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**2025
GUNS & AMMO
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NANCE**

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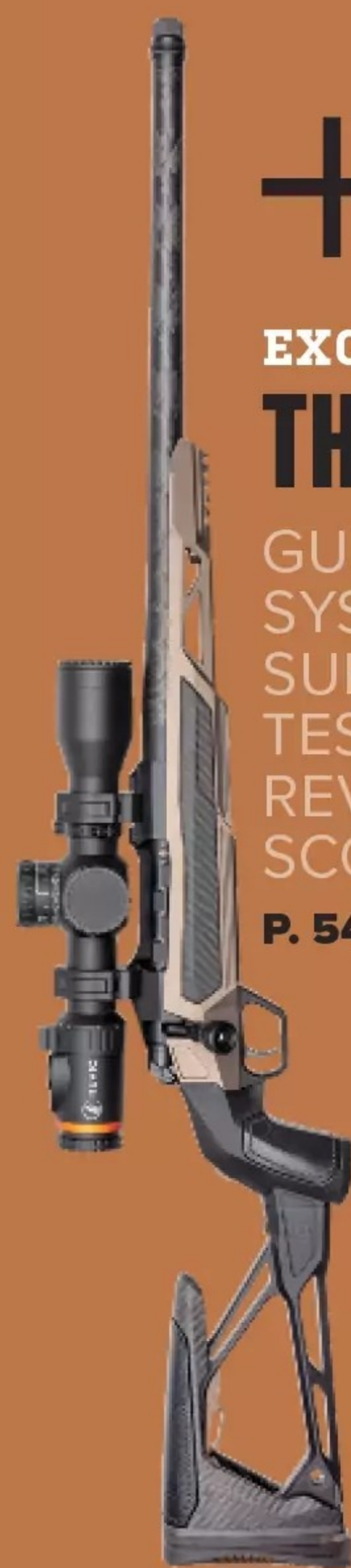
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Remembering Bob Nosler.
1946–2025



**P. 23
TARR**

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COMPACT





The subscriber cover features the Gunwerks' Endex rifle system with folding chassis, 8IGHT suppressor, Elevate 2.0 bipod, and Revic Radical scope. **p. 54**



BY JAMES TARR

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SHADOW SYSTEMS' CR920XL IS THE IDEAL SIZE FOR CONTROL AND CONCEALABILITY.

THE SWEET SPOT

COVER PHOTOS: MIKE ANSCHUETZ, MARK FINGAR; ABOVE PHOTO: ANDY GROSSMAN

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GUNS & AMMO OF THE YEAR
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BACKCOUNTRY PHYSICS

The September 2025 article "Ultra Light & Ultra Fast" by Tom Beckstrand, featuring the Savage 110 UltraLite Elite and showcasing the 7mm Backcountry cartridge was the proverbial "straw." I am continually amazed by the ability and desire of ammunition companies to crank out an endless procession of new cartridges to fill a void that no one previously knew existed. I place the Backcountry in this category, as I did the .21 Sharp, .22 ARC, .22 Creedmoor and the 7mm PRC. My list could go on and on. What I found particularly galling, however, was Beckstrand's claim that the cartridge produces 80,000 psi, but only pushes against the bolt face with an equivalent pressure of 64,000 psi if the diameter of the cartridge case head is limited to .473 inches. Is this magic, or do the laws of physics not apply here? The statement was followed by a description as to how the new steel case presses and sticks to the chamber wall, thereby reducing the force against the bolt face — something I guess brass cases can't do. Without straying into quantum physics, a little clarification is in order.

Bob Dillard

Haymarket, Virginia

When any case is pressurized (by primer ignition and subsequent powder burn), the case expands to the vessel that houses it, in this case the firearm's chamber. This cartridge case expansion occurs regardless of brass or steel construction, or for that matter, whether the maximum chamber pressure is 55,000 psi or 80,000 psi.

This pressure exerts force

on all internal surfaces and promotes case expansion in all directions. Radially, the case is constrained effectively by the chamber walls, leaving the axial end directions; one toward the muzzle and the other rearward toward the bolt face. The forward end, called the "case mouth," is open and holds the projectile before pressure sends it down the bore. The other end, called

the "case head," contains the primer and interfaces directly with the firearm's bolt face. This bolt face is surrounded by an array of bolt lugs that are "locked" into abutments in the firearm receiver, preventing rearward axial movement of the bolt upon firing. Now, under standard chamber pressures with standard brass cartridge cases, the case wall "obturate" under firing and provides some level of frictional grip with the chamber wall. This friction helps to mitigate the rearward movement of the case head, as it occurs due to sliding as well as elastic and plastic deformation of the case, and causing what is called "bolt thrust" as they come in contact. Compare this to Peak Alloy, which is much stronger than cartridge brass, and with a much higher modulus of elasticity, but still obturates in the chamber during firing. These material properties allow the case to axially "stretch" less than cartridge brass for a given internal pressure when locked to the chamber wall, thus reducing bolt thrust. It takes more internal pressure with Peak Alloy to reach the same level of case head movement, and thus bolt thrust, as conventional brass cartridge cases.

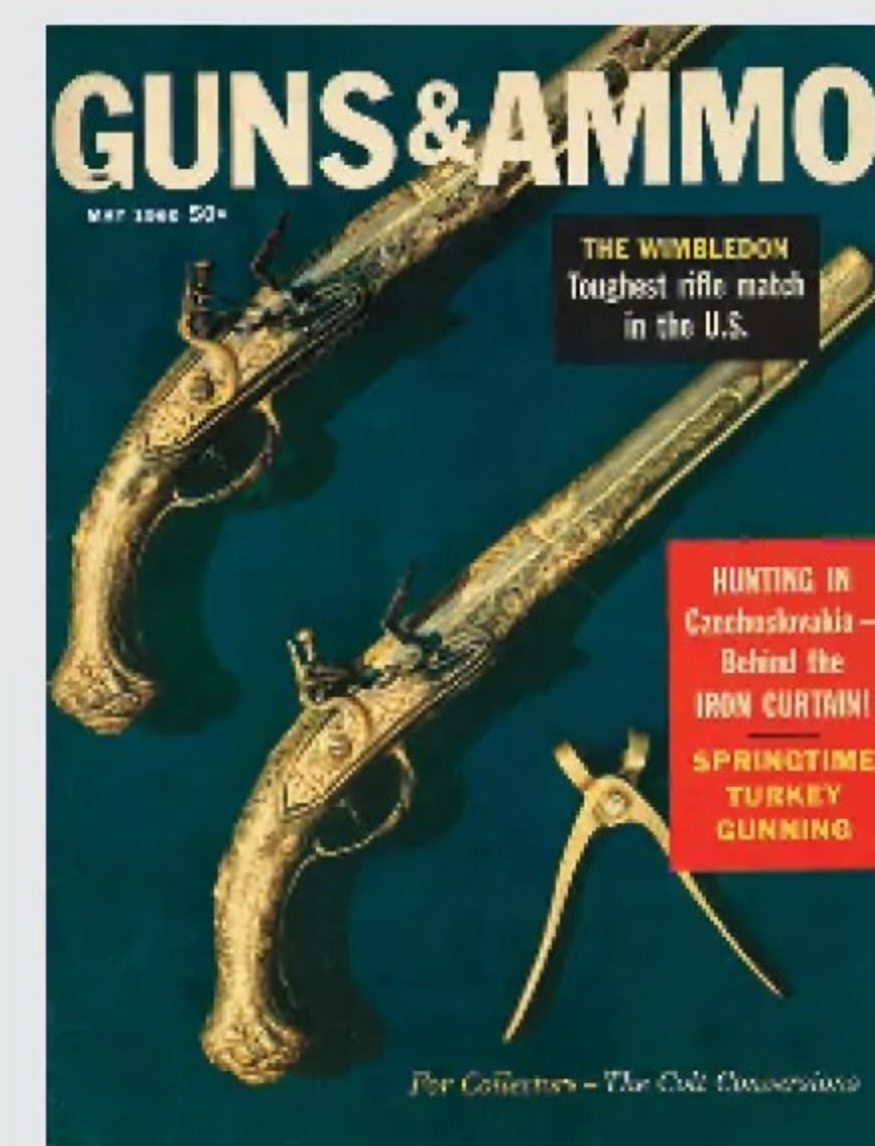
— B. Peterson, Senior Director of New Product Development, Federal Premium Ammunition

WATCH THE TRAPDOOR!

I enjoyed Dave Emary's refresher on the Springfield

MAY '60

Author George McKenna documented the expense and experience of hunting in Czechoslovakia. Though under strict control of Soviet communism, the formality of European traditions were adhered to among the hunters and gamekeepers with respect to game. Various grouse, ducks, partridges and pheasants were taken using a 12-gauge shotgun and rimfires, while chamois, mouflon, roebuck, fallow deer and wild boar were harvested with a 7x57 Mauser. Larger red deer were pursued using an 8x64 Brenneke.



Armory Trapdoor rifles. I got my first a while ago, a rod bayonet 1888. I soon learned why it shot to the left; the thin front sight was bent! I fixed that and added a front-sight protector to the muzzle. Later, I found a like-new Harrington & Richardson Officers Model Trapdoor. I shoot lead 350-grain bullets and also picked up some Federal ammo with 300-grain jacketed tipped bullets. Years ago, I read about an accidental discharge that occurred while snapping the breech block on a Trapdoor with a round in the chamber. The firing pin was frozen in the fire position, so it's the first thing I check at the range



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when firing my rifles. I really enjoy the vintage firearm articles.

Adam W. Mackow
Milford, New Jersey

BACK ON TRACK

Mr. Wood, I always enjoy your column. I just finished the one on Doug Hamlin taking over the NRA. I had a good feeling about him, and your column backs that up. After the [NRA] Board elections, I contacted Buzz Mills of Gunsite to see if we had elected the “good guys.” He responded that we had, and he passed my message on to Hamlin who sent me an email confirming his commitment. I joined the NRA in 1963 as a senior in high school. After returning from active duty in 1968, while living on PFC pay and

working part time, I went back to college and used the extra pay from being a paratrooper to become a Life Member. I sent \$20 a quarter for 15 months — a true believer! I’m now a Benefactor member and have raised a good bit of money for the Association. I was extremely disappointed to learn what Wayne LaPierre and his cronies did to our NRA. I turned my monetary contributions to the Texas State Rifle Association and became a Life member of the Second Amendment Foundation after reading one of your columns. The fight will never end, and it takes money to keep the wheels rolling. Thanks for all you do.

Don Cadden
Burnet, Texas

KEEP AT IT

After reading Eric Poole’s editorial about not shooting a perfect round of skeet, allow me to tell how I almost did not get it. I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in April 1968. After Basic and Weapons Load training, I was stationed at the twin RAF base complex Bentwaters and Woodbridge in England. After work one day in 1970, I was asked if I’d like to shoot skeet at Bentwaters’ rod and gun club. We shot a few times a week and got proficient, most scores in the 20s. About six of us kept at it and shot more. Winchester AA skeet loads were \$1.25 a box, and clays were \$1. I worked my way up to scores of 22 and 23. The more I shot, the better I got. A major shot with us,

too, just for fun. He used a side-by-side fairly well. Once while shooting with the major, I finished Station 5. He said, “You haven’t missed yet!” Then he looked at me and said, “I’m sorry.” I brushed it off and thought about doing everything right. I got Station 6, 7 and then 8. I chose my option on 7 and got the low house. Twenty-five straight! There were a lot of cheers, but no hat to shoot; we had to wear them the next day. I’m sure many readers have done this and better, but to Eric I’ll say just stay with it. Your perfect round is out there.

P.S. If some shooters haven’t heard, the English take doubles off station 4.

Doug Johnson
Deerbrook, Wisconsin



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XM9 PISTOL?

If I could have a dream pistol, it would be a CZ 75 with a titanium frame and slide — and chambered in 10mm. Patrick Sweeney's fine 50th anniversary tribute to the CZ 75 in "The Mystique" (October 2025) was spot on! As a combat sidearm, it still has no equal. Where was it when the U.S. military evaluated 9mm pistols to replace the .45?

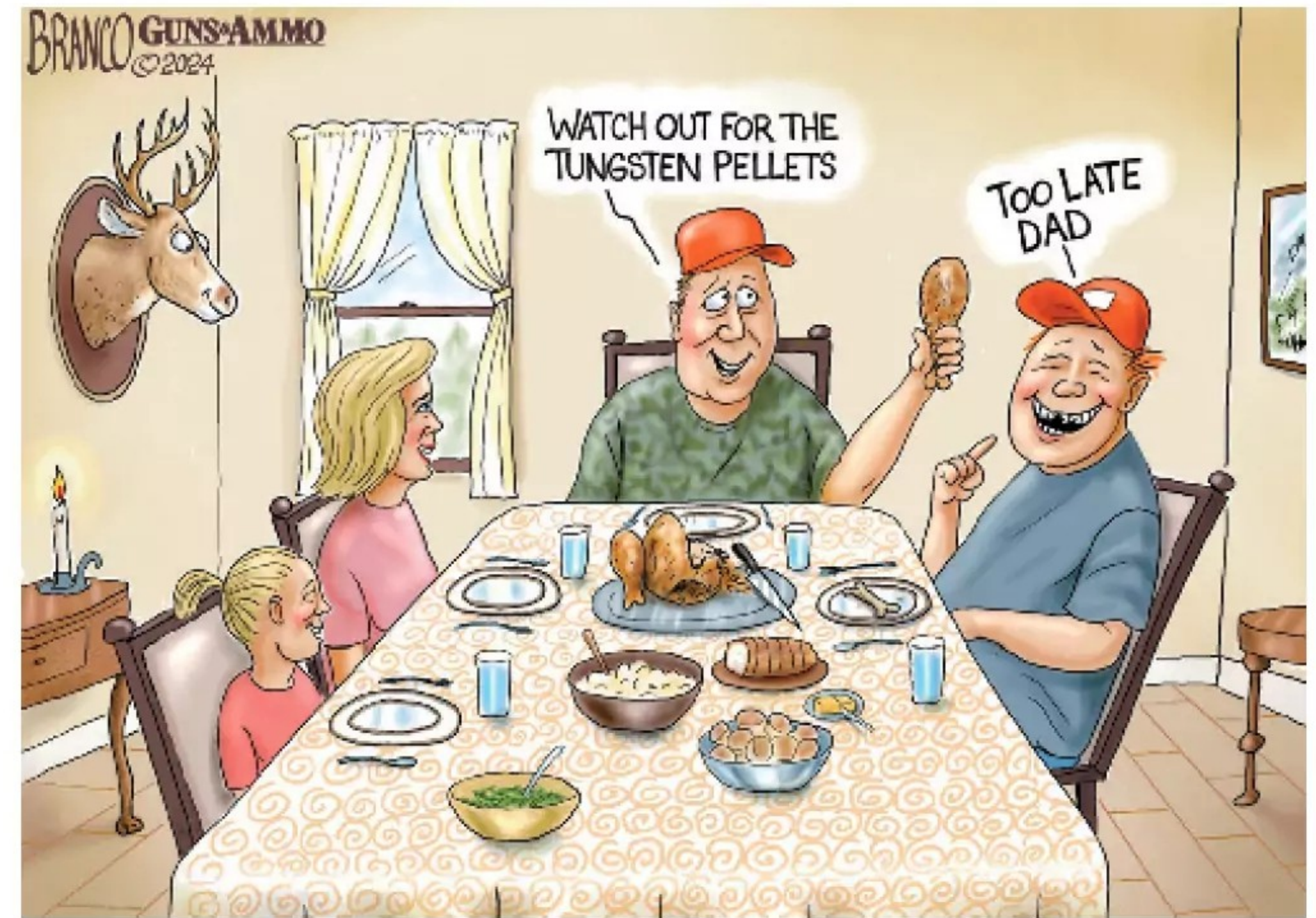
George Getty
Clovis, California

Behind the Iron Curtain.
— P. Sweeney

SUB-SONIC SINGLE-SHOT

I picked up a rolling block .22 LR rifle, a non-serialized J. Stevens Arms Co. Little Scout made in Chicopee

Falls, Massachusetts. The rifle's woodwork and hardware seem to be in very good condition. The bore and chamber appear clean as a whistle! There is a patent date of "July 2-07". On one side of the barrel near the rolling block is a circle with the number "6" stamped inside. Near the butt end of the receiver is a circle with "SVG." On top of the barrel near the rolling block on two lines appears "NOT DESIGNED TO USE WITH HIGH SPEED CARTRIDGES." When did the U.S. start requiring serialization of firearms? Is the present manufactured subsonic .22 LR ammunition safe to use in this rifle, assuming it is in good mechanical order? Some .22 LR ammo makers market



an even lower-velocity load for "short barrel handguns." Is this ammo safe to use in long-barrel rifles?

Frank Lotito
Plum, Pennsylvania

I would recommend only shooting ".22 Long" ammunition from your Stevens — not ".22 Long Rifle." The

.22 Long operates at the same pressure as "Long Rifle," but it is a shorter and lower-capacity case, firing a lighter 29-grain bullet. The result is less area the pressure curve, and less overall force transmitted to the breech block. CCI still loads .22 Long ammunition.

— D. Emary

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Remembering Bob Nosler.



ERIC R. POOLE

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HANDS-ON

FOUNDED BY HIS DAD IN 1948, Robert “Bob” Nosler carried his father’s business beyond bullet making. Though Nosler is best known for John Nosler’s Partition bullet, it was Bob who was the driving force behind the company’s first reloading manual in 1976, the Ballistic Tip in 1984, and returning the company to family ownership in 1988. By 2005, Nosler was more than simply “a bullet company”; it had become a shooting sports brand. Nosler is now a business that manufactures bullets, brass, ammunition, firearms and suppressors.

Bob overcame a lot of resistance along the way, but he knew it would be successful. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War and served aboard the USS *Nathan Hale*. It’s believed he developed his meticulous nature while working on that submarine. When Bob left the Navy, he returned home to Oregon, becoming Nosler’s sixth employee.

Bob started in the “lube room,” a bullet preparation area where all entry-level employees began their careers. Nosler is a production-oriented company, meaning that Bob would have rather invested Nosler’s money to make a better product, improve equipment, or increase production volume. He earned a humble office but spent most days working the factory’s concrete floor. The offices at Nosler are indicative of that; simple and understated.

It was not uncommon to see Bob pull bullets off presses, inspect and weigh them, and looking over people’s shoulders. He is still fondly remembered for working as many hours as anyone else, and being a hands-on leader. Quality control was important to him, but Bob also took care of Nosler’s employees behind the scenes. He assisted many of his staff through personal and professional challenges.

“It’s important to know that [Bob] cared about the people who worked for him,” said Brand Director Mason Payer. “Whenever we had Monday leadership meetings, he

encouraged us to teach somebody something every day. He also sent people home. ‘When the shift is over, be done,’ he said.”

Bob loved to hunt and shoot. Proving product afield was

usually the excuse for those adventures, but Bob often hunted to make memories with his family. He traveled the world, including Africa, Alaska and Canada’s Northwest Territories. He loved pursuing pronghorn and whitetail, but hunting was about building experiences and togetherness. He wasn’t a trophy hound, a point chaser, and he never sought to check boxes for an award.

In 2008, Bob and John commemorated the 60th anniversary of Nosler with a special hunt that included original Partition bullets fired from a pre-’64 Model 70, a similar rifle used by his father. Bob enjoyed baking nostalgia into a hunt. Though Nosler designed six of its own cartridges, his trusted rifle was a Nosler Model 48 Custom in .300 Short Magnum. He loaded it with the 180-grain E-Tip.

Bob stepped away from day-to-day operations in 2020, but he was excited about the Solid Base coming back in the new-for-2024 Nosler Whitetail Country line. “We all have jobs because of whitetail deer hunting,” he said. The development was during his tenure, which recognized that not every hunter is after a sheep or elk. Nosler wanted a more accessible line for deer hunters, and bringing back the Solid Base bullet and using its own brass manufacturing was the answer. Quality is still in it, but at a more affordable price.

John and Bob Nosler’s legacy will continue through the brand’s ammunition, rifles, suppressors, reloading manuals and bullets. A new headquarters and production facility in Redmond, Oregon, is increasing its capacity, still guided by five principles: faith, family, honesty, integrity, and quality. Bob Nosler passed away on Sept. 2, 2025. He was 79.

