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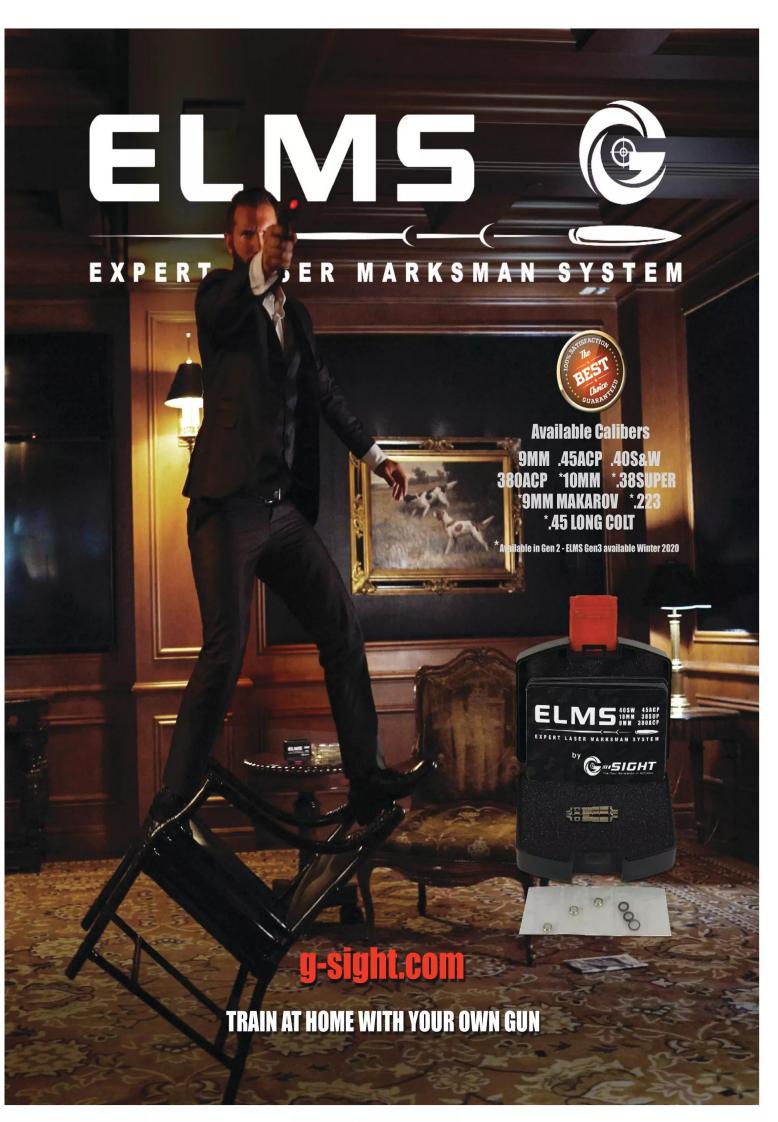
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CONTENTS

PAGE 6



8 HELLFIRE-BREATHING TIGERS! Royal Tiger Offers Two Great Compact AR-15-Type Pistols in 5.56 and 9mm! Vincent L. DeNiro, Editor

24 THE "SHOULD'A BEEN" RIFLE

A Reproduction Model 1855 Revolving Military Rifle Becomes the Classic Sporter Colt Never Made! *Jeff John*

36 A DARK DAY IN MOGADISHU

The RPG-7 Will Dabbs, MD

52 THE VINTOVKI BERDANA OBR. 1868g & 1870g

Russia's First "Modern" Military Rifles *Paul Scarlata*

72 SMALL ARMS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONS, PART 2

El desastre de la Bahía Cochinos Paul Scarlata

E.	





DISPLAY ADS

N

A

Airforce Airguns 51
Alderfer Auction Co 109
American Gun Craft 49
American Gunsmithing Institute
67

3
6
B
3

B

Black Hills Ammunition, Inc 47
Bob's Gun Shop 104
Bravo Company USA
10, 11, 14, 15, 29

C

Crosscut Saw Co. 105

D

D.B. Stewart Enterprises, LLC **106** De Santis Holster Leather Good **39**

G-Sight Solutions2	
Geissele 103	
GovMint 29	

G

H

Handi Racker	104
Harbor Freight Tools	65

K

Kinetic Development Group, LLC

L	
L&S Supply	107
Legacy Sports Intl LSI	5

Μ

M&A Parts 75	
Midwest Tactical, Inc 112	
MKS Supply, Inc 41	
Mossberg 0 F Sons, Inc 27	

Ν

Neith Firearms	49	
Nextten Stauer, LLC	31	
Nightforce USA, Inc	43	

0

Outdoor	Sportsman	Group	57
---------	-----------	-------	----

R

Rapidfire Triggers, Inc.
102, 104, 106, 107, 108
Recon Ordnance77
Riton Optics111
Royal Tiger 70, 71
Ruben Mendiola, Jr 103, 107

S

S&K Scope Mounts 105	
Sarco, Inc	
Sarge's Military Surplus 102	
SCCY Industries 19	
Springfield, Inc7	
Stocky's LLC 49	

Т

Texas Bullion Exchange, Inc6	1
TP Tools & Equipment 10	ō
Trijicon, Inc	5

U

UltiMAK	29

W

	••	
Wilson Combat	t	23

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Royal Tiger's Hellfire AR-type pistols are ready for optics and arm brace accessories of your choice!



ny regular reader of Firearms News knows that I like AR-15 pistols. I like AR-15s, period. I got my first one in 1978 — a Colt AR-15 SP1, more commonly referred to as the Vietnam War M16-style model. A year or two after I got mine, the CAR-15 carbine-style rifle version became available, which really sparked my interest. It had a 16-inch barrel and collapsible stock and was based off the XM177 "Commando" series used by Special Forces in the 1960s and '70s. Of course, the original Commando was the one I really wanted, but I was too young in 1980 to buy a transferable. J. Curtis Earl, the premier machine gun dealer at the time, offered the XM177E2 - a newer version that sported an 11.5-inch barrel topped off with a sound modulator/suppressor/flash hider. The earlier 10-inch barrel (XM177E1) was found to have cycling issues due to barrel length and gas tube length. The solution was to add an inch and a half to the barrel, which left gases in the gas tube long enough to provide a more reliable cycle.

The reason I mention the length is because some of the 10.5-inch barrels popular today sometimes have similar cycling issues with certain types of ammunition due to gun-powder burning rates, and malfunctions resemble the same types experienced with the XM177E1. If you ever had old Russian 5.56 ammunition and ran it through your 10.5-inch-barreled AR pistol, you know exactly what I mean. There are ways to remedy this, and one way is to install a carbine buffer of 1.5 ounces (basically no weights) instead of the standard three-ounce buffer - the recoil will increase, but the pistol will cycle reliably. Another way is to install a barrel 11.5 inches or longer. But, back in the early 1980s, there weren't any AR-type pistols, so the closest you could get to an original XM177 Commando (also nicknamed a "shorty") without buying an NFA firearm, was to get a CAR-15. When I did finally get a CAR-15 around 1981, there were comments from gun enthusiasts and Vietnam vets that the shorter version wasn't accurate, lacked velocity, etc. (easily disproven with a day at the range). I wonder what they would have thought of 10.5-inch- or 7.5-inch-barreled AR pistols of today! Well, the carbine is of course accurate, and AR-15-type firearms with 10.5-inch barrels can easily hit center mass at 200 yards plus.

Why Buy an AR-15-Type Pistol?

When Olympic Arms came out with its OA-93 AR-15 pistol almost 30 years ago, it was really an innovative idea, but most looked at it as more of a gimmick than a serious firearm with real-world applications. Sure, there were situations where a 5.56-caliber pistol with a 6.5-inch barrel might come in handy back then, but for the most part, it was taken about as seriously [Cont. to page 12]



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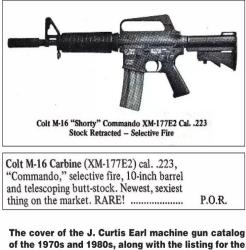
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[Cont. from page 9]

as the 1970s-era Bushmaster Arm Pistol, which was a bullpup-style .223 semi-auto pistol that used AR-15/M16 magazines. It was just an idea that came too soon, but it was the trailblazer.



Colt XM177E2 assault rifle.

Over the past decade, I have really warmed up to AR-15 pistols for a few reasons. First, the AR-15-type pistol can give carbine-like performance out to 200+ yards and will fit inside of a backpack or bug-out bag or be concealable under a jacket. Second, it is a handgun and can be carried in most states as a pistol. So, if you are driving through a dangerous area during a SHTF situation, you can legally have it loaded and ready just like your everyday carry handgun. Third is intimidation. Now, most anti-2nd Amendment voices will cry that intimidation is offensive, not defensive, therefore a bad thing which should be remedied through (unconstitutional) gun-banning legislation. They are very wrong, as usual. Having a firearm that looks intimidating can save lives, especially when one is outnumbered by dozens of bad guys. If you are surrounded in a riot or SHTF situation, pulling out an AR-type pistol with a 20- or 30-round magazine could cause the other side to back off, therefore saving lives without a shot even being fired. In that same situation, if you pulled out a compact eight-shot .380 pistol or snub-nosed .38 revolver, the hostiles may just rush you or pull out their handguns, which may cause you to surrender, in which case, the chances of you getting out alive or without serious permanent physical harm would be very slim. There is no need to speculate on this, just look at the damage, injury, and deaths caused by the riots of 2020. Fourth, an AR-15-type pistol (in 5.56) allows you to take smallto medium-sized game (like a small deer) in a survival situation without having to lug around a hunting rifle, which would not be concealable in a small pack and would add eight-plus pounds to your load, if it could even fit.

In *Firearms News* issue 1 of this year, I reviewed an AR-15 pistol with a 7.5-inch barrel and wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of dropping back three inches on barrel length from my "go-to" 10.5-inch length. (Be sure to visit FirearmsNews.com and search for this article if you don't have a back issue.) One instance where the 7.5-inch-barreled pistol would

The Hellfire 5.56 sports a 4.5-inch barrel and an M-LOK accessory shroud manufactured by Midwest Industries (MidwestIndustriesInc.com). DeNiro installed the new and ATF-approved Gear Head Works Tailhook MOD2 pistol brace (GearHeadWorks.com). The Trijicon MRO (Trijicon.com) tops the Hellfire off nicely.

The Hellfire 9MM sports a four-inch barrel and an M-LOK accessory shroud manufactured by Midwest Industries (MidwestIndustriesInc.com). DeNiro installed the original and ATF-approved Tailhook MOD1 pistol brace manufactured by Gear Head Works (GearHeadWorks.com). The Aimpoint Micro H-2 shown here is one of DeNiro's favorite dot optics.

4



Both pistols have 10 inches of Picatinny rail on top, including the four inches of P-rail on the barrel/accessory shroud, shown here on the right.





to work with it. This was very considerate of Gear Head Works due to legal issues owners can get

themselves into.

Pictorial markings replacing "SAFE," "SEMI," and "FULL" have been popular since HK started using them decades ago. (Don't get too excited; the fullauto marking is just for show.)

be an advantage is when needing to fire out of windows on opposite sides of a vehicle. The shorter barrel really would make a difference, especially of you are wearing a bulky winter coat or if you have other equipment in the car with wires or cords hanging from them (radar detector, smart phone, CB, "fuzzy dice", air freshener, etc.). Even the rear-view mirror can get in the way of the longer barrel. The disadvantages of a shorter barrel were a drop in power, range, and a very loud report, which really requires a suppressor if you feel you will be firing indoors — the fact is that you never know, so assume you will be. Although there were limitations of a 7.5-inch barrel compared to the 10.5-inch barrel, the 7.5-inch barrel performed very well out to 100 yards, and hitting center mass was not an issue. For a city or suburban SHTF situation, either of these barrel lengths would perform well. On the plains of North Dakota, any AR-15 pistol would not be the right platform, but within the cities and suburbs of North Dakota, it would be.

Enter the Royal Tiger Hellfire Pistols

As mentioned, there are some advantages with going shorter on barrel length, as well as some disadvantages. The Hellfire line of AR-type pistols from Royal Tiger has barrels of 4.5 inches for the 5.56 and just four inches for the 9mm. So why go shorter? Concealability. There are times when you may really have the need for a powerful rifle-caliber compact firearm, and there are times when your everyday carry 9mm pistol is just not enough. We will look at a couple more "needs" later, but now, let's talk about the Hellfires.

