

# ARFID



**BUYER'S GUIDE**  
KNIVES BY  
SPECIAL  
OPERATORS  
V2



## MODERN FUTURE COWBOY

THE ROSSI R95  
TRIPLE BLACK

NOT AN AK-47  
THE M+M M10X

FIELD NOTES  
FROM DONBAS  
FORGOTTEN STORIES  
FROM THE RUSSO-  
UKRAINIAN WAR



THE ARCHON  
TYPE B, GEN 2

GWOT LAND CRUISERS  
CANCON CAROLINAS  
BANISH SPEED K SILENCER  
VISIT: FORT MCHENRY  
OLD SCHOOL: S&W VICTORY  
MODEL

★  
BCM



LIFE SAVING TOOLS



[BRAVOCOMPANYMFG.COM](http://BRAVOCOMPANYMFG.COM)

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# INFORCE.

**GEN3**

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#### FIREARM SAFETY IS TOP PRIORITY

RECOIL reminds you to be safe and:

1. Treat every gun as if it were loaded.
2. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
4. Always be aware of your target, and what lies beyond it.

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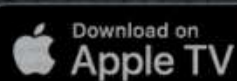
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COVER PHOTO BY DAVE MERRILL

**01**  
**PANTS**  
**Viktos**  
Taculus CCW Coolmax  
Jeans

**MSRP:** \$120

**URL:** viktos.com

**02**  
**JACKET**  
**Viktos**  
Operatus Jacket, Greyman

**MSRP:** \$150

**URL:** viktos.com

**03**  
**SHOES**  
**Viktos**  
Overbeach MC Shoe

**MSRP:** \$125

**URL:** viktos.com

**04**  
**RIFLE**  
**Rossi**  
R95 Triple Black

**MSRP:** \$1,288

**URL:** rossiusa.com

**ANECHOIC**  
**URL:** asilencer.com

**ARMAGEDDON GEAR**  
**URL:** armageddongear.com

**EOTECH**  
**URL:** eotechinc.com

**SUREFIRE**  
**URL:** surefire.com



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I guess this is a milestone of sorts. The 75th print issue of RECOIL is in your hands, and it's packed with exactly the kind of content that we're known for — and that you just won't find anywhere else. In a constantly evolving media landscape, we've tried to stay true to our values in order to bring you honest and balanced reviews, insight regarding guns that are outside of the mainstream, and stories covering interesting topics beyond a narrowly focused guns-and-ammo segment. Most media in this field, be it print or digital, is notorious for a "pay to play" attitude toward coverage. I'm proud to say that we've never sold a cover or taken money to run a

feature, and we're not afraid to broach subjects that others shy away from.

These next couple of months are going to be interesting ones for gun owners, as we stagger toward another presidential election. The topic of gun control was studiously ignored by both parties right up to the point where it became impossible to pretend that Biden was fit for office, and now we're offered the prospect of a regime even more hostile to the rights of everyday Americans.

Not that we should ignore the history and attitude of the Trump campaign toward us — as a rule, gun owners are courted as a constituency right up until Republicans

gain power, and then we're unceremoniously dumped like a fat girl the morning after prom night. Anyone remember the 2A commission we were promised, moving suppressors off the NFA, the bump stock ban ban, and "Take the guns first, due process second?" Because we sure as hell do.

Against a backdrop of wars in the Middle East and Europe, intelligence agencies of Russia, Iran, and China are conducting information operations aimed at destabilizing the U.S., with the goal of causing whatever administration gains power to deal with crises at home, rather than looking outward.

Of course, this has been aided and abetted by our own political parties, who since 2016 have sought to delegitimize election results if they happen to be on the losing end, cheered on by a compliant media who know full well that outrage results in clicks, and clicks mean dollars.

As Jefferson said, "A well-informed citizenry is the best defense against tyranny." It's somewhat disheartening when our own government, foreign spy organizations, our supposed news outlets, and particularly social media "influencers" work to undermine this. If we're to preserve what remains of the glorious experiment bequeathed to us by the founding fathers, then it's the responsibility of each of us to assess any information passed down as fact, and ask ourselves whether someone is trying to inform us, or if we're being manipulated into a given reaction or outcome. The question of whether a certain policy or decision serves the republic, and by extension individual liberty rather than narrow-vested interests, has never been more important.



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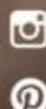
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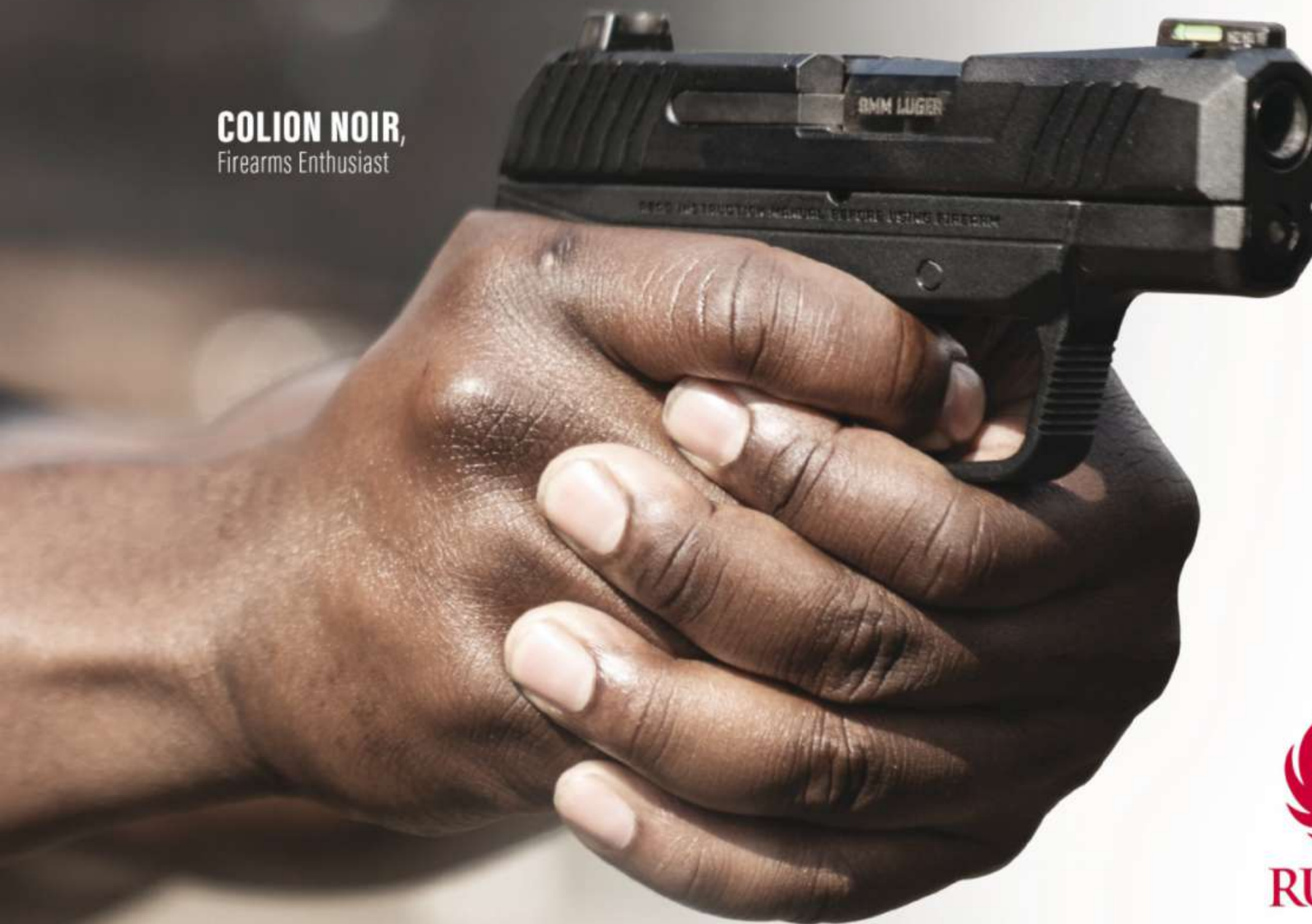


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Circulation/ NPS Media Group

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iStockphoto.com/ Cover (background): IanGoodPhotography; p50 (background): boschettophotography; p52 (background): phokin; ww

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## 01 DELTA V SOLUTIONS GEN 2 3MR

**MSRP:** \$349

**URL:** [deltavusa.com](http://deltavusa.com)

When upgrading, some folks focus on aesthetics and flashy elements, like what color to paint their rifle. A far more important component is the fire control group. After all, it's ultimately what makes your gun go boom. So, it only makes sense to put a lot of thought into which trigger assembly to get. Enter the Gen 2 3MR, a drop-in kit with three modes: safe, semi-auto, and Delta V's 3rd mode. This latter mode has a positive reset that reduces split times, achieved by transferring the force from the bolt carrier through the trigger assembly to assist the trigger back onto the front sear. Its semi-auto and 3rd mode have a non-adjustable 4.5-pound pull weight. The 3MR also comes with an ambidextrous selector.

## 02 HAZARD 4 BEACON LIGHT KIT - A

**MSRP:** \$49

**URL:** [hazard4.com](http://hazard4.com)

Seeing and being seen are important aspects of survival. Hazard 4's new Beacon Light Kit features a bright oval ring of LEDs for safety, signaling, and illumination without ruining your night vision. Outputting 100 lumens of red light, the core lighting unit is made of aluminum and nestles in a Velcro-backed base to attach to whatever you'd like. It's curved to fit nicely on helmets using the supplied adhesive Velcro sticker, but works just as well on bags, drones, bicycles, and so on. You could also thread some cordage through it and spin it in the air for high-visibility signaling. The light has constant-on and strobe modes at three levels of intensity and tempo. The built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery lasts for eight hours at maximum brightness and charges via a micro-USB port.

## 03 BASTINELLI KNIVES GAMBLER

**MSRP:** Starting at \$120

**URL:** [bastinelliknives.com](http://bastinelliknives.com)

Potential legal issues notwithstanding, a fixed blade is preferred over folders if self-defense is your main concern. And among fixed blades, the punch dagger might be the most natural option for firearm enthusiasts because the draw stroke and presentation will be quite similar to deploying a handgun. That's why we're big fans of the Gambler from Bastinelli Knives. This sexy-yet-deadly bad boy is just 6.29 inches long yet feels just as good in the hand as our favorite subcompact pistol, thanks to G10 handle scales and a smart design. The 3.54-inch blade is made from high-quality VG-10 stainless steel with a PVD coating for added durability. It comes in plain or serrated edge with an awesome Kydex sheath and Ulticlip.

## 04 STREAMLIGHT STRION 2020

**MSRP:** Starting at \$218

**URL:** [streamlight.com](http://streamlight.com)

Smaller, lighter, and at least 10 times more powerful than flashlights that came out 30 years ago, the Streamlight Strion 2020 is a step forward in the evolution of handheld illumination tools. Though it's only 6.33 inches long and weighs 5.7 ounces, this light puts out 1,200 lumens up to 335 meters (366 yards) for 1.75 hours on a single lithium-ion battery. If you don't need the power of a portable sun, hit the convenient mode select switch for medium mode (460 lumens) or low mode (120 lumens). To activate the strobe function, just double click the head switch or the tail-cap button. This Streamlight model is quite sturdy, thanks to an aluminum body, an impact-resistant lens, and a IPX7 waterproof rating.







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## 05 WILEY X WX SIERRA

**MSRP:** \$150

**URL:** wileyx.com

At first blush, the WX Sierra from Wiley X look like fashionable shades, but they actually feature impact-resistant lenses that meet ANSI Z87.1+ safety standards. That means they can withstand high-velocity impacts, such as shrapnel or ricochets. If that's not enough, they also come with removable side shields. The lenses also offer 100-percent UVA/UVB protection with distortion-free clarity, so you can rock them at a pool party, on the hiking trail, or at an outdoor range. To make sure the WX Sierra is comfy all day long, Wiley X outfitted them with rubber molded nose pads and dual-injected rubber temple tips.



## 06 WARBIRD PROTECTION GROUP INTREPID BT

**MSRP:** Starting at \$159

**URL:** warbirdpro.com

A good pair of ear pro goes a long way in terms of safety and longevity. That's why WarBird recently introduced its Intrepid series of electronic hearing protection. The top of the line is the Intrepid BT, which offers three modes depending on your situation: Bluetooth only, hearing protection only, and a combination of the two. With a noise reduction rate of 23 dB, this electronic ear pro can instantly dampen loud noises (like gunshots) while amplifying ambient sound so you can stay aware of your surroundings or hold a conversation. The Intrepid BT is easy to use and comfortable to wear, thanks to gel ear seals and a padded, adjustable headband. An added bonus: It charges conveniently using a micro-USB cable.



## 07 REPTILIA AUS AND ROF MOUNTS

**COLORWAYS:** Black, Flat Dark Earth, OD Green

**MSRP:** \$325 for AUS; \$115 for ROF

**URL:** reptiliacorp.com

Reptilia makes a variety of firearms accessories, including optic mounts, grips, stocks, and rail accessories. They've grown and become known for designing and manufacturing accessories and systems for very discerning door-kicking end users with very particular preferences, even if they weren't high-volume orders. Their AUS and ROF optics mounting system was borne of this process; you may have seen them recently on the new L403A1 rifles procured by the UK military. The AUS mount is machined from a single piece of 7075 aluminum and features low-profile, snag-free clamp mounts, as these units didn't want quick detach capability. These are bombproof, set-it-and-forget-it scope mounts. The ROF mount replaces the top half of the scope ring to mount a red-dot optic, either at 90 degrees on top or offset at 45 degrees. The AUS come in 30, 34, and 35mm diameters and 1.54-, 1.7-, and 1.93-inch heights, while the ROF support a variety of optic footprints.



## 08 MAVEN OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT CO. B.5 MOA/MIL

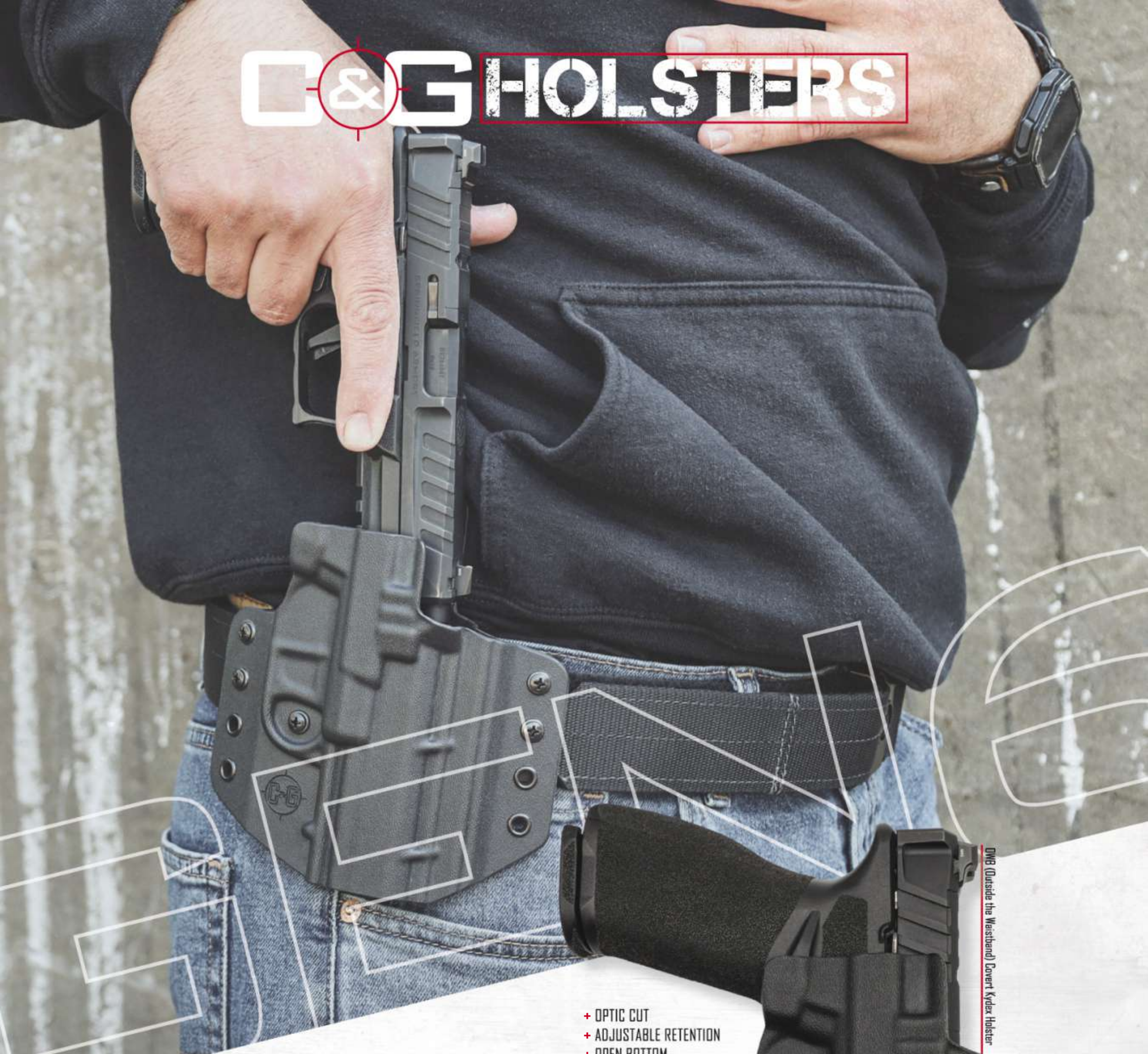
**MSRP:** \$1,700

**URL:** mavenbuilt.com

There are binoculars, and then there's the Maven B.5. This beast is Maven's largest objective binocular, which features a massive 56mm objective lens and 18-times magnification. Tailored for hunters and long-range shooters, it has a fixed reticle (either MOA or MIL) so you can range targets and make adjustments to your hold in the field. The B.5 MOA/MIL has a lightweight magnesium frame, an Abbe-Koenig prism, fluorite glass, and fully multicoated lenses. This combination provides a clear, high-contrast image and exceptional color fidelity. Moreover, it's waterproof and fog-proof. Standing 8.2 inches tall and clocking in at 2.8 pounds, this Maven model is tripod adaptable and comes with a neoprene neck strap, lens caps, and double-layered microfiber storage bag.



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## 09 BACKPACKER'S PANTRY BEEF BOLOGNESE

**MSRP:** \$13

**URL:** backpackerspantry.com

Whether you're a hunter packing backup rations, a camper who keeps mealtime simple, or a prepper replenishing your cache, freeze-dried food is a fantastically convenient option. It's lightweight, reducing your cargo weight. It's easy to make — just add boiling water and wait. And it's usually far tastier than MREs, also known as Meals Rejected by Everyone. Case in point: Backpacker's Pantry recently released a slew of new flavors, and the Beef Bolognese caught our eye and delighted our taste buds. Sure, it won't compare to what's served at a Michelin-starred restaurant, but as far as portable foods go, this meal is top notch. If you're looking for more dishes, Backpacker's Pantry also has Pesto Pasta with Chicken and even Drunken Noodles with Chicken.

## 10 DANNER WALLOWA NYLON SANDAL

**MSRP:** \$130

**URL:** danner.com

For almost a century, Danner has built rugged boots that withstand the rigors of outdoor life. Unsurprisingly, its Wallowa Nylon Sandal is as robust and comfortable as you would come to expect from the Oregon company. Its ergonomic PU midsole, with integrated polypropylene board, offers solid support for your entire foot. Underneath, the Vibram Traction Cascade Outsole has a unique lug pattern that assures a good grip on almost any terrain. Above, the webbing, padded heel strap, and top-latching buckle ensure a comfy and secure fit. Should you wear them to go shooting? No. But can you strap them on to run an errand, cross a stream, or even hike a backcountry trail? No doubt.

## 11 5.11 TACTICAL DART 10-INCH SHORT

**MSRP:** \$58

**URL:** 511tactical.com

If you're like us, you're not going into this fall season quietly. You'll rock T-shirts and shorts for as long as the mild autumn weather allows it. And that's exactly what we'll do with the Dart 10-inch Short, which is now available in Pacific Navy. We love these shorts because they have some smart tactical features without screaming, "Tacticool!" For example, the hand pockets have an angled opening with knife reinforcements and the back yoke utility pockets let you store more gear in addition to the zippered rear pockets. There's also reinforced belt loops with a center back webbing loop and a front right leg welt utility pocket. The Dart is made of 100-percent polyester with mechanical stretch and snag-free Enduro-Flex properties.

## 12 MAGPUL DAKA HARD CASE, LR53

**MSRP:** \$369

**URL:** magpul.com

The Magpul DAKA Hard Case, LR53 can comfortably hold one or more long guns and much of the additional gear required to travel with your firearms. That's because it's built around Magpul's innovative DAKA GRID Organizer, which is like LEGOs for grown-ups. Most cases have foam inserts that only allow for certain configurations once you pick and pluck them. The DAKA GRID has customizable end panels, center panels, and blocks that nest securely together, creating a drop-in system that conforms around your gear — not the other way around. Outside, the LR53 has rounded, double-walled corners to increase strength and impact resistance while decreasing snagging during transport. It also has an innovative latch system, a water- and weather-resistant gasket, ergonomic handles, and durable wheels. Made in the USA.



09



12



10



11



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## The Fortification That Saved America

By Peter Suci

**M**ost historians today will agree that while we may celebrate the Fourth of July, the United States of America was essentially born on April 19, 1775, at the Battles of Lexington and Concord, where the first “shot” of the American Revolution was heard around the world. In addition, the nation secured its independence at the Battle of Yorktown when the British Army surrendered on October 19, 1781. However, the United States was arguably saved at the Battle of Baltimore on September 15, 1814.

Today, Fort McHenry is a U.S. National Monument.

A display shows the smaller ship guns that might have been used to fire on Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore.





Though the United States may not have fallen under British control again, the country may have been greatly weakened had the British succeeded at the battle — and more importantly, we certainly wouldn't have the “Star-Spangled Banner” as a national anthem. Most Americans also know some of the history of the now famous engagement, including that the anthem was written during the siege of Fort McHenry in the Baltimore harbor, yet it is an event that largely hasn't gotten the due it deserves.

## THE WAR OF 1812

The United States and Great Britain had actually been at war since June 1812, although the British military was largely focused on Europe and its fight against Napoleonic France. That limited British earlier war aims in America, which changed greatly with the defeat of France's Emperor Napo-

leon in the spring of 1814, after which the British adopted a more aggressive strategy against its former colonies.

Along with support from Canadian militias and their First Nation allies, the British Army drove the American forces out of the parts of Canada that had been occupied by the American forces earlier in the conflict, while it further sought to invade and capture the largest ports including New York City, New Orleans, and Baltimore. In August 1814, the British Army under Major General Robert Ross entered Washington and captured the city, which was set to the torch. The White House and Capitol Building each suffered extensive damage. It was a devastating blow to the morale of the nation.

## THE BATTLE OF BALTIMORE

Residents of Baltimore feared a similar fate to that of Washington,

These Rodman Cannons were the largest ever mounted at Fort McHenry. They dated much later than the War of 1812, but they serve as a reminder of the challenge for any invader even after the days of wooden ships. The guns could fire exploding projectiles weighing up to 440 pounds. Mass-produced guns represented the “coming of age” of America's iron industry.

but the city had time to prepare its defenses. That included Fort McHenry — although it faced its own setbacks. The fort's regular garrison in September 1814 was the U.S. Corps of Artillery under the command of Captain Frederick Evans. However, on the eve of the battle, only 60 of the 103 “reputable young men” who made up the corps were available for duty. The rest were sick, had deserted, or were under military guard for discipline issues. The hopes improved when U.S. Army General George Armistead arrived to aid in the defense, and as part of his efforts to rally the defenders, he ordered a flag so large that the British would have no difficulty seeing it from a distance.

