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What's That Holster?

I've been a subscriber for several years and have learned a lot from your magazine. I am trying to find the manufacturer of the holster that was on the inside cover of a Springfield Armory ad for a few months, one of which was the Aug./Sep. '19 issue.

BRUCE LEMNAH

You've got a keen eye for good holsters. It's a Yaqui belt slide, a design originally conceived by Col. Jeff Cooper—inspired by a holster he'd seen in Central America, according to an article by Jim Wilson—and first executed by Milt Sparks. There are a variety of takes on this classic, and two companies make a version like the one you saw in the ad: DeSantis Holsters (shown) and Galco.



More Love for the .45 ACP Revolver

I have a Brazilian .45 ACP revolver (referencing gun above, which appeared in "Speedloads," Feb./March issue) I bought when I was taking gunsmithing at Lassen College. It was a little rough, so I bead-blasted it, reblued it and installed Pachmayr grips. The worn Brazilian crest is the only clue that it's not nearly new. It shoots to point of aim and is very accurate. As an old retired law enforcement officer, I wouldn't hesitate to carry it as a duty weapon.

TOM HANDY

TAKE OUR POLL

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE DEFENSIVE CALIBER?

- ☐ .38 Special
- ☐ .45 ACP
- ☐ 9mm Luger
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CUSTOM BFR



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Col. Jeff Cooper, 1920-2006

May marks the 100th anniversary of Col. Dean "Jeff" Cooper's birth. It's fair to say no one has had a more lasting influence on modern pistolcraft. He held a bachelor's from Stanford and a master's in history from UC Riverside, but it was his service in the Marines that was to make him an icon in the firearms world.

While stationed at Quantico, Virginia, he gained an appreciation of the 1911, and in time he developed what is known as the Modern Technique of pistol shoot-



ing—the precepts of which are still taught at the famous Gunsite Academy, which he founded. The technique stressed a two-hand hold (not common in those days), a Weaver stance and a large pistol, preferably a 1911.

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2020

<<< We have the Davidson's exclusive Sig Sauer P320 Stars & Stripes Coyote 9mm At The Range. We tests SBR Function & Ammo in New Mexico in our Ballistic Science feature.



APRIL
27th
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<<< We have the Springfield Armory M1A Tanker .308 Win. At The Range. We test applied ballistics in New Mexico in our Ballistic Science feature. We continue our Marlin 150th anniversary with a look at the Marlin Model 44 cutdown shotgun.

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PRIME NUMBER

SMITH & WESSON'S MODEL 13 WAS A COMBAT CLASSIC BACK IN THE DAY.

By Payton Miller

SMITH & WESSON'S HUGELY successful Military & Police service revolver morphed into the Model 10 in 1957—when the company began numbering its models. It's since served as the launching pad for a head-spinning array of handguns.

Barrel lengths/configurations, calibers, sight types and finishes may change, but the basic template has always been a medium-frame revolver featuring either a round or square butt.

The .357 Magnum made its medium-frame, mid-1950s debut in the Model 19—a beautiful, adjustable-sighted revolver envisioned by its champion, Bill Jordan, as the ultimate law-enforcement tool. In 1974,

however, a down-and-dirty, fixed-sight, heavy-barreled .357 variation on the Model 10 theme appeared: the Model 13.

Originally a square-butt four-inch gun, it was followed later by a three-inch round-butt version that has the distinction of being the last FBI-issue revolver before the Great Semiauto Takeover.

Oddly enough, the Model 13's stainless twin, the Model 65, actually preceded it by a couple of years, and the first Smith I ever owned was a Model 65. I liked it, but I was less than enchanted with the fact it was stainless steel, a bit of retro snobbery that sparked a long, long search for a Model 13. Apparently,

I had some competing soulmates in the carbon steel/blued department because it took me quite a spell.

When I found it, there was one kicker. It had a square butt. I knew enough about the Model 13 to know that the cataloged three-inch guns of FBI fame all had round butts.

Well, a bit of consultation with gun writer Massad Ayoob provided the answer. Seems Smith & Wesson made a limited run of square-butt three-inch guns for an Australian agency—some of which managed to filter back here to the States.

The fact that it was a three-inch made it instantly more desirable. I'm a sucker for three-inch Smiths in either J- or K-frame configura-

tion. Many hot hours slaving over a chronograph have shown me the velocity increase from a two- to a three-inch barrel is considerably more significant than that between a three- and four-inch barrel—particularly with +P .38s in the 125- to 158-grain weight range. With .357s? I don't much care. My days of shooting high-test magnums out of anything smaller than a Marlin lever action are pretty much done.

And there's one more argument for a three-inch gun over the classic three-inch snubie: The added stretch of sight radius makes the sight picture much more forgiving.

The sights are fixed and pretty much bulletproof, so a bit of fooling around with different loads is required in order to find a reasonable compromise between point of aim with point of impact.

My used Model 13 was one of those “carried a lot, shot a little” specimens that make it possible for Smith & Wesson nuts to own more long-out-of-production classics than they could otherwise afford.

Mine was far from pristine, but I didn't care. It had a couple of desirable old-school features as far as I was concerned—namely a blued finish, a pinned barrel (Smith & Wesson began crush-fitting its barrels in the early 1980s) and that square butt. It also had a factory bobbed hammer that appealed to me, as it would force me to work on double-action shooting.

I chose 20 feet as the yardage to check the zero on those low-profile fixed sights. Since I'd installed a lighter trigger return spring—a Wolff spring I bought from Brownells—the double-action pull weight on my Model 13 was just a hair over six pounds and smooth as butter.

I decided to stick with two loads



▲ Miller's three-inch Model 13 sports a bobbed hammer and service-type stocks. It was, he said, “carried a lot and shot a little.” **▼** Twenty-yard groups with 158-grain lead semi-wadcatter (c. cartridge) were solid.



that would be period-appropriate selections from the Model 13's heyday. Back in the mid-1970s, during the final law enforcement pre-9mm hurrah for the .38 Special, there were two preeminent loads for those who didn't like .357s. One was the so-called “Treasury load,” a 110-grain jacketed hollowpoint; the other was the “FBI load,” a +P 158-grain lead semi-wadcutter hollowpoint.

My Aussie Model 13 preferred the FBI load from Buffalo Bore over some vintage Super Vel 110-grain jacketed hollowpoints—marked “Police Only.” This was fine by me. I've always thought a 125-grain

minimum was preferable for any .38/.357.

What was also gratifying was the fact it shot generic 130-grain full-metal-jacket ammo at about the same point of impact as most 125-grain +P jacketed hollowpoints. Unfortunately, it didn't shoot my handloaded 148-grain wadcutters worth a whoop. But that's a small price to pay for such a handy, packable chunk of a vintage service revolver.

My gun was manufactured in 1979—which, at my age, doesn't seem all that vintage. The Model 13 was discontinued in 1998, but it's still worth looking for.

STREAMLIGHT SWITCHES IT UP



TLR-8A G



TLR-9



SIDE-MOUNT



HIGH



LOW

STREAMLIGHT IS ALWAYS PUSHING forward with its products, and this year is no different. There's a lot going on in Eagleville, Pennsylvania, and I wanted to focus on what I think is a big deal: the company's new A-series switches.

I've had a TLR-8G light/green laser mounted on my bedroom gun, a Smith & Wesson M&P9 2.0 Compact, for about a year, and I've been happy with it except for one thing: It's not easy for me to operate the unit's side-mounted switch.

I can do it, sure, but it requires readjusting my hands from a true firing grip. My wife, who has longer fingers, doesn't have the same problem, so I've just trained with it to the point it doesn't pose an issue.

Now this same light/laser is avail-

able with two new rear-mounted switches: one low and one high, both of which are ambidextrous.

They're packaged together in the new TLR-8A G Flex (\$450 suggested retail), and they're easily changed by removing three screws on the back of the unit and swapping one switch with the other.

The company sent me a high-switch version of the TLR-8A G to try, and it turned out to be a game changer. I can easily activate the unit with my support-hand thumb or the tip of my trigger finger.

Streamlight also sent the new TLR-9 Flex (\$240) for use in our upcoming season of "Handguns & Defensive Weapons." The TLR-9 is a 1,000-lumen weapon light for full-size pistols—one with a wide

beam designed for clearing rooms, searching alleys and such.

I mounted it on my Springfield XD Tactical and installed the low switch on it (Flex package units come with the high switch installed). The low switch doesn't suit my shooting style as well as the high one, but it will for some people.

The Flex package is also available for the TLR-7 and -8 (red laser), and both of these—as well as the TLR-8G—will still be available with side-mounted switches, and that make sense because plenty of people like that type of switch. Note you can't retrofit the A rear switches onto non-A series TLRs. The new TLR-9 will be solely a rear-switch light, so there won't be a separate A series for it.—*J. Scott Rupp*

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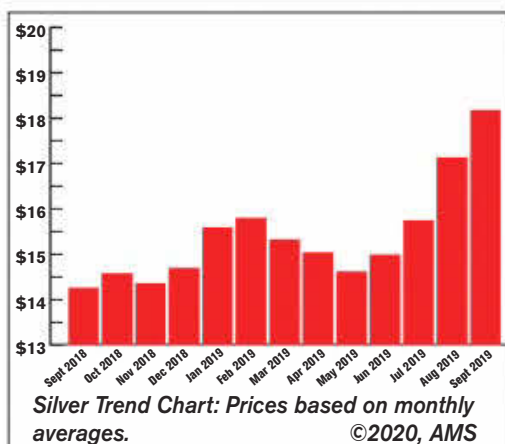
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HANDGUNS | SPEEDLOADS

A CHAT WITH REMINGTON'S NEW CEO



WHEN I SPOKE WITH KEN D'ARCY,

Remington's new CEO, I was impressed with his no-BS approach to getting the company back on the right track. America's oldest gun maker has been put through the ringer the past few years, and nobody knows that better than D'Arcy, who has previously served on Remington's board of directors.

Job one, he said, was getting the company back on a solid financial footing, and he plans to consolidate the firm's operations. But moreover, he sees the path to success as building quality products.

