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AS AMERICAN GUN OWNERS, we are constantly force fed an avalanche of misinformation about how dangerous firearms are, why we shouldn't have them in our households, how they are seldom used for self-defense and what different "gun safety" laws need to be passed in order to solve our problem. Interestingly, nearly every time we hear or read such tripe we are treated to at least a scientific study or two backing it up.

Sometimes it can get frustrating. After all, with so many studies being tossed around, isn't it possible that at least some of it might be true?

The answer is a resounding, "No!" But if those doubts ever do creep into your mind, it's good to recall a 2020 study by the Rand Corporation that shows most of the anti-gun research we hear over and over in the so-called "mainstream" media isn't even valid.

The Rand study took a close look at the results of nearly 28,000 research publications on the effectiveness of gun control laws. Incredibly, Rand authors found only 123 studies—less than half of 1 percent—met rigorous scientific standards!

"Of more than 200 combinations of policies and outcomes, surprisingly few have been the subject of methodologically rigorous investigation," the Rand report stated. "Notably, research into five of the examined outcomes is either unavailable or almost entirely inconclusive, and three of these five outcomes represent issues of particular concern to gun owners or gun industry stakeholders."

A recent conversation with researcher John Lott, president of the Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC),

drove that point home even better for me. As Lott pointed out, it's not just the media and politicians telling lies about guns and gun ownership. His organization recently published reports showing that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) put out grossly inaccurate data on the rate that Americans use guns defensively in order to stop attacks.

The FBI hired "researchers" from Texas State to put together a list of active-shooter cases for the years 2014 to 2021, and they claimed that only 11 active shooting cases were stopped by armed civilians during that time. That low percentage was parroted in newspapers, magazines and on websites across the country and around the world.

Interestingly, Lott worked at the Department of Justice until January 2021, had looked at the same reports as the researchers hired by the FBI and knew that there were actually a whopping 11-times more instances when armed citizens stopped active shooters.

"I don't have the millions of dollars to go and track down the news stories that are there, but I found 124," he told me. "And nobody needs to take my word for it. I have the cases listed and linked to the news stories so people can go and check them themselves."

"What's the takeaway?" you might ask. Well, it's this: There's a widespread, organized effort to convince rank and file Americans that guns are bad and seldom used effectively for self-defense. That assertion, however, is simply a lie.

As Americans, we have a God-given right to protect ourselves and our families, and the most efficient way to do so is a "good guy with a gun." Don't let anyone tell you differently. —Mark Chesnut

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RENDEZVOUS 2022 STOCKPILE

In its sixth year of bringing together the Athlon Outdoors editorial team and contributors with some of the best manufacturers in the shooting industry, the latest Rendezvous once again took to the harvested potato fields in the rolling hills of eastern Idaho. With the Grand Tetons on the horizon, the AO team of editors and content creators once again got a look at some of the latest gear to hit the market or, if lucky enough, a sneak peek of yet-to-be-announced firearms and accessories from more than 30 top-tier manufacturers. Mum's the word on that gear for now, but we will be bringing those future products to the pages of various Athlon Outdoors print magazines and websites soon. But this amazing event wouldn't have been possible without several key sponsors donating goods for the range and for every participant. Here we'd like to show our support and fill you in on the great gear that made for another awesome Rendezvous.

– The Editors

■ 5.11 TACTICAL

1. Women's Venus Fleece Jacket: Fit and performance shine with this full-zip jacket. No need to sacrifice looks for comfort with the anti-pilling micro-fleece construction that has been brushed on both sides for utmost softness. Elastic binding at the hem, collar and sleeve cuffs keeps body heat captured close to the body while the zippered hand pockets give storage and keep hands warm.

2. Women's Aurora Shell Jacket: Rain won't keep you away from the range or hiking trail with the Aurora Shell Jacket. The sporty-looking shell features 15K/15K water resistance and breathability to stay dry while blocking the wind. Underarm zippers offer venting during strenuous activities while the articulated sleeves and shoulders give ample room for a wide range of movements.

3. Women's Nikita Long Sleeve Shirt: Designed with range time and CCW in mind, the

Nakita shirt is easy to wear with its Tencel fabric. Two chest pockets with hidden snap closures offer storage for various items and the left arm sports a small vertical pocket for pens and pencils. When the temperatures rise, roll up those sleeves and keep them up with its button and fabric attachment.

4. Women's Stratos Full Zip: Stay on top of the latest styles with the Women's Stratos Full-Zip. Perfect for a top layer during crisp fall days or used as a mid-layer during cold snaps, the Stratos feels as good as it looks. The one-way zipper features an internal chin guard for extra warmth while the raglan sleeves with elastic binding cuffs keep warmth inside the mid-layer.

5. Men's Corporate Pinnacle Polo: This stylish and comfortable polo shirt is at home in the professional world and can feature company branding. The moisture-wicking properties are welcomed during warmer months. The traditional 5.11 pen



pocket on the left sleeve keeps pens handy and a sunglass loop on the front wrangles eyewear. Built from snag-resistant polyester, bartacking at major stress points delivers long-lasting comfort.

6. Men's Stratos 1/4

Zip: While designed as a mid-layer, the Men's Stratos 1/4 Zip's sharp looks will make you want to wear it on its own. Made from a durable polyester and elastane blend, the Stratos stretches in all the right places for rigorous activities. The front zip features an internal chin guard that combines with raglan sleeves to retain heat. If you get too hot, the anti-wicking material keeps you dry. Comfort reigns with the Stratos as well with its brushed tricot-lined inner collar.

7. Men's Tac-Dry Rain

Shell 2.0: A perfect outer layer to compliment the Stratos 1/4 Zip, the Men's Tac-Dry Rain Shell 2.0 protects from foul weather with a tough 20K waterproof and 10K breathable 2L ripstop material with DWR finish. The completely seam-sealed shell boasts a hood, updated elastic sleeves, a protective storm flap and an inner chin guard to keep the elements at bay. Both sides of the chest and back feature pull-out ID panels, while the Quixip release system gives quick access to a duty belt.

8. Rush12 2.0 Backpack

24L: The versatile Rush12 backpack has received some upgrades in storage and performance. A hidden CCW compartment has been added while the

eyewear pocket now has more room. The incorporated padded laptop sleeve and hydration tubes have been repositioned to the rear as well. Built from water-repellant 1050D nylon, the pack is covered in MOLLE to incorporate the 5.11 Tier System to customize the bag with purpose-built pouches. (511tactical.com)

■ AMMUNITION

9. Hornady & Winchester We certainly kept busy at Rendezvous by plowing through cases and cases of ammunition. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of Hornady and Winchester, we were able to test hundreds of guns from .22 LR to precision rifle loads. Supersonic, subsonic?

They had it all and were key to a successful event. (hornady.com) (winchester.com)

■ RANGE GEAR

10. DOA Shooting Bench-es: Each of the 10 firing stations at the latest Rendezvous featured a rock-solid DOA shooting bench. A long-time staple of the event, DOA has gone through two different designs before settling on the 30x43 bench available in either right- or left-handed options. The portable shooting bench features a strong steel tripod and a padded and adjustable seat. The benches are made from 14-ply maple or birch and look as good as they perform. (doashootingbench.com)

11. DGX Steel Targets:

Nothing beats the pleasant ping of hitting a steel target several hundred yards away. To keep the music playing, Dixie Gun Worx (DGX) provided dozens of durable AR500 steel targets that survived three full days of shooting, even from large-caliber rounds. (dixiegunworx.com)

12. Longshot Cameras

LR-3 Ultra AHD: Time is money, so don't lose any more time waiting for the range to go cold so you can go down-range to clearly see your target's impact locations of each round. Longshot Cameras has solved the issue with the LR-3 Ultra AHD Two-Mile Target Camera. The system consists of a camera with all-axis adjustment, receiver, camera hard case, two tripods and two chargers. Using its powerful 300 Mbps Wi-Fi access point, shooters can set up the camera adjacent and back from the target. By downloading the free and easy-to-use Longshot app, shooters can clearly see real-time target impacts on their devices. Shooters can mark their shots and groups, measure each group size and see the last shot flashing on the screen. The app can be used to track shots, save photos, review sessions, record videos and take still photos. Its nine-hour battery life gives a full day of shooting at the range. The unit is guaranteed to work out to 2 miles and is available with or without the company's Bulletproof Warranty. (longshotcameras.com)



13. Walker's And Axil Electronic Muffs:

At the heart of any Rendezvous is safety. Hearing protection is a must, especially so with a large group banging away for hours on end. Walker's Razor and Axil's TrackR electronic ear muffs provided ample protection with a secure and comfortable fit. Both sets of ears feature directional microphones for communication, while instantaneous sound compression protects the ears once sounds hit unacceptable levels. (walkersgamear.com) (goaxil.com)

14. Oakley Double Edge Cerakote Glasses:

Staying safe on the range is important, but you can still look good doing so. The Oakley Double Edge Cerakote Glasses are made to withstand the rigors of shooting and other rigorous outdoor activities. These lenses have been tested under extreme high mass and high-velocity circumstances for the ultimate in eye protection. Oakley's exclusive lens technology delivers enhanced color and contrast to see in detail. (oakleysi.com)

15. Tannerite Reactive Targets:

Everyone loves an explosion. So, when the Tannerite targets were set out after breaking for lunch each day during Rendezvous, everyone hustled to their next station to contribute to the ensuing cacophony of booms. After mixing the powders in the canister,



give it a good shake and set up the target at a safe distance. The impact of a high-velocity round will set off the charge, resulting in a loud boom and smoke. (tannerite.com)

LEUPOLD

16. SX-2 Alpine HD Spotting Scope:

At every long-range Rendezvous rifle bay, shooters and spotters had the opportunity to experience the amazing power and clarity of one of Leupold's latest spotting scopes—the SX-2 Alpine HD. Built for the harshest conditions, the SX-2 Alpine HD 20-60x60mm angled spotting scope is a must-have for all serious hunters or shooters who want a little more HD magnification and the weight savings offered by a smaller objective. It features a rugged design and an oversized eyepiece that



allows for comfortable, all-day glassing. With a \$400 MSRP, the SX-2 Alpine is sure to become a best-seller in no time.

17. Pro Guide Tripod Kit:

No spotting scope is really worth a darn unless it's mounted atop a steady tripod. Leupold Pro Guide Tripod Kits were used, and they delivered the advertised versatility and performance that elite hunters and shooters demand in the field. The kit's rugged, lightweight design is compact enough to easily carry season after season, yet with a maximum height of 67 inches, it's tall enough to accommodate almost any hunter or shooter. (leupold.com)

MAGPUL

Magpul generously provided their Tundra Beanie,

Tiger Stripe shirt and Icon Crew Socks to keep us all warm and toasty on the range. During these networking events, Magpul's provided Daka Everyday Folding Wallet also helped wrangle a load of business cards among other essentials. The folks from the company also brought along some of their other Daka products to highlight. Their line of Daka pouches, cases and cans gives a wide range of storage and organization options from small pouches to larger cases. (magpul.com)

19. Versacarry Leather Catchall Tray:

At the end of a long day on the range, the Versacarry Catchall Tray served as a parking place for our EDC gear, rings, keys, wallets and more. Constructed from water buffalo leather, the Catchall Tray's corners snap together to make a shallow bowl to hold items or unsnap to lay flat for travel or storage. (versacarry.com)

20. Quietkat Warrior:

The folks at QuietKat offered up one of their Warrior E-Bikes and accompanying trailer to help keep things on track at Rendezvous. Need some more ammo down the line? No problem with this pairing. An extra set of eyes at station 10? Got it! A variety of accessories, such as a Pannier Cargo Basket and Voile Straps, made hauling gear easy and quick. (quietkat.com) PDW



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GRAVY SEALS



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OVERWEIGHT, OUT OF SHAPE AND LITTLE TO NO TRAINING— EVERYDAY DADS LOOK TO FORMER OPERATORS FOR SELF-DEFENSE

BY J.T. PATTEN

I am no longer working in the world of counterterrorism where packing and strapping weapons were as common as me now carrying a laptop bag and phone charger to the office. These days, I am just a regular guy with a regular job who is raising a family in one of the safest towns in America, along with a bunch of other backyard dads who will hopefully never have to draw a weapon in self-defense. Still, the question comes up while hanging with these guys, “J.T., you’re probably a ‘gun guy,’ what do you carry for personal defense?”

My not having a basement racked and stacked with weapons may surprise some of them. I don’t have a knife or gun or load for every hostile or threatening situation and I use a collective risk-based approach to life that guides what or if I would carry anything at all. My tactic has been avoid-

ing high-risk situations with awareness and other preventable cautions or measures where possible or probable.

Going on a hike out West worrying about rattlesnakes differs from going far up North worrying about a mountain lion or bear. Heading into a bad part of the city differs from thinking the Zombie Apocalypse is ready to kick off. Filling up gas late at night differs from being at a large public gathering. Still, the question comes from a place of concern for most of these backyard dads who want to

protect themselves and their families when carjacking, flash mobs, mass shootings, and social or political tension feels like it is a constant threat to safety. So, they seek answers for concealed/ everyday carry and home-defense weapons.

I socialized the defense question among three different groups for some additional perspective: friends who came from law enforcement and the special operations community, military thriller authors who do extensive research and collecting of

firearms for the stories they write, and a bunch of other local backyard dads who don’t know diddly about guns but own them and will spend the money on something that is effective and cool-looking.

■ EVERYDAY CARRY

Use-case threat: Carjacking, active shooter encounter, robbery.

Many of the backyard dads had one pistol that serves as both their concealed carry and home-defense weapon. Glock was the most popular. Most of my buddies who came from the Tier One Special Mission Units preferred the Glock 17, 19 or 21. The dads and writers owned the same but also tended toward the subcompact 43X. The Sig P320 Compact and P365 were the next popular. I go with the Springfield Hellcat RDP.

The biggest difference between the experienced

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shooters and the dads was ammunition. Most of the dads used the same ammo for the range as they would for their defense rounds. Hands down, hollow points were the choice of the professionals for stopping power, especially with 9mm.

The next phase was a mock field test. With the above use-case in mind, none of the dads could retrieve their weapon from concealed carry position when seated in a car. The number one reason was their belly and mobility. Even those who put the pistol in their glove box or armrest compartment could not rapidly access their defense weapon. Standing, the dads with concealed carry holsters had difficulty drawing whether

the weapon was secured in the hour-hand position of six, five, 12, or two. The muffin top was the biggest factor next to getting flustered when having to scramble. This was a failure, as was their trigger discipline.

Takeaway: The weapon selections were on point, but holster choice and lack of dynamic training situations and safety were the highest risks for the backyard dads to defend themselves. Best bet, hand over the keys or valuables.

■ HOME DEFENSE

Use-case threat: Home invasion, civil unrest, zombies.

For this situation, we have three different camps: shotguns, pistols and carbines. Starting with the



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Consider an anti-personnel approach before the counter-approach. Locks, alarms, lighting and cameras can help you avoid confrontations rather than getting into gunfights.



duty-trained shooters, I was surprised to find how many preferred carbines. In hindsight, most of these individuals spent more than a decade clearing rooms with AR-style firearms with NATO 5.56mm and .223 Rem cartridges. There were a few pistol ARs in this mix, too, but many stayed away from adding this to their collection, given potential future law restrictions.

In the shotgun camp, the Remington 870 and Mossberg 500 series were most popular from Delta warriors to writers to everyday men. Here, I differ. I'm bullish on the IWI Tavor TS12 shotgun. This is a high-capacity shotgun with a rotating tubular magazine that allows for differing types of shotgun shells (i.e., slugs vs buckshot).

The biggest misconception by backyard dads was their use of inadequate stopping-power shot because they believed it would still stop an intruder while not penetrating through interior walls or doors. This depends on the distance, barrel length for spread and intervening barrier.

With home-defense pistols, the larger full-size versions of the Glock and Sig were preferred over the compact and subcompact series, but for capacity reasons. Also among the trained professionals was the use of the FN 509 9mm with a 24-round magazine. My choice is the CZ P-10 C Suppressor-Ready with 17+1 capacity.



“ Many of the backyard dads had one pistol that serves as both their concealed carry and home-defense weapon. ”

Takeaway: I don't recommend the carbine solution and longer shotgun for the backyard dads who should not be clearing rooms in this use-case. Their training just isn't there. In a mock situation (holding a Wiffle ball bat in a dark house), the backyard dad was banging into walls. That said, I could tell that walking around with a pistol given the poor trigger discipline could be a disaster, too.

■ FINAL THOUGHTS

The armed professionals followed the rules of carry: Carry what you trust and train how you fight. The military thriller writers had done their research based on what the elite used but also knew a lot

about shootability, accuracy, reliability, and in most cases, concealability. They, like the professionals, had much more training beyond static targets at a range and had better firearm safety discipline.

Movies and thriller books have inflated backyard dads' belief that they would be able to effectively neutralize an armed attacker. While their weapon selections are on par, I have noticed a lot more of the sexiness drive in outfitting their weapons over practicality, which was already constrained. If they bought a weapon with a rail, it was filled with accessories. Many of the tactical gadgets were lower-priced Amazon products that were no doubt

a discrete purchase unwitting to the soccer-mom wife. Most dads had cheap lasers and fancy-looking optics made in China, which helps shooting accuracy at the indoor range, but in the middle of the night within a dark home, a mounted flashlight and threaded barrel suppressor would be much more practical, especially when discerning the threat versus family members or being blinded by the first shot flash. I like the Streamlight TLR-8 Tactical LED Light w/Laser.

Takeaway: Best recommendation for backyard dads is to take a safety class, try several weapons and arrive at the one that is most appropriate for their prime use-cases—not just because it looks bad-ass (although for collecting and recreation that's perfectly fine). For a protection plan, given their lack of safety and general target acquisition training, I recommend an anti-personnel approach before the counterapproach. Locks, alarms, lighting and cameras first. If those are thwarted by a hostile intruder, call 911 (inform them of your room location and that you are armed), hunker the family in a secure place with the lights off and the door locked, and wait with your weapon trained at the room entry. The next step is to hang tight for the all-clear but know where the imaginary red line is that you are ready to cross for personal defense if a confrontation is unavoidable. **PDW**

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IWI'S MASADA SLIM SHOWCASES TOP-TIER PERFORMANCE IN A MICRO-COMPACT PACKAGE

BY GARRETT LUCAS

When it comes to firearms that are built to rigorous standards for demanding real-world applications in the harshest of environments, Israel Weapon Industries (IWI) has to be at the top of the list. In fact, IWI works closely with the Israel Defense Force during the development of many of its weapon systems

to ensure that its products meet the needs of fighting men and women who need every advantage and edge possible.

Another beneficiary of IWI's small-arms expertise is the American shooter because IWI US (a subsidiary) makes the company's firearms available to the U.S. market. One of the company's most recent products integrates that expertise and tough-as-nails build quality IWI is known for into the micro-compact form factor that's perfect for everyday and concealed carry.

One of my favorite pistols that I've tried in the past couple of years was IWI's full-sized Masada—the company's first foray into striker-fired pistols. It was extremely rugged, exceptionally accurate and a fantastic value for the money. Well, the folks at IWI condensed those

same qualities and more into a smaller and lighter package known as the Masada Slim.

The Masada Slim is roughly the same size as a Sig Sauer P365 XL, so it's a bit larger than some of the initial micro-compacts to hit the market like the P365 or the Hellcat. The advantage of the slightly larger size is a longer grip and a higher capacity of 13+1 rounds. While the Masada Slim isn't quite as thin as the P365 XL, it's very close and much slimmer than the original Masada. Factoring in the slide stop, I got a measurement of 1.14 inches with my calipers and that's plenty thin enough for comfortable concealed carry.

The Masada Slim is built on a fiberglass-reinforced polymer frame that serves as a receptacle for the removable, steel trigger chassis. Similar to the P320 series of pistols, the Masada Slim's modular trigger chassis serves as the serialized firearm component and can be easily moved from one frame to another. Provided IWI or



other companies offer new frame modules, the end user can install the chassis into different colored grip frames or frames with varying capacities.

On the top side of the Masada Slim, the pistol showcases a cold-hammer-forged barrel for long life as well as a dual-captive recoil spring assembly to assist with recoil mitigation. The slide offers up serviceable cocking serrations at the front and rear for easy manipulation and press checking. The slide also includes a direct-mount optics cut that will allow the user to install a variety of RDOs on the slide, including a Shield RMsC, Holosun EPS and others. The advantage of the direct-mount system is that it will allow the factory sights to co-witness with most red-dot units that use the Shield footprint.

Speaking of the sights, the Masada Slim sticks with the K.I.S.S. (Keep It

Simple, Stupid] mindset and includes a blacked-out and serrated rear sight with a white-dot sight up front for good



1

1) The Masada Slim incorporates an optics cut that will allow for direct mounting of red-dots from Shield, Sig Sauer and Holosun. 2) Despite its diminutive size, the handgun features significant features like forward cocking serrations. 3) The Slim's blacked out rear sight keeps the sight picture clutter-free for easy pickup of the white-dot front sight.



3



2

contrast and quicker acquisition. After doing a bit of research, I found some conflicting information about the finish on the slide. But when I contacted a company rep to get it from the horse's mouth, they said the information regarding the finish was unpublished.

I've never heard that before and as a buyer, that's kind of an important piece of information I'd like to know. But knowing IWI's penchant for quality and reliability, I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that the finish is robust enough to stand up to anything civilians can throw at it.

The Masada Slim ships with two magazines and has an MSRP of \$450. That's not a bad price considering the quality of IWI's products and the price

There's no question that the Masada Slim is exceedingly accurate and more than capable of meeting your defensive needs.

■ SPECIFICATIONS

IWI MASADA SLIM

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 3.4 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 5.88 inches / **WEIGHT:** 20.3 ounces [empty]

GRIPS: Glass-reinforced polymer / **SIGHTS:** Blacked out rear, white-dot front

ACTION: Striker-fired / **FINISH:** N/A / **CAPACITY:** 13+1 / **MSRP:** \$450



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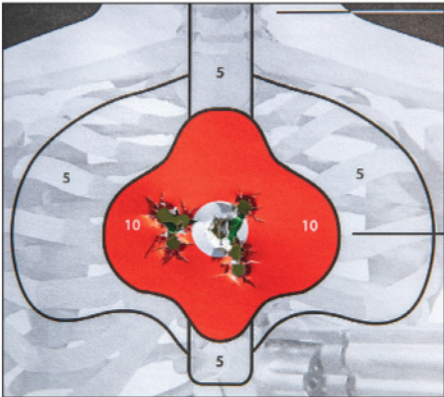


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(Top) Even for a new shooter, the Masada Slim is very controllable with its dual-recoil spring assembly and excellent ergonomics.
(Left) The IWI pistol's ergos and trigger facilitated accurate offhand shooting, shown with this sub-2-inch group from 15 yards.
(Right) With its excellent reliability and accuracy, and its 13+1 capacity, the Slim is a superb choice for a carry pistol.

of other micro-compacts on the market. But, taking nothing for granted, final judgment was reserved until we could get out and spend some quality time with the Masada Slim at the range.

► **SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS**
 I hit the range with a few friends, including a couple of new shooters, to get a feel for the Masada Slim—especially compared to similar pistols I had on

hand. There were some things we noticed right out of the gate that we really liked. First, the grip is very comfortable, and the hand naturally gets a high hold on the pistol for better control.

One of the new shooters was female, and the Masada Slim was one of her top two favorites of the pistols we tried. Emalene liked the grip size and her ability to reach the trigger easily, and she felt like she could control it better than most of the others. She wasn't the only one. During the session, several people commented on how comfortable the Masada Slim was to hold and shoot.

While the grip is comfortable, the texturing was a bit too subtle for my tastes.

■ PERFORMANCE			
IWI MASADA SLIM			
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	
► FEDERAL 124 +P HST	1,192	1.08	
► HORNADY 115 CRITICAL DEFENSE	1,056	0.63	
► SIG SAUER 115 365 ELITE V-CROWN	1,112	0.94	
► SIG SAUER 147 ELITE V-CROWN	976	0.78	
Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 7 yards.			



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The grip wasn't slick, but I thought the texturing could have been a touch more aggressive but that's a personal preference. When seating the magazine, the locking action is very positive and there's a pronounced "click" when it locks into place. It takes a little extra effort to seat the magazine fully, but it's more reassuring than anything else. When hitting the mag release, the magazine ejected rather forcefully and cleanly for quick reloads. Also, a portion of the magazine baseplate protrudes just enough to form a nice lip that's easy to grasp so the user can rip out the magazine if there's a hang-up of any sort.