Despite the odds, and facing General Ross' battle-hardened veterans, the corps and militia artillerymen from the Maryland Militia Volunteer Artillery manned their guns and sought to fend



off the British attack. The volunteers represented some of the city's most prominent merchants and investors — who no doubt were also eager to defend their businesses, homes, and families.

The British had another advantage over the American defenders. The guns at the fort had at most a range of 1.5 miles, while the Royal Navy's guns could reach two miles. The British plan was simple: bomb Fort McHenry until it surrendered, sail the fleet into the harbor, and capture Baltimore. On the morning of September 14, a fleet of some 19 ships began pounding the fort with Congreve rockets and mortar shells. The shelling lasted for 25 hours, but though 1,500 of the 1,800 cannonballs fired at the fort struck near or on it, the damage was light due to recent fortifications that had been completed before the battle. Luck may have been on the American

A scale replica of the type of American warships in service at the time along with weapons that were used in the defense of Baltimore.



A display shows the smaller ship guns that might have been used to fire on Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore.

side, as heavy rain in the evening hours limited the impact of the British bombardment and just four defenders were killed.

It was on the morning of September 15 that a 30x42-foot oversized American flag — made by local flagmaker Mary Pickersgill and her

13-year-old daughter — was raised over the fort, inspiring Francis Scott Key but more importantly the fort's defenders. There is a long-standing rumor that the flag was raised to taunt the British, but it was simply part of the morning reveille. The British had failed to break the garrison at Fort





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The powder rooms were reinforced over the years and could withstand heavy shelling in the 19th century.

During the siege, a British cannonball struck the main powder storage and while it didn't do significant damage, it was decided after the battle to add multiple powder magazines at Fort McHenry.

**THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER**

It has also been widely told to schoolchildren over the years that lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key was being held captive by the Royal Navy when he witnessed the bombardment. That's not exactly accurate; Key was actually on a mercy mission for the release of Dr. William Beanes, the actual prisoner, who Key argued had cared for British as well as American wounded prior to Beanes' arrest.

Key watched the daylong assault from a truce ship in the Patapsco River, and it was from that vantage point that he saw the American flag waving above Fort McHenry. He wrote a draft of the poem "Defence of Fort McHenry" on an envelope, which he later set to the tune "To Anacreon in Heaven" — not to a sailor's drinking

McHenry, while Ross was killed in the land battle fought on the outskirts of the city. Failing to achieve victory, the Royal Navy withdrew later that morning, and the fleet set sail for New Orleans — the site of the final battle

of the War of 1812.

The Star-Spangled Banner flag that flew so famously over Fort McHenry is now in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.



The 1814 cross — lost and found

Where did the Star-Spangled Banner fly in 1814? For a long time, it was unclear. Images of the flag have been found in various places, but in 1987, a flag was found in the ruins of the fort. The flag was found in a room that was used as a storehouse for the British. The flag was found in a room that was used as a storehouse for the British. The flag was found in a room that was used as a storehouse for the British.

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song as many a teacher may have stated over the years.

Regardless, today, those words form the national anthem of the United States of America.

### VISITING THE FORT

Though Fort McHenry is remembered for the War of 1812, it was built in 1798 and was used continuously by the U.S. armed forces through the First World War and the United States Coast Guard during the Second World War.

During the American Civil War, Fort McHenry's defensive role was once again prominent, with its large cannons not only pointed toward the water to defend the city from coastal attack but also pointed toward the center of Baltimore to intimidate its pro-secession population into remaining in the Union.

The fort then served as a military prison, confining both Confederate soldiers, as well as Maryland political figures who openly criticized President Abraham Lincoln. That included the newly elected Baltimore Mayor George William Brown, the city council, the new police commissioner, George P. Kane, and members of the Maryland General Assembly along with several newspaper editors and owners. For its role in housing political prisoners during the



Fort McHenry features numerous interactive displays — in this one, the defense plans for the fort against the anticipated British invasion are presented to visitors.

A British bomb that failed to “burst in air” during the attack on Fort McHenry was recovered after the battle, and today serves to show visitors the size of the cannonballs used in the bombardment.



A number of cannons that have been recovered from construction sites around Baltimore in recent years are now on display at Fort McHenry. These are from the same era as the cannons that would have been employed in the defense of Baltimore in September 1814.



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years of the Civil War, some dubbed Fort McHenry “The American Bastille.”

Following the Civil War, Fort McHenry declined in strategic importance, while its structures and defenses were outdated for modern machines of war. However, when the United States entered the First World War in 1917, the site found a new purpose. The grounds surrounding the fort were transformed into a massive 100-building and 3,000-bed hospital. General Hospital No. 2, as it was called, existed from 1917 to 1925 and marked the busiest period in Fort McHenry’s history.

Following the closure of General Hospital No. 2, the U.S. Army began restoring the fort to its mid-19th-century appearance. It was designated a national park in 1925, and, in 1939, was redesignated a U.S. National Monument. Though additional buildings were added during the First World War, those were subsequently removed when Fort



The imposing walls of Fort McHenry — one of the best preserved “star forts” and certainly among the most famous in the United States.

McHenry was made a national park. Today, it remains a center of recreation for Baltimore locals and a prominent tourist destination that’s open to the public. It’s also one of the best preserved “star forts” in the United States. **R**



**FORT MCHENRY**

**ADDRESS:** 2400 E. Fort Ave, Baltimore, MD 21230

**HOURS:** Fort McHenry is open daily, except for major holidays.

**URL:** [nps.gov/FOMC](https://www.nps.gov/FOMC)

The main gate of Fort McHenry would certainly be imposing on an attacking force. However, it walked the men and women who helped ensure America’s victory in the War of 1812.







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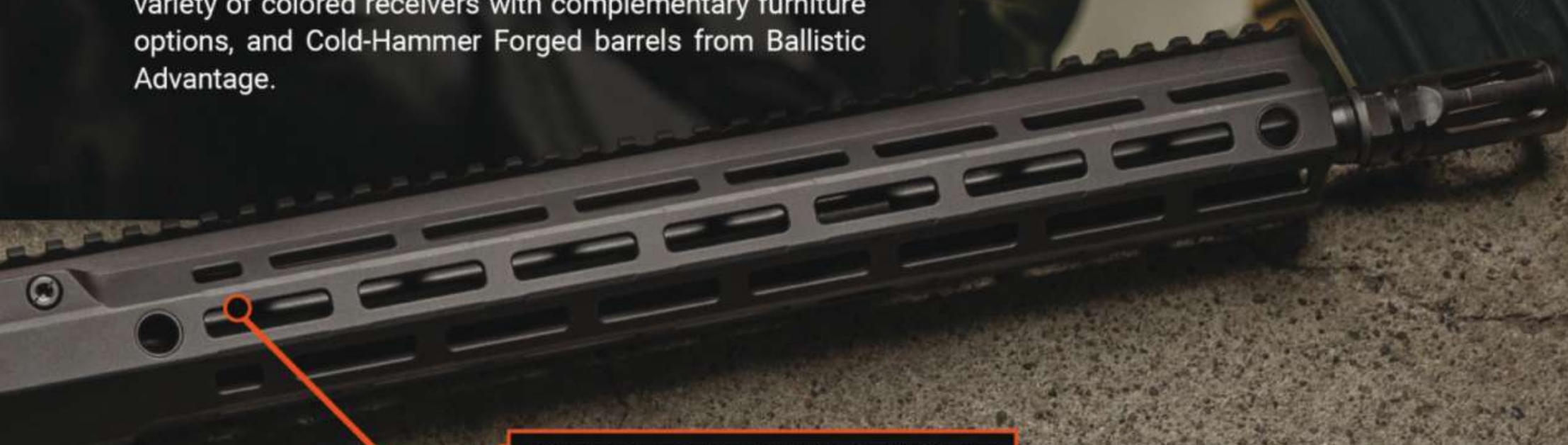
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## SOURCES

GOAT TACTICAL ATLAS  
APC CIVILIAN EDITION  
[goattactical.com](http://goattactical.com)

04.2 1A/2A: OR ABRIDGING



# METAL MILITIA

GOAT Tactical's Atlas APC is an Effective Blend of Battlefield Capability and Consumer Practicality

By John Schwartz  
Photography courtesy GOAT Tactical



**W**hen the Hummer first came became available as a civilian version of the original AM General Humvee, people were excited about the prospect of owning a tactical vehicle with battlefield roots. When GM took over production, the Hummer steadily devolved into a bloated, blinged-out hooty that bore little resemblance to its rugged progenitor. Nowadays, a roughly 10,000-pound electric version [insert muffled giggle here] is attempting to rekindle interest in a model that's become a parody of itself. If sh\*t really hit the fan, would you want to be driving one? Spoiler alert: It's survival of the fittest, not the most politically correct.

Over the years, RECOIL has shown you lots of armored



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Based on the Ford F-550, the ATLAS takes "Built Ford Tough" to a whole new level.

badassery on four wheels, ranging from DIY to bespoke turnkey. With vehicles of this type, however, there tends to be a lot of oxymoronic attempts at combining brute pragmatism with opulence overkill. For instance, you can get electrified door handles and a smoke screen on a Rezvani. That's cool for trust fund babies with Batman fetishes, but it's also bordering on vehicular

LARPing. Those seriously considering a mode of transportation that can be used and abused will want something that's already proven itself on the global battlefield.

Enter GOAT Tactical. While this name may not yet be colloquial among the defensively minded and automotive astute, they're certainly cranking out a product that has a good blend of creature comforts and combat pragmatism. Most U.S. Military vehicles aren't street legal for the average civilian, plus the near impossibility to locate one for a decent price. Plus, there's the headache of procuring proprietary parts and ser-

vice. Thankfully with GOAT's Atlas APC Civilian Edition, you won't have to worry about any of that.

"We're a bunch of industry guys and veterans who love guns and the lifestyle surrounding them," says founding partner Mike Miller. "It's pretty clear that everyone loves military-inspired vehicles. The founding partners, having spent years in the armored vehicle industry, saw the opportunity to bring a current-generation, authentic military vehicle to the civilian market."

The Atlas is as imposing as it looks, but make no mistake, this isn't some Navigator masquerading as an MRAP.



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The Colt Viper is the ultimate carry revolver, boasting a half lug design for enhanced concealability and reduced weight. Crafted with precision from forged stainless steel and chambered in 357 Magnum for unparalleled performance. Available in both 3" and 4.25".

Buyers can pick from a B6- or B7-level armored capsule (including the glass and engine compartment) built on a Ford F-550 chassis and drivetrain with a Super Single rear-wheel setup instead of a dually. This gives it the purpose-built, load-bearing resilience of a commercial vehicle with the drivability of an SUV.

The "Base Tactical Package" features interior appointments like touchscreen controls, optional leather seats, and Bluetooth compatibility give it that modern familiarity with the extra incentive of having features like battle locks and gun ports on the doors. Because the focus of the Atlas is passenger survivability, the floor and fuel tank are rated to Stanag level 1 standards, which is to say they'll withstand simultaneous blasts of two DM51 grenades. Although the B7 armor is almost visually indistinguishable from the lighter B6, upgraded axles, brakes, steering column, and other accessories are added to keep the driving manageable on the thicker option.

Seating can be configured for up to 12 passengers, and storage compartments abound its imposing exterior. Buyers can also opt for custom equipment like a roof turret with a motorized or manual 360-degree ring system or armored cupola. And aside from whatever your desired color scheme is, you can also opt for a 360 lighting package, secondary 26.5-gallon fuel tank, central tire inflation system, run-flat tires, train horns, and rage cages over the windows just to name a few choices buyers get.

If you'd also like specific armor levels in certain areas of the vehicle, it can be set up to withstand a particular caliber by supplementing with ceramics and different anti-spal materials. In terms of customization, the sky is the limit — from purely tactical configurations to interiors that would rival a private jet. The point is that the customer get a final product meant to solve whatever particular problems they're concerned about.

Vehicles are built to order, and production time is about 120 days for the base



The ultimate mix of power, presence and protection. Street legal battlefield hardware.

B6-armored models have a 17,196-pound curb weight, while B7 armoring tops the scale at over 22,400 pounds.

Run flat tires will run approximately 50 mph for 50 miles after puncture.



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package. GOAT Tactical is also currently set up to uparmor the average off-the-lot vehicle, so if you want something more discreet, like an armored Toyota Camry, they can certainly help you with that. Future bespoke offerings intend to include a notch above and below the Atlas in terms of size and features, so stay tuned.

The Atlas APC is likely the closest thing you can get to owning a real-deal military vehicle that's assembled in the







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## GOAT TACTICAL ATLAS APC CIVILIAN EDITION



**ENGINE:**

6.7L V-8 turbodiesel

**TRANSMISSION:**

10-speed automatic

**HEIGHT:**

97.5 inches

**LENGTH:**

249 inches

**WIDTH:**

100 inches

**WHEELBASE:**

145 inches

**TRACK:**

94.5 inches

**FORDING DEPTH:**

31.5 inches

**SIDE SLOPE GRADIENT:**

16.7 degrees

**INCLINE GRADIENT:**

31 degrees

**FUEL CAPACITY:**

39 gallons

**PAYLOAD:**

3,306 pounds

**B6 ARMOR WEIGHT:**

17,196 pounds

**B7 ARMOR WEIGHT:**

22,400 pounds

U.S. and offers the global serviceability and component support you'd expect for any Blue Oval. GOAT seems to have put out a vehicle that's got a nice mixture of HK refinement, AR versatility, and AK durability. A base-level B6 model will cost around \$400K, but comparatively speaking, it seems like those dollars

The size might make it look like a chore to drive, but minimal modifications to the stock F-550 chassis make it about as easy as driving a U-Haul.



get you a lot in return. Yes, we know it requires having f\*ck-you money to own, but what's your life worth? It's also reasonable to assume that South African cash-in-transit companies might see the practicality in something like this. Just ask Leo Prinsloo.

"You can have all the firepower in the world, but without proper protection, you're most vulnerable in your vehicle," says Miller. "Occupied by the task of driving ... not to mention that most of the components in modern cars are about as bullet resistant as a soda can. The Atlas provides ultimate capability in terms of performance and protection."

Some are willing to go on a Hot Pocket diet for a while to afford the CCW pistol they'll entrust their safety to, while others won't go over \$300 regardless of performance. Is there a right answer? It depends on who you ask, but the minute a real war starts, what mode of transportation might you want to search for food, supplies, and repel the unwashed masses amidst hostile conditions? That Veyron you drove to cars and coffee on the weekend won't be worth much anymore. Hopefully Bugatti threw in a box of tampons for your trouble. **R**

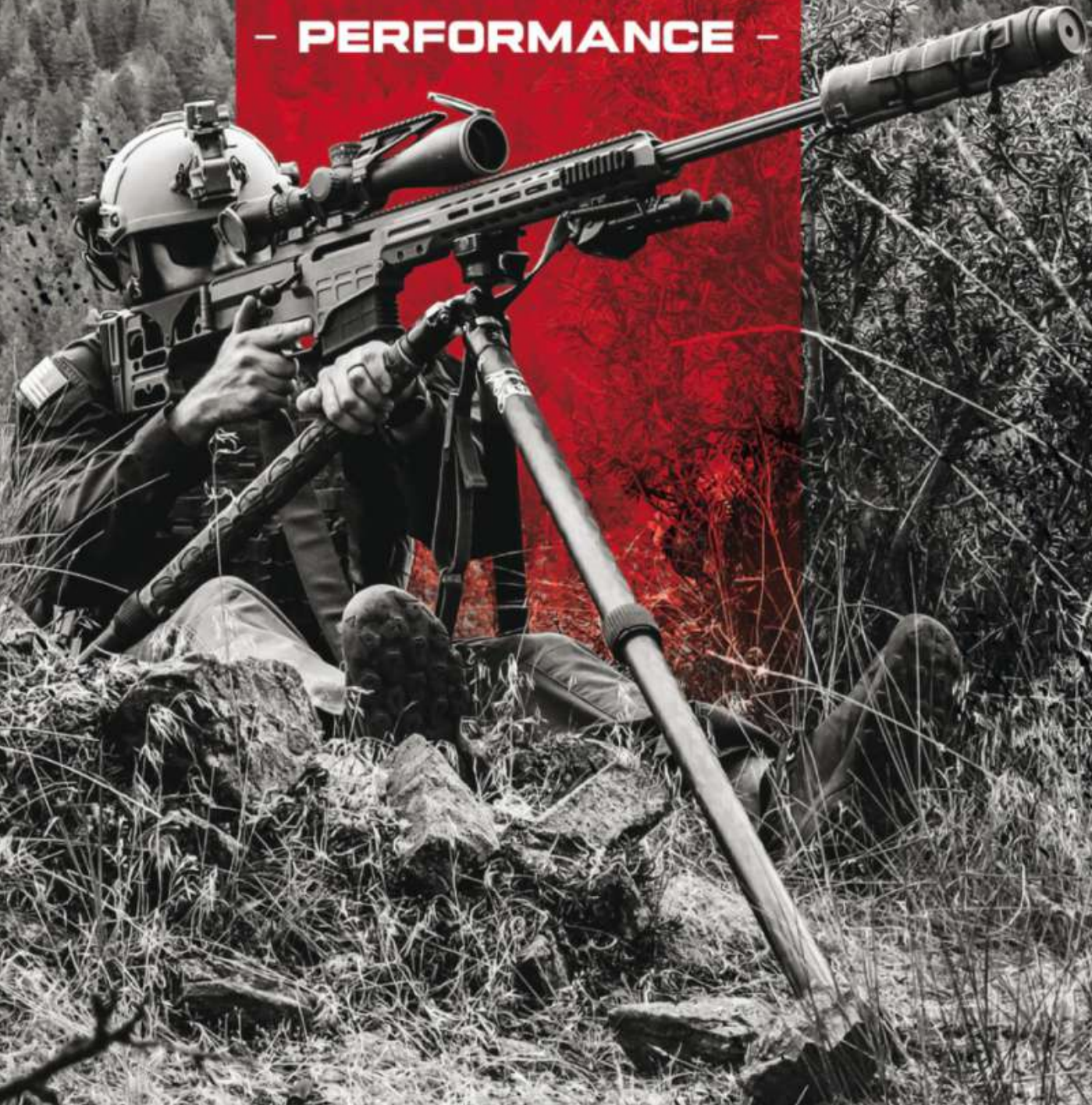
The Atlas is available now to discerning collectors and operators alike.



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# FIT TO FIGHT V2

## Knives Built by Special Operators

By Mike Searson

Last issue we looked at knives *designed* by Special Operators, and this time out we're going to see knives *made* by Special Operators. Each one comes from a SEAL, Green Beret, or Marine Corps Scout Sniper. Most are custom knives, but a few were made by retired SF soldiers who own their own knife companies.

When we think of a tactical knife, do we think of a plumber, engineer, mechanic or even a judo master as having a say on what goes into that design? No, most of us think of the battle-hardened Special Operations warriors who rely on them daily.

These designs are the culmination of different elements that these men deemed necessary in a knife, whether for use on the battlefield or use in civilian life as an EDC or working blade. In some instances, they took sound, proven designs and used them in different applications. You can see this in nearly every aspect of each knife from the raw material used to the contours of the handle, the profile of the blade and even the sheath systems of a few of the fixed blades.

This article was long in the making and a few of these blades have been tested and used for well over a year. **R**

**1**

**Corvus Knife and Tool Carrion**

OAL: 6 inches  
 Blade Length: 2.6 inches  
 Blade Material: 80CRV2  
 Weight: 4 ounces  
 MSRP: \$285  
 Designer: Jerry Saunders  
 Branch: U.S. Marine Corps  
 URL: corvuskt.com

**2**

**Tracker Dan Bloodshark Edge and Half**

OAL: 6.75 inches  
 Blade Length: 3.25 inches  
 Blade Material: Magnacut  
 Weight: 4 ounces  
 MSRP: \$900  
 Designer: Tracker Dan  
 Branch: U.S. Navy SEALs  
 URL: trackerdanknives.com

**3**

**SH9 Knives Stinger**

OAL: 7.5 inches  
 Blade Length: 3.5 inches  
 Blade Material: 1095 steel  
 Weight: 4 ounces  
 MSRP: \$259  
 Designer: Shane Hiatt  
 Branch: U.S. Navy SEALs  
 URL: sh9.com



**Weimy Cutlery  
FS1**

**4.**

OAL: 8.12 inches

Blade Length: 3.43 inches

Weight: 4.1 ounces

Handle Material: G10

Blade Steel: Hitachi White Carbon  
Steel Core Laminated with SUS410  
Stainless

MSRP: \$600

Maker: Brendan "Weimy" Weimholt

Branch: U.S. Navy SEALs

URL: weimycutlery.com

**Spartan Blades  
Phrike**

**5.**

OAL: 8.5 inches

Blade Length: 4.25 inches

Weight: 4.2 ounces

Handle Material: G10

Blade Steel: CPM Magnacut

MSRP: \$280

Designer: Mark Carey/Curtis Iovito

Branch: U.S. Army Special Forces

URL: spartanbladesusa.com

**Half Face Blades  
Crow Scout**

**6.**

OAL: 10 inches

Blade Length: 5 inches

Blade Material: S45VN

Weight: 5 ounces

MSRP: \$500

Designer: Andy Arrabito

Branch: U.S. Navy SEALs

URL: halffaceblades.com

**FOBOS Knives  
Alaris**

**7.**

OAL: 10.5 inches

Blade Length: 5 inches

Weight: 10.9 ounces

Handle Material: Micarta

Blade Steel: CPM-3V

MSRP: \$349

Designer: Erik Hansen

Branch: U.S. Army Special Forces

URL: fobos.com





## CORVUS KNIFE AND TOOL CARRION

**411:** Jerry Saunders served as a Scout Sniper and was chief survival instructor at the Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California. He is a veteran who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Haiti. His experience with further survival and instruction would take up an article of its own.

The Carrion represents the important and robust elements that Saunders needed in a daily working knife. Built from 80CrV2 steel, the blade performs and deploys quickly when you need it most. The handle conforms to the hand, and the sheath is another engineering marvel from a design perspective.

### PROS:

- + The ergonomics are incredible. This is due to a jute cord handle impregnated with epoxy to make a handle material similar to Micarta.
- + 80CrV2 is a tough as nails workhorse of a steel that excels at edge retention.
- + The ambidextrous sheath is a superb design if you commonly change your mode of carry from right to left-hand side.

### CONS:

- The handle, although ergonomic, can feel a bit too short at times.



## TRACKER DAN BLOODSHARK EDGE AND HALF

**411:** Tracker Dan's designs have become the hottest tactical fixed blades on the custom knife scene. Dan is a SEAL, Kali instructor, and survival instructor who once trained with the legendary Tom Brown. The Bloodshark is his design for an ideal tactical EDC fixed blade that can be carried in the front pocket for quick access. The Bloodshark Edge and Half is a slight variation on this idea with a partially sharpened top edge.

The handle is gutted 550 paracord wrapped in a Japanese style over hemp and then resin-coated for a non-slip grip and durability. It has a real Japanese look to it.

The Kydex sheath is designed to ride in the pocket and features a deep carry clip designed by Dan.

### PROS:

- + Classic design reminiscent of a Scottish Sgian-dubh or Viking-style dirk
- + Shaving sharp with a Magnacut blade, this one is a real-world performer for self-defense and basic survival.
- + The sheath setup is ingenious for discrete pocket carry. Dan pioneered this trend.

### CONS:

- There may be a few jurisdictions which frown on carrying a concealed fixed blade, know your laws.
- These knives can be hard to come by, and aftermarket prices can be four to five times what the maker charges at a table.



## SH9 KNIVES STINGER

**411:** Shane Hiatt is a Navy SEAL veteran and founder of SH9 Knives. After serving on both coasts and as an instructor for the Naval Special Warfare Center, Hiatt started making knives a decade ago as a hobby but turned it into a full-time business.

The Stinger is a classic everyday carry piece for the street or for the field. Slightly smaller than his standard forged drop point, the Stinger is easier to carry concealed either on the belt or around the neck. Despite its compact size, this blade is a performer.