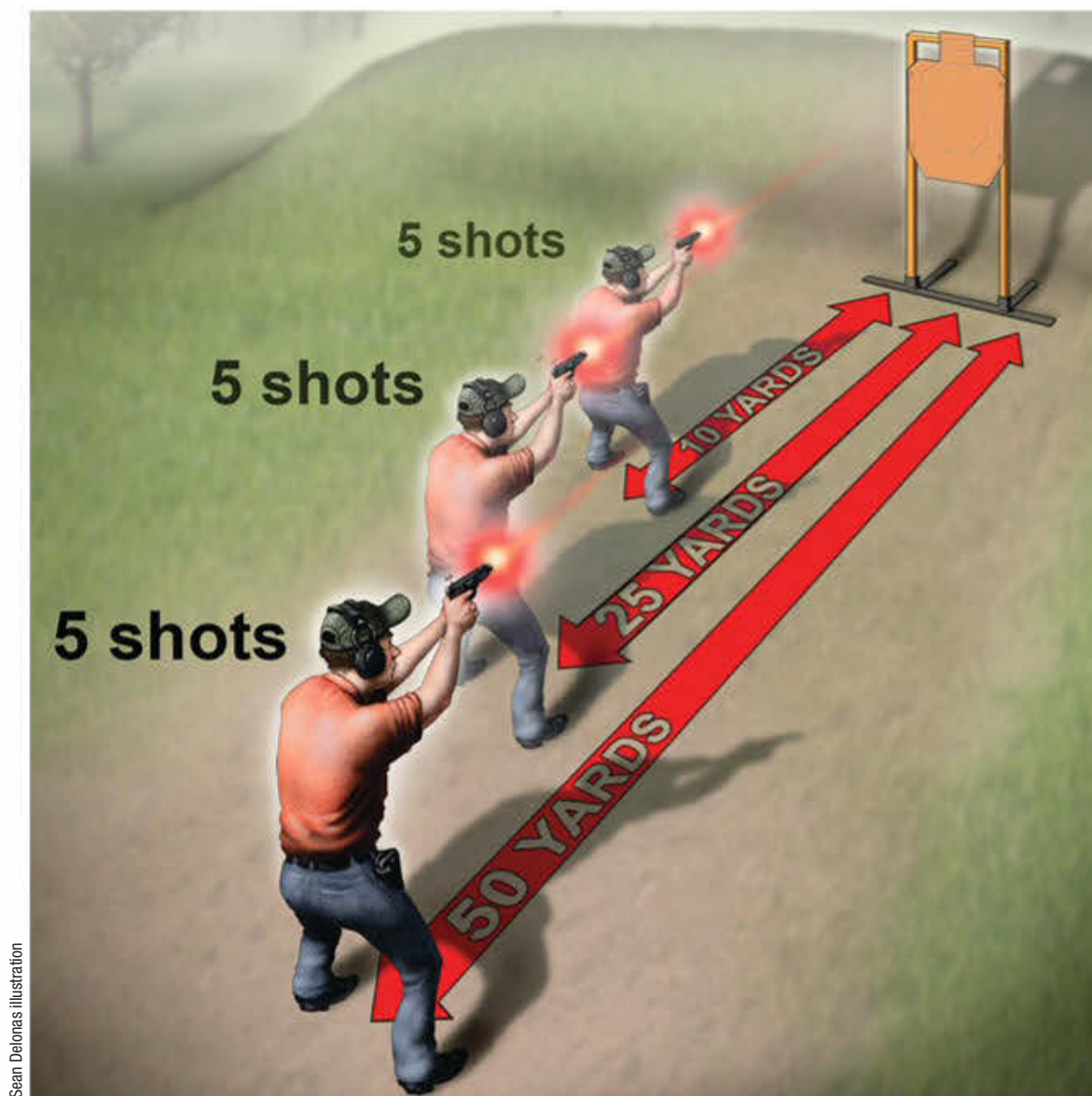
"If you look at any successful company, they have a quality product," he said. "You need to bring new products to the market on a regular basis, and these have to be quality products. They don't always have to be innovative, but they've got to be good."

Further, it's about rebuilding a culture. "It has to start on the [production] line," he said. "With somebody who looks at something and says, 'That's not right.' It's about putting pride back into the best firearms company in the world."

While he intends to move the company toward doing fewer things and doing them better, he was enthusiastic about Remington's handgun efforts—which he recognizes as an important part of the firm's legacy. He hinted that future offerings might include revolvers, which makes sense since wheelguns were Remington's first firearms sold to the civilian market, as early as 1856.—JSR

SKILLS DRILLS | BY J. SCOTT RUPP

CLOSING THE GAP



WITH TODAY'S THREAT OF ACTIVE shooters ever present, being able to shoot at distance can be an important skill. Similarly, the ability to hit a target when you're physically challenged could make a big difference in such a situation.

GEAR No special gear

DRILL This one requires some room. Place an IPSC target or eight-inch paper plate against a safe backstop. From 50 yards, engage the target with five rounds. Move quickly but safely to 25 yards and engage the target with another five rounds. Move quickly but safely to 10 yards and engage the target with another five rounds. If your carry gun is a revolver or semiauto with

limited capacity, you'll have to perform at least one reload.

GOALS Get hits—period. You want to see how well you can shoot farther out and how well you can execute shots when you're breathing at least a little hard. You're also learning safety: You've got to keep your finger out of the trigger guard when moving. As always, start slowly. Work on marksmanship and safe gun handling first and foremost.

You can add target stands or similar to represent cover at the 25- and 10-yard points. Move to these to engage the target and do any reloads. Additional targets at the backstop can help you tell how well you're hitting at the longer distances.

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WHEN AND HOW TO SEARCH FOR ADDITIONAL THREATS.

IF YOU'VE EVER TAKEN A DEFENSIVE

shooting course, you've seen him—the student who, upon firing, immediately snaps his head sharply over one shoulder then the other, as if posing for the camera. Scanning one's environment for additional threats after a shooting is important, but many people seem to be more concerned with how they look during the scan than what they are actually seeing. Let's consider the why and how behind scanning.

It's well established that during a deadly encounter our bodies will undergo numerous physiological changes as part of our hardwired fight-or-flight response. One of the most significant effects is the loss of peripheral vision, a phenomenon commonly referred to as tunnel vision. This occurs because we become hyperfocused on whatever we perceive to be a threat.

Tunnel vision can help us tell if the black object in a person's hand is a cell phone or a pistol. It can help us block out all distractions and focus exclusively on eliminating the threat we're facing. But there's an obvious downside to having a tightly focused field of view. Since criminals often travel in groups, being too focused on one could leave you vulnerable to the others. Hence, the need to scan your environment.

A common error is for shooters to start scanning too soon. Before their front sight has even settled from recoil, they are taking their eyes and muzzle off the target they just shot to search for the next. This won't cost you on the range when the targets are made of paper, but when the bad guys are flesh and blood and their guns are real, as-



Alfredo Rico

▲ It's important to scan and do it right, but you shouldn't take your eyes off the original threat until you're certain that threat has been neutralized.

suming the person you shot is out of the fight could be a fatal error. Only after confirming the known threat is stopped should you consider scanning for more threats.

There are two broad categories of scanning techniques. One method involves turning your head independent of your gun, which remains in a neutral position. The other entails moving your head and the muzzle of your handgun as a unit, with the goal being to always keep your gun between you and whatever threat you may face.

Scanning by turning your head without moving the gun prevents you from potentially pointing your gun at someone it shouldn't be pointed at. This technique also enables you to keep your gun close to your body, where you are better able to control it than if your arms were extended.

Having your gun at the ready in front of your body allows you to drive the gun directly to a threat.

By turning at the waist and looking over your shoulder, you can scan the area behind you.

It's hard to dispute the validity of keeping your muzzle between you and whoever is threatening you. That's why many advocate scanning with your gun instead of just with your head. However, when scanning, you obviously don't know where a threat may be. For example, if you start scanning to the left only to realize there's an assailant to the right, your gun is far from being between you and that threat.

In such case, you'd have been better off to have your gun in a neutral position, where it's closer to the threat. Not only would this allow you to get on target faster, it would minimize the likelihood of swinging past the target.

Conversely, if the threat was located in the direction in which you started your scan, you'd be on target faster than if you had scanned →

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— with only your gun in a neutral position.

Scanning with your gun and head together may require you to lower your arms slightly to ensure you have a clear view of a potential assailant's hands and his waist. A weapon in hand can kill, and a weapon concealed along the waist can be drawn in the blink of an eye. When scanning with a weapon-mounted light, bring the gun close to your body and keep it parallel to the ground so you're illuminating the threat and not the ground.

Since we don't have eyes in the back of our heads, we are most vulnerable to an attack from the rear. As such, it's imperative to "check your six." A good way to reinforce this habit—and make sure the shooter is seeing as opposed to merely turning his head and looking—is for someone standing behind the firing line to hold up a certain number of fingers. If you conducted a proper scan, you'll be able to tell you how many fingers were displayed.

After identifying a potential threat from behind, you need to get in position to address it. Merely looking over your shoulder leaves you compromised. A better plan might be to step forward into the area you know is safe, then turn your entire body 180 degrees—as opposed to just turning your head.

The former puts you in a balanced position from which to fight. Turning in this manner also creates a buffer so you are moving away as opposed to directly into an attack.

In a real-life situation, you need to make sure the known threat is neutralized before scanning for unknown threats. Make sure you aren't just posing but actually scanning to find a threat. Finally, make sure you're in position to defend yourself should an additional threat be detected.



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{ \$2,495 (.45), \$2,595 (9mm); WILSONCOMBAT.COM }

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Designed for compacts and subcompacts, Carry Gun employs modified Gold Dot G2 bullets in lighter grain weights to provide reliable expansion and barrier performance out of shorter barrels. The Gold Dot G2 features a shallow, dished nose filled with elastomer, which prevents the nose from filling with clothing or debris, and the bullet's construction ensures jacket and core won't separate. The three loads are 135-grain 9mm (1,120 fps), 165-grain .40 (1,150) and 200-grain .45 ACP +P (1,130).

{ \$29–\$34, SPEER-AMMO.COM }



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BROWNELLS IS YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP TO BUILD A GLOCK-PATTERN PISTOL.

BROWNELLS IS THE THE LARGEST RE-tailer of firearms accessories in this country. In recent years it has also started selling complete firearms, but where it has always excelled is in offering gun parts. In the past few years the company has begun selling “Brownells”-branded parts and accessories, made in-house.

Last year it began offering Brownells-branded Glock-pattern slides and barrels, and currently it has two Brownells-exclusive Polymer80 frame models to complete your build.

It seemed to me like it was time to build my own gun as I’d never done it before. I obtained a full-size Polymer80 frame from Brownells, as well as just about every other part I’d need to build my own Glock 17-size pistol—all without requiring the services of an FFL.

If you’re a bit behind the curve when it comes to 80-percent lower receivers, here’s the short version. Per the Gun Control Act of 1968, it is perfectly legal for an otherwise unlicensed private citizen to manufacture a firearm for themselves, provided it is for their personal use and not for resale. Such firearms do not even need to have serial numbers.

However, most people do not have the tools or the skill to manufacture their own guns, which has always been the limiting factor. Enter the “80-percent” companies, of which Polymer80 is the largest.

As long as the frame of a firearm is no more than 80 percent complete when you purchase it, it is still not a firearm. Once it is fully machined, as long as you don’t give or sell this completed frame/firearm to another person, it is not legally required to



A The Polymer80 kit from Brownells comes with an unfinished frame, drilling fixture, drill bits, and all the P80-specific parts you’ll need to get your frame ready for a lower parts kit.

have a serial number.

