

**SI** HANDBOOK: **BE BETTER THAN AVERAGE**

# SHOOTING

## Illustrated

DECEMBER | 2025

### **Bolt-Gun Build**

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



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## NRA™ Official Journal of the National Rifle Association of America

**Doug Hamlin, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer**

The NRA, the foremost guardian of the traditional American right to "keep and bear arms," believes every law-abiding citizen is entitled to the ownership and legal use of firearms, and that every reputable gun owner should be an NRA member.

The items and information offered or detailed in this publication are intended for, and directed and offered to, only those at least **18** years of age or older and who are in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.



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## Concealed Carry: The First Steps

The easiest way to learn how to carry a pistol with you every day is by carrying your pistol with you every day. Here's the best way to begin.

NRA FILE



## The Once And Future Dot

Some form of electronic sighting system on top of a handgun gun is nothing new. Dot sights have been around for a while and are here to stay

KEVIN CREIGHTON



## Shooting Drills For The Indoor Range

Even if you're in a lane at an indoor range, you can still train critical defensive-pistol skills. Try these four drills to help sharpen your marksmanship while on an indoor range.

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Some of the photographs in this magazine illustrate specific shooting stances or positions in which it was occasionally necessary to position the camera in front of the muzzle for instructional purposes. At no time was a loaded, functioning firearm used in these photographs; special, deactivated guns or solid plastic gun simulators were employed. In some cases the image was taken using a remotely triggered camera.

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## News



FN Awarded the 2025 Ambrose Award



**Smith & Wesson**  
ACADEMY

Smith & Wesson Announces Grand Opening of World-Class Training Academy

## Guns



The Case For Pocket Carry



Tactical  
.22 LR  
Pistols

## Gear



Meprolight  
M22 PRO  
Reflex Sight

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Pepper  
Spray Easy  
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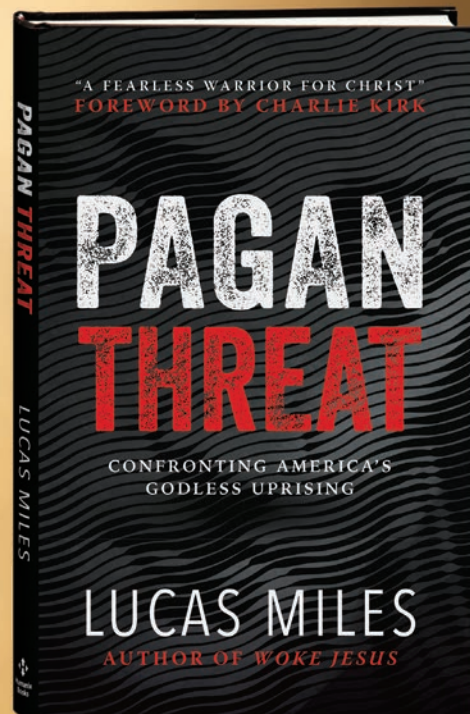
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## Charlie Kirk's Final Words:

“Don't just read *Pagan Threat* — internalize what it has to say. Then, share its message with your Christian friends, before they are seduced by Paganism themselves. We have a faith and country to save.”



America is under attack as never before. Our culture, our Judeo-Christian values, our traditions, our freedoms — and our very country — are all under attack. We saw this attack in the most vicious and bloody way with the **public assassination of Charlie Kirk**.

Charlie Kirk was a conservative leader.

But he was more. *He was a believing Christian.*

In his own way he was an evangelist.

Charlie Kirk's last published words — his final words — are the **Foreword** for the new book, ***Pagan Threat: Confronting America's Godless Uprising***.

*Pagan Threat* was written by Charlie's close friend Pastor Lucas Miles.

Pastor Miles, the author of several bestselling books, served as a leader in Charlie's Turning Point Faith.

Charlie told Pastor Miles he wanted to write this Foreword because **"America was in grave danger."**

**Charlie is right.**

In his powerful **Foreword**, Charlie wrote:

"Because in today's America, the Christian faithful are

faced with a *terrifying and broad array of dangers and threats*.

"We are menaced not by new false gods, but *by the return of demons from long ago*.

"In the Pagan world, **the individual human life was of no importance.**"

These words are chilling, considering what happened in Utah.

This is more than a book — it's a wake-up call for all Americans and for faithful Christians who want to take a stand against the spiritual deception sweeping across America.

*Pagan Threat* serves as an insightful guide, a warning, and a call to action, urging readers to understand, confront, and ultimately defeat this enemy.

*Pagan Threat* shows how you can be like Charlie Kirk — how you can fight and win.

We must stand resolute against the encroaching darkness.

The future of our great nation depends on our collective strength, faith, and our unwavering commitment to the truth.

**Make sure you get Charlie Kirk's final words — his Foreword with *Pagan Threat*!**



### About Lucas Miles

Lucas Miles is a best-selling author. A close friend of Charlie Kirk, he headed TPUSA Faith. Charlie encouraged him to write his new book, *Pagan Threat*.

An ordained pastor, he leads Nfluence Church and has served on global missions and at national events like the National Prayer Breakfast.

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# Pistol Grip Gripes

In Jeff Johnston's article about pistol grips on shotguns in the October issue, I believe he missed a third option, one that involves a sling. Simply put, the pistol-grip shotgun is held at the waist with the sling over the shoulder on the same side. Downward pressure is applied to the sling. When fired, the shotgun rocks back and then comes forward, returning to the shooting position. With a little practice, one can become reasonably accurate. I was explaining this method to a group of "Tacticoool Timmies" who were all into Mossberg's Shockwave. They thought I was a crazy old man. Wish I could get the

chance to show them what they are missing.

**Dave Rickard**  
via e-mail

I really enjoyed "Thoughts on Pistol Grips" by Jeff Johnston, discussing pistol grips on shotguns. As someone who has shot a 12-gauge shotgun with a pistol grip (and no buttstock), I know Johnston is right. That stings the hand hard!

**David Jones**  
Brunswick, OH



## Triggered

I read the "Triggernometry" article in the October 2025 issue and found it informative. I have shot many firearms over the years. My brother-in-law worked for a Natural Gas company for 20 years, and every other week he would bring over to my farm one, two or four new firearms he had just bought. With all of the triggers I have ever squeezed, the best in my opinion is the trigger of the Remington 760 Gamemaster. Now, I know how to shoot very well, but I am not very knowledgeable of the inner workings of guns. I always wondered why more firearm manufacturers wouldn't or didn't use the 760's trigger setup in their own products, especially after Remington's patent ran out. It may not be suitable for semi-automatic rifles and/or handguns, but I do know that it is one sweet trigger.

**William McCloskey, Jr.**  
via e-mail

## Condition Carping

Regarding the October "Tech Wisdom" column, there was a significant error. Citing both Col. Jeff Cooper and his (also) esteemed counterpart in the UK, Jan Stevenson, I must point out that "Anonymous" and his "gun friends" are incorrect regarding the conditions of readiness of 1911-style pistols. Condition 2 is not hammer in the half-cock position. Condition 2 has always been: hammer down on a loaded chamber. It, too, reportedly had a contingent danger—dropped onto a hard surface such as a sidewalk, it could accidentally discharge. This flaw was

supposedly corrected, to the best of my knowledge, first with Colt's Series 70 and later Series 80 models. Also, the scenario you describe of a Government model firing from a configuration with the nose of the sear resting on the edge of the half-cock notch, vis-a-vis in its recess, and the hammer subsequently falling, has been taught in the U.S. Armed Forces and in ROTC from the 1940s as "false half-cock."

**Cal Cheritree**  
via e-mail

## Who's the Jerk?

I received my copy of *Shooting Illustrated* today and, as is my custom, I immediately turned to Bryce Towsley's "In My Never-Humble Opinion" column. October's "Jerks on the Trail" installment made me chuckle as he described himself as "... a sweaty and shirtless 220-pound man with a 5-foot walking stick and a handgun." Heck, I think I'd be scared, too, if I saw that, and I'm also usually armed. At the end of the story, when Towsley frightened Mr. Snowflake away, he should have told him, just before he bolted, that the guy had a "purdy mouth." Did I hear banjos playing?

**Howard Grant**  
via e-mail

I have to take issue with Bryce Towsley's "In My Never-Humble Opinion" column in the October issue. I was with him on most of the article until the end and the way he treated the guy on the trail. Towsley was aware the guy was uncomfortable with his openly carrying a handgun, and instead of being a responsible gun owner and ambassador by explaining open carry, he chose to knowingly cause more uneasiness in a person who will now think all gun owners are people to fear. It might have been amusing to Towsley, but I'm sure the other hiker was not amused.

**Brian M. Boccuzzi**  
via e-mail

Sometimes, the title of a humorous article can give away its deeper meaning.

—Ed Friedman

## Correspondence is welcomed and encouraged

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# 1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

Never ones to miss an opportunity, we carefully steadied our glasses of bubbly and climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

With its remarkable retrograde hour and minute indicators, sunburst guilloché face and precision movement, this design is truly one of a kind. What does retrograde mean? Instead of displaying the hands rotating on an axis like most watches, the hands sweep in a semicircle, then return to their starting point and begin all over again.

Retrograde watches by the big brands can set you back thousands; one recent offering from a big French fashion house is selling for more than \$150,000! But because we've designed the 1920s Retrograde Watch in-house, we can offer it to you for just \$99!

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Studies indicate that firearms are used more than 2 million times a year for personal protection, and that the presence of a firearm, without a shot being fired, prevents crime in many instances. Shooting usually can be justified only where crime constitutes an immediate, imminent threat to life, limb, or, in some cases, property. Anyone is free to quote or reproduce these accounts.

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**A** woman was home alone with her child near Chicago, Ill., around 10 p.m. on Aug. 16, when she heard someone breaking in. She armed herself and retreated to a closet with her child. The intruder, however, proceeded upstairs to the hiding spot, so the woman shot and killed him. The investigation revealed that the man had several prior convictions, including three burglaries, and was on parole at the time of this incident. (shawlocal.com, Crystal Lake, Ill., 8/18/25)

**A** homeowner in Kanawha County, W.Va., discovered a stranger inside his home around noon on Aug. 8. The intruder was reportedly armed with a knife and a baseball bat and advanced on the homeowner when he entered the residence. The two men fought, with the scuffle migrating outside, where the homeowner was able to draw and fire on the assailant, killing him. (wchstv.com, Charlestown, W.Va., 8/8/25)

**I**n Philadelphia, a man was riding a SEPTA train on Aug. 15 when another man brutally attacked him. Police told the media that security video shows the man pacing the train car before attacking with no provocation. He knocked the victim down and struck him multiple times in the head and face. Fortunately, the victim was able to draw his concealed-carry firearm and shoot the assailant dead. (cbsnews.com, Philadelphia, Pa., 8/15/25)


**A** man was cleaning his car at a car wash around 7 p.m. on Sept. 2 near Detroit, Mich., when two other men approached. The men allegedly demanded the man's valuables and pointed a gun at him, whereupon the victim drew his own firearm and shot at the assailants, killing one and causing the other to flee. (clickondetroit.com, Detroit, Mich., 9/2/25)

**O**n Sept. 10, in Oakland, Calif., the owner of a store that offers cash for gold closed his business at 7:30 p.m., but when someone arrived at 7:45, he opened the door, thinking they were a potential customer trying to sell. He was then allegedly attacked by that person and four others, as was his cousin, who was also in the store. The owner, however, was able to produce his firearm and shoot at the assailants as he retreated to the store

office. Two of the suspects were killed. The two surviving suspects were charged with attempted robbery and murder. The store owner was not charged. (ktvu.com, San Francisco, Calif., 9/25/25)

**A** 62-year-old, heavily intoxicated man arrived by bicycle at a convenience store in Indian River County, Fla., on the afternoon of Oct. 3. The man allegedly threatened a woman outside the store with a gun, saying he was going to kill her, and then proceeded inside the store after the woman fled. Still armed, the man began demanding everyone inside the store leave. A female clerk was also armed, however, and she pushed the man back outside, telling him to drop his gun. She disarmed him and forced him to wait on his knees with his hands in the air until police could arrive. The man was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, possession of a firearm by a felon and exhibition of a weapon in public. (tccpalm.com, Ft. Pierce, Fla., 10/3/25)

**I**n San Antonio, Texas, on the morning Oct. 4, a masked man allegedly entered a shop selling smoking supplies, threatened the clerk with a gun and demanded money. The clerk, however, drew his own firearm and shot the suspect multiple times, landing him in critical condition at the time of reporting. (foxsanantonio.com, San Antonio, Texas, 10/5/25)

**A** woman was at home with her children in Phoenix, Ariz., the night of Oct. 10, when an ex-boyfriend forced his way in. The woman shot the man, who was later pronounced dead at the hospital. Police confirmed that the two had recently broken up and that the man had forced his way into the residence. (abc15.com, Phoenix, Ariz., 10/11/25) 





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







By Doug Hamlin

NRA Executive  
Vice President & CEO

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# A New Beginning For Our Freedom

This month marks the 234th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Bill of Rights. That's not a nice round number, of course, but as we enter the 250th year since 56 delegates of the Second Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence—men who knew the British would likely hang them as traitors if they were captured or if the American colonies lost the war—it is worth pondering that it took 15 years of struggling for freedom to get from the Declaration to the U.S. Bill of Rights.

During this decade and a half, the Founders of this nation could not be certain that one would lead to the other. What was clear was that they were fighting for their freedom. Just as clear to them was that they could not have hoped to win their freedom if the citizens of what would become the United States of America were not armed—hence the inclusion of the Second Amendment as a right that shall not be infringed.

I bring up these anniversaries because we should not forget we are still walking in the footsteps of this history. The words in our Constitution—including its first 10 amendments—must remain as animating now as they were when they were eloquently written on 18th-century parchments.

Indeed, these freedoms are alive and strong because we continue to exercise them. As a bulwark and testament to this continued struggle, this association of millions of freedom-loving Americans is committed to protecting the 27 words in the Second Amendment.

We are the Second Amendment's strength, as it is the physical use of this right that keeps it resilient. Gun-control groups know this, which is why they continue to try to make gun ownership and carry as difficult as possible.

Incredibly, as the NRA has shown in recent years, protecting this particular freedom extends to our other rights. The NRA, for example, won unanimously on First Amendment grounds at the U.S. Supreme Court in *NRA v. Vullo* (2024) after the state of New York abused its authority by attempting to destroy this association by threatening financial institutions that dared to work for or with us.

To stop this outright attack on our rights, we sued and kept pushing *Vullo* until it reached its unanimous conclusion in our nation's highest court.

Going to court to fight for our freedom from the deep pockets of government is expensive. As resources are finite and because we are in these struggles to win, the NRA Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA)

is bold and smart but discerning about when and where to file court challenges.

For all of this necessary legal work, we need your support. I often note that we are only as strong as our membership, because it is true. That said, we apologize if we seem to ask too much of our members. We do so because the stakes are high and because we know that if we have enough resources, we can win, as we are in the right. Our Second Amendment does protect our individual right to keep and bear arms. This right also clearly does extend outside of our homes, as acknowledged by the U.S. Supreme Court in another NRA-backed case, the 2022 *Bruen* decision.

No doubt the Founders of this nation, now nearly 250 years after the signing of the Declaration, would approve of this association's work to keep and, where necessary, win back the use of this constitutional right. They might even explain to us from their learned perspective that this advocacy is how freedom must be maintained in a constitutional republic. They would likely tell us that they gave us the First Amendment right to free speech and to petition the government so we would vociferously advocate for our Second Amendment-protected rights.

A look back to our nation's founding, and to all that those individuals said in speeches and letters, makes it clear to me that this large membership association is the America they had in mind when they amended the U.S. Constitution to protect these freedoms.

The anti-gun groups, politicians and media members know it, too. They know that if they can defeat this civil-liberties association, then they will have an easier time dismantling the constitutionally protected right that defends all our other freedoms.

But, because of you and our association, the anti-freedom activists are failing right now. Freedom is being unleashed by the Trump administration. And your NRA is back under new leadership. So please, stay involved and tell everyone who cherishes their freedom that we are far stronger when we stand together. If we all network, via social media and in person, to ask those in our circles to go to [nra.org](http://nra.org) to join, renew and donate, then we can continue to grow the influence of this critical association as we endeavor to teach freedom.



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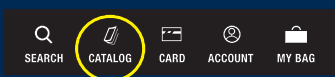
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# Transforming The NRA Battleship

I dedicate this column to the ongoing monumental change and transformation of the NRA. The NRA has experienced an impressive history of success over the last 154 years. However, success is temporary, and to keep making a significant impact on our liberties, **WE MUST CHANGE!** We must listen to our members, adjust our messaging, ensure excellence in all programs and services, and stay focused on our core mission!

I'd like to focus a little on membership in this column. A few columns back, I asked, "Why did you join NRA?" Your emails have contained many personal stories, but never once, "I joined because of a gift incentive." The majority of members joined the NRA because of an interest in guns, hunting, competition, training, defending themselves and their families, and many other reasons. However, the main reason for joining was to protect our God-given right to keep and bear arms under the Second Amendment.

In previous columns, I asked the question, "How are we doing?" Several members commented that we need to invest in youth and women's programs. Other members' comments were highly critical of our Membership Division, which included harsh critiques of excessive mailings, disconnected content, lack of listening, being ignored and poor member services.

Following your comments, the officers have assigned the Membership Committee to review our membership marketing and communications and to provide recommendations for improving and expanding membership. Your emails highlighted the urgency of this matter. The committee is energized, brainstorming, embracing change and generating many excellent suggestions for future action.

## BOARD MEETING UPDATES

I am excited to share that the September Board of Directors meeting was highly productive, with several Directors describing them as some of the best in decades. Per your requests, the Board passed the following resolution:

**"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the NRA Legislative Policy Committee strongly recommends to the NRA Board of Directors that National Right to



By Bill Bachenberg

President

Carry legislation be established as the Association's top legislative priority; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NRA utilize all available advocacy, lobbying, grassroots mobilization, and communications resources to press Congressional leadership to advance National Right to Carry legislation this session, without delay, whether or not final passage is immediately feasible; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NRA commit to holding Members of Congress publicly accountable through the legislative process, thereby providing our Association and membership with a clear record to use in guiding voter engagement, contributions, and activism in the critical midterm elections ahead."

## MAJOR CHANGES COMING TO MEMBERSHIP MARKETING

The Board is listening closely to your emails and conversations and working to create change, and nothing—including membership marketing—is off the table. How many are sick and tired of all the mailings, emails and phone calls? Jim H. wrote, "I am really tired of your 'off the charts' mailings throughout the years. Not just a letter. NO ... a heavy, thick, overdone, expensive, multi-page pleading for me to re-up." Jim, your Board leadership hears you.

You've asked why the NRA sends so many fundraising mailings and email solicitations. The simple answer is that

they generate extra funds for our programs. Yes, the income from these communications exceeds the cost of mailing, and it's hard to stop what's proven to be a reliable source of revenue in the past.

I'm pleased to report that we did not renew our three-decade-old marketing company's contract. NRA is establishing an in-house Marketing Division to centrally manage all member marketing and communications. What a long-overdue idea! Now, communications will be coordinated across all divisions of the Association. This will also introduce new and innovative concepts to our communications. To facilitate the transition, NRA is partnering with a leading outside marketing firm.

Please bear with us as we go through this major transition. It will take some time to develop systems and processes to improve communications. Our goal is to enhance membership renewal notices and coordinated fundraising so we don't pester you every month. During this transition, we will still need to conduct fundraising, so we appreciate your patience.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

NRA is undergoing much-needed change. We all know what happened to many of the battleships of the past—they were either sunk or turned into museum pieces. If NRA wants to remain relevant and strong in the future, we must become more forward-thinking, agile, and responsive to the needs of our members and the gun-owning community at large.