Hand-forged of 1095 carbon steel, the Stinger boasts a sharp edge and has excellent edge retention.

### PROS:

- + Shane's custom blades excel regarding ergonomics.
- + Its 1095 blade is tough, razor sharp, and has an easily maintainable edge.
- + The sheath provides plenty of options for mounting and carry.

### CONS:

- A high carbon stainless steel can rust if not maintained. Cerakote is an option, but ensure you take care of your steel as you would a blued firearm.
- The sheath started out a little too tight, but gradually wore in.



## WEIMY CUTLERY FS1

**411:** Brendan "Weimy" Weimholt is a custom bladesmith based in Texas who proudly served as a U.S. Navy SEAL. His knives are hand-forged using Hitachi White carbon steel core laminated with SUS410 stainless for a very artistic and decorative look while still being fully functional.

Although he's famous for his outstanding kitchen knives, Weimy carried this same technique over to his outdoor and tactical models such as the FS1.

While it may have the look of an artistic bespoke blade, this is a full-on worker for EDC tasks.

### PROS:

- + This blade is forged from Hitachi White carbon steel core laminated with SUS410 stainless. This alloy that Weimy selected has been nothing short of impressive on all fronts.
- + Each forged blade has a unique look. No two will ever be completely alike.
- + Extremely sharp with a well-honed edge

### CONS:

- The blade is an alloy of carbon steel; you need to maintain it as you would a blued firearm and oil after use.
- As with any custom knife in high demand, knives can be hard to come by at times.



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## SPARTAN BLADES PHRIKE

**411:** This model was designed by two retired Green Berets and made by their company: Spartan Blades. The Phrike is named for the Greek goddess of fear and horror. The end result is a slender fixed blade knife capable of daily tasks and a formidable defensive blade.

This is a solid and graceful fighting knife intended for covert carry inside the waistband. The G10 scales are not fitted all the way to the tang, making it very easy to handle but probably a bit less grippy for most folks.

### PROS:

- + Super light at 4.2 ounces. This is a fast-handling knife despite its size.
- + Magnacut steel really makes this knife special if you carry it close to the body, in the rain or in a maritime environment as it is a very rust resistant steel.
- + The sheath allows for covert IWB carry.

### CONS:

- The scales don't go all the way to the edge of the handle, which might make it less grippy for those with 7XL-size hands. Scales fitted all the way to the edge should be a future option.



## HALF FACE BLADES CROW SCOUT

**411:** Half Face Blades is a custom knife-making company founded by former Navy SEAL and Hollywood actor, Andy Arrabito. He makes handcrafted blades with strong visual appeal intended for hard use.

Although they are handmade knives with artistic flair (buffalo horn, Koa wood, and other exotic materials are commonly found on these pieces as well as the G10 found on this model), many of Arrabito's knives have found their way downrange on various war fronts.

The Crow Scout is one of his more well-known designs and is a tough everyday working knife. It's equally capable skinning a deer, opening boxes, making kindling, or as a self-defense piece.

### PROS:

- + The aesthetics are phenomenal on this model — it almost looks too good to put to use
- + S45 VN steel is a great one regarding toughness, corrosion resistance and edge retention, and the model can be had in a variety of other steels, including Damascus.
- + Although this one features a custom leather sheath, the Kydex offerings are top notch in design.

### CONS:

- These knives are in high demand and can be hard to come by if you miss a drop or higher priced on the secondary market.
- S45-VN can be difficult to sharpen for a novice sharpener.



## FOBOS ALARIS

**411:** Eric Hansen is a retired Green Beret Medic and CIF (Commander's In-Extremis Force) veteran who deployed to Afghanistan numerous times. As a civilian, he founded FOBOS Knives. FOBOS, For Operators By Operators, is a veteran owned, service-related disabled business — and all the knives are designed with Hansen's unique special operations approach, particularly regarding his sheaths.

Most sheaths seem like an afterthought, but a common theme through FOBOS (and to be fair, the other fixed blades in this guide) is how robust and practical they are. The Alaris is a deep belly fixed blade knife made from high-quality CPM-3V steel and features a utilitarian drop point that makes it an amazing choice if you're venturing off the grid for a while.

You can tell that a lot of thought went into this design. It chops, slices, and dices with all the authority of a camp knife and is still portable enough to carry as an EDC blade.

### PROS:

- + CPM-3V steel is as tough as a tool steel and offers great edge retention and wear resistance.
- + Ergonomically, it fits the hand well in both the forward and reverse grip.
- + This is an excellent off-the-grid or camp knife, as it can accomplish a number of tasks with relative ease.

### CONS:

- Hansen's knives are in high demand, and it can be a bit of a struggle to find one of the Alaris variants to your exact specs, as there are multiple variations out there.
- This one could have come a bit sharper. It took a bit more time than usual with a diamond stone to get it to where it needed to be.



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# OA 2311s

The Right Formula?

By Nick Saiti

Photos by Kenda Lenseigne



**F**ormula 1 racing is the apex of motor-sports. It's on the cutting edge of technology, but in a conservative way. To clarify, totally new concepts are very risky, so refining existing ideas is a safer game plan, with a goal of getting an advantage without going off the deep end. An entirely

new technology has a chance of not working out and when you're dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars per season, no one can afford to take that risk.

The focus becomes finding combinations of "safer" ideas that will net a better result. The problem is there are no new ideas; so evolving

existing ideas is the order of business. Finding ideas from outside arenas to fit the racing circuit is a thought process in and of itself. For example, turbo chargers were first designed for use in aircraft engines. Eventually, some crazy gear head strapped one to his car to see what would happen. The rest is horsepower history.





As a byproduct, some of these ideas trickle down into the consumer market. Products like carbon fiber, paddle shifters, and steering wheel buttons all have their roots in racing. Evolution doesn't just bring new products but also new ways of thinking, and that's what gets the winning result.

The firearm industry works the same way on a slower and less stressful scale — both the internal combustion engine and the semi-auto firearm evolved at about the same time in the human condition. Ideas come together to advance products. The good ideas make their way into the mainstream



market; see red dots and polymer frames on pistols. Mindset and technology mix in an attempt to gain progress and innovation.

OA Defense (formerly Oracle Defense) has taken a page from the racing handbook and have implemented the winning mindset to blend together

some of the best characteristics of modern pistols. The OA Defense 2311 is the next step in evolution of a practical race car gun. Admittedly, the 2311 doesn't feature anything you haven't seen before. The kicker is you haven't seen them offered in a single package. This is the part where the culmination

of ideas creates something special. Instead of searching for the perfect lap, the perfect pistol is the goal.

OA claims the 2311 is the "combination of race gun DNA and duty weapon reliability" — a fitting description, as the 2311 gives you the best of both worlds. It features the trigger from a 1911, the linkless barrel with no bushing from a CZ75, modularity of a 2011, and of course, magazines from a SIG P320. This seems to be a Frankenstein's monster approach to gun manufacturing, and we always loved monster movies.

### UNDER THE HOOD

You can tell there's something special before you open the bag. If a company pays this much attention to the wrapper, you can expect good things from the rest. The Savior Equipment pistol case has enough room for five magazines, the gun, three optics plates, premium gun oil, and all the emergency toilet paper, or "instruction manuals," as some refer to them. The attention to detail is high with OA Defense — a truly nice package from the start.

The 2311 features a P320-esque slide, with front and rear slide serrations and a thinning profile toward the muzzle. The tapered profile is a small bonus when re-holstering. Night sights are high quality from Night Fission, and an optional suppressor-height front sight is included, but you'll need patience and proper tools to get it installed. The 2311 is cut for Trijicon

The OA 2311 is a curious mix of classic Browning design and modern manufacturing. Note 1911 lockwork, SIG/Petter lockup and injection molded grip.





OA claim they're the first XX11 manufacturers to offer full ambi controls, including slide release. We're glad they ditched the grip safety.

RMR, DeltaPoint Pro, and RMsC optics plates that are included in the bag. The plates have backup rear sights, but we found them borderline unusable as the red-dots we tested were too tall to cowitness. Choose an optic with a base if co-witnessing is a priority.

The bushingless, linkless, and Petter lockup barrel makes for fewer moving parts than a 1911, in turn providing fewer things to break and making manufacturing a bit simpler. While digging through the 2311, we came across the "debris clearance system." This was an answer to a problem we didn't know existed. There are a couple of channels cut into the lug of the barrel to clear any debris in the area. Honestly, we've never heard of this causing a problem but it's always better to have it and not need it.

The hammer, trigger bow, and safety were our first clues that there's 1911 in the pedigree. The trigger breaks at about 4 pounds and is pretty crisp, and the sear and disconnect are straight from a Series 70 1911. Both are MIM parts, if this bothers you. The sear spring and mainspring housing are proprietary pieces that essentially do the same as their 1911 equivalent and were an ordeal to get back together after some curious disassembly. The absence of a grip safety is a controversial move if you happen to be a French cavalryman in the early 20th century, but most serious shooters disable them, as they can fail to disengage if not activated just right. Not something you should be worrying about when you need a gun right now.

One of the perceived downfalls of the 1911 is the internal extractor, which







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can require tuning from a seasoned mechanic and be prone to failure if repeatedly asked to snap over the rim of a cartridge. The 2311 all but takes care of that problem with an external extractor, which is more reliable and definitely less finicky than the standard 1911 claw.

Ambidextrous controls have always been a bit of a moot point in our opinion. If you set up your gun to your needs, there's little use for the opposite side controls. It is a rarity to hear anyone actually needing the opposite side controls, but hey, if you like them, knock yourself out. The only time they make sense is for lefties — and if you toil under that burden, you have our sympathy. OA have you covered though. For the first time ever on a factory 1911-style gun, there's an ambidextrous slide stop. This makes right-handed shooters able to manipulate the slide stop with the trigger finger (another plus we didn't know we needed). And this feature does make it more difficult for field stripping. If you've ever taken a 1911 apart, it basically works the same way, with the slide needing to be lined up just right for the slide stop to be removed. This is definitely a two-hand job, as the bushingless design means the slide is constantly under tension, and after lining everything up, you have to push on the back side of the slide stop to remove it. Once it's done a couple of times, it becomes easier.

The full-size and compact models of the 2311 both have the same polymer

grip, and ship with a couple of options when it comes to magwells. The horse hoof magwell on the full-size version allows 17-round magazines to fit flush, while the smaller magwell on the compact makes 15-round magazines fit flat. There's an option to put the full-size magwell on the compact version to mix things up, and we felt the smaller magwell fit the hand better, but that all depends on the size of your meat hooks. The grip features some moderate texturing and the addition of integrated thumb rests/gas pedals in the plastic dust cover to help tame recoil. Have we mentioned attention to detail is high with OA defense?

### TRACK DAY

We had both the compact and full-size versions on hand. It's an unwritten rule that the bigger a handgun is, the easier it is to shoot, and the 2311 put that notion to the test. Both guns performed flawlessly in the reliability department. The more balanced compact version performed a little better during testing. The smaller magwell and shorter slide made for an almost tighter package. The huge magwell on the full-size functions just fine but it's a bit awkward aesthetically, and everyone knows it's all about the looks.

Both guns were shot at varying distances and speeds. Like taking warm-up laps on the road course, we

Magwells vary from mild to wild and work well to lock the master hand into the grip, while still giving access to allow the user to rip out magazines in the event of a stoppage.

wanted to bring the tires up to temp and get the oil flowing. It helps to get a general feel for guns when testing. Take a couple of shots and pay attention to how the sights react. Shooting enough guns, you get to the point where it becomes monotonous, and when something different comes along you notice. This attention to minutia gets easier after every shot fired, and this is why competitors invest so much time on setup. Or maybe it's just OCD.

The 2311 shoots as good as any 2011/1911 variant we've tested. This is no small statement, as we believe the wide-body 1911 to be one of the best shooting platforms of all time. The general shootability (that's a word) of the 2311 is high. As we expected, the full-size version feels a little softer in the recoil impulse department, but the compact felt snappier and got back on target a bit quicker. When we say

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size and 0.7 inch for the compact). All of the others fell in around an inch. The groups were tight enough for any gun to be labeled a good duty or competition weapon. The 2311 can shoot as good as you can.

### THE PODIUM

Everyone has their own idea as to what's important in a handgun. Concealment, shootability (we swear this is a word), duty performance, modularity, or cool factor. Whatever the reason, you're not wrong. This is why we love guns so much. There are no wrong answers, only different ones. Our job is to simply tell you if we think it's worth it.

The OA Defense 2311 checks a lot of boxes not just as a duty weapon but also as a sidearm in general. The goal is to build a car that is fast, reliable, and does what you want when you want it. You can decide whether to use it as a race car, work truck, or even a daily

Grip texturing and gas pedals give excellent purchase to control recoil.

driver. The direction OA Defense is going for is easy to see with the combination of the 1911 trigger, the modularity of a 2011, the drivetrain from a CZ, and magazines from a p320. Just like Formula 1, if you don't understand what's going on you won't quite get the allure — but if you do you are going to love it. We think it's worth it. **R**

## OA DEFENSE 2311

**CALIBER:** 9mm Luger

**CAPACITY:** 15, 17 rounds

**BARREL LENGTH:** 4.25, 5.0 inches

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 7.75, 8.5 inches

**WEIGHT:** 26, 29 ounces

**MSRP:** \$1,900, \$2,300

**URL:** oadefense.com

quicker, we're talking about milliseconds that can't easily be measured, and it's the equivalent of a butt dyno on the track. The guns did everything we asked of them.

Both guns were shot for accuracy at 20 yards resting from a table, and surprisingly, the compact version netted tighter groups than the full size. We shot 115-grain Focchi, 115-grain CCI blazer brass, hand loads topped with 121-grain FMP projectiles, 124-grain Sierra Sports Master, and 147-grain Federal. Both guns liked the 121-grain FMP bullets best (0.8 inch for the full

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FINISH	BLACK DLC		
SIGHTS	GLOCK FR & RMSC RR		
MATERIAL	SUS416/ POLYMER		



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# SECURE COMMS FOR THE CONCERNED CIVILIAN

**You're Not the Client, You're the Commodity.  
Can We Reclaim Privacy?**

By Iain Harrison  
Photos by Kenda Lenseigne



**A**ccording to laws just passed in Congress, the government has mandated that you now must carry a tracking device, so they can monitor your every movement, what you're buying and thinking about, and everyone you associate with. And they want you to pay for it. Hey, if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear, right? Echoes of Orwell's dystopian *1984*, much?

OK, so the government didn't actually make this a legal requirement. But what's worse is that we've all voluntarily opted in to a surveillance society, and for the most part, any notion we may have had of privacy in our day-to-day affairs is dead. That smartphone you have in your hand or pocket right now is spying on you. What's worse, you're the one who gave it permission to do so. Certain apps are worse

than others, but most will capture at least some data regarding your usage, location, and contacts, all of which can be linked via your credit card information to the things you buy. Your phone knows what images you look at, what you share with your friends, the articles you read, what you find funny, and what pisses you off. If you think that data is treated like the crown jewels by the companies that collect it,

think again — data breaches abound, which can result in all your most sensitive information being traded on the dark web. And for the most part, there's nothing you can do about it. Or is there?

A couple of years ago, I ran into Blackwater founder Erik Prince in a corridor at SHOT Show. "I've got

something to show you," he explained, while fishing in the pocket of his immaculately tailored jacket. With a flourish, he pulled out an object that was immediately recognizable as a sock. While the thought crossed my mind that a Blackwater line of men's hosiery products might not be a bad idea, from the sock in question, Prince

slid out a cell phone. "That," he triumphantly explained, "is a shot into the flank of big tech." And so the Unplugged phone was announced to the world. Since then, the prototype has become reality, and the Unplugged phone joined the ranks of cellphones designed specifically to protect its users' data.







We figured if we were going to field test a communications solution, we might as well choose a challenging environment, here about 10km from the Russian border, where electronic warfare, GPS jamming, and loitering munitions are in use.

are justified in being extremely wary.

The UP phone uses its own OS, based on a fork of Google's Android operating system, but customized to avoid the routine data collection of both Google and Apple. It features its own app store that's selective in the products it carries, based on their data collection and security characteristics, so some familiar names are notable by their absence. If you use messaging apps such as Telegram or WhatsApp, you'll wind up with less familiar versions that don't harvest data like their regular counterparts. There's a definite learning curve, and in some cases, you'll have to make the decision to trade convenience for privacy — there are no Google apps, so if you're a die-hard fan of being tracked by Alphabet, this is not the device for you.

The company has developed its own secure messaging application, as well as a VPN and email service, which is

This segment of the market has been rife with scams, ever since grifters discovered people with legitimate privacy concerns would pay so that their every move wouldn't be tracked. For example, 2021 saw the launch of the Freedom Phone, marketed to a conservative audience as a way to counter big tech surveillance. On closer examination this turned out to be a rebranded, cheapo Chinese, low-end phone in a MAGA wrapper, and pushed by purveyors of synthetic outrage like Candace Owens and Ian Miles Cheong. It probably surprised no one when the company self-destructed in a flurry of lawsuits between its founders, after bilking its customers at 500 bucks a pop. Before that was the Anom, a phone touted as being immune to surveillance and marketed to organized crime as a way of concealing shady deals from law enforcement, which turned out to be an FBI honey-pot. Against that backdrop, consumers



claimed to be one of the most secure out there, and there are neat touches such as a physical switch to kill the connection between the phone and its battery, as well a quick means to wipe all data from the device. While we're by no means experts in this field, the physical device feels and performs like a quality item, rather than something you'd get from Aliexpress. It's a new

A cheap LoRa board forms the basis for this mesh network device, housed in a 3D-printed case. It's paired to the UP phone via Bluetooth and provides a means of communication that's independent of cell towers.

phone, from a new company, so there are still a few bugs. At one point, we experienced some annoying latency issues that were fixed with an update. The phone itself is far from tiny — if you have small hands you may want to skip this one. We actually found the physical size of the phone an asset when using ATAK, as the screen can be cluttered when using a lot of plugins.

It remains to be seen whether the UP phone will become a serious alternative to the established players, but given Prince's track record in creating successful businesses, we'd be surprised if it flopped. As to whether its claims of data protection hold up, the jury is still out. The worst-case scenario is that your info winds up in hands of the same data brokers as it does right now, just via a different route. Best case, you take back control of your private affairs, and cease being a commodity to be bought and sold. We're giving them a long-term test in both the U.S. and overseas, and so far, results are positive.

### SHTF

So much for the day-to-day. What happens when the cell network goes down? Is there a way to communicate with your tribe that's not dependent on Verizon or T-Mobile and is resistant to eavesdropping? The stock, old-school

answer would be to fire up the HAM radio, but there's a significant barrier to entry to this solution — you, and your entire team, need to pass an exam before keying that mic, or else crusty old guys with nothing better to do will hunt you down with a fervor not seen since the days of Nicolai Ceausescu.

Mesh networks provide their users with an alternative means of communication that, due to their dispersed nature, is highly resilient. Each node on the network consists of a radio broadcasting on the LoRa (long range) protocol that can send and receive, but also acts as a relay for other devices in the network. Say your radio has an effective range of three miles, but the guy you want to send a message to is five miles away. If there's another device somewhere between you, your message will hop from device to device in order to reach its intended recipient. Each device can be paired with a cell phone, providing a familiar and easy-to-use interface.

Set up a node on a high point within your home territory, and you'll massively increase the area in which you have comms. It doesn't take much imagination to come up with solutions involving a cheap LiFePo4 battery, solar charger, and mesh network device to provide a low-cost means of blanketing an area with your very own, independent communication system, which, for the moment at least, doesn't require the blessing of the federal government.

We tested this concept in the Donbas region of Ukraine, using some of the cheapest mesh network devices on the market, consisting of a Heltec LoRa V3 chip set in a 3D-printed case running Meshtastic firmware and powered by an internal rechargeable cell. You'd be correct in thinking that sounds like a lot of geeky nerdspeak, but once you dig into the subject, it's actually pretty easy to get to grips with, even for the tech-challenged — the University of YouTube runs classes.



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This combo connected via Bluetooth to our UP phone, stashed in a Thyrn DarkVault case, with the whole shebang riding on our plate carrier. Additional devices were placed in vehicles as mobile base nodes, and there was discussion of putting one on a drone, though this was never actualized. The ATAK app provided team members with a means of identifying friendly force locations, and we stayed in touch via text messages bounced throughout the network, despite the electromagnetic spectrum being polluted with electronic warfare emissions.

This setup was used to provide secure comms and location info within our team, entirely independent of the local cell network. As a matter of course, whenever we're in range of Russian ISR drones, cell phones are set to airplane mode, as Orlan-10 drones can

The "communicate" part of "shoot, move communicate," isn't as sexy as the first bit, but it's no less important.

have the ability to spoof cell towers, getting cell phones on the ground to reveal their location for targeting by indirect fire. By using low-powered Bluetooth emissions, further attenuated by the Thyrn DarkVault case, we're able to stay hidden in background clutter, as the mesh network device transmits only when it has data to send, and its transmission length is measured in milliseconds. The downside to the system we used is that it's not able to send voice transmissions.

Let's say you're intrigued by the possibility this offers and want to investigate further or just jump right in and set up your own LoRa mesh network. What options are available? Glad you asked.

Like building your own AR allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanism and equips the user with trouble-

shooting tools, building your own mesh network devices provides a degree of insight not possible with off-the-shelf units. Just like rolling your own rifle, it's also cheaper. If you don't fancy busting out the soldering iron, there's a whole ecosystem of mesh network fans who are only too eager to share their knowledge. Some of them have Etsy stores with completed devices, based around commonly available chip sets.

Stepping up several notches, electronics company Otto, familiar to the shooting community via their excellent hearing protection products, has a nifty mesh network device known as LynqPRO. It has the added benefit of offering frequency hopping to increase security, as well as an easy, on-device interface that integrates with phones and tablets. It's also compatible with ATAK.





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# WHEN FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

Some of us have greater security concerns than others. Due to working in conflict zones, we're acutely aware of the threat from both state actors and local freelancers and take digital hygiene very seriously. On one recent assignment, two days after we left, the building we were working out of was targeted by a pair of missiles. One impacted in the street outside, peppering a local maternity clinic with frag, while the other scored a direct hit, blowing out the center of the structure. We're reasonably sure we weren't compromised by our digital footprint — HUMINT was the likely source — but it brought home the consequences for failure.

While it's impossible to erase all evidence of our presence, there are a number of steps we take in order to fade into the background. If you're concerned about being targeted when heading overseas, here are a few tips.


1. Protect your U.S.-based devices. We're all guilty of

storing way too much compromising information on our phones — anything from sensitive files from work, contacts, social media accounts, home addresses, and images of our families. If possible, leave your U.S. phone at home and take a burner with you, loaded with the bare minimum of info needed for the task in hand. Toss it in the trash at the airport on the way out. If you must take your U.S. phone, never charge it in a public location, such as a hotel. USB cables work both ways, and intelligence services have been known to harvest data and install software using this method. While you could use a charge-only cable, there's always the possibility this could be swapped out without your knowledge, or you could slip up and use the spare you brought — you know, the one with data transfer ability intact. It's far safer to use a USB cable to charge a power bank then use the power bank to charge your phone.

2. Use a local SIM card, or one from a neighboring country, but preferably a card that doesn't require an ID for purchase. Pinging foreign cell towers with a U.S. number is like waving Old Glory as you walk down the street.

3. Turn off all location services, as these will rat on your whereabouts. If you need to navigate, download off-line versions of mapping software to your device.

4. Use a VPN to encrypt your online activity. This makes it difficult for eavesdroppers to see what you're doing, while concealing your IP address.

5. These days, our preferred SOP is to remove the SIM card in our U.S.-based phone and power it up to connect only via trusted Wi-Fi locations when it's absolutely necessary to use the data stored on it. The rest of the time, we communicate via encrypted messaging apps such as Signal, loaded onto an UP phone running a local SIM card and a third nation E-SIM. 