The trigger pull is what I would describe as a little above average. It wasn't fantastic but it wasn't too bad



(Above) The Masada Slim disassembles quickly and offers good access for a thorough cleaning. (Left) The modular trigger chassis is the serialized "firearm" component that can be swapped from frame to frame.

either. There's a bit of smooth pre-travel until you hit the wall, and then it breaks around an average of 4.5 pounds of pressure. After that, the reset hits quickly with minimal trigger travel for quick follow-up shots. The feel of the pull and break reminded me a little bit of the Ruger MAX-9's trigger pull.

When we finally settled in for some serious shooting, everyone kept complimenting the Masada Slim. Despite its quasi-small size, it handled recoil well. It was a cinch to control and relatively easy to stay on target for quick follow-up shots. Offhand accuracy was spot on as well. Even with its short sight radius,

I was able to put a seven-round group into less than 1.5 inches at 15 yards. Granted, those were slower-paced shots, but that's still a very good performance from a micro-compact pistol.

After that, I shot five-round groups from the bench at 7 yards per our testing protocol for short-barrel semi-autos. The Masada Slim did an excellent job with a variety of ammunition types. The aver-

... the Masada Slim's modular trigger chassis serves as the serialized firearm component and can be easily moved from one frame to another.

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age group size for all loads was just 1.01 inches. The single best five-shot group measured 0.63 inches and was shot with Hornady's 115-grain Critical Defense load. There's no question that the Masada Slim is exceedingly accurate and more than capable of meeting your defensive needs.

Another key factor in a defensive pistol's performance is its reliability. There was no problem in that department either. Whether it was hollow points, ball ammo, truncated rounds or even flex-tip



1) One of the new shooters, Emalene, liked the Masada's slim and comfortable grip that provided her good control over the pistol. **2)** The handgun utilizes a flat-faced trigger with an integral safety. **3)** The IWI's Slim 9mm features subtle but effective grip texturing to aid in recoil mitigation.



to mount your favorite red-dot, the Masada Slim turns out to be an excellent value for its MSRP of \$450. If you're in the market for a

loads, the Masada Slim chewed through everything without fail. In fact, one of our new shooters had an issue with a couple of pistols that malfunctioned because of limp-wristing during recoil. She didn't have that issue with the Masada Slim, and I attribute that to the ergos, grip design and her ability to easily get a solid grip on the pistol for better control.

► FINAL NOTES

All in all, the Masada Slim turned out to be a highly competent pistol. Sure, it didn't have every single feature one would expect in a cutting-edge defensive pistol like an accessory rail or an ambi

slide stop. However, when it comes to the things that matter most like accuracy, reliability, ergonomics and recoil control, it's tough to beat for a pistol of its size.

With those capabilities and the ability

micro-compact and looking for the best bang for your buck, don't sleep on the Masada Slim. It's got a great pedigree and will definitely deliver the goods. For more information, visit iwi.us. **PDW**

It was a cinch to control and relatively easy to stay on target for quick follow-up shots. Offhand accuracy was spot on as well.



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10 RESURGENT

SIG SAUER'S P320-XTEN DELIVERS
**X-TREME LEVELS
OF PROTECTION**

BY SEAN UTLEY

I don't like to say it but I'm old. Well, older. Old enough to think way back at things that I just assumed were obsessions at the moment and anticipated the draw to such things would end. For instance, the SUV. I remember when there technically weren't any SUVs. Then I remember the endless debates over how big they could or would get. Now, even with gas prices soaring, the SUV is still the most sought-after vehicle. Another thing is the 10mm.

Let the record show that I was never a true 10mm fan. But I do remember the Colt Delta in 10mm that my uncle had and loved. I also remember not understanding why he loved it so much. Once I got deeper into firearms, I fell in and out of love with several calibers and was a very early adopter of the .40 S&W. I loved that cartridge and chose it as my carry weapon of choice, even after having carried a Desert Eagle in .44 Magnum. Yes, I did. But I still never owned (or carried) a 10mm.







and for a nominal fee, you can wander around all day and sample all of their wares by shooting them.

While there, I was pulled aside by some of Sig's finest and shown their new big bore—the P320-XTEN. I was stunned like most and had no idea this big sucker was on their plate. The next

The Sig Sauer XTEN's feature set is plentiful and right on par with the X Series of pistols, including a great trigger, excellent grips and an accessory rail out front.



► INTEREST PIQUED

Sig Sauer graced the state of Arizona with its presence in the late spring of 2022 for the Sig Freedom Days event. It's an amazing pro-2A, pro-America and pro-freedom event that you should attend if one is within a couple hundred miles of you. Sig commandeers a location for a few days, brings in all of their incredible firearms and employees,

day, they had samples out for people to shoot, and that's where and how my curiosity for this pistol came to be.

A couple of questions everyone needs to ask and answer for themselves when it comes to personal defense are why they feel it's important, what do they perceive as threats to their personal safety, what are they willing to do to address it and if a firearm is the answer,

■ SPECIFICATIONS

SIG SAUER P320-XTEN

CALIBER: 10mm / **BARREL:** 5 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 8.5 inches / **WEIGHT:** 33 ounces (empty)

GRIP: Full-Size Polymer XSeries / **SIGHTS:** X-RAY3 Night Sights

ACTION: Striker-fired, semi-auto / **FINISH:** Nitron / **CAPACITY:** 15+1 / **MSRP:** \$880



what's the level of confidence that they can handle the situation. Of course, it depends on the level of training, but as we all know, many carry without training.

The 10mm has always been a bear gun. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that type of statement. And while I know a ton of hunters, hikers and outdoorsmen, I can't recall any telling me about using a 10mm on a bear. But, if it's known for effectiveness there, it can sure be effective for your more common personal- and home-defense scenarios. And with the design of the P320-XTEN, I believe it makes the 10mm a more viable option for us.

► OPTIONS

So where would you or I use the XTEN? Well, anywhere you'd use a full-size pistol. Back in the day, we used to carry

full-size pistols daily. It's just what we did. Plenty still do, but in the days of compacts and micro-compact EDC pistols, we seem to have grown soft or lazy. Carrying a full-size pistol requires appropriate planning. Your clothing and holster need to be right to avoid inadvertently revealing your concealed pistol.

Some carry full-size pistols in the colder months because they will already be wearing an outer garment to cover the pistol, such as a jacket or winter coat. This makes carrying the XTEN a bit easier, and OWB (outside the wasteland) is more than likely the way you'll need to go. But it's not a defi-

“ That being the case, the grip module of the XTEN is beefed up to take a 10mm beating and allow for solid purchase on it. ”



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The big XTEN handles well, much like your average full-sized pistol in a smaller caliber. Two 15-round magazines come with the 10mm, putting the icing on the cake.

nite. While we are talking about colder weather and heavier clothing, a big bore beast like the XTEN makes much more sense, as it can ballistically defeat heavy clothing easier.

There are many opinions on what your home-defense firearm should or shouldn't be. I've heard horror stories of gun shop owners refusing to sell guns to certain people because said gun shop owner didn't think the buyer was choosing the right gun for the task. You have to get what you feel the most confident and comfortable with.

While people tout the effectiveness of the shotgun and rifle-caliber carbine, the 10mm delivers the goods as well. And in its true and conventional pistol form, it's compact and easy to maneuver comparatively. The XTEN would make for an effective home-defense pistol, bears be damned.

► SIZE MATTERS

The bigger 10mm cartridge has always required a larger-sized gun to handle the round's punishment, and that had resulted in large grips. Some were large enough

that I lacked the confidence to feel comfortable shooting them. The Glock is one such pistol. But it changed with the Smith & Wesson M&P 10mm pistol, and now the XTEN brings an absurdly comfortable, narrow grip to the table. It feels like most 9mm grips to me, which means I'm no longer as concerned about the recoil impulse for I'm confident that it will be manageable.

The XTEN isn't any bigger than my P320 Comp pistol from Parker Mountain Machine. It's just a smidge longer, but the grip actually feels smaller than the X Series TXG (tungsten) grip module of the comped 9mm.

► DETAILS, DETAILS

The P320-XTEN is a solid pistol. The P320 platform is a mainstay and common at this point. As the platform has developed, so has its feature sets. The core remains the Sig FCU (fire control unit) that lets you



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Optics readiness is now the norm in semi-autos, but excellent sights make a red-dot unnecessary. Addition of a SureFire WML helps complete the defensive package.



change out grip modules and thus pistol configurations. That being the case, the grip module of the XTEN is beefed up to take a 10mm beating and allow for solid purchase on it.

The XTEN features a 5-inch bull barrel to send the slugs where they need to go. Other features on the slide include front and rear serrations and a cut for an optic. You'll need to have an understanding of the rating of the optic you intend to run on the XTEN, but Sig's own Romeo 2 is designed for and up to the task. If you want to run it old school, the X-Ray3 Day/Night sites will keep you on target well enough.

The trigger is a flat X-Series with a 90-degree break. I personally think these triggers are excellent with a great feel. While trigger Nazis will tell you to change it out; it doesn't need it. And you don't want a potential oopsie trigger in a 10mm. Just saying. The triggerguard is undercut, giving just that much higher grip, and it's great coupled with the aforementioned grip. A rather spacious Pic rail resides out in the front portion of the dust cover—perfect for the light you'll need especially for home-defense duty.

The XTEN has plenty of punch thanks to the two 15-round magazines provided. Yes, 15 rounds. I always pay attention to



how the mag gets out of the pistol, and these mags exit with authority when the magazine release is pushed. It can be changed from side to side, and the slide catch is ambidextrous—one on either side.

On another note, you'd think the spring would be stiffer than it is in the XTEN. It's rather easy to chamber a round with the pistol. Or maybe I've just done this for too long. I don't think that's the case because I've found other pistols much more of a challenge to charge than this one.

► THUNDER TIME

The 10mm is nearly as effective in word as it is in actual shooting. Just

writing or talking about it makes you feel safe. But the XTEN still needed a proper flogging. Nothing crazy, just firing several loads to check for accuracy and overall shootability.

I'm not going to sit here and say it's a pussycat because, well, it's a 10mm. It's no softy. But that said, it's a far cry from an unwieldy monster. A good thunderous sound and solid thump and push keep you on your toes. Get a good grip and utilize proper shooting technique, and all is good. If you think too much about it, a flinch can show up—but only if you let it get in your head. For more information, visit sigsauer.com. **PDW**

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TAURUS 605 DEFENDER

Small-framed .357 Mag
revolver that can
be your EDC option

BY WILLIAM BELL
PHOTOS BY JORDAN BELL

IN recent years, there's
been a revival of
interest in revolvers.

This can be seen by the number of new models and variations of models that have been introduced by manufacturers, both foreign and domestic. Most of the attention seems to be on small-frame, concealable five- and six-shooters. Many of these revolvers serve as backup guns for law enforcement officers and those who carry for self-defense. A few, like me, often pack them as a primary defense handgun or EDC. Whatever the purpose, one thing that is paramount in a carry gun is reliability. Since its founding in 1941, Taurus has become one of the top-five





handgun producers in the United States and one of the three largest firearms manufacturers in the world. They have received numerous accolades such as “Manufacturer of the Year,” “Handgun of the Year” and several “Golden Bullseye” awards. Unfortunately, many Americans still view Taurus revolvers with a “jaundiced eye.” Having tested several of them over the years, I believe Taurus revolvers are as good as anything our big-name handgun makers produced. To prove this, I used a medium-frame Taurus .357 Magnum at Gunsite Academy a couple of years ago during a 250 Revolver Course. It ran through 500-plus rounds of .357 Magnum and some .38 Special ammunition without a single hiccup.

► GUN DETAILS

In early 2022, Taurus brought out their Model 605 Defender. It’s basically a new version of their Model 856 Defender but a five-shot .357 Magnum instead of a six-shot .38 Special. The Defender ver-

(Above) The Taurus Model 605 Defender is a five-shot .357 Magnum, packing more ballistic punch for self-defense situations than a .38 Special. (Right) Sights on the 605 Defender revolver consist of a fixed rear sight and a Patridge-style front sight with an orange square and tritium insert for easy sight acquisition during low-light situations.

sions of the Models 856 and 605 all have 3-inch barrels, rather than the 2-inch barrel of the standard model, plus a front night sight. As I’d previously tested the

Model 856 Defender, I wanted to put the Model 605 Defender through the wringer and prove it was a capable EDC handgun. Taurus’ media rep Cody Osborn sent me a new Model 605 Defender; the model I received (2-60531NS) has a matte black nitride finish and Hogue black rubber combat-type grips.

A visual front-to-rear, top-to-bottom inspection showed excellent attention to fit and finish with no external machine marks or flaws. This is a traditional DA revolver with SA capability and an exposed



hammer with a checkered spur. The firing pin is the inertia type and mounted in the frame. It has a push-forward cylinder release latch and cylinder locking points are on the crane (yoke) and the breech face of the frame. Trigger width is 0.25 inches with a smooth face. SA pull weight is fairly crisp but heavy at 6.2 pounds. The DA pull is single-stage, smooth and at about 13 pounds. A round-butt grip frame with exposed backstrap mates perfectly with the Hogue grips. The 3-inch barrel (six-groove, 1-in-16.5-inch right-hand twist) has an integral rib on the top and

It ran through 500-plus rounds of .357 Magnum and some .38 Special ammunition without a single hiccup.

■ SPECIFICATIONS

TAURUS MODEL 605 DEFENDER

CALIBER: .357 Magnum/.38 Special +P / **BARREL:** 3 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 7.5 inches
WEIGHT: 23.5 ounces [empty] / **SIGHTS:** Tritium front night sight, fixed notch rear
GRIPS: Hogue / **ACTION:** DA/SA / **FINISH:** Nitride / **CAPACITY:** 5 / **MSRP:** \$473





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a full-length ejector rod housing underneath. The tritium vial embedded in the Patridge-style front sight is surrounded by a blaze-orange square for fast alignment in daylight. The rear sight is a square notch cut in the top strap.

► AMMO & LEATHER

I selected five different loads as test cartridges. Because the Model 605 gives up a round to chamber .357 Magnum, I wanted to use mostly .357 Magnum ammunition. The Defender's cylinder has long thin flutes with the locking notches behind them and between the chambers for added strength. I wasn't worried about the gun handling the high-pressure cartridges; the concern was my shooting hand with magnum loads fired in a 23.5-ounce revolver!

The first test cartridge was a .357 load from Ammo Incorporated. It has

a 158-grain JHP bullet that looks like a Hornady XTP HP. From Federal came an American Eagle .357 load with a 158-grain JSP. I had two loads from Fiocchi: Defense Dynamics .357 Magnum with a 125-grain JHP and a Pistol & Re-



1) At a distance of 35 feet, the best five-shot group from the Model 605 measured just 1.41 inches using the Ammo Incorporated 158-grain JHP .357 Magnum load. 2) The first stage of the practical shooting test was rapid fire point shooting at a distance of 3 yards using first the strong hand, then transitioning to the support hand for the remainder of the shots. 3) The gun's accuracy potential was evaluated by the author shooting five different .357/.38 loads from the bench using the Taurus 605 Defender in the single-action mode.

volver Line .38 Special with a 158-grain JHP bullet. For a faster-stepping .38, I selected Winchester Super-X +P loads with a 110-grain JHP bullet.

As this test was to see if the Model 605 Defender was worthy of the EDC title, I wanted to use one of my favorite EDC holsters. I'm a definite OWB holster person. I like a pancake style for concealment and I don't want a thumb break or other devices to slow down my draw. An open top and a molded fit are what I want, and I get this with the Combat Master holster from Galco. It's a simple open-top, high-rise rig with belt slots fore and aft that are cut for a belt up to 1.75 inches. The premium leather covers the triggerguard and is double lock-stitched for durability; mine is black in color. I wear it in the 2:30 position, right above my right trouser pocket. My hand is used to going in that direction for either OWB or pocket carry.

■ PERFORMANCE

TAURUS MODEL 605 DEFENDER

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
.357 MAGNUM		
► AMMO INCORPORATED 158 JHP	1,134	1.41
► FEDERAL AMERICAN EAGLE 158 JSP	1,019	1.87
► FIOCCHI DEFENSE DYNAMICS 125 JHP	1,370	1.81
.38 SPECIAL		
► FIOCCHI PISTOL & REVOLVER LINE 158 JHP	837	1.88
► WINCHESTER SUPER-X +P 110 JHP	977	2.01

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 35 feet.





*OPTIC AND LIGHT NOT INCLUDED

MASADA

THE **MASADA** & **MASADA** **SLIM**

MASADA SLIM



The MASADA takes user preferences to a new level. Each feature was carefully selected based on input from the military, law enforcement, and gun enthusiasts alike. The MASADA was engineered to endure all elements while maintaining IWI's legendary attention to detail and reliability. The Masada Slim is the continuation of the Masada line of pistols. Developed with a thin profile and compact design, it allows for ease of concealed carry while providing substantial magazine capacity.yyyvzv

IWI.US

I mated the holster with a Barranti Leather SS Spare belt pouch. This slim leather pouch carries one Quik/Speed strip with extra cartridges, and mine is made for a 1.5-inch belt and carried on the right side. It allows much faster access to the strip than pocket carry, and its vertical construction takes up less room on your belt. It's made to carry the cartridges facing to the rear with the strip tab presented above the pouch mouth; mine is black in color.

► SHOTS FIRED

Once at the range, I was surprised to see that my best five-shot group measured 1.41 inches with the Ammo Incorporated .357 Magnum 158-grain JHP load. It could be that this was the first load I shot groups with, but at any rate, it also had the lowest three-group average at 1.64 inches. I had a four-shot cluster with the Fiocchi .38 Special 158-grain JHP that was 0.46 inches, but a flyer opened it up to 2.29 inches. I'll have to say that the .357 Magnum loads out of the Model 605 Defender were hard on the mitt. All the 158-grain bullet loads shot closest to point of aim. The Fiocchi .357 Magnum 125-grain JHP had me aiming at the top of the orange aiming point, and I aimed slightly higher with the Winchester 110-grain +P JHP, but it still hit about 5 inches below point of aim.

Strapping on the Galco holster and Barranti speed strip pouch, I loaded the gun and strip with the Federal American



All shooting on the practical course began with the Taurus 605 Defender drawn from concealment from the Galco pancake-type holster. The author found that the Hogue rubber grips helped controllability.

Eagle .357 Magnum 158-grain JHP load. I wanted to use magnum ammo in a combat course but wanted something that was controllable in rapid fire; the Federal cartridges seemed the best compromise. My course was 30 rounds at 3, 7 and 15 yards. All stages started from the holster. Then between stage segments, the gun was held in the low-ready position.

Reloading was performed as needed. A realistic "bad guy" photo-target with scoring zones was used.

All shooting was done double action. At the closest distance, the target was engaged with the strong hand only, in a point-shoulder stance. Five rounds were fired, then a reload was performed. The gun transitioned to the support hand and five more shots were fired. At 7 yards, three double-taps were fired using the sights from an isosceles stance. In the same stance, a failure drill was performed. Two shots center mass, then one to the head before one more shot each to the same locations. Lastly, at 15 yards standing and using the sights, two shots were fired left-side barricade, two right-side barricade, and then I knelt and fired one shot from the right side. This stage was repeated.

► EDC WORTHY?

My score on the combat course was 117 out of a possible 150. A number of my shots went high; I think I was centering the tritium dot embedded in the front sight in the rear sight notch when aiming. This raised the front sight in the sight picture, causing the high bullet impacts. I'm not sure why the tritium vial is being inserted so low in the front sight blade. That would be my single complaint about this gun.

I felt it had good accuracy potential from the bench, and the orange square on the front sight made for fast daylight sight acquisition. The Hogue rubber grips helped for controllability in rapid fire. The longer ejector rod on this 3-inch revolver allowed me to punch out empty brass effectively, and during the entire T&E, there were no malfunctions of any kind. The leather gear and speed strip worked to perfection. I'd have to say that if I was looking for a small-frame revolver in .357 Magnum to use as an EDC, I'd have no qualms using the Taurus Model 605 Defender. For more information, visit taurususa.com. **PDW**

Once at the range, I was surprised to see that my best five-shot group measured 1.41 inches with the Ammo Incorporated .357 Magnum 158-grain JHP load.



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The Blackhawk logo features a stylized, bold, black 'B' on the left. To its right, the word 'BLACKHAWK' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. Below 'BLACKHAWK' is the tagline 'MADE FOR THE MISSION' in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a white background.

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HAPPY DOGS

KEEP YOUR FEET
COMFORTABLE
SO YOU CAN
FOCUS
ON YOUR
SHOOTING

BY LINAS
CERNAUSKAS

Nothing sucks more than trying to focus on your target, instructor or whatever, and all you're thinking of is, "God, my feet hurt," or, "I can't wait to take these boots off!" Blisters, sore feet, ill-fitting boots/shoes, cold and wet feet—all can be a major distraction. Thankfully, we have Danner and Irish Setter to the rescue, and they are sure to keep your "dogs" dry, comfortable and happy.

■ **MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK**
Danner's Mountain Overlooks are the type of shoes to do it all—from hiking and range drills to everyday wear. Let me tell you, these shoes are comfortable, and they look good to boot. They are avail-

With quality offerings from Danner and Irish Setter, you don't need to put up with uncomfortable feet at the range.

able in Monk's Robe or Charcoal colors. They also come with an extra set of less-flashy shoelaces. I personally don't mind the red laces.

The top of the shoe features top-grain leather that has a velvet-like feel and has an extremely short break-in period. The removable Ortholite footbed is made of open-cell polyurethane to help dissipate heat and circulate air.

They also have Danner's Plyolite midsole for comfort and shock absorption. The Overlook Outsole provides plenty of traction, helping to give you a stable platform, even in wet grass. Speaking of which, be forewarned, the Mountain Overlooks are not

waterproof. The Mountain Overlook shoes are comfortable to go on a 10-mile hike through nature or even an urban jungle while looking good at it. The leather upper helps give it a glove-like fit, and I found the sizing to be true to fit. I am really happy





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GRAYMAN SUNGLASSES



The author found the Danner Mountain Overlooks to fit like a glove and be comfortable right out of the box.

The top of the shoe features top-grain leather that has a velvet-like feel and has an extremely short break-in period.



■ **GRAYMAN & COMPANY IS KNOWN FOR ITS IMPECCABLE TAILOR-MADE CCW SUITS.** If you wear a suit every day and carry, you need to check out their line of suits with custom options. They have thought of everything. Grayman is now offering a line of covert sunglasses to pair with their suits. It's always good to protect your eyes, as you only have two of them.

Available in three styles (Keyhole, Small Keyhole and Acetate Aviator) and

in three colors (black, clear and tan tortoise), the impact-resistant lenses protect your eyes while forgoing the unwanted attention of the more sporting styles of ballistic sunglasses. While most ballistic-resistant lenses use polycarbonate, the Grayman uses urethane lenses (from Japan), which offer superior scratch resistance and clarity. The Acetate frames come from Italy, and it all comes together here in America for

a final product of exacting personal standards of precision. The glasses also come with a hard and soft case.

I had a chance to try out their Keyhole sunglasses, which I found comfortable to wear. The lenses are indeed very clear, and I found the style, well, very stylish. It definitely does not call attention or suggest that you might be carrying. If you need ballistic glasses that do not shout "gun," definitely check them out at grayman.co.

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, clear safety glasses, and a large black tactical headset with a microphone. He is holding a black Savage handgun with both hands, looking intently at the camera. The background is dark and industrial, with a diamond-plate metal surface visible on the right.

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with these. The best part about them is when I am at the range, I am not thinking about my feet but focused on the training on hand. They retail for \$190. Find out more by visiting danner.com.

■ MUDPAW

Everyone should have a pair of Irish Setter's MudPaws in their range bag. These shoes are awesome at keeping your feet dry and comfortable. In most shoes like these, I find my feet are swimming in their own sweat after 15 minutes, but not so with the MudPaw. They use something called TempSens technology that helps regulate the temperature in the shoe. In simple terms, when it is hot, it keeps your foot dry and cool; when it's cold outside, it keeps your foot warm and dry. They also feature ScentBan antimicrobial scent control to keep that funk out. The polyurethane footbed makes for quick and easy clean-up.