While we are pushing ahead at warp speed, real change doesn't happen overnight. Some changes will be immediately apparent, while others will come more gradually. And yes, we might hit a few bumps along the way. But with your input and support, we will adapt, improve and keep moving forward. Please continue to send your ideas to [President@NRADirector.com](mailto:President@NRADirector.com) or [NRAPresident.com](mailto:NRAPresident.com).

Merry Christmas,

*Bill*



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It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

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By John Commerford  
Executive Director,  
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# Confidence In Mass Media Sinks To New Lows; The Trace Helps Explain Why

Informed gun owners know that the mainstream media is biased and unreliable when it comes to firearm-related topics. Yet recent data from polling firm Gallup show skepticism about mass media is broadly distributed among the U.S. population. One anti-gun “journalism” project helps explain why, by demonstrating how activism and reporting have effectively merged, to the detriment of the profession’s integrity.

First, the bad news for “the news.” Gallup has been asking Americans about their “trust and confidence” in mass media—newspapers, TV and radio—to report the news “fully, accurately and fairly” since 1972. A Gallup poll conducted between Sept. 2-16 shows trust and confidence in mass media at 28%, the lowest level in the poll’s 53-year history.

While trust is at record lows among all parties, Democrats (51%) report confidence at higher rates than Republicans (8%) and Independents (27%). Sixty-two percent of Republicans expressed NO confidence or trust in mass media “at all!”

Examples abound of how the modern media has botched the biggest stories of the day, including the political viability of Donald Trump and Joe Biden’s fitness for the presidency.

But The Trace demonstrates how it is not mere ignorance or unprofessionalism that lead to unreliable news. It is the agenda that drives the reporting.

Michael Bloomberg is one of the richest men in the world and one of the most-zealous advocates for gun control in the United States.

Bloomberg, as mayor of New York City, created Mayors Against Illegal Guns to spread anti-gun orthodoxy in municipal politics. That organization spawned Everytown for Gun Safety, a firearm-prohibition lobby that promotes gun-control advocacy in professional and cultural spheres and even among mothers. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health also hosts the Center for Gun Violence Solutions, which gives the cause a façade of scientific credibility. The overall goal is to create the impression of an elite anti-gun consensus.

What brings the work of all these components to the public’s attention is the operation’s media arm. Bloomberg News was created in 1990. But in 2015, Bloomberg went even further and launched The Trace, which bills itself as a “team of journalists exclusively dedicated to reporting on our country’s gun violence crisis.”

The Trace doesn’t just have a beat; it has an objective: to tilt the narrative about crime and public safety toward support for gun control.

One way is by “partnering” with other media outlets to place stories in well-known newspapers, magazines and television stations.

Another is by mentoring reporters to create their own anti-gun content. Jennifer Mascia, a founding staffer of The Trace, also helped found the Association of Gun Violence Reporters (AGVR). Among other things, AGVR publishes a detailed guide for journalists on how to report on “gun violence.” Key to their approach is insisting every firearm-related fatality was preventable and points to a “solution.” And this always involves more gun control, including “evidence-based policies like permit to purchase, universal background checks, and waiting periods[.]”

Reporters, according to the guide, are also supposed to frame firearm-related crime as “structural,” as opposed to the result of morally culpable individual decision-making. Thus, they should “[n]ever report in a way that suggests a victim ‘deserved’ to be shot because of what they were engaged in prior to the shooting,” including, apparently, criminals shot in self-defense.

On the other hand, writers should emphasize America is a “country with failing firearm policies” and a “society in which outcomes are shaped by structural racism, concentrated poverty, lack of access to social supports, and other environmental factors.”

AGVR also tells reporters to “[s]eek out the expertise of people beyond the police,” and offers to “connect journalists” to “resources,” including “experts” tutored under Everytown’s umbrella.

The idea that “journalists” need a pre-ordained framing for stories about firearm-related crime and pre-ordained gun-control policies as inevitable takeaways should speak for itself. That is advocacy and exploitation, not “trauma-informed journalism.”

Last August, however, another writer from The Trace, Mike Spies, got too comfortable during an MSNBC appearance and gave away the game. Dismissing lesser forms of gun control, he said: “You have to be honest and say what will actually work, which is what nobody wants to hear, which is that there are just simply way too many firearms, and they are way too accessible.” His solution was to follow the lead of Australia and other countries that had banned and confiscated handguns and other “powerful” firearms.

In presenting this case study, I can’t blame The Trace for singlehandedly destroying America’s faith in journalism.

It is interesting to note, however, that during the 10 years The Trace has been in business, Gallup shows trust in media has declined from 40% to 28%. I’ll let you decide if that’s just a coincidence.





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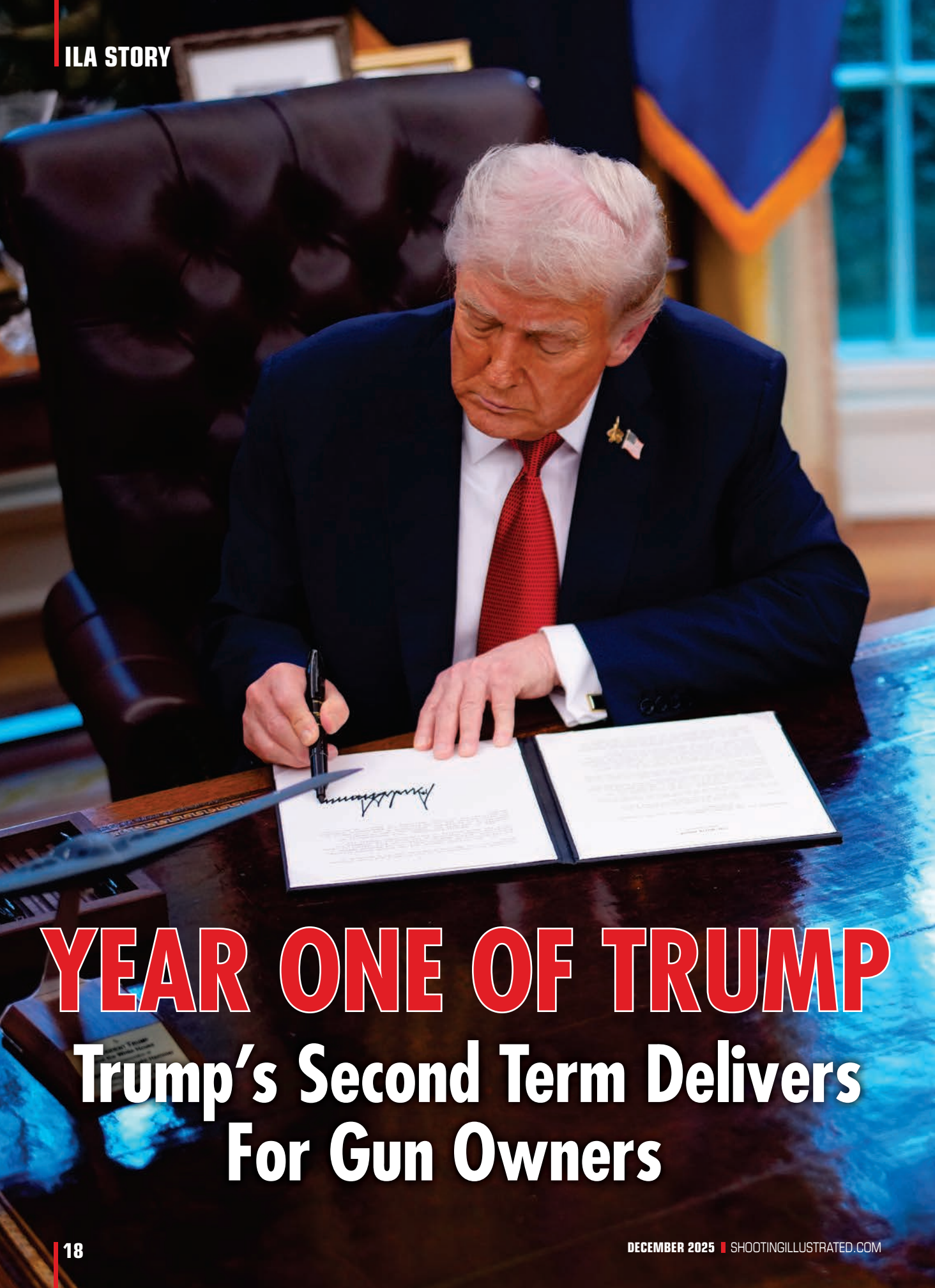


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# YEAR ONE OF TRUMP

## Trump's Second Term Delivers For Gun Owners



By John Commerford  
Executive Director, NRA-ILA



Promises made, promises kept. It's the phrase President Donald Trump's White House uses to emphasize this administration's commitment to delivering on the agenda the American people endorsed at the ballot box. And unlike the case with so many cheap-talking politicians, the Trump administration has plenty of accomplishments to point to. This is especially true when it comes to President Trump's promise to protect Americans' Second Amendment rights.

Speaking at the 2024 NRA Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas, President Trump told NRA members, "Let there be no doubt, the survival of our Second Amendment is very much on the ballot." The president went on to explain, "In my second term, we will roll back every Biden attack on the Second Amendment." President Trump's Make America Great Again platform made clear that his party would "Defend our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, and our fundamental freedoms, including ... the right to keep and bear arms."

Upon taking office on January 20, President Trump got to work on keeping his word.

### REINING IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

In February, President Trump issued an executive order, "Protecting Second Amendment Rights." Of chief concern was reorienting the administrative state to protect, rather than infringe, the right to keep and bear arms.

During his inglorious term, President Joe Biden and his handlers had instituted a "whole-of-government" approach to attacking gun owners, the gun industry and Second Amendment rights. This means that they sought to leverage any bit of the sprawling federal bureaucracy they could to wage their anti-gun jihad.

The most formalized representation of this effort was the ill-named, and Kamala Harris-led, White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The outfit served as a taxpayer-funded gun-control advocacy wing of the federal government, coordinating efforts to undermine the Second Amendment throughout the administrative state. Explaining this far-reaching undertaking, the former deputy director of the White House gun-control office told anti-gun publication *The Trace*, "Within our first week on the job, there was a cabinet meeting where the president and vice president challenged each agency to do more."

President Trump shuttered the gun-control project immediately after assuming office.

The federal public health bureaucracy has been a crucial target for reform. In March, the Trump administration removed Biden Surgeon General Vivek Murthy's anti-gun policy document, "Firearm Violence: A Public Health Crisis in America," from the official Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) website.

There is an ongoing effort to realign the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) toward its original function (controlling communicable disease) and away from boutique political concerns. To this end, Trump administration reduction-in-force efforts have included the CDC's historically

anti-gun National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC). Moreover, reporting from the journal *Nature* suggested the National Institutes of Health, which has funded dubious and bizarre gun-related research, is exercising more judgment in grant-funding decisions.

Then there's the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

In 1992, Congress defunded ATF from administering a statutorily authorized procedure whereby a person prohibited from possessing firearms can petition "the Attorney General for relief from the disabilities imposed by Federal laws[.]" Designed to give reformed citizens a chance to restore their Second Amendment rights, ATF had managed this program under a delegation of authority from the U.S. Attorney General.

In early 2025, the Trump administration moved the statutorily authorized function into the Department of Justice's Office of the Pardon Attorney and began processing relief petitions once again. In July, the Justice Department issued a proposed final rule seeking to further formalize the restoration-of-rights process.

**PRESIDENT TRUMP TOLD NRA MEMBERS, "IN MY SECOND TERM, WE WILL ROLL BACK EVERY BIDEN ATTACK ON THE SECOND AMENDMENT." UPON TAKING OFFICE ON JANUARY 20, PRESIDENT TRUMP GOT TO WORK ON KEEPING HIS WORD.**

The Biden administration weaponized ATF against the gun industry. In June 2021, the Biden White House announced its intent to revoke Federal Firearms Licenses from licensees (FFLs or gun dealers) under a new "zero tolerance" policy purportedly aimed at "rogue gun dealers that willfully violate the law."

Since enactment of the Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986, the government must prove that an FFL's violation was "willful" to revoke its license. This change was in response to congressional findings that ATF was taking an overly harsh approach to routine inspections of FFLs, including revoking licenses for honest and harmless mistakes, instead of working with the FFLs to improve compliance.

The "zero tolerance" campaign effectively read the "willful" standard right out of the federal statute. As a result, the Biden effort subjected well-meaning FFLs to license revocations over minor infractions, including harmless paperwork errors.

On April 7, President Trump formally put an end to Biden-era "zero tolerance." In so doing, the DOJ acknowledged, "The prior administration's 'Zero Tolerance' policy unfairly targeted law-abiding gun owners and created an undue burden on Americans seeking to exercise their constitutional right to bear arms."

While it's impossible to undo all the damage done to well-meaning gun dealers whose livelihoods were a casualty of Biden's war on the Second Amendment, on May 21, ATF announced that "Federal firearms licensees that surrendered their licenses, had their licenses revoked, or had their applications denied based on the [zero tolerance program] may reapply."

In the same April announcement ending "zero tolerance," the DOJ also made clear its intent to revisit Biden-era regulatory restrictions on the use of pistol-stabilizing braces. In July, the DOJ made clear that it would not appeal a Fifth Circuit ruling that had vacated the Biden-ATF brace rule, ending enforcement of the braced-pistol ban.

Further, the Trump administration has reversed a Biden-era regulatory effort to use the Department of Commerce to inhibit commercial export of firearms from the U.S. to other countries. In protecting the American firearm manufacturers' ability to do business abroad, the Trump administration is protecting jobs in this vibrant industry and ensuring these companies' capacity to continue to produce their products for domestic gun owners.

### A MONUMENTAL TAX CUT

On July 4, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB) into law. The legislation zeroed out the unconstitutional National Firearm Act of 1934 (NFA) \$200 tax on suppressors and short-barreled firearms, along with the \$5 tax on "any other weapons."

The tax cut offered gun owners a welcome reprieve from an intentionally punitive tax. Still, the OBBB's most consequential impact may be yet to come. President Trump's signature opened the door to a new legal attack on the NFA regulatory regime.

Under the U.S. Constitution, the federal government is limited to its enumerated powers—one of which is taxation. The drafters of the NFA specifically used the taxing power to regulate the items implicated under their legislation. Using this power, the government constructed an onerous registration and transfer regime for NFA items, which requires transferees to submit sensitive personal information for retention in a federal registry. The legal fiction supporting this oppressive scheme is that it exists to administer the NFA tax. Without the corresponding

tax, there is no justification for the registration regime for the now untaxed items.

Prompted by President Trump's legislation, NRA has joined a coalition of gun-rights organizations in a federal lawsuit to eliminate the NFA's registration requirement for the items not subject to the NFA tax.

### CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION AND THE JUDICIARY

In 2001, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft shifted DOJ policy to recognize that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep and bear arms. This was a meaningful recognition of the proper interpretation of the Second Amendment seven years before the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged the individual right in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008).

However, it took President Trump and his Justice Department to truly treat the Second Amendment as a right commensurate with other civil liberties. This can be seen in Assistant U.S. Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon and the DOJ Civil Rights Division she oversees' emphasis on protecting the right to keep and bear arms.

In June, the Civil Rights Division submitted an amicus brief supporting the plaintiffs' position in the Seventh Circuit case *Barnett v. Raoul*. The case challenges Illinois' ban on commonly owned semi-automatic firearms and standard-capacity magazines.

Further, Dhillon participated in oral arguments on behalf of the U.S. In doing so, she made clear that it is the U.S. government's position that the commonly owned semi-automatic firearms gun-control advocates are eager to ban are arms protected by the Second Amendment.

In September, the Civil Rights Division filed a federal suit against the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for its woeful administration of the state Carry Concealed Weapons License regime. The complaint alleges the Los Angeles licensing authority "systematically denied thousands of law-abiding Californians their fundamental Second Amendment right to bear arms outside the home—not through outright refusal, but through a deliberate pattern of unconscionable delay that renders this constitutional right meaningless in practice."

While there were no U.S. Supreme

Court vacancies in 2025, President Trump's careful attention to nominating judges with a fidelity to the U.S. Constitution and rule of law in his first term paid dividends this year.

On June 5, the Court issued a unanimous decision in *Smith & Wesson Brands v. Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. The case concerned an effort by Mexico, aided by domestic collaborators, to hold the U.S. gun industry liable for cartel violence committed south of the border.

Under longstanding tort principles, manufacturers aren't responsible for the criminal acts of third parties perpetrated with their products (e.g., General Motors isn't liable for the actions of drunk drivers). Faced with anti-gun efforts to undo this basic tenet of tort law to bankrupt the gun industry, the U.S. Congress enacted the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act in 2004, protecting the gun industry from illegitimate third-party liability.

The Court rejected Mexico's case and in doing so invigorated the PLCAA, which has faced an increasing number of dubious legal attacks in recent years.

On October 3, the Court granted certiorari in *Wolford v. Lopez*. The case concerns Hawaii's concealed-carry law enacted in the wake of the Court's landmark *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* (2022) decision. The Aloha State law prohibits license-to-carry holders from carrying on private property open to the public without the property owner's express consent.

While nothing is certain, gun-rights supporters can hold a cautious optimism that the Court may seek to rein in some of the worst post-*Bruen* intransigence while offering further limitation on what defiant jurisdictions so frivolously deem "sensitive places." Property prohibitions akin to Hawaii's in New York and New Jersey have been struck down in the Second and Third Circuits, respectively.

With all this early progress on Second Amendment rights, gun owners are right to be hopeful about what can be accomplished in President Trump's next three years. Yet, there will be challenges ahead. The 2026 midterm elections, a stubborn bureaucracy, and persistent anti-Second Amendment obstinance from the lower federal courts make clear that gun owners must stay engaged and committed to working toward our goals. 🌀





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# One is Good— Two is Safer

## Is your solitary, easily compromised exterior camera providing enough security?

The ability to monitor outside activity from behind locked doors, or while away, is a decided safety advantage. Unfortunately, criminals have developed tactics to defeat the modestly priced devices. A new twist surfaced in Rocky River, OH, in October 2024.

Law enforcement was notified after a mailman noticed multiple homes on his route had their video doorbells covered with blue tape. None of the residents reported anything suspicious beforehand, hinting that the culprit may have been a seemingly routine visitor.

Cameras were cleaned, patrols stepped up and incidents didn't increase. Homes that left their cameras blind were readily identified targets. There are other ways to disable a lone camera and its motion-detection capability. Mother Nature can even be the culprit when a storm takes down power—along with Wi-Fi routers—and criminals prowling the dark. Thankfully there's an inexpensive solution.

Trail cams have been a favorite among hunters for decades, and Moultrie has been a leader in the realm since 1998. In 2007, the company introduced the industry's first cellular-capable unit. Instead of multiple trips afield to change memory cards, it launched a revolution of images and video streaming to screens miles away.

Battery powered and designed for discreet placement, they blend into landscaping and easily escape detection. The company even introduced its Edge Solar camera in July, eliminating the power source concerns.

"Cellular security gives an elevated level of peace of mind," said Alex Sherbinow, Moultrie's senior director of marketing. "Without having to rely on unstable Wi-Fi connections or power ensures you're always connected to your property ..."

The company's Edge 2 Cellular Security Camera is designed specifically for home security. Sherbinow noted "... add on Moultrie AI to give specific notifications based on human traffic and you have the

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOULTRIE



ability to get instant notifications of potential trespassers."

Muddy Outdoor has also noted the trend. "More homeowners are turning towards cellular trail cameras to monitor their properties and homes," said Chris Dunkin, wireless division manager at GSM Outdoors. "Muddy infrared cellular cameras connect to the best network in your area and operate off the Command Pro App. Plans are as low as \$4 per month and there are a variety of different models of cameras and accessories to best suit the needs of any consumer."

There's also the matter of privacy concerns, but the final word on the

dangers of a Wi-Fi-exclusive video system was delivered back in 2020, when criminals hacked into a dozen doorbell cameras across the nation. They then made dire sounding 911 calls from spoofed phone numbers, and livestreamed law enforcement's armed response.