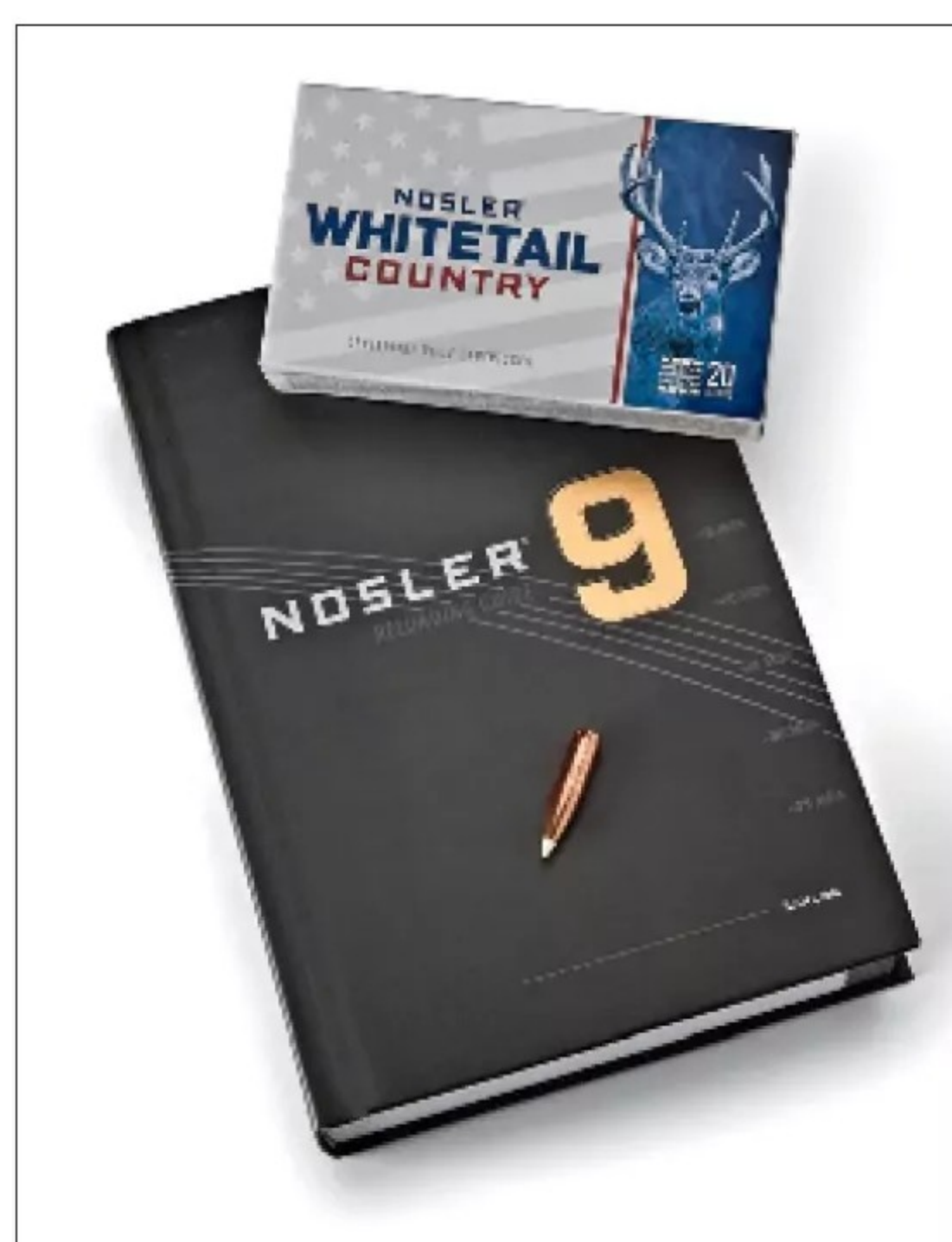


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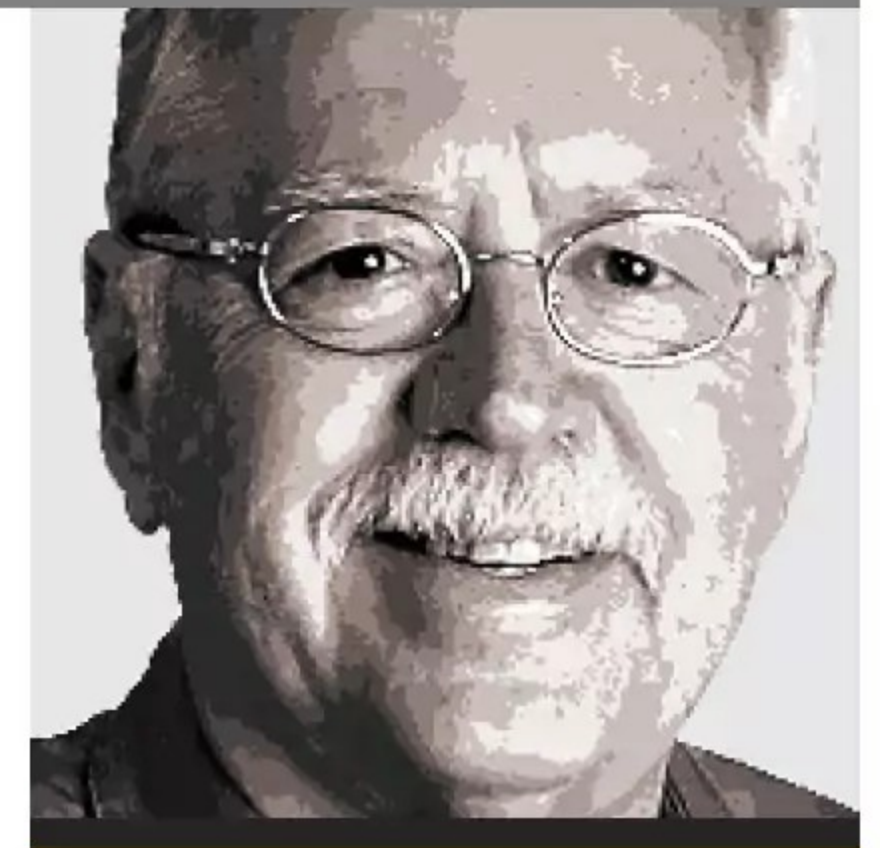
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GARRY.JAMES@OUTDOORS.G.COM



FN P.35 (WORLD WAR II PRODUCTION), 9MM, <70%: \$750

REFINISHED NAZI P.35 HIGH POWER

Q: Long ago, my father-in-law passed away and I inherited this 9mm FN pistol and holster. I assume it was made for the German government in the 1930s. It came to me with a leather holster, a spare magazine and plated silver. The slide reads “FABRIQUE NATIONALE D’ARMES DE GUERRE”. I’m happy to learn more about it. You are welcome to publish any information you find. As a former 336th Assault Helicopter Vietnam gunship pilot, I’ve done my share of shooting, but I’m retired now.

P. H.

Winnetka, Illinois

A: The *Waffenamt* on your P.35 “High Power” indicates it was indeed built at FN during German occupation in World War II. Originally, it would have been blued. However, at some point in its history, it was refinished in nickel or chrome. Unfortunately, this alteration greatly affects the pistol’s value. I’d price it at around \$750 to \$900 as a shooter. It looks

to be in decent shape, though, and is still an interesting artifact.

SAVAGE MODEL 15 INFO

Q: I am attempting to do research on the history of the Savage-Springfield Model 15/Stevens Model 15 and its variants for a possible article. I have read through various online

comments stating that no information is available from Savage on these models. I am hoping you may have a reliable contact at Savage who can assist me or confirm that they no longer have that information available — and not just a scripted reply from someone in the office.

G. K.

Email

A: I’m afraid I don’t have any inside track on anyone at Savage who could help

you. However, I did a bit of research myself and learned that the Savage/Stevens/Springfield Model 15 single-shot .22 “Boy’s Rifle” was manufactured from 1937 to 1965. When it came out in ’37, this simple, well-made little piece sold for \$3. By 1959, the price had risen to \$16.40. In addition to the factory names, these guns are often found with proprietary hardware store monikers. If any additional info comes available, I’ll be glad to forward it to you.

AUCTION BLOCK

MINIATURE FARQUHARSON

A superlative .222 Remington-chambered Clayton Nelson miniature Farquharson achieved a healthy \$27,500 at a September 3, 2025, Sportsman’s Legacy sale. Commissioned in 1988 and completed in 1993, this lovely custom rifle exhibited a flawlessly executed balance of the metalwork to wood. AAA-Grade walnut and superb metalwork perfectly complement Nelson’s petite action. Appointments include an ebony forend tip, 26 lines-per-inch wrap checkering with partial double borders, a scalloped pancake cheekrest with shadow line, trapdoor grip cap and a trapdoor buttplate with widow’s peak. Engraving, signed by Eric Gold, highlights a lynx (right) and a coyote (left), each in gold relief and bordered by fine scroll with gold wire accents. The supporting pattern continues over the lever, tangs, grip cap, buttplate, mounts and screws. The 6-pound rifle with 14¼-inch length-of pull was flawless and unfired. For more information about this and future sales, visit Sportsman’s Legacy at sportsmanslegacy.com.





VINTAGE RUGER BEARCAT

Q: At a recent auction, I purchased a Ruger Bearcat that I've discovered is an "Alpha Cat." It included its original box with the serial number and original price (\$49.50) handwritten on one end. It's hard to say if it was ever fired, though another firearm I purchased from this particular collector appeared to be a "safe queen." It has certainly been dry-fired. The serial number is P12XX, which I found on the Ruger website showing the year of manufacture to be 1959. The four-stage cocking is clean and sharp. All functions are excellent. If it was fired, it wasn't that often, as it feels like a new gun. Needless to

say, I have not shot it yet. Can you tell me more about this version of the gun and what it's worth?

A. K.
Email

A: *It sounds like you've already done a considerable amount of homework on your Old Model Bearcat. From what you say, it's apparent you have a pristine-condition early model. The Bearcat was introduced by Sturm, Ruger & Co. in 1958 and produced until 1970. Early guns featuring epoxy resin rosewood grips had no Ruger medallion, an omission that was corrected in 1963 along with the substitution of rosewood for walnut. Bearcats,*



RUGER BEARCAT, .22 LR, 95%: \$1,750

in altered form and with updated mechanics were introduced in 1996. Your piece, being an early gun in superb condition with alpha-betical prefix and its original box, will bring something of a premium. I'll stick my neck out and opine that it's worth \$1,500 to \$2,000.

NORDHEIM DRILLING WORTH

Q: I've recently come into possession of a drilling marked "EMIL v. NORDHEIM". I understand the shotgun barrels are 16 gauge, but of the shorter version. I doubt I can shoot this nice drilling, and I know I'll have to have the rifle chamber cast, as I doubt it is ".32-40", as marked. Are the barrels Damascus? Do you have any idea when it was made? I know it's from before World War II, but that's not much to go on. I have no interest in its value, as I am keeping it.

P. M.
Email

A: *From your photos, it appears you have a very nice, medium-grade German hammer drilling dating from sometime in the 1920s. My research indicates Emil von Nordheim manufactured sporting arms in Zella-Mehlis, Saxony, Germany, from 1915 to 1925. He was succeeded by Gotth. von Nordheim, who ceased business at the beginning of World War II. The barrels are marked "KRUPP" and are not Damascus. You are most likely correct concerning the caliber; it's probably some metric round, and you'll need to have a chamber cast made to determine what it is.*

HOWA DELUXE M1 CARBINE

Q: Between 1970 and 1971, my father was stationed in Asia. His main job was loading bombs and other ordnance onto aircraft, as well as occasionally cleaning and rebuilding aircraft machine guns. During one of his

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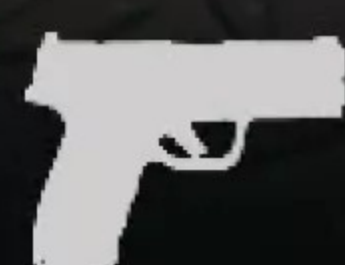
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HOPKINS & ALLEN TRIPLE-ACTION SAFETY POLICE, .38 S&W, 80%: \$375

temporary duty assignments (TDY), he purchased a Howa M1 carbine. It's the most deluxe M1 I've ever seen. I went online to see if I could find out more about these Japanese carbines. I learned Howa made them for both the Japanese and Thai defense forces, as well as some for Klein's Sporting Goods stores. I couldn't find anything about a super deluxe M1. The finish on the stock and the machine work of the action are as nice as any I've seen. Can you tell me more about this model and its possible value?

W. D.

Email

A: As you say, you have a Howa Model 300 sporting version of the U.S. M1 Carbine. These were manufactured by Howa Kogyo in Tokyo, Japan, from the early 1960s into the 1980s. Quality was good, and they are attractive little rifles. Yours is one of the simpler models that came out in the 1970s. This particular version was a popular souvenir with U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan, hence the connection with your father. They are not commonly encountered today. A rifle like yours sold at Morphy's Auctions on April 30, 2021, for \$2,640, including buyer's premium. Its value had been estimated between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and the package included the original box. That's the most recent comparison I can turn up.

ODDLY-GRIPPED HOPKINS & ALLEN

Q: I received this Hopkins & Allen Safety Police .38 S&W revolver out of the blue. I doubt it has much value other than as a heartfelt gift from a lifelong friend, as you can see from the letter that accompanied it. After talking to my friend, I learned his grandfather was a railway policeman in Minneapolis during the early 1900s and carried this revolver. The bore is near perfect, but shows a lot of holster wear. My main question is about the design of the grips. Why the hook or open area at the top? I've researched this firearm and have seen a few with the very same grips. I received a box of .32 cartridges a week or so later and have shot it. It shoots quite well! Any info at all would be appreciated. Thank you!

D. H.

Email

A: The Hopkins & Allen top-break Safety Police Triple Action revolver was a good-quality little piece that was well-regarded in its time. It was available in .22, .32 and .38 calibers. "Triple action" refers to the gun's cocking, firing and safety mechanisms. These revolvers were manufactured from 1908 to about 1921. The outsized grips on your gifted gun appear to be the wooden "target" grips, which were an option. More moderately scaled

pearl panels were also available. Finish was blue or nickel, and engraving was available by special order. The photos indicate your gun is in very good condition. The grips do add to its value. I'd price it in the \$375 to \$400 range.

ENFIELD NO. 2 REVOLVER MARKINGS

Q: I've been a G&A subscriber for more than 40 years, and your column is the first thing I read every month. I'm sending photos of my garden-variety 1940 Enfield No. 2 Mk 1* with a question. My online research indicated these were issued to tankers and air-crews during World War II. On the front strap, "RNG" and "816" were stamped in by someone, and they appear to be somewhat dated. The Royal Navy did have the 816 Naval Air Squadron that was active from 1939 to 1941. Could this be one of theirs? Any information you might have about British units marking their rifles like this would be greatly appreciated. FYI, this Enfield is a great shooter.

K. S.
Kingman, Arizona

A: I have something of an affection for the No. 2 Enfields, and have owned a number of them over the years including two Royal Air Force-issued pieces, both marked simply "R.A.F." I've checked every source at my disposal and cannot find a reference to "RNG." The Royal Fleet Arm certainly wouldn't use those initials, so at this point I'm a bit stumped. Post-war, these revolvers ended up being widely dispersed. Perhaps "RNG" could be a law enforcement or civilian inventory number. If any readers have some insight on the matter, I'm all ears. 

HAVE AN HEIRLOOM? Curious about a vintage firearm? Email us at gaeditor@outdoorsg.com, or send a description with detailed photos to Gun Room, Guns & Ammo, 2 News Plaza, 3rd Floor, Peoria, IL 61614. Please include your name and state of residence.

Due to the volume of requests each month, personal replies are not possible. The most interesting or unusual queries are answered in Guns & Ammo magazine.

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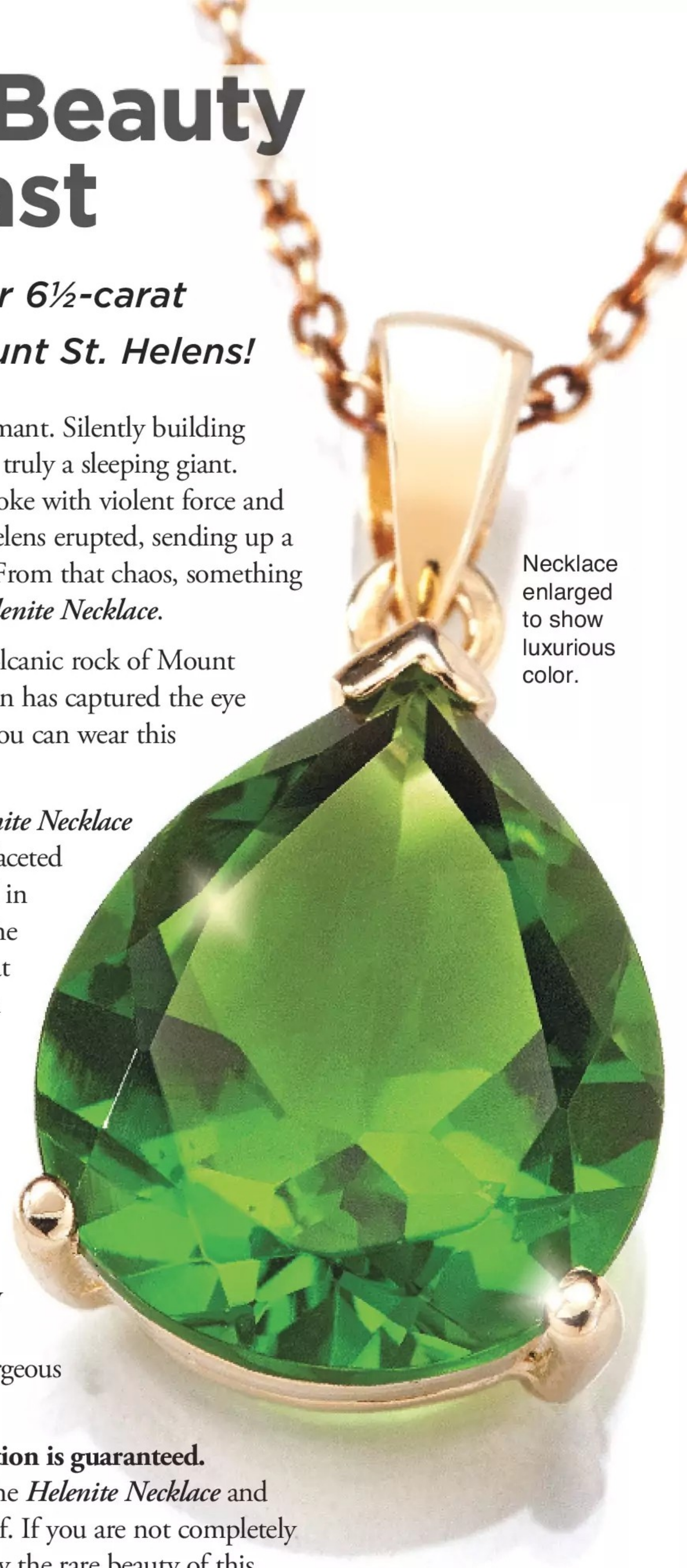
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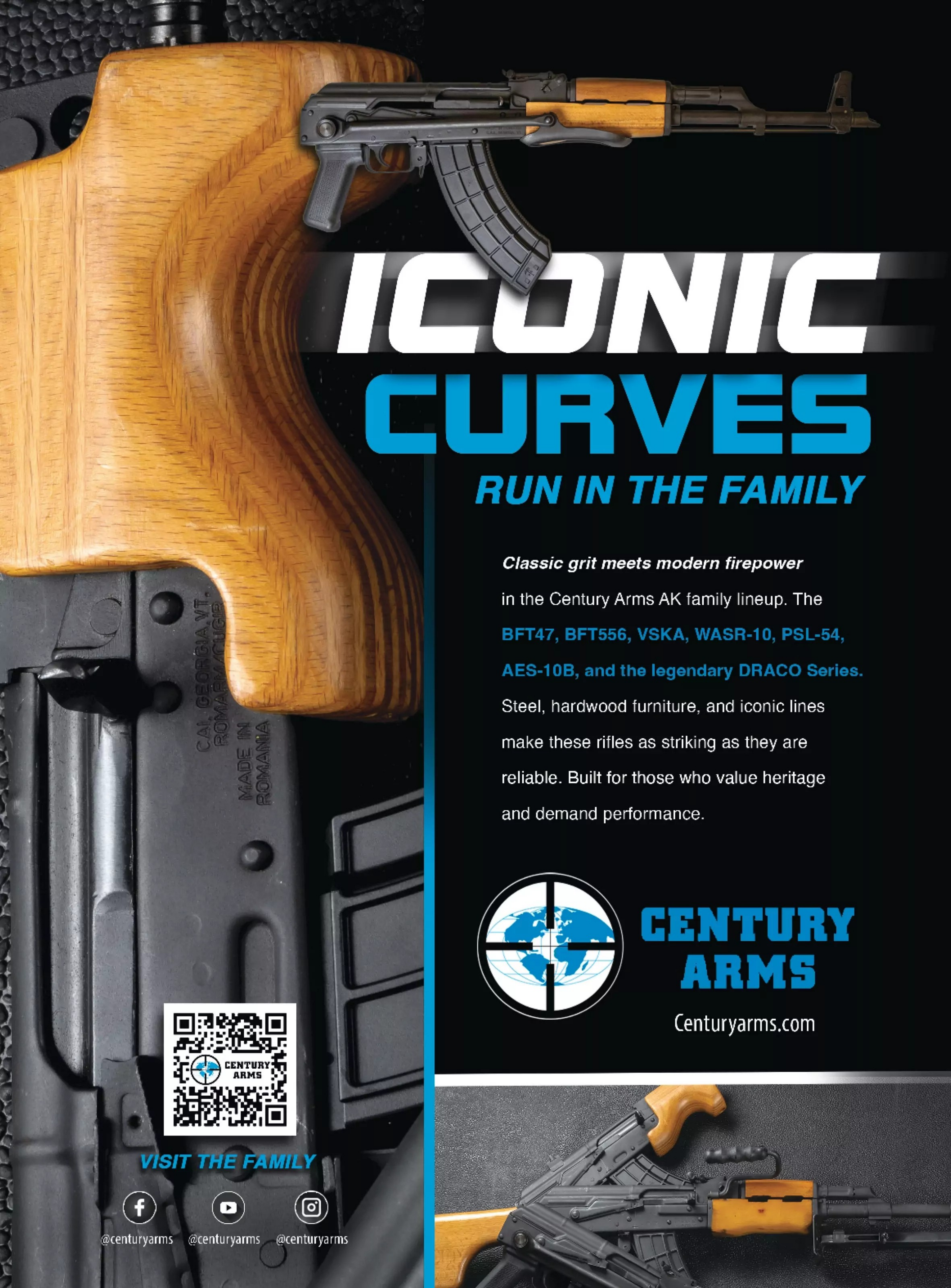
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JAMES TARR

CARRYING A RELOAD

I HANG OUT ON X (formerly Twitter) and read a lot of posts by entertaining gun people — some knowledgeable, others not so much. However, both types make me think. Recently, posts were flying fast about how there doesn't seem to be evidence that any private citizen involved in a defensive shooting has ever reloaded their handgun during a fight, so carrying a spare magazine was simply an affectation.

Two days later, Charlie Kirk was assassinated. Some on the internet celebrated his death and advocated for more violence against political opponents. President Donald Trump designated Antifa a domestic terror organization. The spare magazine argument on X disappeared instantly. People have been confronted with an ugly reality.

The odds that a private citizen will need to reload their gun in a fight are the same as someone needing a gun to defend themselves. It's low, but never zero.

So, let's talk about carrying a reload for your handgun. We can divide this issue into three parts: Why, What and Where.

THE WHY

You might think the main reason to carry a reload for your pistol is the obvious one, that it simply provides more ammunition to fight with. While that's definitely in the top two, I don't know that it's the best reason. The best reason to have a reload on your person — specifically a spare magazine if you're running a semiauto pistol — is because magazines wear and fail. Magazines are consumables that suffer wear simply by existing. Whether loaded or unloaded, they're under constant spring pressure and springs die. Feed lips also spread apart over time, causing malfunctions. On several occasions, I've seen magazine basepads crack while people were shooting, dumping the basepad, spring,

and all the remaining rounds onto the ground. It's annoying at a pistol match but potentially deadly during an a defensive engagement. The solution is simple: Shove a new magazine into the gun, but to do it — stick with me here — you actually need to have a spare magazine on you!

The additional ammunition a reload provides is, of course, pertinent. It may be doubly important depending on the capacity of the gun you're carrying. If all you've got is a five- or six-shot micro-compact pistol or snubnose revolver, not carrying a reload seems an exercise in optimism.

The "statistically average gunfight," according to FBI data, is the rule of three: Three shots fired in 3 seconds at a single bad guy 3-yards away. However, with all the cameras everywhere — mounted on buildings, on your phone, in your doorbell, not to mention police bodycams — we're exposed

to more and more footage of actual defensive shootings. Law-abiding citizens are learning that a lot of bad guys like to do crime with their friends, and it's rare that the shenanigans stop after the first shot is fired.

It's not always just one guy kicking down your front door or pulling at your car doors; sometimes it's two. Or three. In the past few years — on more than one occasion — citizens have aided police officers under attack, too. In Farrell, Pennsylvania, 2024, a police officer was involved in a shootout with a 49-year-old suspect outside of a convenience store after midnight. An armed citizen with a valid concealed carry permit was lauded for backing up law enforcement that night. In a situation such as that, having extra ammunition for suppressive fire might come in handy!

Pistols are poor fight-stoppers to begin with, and bad guys often need multiple hits to halt their violence. Odds are that you'll miss at least some of your shots, too. Nobody



who has found themselves in a life-or-death situation wished they had less ammo in their gun. The joke in the military is that it's impossible to have too much ammo on you unless you're underwater or on fire.

THE WHAT

Generally, one spare magazine to perform a reload is all you should need. If the magazine in your pistol malfunctions, one spare should fix the problem — but capacity plays a part here as well. Are you carrying a compact semiauto with double-digit capacity? If so, one spare magazine should be enough to get you through most situations.