There are times at my outdoor range when I have to walk downrange to set up targets and/or replace them. Sometimes, I have to walk



The MudPaws from Irish Setter feature TempSens technology designed to keep your feet comfy regardless of the weather.

through wet grass and mud, and if I'm not wearing the right footwear, it can become a distraction. With the MudPaws, I take off my shoes and slip the MudPaws right on. No worries, no fuss. Just simple and easy. I even wore the MudPaws for a whole day to see if the TempSens technology would hold up, and it did. I found them comfortable to wear all day, and you can't say the same about most shoes like these. They retail for \$100, but you can find them for less online. Check them out by visiting irishsetterboots.com. **PDW**

In simple terms, when it is hot, it keeps your foot dry and cool; when it's cold outside, it keeps your foot warm and dry.



PDP

NEW

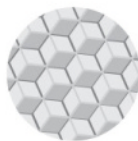


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FROM BAD TO WORSE

THE STALEMATE THAT IS THE NY CONCEALED CARRY IMPROVEMENT ACT

BY FRANK MELLONI • ADDITIONAL PHOTOS BY NYS RESOURCES

June 23, 2022, marked a momentous day for New Yorkers and arguably gun owners nationwide. A Supreme Court decision authored by Justice Thomas struck down several Second Amendment infringements, ultimately removing the 100-year-old "proper cause" requirement that New York State required to issue a full carry permit. As it stood, applicants had to show that their life was currently being threatened, and that initial remedies, like restraining orders, were ineffective. One would think the revolving door prison system created by bail reform would satisfy this clause. However, you would be wrong. After the ruling was released and power was restored to the people, De Facto New York Gov. Kathy Hochul took to the air and threw what can only be viewed as a temper tantrum.

After calling the restoration of civil rights to her constituents "reckless" and "outra-

geous," she declared war on those that sought personal protection by holding a knee-jerk "extraordinary session." In the dead of night, new criteria were dreamt up and passed into law, making it virtually impossible to obtain a carry permit.

■ BAD MATH

When it was introduced to the public, she made many unchecked statements, such as "the good guy with a gun theory is dead." To get there, she

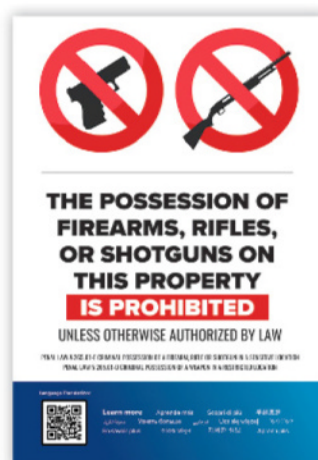
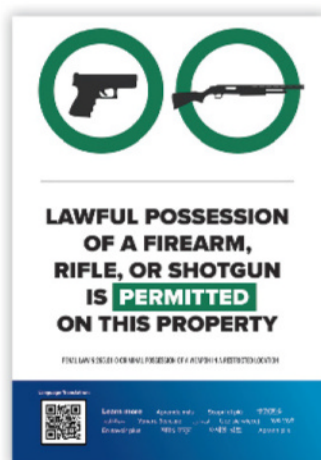
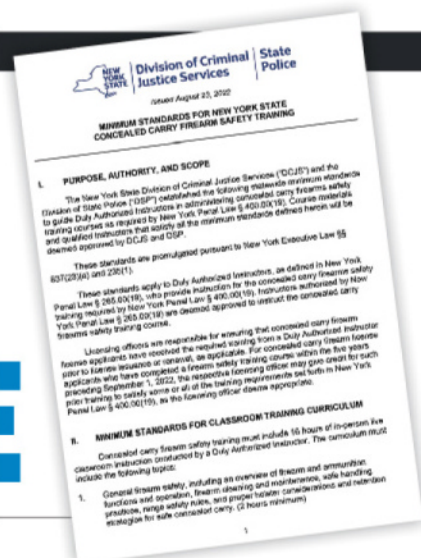
compared murder rates from the years when her disgraced mentor, Andrew Cuomo, imprisoned New Yorkers in their own homes to the murder rates of states where people were allowed to conduct everyday life freely. More people in the streets lead to more violent crime, duh. So, one can't really conclude that "looser gun laws lead to murder." After all, you'd have to ignore that the murder rate in New York is at a record low when gun sales

have been at a record high.

Her claim gets its final nail when you look at New York's murder rate in the '80s and '90s, as it was as much as four times higher than the states she shamed from the podium, all while the "proper cause" requirement was alive and well. She ended her speech by listing a number of unrealistic hoops that applicants would have to jump through; however, none were more concerning than the 16-plus-hour training requirement and complying with the new list of "sensitive places."

■ FURTHER FRUSTRATIONS

As the owner of one of the state's largest civilian firearms instruction companies, you might not expect to hear me refer to mandatory training as a bad thing, but allow me to elaborate. When the law was announced, it listed the types of instructors that could teach this course, what needed to be





taught, and that they needed to be authorized by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and state police. However, when you call these legal entities, nobody knows who in the office is supposed to credential instructors or approve their courses, tests and completion certificates.

This might lead you to believe that nothing is required, but New York can't ever be that simple. Phone calls and in-person meetings with the commanding officers of several county issuing bureaus have revealed that they are uncertain themselves and will be proceeding with caution as to what they will accept. This creates a stalemate for many applicants, even if they do find a way to satisfy all of the other requirements. Furthermore, despite there being absolutely no authorization system in place, some "instructors" claim that they have the authorization to teach it. With a price

“If you miss something on the list (and I left a bunch out), you are looking at a Class E felony.”

tag as high as \$900, these instructors are operating on the knowledge that as long as they provide a certificate stating they taught the minimum requirements, they can simply push the frustrated student back to the permit issuing department.

The second "improvement" announced that day was an extensive list of sensitive places, including government buildings, public transportation, houses of worship, libraries, public playgrounds, public parks, zoos, anywhere health services are rendered, nursery schools, preschools, sum-

mer camps, any educational institutions—including schools of higher education, public schools, private schools, and charter schools—any place used for performance art entertainment, gaming or sporting events, any restaurant that serves alcohol, any gathering of individuals to collectively express their constitutional rights to protest or assemble, the recently redefined Times Square and, get this, any business that doesn't hang a sign openly allowing you to have a firearm. If you miss something on the list (and I left a bunch out),

you are looking at a Class E felony. So, the question remains: Where can you carry your gun if you find a way to satisfy the application process? The answer is only on carefully calculated trips and straight home. So essentially, if your daily errands take you to or through one of the areas that made the list, you'll have to leave your gun behind.

In addition to all of this, you'll have to fork over social media information, your fingerprints and personal references, and "be of good moral character," which opens the door back up to arbitrary denials. At the end of the day, getting a New York state concealed carry permit has gone from a snowball's chance in hell to flat-out unobtainable. Meanwhile, Gov. Hochul chuckles from a podium with only one fear—having to answer the question, "What percentage of the murder rate was at the hands of lawful gun owners?" **PDW**

BEASTLY BEAUTY

BENCHMADE'S 496 VECTOR JUST MIGHT BE YOUR NEW DAILY CARRY KNIFE

BY DANIEL J. CLERMONT



Can you recall the last time you used your carry knife? I'm willing to bet it was for opening a package, not a person. Too many of us gravitate to a pocketknife designed—or at least *marketed*—as “tactical,” i.e., for martial applications. What you really need is a tough, durable knife that is both stylish and universally useful. The Benchmade 496 Vector might fit the bill, as this handy flipper offers loads of utility in a very attractive package.

■ COVERTLY COOL

Not every environment welcomes a weaponized-looking knife. Karambits, daggers and tanto knives go well with a ninja suit, but they don't seem totally reasonable peeking out of your Sunday suit. The Vector is a low-profile, low-viz option that doesn't make

you look like you're looking for a fight. Its refined good looks that include sleek lines, smooth G-10 handles and a satin finish aren't menacing in any way. The knife reminds me of something 007 might pull out of his Banana Republic chinos if he were lost in the woods. Even when open, the knife presents more as a camping knife than a weapon. The size, too, is somewhat diminutive in relation to its

strength with a 3.6-inch blade, an open length of 8.41 inches and a closed length of just 4.82 inches. The matte black, reversal pocket clip is 2 inches long and somewhat slim, giving you a tip-down carry knife that disappears into the pocket nicely.

■ TOUGH STEEL

Talking tough is one thing; walking the walk is another. The Vector knife's steel lives

up to the hype. CPM 20CV is great steel and then some. It's a unique, tooling steel formed through a Crucible Metallurgy Process (CMP). This steel is all about chromium and vanadium carbides. As the steel is rich in both of these elements, it has advantages over other compositions.

The CPM process results in a much more uniform distribution of carbides compared to conventional steel. The Rockwell hardness of the blade steel is a very respectable 61 with CATRA tests showing five times the wear resistance and 80% better edge retention than 440C. Impact resistance data is also impressive. What does this all mean to the



The Benchmade 496 Vector just might be your next carry knife. The tough, durable folder is both stylish and universally useful.



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user? It translates into confidence in holding a knife that is incredibly tough, hard and durable. The strength of CPM 20CV is a bit of a "double-edged" sword, in that the knife may be hard to sharpen, not only because of the steel itself but also a result of the knife's compound grind. It can be particularly tricky to hone at that point where two beveled edges meet near the tip. The silver lining is that you won't have to sharpen it very often, as the edge will hold up extremely well.

The 496 Vector with AXIS Assist weighs 4.5 ounces, which isn't light, but certainly not too hefty to carry all day comfortably. Every ounce of this knife is the result of its purpose-driven design, nothing superfluous here. The handle is robust and has full stainless steel liners and an aluminum bolster for rock-solid durability. The Vector's slide-lock mechanism is both hefty and tight. Although the sliding stud for releasing the lock seems ambidextrous, a finger and thumb working together might be required, especially before the system breaks in.

The AXIS Assist flipper is very positive, and the blade opens rapidly with a pronounced snap. It's not very stealthy, mind you, but reliable. The flipper itself is



The knife reminds me of something 007 might pull out of his Banana Republic chinos if he were lost in the woods.

relatively small, and it does not protrude much from the frame. When grasping the open knife, the flipper naturally does double duty as a guard, perfectly contoured for the index finger near the joint. The Vector has a sliding safety on the spine near the lock to keep it locked closed. This can be a useful feature with a flipper strong enough to easily open the blade if fumbled to a table or the floor. The user can also engage this safety while the knife is open, and it will automatically lock

the blade shut once the folder is closed. With just a little practice, releasing the safety is quick and intuitive should you feel the need for speed.

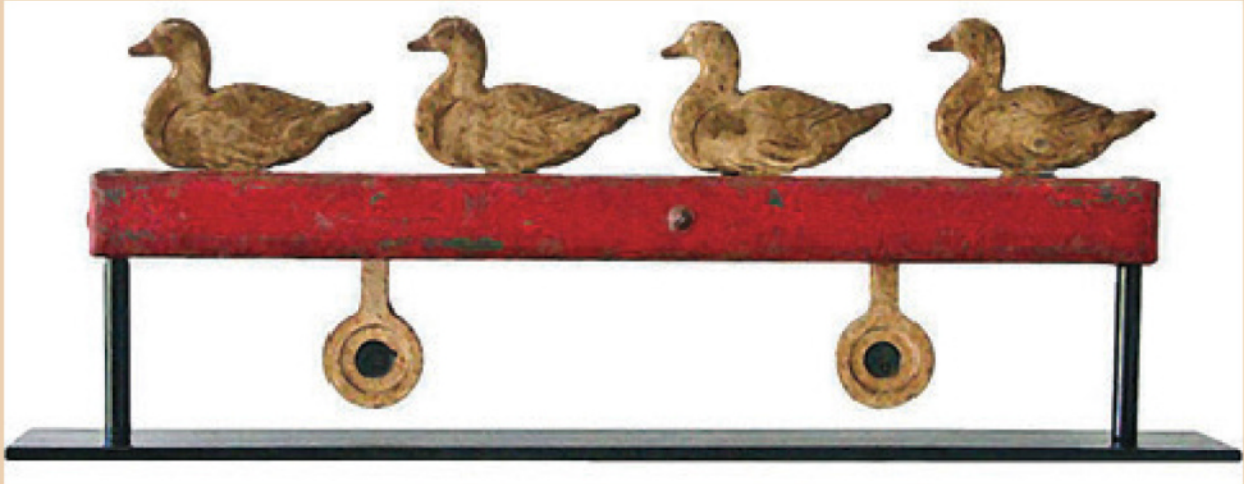
■ CUT TO THE CHASE

The Benchmade 496 Vector is a handsome knife that is built for utility and would stand up well alongside many other folders for ballistic cutting. It's a nice combination of beauty and beast. You have plenty of blade length and penetrating power in a modified drop-point design. The tip and

blade are adequately sharp out of the box for anyone but the most obsessed paper slitters. The Vector has a pronounced choil leading into the edge, which can be a great place to start from when cutting wire, fishing line and the like. The recurve of the blade is perfectly suited for slicing, and this is only further enhanced by the double bevel, which creates a nice, sharp point where the two beveled sections meet. There's no jimping on the spine but there is a pronounced swedge that provides a great thumb ledge near the handle for reinforced cutting. It is also very thick near the tip but thins out in the middle to keep weight down and opening speed up.

The 496 Vector is a solid option for EDC that will dispense with the most formidable cardboard box, cord, candy wrapper or the most menacing toy package on Christmas morning. If push came to shove and you had to rely on an edged instrument in a critical defense situation, the strong, well-constructed Vector with its speedy AXIS Assist would prove a trustworthy sidekick. It is entirely USA-made, and the price point doesn't yet reach "custom knife" levels. The Vector is a knife I enjoy owning and highly recommend. For more information, visit benchmade.com. **PDW**

You're a sitting duck



in a gun-free zone

Public safety is a critical part of the education campaigns of the Second Amendment Foundation, and with good reason. Without a self-defense option, we are all at greater risk.

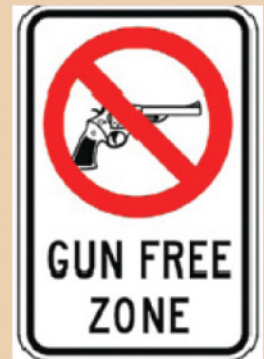
The facts support our concerns about gun-free zones. The Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC) recently finished updating a list of mass public shootings worldwide.

FACT: Over the course of 18 years, 1998 to 2015, the CPRC found 2,354 attacks and at least 4,880 shooters outside the U.S. and 53 attacks and 57 shooters within this country. The study found the U.S. makes up 1.49 percent of the murders worldwide, 2.20 percent of the attacks, and less than 1.15 percent of the mass public shooters.

FACT: Most gunmen are smart enough to know that they can kill more people if they attack places where victims can't defend themselves; 98 percent of mass public shootings since 1950 have occurred in places where citizens are banned from having guns. In Europe, every mass public shooting in history has occurred in a gun-free zone. And Europe is no stranger to mass public shootings. In the past eight years, it has experienced a per-capita casualty rate 50 percent higher than that of the U.S.

FACT: The U.S. is a relatively safe place from these shooting attacks precisely because so many attacks are thwarted by legally armed good Samaritans.

FACT: The evidence shows that gun-free zones are not the answer. Truth is, they are an added danger because they prevent legally armed citizens from defending themselves and their neighbors. It's time to get rid of gun-free zones. The U.S. has tried them for more than 20 years and evidence shows that gun-free zones actually increase the danger. Nobody wants to be a sitting duck in a maniac's shooting gallery.



The Second Amendment Foundation

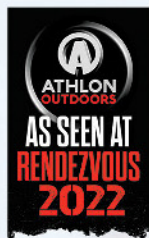
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THE ULTIMATE DEEP CONCEALMENT CARRY 9MM HAS ARRIVED

WILSON'S SFX9 3.25

BY TODD BURGREN



**JOHN BROWNING'S
1911 PISTOL HAS,
BEYOND A DOUBT,
EARNED THE RIGHT TO
BE CALLED AN ICON.**

The plethora of current
1911 manufacturers now

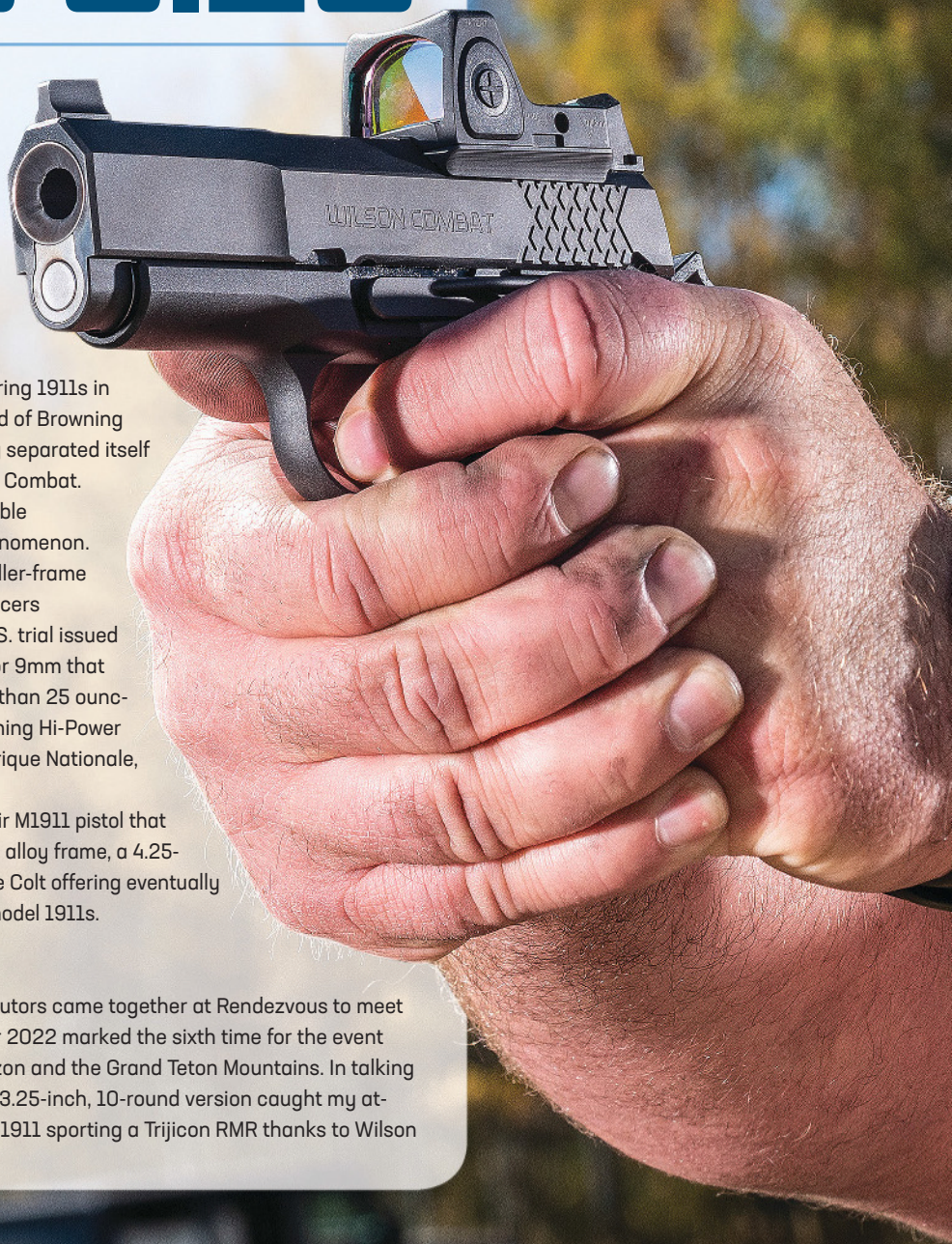
in the marketplace featuring 1911s in
all shapes and sizes would boggle the mind of Browning
himself. One company that has constantly separated itself
from the competition in this area is Wilson Combat.

The quest for a more compact and reliable
1911-style 9mm handgun is not a new phenomenon.
After World War II, it was resized for a smaller-frame
1911 that would aid in ease of carry for officers
versus the issued Government Model. A U.S. trial issued
requirements for a handgun chambered for 9mm that
didn't exceed 7-inch length or weigh more than 25 ounces.
Candidates for this trial included Browning Hi-Power
variants by Canada's Inglis, Belgium's Fabrique Nationale,
Smith & Wesson's S&W Model 39 and Colt.

Colt developed a modified version of their M1911 pistol that
was chambered for 9mm with an aluminum alloy frame, a 4.25-
inch barrel and a nine-round magazine. The Colt offering eventually
spawned into its Commander and Officer model 1911s.

► 2022 RENDEZVOUS

Athlon Outdoors editorial staff and contributors came together at Rendezvous to meet
with top manufacturers each fall. The year 2022 marked the sixth time for the event
and once again had us looking to the horizon and the Grand Teton Mountains. In talking
with Wilson Combat, the company's SFX9 3.25-inch, 10-round version caught my at-
tention. Here was a subcompact, new-age 1911 sporting a Trijicon RMR thanks to Wilson





Combat's True Zero Handgun Optic System. This pistol is a strong contender for being labeled as the ultimate version of the quest to produce a compact 9mm 1911-style weapon. I could not help but think how far Browning's 1911 design had come. Would the genius old John himself even recognize it? I have a feeling he would appreciate what Wilson Combat has brought.

The 1911's slim profile wrapped around 10 or more 9mm cartridges makes it ideal for concealed carry, especially with inside-the-waistband carry techniques. Someone who is a practitioner of concealed carry quickly realizes that grip length, overall weight and width of a pistol are the key defining parameters for discrete carry handguns. However, many will decry not having much success with finding a true compact concealed carry 1911 that also functions with "hell and back" reliability. Wilson Combat's SFX9 3.25 entry into the compact 1911 market resolves this.

► GUN DETAILS

The Wilson Combat SFX9 3.25 I tested featured an aluminum frame with dimensions and measurements more compact than even Officer-style 1911 with some important Wilson Combat tweaks. It weighs in at 25.2 ounces empty and measures 6.75 inches long and 4.5 inches high with a 3.25-inch match-grade barrel. The barrel with coned muzzle does not require a barrel bushing,

Alex Landeen Photos



One metal 10-round, flush-fitting magazine and one 15-round extended magazine (shown above) arrive with the Wilson SFX9. The barrel and chamber areas are fluted.

as it is hand fitted to the slide. Field stripping is toolless. The barrel and chamber areas are fluted. This is not only for aesthetics—weight savings and reliability enhancement are also solid reasons behind Wilson Combat's decision.

The SFX9 is centered on Wilson's aluminum X-Frame with X-TAC front/backstrap treatment for secure hand purchase. Wilson purposely designed SFX9 3.25's hammer, sights, thumb safety, magazine release and slide stop for a weapon meant to be concealed. The SFX9 does not have the typical 1911 grip safety. Single-action trigger pull is 3.5 to 4.5 pounds. One metal 10-round,

flush-fitting magazine and one 15-round extended magazine are standard. The Wilson slide is fitted with external extractor (more on this later) and is Black DLC finished. The Wilson Tri-Top slide profile serves to reduce mass—minimizing muzzle flip forward and rearward. The bottom of the SFX9 slide is machine chamfered.

The SFX9 is a subcompact 9mm 1911 designed to function as such—not a scaled-down model of a .45 ACP Government trying to gain market share. The Wilson Combat's ERS approach is proof of this. Wilson Combat studied compact 1911s (sub-4.25-inch barrel) and their functioning/reliability. In short, pun intended, the compact slide complicates matters with its faster cycling speed. Time must be given for a round to fire, eject and load another one.

Wilson's ERS is a comprehensive approach to the matter combined with smart tweaking/enhancing of certain 1911 parts based on compact dimensions. Wilson's external extractor is spring-loaded and set up to function as push feed versus the more traditional 1911 controlled-round feed method. The Match-grade barrel is fluted with single-lug geometry for smoother cycling. Frame rails are removed around the magazine opening to further reduce the effects of friction, assuring reliability no matter how adverse conditions. Wilson Combat's efforts do not stop here, though.

The handling of slide velocity is approached from multiple fronts, such as heavier-than-expected hammer spring, square bottom firing pin stop and then recoil spring weight. Wilson Combat also pioneered the use of modern flatwire recoil springs in compact 1911 pistols. These springs will enhance your overall reliability because they hold their overall length and tension many

■ SPECIFICATIONS

WILSON COMBAT SFX9 3.25

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 3.25 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 6.75 inches / **WEIGHT:** 25.2 ounces [empty]

GRIPS: X-TAC Treatment / **SIGHTS:** Suppressor-height front and rear

ACTION: Single-action / **FINISH:** Black DLC / **CAPACITY:** 10+1, 15+1 / **MSRP:** \$2,895



5.11 TACTICAL GEAR



■ A few ancillary items spotted from 5.11 Tactical at the 2022 Athlon Rendezvous would prove important components in upcoming article evaluations.