## Shooting Off

***"Justin Ray will have a lasting reminder of what happens when you break into someone's home here in Monroe County. Our hope is that this serves as a clear warning to anyone contemplating such actions."***

—Monroe County (AL) Sheriff Tom Boatwright stated in an official social media post after Ray, while wielding an axe, was shot and wounded by a resident during a June home invasion.

## Lifestyle | Remington Remedy

Remington Ammunition and Log Still Distillery announced a partnership in late August, and the holiday season is an ideal time to share the new Remington Reserve "Open Season" Bourbon with family and friends. The aroma of almond, toasted grain, apple and just a touch of brown sugar is the ideal aperitif.

There are tradition and pride packed into this proprietary blend of



86-proof Kentucky and Tennessee bourbons. The company is family-owned and operating on the same site at which the current generation's great-great-great grandfather launched his bourbon company in 1836.

"Remington has always been about traditions and legacy, and that's exactly what we wanted to capture in this bottle," said Log Still's Denise Ingle. MSRP is \$39.99 with shipping available to most states. To order, visit [logstilldistillery.com](http://logstilldistillery.com).



## SOCOM Invests Heavily in 6.5 Creedmoor

On Aug. 20, U.S. SOCOM awarded LMT Defense a 10-year contract for 6.5 Creedmoor-chambered rifles. Value of the agreement has a ceiling of \$92 million.

The same day, the U.S. Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division awarded a contract for 6.5 Creedmoor to Black Hills Ammunition. The agreement is valued at \$40 million and expected to be completed by August 2030. Somewhere in excess of 17.3 million cartridges will be used by U.S. Special Operations Command and the Marine Corps.



### Quick Shots

Beretta Holding acquired 1,250,100 shares of Ruger common stock for roughly \$46 million in September, close to 7.8 percent of the firm's outstanding shares. The Securities and Exchange Commission filing states the move is an effort to increase strategic collaboration between the legendary gunmakers.

IWI US announced on Sept. 22 that it is relocating its headquarters and all major operations from Pennsylvania to Andersonville, TN. The company will invest \$15.7 million in its new facility, creating 72 new jobs.

The Czech Ministry of Defense entered into a long-term contract in September with CZ to supply small arms to that nation's military. The agreement includes accessories and is valued at up to 4.26 billion CZK (approximately \$204 million), excluding value-added tax. Under the latest agreement, the nation's army will continue to purchase CZ Bren 2 rifles, CZP-10 C pistols and CZ GL underbarrel grenade launchers.

## SKILLS CHECK Steve Tarani

# Harden The Diamond

Refining your precision, accuracy and speed is a precious gem of another sort.

It is said that a novice can pull it off now and again, but the professional cannot get it wrong. To that end, there are three mandatory elements of the shooting process executed subconsciously and cherished by the pros: hard visual focus, sustainable grip and precise trigger press. Mastery of these three define the elite shooter.

Our drill this month trains you to further develop these critical fundamentals, pushing your skills envelope to the next level. These three essential sub-components are combined in such a manner that hardens their molecular bonding subconsciously.

### Here's the Drill

- Set up four targets: two smaller steel targets, placing one left and the other right, and two paper targets arranged near and far in between the steel, with all four targets together loosely forming the shape of a diamond.
- The distance between each target linearly should be no less than 10 yards. Adjust paper distances according to your skill. Shooters seeking more of a challenge may increase target difficulty by either reducing target size, increasing distance or setting a greater penalty for a miss.
- Label the paper target nearest you T1 and the paper target farthest T2. The left steel plate is T3, and the right steel plate T4.

### Near to Far

- Stand to the left of T1 so you have clear access to all four targets of the diamond. Start with a holstered pistol, hands below your gun belt. On the buzzer or "go" signal, draw

from the holster to T1 and place one round in the A-box of the body and one in the A-box of the head. Transition to T3 for one round in the visual center of the target. Transition to T4 with the same (one round) and then end with T2 by placing one round in the A-box of the body and one in the A-box of the head for a total of six rounds.

- Only record your total time if it is a clean run. Run this drill at least three times, starting off with "guaranteed hits" (no misses) and then push yourself on the remaining two runs to find where your wheels fall off.

### Far to Near

- Stand to the right of T1 so you have clear access to all four targets of the diamond. Start with a holstered pistol, hands below your gun belt. On the buzzer or "go" signal, draw from the holster to T2 and place one round in the A-box of the body and one round in the A-box of the head. Transition to T4 for one round in the visual center of the target. Transition to T3 and do the same (one round) and then end with T1 by placing one in the A-box of the body and one in the A-box of the head. Only record your total time if it is a clean run. Run this drill at least three times, starting off with "guaranteed hits" (no misses) and then push yourself on the remaining two runs to find where your wheels fall off.

Which of the three components starts to falter first as you increase speed? Consistently hitting all four points of the diamond without error requires sustained efficiency (from which speed is a byproduct) and control (from which accuracy is a byproduct).

Hardening the diamond at varying speeds provides you with a clear indicator of what you can and cannot do at varying speeds. Therefore, the more you harden the diamond, the further your fundamentals compress into your subconscious (unconscious competence) which affords you much greater task focus—the holy grail of the consummate professional—versus consciously shooting.

# Newbie Necessities

**New to gun ownership? Here are some essential items you need to get started in your firearm journey.**

Prevent unauthorized access to your handgun(s) with the **Hornady RAPID Safe 4800KP XXL**. Constructed from 14-gauge steel and paired with RFID technology, this portable safe exceeds ASTM safety standards, while still granting ultra-fast access to a pair of secure handguns via a convenient keypad, the swipe of an RFID-enabled sticker or the wave of an RFID key fob or wrist strap, all of which are included. An security cable is included and serves as an added theft deterrent.

MSRP: \$322.99; [hornady.com](http://hornady.com)

The **Hoppes Range Kit with Cleaning Mat** includes all the components shooters need to maintain .22- and .30-caliber rifles as well as 9 mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP handguns. Several metal-rod sections of varying lengths provide effective cleaning. It also comes with a pair of brushes, assorted patches, three orange-colored plastic picks for removing carbon from those small, pesky, hard-to-reach places and a chamber brush for AR-pattern rifles. The included mat keeps your work area tidy.

MSRP: \$89.99; [hoppes.com](http://hoppes.com)

Measuring 16x9x9.5 inches, the three-sided, dual-zippered lid of **Federal's Top Gun Range Bag** provides quick and easy access to all of your essential shooting gear. Padding on all sides safeguards contents from damage, while the large main compartment contains a removable divider. Mesh pockets line the sides and back. There's also a zippered pouch on the front that has elastic loops. An adjustable shoulder strap boasts quick-release clasps for optimal support.

MSRP: \$35.74; [federalpremium.com](http://federalpremium.com)

**Champion Slim Fit Passive Ear Muffs** are specifically designed to fit smaller heads where regular-size offerings would otherwise fail. They feature an adjustable headband that provides all-day comfort, allowing for optimum fit while providing a noise-reduction rating of 21 dB. When not in use, the muffs fold in and collapse, taking up minimal space in a range bag. Colors include black or pink.

MSRP: \$27.99; [championtarget.com](http://championtarget.com)

**Magpul Explorer Glasses** boast a stylish, low-profile design that protects from light, wind and debris. The TR90 frames offer lightweight construction and flexibility for comfort without fear of falling off, while the anti-scratch, non-polarized lenses sport an anti-reflection coating and provide protection from UV rays and hot, errant brass cases. A variant with polarized lenses is also available.

MSRP: \$51.75; [magpul.com](http://magpul.com)





# The Long and The Short of it.

I am a fan of the Ruger Redhawk line of revolvers and have several chambered in .357 Mag., .44 Mag. and .45 Colt/.45 ACP. I also have a Super Redhawk chambered in .454 Casull. As a recent retiree, I now have time to spend time on the range shooting these revolvers. Due to the volume I am shooting, I usually shoot lighter-recoiling ammo in each of the revolvers to preserve my hands as much as anything.

While at the range this past weekend, one of the more knowledgeable members of my club came over to visit and see what I was shooting. When he saw that I was shooting abbreviated cartridges in my revolvers, he became very serious and told me that if I truly valued my guns, I would stop shooting the shorter cartridges in my revolvers immediately. When I asked him why, he said that it would damage the chambers, making it so I could never use the full-length cartridges the guns were chambered for again.

I thanked him for his advice, subsequently packing up and going home to clean my guns and put them back in my vault. I have less than 500 rounds through each revolver, so I hope it is not too late to prevent damaging the guns any further than I already have.

How many rounds does it take in a quality revolver shooting the shorter cartridges to damage the chambers making it so I am not able to shoot the magnum loads if I ever decide to?

*Manny Izzi  
Secaucus, NJ*

**The short answer is you have** nothing to worry about in shooting the shorter, lower-powered factory cartridges in the magnum chambers of your revolvers, especially if you clean the guns as you indicated after every range session.

Consider the .45 Colt/.45 ACP Redhawk revolver, for instance. Ruger condones and encourages owners of that particular model of revolver to shoot both cartridges without any reservation—as long as reasonable maintenance is performed as anyone would with a gun they cared about. The steel in the cylinders of these guns will withstand the pressures generated by either of these cartridges without damage for generations to come.

Some revolver shooters run into problems trying to chamber magnum cartridges after shorter cartridges have been fired extensively in their guns from a buildup of firing residue

just in front of the cartridge case mouth. This is particularly prevalent when firing lead bullets, whether they are factory loads or not. Firing cast bullets—particularly in reloaded ammunition due to the nature of the lubricant and the bullet hardness, as well as sometimes higher velocities—tends to leave more fouling in the chamber just in front of the case mouth than a lower-powered swaged bullet prevalent in factory-loaded, lead-projectile ammunition.

Over time, with high-volume shooting carbon and, to a lesser degree bullet-jacket material, can build up in the chamber, making the insertion of a magnum-length cartridge difficult and also making it difficult to extract after firing as well. The solution to overcoming all these issues is regular cleaning with a tight-fitting bronze- or brass-bristle chamber brush with a quality solvent followed by a few cleaning patches to remove the residue.

You can prove your work by inserting a full-length magnum cartridge into each chamber one at a time to ensure the cartridge seats completely and just as important, falls from the chamber with only gravity as its initiator. Do this in a safe area without any distraction so the cylinder is not inadvertently aligned with the barrel, causing a potentially unsafe condition where firing a gun would be inappropriate. It should be easy-in and easy-out with a full-length cartridge under the force of gravity with each chamber to verify the quality of your chamber cleaning.

Another consideration, even though it doesn't seem applicable to your individual situation, is firing high-pressure cartridges in shorter-than-chamber-length cartridge cases. As long as you continue your low-pressure loads and regular cleaning afterward you have nothing to worry about.

As for your misinformed friend, the next time he offers a suggestion similar to the one he previously provided, nod approvingly and thank him for taking the time to try and help. Tell him that you will keep his suggestions in mind if and when you have any problems of that nature in the future. All the while with a prominent smile.

## Correspondence is welcomed and encouraged

**Write to:** Shooting Illustrated | NRA  
11250 Waples Mill Road,  
Fairfax, VA 22030-9400

**e-mail:** [shootingillustrated@nrahq.org](mailto:shootingillustrated@nrahq.org)



Regularly shooting shorter cases out of longer-cylinder revolvers (like .38 Spl. out of a .357 Mag.) is possible provided one meticulously keeps the chambers clean.



## Kit and Caboodle

**Surplus kits are a great way to acquire that classic rifle you've been coveting.**

**T**he components that make up a "rifle kit" have evolved over time. For several decades, the term chiefly referred to a complete set of parts for a traditionally styled, blackpowder rifle that needed minor fitting, surface finishing and assembly. The rifle kits of recent years, whether comprised of surplus parts or all-new components, are far different animals. Popular modern sporting rifle platforms and legal-to-own versions of legacy battle rifles figure heavily into the kit world today.

When comprised of used components taken from demilitarized (or "demilled") service arms, parts kits typically require replacement of several components. The unusable parts, such as cut-up receivers and (sometimes) barrels, may have been intentionally destroyed to bring the kit into compliance with current U.S. laws, or they may simply be missing. Legal replacements may be provided by the supplier or required to be furnished by the buyer/builder.

Other kits contain completely new parts, either as stripped components or partially built rifles, with some assembly still required. Most AR- and many AK-pattern rifle kits fall into the new-parts category. Regardless of kit type, each of the modern DIY-rifle styles fits a wide range of needs, including home defense, hunting and tactical training.

A quick search for "demilled rifle parts kits" will yield a large number of mid- and late-20th-century battle-rifle options. Many surplus kits require gunsmithing skills and, due to specific parts which may be included, necessitate familiarity with federal and state laws. For example, several battle-rifle parts kits include original, full-automatic trigger groups. While semi-automatic receivers are designed to prevent installation and use of these triggers, modifying either component to work together violates the National Firearms Act, which carries hefty legal consequences.

You'll also find kits with short barrels permanently pinned and welded to be at least 16 inches long or used for large-format-pistol or registered short-barrel-rifle builds. The current (2009) edition of Publication 5320.8, the "National Firearms Act Handbook," is available

Surplus kits, like this vz. 58 kit from Century Arms, are a DIY way to get hard-to-find models while learning about how these firearms operate.

for download from the ATF's website ([atf.gov](http://atf.gov)) and can be a useful resource. While not fully inclusive, this publication shines a fair amount of light on many of the common prohibited components and configurations. When in doubt, contact the ATF's NFA Branch for clarification or a Class II SOT (manufacturer of NFA firearms) for hands-on help.

When a receiver is required to complete a build kit, the simplest option is to purchase it from an FFL—complete with all appropriate background checks and an ATF Form 4473. However, current federal laws do not prevent an individual from manufacturing a receiver for personal use, should they have that ability. Nonetheless, the rules vary from state to state, so it's important to understand your local laws as well.

This is especially important in light of the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) April, 2022, regulation updates to the definitions of and marking requirements for firearm frames and receivers. Despite lower court rulings that prevented enforcement of this reclassification effort, SCOTUS upheld DOJ's position in 2025, leaving in place a confusing and convoluted web of rules that risks tripping up unwary and otherwise innocent gun owners and FFLs.

As a licensed manufacturer of both NFA and regular firearms, I have to stay abreast of and fully familiar with all relevant regulations. Still, the so-called "Frame or Receiver Rule" is packed with so much ambiguity that I'm forced to turn away certain types of work just to be on the safe side. That costs me potential



customers, but dancing around gray areas is unwise in this industry. My advice to anyone considering a receiver-less rifle kit is to purchase an already-serialized and marked receiver from a licensed dealer.

Finding a rifle parts kit that costs less than a bottom-tier rifle of the same model isn't too challenging. Thus, a careful shopper with the tools and ability to correctly assemble parts can land a bargain. The builder also gets the satisfaction of helping to create (or recreate) a functional tool. The nostalgia factor for out-of-production or otherwise non-importable firearms is another positive.

I've had the opportunity to service and test a fair number of rifles built from parts kits in recent years. In some cases, the builder simply wanted a second set of eyes and proper tooling (if needed) to remedy anything that may have been out of whack. Other customers had concerns about parts'

conditions or quality. On the AR side of the house, parts kits have been good enough to allow for functional rifles that were well-suited to general-purpose use. Where new components had to be replaced or modified, they were limited to small parts with fit or finish problems. The major components did what they were supposed to do, even if they weren't top-tier.

Rifles built from demilled surplus parts kits have needed more attention. In some cases, major component replacements were required. With the parent rifles having endured all the rigors of military service, heavily worn finishes or corroded parts aren't uncommon. Moderate-to-significant wear of the chamber, bore and moving parts may also be encountered. Pay close attention to pictures, descriptions and return policies before ordering. Since headspace and other critical dimensions and components should be checked prior to use, it's

worth letting a gunsmith check your finished masterpiece to ensure it's safe.

As plentiful as they may seem now, surplus military-rifle-parts kits will not last forever. I grew up in the era when semi-auto versions of just about every mid-20th-century fighting rifle could be had at fractions of today's prices. My shooting buddies and I wagered that they'd still be around when we finally saved enough money to buy our favorites, but politics and the laws of supply and demand had something to say about that.

If we were to go strictly by the number of options on the market, we could conclude that the age of the kit rifle is at hand. Considering that December is when most of us gather with family and friends to count blessings and exchange gifts, it's worth considering the multitude of affordable rifle kits that are waiting to be born or simply remade into new images of their old selves. Just sayin'.

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# Mass Extinction?

Will the medium-frame, double-action revolver go the way of the dinosaur?



ADOBE FIREFLY

If you've been to a natural-history museum (or watched anything from the "Jurassic Park" franchise on the big screen), you know that the period from the time dinosaurs became the dominant life form on the planet until a cosmic fender bender somewhere off the Yucatán Peninsula killed all of them except chickens, cockroaches, parrots and whatever those little brown birds are that sit in the tree over your car and poop on it was called The Age of the Dinosaurs.

Few stretches of dominance have run longer; not the Roman Empire nor even the Brady/Belichick-era New England Patriots.

One stretch of dominance that was nearly as total, if somewhere in between New England's in the AFC East and Rome's in Europe and the Mediterranean littoral, was that of the medium-frame, double-action revolver, which reigned supreme in the United States for something like a century.

If we define the Age of the Medium-Frame Revolver as running from the first adoption of Colt's Model 1889 by the U.S. Military to the abandonment of the Smith & Wesson Model 65 and Ruger Service-Six by the NYPD in favor of semi-automatic pistols, that's a solid 105 years of duty.

During that era, medium-frame revolvers, usually in some variety of .38 caliber, could be found everywhere in our glorious United States.

The aforementioned Colt M1889 was followed by several other models from Colt and Smith & Wesson as the standard sidearms of the U.S. Military. Even after the military adopted a semi-automatic pistol in the shape of the Browning-designed M1911 in the early years of the 20th century, the medium-frame double-action (DA) .38-caliber

revolver remained either the substitute standard or the standard issue for specific services and branches. The Smith & Wesson .38 Military & Police and the .38 Combat Masterpiece saw service as issue sidearms well into the Atomic Age and, in various logistical backwaters, outlasted the Cold War.

It wasn't just with the United States military, either. Smith & Wesson alone produced millions of M&P revolvers in the 20th century, and nearly countless numbers went to the armies of the United Kingdom and its empire (some as part of a business deal to salvage the Springfield, MA, arms maker that had originally contracted to develop a compact submachine gun for the Brits).

Many militaries embraced this classic design. From Spain to Brazil to the Philippines and beyond, clones of the Smith & Wesson medium-frame .38-caliber revolver became one of the most common handguns on the planet, in the millions.

On the domestic side of things, the medium-frame revolver was so common that its appearance on the screen, big or small, practically became shorthand for "the good guys." Whoever was running around with that swing-out cylinder, double action in their hand, whether they were Barney Fife or the guys from "Adam-12," was simply and obviously the Good Guy. The characters they were opposing had Lugers or M1908s or whatever and therefore were obviously the bad guys.

On the private-citizen side of things, the medium-frame revolver stood sentry every bit as diligently. In our grandparent's era and back to our great-great-grandparent's, the handgun on the top shelf in the closet or in the nightstand drawer (it was a more innocent time; we've learned more about good storage procedures and have access to better ready-storage fixtures since those days) kept American private citizens safe from burglars and home-invading bandits.

If I've got someone busting into my home downstairs, I'd certainly prefer to have a swing-out cylinder double-action revolver in a medium caliber with a handy reload if stuff goes pear-shaped, as opposed to a single-action .45 Long Colt thumb-buster with only five beans in the wheel in case I dropped it.

On top of that, it didn't take long before these medium-frame revolvers began to be offered in barrel lengths other than the typical 3 to 6 inches.



Once 2- and 3-inch-barrel, medium-frame revolvers became popular among detectives and other plain-clothes police officers, they saw a surge of popularity among private citizens who lived in states where there was a minimum of restrictions on concealed carry by private citizens.