Brownells sells several exclusive versions of the compact and full-size Polymer80 frames with the new aggressive texture in black, gray, coyote, flat dark earth and OD green. I secured a black full-size frame, technically the PF940v2. This has an aggressive texture and works only with Glock Gen 3 parts. It sports a flat backstrap and a grip angle closer to that of a 1911.

The complete kit comes with a frame, finishing jig, drill bits and all the P80-specific parts you’ll need for the build. You will still need a lower parts kit—trigger unit, slide stop, magazine release, etc.—to complete the build, as well as a top end. These frame kits normally retail for \$150 but seem to go on sale frequently. There is a metal plate in the frame if, at some point, you want or need to add a serial number.

After having gone through the process, I would recommend that unless you’re intimately familiar with the

Glock design and can strip a pistol down to the smallest part, you should educate yourself before attempting this build, as even Polymer80s detailed instructions have a few gaps.

Installing the parts in the frame took me more time than machining it. When in doubt, perhaps track down some Glock disassembly/assembly videos online before diving in.

To get this 80-percent frame to 100 percent, you will have to drill three pin holes in the sides of the receiver, mill off excess material from the top of the frame and mill out the barrel block where the recoil spring guide sits. Polymer80 provides three drill bits and a drilling jig, and it recommends the use of both a hand drill and a drill press. You’ll also need a vise to hold the drilling jig.

Most people do not have access to a drill press, and I know people have machined P80 frames successfully just using hand tools, so I decided to do everything using just a Dremel tool and a hand drill.

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When drilling out the pin holes, do not go all the way through both sides of the frame. Do one side, then the other. As these pins don't just go through your fresh pin holes but through steel parts, slight angling errors on your part usually don't cause problems.

The excess material on the top of the frame is easy to remove. It sticks out above the drilling jig framework and prevents a slide from mating with the frame. You could use a knife or a Dremel with a grinding wheel to remove the excess. Any imperfections will be hidden once the slide is installed.

As for the channel for the recoil spring and its guide rod, you have to remove a circular area, going in from the front of the frame/jig. The material to be removed is clearly

marked. The 9mm drill bit Polymer80 provides is exactly the right size, and if you're using a drill press that's the way to go.

With a hand drill, however, because that fat drill bit doesn't have a pointed but rather flat tip, it wants to skip around. So I improvised. I used one of my own drill bits with a pointed tip and a narrower diameter to drill the initial hole, then expanded it to the proper size, using the side of a narrow drill bit as a crude grinding wheel.

Factory Glock frames have the steel slide rails embedded in the frame. That's not an option with the Polymer80 frame, so it has developed workarounds. The locking block on the P80 frame also incorporates the forward frame rails. There is a drop-in stainless steel rear rail module

(RMR) that cradles the trigger housing at the rear of the frame.

Drilling and machining the frame took me 10 minutes, tops, and was shockingly simple. You'll spend far more time installing the parts into your frame and slide than you will drilling and grinding on the frame.

As for slides and frames, Brownells



While it's recommended to use a drill press, Tarr was able to drill the pin holes in the P80 frame by hand with a Dremel tool.

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has something for everyone. Its slides are machined from billet 17-4 stainless steel and given a nitride finish. It has wraparound serrations and is machined internally to factory dimensions. You have your choice of standard or RMR-cut slides. My full-length slide was made for standard iron sights, but with a window



▲ Brownells sells its own billet-machined stainless steel slides and match-grade Glock-pattern barrels to finish off your frame.

machined into the top (\$214).

You'll need a slide completion kit. There are a number of different options available, I bought one from Glock (\$90). Every piece and part on a Glock can be installed and removed with a simple punch, and the same is true of the striker channel liner in the slide, but I recommend a channel liner installation tool. You can find them for under \$10.

Brownells makes match-grade drop-in barrels of 416R stainless steel for Glocks. These have a nitride finish and are button-rifled so you can use lead bullets safely. They're offered for G17 and G19—generations one through four—standard length or extended threaded (1/2x28) versions. My standard-length G17 barrel has a suggested retail price of \$155.

To finish the frame I had a frame

completion parts kit on hand, but if you wanted to buy one, they start at \$50 and go up from there. I installed a set of RAM night sights from XS Sights (\$140).

Once finished and assembled, I found the slide/barrel fit was really tight. Lubing it generously and cycling the slide by hand 50 or so times before I headed to the range smoothed it out considerably, and live-fire smoothed it out even more. So far, I've got 200 rounds through the pistol without a malfunction. It is still tight, which I like, and at least as accurate as any factory-built Glock I've tested.

Is building your own cheaper than buying a factory gun? Actually, no, but you get to build the exact gun you want from the ground up, and this is your gun, built by you, nobody else. 🎯



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GAME CHANGER

BY JAMES TARR

THE NEW RUGER-57 LOOKS TO PUT A CHARGE INTO THE 5.7X28MM PISTOL MARKET—AND YOU KNOW YOU WANT ONE.



You just can't talk about the new Ruger-57 pistol without covering a little history, so let's very briefly roll things back a couple decades. In 1990 FN developed the 5.7x28mm cartridge in conjunction with its select-fire P90 PDW, similar to what John Browning did with the .45 ACP and the 1911. With the P90, the FN engineers wanted to create a firearm for military and law enforcement that was easier to shoot than a traditional handgun and would penetrate soft body armor (dedicated armor-piercing ammo is not available commercially) but was substantially smaller and lighter than a traditional rifle.

Once the P90 was introduced, the engineers then started looking for alternate platforms for the interesting new cartridge. They ultimately realized that while it was long, the cartridge would still fit into the grip of a traditional handgun. Thus, in 1998, the FN Five-sevenN pistol was born.

It's taken more than 20 years for another major gun company to introduce a pistol chambered in this cartridge, but that day is finally here with the Ruger-57 (pronounced "five seven").

Before we dive into the ballistics of the curious little 5.7x28mm cartridge, let's look at the pistol itself. Externally, the Ruger-57 looks like a stretched Security-9, with a few unique features. —

Photo by Michael Anschuetz
Art direction by Heather Ferro

GAME CHANGER

← This is a polymer-framed pistol, but it is not striker-fired. It is a single-action pistol with an internal hammer.

There is an ambidextrous 1911-style thumb safety that blocks the movement of the trigger: up for Safe, down for Fire. The safety can be engaged when the hammer is not cocked, and the long lever, while narrow, is easy to work with your thumb. There is also a safety lever on the trigger to prevent impact-related accidental discharges.

This pistol appears stretched because it sports a 4.94-inch barrel to get as much as possible out of the bottleneck high-velocity cartridge. Why 4.94 inches? Ruger says it's be-

cause the slide has a recessed breech face, so the distance between the breech face in the slide and the tip of the barrel is actually 5.0 inches.

The slide is alloy steel with a black oxide finish. There is a lightening cut in the top of the slide, and aggressive cocking serrations front and back. The pistol has a relatively robust recoil spring. For its size, this pistol is surprisingly light. With an empty magazine in place, it weighs just 24.5 ounces.

The front sight is a tall steel post with a green fiber-optic insert. The rear sight is plain black and steel. It is fully adjustable for windage and elevation. Both sights are dovetailed into place.

As the FN Five-seven is the only other traditional handgun on the market chambered in the 5.7x28mm cartridge, comparisons are unavoidable. One clear difference between these two pistols is the Ruger's ability to mount a red dot. The Ruger's slide forward of the rear sight is drilled and tapped for an optic adapter plate, available separately at SHOPRUGER.COM. Currently, the only plate available fits Burris and Vortex red dots. The magazine release is also reversible, whereas the FN pistol's is not.

This Ruger-57 is fed by 20-round magazines. The magazines have steel bodies and polymer base plates, and two are provided with the pistol. If you live in a state with magazine restrictions, Ruger sells a version of this pistol with 10-round magazines.

Because the 5.7x28mm cartridge is quite long, so is the grip of the pistol. However, the cartridge is also narrow, and the grip of this pistol is narrower than most double-stack 9mm handguns, so it doesn't feel big in your hand. That said, most everyone will have to rotate the pistol in their hand to reach the magazine release.

The polymer frame has ample sections of moderately aggressive texturing, and you will not have to worry about it moving in your hand. At the front of the frame is a long, five-slot Picatinny-style rail for mounting lights or lasers.

Since this pistol's introduction, the most common criticism I've heard is, "Great, Ruger's introduced a pistol that no one was asking for." My response to those complaints: What kind of firearm could you possibly want that Ruger isn't already making?

Before developing this pistol, Ruger looked at the marketplace and tried to identify segments where it didn't have a presence or where its products were under-represented. In examining the market, it realized there was only one handgun chambered for the 5.7x28mm cartridge, and it was far from inexpensive. →



▲ The Ruger-57 looks a lot like a Security-9. It has an excellent trigger and a reversible magazine release. Tarr found the slide stop hard to use as a slide release.



▲ The 5.7x28mm cartridge (c.) flanked by a .223 Remington (l.) and a 9mm (r.). It is long for a pistol cartridge, but it's narrow so the gun's grip is still quite comfortable.

1911 DROP-IN TRIGGER SYSTEM

By Craig Enloe

As with all parts of society, the gun industry is evolving as technology continues to grow. Firearms are becoming lighter, smaller, more durable, more accurate and more versatile than ever. The leaps forward in firearm technology won't be slowing down, either. But not every platform has reaped the rewards of increased technology.

The 1911 model has largely been left behind when it comes to innovation. After all, it's called "1911" for a reason. It's been in service for over a century. John Moses Browning's design has remained relevant yet left little room for evolving. Nighthawk Custom, makers of top-of-the-line, high-end 1911 pistols, has produced the first giant leap forward in 1911 technology, the Drop-In Trigger System.

"It is absolutely phenomenal," exclaimed Rob Potter, lead instructor at RRT Firearms Training in Lakebay, Wash. "I took one look at it and knew Nighthawk Custom had hit it out of the park on this one. Your entire ignition system on a 1911 is replaced by a cassette-style drop-in trigger. It is very simple."

The Drop-In Trigger System, or DTS as it is called, is a self-contained unit that took many years of development. The traditional sear, disconnect, and springs have been removed from the equation. Inside the steel housing of the DTS unit, a new disconnect, sear, hammer, and hammerstrut are assembled with independent springs for both the disconnect and sear. The traditional sear spring is replaced by a grip safety spring featuring a single leg.

Installation is completed in around 10 minutes and then the true brilliance of the DTS is put on display. Squeezing off the

first round, not an ounce of creep is felt. As Potter explained it, "The benefit of this is that for any production pistol, the holes in the frame are not in perfect alignment. That makes it very difficult to get a good trigger pull with no creep. This eliminates that."

The trigger breaks cleanly at 3 3/4 to 4 pounds and resets flawlessly for round after round. If a shooter didn't know any better, they would swear this was a gunsmithed trigger job.

"The trigger is absolutely phenomenal," Potter added. "I can't tell the difference between a finely gunsmithed trigger and this trigger."

Nighthawk Custom has delivered the first truly drop-in trigger. For the first time, novice gunsmiths and tinkers can give their 1911 the feel and performance of an expertly gunsmithed trigger job, with the pistol never leaving their home.