With the 5.11 Tactical A/T Mid Boot, think of a running shoe crossed with a hiking boot. The A/T Mid's light weight is a pleasant surprise, especially considering the rugged nature of the footwear. 5.11 Tactical combines 3D molded TPR toe and heel protection, a welded/mesh upper and high-performance, high-traction outsole. The 5.11 Tactical All-Terrain Load Assistance System (A.T.L.A.S.) is built to handle your body weight with or without a pack. My experience with the A/T Mid consisted of various range excursions as well as scouting expeditions for the upcoming deer hunting season. The Ortholite foam footbed keeps your feet comfortable no matter how long you are on them. 5.11 Tactical has

given the A/T Mid Boot good-looking aesthetics, enabling wearing outside of strictly range days.

Speaking of aesthetics, the re-introduced LV 2.0 packs proved handy for a variety of functions. Nothing is as individualistic as deciding how to carry immediate action items such as a handgun, weapon magazines (handgun and rifle), medical IFAK, radio and whatever else is deemed a necessity. Factors such as accessibility, adaptability, fit, weight-to-mobility ratio, retention and most effective use of limited real estate all come into play in the decision-making process. If this can be accomplished in a low-profile/low-vis way, even better.

The LV6 Waist Pack 2.0—do not call it a “fanny pack”—has been updated with a quick-release buckle waist strap that facilitates being worn around the waist or slung across the body like the cool people

do. Interior pockets accommodate various items you see fit to carry along with a hidden slip compartment for a compact handgun such as the Wilson Combat SFX9. The LV6 can also be attached to the larger 5.11 Tactical LV18 Backpack 2.0 if desired.

The LV18 Backpack has an ambidextrous side-entry CCW compartment with increased hook/loop area for holster retention strap for keeping a handgun discretely close by. The padded laptop sleeve has been expanded in size as well. A second set of webbing loops offers an attachment point for the LV6 Waist Pack 2.0 when extra cargo space is needed. Additional features include side compression straps, a padded back panel with a Flex cuff channel and quick-release shoulder straps with a removable sternum strap. For more information, visit 511tactical.com.
—Todd Burgreen

times longer than standard round wire springs, and the coils resist binding. Take all this and then verify with extensive testing spanning years, and you have the formula for success that offers peace of mind to those wanting the carry the SFX9 without compromising reliability and performance.

► CARRY OPTICS

The SFX9 3.25 arrived with a Trijicon RMR mounted. Typical of Wilson Combat, their path to red-dot usage is well-studied and meticulously applied. The True Zero system requires slide machining, gunsmith installation and slide refinishing by the Wilson Combat Custom Shop. It can be done retroactively to many previously purchased Wilson Combat items. The True Zero mounting plate offers windage-adjustable, suppressor-height rear sight and a new front sight that allows for co-witnessed zero between your optical dot and your iron sights.

The True Zero attachment method allows for easy interchange between various red-dots just by changing the plate. The hardened steel plate's self-leveling geometry ensures your optic is level and provides a more rugged interface that will return to zero when removed and replaced.

Users of the Wilson Combat SFX9 3.25 equipped with the Trijicon RMR find that

Wilson Combat is a one-stop shop, with holsters also available, along with ammunition and other gear.



they no longer have to switch focus from the target to sights and invariably eliminate the "front sight focus" that is so difficult for older shooters to naturally maintain when using iron sights. Handgunners with a red-dot-equipped weapon can now do as nature intends for them to do—focus on the threat/target. The red dot will be there for aiming purposes. Moreover, because the indexing of a red-dot is far easier than two separate protruding pieces of steel, they find they can take accurate shots beyond what was considered possible with iron sights. Hitting steel at 75 yards is very possible with the SFX9, as well as running CQB drills at times that were considered impractical to achieve before. All this is simply because the RDS concept uses the eyes in a more normal manner combined with a handgun such as the SFX9 that is intuitive to operate with.



Range testing purposely included Wilson Combat's top-quality holster and ammunition.

► RANGE TIME

Range testing purposely included a Wilson Combat holster and ammunition so as to determine if SFX9 3.25 was worthy of being considered for daily concealed carry duties. The Wilson Combat holster featured a generous open-cut top to use with the co-witness sights and RMR-topped slide.

Drills consisted of drawing from concealment to see if the red dot was easy to obtain when operating in haste. Various scenarios engaging targets from behind cover or on the move were also utilized. Magazine change drills were done for the dual purpose of getting a feel of manipulating SFX9 with RMR installed and making

sure the red dot was seamlessly picked up after reloading and back on target.

It was quickly determined that the Wilson Combat SFX9 has great potential in terms of accuracy, speed and extending effective engagement distances. The relatively short sight radius of the SFX9 is not an issue with the Trijicon RMR mounted—in fact, it is irrelevant thanks to the red-dot. The SFX9 3.25 arrives with a 1.5-inch accuracy guarantee at 25 yards.

► FINAL THOUGHTS

What sets the SFX9 3.25 apart is the amount of product development and field trials it received from Wilson Combat.

Wilson Combat videos and posted website information are excellent resources. This kind of support is not typical of 99% of other handgun manufacturers. For example, a key part of the Wilson Combat True Zero red-dot system is to have the red-dot co-witnessing with the handgun's iron sights. There are many reasons for this. Anything electronic can fail, no matter how rugged. It's important to have backup sights ready. Another advantage retaining elevated irons around the red-dot is that it provides instant verification of zero and, if not, they are there as instant backup. Lastly, the co-witness sights assist in initial orientating to the red-dot, especially during first exposure to the RDS format.

The use of the Wilson Combat SFX9 3.25 10-round as an everyday carry handgun is what sets it apart from other endeavors incorporating red-dots on pistols. The SFX9 is a handgun that pushes the envelope past "safe" norms, while still maintaining real-world fighting application. The Wilson Combat SFX9 increases the effectiveness of a 1911-style 9mm concealed carry handgun beyond what many thought possible with the platform. For more information, visit wilsoncombat.com. **PDW**

■ PERFORMANCE

WILSON COMBAT SFX9 3.25

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
► HORNADY 147 XTP	905	1.00
► SIG SAUER 124 V CROWN	1,024	1.00
► WILSON COMBAT 115 HAP	1,054	0.66
► WILSON COMBAT 124 GDHP	1,073	1.25
► WILSON COMBAT 135 HBFN	876	0.75

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 15 yards.





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Alex Landeen Photo



METAL M2.0 MADNESS

S&W'S LATEST M&P9 ROCKS OUT WITH AN **ALUMINUM ALLOY FRAME**

BY WILLIAM BELL • PHOTOS BY JORDAN BELL

Several months ago, Smith & Wesson introduced the CSX, a micro-compact 9mm. The pistol was not only a hammer-fired, single-action semi-auto, but also had an aluminum alloy frame in place of the polymer frame on S&W's other centerfire pistols. Now S&W has added a metal-framed model to the M&P line called the M&P9 M2.0 Metal. When this announcement was made, I immediately thought about the first 9mm pistol manufactured by S&W called the Model 39. The idea for this pistol came on the heels of WWII as the U.S. military began discussing the replacement of the Model 1911A1 in .45 ACP. The president of S&W



wanted the company to produce a 9mm pistol that was double action (DA) for the first shot, like the German Walther P-38, hoping to attract military contracts.

The design for this pistol was finished in 1948, and a number were built and sent to Springfield Armory for testing. However, interest by the government waned, so S&W decided to concentrate on the civilian and law enforcement markets. Production of the aluminum-framed DA model began in 1954, and in 1957 it was given the number designation of Model 39. It had a 4-inch barrel, an overall length of 7.55 inches, weighed 28 ounces and had a single-stack, eight-round magazine. It was available in blue or nickel finish



The S&W M&P9 M2.0 Metal has a flat-faced trigger. Textured panels on the grip frame provide a firm hold. Curved serrations are located on the front and rear of the slide.

and had checkered walnut grip panels. The big break for the Model 39 came in 1967 when it was adopted by the Illinois State Police. In 1971, S&W introduced the Model 59, a 9mm with a slightly wider frame and a 14-round magazine. The era of the "Wonder 9" had begun.

► FULL-CIRCLE

When S&W introduced their polymer frame, striker-fired hi-cap 9mm pistol in 2005, they called it the M&P. It replaced all the aluminum-framed DA pistols that had evolved from the Model 39; like the model 439 and Model 3904. The M&P line took off and spawned numerous variations in mid-size, compact and subcompact models, like the popular Shield. It

has seen widespread use both as a law enforcement duty and off-duty sidearm, plus a large share of the self-defense and sporting markets, too.

I'm not sure what the catalyst was, but now we have the M&P9 M2.0 with a 7075-TE aluminum frame. Unlike its metal-framed predecessors, the Metal does

not have separate wood or plastic grip panels. Instead, it has an integral grip/frame with a textured polymer frontstrap and four interchangeable palm-swell grip inserts that allow the user to conform the shape of the grip to their hand. Changing them out is a snap, and I found the Med-Large size insert best for me. What



■ SPECIFICATIONS

S&W M&P9 M2.0 METAL

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 4.25 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 7.4 inches / **WEIGHT:** 30 ounces [empty]

GRIPS: Interchangeable polymer / **SIGHTS:** White three-dot / **ACTION:** Striker-fired semi-auto

FINISH: Tungsten Gray Cerakote / **CAPACITY:** 17+1 / **MSRP:** \$899



S&W calls a "Frame Tool" that's located in the bottom/heel of the grip frame holds the inserts in place and also has a slot to serve as a lanyard loop. The large palm-swell insert even has a beavertail at the top. The inserts' texture is like medium-grit sandpaper, so this metal-framed pistol won't slip in your hands.

Other features on the frame include a three-groove Picatinny-style rail, ambidextrous slide stop, textured/reversible magazine release and the takedown lever on the left side. This patented takedown lever/sear deactivation system allows disassembly without pulling the trigger. The safety-type trigger has a flat face, which assists in consistent finger placement and an enhanced sear for a lighter, crisper trigger let-off. There is nearly 0.5 inches of take-up, but the trigger breaks with a pull weight of 4.14 pounds, per my Lyman Trigger Pull Gauge. The 2.0 Metal comes with two 17-round magazines, and its beveled magazine well accepts any 17-round M2.0 magazine. The grip angle is 18 degrees, providing natural "pointability." The finish on the frame is a Tungsten Gray Cerakote.

The stainless steel slide on the M2.0 Metal shares the same Cerakote finish as the frame. It has "wavy" slide serrations fore and aft and provides a low bore axis, which reduces muzzle flip and improves recovery during rapid-fire shooting. The 4.25-inch barrel is also stainless with an Armornite finish. The fixed sights are mounted in dovetails on the slide and are solid steel of the three-dot style and adjustable for windage. A witness hole at the rear of the barrel where it meets the breech face serves as a loaded chamber indicator. Just behind the ejection port area, the slide is cut for mounting optics. A matte-finished black polymer cover plate is provided, plus my

test gun came with a seven-piece screw and plate kit that allows mounting of various makes of red-dot optics.

Besides the aforementioned accessories, the M2.0 Metal comes in a compartmented black cardboard box. A 15-inch cable safety lock is included, along with an owner's manual and warranty registration card. The black and tungsten Cerakote finish on this new S&W pistol is very attractive in my opinion and examining it stem to stern, inside and out indicated that the fit and finish leave nothing to be desired.

► CARRY GEAR

Many LEOs and legally armed citizens carry full-size pistols as off-duty and concealed carry guns. With an overall length of 7.4 inches, a height of 5.5 inches and an empty weight of 30 ounces, the

M&P9 M2.0 Metal is nowhere near out-of-bounds as an EDC pistol. For this reason, I selected a leather OWB holster to use in this T&E. My choice was the Trooper from Versacarry. It's a high-ride, pancake-style belt holster made from vegetable-tanned water buffalo leather. It has an adjustable thumb-break safety strap and 1.5-inch belt slots that give it a forward cant. The dark brown leather holster "tunnel" is reinforced with black leather and the entire holster is lock-stitched together with industrial-grade nylon thread. Mated with the holster was their Adjustable (Single) Magazine Pouch. It has the same construction and brown color as the holster, is made for double-stack magazines and has an "expedited break-in" feature.

For 9mm test cartridges, I wanted a variety of popular bullet weights and configurations. From Black Hills, I selected a 115-grain FMJ practice load. From Hornady, I selected their American Gunner, a +P load with a 124-grain XTP-HP bullet. Nosler provided their new ASP cartridges, which have a 115-grain JHP

(Below) Author holding the M&P9 M2.0 Metal and leaning over open door of vehicle. After the T&E, the author would have no qualms selecting the M&P9 M2.0 Metal if he needed another service pistol for LE work.



Alex Landeen Photos



bullet. For a 147-grain JHP load, I selected Speer and their Gold Dot HP bullet. Lastly, from Wilson Combat, I chose their High Performance +P Tactical load, which has a 115-grain XTP HP bullet.

► RANGE WORKOUT

Once at the range, I attached big target sheets that have five oval bullseyes to my portable target stand and set it out at 25 yards. My best group of the session measured 2.75 inches using the Black Hills 115-grain FMJ cartridges. Second place went to the Hornady American Gunner 124-grain XTP +P load at 2.93 inches. Overall group average came in at 3.17 inches for all five of the 9mm loads. Although not a tack driver, it was very acceptable for a service-type pistol at 25 yards.

I'm more concerned about what a handgun will do when shooting at a realistic "bad guy" target during a combat/qualification course. The target used has scoring areas of five, four and three points. Most of the head and the center of the thoracic area score five points. I used a 30-round course, so 150 points were possible. I'd already put on my holster and magazine pouch, and the magazines were loaded with a mix of test ammo.

Stage One was shot at 3 yards using a one-handed, point-shoulder type stance. Six rounds were fired with the strong hand before a magazine change and then six more rounds with the support hand only. Using an isosceles-type stance and the sights, stage two was at 7 yards and fea-



Author with the M&P9 M2.0 Metal shooting atop a sandbag rest. Five brands of 9mm cartridges in three bullet weights were used during the T&E of the M&P9 M2.0 Metal.

tured a series of three double-taps, then a magazine change and re-holster. Stage three was two failure/body armor drills—two shots center mass and one to the head. Stage four was 15 yards from behind a post serving as a barricade. Two shots were fired standing on the left side, two shots standing on the right side and ended with two shots kneeling from the right side. Going downrange, I was pleased with the results. I only dropped five points with five hits in the four-point zone. Everything else was five-pointers for a total of 145/150. My two headshots were in the bridge of the nose and were touching side-by-side. The bad guy definitely lost this duel.

► PLUSES & DELTAS

Given this was my first in-depth experience with a Smith & Wesson M&P9, I

was very favorably impressed with the platform. First and foremost, during the entire testing, there was not a single malfunction of any kind. The gun was shot right from the box with no prepping. I found the sights to be well-regulated. Hanging onto the M2.0 Metal wasn't an issue at all with the textured grip inserts, mitigating recoil and muzzle flip even with the hotter +P loads from Wilson and Hornady. The magazines dropped clear when the textured catch was pressed, and all of the controls were easily operated with one hand. I really don't have anything negative to say about the pistol. What I will say is that were I in the market for a service-size handgun, I would not hesitate to put my trust in the M&P9 M2.0 Metal. For more information, visit smith-wesson.com. **PDW**

■ PERFORMANCE

S&W M&P9 M2.0 METAL

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
► BLACK HILL 115 FMJ	1,130	2.75
► HORNADY AMERICAN GUNNER 124 XTP HP +P	1,160	2.93
► NOSLER ASP 115 JHP	1,060	3.04
► SPEER GOLD DOT 147 GD-HP	847	3.18
► WILSON COMBAT 115 XTP HP +P	1,226	3.06

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



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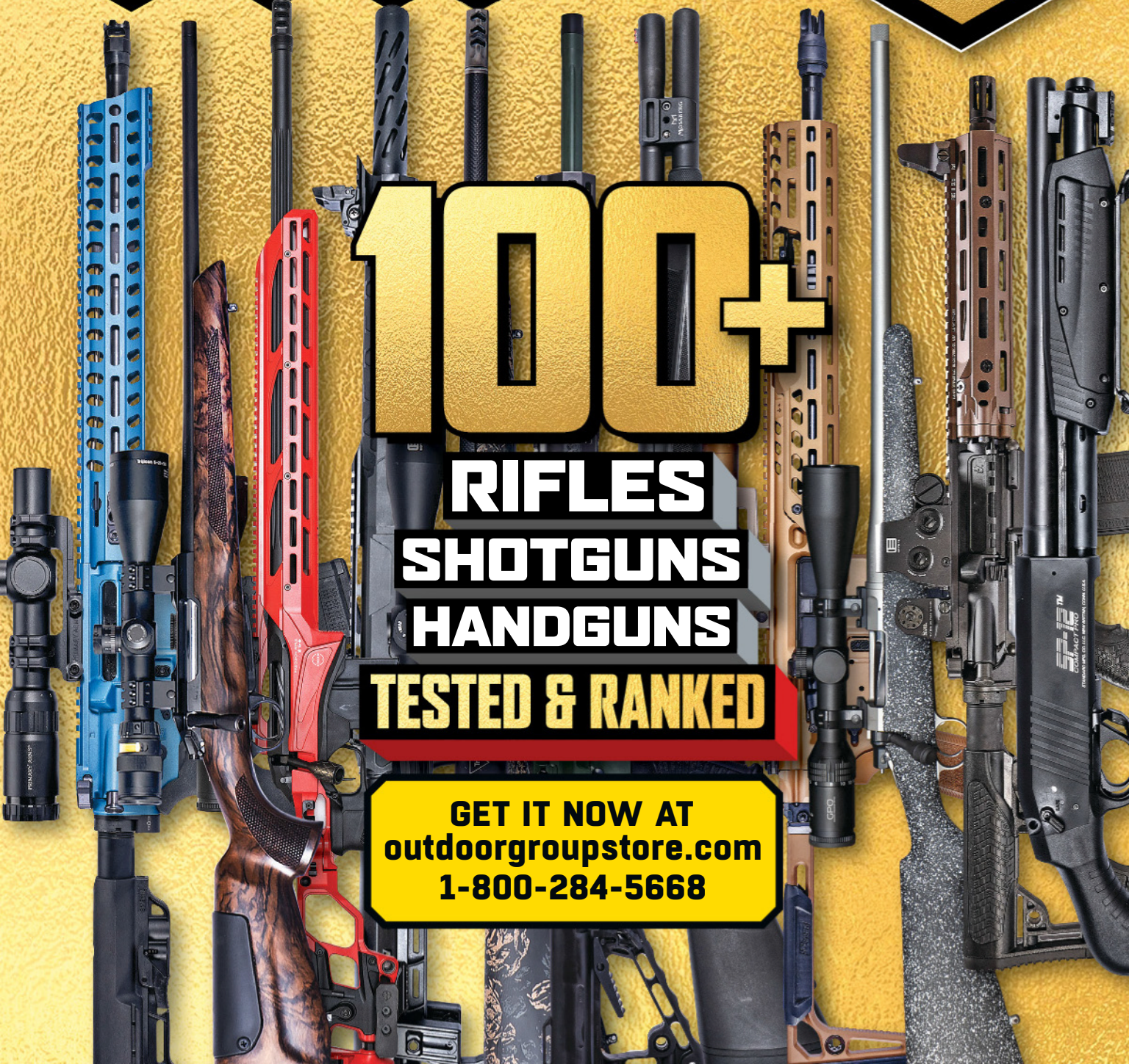
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It took the author a moment to get used to the stance and feel of the handgun before shooting.

LEARNING THE RIGHT WAY

A GOOD INSTRUCTOR CAN MAKE OR BREAK A NEW SHOOTER'S EXPERIENCE

BY MADISON HEIM



Guns are intimidating...

Or so that is what I thought until I had a certified NRA Instructor teach me the proper way to handle guns. My only experience (so far) has been shooting a rifle in .22 LR, and I

wanted to dip my toes into the water and try out handguns. There are two kinds of people. People that jump right into the pool or people that take it body part by body part. Personally, I dip my toe in it, get

a feel of the temperature and let my body get acclimated.

I applied the same logic to shooting guns. Start small with the caliber that is the easiest and work my way up. I figured the best way was to

start slow as I worked on my confidence around firearms and anxiety when handling them. My experience of learning about firearms is not a race or a competition. I can move at my own speed.

Now, I can proudly say I tackled shooting a .22 rifle and fell in love with it. I had a newfound understanding of the sport and why people get involved. And honestly? I wanted to feel that calmness shooting firearms gave me for the first time all over again. There is something about how when the world gets too heavy and overwhelming, shooting is the perfect way to clear your head. I craved to learn and experience more. The next step I wanted to take was handguns, and this time I wanted a trained professional to show me the ropes.

■ THE RIGHT INSTRUCTOR

Andy Grossman has been an NRA instructor for 13 years and would be showing me the proper way to shoot a handgun. Being a fellow writer and photographer for *Athlon Outdoors*' magazines, Andy likes long walks to the gun range, refilling his ammo and educating the uneducated.

As Andy prepared his firearms for me to shoot, I asked him out of curiosity if he ever has people come into his class that are strongly against guns but want to see what they are about. I was shocked to hear a yes. He also added that most of the time their opinion on firearms changes to a more positive one.

Now do not get me wrong, guns speak for themselves when giving each person their own individual experience, but a big part of your experience

in shooting a firearm is having a knowledgeable teacher to educate you. Instructors play a fundamental role in the experience you have when shooting and how successful it can be.

Andy made the experience fun, informative and helped me ease any jitters of anxiety I had. The thing I appreciated the most was that he made it a priority that I knew each gun and how it operated. He did not just slap it into my hand, give me a shove toward some targets and tell me to pull the trigger. He took his time in showing me what a cartridge was and the difference in

what each caliber looked like.

It is important to know how the firearm operates. Andy showed me where the firing pin was inside the gun and its purpose—to strike the primer on a cartridge and cause it to ignite. Who knew that a small little pin could make a big explosion of chaos happen? I certainly did not, and it was cool to learn that it is such a straightforward process, that in return, you gain a lot of fun and excitement.

■ TINY DETAILS

When I have held handguns in the past, I have never felt

comfortable touching them because I did not know how to hold them. I always delicately pinched the handle and shoved it off into the hands of the owner as quickly as possible. Something so small and simple on how to handle a gun makes the whole experience completely different. It adds a newfound sense of confidence, and my favorite part of the whole experience was Andy showing me how to hold a handgun.

Grab the firearm like you are ready to use it was the biggest lesson I learned when handling guns. He showed me where my thumbs should sit, what thumb should be tucked under what and how to stand. It seems silly, but instructors know the tiny details. Sometimes when we do a repetitive thing, it falls into muscle memory.

For example, if I had my significant other show me how to shoot a handgun instead of an NRA instructor, he could have missed a delicate detail on where my thumb should properly sit, and I could have gotten pinched. Boom. Now the whole experience is off, and I would not feel safe shooting anymore. It would have tainted my experience and made me even more uncomfortable when I am already feeling nervous.

Now I am not saying if you are not an NRA Instructor you cannot teach someone to shoot a gun. They are simply better equipped to educate and less likely to



He quickly made me comfortable with the pistol by showing me how to handle it, the best position I should be standing and how to aim.

skip over crucial information that can make or break a beginner's experience.

■ TIME TO SHOOT

The handgun I would be shooting for the first time was a .22. My first impression was that it looked tiny in comparison with the other firearms that were lined up. It looked like something you look at and declare, "Awe, look how cute!" Immediately, I had respect for this handgun and knew better than to underestimate it. I knew this pistol deserved the same respect as all the other handguns out there and now that this pistol and I had a mutual agreement with each other, it was time to practice.

Again, Andy did not shove the handgun in my hands and shout good luck and pray for the best. He prepared me with everything I needed to know beforehand. He quickly made me comfortable with the pistol by showing me how to handle it, the best position I should be standing and how to aim. With the magazine out, he allowed me to practice aiming toward the targets.

Just as it looked, it felt tiny. My hands on the grip came around easily and I could not believe how light it felt. It was a world of a difference than shooting a .22 rifle. Holding the rifle for long periods made my arms sore and angry. The handgun felt closer to my body, creating less tension on my muscles and was much more comfortable to operate.