In the earliest days of the Shall-Issue concealed-carry movement (propelled by the NRA) the once-considerable popularity of the medium-frame revolver began to falter. The reasons for this are manifold.

Probably the least serious one is the "outgunned" one. On the one hand, nobody wants to be on the side of a gunfight where you have fewer BBs in your blaster than the other guy, but at the same time, it's not deniable that the victory tends to go to the participant who can keep their gun in the fight longer.

During the 1980s and '90s, though, pop culture had everyone convinced


that law-enforcement officers were outgunned. A more pertinent and applicable worry was the difficulty of training rank-and-file officers to fire medium-frame, double-action revolvers decisively and accurately.

One problem was that mastering the long and heavy double-action revolver trigger pull was difficult. The temptation was always there to cock the revolver to the shorter, lighter single-action pull, but high-profile court cases caused that option to be eliminated. By the late 1980s, many large departments had gone over to double-action-only (DAO) triggers on their revolvers. Once this trigger-pull barrier was eliminated, it freed up the possibility of DA semi-automatics with similarly heavy triggers.

The other ding against the classic medium-frame revolver was the size of the handgun itself. Using the Smith & Wesson K-frame (Model 10 and its offshoots) as the test case, this is a

frame size that is hard to get a proper trigger reach on unless you wear a men's size "M" glove. If your hand is smaller than that, well ...

An illustration of this is that back in the Age of Disco, when the NYPD authorized the Colt Official Police .38 and Smith & Wesson Model 10 as its official handguns, female officers whose small hands couldn't handle the reach to the double-action trigger on the medium-frame guns could use a 3-inch, heavy-barrel version of the J-frame Model 36, a smaller five-shot revolver, as a substitute standard-issue duty gun.

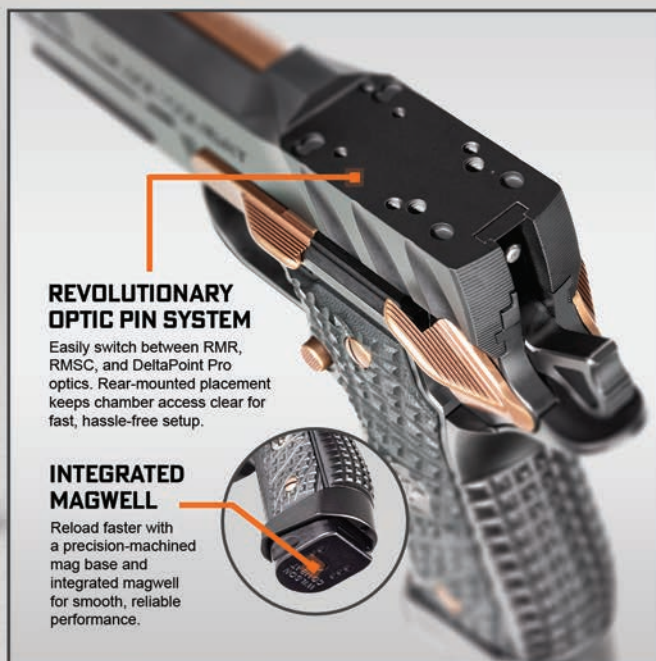
Medium-frame revolvers still exist to this day, largely as rimfire, small-game-hunting wheelguns or niche gamer pieces, but it's kinda sad to see that their frontline service in defense of our nation and cities has largely passed. The passing of the dinosaurs is lamented, too, but I doubt "Wheelgun Park" becomes a franchise. 



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PUSHING BOUNDARIES | SETTING STANDARDS

# Reload and Make Ready

## Practice reloading that defensive shotgun.



Many different methods can be employed to get your defensive shotgun back in the fight, but all require quality instruction and copious practice to perfect.

PHOTO: JAY GRAZIO

**T**he shotgun's weakness is twofold: First, it doesn't hold many rounds; and second, it's slow to reload. But, with the proper setup, techniques and practice, these weaknesses can be mitigated. Here's how to do it:

As a quick caveat, I realize that there are non-traditional shotguns available these days that hold lots of rounds, while a few others are easy to load: KelTec's bullpup KSG holds 14 rounds, for example, while Mossberg's detachable-mag-fed 590M series loads quickly—but I'm talking about the more traditional, tubular-magazine, pump- and semi-automatic models that represent the majority of those found in homes across the nation. Most of these hold five rounds, eight if they wear a mag extension. Hopefully, those shots will be all the home defender needs to end the threat, but I wouldn't bank on it. I think it's a smart idea to be prepared to reload at least once.

The first key to minimizing risk while pausing to reload is to never let the shotgun go completely empty. Throughout the course of history, plenty of good people have been

compromised the moment their gun ran out of ammo and the attacker realized it. So, at any opportunity the mag should be topped off so that the home defender always has at least one round in the gun, ready to fire.

But, sometimes topping off is not feasible and the gun does run dry. In this case, the first shell should be "emergency loaded" into the chamber so the gun can be re-engaged into the fight as quickly as possible, while the mag can be filled as the situation allows. An emergency reload simply means that a shell is hastily grabbed (with either hand, but I'll get to this later) and shoved into the open receiver and moved into battery via the pump action or bolt-release button as fast as possible. Essentially, this is a single-shot reload, but it needs to be contemplated and practiced for maximum efficiency.


The most efficient way to top off a magazine or perform an emergency reload is with the use of a shell holder—or shell caddy—preferably on your shotgun, or, if not, on your belt. Shell caddies either stick on or are bolted to the receiver of the shotgun, but I've found that the stick-on kind often doesn't stick after a year or so in the closet. Of course, you can keep a bandolier of shells at the ready, same as a shell holder that clips on your belt, but most experts believe that if something goes *bump* in the middle of the night and all hell breaks loose, you'll be doing good to get to your shotgun and your cell phone, much less have the time and wherewithal to gear up for battle. Therefore, it's a good idea to store extra rounds on the gun itself. (Some slings contain shell loops for shells, but I don't prefer them because it's tough to hold the shotgun on target with a shell-laden sling swinging back and forth. Try it and you'll see what I mean.) Once you figure out what type of shell holder works best for you—maybe it's a simple belt pouch or even a robe pocket—then you can practice the most efficient technique of reloading from it.

Perhaps the most efficient method of top-off reloading is for shooters who are strong enough to hold their shotgun to the shoulder with only the strong (trigger) hand. With the shotgun pointed forward in the firing position, the weak hand can reach to the shell caddy, the belt or a support-side pocket, find a shell and insert it into the magazine with the thumb and forefinger—all while never taking the eyes off the target. For



those who cannot hold their shotgun at the ready with only the trigger hand, they can either place the buttstock under their armpit while turning the magazine loading port toward the off-hand, or they can turn the gun upside down while resting the butt on their hip—all while the trigger hand stays on the grip. Either way, the weak hand should find a shell and insert it. Expert shooters can reach for two or even four shells at a time, orient them in the support hand without looking and feed them into the magazine without having to go back to the shell carrier each time, but such a technique is inadvisable without years of competitive training and practice.

If your weak hand is pretty much worthless—or if your gun of choice is a pump (because a pump's action must be worked with the support hand, there's a strong argument for always keeping the support hand on the fore-end of a pump)—the shooter has a few options for efficient reloading. To top off the mag, the shooter should secure the shotgun to the shoulder in the firing position with rearward force provided by the support hand. Then the strong hand should come off the grip to grab a shell and stuff it in the magazine from underneath. For multiple reloads in succession, the shooter can flip the gun upside down and place it on his or her shoulder, almost like a violin. Then, using the strong hand, a shell or shells are plucked from a shell holder, oriented and stuffed into the magazine as quickly as possible before sliding the action into battery with the weak hand and flipping the gun right-side up and reassuming the shooting position.

After these techniques are learned with your specific shotgun and ammo setup, they should be rehearsed until reloading becomes second nature, even in the dark and, preferably, while moving. Strongly consider buying (or making) dummy loads so practice can be performed in the comfort of your living room. 



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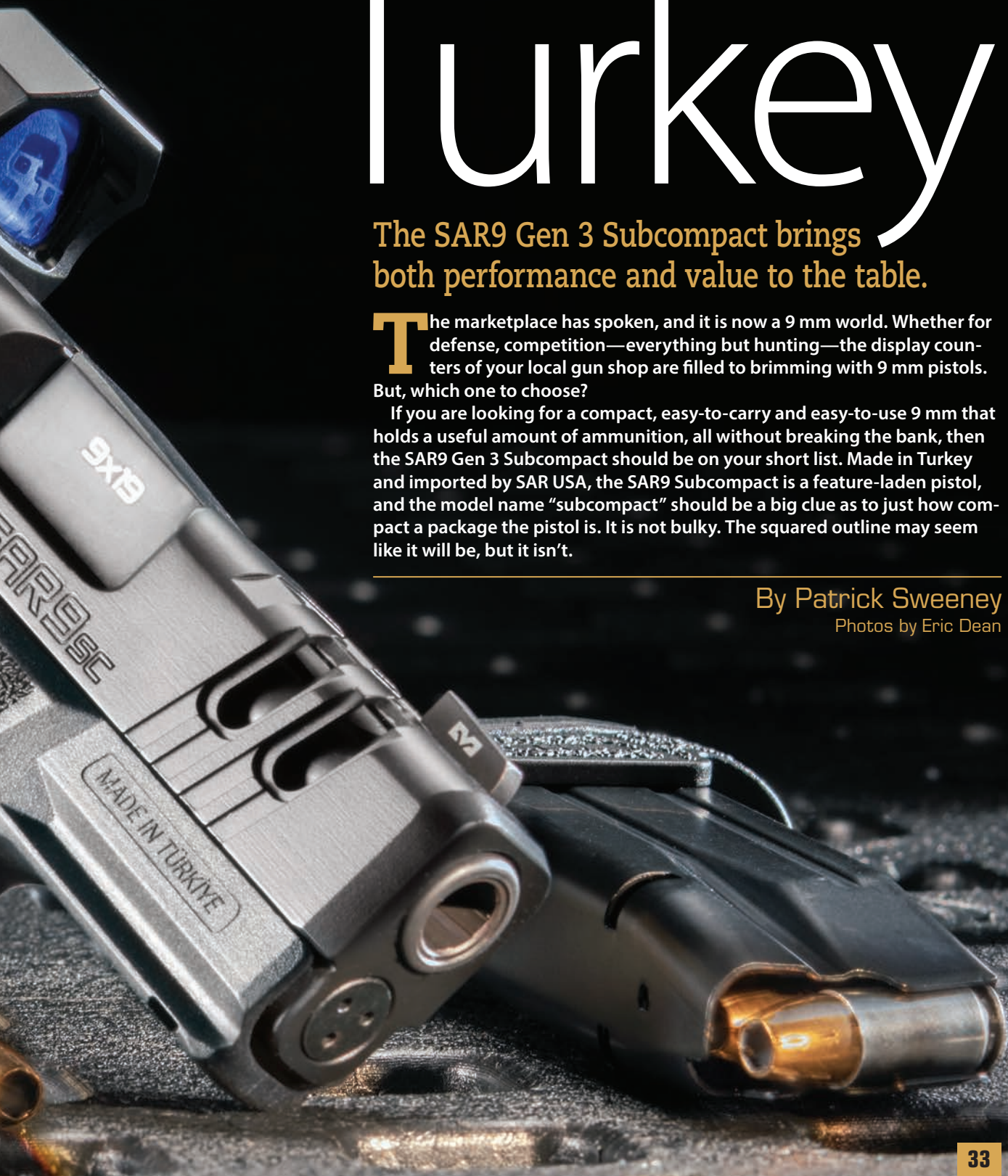
# A Small Slice of Turkey

The SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact brings both performance and value to the table.

**T**he marketplace has spoken, and it is now a 9 mm world. Whether for defense, competition—everything but hunting—the display counters of your local gun shop are filled to brimming with 9 mm pistols. But, which one to choose?

If you are looking for a compact, easy-to-carry and easy-to-use 9 mm that holds a useful amount of ammunition, all without breaking the bank, then the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact should be on your short list. Made in Turkey and imported by SAR USA, the SAR9 Subcompact is a feature-laden pistol, and the model name “subcompact” should be a big clue as to just how compact a package the pistol is. It is not bulky. The squared outline may seem like it will be, but it isn’t.

By Patrick Sweeney  
Photos by Eric Dean



When I made sure the sights were on target before pressing the trigger, it never missed.

The molded frame is a polymer composite with a reinforcing material included, so while it is impervious to all known solvents including New Jersey tap water, it is not squishy or flexy, as some polymer-frame pistols are. The frame has textured non-slip panels included in the molding, which are also present above and ahead of the trigger as index points for your trigger finger when it is not inside the trigger guard. (Which should be all the time when you are not on-target.) As part of Sarsilmaz engineering the SAR9 Gen 3

Subcompact to be as small as it is, SAR designers had to give up on a replaceable backstrap. If this is something you simply and absolutely must have, then I guess this isn't the pistol for you, which is a shame, because it will be a stellar choice for the rest of us.

The frontstrap has subtle finger grooves. In most instances, the more aggressive finger grooves end up in spots on the frontstrap that don't really match with the finger size of most shooters. Here the grooves, even if they don't line up for you, work to add to the non-slip nature of the grip. You might not even notice them, except for the fact that the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact doesn't move in your hands during recoil. Adding to the excellent ergonomics of the frame size, the baseplates on the magazines (The pistol comes with two of them; one holding 12 rounds, the other 15) are also subtly grooved and textured as well.

On the front of the frame, SAR included an accessory rail. Here you can mount a light or laser, with one proviso: the rail has only one cross slot, so you may be limited in your choice of lights or lasers, in that they have just to the one slot to lock into while fitting on the frame. Given the vast number of lights from which to choose, this should not be a major problem.

The SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact trigger is just like all the other SAR9 triggers in that it is inside of a generous trigger guard, with the rear of the trigger guard "lifted" to provide more space for your hand on the frontstrap. Combined with the relatively high-rise tang on the rear of the frame, and you can get your hand well up onto this handgun to deal with recoil. Not that the 9 mm has much recoil, but with a pistol this small and this lightweight, you want as much control as you can get. The trigger has a middle tab in it, the trigger safety, made of a red composite, which blocks the trigger from moving until your trigger finger has pivoted it out of the way. As with all safeties, it is just a mechanical device, and it is up to you to make sure you follow the "Four Rules of Gun Safety" and conduct yourself accordingly.

The frame controls are not ambidextrous. The slide-stop lever is above and behind the trigger, on the left side only, and it is a flat steel plate with grooves on it for purchase. It is not meant to be a competition-size slide stop; it is meant to not be a problem when holstered. It works easily with your thumb.

## SAR USA | SAR9sc Gen 3



### SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Super Vel 90-grain +P JHP	1,402	3.1	3.6	3.5
Black Hills 100-grain Honey Badger fluted SC	1,216	3.2	3.6	3.4
Federal Punch 124-grain JHP	1,090	2.9	3.4	3.2
Hornady Critical Duty 135-grain +P	1,054	2.9	3.5	3.3

Velocity measured in fps 15 feet from the muzzle with a LabRadar chronograph. Temperature: 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for four consecutive, five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a sandbag rest.

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Manufacturer:</b> Sarsilmaz, Turkey	<b>Trigger Pull Weight:</b> 5 pounds
<b>Importer:</b> SAR USA; (833) 727-4867, sarusa.com	<b>Length:</b> 6.4 inches
<b>Action Type:</b> Striker-fired, semi-automatic	<b>Width:</b> 1.1 inch
<b>Caliber:</b> 9 mm	<b>Height:</b> 4.8 inches
<b>Capacity:</b> 15+1 rounds	<b>Weight:</b> 21.7 ounces
<b>Frame:</b> Reinforced polymer	<b>Accessories:</b> One 12-round and one 15-round magazine, tools, cleaning kit, lock, holster, manual
<b>Barrel Length:</b> 3.3 inches	<b>MSRP:</b> \$500
<b>Sights:</b> Tritium-enhanced notch rear; tritium-dot post front; optics cut	



The magazine release is a flat, grooved button that is also not meant for competition, but to stay where it is when holstered.

The slide of the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact bears a host of extras, or at least, what used to be extras until recently, but now are considered essential to many prospective buyers. It has cocking serrations both front and rear, but it also has some extra serrations that I had not thought of before this pistol. Right-handed shooters will find that the extra serrations, on the left side and in the middle, are right where the heel of your left hand bears on the slide when doing the overhand slide manipulation. So, not only is the heel of your thumb getting purchase, but the heel of your hand—out at the base of your little finger—is also getting some. My second thought, on noticing that, was that lefties would be, left out, as so often happens. No, they aren't. I did some left-handed slide manipulations and discovered that the rear edge of the ejection port served the same purpose.

Now, if you manipulate the slide with an underneath hold on the front cocking serrations or reach over the top with the web of your hand, not only are there serrations there for either technique, but the slide has been machined through to expose the barrel. There's also a slot machined on the top exposing the barrel. On a long slide I can see this as a detail helping balance the slide mass, but on the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact, it probably isn't that. Still, it looks cool, and it makes working the slide easier.

The barrel has an integral feed ramp, lacks a 1911-style link and locks in place in the ejection port, the now-standard design and arrangement that has been the norm for 9 mm pistols for decades. This is definitely a case of if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and SAR has a reputation for not trying to come up with clever non-fixes of non-problems. The recoil spring is a contained assembly, and on disassembly it comes out as a single unit. Disassembly is exactly like that of the ubiquitous Glock, so if you know how to take apart a Glock for cleaning, you know how to do the same on this SAR.

Unlike Glocks, the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact magazines are not polymer. They are sturdy steel tubes with polymer followers and base-plate assemblies.

The immediately obvious best parts of the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact are on the top of



Tritium night sights come standard on the Gen 3 Subcompact. A white-outlined tritium dot in the front post combines with a tritium-flanked U-notch rear for an excellent setup • Should you prefer an MRDS, the pistol's cover plate can be removed to reveal that it is already cut for a red-dot sight having an RMSc footprint • Peering into the port reveals a ramped barrel and clean, well-finished machining of parts • Finger grooves and fine stippling contribute to satisfactory purchase and control • The squared trigger guard is textured, for those who place a support-hand index finger there. It also allows just enough space for a small accessory on the rail • Both the flush-fit and extended magazines can accommodate all fingers, though the former provides discretion while the latter offers enhanced comfort and control • Although small, the single slot rail is not an affectation, given new, smaller light/laser units.



Adding to the excellence ergonomics of the frame size, the baseplate on the magazines ... are also subtly grooved and textured as well.

the slide. First, it comes with tritium night sights, standard—a white dot out front, with a big white circle around it, and the rear-sight notch is flanked by tritium inserts, but without the white outline. The handgun is machined for optics mounting and comes with a cover plate bolted on. There is an adapter plate in the lockable hard case, made for optics using the RMSc footprint.

And speaking of the case, it is packed with extras as well. Not only is the extra magazine in there along with the pistol, but there's a flush baseplate just in case you don't want the 12-round magazine to have its finger-hook baseplate. A manual, tools, a cleaning kit in a plastic cylinder, a lock for the pistol itself and a holster are also included. Yes, a holster. It is a Kydex, IWB, right-handed holster with a thumb guard, and it is entirely suitable for daily use. It clips right onto your belt, easy as pie. The only detail that SAR has perhaps overlooked is a way to carry the spare magazine it so thoughtfully includes in the case. Then again, what you are wearing has pockets, does it not? That will do until you can source a spare mag carrier. (Your gun shop probably has a selection; ask them.) So,

right there at the counter of your local gun shop you have everything you need for daily carry except ammunition and a concealed-carry permit in the minority of states that still require one. As always, I would recommend you get in some practice with your new SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact before embarking on a stroll wearing it. That is only prudent.