Let's talk about the common features between the two models. Both Hellfires have a high-quality barrel

shroud (manufactured by Midwest Industries) which has a Picatinny rail at 12 o'clock, seven M-LOK slots, and two tension Allen screws that allow for a rockhard fit. Both pistols have 10 inches of Picatinny rail (including the four inches of rail on the barrel/accessory shroud). Barrels are topped off by A2-style flash hiders, and buffers for both pistols are at three ounces each. Grips are the "Engage" model supplied by Mission First Tactical. These are premium grips, not the standard AR-15 grips you can pick up at a gun show for three bucks — these run \$20 each. Grips feature a textured surface, which prevents your hands from slipping when the firearm gets wet. Although comfortable, the grips are at more of a vertical angle than I am used to, so I would probably replace them because I'm old school - remember I got my first AR-15 over 40 years ago. The last common feature I will mention is the pictorial engravings for the fire control. They show various bullet shapes for safe, semi-auto, and full-auto, and are marked on both sides of the lower receiver surrounding the safety selector. Don't get too excited; the full-auto marking is just for show.

"Well, what about arm braces?" you may ask. At the time of this writing, many back-and-forth statements from BATFE have been made recently between members of Congress, firearms manufacturers, brace manufacturers, gun-rights groups, and individual gun owners regarding the current legal status on braces: which ones are approved and which are not, and what you can and can't do with AR-15-type pistols. Bottom line, nothing has been changed as of this writing. I decided to install Gear Head Works (GearHeadWorks. com) Tailhook braces, as those are BATFE-approved for use as an arm brace, and because I really like the design. Note that Royal Tiger installs AR pistol buf-



The Hellfire 9MM magazine-release button is large and is in the same location as that of any standard AR-15, unlike many early 9mm AR-15 conversions. which utilized a lever-type magazine release at the bottom rear of the magazine well.

fer tubes, which have a diameter of 1.24 inches, so if you decide to purchase an arm brace for this firearm, be aware that not all brace models will fit. The aluminum Tailhook MOD1 will only fit buffer tubes with a diameter of 1.17 - 1.20 inches. I know that is close to 1.24 inches, but it won't fit. It really won't. And no, you cannot hammer it on! (That won't work, but I thought about it!) Both buffer tubes on the Hellfires were changed out and the polymer Tailhook MOD2 comes with a unique buffer tube incorporating a track

[Cont. to page 16]



God bless America! A nice touch on the 5.56 model. especially these days.

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Comparison of the bolt assemblies for the Hellfire 5.56 (LEFT) and Hellfire 9MM (RIGHT). Note the lack of a separate bolt assembly on the 9mm carrier, as well as the lack of gas key, as this firearm is blowback-operated.



The Hellfire 5.56 field strips like any AR-15 and comes with one 30-round Mission First Tactical magazine.



Like its 5.56 brother, The Hellfire 9MM field strips like any AR-15 and comes with one 33-round Glock-type magazine from SGM Tactical.



[Cont. from page 13]

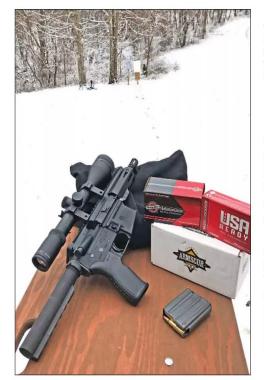
design which will allow the brace to adjust, but will not allow a standard M4 or CAR stock to work with it. This was very considerate of Gear Head Works to look after its customers from a legal standpoint, as no one wants to be charged with "intent" to manufacture an unregistered short-barreled rifle (SBR) based upon "constructive possession" legal theories just for having a spare collapsible AR-15 stock laying around. Also, the brace expands and stops well before the BATFE limitation rule of 13.5 inches maximum "length of pull." On to more feature comparisons.

All controls on both firearms are standard AR-15 type with the exception of the 9mm version's magazine release. The good news is that magazine release is in the same location as any AR-15, so besides a little difference in touch/feel, your muscle memory will still pop that magazine out without much of an issue. There are two other things requiring mention regarding the controls.

While the 5.56 and 9mm models have features that are almost the same, the forward assist on the 9mm does not work. The assembly is there, but there are no teeth on the 9mm bolt. However, this is not an issue, as the 9mm is blowback operated, while the 5.56 is gas operated, with a separate rotating bolt. The blowback operation of the 9mm version is why it has a heavier bolt weighing 14-7/8 ounces, compared to the standard 5.56 bolt-carrier assembly, which weighs 11-5/8 ounces. Due to the large external magazine release on the 9mm version, it does not have the American flag engraved on the magazine well that the Hellfire 5.56 has.

As Columbo would say, "*Um, just one more thing.*" I have one other control feature to mention and that's the bolt catch/bolt release lever. It's there on the Hell-fire 9MM, but only works if you manually pull it outward when the bolt assembly is rearward. You can





used the "winter trigger"!)

The Hellfire 5.56 about to be tested with Black Hills 55-grain Barnes TSX hollow points (Black-Hills.com) and Winchester's USA Ready 62-grain Open Tip ammunition (Winchester.com). The Armscor 62-grain FMJ was used for function testing and shooting with dot optics.

depress it to drop the bolt carrier, but it will not lock the bolt back when the magazine runs dry, as the magazine's follower is too far forward to activate it. Just do some training drills, and this is not a huge issue. Hey, the MP5 doesn't have one either, and it's still touted by many small arms experts as the best submachine gun ever designed.

To wrap up the last of the features, which are now differences, the 5.56 has a 1/2x28 thread pitch on the barrel, while the 9mm has a 1/2x36 thread pitch. That's a bummer for the Hellfire 9MM owners, as most 9mm suppressors use 1/2x28 especially suppressors designed for AR-15-type firearms. But, that can be rectified for only \$30 by contacting Kaw Valley Precision (KawValleyPrecision.com) and ordering its 1/2x36 to 1/2x28 thread adapter. The advantage to



The smallest 5.56 group at 25 yards came from Winchester's USA Ready 62-grain Open Tip at .86 of an inch, and without the flyer only .67 of an inch — a tie with Black Hills' best group without its flyer.

having a different thread pitch is that it would prevent someone from screwing a 5.56 suppressor on to their 9mm AR-15 barrel — that would ruin anyone's range day (unless it was intended to get more YouTube



at 2.10 inches and 1.59 without the flyer.



The new BATFE-approved Tailhook MOD2 is as comfortable as the original model and shifts the firearm's weight from the wrist (relieving stress) to the forearm. It also incorporates a unique track system, which allows the brace to be quickly adjusted within BATFE regulations.

views). The 5.56 barrel features a 1 in 10-inch rifling twist rate, but I was unable to confirm which twist rate this four-inch 9mm Hellfire has. The 7.5-inch Hellfire 9MM also uses a 1 in 10-inch twist (yes, Royal Tiger has this longer-barreled version if you would prefer one of those).

As far as magazines go, the Hellfire 5.56 uses any standard AR-15/M16 magazine, and the Hellfire 9MM uses any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine, which is the best choice for availability by far. That's about it for these two. I'm not going to get into field-stripping instructions since these are very common AR-15-type firearms, and that would be like me doing a review of hiking boots and giving instructions on how to tie laces.

Now that you have a good idea why you should have an AR-15-type pistol in your collection and why you should consider these Royal Tiger models, it's time to do some shooting.

Firing the Hellfires

I decided to go with a Trijicon MRO for the 5.56 version since I already had this optic dialed in for another 5.56 AR pistol. I loaded up with some 62-grain FMJ from Armscor and took about 10 shots on a man-sized steel silhouette at 25 yards for my initial test. The Hellfire 5.56 put them all in the target with no malfunctions.

As with all of my accuracy tests, I am testing the accuracy of the firearm and reducing as much human error as possible (especially with "old eyes"), so I mounted a 4X-14X Burris Fullfield 30 scope (Bur risOptics.com). I would never use an optic like this on this type of firearm for anything other than accuracy testing from a shooting bench. Since it was 29 degrees outside, I placed a piece of pipe-insulating foam on the buffer tube because I don't really enjoy the feeling of ice on my cheek. I also wore gloves and opened up the "winter trigger" on the Hellfire so that it was easier to shoot with gloves on — I haven't done that in a loooong time!

Due to the availability of ammunition on hand, as well as time, weather, etc., I decided to only do the 5.56 accuracy tests with ammo from Black Hills and Winchester, shooting three five-shot groups per ammo type for each distance. First up, at 25 yards (this does only have a 4.5-inch barrel you know), was Black Hills 55-grain Barnes TSX hollow points (which are 100% copper and made to expand into four sharp petals, retaining all original weight after impact — a great hunting round). I wanted to shoot a test group first, as the trigger measured 6.5 pounds. Sure, this is a G.I.-type trigger and I have fired hundreds of them, but this one had a lot of creep. My test group measured out at 1.72 inches and .96 without the flyer, but what was really

impressive was the three-shot cloverleaf I got that measured out at .23 of an inch! I felt comfortable to begin, although I wish I had the Midwest Industries Enhanced Drop-In Trigger installed, due to its crisp 3.5-pound pull — it's one of the best I've ever used. Not a big issue, as I'm used to long and creepy AR-15 triggers (everyone should learn to shoot well with them). My first group measured 1.32 inches and 1.22 inches without the flyer. The best group with this ammo was 1.19 inches total/.67 of an inch without the flyer.

Next up was Winchester's USA Ready 62-grain Open Tip (OT). The largest group of the three measured in at 1.51 inches and .71 of an inch without the flyer. The smallest group came in at .86 of an inch and without the flyer .67 of an inch — a tie with Black Hills' best group without the flyer. The other group measured in at 1.15 inches and .96 of an inch without the flyer. I normally would not perform an accuracy test of 5.56 at 25 yards, but since the barrel was only 4.5 inches, I was curious as to how well it performs. For an AR-15-type firearm this concealable, a closeup precision shot could be a real possibility, especially in a hostage situation.

Now out to 50 yards. Black Hills' first 55-grain group was 2.7 inches and 1.55 inches without the flyer. My second group measured in at 2.87 inches and 2.14 without the flyer, and the last group was 2.85 inches and 1.66 inches without the flyer. Now for Winchester's USA Ready 62-grain OT. My first two groups were in the three-inch range with the first one coming in at 3.03 inches (1.88 inches without the flyer) and 3.07 inches (2.45 inches without the flyer). The last group tightened up quite a bit with 2.10 inches and 1.59 without the flyer. This was the best group at 50 yards for 5.56.

Overall, I'm happy with the groups, especially since this is the shortest AR-15 5.56 barrel I have ever fired and since this is a pistol with no stock. Not bad for a 5.56 barrel that is about the same length as many carry pistols. If I had a match trigger, I know I could have tightened the groups up and would have gotten more consistency in group sizes. Now for some realistic shooting.

I then took the Hellfire 5.56 out to 100 yards with the Trijicon MRO, with my target being a plain piece [Cont. to page 20]

ROYAL TIGER HELLFIRE 5.56				
Manufacturer	Weight (grains)	Туре	Average (in.)	Best (in.)
25 YARD	S — THREE FIVE-S	HOT GROU	JPS	
Black Hills Barnes TSX	55	HP	1.29	1.19
w/o flyer	55	HP	1.04	0.67
Winchester USA Ready Open Tip	62	HP	1.17	0.86
w/o flyer	62	HP	0.78	0.67
50 YARD	S - THREE FIVE-S	HOT GROU	JPS	
Black Hills Barnes TSX	55	HP	2.81	2.7
w/o flyer	55	HP	1.78	1.55
Winchester USA Ready Open Tip	62	HP	2.73	2.1
w/o flyer	62	HP	1.97	1.59
Burris Fullfield 30 scope set to 14x for a	ll shots.			



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The Hellfire 9MM ready to test Black Hills Seconds 115-grain FMJ (Black-Hills.com), Federal Syntech Training Match 124-grain TCFN (FederalPremium. com), and CCI Blazer 147-grain FMJ (CCI-Ammuni tion.com).

[Cont. from page 18]

of 25"x30" white paper. From a standing position, I rapid fired 30 rounds of Armscor 62-grain FMJ using the Trijicon MRO as my sight. Since I only laser bore sighted the MRO, shots were in the lower right of the paper, but almost all of them hit paper, with most within a 12-inch circle. Since the barrel is only 4.5 inches, I was happy to see that none of the bullets key holed.

Now for the Hellfire 9MM. I was pretty excited to fire this one as well and chose an Aimpoint Micro H-2 as my optic (Aimpoint.com). I've had this one for years and love using it. After a quick bore-sighting

session, I loaded up a Glock 17-round magazine with Winchester steel case 115-grain FMJ. I started out hitting a full-sized steel silhouette target at 25 yards. All 17 rounds fired perfectly and hit the target without an issue. So, I loaded up the magazine a couple of more times and fired away — I was having too much fun and needed to go back to business. I was curious as to the accuracy out of this platform, since it has a four-inch barrel, and four inches is about the most common length for 9mm handguns. Now for some accuracy testing.



Initial testing was at 25 yards. The Burris 4X-14X Fullfield 30 scope was used for accuracy testing purposes only and is not an optic recommended for AR-15 pistols of this type.

