and 1,150 fps for carbines.

TRAPDOOR AMMUNITION

The original military loading for the Trapdoor was a 405-grain lead round nose (LRN) bullet ahead of 70 grains of blackpowder. The load produced 1,350 feet-per second (fps) at the muzzle from a 30-inch barrel. In 1873, a reduced recoil load was introduced for the Trapdoor Carbine, which was loaded with the 405-grain bullet ahead of 55 grains of blackpowder to produce a muzzle velocity 1,150 fps. In 1884, a 500-grain LRN bullet was loaded ahead of 70 grains of blackpowder, giving a muzzle velocity of 1,315 fps. This load was viewed as a long-range load. Table 1 shows the

TRAPDOOR SPRINGFIELD BALLISTICS

	405-GR. CARBINE (G1 BC: .280)			405-GR. RN RIFLE (G1 BC: .280)			500-GR. RIFLE (G1 BC: .345)		
RANGE (YDS.)	VELOCITY (FPS)	TRAJECTORY (IN.)	10-MPH DRIFT (MOA)	VELOCITY (FPS)	TRAJECTORY (IN.)	10-MPH DRIFT (MOA)	VELOCITY (FPS)	TRAJECTORY (IN.)	10-MPH DRIFT (MOA)
0	1,150	-0.8	0.0	1,350	-0.8	0	1,315	-0.8	0
100	1,042	15.7	2.4	1,182	12.1	2.7	1,182	12.1	2.2
200	967	0	4.5	1,064	0.0	5.3	1,083	0	4.3
300	909	-52.8	6.3	983	-42.7	7.5	1,010	-41.6	6.2
400	861	-147.6	8.0	933	-121.4	9.6	955	-117.3	7.9
500	819	-289.4	9.7	872	-241.0	11.4	909	-231.3	9.5



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3.—ACCURACY.*					
Mean result of target practice at the National Armory, the arm being fired from the shoulder with a muzzle rest.					
Radius of circle of shots.					
Range.	Rifle.	Carbine.	Range.	Rifle.	Carbine.
	<i>Inches.</i>	<i>Inches.</i>		<i>Inches.</i>	<i>Inches.</i>
100 yards	1.3	1.7	800 yards	13.8	23.50
200 yards	2.7	4.2	900 yards	17.0	30.00
300 yards	4.2	6.5	1,000 yards	21.4	
400 yards	5.8	9.0	1,100 yards		
500 yards	7.6	11.7	1,200 yards		
600 yards	9.5	15.5	1,300 yards		
700 yards	11.6	19.0			

The radius of circle of shots is the average distance of the shots from the center of impact. The center of impact is the center of the cluster of shots which are aimed at a given point, generally the center of the target. The best recorded targets at 500 yards are, for the rifle, 2.8 inches; carbine, 3.4 inches; at 800 yards for rifle, 8.5 inches; at 1,000 yards for the rifle, 11.9 inches.

*Average of a large number of targets, and which may reasonably be expected to be duplicated by a good marksman.

The period U.S. Army accuracy chart illustrated the different ranges for the 405-grain standard-issue load. The accuracy shown is the mean radius of the group, not the total group size.

trajectories and wind drift for these loads.

There are several commercial offerings appropriate for the Trapdoor Springfield. The first three mimic the original Government rifle load, which regulate well with the sights: HSM .45-70 Cowboy load (#162177) with a 405-grain lead flat point at 1,300 fps; Black Hills Cow-

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	EV	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Black Hills Cowboy 405-gr LFN	1,283	40	4.25	4.5

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups shot at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of five shots measured with a chronograph set at 10 feet from the barrel.

boy load (#13) loaded with a 405-grain lead flat point at 1,250 fps; and Remington Reduced Pressure 405-grain jacketed soft point load (#376119), at 1,330 fps.

I don't recommend a regular diet of jacketed bullets in the Trapdoor. The steel is soft by today's standards, and the rifling will wear relatively quickly. Winchester offers a Cowboy Action 405-grain lead flat point load, #352132, at 1,150 fps. This load mimics the Government Carbine load. These loads are all smokeless and will be a bit dirty in terms of leaving partially burned propellant grains in the barrel and breech. I recommend sticking with the commercial Cowboy loads. You can certainly hand-load your own ammunition using data for the Trapdoor Springfield or load blackpowder, but do not shoot the +P loads marketed for the .45-70!

OPERATING THE TRAPDOOR

The hammer on the Trapdoor is a three-position hammer. The first *click* of the hammer raises the hammer off

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of the firing pin but blocks the small curved locking lever at the right rear of the breech block from moving enough to open the breech block. This is the “safe” position for carrying a loaded rifle. The next *click* is the half-cock position for the rifle, which serves as a “safe” position for the hammer for operation of the breech-locking lever and opening of the breech for loading or removal of a loaded cartridge or cartridge case. The third position of the hammer is the full-cock position for firing the rifle. To operate the breech block and access the chamber, raise the locking lever and raise the breech block, pushing it forward. The last of the movement of the breech block forward actuates the extractor and ejector. To load the Trapdoor, slip a cartridge into the chamber, rotate the breech block down, and push it down until the lock lever *clicks*. Fully cock the hammer and the gun is ready to fire.