Testing and practicing with the new pistol proved to be both fun and a bit boring. Fun in that getting to the range is always fun, and boring in that it never failed. When I made sure the sights were on target before pressing the trigger, it never missed. Plate racks were routine, and even plinking at rifle gongs at 100 yards proved to be not too difficult an exercise. Shooting groups for accuracy testing proved to be just as boring. While the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact is not a bullseye pistol (and no one suggests it is) for a really compact, daily-carry pistol it certainly does its job in the accuracy department.

With standard-velocity training reloads, the pistol recoiled as comfortably as if it were a larger handgun, and with full-power defensive loads it was never objectionable to shoot. The hand-filling grip and non-slip texture kept it from moving during recoil. For the extras that are built in, and those in the case, the SAR9 Gen 3 Subcompact is an even better deal than the initial price point might suggest. If SAR is not a brand you have considered up to now, then you really have been short-changing yourself. So, go investigate this 9 mm deal. 🌀



In keeping with modern styling cues, the Gen 3 Subcompact has a ported slide • The safety tab within the wide, serrated and flat-face trigger is bright red, if for no other reason than to give the pistol a dash of color • Taking down the pistol into its large component groups is simple for anyone familiar with that Austrian handgun. No tools are needed and the process is all that is required in order to conduct routine cleaning and maintenance.



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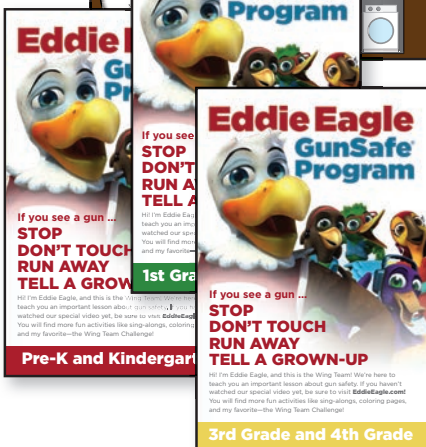
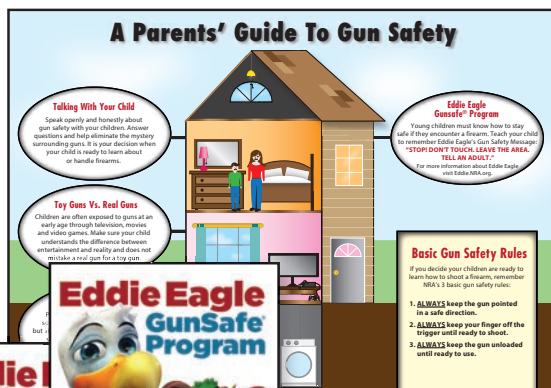
# Eddie Eagle GunSafe® Program

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For more information, please visit <https://eddieeagle.nra.org>



# And





# Here's to You...

The Robinson Armament XCR-L is a tactical rifle you may not be familiar with, but you really should be, because it ranks with the best of them.

**R**obinson Armament may not be well known outside of the tactical-rifle cognoscenti, but the North Salt Lake City, UT, firm is hardly a newcomer to arms making. Founded in 1994 and still helmed by Alex Robinson—who studied, collected and built firearms starting in his teens—the company first imported Russian VEPR rifles, then made its first firearm, the M96 Expeditionary Rifle, in 1999. Patterned somewhat after the Stoner 63, which saw limited use by Navy SEALs and Marines in Vietnam, the M96 had unusual features, like the ability to be changed from a layout with the magazine inserted from the bottom, to one with the mag inserted from the top. There was also a belt-fed conversion kit designed for it, but never sold. Unhappily, this interesting rifle was expensive to produce due to multiple welds of steel stampings, and it was discontinued after a 6-year run.

The XCR-L reviewed here was designed in 2004 with the intent to win the U.S. Military's Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle (SCAR) competition that was eventually awarded to FN with its presciently named SCAR platform. Nevertheless, the Robinson Armament XCR garnered interest among enthusiasts and was first sold commercially in 2006. It was considered by many to be ahead of its time, and two decades and several improvements later, it still offers standout features rarely seen together on the same tactical rifle.

By Andy Massimilian

Photos by Eric Dean



Good workmanship was evident on my test sample by an even Cerakote finish, no visible machine-tool marks and tightly fitted parts.

The XCR is gas-piston operated and constructed using two receivers joined by a captive pivot pin at the front and a takedown latch at the rear. The serialized lower receiver houses the fire-control parts and is made from a 7075-T6 aluminum forging. The upper receiver is made from a proprietary grade of aluminum with strength and hardness between 6061 and 7075-T6 and contains the bolt-carrier group, operating rod, left-side charging handle and captive recoil spring. It is monolithic, meaning the handguard is integral with the upper receiver, not a separate part as with most AR-15s.

An adjustable, long-stroke gas system operates the rifle. The long-stroke is so named because the gas piston is attached to the operating rod and moves rearward more than the length of the cartridge when cycled. Short-stroke designs, in contrast, use a piston that isn't connected to the operating rod, but moves it rearward by impacting it forcefully.

To regulate the gas flow activating the piston, an adjustable gas regulator is present. Its dial has eight numbered settings to optimize cycling reliability over a wide range of loads and provide repeatable settings—something most adjustable gas blocks and bolt-carrier gas keys used on some AR-15s do not. Setting "0" places the rifle into manual operation, which is ideal if you're operating the XCR with a suppressor and require maximum stealth.

The action uses a rotating bolt that locks into the barrel extension and is reminiscent of the AK-47's, but has three locking lugs instead of two, and the ejector is mounted to the upper receiver with two screws. The barrel is made from button-rifled 4150 CMV steel, chrome lined to mil-spec standards. Steel parts—except the stainless steel piston—are Parkerized, while aluminum parts are hardcoat anodized and finished with H-Series Cerakote.

Offered in two categories, the XCR provides shooters with several options. The XCR-L platform uses AR-15 magazines, and the XCR-M is for chamberings that require larger SR-25-pattern magazines. The L and M versions are available in several rifle, pistol and "Other Firearm" configurations, each with its own set of customizations like a choice of barrel, handguard, muzzle device, stock or arm brace and finish. "Other Firearm" is an ATF classification for a firearm that doesn't fit into any existing definition. The XCR "Other" has options with barrel lengths from 9.5 to 12 inches, an adjustable arm brace, a vertical forward grip and an overall length greater than 26 inches. "Other Firearms" aren't subject to NFA registration, but can't be sold by an FFL to persons younger than 21.

The XCR is unusually modular, allowing chambering and stock changes in less than 5 minutes using only two Allen wrenches: one to remove the barrel and another to

## ROBINSON ARMAMENT | XCR-L



### SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Hornady 80-grain ELD-VT	2,869	.63	1.74	1.00
HSM 95-grain Berger VLD	2,464	.62	1.55	1.14
Black Hills Gold 103-grain ELD-X	2,506	.49	1.66	1.18

Velocity measured in fps 10 feet from the muzzle for 10 shots with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph. Temperature: 82 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yards from a Caldwell Precision Turret rest.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Manufacturer:** Robinson Armament; (801) 355-0401, [robinsonarmament.com](http://robinsonarmament.com)

**Action Type:** Long-stroke-piston operated, semi-automatic

**Caliber:** 6 mm ARC

**Capacity:** 20 rounds

**Receiver:** Aluminum

**Barrel Length:** 18 inches

**Rifling:** 6 grooves; 1:7.5-inch RH twist

**Sights:** Fully adjustable aperture rear, protected-post front; monolithic rail for mounting optics

**Trigger Pull Weight:** 3 pounds, 9 ounces

**Stock:** FAST 3, folding

**Length:** 30.5 inches (folded); 38.5 to 42.75 inches (deployed)

**Weight:** 9 pounds, 4 ounces

**Accessories:** Five-round magazine, 20-round magazine, padded soft case, lock, manual

**MSRP:** \$2,434

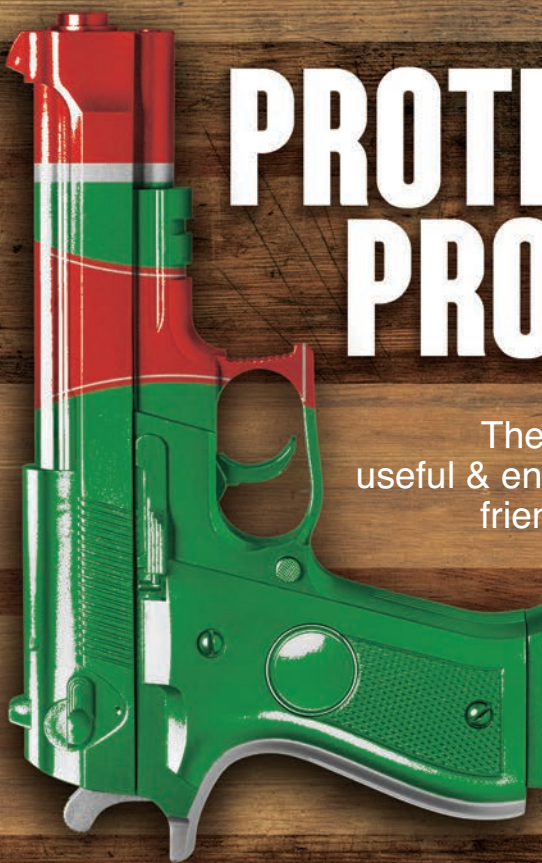


remove the buttstock. Some changes also require a different bolt and magazine, but none require special tools, a vise or appreciable skill to accomplish. Moreover, replacing a worn barrel on an XCR is far easier than on an AR-15.

Hornady's 6 mm ARC is among the most powerful cartridges that fit into an AR-15 magazine. It is based on the 6.5 Grendel and was designed for special military units as a caliber that would bridge the performance gap between the 5.56 NATO and 7.62 NATO cartridges while utilizing the M4's lower receiver. It shoots flat, has minimal recoil and stays supersonic beyond 800 yards depending on load and barrel length. These ballistics dictate a rifle that is configured for intermediate-range shooting, so I selected the Competition variant XCR-L equipped with the longest, heaviest barrel offered. This variant is distinguished by its extended handguard that allows a bipod to be conveniently mounted closer to the muzzle for better stability, while the 18-inch barrel is relatively stiff.



Equipped with a flip-up, fully adjustable, aperture rear sight and flip-up, protected-post front, the XCR is ready to shoot out of the box, but the "irons" make handy back-ups should you mount an optic • Compatibility with AR-style pistol grips means options are plentiful • The length of the operating rod and gas tube confirms that this is a long-stroke piston system • Though reminiscent of an AK-style bolt, the XCR's bolt (shown in its carrier) has three lugs • The gas regulator is accessible through a slot on the fore-end of the monolithic upper.



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The XCR is unusually modular, allowing chambering and stock changes in less than 5 minutes using only two Allen wrenches: one to remove the barrel and another to remove the buttstock.

For the best accuracy, Robinson suggested the three-chamber muzzle brake with symmetrical ports pointing left and right and the FAST 3 stock because it accommodates the widest range of scope heights and firing positions from prone to bench rest. My test rifle weighs 9 pounds, 4 ounces unloaded, measures 30.5 inches long with the stock folded and 38.5 to 42.75 inches with the stock open. Two steel magazines are included, a five-round and a 25-round version. They are of standard AR-15 design, except they use a 6.5 Grendel follower.

Though the XCR can be purchased with a rail adapter to accommodate various buttstocks, the FAST 3 stock has much to offer. Made from aluminum with a steel hinge, it locks into place open or closed without any wobble and has a check piece that can be adjusted to three comb heights by prying it



Adjustable for length-of-pull and comb height, the FAST 3 stock proved comfortable • The flat-face, two-stage trigger broke at less than 4 pounds, quite satisfactory, if unspectacular • Touted by the manufacturer as offering the best accuracy was the rifle's three-chamber muzzle brake • Even with the buttstock fully folded, the XCR's trigger is accessible and the rifle can be fired • Controls, including the safety selector, were well placed and actuated smoothly.



off at the front, then reattaching at the desired height to precisely align your eye with an optic. If these settings aren't adequate, the stock can be moved up or down at the hinge by removing two screws and resetting the hinge. Length-of-pull can be adjusted via a thumbwheel screw over eight settings from 12.25 to 16.5 inches and can be locked in place. The cheek rest and buttplate are plastic, and sling mounts include a slit and QD mount on either side. The stock folds and locks rightward and below the ejection port to allow fire-when-folded capability. If the hinge becomes wobbly, it can be adjusted for stability. When folded, a small rubber bumper prevents it from marring the receiver. Finally, the stock has a QD socket for a sling mount on the bottom.

XCR rifles come with an AR-15 A2-style grip and a polymer, flip-up, fully adjustable aperture rear and a protected-post front sight. All are replaceable with standard aftermarket parts should the user desire.

Fieldstripping the XCR is quick and intuitive. With a verified unloaded rifle, press the takedown latch on the left rear of the upper receiver forward, then pivot the lower receiver downward. Remove the recoil spring, then pull the charging handle rearward to expel the operating rod and bolt carrier. The bolt slides out of the carrier and, by removing a single pin, the firing pin can be withdrawn from the bolt. The gas tube is then easily withdrawn from the front of the upper receiver.

Good workmanship was evident on my test sample by an even Cerakote finish, no visible machine-tool marks and tightly fitted parts. Minor flashing edges from the forging process remain on the lower receiver but are of no consequence, except perhaps to fire-arm obsessives. The left-rear side of the upper receiver is slightly higher than the lower by design to allow the charging handle to clear.

I tested the XCR for precision and ammo preference using the five-round magazine. The average five-shot groups of all three tested loads ranged from 1 to 1.18 inches measured at the shot centers. The largest groups ranged from 1.55 to 1.74 inches and were possibly caused by bullet tips that sometimes impacted the breechface during feeding and deformed. Robinson Armament is examining this, and potential solutions





Being monolithic—that is, the upper receiver, fore-end and rail are all one unit—helps assure rigidity and precision • Despite its innovation and sophistication, the XCR-L breaks down easily. Anyone familiar with MSRs will have no problem • One of the rifle's small niceties is a rubber case deflector.



include a radiused feed ramp if this issue isn't unique to our sample rifle.

Nonetheless, these results underscore an accurate rifle and a smooth, predictable two-stage trigger that broke crisply with no overtravel. Its 3-pound, 9-ounce pull weight is a bit heavy for a long-range precision rifle, but the XCR-L is designed to be a short-to-medium-range, tactical semi-automatic. The first stage weighed 2 pounds, 4 ounces, which allows the shooter to pause the trigger press to make final sighting corrections. Moreover, because the trigger face is flat and the trigger guard extends downward to accommodate winter-weight gloves, the shooter can position his or her finger at the trigger's bottom for better leverage and a lighter 2-pound, 11-ounce pull.

After I optimized the gas regulator setting for the load, reliability was perfect during the 150-round test, except for a single failure to feed. And for those who reload the 6 mm ARC, ejected brass wasn't dented thanks to a specifically designed gas valve, ejector angle and rubber brass deflector. The firing pin on my sample XCR pierced several primers on the Hornady loads, but a replacement firing pin corrected this.

Controls are ergonomic for right- and left-hand shooters. The safety levers have a 60-degree throw, allowing rapid manipulation and, like the magazine-release buttons, are mounted on both sides of the lower receiver in the same locations as an AR-15. The ambidextrous bolt catch/release is situated just ahead of the trigger guard and is easily activated by the trigger finger. After the last round is fired, it moves upward, locking the bolt rearward; pressing it down allows the bolt to spring forward. The round, non-reciprocating left-side charging handle is operable by left-handed shooters who wish to retain their firing grip by reaching under the receiver and swiping the handle rearward, knife-hand style the same way a right-handed shooter charges an AK-47. The charging handle also does double duty as a forward assist to remedy any minor out-of-battery stoppages, should they occur.

Ultimately, the XCR is feature-rich with very good ergonomics, accurate with the loads tested and offers better modularity and easier barrel changes than most of its peers. It also has one of the best non-custom triggers in its class and all the advantages of an adjustable gas system. ↻



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# Build Your BOLT

This Bergara barreled-action build strikes a balance.





**B**efore you build a rifle, you have to start by asking yourself one question: What do I want this rifle to do? A target rifle to plink at the range is a lot different than a PRS setup, so is a hunting rifle compared to a defense rifle. I wanted to build a rifle that was practical for me, which meant a rifle I can take to the range and have the bragging rights for a day with my pals at 100 yards. I also wanted 200 yards to be a chip shot, so that is where I began. I started by making a punch list of the attributes or feature set I wanted in my rifle.

- Common and proven chambering with plenty of ammo options.
- Ability to easily engage targets out to 200 yards.
- A proven action with plenty of aftermarket-parts support.
- A barrel with a medium-to-heavy contour; heavy enough to settle down quickly when using a rest, tripod or a bipod, but not too heavy to carry.
- A stock that's adjustable for length-of-pull and includes a cheek riser; even better if the grip and buttplate are adjustable.
- Suppressor ready.
- Compatible with AICS-pattern magazines.



The chambering choice to me was simple; old-school .308 Win. ammo runs about a buck to \$3.65 per round depending on the brand and type of ammo, and there is an embarrassment of choices in bullet types and weights. The last thing I wanted to do was to have a unique (read: unpopular) chambering and not have readily available ammo. I was leaning toward a chassis setup for the simple fact that they are adjustable for a more personalized fit and lighter than a boat anchor. I made choices and compromises. Budget is always a consideration, since there isn't a box on my 401K loan form for a rifle build. Here's where I ended up:

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Story and Photos by R.A. Sadowski

The TriggerTech trigger was crisp and light. I almost needed a screwdriver to remove the silly grin from my face after shooting it.

### Barreled Action: Bergara No. 5.5 Contour

When I started to look at parts, I knew the build needed to be based on the combat-proven Remington Model 700 action. There are plenty of aftermarket parts for the Model 700 and its clones. I chose a Bergara barreled action because the action is designed to fit most stocks and chassis made for the 700. Bergara barrels are also some of the most accurate factory-made barrels available at a decent cost. I chose the number 5.5 contour because it offers a balance between weight and accuracy for long-range shooting. Barreled actions also make building a rifle easier, since the barrel is already properly headspaced, so that is one less thing to do.

### Stock: Magpul Pro 700 Lite SA

Most aftermarket stocks allow the DIY gun builder to simply drop the barreled action into the stock and torque it down to the spec. That's simple, and I like simple. Chassis are practical, allowing the user to adjust the

stock for a near-perfect fit, have a comfortable pistol grip and the ability to add accessories like a bipod. Regardless of matters like environmental conditions, you need to be comfortable behind the stock, and a chassis allows that. A Magpul Pro 700 Lite SA stock was used as the foundation for the build. It is lightweight at 4.4 pounds and is adjustable for both length-of-pull and comb height. Plus, the rubber buttpad is adjustable for height and cant, and the pistol grip is adjustable for trigger reach. Two grip modules are included, and the fore-end is peppered with M-Lok slots to add any accessories you might need. QD sling swivel sockets and a sling slot offer sling-mounting options. You can also buy an optional QD socket, so the sling is completely quick-detach. The magazine well is compatible with AICS mags, of which I have a stack of on hand. There's a lip that allows the user to jam the rifle up against a barricade while not interfering with the magazine, which is a handy feature. The magazine release is low-profile, anti-snag and ambidextrous, so making a mag swap in the prone position is smooth and fast. Similarly, the trigger guard is generously sized and glove friendly and accepts curved or flat triggers.

### Trigger: TriggerTech Diamond

We all know the trigger is the thing that interfaces most intimately with the user, other than the stock. I dropped in a single-stage TriggerTech Diamond with a flat face. It is adjustable from 4 ounces to 2 pounds, and you don't need to pull the action from the stock to adjust it.