Some pertinent personal history here: I hate gunwriters who wax eloquent about carry guns but don't ever carry one — and there are more than you think! If I'm wearing clothes and not on the wrong side of a metal detector, I'm carrying a full-size pistol and at least one reload under my sweatshirt or Hawaiian shirt. Always and everywhere but the gym, which is where I downsize my gun. This attitude to carry everyday is, in large part, due to my very weird, interesting life. I've been an armored car driver, a police officer, and a private investigator, all of it either in or around the Third World ruin called "Detroit." On the same day the Berlin Wall came down, in 1989, my parents were murdered in a crime that got the FBI involved and had local news crews broadcasting from my front yard. I also wrote "Carnivore," an autobiography for Iraq War veteran SFC "C.J." Dillard Johnson. After that book's publication, ISIS — yeah, that ISIS — made him No. 2 on their kill list behind Robert O'Neill, the U.S. Navy SEAL who shot bin Laden — and my name is on the cover of that book. I figure the odds don't apply to me.

I used to carry the .45-caliber Government Model 1911, and I did every day for a decade. I always carried two spare eight-round magazines in a Galco leather double mag carrier (\$102, galcogunleather.com), totalling 25 rounds of Federal's 230-grain Hydra-Shok. The 1911's single-stack magazines are flat and conceal well. When I switched to 9mm — either a Glock 17 or 34, SIG Sauer P226, or Langdon Tactical Beretta 92, depending on the year or my mood — I carried only one spare magazine for 35-plus rounds on my person. I carry these spare magazines outside my belt as I do my holster, and most of the time an old Blade-Tech polymer mag pouch (\$30, blade-tech.com) opposite of a Safariland 5198 open-top holster (\$54, safariland.com). I dress around them.

In case you're interested, I've cycled through various carry ammo through the years, including Speer Gold Dot



124-grain +P hollowpoint (HP), Hornady 135-grain +P Critical Duty, Winchester Ranger 127-grain +P+, and Black Hills 115-grain TAC-XP +P. Currently, my lightly customized Gen5 G17 carry gun is loaded with Federal 147-grain HST rounds. If I can't solve the problem with 35 HST rounds of 9mm, I'm doing something wrong or I should transition to a rifle.

If you're a revolver guy, I consider you an old-fashioned optimist. You won't have any problems with malfunctioning magazines, but your gun carries so few rounds that everything needs to go right to not find yourself in the middle of an ongoing problem with an empty gun. If you're carrying a revolver, you should be carrying a reload for it — or a spare revolver.

THE WHERE

When it comes to wheelguns, you can reload them with loose rounds, Speed Strips or speedloaders. These fit nicely into a pocket, just like a snubnose. Speedloaders are the fastest but tend to be bulky. I think Bianchi Speed Strips (\$15.25, safariland.com) might be the best choice. They hold five or six rounds in a flat row, and you can stuff them into your cylinder two at a time. Because they

are flat, slightly smaller than a deck of cards, they fit nicely into a pocket and don't bulge like a speedloader. I know a few serious guys who carry snubbies either as a backup or primary, and most of them carry one or even two Speed Strips in their front pocket — usually the front-right pocket, if they're right handed.

If you're carrying a spare magazine, it should be where it can be easily accessed by your support hand. If you're a right-hander, that means where you can grab it with your left hand, probably on the left side of your body, on your belt line, or in your pocket.

Most holster manufacturers offers magazine pouches as well, for inside- (IWB) or outside-the-waistband (OWB). Appendix carry (AIWB) is the rage, and a lot of those holsters sport a spare magazine carrier on the opposite side of your belt buckle. Many people just stick a spare magazine in their front pocket, and that works. Be aware that doing so allows lint to get into the magazine and move around, so it could be upside down when you go to grab it. A few holster companies sell in-pocket magazine carriers that keep the magazine in place and properly oriented, and with the end of the magazine covered far less lint gets in there.

That reload? Sure, you probably won't need it. The odds are against it. Just like the odds of you needing that carry gun at any one time are very low. Still, the odds are always greater than zero. 

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Using a smartphone to become a better shooter.



RICHARD NANCE

POCKET COACH

THE BEST WAY to improve your shooting skills is to receive professional instruction. A competent instructor will lay the framework for your success by teaching proper technique and, just as importantly, diagnosing and helping to correct errors detrimental to performance. This is far more efficient and, in the long run, less expensive than learning through trial and error.

The problem is, despite your diligence and the instructor's ability, a week-end or even a weeklong course won't give you enough repetitions of a technique to master it. To truly anchor a skill, you'll need plenty of practice after the course to develop and maintain what you were taught.

While practicing under the tutelage of a qualified shooting instructor is ideal, it's usually not a realistic option. Most of the time, you'll be practicing on your own or perhaps with a friend or two. Have you considered the "coach" that we carry virtually 24/7 to communicate, stay informed, and even be entertained?

Of course, your smartphone can provide access to digital articles and videos to enhance your shooting knowledge, but who's to say whether you're applying what you learned correctly in your practice sessions? Your phone's camera can, particularly its slow-motion video feature.

My introduction to using "SLO-MO" video to improve performance came several years ago in a defensive pistol course taught by Kelly McCann, a former Special Operations Marine and renowned firearms trainer. After learning the nuances of the draw stroke, we filmed one another drawing and firing while on the shot timer. As I watched the SLO-MO video, I was gut-punched with the realization that my technique wasn't as clean as I'd imagined. Specifically, I was wasting time driving the web of my hand down onto the grip

of my pistol. Shoving the gun down was, of course, counter-productive to my goal of drawing the gun from the holster as quickly as possible.

With the problem diagnosed, I was able to implement a solution. In this case, it was simple. Instead of driving the web of my hand down so hard on the grip of my pistol, I focused on placing the web of my hand in position and

hooking under the trigger-guard with my middle finger to facilitate the draw. The result? A faster and more efficient drawstroke.

If you don't have someone to record you shooting, get a tripod to hold your phone steady. You can hit the record button yourself then step into frame and perform whatever technique you'd like to analyze. Providing several repetitions can help you determine whether a particular error was an anomaly or a recurring problem.

Recently, I used SLO-MO video to evaluate my grip and trigger control — two

important marksmanship fundamentals. I intentionally recorded clips of an improper grip first. For starters, I held the pistol too low, exposing a gap between the web of my hand and the top of the backstrap. Predictably, SLO-MO video showed the muzzle flip up wildly as each shot broke. While you might get away with gripping too low for a single shot, this poor technique makes it difficult to deliver fast and accurate follow-up shots.

Next, I gripped high on the backstrap, but instead of camming my support-side wrist forward to aid in recoil control, I allowed my wrist to remain in a neutral orientation, with my thumb flagged upward as if I were hitchhiking. As a result, my left wrist would flex with each shot fired. You might still hit your target without camming your wrist, but the pistol will be harder to control when shooting rapid strings of fire. I have proof.



Your smartphone's slow-motion video feature makes a great coach. While a target and shot timer tell how the story ends, SLO-MO video reveals the entire story. It provides invaluable feedback to diagnose shooting errors that, once identified, can be corrected. Best of all, unlike a coach, a phone is always with you and always ready to provide a detailed, objective account of your shooting technique.



You don't even need an independent camera operator to train at your range. A tripod works just as well! Bluetooth switches are available to remotely activate your phone's camera, too.

Finally, rather than isolating my trigger finger, I purposely clutched my shooting hand with each press of the trigger. Unlike the two grip errors, “jerking the trigger” can cause you to miss your first shot, typically low and left for a right-handed shooter.

Like your target and shot timer, SLO-MO video tells a story. In fact, it tells the whole story, whereas the target and shot timer only provide the ending. You either hit the target, or you missed. You either made the time standard, or you



Your phone camera can be oriented on your left- or right-hand side, depending on what you want to learn. It's also possible to zoom in on sections of your gun or body for a closer view.

didn't. SLO-MO video shows the process.

By analyzing your technique frame by frame, you'll likely discover mistakes you didn't know you were making. Once a mistake is diagnosed, it's just a matter of correcting it — an impossible challenge if you don't know what you're doing wrong. You can even share the SLO-MO video with someone more knowledgeable to provide feedback on how to best correct any technical errors SLO-MO video reveals. The best way to go fast is to analyze yourself in slow motion. **GA**

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Burris Fullfield

TOM BECKSTRAND

50 YEARS YOUNG

FIFTY YEARS AGO, Burris unveiled the Fullfield line of rifle scopes, which became known for presenting an exceptionally wide field of view. In the years since, Fullfield scopes featured increased light transmission while keeping the price palatable to most working-class riflemen. These principles have always guided the Fullfield line, but the newest generation of these scopes brings unprecedented performance at a price that remains within reach.

Field of view continues to be one of the areas where the Fullfield shines. While Burris no longer dominates in this area, these inexpensive scopes have fields of view that are just as wide as scopes that cost seven or eight times as much. All these models have second focal plane (SFP) reticles and are best suited to hunting or casual plinking at ranges up to and within 1,200 yards. Holding off for wind requires some additional effort unless the scope is at its maximum magnification, but that's why I'd recommend these scopes for recreational pursuits versus hard-core competitive use.

Each of these scopes has an intended purpose, so a quick look at each model shows how much thought and great design went into ensuring these scopes meet the diverse needs of today's rifleman.

2-8X35MM \$192 – \$228

This little number is a short 9¾ inches long and weighs a scant 13½ ounces. If ever there were a scope well suited to a Ruger American or Savage Axis, this is it! The 2-8X has a 1-inch tube, which is one of the reasons it weighs so little.

This scope is best used for hunting where shots on game are inside 200 yards. It is small and light, but it is also only available with a capped elevation turret and fixed parallax. This means there is no dialing for distance, only holding over with one of the ballistic reticles. The parallax comes

set at 100 yards, so as the target distance increases beyond 200 yards parallax begins to introduce some aiming error. The capped elevation turret and fixed parallax are why the 2-8X Fullfield is one of the most economical scopes available.

2.5-10X42MM \$216 – \$264

The 2.5-10X is best suited for a similar hunting scenario as previously described. It has an excellent field of view and is only three-quarters of an inch longer and 2 ounces heavier. Like the 2-8X, it has a relatively large objective lens that gives it an equally large exit pupil. No scope “gathers light,” but this one does sling a bunch of it back to the shooter's eye. The exit pupil is the circle in which the shooter's eye must reside to see a full field of view through the scope. A larger exit pupil makes it easier to get a full field of view and, in cases where the shooter's pupil can dilate to match the size of the exit pupil, results in a well-lit image. All Fullfield scopes have large exit pupils.

3-12X42MM \$300 – \$396

The 3-12X model is the first Fullfield scope I would recommend for hunting beyond 200 yards. There are three versions of this scope available, but one has the new exposed advanced elevation turret, which is also available with a side-focus knob. The exposed elevation turret allows the shooter to dial one complete revolution of 25 minutes of angle (MOA). For reference, 25 MOA would allow most 6.5 Creedmoor rifles with 24-inch barrels to dial for targets out to about 1,000 yards at near sea level.

The side-focus knob allows shooters to focus the image at distances as close as 25 yards — Hey, rimfire shooters! — or out to “infinity.” The ability to focus the image coming into



Burris offers numerous rings to mount any size maintube or objective size. Signature rings (below, right) include a Pos-Align insert for additional non-marring grip. **\$54 – \$78**



A factor in determining the amount of field of view a scope can offer is the maintube size. Fullfield scopes have always been available with a traditional 1-inch maintube, but 30mm and 34mm maintubes are useful for low-light and high-magnification use.

the scope is an important step in removing parallax and the error that comes with it. Most of the time, parallax error isn't significant enough to matter when hunting inside 400 yards, but if the targets get small or the distances get long, the shooter has to eliminate parallax. The side-focus knob makes that possible.

3-12X56MM **\$348 – \$396**

The unique features on the 3-12X are the 30mm maintube (instead of 1 inch) and the massive 56mm objective lens for a scope in this magnification range. The 30mm maintube provides an additional 23 minutes of internal adjustment compared to the 3-12X with the 1-inch maintube. However, the elevation turret still has a single 25-MOA revolution, limiting how much of that travel is usable after zeroing. That additional internal travel is useful for rifles that require a lot of adjustment to zero due to less-than-optimal manufacturing. Where it might not be possible to zero the scope with a 1-inch tube on a questionable rifle, the 30mm and its additional internal adjustment could get the job done.

The 56mm objective lens is going to have the largest exit pupil of any Fullfield scope. This means it will be easy to get



Burris' 4-16x50mm and 6-24x50mm Fullfield models can be equipped with double-spring, knob-style, Advanced Exposed turrets for precision dialing on long-range targets.

behind to get a full field of view, and it has a forgiving eye box. Should the possibility exist of needing the scope set at maximum magnification in very low light, this model would provide the best performance.

4-16X50MM **\$420 – \$468**

If I were going to pick a single Fullfield scope for all my hunting needs, the 4-16X would be it. Thanks to the 1-inch maintube, it weighs

only 18 ounces. The SFP reticle allows me to walk around on a hunt with the magnification set at 4X, giving me a great view of both the reticle and any animals that appear at close range. It has illuminated reticle options that are helpful at twilight, and this model is available with all of Burris' new turret systems.

These new scopes, depending on the model, are available with one of four turret systems. The capped elevation turret is what most are used to with a hunting scope. Remove the cap to zero the scope and then put it back on and leave it alone. The next option is the capped advanced knob with a removable cap. Underneath is what appears to be an exposed elevation turret. The size of the internal turret and the engraving on it make it apparent that it's meant to be dialed for distance.



Burris Knob Synergy means that it is easy to upgrade the elevation knob to an advanced or custom ballistic system.



The parallax dial for models with illuminated reticles also houses the CR2032 battery.



Burris Fullfield optics feature coated objective lenses engineered to enhance image brightness and clarity.

Next is the exposed elevation turret with 25 MOA of adjustment, and the final option is a custom-engraved turret that uses the shooter's rifle information and expected hunting conditions to create a turret that dials to however many yards to the target. No mils or MOA to calculate; just spin the dial to "4.2" to hit a target at 420 yards.

6-24X50MM \$600

The 6-24X model is for all the magnification hogs who want to see all the details down-

range. Its wide field of view makes this a great economical choice for those who love magnification. This scope is only available with the exposed elevation turret system.

The Burris Fullfield line is comprehensive with a wide variety of magnification ranges, reticles, and turrets. All

Fullfield scopes are IPX-7 rated, meaning they can be submerged in 3 feet of water for 30 minutes with no moisture penetration of the optic. Best of all, Fullfields still carry Burris' Forever Warranty. 

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QUIET TIME

Ruger RXD Suppressors

The Ruger RXD22Ti is a rimfire suppressor with a monocoque baffle assembly. It is light weight and short at 5.6 ounces and 5.66 inches.



The RXD30Ti includes a muzzlebrake and wrench. It is a centerfire can that's compatible with other HUB-style suppressor mounts.

A QUIET COLLAB

THE RXD SERIES OF SOUND SUPPRESSORS is the result of a strategic partnership between two of the most well-respected names in the firearms industry: Sturm, Ruger & Co. and Dead Air Silencers. The collaboration was simplified to the product-line moniker "RXD." Seeking more than just a simple rebranding of existing products, RXD suppressors were designed from the ground up, leveraging Ruger's

history and deep understanding of firearm design combined with Dead Air Silencer's experience implementing cutting-edge suppressor technology. The key goals were performance, simplified design and ease of maintenance. The partnership resulted in two initial offerings, the RXD30Ti for centerfire rifles and the RXD22Ti for rimfire and smallbore firearms.

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The unique, helical baffle design was possible with 3D printing technology. Dead Air refers to these as “Triskelion” baffles.



Despite its light 12.4-ounce weight, the RXD30Ti is still rated for powerful cartridges, including the .300 PRC.



RXD30TI

The RXD30Ti is a titanium .30-caliber suppressor specifically designed for the needs of hunters and precision rifleshooters with a focus on lightweight construction, sound suppression and reduction in recoil. These goals were achieved using a combination of Dead Air’s patented Triskelion and Nomad baffle designs, combined with an integral, ported brake.

Unlike traditional conical baffles, Triskelion baffles are a helical design made possible only through additive manufacturing, i.e., 3D metal printing. The design significantly reduced the amount of gas that is typically directed back at the shooter by directing expanding gases forward along a twisting, helical path. Once the expanding gases travel to the end of the suppressor, much of the energy is directed perpendicularly through a series of seven ports, acting similarly to a conventional muzzlebrake. These ports also provide diffused venting, reducing the disturbance of dust while shooting near the ground. The system resulted in less rearward gas, lower recoil and a more comfortable shooting experience.

The 3D-printing process allows for a singular, robust structure that is both lightweight and strong. Weighing just



RXD30TI	
CALIBER	.30
THREAD PITCH	5/8x24
LENGTH	7.34 in.
DIAMETER	1.74 in.
WEIGHT	12.4 oz.
MATERIALS	6AL4V titanium
FINISH	Black or Burnt Bronze Cerakote
MSRP	\$1,099
CONTACT	Sturm, Ruger & Co., 336-949-5200, ruger.com
MANUFACTURER	Dead Air Silencers, 801-857-4232, deadairsilencers.com

12.4 ounces (with the included mount) and measuring 7.34 inches in length, the RXD30Ti is a great option that won’t significantly affect the balance of any given rifle. The suppressor ships with a one-piece direct-thread brake mount for 5/8x24-threaded barrels.

This internal brake design helps reduce overall recoil while also protecting the blast baffle from direct pressure, preventing erosion. The brake mount threads into a 1.375x24-inch threaded rear section, allowing the suppressor to accept other popular HUB-compatible mounts up to 1½ inches in depth. On the front end, a removable R-Series RXD front cap reduces muzzle flash and can be removed with a standard 11/16-inch wrench. The front cap can be replaced with other caliber-specific R-Series caps if an extra decibel or two is desired, or if a user wants to change the look.

The RXD30Ti is rated for a range of calibers, from 6.5 Creedmoor to .300 PRC, making it an excellent choice for a variety of hunting and recreational shooting applications. While it’s not full-auto rated, the design is intended for typical use during hunting and precision shooting sessions. The RXD30Ti is available in two high-temperature Cerakote finishes: black and Burnt Bronze.



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Rimfires are notoriously dirty to shoot. The XRF muzzlebrake helps to prevent lead build-up farther down the suppressor.



Like the .30-caliber can, the RXD22Ti takes advantage of 3D printing technology. It also makes maintenance easy.



RXD22Ti

The RXD22Ti is the rimfire counterpart to the RXD30Ti. This innovative suppressor features a CNC-machined titanium tube, a monocoil baffle assembly, a titanium retaining cap and an XRF muzzlebrake. Being made of titanium, the RXD22Ti is remarkably lightweight, weighing only 5.6 ounces and measuring 5.66 inches (with the included muzzlebrake).

The RXD22Ti uses additive manufacturing to create a single-piece, 3D-printed Triskelion monocoil. This PVD-coated monocoil supports a series of Triskelion baffle wedges in place, along with helical channels that run the core’s entire length. This complex structure creates pockets and obstacles that encourage turbulence, further cooling down gases and reducing back pressure. This complex monocoil design can only be created with 3D printing.

The core threads tightly into a CNC-machined titanium outer tube at the rear and centers at the front with a tapered cap. A high-temperature O-ring at the base keeps the assembly from loosening. When fully assembled inside the tube, the core maximizes suppression of both the initial muzzleblast and the subsequent gas flow as expanding gases travel forward and out the muzzle.

It ships complete with an XRF rimfire muzzlebrake, which has a tapered shoulder that ensures secure lockup and repeatability. The design of the XRF helps prevent lead



RXD22Ti	
CALIBER	.22 LR
THREAD PITCH	1/2x28
LENGTH	5.66 in.
DIAMETER	1.1 in.
WEIGHT	5.6 oz.
MATERIAL	6AL4V Titanium
FINISH	Black or Burnt Bronze Cerakote
MSRP	\$499
CONTACT	Sturm, Ruger & Co., 336-949-5200, ruger.com
MANUFACTURER	Dead Air Silencers, 801-857-4232, deadairsilencers.com

buildup deep inside the suppressor. Additional XRF brakes are available for either 1/2x28 or M10x1 threaded barrels.

This basic construction simplifies maintenance, since rimfire suppressors notoriously collect carbon and lead quickly, hindering performance. To clean the internals, simply remove the core with the supplied tool or 1-inch wrench, and then submerge the components in your favorite solvent for a long bath. Since it’s PVD-coated, there’s no need to worry, but you might want to remove the O-ring first, depending on your choice of solvents.

The RXD22Ti is designed for high-velocity rimfire and most small-caliber centerfire platforms, including .22 LR, .22 WMR, .17 HMR, and even 5.7x28mm. This range makes it an ideal suppressor for a host of firearms, from your favorite Ruger 10/22 rifle to a

Mark-series pistol with a threaded barrel — or maybe an LC Charger in 5.7! It’s full-auto rated for .22 LR (with no barrel length restrictions) and can handle a muzzle energy up to 850 foot-pounds. Like the RXD30Ti, it’s also available in a choice of black and Burnt Bronze Cerakote finishes.