I practiced for a moment



The .22 the author shot was a Ruger SR22 and a perfect beginner handgun.

There is something about how when the world gets too heavy and overwhelming, shooting a firearm is the perfect way to clear your head.

or two getting accustomed to my stance and how everything felt in my hand. Andy explained the process of aiming, making sure I line up the sight properly, and to my shock, my nerves seemed to have evaporated.

I would shoot the handgun but under one condition...Andy shoots first. I knew it would be easier for me if I got to see the recoil of the handgun, what it looks like shooting, witnessing how he holds and stands. He happily agreed.

I will be honest; the first round is always the most challenging for me when shooting. Not knowing what to expect allows fear to creep up and take hold of my fingertips seizing my hands from pulling the trigger. But once the first

round is fired, I have no mental block holding me back. I know what to expect and have no reason to be scared. Finally, confidence takes over, and I can enjoy my experience of shooting.

I took the stance of my legs spread slightly apart, taking the time to get comfortable. I thought it would take me forever to pull the trigger like it normally does, but I found myself more comfortable pulling the trigger. I allowed my fingers to get in the proper position, took a breath in, mentally prepared myself and...boom. I fired off my first round.

Huh...It didn't feel like anything I haven't experienced before. It was almost puzzling how similar shooting the .22

rifle and the .22 handgun felt. I expected it to shoot differently based on the size difference of the guns but was shocked that they felt the same. Both firearms seemed to sound the same and have the same recoil. It wasn't a drastic difference and a good welcome to shooting handguns. Even with the similarity, shooting the handgun still gave me the same peaceful feeling that shooting the .22 rifle gave me.

■ PATH TO AWESOMENESS

I strongly recommend that anyone who is a beginner in the gun world to learn from an NRA instructor. They make a world of a difference. Compared to my first experience shooting, I felt better educated, better equipped and more comfortable. I had fewer nerves shooting the handgun than a rifle just based on having an instructor present.

Learning to shoot with a certified NRA instructor was like having your own personal cheerleader on the sidelines. It was a big way to ease the jitters and make me excited to shoot even more guns. I could constantly hear Andy on the sidelines yelling out compliments on how "awesome" I looked when shooting.

And I did. I felt awesome shooting a handgun and will always remember the feeling. Gun instructors deserve more recognition for all that they do, and I cannot thank Andy enough for allowing me to have my moment of awesomeness. **PDW**



KEEPING IT LOCAL

HIGHLIGHTING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOCAL GUN SHOPS AND BIG-BOX OR ONLINE RETAIL

BY JOHN LEACHMAN • NSSF PHOTOS

I recently met up with a guy I've known for several years. It was nothing more than grabbing a cup of coffee and having a good chat about all the things: weather, sport, politics and, of course, fire-

arms. It was the kind of conversation that spanned the full list of "regular" topics. But something clicked for me as I got in the truck and headed home—something I hadn't thought of until then—and it sparked

the idea for this article. You see, my friend just happens to own a local gun shop, which is coincidentally how we met many, many years ago prior to us being relocated for work. I reflected on our conversation

and how "local" it was. Sure, we talked about national topics, but much more of the time was spent on local issues, things that matter in the community where we both raise(d) our kids. It was exactly the kind of

conversation I wouldn't expect to have—because I've never had—at a big-box chain or with an online retailer. So, here's an article with a big shout-out and hats off to all the local gun shop owners making a difference to their customers and their community.

■ THE GOOD OL' DAYS

I consider myself lucky to have grown up in Small Town, USA, where everyone knows everyone. And while it's hard to believe there are folks out there who have always had online shopping available to them, I'm glad to have grown up in the days of corded phones, a computer that was used for games (but only from a 3.5-inch disc), a Sears and Roebuck catalog frequenting the coffee table (gosh I loved that toy catalog for Christmas) and Main Street.

As I thought about this article, I wondered if my past was the motivation behind it with some deeper connection to the good ol' days. I've never considered myself to be a "back in my day" type. Don't get me wrong; I can iPhone with the best of them and live an app-driven life. I'll be the first to admit that I should do more shopping from locally owned shops, as I find myself in big-box and online stores for a large percentage of my shopping needs. I keep the Amazon driver busier than a church fan in August in the South. There's just something about the convenience of ordering something from the seat of

your house. Likewise, being able to shop at one of those "one-stop-shop" type stores is appealing. But I have learned through experience that when it comes to guns/ammo, the best decision is local.

■ WHY LOCAL MATTERS

I'm not one of those self-proclaimed, anti-big-box types. I believe major chains do a lot of good and do contribute to our 2nd Amendment rights. They also find themselves having to thread a thin line of political correctness, the result of which is often silence—or worse—on issues that matter to the collective us. I absolutely love the straightforward and unapologetic nature of local gun shops—always defenders of 2A and staunch advocates/allies for local law enforcement. I also believe there is a significant difference between being relationship driven and transactional driven, and I'd chart the vast majority of big-box stores in the latter and the locally owned shops in the former. Call me biased, but the service and value provided in locally owned shops are superior.

One of the major differ-

ences between local versus big box is the investment in the community. As we are all very aware, gun ownership is fairly consistently under attack. Sometimes more aggressively than others, but it's remained a hot-button topic for quite some time. Local gun shops are impacted significantly by everything that happens, and because of that, they do a wonderful job at staying up to speed with things that impact or potentially infringe on our Second Amendment rights. Not only are they staunch advocates for the 2A, but they are also amazing resources to lean on for a deeper understanding of local issues—from what is or isn't legal to potential issues with upcoming legislation.

■ PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCE

I have a few experiences with local gun shops that I believe highlight the essence of the value they add to the world of gun ownership. Education and enhancing understanding of the complex topic of guns is another thing that I have really come to appreciate about the local shops. I grew

up around long guns and my dad reloaded his own shotgun shells, of which it was required of me to learn. So, my comfort level with any gun that snugs the shoulder (the exception being the AR-15) is very high. Handguns, on the other hand (no pun intended), were not my forté and something I was a 'late-onset' adopter of. I wanted a handgun, but despite doing some research online about models and calibers, I was mostly clueless about what my best first option should be. So, I went the big-box route and found myself very overwhelmed. First, it was intimidating and overwhelming walking up to a sea of handguns in a case 50 yards long. But it became painfully obvious to me within a few minutes of conversation that I was either talking to someone either uninterested or unable to answer questions or engage in any type of rich dialogue about what matched my needs. I left empty-handed.

Thankfully, the next stop was a local shop—the one owned by the guy I mentioned earlier. I'm not going to lie; I was worried that it would be a repeat performance of what I'd just encountered. I was worried about the more intimate setting of a local shop, absent the hustle and bustle and an environment that put me (and my ignorance) on full display. I was worried I'd be asked questions I wasn't prepared to answer and just feel stupid. But it was, without a doubt, the best decision I ever

I keep the Amazon driver busier than a church fan in August in the South.



You'll seldom see smiles like these at the gun counter at your local big-box store. Likewise, shopping online completely lacks any human interaction.

made because I was the exact opposite of what I was worried about. I'm pretty sure he knew within the first few minutes that I was out of my depth when discussing or considering a handgun purchase. But his interest was in upskilling me in the trade and matching me with the best option. I probably spent two hours in there, answering questions first but then just discussing different guns and their pros/cons as well as holding them to see how they felt in my hands. What I appreciated most was the education about the gun itself. How to disassemble, reassemble, how to clean it, etc. I went into the shop ignorant and felt

like I came out a confident, seasoned pro. Granted, I still have a lot to learn to reach pro status (not that I ever will) but understanding and confidence go a long way.

A couple of years later, I caught the AR-15 bug. It didn't take too long to figure out that while the choice of caliber was fairly straightforward, the options from there were endless. I'd wised up by then and knew the owner of the shop quite well as a patron for ammo, accessories, etc. We probably talked a half dozen times about AR builds—the must-haves, the nice-to-haves and the things to steer clear of. I thought the handgun world was complicated!

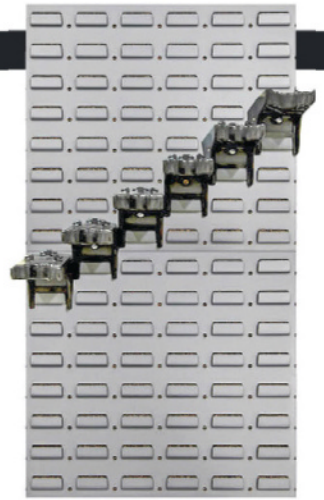
Similar to my first handgun experience, the ignorance I had was met with information from a position of helping me understand better to make a more well-informed choice.

I find the local shopping experience to be better connected to other firearm-related details of the community. I love that, at least in my experience, the local gun shop is more of a gathering place for folks with similar interests. It's not just the awesome service from the person behind the counter—in a lot of cases likely to be the owner—it's the conversation and camaraderie from other folks in the store shopping. We may disagree in other aspects of

life, but the connectedness and conversations I've had started about a new AR-15 build and ended up running the gamut from politics to postage stamp prices. The local gun shop is akin to a coffee shop (per se). I chuckle as I write that because they actually will serve you a hot cup of Joe, but fair warning: It's high caliber and prone to keep you up for days.

If you haven't visited your local gun shop, consider this a challenge to stop in and start up a conversation. In so doing, you'll be investing in critical allies in your community, and I'd be willing to bet that 99 times out of 100 you'll be a customer for life. **PDW**

RACK 'EM, STACK 'EM



SECUREIT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR EXISTING SAFE WITH SMART AND CUSTOMIZABLE ACCESSORIES

BY FRED MASTISON

Like many of you, my gun collection consists of more than one gun. In fact, it is significantly more than just one gun. Again, like you, I keep those guns locked securely in a safe. The challenge, however, is what must take place when I need to get a gun out. Unless it is one of the guns close to the door, I usually have to unpack a majority of my safe to get the gun in the back. On top of that, the organizer bar is set at a height that only accommodates a small number of my guns. Apparently, when most of these safes were designed in the late 1700s, they never made plans for SBRs or AR pistols.

My last unsolicited complaint is the fact that there is not much room. While a safe may be called a "20 gun" model, the only way you will get that many in is by stacking them against each other. As a gun writer, it is important

for the guns I get in to be well taken care of. Putting them in a safe right against other guns just simply isn't an option. With that, my quest has been to find an organizational solution to my existing safe. My quest was fulfilled recently when a friend shared information on the SecureIt Gun Storage Steel 6 Gun Safe Retrofit Kit.

■ MADE TO MODIFY

This retrofit kit is designed to take the organizational mess of your existing safe and add metal panels for modular

fixtures. This design allows you a great deal of flexibility regarding supporting rifles of various lengths as well as other items like handguns. The primary kit that SecureIt sent me consisted of two small louvered panels, six cradles with bungees, three stock bases, and the necessary screws and drywall anchors. I say, primary kit because the team was also kind enough to send a few extra items including an extra panel, an extra base, an extra cradle and handgun mounts. One

special note: Whatever space you choose to retrofit, it must have an internal dimension of at least 17.25 inches wide and 32 inches high. This is the dimension of the panels that form the base of the kit.

Installation of the kit is straightforward and simple. While I will explain the process in detail here, I also have a video of the installation at personaldefenseworld.com. The first order of business is to empty your safe and store your guns somewhere safe. Installation will not take long, so there is no need for any drastic storage measures. Once the safe is empty, it is time to remove any shelves and dividers that may be inside. A majority of these items simply pull out and are held in place with a peg hole or shelf clips. If you are looking to only modify a portion of your safe, some of these shelves can be left in place. That is an individual call. At this point, I

My personal choice was to retrofit one of my safes, but this would work well in something like a cabinet as well.



The challenge with traditional safes is that they are largely "one-size-fits-all," which doesn't always meet the storage needs of modern gun owners.

did a thorough cleaning. While you may not think that your gun safe will be dirty, you will be surprised by the buildup of random dirt and dust in the bottom. Do your guns a favor and break out the vacuum.



■ TIME FOR CHANGE

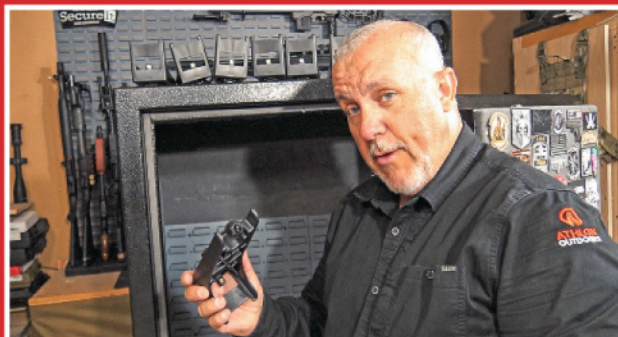
Now it's time to install the panels. Place the panel at the ideal height between your longest and shortest firearm. I chose to put the bottom panel 10 inches from the bottom of the safe. This allows me to give support to any SBRs I have with the second panel set to support longer rifles. To mark the drill holes, simply use a black sharpie and mark the four corners of each panel. Most safes are small enough to just visually confirm they are level, but I used a small bubble level just to make sure.

Once we know where our holes should be, it's time to penetrate the safe wall. Most gun safes are lined with drywall or similar material. It is then covered with a carpet. In the instructions, SecureIt suggests the use of a 3/16-inch masonry bit to get the job done. I became a rebel at this point and simply used a screwdriver to punch my holes. My concern was that the drill bit may catch the carpet and wind up on the bit. The choice is yours as both methods get the holes made. In that our

sub-material is drywall or similar material, we will be using the provided drywall anchors. The only thing we need to do is to cut them down in size a bit. With a pair of snips, I cut the front portion of the anchor off, leaving about 3/4 of an inch. Set the anchors into your fresh holes and we are ready to attach the panels. Align the panels with the premade holes and use the one-inch drywall screws provided in the kit. You are welcome to use a drill to screw them in, but I used an old-school screwdriver. I wanted to make sure I did not accidentally over torque the drywall anchors.

It is at this point that I did a little freestyling. The team at SecureIt was kind enough to send me an extra panel knowing I wanted to fill the entire back wall of my safe. Now, this is where a disclaimer must be added. I spoke to members of the SecureIt team and explained what I wanted to do. They agreed as we discussed the need to cut the final panel into two equal pieces. I am a very handy person and am very comfortable doing cuts like this. I have the proper tools and experience. In short, I would say that if you have these skills and tools, you too can create a custom grid for your safe. My safe was perfect for this customization because cutting the extra panel in half fit the remaining open space perfectly. If all you have is a hacksaw and hope, this level of customization is not for you.

With all the panels in place, I moved to install the stock



Installation of the Secureit Gun Storage Steel 6 Gun Safe Retrofit Kit is very straightforward. Prep your safe, align the new panels, attach them with drywall anchors, insert the bases and then put your guns in. Once the installation is complete, you have a very customizable safe interior that you can tweak however you desire to meet your individual firearms storage needs.

bases. Each stock base supports the buttstock of any two long guns within two individually tiered channels. The angled tiers provide adjustability in the angle of the gun, ensuring the security of the gun. The stock base rests at the bottom of the system, interlocking to prevent moving or shifting. For this installation, I had four bases that would support eight guns.

Now I needed to install the cradles. These cradles properly support any gun at the barrel, rail or mag well. It is key to the standoff that allows the system to store the gun with optics intact. The standoff also allows the storage of additional gear behind the gun. Once in position, the cradle can be locked into place with one screw or left loose for quick readjustment. Bungee cleats positioned at the top of the cradle, where the bungee is secured, provide added security. This is also a very custom feature. The cradles can be set at various heights to support whatever gun you have.

Once again, the great folks at SecureIt went above and beyond. They included two versions of their pistol mounts—a single pistol peg and a display pistol peg. The single pistol peg stores a 9mm or larger handgun and attaches to one louver on the wall panel. The pistol peg adjusts on the fly for fast access to a single handgun. The display mount has the peg facing to the side, which

allows for a more polished display of your favorite handgun. They allowed me to safely store my handguns while simultaneously looking cool. One very nice thing about this kit is that all the attachments are interchangeable with their other panel systems. I have a gun wall from SecureIt and can easily take pieces off that and put them into my safe and vice versa. They also have an extensive line of other accessories ranging from mag holders and

shelves to lights and bins.

Once the guns were back in the safe, I began to appreciate the design even more. The guns were very easy to access, and they were safely separated. This makes my life significantly easier. In total, the installation took me less than an hour and was easy to do. My personal choice was to retrofit one of my safes, but this would work well in something like a cabinet as well. My mind is now racing

as I lay out new designs in my head and add to not only my improved safe but to other areas in my office. SecureIt has been quietly outfitting the U.S. military, law enforcement and federal agencies for more than two decades. Their products are real solutions to our storage challenges. They bring a level of ingenuity and vision to the field that few others can approach. For more information, visit secureitgunstorage.com. PDW


DXT2 Big Dot



DXT2 Big Dots drive focus to the front sight using a high-contrast front and a V-notch rear for an unobstructed view of the front sight.

The dot-the-“i” sight picture prevents confusing the front and rear sights in high-stress situations.



 More Info

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XS SIGHTS
FASTEST SIGHTS IN ANY LIGHT™

SPRINGFIELD ★ SA-35 ★

**DON'T CALL IT A CLASSIC—
IT'S A HI-POWER
TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

BY TODD BURGREN

When word spread that Springfield Armory was offering its own rendition of the Hi-Power in the form of the SA-35, many wondered what market sector they were going after. It did not seem natural to offer a high-end version of the Hi-Power. This niche was already filled by companies specializing in customizing this particular pistol design. Often, the simple idea is the most brilliant. Springfield Armory decided to take advantage of its manufacturing experience and offer an improved Hi-Power with its SA-35 model with a price well below \$1,000. Like I said—brilliant.

There is a reason why iconic firearms hold a special place in our psyche. The Hi-Power is just such a firearm. This is because the Hi-Power heralded a transition in form and/or function from handguns that



preceded it. The Hi-Power set the standard that descendent designs strove to match or improve on. Its pedigree is unmatched considering John Browning's involvement in the project. Many pundits will claim the Hi-Power was Browning's refinement to his

legendary 1911. Classic is a word that often describes this design—though Springfield Armory literature insists on not using this term. This is because its SA-35 offers more than just curio and relic performance. Much like the 1911, the Hi-Power is still a viable platform.

► HISTORY LESSON

The original Hi-Power can be thought of as the blending of American and European handgun design concepts. It took someone of Browning's stature to pull this feat off and have it accepted





Alex Landeen Photo



on both sides of the Atlantic. The Browning Hi-Power was conceived in response to a 1921 French military requirement for a new service pistol.

After Browning's 1926 death, the Hi-Power design was taken over by FN designer and Browning's friend Dieudonné Saive. With no market interest for a new service handgun in the late 1920s, Saive was able to continually refine Browning's base design. By 1928, many of Browning's previous patents for the 1911 were expiring. The Browning Hi-Power version featured the removable barrel bushing and take-down sequence of the 1911. By 1931, the Browning-Saive Hi-Power design incorporated a 13-round magazine, a curved rear

design was complete and ready to be produced. The Hi-Power was first adopted by Belgium for military service in 1935 as the Browning P-35. Ironically, France decided not to adopt the Hi-Power.

One immediate concern any time a double-stack magazine is utilized is how it affects grip and trigger manipulation. Browning and Saive made sure the Hi-Power frame did not sacrifice ergonomics in the quest for capacity. Even average-size hands have no issue working the trigger or other controls. Still today, the Hi-Power grip feels smaller in the hand compared to other double-stack designs. This is attributed to how the top of the grip reduces inward near the slide, thus moving the hand closer to the trigger.

The Hi-Power is one of those rare weapons that served on both sides' militaries in WWII. In 1954, the British military adopted the Hi-Power as its first standard semi-automatic pistol. Fifty more armies also adopted it after WWII. Interestingly, the Hi-Power was also the choice of such elite units as the British SAS, SBS and Royal Marines. The FBI HRT and various intelligence agency direct-action units utilized the Hi-Power until the late 1980s. It's impressive, indeed, that after more

grip back-strap and a barrel bushing that was integral to the slide versus removable barrel bushing. By 1934, the Hi-Power



The SA-35's Tactical Rack rear sight (top) is an improvement over the original. The Springfield also boasts an extended thumb safety and recontoured external hammer.



than 60 years since its introduction, the Hi-Power was still the “go-to” sidearm for elite LE and military operators.

While the upside of the Hi-Power such as capacity, reliability and ergonomics obviously outweighed its negatives, especially compared to contemporary designs, the Hi-Power had features that could be improved upon. The trigger pull, especially heavy for a single action, minimalist sights, weak internal extractor and slide/hammer bite of a shooter’s hand come to mind. Various Hi-Power upgrades and cloned models over the years have addressed these issues. Custom gunsmiths created a cottage industry of offering services to improve upon base Hi-Power models. Browning’s (Belgium-based FN is parent company of Browning) decision to discontinue Hi-Power production in 2018 opened the door for a company like Springfield Armory to offer its SA-35 version.

► MODERN TOUCHES

The Springfield Armory SA-35 takes advantage of forging technology for strength and durability in the frame and slide along with the barrel. Tweaks have been made in ergonomics, extended thumb safety lever, along with modern sights with tactical ledge type rear sight and white-dot front sight, improved feed ramp design and an increased 15-round capacity magazine.

The much complained about magazine disconnect from Hi-Power’s original design was abandoned in the SA-35, enabling both a magazine that drops free and an improved factory-tuned trigger. An integral beveled magazine well speeds reloads, and a recontoured exposed hammer prevents



An integral beveled magazine well speeds reloads, and recontoured exposed hammer prevents slide “bite.” Takedown resembles today’s more modern handguns.



“bite” during slide cycling. Matte blue finish and checkered walnut grips complete the “steel and wood” aesthetics so familiar with the Hi-Power design.

The SA-35 tale of the tape is a barrel length of 4.7 inches with an overall length of 7.8 inches. Slide width is 0.9 inches, 1.4 inches at the controls and weight is 31.5 ounces. The Springfield Armory SA-35 represents portability, capacity, reliabil-

ity, controllability and lethality comparable to more current designs, including polymer striker-fired handguns.

No one can argue against the Hi-Power being an instinctive handling weapon. The trigger and grip size/angle cause it to be one of the most accurate handguns in most arsenals. Why do you think hostage rescue units and other special-purpose military/LE teams use it? It is accurate

■ SPECIFICATIONS

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY SA-35

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 4.7 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 7.8 inches / **WEIGHT:** 31.5 ounces (empty)

GRIPS: Checkered walnut / **SIGHTS:** White-dot front, serrated Tactical Rack rear

ACTION: Single-action / **FINISH:** Forged Carbon Steel, Blued / **CAPACITY:** 15+1 / **MSRP:** \$699



and conducive to precise shot placement. Springfield Armory's SA-35 maintains these characteristics.

The Hi-Power's trigger mechanism has an arrangement of springs and levers that limit what can be done to it in terms of improving it. A magazine disconnect safety further compounds the problem. The single-action trigger on the Hi-Power will never be confused with the trigger found on the 1911. Springfield Armory's tuning of the Hi-Power trigger produces a 4- to 5-pound pull. Removal of the magazine disconnect safety was a no-brainer as well.

► ON THE RANGE

I have been fortunate to handle multiple examples of the Springfield SA-35— either through colleagues, a T&E sample and most recently at Athlon's Rendezvous. The SA-35 was evaluated using Black Hills Ammunition, Speer, Hornady and Federal/American Eagle premium ammunition. The 9mm loads fired ranged from 115 to 147 grains with both hollow points and FMJ bullet types tested. Early production Hi-Powers were designed to function with FMJ bullets. This changed as time passed and JHP bullets became more common with Hi-Power's receiving throated chambers etc. The SA-35 is well done in this area with a polished feed ramp. Approximately 1,000-plus rounds were fired from SA-35s while compiling this article. An ammunition can full of an assortment of

steel, aluminum and brass case 9mm loads that were consolidated from partially used boxes were purposely used in conjunction with the brands listed previously.

The SA-35 was tested at the range first by verifying zero and then firing multiple round bursts at various steel man targets. This quickly shows if any reliability issues exist. Initial reports of weak extraction have faded. Further testing consisted of strings of fire against steel plate racks and popper targets at 7, 15 and 25 yards. The sights were zeroed out of the box for 25 yards using the classic 6 o'clock hold. The thin SA-35 front sight and Tactical Rack rear sight proved advantageous for both accurate and rapid shot placement.