SHOOTING THE TRAPDOOR

My shooting thus far has been with the Black Hills Cowboy load I previously mentioned. The load has modest recoil and leaves some partially burned propellant grains in the breech and barrel. The accuracy specification for the 1873 Trapdoor was a 3.4-inch circle at 100 yards. The accuracy improved to a 2.6-inch circle at 100 yards with the 1884 model, primarily due to the stiffer stock and improved sights. I have found my 1884 meets these accuracy specifications with the Black Hills ammunition. When I shot the groups for this article, the wind was a full-value crosswind between 5 and 15 miles-per-hour (mph). I did not attempt to adjust for wind while shooting. Every group was the largest in windage.

Elevation was usually about half the windage. When you consider that a 10-mph wind is 2¾-inches of drift with the .45-70, my Trapdoor shot within the specification for the 1884. The triggerpull on my gun is a bit heavy at 6¼ pounds, too, but it's crisp. Table 2 shows my results with Black Hills' ammunition.

PARTING SHOT

If you own or can pick up a Trapdoor Springfield in good condition, take it out and shoot it, especially

beyond 100 yards. It's a lot of fun. I can consistently hit a deer-sized silhouette at 500 yards with mine. It's pretty satisfying to pull the trigger, wait a second or so, and hear a loud *clang* in the distance. Shooting the Trapdoor is both entertaining and sobering. I wouldn't have wanted to march for miles carrying one while pursuing Indians in the West, and I would have felt under-gunned in a fight with something that was a single shot that forced me to come out of the shoulder after every round to reload. Regardless, the Trapdoor served the U.S. with distinction for 35 years. **G&A**

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Taurus Deputy .45 Colt

THE LAW HAS ARRIVED

WHILE THE SINGLE-ACTION revolver may not have been “the gun that won the West,” it was certainly on the belts of those who were winning it. The Single Action Army (SAA) has since become a handgun with a devoted following, and the Taurus Deputy is fully up to the task of satisfying that desire. In the Deputy, Taurus both reached back into history and brought the SAA into the 21st century.

The Deputy is available in two barrel lengths, the 4¾-inch length and the 5½-inch artillery model. You also have the choice of .45 Colt or .357 Magnum. In the latter, one can either spend range time booming with a big-bore or opt for softer-recoiling .38 Specials for most of your shooting, but you can still choose the power

of the .357 Magnum when you want it. What you don’t have is a choice of finish; the Deputy is only available in a polished black oxide finish. Color case-hardened frames, nickel or stainless steel are not options.

On the right side of the frame, the Deputy is roll-marked “Taurus Armas/Made In Brazil”. On the left, it reads “Taurus Int’l Mfg/Bainbridge, GA.” SAA fans accustomed to seeing patent dates will perhaps be disappointed, but this is a Taurus offering. The barrel is marked with the Taurus logo, “DEPUTY” in a Western font, and the caliber. In the instance of Guns & Ammo’s sample, “45 COLT”. The serial number is located on the underside of the frame, ahead of the triggerguard and includes a code block.



The Deputy incorporates a transfer bar to deliver the blow of the hammer to the firing pin. This means it does not have to be loaded with the hammer resting on an empty chamber, as does the original SAA.