### Optic: Trijicon REAP-IR

For the optic mount I used a 20-MOA Talley one-piece Picatinny rail with an anti-cant indicator. This gives me 20 MOA more if I decide to use the rifle for longer-range shooting. Further, any optics rings that are cross-slot-mount compatible will work with this base. It will also work with optics that feature integrated mounts such as the versatile Trijicon REAP-IR 60 mm thermal optic. Here is where I deviated from the norm. I have been using thermal optics for a few years, and even in that short period of time, the displays have gone from colored blobs to detailed thermal images. Once you go thermal, it's hard to go back to traditional



Bergara's barreled actions are uncoated and require a finish • The Magpul Pro 700 Lite SA stock offers excellent ergonomics as well as a wide range of adjustment for things such as length-of-pull, comb height and trigger reach.



### SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Black Hills Gold Match 168-grain Hornady A-Max	2,087	.69	.95	.82
SIG Sauer Elite Performance Match 168-grain OTM	2,590	.48	.76	.62
Hornady Match 178-grain HPBT	2,580	.50	.82	.66

Velocity measured in fps 5 inches from the muzzle with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Chronograph. Temperature: 82 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yards from a bipod.



optics—a thermal optic provides an entirely different shooting experience. I know I blew my budget with the REAP-IR, but I've found optics have transitory lives on my rifles. I've used a variety of different thermal optics and settled on the Trijicon for its simplicity. A single joystick controls the optic, so I don't need to be a computer programmer to work the dang thing. Plus, it has a rugged aluminum housing, and the resolution for the price point is excellent.

#### Muzzle Device: SureFire SOCOM Muzzle Brake

The SureFire SOCOM Muzzle Brake is proven, which is a nice way of saying it has been around for a while. I've used this brake in the past and like how it reduces the recoil impulse, so recoil goes straight back and I can stay on target better. I also opted for this device since it's compatible with the company's SOCOM suppressors should I choose to run a can on the rifle. Suppressors tend to be transitory on my rifles, too.

#### Bipod: Magpul MOE QD Bipod

Keeping with the Magpul theme, the new MOE QD bipod was attached to one of the seven M-Lok slots on the bottom of the chassis fore-end. It's made of polymer and designed to be rugged and lightweight, as well as easy to install.

#### Pure Custom Touch

I've always held to the advice of "Make it new, make it you." So, what do you do with a barreled action in the white and a plain-black chassis? You call a fellow gun guy who has Cerakote coursing through his veins.

Jeremy Sides owns Eclipse Gunworks (eclipsegunworks.com) and we went back and forth several times on the personality of the rifle. Did I want it Guccied, battle worn or any option in between? Sides grew up in the firearm industry and has built high-end pistols for the past 25 years. He has an artistic eye that meshes seamlessly with his gunsmithing skills. I'm not sure about everyone else, but I've had my fill of Burnt-Bronze finishes. We landed on Highland Green, Desert Sand, Graphite Black and Gun Metal gray for the chassis. The Bergara barrel and receiver are finished in Tungsten and the bolt is coated in Graphite Black.

The build process didn't take long once I had the parts. The TriggerTech trigger



Use of a torque wrench ensures the action screws are tightened to approximately 55 to 60 inch-pounds to the chassis • The Trijicon REAP-IR 60 mm thermal riflescope gave the author added versatility of being able to engage targets a long range as well as in a variety of lighting conditions • The TriggerTech Diamond is easily attached to the action via two pins. Installation requires only a punch and hammer • The SureFire SOCOM muzzle brake proved effective at mitigating the rifle's recoil • After installing the trigger onto the barreled action, it can then be easily inserted into the chassis of the Magpul Pro 700 SA stock.

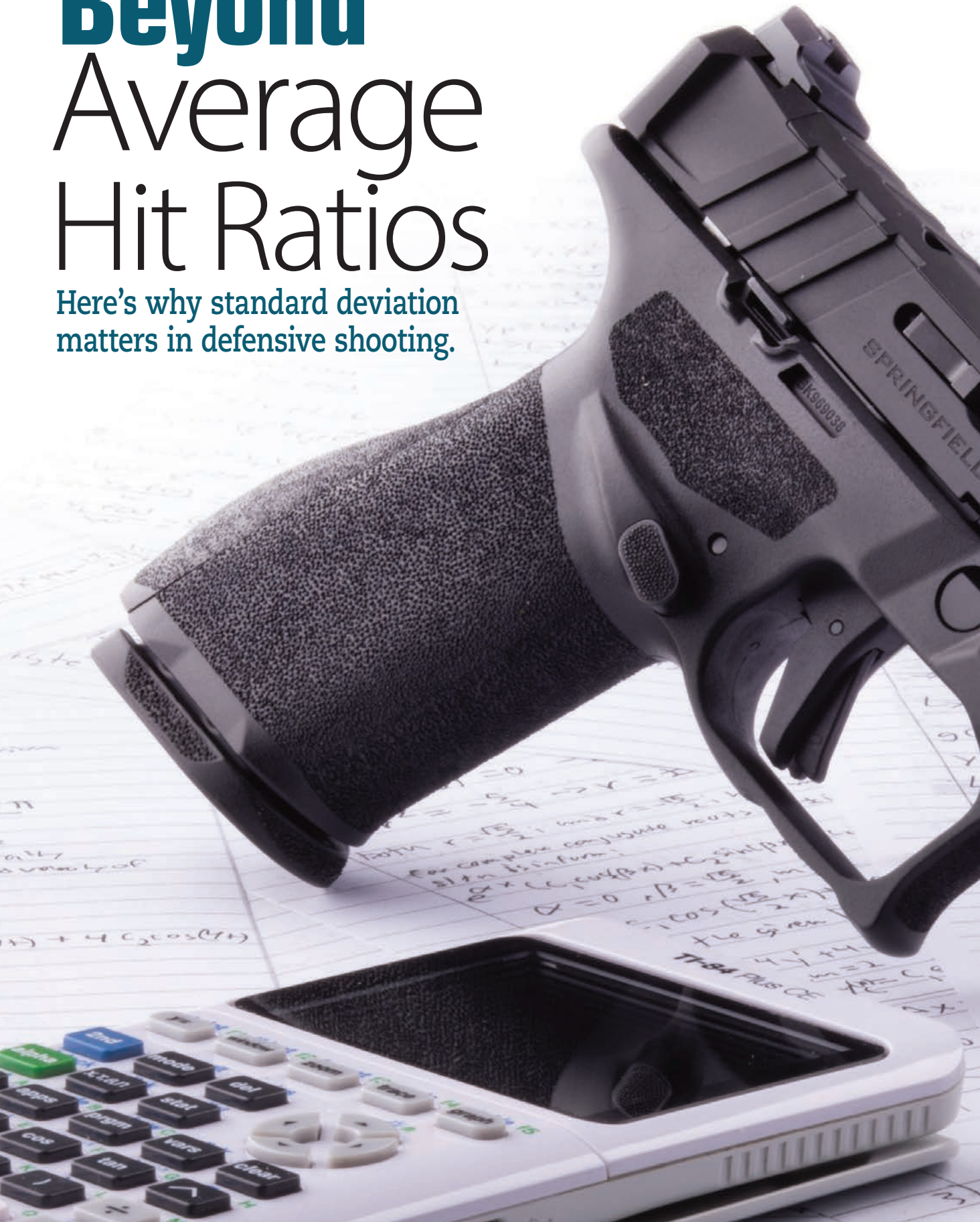
attached to the bottom of the receiver via two pins using a hammer and a punch. Next, drop the barreled action into the Magpul chassis and hand-tighten two action screws. I then pulled the action back to ensure the recoil lug on the barreled action makes contact against the rear surface of the recoil lug slot, and then torqued the two action screws to 55 to 60 inch-pounds. Then, the SureFire comp was screwed on and hand-tightened. It needs to be timed, meaning the comp needs to be even with bottom dead center (6 o'clock position) to the barrel. SureFire includes shims and timing-wheel charts in the instructions to make this happen. It is

Getting behind the Bergara, I installed the bipod and it felt like I had been shooting the rifle for years—it was just that comfortable.

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# Beyond Average Hit Ratios

Here's why standard deviation  
matters in defensive shooting.





**W**hen most shooters evaluate performance, they focus almost entirely on averages: average hit ratios, average split times, average group size. But, averages only tell part of the story. For defensive gun use (DGU), where every shot may determine survival, consistency is just as important—sometimes more important—than peak performance.

That's where standard deviation comes into play. While it might sound like a statistic best left to math nerds, it's actually one of the most useful metrics for defensive shooters. A low standard deviation means your performance doesn't swing wildly from shot to shot or drill to drill; instead, it stays tightly clustered around your normal baseline. In high-stress encounters, that consistency could be the difference between hitting your target and missing entirely.

Here we'll explore why standard deviation matters in defensive shooting, how it is applied in testing (using a SIG Sauer P365 XL ported vs. non-porting as an example) and what you can do in training to minimize your own performance variability.

### Why Consistency Beats Averages in Defensive Gun Use

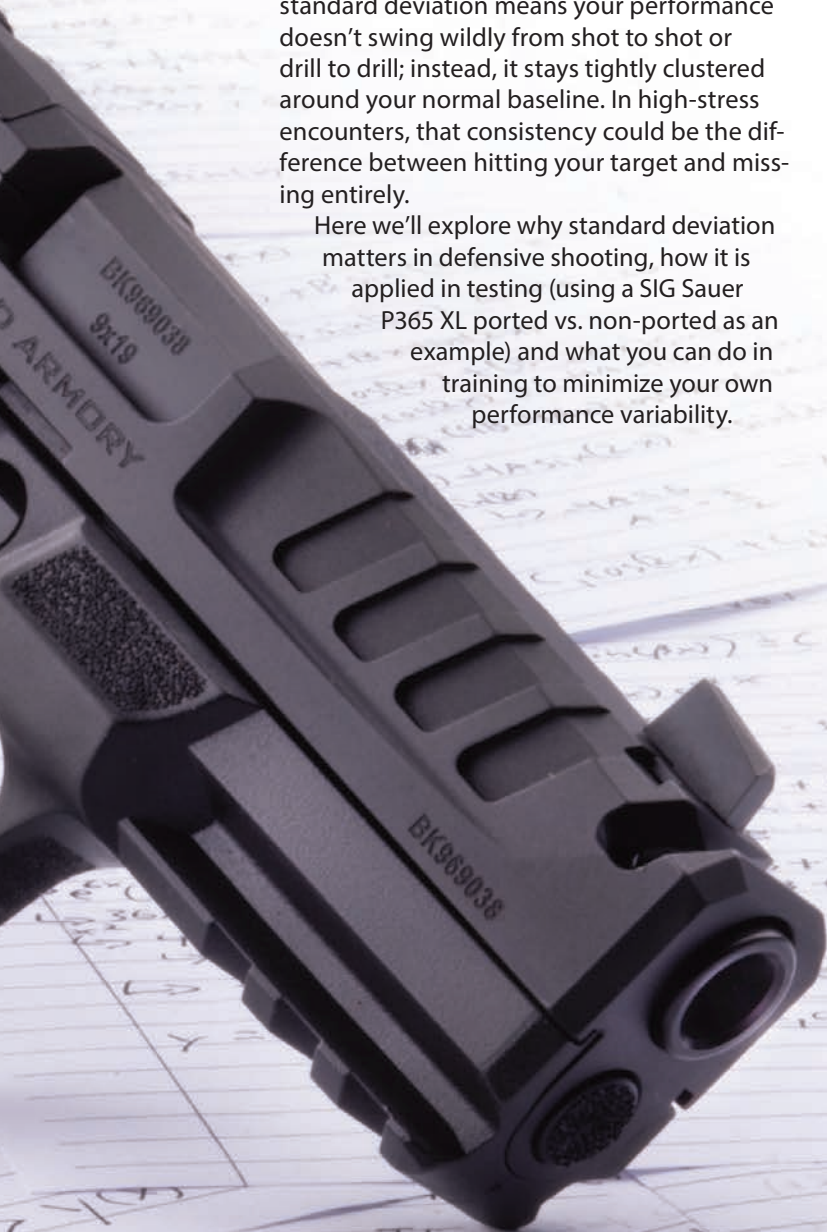
Imagine two shooters with nearly identical average-hit ratios. Shooter A has a hit ratio of 6.3 out of 10 shots, and a standard deviation of .2. Shooter B's hit ratio is the same 6.3 out of 10 shots, but has a standard deviation of 1.1. On paper, they look the same, but in practice, Shooter A almost always lands between six and seven hits, while Shooter B swings from five hits one run to eight hits the next.

In competition, Shooter B might get away with it. A single bad run can be offset by a great one, and the scoring system allows for some volatility. In a defensive-gun use, there are no "makeup" runs. You don't get to balance out a bad string of fire with a good one later.

That's why consistency matters more than just the average. Under real stress, you may not get your best run, and if your performance swings wildly, you risk being on the low end of your average when your life depends on it. A steady, predictable hit ratio gives me confidence that, no matter the conditions, I'll put rounds where they need to go.

Speed also plays a role, but only when it's paired with that consistency. Faster split times are worthless if half the rounds miss. The ported slide gave me gains in both precision and speed—tighter accuracy and quicker follow-ups—which is one reason why it is valuable for defensive use.

By Jeff Gonzales  
Photos by Eric Dean



**Standard Deviation in Our Ported vs. Non-Ported P365 XL Testing**

In my original testing, I established a baseline with 12 cold drills over a six-month period. I had a mean-hit ratio of 6.27 and a standard deviation of .71. That gave me a reliable picture of normal-performance variability.

Here’s how the ported and non-ported slides compared:

Metric	Baseline	Non-Ported Slide	Ported Slide
Average Hit Ratio	6.27	6.24	6.71 (+7.5 percent)
Standard Deviation	.71	Baseline	Lower Spread
Average Split Time (seconds)	.27	.27	.25 (7 percent faster)

The non-ported slide aligned with the baseline, meaning it neither improved nor worsened consistency, which makes sense. However, the ported slide not only boosted the average hit ratio, but also showed less deviation from the baseline—a critical finding.

This suggests the benefits of porting aren’t just about shaving milliseconds off your split times. They’re about keeping your shots clustered closer to your average, run after run, even when fatigue or stress sets in.

**The Math Made Simple: What Standard Deviation Tells Us**

If statistics make your eyes glaze over, here’s a straightforward analogy. Average (mean) is like your car’s advertised miles-per-gallon. Standard deviation is the difference between driving that car in perfect

weather on a flat highway versus forcing it to go uphill in a snowstorm.

In other words, average shows potential, but standard deviation shows reliability. For shooters, a low standard deviation means your performance is repeatable, while a high standard deviation means your results swing widely, and you might not be able to count on your average when it matters most.

**Stress, Variability, and Real-World Defensive Encounters**

During a DGU, your body goes into fight-or-flight mode, which induces adrenaline spikes, fine-motor-skill degradation, narrowing of vision and an accelerated heart rate. All of these factors increase variability in shooting performance. A gun or technique that reduces standard deviation under calm conditions will likely help manage stress-induced variability when the stakes are high. This is why the tighter spread I observed with the ported SIG P365 XL is more than a statistical curiosity—it’s a predictor of how the gun will perform when my life depends on it.

**Gear vs. Training: Can Your Equipment Choice Lower Your Standard Deviation?**

Porting is one gear-based way to tighten consistency. But, it’s not the only factor. Both equipment and training affect your performance variability. Equipment factors include things like ported or compensated slides, as these reduce muzzle rise and promote more consistent shot recovery. Other factors include, but are not limited to: quality sights, which foster faster sight-picture

Speed also plays a role, but only when it’s paired with that consistency. Faster split times are worthless if half the rounds miss.



Gear improvement—such as swapping out the stock plastic Glock sights for upgraded Trijicon night sights—is one way to improve your shooting; upgrading to a different pistol with a compensator is another. A third method might be switching to more precise ammunition for practice needs.



reacquisition and less variation between shots; ammunition choice, which should yield consistent recoil impulse and reduced variability; and grip texture and ergonomics, which means less slipping under stress and a tighter performance cluster.

Training factors include things like high-repetition drills, as the more repetitions you run, the more consistent your muscle memory becomes. Stress inoculation is another, as adding physical exertion, timers or low-light conditions during practice reduces stress-induced variability. Other factors include things like dry-fire practice, which builds consistency in trigger press and sight alignment, or tracking your performance data, as recording hit ratios and split times helps you spot trends in variability.

The bottom line is that gear like a ported slide helps, but only in the context of disciplined training.

### Practical Example: Comparing Two Defensive Shooters

Consider two concealed carriers running the same defensive drill:

Shooter	Gun Setup	Average Hit Ratio	Standard Deviation	Outcome Under Stress
A	SIG P365 XL Non-Ported	6.3	.9	Wide swings: 5 to 8 hits
B	SIG P365 XL Ported Slide	6.7	.4	Consistent: 6 to 7 hits

Shooter A might occasionally outperform Shooter B, but Shooter B's consistency ensures reliability in almost every run. For a defensive encounter—where “good enough” beats “sometimes great, sometimes bad”—Shooter B holds the advantage.

### How to Measure Your Own Standard Deviation

You don't need advanced tools to track this. Here's a simple method:

#### Pick a drill

Example: Five rounds at 5 yards on an 8-inch target, run with a timer.

- Run 10 repetitions.
- Record your hit count and split times for each run.
- Calculate your mean.
- Add your hit counts, divide by 10 (the number of repetitions).
- Calculate standard deviation (simplified).
- Subtract your mean from each run's score.
- Square the results.
- Average those squared results.
- Take the square root of the above to find your standard deviation.

If math isn't your thing (and believe me, it's not mine), then do what I do and use a spreadsheet or one of the many free online calculators.

**A gun or technique that reduces standard deviation under calm conditions will likely help manage stress-induced variability when the stakes are high.**

### Training to Reduce Variability

Even without changing gear, you can actively work to lower your standard deviation. For example, work with consistency drills, where instead of chasing your maximum speed, train at a controlled pace until your results are repeatable. Alternately, there's “pyramid training,” where you start slow, build up speed, then return to slow to reinforce control. Another option is to try some fatigue drills, where you might add pushups or sprints before shooting to simulate adrenaline. Lastly, cognitive-load drills will train the brain to perform under stress while maintaining accuracy and safety.

Critical to your progress is to record and review your shooting. Keep a shooting log and monitor not only your averages, but also your spread. The goal isn't to eliminate all variance (an impossible task), but to tighten your range of variance, so your worst-case performance is still fight-winning.

### Tightening the Bell Curve

Most shooters focus only on improving their averages, but in a defensive-gun-use scenario, your worst run may be the one that counts. By lowering your standard deviation, you ensure that even your low-end performance remains effective and reliable.

My testing with the SIG Sauer P365 XL with a ported slide showed exactly that: Not only were the averages higher, but consistency was tighter. In other words, porting didn't just make me a little faster—it made me more predictable. And when your life is on the line, predictability equals survivability.

### What Does it all Mean?

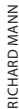
Average hit ratios and split times make for great bragging rights, but standard deviation tells the real story of how reliable you'll be in a defensive-gun use.

From my testing with the P365 XL, the ported slide didn't just boost averages—it reduced variability, which is arguably the bigger advantage. Combined with focused training that emphasizes consistency under stress, you can ensure your “worst-day” performance is still enough to save your life.

So, the next time you log your shooting drills, don't stop at calculating averages. Ask yourself: How consistent am I, really? Because when the fight comes, you won't rise to the level of your best run—you'll fall to the level of your most repeatable one. 🌀

## That's A Lot

Lot numbers help us reduce variability without buying ammunition by the pallet.



With most commercial ammunition, the lot number isn't that important—unless you have a problem, or find a batch that works especially well and you want to buy more of it.

**T**here is a lot of information on a box of ammunition. The first thing we all look at is the cartridge designation, because we want to know if the ammo in the box will work in our gun. Next, we look at the bullet weight and type so we will know if the ammo is compatible with what we want to use it for. But, there is some other info on a box of ammo. It's called the lot number, and I bet many shooters don't know what this number is for, what it means or maybe even where to find it.