Signal	iMessage	WhatsApp		Facebook Messenger				
Data Linked to you	Data Linked to you	Data Linked to you		Data Linked to you				
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# M+M INDUSTRIES M10X+

## Swiss Soviet Shooter

By Steven Kuo

**W**e're all gun nerds at heart here at RECOIL. So while it's neat to check out the latest and greatest AR or the umpteenth refinement of a Glock, we love seeing weapon systems that stray off the beaten path.

M+M Industries is based in Colorado and was started by two fellows named Mike, hence the company name. One of the original Mikes, Mike Meier, now runs M+M. Born in Switzerland, he also lived in Venezuela before moving to America. Meier saw firsthand the economic and political upheaval there,

The M10X+ is soft-shooting and a pleasure to hose with.

including the new government disarming citizens and instituting changes, one after another, that harmed the populace. This solidified his belief in the importance of firearms ownership. M+M got started in 2005 importing guns, parts kits, and accessories, building a particular expertise in the FN FAL space.

In 2010, the company graduated to building their own guns. Working with Romarm/Cugir in Romania, they designed the M10-762 AK-pattern rifle. Starting with the Romanian PD MK63 AKM design, they incorporated a 90-degree gas block reminiscent of the East German Wieger rifles and made other modifications for regulatory compliance. Rather than using

surplus parts, M+M began installing new-production parts as well as modern furniture and accessories, creating a more modernized AK build.

It did well, and M+M started working on its own design for a new rifle that it would manufacture itself, entirely in America. Back in Switzerland, Meier had worked on numerous projects related to the SIG SG 550 and SG 553 rifles. Combined with his experience over the years with the FAL and AK platforms, Meier was inspired to create a simple design incorporating aspects of all of these great weapon systems.



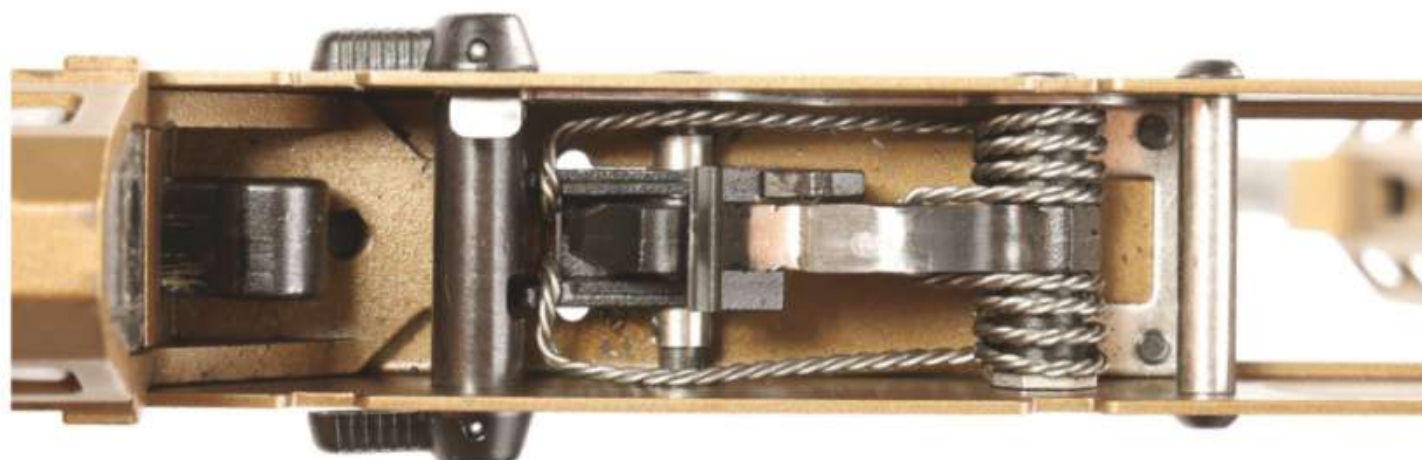
**SIG-FAL-AK MASHUP**

Thus, the M10X was born. M+M chose to base the gun around 7.62x39mm and AK magazines, due to their ubiquity and affordability in the U.S. and abroad. At first glance, you might think the rifle's some sort of an AK variant, but the long-stroke gas piston operating system is actually inspired by the SIG 55X family. Gas bleeds off through the gas block on the barrel and through a five-position adjustable gas valve. The piston is fixed to the bolt carrier group by the charging handle and sits inside the gas cylinder, reciprocating as the action cycles. The recoil spring actually wraps around the gas piston, using it as a guide rod.

The monolithic aluminum handguard contains a billet steel insert that's the actual receiver of the gun, again with a SIG 55X-type design. The bolt group rides on rails in the steel receiver, which is milled from 4150 steel. The breech locks via a rotating bolt.

Like a 55X or FAL, and unlike an AK, the barrel is threaded, head spaced,

and torqued into place. It's topped off with M+M's own muzzle brake design, a single chamber brake with tines that also function as wire cutters, if you don't mind expending one round per wire, like a boss. The center pin is similar



Above: The side-folding Magpul Zhukov stock makes the M10X+ compact for transport. You can also shoot it while folded.

Below: Five-position gas valve.

Middle: Low ADM scope mount positions the Vortex 1-6x perfectly without a cheek riser.

Bottom: AK-style trigger with new braided hammer spring.



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The G3 family consistently punches above its price point, delivering performance on par and above far more expensive products. Which does raise the question: *what are those other guys charging you for?*





to a FAL, with three major components — the handguard, upper, and lower — mating up with the screw pin.

It has several rows of M-LOK slots on the sides and bottom, as well as 18 uninterrupted inches of top rail.

The lower trigger housing is stamped steel and uses an AK-style fire control group inspired by the AKM. It takes any AKM pistol grip; the included grip is ribbed with storage inside. A typical AK paddle magazine release is at the front of the trigger guard, while a SIG- or AR-like ambidextrous rotating safety selector sits above the grip. As you'd expect with an AK magazine-based system, there's no bolt-hold-open when the gun runs dry. Just wait for that frightening click.

The buttstock mounts to the rear trunnion; M+M affixes Magpul's folding Zhukov stock, since the operating system doesn't extend to the rear. The length of pull is adjustable, and the stock folds to the right side. Of course, you can fire the gun with the stock folded, for maximum Hollywood taticoolness.

### M10X+

Shown here is the third generation in the M10X line, the M10X+ that launched last year. The gas piston has been modified from prior versions with a heat shield and bushing to help it stay cooler and cleaner, and the headspace, gas valve, and gas port have been tweaked to boost accuracy potential. Also, a new rubberized recoil buffer was added at the rear of the upper to

SIG 55X fans rejoice, the M10X's operating system is all 55X.

Note the normal and larger adverse gas ports in the gas valve.

prolong the service life of the rear trunnion and recoil spring. The steel receiver is now milled for tighter tolerances; the first generation was also milled but the second was cast.

New for the M10X+ is a cold-hammer-forged, chrome-lined barrel, so you can feel better about bimetal and corrosive ammo if so inclined. Previous iterations were button-rifled and nitrided. The handguard is new, skeletonized to reduce weight and increase cooling. It also has additional fasteners securing it to the receiver and barrel assembly for more support.

The trigger group features a new braided hammer spring that hits with an additional pound of force for more reliable ignition on hard primers in surplus ammo.

### FIELDSTRIPPING

One thing we love about Glocks is how few parts there are. Similarly, M+M aimed for simplicity, impressively managing to reduce the total number of parts in the rifle to 63 — roughly half of that in an AK or AR. Not only is it clever, but no tools are required to tear it down.

To disassemble the M10X, first remove the magazine and ensure the gun is unloaded. Then, fold the buttstock,

revealing the receiver latch. Push it in while pulling up on the upper, and the two pieces will open up on the hinge pin. Push on the end of the charging handle and turn it clockwise 90 degrees, which will rotate a spring-loaded hook on the opposite side that secures it to the bolt group. Then, pull it out. Now, you can slide the bolt carrier group out of the receiver; since the recoil spring is on the gas piston, there's no spring tension to overcome and the BCG comes right out with no fuss. To separate the bolt from the carrier, push it in and rotate it to release the bolt's lug from the corresponding track in the carrier.

To work on the gas system, turn your attention to the muzzle end. On the right side of the gun next to the gas valve is a spring-loaded pin. Partially depress it to release the gas valve, which you can rotate to remove from the gas cylinder. To remove the gas cylinder, fully depress the pin, rotate the cylinder to release its lugs from the upper receiver, and pull it out. The gas piston will come out with it. Reassembly is the reverse of the above steps, taking care to properly align the parts.

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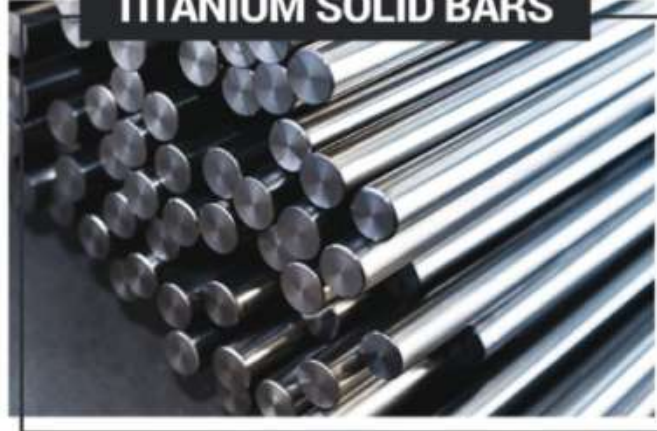
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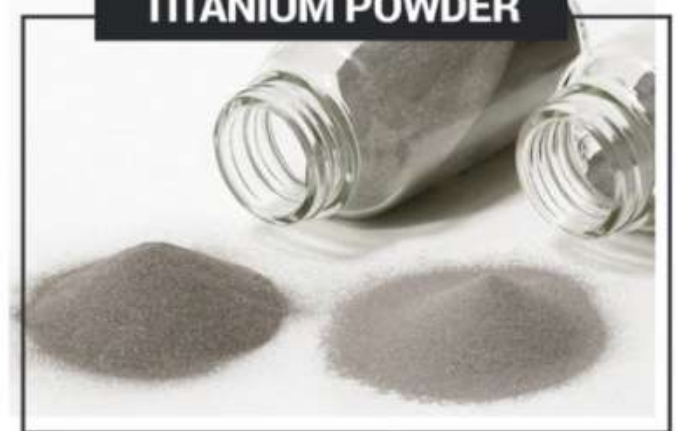
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### FIFTY SHADES OF BRONZE

The M10X+ has a funky Swiss-Soviet aesthetic to it, and our sample gun was Cerakoted in a handsome burnt bronze color. Naturally, Vortex's bronze Razor line was a great match. The Razor HD Gen II-E 1-6x scope has long been a favorite of both top 3-gunners as well as top-tier operators. Its great glass, incredible field of view, thin bezel, blazing bright illumination, generous eye relief, and Mil-scale reticle make it a delight to use at either 1x or 6x.

Due to the position of the buttstock relative to the top rail, typical AR scope mounts will be very high on the M10X. ADM's super-low AD-RECON-SL mount worked perfectly, placing the Vortex just

Our sample M10X+ ran reliably with several different types of AK magazines.

The Vortex Razor HD Gen II-E 1-6x scope and SureFire Mini Scout Light Pro are right at home on the M10X+.

above the top rail and providing a comfortable cheek weld. The mount features ADM's time-tested quick detach levers and is available for 1-inch to 40mm scopes. Alternately, you could procure a cheek riser for the Zhukov stock.

Of course, every rifle needs a weapon light, so we affixed a SureFire Mini Scout Light Pro in tan. The color's a bit off of the bronze, but still works well for our fifty-shades-of-bronze theme. The compact torch is a good match with the medium-length handguard on the M10X+ but outputs plenty of light, and the swiveling Picatinny rail mount keeps the light tucked tight against the handguard.

Finally, Rugged Suppressors' Razor762 silencer keeps things civilized. At just 6.4 inches in length, it's compact and effective with reduced gas blowback. It's belt-fed rated, made of 17-4 stainless steel, and is very robust.

### GOING HOT

As always, we started on the bench to group and chrono the M10X+. It certainly liked some ammo better than others. American Eagle 124-grain FMJ chrono'd at 2,361 fps and posted five-shot groups from 3.5 to 4.8 MOA. Double Tap's 123-grain Rifle Defense JSP averaged 2,150 fps with groups from 3.7 to 5 MOA. Hornady 123-grain

SST was more consistent, with velocity of 2,235 fps and groups between 2.9 to 3.3 MOA. Igman 123-grain FMJ and Red Army 122-grain FMJ turned in the best groups of the day at 1.9 and 2 MOA, respectively, but we also had some flyers pushing some other groups out to 3.5 MOA. Igman averaged 2,335 fps, and Red Army flew at 2,306 fps.

The M10X+ is fun to shoot, with a pleasant, smooth recoil impulse. M+M's Chaos muzzle brake worked well, keeping the rifle pretty neutral for follow-up shots. As far as AK triggers go, the trigger is excellent, breaking at around 2¾ pounds. It's light and pretty smooth but a little mushy with a fair amount of travel.

Handling is intuitive if you're familiar with running AK mags. The safety selector is much more ergonomic than AK safeties, but not nearly as smooth and easy to actuate as an AR, especially to put back on safe. M+M offers optional extended safety levers that would probably help with this. You can swap the charging handle to either side of the gun within seconds. We positioned ours on the right side for the full AK experience, also saving our knuckles from banging on the scope mount on the left side.

The buttstock folds conveniently and is comfortable, though we found the length adjustment to be fiddly. There are QD sling sockets built-in to the front of the handguard and the rear trunnion; the rear one was a bit too tight for some of our QD swivels, perhaps due to the Cerakote. For the price of the rifle, we'd like to have seen Magpul's optional QD



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1 A2 FLASH HIDER

3 MAGPUL MOE GRIP

2 M-LOK RAIL

4 MAGPUL MOE STOCK

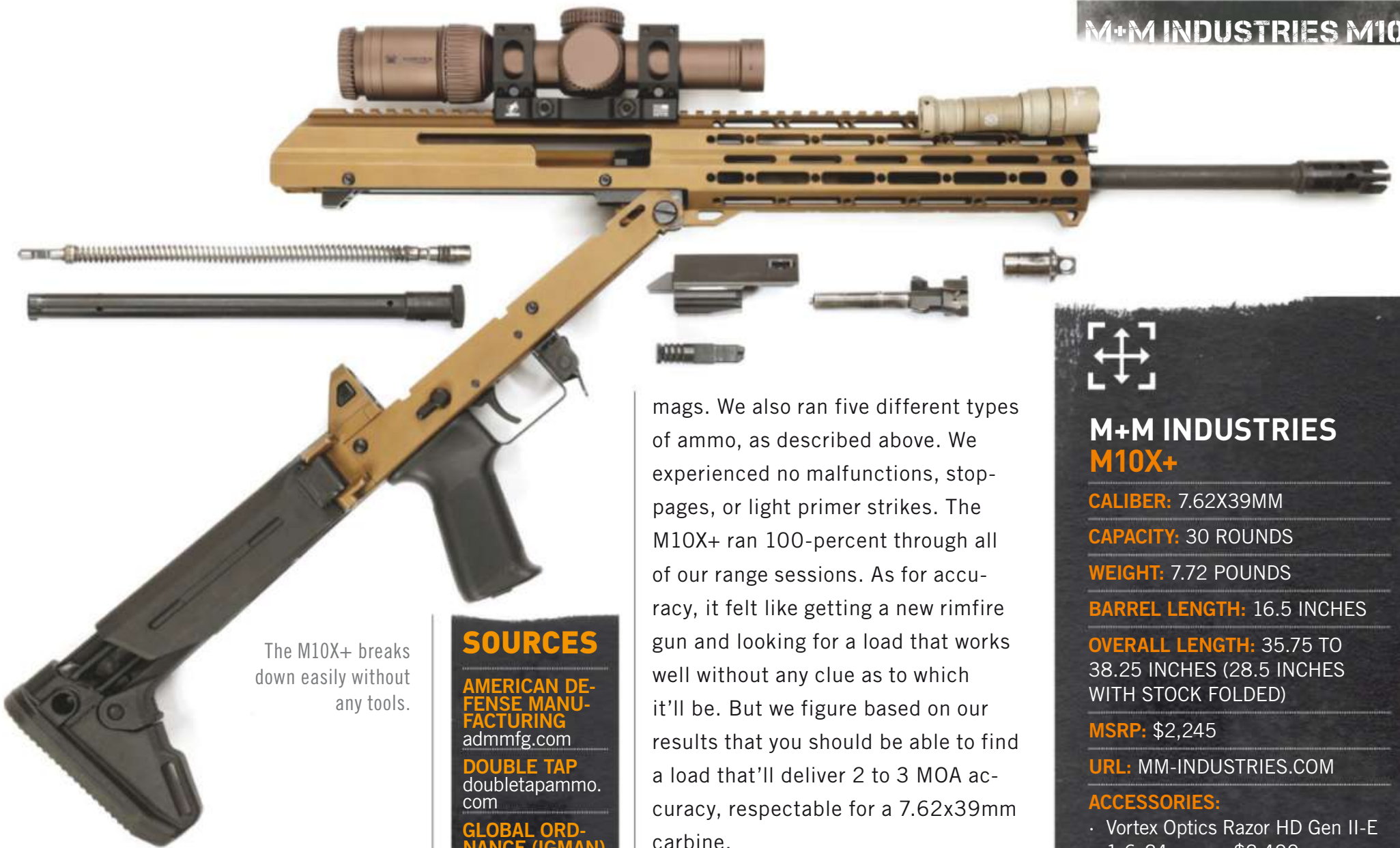
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The M10X+ breaks down easily without any tools.



**M+M INDUSTRIES M10X+**

**CALIBER:** 7.62X39MM

**CAPACITY:** 30 ROUNDS

**WEIGHT:** 7.72 POUNDS

**BARREL LENGTH:** 16.5 INCHES

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 35.75 TO 38.25 INCHES (28.5 INCHES WITH STOCK FOLDED)

**MSRP:** \$2,245

**URL:** MM-INDUSTRIES.COM

**ACCESSORIES:**

- Vortex Optics Razor HD Gen II-E 1-6x24 scope: \$2,400
- ADM AD-RECON-SL scope mount: \$227
- Rugged Suppressors Razor762: \$894
- SureFire Mini Scout Light Pro: \$369

**SOURCES**

**AMERICAN DEFENSE MANUFACTURING**  
admmfg.com

**DOUBLE TAP**  
doubletapammo.com

**GLOBAL ORDINANCE (IGMAN)**  
globalordnance.com

**FEDERAL AMMO**  
federalpremium.com

**HORNADY**  
hornady.com

**RED ARMY:**  
centuryarms.com

**RUGGED SUPPRESSORS**  
ruggedsuppressors.com

**SUREFIRE**  
surefire.com

**VORTEX OPTICS**  
vortexoptics.com

mags. We also ran five different types of ammo, as described above. We experienced no malfunctions, stop-pages, or light primer strikes. The M10X+ ran 100-percent through all of our range sessions. As for accuracy, it felt like getting a new rimfire gun and looking for a load that works well without any clue as to which it'll be. But we figure based on our results that you should be able to find a load that'll deliver 2 to 3 MOA accuracy, respectable for a 7.62x39mm carbine.

**LOOSE ROUNDS**

The M10X+ is an expensive gun, no doubt about it. Its unique SIG-FAL-AK mashup has to speak to you. If it does, you'll really enjoy its clever design touches and shootability. Just look below at the rifle fully kitted out — that's pretty damn sexy. If you can live without the lightened handguard and hammer-forged chrome-lined barrel, M+M configured their new

M10X-M models to save some money; they're about \$350 less. Alternately, there are also M10X+ variants with short handguards and exposed gas tubes that give off serious funky AK vibes for \$145 less. **R**

sling socket accessory included with the Zhukov buttstock.

Looking online, there's chatter on the Internet about previous iterations of the M10X — some folks encountering reliability and accuracy issues, while others have been problem free. We asked M+M about it, and they acknowledged some growing pains, especially during the pandemic; for instance, they had some issues with some coatings applied at that time. The list of updates for the third generation of the platform is squarely aimed at addressing these potential concerns, from the premium barrel to the numerous revisions to boost reliability and consistency. M+M also emphasized that their guns come with a lifetime warranty and upgrades are designed to be backward-compatible, so you can always update your older-generation guns.

In our testing, we tried several types of magazines, including steel Bulgarian mags provided by M+M, Magpul PMAGs, X-Tech Tactical mags, and ancient Chinese steel







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# LAND CRUISERS OF GWOT

## A Look at the Iconic Vehicles of America's Forever Wars

By Michael E. Perez

In the Global War on Terror, there's one vehicle marque that stands out, used by both the Islamic extremists and the Western forces who were fighting them: Toyota.

In 2010 and 2013, I had the honor to serve alongside the Third Infantry Division in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was a law enforcement professional, a contractor assigned to advise on identifying, targeting, and actioning the improvised explosive device (IED) bomb makers. I also served as a rule of law advisor, a battlefield investigator, and advised the host country police and intelligence services.

During these tours, I was overwhelmed by the number of Toyota Land Cruisers used by coalition forces, non-governmental organizations, and just all over. There were 100 series, 70 series, 200 series, and Hilux trucks.



Virtually all of these trucks were up-armored, meaning that they were armored to withstand 7.62 munitions, as well as to offer protection against IEDs. The armoring consisted of ballistic panels in the doors, roof, floor, and engine compartment. The tires were fitted with run-flat inserts, and the glass was replaced with ballistic glass and polycarbonate windows a couple of inches thick.

Some of the trucks were also fitted with gun ports in the doors and/or windows, and some with a roof hatch for a gunner. Many trucks also had a "Trunk Monkey" option. This variant fitted a rear facing seat in the cargo area for a gunner to cover the rear of the vehicle.

Most of the vehicles were fitted with ARB bumpers and roof racks. The roof racks held the spare tire, while the

- 1. 200 series at an entry control point
- 2. 79 series next to a G-wagon
- 3. 105 series with comms and electronic countermeasures (ECM) antennas

4. UN 79 series with a winch bumper and HF antenna

5. 79 series outfitted with ECM and comms antennas



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bumpers were fitted with communications antennae and a winch. Fixed to the front and rear recovery points were tow straps coiled up and zip tied to the ARBs and tucked inside the rear door, ready for immediate deployment. Many were also equipped with red/blue strobe lights and sirens.

Depending on the truck's role, the interiors might be stock or heavily modified for mission-essential use. Like the "Trunk Monkey" option, rear seats were sometimes replaced with side-facing seats for better access to the doors. In defensive situations in vehicles without gun ports, the doors would be cracked open, and defensive fire directed from the vehicle. Front seat backs would have pouches containing extra weapons, magazines, and

1. 79 series troopy

2. 200 series used for VIP transport. Note the size of the cable from the ECM antennas.

3. 105 series fitted with an ARB bumper and attached tow strap

4. 200 series with comms and ECM antennas

5. 79 series; note the hood pins and emblem.



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trauma kits. Most trucks carried large floor jacks for the fastest possible tire changes.

The dashboard would typically have a video camera and navigation aids. U.S./NATO vehicles would navigate using a Blue Force Tracker (BFT), allowing the truck commander to see other friendly forces as well as known enemy locations. The BFT were also used in navigation and allowed tracking of all friendly vehicles by the local tactical operations center. The console area would be filled with radio equipment.

Bristling from these trucks were a myriad of aerials. Some were for radio communications (COMMS), BFT, satellite communications, and electronic countermeasures (ECM) to defeat IEDs. ECMs are devices that



1. 200 series right-hand-drive police vehicle
2. 200 series
3. 200 series built by Arctic Truck
4. Turkish 200 series
5. UN 79 series with HF antenna



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block or jam radio frequencies that certain IEDs use to detonate. One of the drawbacks of the 200 series Land Cruisers with all its electronics was that ECM gear would often interfere with the operation of the electronic remote and keyless start.