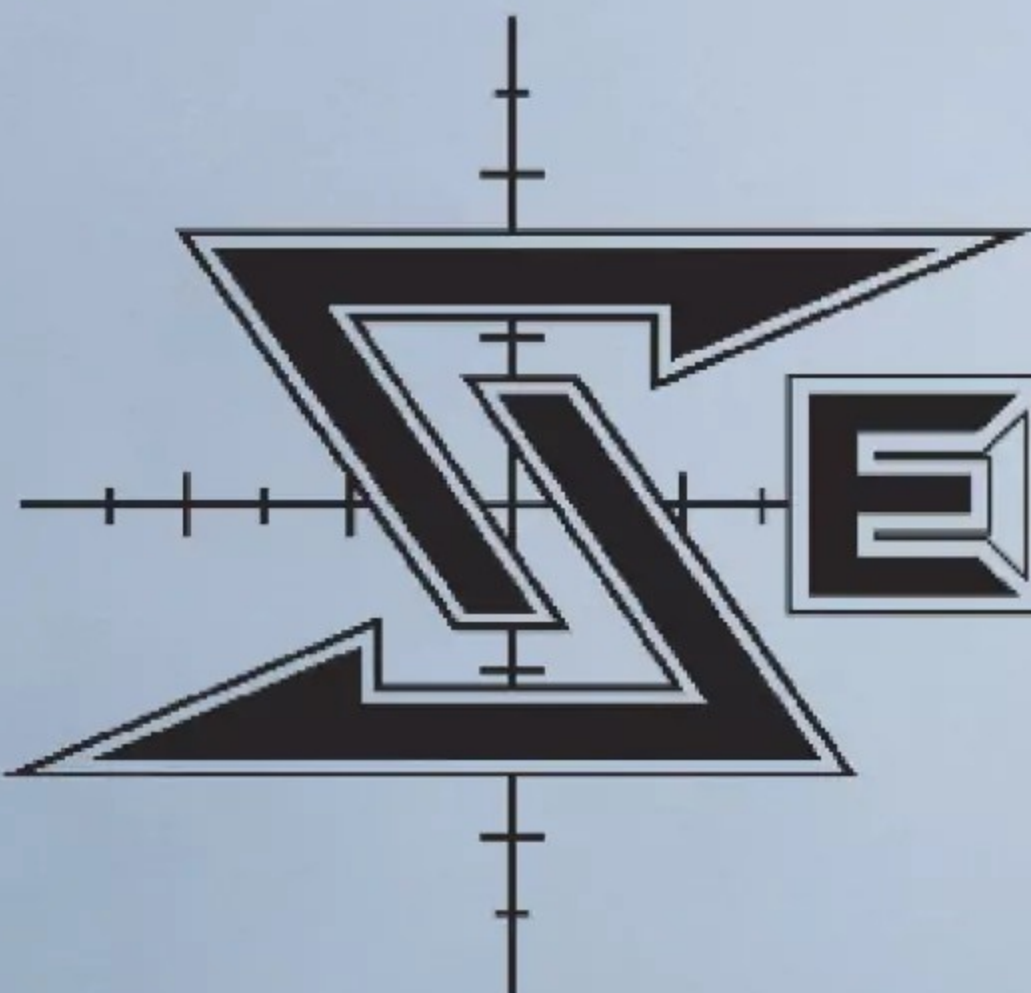


Feeding and extracting is available through the loading gate. The loading gate also offers a quick chamber check.

TAURUS DEPUTY	
TYPE	Revolver, single action
CARTRIDGE	.357 Magnum/.38 Special, .45 Colt (tested)
CAPACITY	6 rds.
BARREL	4.75 in.
LENGT	10.25 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 5 oz.
GRIPS	Plastic, checkered pattern
FINISH	Black oxide, polished
SIGHTS	Blade (front), notch (rear)
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 2 oz. (tested)
MSRP	\$607
MANUFACTURER	Taurus, 229-515-8464, taurususa.com

Loading follows the classic single-action process. Flip open the loading gate. Cock the hammer two *clicks* — no more. The cylinder will now rotate freely. Insert six rounds, one into each chamber. Close the gate and cock the hammer. Now comes the delicate

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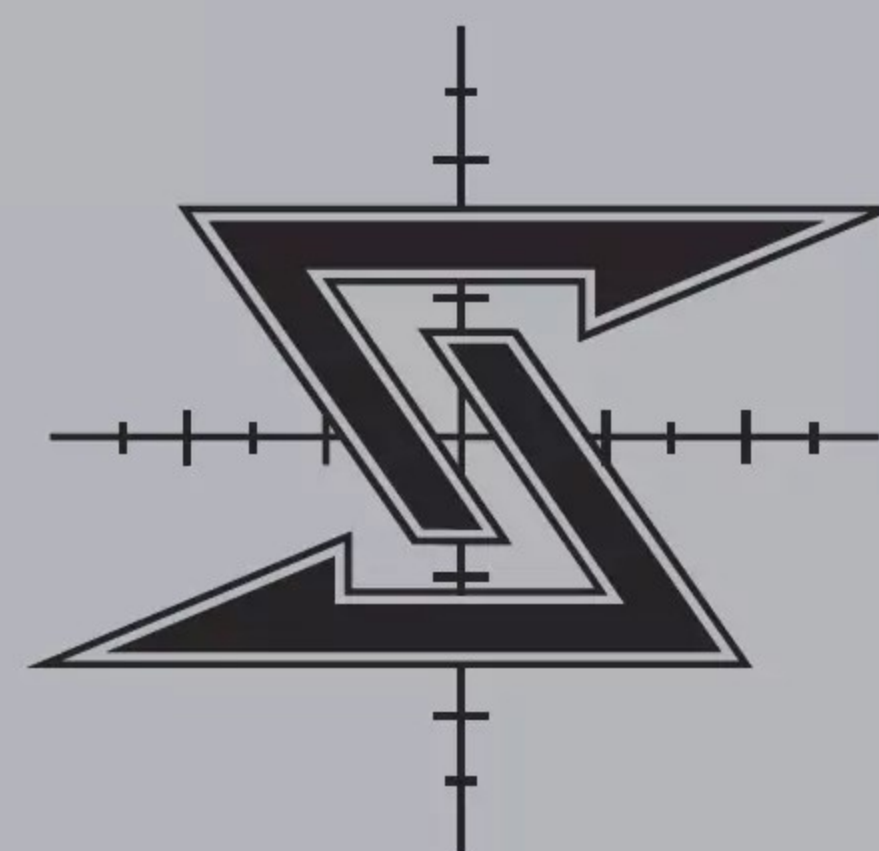


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If the plastic grips are not to your liking, they come off with one screw and can be easily replaced. There is an extensive aftermarket for SAA-style grips already available in many options.



The SAA grip shape allows the revolver to roll in the hand during recoil, softening the impact.