It’s exciting to see what can be achieved when two industry leaders team up. The proven result is the RXD Series. These are not only effective at reducing sound and recoil, but also lightweight, durable and easy to maintain with common tools. Hopefully, this venture will encourage other collaborations in the future. **G&A** — M. Finger



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MINI BOLT YOUTH G2
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H005 – .22 S/L/LR



BRASS SIDE GATE LEVER ACTION
H024-3030 – .30-30 Winchester



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H027C1-H9G – 9 mm



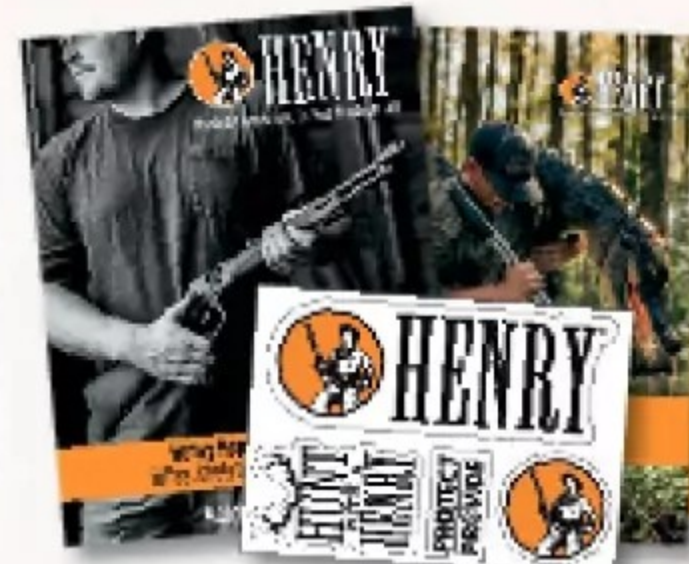
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Warne Vapor Bipod

The Warne Vapor bipod features a pair of aluminum legs and mount assembly, and steel hardware, targeting an affordable price-point. The bipod height is adjustable from 7.3 to 10½ inches with eight leg positions. Picatinny and M-Lok mounting interfaces are included. **\$100**

ETHEREAL

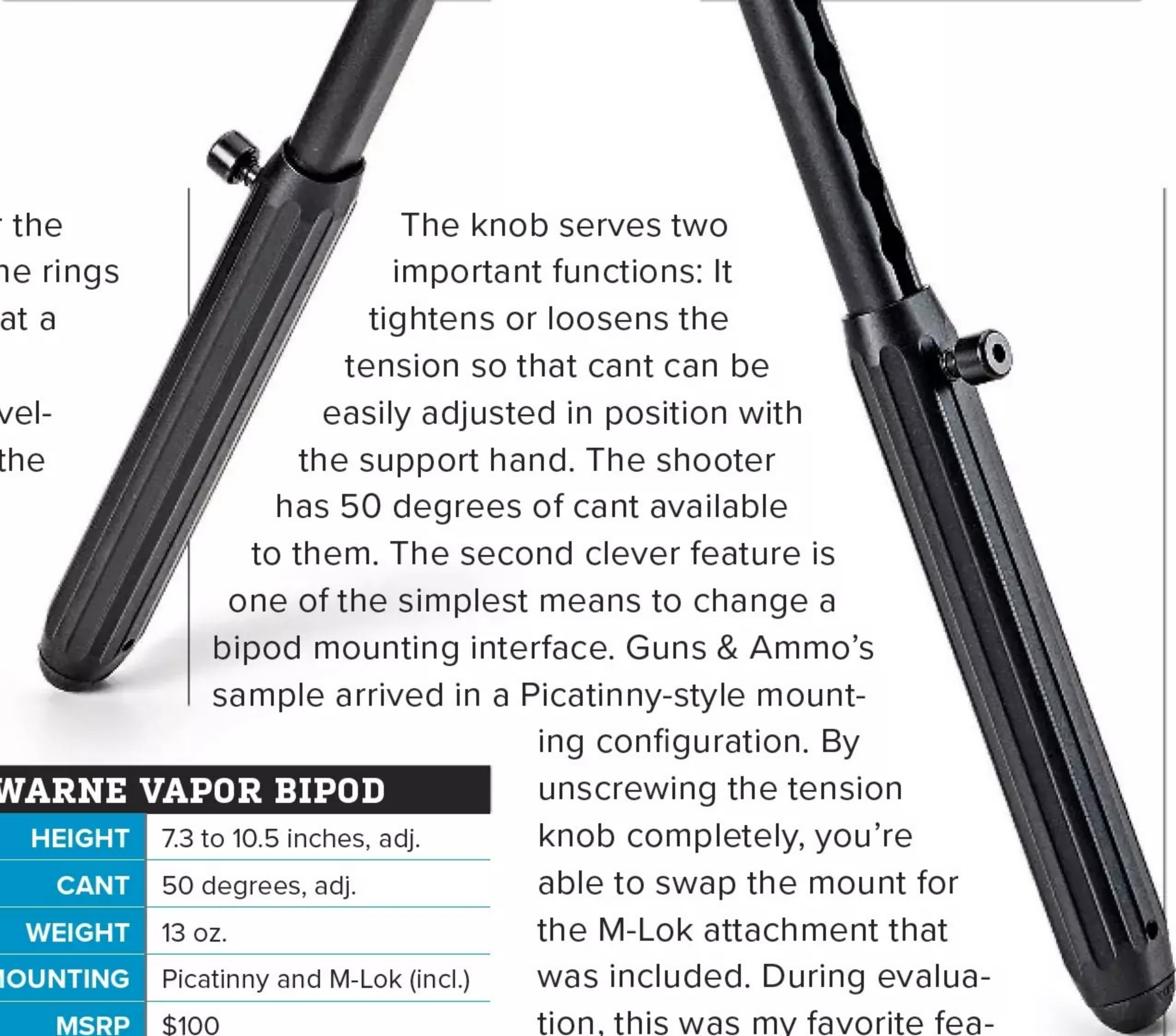
WARNE’s scope rings come to mind when I hear the name. With so many options, there is set of Warne rings or a cantilever mount that fits your needs, often at a reasonable price.

Bipods were natural progression in product development when Warne introduced its first bipod — the Skyline Precision Bipod in 2019. Skyline Lite and Pro models followed in 2024. Turning aluminum into precision rings and bipods requires superior machining and quality control, both a part of the brand’s DNA. The company turned heads in the Precision Rifle Series (PRS) community with its Skyline bipod series, which were engineered to meet the demands of long-range competition. The Skyline Pro models are among the most high-end bipods available for competitors, but they are priced accordingly. The Skyline Pro bipod is the flagship, with a price of \$600. Until the Vapor line, even the least expensive Skyline Lite bipod cost \$225.

Realizing customers preferring more affordably priced options were being underserved, Warne introduced the Vapor bipod in 2025. It wears a price tag of just \$100. The engineering experience, testing and feedback from the Skyline series improved the Vapor bipod’s design.

Like any good bipod, the Vapor isn’t made of cheap materials. In this case, Warne selected a high-grade aluminum and steel hardware for components such as fasteners. Shooters can “load” the Vapor bipod without fear of bending or breaking its legs with reasonable use.

Between the legs is an aluminum tension knob.



The knob serves two important functions: It tightens or loosens the tension so that cant can be easily adjusted in position with the support hand. The shooter has 50 degrees of cant available to them. The second clever feature is one of the simplest means to change a bipod mounting interface. Guns & Ammo’s sample arrived in a Picatinny-style mounting configuration. By

unscrewing the tension knob completely, you’re able to swap the mount for the M-Lok attachment that was included. During evaluation, this was my favorite feature of the Vapor bipod. As the producer of Guns & Ammo TV, and competitor, I often need to change

bipods between guns, but many have different forends. The two interchangeable mounts solve this issue.

Height of the legs can be adjusted from 7.3 to 10½ inches. There are eight leg positions between those dimensions for optimal positioning. To stow the legs, simply pull downward. They can be directed forward or backward; forward is better in the field, but backward is handy for storage.

The Warne Vapor bipod is a simple and practical tool that is intuitive to use. Benefiting from the lessons learned in



Loosening the tension knob underneath the Vapor bipod unlocks 50 degrees of cant. Unscrewing it completely allows the mount to change between Picatinny to M-Lok.

its premium lines, Warne identified what shooters really need and charge you only for that. It’s a good bipod that will serve you well. **GA**
— J. Oller

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PHOTO: MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

2025 GUNS & AMMO OF THE YEAR

*The best of what's new
and innovative for 2025.*

GUNS & AMMO EDITORS, contributors and staff have finalized the list of recipients for the firearm industry's most prestigious annual award. Through extensive testing and evaluation, including field use, industry events and consumer input, G&A considered the merits of every new product. Nominations and voting were conducted at the conclusion of the annual Outdoor Sportsman Group (OSG) Roundtable in Grand Junction, Colorado. Only products commercially available as of the fourth quarter of 2025 — and products not eligible for the previous year's awards — qualified for consideration.

When possible, G&A acquired multiple samples of each nominated product to achieve a representative evaluation. Products that warranted any doubt in reliability or durability were struck from the list of candidates. All-new designs — as well as those demonstrating the most potential to benefit the broadest range of readers — were given additional merit when scored. In the circumstance of a split decision between comparable products, the more affordable option was favored during the voting process.

The winner of each category was determined by popular vote, but nominated products had to meet three criteria: First, the product must have been new and available for purchase in 2025. A line extension of an existing product did not earn full points as another possessing innovative features and engineering. Second, the product must have demonstrated quality and reliability to a degree that met or exceeded its design objectives. Lastly, the winner offered the greatest availability and interest to the largest audience. G&A's staff awarded these points after surveying in-store availability and confirming retail pricing to ensure that new products exist for sale and provided great value as described to consumers.

The Air Gun of the Year award category was temporarily suspended for 2025.

Voting concluded on August 12, 2025. Congratulations to the winners.

To maintain the credibility of the Guns & Ammo of the Year awards, no manufacturers, advertisers or sales representatives were consulted or involved with the selection process. What follows is the ultimate list of 2025's best new products.



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA	
TYPE	Roller-delayed blowback, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	30 rds.
BARREL	6 in., Melonite (carbon steel), threaded (1/2x28)
LENGTH	15.5 in. (w/o brace); 16.25 in. (brace folded); 24.25 in., (brace extended)
WEIGHT	4 lbs., 6 oz. (w/o brace); 5 lbs., 1 oz. (w/ brace)
RECEIVER	Forged 7075 (aluminum)
BRACE	Strike Ind. FSA, folding
TRIGGER	5 lbs. (tested); flat face, single stage
SIGHTS	Folding, post (front); folding notch/aperture (rear)
MSRP	\$1,173 (tested w/ brace); \$1,020 (w/o brace)
IMPORTER	Springfield Armory, 800-680-6866, springfield-armory.com

HANDGUN OF THE YEAR
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA

possesses the handling qualities of a personal defense weapon (PDW), but it is a pistol. Subject to years of secrecy and development, Guns & Ammo’s staff got its first look and testfire of the Kuna during a 2021 factory tour of HS Produkt in Karlovac, Croatia. Between that visit and its public introduction on April 15, 2025, the Kuna was further enhanced with features derived from Springfield Armory’s input for the U.S. market.

A straightforward approach to design ensures that the roller-delayed operating system is reliable. The roller temporarily locks the bolt into battery, which dissipates energy during recoil, eliminating the need for a heavy bolt or complex gas system. The side-effect is a compact pistol that is light and easy to control.

The forged aluminum receiver features an integrated optic rail with hybrid flip-up metal sights, and a rail on the endplate for the attachment of a pistol brace. (A



variation of the Kuna includes a folding pistol brace.) The forend also includes M-Lok attachment points for accessories such as lights and slings.

Precision shooting to the potential of the 9x19mm cartridge is made possible by the 6-inch hammer-forged barrel and flat-face trigger, which exhibited a 5-pound pull, and a short, predictable take-up and reset. Making repeated accuracy possible is a multi-port muzzle-brake to reduce felt recoil that is attached to a muzzle threaded 1/2x28. It can be removed and replaced for shooter wanting to suppress the Kuna.

Shooting the Kuna using either hand is possible due to the bilateral controls and ambidextrous features. Several of those features were engineered to be familiar for users of other Springfield Armory products, giving the Kuna complementary handling qualities. The AR-pattern grip wears the same adaptive grip texture available on the 1911 DS, Hellcat and Echelon series, for example. When pricing competing semiauto PDW-style pistols, we found the Kuna also had them beat. ■



RIFLE OF THE YEAR

HENRY LEVER ACTION SUPREME RIFLE is an innovative approach to long guns. The lever-action rifles were introduced in January 2025, chambering either .223 Remington/5.56x45mm or .300 Blackout.

The ability to feed these cartridges from commonly available AR-pattern detachable magazines distinguished the Lever Action Supreme. Since the 150-year-old lever-action concept wasn't conceived to feed from detachable magazines, Henry's engineers designed components to consistently align and secure the magazines while providing the rifle with a familiar magazine release latch system. Additionally, unique linkage was invented to allow the lever to operate and avoid interference with the magazine during its travel. The system also had to work with a new bolt and chamber developed to accommodate the alternating position of cartridges atop AR-pattern magazines. Henry's achievement is nothing short of remarkable.

Deserving of attention is the rifle's handling qualities, flexibility to accept optics, and threaded barrel. When equipped with a suppressor and fed subsonic ammunition, the Lever Action Supreme Rifle was quieter than most firearms chambered in the same calibers. This is due to barrel length and the fact that the bolt assembly remains locked in battery until the user decides to rack the lever and cycle the action.

Accuracy potential was more than acceptable for a lever-action rifle. Henry's Lever Action Supreme Rifle produced sub-MOA five-shot groups when tested with match ammunition, and near-1-MOA groups with other quality loads. These results were enhanced with optics, using an optional rail attached to the receiver.

Even though the Henry Supreme Lever Action Rifle was the result of all-new engineering, the suggested retail price rivals the value of traditional lever-actions as of 2025. However, many will find the Supreme is more practical for defense and hunting purposes. ■

HENRY LEVER ACTION SUPREME RIFLE	
TYPE	Lever action, magazine fed
CARTRIDGE	.223 Rem./5.56 NATO, .300 Blk.
CAPACITY	10, 20, 30 rds.
BARREL	18 in., 1:8-in. twist (.223 Rem.); 16.5 in., 1:7-in. twist (.300 Blk.)
LENGTH	38.15 in.
WEIGHT	6 lbs., 9 oz.
STOCK	American walnut, rubber recoil pad
FINISH	Blued (steel); anodized black (aluminum)
SIGHTS	Blade (front), trapezoidal notch, adj. (rear); drilled, tapped for Weaver 63B-type mount
TRIGGER	3 lbs., 2 oz. 3 lbs., 6.5 oz. (tested)
SAFETY	Tang switch
MSRP	\$1,299
MANUFACTURER	Henry Repeating Arms, 866-200-2354, henryusa.com





SHOTGUN OF THE YEAR

MOSSBERG 940 PRO TACTICAL SPX has perfected the brand’s self-regulating, semiautomatic gas system. Within the forend is a clean-operating vent arrangement that reduces the frequency for necessary maintenance when compared to previous 930 and 940 versions.

Seemingly every part was reconsidered and received enhancement. The optic-ready aluminum receiver supports direct mounting of reflex sights with an RMSc footprint. Mossberg also provides adapter plates for mounting optics with the RMR-, Docter- or DeltaPoint Pro-pattern interface. The receiver is also drilled and tapped to accept an optic rail, and users can default to using the provided low-profile fiber-optic front and rear ghost-ring sights for aiming.

MOSSBERG 940 PRO TACTICAL SPX	
TYPE	Gas operated, semiautomatic
GAUGE	12 (2¾ in. or 3 in. chmbr.)
CAPACITY	4+1 or 7+1 shells
BARREL	18.5 in., Cylinder bore
LENGTH	37 in.
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 4 oz.
LENGTH OF PULL	12.5 in. to 14.25 in. (adj.)
STOCK	Synthetic; adj. length of pull, cast and drop
FINISH	Cerakote or blue (steel), anodized (aluminum)
TRIGGER	5 lbs.
SAFETY	Tang switch
MSRP	\$1,190 - \$1,371
MANUFACTURER	Mossberg, 203-230-5300, mossberg.com

Working the action of the 940 Pro Tactical SPX consists of manipulating the redesigned oversized tang safety switch, the large and knurled charging handle, and bolt release button. Everything was touched.

Organizing accessories such as lights and slings is easier with a fresh forend design that sports two quick-detach (QD) cups, three M-Lok mounting points, and tacky texture to every control point. Concealed underneath the forend are two integrated heat

shields to protect the support hand.

Capacity of the magazine tube is either five or seven shells depending on model. Spare shells can be organized in the Vang Comp Systems 6-Shotshell Carrier, which is removable due to a hook-and-loop strip. This spare shell carrier is standard on all 940 Pro Tactical SPX models.

Configuring the 940 Pro Tactical SPX to comfortably fit a shooter’s shoulder is accomplished by customizing the stock spacer system. If you take the time to explore different spacers, its length of pull can be incrementally adjusted between 12½ to 14¼ inches. Besides personalizing fit, the 940 Pro Tactical SPX is offered in Cerakote coatings and finishes to suit your style. ■



AMMO OF THE YEAR

7MM BACKCOUNTRY Federal Premium advanced ammunition when it introduced the .284-caliber 7mm Backcountry in January 2025. Federal's patented Peak Alloy case technology enabled the cartridge's achievement, which yields higher muzzle velocities from short-barreled rifles. Short barrels on lighter rifles plus flatter trajectories equal greater success for hunters and long-range shooters.

The rimless-type bottleneck 7mm Backcountry cartridge case is formed from a proprietary steel alloy designed to support higher pressures than traditional brass alloys. To maximize the accuracy potential, range, and terminal ballistics of the cartridge, Federal offered its initial offerings with its 170-grain Terminal Ascent and 175-grain Fusion Tipped bullets, as well as Berger's 195-grain Elite Hunter and Barnes' 168-grain LRX projectiles. These heavy-for-caliber projectiles feature a high ballistic coefficient (BC) for reduced drag. When fired out of a 20-inch barrel with 1-in-8-inch twist rate, the



FEDERAL
TERMINAL
ASCENT
170-GR.

BERGER
ELITE
HUNTER
195-GR.

FEDERAL
FUSION
TIPPED
175-GR.

BARNES
LRX
168-GR.

7mm Backcountry produces more muzzle velocity than typical 7mm magnums from a standard 24-inch barrel.

Felt recoil is similar to rifles that chamber magnum rounds. Even though observed pressures are higher, Guns & Ammo's long-term testing supported Federal's assertion that throat erosion and barrel life is comparable to that of similar cartridges.

The 7mm Backcountry makes the most of 2025's high-performance bullets when fired from short-barreled, lightweight rifles. Lightweight rifles with short barrels are easier to carry afield — and are ideal for use with suppressors. Attaching a suppressor to a rifle chambered in 7mm Backcountry harnesses all the benefits of the cartridge with a familiar balance, handling, and weight. Using a suppressed rifle in 7mm Backcountry minimizes visible flash and reduces the audible report, thereby lowering stress on game and benefiting the shooter's health. ■



OPTIC OF THE YEAR

BURRIS XTR PS is an all-new optic for precision shooters that combines several patented innovations into a singular shooting system, helping to make every shot a hit.

The XTR PS features Burris’ Programmable Elevation Knob (PĒK) system and heads-up display (HUD) data center. Without the need to lift your head off the stock’s comb, the HUD displays turret position in yards or mils without the need to reference DOPE charts, along with wind hold, scope cant (level), selected density altitude, and more — placing all of this information directly into your line of sight.

The ballistic functionality of the XTR PS comes from its integration with the accurate and free BurrisConnect app, where profiles are built and uploaded to the scope. Once loaded, the app is only needed if you want to add or change a bullet profile. With more than 20,000 feet of density altitude uploaded to the scope, shooters can select the parameters to match specific shooting environments.

The HUD is positioned at the top of the window, offering information at a glance. Below it is optical excellence. Hi-Lume multi-coated lenses deliver a clear, untinted image through all light conditions, from before dawn and dusk to the harsh glare often encountered in competition or long-range shooting. Extra-low dispersion (ED) glass makes this clarity possible, which

is unusual for multi-function electronic optics. Light transmission is optimized due to the scopes’ 34mm maintube, machined as a single piece from 6061-T6 aluminum.

BURRIS XTR PS	
POWER	3.3-18X or 5.5-30X
OBJECTIVE	50mm or 56mm
TUBE DIAMETER	34mm
ELEVATION ADJUSTMENT	26 MIL
WINDAGE	15 MIL
RETICLE	SCR 2 Illuminated
LENGTH	15.4 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 5.5 oz.
EYE RELIEF	3.3 in. to 3.7 in.
MSRP	\$2,400-\$2,640
MANUFACTURER	Burris, burrisoptics.com

The dual-color illuminated SCR 2 reticle provides contrast in changing light conditions. It is set on a first focal plane (FFP) and powered by a commonly available CR2032 battery. As magnification increases or decreases, the reticle grows or shrinks with the image, guaranteeing the aiming point is consistent across any power level.

Whether zeroing the reticle or dialing the turrets to adjust the reticle’s center on a target, the PĒK system incorporates a clickless turret with a digital position center for fast 1/30-mil elevation adjustment. This is even more precise than quarter

MOA, eighth MOA, or tenth-mil systems. One complete revolution of the PĒK turret results in 19 mils of adjustment for quick dialing at extended-range targets.

For shooters working against a clock, the XTR PS also includes a match countdown timer, useful for managing a stage’s allowable time effectively.

Additional features include soft-touch side array buttons to navigate the menu, the side-focus parallax adjustment knob, and a repeatable zero stop.

Be ready for the field or your next competition with the XTR PS, available in 3.3-18x50mm or 5.5-30x56mm. ■



TECHNOLOGY OF THE YEAR

PULSAR THERMION 2 LRF XL60 is the best thermal commercially available riflescope at the time of this writing. It's not "night vision," which only works in low light and requires an ambient light source. The Thermion 2 incorporates the most advanced IR-spectrum

sensors to detect the temperature of objects in any environment, converting that information into a digital image. Thermals can be used day or night, and penetrate fog and smoke. Images appear live on the high-resolution 2560-by-2560-pixel Micro-OLED screen, which streams at a 50 Hz frame rate.

The acronym "LRF" stands for "laser rangefinder," which addresses the issue of other thermal optics by providing shooters with the distance to the target. "XL60" is a reference to the extra-large 60mm objective, which enables a 11.7 degrees — about 22.4 yards wide at a range of 100 yards.

The Thermion 2 LRF XL60 includes a variety of crosshair reticles, can snap pictures, record video, and transfer the images to your smartphone. Download the Stream Vision app to connect the Thermion 2 LRF



The Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF XL60 can take pictures and record video to document your hunt. Thermal images can also be displayed in different color tones such as "white hot."

XL60 and load ballistic parameters for different cartridges and reticles, or transfer and share your videos and photos with others.

The Thermion 2 LRF XL60 has the ergonomics of a conventional riflescope. What looks to be an elevation turret on a target scope is a battery cap that shrouds the rechargeable battery that lasts nearly 10 hours. The right turret cap conceals a USB-C port for recharging the internal battery or to transfer data between

the scope and a smart device. The left dial and button allows the user to navigate through the menu of functions. At the objective housing is the master power and adjustment for gain to sharpen resolution. Above the eyepiece are buttons to use the laser rangefinder and record video or take photos. The Thermion 2 LRF XL60 is simply brilliant. ■



HOLSTER OF THE YEAR

VERTX S.O.C.P. TACTICAL

FANNY PACK was debated between Guns & Ammo's editors and contributors, but not for its quality, price point or utility. The debate concerned whether a fanny pack qualifies as a "holster." The practicality of wearing the Vertx S.O.C.P. Tactical Fanny Pack to tote a concealed pistol was not a source of argument, however. In fact, a number of staff are still seen wearing it despite having already reviewed it.

An everyday carry (EDC) pocket dump with the S.O.C.P. Tactical Fanny Pack usually looks like this: a pistol (including those with a full size grip), two or three spare magazines of equal or extended capacities, tourniquet, a smartphone, handheld light, identification, hidden GPS tracking device, pen, lighter, keys, spare battery, and a few small bills for cash transactions.

Worn either around the waist or slung across the shoulder, the S.O.C.P. is immensely useful and config-

urable. At the range, it proved relatively quick to draw a pistol from. Draws from concealment resulting in an A-zone hit at 7 yards averaged 2 seconds. Pre-positioning the Paracord hot-pull tab expedites

access to the gun compartment. When equipped with Vertx's Rapid Access Tab Kit the effort is hastened.

Quality of engineering is found in the details. The external cellphone pocket has a zippered access, but for quick messages and app use, you can use the phone through a touch-screen window. Inside are mesh and stretch pockets, and a holster retainer in the pistol compartment.

The waiststrap is adjustable for different size people, or wear in the crossbody position. Wing-to-wing, the S.O.C.P. Tactical Fanny Pack measures 17 inches, and is 7.75 inches tall. The strap length is 19 inches. Internally, the main compartment is 11 inches corner-to-corner, roomy for most full-size pistols. ■



SUPPRESSOR OF THE YEAR

BANISH 12 is an innovative solution to suppressing a shotgun.