Again, I'm testing at 25 yards. As stated earlier with the Hellfire 5.56, I'm trying to eliminate as much human error as possible, so again, I used the Burris Fullfield 30 scope set to 14 power. First up was Black Hills Seconds 115-grain FMJ. My first of three five-shot groups gave me a 2.9-inch group, 1.8 inches without the flyer. I noticed that the Black Hills felt like it was running a little hot. My next groups were 2.35 and 2.83 inches, with the best group without the flyer coming in at 1.68. Next up was Federal's Syntech Training Match 124-grain TCFN (Truncated Cone Flat Nose). Is this the Joker's ammo? The bullets are purple! The polymer jacket allows for safe shooting indoors by reducing heavy-metal exposure and also extends barrel life. So, how does it run? Very reliably. My first group was 2.14 inches, 1.96 without the flyer. The second group was 2.36 inches and 2.19 inches without the flyer; the last group was 2.16 inches and 1.38 inches without the flyer. Pretty consistent. Last



CCI's Blazer 147-grain FMJ proved to be the most accurate 9mm of the day, at 25 yards, as shown in this 1.33-inch five-shot group. Without the flyer, it measured .83 of an inch!



The Tailhook MOD1 is the easiest to use according to DeNiro, and he feels it's very comfortable, as the weight is shifted from the wrist to the forearm. It's also BATFE-approved.

on my list: CCI's Blazer with its 147-grain FMJ. My first five-shot group was 2.92 inches, 2.12 without the flyer. Then "something" happened. My next group was 1.59 inches with .71 of an inch without the flyer. Wow! Then, the last group yielded 1.33 inches with .87 of an inch without the flyer. It was odd that the first group was consistent with the other weights and bullet types from the previous two manufacturers, and then a great increase in accuracy. Was this my fault? Maybe. As far as trigger pull, it felt like a standard AR-15 trigger, and this one broke at a heavy 7.5 pounds, but with little creep and typical reset. I fired a few more groups with the CCI Blazer and they yielded similar accuracy groups to the last two recorded.

As you have read, I tested three different brands with three different weights, and to be fair, it seems that this pistol likes the 147-grain weight, as do most 9mm handguns. If I were able, it would be interesting to see how Black Hills and Federal's Syntech would have done with their 147-grain loads, but I didn't have any. It is also important to note that I was shooting both Hellfire pistols on a sandbag, from a seated bench, and that there was no brace on either pistol while accuracy testing was conducted. The pistols' buffer tubes were against my cheek and my second hand was pushing down on the scope, which pushed the pistol into the sandbag. While it may seem an unorthodox shooting technique, it did give me a pretty solid position, but still unorthodox.

Now, out to 50 yards with the 9mm. I chose the CCI Blazer (brass-cased Blazer, not the aluminum-cased ammo) for the test at 50 yards, as it came in first at 25 yards. My first group measured in at 2.8 inches, 2.4 without the flyer. Next, the group opened up to 3.13 inches and 2.1 without the flyer. I would say that the

bullets are stabilizing nicely at 50 yards, as these are not much larger than the 25-yard groups at twice the distance. The last group was 3.4 inches and 2.5 inches without the flyer. No doubt, the Hellfire 9MM can be a replacement for a standard handgun if the situation warrants this type of firearm.

How about 100 yards? I stapled the same 25"x30" white paper to my target stand. I then took the Hellfire 9mm out to 100 yards with the Aimpoint Micro H-2. From a standing position, I then rapid fired 30 rounds of Black Hills 115-grain FMJ. Many of the rounds hit the target, but as in the case of the Hellfire 5.56, the heavy and creepy trigger, as well as the recoil, threw my aim off somewhat. Had this been slow fired from a bench with a magnified optic, I would guess that the group sizes would be between six to eight



DeNiro handled court security during some high-profile gang-related drug and murder court cases back in the 1990s. He feels that the intimidation factor of having a firearm like the Hellfire 9MM can actually save lives. Also, having a firearm that can be fired more accurately than a standard handgun and that can also take the same magazines as a duty pistol, are two more game changers. The same applies to citizens and their defense plans.

inches. However, this was a more realistic drill rapid firing from a standing position with an optic that has zero magnification. I would recommend that if you intend to use any caliber AR-15-type pistol with a barrel around four inches, at 100 yards, you install a match trigger and a hybrid compensator-muzzle brake. For 50 yards and under, the G.I. trigger does fine and the recoil is acceptable, unless you want to dump multiple rounds into a target fast.

I then walked over to my man-sized silhouette steel target and did some shooting, one-handed, with the Tailhook MOD1 brace. I have to say that this brace is the easiest to use and it's very comfortable. All of the firearm's weight is shifted away from the wrist, making it a very effective design.

Power, Other Applications, and Thoughts

So, what is going on here, in regard to power, with these short 5.56 barrels? On average, a 55-grain 5.56 puts out around 1,100 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle out of a 16-inch barrel. Out of a

ROYAL TIGER HELLFIRE 9MM				
Manufacturer	Weight (grains)	Туре	Average (in.)	Best (in.)
25 YARD	S — THREE FIVE-S	HOT GROU	JPS	
Black Hills Seconds	115	FMJ	2.36	1.9
w/o flyer	115	FMJ	1.78	1.68
Federal Syntech Training Match	124	TCFN	2.22	2.14
w/o flyer	124	TCFN	1.84	1.38
CCI Blazer	147	FMJ	1.95	1.33
w/o flyer	147	FMJ	1.23	0.71
50 YARD	S — THREE FIVE-S	HOT GROU	JPS	
CCI Blazer	147	FMJ	3.24	2.8
w/o flyer	147	FMJ	2.33	2.1
Burris Fullfield 30 scope set to 14x for a	ll shots.			



The Hellfires are very compact and will fit in the smallest of bug-out bags.

10.5-inch barrel, about 820 foot pounds. However, these Hellfires are not competing with these, as a 10.5-inch barreled AR-15 pistol would be an adequate replacement for a 16-inch carbine for a few reasons, one being that you would be able to carry and conceal the 10.5-inch barreled version with a CCW permit in some states that would prohibit the concealment of a loaded rifle. Within 150 yards, the 10.5-inch pistol could do just about what you would want it to, defense-wise, without taking much of a backseat to the 16-inch carbine. With this 4.5-inch 5.56, you wouldn't carry it as a replacement to a 16-inch carbine, you would carry it as a replacement for a traditional pistolcaliber handgun where you would need penetration. Although the standard 55-grain 5.56 round only has about 350 foot pounds of muzzle energy coming out of a 4.5-inch barrel, the ability of a small-diameter 5.56 to penetrate a bad guy's barrier or body armor is the key, especially when it is galloping out of the gate at 1,600 fps. There is also a large variety of 5.56 specialty rounds that can increase power and terminal performance available.

As far as the 9mm version, the power of the Hellfire 9MM is going to be the same as any 9mm handgun with a four-inch barrel. As pistol caliber carbines

(PCC) are very popular these days, the difference in power between a PCC and a four-inch-barreled Hellfire 9MM are not nearly as drastic as the same comparison with its 5.56 brother. (For you young guys who think that PCCs are some new firearms trend, I got my first PCC in 1981, in the form of an UZI carbine.) A PCC with a 16-inch barrel will throw a 115-grain 9mm projectile out of the muzzle with about 440 foot pounds of energy, compared to a 9mm AR-15 pistol with a 10.5-inch barrel at about 400 foot pounds. A four-inch barreled firearm, like the Hellfire 9MM (or any 9mm handgun with the same length barrel), yields about 300 foot pounds at the muzzle. Sure, 140 foot pounds is a gap between a four-inch barrel and a 16-inch barrel, but we are talking a 12inch difference in barrel length. Why not just carry a four-inch 9mm handgun? It's the same power, much lighter, and easier to carry. The first answer is something most cops who worked in dangerous environments know - intimidation.

Back when I was a deputy sheriff in the 1990s, I worked a lot of court security details. Everything from prisoner transport to and from court, to searches at entries and security during trials. Many of those trials were murder and drug-gang related, and there were more than a few cases where we had to doubleup security due to threats against witnesses. In some cases, the FBI warned us that drug-gang hitmen were in from out of town and would be surveilling the witnesses even during trials. As a deputy, even in these situations, we were not issued any other weapons, so it was just us and our duty handguns (this was almost 30 years ago). We all qualified with shotguns, but firing a shotgun in a crowded government building during an emergency could leave many innocent bystanders seriously injured or killed (keep in mind that many court cases have ruled that police are responsible for every projectile fired - we used 00 buckshot and #4 buckshot). I always carried two spare 20-round magazines for my S&W 6944 pistol (yes, it's rare!) on my duty belt, but I was known as one of a few big "gun guys" in the department.

Having something like a Hellfire in my hand would have definitely made any bad guy think twice, especially with a 33-round magazine inserted. If you can intimidate the bad guy, he may just cancel his plans, thus saving lives and injuries. The other advantage is a Hellfire would have given me three points of contact (firing hand, second hand for a rest, and cheek) for better aimed and controlled fire, a game changer if I ever had to take a long shot — those courthouses are big, and 100 feet to hit a threat would not have been the greatest distance possible. The ability to use my duty pistol's magazines, if I had carried a Glock, would have been the "cherry on top." Best of all, either model would have fit in the gym bags and briefcases we used to take to work every day. All of these advantages would also apply to any citizen who wants to protect themselves.

I really enjoyed shooting the Hellfires. Although these very short barreled AR-15 pistols may not fit everyone's requirements, both models really fit a niche for self-defense. By the way, I never lubricated either gun and had zero malfunctions. If you are interested

HELLFIRE 5.56 PIS	TOL
Caliber:	5.56x45mm
Operation:	Gas-operated
	semi-auto
Barrel Length:	4.5 inches
Barrel:	Heavy, Chrome Moly
	Vanadium w/Nitride finish,
	1 in 10" twist
Muzzle Thread:	1/2x28
Bolt Steel:	8620, Nitride /
	Heat Treated
Rails:	6" top P-Rail with 4" exten-
	sion, 7 M-LOK positions
Upper Receiver	Billet 7075 T6
Material:	Aluminum
Lower Receiver	Forged 7075 T-6
Material:	Aluminum
Receiver Finish:	Hard Coat
	Anodized, Black
Magazine:	Any AR-15/M16-type
	magazine in 5.56,
	(30-round incl.)
MSRP:	\$849.99
Contact:	Royal Tiger Imports,
	RoyalTigerImports.com, (321) 212-7801

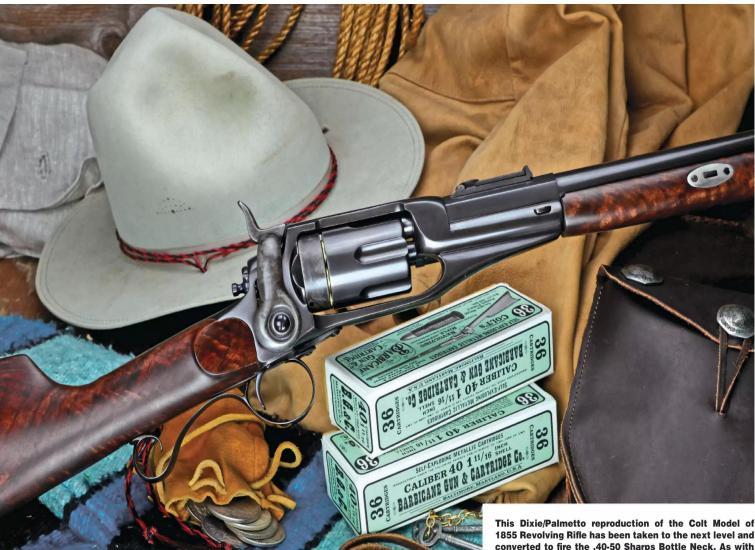
in getting a Hellfire for yourself, or another of their AR-15 pistols, visit Royal Tiger at RoyalTigerIm ports.com.

sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Material: Aluminum Lower Receiver Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	HELLFIRE 9MM PI	STOL
Barrel Length: 4 inches Barrel: Heavy, Chrome Moly Vanadium w/Nitride finish, 1 in 10" twist (twist not confirmed) Muzzle Thread: 1/2x36 Bolt Steel: 8620, Nitride / Heat Treated Rails: 6" top P-Rail with 4" exten sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Material: Billet 7075 T6 Aluminum Lower Receiver Material: Forged 7075 T-6 Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Caliber:	9mm (9x19)
Barrel: Heavy, Chrome Moly Vanadium w/Nitride finish, 1 in 10" twist (twist not confirmed) Muzzle Thread: 1/2x36 Bolt Steel: 8620, Nitride / Heat Treated Rails: 6" top P-Rail with 4" exten sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Material: Billet 7075 T6 Material: Aluminum Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Operation:	Blowback semi-auto
Vanadium w/Nitride finish, 1 in 10" twist (twist not confirmed) Muzzle Thread: 1/2x36 Bolt Steel: 8620, Nitride / Heat Treated Rails: 6" top P-Rail with 4" exten sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Material: Billet 7075 T6 Material: Lower Receiver Material: Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Material: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Barrel Length:	4 inches
Bolt Steel: 8620, Nitride / Heat Treated Rails: 6" top P-Rail with 4" exten sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Billet 7075 T6 Material: Aluminum Lower Receiver Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Barrel:	Vanadium w/Nitride finish, 1 in 10" twist (twist not
Heat Treated Rails: 6" top P-Rail with 4" extension, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Billet 7075 T6 Material: Aluminum Lower Receiver Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Muzzle Thread:	1/2x36
sion, 7 M-LOK positions Upper Receiver Material: Aluminum Lower Receiver Material: Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Bolt Steel:	
Material: Aluminum Lower Receiver Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Rails:	6" top P-Rail with 4" exten- sion, 7 M-LOK positions
Lower Receiver Forged 7075 T-6 Material: Aluminum Receiver Finish: Hard Coat Anodized, Black Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	1.1	Billot For For
Magazine: Any double-stack Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,		Forged 7075 T-6
Glock-type 9mm magazine (33-round incl.) MSRP: \$659.99 Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Receiver Finish:	Hard Coat Anodized, Black
Contact: Royal Tiger Imports,	Magazine:	Glock-type 9mm magazine,
	MSRP:	\$659.99
RoyalTigerImports.com, (321) 212-7801	Contact:	RoyalTigerImports.com,

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By Jeff John "SHOULD'A BEEN" A Reproduction Model 1855 Revolving Military Rifle becomes the classic sporter Colt never made!

porterizing" once meant creating a hunting rifle costing less than a commercially produced one from a surplus military rifle. Today, with inexpensive factory rifles performing so well, and the shrinking supply of surplus arms costing what they do, sporterizing has been replaced with "custom." Prior to the Civil War, almost all civilian rifles were custom. A custom rifle has forever been unique and hand-tailored in style and capability as broad as the collaborator's imaginations. This project combines them all and adds the element of fiction.

The "Colt Model of 1871 Revolving Rifle Cartridge Conversion" never existed - until now. This extensively remodeled Dixie/Palmetto reproduction 1855 Military Revolving Rifle began in a fireside game of "What Might Have Been" and happily became a fun, shootable treasure.

The aftermath of the American Civil War saw the birth of the sporterized military rifle. Before the war, riflemen rarely bought "off the shelf" rifles, but after the Civil War, the fresh availability of mass-produced arms - including cartridge-firing repeaters - quickly led to purposeful remodeling. Possibly the first such sporterized military arm was the 7-shot Spencer carbine. Its reliability and efficacy recounted in thrilling news accounts created the desire among the public for ones fitted with heavy octagon barrels. Best known of these were ones fully remodeled to resemble the famed muzzleloading Hawken rifle by St. Louis gunsmith J.P. Gemmer (who bought the Hawken's operation in the 1860s).

The Colt Model of 1855 Revolving Rifle was offered as a highly finished sporting arm prior to the war, and afterwards a few gunsmiths converted military models Once a military Model of 1855, the Dixie/Palmetto reproduction has been transformed into a handsome 27-inch barreled cartridge-firing sporting rifle. Whereas Colt would have likely charcoal-blued the frame and cylinder, the metal has been rust blued and the deluxe American walnut stock given a hand-rubbed oil finish using Phil Pilkington's products. The small parts were nitre blued with Brownells salts, or brush plated using a Caswell kit. The fore-end cap is poured pewter. All such finish work is well within the realm of the home hobbyist.

A conversion to cartridge for the big rifle is something Sam Colt or designer Elisha Root may have contemplated had they lived into the post-war era. They had worked hard to perfect the percussion model, and it served well in the war. Had the firm pursued a post-war rifle for discriminating riflemen, it may have looked thusly.

to use cartridges (usually rimfire), but not to the extent of the Spencer, or the beauty of the pre-war Colt Sporting Model. The Colt rifle was discontinued at the end of the war, and this project explored the way such a rifle might have looked had it stayed in the line. There's no doubt any of our established and highly skilled frontier gunsmiths who became experts remodeling Trapdoors, Sharps and Remingtons like Slotterbeck, Freund, Gove or Gemmer could have made one had a customer challenged them.

The big Colt didn't survive the war for any number of reasons. The death of Samuel Colt in 1862, the factory's destruction by fire in '64 and the death of Elisha K. Root in '65 (designer of the rifle who became the company's president after Colt's death) most likely precluded any revival. The glut of surplus arms, S&W's ownership of the bored-through cylinder patent all amid the post-war depression left little capital for fanciful pursuits, but a showman like Samuel Colt may have tried. Perhaps the reason was simple: there were not the large bins of now useless percussion parts as there were for the 1860 Army revolver.

I admired the big Colt rifle as a kid, yet owning let alone shooting an original has always been beyond my grasp. Back then, I was enthralled by the military model in .56 caliber. That its performance had been so heavily criticized, yet it's obvious value in battle against a single-shot musket made it an underdog in my young eyes.

One battle where the Colt proved its mettle was Chickamauga, September 20, 1863. The center and right of the Union's Army of the Cumberland collapsed and fled in retreat right through the 21st Ohio ordered forward to reinforce Major General George Thomas. Most of the 21st were armed with five-shot .56 caliber M1855 Colt Revolving Rifles. The veteran regiment could load and fire five-shots almost as fast as a man firing one shot from his musket. Even better, they could load and fire prone.

Confederate General Longstreet smelled victory and poured men supported by artillery into the breech. If the 21st Ohio gave way, Longstreet would flank the rear of Thomas and finish off the Army of the Cumberland. The 21st poured volley after volley into the charging Confederates presenting the illusion of a force five times bigger than they were. The 21st held until they ran out of ammunition. Estimates are they expended more than 40,000 rounds of ammunition, repelling four charges that day. Down to one round per man, they were relieved and sent to the rear, but a surprise attack there by the Confederates ended in a bayonet fight. More than 100 of the 21st were captured, but many escaped.

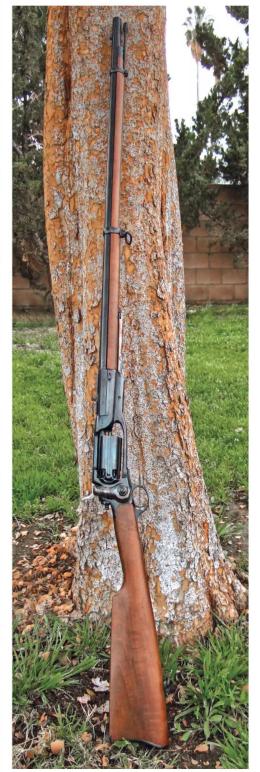
Warts & Charms

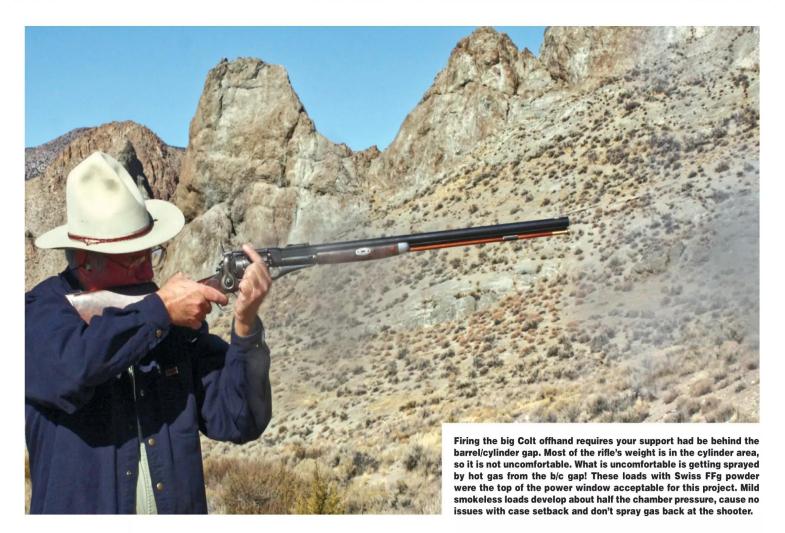
Critics of the Colt Model 1855 Rifle complained the gun sprayed the shooter's face with hot powder gasses (true). When firing volleys standing in the conventional infantry line (shoulder to shoulder), soldiers also sprayed each other with hot gas from the barrel/ cylinder gap. The rifle was prone to chain firing (having multiple chambers discharge). To mitigate sending a ball through their support hand in such an event, soldiers were taught to place their left hand under the frame behind the cylinder. If the Black Swamp Boys of the 21st Ohio were indignant over any of these issues, it is unmentioned.

More likely those boys found the Colt's endearing traits outweighed its disabilities. They could deliver five rapid volleys. Firing and reloading prone behind cover was a considerable advantage when your opponent was fully exposed firing and loading upright. The hardy men of the 21st worked around the warts of the big Colt and embraced its unique charms. Such charms would make the rifle as viable out West where firepower was king in an encounter with bands of desperadoes or Indians.

A veteran of Chickamauga might fondly remember his Colt rifle. Had he found success in the gold and sil-

The Dixie/Palmetto Colt Military Model of 1855 gave reenactors a unique Civil War rifle. The big Colt saw service throughout the war, including a particularly hot action with the 21st Ohio at Chickamauga.

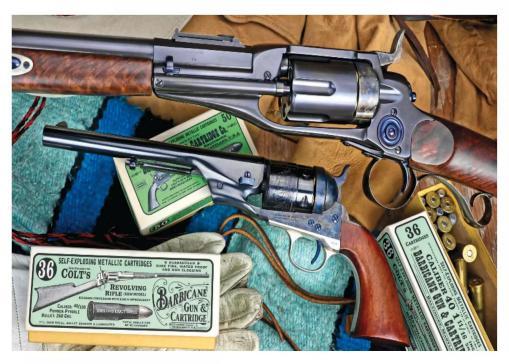




ver fields of post-war Nevada, he may have jumped at the chance to buy a cartridge conversion from Colt, or might choose to have one made from the arm he used to fight Johnny Reb that September day. Such an arm would be useful fending off undesirables as he rode from Virginia City to visit his friend Ben Cartwright up on the Ponderosa. (Since it is a fictional rifle, perhaps you won't mind my sprinkling a little more fiction around it).

Handgun to Rifle

Samuel Colt's big revolving rifle was a studious project beginning as a small handgun designed by Elisha K. Root to prove the mechanism. The little hand-



gun (in .28 or .31 caliber) known as the "Colt Root Model of 1853" was then expanded and enlarged into the rifle.

The new percussion rifle's signature success was the complete isolation of the working parts from powder gas and cap fragments. The frame's cylinder window had no openings for spent cap bits to fall, a common occurrence disabling percussion revolvers.

To isolate the action from ignition debris, the hammer operates the hand through a window in the righthand side of the frame. The large head of the cylinder pin, exposed at the back of the receiver, has six external locking notches around its circumference and its ratchet faces inside. Underneath is a bolt that rises up to lock the cylinder. As the hammer is cocked, the hand rotates the cylinder pin by pulling down on the ratchet. About four inches forward, the cylinder pin engages the "transporter" (as Palmetto calls it) securely pinned into the front of the cylinder. This transporter requires precise fitting in order to align the chambers with the barrel timed in conjunction with the bolt locking the cylinder pin at the rear. Twin opposite lugs on the cylinder pin fit into recesses in the transporter to turn the cylinder. [Cont. to page 28]

A rifle deserves a suitable companion handgun, and the big Colt rifle is paired with a Cimarron copy of the Colt 1860 Richards/Mason conversion in .44 Colt. The .44 Colt and .40-50 SBN are two of America's earliest centerfire cartridges.

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The hand is mounted to the hammer and operates through a large window in the action. This opening is mostly protected from debris by the hammer. It apparently never caused much of a problem, or at least never as much as cap debris did in most percussion arms. The advent of the metallic cartridge obviated such concerns forever.



The Dixie/Palmetto rifle had some serious mechanical issues as a gun. Enough so, the decision to create a unique one-of-a-kind Sporting Model Cartridge Conversion was undertaken. Note the coarse three-leaf sight standard on military models.

[Cont. from page 26]

The Palmetto Reproduction

For a while, Dixie imported the big Colt for reenactors. It's apparent there are several good craftsmen at Palmetto very proud of what they do — and they do it well — but one or two "issues" in their work and spoil the whole. In this case, bore-and-groove dimensions didn't match chamber dimensions, and cylinder/ barrel misalignment from a poorly fitted transporter caused the gun to spit debris forcefully from the right side causing terrible groups, annoying bystanders including the shooter.