Along with the original three-screw layout of the SAA. The cylinder rotates on and is retained by the knurled base pin.

part. Get your off-hand fingers or spare thumb on the hammer to restrain it. Press the trigger holding the hammer back. Ease the hammer forward slightly and let go of the trigger. This allows the transfer bar to slide down away from the firing pin so the hammer cannot make contact. Now it's safe. To shoot, cock the hammer, aim and press the trigger. It's that simple. Once you have fired all six rounds, cock the hammer for two *clicks*, open the loading gate and rotate the cylinder to line up each chamber with the gate opening. Press the spring-loaded ejector rod head back to push out the empties.

A tip: If you've kept the Deputy clean and oiled, and are using low-pressure, cowboy-competition-level ammunition, you can simply point the muzzle straight up and rotate the cylinder. As each chamber comes into alignment, the empty case will usually fall out under its own weight.

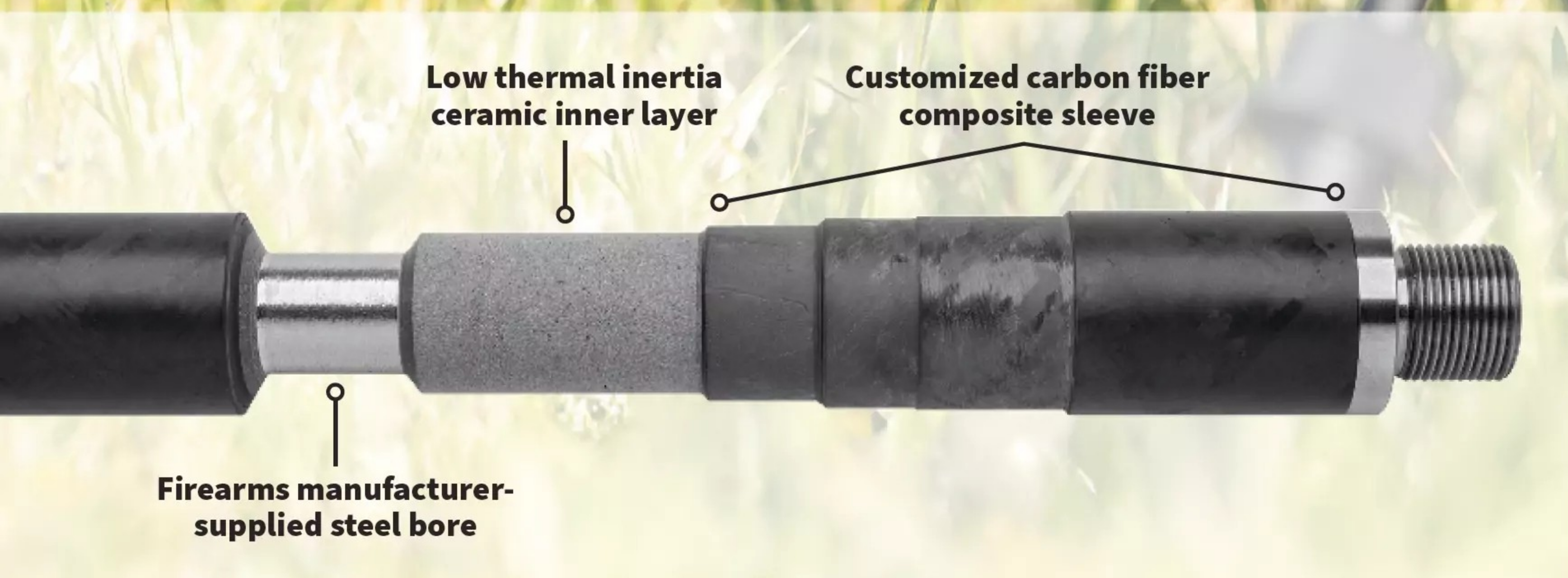
Aiming the Deputy means using the modestly improved — but still classic — sights. The front sight is a blade attached to the barrel, and the rear is a notch at the end of the topstrap's groove. Unlike the original SAA, the sights are proportioned for aiming. The front sight, instead of being akin to the

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edge of a dull knife, has a flat top. The rear, instead of looking like a notch that the dull knife would have made, is a squared slot. The Deputy's is a more practical aiming system.

The grips are plastic with a checked pattern molded onto it with a smooth border. In the upper corner where the grips meet the frame, the Taurus logo is molded. The pair is held to the gun by means of a screw that passes through the open space between the grip straps. If black plastic is not to your liking, aftermarket SAA grips can replace them.

To disassemble for cleaning, first make sure the Deputy is unloaded. Cock the hammer two *clicks*. Press the spring-loaded button (base-pin screw) on the side of the frame ahead of the cylinder and hold it down. This frees the center base pin. Pull the base pin forward. When it stops



This is as far as one needs to go for general cleaning disassembly. Further disassembly is possible, but it requires fitted screwdrivers. This SAA design does not require complicated maintenance.

against the ejector tab, lift the cylinder out of the frame on the loading gate side. As a bonus bit of engineering, Taurus made the base pin on the Deputy long enough that it will not come completely out of the frame during disassembly,



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so there is no chance you'll drop it and lose it. This is as far as you need to go for regular cleaning. For a more detailed disassembly, you'll need a set of properly fit screwdrivers to remove no fewer than a dozen screws.