Photo courtesy of Nighthawk Custom

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GAME CHANGER

← The first time I laid hands on, much less fired, an FN Five-seveN pistol, it was over a decade ago. I was surprised by two things: As light as the pistol was, felt recoil was less than that of a 9mm, and the pistol's slide was polymer—well, steel wrapped with polymer, but still.

As “different” as the Ruger-57 looks, it still has a much more tradi-

tional handgun appearance than the FN, while having the same magazine capacity and being roughly half the cost. Suggested retail price for the Ruger-57 is \$799. The current suggested retail for the FN Five-seveN is \$1,435, and even though I suspect FN shortly will be quietly dropping the price of the Five-seveN, that's still not even close.

Now to the caliber. The 5.7x28mm cartridge has a bottleneck design, which is uncommon when it comes to pistol cartridges. Think of it as a two-thirds-size .223 Remington and you'll have a good idea of both its looks and its performance. For reference, overall length of a 9mm cartridge is 1.169 inches, a .45 ACP is 1.275 inches, and the 5.7x28mm has an overall length of 1.594 inches. A .223 Remington has an overall length of 2.26 inches.

Current 5.7x28mm loads offer bullets between 28 and 40 grains in weight, running between 1,650 and 2,000 fps out of a handgun-length barrel. Most 40-grain loads will do roughly 1,700 fps.

For this article I thought it would be appropriate to compare the 5.7x28mm cartridge to the two cartridges that are most similar in performance, the proprietary .22 TCM from Rock Island Armory and the .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire. With all of these cartridges, you →



▲ There's a lightening cut in the top of the Ruger-57's slide, aggressive forward serrations and a fiber-optic insert in the tall front sight.



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GAME CHANGER

← are flinging a .22 caliber bullet downrange, and all of these cartridges have less recoil than what you normally find with traditional handgun cartridges

The .22 TCM is meant for 1911-style guns, and it's basically a very shortened .223 case loaded with truncated 39- or 40-grain bullets. Out of pistol-length barrels, 40-grain bullets will do more than 1,900 fps.

The .22 WMR is a long rimfire round originally designed for small game rifles, but numerous pistols have been chambered in this cartridge. Loads offer bullets between 30 and 50 grains. This cartridge performs better out of rifle-length barrels, but in handguns you can expect to send 30-grain bullets downrange approaching 1,600 fps.

In terms of power, the 5.7x28mm fits between the .22 TCM and .22 WMR. However, there are other considerations.

As I mentioned, the .22 TCM is a proprietary cartridge, and Armscor/Rock Island Armory is the only company making ammo for it, and there are currently only two loads offered.

Ammo for the .22 WMR is made by a number of companies, can be found all over and is the least expensive of these three calibers.

Right now the number of makers of 5.7x28mm ammo is slim: Federal/Speer/American Eagle and Fiocchi (which also makes the FN-branded ammo). Together they offer about six loads, and none of it is inexpensive. However, with the introduction of this pistol, I wouldn't be surprised to see new offerings and perhaps a new ammo company or two deciding to manufacture the 5.7x28mm—with a resulting drop in price.

I talked to a Hornady representative, and he said the company has thought about making 5.7x28mm ammo, but with only one expensive boutique pistol on the market chambered in the caliber, Hornady didn't feel there would be enough sales to jump in. That has now changed, because if there is one thing Ruger is good at, it's selling lots of guns.

Ruger's tagline for the 57 is "Fun to shoot, cool to own." The company is not pushing it toward one intended use or another; it is leaving that up to



▲ The slide forward of the rear sight is drilled and tapped for an optic adapter plate, which is available separately.

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER-57

5.7x28mm	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Fiocchi Poly Tip	40	1,683	16	2.4
FN SS197SR V-Max	40	1,705	22	2.5
American Eagle FMJ	40	1,605	13	3.1

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket.

the consumer, which I think is a very smart move. It's one of those pistols where you see it and say, "I don't know what I'd do with it, but I want one."

The clerks at my local gun store tell me that over the years they have had quite a few people come in wanting to get a pistol chambered in 5.7x28mm—because it's cool and different and something that they can show off to their friends. However, the conversation usually ends when they find out that the ammo is hard to get and the pistol itself is priced well over \$1,000.

Now they actually have an affordable alternative, and as I said, I'd be shocked if you don't see at least one more major manufacturer begin producing ammo in this caliber.

Ballistically, it's more than suitable for small game. Hornady's V-Max bullets, available in several different 5.7x28mm loads, are designed to excel on small game. As a defensive pistol, you have merely to turn on your computer to hear the screeching of people proclaiming the 5.7x28mm cartridge is unsuitable for defensive use—never mind the fact that it was specifically designed for anti-personnel use. While the number of actual shootings involving this cartridge is low, it seems to have proven itself roughly as effective as a standard handgun round while providing less recoil, more magazine capacity, but more muzzle blast.

In ballistic gel block testing, these bullets, when fired out of handguns, vigorously fragment, and the bases penetrate 12 to 18 inches.

It's not exactly sized for concealed carry, but then neither is a four-inch revolver, and people have been carrying those for a century. If I was carrying a pistol this size, I would prefer one chambered in 9mm, but if forced to choose between this pistol and a revolver, I would choose the Ruger-57 over the wheelgun every time, no matter the caliber of the revolver.

Why? The Ruger-57 points great and has a great trigger, low recoil and 20+1 capacity and promises 12



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GAME CHANGER

← to 18 inches of penetration. The biggest downside to this caliber for defensive use is the inability of the small, light bullets to penetrate any sort of barrier like drywall and auto glass without breaking apart.

On my first trip to the range, I also brought along an AR pistol for testing. Without thinking, I started load-

ing the Ruger's magazine as if it was an AR mag, and that worked just fine. You don't have to slide the cartridges in from the front; you can just push them down from the top.


Felt recoil, as I mentioned, is less than a 9mm but more than a .22. You will get more blast and, depending on the ammo, usually more flash than with a 9mm, but not the recoil.

It is fun to shoot and reminded me of a USPSA Open division pistol, the kind with a large compensator hanging off the end of the barrel. There's a lot of noise and flash but not much muzzle rise or recoil. As fellow gun scribe Michael Bane says about this pistol, "You can run it like a stapler." With the fully adjustable rear sight, it is no problem getting your rounds to hit exactly where you're aiming.

One thing I discovered is it's difficult to drop the slide on a loaded magazine using the slide stop. You're better off just yanking the slide to the rear and letting it fly. Also, that

20-round magazine capacity is awesome. Start shooting, keep shooting, shoot some more, and eventually, probably before you get tired, the magazine will run out of ammo.

With great sights, a long sight radius and an excellent trigger, shooting this pistol accurately and at speed is easy, whether you're hunting, plinking steel or training a new shooter. Currently, the only downsides are the availability of ammo and its cost.

The staff at my local gun store seems to have the following opinion on this pistol: They're not sure what people are going to use them for, but they're confident that they are going to sell a whole lot of them. I think they're right. 

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RUGER RUGER-57

TYPE: single-action semiauto

CALIBER: 5.7x28mm

CAPACITY: 20

BARREL: 4.94 in. alloy

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.65/5.6/1.2 in.

WEIGHT: 24.5 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: polymer frame, oxide-coated alloy steel slide

SIGHTS: fully adjustable rear, fiber-optic front

TRIGGER: 5.5 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: trigger lever, manual thumb safety

PRICE: \$799

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, [RUGER.COM](https://www.ruger.com)

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REFINED NINE

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

SMITH & WESSON'S M&P9 SHIELD EZ IS A SMOOTH-OPERATING SINGLE-STACK CARRY PISTOL.



The demand for concealed-carry handguns is huge and growing, and Smith & Wesson has already staked out a sizable corner of the market. Year in and year out, Smith & Wesson's revolvers and pistols rank among the top-selling defensive handguns in the country, and the reason for that continued success is simple. The company continues to deliver firearms that meet the demands of their buyers.

Take, for instance, the new M&P9 Shield EZ, the newest member of Smith & Wesson's family of defense pistols. Last year the company released the M&P380 Shield EZ, and some shooters viewed it as just another

.380 carry gun that would blend into the sea of single-stack defense pistols already in existence.

But the M&P380 Shield EZ isn't the same as all those other guns. Yes, it's a polymer-framed, single-stack pistol that's small enough to carry concealed under light clothing, but it's easily one of the simplest carry pistols to operate. Those user-friendly features caught the attention of buyers, and the new M&P9 Shield EZ—a member of the M&P M2.0 Shield EZ series—offers those same qualities from a 9mm carry gun.

That ease-of-use begins with the slide. Heavy springs in semiauto carry guns can make slide manipula- ➔

REFINED NINE

tion difficult. That may not be an issue for you, but there are thousands of shooters—particularly new shooters or those with limited hand strength—who find it difficult to operate the slide on a standard off-the-shelf carry 9mm.

The M&P9 Shield EZ's captured steel spring, by contrast, is light enough that the slide can easily be operated even by shooters without particularly strong hands. There's also plenty of grip surface on the slide thanks to Smith & Wesson's signature wave-inspired rear slide cuts.

The internal hammer-fired M&P9

Shield EZ comes with a 3.675-inch barrel that gives this pistol a sight radius of 5.875 inches and an overall length of 6.85 inches. Overall height is 5.05 inches, slide width is 1.04 inches, and unloaded weight ranges from 23.0 to 23.2 ounces depending on whether or not you opt for the manual safety.

It's not as light or small as subcompact 9mms—both the Glock 43 and Walther PPS M2 are about a half-inch shorter and weigh a few ounces less—but the Shield offers a longer sight radius and more mass to counter the effects of recoil.

Likewise, it's more concealable than double-stack or full-size guns. Many new shooters opt for the smallest, lightest 9mm they can carry to reduce bulk and avoid printing, but the tiny nines aren't much fun at the range. The M&P9 Shield EZ is designed to strike a balance between concealability and function, and it does so very well.

There are different schools of thought regarding safeties on carry pistols, and I've noticed many shooters—particularly new shooters—simply won't carry a pistol with a round in the chamber unless the gun sports a manual safety. The M&P9 Shield EZ offers not only the option for a manual safety but also comes standard with a grip safety as well. There's also a loaded-chamber indicator that elevates when there's a round in the chamber, offering a visual and tactile reference regarding the condition of the firearm.

Following the easy-to-operate design mantra, the M&P9 Shield EZ comes with two eight-round metal magazines that have open windows on either side of the mag so you can clearly see how many rounds are available. There's a bright red plastic follower and two tabs that extend from both sides of the follower.

These allow the shooter to manually depress the magazine spring for easier loading. The layout is simi-



▲ The M&P9 Shield EZ adds a new takedown lever, and the gun can be disassembled without pulling the trigger. The slide stop proved tough to use as a release, but it sure won't snag.



▲ Aside from lighter springs, the pistol is made easier to rack through the serration pattern at the rear of the slide, which flares slightly for better purchase.