Made possible by 3D technology, engineers incorporated fluid dynamics to dissipate the gas flow behind a shotgun shell's payload. It was designed for hunting, but Guns & Ammo's staff has found the Banish 12 practical for other activities including clay target shooting and training. The reduction of 21 decibels (dB) from a 12-gauge shotgun means that it's friendlier for shooters, game and canine companions.

Though the Banish 12 measures 8.55-inches long, 3.1-inches wide, and 2.4-inches tall, it only weighs 17.6 ounces — a little more than a pound. It's made of 3D-printed titanium, giving the Banish 12 excellent strength for its weight.

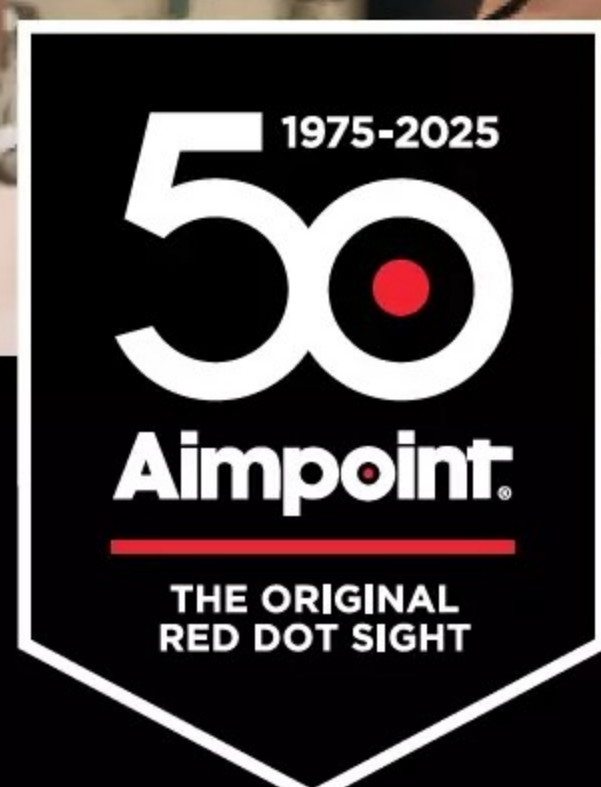
The Banish 12 is printed as one piece, and it never needs maintenance. It attaches to popular shotguns by a choke mount system. It works with interchangeable choke tubes, and is delivered with Improved Cylinder (IC), Modified (M), and Full (F) chokes. Additional choke mounts are available to tune your suppressed shotgun, including Benelli Crio, Benelli Mobil, Beretta Optima HP, Browning Invector Plus, Mossberg AccuChoke, Remington 870, and Remington Pro Bore systems.

When mounted, the low-profile design doesn't interfere with the shotgunner's sightline down the barrel rib, and it's light weight minimizes any effect to your presentation and swing, as well as its portability.

The Banish 12 is offered in black or tan colors. It is also supported by ready-to-ship accessories, including choke tubes, mounts, and a pouch to carry and protect the shotgun suppressor. Available in black, FDE or green, the pouch includes loops to secure it to a backpack, range bag or gear belt, keeping your suppressor handy when it's time to head outdoors. ■

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INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

CALDWELL

CLAYCOPTER is the most fun a shooter who is not behind a gun can have. The ClayCopter is a hand-held thrower that uses proprietary, biodegradable discs. Two discs can be thrown simultaneously, and 90mm or 110mm discs are readily found at popular retail stores in packs of 50.

At the range, Guns & Ammo tested the variable distance dial and determined that users can control target discs' range from 20 to 100 yards. When hit, the disc reacted in a pattern that invoked memories of shooting doves and pheasants. Training with the ClayCopter is beneficial to wingshooters wanting to practice field-like scenarios. Target discs can dip, dive and weave through the air. Worth noting, missed discs were often recovered undamaged and could be collected and reused.

The ClayCopter is powered by a removable and USB-C rechargeable lithium-ion battery. It extends the



support-hand grip, which depresses a safety. Changing batteries is like changing the magazine of America's most popular rifle, which is rather infrequent. G&A's editorial staff estimated that a relatively new battery pack that was fully charged yielded about 300 throws before needing a recharge. Still, spare battery packs are available, each having a gauge to monitor its charge status.

Launches are consistent and predictable. Single targets and true pairs can be thrown. Not only will it provide a challenging experience for the shooter, but the thrower is also part of the action. When considering traditional hand-held throwers and more expensive spring and electronic clay throwing systems, the ClayCopter meets the needs of shotgunners at an affordable price.

Even a field never intended for shotgun use can become an impromptu sporting clay paradise with Caldwell's ClayCopter. ■



RED DOT OF THE YEAR

AIMPOINT COA & A-CUT was a collaborative effort between Aimpoint and Glock, making it subject to a 1-year exclusivity agreement. We're on standby to see other guns receive the A-CUT mounting interface, and thereby the COA. The pairing is genius, so much so that orders from law enforcement agencies have limited the combo's availability on the commercial market.

Guns & Ammo's staff tested the Aimpoint COA and A-CUT since it was announced in the March 2025 issue, and it has lived up to the hype. Stabilized in all directions, the COA optic doesn't move. A wedge locks the front and rear, while a raised shelf interlocks with

the center channel underneath the COA. The rear sight plate uses two fasteners to secure a sight plate that completes the rear wedge. This means there is no recoil shearforce transferred to the fasteners or the threads, a failure point with other optic-mounting designs.

We expect that the A-CUT will revolutionize optic mounting footprints on handguns, but the Aimpoint COA optic is just as noteworthy. Often imitated, the

COA possesses every one of Aimpoint's innovations. It's a lightweight, thin-walled, closed-emitter optic with low-profile tactile controls. Transitions between intensity levels are uninterrupted. Reticle activation and adjustment are intuitive, and the COA displays a perfect 3.5 MOA dot with eight daylight and four night-vision compatible settings. Though a CR2032 battery will run the COA for 50,000 hours — more than five years — to change one is as easy as loosening a



screw, pulling out a tray, and switching out the easy-to-find battery. Even for all its features and benefits, the COA did not receive a price increase versus the Acro P-2. The innovative design, materials, manufacturing quality, and demonstrated reliability made the A-CUT and COA red-dot sight system a clear winner. ■

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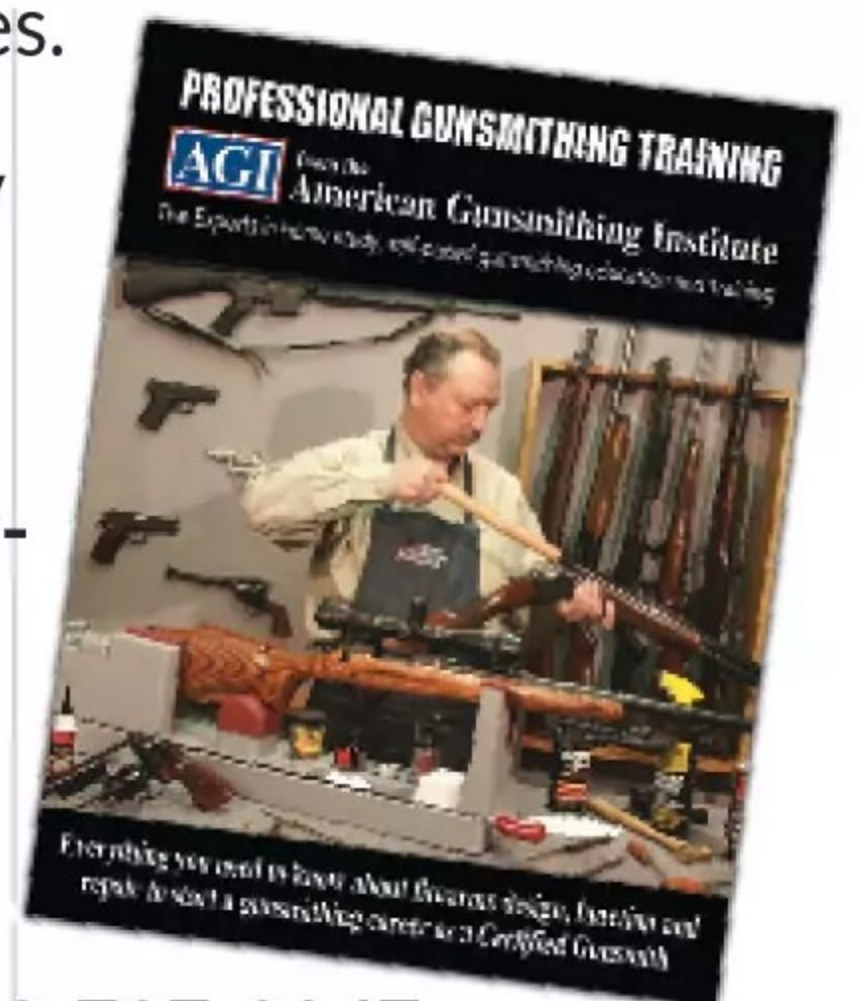
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OPTIMIZATION COMPLETE

THE ENDEX RIFLE REPRESENTS THE BEST
ITERATION OF MAGNUM GUNWERKS RIFLES.

BY TOM BECKSTRAND | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





WHEN GUNWERKS’ NEXUS arrived in 2022, it was revolutionary. An aluminum receiver combined with a 65-degree bolt lift that dropped into a stock with a double-stack flush-fit magazine — and capable of accommodating magnum cartridges — was unexpected and unprecedented. The new-for-2025 Endex represents the final evolution of the Nexus. It has a new trigger, chassis and safety. It is Gunwerks’ most shootable and portable magnum-class rifle.

DNA

The Gunwerks Nexus was the starting point for creating the Endex. The bolt head, barrel extension, barrel and magazine all remain unchanged. The aluminum receiver was slightly modified, but every component was made by Gunwerks to high standards. The receiver design allows the owner to easily reconfigure the rifle from 6.5 PRC to .300 PRC. The 6mm Creedmoor and 6.5mm Creedmoor barrels, bolt heads and magazines are on the way.

One of the most endearing features of the receiver is its width, which reliably allows it to feed a column of double-stack magnum rounds. A double-stack ammunition column is the only way to replicate the effortlessness of the old internal magazine and floorplate system. Gunwerks had to design and build the Nexus detachable box magazines from scratch, but working the bolt to load a round into the chamber makes it apparent that those efforts were worth the results.

The receiver is made from 7075 T6 aluminum. It uses a six-lug bolt head and barrel extension to contain

GUNWERKS ENDEX	
TYPE	Bolt action
CARTRIDGE	7mm PRC (tested)
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	18 in.; 1:8-in. twist, carbon fiber wrapped, stainless
LENGTH	41 in. ext.; 32 in., folded
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 8 oz.
STOCK	Chassis, foldable
GRIP	Leather wrapped
LENGTH OF PULL	13.5 in.
TRIGGER	1 lb., 12 oz. (tested)
FINISH	Anodized FDE (aluminum)
SIGHTS	None
MSRP	\$7,975
MANUFACTURER	Gunwerks, 301-296-7300, gunwerks.com



Count them! There are six lugs on the bolt head to contain magnum cartridge pressures. The bolt has a unique 65-degree lift.

the pressure of firing the cartridge, much like an AR-15. Using steel components — barrel bore, barrel extensions and bolt head — to contain pressure means the rest of the receiver just needs to stabilize and align all the other components, i.e., the bolt, trigger, and chassis. Using aluminum for the receiver body eliminated a significant amount of weight. The top of the receiver hosts two large sections of integral Picatinny rail as scope bases. The center section was deliberately opened to allow clearance for fired cases to eject and to provide ample room to toss loaded rounds directly into the receiver to single-feed the rifle.

Easily changing barrels and bolt heads is one of the main attractions of this receiver. Once removed from the chassis, a quick twist of three screws allows the barrel to pull from the receiver. Gunwerks makes its own barrels and has some of the most meticulous manufacturing and inspection standards I’ve seen. Barrels for the Endex are available in 16-, 18-, 20-, 22-, and 24-inch lengths.

EVOLUTION

While elements of the bolt remain identical to the original Nexus, there are substantial changes found on the Endex. For example, the Nexus has a three-position safety located on the bolt shroud; the Endex safety is adjacent to the shroud and part of the trigger assembly.

The cocking piece in both the Nexus and Endex interfaces with a vertical sear on the trigger. Gunwerks settled on this type of interface because it created more consistent ignition from the rifle’s fire control



The bolt assembly is efficient. Though the safety is familiar in its location, the three-position design was enhanced for the Index and is part of the trigger assembly.



New for the Gunwerks Index is the trigger, which was engineered in-house. Guns & Ammo's sample was tested at less than 2 pounds, attractive to precision shooters.



The comb profile features a negative drop towards the optic, an increasingly popular trend with long-range shooters of magnum rifles. The stock also provides a socket cup for attaching a sling.



A serrated push button is made of aluminum and anodized in Flat Dark Earth. Pressing it unlocks the stock, allowing it to fold on the hinge pin.

system. Using a vertical sear allows the firing pin, when released, to make a straight run at the primer. The angled sear in just about every other bolt-action rifle is easier to manufacture but visibly lifts the rear of the bolt body when cocked. When released, the bolt body drops and the firing pin moves forward. Angled sear rifles exist in large numbers and work just fine, but they experience small inconsistencies that vertical sear rifles do not. I've spent enough time with Aaron Davidson, owner of Gunwerks, to know that he is not one to compromise on an issue such as the sear. I'm thankful for that.

The Nexus used the only vertical sear trigger made



When folded, the chassis' stock captures and guards the bolt handle in the closed position. The stock blends carbon fiber, a polymer composite, with a leather comb and rubber recoil pad.

by TriggerTech, which was originally designed for the Kimber Model 84. It allowed Gunwerks to place the three-position safety on the bolt shroud, and rifle shooters rejoiced. However, this arrangement required precise adjustment and placement of the TriggerTech trigger to work reliably with the safety. Removing the trigger from the receiver for maintenance was forbidden, meaning if the

trigger was acting weird, the rifle had to go back to Gunwerks. Gunwerks builds rifles to be shot extensively and under demanding conditions around the world, so they began working on its own trigger design for a better solution. That solution was engineered



The Endex blends various materials to its aluminum chassis design. The pistol grip sports a stitched black leather wrap that exudes a feeling of quality and comfort to the firing hand.



The triggerguard is composite and sits behind the magazine well. The magazine is released by a tab at the front, which also secures the magazine well to the chassis.



The chassis' forend features shooting support by way of a standard Picatinny-type rail. The aluminum chassis is hardcoat anodized in Flat Dark Earth or black.



The NX2 detachable box magazine is flush to the bottom of the chassis when inserted. It holds three rounds of 6mm CM, 6.5mm CM, 6.5 PRC, 7mm PRC, .28 Nosler or .300 PRC.

and is manufactured by Gunwerks, and it's on the Endex. The Endex trigger has the desirable vertical sear, but the safety is part of the trigger assembly and no longer on the bolt shroud. A single T-25 fastener attaches the trigger to the receiver, making it easy to remove for maintenance. The safety is ideal. Moving the selector from "fire" to "safe" locks the bolt handle in the closed position so it won't accidentally open during movement. It also moves a large steel pin into the path of the firing pin, making it physically impossible for the firing pin to touch the primer.

Many trigger-mounted safeties block sear movement but still allow the firing pin to fall should the sear slip



The forend is a new chassis design for the Endex. It does not contact the barrel, but supports the attachment of front-end supports such as Gunwerks Elevate 2.0 bipod. [\\$395](#)

if the rifle is jarred hard enough. Putting the steel pin in the firing pin's path is the first way Gunwerks ensures the safety does its job. The second way is by balancing all the internals of the trigger around the points of rotation. Unbalanced triggers may experience internal component movement when the rifle is dropped. If there is more weight on one side of a point of rotation than the other, inertia can cause the heavy side to

move in one direction while the lighter side moves in the other. (Physics is merciless.) Balancing the internal components about the point of rotation ensures inertia cannot cause the rifle to fire, even with the safety off. SAAMI has a drop standard of 12 inches with the

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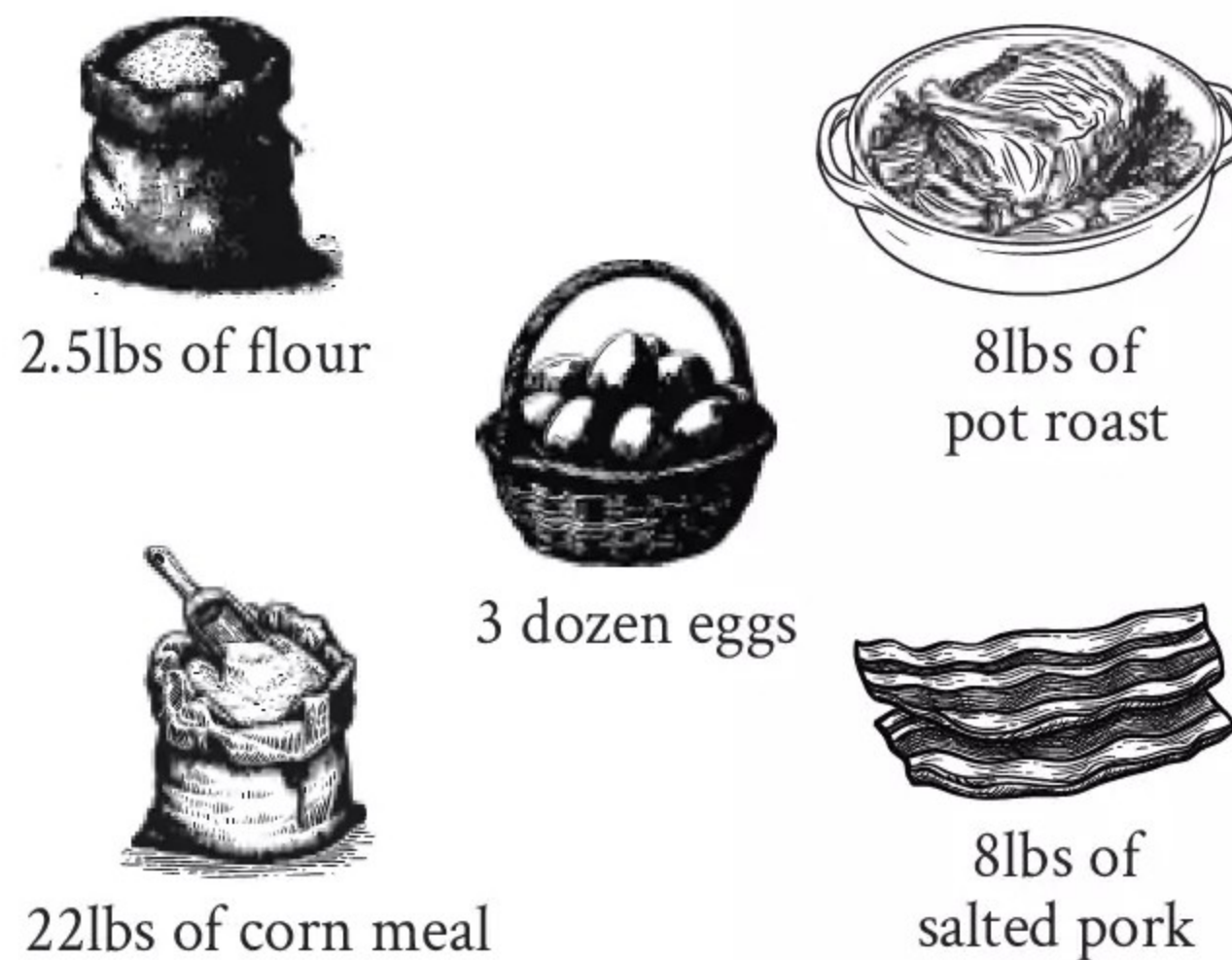
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The carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel is standard with 5/8x24 threads. Underneath is a nut tightened to secure the threaded ring against the wrapped, stainless-steel barrel. A brake is also available.

safety on, meaning a rifle cannot fire if it is dropped from a height of 12 inches. Gunwerks designed its trigger so well that it can be dropped from 48 inches in six different orientations with the safety off — and it still won't fire! All that design work produced a trigger that has zero creep, and a weight of 1 pound, 12 ounces.

Since the trigger and bolt shroud received so much attention, Gunwerks decided to improve the bolt lift while they were at it. They wound up placing a roller on the cocking piece so that it didn't just get dragged up the cocking ramp when opening the bolt. It "rolls" up

the ramp and significantly reduces the amount of effort required to open the action when fired. Gunwerks showed a 40-percent reduction in effort required to lift the bolt. My test showed a similar result.

THE CHASSIS

The most obvious change between the Nexus and the Endex is the chassis. What I appreciate most about the chassis design is the functional identity it shares with a really good traditional stock and its ability to fold for easy transport. The silhouette of the Endex chassis is remarkably similar to the stock found on the Nexus, and for good reason. Gunwerks was one of the original proponents of the "negative comb," or a stock comb that rises as it approaches the buttpad. Such an arrangement ensures good support for the shooter's head, but decreases the pressure applied to the shooter's face when the rifle recoils. The negative comb has become a lot more popular in recent years with some stocks (taking it to caricature levels), but the Gunwerks' comb is ideal for most field shooting scenarios.

The magic of the Endex is the toe line that runs from the bottom of the buttpad to the grip. This line is smooth and continuous with a couple of contoured and gradual steps as the toe line blends into the bottom of the grip. This allows the shooter generous real estate for use of rear supports. Even during recoil, the rear support maintains contact with the chassis.

Hidden mostly under the grip panels is the hinge, which locks

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firmly in place when the chassis is extended. Placing the hinge in this location allowed the Endex to retain classic stock lines, including the toe. When folded, a magnet and a lever under the comb secures the bolt handle when the stock is folded.

The wedge-locking system pinches and immobilizes the receiver's recoil lug, too. While bedding isn't necessary for a reliably functioning rifle, just bolting a receiver to an aluminum bedding block or chas-

sis doesn't provide complete immobilization of the receiver, resulting in the occasional unexplained "flyer." Gunwerks uses an internal wedge that, when tightened, pinches the recoil lug and eliminates those flyers.

When accuracy testing the Endex, no group measured larger than .72 inch from 100 yards with any of the loads tested. Most groups were in the .3- to .6-inch range. Such consistent accuracy is not only a function of a great barrel and a firing system that delivers appropriate energy to the primer, but it also speaks to the chassis that firmly holds the receiver when fired.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Gunwerks 180-gr. Berger Hybrid	2,795	22.8	8.5	.26	.4
Hornady 180-gr. ELD-M	2,784	47.5	16.2	.38	.55
Federal 175-gr. ELD-X	2,878	46.4	17	.44	.53

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

END OF EXERCISE

Gunwerks rifles are truly exceptional performers. Why? The company goes to extremes when engineering the details that often go unrecognized or unappreciated among its customers. If you like really nice rifles that

perform to an unprecedented level, Gunwerks' Endex is an excellent pick for a highly transportable magnum rifle that fits a wide variety of shooting and hunting disciplines. **G&A**

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THE SWEET SPOT

SHADOW SYSTEMS' CR920XL IS THE IDEAL SIZE FOR CONTROL AND CONCEALABILITY.