The Deputy, as a clone of the original SAA — at least in terms of external dimensions — is not meant for more than the regular-pressure loads of .45 Colt, or similar .357 loads in that model. Do not subject it to the modern high-pressure hunting rounds that can be found (or created) in .45 Colt cases. Instead, stick with the performance of factory .45 Colt ammunition, which are not insubstantial. Guns & Ammo's sample pistol in .45 Colt was tested with a jacketed defense load and three different cowboy loads. If you think the old .45 Colt cartridge is lacking horsepower, then you are only partly correct. The softest load fell just short of making Major by United States Practical Shooting Association (USPSA) standards, and the strongest one made Major even by the standards of the earliest years of the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC). Like a V8 from the old days, the .45 Colt gets its power from bore

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady Critical Defense 185-gr. FTX	960	24	8.9	2	2.1
Black Hills Cowboy 250-gr. LFN	764	36	14.7	2	2.4
Hornady Cowboy 255-gr. LFN	657	14	5.7	2.1	2.4
Winchester Cowboy 250-gr. LRN	637	58	23.9	2.2	2.5

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 with a Labradar chronograph set adjacent to the muzzle.

size, not compression ratio. The shape of the grip means the single action will roll up in your hand on each shot. This is intentional, to soften the recoil, and to get the spur of the hammer closer to your hand in order to thumb-cock it for the next shot. Even with the stoutest factory load, the Deputy was never a chore to shoot.

RANGE DAYS

Every afternoon of plinking proved to be enjoyable — not work. As an added benefit, a single-action revolver is a great teaching tool. With limited capacity, the shooter cannot simply blast a full cylinder at a plate rack. No, each shot must be aimed. Additionally, the mystique, history and romance of the West often prove a great lure for new shooters. That makes the range day even more fun. The Deputy lists for \$607, but you'll likely find it for a little less at your local gun shop. As a learning tool, a backwoods sidearm, or as a working gun for the farm or ranch, the Deputy offers the aura of the Old West wrapped in a modern package at a great price. **G&A**



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Canik Mete MC9 CA 9mm



CALIFORNIA BOUND

FIREARMS LAWS are in constant flux in California. Beside the rays of sunshine, dozens of clouds choke out the light. In 2025, a slew of new handguns arrived to the Golden State, along with new fees and buying restrictions. One bright spot was the Canik Mete MC9 CA, a compliant version of the brand's popular subcompact pistol.

California's Unsafe Handguns Act dictates special requirements for a new semiautomatic handgun to meet in order to be sold in the state. Each new model must be submitted for an independent safety test, and employ a magazine disconnect and loaded chamber indicator. Per a so-called "large-capacity" magazine ban, magazines are limited to 10 rounds or fewer. A list of California-compliant handguns is maintained on the California Department of Justice's Handgun Roster.

Microstamping became a requirement in 2013. The law required that a code be stamped on a cartridge's primer. The code would contain the handgun's serial number, make and model, as well as other details. Microstamping proved impractical and a barrier to compliance. No manufacturer implemented it, creating a de facto ban on new handgun models. In 2024, the microstamping law was suspended. In turn, many firearm manufacturers added CA-compliant features to their popular models and submitted them for approval. Finally, Californians' firearms choices are no longer stuck in 2013.

Also in 2024, California Penal Code Section 27535 took effect, limiting dealers to deliver one firearm per 30-day period to a customer. California has had a single semiautomatic handgun limit per 30-day period since 2021, but the new law applied to all firearms including revolvers and bolt-action rifles. Fortunately, that law was short-lived. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals prevented the Department of Justice from enforcing it. As of this writing, Californians may receive multiple firearms, including semiauto handguns.

BUYING A FIREARM IN CALI

The year 2024 was busy for anti-gun legislators in California. Legislators created new ways to penalize lawful gun buyers: Excise taxes and fees for ammunition background checks. An 11-percent California Firearm and Ammunition Excise Tax was imposed on all retail sales of firearms, firearm precursor parts and ammunition. The tax applies to gross receipts, which includes credit card fees, handling fees, and transfer fees. The state treasury established the Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Fund to receive these funds. In 2025, \$161 million is to be divvied out to the State Department of Education, Board of State and Community Corrections, California DOJ, counseling, and so-called "gun violence" research.

But wait, there's more! Since 2019, California has mandated a background check and a fee for ammunition purchases. In 2025, the fee rose from \$1 to \$5. The reasoning for the 500 percent increase? To pay the debt that the Department of Justice incurred to set up the ammunition authorization program, and to ensure its continued function. The state created laws that make lawful gun owners fund its anti-gun policies.

CANIK METE MC9 CA

TYPE	Recoil operated, striker fired, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	10 + 1 rds.
BARREL	3.18 in.
LENGTH	6.1 in.
HEIGHT	4.52 in.
WIDTH	1.12 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 5 oz. (w/ ext. mag.)
FINISH	Black
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 8 oz. (tested)
SIGHTS	Post , white dot (front); blacked U-notch (rear)
SAFETIES	Trigger lever, striker block
MSRP	\$470
MANUFACTURER	Canik, 561-908-7993, canikusa.com



A mini-Mete MC9 functions like bit driver and has storage for small parts.



Secured with a roll pin, three sizes of backstrap are included for custom fit.



Optional baseplate extenders further support concealment or an ideal grip.