SMITH & WESSON M&P9 SHIELD EZ

TYPE: internal hammer-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 8+1

BARREL: 3.675 in., Armornite-finished stainless

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.8/5.1/1.0 in.

WEIGHT: 23 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Armornite-finished stainless slide, black polymer grips

TRIGGER: 5.3 lb. pull (as measured)

SIGHTS: white three-dot; drift-adjustable rear

PRICE: \$479

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson,

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REFINED NINE

lar to what you'll find on many .22 magazines and offers an easy and efficient alternative to traditional loading.

The M&P9 Shield EZ comes with an 18-degree grip angle and a beavertail. The grip itself is rather deep front to back—about 2.5 inches from the back of the grip safety to the trigger undercut—with flat side panels. There's texturing all around the grip surface, and the grip widens near the top to create a narrow shelf for consistent hand position and comfortable shooting.

Smith & Wesson didn't overengineer this grip with oversize finger grooves or odd bulges and grooves, and it's easy for each shooter to find a comfortable hand position. Unlike really small subcompact 9mms that leave shooters with large hands shuffling to gain purchase on the gun, the Shield EZ offers adequate space on the frame for a thumbs-forward grip. The grip and frame design are simple but shooter-friendly.

The controls on this gun are well laid out and simple to operate. In addition to the aforementioned grip safety, the model I tested came with an oval-shaped, reversible mag release button and a small, rectangular serrated slide stop that sits in a molded shelf in the frame.

While the slide stop serves its purpose dutifully, it's not particularly easy to find or manipulate. I realize Smith & Wesson designed it to be small and innocuous so it won't impede the draw, and that requires a dimensional give-and-take, but it's not particularly easy to use.

It's no problem to lock the slide open by pressing up on the stop while pulling back, but if you're going to drop the slide, it's much easier to pull back and release it with a full magazine or remove slide pressure before pressing down on the stop if the magazine is empty.

Personal gripes aside, the control layout works fine, it's perfectly functional, and there's also the option for a paddle-type manual safety if you

like the redundancy of both a grip and thumb safety on your carry gun.

Ease of disassembly is another consideration for new shooters, and Smith & Wesson has simplified the process by adding a takedown lever to the M&P9 Shield EZ. With the gun unloaded and the magazine out of the pistol, lock the slide back, rotate the takedown lever on the left side of the frame downward (there are slide cutouts to facilitate this maneuver), and remove the slide/spring assembly/barrel.

The process doesn't require pulling the trigger, and that makes the process safer than with competing guns. It will also make the M&P9 Shield EZ more appealing to new shooters.

The Shield EZ's barrel and slide are both machined from stainless

steel, and both are also given an Armornite black nitride finish that essentially makes them impervious to sweat, oils, moisture and the other stuff carry guns are exposed to on a daily basis.

The front and rear white dot sights are very basic and are dovetailed into the slide, and the rear sight is drift-adjustable. The rear sight lacks a tactical ledge, but its sleek rounded profile won't snag. There's a rail for mounting lights, lasers and other accessories.

All Smith & Wesson Shield guns have good triggers, and the Shield EZ 9mm is no exception. There's a short take-up, and the trigger break is clean and predictable. The average trigger weight for 10 shots was 5.3 pounds on my Wheeler gauge, and the Shield EZ's trigger doesn't



▲ The magazine features tabs on the slide that allow shooters to depress them to make loading easier, and round counts are well marked.

ACCURACY RESULTS SMITH & WESSON M&P9 SHIELD EZ				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense Lite FTX	100	1,136	11	2.79
SIG Sauer V-Crown JHP	115	1,175	9	2.25
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,067	10	2.41
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep JHP	135	1,037	7	2.46
Federal Syntech Defense SJHP	138	1,051	5	1.90

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 15 yards from a fixed rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a Shooting Chrony digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle.

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— have the spongy feel encountered on some striker-fired pistol triggers. Reset is as short as the top concealed pistols in this price class, and a generous undercut in the molded frame and a wide trigger face offer improved control and comfort.

The M&P9 Shield EZ has a two-

piece slide with an internal extractor, which is a departure from previous designs. The portion of the two-piece slide that contains the extractor is pinned.

The M&P9 Shield EZ's slide is, as S&W promises, quite easy to operate, and I think even those with minimal

hand strength will be able to chamber a round—especially if they hold the gun close to the body and rely more on leverage and less on sheer muscle strength. The signature slide cuts help, and the rear portion of the slide is widened to provide a little extra purchase.

The grip design of the M&P9 Shield EZ will accommodate a wide array of hand sizes, and the grip angle promotes a high hand hold and tilts the wrist slightly forward to efficiently absorb muzzle rise. Defensive 9mm ammo can produce sharp recoil, and subcompact pocket 9mms aren't much fun to shoot for extended periods. The M&P9 Shield EZ's spring slows rearward slide velocity enough that it won't create a sharp recoil pulse or shorten the functional life of the gun.

Though it's slightly larger and heavier than some competing 9mms, the M&P9 Shield EZ isn't so large that it's difficult to conceal. This



A The EZ blends a great trigger, reliable function and superb ergonomics into an easy-to-shoot design.

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I carried the S&W for more than a week. Its slim profile sits close to the body and doesn't stab when carried against the skin, and there's no doubt the finish will hold up against just about anything you can throw at it.

Narrow as it is, the grip offers full control over the pistol, and it's easy to grasp. The Smith & Wesson M&P9 Shield EZ's ergonomics are superb, honed by more than a decade of refining slide cuts and grip designs until the gun sits perfectly in the hand and on the side. The addition of a grip safety is a matter of opinion. I prefer my Shields without a grip safety, but those who disagree now have the option with the EZ.

The Shield's white-dot sights are biased for fast target acquisition for close-range shooting, and that's where this gun excels. At five, seven and 15 yards, the S&W was capable

of punching shot after shot through the vitals of a torso target, and the dot design and short reset mean you can deliver follow-up shots in a hurry.

Those same sights, which are so well suited for defensive shooting, are coarse for benchrest shooting, but from 15 yards accuracy wasn't bad for a carry gun. The best groups of the day were around 1.5 inches, and the group size for four five-shot groups averaged between 1.9 and 2.8 inches—pretty impressive for a short-barreled, semiauto defense pistol.

It's also worth noting the S&W didn't seem to be particularly finicky about ammo and shot all five defensive loads equally well and to roughly the same point of impact. Reliability was above average for a new, out-of-the-box carry pistol. Two Federal Syntech cartridges failed to properly go up the feed ramp, and on one occasion the slide failed to

remain open after the final round was fired, but that's over the course of 150-plus rounds.

The M&P9 Shield EZ is designed to ease operation for new shooters, and at a suggested retail price of \$479 and a street price hovering around \$400, it's a good entry point for new folks. But that doesn't mean this gun isn't a great option for seasoned firearms enthusiasts. It's a good carry gun that's been slowly and deliberately tweaked over the years to a level of refinement found on few of its competitors. Sure, there are lots of compact single-stack pistols on the market, but the Shield—in all its many forms—remains a solid choice.

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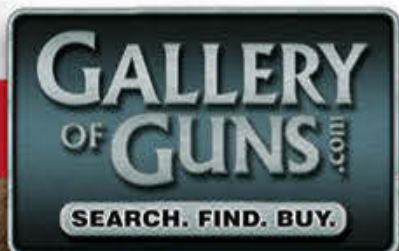


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WILD BILL RIDES AGAIN

BY J. SCOTT RUPP





A. UBERTI'S 1851 NAVY CONVERSION HONORS A WESTERN LEGEND.

His name was James Butler Hickok. He hailed from Illinois, and during his life, he was a gambler, a lawman, a scout, a spy, a showman and more. But he was best known, accurately or not, as one of the greatest gunfighters of the American West. His main guns of choice were a pair of Colt 1851 Navy blackpowder revolvers with ivory grips.

Renowned reproduction maker A. Uberti is honoring the legend of “Wild Bill” Hickok with an 1851 Navy conversion in .38 Special as part of the company’s Lawmen and Outlaws series of guns. Other guns in the series include “Frank” (as in Frank James, brother of Jesse), a replica of the 1875 Remington; and three unique replicas of the 1873 Single Action Army named for Jesse James (all-black finish, bison-horn grip), Doc Holliday (nickel plated, pearl grip) and William Bonney (blue/case-hardened finish, buffalo-horn grip).

You could almost write a doctoral dissertation on the guns Hickok may or may not have carried during his lifetime, but the 1851 Navy was definitely a favorite. He often carried a pair of them, butt-forward for a reverse or cavalry draw.

Like Hickok’s guns, the Uberti Wild Bill is stocked with ivory grips—simulated, of course—attached to a blue grip frame. The 7.5-inch octagon barrel is blued, and the frame is case-hardened.

The original 1851 Navy, which actually debuted in 1850, was a .36 caliber blackpowder revolver. According to historian R.L. Wilson, it was perhaps Samuel Colt’s own favorite. While the gun weighed 42 ounces, it was lighter than the massive 66-ounce .44 Dagoon (produced 1847–61). Because of that, Wilson writes, Colt saw the 1851 as more suited to naval service—hence the “Navy” moniker—while the .44 caliber Dagoon was more fitting for landlubbers.

The U.S. government saw it differently, and the first contract for the 1851 Navy, for 1,000 guns, went to ground troops. The gun was also quite popular with private citizens because it was a step up in power from Colt’s .31 caliber guns but was not as huge as the .44s.

The naval motif extended to

WILD BILL RIDES AGAIN

← 1851's cylinder, which was engraved with a scene from the Campeche sea battle between the Texan and Mexican navies, which Texas won. Wilson indicates Colt did this because he felt a debt to Texas, as it was the first government to embrace his gun designs and buy them in any quantity.

With the Wild Bill revolver, Uberti decided to go with the smokeless-powder cartridge version of the Navy. This decision wasn't just a good call in terms of sales potential; it also has a historical basis when it comes to Hickok.

In the late 1800s Colt belatedly decided he needed to get into the smokeless game, but a patent by Rollin White that was held by Smith & Wesson forced him to try to figure out other ways to adapt his revolvers to the new type of ammunition.

The first conversion revolvers Colt produced featured a muzzleloading conversion design by F. Alexander Thuer. Colt produced about 5,000 such guns, according to Wilson. Models included 1860 Army, 1851 Navy, 1861 Navy, 1862 Police and Pocket Navy and 1849 Pocket.

But by 1872 he was able to use the new Richards-Mason patent to produce breechloading smokeless conversions. This included 3,800 1851 Navy revolvers, and the Uberti is of the Richards-Mason design.

According to Joseph A. Rosa's book *Wild Bill Hickok: Gunfighter*, Hickok was reported to have carried a 1851 Navy conversion while in Deadwood, South Dakota, where he met his fate. He was shot in the back of the head during a card game. The hand he reportedly held at the time was pairs of aces and eights, which came to be

known as the "dead man's hand."