The hammer nose only struck the upper half of the nipple, not the full face of the entire nipple. Thus, the



A paper shield was erected to see why the percussion gun's accuracy was so execrable, and the shooter so annoyed. A "transporter" misalignment of cylinder-to-barrel caused bullet debris to eject forcibly out the right. The left-hand shield showed less than half this amount of detritus, some of which penetrated the paper on the right. Luckily, the other shooting benches were unoccupied. Wear shooting glasses at the range, just in case the author shows up with some ill-mannered contraption.

cap always ruptured, and gas escaped forcibly. With full-power loads, the hot jet of gas was unendurable. Had the hammer struck the nipple squarely as Colt designed it, the hammer nose would mitigate gas leakage.

The New Conversion

My initial desire for a military model as a youth had grown into one for a far more beautiful sporting percussion rifle. Several conversations with gunmaker John King and a complete evaluation of the percussion project showed no good way to repair the hammer, so it would hit the nipples squarely. A new cylinder was likely the best way to fix the transporter misalignment, the barrel would have to be lined in any *[Cont. to page 30]*



The bullets developing the best performance in the rifle include a commercial hardcast 275-grain plain-base bullet (left pair), and a home cast 320-grain bullet dropped from 30:1 alloy in the RCBS 40-300 CSA mold and SPG lubed (middle pair). Both are sized .406 inch. To the right is a .45-70-405 Gov't for comparison.

The .40-50 SBN (middle) was one of our first centerfire cartridges and quite successful against thinskinned game. So successful, many other manufacturers duplicated its ballistics culminating in the .40-65 Winchester, from whence the bullet for these loads comes. The .40-50 is flanked by two cartridges stealing its limelight. The immensely popular .44-77 Sharps & Remington (left) was widely used in the early buffalo hunting era as well as one of our first premier long-range shooting rounds. The .50-70 Gov't (right), was also guite popular for buffalo hunting, and is shown in its coppercased, inside primed military issue.



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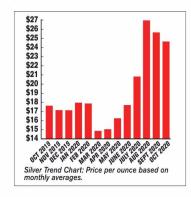
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King etched the Colt address where it was originally — inside a trough atop the action. The MVA Roughand-Ready sight is an elegant replacement for the clumsy military three-leaf sight. Befitting the "Silver Baron" theme is a silver-plated Cimarron 1851 Navy conversion in .38 Colt alongside an original 19th century sword cane.

The pewter fore-end cap was cast-in-place using a kit from Track of the Wolf. The instructions are clear and easy to follow giving an opportunity for a unique finish to a fore-end.



[Cont. from page 28]

drawn back.

case, and all this led to the thoughts of a far more intriguing Richards-type cartridge conversion. Centerfire barrel liners were readily available giving wide latitude as to caliber.

the size and weight of the rifle that would also fit

through the loading port trough. One of our first centerfire cartridges — the .40-50 Sharps Bottle Neck — proved perfect. Note the cylinder stop rises into the external cylinder locking notches on the cylinder

pin. The hand pulls down on the ratchet mechanism

from the inside of the cylinder pin as the hammer is

King had scratch-built a Dragoon conversion and had several ideas for creating this one. This project proved very expensive in time and treasure, since it called for custom fabrication of parts as big as the cylinder, complex breech-ring/loading gate and buttplate to ones as small as the ejector housing hanger. As expensive as this project was, I'm pretty sure King only charged me his children's rates. Many gunsmiths would never entertain such an endeavor due to all the



Little things enhance the whole. The ejector housing bracket is one of the essential parts that had to be custom-made. Done this well, such endeavors enhance the whole and are the unsung heroes of many a custom project.

unpaid thinking/planning necessary, let alone having the ability to consummate it so commendably. Paying as it progressed meant not having to find a streak of gold or silver, thankfully. (Think: Johnny Cash's *One Piece at a Time*, although it did cost more than a dime!) Of the few original cartridges to choose from, the best choice was the .40-50 Sharps Bottle Neck, which was one of our earliest centerfire rounds first appearing in 1869. On paper, it is quite potent launching a 265-grain bullet at some 1,450 fps. Little appreciated [Cont. to page 32]



One peculiar feature of the big Colt is the way the frame ends in rounded corners on the bottom with a trigger guard plate simply bolted on externally and running right into the stock. The small military trigger guard was milled away and an English scroll guard added.

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The Colt buttplate with its 2-stepped tang was originally quite short. To help the stock look more proportional, it was lengthened by welding two together. In between a threaded boss was welded for the brass nut to give access to the wiping rod extension housed with the butt. The buttplate was silver plated using a Caswell Plug N' Plate kit. This is the ragged edge of the plating tool's capabilities, and will wear quicker than a professional job, but few platers were taking work during the big Covid lockdown.

[Cont. from page 30]

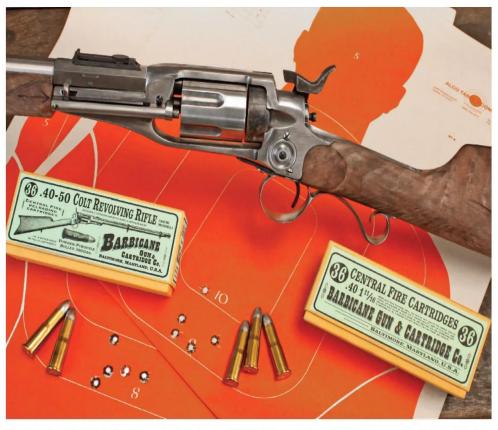
now, the cartridge was originally considered very practical, and its ballistics widely duplicated. A .40 caliber bullet about that weight over 50–65 grains of powder proved highly popular in sundry hunting cartridges all through the latter half of the 19th century most famously in lever actions like the .40-60 1881 Marlin, duplicated in the .40-65 1886 Winchester as well as in sundry Maynards and Bullards until the 20th century's flatter-shooting smokeless smallbores replaced them.

The .40-50 SBN proved ideal simply because the Colt's frame wasn't amenable to long straight-wall cases. A straight, deep runway cut in the frame would interfere with the cylinder pin nut that runs through the frame to house the cylinder pin. The bottleneck case could bend around this limitation.

None of the modern superpower rounds such as .445 Super Mag, .460 or .500 S&W were selected in case someone got froggy enough to try one down the line. They'd be perfect loaded to black powder levels of performance, but never approaching the magnum threshold promised by the case's headstamp. The frame is cast from good steel (European C40, which is similar to US 1040), but the 19th century design doesn't lend itself to high-pressure cartridges.

As construction progressed, I was in charge of the cosmetic work cleaning up the welded areas, trying to straighten edges the Italian power buffing rounded, creating the pattern stock, shaping the fore-end, keys and escutcheons, and pouring the pewter cap while King created the buttplate, breech-ring/firing pin assembly with loading gate, cylinder then figured out how to secure it all in the frame. The ejector assembly looks like it's simply a Colt SAA ejector rod and tube upside down on the left side of the action, but securing it required small custom parts, and modification of others. Slowly, the elegant Colt Sporting Model with trumpet head wiping rod, crescent butt, English scroll trigger guard and extra fancy black walnut stock with cheekpiece began to appear.

The buttplate was an adventure since the original Colt crescent was designed for a carbine and very short (The Rifle Shoppe reproduces them). Due to



The first targets using the 320-grain bullet over H4198 delivered decent 50-yard groups, albeit well below point-of-aim (which was just under the head of the target).

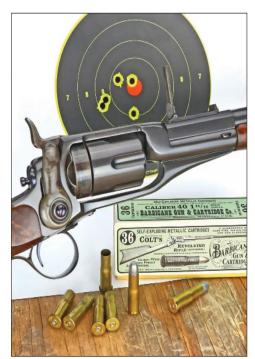
the size of the action, the carbine buttstock looks tiny even on the carbine and looks sillier on the larger rifle. To keep the Colt buttplate's unique shape, King cut and welded two together helping give the stock proportional looks. The buttplate essentially drives the shape and design of the stock, allowing a taller comb helping the sights come to the eye when shouldered. We could have used a commercial crescent, but a "Colt" buttplate was one of the features giving this rifle the look of something the factory may have envisioned. Such parts are never a problem for a factory, but cause substantial effort as "one-offs."

These rifles need a wiping rod extension, since there isn't enough room under the barrel for a rod to run full length. Because it is a wood rod and thicker, the



Making .40-50 is simple. Run the parent .45-70 into the .40-50 full length sizer die, then trim to length. It's the trimming that becomes tedious, since a whopping lot of brass has to come off. Unless vou have a power case trimmer, it's easier to buy them from Buffalo Arms.

center of the buttplate has a large brass plug screw fitted in the center under which resides the wiping rod extension. The crescent buttplate helps the firing hand hold the rifle into the shoulder while the left-hand loads or manipulates the ejector. You can't do that



The best group was this five-shot 100-yard one measuring 1-7/8 inches fired using the peep. Your humble correspondent can usually shoot this well early in the day, but the fine sights are a mite too fine for old eyes to use all day long. Average groups were 2-1/2 inches.



A Ted Cash German silver front sight with a 0.050inch blade was filed to a rakish shape to zero the rifle.

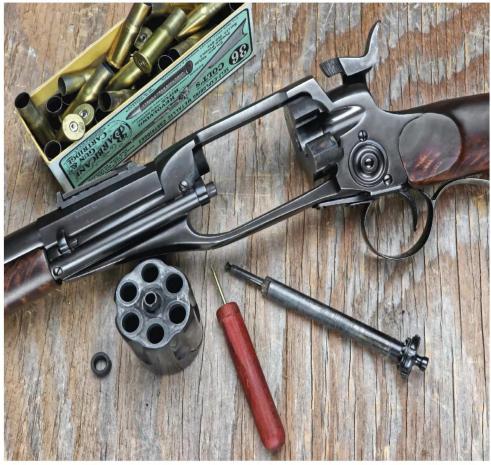


A Montana Vintage Arms reproduction of Remington's versatile Rough-and-Ready rear sight offers an open V-notch for quick firing and peep sight staff for more precision shooting. Per the original, there are no range markings on the staff.

with many nine-pound rifles, although the biggest help is the rifle's center of gravity is near the cylinder.

The barrel liner is from Track of the Wolf for use with .406-inch, 265-grain bullets. Although larger than the original .40-50 Sharps' .403-inch bullet, .406inch grooved bullets are readily available. Grooved bullets from Buffalo Arms are cast soft with SPG lube, and Graf & Sons offer hardcast bullets lubricated for smokeless powder. Both Lyman and RCBS offer molds.

The military 3-leaf sight was very clumsy looking. More suitable was the Montana Vintage Arms Rough-and-Ready rear sight designed for early Remington Rolling Block Sporting Rifles paired with MVA's simple Globe front. The rear sight features a fixed V-notch open leaf and a staff with a peep sight disc when raised. The sight comes with two extra discs with differently sized apertures. The peep's disc unscrews to adjust for elevation and — like the original — the staff has no range markings. There is no windage adjustment, leaving the front as drift adjustable only. The front comes with an interchangeable square post or bead post set into a richly blued globe.



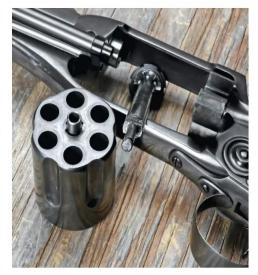
Disassembly is easy, but requires a little tool. The once large, external cylinder pin plunger (just visible under its retaining screw in the frame) is now flush and under the ejector rod housing, but has a little window for the tool. Half cock the rifle, ensure the cylinder is unloaded, push in the pin, and withdraw the cylinder pin. Take the cylinder out of the window, roll up your sleeves and go to work. No other disassembly is required. Note the external endshake bushing to the left of the cylinder. Normally you'd want something like that captive, but there was no good way to do so. Note also how small the cylinder pin is where it exits the cylinder and enters the frame. It is smaller in diameter than a Colt SAA's cvlinder pin, and another reason the gun shouldn't be fired with high-pressure loads.

First Firing

Little data is available for ammunition so long obsolete, and suitable loads were developed using Quick-LOAD software. Dies were available, but the RCBS .40-50 reloading dies came with a .408 expander instead of a .406 (that tripped me up later). Brass can be formed from .45-70, but it is tedious, since after squishing down the big case, a considerable amount must be trimmed. After doing 20 or so with a manual case trimmer, I took the simpler expedient of buying formed and trimmed brass from Buffalo Arms.

For safety's sake, the rifle was built to the tighter tolerances smokeless powder requires rather than the loose tolerances necessary for black powder. Thus, the barrel/cylinder gap is .006 inch with minimal endshake. Were it set up for black powder, those two parameters would be greater. While there is some wiggle room, the two are mutually exclusive.

During the first Great Component Shortage, I was only able to find the RCBS .406-inch, 300-grain mold



The "Transporter" (as Palmetto calls it) at the front of the cylinder ensures chamber/barrel alignment with the bolt locking notches on the cylinder pin. Once aligned, the transporter is secured by twin pins on either side of the cylinder. The front of the cylinder pin (shown next to the cylinder facing from the frame window) has twin lugs engaging corresponding recesses in the transporter to rotate the cylinder. The two have to be in perfect alignment at the very front and very rear for the system to work.