The benefits of the SA-35 tuned single-action trigger proved evident during range evaluation. Groups fired from standing or kneeling positions were impressive with rounds unerringly hitting their mark. The tapered double-column magazine is a simple fit into the magazine well with Springfield Armory further improving this by beveling the grip bottom. The mag-

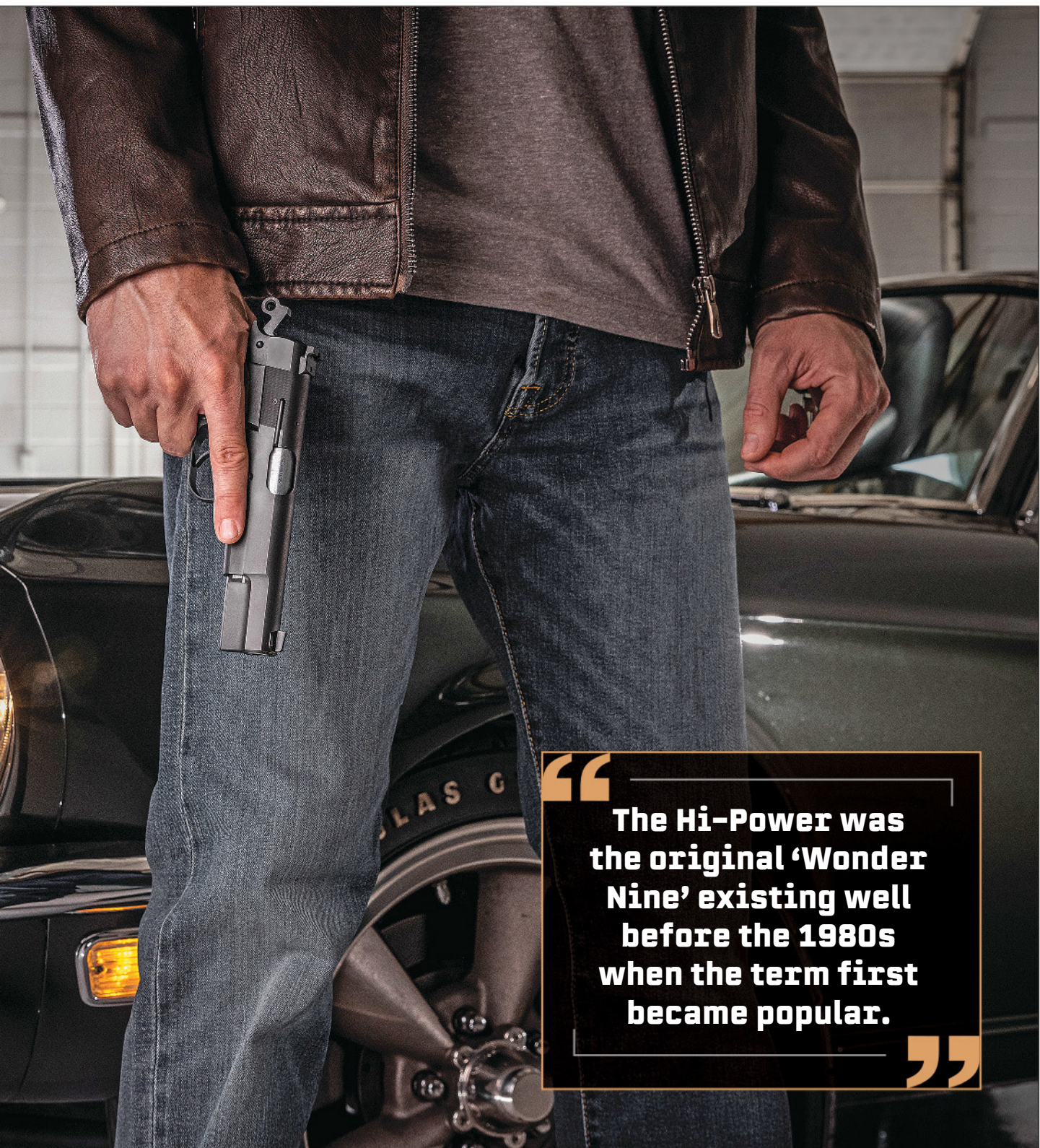
azine is vigorously ejected when the release is depressed.

Bench testing could not be resisted after witnessing the unsupported accuracy results. Groups of 2.5 inches at 25 yards were not unusual. The natural pointability of the Springfield Armory SA-35 was confirmed along with speed to get it into action. A Galco Avenger belt and Summer Comfort IWB holsters were used with the SA-35. The extended thumb safety was positive and easy to manipulate. Drills included working around vehicles and CQB activities typified by experiences encountered in shoot house environments. The slight beavertail frame settles the weapon naturally into your hand and provides a point of reference when drawing the pistol from a holster. No hammer or slide bite was experienced even when drawing quickly from the Galco holsters. The double-column grip tapering up to the thin slide sits the SA-35 in your hand in such a way that eliminates any front-heavy sensation that some handguns exhibit.

The Hi-Power was the original "Wonder Nine" existing well before the 1980s when the term first became popular. Based on the above, the SA-35 is still a valid choice for real-world use. For more information, visit springfield-armory.com. **PDW**

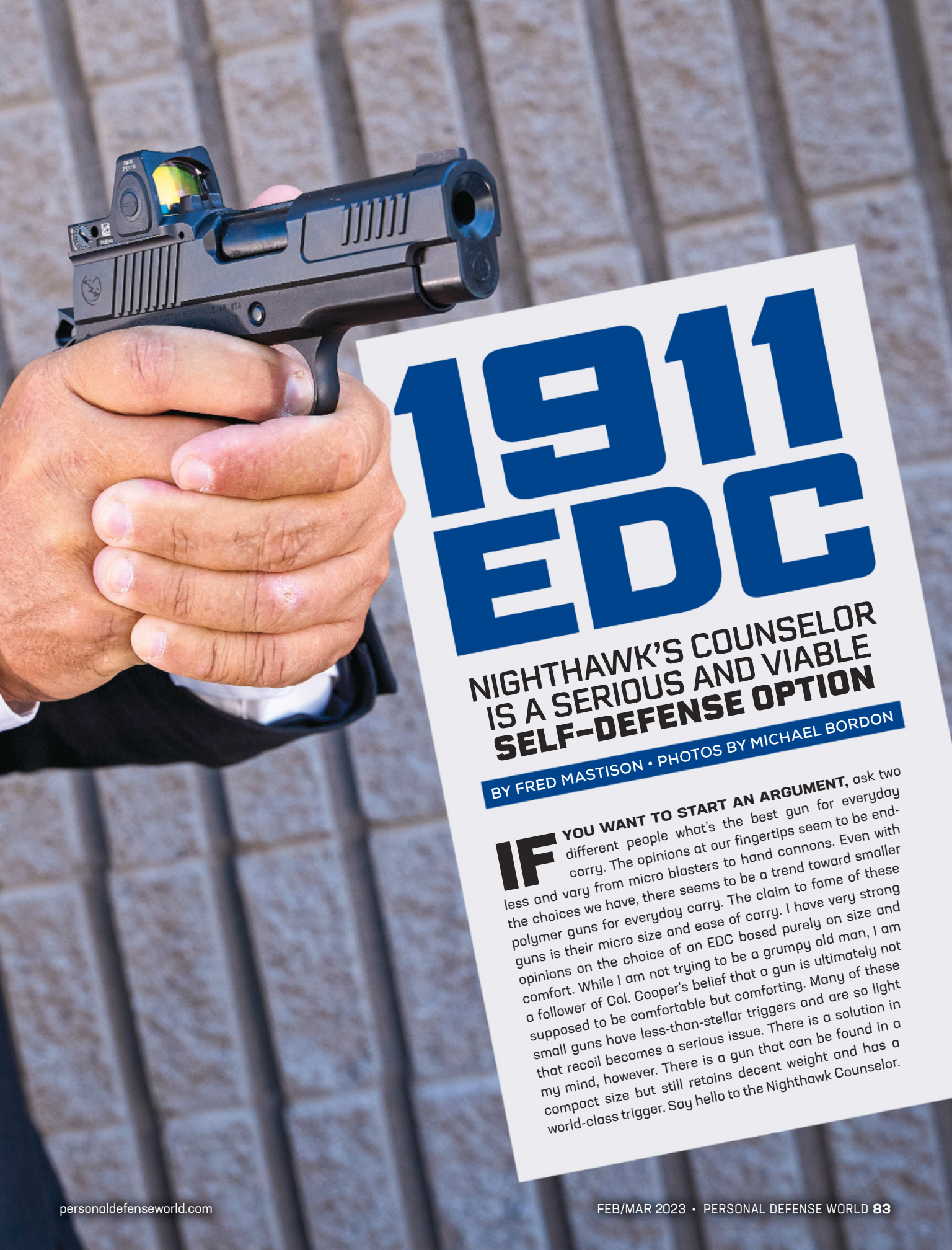
Range evaluation left little doubt why the Hi-Power was utilized by elite units. A full magazine (left) fired at 20 yards with the SA-35 resulted in hits where you want them.





“ The Hi-Power was the original ‘Wonder Nine’ existing well before the 1980s when the term first became popular. ”





1911 EDC

**NIGHTHAWK'S COUNSELOR
IS A SERIOUS AND VIABLE
SELF-DEFENSE OPTION**

BY FRED MASTISON • PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BORDON

IF YOU WANT TO START AN ARGUMENT, ask two different people what's the best gun for everyday carry. The opinions at our fingertips seem to be endless and vary from micro blasters to hand cannons. Even with the choices we have, there seems to be a trend toward smaller polymer guns for everyday carry. The claim to fame of these guns is their micro size and ease of carry. I have very strong opinions on the choice of an EDC based purely on size and comfort. While I am not trying to be a grumpy old man, I am a follower of Col. Cooper's belief that a gun is ultimately not supposed to be comfortable but comforting. Many of these small guns have less-than-stellar triggers and are so light that recoil becomes a serious issue. There is a solution in my mind, however. There is a gun that can be found in a compact size but still retains decent weight and has a world-class trigger. Say hello to the Nighthawk Counselor.

► BIGGER IS BETTER

An officer-size 1911 makes a great EDC choice for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the trigger we find in this gun. The 1911 trigger has always been the gold standard in performance. For those who live and breathe striker-fired guns, the 1911 trigger is a different creature. Mechanically, it is drastically different and allows a shooter a much better trigger press. All you need to do is **look at the countless competition championships won by 1911s as a testament to their performance. The trigger on the Counselor embodies that performance and more.**

Second is that the 1911 is a very accurate gun. Once again, we look at the wall of shooting trophies amassed by 1911 shooters. A big benefit of an officer-size 1911 is something that most people think is a downside—weight. The belief is that your EDC needs to be feather-light, but that is simply not true. If you are carrying for real personal defense, you need to ditch this idea. Many people carry a Glock 19 for their EDC, yet the Nighthawk Counselor, for example, is only three ounces heavier.

Even with these benefits, there has been an unfounded bias toward these classic pistols, and most of that comes from the internet. The 1911 clichés are numerous and mostly undeserved. When choosing an EDC pistol, quality should always be the first point to consider. Just as with any firearm, you get what you pay for. A well-made 1911 runs very well and should be considered an investment. Ultimately, it is an investment in your life.

The bashing of the 1911, for the most part, comes from people with little to no experience with this pistol. They claim malfunction issues, yet it is usually secondhand chatter or them running the gun improperly. The truth is that a 1911 is a gun for serious shooters. They require



The Nighthawk Custom Counselor is an exceptional EDC pistol with the perfect balance between weight, performance and great looks. Carry it with confidence and pride.



more attention and, unlike their polymer cousins, require regular lubrication. Most 1911 malfunctions I see in classes are the result of a desert dry gun. The popularity of the micro blasters is their ease of carry and concealability. This is undeniable, yet I will once again put on my old man hat and say that you need to dress around your gun. I believe you need to carry a larger pistol whenever possible. If the dark day comes and you need to break your gun out and fight with it, you will be thankful for a larger gun. They are absolutely easier to fight with.

The choice of a good holster and gun belt is critical to a good carry setup. Holster-wise, we have a billion choices, and people are usually pretty well-versed in what to consider. With a 1911, I am still a fan of leather and suggest you consider a company like Craft Holsters. They make quality gear that looks as good as it functions. The belt is a point many people do not think much about. If you carry every

day, you will quickly see the "gun dip" that shows up in lighter belts. You hold your belt up and can clearly see where you normally carry your gun because there is a dip in the belt. Much to many people's surprise, Magpul makes an exceptional leather gun belt. It is great looking and allows us to avoid the gun dip. In short, you need to consider every part of your carry rig and gun.

► NIGHTHAWK'S ADVANTAGE

I have been a fan of the Nighthawk Counselor since its launch. The gun is the original member of Nighthawk Custom's Ambassador Series. It is an officer model and based on a shortened lightweight aluminum frame, complete with an aluminum mainspring housing and grip safety. Chambered in 9mm and with a capacity of 8+1, it touts a 3.5-inch match-grade barrel. It has some very nice custom features that make it pure Nighthawk. They have added a new bobbed-concealment beavertail and hammer, which are smaller for concealed carry.

It also sports a brand-new slide design. Most pistol slides have "negative" serrations. This means that material has been

machined away from the slide to create slots for your fingers to grip. However, the Counselor has "positive" serrations up front that protrude out from the slide for a unique look and excellent grip for a press check. It is a unique and ingenious design feature that makes manipulation easier. The Counselor features Nighthawk's patent-pending Flush-Fit Magwell.

They built the Counselor to have the same overall length of an officer frame, but with a mag well included. To accomplish this, they cut an officer frame even shorter, added a channel for its custom-engineered mag well and the mag well slides in from the front while only adding back the length of the frame it removed. The mag well holds the sear spring in place, a feat that has never been done before. This combination of a small gun with a mag well included is the ultimate solution for concealed carry. Another feature included with this model is an ultra-high, undercut triggerguard, so that most full-size hands can still fit on the grip. Lastly, Nighthawk has included G10 Scales, which are custom engineered with Railscales for this pistol and "are thinner than the thinnest 1911 grips available on the market."

I carried the Nighthawk Counselor for weeks and found it to be an exceptional EDC gun. As I mentioned before, I took great care to choose not only the pistol but the belt and holster as well. While it was comfortable in my everyday ac-



... I am a follower of Col. Cooper's belief that a gun is ultimately not supposed to be comfortable but comforting.

tivities, I also test drove it on the range. Whatever gun and rig you choose, you need to spend time on the range running it. It may look good on paper, but you need to make sure that your setup will allow you to fight should the need arise. This is an area where the Counselor shines.

► RUNNING DRILLS

Rigged for concealed carry, I ran drills ranging from close contact to 50-yard shots. While the Counselor may be a beautiful gun, it is most certainly not a safe queen. I ran both standard ball ammo as well as my defensive loads with-

out any feed or function issues at all. In fact, the day at the range would see 400 rounds run through the Counselor without any malfunctions. Beyond that, it was very accurate and allowed me quick follow-up shots. Reloads on this compact fighter were easy, and it ultimately confirmed my belief that I would absolutely take this gun to a fight.

Carrying a 1911 of any size for your EDC is a good choice. I know from experience that the 1911 is not for everyone. As I mentioned earlier, it is a gun for more serious shooters and gunslingers. A good friend said it best when we were discussing how to figure out if someone was a 1911 person or not. He said, "Look at your lawnmower. If it is shoved in a corner and covered in grass, you are probably not a 1911 person. If, however, your lawn-

mower is clean, maintained and stored properly, you may have the disposition to carry a 1911." As with anything in the firearms world, or even life in general, I encourage you to make your own decisions. Don't let random internet chatter and memes be the basis of your gun choices. If you are looking at upgrading your EDC pistol, I encourage you to take a hard look at the Nighthawk Counselor. I will also tell you to take the time to get the best belt and holster to carry it in. This EDC trifecta will give you an unbeatable setup. For more information, visit nighthawkcustom.com. **PDW**

■ SPECIFICATIONS

NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM COUNSELOR

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 3.5 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 7 inches / **WEIGHT:** 27.9 ounces (empty)

GRIPS: G10 / **SIGHTS:** Tritium front, Heinie Tritium Ledge rear

ACTION: Single-action / **FINISH:** Nitride / **CAPACITY:** 8+1 / **MSRP:** \$4,299





DOUBLE DEFENSE 12-GAUGE



STOEGER OFFERS ONE-TWO DEFENSIVE PUNCH AT AN UNBELIEVABLE PRICE POINT

BY LINAS CERNAUSKAS • PHOTOS BY ANDY GROSSMAN

STOEGER INDUSTRIES offers several double-barreled shotguns available in both over/under and side-by-side configurations with models available in 12 or 20 gauge at a manufacturer suggested retail of \$449 for the over/unders and \$489 for the side-by-sides. That's a great value, especially for a firearm that probably won't be restricted any time soon. I still prefer my ARs for home defense, but Stoeger's Double Defense gives a viable defensive option to those folks who live in states that like to

restrict their civil rights. As a bonus, I added a light and red-dot, and still kept the entire defensive package under \$600!

► SCATTERGUN DETAILS

The Double Defense is a dressed-up Stoeger Condor for defensive use. The shotgun itself is made by E.R. Amantino in Veranopolis, Brazil, which has been making shotguns for Brazilian military and law enforcement since 1962. What does that mean? It means that they know how to make a fighting shotgun. The Double Defense is purely utilitarian; there's nothing pretty about it, nor

should there be. It's meant to throw ball, lead and slug loads at people looking to do you harm.

The 12 gauge is chambered for shells up to 3 inches and features 20-inch barrels. The stock on the 12 gauge comes in black synthetic while the 20 gauge is black-finished walnut. The Double Defense has a single trigger—not too light and not too heavy, with very minimal take-up.

Push the throw lever on the receiver to the right to break open the action. The Double Defense does not have ejectors, but extractors, which should be expected, especially at this price point. The extractors push

the shells out about a quarter of an inch, and you have to pull them out with your fingers. The thing I hate about the Double Defense is when you close the action the tang safety automatically goes to safe. I understand it is a safety feature, but under the heat of the moment and trying to reload, you might forget that the shotgun has “safed” itself. The tang safety is “up” for off-safe and “down” for safe.

The Stoeger 12 gauge has a standard box-lock, over/under action, and the block



A break-open design, the Stoeger Double Defense is easy to load and get back into action quickly with a little practice. Note that it utilizes extractors instead of ejectors.

solid and firm in the hands. Hell, if you needed

close action, off the safety, shoot and shoot. It probably took you longer to read that sentence than for me to do it all. When shooting double barrels, please realize that the barrels will probably have a different point of impact. I found the top barrel to be to the right slightly, but not by much if you're shooting buckshot.

Keeping up with the Stoeger shotgun's name, I would definitely feed it Fiocchi's Defense Buckshot. The shells were not unpleasant to shoot from the over/under. The Defense Buckshot shells are 2.75 inches, feature nine pellets and have a velocity of 1,250 feet per second (fps). The shell is engineered from the ground up to stop the threat. If you haven't had a chance to check them out, you should do so.

If you're worried about over-penetration because you live in an apartment or someplace crowded, Federal has a one-two solution for you. The first one is Federal's Force X2 Shorty Shotshell, measuring 1.75 inches and featuring six



is, surprisingly, jeweled. Opening and closing the action the first couple of times took some effort, but once it started to break in, it became much easier.

Both barrels have fixed Improved Cylinder chokes, and the barrels and receiver sport a blued finish. On either side of the barrels, there are Picatinny rails along with one more rail on top of the receiver. At the front of the shotgun, you'll find a green fiber-optic sight that picks up light really well.

The weight of the 12-gauge defensive package is a tad bit over 7 pounds. It feels

to, after firing your two shots, you could possibly use the Double Defense as a solid impact weapon. The shotgun has an overall length of 36.5 inches, a length of pull of 14.5 inches, a 2.5-inch drop at heel and a 1.5-inch drop at comb. The Stoeger fit me well, so I was interested to see how it would shoot.

► ONE-TWO PUNCH

I was surprised by how much fun I had with the Double Defense, I kind of got into a groove. Shoot, shoot, push lever, break action, extract shells, put two more in,

■ SPECIFICATIONS

STOGER DOUBLE DEFENSE (31089)

GAUGE: 12 [3-inch chambers] / **BARRELS:** 20 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 36.5 inches

WEIGHT: 7.1 pounds (empty) / **STOCK:** Black synthetic / **SIGHTS:** Fiber-optic front

ACTION: Break-open / **FINISH:** Blued / **CAPACITY:** 2 / **MSRP:** \$449





VANTAGE RED DOT 1x25

■ **HAWKE'S MOTTO** of "Easy to Use. Hard to Beat" rings very true with their Vantage Red Dot series. The one I used on the Double Defense was their 1x25, and it handled the 12-gauge recoil with aplomb. The Vantage features a 3-MOA red dot with

11 stages of brightness control. The body is constructed of high-quality aluminum and features an integrated mount. The 25-layered, multi-coat optics provides maximum clarity. It has also been nitrogen-purged and is shockproof, waterproof and fog-proof.

It has a manufacturer's suggested retail price of \$119, but I have found it out in the wild for under \$100. It is a solid, budget-friendly red-dot, whether for your home-defense shotgun or AR. Find out for yourself at us.hawkeoptics.com.
—*Linas Cernauskas*

pellets that are specially designed to split into two pieces upon impact.

The other one from Federal is their Shorty Shotshell, which has 15 pellets. This too is a 1.75-inch shell. Both of the Federal shells were a hoot to shoot and would be devastating at close range without the worry of over-penetration. Keep in mind that the Shorties are best for close-quarter/bad breath distances.

► FINAL NOTES

At a manufacturer suggested retail price of just \$449, there's no reason why you shouldn't have a home-defense boomstick that speaks either in 12 or 20 gauge. It's a helluva lot better than having a whistle or informing the offending parties that they're invading your "safe space." The Stoeger Double Defense gets the job done. It ain't pretty, but it doesn't need to be. Find out more by visiting stoegerindustries.com. *PDW*

AXEON LIGHT



■ **THE AXEON MPL1** (Micro Pistol Light) was designed for handguns (duh), but I found it to fit perfectly with the Double Defense on the left side of the barrels. The MPL1 features a master on/off switch just below the rail that is used to prevent

accidentally turning the light on. With that switch engaged, you can activate the instant on/off button located on the rear of the light. The MPL1 is powered by a single AAA battery and produces 120 lumens for a run-time of 30 minutes. It is water

resistant and one tough little light. The Axeon MPL1 has a manufacturer's suggested retail price of about \$33, but you can find one for under \$30, and it's more than worth that price. See for yourself at axeonoptics.com.
—*Linas Cernauskas*

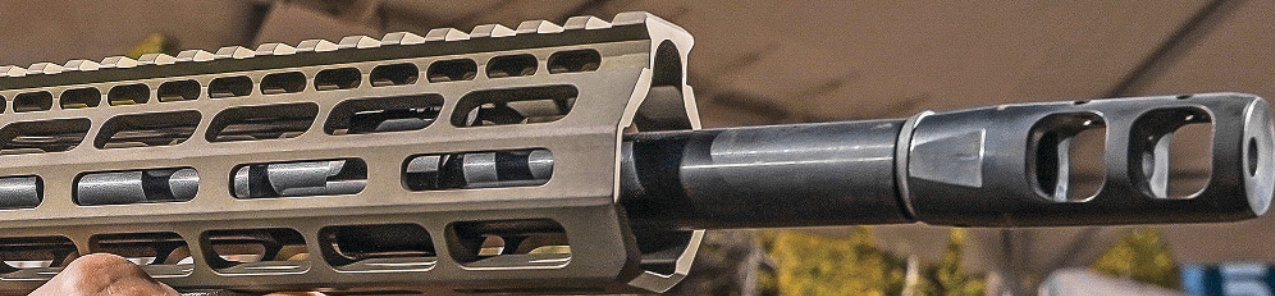


The Double Defense has a Picatinny rail on both sides of the barrels and on top of the action, where the author mounted a Hawk Vantage red-dot for improved accuracy.



NOT A RIFLE, NOT A PISTOL

**DARK STORM'S DS-15 NON-NFA
TYPHOON STRADDLES THE LINE
BETWEEN SBR AND PISTOL**



BY TODD BURGREN • PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY

Time spent with Dark Storm Industries' (DSI) Ed Newman at the recent Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous in Idaho further confirmed what many of us instinctually already know about the growing propensity towards non-typical weapons patterned off AR-like rifles. This stems from removing the traditional buttstock and adding certain components, all the while knowing firearm regulations to create non-traditional form pistols or more pertinent to this article...non-NFA firearms.