Except for the Hiluxes, the Land Cruisers were usually used for VIP movements. Seeing a civilian Afghan or Iraqi in a Land Cruiser usually

meant that person was some sort of big shot.

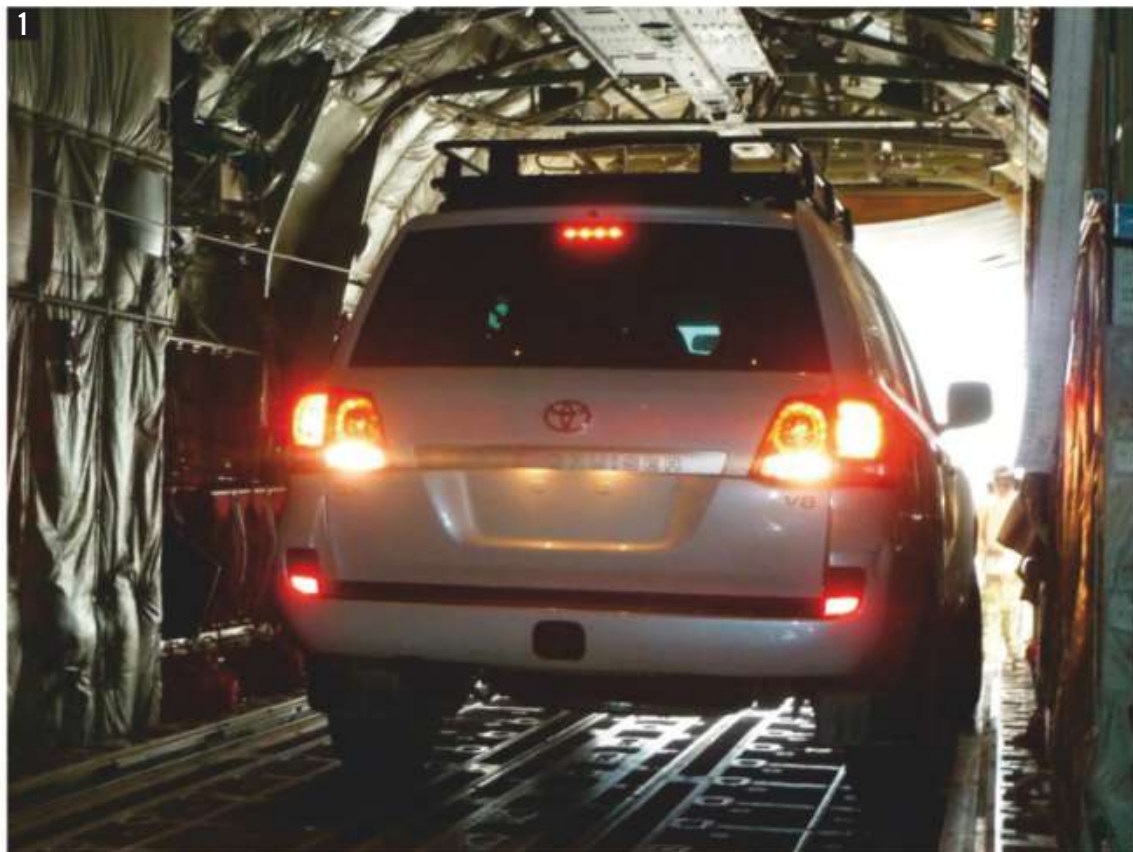
The Hiluxes, along with some Tacomas, were often used by Special Forces. These double-cab trucks were armored, lifted, and fitted with mounts for a M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, M240 general-purpose machinegun, or a 40mm grenade launcher.

COMMS antennas were also fitted

infrared light for night vision goggle use.

While at Kandahar Airfield, I spotted an Arctic Trucks-built Land Cruiser that belonged to the Lithuanian special forces. This Arctic Truck was armored with gun ports in the doors, a truly remarkable vehicle.

In talking with many different people and having driven an armored Land Cruiser while stationed in Peru,



1. 200 series backing into a C-130

2. Parking for VIP 200 series

3. Unarmored 105 series

4. 79 series with ECM and comms antennas

5. Land Cruiser parking only

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the consensus was that Land Cruisers were the best platform for an armored vehicle. They were rugged enough to handle the extra weight and were reliable. There were also a couple of Suburbans, Expeditions, Land Rovers, Nissan Patrols, and a couple of G-wagons, but Toyota Land Cruisers were in the majority.

Toyotas played a significant role in civilian and insurgent life. When outside the confines of my base, the streets were filled with Toyota Hiluxes, minivans used as buses and sedans. We also saw the Toyota trucks being used by the various terrorist groups. If there's one common thread running throughout low level conflicts in various sh\*thole countries, it's the presence of vehicles produced by Kiichiro Toyota's company. ■



- 1. 79 series pickup
- 2. UN World Food Project 200 series
- 3. VIP 200 series
- 4. 79 series troopy
- 5. 200 series entering the base

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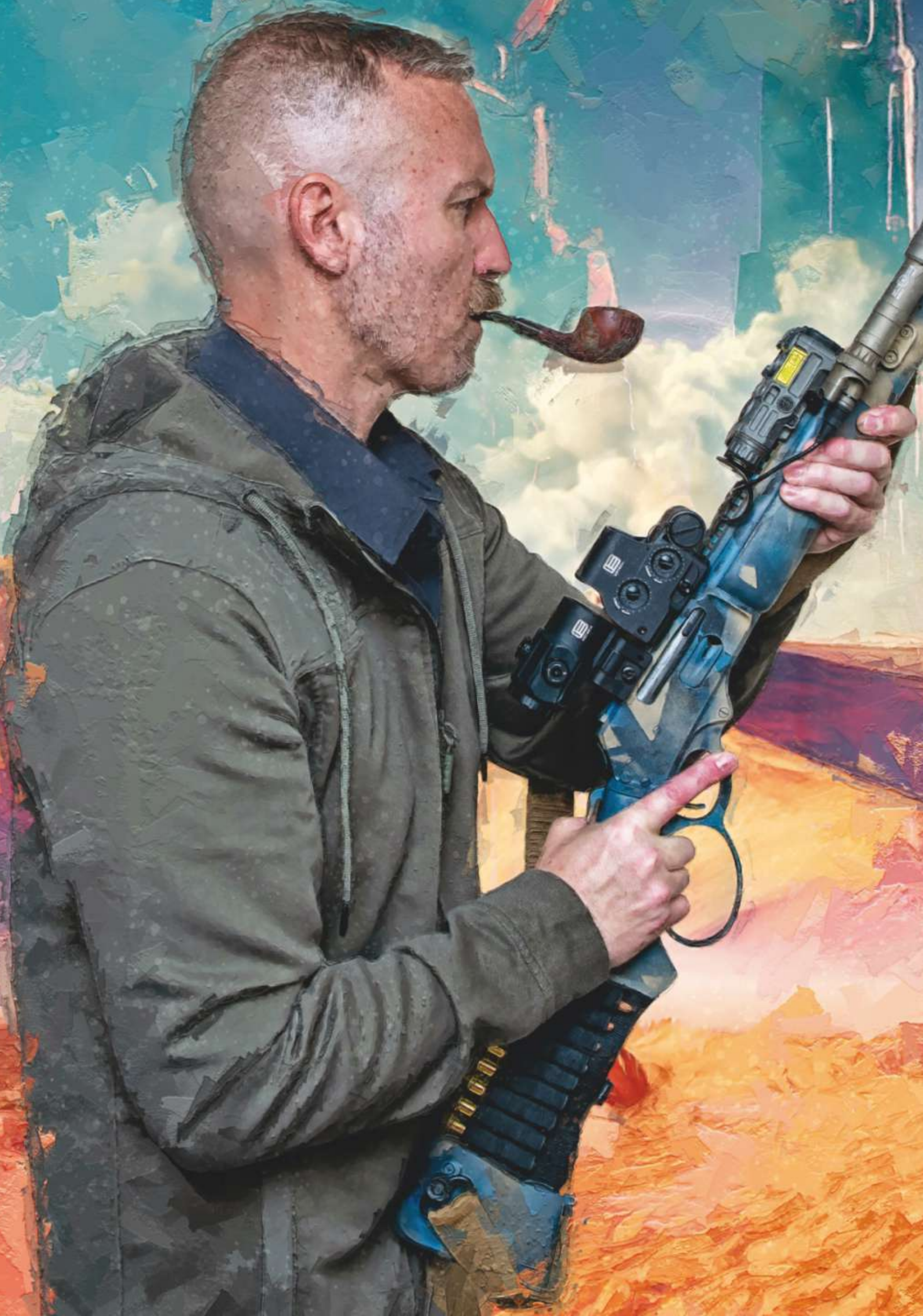


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# GREAT- GRANDPA'S FEVER DREAM

The Almost-American Rossi R95 Triple Black

By Dave Merrill

The crackling of a campfire. The feel of worn leather. The sizzle and sear of a steak. The dry dust in the wind and smoke in the air. While John Wayne Westerns don't have the draw they used to, you'll still find their themes all over American media, from the overt *Yellowstone* to the more-subtle *Star Wars*. The mythology of the Old West can be infectious, and even those with no love for country music or cows can find themselves drawn to that transitional time in history — that space immediately before and after slavery all the way to industrialization.

And there isn't a gun more emblematic of the American frontier than the lever gun — how the West was won.

Though a cynic might say modern lever actions are made in anticipation of bans, cynics always say that sh\*t about anything that isn't automatic. It's true that they're legal in every state in the Union, but that's not a downside.

Today, they're made much better — lever actions were originally designed and produced in the days where the custom labors of man were cheap but the precision and predictability of machines were expensive. Now, even mid-level companies have access to machines only available to major automakers just a

few short years ago.

It's also fun to run cartridges and calibers of the past you wouldn't otherwise entertain in yet-another-AR, like .30-30 Winchester you see here, or .45-70.

And while virtually all major modern racecar drivers are running automatics that produce better performance than manuals, a stick shift is still fun as hell to run — and a lever action is like a stick shift on a gun.

It seems fitting that in another time of transition, a place where you can feel the future but can't quite touch, that lever-action rifles are having another moment.

### TRIPLE BLACK

With all this talk of Americana, why does Rossi, bellowing from Brazil, make our cut? It's actually appropriate that the Rossi is made in Brazil. Not because

The dual switch was placed with a piece of Picatinny.

The crossbolt safety prevents the hammer from hitting the firing pin, though you can still pull the trigger.

of their improved facilities and cold-hammer-forged barrels (though they help), but because Brazil is a spiritual successor to America.

Brazil's bustling bovine boom followed ours. This inflection to the Wild West lives on in there, imported by former Americans themselves. It's been said all of the stereotypes foreigners have of America are actually true in Brazil, and that includes their love of cowboys and gauchos.

With the R95 Triple Black, Rossi is doing their best to bridge the gap between the future and the past. It combines the classic lever look with some practical Picatinny upgrades, and even a threaded barrel.







But the Rossi stock is sufficient in most cases, the extra-long top Picatinny rail doing a lot of lift. As the name implies, the finish on the furniture is all black. Black enough that upon initial inspection you'd actually suspect they're synthetic, but it's all real wood under the hood.

Still, some modifications were made. One place for improvement was with the antiquated sling studs. Just fine in grandpa's time, but we wanted some more-advanced ergonomics. Two QD sockets were sunk into the stock, one on the upper-right-rear and the other forward and left. The new positions not only allow it to lay flatter on the chest when hands-free, but it also enhances using the sling as a shooting aid.

There was some debate about optics. On the one hand, an LPVO would look more classic, but it was determined a dot sight plus magnifier makes more sense with the 7.62x39-like ballistics of .30-30 fired from a 16.5-inch barrel. If Rossi could thread the needle between the historic and new, we can too. An EOTech EXPS 3-0 paired with a G43 flip-side magnifier would end up being the answer.

Also from EOTech is the OGL - On-Gun

Our R95 example is chambered in .30-30 Winchester, but by the time you're reading this you'll be able to get a bigger bore .45-70 in the same.

It has a right-side loading gate to fill the tube, which is traditional but not exactly the most ergonomic choice for most. Similarly, the crossbolt safety isn't hard to hit but isn't as ambidextrous as it could be. Speaking of the safety, when it's engaged it prevents the hammer from touching the firing pin, making the whole lowering-the-hammer-when-hot thing far

A front/side sling swivel was added for better ergos.

is cross-compatible with already-established Marlin 1895 stocks and accessories, manufacturers like Midwest Industries and Ranger Point Precision already have you covered anyway. Want it skeletonized and covered with M-LOK? You can do it. Attaching accessories like lights is one of the places where the aftermarket brings a clear advantage over the standard factory offering.

more safe and far less stressful.

The included peep sights are quite nice, but also easy to remove if you don't want the clutter.

## CUSTOMIZING & OUTFITTING

While the Rossi R95 Triple Black





Laser, which took home a SHOT Show Award back in 2023 and graced the cover of RECOIL Issue 66.

And, of course, we gotta have a light. A SureFire M64ODFT Pro Turbo has the

lumens we're looking for paired with the candela we want for throw, and it's a snap to run both the WML and OGL with a dual switch. A dual-fuel light, this SureFire Turbo can run off either a pair of CR123s or the provided rechargeable 18650. The SureFire was sunk directly in the side of the stock with screws, and a Picatinny was placed on the opposite

There's enough space to run a red dot, flip-side magnifier, light, and laser.

side for the dual switch to ride.

It'd practically be a crime to not suppress a lever action with a threaded barrel — it can be exceptionally quiet with no gas expressing from the ejection port. One of my favorite things about silencers is that virtually all available are made in America. It's one of the firearms frontiers where it's still possible to go from a garage shop to a giant. An accidental advantage, and unintended positive side effect of NFA items, is the relatively limited imports. Manufacturing is essentially domestic-only, keeping the Chinese cheapies away and at bay.

Anechoic, featured in RECOIL Issue 74, is a great up-and-comer. They're bigger than a garage but not yet a giant; their silencers are nicely engineered. While the all-titanium affair of an AnechoX suppressor isn't the best on something higher pressure or with a faster rate of fire, with five rounds plus one of thirty-thirty before reshucking? It does much better than merely fine. The Anechoic AnechoX has a HUB mount, so all it took to thread onto the rifle was a flush 5/8x24 adapter.

An Armageddon Gear suppressor cover cuts down on the mirage carrying off the can, but remember that holding in heat works both ways — push it back over the barrel when it comes time to cool. It made sense to pair Armageddon Gear's can cover with one of their slings, too.

There's almost nothing that you can do to better bond with an inanimate object faster than to put a piece of your personality in it. Any personalization is good, but performed with respect is much better, even if it's just spray paint. Here we do it with rattle

All the accessories laid out. The all-titanium AnechoX is more than merely fine on this rifle. An inexpensive butt cuff triples your capacity.



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can Rust-Oleum and painter's tape. Preparation and degreasing are the most important things when it comes to paint, but the great thing about getting color in a can is that while it will still scratch with use, you can always easily touch it up. It's best practice to keep paint within the same brand, even the same line within a brand, because they can all have different solvents and activators inside — and they don't always play well together. A clear coat on top will protect the whole mess, with the additional advantage of slicing down the shine.

### HOME ON THE RANGE

It's not entirely inaccurate to think of a lever gun a bit like a pump-action shotgun. They are antique-action manual affairs with lower rates of fire and corresponding capacities. And thus, they share some similar lessons. Be as intentional as possible when you're running the action. Just like a pump gun, this can take some practice. It's a good example that just because something is simple it doesn't mean that it's automatically easy.

The mechanics are visceral, and double-so with steel. *Plick. Pow. Ping.* The steel rings. *Clink. Thwack. Shuck.*

Plugging measured data from a preferred load into an Applied Ballistics calculator let us determine a 50-yard zero was close to ideal. The drops are reasonable up close, and all fall within the average height of a man out to 350 yards.

After you spend a lot of time on the range you'll come back with some newfound respect for cowboy action shooters — it's not that the Rossi Triple Black is hard to shoot (it isn't) or that the R95 is inaccurate (it's not), but that your fingers and knuckles brush, bang, and pinch in places you aren't used to. Not unlike gaining your first Glock knuckle.

Many older lever guns are gunked up from whatever weird lubes and preservatives were used in the past. With the Rossi R95 Triple Black and similar? Just

Some tape and rattlecan paint makes for a fun afternoon project.



use something modern and you'll be fine.

This isn't a Glock or an AR-15, so you don't want to detail strip it willy-nilly. Not unless you want to visit a gunsmith with an inoperable rifle and a Ziploc full of parts, pieces, and shame. A sign of modern engineering is simplicity, and these came out right before modernity. Not too terrible if you know what you're doing, but for most it's a puzzle of pieces.

If you're taking it outside the house, having more than five could be considered wise. You can get everything from a bandolier that holds half a hundred to a quiver for a pair, but something onboard

is easy to always have — be it a butt cuff or a hard-side holder. Ideally topping off instead of running totally out between reloads.

In terms of prepping for defensive use, you can either keep it "cruiser ready" with the safety off and the hammer down on an empty chamber, ready to go hot with a quick swing of the wrist, or you can give yourself an extra by using the safety to safely lower the hammer — then thumb it back before you fire.

### LOOSE ROUNDS

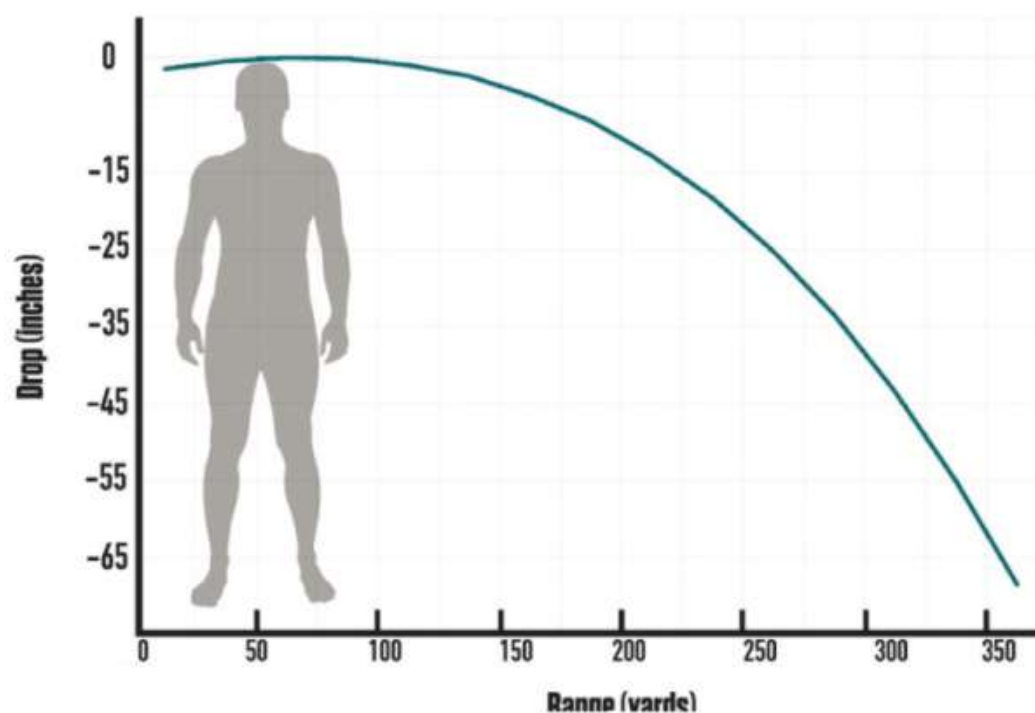
No, the Rossi R95 doesn't have the magazine capacity or the rate of fire of an AR-15. And if it did have the capacity,

.30-30 Winchester (left) is often compared to 7.62x39 (right).

With a 50-yard zero, all drops fall within the height of an average man out to 350 yards.



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**OVERALL LENGTH:** 35.5 INCHES

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**URL:** ROSSIUSA.COM

This is the most you want to break down the R95 unless you really know what you're doing.

To those who live in states with neutered ARs and weird work-arounds and fins and strange stocks: if you're not going to move, give one of these a try instead. No more double-checking legality prior to posting pictures and no more "I'm sorry! HukkaHukka" IG replies either.

You don't want to fight a war with a lever gun, but you know you could if you had to.

I've never been much for Westerns, though I've seen a few over the years. And as for horses, I can't even begin to

get on one before being bucked off. If a rugged Western rider is what you're looking for, our Editor-in-Chief Iain Harrison fits the bill. As for me? I'm much more at home on the city streets.

And, yet still, I found myself connected to this rifle. In part because I appreciate both the deep history and mechanical nature, but also because it represents a dream of the future flowing through from the past. Beyond great-grandpa's wildest dreams.

What does a rifle made in the 21st century look like? Here's one. **R**

you'd probably want to cut your hands off before you went through a full thirty. An AR, in the hands of an experienced user, can shoot much faster and farther. The lever-action rifle was the AR of its day but there's a reason select-fire M4s and variants thereof are in the hands of militaries around the world.

But — aside from scenarios so extreme and unlikely that they'd involve me getting my own Wikipedia page — I can't think of many practical problems that can't be solved with this rifle, in my hands. And that's true of every pair of capable hands, in every state of the union.

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# A CHALLENGE REKINDLED: THE TACTICAL GAMES

## How the Event Has Evolved Over Six Years and Now Tests Competitors in New Ways

By Jack Hennessy, Photos by Mathew Hennessy

**T**he Tactical Games was born in 2018 from the brain of Tim Burke, a career Special Forces soldier. The premise then remains the same as today: merge CrossFit-style exercises with a 2-gun event (rifle and pistol) for purposes of testing one's accuracy under the stress of both physical exhaustion and competition.

Yet despite a faithfulness to the initial concept, a lot has changed over the past several years. With competitions growing annually, as much as 100 percent or more in terms of participant numbers, new faces with varied levels of skills, combined with being able to host events at sites with more square footage, created the opportunity to offer greater challenges.

Nathan Drumm, 43, served in the Marines for several years, got out of active duty in 2005, out of the reserves in 2010, and now works as a full-time firefighter in Louisiana. Drumm started

competing in The Tactical Games in 2019 at Reveille Peak Ranch in Texas, which was the organization's third-ever match. Drumm also competes in PRS, sniper matches, other 2-gun events, but prefers The Tactical Games. He has made it to the podium 10 times in the Elite division (the most-difficult division), including a Fourth-place finish at the 2020 national championship and then Fifth at the 2022 championship.

"In the very beginning, the shooting was very rudimentary," said Drumm.

"But it was being programmed by somebody who created the sport and not necessarily a match director."

A lot of that changed starting in 2021. Jared Halbert, CrossFit athlete and competition shooter with two Tactical Games Men's Elite National Championships in 2020 and 2021, transitioned from top-podium finisher to CEO and owner.

"He's a competitive shooter, and he brought a lot of his knowledge, and he

brought people who were known good match directors in like the 3-gun world, and multi-gun shooting disciplines," said Drumm. "They started creating better matches, better shooting.

"That's when you saw the huge page turn into the tactical games for the better is when he took over," said Drumm. "The shooting was more interesting. The physical stages were a lot better planned out. Even today, they're still trying to make it as interesting as possible."

I competed in my first Tactical Games this past July in Seabrook, Iowa. The best way I can describe it? "A great learning experience." Here are my key takeaways and what you should you know, should you consider competing.

### TODAY'S TACTICAL GAMES MISSION

Nick Thayer is a fitness and competitive-shooting enthusiast, veteran, and business owner. "I started out as a





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competitor in The Tactical Games, and it quickly became a major part of my life,” Thayer said. “I thoroughly enjoy all aspects of the sport and the work people are putting in to be competitive in it. It is awesome watching competitors from all backgrounds come out and push themselves to be better.”

Thayer now runs the show and plays a role in all stages of planning. “The Tactical Games started as an idea, it formed

into a competition, and it became a sport,” Thayer said. “The purpose of this sport is to get people interested in shooting, but also to get people who are interested in shooting interested in fitness, and I think the most important thing that we can have is a healthy interest in firearms in America.