If you're a handloader, you will understand perfectly the purpose of a lot number. When you handload ammunition, you keep detailed notes about all the components you use and the physical dimensions of the ammo you create. You'll also make notes about velocity and precision in the gun(s) for which you loaded the ammo. This is so that when you find a handload you like, you can duplicate it later. This is one of the reasons ammunition manufacturers use lot numbers. They want to know every specific of every load they sell, but not just so they can duplicate it later. They also want this information in case there's a problem down the road.

Let's say you purchase a box of ammo for your 9 mm pistol, and while you're shooting, you have a case-head separation. A case-head separation can potentially damage a gun—especially a rifle—and can also potentially injure a shooter. Back in the 1990s, I saw this happen multiple times with Glocks chambered in .40 S&W. On one occasion, one

of the officers on my range received some minor injuries. When an ammunition manufacturer is made aware of an issue like this, it can consult the information associated with the lot number of the load that was fired and see all the particulars of that load to include pressure-test data.

The problem might not be dangerous, though. It could be that a manufacturer is getting multiple reports that a certain ammunition is not feeding and functioning correctly in certain firearms. For example, ammunition used in AR-15s—direct-gas-impingement-driven guns—needs to produce a certain port pressure for the gun to function and cycle properly. It could be that the components used in a certain load are not providing the requisite port pressure. It also might be that the rim on the brass case is out of spec. This was something often seen during the last ammo shortage we experienced. In either case, with the lot-number information, a manufacturer can better investigate the problem.

But, lot-number information can be valuable to you as a shooter, too. Some years back I received some 6.5 PRC ammunition from a manufacturer, and it shot great in my rifle. Recently I ordered some more of that ammunition, and it did not shoot as well. The new ammo was from a different lot number, but why the difference? Well, it could be a lot of things. The manufacturer may have started using a different powder or primer for that load, and my rifle just did not like the combination. It could also be that the bullet manufacturer slightly tweaked the projectile's design. This happens sometimes, too.

As an example of bullet tweaking, not too long after Berger began marketing its VLD bullets for hunting, some competitive-shooting customers were complaining that the bullets had striation marks near the bullet nose (they wanted their bullets to be pretty). Berger found that by slightly increasing the lube in the forming die, these striations disappeared. The problem was that this extra lube slightly changed the dynamics of the bullet by increasing the strength of the jacket, and the “pretty” bullets would not expand/upset the way hunters wanted them to. Berger discovered this because hunters were complaining about them. The company sorted this out by making the bullets both ways; it just put the hunting bullets in orange instead of yellow boxes.

The good news is that if you are just buying ammunition for plinking or recreational use, the lot number is not that important. However, if you are seriously interested in the best precision possible, it's a good idea to note the lot number of any load you try. This will allow you to go back to where you bought the box of ammo you wanted to test and buy a lot more of the exact same load. Lot numbers are not just on individual boxes of ammunition; they also appear on case boxes. Long-range shooters routinely buy in bulk like this to ensure they can deliver accurate shots at

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# Choosing the Perfect Carry Gun

**As with clothing and footwear, serious consideration should be given when choosing a handgun for self-defense.**



One of my shooting buddies has a daughter who is moving away to attend graduate school, and wanted a home-defense gun. His solution was to gather up a broad selection of handguns, go to the gun range and let her decide. So, the young lady shot several small revolvers and various sizes of semi-automatics, and finally made her selection. Her choice was a 1970s-era Smith & Wesson Model 19 revolver. She liked it because it fit her hand, she shot it well and she understood how it worked. Smart lady.

Selecting a personal-defense gun is a very personal thing, and to begin with, it must fit the shooter's hand. Proper fit is for the gun to be centered in the web of the hand between the thumb and index finger. In addition, the barrel of the gun should be in a straight line with the wrist and forearm. Depending upon the gun chosen, we might adjust this a little bit by changing to thinner stocks or thicker ones. Positioning the gun in the hand in this manner allows us to exert our strongest grip on the pistol while simultaneously allowing us to have greater control for faster shooting and follow-up shots.

Another factor to consider is the position of the trigger finger. With a single-action pistol, the first pad of our trigger finger should be centered on the trigger. With a double-action trigger the first joint of the trigger finger should be centered on the trigger. These positions give us the best control over the all-important trigger press.

One of the things that causes us problems in selecting that perfect handgun is what I call length-of-pull. That is the distance from the pistol's backstrap to the center of the trigger. If that distance is too long, then the trigger

finger will not be able to address the trigger properly and our marksmanship will suffer.


That is exactly the problem I have when it comes to Smith & Wesson N-frame revolvers. The length-of-pull is just too long for me to grip the gun properly and, at the same time, properly address the trigger. I've tried thin stocks, thinner stocks and even grip adapters—all to no avail. It's not Smith & Wesson's fault; it is solely my problem due to my average-size hands. I love those big-'ol Smiths; I just don't shoot them well.

Another important factor in making the selection is how well a person shoots a particular gun. Of course, to make an intelligent decision, the person first needs to know how to shoot. To borrow a cliché, sometimes we just don't know what we don't know. This can be fixed fairly quickly by attending any number of shooting schools across the country, not least of which are those sponsored by the NRA. It would even help to attend one of the schools that will rent guns to students. By getting good training, we begin to have a better understanding of our abilities and what our preferences are; in other words, we are now making an intelligent choice.

Confidence in a particular type of defensive handgun also plays an important part in our selection. For several years, as a peace officer, I carried a Colt Government Model chambered in .45 ACP. What endeared this gun to me and what helped me through some serious situations was the fact that it was the same gun I shot on weekends at our local combat matches. I always did quite well in those matches, and that confidence translated into situations that I encountered in my work.

Just like the young lady going to graduate school, it helps to shoot as many different kinds of handguns as possible. Selecting the personal-defense gun is just that—it's personal—and personal tastes should not be overlooked so long as a person is making the selection from decent-quality guns. Most big cities have gun ranges that will rent guns to customers, and this is an excellent way to get an education at minimal cost. The more guns a person tries out, the more he or she will know about what they like and why they like those qualities.

You might get lucky and find the gun of your dreams in very short order. You might, but I didn't. I shot lots of guns, traded some and bought others. But, I must tell you it was an enjoyable education, and as a result I now know which semi-autos and which revolvers I can expect to do my best work with.

So, that would be my recipe for selecting the perfect carry gun. Learn to shoot, then make sure the gun fits you and that you shoot it well. Finally, if you find something that fits your needs better, don't be afraid to trade up. While the whole business of a personal-defense gun is serious business, you will find, along the way, that trips to the gun range and shooting are enjoyable pastimes. And that's all good. 



## Winchester Model 1907

**Semi-automatic rifles firing intermediate calibers and feeding from removable-box magazines have been around a lot longer than you might think.**

**I**n 1903, the Winchester Repeating Arms Company was trying to reinvent itself. The company that made a fortune, created a legend and helped shape our country's history with its lever-action rifles designed by John Moses Browning now wanted people to think of it instead as a pioneer in the newest type of firearm: the semi-automatic rifle. The reason behind this change of direction was the sudden severing of relationships between Browning and the New Haven company he helped make famous.

It all began around 1901, when Browning first showed T.G. Bennett, Winchester's president, two prototypes for a unique new shotgun—a semi-auto, blowback-operated longarm. Two years passed without word from Winchester, so Browning paid Bennett another visit and demanded an answer regarding his repeating shotgun. Unfortunately, Bennett gave it a thumbs-down. In hindsight, this was probably not a smart thing to do to the inventor who gave Winchester the 1885 High Wall, plus the Models 1886, 1892,

1894 and 1895 lever-actions as well as the Models 1887 and 1897 shotguns, among other things. Infuriated, Browning stormed out of Bennett's office, thus ending his 19-year association with the company. Browning then took his shotgun to Fabrique Nationale in Herstal, Belgium, where the gun became the Browning Auto-5.

In the meantime, Winchester was left without the prospect of any more Browning-designed guns, a bad bit of timing, because in an effort to embrace the new technology of the 20th century, there was a race among various manufacturers to see who could be first with a marketable semi-automatic rifle. But, even though Winchester no longer had Browning, the company did have Thomas Crosley Johnson. He was a gifted designer-engineer who would subsequently be responsible for such classics as the Model 12 pump shotgun, the Model 21 side-by-side and the Model 54 bolt-action, which would eventually become the Model 70. But for now, Johnson was tasked with developing rifles that would get the shooting public to start thinking of Winchester as an innovator in semi-automatics.

His first entry into this untrampled field was the Winchester Model 1903 takedown, which not only became Winchester's first semi-automatic rifle, but also the first truly successful semi-auto in America. It chambered a unique variation of the popular .22 rimfire, a proprietary .22 Winchester Automatic cartridge. It was the only firearm ever chambered for this round, which was loaded via a magazine tube inserted through an opening in the right side of the stock. Not as powerful as the .22 LR, this cartridge was also dimensionally different to prevent the use of blackpowder .22 rimfires—which were still quite common at the time—from being chambered in the Model 1903. Much later, the Model '03 was redesigned as the Model 63, which could handle smokeless .22 LR rounds.

The Model 1903 was only a stopgap solution, however. What the sporting and law enforcement markets wanted was a centerfire version of Winchester's new semi-auto. To meet this demand, Johnson and his team came up with the Model 1905. While similar in appearance and concept to



A tube-shaped operating sleeve protruding from the Winchester Model 1907's forearm was used to cock the rifle. To take down the rifle for maintenance, a screw located at the rear of the receiver was removed to separate the receiver from the stock and trigger group. The .351 WSL is ballistically similar to the .357 Mag.







The Winchester Model 1907 firmly established the company as an innovator in semi-automatics shortly after it parted ways with John Browning.

the 1903, it had the distinction of being Winchester's first rifle with a detachable-box magazine. A five-round version was standard, while a less aesthetically pleasing (to some) 10-round magazine was available as an option. Like its predecessor, this new rifle featured proprietary chamberings, with two options available: .32 Winchester Self Loading (WSL), which became the basis for the future M1 Carbine round, and the .35 WSL, which was comparable to today's .357 Mag. Neither proved very popular.


Two years later, Johnson hit pay dirt with the Winchester Model 1907. Similar in appearance to the 1905, but with its own serial number range, this new version was chambered for the beefed-up and slightly elongated .351 WSL cartridge—for which this rifle was the only option—and fired a 180-grain bullet with a muzzle velocity of 1,850 fps. While that hardly qualified it as a big-game cartridge, it proved remarkably effective on soft-skinned medium game such as mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes, where the Model 1907's rapid-fire capabilities made up for its subpar accuracy. With its handy 20-inch, round-profile barrel, the rifle also found its calling during World War I, where U.S. and Allied pilots often slipped a Model 1907 into the open cockpits of their biplanes for occasional, impromptu air-to-air firefights with the enemy.

Like its immediate predecessor, the Model 1907 came with a five-round detachable-box magazine that clicked in place and was flush with the trigger guard, making for a handsome, but very businesslike appearance. An optional 10-round magazine was also available. A thick, semi-beavertail forearm was necessary in order to

encase the breech bolt's inertia-block extension that was carefully calibrated to equal the forward velocity of the cartridge in order for the semi-auto action of the Model '07 to function. Thus, the forearm, in spite of its bulky appearance, was actually quite fragile, as it was hollow in order to contain the recoil mechanism.

Like the Model 1905, the 1907 featured a takedown lock and screw at the rear of the receiver and was cocked by pushing in on a polished tubular "operating sleeve" that protruded out from the fore-end underneath the barrel. Also, by pushing in and then twisting the operating sleeve either left or right, the bolt could be locked open. The rifles came with fixed rear sights, but tangs were drilled and tapped, and later in production, tang sights could be substituted at no extra cost. Initially there were no sling swivels, but by serial number 23,171 they became standard. Weighing almost 8 pounds, it is hard to imagine anyone carrying the rifle without a sling.

An even weightier Model 1910 chambered in .401 WSL came later, but the Model 1907 proved to be the most popular and longest lasting of Winchester's earliest semi-autos. In fact, due to its almost-immediate adoption by law enforcement agencies, a special Police Rifle variation was offered in 1908. Starting around serial number 9,000, it featured a bayonet attachment, thicker stocks, checkered-steel buttplate (instead of the standard, hard-rubber shotgun buttplate) and weighed almost 11 pounds. These Model 1907 Police Rifles proved to be of immense aid in combating crime during the "Roaring '20s" and brought many a gangster to justice, including Bonnie and Clyde.

Finally, with more than 59,000 units produced, the Winchester Model 1907 was discontinued in 1957. This ended a half-century legacy of a novel semi-automatic rifle that might never have come into existence had Winchester decided to produce Browning's semi-automatic shotgun. 



30th



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# Heritage Manufacturing Coachwhip

**The new Coachwhip coach gun is prettier than you'd expect and more practical than you may realize.**

**A**t the very end of an impressive row of firearms that terminated right behind the cashier sat an odd and lonely little double-barrel scattergun. It looked out of place in terms of both size and technology, just a relatively small amalgamation of blued steel and walnut, its price tag dangling from a white string tied to the trigger guard. I smiled.

"May I see the coach gun?" I asked the clerk manning the register.

"No," he said, inexplicably arching his brows. He'd been friendly and accommodating until then, so I was briefly taken aback by his refusal. I guess he must've sized me up as a good guy, though, because—after quickly glancing around—he leaned forward and conspiratorially whispered "That's the store gun, and it's loaded."

Genius. They had hidden their primary defensive tool in plain sight just by affixing a price tag to it and setting it next to all the other long guns. Although each employee carried a sidearm, whoever was on the cash register also had immediate access to two blasts of buckshot from what a crook would assume was an empty gun.

It also meant that, among this vast array of advanced, consumer firearms, a little 19th-century-style coach gun offered the best combination of compactness, handling, reliability, simplicity and power to initiate defense of the store and its employees.

Heritage Manufacturing's new Coachwhip is an extraordinarily handsome rendering of a coach gun. With a Prince-of-Wales grip, splinter fore-end, black-chromed barrels and case-colored receiver, hammers, trigger guard and double triggers, it's a looker. Of course, looks alone won't carry the day in a fight—but twin 3-inch, 12-gauge chambers will.



## SPECIFICATIONS

**Manufacturer:** Heritage Manufacturing;  
(800) 845-3776, heritagemfg.com

**Action Type:** Break-action

**Caliber:** 12 gauge; 3-inch chambers

**Capacity:** 2 rounds

**Finish:** Case-color receiver and controls;  
black-chromed barrels

**Barrel Length:** 18.5 inches

**Choke:** Cylinder bore

**Trigger Pull Weight:** 10 pounds, 10 ounces

**Sights:** Brass-bead front

**Length:** 35.43 inches

**Weight:** 6 pounds, 11.5 ounces

**Accessories:** Manual

**MSRP:** \$984.99

## ON TARGET

Vintage aesthetic

## OFF TARGET

Limited ergonomics

The Coachwhip has barrels long enough to avoid NFA restrictions on short-barreled shotguns • Case coloring on the receiver, triggers, trigger guard and hammers is nothing short of stunning • Move the barrel-release latch to either side to open the action. All controls actuated easily, for a new gun • A brass bead is a simple and traditional alternative to an optic or even rifle sights—and is all that is needed • Rabbit-ear exposed hammers are easy to cock and make the condition of the shotgun plain to see in an instant.



Once you stipulate to the gun lacking firepower, it is otherwise easy to champion the virtues of a coach gun as a defensive arm. First and foremost, it's a 12-gauge shotgun, long the gold standard of short-range, defensive longarms. But, the other thing about a coach gun is that it's almost foolproof for those first two shots because there is no cycling. You load the chambers directly; the shells are already in there and await only the fall of the hammers for ignition of the primers.

Hinge the buttstock on your shoulder, angling down the 18.5-inch barrels to the low-ready when moving (especially around corners), then quickly lever up the gun, if and when needed. If you have to maneuver indoors, there are few longarms that can do it as well, and no pistol can match the muzzle energy of those two loads of buckshot.

Authentic coach guns follow the KISS design principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid). There are no lights, lasers or electro-optics, and no means to readily affix them. One of the virtues of the Coachwhip is that all the controls are located close together, making them easy to manipulate without having to move your hand too far from the operating position. The barrel latch, rabbit-ear exposed hammers and tang-mounted safety are right below your line-of-sight and the triggers are right there underneath. All controls actuated positively and without undue stiffness, given this was a brand-new gun. They got even smoother with use, but were pretty good right out of the box.

The downside of the Coachwhip is really a problem inherent to coach guns. Once the two shots are out of the barrel, the reload is, uh, labor intensive. You must thumb the barrel latch and break open the action. The Coachwhip has no ejectors, so you'll have to pluck out the empties with your fingers, grab two more shells and insert them in the chambers, snap the action shut, then cock the hammers and get back on the

triggers. That's a lot to do under stress. The hope is those first two shots would solve the great majority of problems.

The other concern is settling on a condition for storage if this is your primary home-defense gun. Do you keep it loaded and, if so, with the hammers down or cocked? And with the safety on or off? It requires some thought and once you make a choice, you'll need to commit it to muscle memory to be able to use the gun quickly and effectively.

At the range, the gun demonstrated the expected reliability. There's really not a lot to go wrong. There was no spread with 00 buck at 5 yards, just a single hole. Depending on the load, pellets struck 2 to 5 inches above point-of-aim at 7 yards, so know where your preferred load hits should you invest in a Coachwhip. Firing at 10 yards with No. 4 buck produced about an 11-inch spread. Best all-around performance was achieved with 2¾-inch No. 1 buckshot. Three-inch loads didn't produce a conceivable advantage for home defense, unless you are expecting a grizzly to break down your door.

Some will find it nitpicky, given this is a coach gun, but it doesn't leap to your shoulder the way a high-end sporting shotgun will. But, of course, what does? Also, shooting a high volume of shells through the Coachwhip was no fun—nor should you expect it to be. This is not a gun for sporting clays or trap. Yes, recoil is stiff, but in a defensive use, you'll never notice, and the gun is controllable, if not pleasant.

In addition to home defense, the Coachwhip will likely pique the interest of cowboy-action shooting participants. If you like retro firearms, or you feel a coach gun's tactical advantages outweigh its liabilities, the Heritage Manufacturing Coachwhip is a particularly fine example of one. And while you may blessedly never have to use it except for familiarization or fun, you'll still have something quite nice to look at. 🌀

Greg Gadson



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**IN MEMORY NRA-ILA  
CONTRIBUTIONS**

**September 1-30, 2025**

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**Arthur J. Phillips**, Thaxton, MS (from:  
Marita A. Allen); **Sidney Kjeldahl**, Sauk  
Centre, MN (from: Nancy Kjeldahl).

# Focus On The Courts

**T**his late in the year, most state legislatures have adjourned, so NRA-ILA is looking at other areas to defend and advance our right to keep and bear arms. There is, of course, Congress, along with working with President Trump's administration on bureaucratic changes. But this month, we highlight efforts in the judicial arena.

**NRA FILES AMICUS BRIEF URGING SCOTUS TO HEAR CHALLENGE TO BAN ON FIREARMS POSSESSION BY NONVIOLENT FELONS**

**O**n October 9, the National Rifle Association, along with the Second Amendment Foundation, Firearms Policy Coalition, and FPC Action Foundation, filed an amicus brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to hear a challenge to the federal lifetime prohibition on firearms possession by nonviolent felons.

The case, *Zherka v. Bondi*, was brought by Selim Zherka, who pleaded guilty over a decade ago to a charge of conspiracy to make a false statement to a bank and to sign and file a false federal income tax return. Because the crime was punishable by over one year's imprisonment, under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1), he is forever prohibited from possessing a firearm.