The Dark Storm Industries website does a good job of explaining nuances between the Non-NFA Typhoon, AR pistols and SBRs. In short, the DS-15 Non-NFA Typhoon is not a rifle, as it does not have a stock and is not designed to be fired from the shoulder. It is not a pistol, as it has a barrel length of 12.5 inches and features a forward vertical grip and is designed to be fired with two hands. It is not an AOW (Any Other Weapon), as this firearm has



an overall length greater than 26 inches, is not designed to be fired from the shoulder and features a forward vertical grip. While many will have a wry smile cross their face when introduced to the DS-15 Non-NFA Firearm Typhoon, it is in compliance with ATF regulations.

For those who have no legal access/desire for an NFA SBR rifle, or if changing braced pistol regulations make you nervous, the DSI DS-15 Non-NFA Firearm Typhoon may well be the closest they can get to achieving such firepower in a compact package. A weapon like the DSI DS-15 Typhon has its own advantages in terms of portability and discreteness that is hard to resist.

► SIGN OF THE TIMES

The need to use such convoluted terminology with the DS-15 Non-NFA Typhoon is a sign of the times thanks to the regulatory mess created by the ATF. I challenge potential users to view the DS-15 Typhoon

not as a cool novelty loophole getting around regulations, but as a rather serious candidate for any AR-associated tasks. The DS-15 Typhoon offers firepower combined with superior accuracy and terminal ballistics when compared to a handgun.

DSI's choice of a 12.5-inch barrel may confuse some. Why not go shorter for even more compactness? Multiple factors are at play here. Non-NFA parameters require an overall length of greater than 26 inches. The 12.5-inch barrel conserves direct impingement reliability as well as maintains a semblance of rifle-like ballistics. The DS-15's 12.5-inch barrel length also alleviates many complications associated with suppressor use impacting functioning. Ultra-short barrels (sub-10-inch) can be problematic with suppressor use due to the resultant increase in back pressure/bolt group velocity.

Initial exposure to the DS-15 Typhoon came with DSI's own Ed Newman standing next to me during Rendezvous. It was quickly evident that the DS-15 Typhoon deserved more attention beyond merely its unique "Non-NFA Firearm" designation status. Arrangements were made for a DS-15 Typhoon to be sent to me after the Rendezvous was over.

► HOLOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGE

An EOTech HH II combo was chosen for use on the DS-15 Typhoon. The EOTech EXPS2-2 with a G33.STS magnifier was mounted on the Typhoon's upper receiver's Picatinny rail. Both units together only add 22 ounces to the gun. The G33 magnifier mounts behind the EXPS2. The G33 3x magnifier is on a tilt mount allowing for it to be swung out of the way until the situation calls for its use. Not



to drop names...the G33 3x is the selected magnifier of USSOCOM. The G33's mount provides fast transitioning from 3x to 1x. The optic offers tool-free vertical/horizontal adjustments and an adjustable diopter for improved, precise focusing. The EOTech holographic magnifier combination is worthy of consideration by offering a laser holograph reticle for fast close-range target acquisition and quick magnification enhancement as engagement distances increase.

The closed nature of the EXPS2 holographic sight creates a dependable design that will not be affected by weather or environmental conditions. Rain, snow or debris cannot interfere with the laser-projected hologram circle/two-dot reticle on the lens, enabling accurate shooting

The DS-15 Typhoon lived up to its billing of being a fast-handling gun. The 12.5-inch barrel conserves direct impingement reliability while maintaining a semblance of rifle-like ballistics.

in any conditions. As long as the operator can see through any portion of the window, the entire reticle pattern remains visible on the target. The holographic reticle has two 1-MOA dots, surrounded by a 68-MOA larger circle. There are hash marks at the 9, 12, 3 and 6 o'clock positions for additional sighting references. The 6 o'clock hash mark has been specifically designed to be a CQB sighting reference to account for bore-to-sight offset at ranges 7 yards and less. EOTech has all the electronic components for the EXPS2 holographic sight in an enclosed and integrated base. The EXPS2's external surfaces are non-glare, and the lenses have an anti-reflective coating. Another important and oft-overlooked advantage of the holographic sight is that the projected reticle is visible to only the user. Some emitter-type red-dots can show light source to the downrange side of the sight. A lithium CR123A battery gives a respectable 1,000 hours of life. Anecdotally, the battery is placed transversely in the EXPS2 to avoid stressing the contact springs during recoil.

Accuracy was beyond reproach with the DS-15 Typhoon with 2-inch groups at

■ SPECIFICATIONS

DSI DS-15 TYPHOON NON-NFA

CALIBER: 5.56mm / **BARREL:** 12.5 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 28.75–31.5 inches

WEIGHT: 6.1 pounds [empty] / **STOCK:** SB Tactical SBA3 Brace / **SIGHTS:** None

ACTION: Direct impingement semi-auto / **FINISH:** Hardcoat anodized / **CAPACITY:** 30+1 / **MSRP:** \$1,495



100 yards being typical. Remember this is with the EOTech EXPS2 holographic red-dot mounted. A large part of this is thanks to using the EOTech 3x magnifier for sighting in and accuracy work. Ammunition tested with the DSI DS-15 Typhoon was a combination of multiple 5.56mm/.223 loads from Ammo Inc., Sig Sauer, Black Hills, Federal and Hornady. Premium loads typified by Sig Sauer Elite 77-grain Match punched rounds into 1.33-inch groups. Remember, the DS-15 Typhoon is not a match target rifle, making this performance even more impressive.

Drills quickly moved past stand-and-deliver drills to more dynamic ones involving movement, magazine reloads and firing from behind cover. It was decided to concentrate on using the DS-15 Typhoon in training scenarios at Echo Valley Training Center's (EUTC) 360, MOUT Village and "Jungle Walk" ranges.

A 30-round Magpul PMag arrives with the DS-15 Typhoon. Multiple other magazine types were utilized with the DS-15 Typhoon, including the U.S.-made SENTRY Hexmag Carbon-Fiber 20- and 30-round mags. SENTRY's Carbon Senthex carbon-fiber polymer reduces magazine weight by 20% while delivering superior strength and rigidity.

I could not resist also deploying the Magpul PMag D-60 drum magazine during portions of the T&E. The thought being the best reload is no reload. This allowed the DS-15 Typhoon to shine in terms of potent firepower. Team tactic drills involving moving forward and rearward while maintaining constant fire on the objective showed why a compact AR firearm equipped with EOTech EXPS2 holograph backed up by EOTech 3x magnifier is such an upgrade over your standard pattern handgun, pistol-caliber carbine or even full-size rifle.

The DSI DS-15 Typhoon lived up to its billing of being a lightweight, fast-handling weapon. Drills moving around barricades and training evolutions involving firing and evacuating from vehicles clearly bore this out. A word about the DSI Firestorm compensator. While effective, it is loud



The DS-15 Typhoon doesn't rely on its designation status solely for its effectiveness/appeal. It performs as an AR should.

and definitely NOT a flash hider. Any rifle cartridge out of a 12.5-inch barrel is going to be substantial in the noise department. The DSI double-chamber brake accentuates the concussion and blast. The direct impingement DS-15 Typhoon proved utterly reliable with more than 400 rounds being fired for this T&E. This was not the goal considering ongoing ammunition issues. However, the DS-15 Typhoon proved too enticing to put down. It just seemed there was one more drill needed.

► FINAL NOTES

If considering DSI DS-15 Non-NFA Typhoon for anything beyond recreational use, it would be best to view it through the lens of a PDW (personal-defense weapon). The DS-15 Typhoon is just as compact as an SBR and, with training, can be operated very effectively. The 12.5-inch barrel produces approximately 2,350 to 2,680 fps velocities depending on bullet weight and manufacture chosen. CQB/Direct Action and personal security detail operations are the realm of

PDWs, a near-perfect analogy to the civilian personal-defense realm. The DS-15 Typhoon is more potent and offers a longer effective range than a standard pistol, especially when trained to use it properly, its nuances are appreciated and it is set up correctly.

DSI created the DS-15 Non-NFA Typhoon as the ideal choice for users needing maximum firepower in a condensed package along with trying to gain access to otherwise restricted gun ownership areas. With that said, the DS-15 Typhoon is not a trick pony relying on its designation status solely for its effectiveness/appeal. It performs as an AR should.

The DS-15 Typhoon is small enough to discretely transport in a pack without having to break it apart. This is a real plus. For example, the DS-15 Typhoon snuggled nicely in an Elite Survival SUMMIT backpack. The backpack offers "hide in plain sight" utility. Aesthetically, the pack is designed to look like an inconspicuous hiking pack.

DS-15 Typhoon features are intended for maximizing effectiveness—billet aluminum receiver, hardcoat anodizing, DSI Chinook ambi charging handle, ambi safety selector, 10-inch M-LOK handguard, DSI steel micro gas block, carbine-length gas system, DSI Firestorm compensator, SB Tactical SBA3 brace, Hogue pistol grip, Magpul VFG, etc.

A return to AR basics such as lightweight handling with potent firepower is often the answer for most defensive situations. DSI offers such a platform with its Non-NFA DS-15 Typhoon. For more information, visit dark-storm.com and eotechinc.com. **PDW**

■ PERFORMANCE

DSI DS-15 TYPHOON NON-NFA

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
► AMMO INC. 55 FMJ	2,533	1.00
► BLACK HILLS 69 MATCH	2,369	0.75
► FEDERAL M855 62 FMJ	2,511	1.25
► HORNADY 55 TAP	2,528	1.00
► SIG SAUER 77 OTM	2,413	0.66

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 50 yards.



PDW
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AMERICA

LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS



MOSSBERG
590S

NEIGHBORLY PROTECTOR

THE SHOCKWAVE 590S' DIMINUTIVE SIZE
MAKES IT THE **PERFECT CAMPER GUN**

BY ANDY GROSSMAN

Camping IS ONE OF THE BEST MEMORIES I HAD AS A CHILD. BEING OUTDOORS, AWAY FROM EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY WAS, AND STILL IS, AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE.

As I got older and this world we live in evolved, camping has changed a lot, but the concept of making incredible memories with your family is still the same. My son learned how to swim and ride a bike in a campground—memories that will always stay with us forever. My son is now 8

years old. We have been camping with him since he was only 6 months old. We started in a tent, roughing it a bit. Then moved up to a pop-up camper and eventually into a travel trailer.

Unfortunately, camping as we know it changed a bit in the aftermath of Covid. Everyone and their grandma now have campers and are packing into campgrounds all over the country. This is good and bad. I love the fact people are getting out of their houses and exploring a





The Streamlight TL-Racker is the perfect accessory for your home-defense pump gun. The author found it to be easy to install, and the unit functioned perfectly during testing.



bit, plus the entertainment value of watching all the new campers try to park is just fantastic. However, with all these new campers comes safety and security issues that many folks don't think about. That included me until one day I realized a major flaw in my security game while camping.

► REVELATION

I am a firearms instructor, gun enthusiast and advocate of personal protection for all, so even while camping I had a bug-out bag with my camping gun setup included. I always have a pistol on me, and in the camper, my go-to gun was very similar to my home-defense gun—a tiny AR pistol equipped with a light. I know the setup and trust it in every situation from my truck to my house to my camper. Well, until now. While we were camping in a new campground early in the season, I was watching

all the campsites around us fill up with other campers. There were tents across from us and travel trailers on both sides and behind us. I went up on the roof of my camper to fix something and had a great bird's eye view of the entire place. What I saw was campers lined up only about 20 feet apart. I started thinking about the construction materials of a camper and then started thinking about my guns. How many campers would a 5.56mm round travel through before stopping?

At that moment, I had a revelation and realized a massive flaw in my camper

security setup—over-penetration. All these people are sleeping in their campers in the danger zone if I had to start shooting to defend my family in the case of a break-in. I needed to think about this problem and come up with a solution. A pistol still has the potential of over-penetrating as well. Maybe not as much as the AR, but it's still a risk in the campground situation. I then started thinking shotgun, but all my shotguns are long-barreled and not ideal for defense. Then I found the perfect solution to my problem—the Mossberg Shockwave 590S.

► TACTICAL LEGACY

Mossberg's 590 series has been a go-to tactical choice since 1987 when it was released and adapted as standard-issue for

■ SPECIFICATIONS

MOSSBERG 590S SHOCKWAVE

GAUGE: 12 / **BARREL:** 14.375 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 26.37 inches

WEIGHT: 5.3 pounds (empty) / **GRIPS:** Raptor / **SIGHTS:** Bead

ACTION: Pump / **FINISH:** Black / **CAPACITY:** 4/5/8+1 / **MSRP:** \$643



the U.S. military. The Mossberg Shockwave 590S is everything we all know and love about the famous pump-action 590 but with a shorter barrel and raptor grip—taking the famous tactical shotgun and making it a perfect choice for defense for campers or even apartments. Plus, Mossberg's 590S Shockwave will now accept 12-gauge mini shells thanks to a simple redesigned action.

If you look at the 12-gauge Shockwave 590 and 590S models side-by-side, the external controls and features are identical until you take a closer look at the elevator port. At the rear of the port is a built-in, shock-absorbing rubber bumper that does not need to be removed or adjusted. The shell elevator is extended and sports a modified shell guide. The Shockwave's tubular magazine can hold 4+1 rounds of 3-inch shells, 5+1 rounds of 2¾-inch shells or 8+1 rounds of 1¾-inch mini shells. Mossberg also upgraded the trigger group, improved the bolt slide and revised the cam surface a bit. My favorite part of the updated 590S is that the three different shell lengths can be loaded into the magazine in any order or combination you prefer.

There are no accessories to adjust or tube modifications needed. Just press in the shells you want and go to work. Thanks to those mini shells with slightly lighter payloads and reduced velocity powder charges, you get more rounds in the tube and noticeably reduced felt recoil.

► LASER & LIGHT

Because the point of this Shockwave for me was close-quarters defense, I decided to add the Crimson Trace Lasersaddle and a Streamlight TL Racker up front. Crimson Trace has perfected their lasers for all applications, but my favorite offering for the Shockwave has always been the Lasersaddle. The LS-250 model is a lightweight, well-built laser sighting solution for the Shockwave. It attaches seamlessly to the receiver using the four screws in the top of the receiver and



“ How many campers would a 5.56mm round travel through before stopping? ”



replaces the trigger housing pin with a nice screw that won't walk out. The Lasersaddle is easy to install and use.

Activate the laser easily by using the multiple ambidextrous laser activation pad points that just require a simple light push for instant targeting with the red laser. Crimson Trace adds adjustments

for windage and elevation to all of its products. I don't see the need for it on the Shockwave, but it is there if you want to fine-tune it. You can also power the unit off completely using the master on/off

“Clearly, that would do some incredible damage to someone dumb enough to break into the camper. The issue is you can only hold five rounds.”

switch. Crimson Trace claims four hours of battery life with two provided CR2032 batteries. I love that you can still use a saddle on the opposite side if you want, and the Lasersaddle seamlessly inte-

grates into the receiver of the 590s Shockwave. This makes targeting very easy since you really are not going to be using the bead sight on the Shockwave normally in a defense situation.

The other addition to the Shockwave was for the pump. I liked the factory pump with the hand strap, but I felt I

needed a little upgrade because this gun was really for low-light defense, and you need both hands to shoot it. I picked up a Streamlight TL Racker, which gives you a completely new pump grip that is more

ergonomic and adds a much-welcomed built-in light to the front. The TL Racker greatly improves your front hand grip when shooting and racking the Shockwave, plus it gives you a 1,000-lumen tactical light built right into the front of it. The light is activated by a simple ambidextrous pressure switch under the Streamlight logo on either side. The Streamlight is a little harder to install because it does not come with the shotgun forend wrench you need to remove the forend, but it is worth the trouble. I picked up a simple tool on Amazon for



Crimson Trace's Laser Saddle looks like it grew on the Shockwave and guarantees a solid aim when firing from the hip. There's no need to line up sights with the CT in place.



around \$10, and it worked perfectly. The Streamlight takes two CR123A batteries and comes with a hand strap already attached. The gun was now ready to hit the range and test everything out.

► PERFORMANCE

At the range, I wanted to test out all my options and knew exactly what I wanted to run for my camper defense. I ran 3-inch, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch and the mini shells from both Federal and Aguila. Obviously, 3-inch buckshot loads hit pretty hard, and I decided I probably didn't need to run it for my purpose. Remington's 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch Ultimate Defense managed-

recoil buckshot ran great as well and surprisingly was not bad to shoot. I was able to put rounds on target easily and saw a very consistent 4-inch spread on the target at 7 yards. Clearly, that would do some incredible damage to someone dumb enough to break into the camper. The issue is you can only hold five rounds. I like more ammo, so I gave the mini shells a shot.

I was able to see an approximate 5-inch grouping at the same 7 yards on paper. Clearly, any of these options will ruin someone's day, but with that reduced recoil and higher round count, I really liked the idea of run-

ning straight mini shells. Thanks to the Mossberg 590S Shockwave, I can have nine rounds ready to rock and roll in a lightweight, simple-to-use package that I don't have to worry too much about over-penetrating in a campground. This setup would be perfect for anyone that could potentially see themselves in a close-quarters defensive scenario where over-penetration is a major concern. The addition of the Crimson Lasersaddle and the Streamlight TL Racker makes aiming simple and control a breeze while ensuring you know exactly what your target is, and your target knows exactly the moment they messed up. For more information, visit mossberg.com. PDW

HARDEN YOUR RIDE



ADVICE FROM A FORMER POLICE OFFICER ON PROTECTING VALUABLES IN YOUR VEHICLE

BY BILL FOSTER

Have you ever been the unfortunate victim of some delinquent turd breaking into your vehicle? Over the many years back before I hung up my badge, I responded to countless complaints of someone having their vehicle broken into. It's never an easy thing to deal with, as the victim feels violated. And rightfully so, because some oxygen thief in desperate need of an ass beating just made off with your belongings. The homeless around my area will bust out your window simply for your spare change. With some guidance and a couple of quick stories, hopefully, this will help keep you from becoming a victim of a car burglary.

■ TIPS & TRICKS

So, my agency was slammed with dispatched runs, and I get sent on a call for a vehicle that was broken into at a local bar and grill. I can see some window glass on the ground with most of it in the backseat of his nice,

new Land Rover. The complainant informed me that his briefcase had been on the right-side backseat. It contained his government laptop, his passport, a couple of credit cards, including a U.S. Government credit card and some other personal belongings. It was obviously a very bad night for that guy.

There are several ways to avoid becoming a victim. First and foremost, park in a well-lit area. Thieves prefer to scurry around in the dark like cockroaches. But drug addicts will make eye contact with you through the restaurant window as they bust into your vehicle, and all while you're eating your meal. They simply don't care; they just want their next "fix."

Take a good hard look at the inside of your vehicle. What do you have laying around that a would-be thief might find attractive? Do you have a set of expensive (sun)glasses, a cell phone or anything worth of value that is out in plain sight?

Is anything worth taking to the local pawn shop or Craigslist? My best advice is don't leave anything of value out in the open. Knuckleheads will look into your car, see that your vehicle isn't worth it and then move on to make someone else a victim. That is the goal here.

For starters, it's always best to lock your vehicle. If your vehicle has a rear cargo area cover, use it. Do you have an aftermarket subwoofer out in the open? Then get a custom box that hides it in one of the storage spaces of your vehicle. If you have a really nice aftermarket stereo, get an alarm. I had a Viper car alarm on a previous vehicle that I owned. That thing was so sophisticated that it has motion and glass break sensors. You could literally tap your key once on any of the windows, and the alarm would go off. Plus, it had an app that allowed me to lock/unlock and arm/disarm the alarm from anywhere. That's a pretty cool

feature if you want to mess with your teenage kids who are borrowing the car. If you can't afford an alarm, you can always find yourself a car alarm company sticker and put it on your vehicle. Only experienced criminals will know if it's real or not. And by the way, that key fob you have is for locking and unlocking your doors and a panic alarm. Most are not an actual "alarm system." Just FYI.

Window tint is a great idea! Unfortunately, not every state allows it. Or they allow tinted windows with the exception of the front driver and passenger windows, as well as the windshield. If you're in one of those states, you're just going to have to make the best of it. I know that back in the day, there were some Michigan State Police Troopers who would give you a choice: a ticket or you can scrape the tint off. I can see both sides of that coin though, as I did most of my career on midnights. I've pulled traffic

stops and walked up on cars with blacked-out windows, and it spikes the inner radar a bit. The windows that you can alter, tint them dark. Not limo tint, but just dark enough that one can't see in the back. Personally, I have all of my windows tinted, including the windshield. Hey, I rarely need my sunglasses anymore while driving and I can still see perfectly. You can try and look into the back of my SUV and you won't be seeing anything.

If you do opt for blacked-out limo tints and you drive a black Chevy Tahoe or black Chevy Suburban, you know what you will look like, right?

■ PAY ATTENTION HERE

Whatever you do, do not booby-trap your car. I've heard horror stories about those instances. Besides, think about it. You set the trap and go into the house for the night. Then you oversleep, are in a hurry to get to

work and still half asleep. Next, you open the car door in a rush and BAM! You just got hit by your own trap. It's simply not worth it.

If you do have your vehicle broken into, do yourself a favor and listen closely. Hope it was just some crackhead or tweaker who wants their next fix. But, if it was someone who knows what they're doing, you could be in for some serious trouble. Many hardcore criminals will break into your vehicle, and

grab whatever is closest, simply to throw off suspicion. However, the real prize is that they will snap a quick cell phone shot of your registration with your home address on it.

They will also remove the cover of your remote garage door opener and take a quick picture. Now, they watch your place, and when you leave, they take a similar garage door opener that they programmed to your code and then pull up in a U-Haul to load up your valuables. All of that being said, if you find yourself the unfortunate victim of a car burglary, do yourself a favor. As soon as you get home, change the code inside your remote garage door opener as well as the garage door opener itself. At least now you will have some peace of mind. Keep your remote garage door opener out of plain sight, not clipped to your visor.

Hopefully, some of these tips can help you make your vehicle look like an unappealing target to criminals. Most criminals break your window and grab what they can, as fast as they can. But the thing is, they scope out the vehicle and often glance inside first to see if it's even worth their time. By following these simple ideas, you can hopefully help keep your belongings from getting stolen. These are but some simple guidelines. Common sense will go a long way to help you out as well. Best of luck to you all and may the fleas of a thousand barnyard animals invade the bedding of any criminal who tries to break into your vehicle. **PDW**

LOCK'ER DOWN

■ **Okay, you've tinted your windows, put away all of your cool stuff and locked your doors. So now what?** Imagine that you're out running errands, and one of those errands is going into a government building. What do you do? Sure, you could toss your heater into the glove box and hope for the best. In my state, if someone gets your gun and commits a crime with it, they will try and charge you as an accessory. Crazy, right? There are a few different options you can use. I do not recommend securing your weapon in your trunk. You have to get out of your vehicle to do this, and everyone in the area who can see you will see what you are doing. Then the bad guy breaks.... I'm sure you can see where I'm going with that.

Gloveboxes are also a very bad idea. It's one of the first places a bad guy will check. Plus, if you forget to grab it, get driving down the road and get pulled over by the

police, you're going to be in a pickle. If you reach for your registration and insurance without thinking about your weapon, you're liable to get the officer's gun screwed into your temple.

Options? Well, there are small lockboxes you can use, such as the Hornady "Standard Lock Box XL" or their Rapid Vehicle Safe. You toss your gun in it and use the included tether cable and loop it around your vehicle's seat bracket. The downside to that is that even a small set of bolt cutters will go right through that cable.

A much better option is a metal locking insert for your center console. For this, I chose the "Exxtreme Console Safe" from Lock'er Down. Made in the United States, the safes they offer are available in several locking configurations, including a four-digit manual tumbler combination lock, a seven-sided

tubular key, an Abloy lock with either two or three keys or a metal-encased electronic lock.

The Exxtreme Console Safe is made of heavy 12-gauge steel, has a 10-gauge steel plate welded to the lid to eliminate seams and pry points for maximum security, and comes with a lifetime warranty. Another cool feature is that it uses your vehicle's factory mounting holes for a quick, 10-minute install. It also has cutouts so as not to block any cables that you might still want to use. The lid is spring-loaded to assist in a quick opening.