“So our goal is always to get more people that are interested in fitness interested in shooting, and get people that

are interested in shooting interested in fitness. I believe The Tactical Games can play a role in the normalization of firearm ownership and can help curve the health epidemic we have in this country. My goal is to see as many Americans as possible interested in shooting sports and physical fitness, not only for themselves but for their families.”

### CONSIDERING COMPETING? HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED

#### Don't wait.

“I've had a bunch of people reach out to me and say, ‘Oh, I'm not ready,’” Drumm said. “I said, ‘Dude, you're ready.’ As long as you're safe with your firearms, just come out and go.”

Drumm had one friend who put it off for two years. Finally, his friend decided to compete. “When he came out, he said, ‘I never should put this off. Like I could have been doing this for two years’. And I said, ‘you're right.’”

#### Volunteer first.

Volunteering is the perfect way to experience all the event has to offer while also earning yourself an entry credit. So not only do you learn, but you save yourself the cost of competing.

“When you volunteer, you learn so much,” Drumm said. “Like I volunteered quite a bit and every time I go, I learn something every time. You literally have a sample size of everyone that's there. And once you volunteer, it kind of takes the mysteriousness of it away. You're like, ‘Oh, OK, I can do this.’”

#### Make friends.

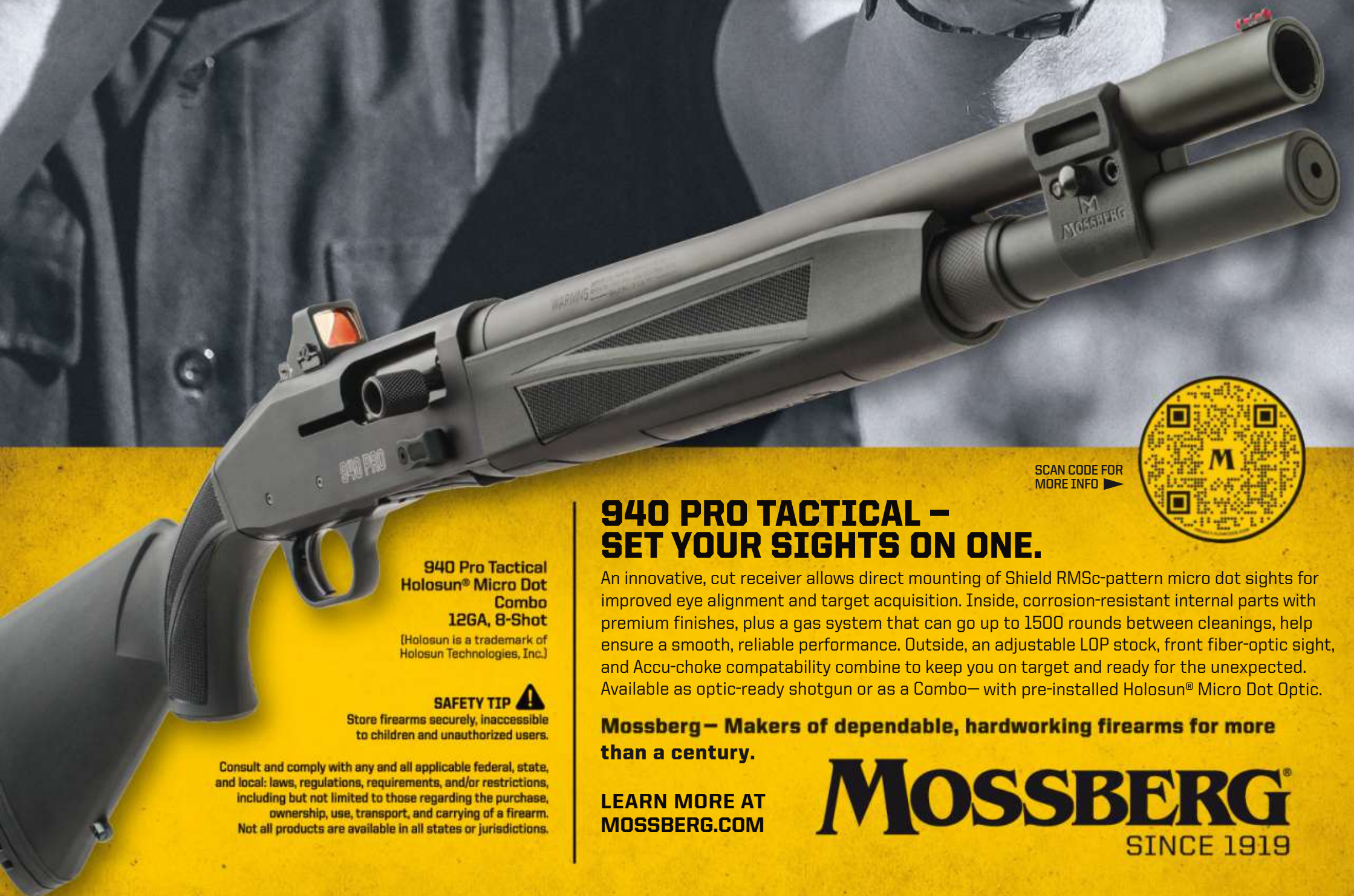
Whether through meeting people when volunteering or joining the Tactical Games Training Group, you will find a friendly and encouraging community. There is always someone ready and happy to answer questions and provide advice. These people want to see the sport grow, so most serve as great ambassadors for making that happen.

### TIMELINE FOR TRAINING

Start early, as much as six months

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out, depending on your current level of fitness. There are several sources advising what your level of fitness should be for your division. For example, the Tactical Games suggested I, for my 40-plus Mens Master Division, should be able to run a 10-minute mile with a slick plate carrier (plates included). But I learned after the event: Double or triple whatever they recommend. What that means: Be able to run three miles with a carrier at a 10-minute pace.

A 1.5-mile run may seem easy when fresh but consider a run like that — or longer — could happen Sunday midday as your final event after an exhausting weekend in nearly 100-degree heat and include steep inclines.

If adhering to a six-month training routine, you may wish to focus solely on the physical for the first two months to

Now that braces are back on the menu, the author availed himself of a shorter barrel to accommodate a can. Other shooters aren't so considerate, so good ear pro is still necessary. Don't overthink your gear — use what you have and go compete.



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get your resting heart rate down, which leads to better VO2 levels and an increase of oxygen in your blood content.

For the next two months, incorporate dry-fire into your exercise. Both my buddy and I made good use of Mantis (both for pistol and their BlackbeardX for rifle) and found their gear to be immensely helpful, especially when comparing our heart rates to accuracy. It helped us see how deep breaths and controlled breathing would benefit us when pulling triggers.

For the final two months, if you can

afford the ammo and range time, get out and practice via live fire as much as possible in awkward positions. That means shooting offhand, from odd angles on a barricade, outward to as much as 700 yards for rifle, 40 yards for pistol. Take notes and know your data. Try different ammo offerings if necessary to determine what your barrel likes most.

### NUTRITION, HYDRATION

Lean protein, colorful vegetables, and starches should be the mantra dur-

PT-wise, work on the ability to run, lift, and pull. Remember rule number one of the zombie apocalypse.

ing training. Ahead of intense workouts and/or runs, as well as the event itself, pack in the carbs via pasta or pizza.

Stay hydrated daily and incorporate a packet of electrolytes. I take one LMNT zero-sugar 0.12-ounce packet daily (as a friend pointed out it's best to reduce intake of artificial sugars), then, during the event, I alternated between two bottles of water and one with LMNT. Avoid caffeine, especially during the event. Thayer pointed out most any medical emergency involved someone being over-caffeinated.

"These stages will get your heart rate high enough," he told us at the safety briefing. "No need to supplement with that pre-workout stuff." And he was right, as my heart rate hit 204 bpm at the end of Sunday's run.

### GEAR CHOICES

How Gucci you want to get, and how much you want to "game it" is all up to you. Below was my loadout complete with insights:

**Rifle: Suppressed 12.5-inch AR Pistol**

**Insights:** While mostly consisting of Aero Precision parts, but with a BCM Mil-spec trigger, Radian Weapons BCG, charging handle, and ambidextrous safety, and Vortex's 1-6x24 Razor HD Gen II and Troy's angle offset irons, I also ran SilencerCo's Velos 5.56 suppressor. The gun was complimented for being the quietest in attendance, but in addition to low velocity and bullets meeting dirt and not steel at 450 yards, after enough rounds the 1:7-twist CMV barrel was throwing rounds using Barnes Precision Match 77-grain.

Upon returning home, I visited an indoor range and found when cold, the gun was shooting easily sub-MOA until the fifth round. Then, at over 35 rounds, the groups really opened up. So while I had read "choose a light gun because you'll have to carry it during workouts," this was not the case, as the rifle was almost always staged on the ground during stages. I would have



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benefited from a longer barrel, likely a birdcage versus a can, and I should've done more testing in regard to how a 69- or 62-grain bullet would perform in my barrel when hot.

**Pistol: Glock 47**

**Insights:** I installed the Radian Weapons Afterburner and Ramjet compensator and match-grade barrel as well as their guide rode and 18-pound spring. Otherwise, the gun, including the trigger, was stock. On the slide, I ran Vortex' Defender ST 3-MOA dot, a micro red I really appreciate both in terms of performance and the perfectly sized window.

While most competitors, especially top contenders, run a hammer-fired pistol — Drumm runs a Hayes Custom Cobra — I wanted to compete with a loadout I'd use in a personal defense

Having the ability to swap in shorter mags to get lower on shooting obstacles is a bonus — bring a selection of 10s, 20s, 30s, and a drum or big stick.

situation. Since I always carry a Glock, I competed with a Glock.

**Plate carrier: Spartan Armor Systems Plate Carrier with Hercules Level IV ceramic plates**

**Insights:** While slick (no mag pouches or attachments), this weighed a little above 15 pounds (the minimum for men). It was comfortable in most scenarios except putting heaving objects on my back, which pushed my back plates down and my front plates up into my throat at times. So while other competitors ran vests filled with sand and designed for these sort of CrossFit-style workouts, my hard armor was a handicap, but that is what I wanted. Same logic as for using a Glock with a stock trigger, I wanted to practice like I'd play.

**Belt: Blue Force Gear CHLK**

**Insights:** I've been using this belt for almost two years in competitions. The combo of inner and outer belts works well, and it stays secure and tight on my waist while I have ample MOLLE space for med kits and mag pouches. I also brought their Ten-Speed chest rig in case I needed to quickly bring four magazines to a stage and didn't want to swap out pouches on my plate carrier.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS AND TIPS**

Take a look at what you think you need to do, and — bare minimum — double it. Progressively make preparation more uncomfortable — run farther and faster, lift more, shoot from barricades at awkward positions and angles.

Keep track of your progress in every respect. That includes your diet and



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At the end of a stage, you might be ready to drop, but the other competitors will pull you through.

hydration levels in relation to workout performance, but also your bullet data from 50 to 750 yards. Know bullet rise and drop and bring a rangefinder to the event. Stage designers will assume you guesstimate a target to be 150, but it could easily be 172 and when your target is a small, inverted triangle, having that bullet data and knowing the exact range will matter.

Get faster with your workouts, slower on the gun. When I tried to go too fast on my first plate rack shooting my pistol, my accuracy suffered. “Learn to be slow in

a hurry,” as my friend and LE instructor Mike Yoder always likes to say. In some stages, the ability to finish the workout quicker may mean the difference in an extra round of shooting and thus more points potential.

Be intentional about ammo or bullet choice. “Right now, my wife and I are using Sierra 77s,” Drumm said. “We have also used 69-grain MatchKings for I think two and a half years. Just right now, the barrels we’re using like the 77 just a little bit more.”

Drumm custom loads for longer ranges and marks his magazines accordingly. He knows what bullet works well with what powder (IMR 8208 or StaBALL Match) in what barrel at what range, because he’s put in the time and tuned his setup.

**OTHER TIPS**

- Bring both 30-round and 10-round rifle magazines. When shooting from a rooftop barricade, not having to balance a 30-round magazine makes a big difference.
- Be able to mark your magazines with a paint pen. During one stage that called for alternating between 10 and five rounds, I shot five rounds during a 10-round sequence, costing me points.

- Use plugs not muffs and preferably the noise-cancelling kind with external mics. I ran OTTO’s NoizeBarrier Micro plugs, and these made a major difference, as they both lowered loud noises to acceptable and decibels and still allowed for me to clearly hear my spotter or RSO when needed.
  - Find ways to make yourself as comfortable as possible between stages. This could mean a change or two of clothes should you sweat through other clothes (socks and underwear are biggest considerations here). Bring a chair, at the very least. And have cooler with plenty of water.
  - Take time to move between stages and after the first day. Lactic acid builds up in your muscles. Get it out via mild exercising or even muscle massages (muscle-massage gun too?) You don’t want your limbs feeling like dead weights on the second day.
- A final takeaway came from Drumm: “Don’t worry about buying a lot of expensive gear. As long as you have a pistol — a 9mm, 40, or 45 — and a rifle, use that. Make sure you have a belt. Make sure you have some pouches and don’t worry about buying the most expensive stuff out there. It’s more important that you just try it, right?”

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# PAN- EUROPEAN PISTOL

**PTR's Archon Type B Survived a Troubled, Multinational Development History and Has Made a Comeback for "Gen 2"**

By Patrick McCarthy

**D**eveloping a new gun isn't easy, unless your desired level of quality involves a piece of scrap lumber, a length of galvanized pipe, some hose clamps, and a nail to serve as the firing pin. Professional firearm designers must first tackle the design and mechanical engineering phase, creating a mechanism that functions reliably while navigating a minefield of existing patents that cannot be infringed. Then comes prototype testing, revisions, tooling, and mass manufacturing. Even if an objectively excellent product is produced, it must be priced and marketed appropriately in order to achieve even a modicum of commercial success. And ultimately, many consumers will write it off as an oddball and stick to tried-and-true alternatives — we call this the “why not just buy a Glock 19” effect.

Over the years, we've seen countless new firearm designs come and go. Some get stuck in endless “development hell,” others get embroiled in heated legal battles with competitors or stakeholders, and a few make it to store shelves only to sell so poorly that the parent company goes bankrupt. The Archon Type B could've fallen victim to any one of these fates, and yet, it survived. Not only that, the end result is better than you might expect.

### BIRTH AND REBIRTH

The story of this pistol — originally known as the Strizh, meaning “swift” in Russian — dates back to around 2011. It was co-designed by Dimitry Strechinski, a Russian, and Nicola Bandini, an Italian, as a potential next-generation 9mm service pistol for Russian police and military organizations. According to research by Ian McCollum of Forgotten Weapons, it “was progressing very successfully through testing and trials” by 2014. However, in the end it was not selected by these organizations. Some, including McCollum, have speculated that Russian

decision-makers demanded some financial “encouragement” to grease the wheels of progress, but there's no way to know for sure. Regardless, the duo made the difficult decision to pivot toward international sales.

Strechinski and Bandini took their design to Arsenal Firearms of Italy — not to be confused with Arsenal JSCo, the AK manufacturer in Bulgaria — who dropped the Strizh name and began to sell the pistol in Europe under the new name Strike One. Around 2016, Arsenal Firearms also partnered with Salient Arms International (SAI) to establish a U.S. division. The American-market, compact variant of the Italian-built pistol became known as the Arsenal Firearms USA Stryk-B.

In mid 2017, reportedly due to dispute over international licensing and trademarks, Arsenal Firearms USA rebranded as Archon Firearms. This resulted in the Strizh's lineage branching off in two directions. On one side, Arsenal Firearms continued to sell the Italian-made Strike One, which is currently imported to North America by American Precision Firearms. On the other side, Archon Firearms (formerly Arsenal Firearms USA) renamed and revised the design to create the Archon Type B. Archon contracted some of its manufacturing to RUAG, a Swiss aerospace and defense company operating factories in Germany and Hungary. Most recently, Archon opened its own manufacturing facility in the



Czech Republic, and PTR Industries became the exclusive partner and distributor of Archon products for the North American market.

After learning of this tangled web of designs, redesigns, mergers, and legal battles, you might think this pistol never would've made it to the market. But it's still alive, and that speaks to the quality of the engineering under the hood. In fact, rather than stagnating, the latest version features some substantial improvements.

### ARCHON TYPE B GEN 2

For Archon's second-generation model, a lot has changed, but the core DNA of the original Strizh remains apparent. This pistol is based on an action that's inspired by the floating locking block system originally seen in the relatively obscure Bergmann-Bayard Model 1903 pistol. Archon's

version of this system is called AF-Speedlock. Rather than tilting upward as the slide reciprocates, the barrel moves straight back about



Various types of pre-cut textured material can be applied to each part of the grip. These range from the default rubberized Talon grip to an aggressive skateboard-tape-style material.



To change grip configurations, two roll pins must be tapped out with a mallet and 3/32-inch punch. A Real Avid Accu-Punch set made quick work of this task. After attempting to install the large backstrap, I noticed the pin channel wasn't drilled all the way through, making it impossible to insert the roll pin. This defect was annoying, but easily fixed.



With two grip extenders and four backstraps, the Type B Gen 2 can be set up for use with 13-, 15-, or 18-round magazines.



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¼ inch. A U-shaped floating block beneath the barrel moves up and down to lock the barrel in place before each shot. This design allows for a low bore axis and slim, lightweight slide, two factors that make the recoil impulse surprisingly gentle. It also maintains reliability by reducing the angle at which rounds feed from the magazine into the chamber.

The rear of the grip is characterized by a large beavertail and a diagonal “tendon activator” — two features that have remained from the earliest phase of its design.

The trigger is a flat-faced design with 4.5-pound pull weight, and the teardrop-shaped magazine release can be oriented for left- or right-handed use. The Type B’s slide rides on a steel monocoque frame machined from a single piece of bar stock. Racking the slide reflects the precision of this component, as it feels buttery smooth with minimal play in any direction. A single steel pin through the frame retains the slide, and we appreciate that it’s captive to eliminate the risk of misplacing it during cleaning.

Archon’s first-generation Type B featured a distinctive grip pattern of square teeth cut at an angle and laid out in a grid across its glass-reinforced polymer frame. Archon called this “grip mapping technology,” and it accentuated the gun’s futuristic appearance, but its uniqueness was somewhat polarizing. For Gen 2, they’ve switched to a more traditional grip texture with a trick up its sleeve — it’s user-replaceable. Regions of the pistol grip are covered in high-strength Talon Grip tape, and this material can be peeled off and switched out with different textures. The Type B comes with a rubberized orange-peel-style finish applied, but more aggressive Granulate skateboard tape and Pro hybrid finishes are offered. The user can also mix and match, selec-

tively applying a rougher material to key areas.

Speaking of modularity, the most notable change to the Type B Gen 2 is its multi-part grip design. The backstrap and magwell portions are removable, allowing the gun to be assembled in three configurations: full size with 18-round capacity, compact with 15-round capacity, and subcompact with 13-round capacity. Each Type B includes a 15-round mag, an 18-round mag, two grip extenders, and four different backstraps. This allows the user to switch grip sizes and capacities in a matter of minutes without permanently altering the serialized frame of the gun. At time of writing this article, 13-round mags aren’t currently available through PTR, but we’re told they’ll be offered in the near future.

A large beavertail extends approximately half an inch past the rear of the slide to reduce the risk of slide bite. Beneath the beavertail, there’s an angled gusset which is intended to “activate the tendon” in the webbing of the shooter’s dominant hand, applying pressure to tighten the grip on the gun. This is a feature that has carried over from the original Strizh, and it feels counterintuitive, since many modern shooting instructors advise students to tighten the support hand and apply less grip pressure with the dominant hand.



An optional threaded barrel makes it easy to install your suppressor of choice. Although the barrel doesn’t tilt, PTR still recommends using a booster.





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Combining a low bore axis with the unusual AF-Speedlock action gives the Type B a smooth recoil impulse with very little muzzle rise.

strong suits. It's still a 4.5-pound striker-fired trigger, but the travel is short, the wall is distinct, and the reset produces a tactile click. I also appreciate that, rather than a blade safety that protrudes into the center of the shooter's finger, the entire flat-faced shoe serves as a pivoting trigger safety. This makes it comfortable to shoot hundreds of rounds without any annoying hotspots on the finger. Years ago, when RECOIL staffer Rob Curtis reviewed the first-gen Archon, he described the feel as "a lot like a quality two-stage rifle trigger," and I'd agree with this assessment.

That said, the best part about the Archon Type B — and this should come as no surprise, given its design — is its recoil impulse. With each shot, the gun pushed straight back into my hand with very little muzzle rise. In simplest terms, shooting the Archon feels similar to shooting a run-of-the-mill Glock or SIG with an aftermarket compensator installed. There's far less snap of the wrist, so holding the red dot on a target for immediate follow-up shots feels almost effortless. Ringing steel plates in quick *one-two-three-four-five* cadences

The Type B is available with your choice of iron sights only (plain rear and fiber optic front), RMR cut, RMS cut, or ACRO cut. Base model MSRP is \$960; with an optic cut, it's \$999. The Type B ships with a 4.3-inch barrel, but a 5-inch threaded barrel is available through PTR as an accessory for an additional \$139.

### ROUNDS DOWNRANGE

When I picked up the Archon from my local FFL, it generated immediate interest from staff and other customers. Its proportions are distinct enough to quickly set it apart from other pistols in the display case — if anything, it bears a slight resemblance to a CZ Shadow 2 with its low-profile slide and large beavertail. There's even a hint of Laugo Arms Alien (minus the \$5,000 price tag) if you squint a little. I'd consider that very good company to be in.

The new grip design fit my hands nicely in 15-round configuration, and the combination of a large undercut on the trigger guard and half-inch-long beavertail allowed me to choke up on it without discomfort. The rubberized grip texture is better than smooth plastic but nowhere near as aggressive as a stippled polymer grip — if

you've ever used rubber Talon Grips, you know exactly what it feels like. For better or for worse, the "tendon activator" feature in the backstrap had no noticeable impact on my shooting. Ideally, I'd delete this feature and reduce the beavertail to about half its current size for improved comfort during AIWB concealed carry, but neither feature distracted me while shooting.

Trigger feel, both in terms of shape and movement, is one of the Archon's

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was satisfying, and the gun felt like it was encouraging me to clear each plate rack just a little faster. Granted, it's nowhere near the level of a race gun or the aforementioned Laugo Alien, but I've spent hundreds of dollars on aftermarket barrels, comps, and recoil springs to achieve similar performance from other pistols I own. With MSRP under a grand and street price even lower than that, the value is solid.

Since PTR offers a threaded barrel, I tried installing a KE Arms universal double-port compensator to see if I could make a flat shooter even flatter. The Archon ran reliably with the comp and standard velocity Blazer 124-grain ammo. Muzzle rise was reduced from slim to none, but this modification seems like overkill. It actually drove the muzzle down slightly below the horizon with each shot. A single-port comp could produce better results, but for those who really want to build a gamer gun, I suspect a few small ports in the barrel and a lighter recoil spring might be the Goldilocks setup.

I also used the threaded barrel to install a SilencerCo Omega 9K suppressor. Given the non-tilting action, I wondered whether a booster (aka Nielsen device) would be necessary, but a PTR rep explained that it's still necessary for complete reliability. So,

Unlike many of its contemporaries, the Archon's barrel doesn't tilt as it unlocks. Instead, it moves straight back as a U-shaped floating block inside the frame disengages.

I assembled the included SilencerCo piston spring and retainer with a Dead Air ½x28 piston, then threaded the can onto the muzzle. The quasi-compensated recoil impulse makes this a great suppressor host.