Our brief provides a detailed historical analysis demonstrating that peaceable citizens—including nonviolent felons—were never disarmed throughout American history. From the earliest colonial days through the 19th century, the government disarmed only dangerous persons. Moreover, historically, upon completing their sentences, nonviolent

offenders not only had full access to their Second Amendment protected rights, but also the able-bodied males were required to keep and bear arms under the state and federal militia acts. Therefore, the brief concludes, Section 922(g)(1) as applied to nonviolent felons is inconsistent with historical tradition and should be held unconstitutional.

**NRA FILES ANOTHER LAWSUIT CHALLENGING THE NATIONAL FIREARMS ACT**

**A**lso on October 9, the National Rifle Association—along with the American Suppressor Association, Firearms Policy Coalition, and Second Amendment Foundation—announced the filing of another lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA). The case, *Jensen v. ATF*, was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

Originally, the NFA imposed a \$200 tax and established a tax-enforcement registration regime for certain classes of firearms. However, President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB) eliminated this tax for suppressors, short-barreled rifles, short-barreled shotguns and NFA-defined "any other weapons," leaving only the registration requirement in place. The complaint in *Jensen* argues that, since the tax has been eliminated, the NFA's registration regime can no longer be justified under Congress's taxing power—nor under any other authority granted under Article I of the Constitution.

The complaint also asserts that the NFA's registration regime for suppressors and short-barreled rifles violates the



Getty photo by peterspiro



Second Amendment. The Supreme Court has established that any regulation on arms-bearing conduct must be consistent with our nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation. And, the complaint argues, there is no tradition that supports the NFA's registration regime for protected arms such as suppressors and short-barreled rifles.

The plaintiffs in the case include the Texas State Rifle Association, FPC Action Foundation, Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, Hot Shots Custom LLC, and three individuals. The case represents the second lawsuit brought by the NRA, ASA, FPC and SAF challenging the NFA since the OBBB eliminated the tax for various NFA items and builds upon *Brown v. ATF*, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri on August 1.

#### REHEARING EN BANC SOUGHT IN NRA-SUPPORTED CHALLENGE TO NEW JERSEY'S CARRY RESTRICTIONS

**O**n October 8, the National Rifle Association announced the filing of a petition for rehearing en banc in *Siegel v. Platkin*, a challenge to New Jersey's carry restrictions.

In response to the NRA's landmark Supreme Court victory, *NYSRPA v. Bruen*, New Jersey passed a law making it illegal to carry a firearm in 26 categories and 115 subcategories of places that together cover nearly every square inch of public space throughout the state. The law also includes several other restrictions, including a requirement that carry-permit applicants provide references from four "reputable" non-relatives.

In September, a three-judge panel of the Third Circuit invalidated some aspects of the law, but upheld carry bans in many categories of locations, including permitted events, public parks, beaches, playgrounds, zoos, libraries, museums, bars, casinos and healthcare facilities, among others. The panel also upheld the requirement that applicants provide references from four "reputable" non-relatives.

The petition argues that the panel misapplied *Bruen* and emphasizes that the issues presented in the case are too important to allow the panel's flawed decision to be the last word on the constitutionality of New Jersey's outlier regime.

The plaintiffs in the case are the Association of New Jersey Rifle & Pistol Clubs and seven individuals.

Please be sure to visit [nra.org](https://nra.org) for updates on NRA-ILA's ongoing efforts to defend your constitutional rights, and please visit [nra.org/litigation](https://nra.org/litigation) to keep up to date on NRA-ILA's ongoing litigation efforts. 🔄

By John Parker

Photo courtesy of Nosler

## Bob Nosler's Legacy of Innovation and Dedication

**R**obert "Bob" Nosler, the chairman of Nosler, Inc. and a defining force in the world of ammunition and firearms, passed away peacefully on Sept. 2, 2025, at the age of 79.

"It was with deep sadness that I learned of the passing of past board member Bob Nosler," NRA EVP and CEO Doug Hamlin said. "I had the privilege of knowing Bob for over 35 years. He was a gentleman and passionate about the protection of the Second Amendment rights of all law-abiding citizens. My deepest condolences go out to Bob's wife, Joan, and the entire Nosler family."

A native of Oregon and son of Nosler founder John A. Nosler, Bob devoted his life to preserving and advancing the principles of uncompromising craftsmanship and purposeful innovation. His journey began in service to his country as a submariner in the U.S. Navy aboard the *U.S.S. Nathan Hale* during the Vietnam War. Upon returning home, he joined the family business as its sixth employee—starting on the production floor and steadily climbing the ranks to become CEO and eventually chairman.

Bob's influence on the shooting sports industry was profound. Under his leadership, Nosler evolved from a bullet manufacturer into a full-line producer of bullets, brass, ammunition, rifles and proprietary cartridges. Among his accomplishments was restoring full family ownership of the company in 1988, a move that reinforced Nosler's long-term vision and independence.

A dedicated steward of American manufacturing and traditional hunting values, Bob also served on the NRA Board of Directors starting in 2012 and, alongside his wife Joan, was named the NRA's "Corporate Executive of the Year" in 2016. His generosity and commitment extended to organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Camp-Fire Club of America, Oregon Hunters Association and the NRA Whittington Center in Raton, N.M.

In recent years, Bob added another title to his legacy: author. He published three fiction novels, showcasing the same focus and dedication that marked his professional life.

To those who worked with him, Bob was a leader defined by humility and purpose. Known for his "management by walking around" style, he preferred factory floors to boardrooms, listening to employees and ensuring the company's mission remained rooted in trust and excellence.

"Bob was more than a leader of this company—he was a mentor, a friend and the living connection between the foundation laid by our grandfather and the future we continue to build today," said John R. Nosler, president of Nosler, Inc. "We will honor his legacy by staying true to the principles he lived by—innovation with purpose, craftsmanship without compromise and a deep respect for the hunting tradition."

Bob Nosler is survived by his wife, his family and generations of sportsmen and women who rely on the integrity of Nosler, Inc. products. His presence will be deeply missed, but his legacy will endure.

# NRA Online Regional Report

To search for events in your area, go to

**[nrapublications.org/regional-report](http://nrapublications.org/regional-report)**

Visit the links below to find gun shows, programs, clubs, events and training in your area.



## LAW ENFORCEMENT

**[le.nra.org](http://le.nra.org)**

Public and private officers interested in becoming law enforcement firearm instructors should attend one of NRA's Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor Development Schools. NRA Police Pistol Combat competition is intended to be used as an extension of an officer's training.



## FRIENDS OF NRA

**[friendsofnra.org](http://friendsofnra.org)**

Friends of NRA events celebrate American values with fun, fellowship and fundraising for The NRA Foundation. To learn more about events in your area, visit **[friendsofnra.org](http://friendsofnra.org)**, contact your local field representative or send an email to **[friends@nrahq.org](mailto:friends@nrahq.org)**.



## GUN SHOWS

**[gunshows.nra.org](http://gunshows.nra.org)**

Dates and locations of gun shows are subject to change. Please contact the show before traveling. Discounted NRA memberships are sold through NRA recruiters. Some shows may offer free admission to people who sign up for new memberships or renewals.

To become an NRA Recruiter, contact NRA Recruiting Programs at **[recruiter@nrahq.org](mailto:recruiter@nrahq.org)**.



## TRAINING

**[refuse.nra.org](http://refuse.nra.org)** | **[nrainstructors.org](http://nrainstructors.org)**

The NRA's Refuse To Be A Victim® program provides information on crime prevention and personal safety. To learn more about the program, visit **[refuse.nra.org](http://refuse.nra.org)**. The most up-to-date seminar and instructor training schedule is available on the Internet by visiting **[nrainstructors.org](http://nrainstructors.org)**, or online training is available at **[nraonlinetraining.org](http://nraonlinetraining.org)**.

Questions? Email to **[refuse@nrahq.org](mailto:refuse@nrahq.org)** or by calling (800) 861-1166.



## AREA SHOOTS

**[ssusa.org/coming-events](http://ssusa.org/coming-events)**

For more information, please contact the NRA Competitive Shooting Division at **[comphelp@nrahq.org](mailto:comphelp@nrahq.org)**.



## STATE ASSOCIATIONS

**[stateassociations.nra.org](http://stateassociations.nra.org)**

Joining NRA-affiliated state associations supports NRA's mission in your state. See **[clubs.nra.org](http://clubs.nra.org)** for more information.

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# From First Shots to Next Steps: Women On Target Program Equips Women

On Sept. 20, 2025, the sound of gunfire carried across the 110-acre grounds of the Arlington-Fairfax Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America in Fairfax County, Va. But this wasn't just another day at the range. It was the Club's annual NRA Women On Target (WOT) Instructional Shooting Clinic, where 45 women of all experience levels gathered not just to shoot, but also to deepen their understanding of what it means to be shooters. Through live-fire exercises, educational seminars and direct mentorship, the Arlington-Fairfax chapter of IWLA once again demonstrated the possibilities of a long-beloved NRA program.

At the heart of the WOT program events is a commitment to supporting the whole shooter. Instructors don't just teach grip, stance and trigger press. They also teach judgment, responsibility and the deep connections between mindset, marksmanship and the law. And another NRA program, Refuse To Be A Victim, was incorporated to translate situational awareness and personal safety into practical and practicable routines.

The second pillar of the WOT experience is hands-on, one-on-one live-fire training. At Arlington-Fairfax, women received individualized instruction across disciplines including pistol, traditional rifle, AR-15, shotgun and field archery. Some tried out shooting for the first time. Others, such as members of a local chapter of Armed Women of America, came to broaden their skills, meet new people



Photo by Cara Baylus

and try new firearms. At the rifle station, students tested several platforms, including a rare historic wall gun, while AR-15 instructors demonstrated how the platform's configurability makes it ideal for shooters of smaller stature. On the shotgun range, first clays broke quickly, followed by seconds and thirds. Pistol bays emphasized fundamentals of stance, grip and trigger press, while archery offered a quieter challenge with recurve, compound and crossbows.

This year's event welcomed a new clinic director, Sarah Smith, who took over from longtime director and current club president Pamela Meara. Sarah first encountered WOT just a few years ago as a volunteer helping with administrative work.

"One of the first things I noticed was we needed more female instructors," Sarah noted. "I'm a lifelong shooter with a passion for training but I'd never married the two ideas. Women on Target was the final nudge I needed. I jumped into training and certified in

basic pistol and by the following year's Women on Target, I was on the line."

Lois's story also began with WOT.

"I was an attendee at Women on Target in 2023. I went home and said, 'I am buying a pistol.'"

Today, Lois is certified to teach several NRA disciplines and has been instrumental in forging a strong relationship between the clinic and her local chapter of Armed Women of America.

That virtuous cycle is the real legacy of WOT. It doesn't just create better shooters; it creates leaders, mentors, responsible citizens and capable advocates who understand that education doesn't stop when you leave the range.

## A MODEL WORTH REPEATING

WOT has always promised to meet women where they are, as we saw at the Arlington-Fairfax clinic. This event proved what many in the NRA community already know: WOT is more than an event. It's a movement. To learn more about Women On Target, visit [wot.nra.org](https://wot.nra.org).

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**Communications intended for any member of the NRA Board of Directors should be addressed to:**

(Name of Board member), NRA Office of the Secretary, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030; or [nrabod@nrahq.org](mailto:nrabod@nrahq.org); or (703) 267-1021. Please include your name, contact information and NRA membership ID number, as only communications from NRA members will be forwarded.

super-simple to do: Basically, you want the comp almost bottom, dead center. Looking at the front from the top of the muzzle, determine the degrees the comp is off. Then, just a look at the timing chart will tell you what combination of shims you need. Remove the comp, add the shims, a dab of Rocksett (included with the product) and hand-tighten, then torque it to about 20 inch-pounds—there is no need to gorilla it and overtighten.

The Trijicon mounts like any other optic with a built-in Picatinny base. You want to be comfortable looking through the eye piece and viewing the screen.


### Running The Bergara Barreled Action

The Bergara action is quite exceptionally smooth for a mass-produced turnbolt. There was no drag and it wasn't sticky. I could load a round one at a time by dropping it on the empty mag. Adjusting the Magpul chassis requires a hex wrench, and it was a simple task to fit it to me. Getting behind the Bergara, I installed the bipod and it felt like I had been shooting the rifle for years—it was just that comfortable. The Trijicon has excellent resolution: Looking at pine trees I could see the texture of the bark on the trunk, and I could easily identify yearling does from bucks. I used a hand-warmer as a target, but have found that better thermal scopes can pick up the heat-absorbing colors of a dark bullseye. I'm glad I passed on that computer

programming course all those years ago because I didn't need it to zero the REAP-IR, as it is super-simple to zero.

The TriggerTech trigger was crisp and light. I almost needed a screwdriver to remove the silly grin from my face after shooting it. I started with Black Hills Gold Match loaded with a 168-grain Hornady A-Max and SIG Sauer Elite Performance Match with a 168-grain OTM bullet. Muzzle velocity averaged 2,087 fps for the Black Hills and 2,590 fps with the SIG. The best group with the SIG Sauer was .36 inch for three shots at 100 yards, and the Black Hills group was .60 inch. Moving to 200 yards, Blacks Hills shot 2.08 inches for three shots and finally SIG Sauer measured 3.18 inches. I guessed 168-grain ammo to start out, and the results were impressive. I still need to run more bullet weights through it, but it looks like the Bergara is partial to 168-grain bullets. Recoil was pleasant and the weight of the rifle helped me to get back on target fast even when I had the zoom too high.

### Build It and It Will Shoot

You can spend a few stacks of Benjamins on a really good rifle with a well-known name rollmarked on it, or you can build one yourself using quality parts. If you know what end of a screwdriver to hold and "DIY brotherhood" is tattooed on your forearm, you can build a damn good rifle that is unique and personalized. 

I'm not sure about everyone else, but I've had my fill of Burnt-Bronze finishes. We landed on Highland Green, Desert Sand, Graphite Black and Gun Metal gray for the chassis.



Rugged and lightweight, the Magpul MOE QD bipod easily interfaced with the rifle's M-Lok slots and proved intuitive to use, without adding any unwanted bulk. Thanks to its practical features like enhanced ergonomics and adaptability, the author's DIY rifle has delivered excellent sub-MOA groups at 100 yards.






extreme range, just exactly like they would if they were handloading their own ammunition.

I talked with Federal Ammunition about its lot numbers. When the company creates a load for any cartridge, it records all the pertinent information about that load, including the pressure-testing and accuracy results, then assigns a lot number to every box. When Nosler makes bullets, it also uses a lot number, and not only are these bullets tested for precision, but the company also tests its hunting bullets for upset/expansion at various velocities, and the test bullets are retained for record. Similar procedures are exercised by most other major ammunition, bullet, powder and primer manufacturers. So, this means if you're a handloader, you need to record not just the specifics of the load you create, you also need to record the lot number for every component you use.

Now that you know what a lot number is for, you need to know where to find it. With most of the ammunition that's loaded in cardboard boxes, you'll find the lot number stamped on the inside of the flap. With some manufacturers, you may see the word "Lot" included in the number stamp. You might also see some other information—printed as opposed to stamped—on the flap, and this information might be the load or even the packaging identifier. With plastic ammo boxes like Federal uses for some handgun loads, you'll find a rectangular white section in the labeling where they stamp the lot number, or it will be stamped on the plastic box itself. With most of the ammo Hornady manufacturers, the company includes the lot number as part of the printed label.

For most shooters, the lot number is something they won't need to worry about. But, if you are particular about how your ammo performs, and if you want to ensure it will continue to perform the same way, you might want to pay attention to the lot number and buy a lot of the lot you want. 

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# The Other Side

All those lost springs and levers have to go somewhere, right?

I am not sure who came up with the idea of the multiverse, but it was probably one of those smart guys like Albert Einstein or perhaps Sheldon Cooper. The idea is that there are parallel universes, and we exist in each one in a slightly different form. As an example, next door I'll bet I am good looking and rich while George Clooney is ugly and broke.

Its existence has been debated in smoky, late-night college dorm rooms for a long time without conclusion. Except now—I have proof.

Guns often have spring-loaded parts, pawls, detent balls, pins and multiple other necessary pieces. Anybody who has tinkered on guns much knows that these parts will launch and fly as fast and far as anything that Elon Musk ever made. They are restless little critters that never want to stay home and they often run away, never to be seen again.

So where do they go? For years that was a bigger mystery than the meaning of life. For example, my shop is not all that big, about 24 feet on a side. I bought a two-car garage kit from the local lumber yard and hired a boss man with a bunch of wide-eyed weirdos to put it together. If all the lost parts over the decades were still in the building, there would be no way you could even walk through the clutter. Yeah, OK, I understand that's the case now, but it's clearly not lost gun parts getting in the path. So where did all that stuff go?

Just like those smart guys, I have a theory.

A while back, I decided to be one of those influencer types. Everybody else is getting rich videoing the stuff they do, so why can't I? The problem is, I wasn't sure how to go about it, so I hired a "consultant." Given what they charge, I should be a consultant, clearly it pays well.

That blue-haired, tattooed lady told me that to succeed, I need rainbow hair and should probably switch genders. The hair might be on the table, but that gender thing is out—I ain't letting nobody alter my plumbing, at least not

unless it pays a lot more money than what she said. Anyway, I started videoing everything I do.

When a spring-loaded part launched, I heard it strike the wall like the other billion times, and I thought I knew where to start my search. Except, it wasn't there. It never is.

I looked for about two days before I remembered I had the phone making a video. That's how I know it switched universes!

When I slowed down the video, the flying part was about 2 feet directly over my bench when it hesitated, just for a nanosecond, like it struck something invisible. There was a flash of light and it was gone. I heard it hit the wall after that, so I suspect that there is an acoustic connection between universes. I'll bet that's just to mess with us and is an indication that whoever designed this mess has a sense of humor, even if it is a bit mean.

My theory is that it hit a weak spot in the membrane and, to paraphrase the great Jim Morrison, it "broke on through to the other side!"

If my theory is correct, there is a huge pile of gun parts over there, just sitting. Why? Well, nobody on this side is big on tidying up their work space, so why would it be different in the 2.0? There has to be a likely gold mine in gun parts just waiting, piled up against the membrane of the universe. If I could collect all those lost parts and put them on GunBroker, maybe I could abandon my dreams of being an influencer and make some money.

So, to get to my point; anybody got any ideas? I heard that gremlins—the real ones, not those imposters in the movies—can get the job done. I think they first came into notice during World War II, but everyone I knew from that timeframe is gone. The web is useless, just stuff about the movie. I looked on Amazon to see if I could buy a dozen, but all they have is movie stuff, too. I ran an ad on that Facebook Market thing and man did I meet some weird people. I got scared and changed my phone number.

I need real-life gremlins, some that can travel back and forth at night to gather all those parts.

So, can anyone help? If I can make this work, I'll lobby the editor here to let me write a feature about how I did it. Then you folks can retrieve all your spring-loaded stuff that's gone missing over the years for your own selves.

Maybe afterward we can sell the gremlins and start a new pet fad. Who knows, it might even inspire a movie.🌀



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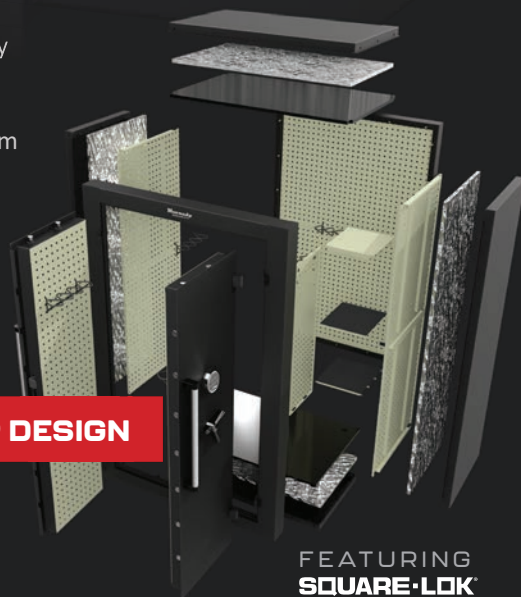
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