The Exxtreme Console Safe is a great product thus far. I keep my sunglasses along with my gun when it's not on my side, plus some other stuff. This is a great investment, and a small price to pay. It's also probably cheaper than the deductible for your car insurance policy. The Lock'er Down Console Safe gives complete peace of mind knowing that your valuables are safe and secure. For more information, visit lockerdown.com.


—Bill Foster



TIME TO BE BLUNT

HARDCORE STRIKING WEAPONS
THAT WILL **DEFINITELY**
LEAVE A MARK

BY MICHAEL D'ANGONA



TOO MANY TIMES the words, “helpless victim” comes across the media followed by a story of how an attacker overcame a defenseless person that was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Well, it's time to make sure that you're not that person.

Unlike firearms and knives that can have long-term physical, mental and even legal ramifications if used, blunt force weapons can help to defend against an attack with accurate striking without such lasting effects (in many, not all, cases). The options to “leave a mark” on your attacker are many. From handheld, keychain-style jabbing weapons to larger bat-like clubs and slender extending batons that strike with lightning-fast precision, choose the one that fits both your hand and fighting style. This will ensure that you'll be the one standing with weapon in hand, waiting for round two for whoever is foolish enough to cross your path.

Utilizing one of the many blunt-force defensive weapons below, you'll turn the tables on your attacker and give him (or her) some “love taps” that will leave them running away from the scene to nurse their wounds.

► **5.11 TACTICAL KUBATON
TACTICAL PEN**



► **5.11 TACTICAL EDC
PL 2AAA FLASHLIGHT**



► **GUARD DOG SECURITY
TITAN STUN GUN & BATON**

► **5.11 TACTICAL
EDC PL 2AAA FLASHLIGHT**

Everyone needs a little bit of light now and then. Use this powerful flashlight to find your keys, scan dark streets and illuminate dimly lit hallways and stairways. Best of all, if things go south fast, use this disguised weapon for precision striking against your attacker. The textured shaft offers a superb grip for both offensive and defensive self-defense techniques, while its included steel clip keeps this tool/weapon combo always within hand's reach. Tough, durable and versatile, this is the ultimate carry-anywhere weapon.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Powerful, 107-lumen output
- Constructed of machined aerospace-grade aluminum
- IPX-4 Water resistance
- Impact resistant up to 6.5 feet
- Runtime on high: 4 hours, 20 minutes

MSRP: \$30 (511tactical.com)

► **5.11 TACTICAL
KUBATON TACTICAL PEN**

What's better than a weapon that you can carry with you just about anywhere, any day? Not much, which makes this kubaton a must-have for everyone. Its hardcore aluminum body offers a secure grip when writing and when danger comes your way. Use its tapered tip to strike the vital areas of your attacker, including eyes, throat and ribs with pinpoint accuracy. This non-threatening weapon stays clipped to your pocket when not in use but is always ready to assist when needed. The pen comes in black, sandstone and weathered orange colors.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Durable, one-piece design
- Aggressive jimping for pommel grip
- Includes black pressurized ink cartridge
- Steel pocket clip for easy carry
- Ideal for home, school or office use

MSRP: \$32 (511tactical.com)

► **GUARD DOG SECURITY
TITAN STUN GUN & BATON**

This beast of a baton lets those around you know that you're not someone to be messed with. This weapon offers the trifecta of results with a blinding flashlight, integrated stun gun and a heavy-duty, blunt-striking outer casing that delivers damage by the truckloads. The unit offers a safety switch, multiple flashlight settings, a rechargeable battery pack and a lifetime warranty for long-term use. This baton allows you to keep bad seeds away while protecting your friends and family. This Guard Dog never sleeps!

SPECIFICATIONS

- Durable, type III aluminum body
- High-voltage stun capability
- Easy-to-grip handle
- Rechargeable with included charger unit
- Over a foot-and-a-half in length to keep aggressors away

MSRP: \$40 (guarddog-security.com)

“Just lock this weapon in your grip and jab and slash at the bad guy’s eyes, throat and pressure points until you’re free and safely away.”

▣ **KABAR TDI SELF-DEFENSE CANE**

► **KABAR TDI SELF-DEFENSE CANE**

Looks can be deceiving when you’re carrying this cane. To many, it appears to be a normal walking aid, but in the hands of a victim of a crime, this tool becomes a lifesaving weapon. Its full aluminum body delivers hardcore striking while its curved handle can be used to hook a leg, arm or neck and control your assailant throughout the conflict. It goes virtually anywhere you do without detection and functions as a normal cane throughout your day. The best of both worlds is in your hand.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Discreet design
- Black powder-coated aluminum construction
- Curved handle with tapered tip
- Removable rubber foot
- Weighs just over 2 pounds

MSRP: \$186 (kabar.com)

► **MEGAKNIFE 21-INCH EXPANDABLE BATON**

Don’t let the pink color fool you. This baton means serious business and can become your best friend when your life is threatened. At just over 8 inches in length (closed), this baton can be hung discreetly on your belt. However, when danger comes your way, the baton extends to an incredible 21 inches of offensive power. Its solid steel tip makes short work of an assailant’s most vital areas while protecting you from other striking weapons, knives and incoming fists.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Hardened, stainless steel construction
- Solid rubber diamond-grip handle
- Opens quickly and locks into place
- Extends up to 21 inches (closed length: 8.3 inches)
- Included pink belt sheath

MSRP: \$35 (megaknife.com)





❑ ROTHCO EXPANDABLE SPRING BATON



❑ NINJA SELF-DEFENSE KEYCHAIN

❑ STINGER WHIP CAR EMERGENCY TOOL

► NINJA SELF-DEFENSE KEYCHAIN

Don't let the word "ninja" dissuade you from carrying this versatile striking weapon. No martial arts training is required to let loose upon an attacker who is out to do you harm. Just lock this weapon in your grip and jab and slash at the bad guy's eyes, throat and pressure points until you're free and safely away. The three-prong design allows for easy gripping and multiple-angle striking, so it's a win-win for you and a big zero for your wannabe attacker.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Solid-steel construction
- Virtually indestructible
- Three tapered striking points
- Integrated keyring attachment
- Ideal for both men and women

MSRP: \$15

(selfdefenseproducts.com)

► ROTHCO EXPANDABLE SPRING BATON

Spring into action, both figuratively and literally, when threatened with this impressive flexible baton. This handheld weapon features a sure-grip, rubber handle that transfers your powerful swing into a load of damage for an aggressive assailant. Its unique design allows the spring action to increase both the speed and precision of your strikes, all the while keeping your attacker at a safe distance from inflicting harm upon you. Additionally, this weapon collapses to a concealable 9 inches, so you can walk with confidence without alerting others of your silent "partner" in your pocket or on your belt.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Friction-lock design opens quickly and locks into place
- Extends to nearly 2 feet in length
- Closed, 9-inch size offers easy concealment
- Easy-to-grip rubber handle with wrist strap
- Solid metal tip for precision impact

MSRP: \$23 (rothco.com)

► STINGER WHIP CAR EMERGENCY TOOL

This unique item can be your savior if trapped in your car or threatened by man or beast. Constructed of ultra-tough aluminum alloy and hardened steel, this self-defense amalgamation combines the power of a striking tool with the lightning-fast action of a precision whip. This tool/weapon can be used to break windows if trapped in a vehicle, as a striking kubaton in vital areas or as a means to keep dangerous animals away from you as you walk or hike. Its versatility is second to none. Additionally, it offers a belt clip and wrist strap, so you'll always have this whipping wonder nearby.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Hardened steel tip for striking an assailant
- No special training needed; ideal for both men and women
- CNC-crafted ergonomic aluminum grip
- Lightning-fast, stainless steel whip for personal defense

MSRP: \$35 (thestingertools.com)



❑ **STINGER WHIP TO FIST PRO EMERGENCY & SELF-DEFENSE TOOL**



❑ **STREETWISE BARBARIAN
19-INCH STUN GUN BATON**

► **STINGER WHIP TO FIST PRO EMERGENCY & SELF-DEFENSE TOOL**

This self-defense weapon offers the best of both worlds utilizing a super-quick, steel whip and a devastating monkey-fist striking ball. Depending upon the threat, the unit transforms in seconds to meet the danger and repel it away from you and your family. This handy weapon features an ergonomic grip and stainless steel, anti-corrosive cable. And for vehicle safety, it has a seatbelt cutter and hardened steel glass breaker. No special training is needed to use this weapon proficiently when trouble comes your way.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Multifunctional emergency and self-defense tool
- Switches easily between whip and fist mode
- No special training needed
- Ergonomic handle provides a secure grip
- Durable steel and aluminum alloy construction

MSRP: \$50 (thestingertools.com)

► **STREETWISE BARBARIAN 19-INCH STUN GUN BATON**

Be a modern-day barbarian with this impressive and intimidating club. Utilizing a super-tough outer casing and rough, multi-pointed tip, you'll inflict massive damage upon whoever is foolish enough to mess with you. Need some extra punch? No problem. This impact weapon delivers quite a shock for the unsuspecting assailant in the form of nearly 9 million volts, delivered over three electrical contact arcs. When times are peaceful, use the baton's included LED flashlight to light your way through dark streets and hallways. Includes wall charger, wrist strap and metal clip.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Rough edge blunt striking surface
- Powerful, one-hand operation
- Three electrical contact zones for maximum stun effectiveness
- Integrated 180 lumen flashlight
- Wrist lanyard and easy-grip handle for extra grip security

MSRP: \$40

(thehomesecuritysuperstore.com)

► **STREETWISE 12-INCH EXPANDABLE STEEL BATON WITH KEYRING**

You almost never go anywhere without your keys. Now you'll have an incredible weapon with you, too. This blunt striking baton hangs innocently on your keychain until trouble comes your way. Then, with a quick flick of your wrist, the baton expands to a full foot of striking power. Use it to keep an attacker away or go on the offensive and not be a defenseless victim. The unit locks into place upon full extension, and it doesn't hold back when push comes to shove, and you take control!

SPECIFICATIONS

- Compact, easy-to-carry design
- Automatically locks into place when fully extended
- Textured handle provides a secure grip
- Integrated ring for keys or hanging when not in use
- Durable, steel construction

MSRP: \$21

(streetsmartprotection.com)

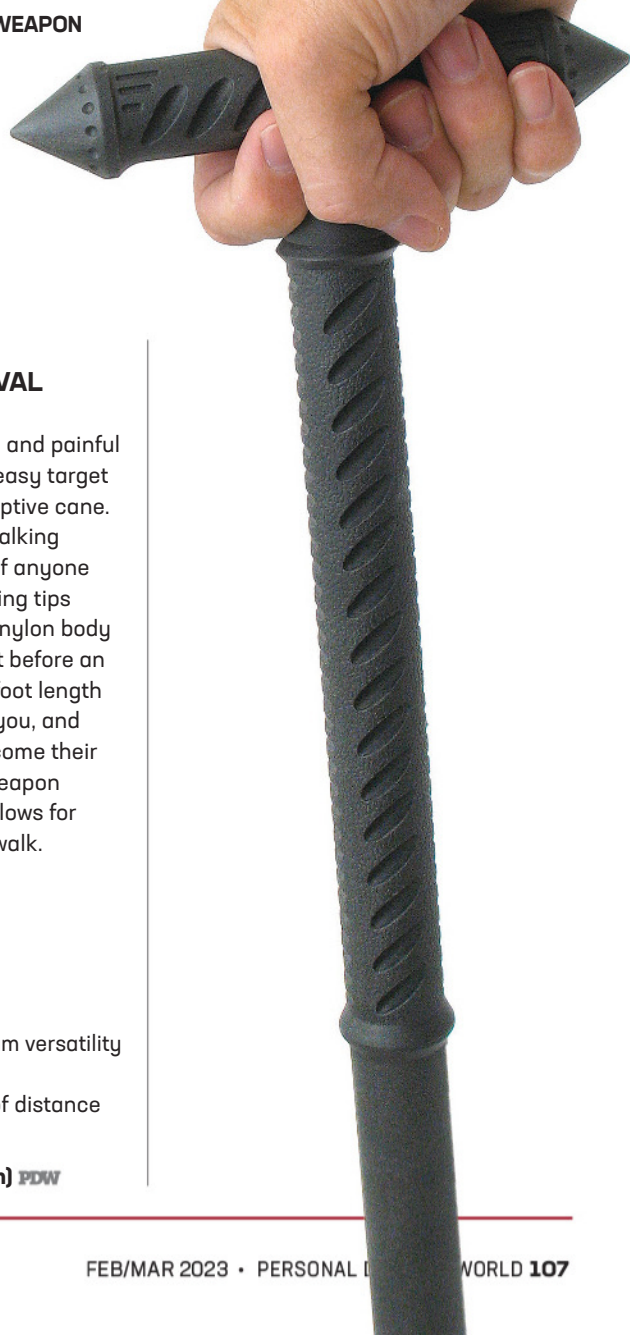


▣ STREETWISE 12-INCH EXPANDABLE STEEL BATON WITH KEYRING

▣ UNITED CUTLERY NIGHT WATCHMAN SURVIVAL STAFF WALKING CANE



▣ STREETWISE SHAR-KEY WEAPON



► STREETWISE SHAR-KEY WEAPON

With three pointed contact surfaces, any attacker with the intent to do you harm will get a rude awakening from this “shark.” This keychain attachment goes where you do, so you’ll always be ready for the unexpected. Its “fishy” design allows for a secure gripping surface, as well as multiple fins that provide the impact to an assailant’s face, throat, eyes or anywhere you choose to inflict pain and show you’re no victim! Ultra-tough, metal-detector-friendly material will stand up to repeated use for everyday personal protection.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Three distinct striking points
- Knuckle protection
- Finger indentations provide a firm grip
- Metal detector friendly
- Includes keyring

MSRP: \$10
(thehomesecuritysuperstore.com)

► UNITED CUTLERY NIGHT WATCHMAN SURVIVAL STAFF WALKING CANE

A foolish attacker will get a huge and painful surprise by thinking you are an easy target as you walk about with this deceptive cane. At the first sign of trouble, this walking assistant can make short work of anyone out to do you harm. Its twin striking tips and one-piece injection-molded nylon body can deliver damage in an instant before an attacker can react. Its nearly 3-foot length ensures no one will get close to you, and if they do, then a lot of hurt will come their way. When all is peaceful, this weapon becomes a useful cane, which allows for stability and steadiness as you walk.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Constructed of extra-strong, injection-molded nylon
- Textured, T-grip handle for steady support
- Double-tip handle for maximum versatility
- Removable rubber toe
- Offers more than three feet of distance during a conflict

MSRP: \$47 (unitedcutlery.com) **PDW**

MICRO NINE»»»

SAVAGE'S STANCE IS LOADED WITH PREMIUM FEATURES AT A BARGAIN PRICE

BY FRANK JARDIM

THERE'S A LOT TO LIKE about the new Savage Stance 9mm micro-compact concealed carry pistol, especially if you are left-handed. With an MSRP of \$479, it is loaded with premium features that you would expect on top-end guns priced at \$100 to \$200 more.

► DIVING RIGHT IN

The Savage Stance has a unique ambidextrous magazine release button that protrudes simultaneously from the right and left sides of the grip, allowing instant operation with either hand. The Stance also has ambidextrous slide release buttons, and, in some models, manual safety switches. In addition, the Stance's polymer grip frame is recessed on both sides behind the triggerguard for right- or left-hand trigger fingers, undercut

at the bottom rear of the triggerguard for a higher grip on the frame, has a sculpted-in finger swell on the front strap, and has an extensively and aggressively stippled grip frame that includes the area above the triggerguard. If there was a stippling contest, the Stance would win. The texture is like 100-grit sandpaper and provides excellent purchase. I think it may be the best of the various types I've seen on recent production guns. The Stance has an 18-degree, 1911-style grip angle and comes with two different backstraps (flat and arched), offering shooters a degree of customization for their particular hand anatomy.





The slide is serrated at the front and rear, providing ample grasping surface for racking. Iron sight options are excellent, including white and red three-dot standard or Tru-Glo three-dot night sights for \$68 more. Both are made of durable steel and solidly mounted with a screw for the front sight and a windage adjustable dovetail for the rear. My first test gun's standard three-dot sights were sloped front and rear to reduce the risk of snagging on the draw, and the front face of the rear sight had a forward rake for one-handed racking of the slide in emergencies. For an additional \$80, you can get the Stance with triggerguard mounted Viridian red laser sight.

The Stance has an aluminum trigger with a broad sculpted shoe. Trigger-pull on my initial test gun was 6.5 pounds but extremely creepy, even for a striker-fired gun. This was contrary to the advertising, so I requested a second test gun. To my delight, the new gun had a very smooth pull of the same weight. There was a slight amount of take-up at the start of the pull, so I would call this a two-stage trigger. In rapid-fire shooting, you will never notice that, but in slow, deliberate fire it becomes

apparent. A fixed overtravel stop is molded into the grip frame at the rear curve of the triggerguard. To reset, the trigger has to move all the way back through its arc to its starting point.

The stainless steel slide is tapered at the muzzle to make it a bit narrower for easier re-holstering. The whole gun is quite thin, measuring only 0.96 inches. For comparison purposes, a Sig Sauer P365 is 0.99 inches thick, and a Springfield Armory Hellcat sits at 1.05 inches thick. While the Stance may well be the skinniest girl at the dance, she is taller too. Overall dimensions are similar to the S&W M&P Shield series guns. Like the S&W Shield, the Stance is simply more gun to hold onto. It comes with a seven-round, flush-fit magazine and an eight-

round extended magazine. I found I could get a solid, full-hand grip with the eight-round magazine. With the seven-round magazine, my pinky had to curl up under the magazine floorplate for lack of grip space. Such is the world of micro 9mm pistols. As of this writing, the Savage now has 10-round magazines, too.

► RANGE PERFORMANCE

On the range, I noticed the Stance had a bit more muzzle flip than its peers with

a lower barrel axis. That is to be expected, and the better textured and larger grip area may compensate for it. The slide release and manual safety are purposely low profile to minimize width and snagging. In use, that means you can't release the slide using your shooting hand thumb alone. I found it fairly hard to release with my off-hand thumb. The best way to get the slide forward after changing magazines was to pull it back slightly

and release it as one does with a Walther PPK. The manual safety can be flipped down into the "FIRE" position with the



(Top) The design of the Stance's sear/trigger bar engagement was not as robust or solid as that of the Springfield Armory Hellcat, Sig Sauer P365, Mossberg M1C or Glock micro 9mm pistols. In the center of the photo, you can see an oil smear where the tip of the trigger bar engages the rather wobbly sear and ultimately slides under it. **(Above)** The serial-numbered part of the Stance is the modular chassis formed of stamped stainless steel. **(Left)** The modular chassis comes out for cleaning without tools by pulling the take-down lever out of the polymer grip frame.

side of the shooting hand thumb, but it is too small for me to push upward into the "SAFE" position that way. This is not an issue in my opinion since one is generally in a bigger hurry to get a manual safety off than on.

To my surprise, I found the Stance to be about half as accurate as its micro 9mm competitors I've tested in the past: Sig Sauer P365, Springfield Armory Hellcat, Mossberg MC1, and S&W M&P Shield. That being said, those pistols are unusually, and impressively, accurate, and the differences at 7 yards range are arguably inconsequential. For example, my average five-shot, slow-fire groups fired from a standing position with the Stance measured 1.93 inches center to center compared to 0.90 to 1.25 inches with P365, Hellcat, MC1 and Shield.

► HARD TAKE

While the Stance has a lot of good points, it does have a few shortcomings in my opinion, aside from average accuracy. First, the windows cut through the slide, ostensibly for making the gun lighter, are of questionable value in a carry handgun because they will allow dirt to enter the inner workings of the firearm, which can interfere with reliable function. This is a case of putting style over function and Savage isn't the only gunmaker guilty of this. Second, the Stance's magazine is not truly a single stack, but an inefficiently designed double-column magazine. This may have already been addressed with the new 10-round magazine now in

production, but I have not examined it as of this writing. Third, the half-cone-shaped cut through the top of the slide at the rear of the ejection port intended to serve as a visual loaded-chamber indicator is too small to see the cartridge case and needs to be enlarged to be useful.

My final critique, and really the only one that I felt warranted a call to the Savage factory, was the design of the sear and the trigger bar that bears against it to release the striker and fire the pistol. The contact point between the trigger bar, which you might also call a connector, is very small. Estimating with a caliper, it appears that the contact point is about 0.035 inches square. I took note of this because the trigger bar and sear are continuously bearing and moving against

each other as the trigger bar pushes the sear back to release the striker. It then slides down off the sear as the rearward movement of the slide pushes the trigger bar down to disengage it and free the sear to pop up and catch the striker again between shots. In addition to this small contact surface, the sear is noticeably wiggly on its pin, and the pin holes in the fire control unit are somewhat oversized beyond what is commonly used for a sliding fit. The loosey-goosey fit of the sear to pin and pin to frame (in this case a chassis made from a stainless steel stamping) allows the sear to move left and right instead of just rotating evenly under the pressure of the trigger bar. My concern was that the excessive and superfluous movements of the sear, in



(Top) The Stance's slide is tapered at the muzzle to make it easier to re-holster. Note the recessed crown on the barrel to protect the rifling from damage. **(Above)** The Stance was not the most accurate gun I've ever tested, but it's accurate enough for typical close-in self-defense and functioned reliably with the 300 rounds of various ammunition the author tested it with. **(Left)** The standard iron sights are three-dot. Tru-Glo three-dot night sights and a Veridian triggerguard-mounted laser sight are factory upgrades.

■ SPECIFICATIONS

SAVAGE STANCE

CALIBER: 9mm / **BARREL:** 3.2 inches / **OA LENGTH:** 6.2 inches

WEIGHT: 21.9 ounces (empty) / **GRIPS:** Glass-filled nylon / **SIGHTS:** Standard three-dot

ACTION: Striker-fired, semi-auto / **FINISH:** Black Nitride / **CAPACITY:** 7+1, 8+1 / **MSRP:** \$479





(Above) The Versacarry Comfort Flex Deluxe holster features a core of rigid polymer wrapped in tough water buffalo leather cut high on the body side and padded for all-day comfort. The adjustable tension screw and ample pocket make this holster very versatile. **(Left)** The eight-round extended magazine on the left and the seven-round flush-fit one the right. Though these are called single-stack magazines, they obviously are not. A 10-round magazine is also available.

conjunction with the tiny bearing surface between it and the trigger bar, would lead to premature wear and rounding of that bearing surface's edges to the point that the trigger bar could no longer get enough purchase on the sear to move it enough to fire the pistol.

Now perhaps Savage has already determined through testing that despite their delicate look, the service life of these

parts is at a round count so astronomically high that nobody will ever live long enough to wear them out. Whether the design is ultimately more, perfectly, or less than adequate for the intended job, I cannot say. However, the mechanical engineering of the trigger bar and sear contact on the two Stance pistols I examined is not as robust, controlled or positive as those of the Hellcat, P365, Glock or Mossberg. I think the Stance could be as good with some minor adjustment to the sear shape and tighter pin tolerances.

Though I was never able to talk directly with the Savage engineers responsible for the Stance, the company did offer the

“Time will tell how durable it proves, but in the meantime, it has a lot of good points that make it worthy of consideration.”

following to me through their advertising agency regarding long-term durability.

"While in development and during normal production, rigorous testing is conducted on all Savage products to ensure that they exceed current industry standards. Stance is no exception to this. Some of these tests will include running multiple firearms through several thousand rounds each in the attempt to find the service life of certain parts or the service life of the complete firearm. Generally, these endurance-style tests end without much hurrah. This means that after several thousand rounds are fired, the firearm is still serviceable and running as expected. Conservatively, during development somewhere north of 50,000 rounds were fired to prove out the Stance design. That doesn't take into account any testing conducted after the official development was completed and we began to work Stance into standard production."

So now you know what I know about the Stance. Time will tell how durable it proves, but in the meantime, it has a lot of good points that make it worthy of consideration. For more information, visit savagearms.com. **PDW**

DIFFERENT SYSTEM.



BETTER RESULTS.

PRIMARY WEAPONS SYSTEMS

EVOLVE

Primary Weapons Systems (PWS) developed their PWS Long-Stroke Piston System which takes the operating system from Kalashnikov's AK design and merges it with Stoner's AR platform giving a hybrid rifle to shooters looking for a low-maintenance yet reliable and accurate firearm. PWS manufactures AR-15s in 223 Wylde, 300BLK and 7.62×39 as well as DPMS .308 pattern builds in both .308 Match and 6.5 Creedmoor - all with the long-stroke piston operating system.



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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

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