BY JAMES TARR | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ



SHADOW SYSTEMS' CR920XL is the latest member of a pistol line introduced in 2023. The CR920XL is the largest and most feature-rich of the CR920 line, purpose-built for concealed carry but upsized for capacity, control and shootability.

Shadow Systems Corp. (SSC) is located in Plano, Texas. It began work customizing Glock pistols. Today, SSC well-known for producing its own handguns that, in many ways, are superior to factory “G” guns. Every part and piece of the pistols are made in the United States, also.

As for the CR920 series, “CR” stands for “Covert Role,” and the CR920XL is a 9mm designed specifically for concealed carry. The original CR920 has a 3.41-inch barrel and measures 6.37 inches in length, and is 4.27-inches tall with a flush 10-round magazine in place. The CR920X extended the frame so that flush

magazines carry 15 rounds. The CR920XL pairs the long frame of the “X” model with an extended 4.18-inch barrel. However, the height and length of these pistols don’t tell the full story.

The CR pistols are slimline models. The slide is only .86 inch thick, in fact, and the grip — except for the small magwell flare at the bottom — is just 1.06 inches! Before considering the specific features of this model and the CR series, I must address the slimline Glock models 43, 43X and 48. These are the pistols against which the Shadow Systems CR920s are — and should be — compared.

Dimensionally, the CR920X and CR920XL are similar to the G43, G43X and G48, respectively. Where Glock pistols fall short is capacity. The slimline Glocks are all fed by fat, single-column polymer magazines, and flush magazines in the larger G43X and G48 only



The Shadow Systems CR920XL is part of the manufacturer's Elite Series pistols. It was engineered for current concealed carry trends demanding a slim profile with a grip long enough to control, 15-plus-round capacity, and a mid-length slide assembly.

SHADOW SYSTEMS
CR920XL

TYPE	Recoil operated, striker fire, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	15+1 rds.
BARREL	4.18 in., black nitride or bronze titanium carbon-nitride (tested)
LENGTH	7.1 in.
HEIGHT	5.2 in. (with flush magazine inserted)
WIDTH	1.06 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 4.8 oz.
SLIDE	17-4 stainless steel
FINISH	Black nitride (steel)
GRIP	Polymer, textured
SIGHTS	Night Fision tritium green dot (front), serrated black notch (rear)
TRIGGER	6 lbs. (tested)
SAFETY	Trigger lever, striker drop safety
MSRP	\$829
ACCESSORIES	Two 15-round magazines, cable lock, soft case
MANUFACTURER	Shadow Systems, 469-458-6808, shadowssystemscorp.com

hold 10 rounds. There’s room for more ammo inside the grip, but Glock didn’t design it that way. John Browning was an expert in designing firearms that were size-efficient. The wasted potential of the Glock grip and magazines would have him weeping. Shadow Systems has fixed this with double-column steel magazines that offer 50 percent more capacity and significantly better looks and features.

The CR920XL is a polymer-framed, striker-fired 9mm pistol. It is 7.1-inches long, 5.2-inches tall, and supplied with two flush 15-round magazines that appear to be stainless steel but actually have a nickel-Teflon finish. The coating is slick for improved feeding and corrosion resistance. The pistol weighs 20.8 ounces with an empty 15-round magazine in place.

The CR920XL starts with a 4.18-inch barrel available with either a black nitride or a bronze TiCN (titanium, carbon-nitride) coating. Guns & Ammo’s sample had the latter. The barrel has spiral fluting, which has always been something that makes Shadow Systems’ pistols stand out aesthetically. The slide has cutouts on either side, too, forward of the chamber, which show off the barrel. It looks good. Technically, CR920XL models are the enhanced Elite models that feature the slots and angle cuts atop the slide.

The slide has a nitride finish. Shadow Systems’ segmented “O” symbol is on the right side of the barrel’s chamber and on the left side of the slide, where you’ll



also find the model number. Both the front and rear of the slide sport aggressive serrations. The top of the slide, forward of the ejection port, features the aforementioned angled cuts as part of the Elite package. For decades, Glock consistently ignored requests from its commercial consumers to add texture to the smooth-slabbed slides, only adding forward serrations to Gen5 guns because the FBI demanded it. Glock’s indifference to the wants of the consumer is why SSC has taken market share with G-pattern pistols that are superior

in many ways. The day/night sights on the CR920XL are steel, made for Shadow Systems by Night Fision. The front sight has a tritium insert surrounded by a bright green ring. If you’re new to tritium, it’s a (safe to you) radioactive element that glows green, visible in darkness, within a stainless-steel cylinder having a glass lens at the end to reveal its illumination. The half-life is about 10 years. After that, the front sight’s illumination fades significantly but the green ring will still be bright. The rear sight is plain black and serrated, with shaved corners to reduce snagging. These sights are full-size, not reduced models for the narrow slide. It



Slide serrations and texture are prevalent and aggressive. All three sides of the exposed slide are covered.



The green, tritium-filled front sight will co-witness with the rear sight through a mounted optic such as the Holosun EPS Carry.



The optic mounting plate is slightly wider than the slide cut, but it's not wider than the slide. A full-size red-dot sight will spill over the width of the slide, but most micro-size optics less than 1-inch wide will fit.



Two spacers are provided with the CR920XL to fill the space between an optic and the slide. The spacer notches fit within the grooves and prevent movement.

allows you to shoot to the capabilities of the pistol with irons.

As an aside, the popularity of red dots on carry guns has caused gun and aftermarket iron sight manufacturers to almost completely abandon rear sights with dots or markings. Why? Dots can distract a shooter from focusing on the reticle in the window. It's something I've been begging them to do for years.

With iron sights, the front sight is everything. Focus on the front sight. As where it is, so too will the bullets fly. Bright marks on the front sight are good, as they help you see and track it at speed. The rear sight, on the other hand, should be thought of as a window frame; look through it at the front sight. Anything on the rear sight that distracts your eye from the front sight should be avoided,



A Holosun EPS Carry with enclosed emitter was used for testing the CR920XL. It was designed for compact pistols. **\$471**

generally. That's a long way of saying I'm perfectly okay with plain black rear sights.

The CR920XL is red-dot ready, though. It's delivered with a steel coverplate mounted atop the slide. Remove it and you'll see the slide is set up for direct mounting sights using the Shield RMR or Holosun 507K footprint. The slide is only .86-inch wide, so full-size optics such as the Trijicon RMR won't fit without hanging over both sides.

The bronze titanium carbon-nitride coating SSC uses on its barrels has always looked more like copper to me than bronze, but I love the color contrast with the black-nitride finish of the slide. The more I shot it, the darker it got. With enough rounds downrange, it will appear closer to the color of bronze than copper.



Disassembly of the CR920XL is exactly like any Glock-style pistol. The bronze-finished 4.18-inch match-grade barrel provides the gun a distinctive contrast visible through the slide's cuts. The dual-spring guiderod assembly reduces recoil, but increased effort is required to rack the slide.

This pistol utilizes a double recoil spring system with a stainless-steel guiderod. The springs help absorb some of the recoil, making the gun more shootable, but that means you'll definitely appreciate all those slide serrations when it's time to rack the slide. The slide rack requires some force with this gun.

The slide stop isn't extended or enlarged. It locks the slide back but is small and flat enough to the gun that using it as a slide release doesn't really work. The magazine release is a serrated, rectangular steel button that is reversible. It is low-profile, so you shouldn't have any issues accidentally ejecting magazines. There's a small beavertail on the back of the frame to help prevent slide bite for people with large hands.

The texturing on the frame is nicely aggressive, roughly as grippy as light stippling, which means your hands won't move around the gun while you're shooting. It covers all the grip area one could ask for, as well as sections of the frame above the front of the triggerguard where the thumb of your support hand rests when the shooting has stopped.

The triggerguard is double-undercut, as well. Between that, the beavertail in back and the nice tex-



The magazine release is tactile and positioned well. There is no manual safety, but the trigger features the usual safety lever.

ture, you'll be able to choke up as high as possible on the gun and hold on for maximum control. The frame is long enough for most people to get all their fingers comfortably around the gun's grip. That's the point.

At the front of the frame, you'll see a rail with one slot for mounting a light. Here I had a little adventure.



The CR920XL is a compact handgun with a grip to support almost any shooter's hands. The textured backstrap is not convertible.



The magazine well isn't as aggressively flared as other modern handguns, but the inner-contour does help funnel magazines.



In addition to the grip, texture appears on the indexing point above and on the triggerguard.



Though ample space exists on the dust cover, the CR920XL was only given a single rail slot for mounting G43/48-pattern lights.

There's enough room on the rail for three slots, but SSC puts only one there, which is positioned as far back as possible. Between it and the triggerguard, you'll find the serial number laser-etched onto a steel insert. Trying to find a pistol light that fit the slot was an exercise in frustration. I tried mounting the usual full-size and compact lights from SureFire, Streamlight and Nightstick — the three biggest names in the industry — but I couldn't find a single model that interfaced properly with the CR920XL's slot in relation to the front of the triggerguard. Then I tried a Streamlight TLR-7 HL-X Sub, which was specifically designed for subcompact handguns, and it worked. Eventually, I discovered any light meant to fit a Glock 43, 43X or 48 should work on the CR920XL pistol, but there aren't as many of those as you'd think.



Magazines hold 15 rounds of 9mm ammunition, but plus-three-capacity basepads are available. Spares mags are [\\$30](#).

I've tested various CR920 models before. With the XL model, I noticed that Shadow Systems seems to have changed the integral magazine well. It is almost teardrop-shaped, widening at the front into a decent-sized funnel, with extra room at the rear of the magwell. The grip doesn't flare out at the sides, but that's fine. Generally, if you mess up during a mag change, you're hooking either the front or rear of the magazine, or the top cartridge on the gun. This integral magazine well is far more effective and efficient than you might think from its minimalist appearance.

Shadow Systems spec'd a slightly heavier trigger pull for the CR-series guns — between 4½ and 5½ pounds. Every CR sample gun I've tested has had a trigger pull heavier than that, though, and the CR920XL evaluated for this article was no different. The trigger pull on G&A's sample measured 6 pounds,



which is heavier than I prefer, but still perfectly acceptable for a compact defensive pistol. Honestly, in this era where everybody is stuffing loaded guns down the front of their pants, I'm not against heavier trigger pulls.

The trigger is polymer, having a gently curving flat face and the safety lever in the center. Pull weight aside, quality was pure Glock *sproinkiness* — exactly what you'd expect. (That's a real word I made up.)

At the range, the CR920XL was a lot of fun to shoot. It's big enough to hold onto properly and shoot at speed, yet small and thin enough to conceal with a

good holster and cover garment. The weight of the gun and trigger pull had more of an effect on my speed and accuracy than the size of the gun, but I still found it easy to shred the center of a USPSA target from 10 yards at speed. The bright green dot on the front sight did its job well, even in low light, as I did some of my shooting at an indoor range with controlled lighting.

The CR920XL isn't a "one-hole" gun, but guns using this design rarely are. The strength lies in being more than accurate to get the job done while offering unerring reliability. Even using proprietary magazines, the XL variant seems to carry on that tradition. Since I mentioned magazines, if the two 15-rounders SSC supplies with the gun aren't enough, plus-three capacity extended basepads are available (\$29, shadowsystems.com).

The XL is likely to become the most popular model in the 920 series if Shadow Systems customers follow the national trend. People embrace the original model, then yearn for a bigger grip they can get their whole hand on. For most, a longer slide isn't harder to conceal

inside the waistband.

The CR920XL is reliable, looks great, easy to shoot, and offers excellent value while being easy to conceal. The American gun buyer has never had it better. The handgun market is an embarrassment of riches, and the CR920XL is another example of gold atop the treasure pile. **GA**

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Nosler ASP 124-gr. JHP	1,109	30	15	2.5	3.5
Winchester Train & Defend 147-gr. JHP	931	39	24	2.8	3.5
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,151	26	16	3.2	3.6
Magtech 115-gr. FMJ	1,161	36	24	3.4	4.3

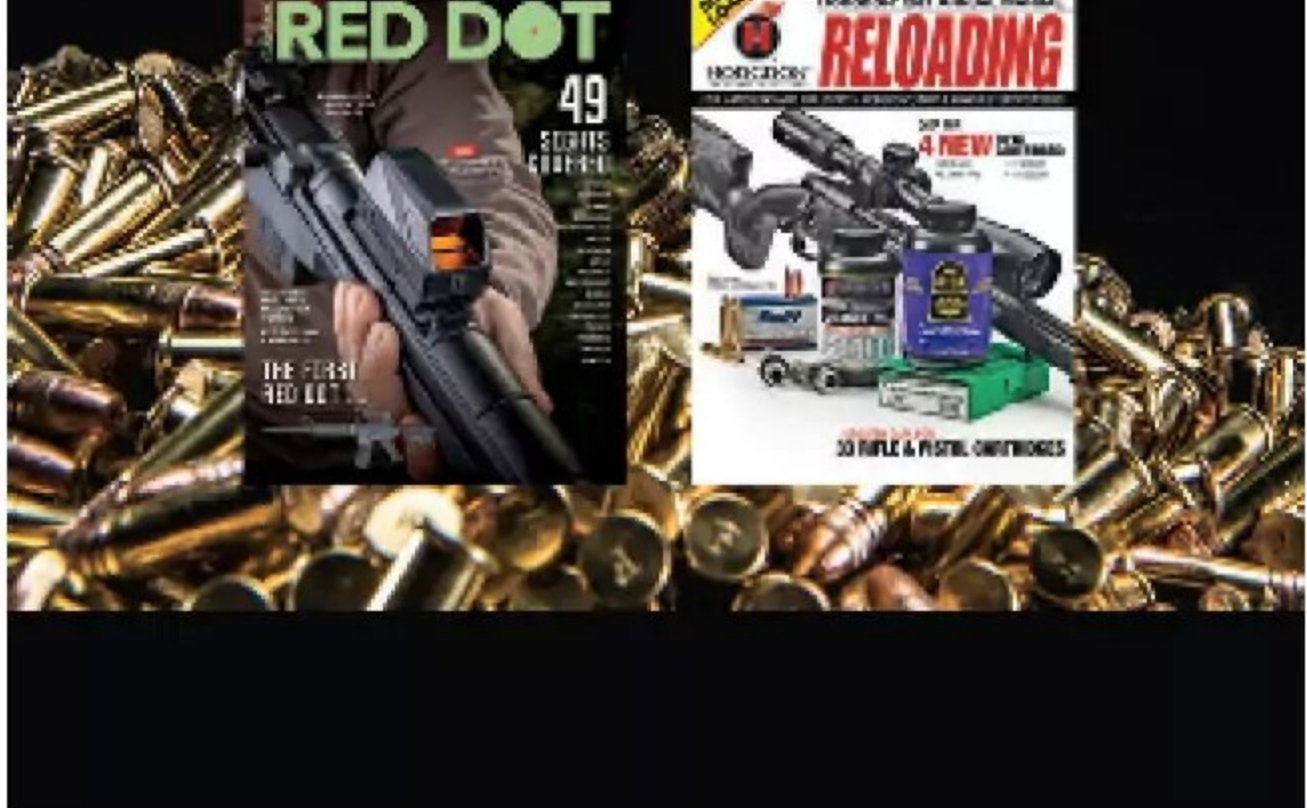
Notes: Accuracy is the average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph placed 12 feet in front of the muzzle.



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FIOCCHI COVERTX AND HYPERFORMANCE DEFENSE SBR ENHANCED AMMUNITION ARE DESIGNED FOR SHORT BARRELS.

BY JACK OLLER | STUDIO PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

WHAT ARE THE MOST popular firearm trends for 2025? Suppressors and everyday carry (EDC) subjects continue to dominate the interests of gun owners. With the repeal of the \$200 tax stamp for suppressors and short-barreled rifles (SBRs) taking effect January 2026, demand is expected to increase. And, of course, compact handguns continue to be the top-selling firearms.

The firearms industry is symbiotic. Firearms don't function without ammunition. The opposite is equally true. An advancement in one category drives development in another. Such is the case with the Fiocchi CovertX pistol and Hyperformance Defense SBR Enhanced ammo lines. It's not conventional to review new pistol and rifle cartridges in one space. However, CovertX and Hyperformance Defense SBR share one important quality despite use in different firearm platforms — both are optimized for short barrels.

INDOORS/OUTDOORS

Starting with the rifle ammo, my first experience with the Fiocchi Hyperformance Defense SBR load occurred during a media event at The Site Firearms Training Center (thesitetraining.com) in Mount Car-

roll, Illinois. As an Illinois native, the irony of inspecting new SBR cartridges in guns and suppressors banned by the state is not lost on me. Still, the facility is the perfect location to try out new rifle loads. The Site boasts a golf-course-groomed 600-yard rifle range with moving targets, and it has one of the most impressive shoothouses I've seen.

A shoothouse is the perfect space to highlight why ammo designed for SBRs is necessary. It's not an exaggeration to compare a standard .223 Remington cartridge fired indoors with an SBR to a flash-bang grenade. Imagine a home-defense scenario using an unsuppressed SBR. Your house is going to be dark, and most people don't think to keep earmuffs near a defensive rifle. Lawfully discharging said firearm produces a large muzzleblast, and the enclosed space amplifies the sound. It's deafening and blinding. The reason is that most .223 loads are made for barrels with a 16-inch minimum length. The case is loaded with enough powder to burn through the duration of time it takes the bullet to exit the muzzle. In a 12-inch (or shorter) barrel, unburned powder ignites beyond the muzzle. SBRs have more muzzleflash and a louder report than firearms with 16-inch and longer barrels, even when outdoors.





SBR ENHANCED

Terminal performance is an important consideration for SBR load development. Velocity affects bullet penetration and expansion, and barrel length affects velocity. Many rifle loads do not meet performance expectations out of short barrels. It's a tricky combination. SBR ammo needs a bullet that expands at lower velocities, and it needs to be matched with the right powder to do so. The powder is symbiotic to the bullet in the case of load development.

Fiocchi's SBR Enhanced loads are available in .223 Rem., .308 Winchester, .300 Blackout, and the elusive 4.6x30mm made famous by the HK MP7. In addition to selecting the right bullet for the respective cartridge, the SBR Enhanced line is loaded with powder that incorporates a flash suppressant. Put it together and Fiocchi engineered a formula that provides superior advantages when shot through an SBR.

Fiocchi brought an array of SBRs to demonstrate the new ammo at the event. Dead Air Silencers (deadairsilencers.com) was also a presenter, outfitting our rifles with an assortment of cans. I really got excited, though, when staff unboxed Clear Ballistics' Gel Blocks (clearballistics.com). The gel blocks don't provide a perfect picture, but they offer a unique insight into a bullet's expected performance regarding penetration and expansion. Other mediums do not illustrate wound channel cavities in the way that shooting into gel

does. Based on recovered bullets tested at The Site, I was most impressed by the .223 Rem. load with a 77-grain Sierra MatchKing (SMK) bullet. This round left the AR's 12-inch barrel at 2,313 feet per second (fps), measured by a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. The block revealed that it had inflicted a massive permanent wound channel.

The .300 BLK and .308 Win. loads also proved effective in gel. The two .300 BLK loads are offered in supersonic or subsonic varieties. The supersonic cartridge is loaded with a 125-grain Hornady Super Shock Tip (SST) bullet, and the subsonic features a 220-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip (BT). The .308 Win. also got the Hornady SST bullet. I like these options.

After leaving The Site, I continued evaluating the .223 and .308 SBR Enhanced loads at home. My LaRue Tactical Black and Tan (\$2,500, larue.com) favors 77-grain bullets, and it turned in sub-MOA performance to 250 yards with the .223 SBR Enhanced load. It also performed admirably in a custom Aero upper and lower with a 12.5-inch Criterion barrel with a 1-in-8-inch twist (\$330, criterionbarrels.com). The .223 load is undoubtedly my favorite in the SBR Enhanced lineup. A heavy-for-caliber bullet such as the 77-grain Sierra MatchKing is one of my go-tos

for reloading. This may be controversial, but I'm familiar with several hunters who almost exclusively hunt with the 77-grain SMK — even on big game such as elk and bear! That's a conversation for another time. I'm not suggesting that you try it, but I've seen too many pictures not to be convinced of its ability.

Loaded for an SBR platform, the 77-grain SMK Hyperformance cartridge would be incred-

ibly effective in a defensive fight or on a hog hunt. It's a practical all-around offering for the AR platform. I expect that it would perform well in short-barrel bolt-action rifles, too.

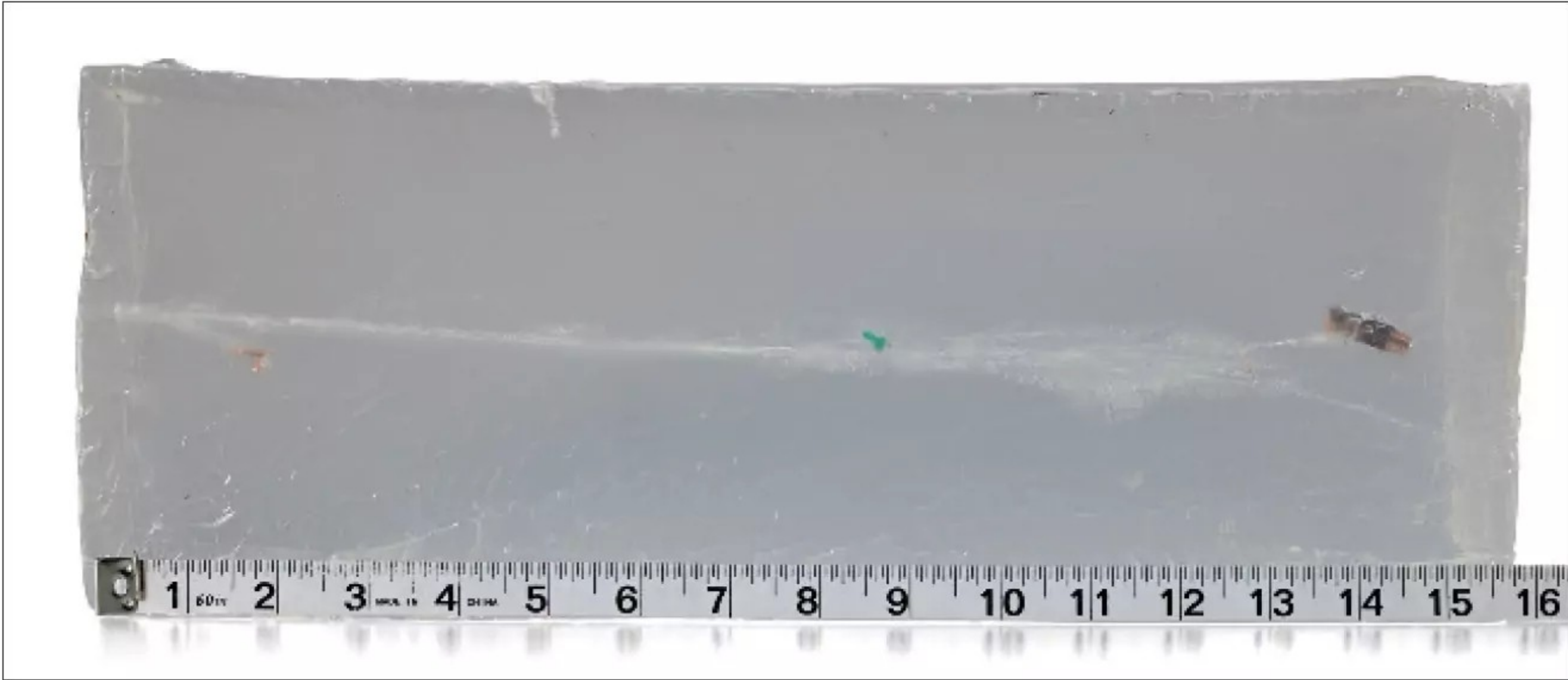
The Hornady SST used in one of the .300 BLK and .308 loads is also a well-established bullet. In contrast to the match-type bullet loaded in the .223 Rem. round, the SST was designed for hunting first. It fea-



Even when fired from a suppressed SBR, standard loads can produce flash as unburnt powder escapes the chamber. Fiocchi's SBR Enhanced line is charged with flash-suppressant powder.