Unsurprisingly, holster and aftermarket parts support is limited, but there are a few options if you look around. I ended up installing a SureFire X300U light and using a T-Rex Arms Ragnarok SD holster, which indexes off the light rather than the gun. If you don't mind forgoing a weapon light, LAS Concealment offers a variant of its customizable Shogun IWB holster for the Type B, and PTR themselves offer a basic OWB Kydex holster. Rain6 and Iron Horse Designs — both in Vernal, Utah — are leading the way for third-party upgrades, offering magazine basepads, recoil and striker spring tuning kits, trigger work, porting, compensators, turn-key custom Archon builds, and more. I'm hoping to try some of these items for an Optimized column feature in our sister publication, CONCEALMENT.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

So, why not just buy another one of your favorite mainstream striker-fired

pistols? If that's the only question you're asking, you're not the target audience (and you're probably not much fun at parties). The Type B is an unusual design with an unusually complicated lineage, but that's how innovation happens — somebody has to step outside the box, and doing so is never easy. Archon's website explains, "The challenging times of the past have tempered our company and only made it stronger."

What we ended up with is a Russo-Italian design from a company that's headquartered in the Czech Republic, built by a Swiss contractor in a factory in Germany, and imported to the United States by PTR. More importantly, what we ended up with is a pistol that looks, feels, and performs unlike anything else in its price range. With its latest Gen 2 updates, the Archon Type B feels less quirky and more polished than ever. While it may never fly off the shelves like the sub-\$600 pistols from major brands, it's worth a look if you're open to something that's not just another Glock clone. **R**

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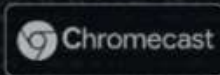
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# FIELD NOTES FROM THE DONBAS

## Forgotten Stories From the Russo-Ukrainian War

By Iain Harrison

If you want the truth, you have to go find it. I recently returned from assignment in eastern Ukraine, speaking with guys on the ground in order to get stories overlooked by mainstream sources. Three weeks of being serenaded by KAB glide bombs, S300 missiles, and MLRS artillery. Crammed into the back of a clapped-out, four-banger diesel SUV, kidneys pummeled by a suspension long-since past its prime, bottoming out on the bump stops on potholed roads that make Detroit seem like the

At the border of Donetsk Oblast, heading toward the loud part.

Nurburgring. Sweating in 95-degree temperatures while wearing armor and helmet and grabbing a whore's bath in abandoned workshops whenever we found a working faucet.

As in most armed conflicts, hardship is contrasted with the surreal. Like smoking Cuban cigars at 2 a.m. after an arm-wrestling match with snipers who'd just rotated off the line, as HIMARS rockets launched from the adjacent field, providing one of the world's most expensive fireworks displays. Or watching a drone expert

who'd racked up more kills than your neighborhood cancer ward hand-feed a baby bird he'd found on the ground.

Strangely enough, my team never ran into reporters from the major networks, but then again, chances to run up the corporate Amex were few and far between. Mainstream media rarely leaves Kyiv, as that's where they can guarantee a regular diet of press releases, spoon-fed fresh from the MOD. Plus, there's lots of good restaurants and titty bars. Not that there's anything wrong with that.





Our story began a few months ago, on trip number five. We got the chance to shoot Ukraine’s version of the AR-10 (and pretty decent it is, too), courtesy of Sasha, a sniper instructor and founder of a semi-independent sniper unit that sends guns-for-hire to units of the Ukrainian army wherever they’re most needed. Sasha previously owned a Mercedes repair shop and was a national champion biathlete, so the dude knew how to innovate and shoot under stress and volunteered to help repel the first Russian invasion

in 2014. He’s been slinging rounds downrange ever since the battle of Donetsk Airport and has an interesting tale of “repurposing” ex-president Yanukovich’s official armored SUV, in which he wound up getting ambushed, taking rounds from at least three PKMs and one RPG. He was heading east to deliver supplies and check on his men, so he asked if I wanted to hop a ride. Rolling out toward the rising sun, you never quite know what’s on the agenda, or if you’ll make it there. Or back.

Top left: FPV drone operators rarely pass up a chance to practice their skills and will fire up a laptop-based simulator during downtime.

Above left and right: Our grenade selection wasn’t as varied as afternoon tea, but there’s a limit as to how much you cram into a Mitsubishi.

After spending some time with contacts in a special forces regiment in Kharkiv, it was time to hit the road to the Donbas region. Pokrovsk is one of those Soviet-era bastions of heavy industry that would make an ideal location for a post-apocalyptic zombie movie, littered with shuttered coal mines, slag heaps, and endemic industrial decay. Think New Jersey, but without the charm. Driving past soulless and decrepit apartment blocks built during Brezhnev’s reign, the summer evening air was redolent



Above left: 1986 M109 Paladin on its third barrel, out of action for a week due to a busted cooling fan shaft. In the U.S., this would be solved with a power pack swap taking less than an hour, but the crew had to have the part fabricated locally at their own expense.

Above right and right: Range time with some dudes, somewhere east of Poland.

killed. Later, this was amended; one surviving team member hadn't deployed to the position, so had escaped his teammates' fate and was there to meet us when we pulled up to an anonymous, single-story brick house on the edge of town. Misha, the lone survivor, relayed the tale. "F\*cking brigade commanders tasked my boys

without telling me and sent them to a bad position. We had recce'd a good sniper location on the flanks, but they used them like regular infantry, sending them to a place the Russians had already identified."

The next couple of days were spent trying to find out what actually happened to his detachment, visiting



with dust kicked up by ancient Kamaz military trucks belching black diesel exhaust, with additional olfactory notes provided by a malfunctioning city sewage system. Earlier that day, 220mm Uragan rockets had slammed into a random residential area, killing a handful of civilians, an event so unremarkable here that it barely made it into conversation. The city's location makes it strategically important, situated at the intersection of two major roads and a railway line — taking it would expose the southern flanks of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, two of the last remaining major cities in Donetsk. As a result, the Russians are pushing hard to take as much real estate as quickly as possible. So far, they've been met with limited success, grinding away at the Ukrainian defenders with a seemingly insane disregard for casualties.

While on the road to Pokrovsk, we got word that the guys Sasha was supposed to rendezvous with had been



The first two pics are near misses; the third is just your average Donetsk urban landscape. Cue the “They’re the same picture” meme.



command posts and reviewing hours of drone footage, gaining a bird’s-eye view as Russian infantry supported by FPV drones rolled up his guys from the rear. “Anyone above the rank of Captain isn’t worth a sh\*t!” exclaimed Misha. “We have too many commanders who are still of the Soviet mindset, where the lives of troops aren’t worth anything, and they don’t know how to effectively use specialists.”

While the tradition of soldiers griping about their officers is as old as time and spans continents and centuries, this wasn’t an isolated incident. We heard from members of the 47th mechanized brigade who had been in the thick of fighting since Bakhmut, putting in good work with their U.S.-donated Bradley IFVs. They recounted

a case where some of their supporting M109 Paladin crews had been given shovels and pushed up to the zero line to prepare infantry fighting positions. After several well-trained and experienced howitzer teams had been wiped out, higher command finally realized that maybe this wasn't such a great idea.

In hierarchical organizations such as the military, the fish rots from the head. When commanders discipline their subordinates for bringing them bad news, bad news, no matter how important, doesn't get brought. The old Soviet command structure placed great emphasis on discipline and loyalty, leaving little room for initiative or acting off the books in support of the commander's intent. Despite having

Below, left: An IED maker's carefully collected stash of frag used in drone-dropped munitions. Note the plastic bottle, full of chopped-up chainsaw blade.

Bottom left: Latest individual UAS detector, which gives an indication of the type of bird based on known frequencies.

Below: A typical 7-inch FPV drone used by both Ukrainian and Russian forces.

been trained in Western doctrines of pushing responsibility down to the lowest level feasible, Ukrainian troops are still saddled with a military bureaucracy that's sclerotic and rigid. This goes all the way to the highest levels. The biggest problem I saw in their operations was lack of weapons, such as Javelins and Stingers. A very close second stems from their leadership.

### DRONE UPDATE

It's not a stretch to say that we're currently witnessing an inflection point in the history of warfare. Cheap, disposable unmanned aerial vehicles or drones are having as much of an impact on this aspect of the human condition as the advent of the machine gun in the early 20th century, and no specialism

be it infantry, armor, artillery, or logistics has escaped their presence.

We can say that the U.S., with our military dominance of the battlespace, will be less affected by this change — and if we head down that route, it's a mistake that we'll pay for in lives. Since I started covering the war in Ukraine from the front lines, one thing that's been brought home in stark relief is the pace at which this environment evolves, with both sides developing tactics, countermeasures, and technology at breakneck speed. Of course, we've seen this many times before — better armor on tanks necessitated bigger guns to defeat it. Bigger guns and thicker armor need more powerful engines to move them. Darwin in action. Here's what I'm seeing now.



# AGILITY

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Back in mid 2022, Ukrainians gained a tactical advantage through the widespread employment of readily available commercial, off-the-shelf (COTS) drones, such as the Chinese DJI Mavic 2 and 3. Initially used to spot for artillery and provide over-watch for Russian assaults, it wasn't long before they became weaponized, armed with either VOG grenades or improvised free-fall bombs released from 3D-printed saddles. Both sides are supposed to be covered by a sales embargo imposed by DJI and enforced by a no-fly zone embedded in their software, but this is circumvented by reprogramming or spoofing the drone's GPS chip to make it believe it's flying someplace else. DJI has since imposed sales restrictions in Europe to further frustrate Ukrainian efforts to acquire them, but as far as we know, no such conditions exist in Russia. The Mavic 3 continues to provide reconnaissance capabilities to both sides, but its use as a weapon has largely been supplanted by first person view (FPV) drones, as these are cheaper and more easily sourced locally.

Early 2023 saw the widespread Ukrainian use of FPVs armed with RPG-7 HEAT warheads, which proved to be effective in defeating armored vehicles, as they typically work in top-attack mode where armor is thinnest. For a while, Ukrainians had the upper hand, as these drones of many different flavors and types were made in local workshops by commercial enterprises and the widespread civilian volunteer network, which supports the armed forces.

Rather than use a dispersed approach to R&D and manufacture, Russia opted to choose one or two types, then place massive contracts with a limited number of defense companies. As a result, the numerical advantage enjoyed for a few months by Ukrainian forces disappeared. There has been additional development by both sides

Even close to the front lines, R&D cells operate to build and update weapon systems using 3D printers.



UAR-10, IWI AR-15, and CZ Bren 2 in a safe house, Kharkiv region.



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Above: Everything a growing boy needs: potatoes, a drone detector, UAR-10, and a pack of smokes. And, yes, that's a Louis Vuitton wrap.

in terms of the types of munitions carried by FPVs since then, and HE, frag, HEAT, and HEDP are part of the inventory. FPVs are much harder to fly than commercial drones, as they lack on-board stabilization, so their operators typically require a longer training period, starting on simulators and progressing to live flights once they've proven competence.

The next step up from Category 1 drones are their bigger cousins, products of the military-industrial complex. Here too, tactics and usage are evolving. Previously, Russian operators would launch Lancet loitering munitions only when a target had been identified by an ISR drone, such as an Orlan or Supercam. Now, it would appear that they have sufficient inventory to launch both at the same time, with the Lancet used against targets of opportunity — something we witnessed first-hand.

## COUNTER DRONE WARFARE

Use of drones in combat is complicated due to the presence of countermeasures. Russians have long been experts in electronic warfare (EW) and have been quick to adapt this prowess to the new field. Drones typically use two radio channels: one for their video feed and the other for flight control. Jam the video channel and the drone is blind. Jam the command channel and it either crashes or will hover in place until the battery dies. Of course, counter-

countermeasures are in play, and these range from using signal amplifiers and directional antennae to punch through signal jamming, to the use of drone-carried signal repeaters to “hop” the command and video channels.

Due to fielding of EW complexes down to the subunit level, drone operators are now using a spectrum analyzer to determine what, if any, channels are being blocked. They'll then program the drone to use an open channel. Ukrainian forces currently have an advantage due to the wider variety of FPVs being built by their various cottage industries. They're able to quickly adapt to jump on channels outside of the usual range used by COTS drones and swap out antennae to take advantage of them. Prior

experience suggests this advantage will be short-lived, and Russian forces will catch up sooner or later.

Both sides are making use of drones to resupply troops in positions with ammunition, water, and food, as sending men or vehicles in contested areas inevitably results in casualties. We saw instances of casualty evacuation using unmanned ground vehicles, roughly the size of ride-on lawn mowers and equipped with stretchers.

Presently, about 90 percent of infantry casualties in this conflict are caused by either artillery or FPV drones. We in the U.S. must adapt our TTPs to account for the constantly changing world of drone warfare or risk being left behind as our enemies watch and learn. **R**

The Archer thermal weapon sight shown here is highly regarded by snipers.



Myrnohrad, east of Pokrovsk, may well have fallen by the time this issue hits the shelves, as the Russians were pushing hard to capture it.







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# SILENCER CENTRAL BANISH SPEED K SUPPRESSOR

## The Letter of the Day is K

By Steven Kuo

**S**ilencer Central made its name and shook up the industry with its novel approach to selling and shipping suppressors — direct to your home in most states, due to their local presence in each of those states. They made the process dead-nuts simple, with real live customer service to help and hand-hold customers every step of the way, free NFA gun trusts, and interest-free payment plans. But over the years, they also developed their own line of suppressors, in part to ensure they'd always have product available given short supply and high demand.

Dubbed the Banish line, Silencer Central released various silencers of the type you'd expect — .223- and .30-caliber cans, a rimfire can, multi-caliber and modular pistol and rifle cans. Most are constructed of titanium, with some Inconel and stainless steel sprinkled in the mix.

Meanwhile, Silencer Central had another project in the works. In partnership with Federal Ammunition, they developed a compact “K” can

specifically to meet the needs of law enforcement. It's now being offered to the commercial market.

Nothing in life comes for free, so all else being equal, a reduction in size comes with a reduction in sound mitigation. However, there are other considerations to prioritize. For an officer or SWAT team operator, a suppressed rifle will still be quieter to better protect their hearing and communicate with their team, and it won't blind and deafen everyone. The shorter overall length is more nimble, maneuverable in structures, and easier to store.

Note also that we said “all else being equal.” And Silencer Central didn't just cut one of their Banish 223 cans in half. The Speed K is a new design, unlike the companies' other silencers, designed to provide reduced back pressure in a compact package with good sound suppression.

It has a short and girthy footprint to provide more volume to work with — it's a scant 4 inches long and a full 2 inches in diameter. Additionally, the Speed K is constructed via additive manufacturing, otherwise known as 3D printing. This allows it to incorporate complex and precise designs as the

The Speed K is threaded for industry-standard HUB mount adapters. Just pick your poison — shown here are Silencer Central's titanium direct thread adapter, Wolfpack Armory's Plan B adapter, and Dead Air Silencers' KeyMo adapter.



Note the four vent ports in the muzzle cap.



3D printer precisely puts down layer after layer that wouldn't be feasible to machine. With its stubby length, it has clipped wall baffles, and a finned blast chamber to disperse energy as quickly as possible. It has five baffles, with the fourth being vented. The controlled flow design reduces back pressure; Silencer Central says that compared to an unsuppressed gun, gas blowback is increased by less than 6 percent. At the cost of some sound mitigation, you avoid a face full of noxious gases. It's a worthwhile trade-off for this can, especially on the ubiquitous direct-impingement AR platform.

The Speed K is a hard-use duty silencer — it's made entirely of Inconel, exceptionally robust, and full-auto rated. Inconel is a superalloy composed primarily of nickel and chromium, which can handle high temperatures and is very corrosion resistant; it's been used in rocket engines and Formula 1 cars. This is another trade-off, prioritizing durability for duty use over light weight. At 15.6 ounces without a

mount adapter, it's a little hefty (note the company's spec sheet shows it as 14.1 ounces); however, since it's only 4 inches long, it keeps the weight balance further back.

The rear of the suppressor is threaded 1.375x24 to accept industry-standard HUB mount adapters; it'll come with your choice of direct-thread adapter from the factory. Silencer Central currently offers eight selections for direct thread mounts. Shown here for comparison are the included 1/2x28 direct thread adapter at 1.2 ounces (plus weight savings of deleting your muzzle device), a Wolfpack Armory Plan B adapter at 2.6 ounces, and a Dead Air Silencers KeyMo adapter at 4.7 ounces.

Note that the Speed K isn't serviceable; the baffles can't be removed due to its solid 3D-printed construction. Clean it with a sonic wash or by soaking it for a couple days. Then, remove the mount adapter and scrub the blast chamber and accuracy baffle. Clean all of the threads as well, and use a rod to clear out the four vent ports in the muzzle cap.



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We tested the Speed K on both direct-impingement and piston rifles, not to mention an FN M249, and it delivers on its promise. It's very compact and handles well. You can feel the additional weight on the muzzle end, but it's not unwieldy. It's fantastic on an SBR or pistol build, but even on a 16-inch gun, the short can keeps it within reason, like clearing buildings with an old M16A2 in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Gas blowback is well controlled and doesn't distract the shooter. The silencer functioned well on the hosts we tested without need to make any adjustments to gas settings or buffer weights. While it isn't the quietest silencer you'll ever run, it's quiet enough and makes it much less unpleasant to touch off rounds indoors and around other people.

In our testing, there was approximately 1 MOA of point of impact shift from unsuppressed to suppressed, and no appreciable difference in group sizes. Naturally, it's also soft shooting,

At just 4 inches long, Silencer Central's Speed K is very nimble. It's great on a shorty, but even a 16-inch gun remains maneuverable.

Right: Speed K shown with various mount adapters.

Bottom: The 3D-printed finned blast chamber is designed to disperse energy as quickly as possible.

between the extra weight and the suppressor itself.

While at the 5.7 Fest event at Range Ready Studios in Louisiana, we had the opportunity to conduct sound level testing using a Larson Davis LxT1 sound meter. This is an expensive piece of equipment that's able to capture the oh-so-brief peak sound levels of a gunshot; regular consumer-grade sound meters can't pick them up. Silencer Central rates the Speed K at around 20 to 21dB of sound reduction at the shooter's ear. Our testing in humid 90-degree weather resulted in a reduction of 19 to 20dB, pretty close to the company's data.

Silencer Central's Speed K is a great hard-use silencer for tactical ap-

plications and home defense. If you're willing to sacrifice some durability and the full-auto rating, Silencer Central just released a titanium version, the Speed K Ti, which weighs about 9 ounces and costs an additional \$280. It'd be great on a home defense gun, while the original Inconel variant would be your go-to-war choice. **R**



## SILENCER CENTRAL BANISH SPEED K

**CALIBER:** 5.56mm

**LENGTH:** 4 inches

**DIAMETER:** 2 inches

**WEIGHT:** 15.6 (Inconel) or 8.6 (titanium) ounces

**MSRP:** \$1,119 (Inconel), \$1,399 (titanium)

**URL:** [silencercentral.com](http://silencercentral.com)



# RDSO INNOVATIVE RED DOT PROTECTION

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# PRECISION COMBO CAN

Why You Want a Maxim Defense PRS:338 By Dave Merrill





Since their inception, Maxim Defense has consistently produced and developed designs that others would ape — after all, a large part of the problem is knowing if something *can* be done in the first place. We've said that Maxim Defense does the hard part first, so it's fitting that their earliest offering in the silencer space was for a machinegun. Not just any machinegun, but the M240 (see more in RECOIL Issue 59).

It does seem difficult to get further from precision than a machinegun, but the same technology that lets you have a conversation while dumping a belt-fed also applies to your PRS piece. Maxim Defense suppressors, based on those hardy designs, use what they've dubbed *M-Core technology*. They're deceptively simple, appearing to be nothing more than monocores, but their performance

far exceeds expectations — at least if you use other monocores as a metric.

Maxim Defense currently offers two PRS cans designed with precision in mind: the 7.9-inch PRS:308 and the 11-inch more-modular PRS:338.

If you already have a PRS:308 it can still be worth your time to get a PRS:338, but if you don't have either then the PRS:338 is what you want. Why? Because the PRS:338 does double duty. Remove that initial module and — *magic* — you've essentially got a PRS:308. (It's true that the bore of the PRS:338 is larger by just a touch, but not a touch that's going to make any practical difference.)

As to why Maxim Defense sells both? While everyone *wants* a silencer that can eat .338 Lapua Magnum, the number of people who actually need it is very small indeed. And if you

## MAXIM DEFENSE PRS:338

DIAMETER: 1.75 inches

LENGTH: 11 inches

WEIGHT: 19 ounces

MSRP: \$995

URL: [maximdefense.com](http://maximdefense.com)

## MAXIM DEFENSE PRS:308

DIAMETER: 1.75 inches

LENGTH: 7.9 inches

WEIGHT: 10.8 ounces

MSRP: \$995

URL: [maximdefense.com](http://maximdefense.com)

don't need that module? You'll not only save a third on the length, nearly half on weight, but also a third on the price. Hell yeah. **R**





# PRINCE OF PMAGS

## Drake Clark Is One of the Magpul OGs. We Catch Up With Him to Talk PMAGs, ACRs, and Foldy Glocks

By Iain Harrison

**A**lthough it's something of a trope, Magpul is one of those quintessential American success stories that started in somebody's basement. Richard Fitzpatrick, a Marine veteran started out with an idea to provide soldiers with a product to replace the 550 cord and duct tape loops soldiers were adding to their magazines, in order to make getting them out of ammo pouches a bit easier. He contracted a neighbor to set up an injection molding machine in his garage, and while the neighbor operated the press, Fitzpatrick and his wife boxed up products in their basement and shipped them out to customers. The rest, as they say, is history.

Drake Clark fell in love with the AR-15 through his job on the patrol rifle team in the Oakland, California, Police Department and wound up using the original Magpul on the job, before moving to Colorado, where he was hired to head up sales efforts. We caught up with him at his ranch and range complex near Gillette, Wyoming.

**RECOIL: What made you leave law enforcement?**

**DC:** It was really the opportunity offered by Magpul's founder, Richard Fitzpatrick, who I met in Colorado while at the sheriff's office. I was already familiar with the first original Magpul product, the actual Magpul brought out in 2000 after the company was formed in 1999. I did some part-time work with him on the sales side of things, then when things took off I moved over full time with a few of the people who built what Magpul is today.

**What was the first product you were involved with on the development side?**

**DC:** I think that was back in my part-time days, and it was the enhanced follower. Richard was trying to come up with a solution for the performance of the green and black GI followers in the 30-round magazines, and he and I had extensive conversations about it. And while I wasn't directly involved in its design, I did a lot of testing and feedback during product development.

**And that led directly to the PMAG?**

**DC:** Not directly, as there were a few products before that. The MIAD grip came out, then the CTR stock in the 2005 to 2006 time frame during the time we were working on the PMAG. We launched that publicly in 2007, if I'm not mistake at the Orlando SHOT Show, back when we didn't just have it in Vegas, and then sales just exploded from there.

**Magpul has had a lot of additions to the catalog since it was formed.**

**What's been the most memorable one for you?**

**DC:** It's hard not to default to the PMAG, as that's been my business card for going on 20 years now, but maybe the most memorable was working on the Masada project. That was when I had way less gray hair in my beard and all of us were quite a bit younger. Mike Mayberry and Brian Nakayama were the brains behind it, and it was an exciting time as really there were no modular firearms around then. While I love the AR-15, we came up with something that could change calibers,



swap lower receivers out, and build it mission specific so you could have a DMR or CQB gun or a suppressed upper. At the time, there were some big competitions going on with the army and some foreign companies had a foot in the door, and we were like, hey, we want to see American troops carrying an American weapon, built by Americans and designed by Americans.

**So, go over the story after the initial design.**

**DC:** I think we had six prototypes that we built and all of them ran pretty good. Building six of something easy. Building 6,000 in a month is a different story, and we wanted to stay in our lane in the accessory world and let the guys that had that tenure in the firearms space carry that torch, while



Clark's beard has evolved since the early years, seen here in the Magpul Unimog and on the range for the iconic video series.

we could complement what they're doing with really high-end furniture. So, we licensed the manufacturing rights to Bushmaster initially, then of course when they got bought up by Freedom Group the design went with them. Their goal was to produce a commercial version of this thing, which took a lot longer than we would've liked. Along the way, the modularity was lacking — we didn't see the caliber changes initially, and the vision we had didn't actually come to fruition.