Engraved and prominent lettering along with a red-sided chamber indicator are requirements for CA-compliant pistols.



The 3.18-inch carbon-steel barrel and dual-spring guiderod can be removed from the slide during disassembly.



The Mete MC9 CA slide has an RMsC footprint. G&A's sample was tested with a Riton 3 Tactix MPRD 3. [\\$330](#)

MAKING THE LIST

Despite the laws, California remains a fruitful firearms market. Canik knows this and even rented billboards to announce the arrival of its Mete MC9 CA. The Canik Mete MC9 CA is a compact 9mm pistol advertised as a "micro." It has an overall length of 4½ inches, and a width of 1.12 inches. It features a 3.18-inch barrel with a dual recoil spring. Dual recoil springs offer more resistance than a single recoil spring, reducing the sharp snappiness of some pistols.

The sights include a white dot front sight that settles into a blacked-out rear U-notch. Both front and rear are set in dovetails, meaning they could be adjusted for windage. The slide is optic-ready, too, with an RMsC footprint. It's available in black, FDE and two-tone (black slide with FDE frame).

One added value aspect of this pistol is the hard case. It has a laser-cut interior to arrange the contents precisely. Those include a holster, two additional backstraps, a punch, cleaning brush, magazine grip extender, mag loader, and small pistol-shaped tool caddy. Two 10-round magazines are also in the case, one with a flat baseplate and another with a 1-inch extended basepad.

Although it's regarded as a micro-compact, it bucks certain trends seen with other pistols such as the Springfield Armory Hellcat and SIG Sauer P365 series. Instead of slim-



The extended magazine basepad improves grip control but leaves an unusual void underneath the backstrap.



The optic cut is low to support alignment of the front and rear sights through many notched optic windows.



The Canik kydex holster can be configured for inside or outside the waistband carry.

ming it down, Canik beefed up certain areas. The beavertail, for example, is a quarter-inch taller than those on the Hellcat or P365, giving the Mete MC9 a higher bore axis. The trigger is also taller, resulting in a larger triggerguard.

The Mete MC9 CA also includes fitting customizations. Small, medium and large backstraps are provided, and a roll pin holds the backstrap in place. The flat magazine baseplate — which is intended to improve concealment — can be changed for an extended baseplate, too. One of the magazines features a 1-inch basepad extension, but it increases the length of the grip. It's a compromise of concealment versus improved control of the grip. The backstrap, extension plate and extended magazine have a matching rough texture that surrounds much of the grip.

Other notable aspects of the Mete MC9 are the low-profile slide-stop lever and an accessory rail under the

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dustcover. The magazine release is a reversible button. In view of the shooter's sight picture is also a red-colored cocking indicator, which is visible through a hole in the backplate when the striker is cocked.

On both sides of the slide are forward-leaning serrations. The serrations at the front are deeper than the rear, supporting a two-finger press check of the chamber's status. For a quick visual status check, the aforementioned loaded chamber indicator with red sides is positioned behind the ejection port. The words "LOADED WHEN UP" are permanent, and appear on the optic plate cover.

Fieldstripping the Mete MC9 is similar to most striker-fired polymer-framed pistols — with one exception: Push the slide forward about half an inch and lift it straight up to remove it.

AT THE RANGE

One of the major advantages of the Mete MC9 CA is that you can customize the fit of the grip. Guns & Ammo's staff experimented with switching the small backstrap for the large one and replacing the flat baseplate on the magazine with the extender. Together these changes improved the pistol's handling for those with larger hands.



The curved trigger is distinguished by the safety lever, accented in red.



Serrations are functional touchpoints on the slide, frame and controls.

The 4½-pound trigger felt lighter than expected, and the tension was consistent to the wall before it snapped to fire. There was no steep pressure hump before a shot broke. The trigger's reset was also short.

We fed a variety of training and self-defense ammunition through the Mete MC9 CA during testing. The accuracy protocol was shot from a bench with hands resting on a shooting bag. The results were impressive for a "micro." In fact, three groups from three different loads measured 1.2 inches or better.

It proved to be a great shooter, but it was temperamental when using Hornady American Gunner 115-grain XTP ammo. With this load, there were multiple failures to fire and several light primer strikes. The Canik also had two light primer strikes with Hornady's 115-grain Critical Defense

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PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady American Gunner 115-gr. XTP	1,067	34	8	1	1.4
Marshall Range Practice 115-gr. JHP	991	65	21	1.1	1.8
Sellier & Bellot 115-gr. FMJ	1,130	34	10	1.2	1.9
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,074	37	10	1.4	2.1
Fiocchi Range Dynamic 124-gr. FMJ	1,065	55	14	2.1	2.3

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups fired at 20 yards from a sandbag rest on a bench. Velocity is the average of 10 shots recorded by a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent the muzzle.

load, and one with Sellier & Bellot 115-grain ball ammo. These occurred while using both magazines. The failures to fire resulted in the slide not going into battery, usually between a string of shots; not at the beginning. After two of these interruptions, the pistol was fieldstripped and oiled, but that didn't correct the issue. However, there were zero issues when shooting Fiocchi or Marshall Munitions ammo. This exposed a minor annoyance. Initially, the slide-stop lever was difficult to engage when the magazine was not installed. With time, it improved.