The Uberti Wild Bill has the same 7.5-inch octagon barrel as the original 1851 Navy, and it sports a slightly recessed crown. The top flat is stamped "Stoeger Accokeek MD A. Uberti Italy," and the calibers "38 Colt & S&W Spec" are on the underside.

The sights are wicked cool. The front is a cone-shaped brass "bead," and the rear sight is a notch in the hammer. More on this later.

I'm a sucker for case-hardening, and the nicely done finish on the Wild Bill frame is set off by blued screws and a blued trigger guard. The left side of the frame is stamped "Pat. July. 25. 1871" and "Pat. July. 2. 1872."

The cylinder has the aforementioned naval battle scene engraved on it, as well as the date of the battle: "Engaged 16 May 1843." Other engravings include "Patent No." (but not the number) and "Engraved by W.L. Ormsby New York." Waterman Lily Ormsby invented a roll-engraving machine that Colt employed on a number of early revolvers, including the 1851 Navy.

The faux ivory grips look great, although the right stock on mine has a tiny flaw near the base of the grip. Fitting to the frame isn't picture perfect—it's a little proud at the top of the frame on the left stock and underneath the frame on the right stock—but it's pretty darned good.

Opening the loading gate and drawing the hammer to half-cock gives access to the six cylinders. The bolt stops are slightly off-center, and the timing on my sample was perfect.

The ejector rod is not your standard deal. Instead of a fixed ejector rod head that travels straight back, the Wild Bill's pivots downward through an angled cut in the ejector rod shroud. Pull it down into its channel, then push the ejector straight back against spring tension. Release it and it springs back, with the head folding flush against the barrel.



▲ The combination of the blued cylinder, case-hardened frame and simulated ivory grips makes this gun a real looker.



▲ Unlike Single Action Army-style revolvers, the 1851 Navy conversion's cylinder revolves on an arbor, and the barrel must be removed to pull the cylinder.

It takes a bit of getting used to if, like me, your single-action experience has been with Single Action Army-style revolvers, but once you do, it's fast and fun to kick out empty cases.

When loading/unloading or disassembling the Uberti, the manual urges you to activate a "safety block" located in the hammer. There's a small screw in the right side of the hammer. Turning that screw half a turn clockwise causes a small lever inside the hammer to pivot outward and prevent the hammer from falling fully forward, thereby keeping the firing pin from striking a cartridge primer.

I did note that it occasionally took a couple attempts to get the safety block to retract into firing position. But I'm not going to worry about this because the block is obviously a liability-driven extra "safety" that I'm unlikely to use. I think proper gun-handling practices will suffice here.

To disassemble the Wild Bill, turn the barrel wedge screw located in the left side of the frame so the flat side of the screw is facing the wedge. Then pull out the wedge.

That sucker fits really tight—as it should—so at least at first you should expect to have to use a non-marring punch of the right size to drive out

A. UBERTI WILD BILL 1851 NAVY CONVERSION

TYPE: single-action centerfire revolver

CALIBER: .38 Special

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 7.5 in. octagon

OAL: 13.6 in.

WEIGHT: 2.8 lb.

CONSTRUCTION: blue barrel, cylinder, backstrap and trigger guard; case-hardened frame

GRIPS: simulated ivory

SIGHTS: hammer notch rear, brass bead front

TRIGGER: 2 lb., 11 oz. pull (measured)

PRICE: \$809

MANUFACTURER/IMPORTER: A. Uberti/
Uberti USA, UBERTI-USA.COM



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WILD BILL RIDES AGAIN

← the wedge from the opposite side.

With the wedge out, pull the barrel forward to remove it and then slide the cylinder off the arbor for cleaning. Reassemble in reverse order.

On my sample I was unable to get the wedge screw to go into the proper position when turning it clockwise, but it's at 90 degrees and will still prevent the wedge from backing out during firing.

I confirmed this with a Uberti rep, who told me that as long as the flat edge of the screw is not parallel to the wedge in a six o'clock position—and

as long as the screw is tight—the wedge will not come out.

As far as shooting the gun goes, what a hoot. For one thing, it was more accurate than I expected it to be—or at least I was able to shoot it better than I anticipated. In fact, I hadn't even planned to test it at 25 yards because I figured I wouldn't be able to see the sights well enough. But I gave it a shot, and it turned out I was wrong.

By placing the brass bead where it just protruded above the tiny rear-sight notch in the hammer, I was able

to get some great groups—including one with Black Hills's cowboy load that was less than an inch. The averages you see in the accompanying table are more than respectable for a gun of this kind. The only downside was the gun shot four inches low and right.

Under the range's overhead cover, the brass sight looked like any plain metal sight, but out in the open, the bright, shiny bead was quick to pick up and quick to use. I had a literal blast with the Black Hills ammo, burning through 100 or

ACCURACY RESULTS | A. UBERTI WILD BILL 1851 NAVY CONVERSION

.38 Special	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady American Gunner XTP	125	683	31	2.6
Remington Wheelgun TMWC	148	693	21	2.6
Black Hills Cowboy CNL	158	655	15	1.7
Remington Wheelgun LRN	158	697	10	2.2

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from an MTM Case-Gard pistol rest. Velocities are averages of 20 shots recorded on a ProChrono chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: CNL, conical-nose lead; LRN, lead roundnose; TMWC, target master wadcutter



▲ The brass-bead front sight is super easy to pick up and use. The 7.5-inch octagon barrel sports a recessed crown.

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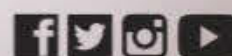


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WILD BILL RIDES AGAIN

← more rounds on an MGM plate rack. This load is soft shooting—it's intended for cowboy action competition, after all—and is in my opinion a great pairing for the 2.8-pound Wild Bill revolver.

I mentioned that from the bench the gun shot low and right, but out in the sunshine, it was a simple matter of placing more of the shiny front sight above the notch and holding a little bit left. For a while I thought I was never going to miss a plate.

The trigger has just a bit of gritty creep, but it breaks nicely at two

pounds, 11 ounces and was a big aid in accurate shot placement.

The revolver's balance is just perfect, and the gun comes up on target quickly. I didn't have a proper holster, so I engaged the plates one-handed and two-handed from Low Ready. My right thumb isn't long enough to easily reach the serrated hammer spur for one-handed shots, but in a two-handed hold I could really rip through all six rounds using my support-hand thumb to cock the hammer.

On the range I did load a full six rounds into the Wild Bill's cylinder, but since there's no transfer bar safety, if you're going to carry it you need to keep an empty chamber under the hammer. And don't think

you can get away with loading six but drawing the hammer back to the half-cock, load/unload position. This is not a safety position, and if you drop the gun with a live round under the hammer, it can fire.

Some guns you own because they're practical, some because they're fun to shoot, and some because they're just plain cool. The Wild Bill certainly checks the latter two boxes.

I love shooting single actions, and a nice handling, soft shooting revolver like the Wild Bill is hard to beat in this regard. And with its good looks and the colorful history behind it, you won't find many guns that are cooler.



❏ The 1851's ejector rod head isn't fixed. Rather, it pivots down through a slot in the ejector rod guide, allowing the rod to be pushed to the rear to eject cases.

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A large advertisement for Kahr Arms. It features a close-up of a person's hands holding a black Kahr Arms handgun. The person's left hand is holding the slide, and their right hand is on the grip. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some mechanical parts. In the top left corner, there is a logo for Kahr Arms with the website address www.kahr.com. At the bottom, there is a large text banner that reads "Kahr Arms: The First and Best Choice for Concealed Carry".

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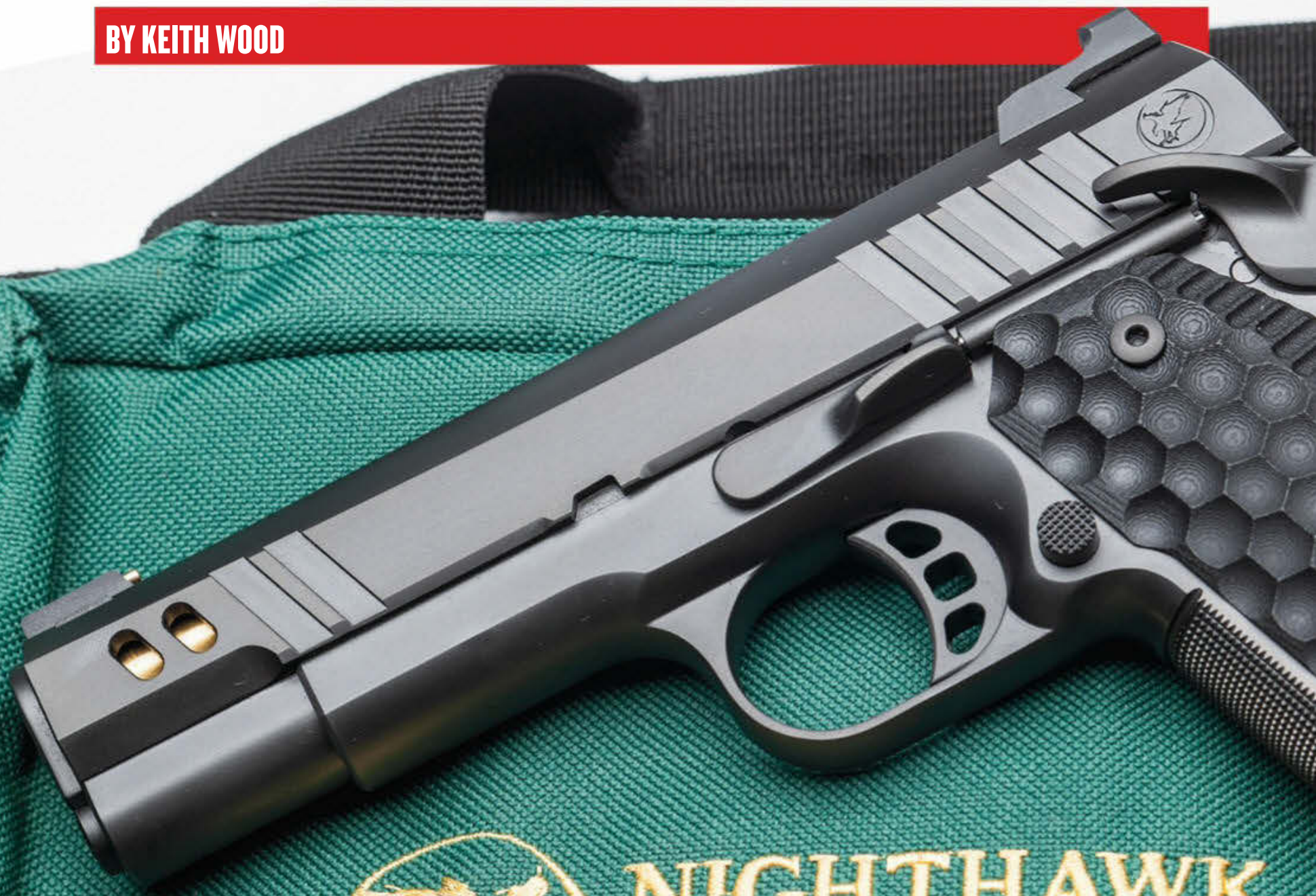
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BY KEITH WOOD



**NIGHTHAWK
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NIGHTHAWK'S NEW VICE PRESIDENT IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF WHAT A 1911 CAN BE.