Fiocchi Hyperformance Defense SBR Enhanced ammunition is offered with blue-tip Hornady SST projectiles, a 220-grain green-tip Nosler Ballistic Tip for .300 BLK, and Sierra MatchKing bullets. SSTs are used in .300 BLK and .308 Win., and MatchKings in .223.



The .300 Blackout load exits an 8.5-inch barrel at 1,080 fps with 570 ft.-lbs. of energy, leaves a 10.5-inch barrel at 1,111 fps with 603 ft.-lbs., and a 16-inch barrel at 1,126 fps with 619 ft.-lbs. of energy. The 220-grain projectile penetrated 15 inches and fragmented in clear gel.

tures a polymer tip designed to ensure rapid expansion on impact. The tip is colored “Fiocchi Blue” instead of “Hornady Red.” The 125-grain bullet clocked 2,801 fps from a .308-chambered SBR with a 12-inch barrel. Moving to a Franchi Momentum All-Terrain Elite bolt-action with 18-inch barrel added 270 fps (\$1,479, franchiusa.com). Groups at 100 yards from a benchrest were right at 1 inch. Kinetic energy measured with a Garmin chronograph and confirmed with a calculator turned in an astounding 2,600 foot-pounds (ft.-lbs.) of muzzle energy.

Since suppressors are driving interest in SBRs — along with the ammo optimized for them — accuracy and chronograph testing was done using Banish 30 Gold (\$1,299, banishsuppressors.com) and Banish 223 suppressors (\$749).

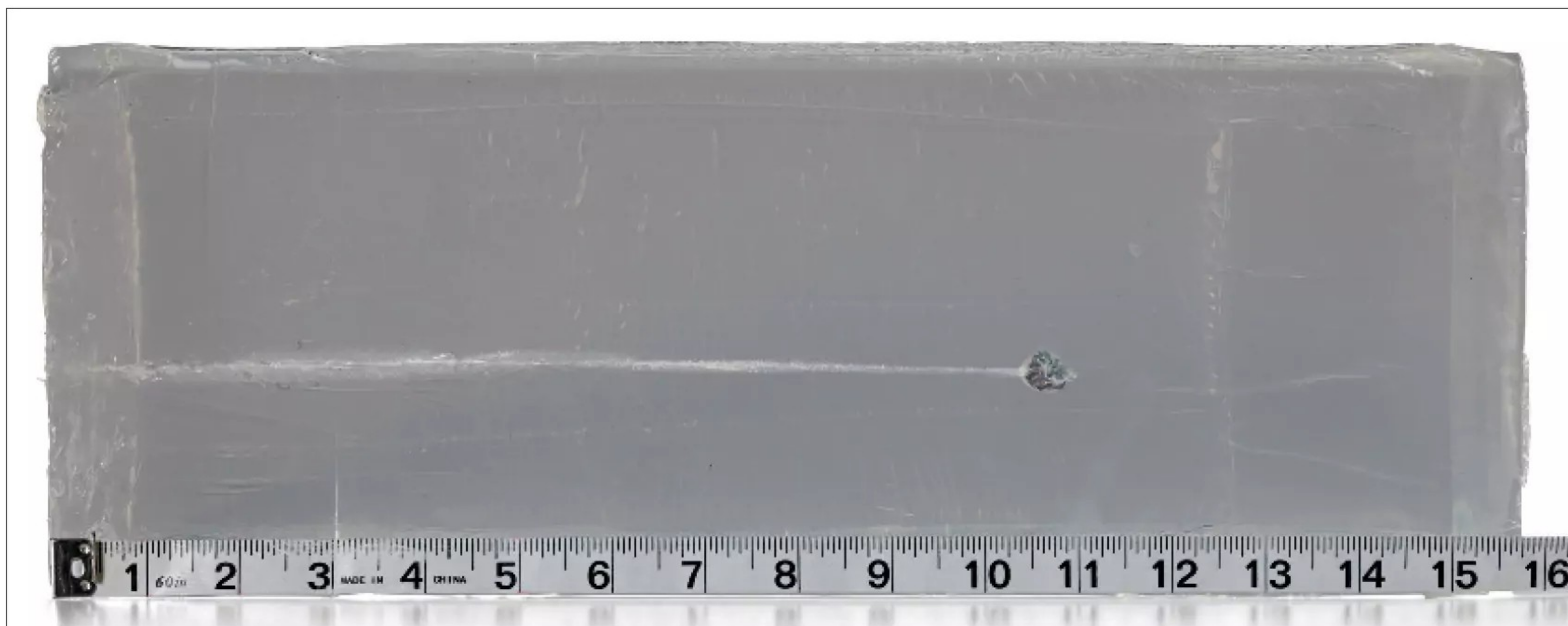
COVERTX
Fiocchi introduced the CovertX line alongside the SBR Enhanced at The Site event. Like the rifle ammo, the CovertX was optimized for short barrels — but not only pistols. The difference in production volume for handguns versus the number of SBRs produced is substantial. There are many AR manufacturers making AR pistols, pistol caliber carbines (PCC) and SBRs, but I can’t think of any handgun manufacturer worth its salt that doesn’t offer several compact or micro pistols. The Springfield Armory Hellcat line alone has almost 50

models to choose from!
Fiocchi introduced the CovertX line by supporting the five most popular pistol cartridges, all loaded with a jacketed hollowpoint (JHP) bullet. The line includes a 95-grain

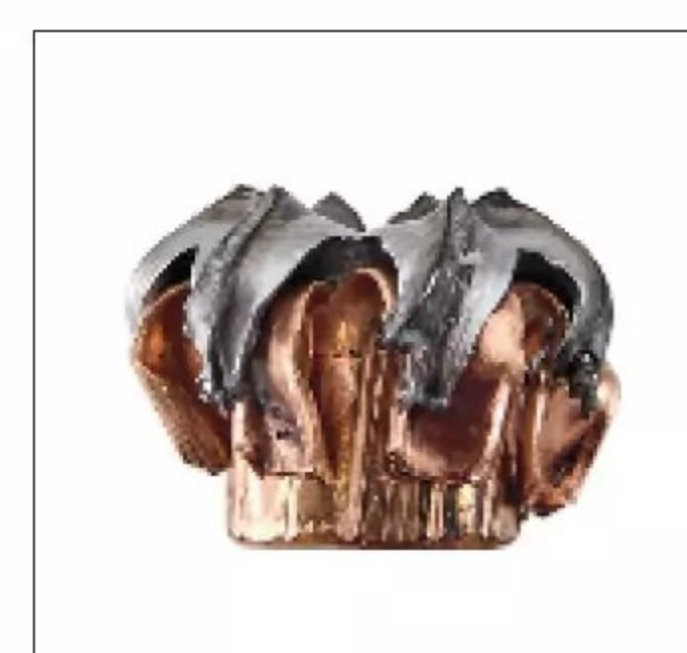
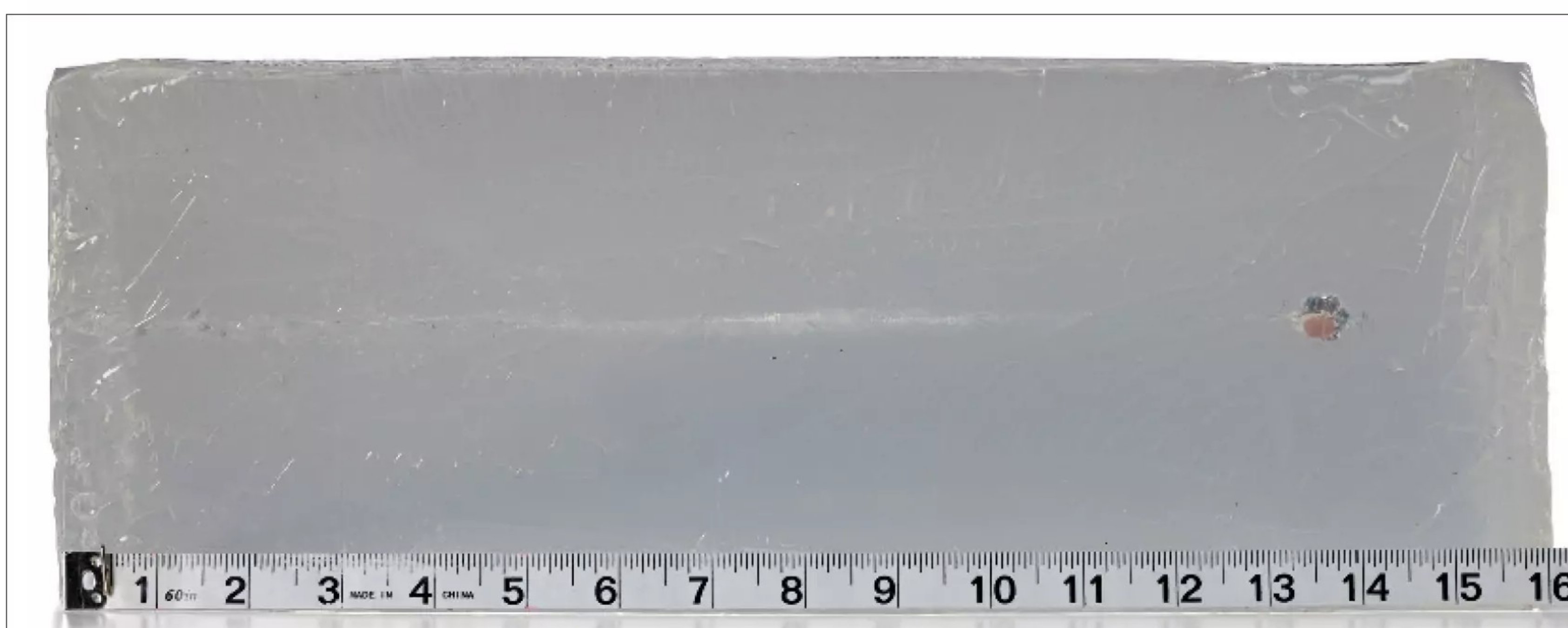
PERFORMANCE

BARREL	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	KE (FT.-LBS.)	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
.223 REM. FIOCCHI HYPERFORMANCE SBR ENHANCED SMK 77-GR. HPBT						
LaRue Tactical 16.1 in.	2,395	87	30	982	.6	.75
Criterion Barrel 12.5 in.	2,391	44	18	977	.85	1.1
.308 WIN. FIOCCHI HYPERFORMANCE SBR ENHANCED 125-GRAIN SST						
Franchi Momentum All-Terrain Elite 18 in.	3,071	42	15	2,620	1.1	1.25

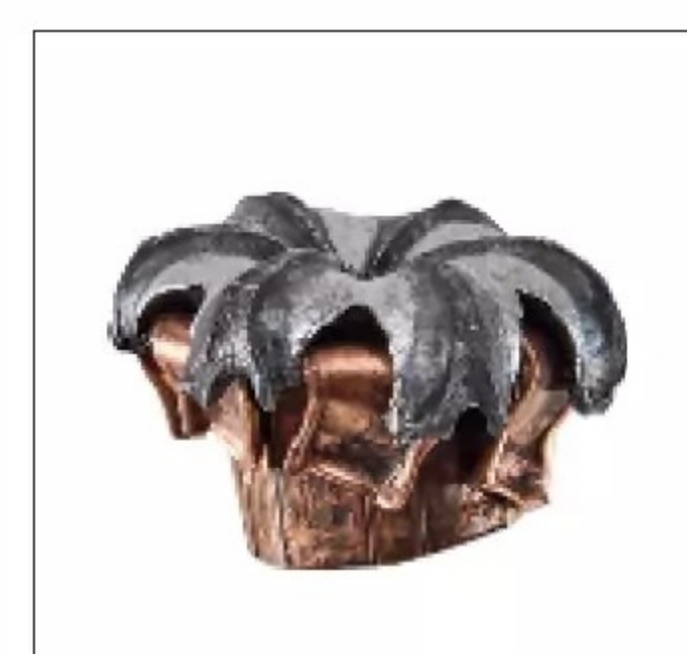
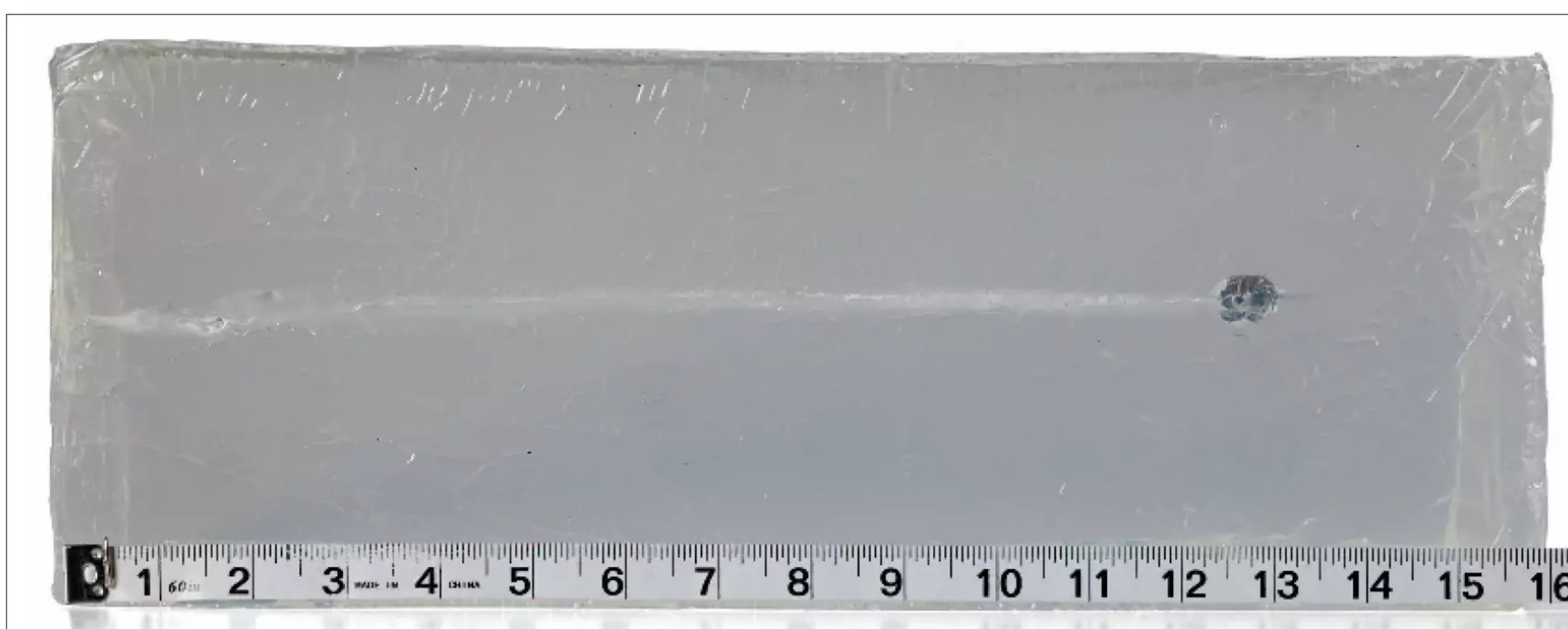
Notes: Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups from a sandbag rest at 100 yards. Velocity and kinetic energy are the average of five shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the barrel.



Fiocchi CovertX load for the .380 Auto features a 95-grain jacketed hollowpoint (JHP) that averaged 994 fps from a 3.25-inch barrel. Penetration in bare 10-percent clear gel was measured at 11 inches. The projectile expanded to .57 inch.



Fiocchi CovertX load for the 9mm features a 124-grain JHP bullet that averaged 1,145 fps from a 3.8-inch barrel. Penetration in bare 10-percent clear gel was measured at 14 inches. The projectile expanded to .58 inch.



Fiocchi CovertX load for the .45 Auto features a 230-grain JHP that averaged 875 fps from a 4.25-inch barrel. Penetration in bare 10-percent clear gel was measured at 13.25 inches. The projectile expanded to .77 inch.

.380 ACP, 124-grain 9mm, 125-grain .38 SPL +P, 125-grain .357 Mag., and a 230-grain .45 ACP.

In many ways, handgun ammo is facing the same design challenges as SBR ammo. How do we get a bullet to penetrate at least 12 inches per FBI protocol for bare gel, but no more than 18 inches and expand at slower velocities? The answer is the same. Fiocchi needed that tricky combination of the right bullet

matched with the right powder that performs in a sub-4-inch barrel. Well, they found it.

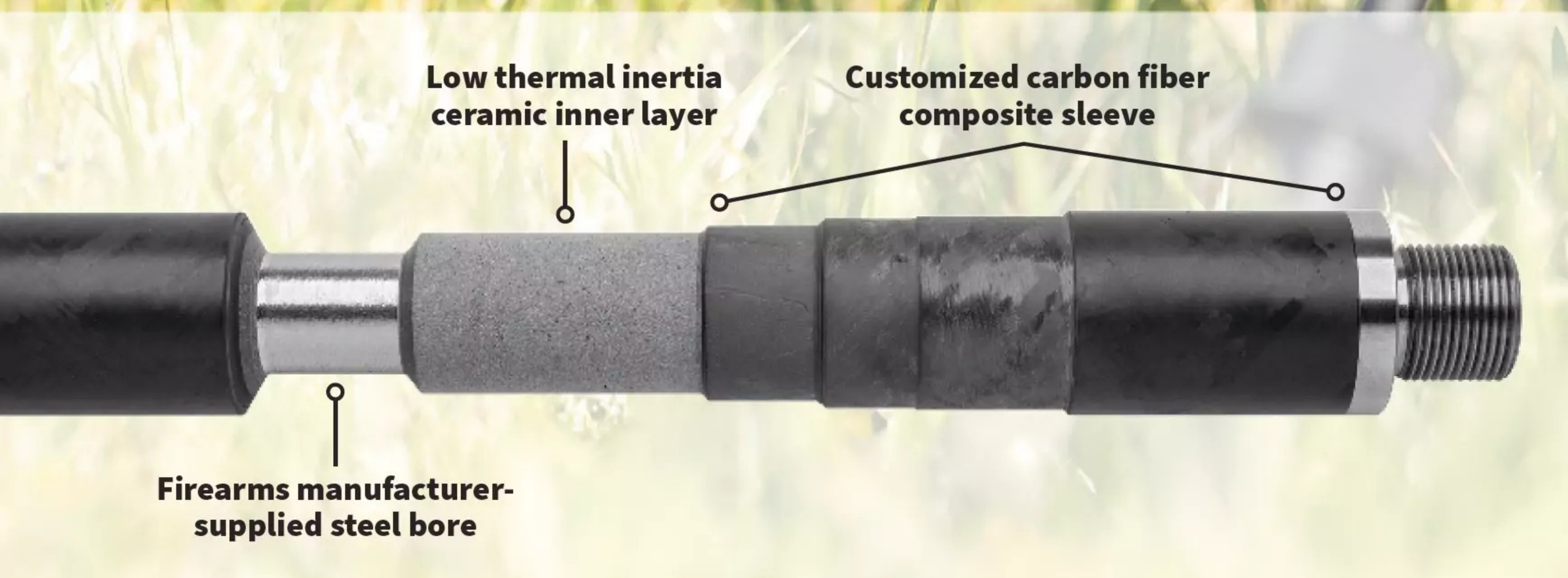
Fiocchi also gave the CovertX a flash suppressant powder. This is important for low-light use to mitigate flash, beneficial in low-light and home defense scenarios. I perceived reduced flash. It wasn't eliminated, but the muzzleflash was greatly minimized during my low-light test. If you have no practice shooting in the dark, I

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Fiocchi CovertX ammunition features a flat-base JHP bullet with a lead-alloy core given a skived jacket. The case is nicked brass.

recommend putting in some time at the range to familiarize yourself with your firearm's low-light flash signature.

CovertX JHP bullets were pulled from gel blocks and told us a lot about its performance. The .380 penetrated at least 10 inches, but the other calibers met or exceeded the FBI standard for bare 10-percent ballistic gel. The bullets mushroomed beautifully, too, and held together. All demonstrated 99-percent weight retention.

Despite only penetrating 10 inches, I was most impressed by the .380 CovertX load. From a 10-inch-“ish” AR barrel chambered in .380, it clocked 1,086 fps and penetrated the same as the bullet fired at 994 fps from my Glock 42. (The unreleased Rock River AR in .380 was revealed to media at the event.)

Across the line, the JHP bullet has pre-cut skiving in the tip. The core is a lead alloy, and the copper jacket is thick enough for controlled performance for use in full-size handgun barrels, too. The cases are formed from nickel-plated brass. I experienced no feeding issues or malfunctions throughout testing. They fed well and printed tight groups at 25 yards. Within 10 yards,

I could shoot one jagged hole with any of the loads.

It's hard to accurately measure recoil impulse in a handgun, so my perception comes from simple experience. Against standard 124-grain 9mm



Guns & Ammo evaluated Fiocchi CovertX through several pistols of different calibers and barrel lengths. Performance was flawless.

loads, I perceived the CovertX in my Springfield Armory Hellcat RDP as less “snappy.” It was a benefit to defensive drills that involved shooting multiple rounds. It doesn’t matter how good a bullet is if it doesn’t hit the target. During my ongoing testing, the 9mm and .380 ACP CovertX loads were accurate and easy to keep on target. After I considered the performance in

gel and accuracy at the bench, I concluded that Fiocchi's CovertX is an ideal pairing with compact EDC pistols.

PARTING SHOT

The parallel development of Fiocchi's rifle and handgun ammunition intended for short barrels uniquely highlight what we've been asking for. Conceptually, the CovertX and Hyperformance Defense SBR Enhanced are not introducing anything revolutionary. These are copper-jacketed lead-core bullets. Subsonic and suppressor-friendly ammunition has been done before. However, Fiocchi is filling the greater demand we are

experiencing for specialized ammo — and it works as designed. For law enforcement, self-defense, and hunting, Fiocchi CovertX and SBR Enhanced lines are excellent symbiotes to short barrels. 