Then, Remington Defense got involved, and they did some cool things like a magnesium lower receiver and different charging handle, and both the Bushmaster ACR and Remington did very well in the military trials. I think a lot of its success came down to the design of the bolt carrier group, where you had it riding on those steel rails. The whole thing was very robust and reliable.

I think the general public wanted to see a better price on the gun. It cost a lot of money to build this thing and get tooled up for a production environment and one the things that harmed the ACR initially was that this was the start of the era of the price point rifle. There was a lot of demand for AR-15s, and manufacturers were filling that demand with \$500 rifles, and why would you buy the \$2,400 rifle instead?



I know a lot of people are interested in our positioning on the ACR tooling packages and especially the stock. There's been a lot of guns that weren't designed around it that wind up with ACR stocks through adapter kits. Magpul is adhering to our standards when it comes to new designs, and the ACR furniture; these are very old molds with a lot of shots through them, so we decided to not jump back into that business. The cost of making new molds wouldn't be justified for the demand.

**The firearms industry is quite unusual in that it's filled with very passionate consumers. You get people who say, "I love this design! You should make it." And then you crunch the numbers and find out that you'd sell at least a hundred of them to people who are just as passionate.**

**DC:** Absolutely. At Magpul we have some very bright and driven people who are always coming up with new ideas for products. There's a lot of times where we love them, but we can't bite on a new product without running the numbers to find out what it would cost to put it in production versus the projected demand. An example of that is the new DAKA Grid Organizers. We kicked that idea around for years until we could come up with a way to make them so that

Product development involves lots of time spent sending rounds downrange to discover faults and deficiencies. It's a hard life ...



people could spend their hard-earned money on them and feel like they were getting their money's worth. And we could still make a profit.

**How does Magpul see itself, as an injection molding company that solves problems in the gun space or as a gun company that just happens to do injection molding?**

**DC:** I think it's probably the latter. We're gun guys, but we don't just do injection molding. We all have this passion for making things work better and look better, and if they do that and it's a reasonable price, that's what we're attacking here. We try to keep our product development separate from production, because as you know, demand is very cyclical, so no





matter what the market is doing, we're on the gas the entire time.

We've gotten a lot better at launching products. In the past six months, if we're talking about it publicly, then you're able to go buy the product. We're not doing the "talk about it and then two years later maybe get the product." The lever gun stock and forend, we announced that at NRA [show] and that Friday you could actu-

Clark's hobbies extend to rescuing classic vehicles, which can be seen dotting his ranch, such as this '70s F-250 camper.

ally go buy it. I've been around long enough, to catch a lot of flack over the years.

**OK, so what's happening with the foldy Glock?**

**DC:** [Laughs] OK, that's a good one. This is partnership with ZEV that started a few years ago and it's exciting because it's been around for as long as I have — it's a design that Mike Mayberry came up with years ago, and we touted it as demonstration of our talents and what we were capable of doing. Again, we're not a gun company so we looked for a partner to bring it to production while we handled the polymer components associated with it. We're really excited for it to come to market at a price we think is going to be appealing to people. You can say it's gimmicky for sure, but I think there's a good use case for this thing in many situations. And I suspect that

the countless requests I've gotten over the years from government agencies and foreign governments interested in buying it mean it's not just for the U.S. commercial market.

**So, when?**

**DC:** We're pretty close. We're hoping to see something this year, and I would really like to see it shipping before the holidays.

**You're bringing out new products all the time and the catalog can't expand infinitely, so of the products you've discontinued, which are the most memorable and which ones would you like to bring back?**

**DC:** That's a great question, and I don't want to disappoint you with my answer but we've actually stopped shipment on very few SKUs over the years. I remember working on the catalog before SHOT Show every year and



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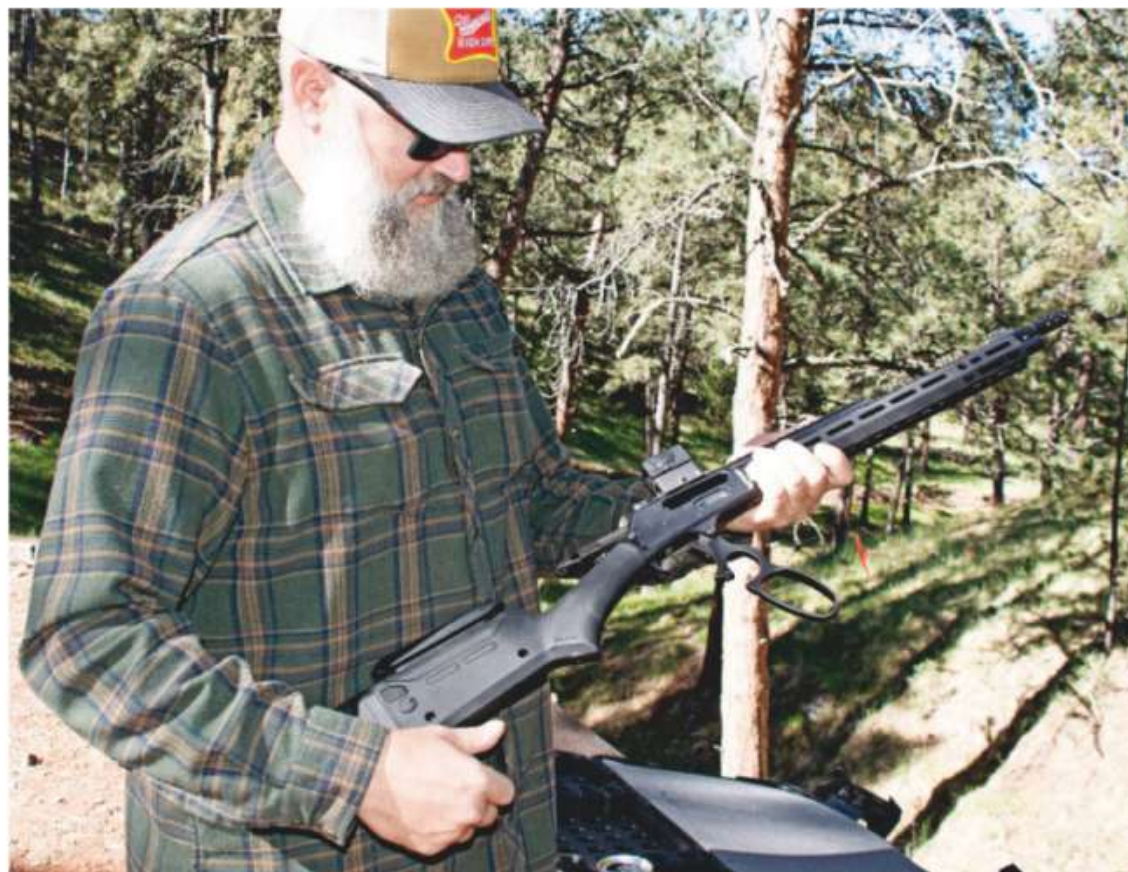


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you keep adding a couple of pages, or in some cases 20 pages, and all of a sudden you've got like this coffee table book. And when you include all colors, we're at thousands and thousands of SKUs now. But to get back to the question, of the things that have been discontinued that I wish could be brought back, there's something we called the speed plate, which was a floorplate for 9mm Glocks. You'd remove the factory floorplate and replace it with this, and it looked similar to a ranger plate with a loop and that thing made it really easy to pull mags out of your duty belt when I was a cop, and you could also retain the magazine between your knuckles.

Magpul has branched out into the lever gun market, offering ELG polymer furniture for Marlin 1895 models.





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**Let's talk about the process of making stuff via injection molding, because from the outside looking in, it seems like polymer goes in, product comes out, and what happens in the middle is a black art.**

**DC:** OK, sure, but bear in mind I'm a caveman and I'm only an engineer by osmosis — I hang out with some very intelligent guys and I listen to every word and try to learn from it. The short of it is, your base polymer arrives in huge boxes on pallets in pellet or chip form, and there's a little bit of a drying process that happens with the material, then it's vacuumed up into a hopper. Then, it's pressed into a really hot mold tool and as the material is pressed into the tool it's melting and becoming viscous and filling all the voids inside. At the point the tool is filled, it holds for a moment, which is all part of the cycle time, then the mold opens up and the part drops falls

Checking out other companies' polymer offerings — Clark is a fan of the PSA Dagger Micro 9mm.

out. The black magic is getting that part to fall out the same every time and to have it be not warped or change shape when it cools down.

**So how do tools wear out?**

**DC:** Heat cycling can wear a tool. Sometimes the material you're working with can be abrasive if it's got fiberglass as a reinforcing agent so as it's being pushed into the tool it'll erode the tool, just like you'd see erosion on a gas port. It's a combination of heat and friction that over time will even erode steel.

**One question we've got ask: When will you bring back straight 20s and EMAGs?**

**DC:** [Laughs] Man, that's so funny. Somebody told me about this meme about a year ago. Straight 20s? Put them on your wall and look at them, because those are not the best-func-

tioning PMAG we've ever made. We realized pretty quickly that reliability is all about that constant curve so do get your InstaBook pics going with some beauty shots of your OD green straight 20s, because they're not coming back.

You know the EMAGs were a damn good magazine, and we sold over a million of them to the British MOD, but their development came as a result of trying to get PMAGs for the HK416 for the guys in DEVGRU. If you get excited about EMAGs, well this story is why you should get excited.

David Kramer walked me into a meeting with some of the guys at Dam Neck, and they were like, ounces equal pounds, pounds equal pain; these steel HK mags are heavy and we need a lighter solution. The Gen 1 PMAG with its constant curve geometry couldn't seat into the 416 magwell as the front edge is too long, so I went back to the shop, sat down with the boys, and tried



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to justify changing a brand-new tool and spending the kind of money we're talking about for a new magazine, just after we launched the first one.

So myself and a couple of the guys stayed late for a few nights and used a manual milling machine to mill down the front edge of that magazine so it would seat in a 416. We built these guys a couple hundred mags and shipped them out, and they'd go on missions and when they came back they'd say, "Hey man, we need some more of those mags." And we'd be amazed because we just sent some,

but then learned that they throw them away after each mission and start out with brand-new kit. So, we said, "Sure, if you're buying them again, we'll make them again." But really we needed a long-term solution.

So, I started looking for other guns in service that had a similar magwell to the 416 and asked why the HK magwell was this shape in the first place. When I looked into it, I found that there's a place in the 416 magwell that's hogged out, and that's to fit a specific blank firing magazine, which has a live round inhibitor. So I started

asking why is HK doing this and where did that come from? Well, it turns out, it came from the SA80 and when HK was doing the refit, they made a steel magwell for that gun and then used the dimensions on the 416.

So, we got the Brits to commit to a million-plus mags, and that was our big customer, which allowed us to build the tool to make the mags for the Dam Neck boys, and ultimately Bin Laden met a few dudes who had EMAGs sticking out of their 416s. So if there's a reason someone should want an EMAG, it should be that. **R**

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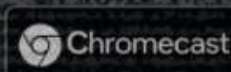
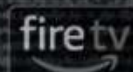
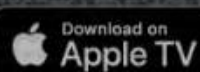
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# SMITH & WESSON VICTORY MODEL

S&W's Military and Police Revolvers Served in All  
WWII Theaters and Deserve a Place in Your Collection

By Jamie Slaughter





**S**mith & Wesson's Victory Model was originally produced as part of the massive Lend-Lease effort on the part of the United States to help equip British and Commonwealth troops fighting against the Axis powers, before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drew the United States into World War II. The program continued throughout the war following United States' participation, with Victory Models being produced from 1942 to 1945. In short order, the Victory Model was also produced for domestic military consumption.

The "Victory" Model Smith & Wesson is believed to have derived its name from the "V" prefix on the series' serial numbers, and it wasn't a new design by any means. Depending upon how one approaches the issue, and what verbiage one leans toward in describing this family of Smith & Wesson revolvers, it fits into the same series of guns as the Model 10, the Smith & Wesson Military & Police, and the Model of 1899. Throughout

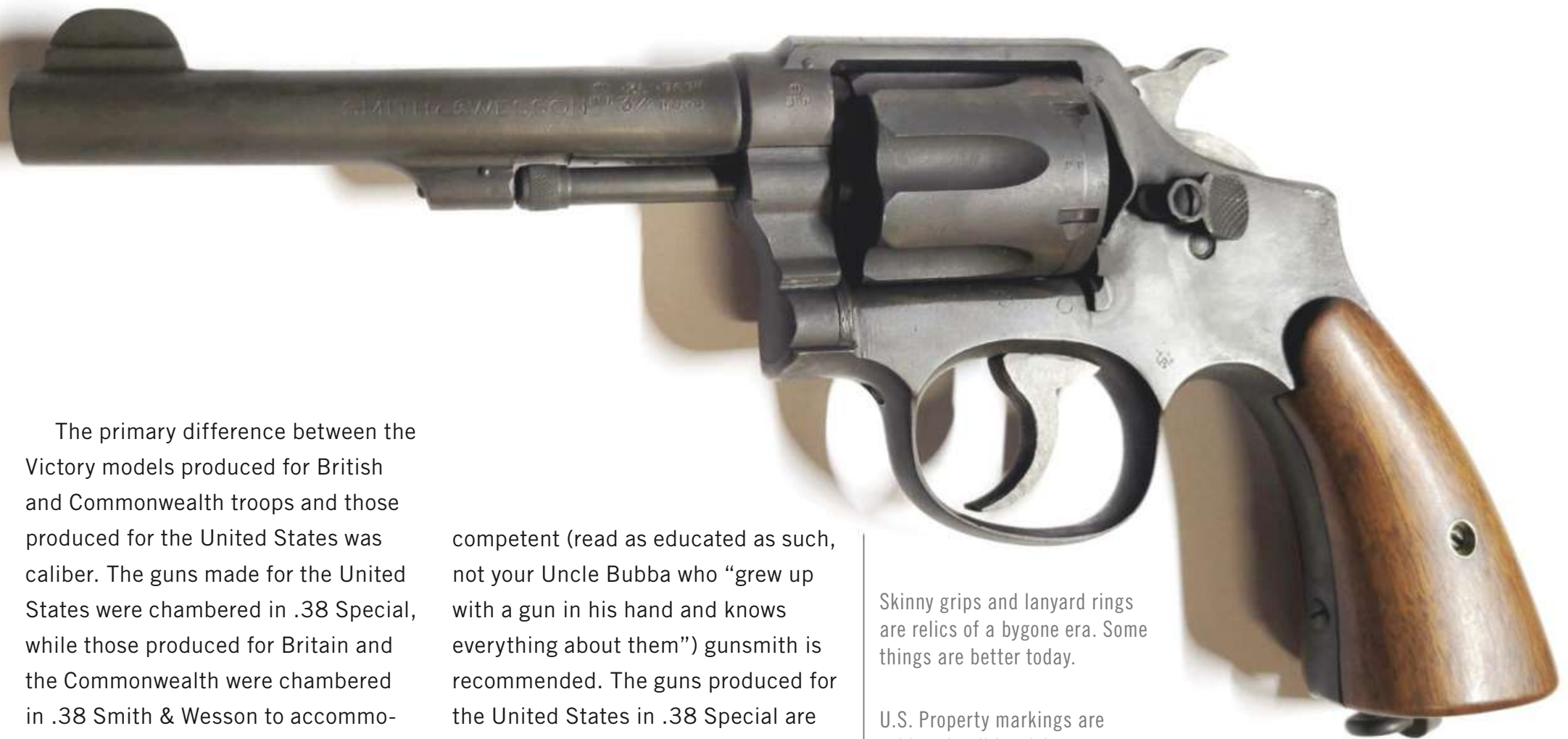
War-finish revolvers like the Victory model lack the external refinement of their contemporary civilian counterparts, but the internals are usually just as slick.

Despite soldiering through World War II, this revolver has comparatively little wear to the bolt stop recesses — a good candidate for your collection.

its production life, and including the WWII years, this pistol has been continuously tweaked and modified to meet differing needs, customers, and challenges for well over a century (and over a decade longer than the 1911). While it may be difficult to believe,

this pistol still soldiers on for self-defense around the world and some police use.





The primary difference between the Victory models produced for British and Commonwealth troops and those produced for the United States was caliber. The guns made for the United States were chambered in .38 Special, while those produced for Britain and the Commonwealth were chambered in .38 Smith & Wesson to accommodate the British .38/200 round that was utilized in the Webley and Enfield revolvers (which, by the way, are different internally, although they have a very similar external appearance). The .38 Special is a longer cartridge and more powerful than the .38/200.

The easiest way to determine which model you have is simply to examine the markings. While all are stamped “United States Property,” as were all small arms under Lend-Lease according to the terms of the program (Savage No. 4 Enfields are a good cross-reference point here), the caliber will be marked on the barrel for the user to clearly see. The .38 Special cartridge will not fully fit in the .38/200 cylinder, which generally avoids problems with mistaken ammunition. However, like the Webley Mark VI, originally chambered in .455 Webley, many .38/200 Victory Models have been altered over the years to “accept” .38 Special. Be wary, however. Like the Webleys’ “shave jobs” the quality, consistency, and most importantly the safety of such revolvers should always be questioned, and examination by a

competent (read as educated as such, not your Uncle Bubba who “grew up with a gun in his hand and knows everything about them”) gunsmith is recommended. The guns produced for the United States in .38 Special are so marked, and many of these will be encountered with U.S. Navy markings.

There’s often a vast difference in the condition of Victory Models encountered on the market in the United States. It’s important to remember that many of these were used in harsh environments for three years of war, in conditions ranging from North Africa and Europe to the jungles of the South Pacific. Afterward, many of them continued to soldier on with the countries which bought them, or they were sold as surplus to civilians, or given as aid to other countries. Take the time to examine any Victory Model very carefully.

Warnings aside, extremely nice guns are on the market. This particular gun was acquired through Legacy Collectibles, a very reputable and highly recommended source. Due to the high overall quality of most of the Victory Series, if the gun was well maintained and cared for, they can still be very viable range guns. In fact, with the nicely preserved specimens, such details as case hardening on the hammer and trigger are still evident. Like

Skinny grips and lanyard rings are relics of a bygone era. Some things are better today.

U.S. Property markings are evident in all Lend-Lease firearms, but their location varies according to the model.



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Despite the UK's desperate need for guns of all types, the wheels of bureaucracy still turned, ensuring that rather than going directly to the troops, these guns first went to the Proof House for testing.



all older Smith & Wessons that were well maintained, the lock work is truly impressive compared to modern guns, and the sound of an early, well-timed revolver has an almost musical quality to it.

Accuracy in both the .38/200 using .38 Smith & Wesson ammunition and in the .38 Special models is generally acceptable. Hand loads improve accuracy and consistency, but .38 Special ammunition should be available almost everywhere handgun ownership is legal. .38 Smith & Wesson ammunition can be more of a challenge, although there are still a number of commercial loadings on the market. Original .38/200 is almost unobtainium. The stocks of

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication Title: Recoil
2. Publication Number: 2374-2836
3. Filing Date: 10/01/2024
4. Issue Frequency: Bi-Monthly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$49.97
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication:  
CMG West, LLC  
5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher:  
CMG West, LLC  
5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor:  
Publisher: Glen Castle, 5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913  
Editor: Iain Harrison, 5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913  
Managing Editor: Laura Peltakian, 5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913

10. Owner: CMG West, LLC  
5583 W. Waterford Ln., Suite D, Appleton, WI 54913
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None

12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:  
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months  
 Has Changed During the Preceding 12 Months

13. Publication Title: Recoil
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Nov/Dec 2024

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	73,003	68,896
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	8,445	8,389
(2) Mailed In-County Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	16,121	15,003
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	0	0
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3) and (4))	24,567	23,392
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)		
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(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (carriers of other means)	150	350
e. Total Free or Nominal Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))	285	462
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	24,852	23,854
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page#3))	48,151	45,043
h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g)	73,003	68,896
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)	98.9%	98.1%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation:	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	30,431	29,179
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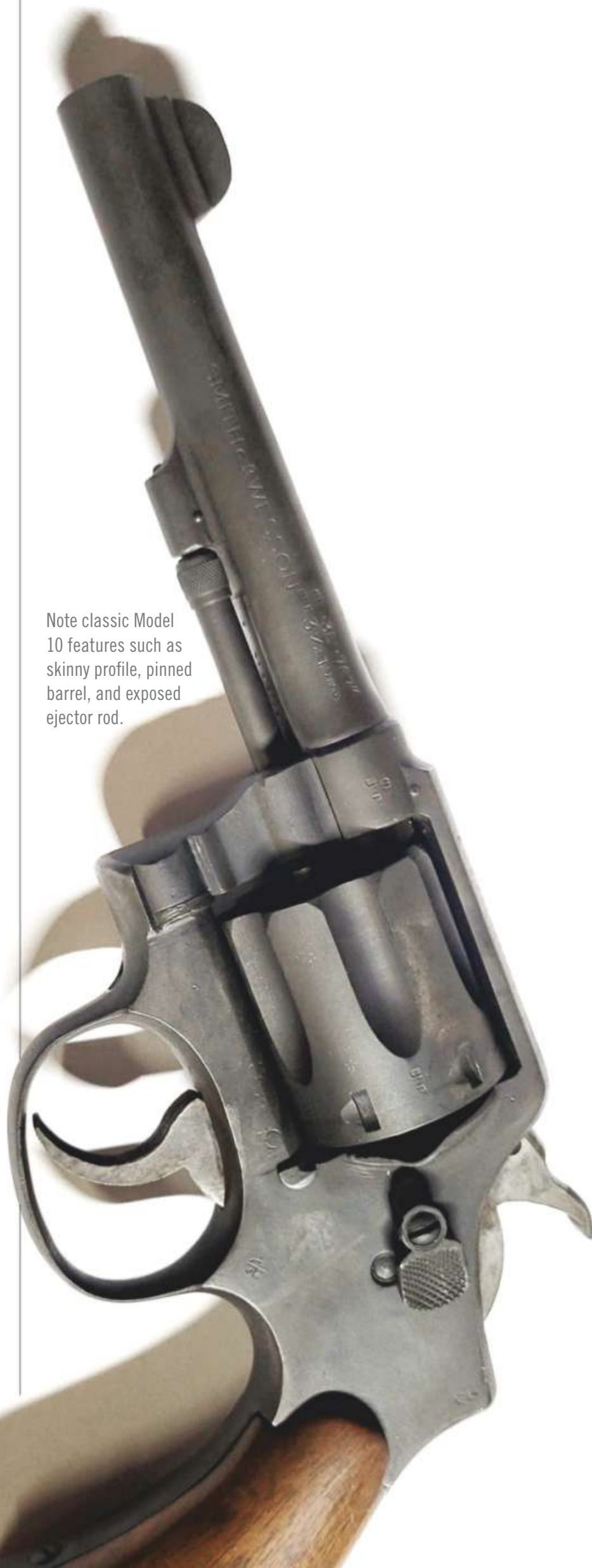




All pressure-bearing parts are subject to British proof, so you'll find separate markings on the cylinder, frame, and barrel.

Webleys, Enfields, and even Victory Models were kept in reserve long after WWII, as .38/200 military production dwindled in favor of 9x19. There was little left with which to practice, and in the event of war, at least one retired British officer reported to the author that he was advised he'd have three to six rounds issued as stocks were so low.

The Victory Model is a great entry into a currently very expensive collector's market for WWII firearms. The Lend-Lease guns in .38 Smith & Wesson can be had in very nice condition for less than \$650 on the current market, while guns chambered in .38 Special tend to start in the \$850 range in nice condition, with U.S. Navy marked models bringing a bit more of a premium, beginning in the \$1,050 to \$1,100 range. The Commonwealth web holsters meant to carry the Victory Model (and the Webleys and Enfields) are easily obtained in mint condition from various manufacturers for under \$50. The U.S.-produced leather hip and should holsters for the Victory Model are harder to find and normally over \$100 when encountered. **R**



Note classic Model 10 features such as skinny profile, pinned barrel, and exposed ejector rod.



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