(dropping 320 grains cast 30:1) and, serendipitously, the bullet just fits seated to the overall length of the cylinder. With the target placed at 50 yards, the first five shots loaded with Hodgdon 4198 went very low, but the report mild and accuracy promising.

Switching to black powder, loads with Swiss FFg gave a startling loud crack, light recoil, and sprayed

.40-50 SBN PERFORMANCE				
Bullet (brand, bullet weight, type)	Powder (brand)	Charge (grains weight)	Velocity (fps)	Average Group Size (inches)
Bonus Bullets 275 LFN	AA5744	17	1,037	2-1/2*
RCBS 300 LFN	Swiss FFg	50	1,159	2**
RCBS 320 LFN	H4198	17.2	930	3-7/8
RCBS 320 LFN	AA5744	15.5	950	2-7/8

Notes: Groups the product of 3 shots at 100 yards. CCl 200 primers used in Winchester brass reformed by Buffalo Arms. *Best five-shot group at 100 yards was 1-7/8 inches. **Three-shot group at 50 yards. Competition Electronics Pro Chrono set 10 feet from muzzle. LFN: Lead Flat Nose, RCBS Mold 40-300 CSA. Sadly, Bonus Bullets has closed.

powder gas into my face. Those five shots hit the target, too, but the group grew wider after only a couple. Gas spray wasn't as uncomfortable as the percussion was (always wear shooting glasses). Predictably, fouling was as big an impediment to accuracy as it was to reliability, and the cylinder had to be helped around after just two shots. The fouling in the barrel was hard and heavy, since the bullet carried little lube. When cleaning, the brass brush squeaked going down for the first pass. Humidity mitigates fouling but not in the dry Southwest. Here, fouling turns to cement quickly.

I also had "case setback" issues where the shoulder is pushed back slightly and causes the cylinder to bind as it rotates even at the modest 18,000 to 20,000 psi of black powder. I thought it was due to fouling, but during photography, cleaned, unsized cases fired with black powder wouldn't easily go back into any of the chambers and the cylinder was as difficult to turn as it was when dirty, but dirty cases fired with mild smokeless loads would fit most chambers (there are always slight differences) and allowed easy rotation. Readers familiar with the old S&W Model 53 in .22 Remington Jet know of this phenomena.

This damped my goal of achieving the original ballistics, which aren't extraordinary anyway. The BP load with 50 grains of Swiss FFg powder under the 320-grain RCBS bullet averaged 1,159 fps, no doubt due to the heavier bullet, b/c gap and 27-inch barrel, but 1,450 fps was a pipe dream. But discovering how pleasant the rifle became with smokeless loads throttled back just a little more was a wonderful surprise. After all, this is just a fun, unique "Sunday shooting rifle." Out of H4198, I scored a lonely bottle of AA5744 amid our current Great Component Shortage. A return to QuickLOAD showed AA5744 would offer very polite performance launching the bullets to 1,000 or 1,100 fps at a sedate 9,000 to 10,000 psi. Perfect!

Serendipitously, I stumbled on three forgotten boxes of hardcast bullets marked ".406-260" (but weighing 275 grains) gifted by my late friend Ed after he sold his .40-65. They are similar to the ones Graf's offer and proved perfect for this rifle. Paired with 17.0 grains of AA5744, they gave accuracy of 2 to 3 MOA at 100 yards.

There was one last reloading issue before I achieved peak accuracy. The RCBS dies came with a .408 expander, and the .406-inch bullets were too loose in the neck causing erratic ignition. RCBS doesn't offer a .406, and the Buffalo Arms custom one was out of stock. So, off the .408 went to King for turning down to .406.

Final Hurdle

The groups were still very low at 50 yards. I could just raise the peep to put the group in the right place, but wanted both sights zeroed. There was just no good way to lower the globe or raise the rear sight bed the amount necessary for even a 50-yard zero. Sadly, I replaced the beautiful MVA globe with a much lower Rocky Mountain-style brass-based Ted Cash sight from Track of the Wolf. The rounded blade of the Ted Cash is thinner than I normally desire at .050inch, but it subtends the tiny V-notch of the MVA rear perfectly. Its German silver blade had to be filed lower to zero the rifle allowing me to shape it into the racier shark-fin profile I prefer over the factory style.

Now everything came together. With the 275-grain load, the rifle shoots right over the front sight at 50 yards using the V-notch, and is two inches high at 100 using the peep. Pictured is the best five-shot group at 100 yards shot early in the day. My eyes quickly tire trying to focus on the narrow front blade and I'd like as not get a good three-shot group with the other two clustered nearby but higher or lower. I much prefer a .080-inch front sight blade, but that would mean opening up the rear sight's V-notch as well as the aperture of the nicely case-hardened disc. Rather than doing that, I'll just remember to shoot this rifle first on a Sunday outing.

It took a long time to finish this gun, partly to let treasure accumulate between steps, but also awaiting some of the raw castings and sundry unique parts and then choosing the finishing processes. I imagine Colt would have finished the receiver and cylinder using charcoal bluing and rust blued the barrel, but I was loath to send off the gun during the Covid epidemic. I decided against silver plating the frame for the same reason and chose rust bluing overall, since I can do that at home. Rust bluing the complex angles of the receiver was an adventure, but it came out pretty well. Being able to make the stock pattern, polish and blue the metal mitigated final costs. Now I firmly believe it's a gun fit for any self-respecting Silver Baron (or Cattle Baron for that matter!).

Whether you entertain owning a rare, historical gun, or want a special rifle for any reason (or no reason), our great country has enterprising men capable of bringing your vision to life. If you're just a little

COLT 1855 REVOLVING RIFLE CARTRIDGE CONVERSION

Action Type:	6-shot revolver
Caliber:	.40-50 Sharps Bottle Neck
Barrel Length:	27 inches
Overall Length:	46 inches
Weight:	9 pounds, 6 ounces
Finish:	Rust blue
Sights:	MVA Rough-and-Ready rear, Ted Cash front
Stock:	American walnut, oil finished
Value:	I hesitate to add a value, since the price included a lot of one- off R&D costs. But for those entertaining a foray into the custom world, the last retail on the rifle was \$1,850. A prop- master friend's maxim was to figure out the base costs of time and parts, triple it and add a third. That rule of thumb comes close to just about everything custom.
Manufacturer:	Palmetto Armory, Italy

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SOURCES

Buffalo Arms, 660 Vermeer Court, Ponderay,
ID 83852, (208) 263-6953, BuffaloArms.com
Brownells, 200 South Front St., Montezuma,
IA 50171, (800) 741-0015, Brownells.com
Caswell Plating, 7696 Route 31, Lyons NY
14489, (855) 227-9355, CaswellPlating.com
Dixie Gun Works, P.O. Box 130, Union City, TN
38282, (731) 885-0561, DixieGunWorks.com
Graf & Sons, 4050 S. Clark, Mexico, MO 65265,
(573) 581-2266, Grafs.com
John King is now semi-retired and preferred not
to have his contact information included.
Montana Vintage Arms, 61 Andrea Dr.,
Belgrade, MT 59714, (406) 388-4027,
MontanaVintageArms.com
QuickLOAD, NECO, 108 Ardmore Way, Benicia,
CA 94510, (218) 722-3113, Neconos.com
RCBS, 605 Oro Dam Blvd., Oroville, CA 95965,
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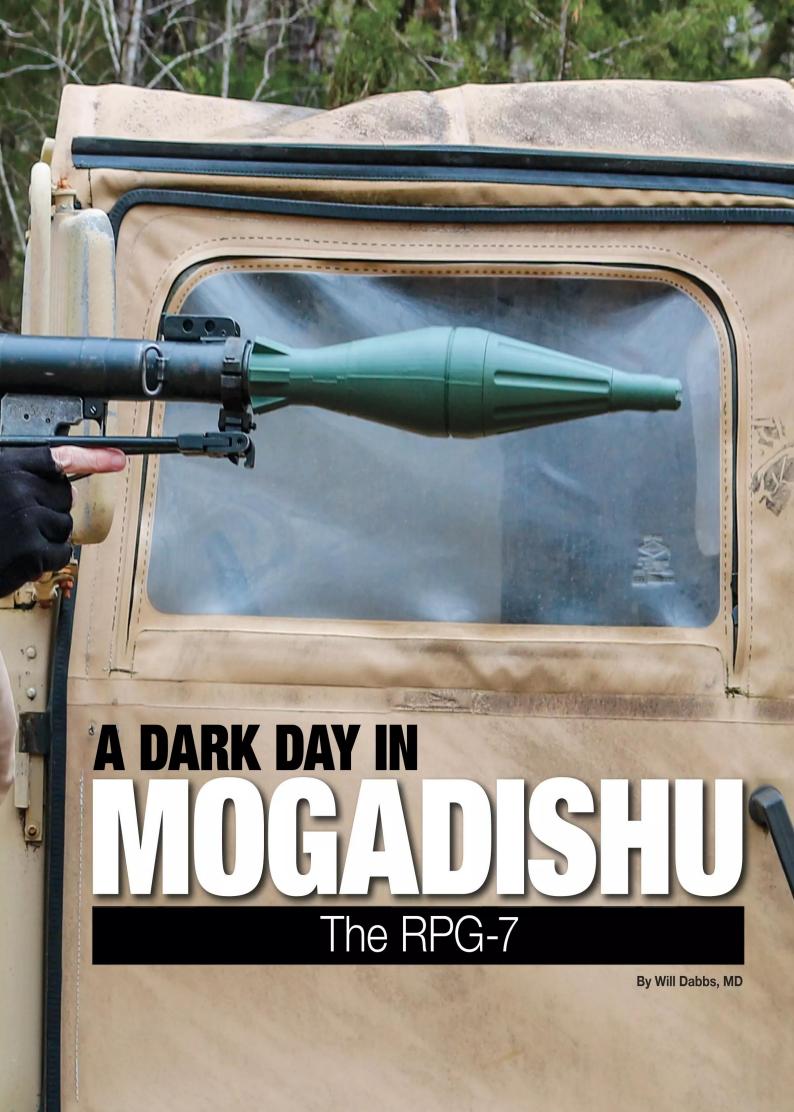




»NEW MRO HD

Some sixty years after its introduction the RPG-7 has become a staple among insurgents and terrorists the world over. ke ynerd n n thp Noa ...and, itarting ti

•





The first Army Blackhawk helicopter destroyed in Mogadishu was actually shot down about a week before the events depicted in *Blackhawk Down.* DOD photo — public domain.



This particular flight of two Blackhawks was in the wrong place at the wrong time. DOD photo — public domain.



n the early morning of September 25th, 1993, an Army buddy of mine was flying a 101st Airborne Division UH60 Blackhawk helicopter as part of the "Eyes Over Mogadishu" mission in Somalia. The familiar events depicted in the book and movie *Blackhawk Down* would occur some eight days later. He had landed his aircraft for refuel only to be interrupted by a mortar barrage. Their flight of two Blackhawks then lifted off and circled to gain a vantage on the enemy activities in the city below.

At this point, the city of Mogadishu was a hornet's nest of militia activity, but there had not yet been a great deal of violence directed toward American forces. US troops were in the country as part of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) Operation Restore Hope, a well-intended undertaking attempting to establish sufficient security to facilitate UN famine relief efforts. Prior to this operation one in ten Somali children under the age of five had died from malnutrition. There had thus far been sporadic exchanges between UN forces and irregular troops allied with sundry warlords, but things seemed tenuously under control. This was an illusion.

An RPG-7 round rose from the war-torn cityscape below and connected with the crew compartment of my buddy's helicopter. The antitank warhead detonated, killing the three crewmembers in the back and igniting the aircraft's onboard fuel stores. He



In 1993, Somalia was the Wild West and Mogadishu was a powder keg. (MovieStillsDB.com)

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The RPG-7 is a simple and easy to use even a child can

proven design. The RPG is so master it, and many have.



to rest against an embankment. What followed was one of the most compelling though seldom told sto-

[Cont. from page 38]

The Weapon

The rocket launcher that Mohamed Farah Aidid's forces used to shoot down this first Blackhawk helicopter was a versatile and ubiquitous product of the Cold War. The RPG-7 is the most commonly used antitank weapon in the world. Rugged, portable, reusable, and deadly, the classic RPG-7 can be found most anyplace organized groups of people try to kill each other. The RPG-7 is an evolutionary development of the earlier post-war RPG-2.

ries to come out of the Battle of Mogadishu.

RPG doesn't actually mean "Rocket-Propelled Grenade," and the RPG is actually a hybrid rocket system in the purest sense. The acronym is short for Ruchnoy Protivotankoviy Granatomyot in Russian. This directly translates into "Handheld Antitank Grenade Launcher." [Cont. to page 42]



The RPG-7 produces a telltale puff of smoke upon firing that can potentially betray an ambusher's position. DOD photo — public domain.