PERFORMANCE

FIREARM	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	KE (FT.-LBS.)	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
9MM FIOCCHI COVERTX 124-GRAIN JHP						
Walther PDP 5 in.	1,216	25	9	408	1.6	2.25
Springfield Armory Hellcat RDP 3.8 in.	1,145	38	14	360	1.9	2.15
.380 ACP FIOCCHI COVERTX 95-GR. JHP						
Glock 42 3.25 in.	994	18	6	208	2.8	3.35

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



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TOUCHED BY PIXIE DUST

HECKLER & KOCH introduced the VP9 in Guns & Ammo's September 2014 issue, and it quickly became a big success. HK then released an improved A1 version in January 2025 that included the full-size VP9A1 F and compact VP9A1 K model. However, you know America: We haven't met anything we couldn't improve. Enter Langdon Tactical Technology (LTT).

LTT is helmed by Ernest Langdon. As a U.S. Marine, Langdon served as the chief instructor of the 2nd Marine Division Scout/Sniper School and High Risk Personnel Course, and was the platoon sergeant for a close quarters battle (CQB), designated marksman (DM) and a scout/sniper platoon. In the firearms industry, he became a Grand Master Class-rated USPSA shooter and a Distinguished Master in IDPA with 10 National Champion titles and 12 World Speed Shooting titles. Perhaps his fame came from the incredible trigger job work he performed on Beretta's 92-series pistols in the early 2000s. However, LTT expanded its handiwork to include other brands and platforms. It is one of the fastest-growing specialty gun companies in the U.S. Enter the HK VP9A1 F 9mm sent to G&A for testing.

THE A1 UPDATE

The VP9 is a polymer-framed, striker-fired 9mm pistol with a 17-plus-one capacity. HK subsequently increased the capacity of flush magazines to 17 and developed 20-round extended mags for its A1 F model, and cut the slide to accept an optic.

With the new-for-2025 A1 series, HK eliminated the three finger grooves at the front of the frame, making it so you can adjust the reach to the trigger with backstraps, and added an integral magazine well to the frame. The trigger pull was also improved, featuring a nickel-Teflon coating on the trigger bar.

Serrations were cut on the slide and frame for the thumb of your support hand, the contours of the magazine release were tweaked,





**LANGDON TACTICAL
TECHNOLOGY
HK VP9A1 F**

TYPE	Recoil operated, striker fire, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	17 + 1 rds., 20 + 1 rds.
BARREL	4.53 in.
LENGTH	7.76 in.
HEIGHT	5.46 in.
WIDTH	1.3 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 7.2 oz.
SLIDE	Steel
FRAME	Polymer, black
SIGHTS	Notch, black (rear), XS Sights, tritium (front)
TRIGGER	3 lbs., 12 oz. (tested)
SAFETY	Firing pin, trigger lever
ACCESSORIES	One 17- and one 20-round magazine, four backstraps, three grip-panel sets, C&H optic plate, soft case, cable lock
MSRP	\$1,323 (tested)
MANUFACTURER	Heckler & Koch, 706-568-1906, hk-usa.com
CUSTOM SHOP	Langdon Tactical Technology, 571-385-2979, langdontactical.com

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For a sight system with co-witnesses with a red-dot optic such as the Trijicon RMR, choose the XS Minimalist rear and green front night sight set from LTT.



The VP9A1 retains the railed dust-cover with serial number plate of the VP9, but features a longer slide and 4.53-inch barrel, reminiscent of the long-slide VP9L and Match.



The HK VP9A1 series continues the original model's wings under the rear sight. These tabs assist with leverage in racking the slide.

and the magazine basepads were altered to strip magazines easier if necessary. The pistol doesn't say "A1", but the lack of finger grooves and the flare of the magazine well at the bottom of the frame are clear indicators.

The full-size (F) version of the VP9A1 stretches the barrel from 4.09 to 4.53 inches. Overall, the VP9A1 F is 7.76-inches long, 5.46-inches tall, and 1.3-inches wide. With an empty magazine, it weighs 23.2 ounces (no optic). Lower-capacity 10- and 15-round versions are available for restricted states, but G&A's sample was supplied with one flush 17-round and an extended 20-round magazine.

The hammer-forged barrel and the slide sport HK's corrosion-resistant

“hostile environment finish,” as it’s described, featuring aggressive flat-bottomed serrations that cover almost half of the surface. At the rear of the slide, polymer “wings” remain. HK calls them “charging supports,” but they are polymer ridges that stick out from the rear of the slide under the rear sight behind the rear slide serrations. These are useful for those with reduced hand strength.

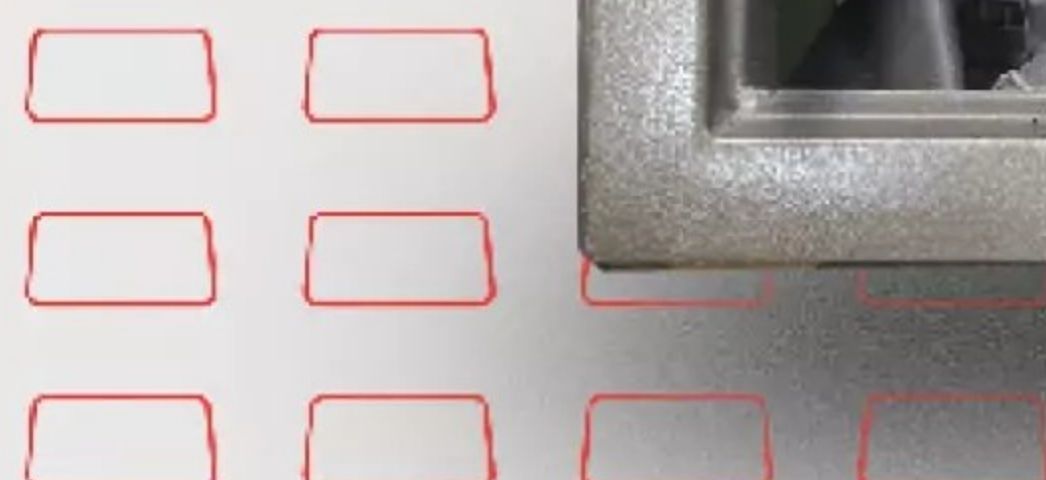
HK is offering versions of the VP9A1 with Holosun SCS optics. On the base optic-ready model, standard sights are a high-visibility tritium front with a black-out rear notch. If you buy a new pistol with the optic installed, blacked-out rear sights are standard.

The SCS sits low enough on the slide that you align factory sights through it, but if you buy the optic-ready version and mount one to it,



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Two Grayguns trigger options are available from LTT for the VP9A1. One is a flat trigger and the other is a hybrid flat trigger with a subtle curve. Both include a trigger safety lever.



C&H Precision optic plates are optional from LTT. Available adapter plates support Aimpoint Acro, Holosun 509T and EPS, and Trijicon RMR footprints.



Despite the LTT enhancements of the HK VP9A1, the pistol disassembles in the same manner as a stock version for maintenance.

those factory sights sit too low to be seen with most other optics. HK offers mounting plates for just about every available optic footprint, though.

The VP9A1 has a bilateral paddle magazine release at the rear of the triggerguard. Medium-size side panels and backstrap are also standard. With the A1, HK offers four



LTT includes the HK backstraps and side panel sets that can be arranged in any combination to fit the grip to an individual shooter. Medium-size panels and backstrap are installed.



The flush-fit magazines provide 15 rounds of 9mm ammo, but extended 20-round magazines were sent to G&A for testing. The grip texture offers a sure hold throughout operation.

backstraps: S, M, M EXT, and L EXT. “EXT” versions offer additional material under the web of the hand to increase the reach to the trigger.

LTT UPGRADES

While LTT does stock and offer pistols, it is a custom shop. They will perform work on customer-supplied guns. Langdon and LTT are known for taming tough double-action (DA)/single-action (SA) triggers, and an improved trigger pull is the heart of the LTT HK VP9A1 models. LTT replaces the trigger with a Grayguns unit (grayguns.com), either a flat or a so-called “hybrid” that sports just a slight curve. Both have a flat face. G&A’s test gun had the flat trigger, which is made of aluminum. The standard pivoting safety lever is still in the center of the shoe. Grayguns’ trigger design reduced pre-travel and overtravel, and then LTT does a trigger job before polishing critical surfaces.

The standard VP9 trigger pull wasn’t especially heavy, but it isn’t short. The trigger pull on G&A’s LTT HK VP9A1 was significantly shorter. Take-up was short, and the trigger fired at 90 degrees — crisp, smooth, and clean. There was no overtravel. As soon as the trigger tripped the striker, it stopped moving. Reset was very short, as well. Total pull

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Controls, including the serrated slide-lock/release lever and paddle magazine release, are bilateral, except for the serrated disassembly lever that rotates 90 degrees with the slide locked.

weight was a crisp 3¾ pounds, which allowed evaluators shoot to the pistol's potential.

As part of the package, LTT replaces the factory sights with XS Sights' backup sights that work for optics with medium heights, including the Trijicon RMR (\$779, trijicon.com) and Holosun 507C X2 (\$365, holosun.com). Taller factory HK sights are also offered and work best with optics that have taller deck heights, such as the Holosun 509T X2 (\$506) and the Trijicon SRO (\$822).



HK VP9 pistols have the serial number in three places per European specs. “DE” indicates its German “*Deutsch*” manufacture, while “CIP” and “N” certifies that it was nitro-proofed.

You can also choose to have LTT mount an Aimpoint Acro P-2 (\$599, aimpoint.com) or Holosun optic of choice with the optic discounted versus retail. LTT will replace the factory mounting plate with one from C&H Precision. The machined aluminum mounting plates from C&H are highly regarded — they are the preferred choice of the Gunsite Gunsmithy (finksguns.com), for instance — and allow the lowest possible mount on the slide. LTT mounts the optic with precision and secures the fasteners with blue Loctite.

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LTT doesn't modify the slide assembly's inner workings. The HK striker and striker block enhances the VP9A1's inherent safety and reputation for reliability.

Witness marks on the mounting screws are indicated by a blue paint pen mark to verify that screws haven't loosened since being installed. G&A's test pistol came from LTT with XS Sights and a C&H mounting plate for an RMR footprint. A Trijicon RMR RM06 Type 2 with 3.25-MOA dot (\$779) was used for accuracy testing the LTT HK VP9A1 at 25 yards.

The VP9A1 F is a big pistol, perhaps bigger than most people would want to carry. It is suitable for competition or home defense, though, especially with the 20-round magazine installed. If you need a compact version for carry, consider the LTT HK VP9A1 K (\$1,162, langdontactical.com).

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady Am. Gun. 124-gr. JHP	1,089	33	18	1.4	2.1
Black Hills +P 124-gr. JHP	1,186	28	12	1.8	2.4
Winchester 115-gr. FMJ	1,121	44	22	2.2	2.9
Federal HST 124-gr. JHP	1,138	39	20	2.5	3.2
Magtech 115-gr. FMJ	1,141	51	36	3	3.6

Notes: Accuracy is the average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph set 12 feet in front of the muzzle.

AT THE RANGE

During testing, the LTT HK VP9A1 F was completely reliable. The LTT trigger work made this full-size piece predictable to group with and a joy to shoot. HK pistols are known for reliability and durability, but they're nothing short of accurate. That reputation was simply enhanced with what we saw in our test sample.

PARTING SHOT

HK did an excellent job of updating the VP9 with the A1 feature set. A few areas good enough for stock guns were addressed for discriminating shooters by LTT. If you're looking for a striker-fired gun with excellent reliability, accuracy and handling, the standard VP9A1 is a solid choice. LTT's version is even better, and it's a one-stop custom shop. 

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Guns & Ammo Buzz Podcast update!

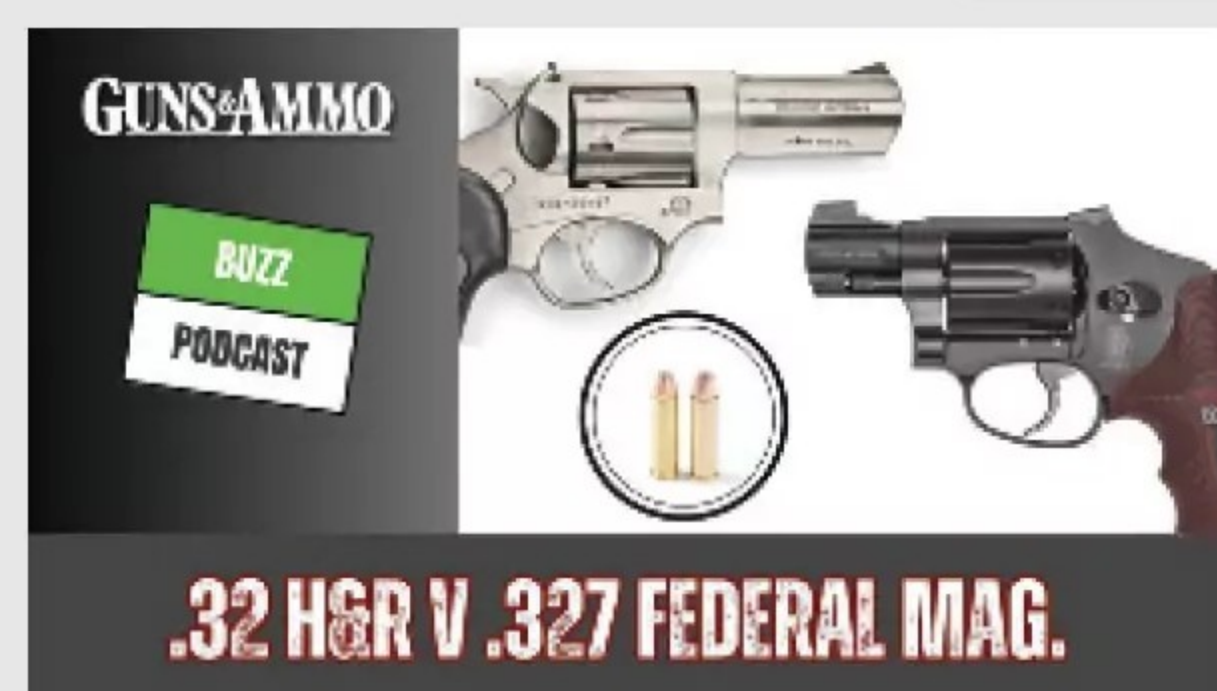
DATA HIVE

IN DECEMBER 2024, the Guns & Ammo Buzz Podcast released its first episode on YouTube, Spotify and gunsandammo.com. Initially, each episode focused on new or upcoming products, which served to anchor the conversation as it found footing. Topics have branched out to include exclusive interviews, product comparisons and general industry overviews. Additionally, the Buzz has allowed our team to show off the work that goes into producing the content Guns & Ammo is known for.

As the longest-serving contributor to Guns & Ammo, as well as its former editor-in-chief, Garry James has been writing for more than 53 years. His wealth of firearm knowledge still serves readers through his "Gun Room" column appearing in every issue. One of the latest episodes of the Buzz Podcast was dedicated to Mr. James, an interview discussing his life, his influences and his efforts to preserve firearm history.

The podcast format gives contributors a more casual environment to discuss topics they are passionate about, and room to talk about it in long-form conversation. Patrick Sweeney loves

.32 H&R VS. .327 FEDERAL MAG.
Patrick Sweeney compares modern loads for the .32 H&R Magnum and the .327 Federal Magnum in Ruger and Smith & Wesson revolvers.



Gun Room: Garry James

As the longest-serving contributor to Guns & Ammo, Garry James discussed his 53 years of experience, his life influences and his commitment to preserving firearm history.

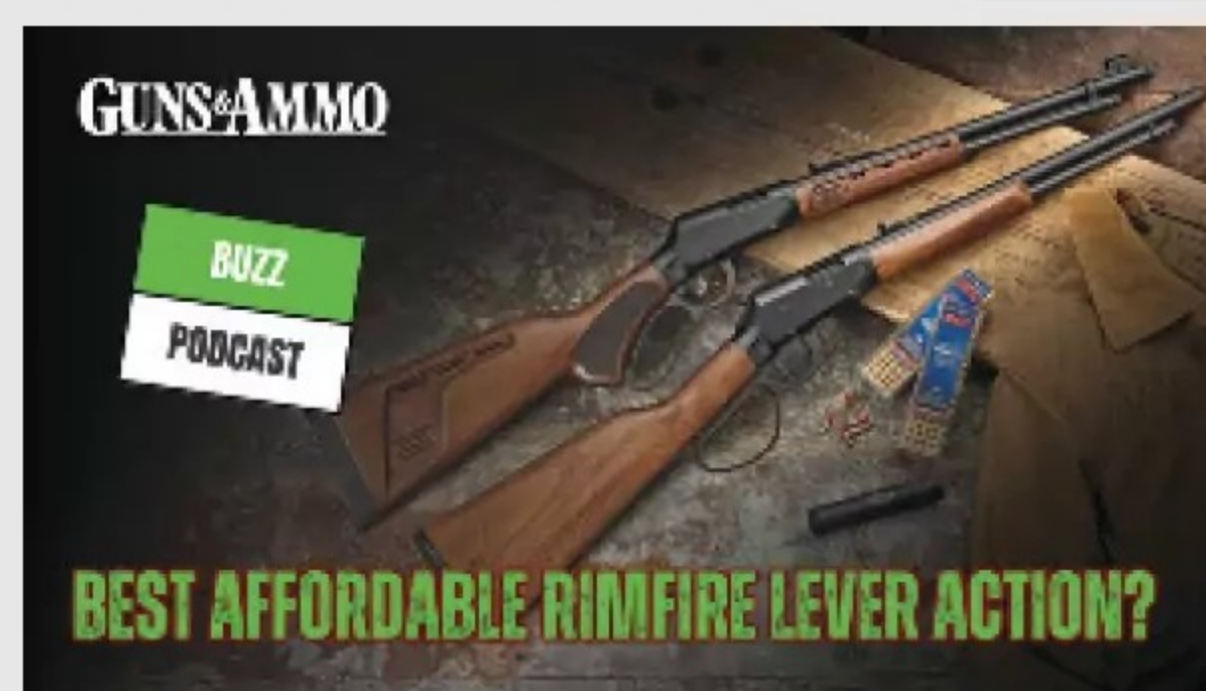
revolvers and was more than happy to compare the storied .32 Harrington & Richardson (H&R) Magnum and the .327 Federal Magnum.

Dedicated gun reviews are still on the table, as the Savage Revel stole the spotlight for an episode. Representing the revival of Savage's history with levergun manufacturing, Craig Boddington thinks the Revel may be one of the best budget .22s on the market.

Buzz listeners can expect an extensive variety of topics, including exclusive interviews, behind-the-scenes commentary on articles, firearm comparisons and more. Any topic you'd like us to shine a light on? Email gaeditor@outdoorsg.com with the subject line "Sound Off," and we'll be happy to read your feedback.

BEST AFFORDABLE RIMFIRE LEVERGUN?

The Savage Revel represents a revival of the company's history in making leverguns.



ANTONIO ACITELLI

TOP COMMENTS

In response to a reader's comment in the May 2025 "Connect" column, "Quick Response":

Mr. Acitelli, my age and background are similar to Harding D., and I find that his comments and techniques mirror mine as far as women's shooting. I prefer teaching women because they don't come to class with a macho, know-it-all attitude. The experience starts with classroom, safety, and familiarity for an hour or two. Then, for any women who want to continue there is range time and live fire. I go a step further and prohibit any men from attending or even watching the class. I don't want any comments or suggestions made to the women students that might make them uptight.

When the class ends, I offer additional free instruction to women who are willing to commit to attending three or four lessons to learn how to shoot, and who will commit to practicing what they learn on their own with a more experienced shooter after the lessons are over.

It would be nice for all of us if women started reading gun magazines, but there needs to be articles that are specifically targeted to women shooters. Complicated articles on ballistics or ancient sniper rifles would probably chase them away.

Good comment by somebody who knows from which he speaks.

— Jim S., Email

In response to September 2025, "Connect" column, "Quiet Riot":

I'm really interested in buying a suppressor after the first of the year, 2026. I plan on buying one for my .454 Casull. Do I need a .46 caliber can? I'd like to also use it on my .308. I realize it will be a bit large, but one is all I can afford. What would be your suggestion for a good one?

— Hub W., Email

A .46-caliber suppressor is appropriate for .454 the Casull, but make sure that the pressure rating can handle the cartridge, not just the diameter. Most rifle-rated .46-caliber cans should function and dampen the sound of .30-caliber loads. A dedicated .30-caliber suppressor is recommended, but you should still see a noticeable reduction in noise with the .46.



SOUND OFF

Respond to articles, find community and join the conversation in the Guns & Ammo forums and by engaging with us on social media:



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KEITH WOOD

Silencer Shop Foundation versus the NFA.

COMPLAINT DEPT.

WHEN SOFTWARE ENGINEER Dave Matheny founded Silencer Shop in 2010, he wasn't trying to disrupt the industry, he just wanted to protect his son's hearing. Matheny's son was born deaf in one ear. As a caring father, he wanted to safeguard his remaining hearing while enjoying a shooting and hunting lifestyle. His suppressor-buying experience was so negative that he started his own business to simplify the process. Silencer Shop has become an industry leader. With such success comes responsibility, so Matheny and his team decided to make a difference in protecting the rights of Americans.

Silencer Shop (silencer-shop.com) has been quietly working to advance the cause of suppressor rights for years. Until

recently, though, that work wasn't public. When President Donald Trump signed H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Matheny felt it was time to take definitive action.

One of the outcomes of H.R. 1 was to eliminate the \$200 transfer tax imposed on most National Firearms Act (NFA) items — suppressors included. On July 4, 2025, the Silencer Shop Foundation — along with industry partners such as SilencerCo (silencerco.com) — filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas against the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). The suit challenges the NFA's regulations pertaining to suppressors and other NFA items that are no longer taxed as of January 1, 2026. The lawsuit, which has been joined by 15 states, challenges the NFA on the basis that it was imposed as a tax law. Without the tax, the accompanying regulatory elements of the bill should not exist. The complaint asks the court to do the following:

1. Declare that the NFA's registration and transfer requirements pertaining to untaxed firearms exceed Congress'

enumerated powers.

2. Enjoin the government from implementing, enforcing or otherwise acting under the authority of the NFA with respect to untaxed firearms.

In simple English, the suit asks the court to eliminate the existing process of obtaining suppressors, short-barreled

rifles (SBR), short-barreled shotguns (SBS), and any other weapons (AOW). If the suit prevails, purchasing those items would be no different than purchasing an ordinary firearm. At the time of this writing, the ATF and DOJ have not responded to the lawsuit.

Matheny not only wants to unravel the NFA to make suppressors and other covered items easier to obtain, but he also

feels as though its very existence is a threat to our rights.

"Personally, I believe that the NFA is evil," Matheny said. "We need to eliminate it. As long as NFA is around, it will be a vehicle to push every firearm toward registration."

He feels strongly that the Biden-era reforms to the NFA process were a prelude to expanding registration to include commonly-owned semiautomatic firearms.

The Silencer Shop Foundation doesn't plan on resting, even if or when the NFA fight is won.

"Our goal is the restoration of the Second Amendment," Chief Marketing Officer Elliot Aquila said. "Once the NFA is kaput, we are going to set our sights on all of the ground that was lost the last 30 years." They are also working to ensure that eliminating the registration process won't make suppressor ownership illegal under some states' laws, which is a real possibility.

Proceeds from purchases made through Silencer Shop support the cause of the Silencer Shop Foundation, covering 100 percent of the Foundation's overhead. Additionally, direct donations can be made online at ssf.org. 





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