In the 1911 world, the definition of the term “custom” can vary significantly. Everything from mass-production guns to pistols hand-built by sole proprietors can carry the title. Reasonable minds can disagree as to what constitutes a custom handgun, but by anyone’s definition, Nighthawk Custom’s products fit the bill. The company that boasts “one gun, one gunsmith” has grown significantly over the past 16 years, but the one-gunsmith policy has not wavered. Among the company’s newest creations is the Vice President, a Commander-length 1911 destined to turn heads.

When Nighthawk Custom opened its doors in 2004, the entire employee roster had just four names on it. Today, the company employs more than 65 workers who design, build, test, package and ship the company’s line of custom handguns and shotguns one by one.

With more than 40 handgun choices alone, the company’s product line is extremely diverse. Part of that lineup includes the Executive series, which includes both long-slide and full-size pistols and now, with the introduction of the Vice President, a Commander-length option.

Nighthawk introduced the Executive series in late 2017 with the announcement of the six-inch-barreled Chairman, offered in .45 ACP and 9mm. The company followed up with the President model based on the same fundamental lines and, at the 2020 SHOT Show, released the Vice President.

The Vice President is in some ways a traditional 1911 design, but it has many modern upgrades that add both style and substance. This model is built on a full-size 1911 frame, forged from a carbon steel alloy. The forgings are finish-machined using CNC equipment before landing on the bench of one of Nighthawk’s 20 in-house master gunsmiths, along with the other assorted parts required for a full build.

Rather than following an assembly line model that would add efficiency and cut costs, Nighthawk operates as a collection of individual craftsmen, each producing a high-quality product to a strict standard. This skilled labor and commitment to excellence make their products expensive but, in my eyes, worth it.

My test gun was built by David Atchley, who is one of fewer than 50 active members of the esteemed American Pistolsmiths Guild. Once the parts make their way to the bench, no other hands will touch the handgun until it’s time to apply the finish.

The overall fit and finish on the Vice President are as nice as I’ve seen on any comparable model. I’m a tough critic, and I could not find a single aesthetic or functional flaw. Like the Chairman and President, the Vice President is a striking handgun with angular lines and a two-tone finish. The smooth black Diamond-Like Coating treatment on the bulk of the handgun is

SECOND TO NONE

← accented by the gold titanium nitride barrel, the uniquely patterned grips and numerous CNC cuts on the slide. This gun will not be mistaken for anything else on the range.

The frontstrap on the Vice President is checkered at 25 lines per inch and cut high to allow the gun to sit as low as possible in the hand. The mainspring housing is checkered identically and is machined integrally to an extended magazine well.

This mag well flares to allow for fast reloads but adds little in terms

of external dimensions. Every sharp edge, burr and flaw has been removed by hand—from the mouth of the mag well to the inside of the frame. The transition from one part to another is silky smooth.

The grip safety is a beavertail design with ample material to ensure it is reliably disengaged when the shooter grips the handgun. The black RailScales grips are one of the distinguishing features of the Vice President, with a deep relief honeycomb pattern formed into much of the G10 material and a series of lateral serrations at the

rear edges. The combination of the frame cut, checkering and aggressive grip texture makes this handgun extremely manageable in terms of recoil and muzzle rise.

As well executed as the frame assembly is, it's the top end of the Vice President that really sets it apart visually. The slide is machined with 45-degree top angles to create a five-sided design rather than a traditional rounded shape. Serrations run the length of the sight radius.

A series of cuts are milled into the sides and the top of the slide to reduce weight and make the gold-coated barrel visible, even with the slide in battery. If you like a little bling, it's a good look. Angled cocking serrations are found front and rear.

Though slide-to-frame fit isn't the be-all and end-all in terms of accuracy, it is evidence of great craftsmanship and can reduce wear in the long run. The combination of an excellent slide-to-frame fit and hand-stoned surfaces on the Vice President make the slide move with a smoothness I'm not sure I've experienced on any other handgun. It's a bit like sliding two ice cubes across one another.

From a controls standpoint, the Vice President is pure 1911. As one would expect, the single-stage skeletonized trigger breaks consistently at 2.9 pounds without a hint of creep. Reset is also short and positive, making for the kind of trigger that draws shooters to custom 1911s.

The manual safety is slightly oversize yet slim and is easy yet positive to actuate. Likewise, the slide stop is extended yet still appropriate for concealed carry, and the pin is both countersunk and flush cut. The mag release is checkered to match the frontstrap and mainspring housing and can be engaged without shifting one's hand on the grip.

I may sound like a broken record, but for me, the two most important elements of a handgun are the →



A The Vice President features an excellent trigger, and Wood found the thumb safety easier to disengage than with other 1911s he's shot.



A The serrated top features a lightening cut that shows off the barrel's gold-colored titanium nitride finish, and the gold bead front sight is fast to acquire.

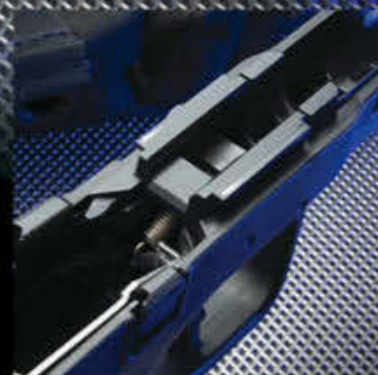
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← trigger and sights. We've already established that the Vice President has a great trigger, and the sights are excellent. The serrated blade Heinie Ledge Tactical rear sight fits into a dovetail milled into the slide and is drift adjustable for windage once the twin hex screws have been loosened.

The front sight also rides securely in a dovetail and has an 0.08-inch gold bead at its center. I'm a big fan of a gold bead front sight on my handguns, and this one is no exception.



A The Vice President sports a Heinie Ledge rear sight and G10 grips with a good-looking and effective RailScales pattern.

On the inside, the Vice President uses traditional elements along with a few deviations. The trigger, sear, disconnecter and Delta-style hammer are pure 1911, as is the internal extractor.

This handgun employs the standard recoil spring guide and plug system that we've seen for over a century. The barrel bushing has been shortened a bit—probably so that it's invisible through the forward slide cuts that show off the barrel beneath. Unless you're a gorilla, you'll need the included bushing wrench to disassemble the Vice President, which is further evidence of the careful construction of this handgun.

Additionally, there was no evidence of barrel squat, which is important in a locked-breech pistol. This close fit ensures better accuracy and shorter barrel lock time. Timing is an important but often ignored element of 1911 function that clearly the gunsmiths at Nighthawk pay attention to.

The most visually distinctive element of the Vice President is undoubtedly the barrel. Like the barrels on the other guns in the Executive series, it receives a titanium nitride coating. For those not familiar with this treatment, it is a hard and wear-resistant coating often applied to machine tooling and medical devices.

It is extremely thin, usually only 0.0002 inch thick, which is a good thing on a firearm with such minimal clearances. Not only does the

ACCURACY RESULTS | NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM VICE PRESIDENT

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Super Vel + P JHP	90	1,430	9	2.3
Hornady American Gunner XTP	115	1,095	9	1.4
Winchester USA Ready FMJ	115	1,115	16	1.4
SIG Sauer Elite FMJ	124	1,124	16	1.8
Browning BXP X-Point JHP	147	927	10	1.9
Federal Syntech Training Match	147	994	11	2.3

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Target Shooting Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a LabRadar Doppler Chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

coating provide superior surface properties when compared to many traditional firearm finishes, but also it gives the barrel its gold tone.

Like nearly all 9mm 1911s, the barrel is ramped, which makes for a single feed plane and strengthens the lower lugs where they meet the slide-stop pin. The recessed crown protects the rifling and adds some visual appeal.

Though these features are all standard on the Vice President, Nighthawk allows buyers to choose from a menu of custom options. A double-stack upgrade is available, as is an integral light rail as well as various sight, barrel and checkering options, with varying prices that are listed on the company's website.

Likewise, if the customer wants a chambering other than .45 or 9mm, .38 Super and 10mm Auto options are available. Notably, many finish options are available at no additional cost, including various Cerakote colors, hard chrome and even stainless steel construction.

Looks are important, but performance is the true test of value. I'll spare you the suspense: The Vice President was impressive on the range. I tested six different loads, ranging from 90 to 147 grains, and the Vice President ran flawlessly regardless of bullet type or weight. ➡



▲ The mag well doesn't add girth to the pistol, and it's not only perfectly blended, but also it's exquisitely finished.

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After seeing it group well in so many guns, Hornady's 115-grain XTP load has become my gold standard for accuracy testing. It lived up to its reputation with 25-yard groups averaging just 1.4 inches. It's worth noting that the largest average groups with any load tested still measured less than 2.5 inches, which is a long-

established benchmark for handgun accuracy at this distance.

The Vice President was 100 percent reliable and mechanically accurate, and it was a pleasure to shoot. The well-designed grip and checkering surfaces, the crisp trigger and high-quality sights made rapid and repeatable hits come easily. Unlike some custom 1911s I've tested, the manual safety was easy to disengage. Recoil was minimal, as was muzzle rise thanks to the 9mm chambering.

I shot the Vice President as well as I've shot virtually any other handgun. With little effort in under two seconds, I was able to reliably put five rapid hits into the head zone of an old-model IDPA target placed at seven yards. This isn't a boast but rather a testament to the design and execution of this handgun that allowed me to shoot my best.

With the rare but real threat of active shooters, I am no longer com-

fortable carrying a handgun that is incapable of making reliable hits at extended ranges. With that in mind, I've shifted away from subcompact pistols in favor of guns I can truly shoot well. Though they can be on the heavy side, Commander-length 1911s, in my opinion, are just about ideal for concealed carry. The Vice President fit well in my Milt Sparks Summer Special II holster and should be compatible with any rig designed for 1911s of this length.

The Nighthawk Vice President is on par with the finest handguns I've shot over the years in terms of fit, finish and performance. The company's commitment to doing things right is evident down to the smallest detail. There are no cut corners, no MIM parts, no expense spared. This level of craftsmanship doesn't come cheap but if you're looking for a top-quality handgun and are willing to pay for it, one could hardly go wrong with the Vice President.

NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM VICE PRESIDENT

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: 9mm Luger (as tested)

CAPACITY: 10+1

BARREL: 4.25 in., titanium nitride finish

WEIGHT: 38.4 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: forged steel frame, machined steel slide

GRIPS: RailScales G10

SIGHTS: black adjustable rear, gold bead front

TRIGGER: 2.9 lb. (measured)

SAFETIES: single-side thumb, grip

PRICE: \$4,199

MANUFACTURER: Nighthawk Custom,
NIGHTHAWKCUSTOM.COM



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RUGER SECURITY-9 COMPACT W/VIRIDIAN LASER

RUGER SECURITY-9 COMPACT SEMIAUTO-matic is now available with a Viridian laser mounted on the trigger guard. Thanks to a double-stack, 10-round magazine, the glass-filled nylon grip feels full, and the grip has stippled panels on all sides including the grip extension. The stippled panels are neither harsh nor aggressive, but just right to allow good purchase. The backstrap has a little arch to it, which I like.

The alloy steel slide has cocking serrations fore and aft and is matte blue. The frame features a hard-coat aluminum chassis with full-length guide rails to keep everything running smooth and tight.

The no-snag rear sight can be drifted for windage only. An Allen

screw in the center allows the sight to be moved and then locked down. The sight's notch is large and crisp, and the white outline makes for fast sight acquisition even in poor lighting.

The front sight is a post with a white dot, and it can be drifted for windage. The front and rear combine for a clean sight picture, and the top of the slide is finished in a satin blue to keep reflections at bay.

The barrel is just under 3.5 inches long with a cone-shaped profile that locks tightly with the slide. The front of both the slide and the Picatinny rail have been contoured for easy holstering.

Within the slide is a massive extractor and a hefty mechanical ejector. The barrel extension has a "view port"

RUGER SECURITY-9 COMPACT

W/VIRIDIAN LASER

TYPE: hammer-fired semiauto centerfire

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 10+1

BARREL: 3.42 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.5/4.4/1.0 in.

WEIGHT: 22.4 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: blue alloy steel slide, glass-filled nylon frame w/aluminum chassis

TRIGGER: 5 lb. pull (measured)

SIGHTS: drift adjustable white outline rear, white dot front; adjustable Viridian red laser

SAFETY: single-side thumb, hammer block

PRICE: \$439

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, ruger.com

(Ruger's term) that serves as a loaded-chamber indicator.

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HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT

← which means it's easier to rack than a striker-fired gun yet delivers a strong strike on a primer for sure ignition. While trigger pull averaged about five pounds, it has a clean and snappy reset.

Controls are straightforward. The manual safety lever is on the left side only. This safety might take a little getting used to because it pivots on the front side of the lever rather than the rear as most other guns.

When down, in the Fire position, a red dot appears under the lever; when up, a capital "S" appears for Safe. But you have to have good eyes to see both. Additionally, the pistol has an integrated trigger safety to prevent the hammer from falling unless the trigger is pulled.

With the slide locked back and the magazine out, I had a hard time working the slide stop as a release. I needed to pull back on the slide a little while pulling down on the stop to release the slide.

The Viridian laser is made of high-

strength polymer. It is mounted on the trigger guard and is also attached to the pistol's Picatinny rail. A red on/off switch is found on either side of the unit. Pushing it in will activate the laser; pushing it again shuts it off. If you forget to turn it off, it will power down within five minutes.

The unit has adjustments for both windage and elevation. The laser is supposed to come sighted in, and while the dot seemed to align with the sights as I first took the gun out of the box, when I took it to the range, I discovered I needed to make some adjustments.

At the range, I was impressed how the gun handled in my hand simply because of the wide grip. Shooting a short-barreled compact gun in 9mm can be hard on the hands with a narrow grip, but the Ruger never wore me down throughout the morning of shooting—even with the Barnes +P loads.

The sights were more than adequate, and even though I was shooting in the daylight, I did try the laser, which was somewhat visible at the 15-yard line. Indoors the laser was bright and gave a clean sight picture at anything I aimed at.

The five-pound trigger pull made it hard to get small groups, and going into it I figured I would be more than satisfied if all my shots would be within a three-inch circle. So I was more than pleased at the averages I got. The best group of the day went to Hornady's 124-grain XTP: a 2.6-inch five-shot group.

My only concern was the fact that



▲ The single-side safety has a red indicator when in the Fire position. Trzoniec found the slide lock lever difficult to use as a slide release.

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER SECURITY-9 COMPACT W/VIRIDIAN LASER

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Barnes TAC-XPD +P	115	974	38	2.6
SIG V-Crown JHP	115	1,055	14	2.8
Hornady Custom XTP	124	1,058	17	2.7

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 25 shots recorded on an Oehler Model 35P chronograph. Abbreviation: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



A The coned barrel locks up tightly in the slide, and the front of the slide and the Picatinny rail are contoured for easy holstering.



A The Viridian red laser attaches to the trigger guard and rail. It has on/off buttons on both sides of the unit.

when the gun went empty, getting it back into battery is a two-hand operation. With your thumb on the slide lock, you have to pull the slide back just a bit with your other hand to let the slide follow to chamber a round.

Figuring I did not have my Wheaties for breakfast, I asked another shooter to try it, and he also had to use both hands. So if you like to use the slide-lock lever as a release, this is something to consider.

For a price point of under \$450, I rate the made-in-America Ruger Security-9 with the laser a good buy. Ruger continues to produce top-quality, reasonably priced firearms for sporting and defense uses. This gun is one of them.

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A-O CASE-HARDENED 1911

TODAY, SHOOTERS HAVE THE PICK OF the litter when it comes to a 1911 with personality. One of the newest editions to the fold is a case-hardened Model 1911 by Auto-Ordnance (\$1,327). The gun is stunning with its unique color case-hardened finish, executed in what Auto-Ordnance calls a “swirling” pattern. The finish is found not only on the frame and slide but also has been carried over to the trigger and controls. It is well done and very even on all parts.

All of the slide, slide cocking serrations and frame flats are true, with no over polishing or rounded corners. For traditionalists, the words “Model 1911A1 U.S. Army” are stamped boldly on the left side of the slide.

Both the trigger and hammer are serrated for a non-slip surface, and it comes fitted with the traditional five-inch machined barrel.

Breaking at 7.5 pounds, the trigger

is not going to win any competition medals. The hammer is wide, has a safety stop position and includes the modern firing pin block.

If you didn’t already know this, Auto-Ordnance warns never to use this half-cock position as a manual safety, as it was designed to prevent the hammer from hitting the internal firing pin if it should slip from your thumb while cocking. To use it as a safety could damage the sear, leading to an accidental discharge.

The beavertail grip safety seems a bit wider than the original Model 1911, but it’s in step with modern times with its memory groove. The gun has an arched mainspring housing, something I have always approved of since it positions the gun correctly in your hand.

This housing has been vertically serrated, and the base sports a lanyard loop as per original guns. The frontstrap is polished smooth, while

the magazine release is checkered with the base of the single seven-round magazine fitting perfectly flush with the bottom of the frame.

Auto-Ordnance took a bit of license with the thumb safety. There’s a small, checkered nub that sticks out for easy access rather than a longer, tapered appendage. The slide lock/release is standard fare, serrated for non-slip use.

The low-mounted sights are rudimentary at best, with a blade front sight and a rear sight assembly drift-adjustable for windage.

The wood grips are a standout, as they are not only nicely checkered with the traditional double-diamond pattern but also have a large U.S. logo engraved in an oval in the center. Oil finished, they are a distinctive part of this fabled .45.





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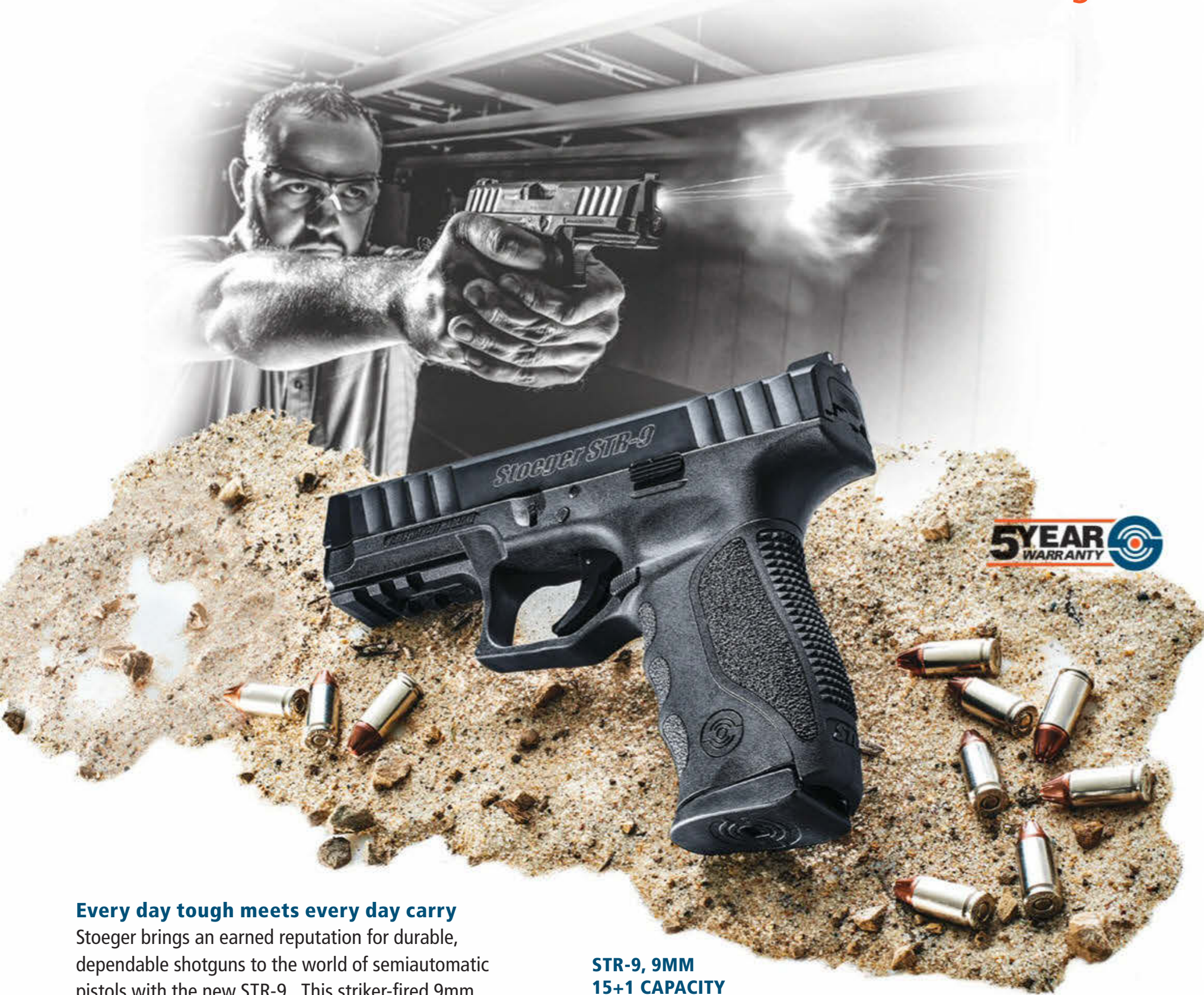
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