The 1960's-era RPG-7 was a staple of Cold War Combloc armies. A contemporary of the ubiquitous Soviet AKM shown here alongside the Makarov pistol and Soviet-era F1 hand grenade, the RPG-7 is now used by terrorists and insurgents the world over.



The US counterpart to the RPG-7 was the disposable M72A2 LAW (Light Antitank Weapon) shown here. The LAW tube was extended prior to firing and then discarded afterwards.

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The British .55-caliber Boys antitank rifle was outclassed by Axis armor soon after its introduction in 1937. Shaped charge weapons soon displaced it.



The WW2-vintage British PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) was a beast of a thing that weighed some 32 pounds. Technically a spigot mortar firing shaped charge warheads, the PIAT accounted for 7% of all the German tanks destroyed by Commonwealth forces during the Normandy campaign. By comparison, aircraft of all types accounted for 6%.

[Cont. from page 40]

While the RPG-7 does indeed fire a rocket-propelled projectile, it is initially launched by a modest gunpowder charge that pushes the round through its first 100 meters or so. This booster charge produces a characteristic ample puff of grey-blue smoke and operates in the manner of a recoilless rifle. Once the round is clear of the launcher the sustainer motor ignites and accelerates the rocket out to about five hundred meters. From that point on the round coasts under its own momentum. Most RPG rounds include a self-destruct feature that detonates the warhead automatically at around 920 meters.

The RPG-7 was first delivered to the Soviet Army in 1961 and is currently in use with the militaries of at least 104 nations. Israel produces ammunition locally to feed their captured launchers, while a company called Airtronic here in the US manufactures an Information Age upgraded version of the weapon today. There are at least nine different types of warheads produced in four broad categories for a wide variety of applications. Around nine million copies have seen service.

Development

Rocket-propelled antitank weapons really came into their own during WW2. Both the United States and Germany produced parallel designs that ultimately revolutionized the anti-armor capabilities of Infantry forces. Prior to the advent of the shaped charge heavy cumbersome antitank rifles like the British Boys .55-caliber weapon tried and failed to keep up with developments in armor technology.

The earliest official mention of shaped charge technology dates back to 1792 and a German mining engineer named Franz Xavier von Baader. Von Baader suggested in a mining journal of the day that by orienting a blasting charge above an empty conical space one could focus an explosive's effect and thereby conserve blasting powder. Here the idea languished until the late 19th century.

Charles Munroe was a civilian chemist working at the US Naval Torpedo Station in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1888. He observed that when a block of explosive guncotton was detonated alongside a steel plate the manufacturer's name that had been stamped into the explosive block would be cut into the steel. By raising the charge above the plate Munroe could



From top to bottom we see the US 2.75-inch M6A1 Bazooka rocket, the Cold War RPG-7 round, and the US WW2-era M9A1 antitank rifle grenade. All three incorporate shaped charge warheads.



The forward (left) portion of the RPG-7 warhead is just empty space underneath a sheet steel shell.

alter the depth and intensity of the impression. The resulting phenomenon became known as the Munroe Effect.

While weapons designers piddled with the idea for decades, it was not until 1932 that a German student of Physics named Franz Rudolph Thomanek conceived an antitank round using this principle. By creating a conical shaped charge with a mechanical standoff from the target a warhead forms a type of explosive lens that focuses the shock of an explosion onto a single spot. The resulting effect is entirely kinetic but tends to liquify steel armor at that focused point and punch into the interior of an armored vehicle. The result is predictably ghastly.

During WW2, Munroe Effect munitions were used in the German Panzerschreck, Panzerfaust, Panzerwurfmine, and Mistel. The British used the concept in their PIAT launchers. Soviet RPG-43 and RPG-6 antitank hand grenades employed shaped charges as did the American M-9 bazooka and M9A1 antitank rifle grenade. Tank warfare would never be the same.

Geometry

On an RPG-7 rocket the foremost cone is simply empty space enclosed in sheet steel. This architecture provides the necessary standoff. The explosive lens focuses its jet of superheated plasma onto a thin sheet of copper located within the warhead. The resulting explosively-formed copper dart is what penetrates the armor. The actual explosive charge is located in the rear half of the device. How deep a hole a shaped charge can cut is a general function of the diameter of the warhead.

I have tested this effect myself using Tannerite. I formed an improvised shaped charge by affixing a paper Solo drinking cone inside a toilet paper tube.

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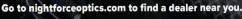
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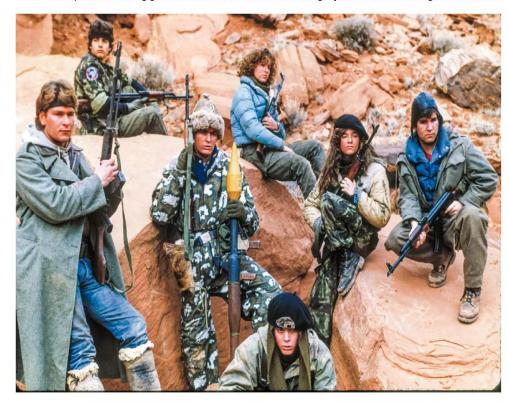




The nose of the RPG-7 round includes the piezoelectric fuse.



The RPG-7 round breaks down into four major components. The warhead is on the top, the rocket motor is in the middle, and the folding guidance fins are on the bottom. The gunpowder booster charge is not shown.



The 1984 classic *Red Dawn* was one of the first Hollywood blockbusters to feature an RPG-7. These RPGs were handbuilt props made for the film. The nose caps were taken from tubes of toothpaste. (MovieStillsDB.com)

[Cont. from page 42]

I packed the outside of the cone-shaped bit with Tannerite, sealed it all up with duct tape, and then arranged the toilet paper tube to establish the proper standoff distance. I then taped the whole shebang to the trunk of a big cedar tree standing in the lake behind my house, retreated a safe distance, and shot the thing end on with a .223 bolt-action precision rifle. The end result was a roughly half-inch hole bored cleanly through the foot-thick trunk. I can think of

no real practical application for such stuff in my little world, but it made for a fascinating way to kill a lazy Saturday afternoon.

The rest of the RPG-7 round consists of a set of large folding metal fins as well as a smaller set of offset fins at the base. The large fins create uniform drag and keep the round pointed in the right direction. The smaller fins impart a gentle spin to help stabilize the round in flight.

Eccentricities

I've yet to see a movie get an RPG-7 right. The 1984 John Milius classic *Red Dawn* was one of the first American films to include an RPG-7, but their launchers were scratch-built props. The *Red Dawn* RPGs actually used the caps from Crest toothpaste tubes on the noses of their rockets. The projectiles were guided along thin wires and propelled by model rocket engines. The biggest anomaly I have seen in movies is that the round always moves too slowly.

The velocity of an RPG round is in the vicinity of 925 feet per second. That is roughly the same speed as a typical .45ACP bullet. As a result, live RPGs seem much closer to guns than model rockets. There's not a great deal of delay between firing and impact. Total time from launch to mandatory self-destruct at 920 meters is only about three seconds. RPG rounds also do not typically leave obvious smoke trails, either, though the initial backblast can easily give away a firer's position.

The ample fins on the back of the RPG warhead also create a curious crosswind effect. When viewed from the side in flight the rear portion of the warhead has a much greater air resistance than the front bit. In still air this doesn't make any difference. Crosswinds, however, produce some odd paradoxical performance.

An RPG round in flight subjected to a crosswind will tend to yaw such that the tail sweeps away from the wind and the nose moves upwind. This causes an RPG rocket fired into a crosswind to track into the wind. This effect is more pronounced the greater the range to target and the higher the windspeed. Only the most experienced and lucky RPG gunners can land accurate rounds on target at significant ranges in windy conditions. In many cases multiple RPGs are fired in salvoes as a result.



The geometry of the RPG-7 round causes it to track counterintuitively into the wind when fired in a crosswind.

While the initial booster charge has the effect of removing the rocket motor a safe distance from the firer prior to ignition, it does create a significant backblast. YouTube has some darkly humorous videos of terrorists wandering behind RPGs just as their miscreant pals touch them off with tragic effect. However, military manuals claim you can safely fire an RPG-7 in an enclosed space so long as you have two-meters' worth of clearance behind the weapon. I do, however, suspect that such a maneuver would indeed reliably clear your sinuses.

Details

The typical RPG-7 weighs 15 pounds with its 2.7x PGO-7 optical sight and is 37.4 inches long. The internal diameter of the launch tube is 40mm. The RPG-7D is an airborne version that breaks into two smaller components for easier portage.

The launcher comes with adjustable flip-up iron sights welded to the tube. The rear iron sight is adjustable out to 500 meters. The PGO-7 includes an internal mirror system to orient the line of sight outside the area occluded by the warhead. The reticle in the PGO-7 is graduated out to 500 meters and includes stadia used for range and windage estimation. These range-finding stadia are calibrated for 2.7 meters, the height of an American Cold War-era M60 tank. The RPG-7 optics mount is Combloc standard and can accept passive IR or image intensifying night sights as well.

Current production ammunition falls into four broad categories. The 93mm PG-7VL HEAT (High Explosive Antitank) round is a general purpose warhead effective against both armored vehicles and fortified emplacements. The dual 64mm/105mm PG-7VR HEAT warhead is specifically designed to defeat modern armored vehicles equipped with explosive reactive armor. The smaller 64mm warhead detonates the reactive armor block making way for the main warhead to penetrate the vehicle. These shaped charges can defeat up to a whopping half meter of steel.

The TBG-7V Tanin 105mm thermobaric warhead is designed for urban warfare. This weapon is crafted to destroy voluminous structures from the inside out. The OG-7V is a close-range 40mm fragmentation warhead that turns the RPG-7 into a close combat grenade launcher. The OG-7V round has no sustainer motor and fills roughly the same role as our 40mm grenade launchers might.



The RPG-7 produces some ample chaos out its butt. Like all recoilless weapons of this sort, it is imperative that you clear your backblast area before firing. (DOD photo — SSG Ezekiel Kitandwe)



The RPG-7 loads from the front.





The folding iron sights are simple but effective.



PAGE 46

The PGO-7 optical sight features a battery-powered illuminated reticle and 2.7X magnification. The offset nature of the design is so that the line of sight can peek around the warhead.



The optics rail on the side of the RPG-7 is Combloc standard.



The PG0-7 optic is actually a seamless fit on the side of this AKM. Though the resulting eye relief is awful, the #2 range line makes a decent 100-meter zero on an AKM.

Architecture and Origins

The RPG-7 sports a wooden or polymer sheath that helps protect the firer from the heat of launching. The front pistol grip includes a manually-cocked hammer and a simple crossbolt safety. The rear grip just gives you something else upon which to cling. There is a removable folding bipod available as well as fixed sling swivels on the right side of the tube.

Registered transferable RPG-7 launchers come available from time to time. However, it would be tough to justify the expense, transfer tax and hassle as there will literally never be live RPG rounds available to American civilians. There is a cool subcaliber training device that fits inside the RPG tube and fires 7.62x39mm tracer rounds, but these kits are both rare and expensive. Acquiring your own operational RPG-7 with subcaliber device requires patient stalking on online fora as well as a fair amount of cash.

The Rest of the Story

The Blackhawk burst into flames immediately upon being hit. Pilots in the other aircraft said it looked [Cont. to page 48]



The forward pistol grip includes the fire controls. You'll seldom find a simpler modern weapon to operate.



The manual hammer is designed to be cocked with the firing thumb.



The rear pistol grip just gives you something to hang onto.



I have seen these heat shields in a variety of colors.



This spindly detachable bipod is a common accessory.



There was a dedicated sling with dual snap hooks designed for the launcher.



The interior of the RPG-7 tube is either hard chromeplated or stainless for wear and corrosion resistance.



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The transition from safely flying an Army helicopter to escaping and evading was almost instantaneous. An aviator's survival gear seems piddly arrayed against well-armed militia. The radio is hands-down the evader's most effective weapon.



The RPG-7 is a remarkably effective ambush weapon. It is immensely capable for its size and cost.



A demilled RPG-7 isn't good for much, but it sure does look cool hanging on the wall.

[Cont. from page 46]

PAGE 48

like a comet going in. My friend had just enough time to drag his fellow pilot clear before the aircraft became fully involved. Everything happened so fast that Somali militia on the ground presumed the entire crew died in the crash.

Both American pilots were badly burned. My buddy suffered a broken wrist, and his comrade was temporarily blinded. Help was nowhere close.

The two Army pilots retreated into an alcove to take stock of the situation. For a variety of reasons their survival radios were too noisy to use given the proximity of hostiles. Between the two of them they had a pair of Beretta M9 pistols with a single magazine each and a pair of survival knives.