Despite these issues, the Mete MC9 CA was a joy. It's a little snappy, but most will recover quickly for follow-up shots. Speedily shooting through a full (10-round) magazine loaded with Sellier & Bellot at a 3-inch sticker placed at 20 yards resulted in decently round and tight groups.

Reloads were smooth. The metal-bodied magazine slips into the magazine well as if it was Teflon coated. (It's not.) The backstrap sits lower than the grip, which functions as a backstop for inserting the magazine. It was intuitive to hit consistently and drive home before secured by the reversible magazine catch. Adding to the reload performance is the fact that the magazine release was optimally placed on the grip frame. The thumbs of every shooter reached the

release without needing to break the grip to rotate the pistol inward, even with the large backstrap in place.

Even for concealed carry duties, G&A's staff preferred the magazine with the grip extension. The flat baseplate provided no support for the pinky finger, but the taller magazine did print when carried under a T-shirt in the appendix position. The supplied Canik holster can be employed inside and outside the waistband, but it sat too low in the appendix position for one reviewer. It was comfortable carrying inside the waistband at the hip, though.

PARTING SHOT

There is more to precise shooting and control than a low bore axis. Customizable ergonomics makes the Mete MC9 one of the better-fitting micros available to Californians. **G&A**

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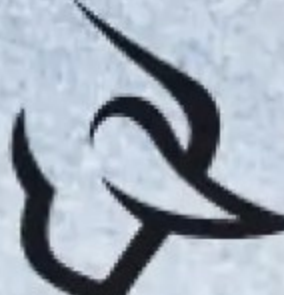
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QUIET RIOT

AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING, suppressors and short-barreled rifles (SBR) were at the forefront of Second Amendment conversations, thanks to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Removal of the \$200 tax stamp and ATF Form 4 were attached to this legislation, not to mention the removal of SBRs and shotguns from the National Firearms Act. The Senate Parliamentarian ruled that the language violated the Byrd Rule.

Regardless, awareness, education, and interest in suppressors has risen considerably. Guns & Ammo's reader mail reflects this, as well. We received many questions about suppressor ownership. While the "Quiet Time" column presents a review of new suppressors, what follows are real samples of the most frequently asked questions set in a Q&A format.:

Q: I want to try out a suppressor. However, not being able to test one means I'm gambling on whether I'll like it. Also, I'm not sure I want to commit to a big purchase before I try to navigate the ATF process.

A: If you haven't fired a suppressed firearm before, some ranges — depending on your home state — offer suppressed gun rentals. While you may not be able to "try before you buy" for



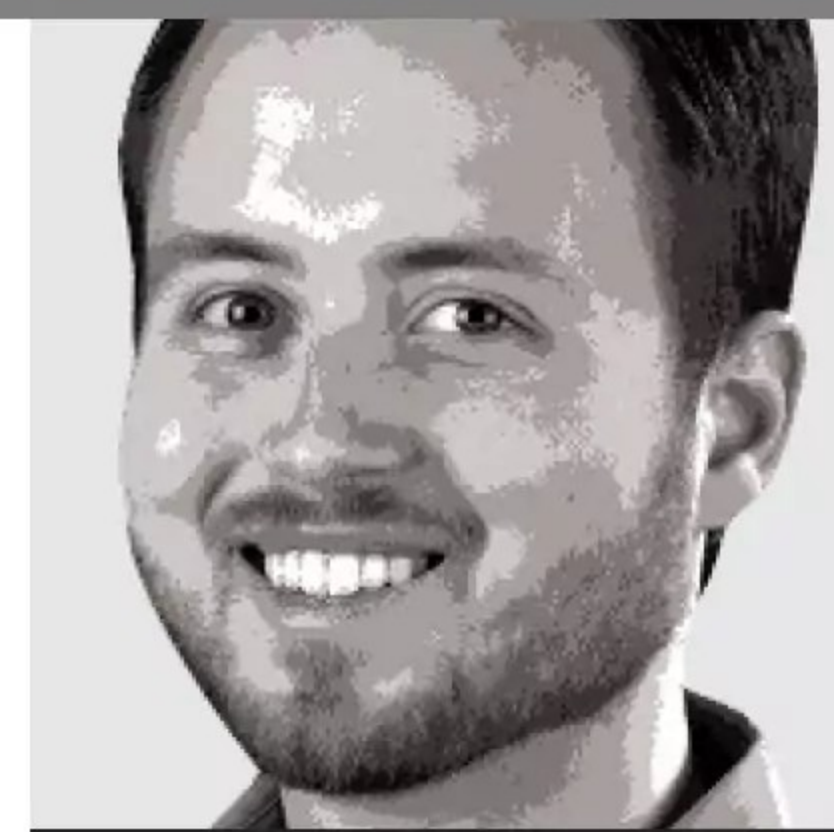
THE QUIET HUNTER
Even a relatively lightweight suppressor can muffle the blast of a .300 Win. Mag.



specific brands and models, it's a good example of the general shooting experience. If the idea of owning a suppressor is appealing, but you're hesitant about the cost or commitment, I'd recommend a .22 rimfire can. Many suppressors of this caliber sell between \$300 and \$400. While the \$200 tax stamp is an annoying hanger-on to any suppressor purchase, the total spent is still on the lower end of this endeavor. Shooting a .17 HMR- or .22 LR-suppressed firearm is a blast close to "movie-level quiet." Rimfires don't generate much heat, and a .22 can will likely accommodate any type of modern rimfire, some even supporting firearms in 5.7x28mm.

Q: I see that one suppressor can be used for multiple calibers. Is this true? Can I buy one large-caliber suppressor and use it for everything instead of getting one for each chambering? If not, what size is ideal?

A: You may notice that some products list cartridge compatibility as "all calibers up to .XX" in the description. A .30-caliber can — with some limitations — will accommodate anything smaller than a .308, including .270, .260, .25, .223 and rimfire calibers. You could even use a .46-caliber suppressor and shoot .22 LR if you have the appropriate thread adapter or mount. However, as the difference in size between the suppressor bore and barrel caliber increases, the effectiveness of its sound-reduction diminishes. A .22-caliber projectile passing through a .46-caliber suppressor may have some sound suppressed, but much less.



ANTONIO ACITELLI

If you're interested in a "one-size-fits-all" solution for .30 caliber and smaller firearms, a .30-caliber suppressor rated for magnum cartridges such as .300 Winchester Magnum or .300 Remington Ultra Magnum is a popular choice. Thirty-caliber cans do a decent job of suppressing .223/5.56mm, as well as rimfire loads. On a Texas Oryx hunt, I took a rather lightweight Banish Backcountry (\$1,099, banishsuppressors.com) on a Mossberg Patriot Hunter LR chambered in .300 Win. Mag. (\$854, mossberg.com). An easy ruck, this pairing did a shockingly good job at tempering the magnum. The one issue I've experienced in relying on just one suppressor is that if you take multiple guns to the range and only one can, be ready to pass the downtime as you wait for it to cool between strings of fire.

I'd love to write more on this subject. Want to read more about suppressors, knowledge on how they work, use and legislation? Let us know! Email us at gaeditor@outdoorsg.com.

The Sensible Suppressor

Alfredo Rico reveals inner workings of popular offerings from SilencerCo.



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KEITH WOOD

Touring English gun culture reminds an American how fortunate we are.

GUNS OF LONDON

MY LATE MOTHER, Judy, spent many years working for an airline. Before having children, my parents traveled the world. I grew up hearing stories of international destinations, and London was one of their favorites. In the last two decades, I've traveled extensively but England escaped me. Summer 2025, with my wife and children in-tow, I checked it off of my list. Though it was a family trip, I managed to explore London's historic gun culture.

One of the must-see sights for gun enthusiasts is James

Purdey & Sons' London gun-room near Hyde Park. Purdey has occupied Audley House in Mayfair since 1883, and the historic building's marble pillars still bear the scars of a German bomb that damaged the structure in 1941. My son and I chatted with the manager, Nick Harlow, and gawked at firearms with six-figure price tags. When my son mentioned seeing a pair of one-twelfth-scale Purdey sidelocks in Queen Mary's Dollhouse at Windsor

Castle the day prior, Harlow pulled out the company's ledger from 1923 and showed us King George V's hand-written order. History is alive at Purdey.

We left Purdey and walked past the Iranian Embassy at 16 Princes Gate. In 1980, MP5-wielding commandos from B Squadron, 22 Special Air Service (SAS), performed a successful rescue of 26 hostages held by terrorists. The image of the black-clad rescuers on that building's balcony — one of the first-ever glimpses of a real-world counterterror operation — was subsequently used in an iconic Heckler & Koch advertisement.

My final stop was the Churchill War Rooms, a well-preserved underground bunker where Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his staff coordinated Allied efforts during World War II. The site, which is operated by the Imperial War Museums, includes a Churchill Museum. To my delight, it contained his personal Colt Model 1911.

Churchill's handgun was purchased in London by him in 1915. He used it while serving as the commander of the 6th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers on the Western Front of World War I in 1916. Churchill's commercial 1911 would have been one of the 2,226 1911s reportedly shipped to Colt's distributor, London Armoury Company. Though Churchill's 1911 was chambered in .45 ACP, 224 of the guns sent to England were chambered in .455 Webley. According to the museum, this 1911 was Churchill's favorite firearm.



We saw other firearms on display in the Imperial War Museum and in the Tower of London, but none of them ranked as highly for me as that battered old Colt. To know that one of history's most influential figures carried the classic American sidearm in a Sam Browne holster made the world seem smaller.

This was a family vacation, so there was no time to visit John Rigby & Co., Westley Richards or any of the other

storied English gunmakers. (Notably, Rigby celebrated 250 years in 2025.) We did make it to Scotland, where we fell in love with the scenery and culture. Scotland has its own proud firearms heritage, and I loved seeing an original breech-loading flintlock Ferguson rifle in a museum honoring one of the nation's storied Highland regiments.

Great Britain was once at the cutting edge of firearm design and innovation, at a time when some of the world's greatest minds were focused on developing small arms. Victorian Britain was to gunmaking what today's Silicon Valley is to tech. It was great to see evidence of that history, but I'm

happy to live in a nation where guns aren't merely a part of our past but threads in the fabric of our culture. 



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