When the armed militia troops got close my buddy emptied one of the M9s, causing the approaching irregulars to take cover and open fire. A grenade thrown by one of the attackers inexplicably failed to detonate. Now, he had two handguns and one magazine of ammunition. When the attacking militia approached a second time my buddy unloaded with the second handgun, this time striking one of the approaching militia members. The Somalis had at this point become quite agitated.

The two aviators were now essentially defenseless in the face of a hostile mob of armed militia. My buddy was quoting scripture to his friend, feeling that they were at the moment of capture. At that point a young Somali unexpectedly appeared out of nowhere and said simply, "American boys!"

My pal lifted his comrade and followed the kid who led them to safety with a nearby combat unit from the United Arab Emirates. Their Somali guide then disappeared.

My buddy is a man of deep Christian faith whose experience in those dark streets of Mogadishu has



Part of the demilling process involves welding a steel bar across the interior of the tube. I touched up the weld spot with a little cold blue.

nt Precision

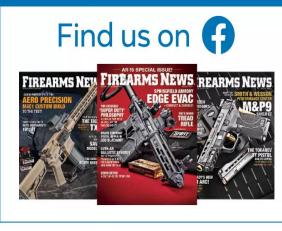
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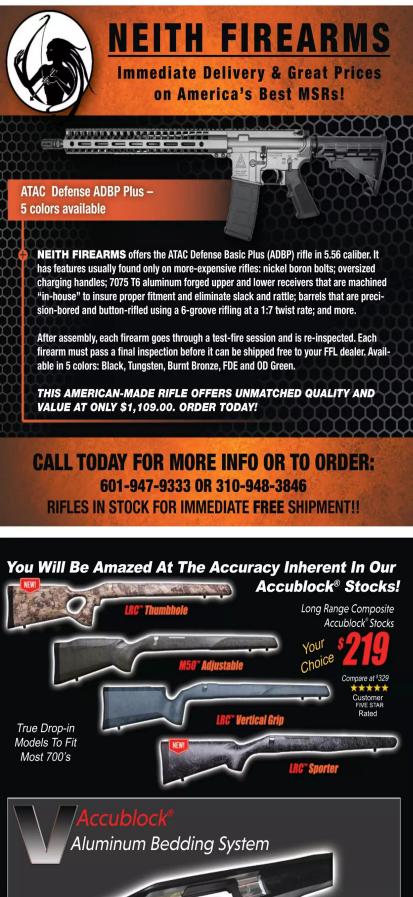
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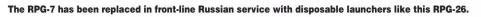
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If you want to add a little flair to your man-cave, Sarco is a good place to start. Their inventory is ever changing and always fascinating.



This 3D-printed RPG-7 round was an eBay find.

RPG-7 ANTITANK ROCKET LAUNCHER

Bore Diameter:	40mm
Warhead Diameter:	85mm
Weight:	15 lbs. with PGO-7 Optical Sight
Length:	37.4 in
Velocity:	115 meters/sec (boost)/ 300 meters/sec (flight)
Maximum Effective Range:	700 meters
Sights:	PGO-7 2.7X Optical/ Flip-Up Backup Iron Sights

SOURCES

GunPartsCorp.com SarcoInc.com



This is about all a demilled RPG-7 is good for. However, it adds some undeniable flair to any proper man-cave.

[Cont. from page 48]

become a powerful testimony. He unreservedly gives God the credit for saving his life along with that of his comrade that day. As regards the unknown Somali kid he had this to say, "Perry (his fellow pilot) and I believe he was an angel, to show us the way."

Where Do You Get One?

My RPG is a demilled version from Gun Parts Corporation. The demilling process involves cutting a chunk of the tube away on the left aspect of the launcher underneath the heat shield and welding a steel rod in place through the firing pin assembly. The end result is utterly inert but looks just super cool hanging on the wall of the man cave. I bought an empty Chinese rocket via eBay several years ago that is inert but otherwise crafted from original components. This rocket includes the empty sustainer motor and folding fins. These rockets can be tough to find these days and are too long to seat fully inside the tube given the restrictor bar. The warhead I use in my launcher is a 3D-printed version I found online. You really can get just about anything on eBay.

As of this writing Sarco offered RPG-2 rockets, spent RPG-75 tubes, and sundry support gear. They also sell replica Panzerfausts, Panzerschrecks, and bazookas as well as the kits to make your own at home. If your proclivities wander to truly weird inert ordnance, that's the place to start.

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1917. A group of revolutionaries in Petrograd. Note the man standing on the left is carrying Vintovka Berdana obr. 1870g.

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THE VINTOVKI BERDANA obr. 1868g & 1870g¹ Russia's First "Modern" Military Rifles

By Paul Scarlata

Photos by: Nick Stanev, John Sheehan & Becky Scarlata (unless otherwise indicated)

n the second half of the 19th century, Imperial Russia was an absolute monarchy ruled by the Tsar and controlled by hereditary nobility and an all present church. There was no parliament, political parties were banned and the state's power was insured by a vast network of secret police.

The basis of the empire's economy was agriculture, which took place on large estates owned by nobles and worked by illiterate peasants. These peasants had only been freed from serfdom in 1861, although it meant little to them as most were inexorably tied to the land by tradition, ignorance and debt.

The growth of railroads had been slow. It was only in the latter part of the century that modern industrial manufacturing began on a limited scale.

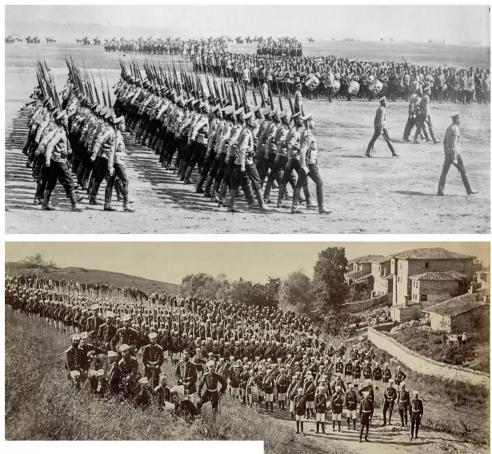
But there was one thing that Imperial Russia possessed that was the envy of most military minded persons — MANPOWER! In the late 19th century Russia maintained a standing army of 1.4 million men which, with wartime mobilization, could be enlarged to 4 million. Her most likely foes, the Ottoman Empire, Germany and Austria-Hungary had an obsessive fear of the "Russian Steam Roller" crushing their armies.

In the mid-1800s, the Russian army began trials to find a breech loading, rifle. In 1866 they tentatively adopted the Terry-Norman system to convert their obr. 1858g rifled muskets to breech loaders. It used a hinged, sliding bolt to seal the breech while its paper cartridge was fired by percussion cap ignited by the musket's exposed hammer. Only about 60,000 were produced before an "improved" system was approved.

The Vintovka Carlé obr. 1867g used a breech system designed by the German Johannes Friedrich Christian Carlé and, like the Terry-Norman, it utilized a turning bolt with dual locking lugs and a needle-like firing pin to ignite a self contained, combustible cartridge. Like its predecessor it was a complicated system that suffered from gas leakage and the use of the fragile 6 linii (15.24mm–.60 caliber) combustible cartridge.²

The first Russian rifle to use a metallic cartridge, the Vintovka Krnka obr. 1867g, used a Snider-like, hinged breech system developed by the Czech gunsmith Sylvester Krnka. It fired the Patron 6 linii obr. 1867g which consisted of a center fire, rimmed case 37–40mm long (both straight walled and bottle necked cases were used) topped with a 570-gr. lead bullet which was propelled to 1075 fps. Both infantry and Kazachya (Cossack) rifles were manufactured, the latter being slightly shorter, used a button type trigger and did not accept a bayonet.

At the same time, the Russian navy tested a rifle designed by the Italian Augusto Albini as modified by the naval officer Lt. Nikolai Baranov. It used



Russia's foes were awed by the Tsar's massive army.



The Vintovka Krnka obr. 1867g was the Russian army's first metallic cartridge, breech loading rifle. (Nick Stanev photo)

a "trapdoor" type breech that was locked by a bolt attached to an outside hammer that also activated the firing pin. Both rifles went into production in 1869 the Krnka for the army while the Albini-Baranov was adopted as the Morskaya Vintovka obr. 1869g (Naval Rifle Model 1869).

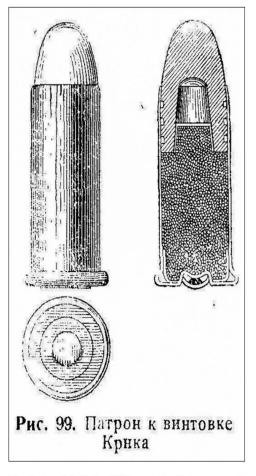
While many of these converted muskets served with Russian forces well into the 1880s, the army wanted a

truly "modern" rifle. As in the past they sent agents to various European countries and the U.S. to see what was available.

Hiram S. Berdan was born in upstate New York in 1824. Trained as a mechanical engineer, he was known as the top rifle shot in his country for fifteen years prior to the Civil War. He developed the first commercial gold amalgamation machine to separate



A close up of the Krnka's hinged breech system.



The Patron 6 linii obr. 1867g was the Russian army's first metallic cartridge.

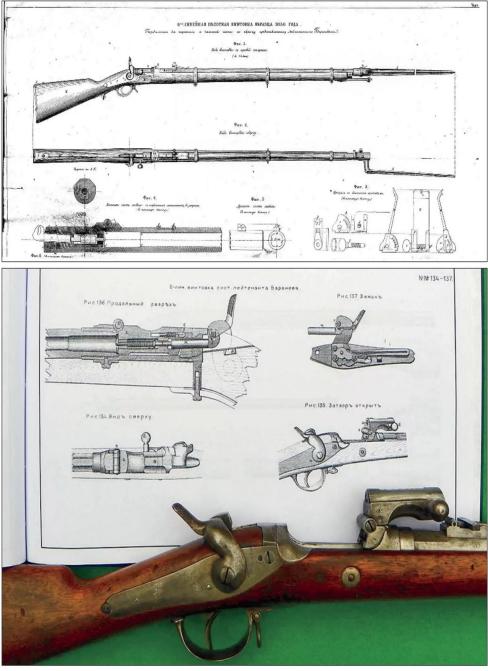
gold from ore, invented a reaper and a mechanical bakery, inventions that brought him wealth and international fame.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, in the Fall of 1861 he helped recruit eighteen companies, from eight states, which were formed 1st and 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters with Berdan as Colonel. His men, who had to pass rigorous marksmanship tests, were dressed in distinctive green uniforms and equipped with rifles featuring telescopic sights and, later, breech loading Sharps rifles.

Berdan served in a number of campaigns and while an innovative officer he proved unpopular with the officers and soldiers under his command. He resigned his commission on January 1864 and returned to his career as an engineer and inventor but was convinced to resume his military duties and served until the end of the conflict.

After the war, he became involved in designing rifles for the newly popular self-contained metallic cartridge. It was at this time that he met Colonel Aleksandr Pavlovitch Gorlov (also spelled "Gorloff"), a member of the Glavnoye raketno-artilleriyskoye upravleniye or GRAU (Main Artillery Directorate) of the Russian ministry of war and chief of the Russian Army military mission to U.S. in 1860s. The mission's task was to examine modern U.S. rifles and to choose the best weapon for the Russian army.

One of those they examined was the so-called Berdan No. 1, a breech loading rifle that used a tubular receiver with a "trapdoor" type breech. Drawing



The Morskaya Vintovka obr. 1869g was a modified Albini rifle adopted by the Russian Navy. (Courtesy Nick Stanev)



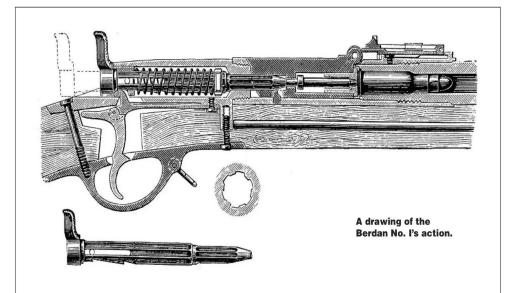
Russian sailors drilling with Morskaya Vintovki obr. 1869g.





Hiram Berdan was a skilled engineer and designer and commanded the 1st and 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters during the Civil War.

Colonel Aleksandr Pavlovitch Gorlov was the driving force behind Russia's adoption of the Vintovka Berdana obr. 1868g.



back the tail of the striker at the rear of the receiver allowed the breech block to be raised, extracting the spent case and opening access to the chamber. A cartridge was then inserted, the breech was closed, and the rifle could be fired. The mechanism was locked at firing by the striker entering into the back of the breech block where it activated the firing pin.

Colonel Gorlov was impressed enough that he, and his assistant Lieutenant K.I. Gunius, worked from late 1867 until 1868 with Berdan to make several changes and then arranged for Colt to manufacture several prototypes. The GRAU was impressed enough that they signed a contract with Colt for 30,000 rifles known as the Vintovka Berdana obr. 1868g.³

The obr. 1868g was chambered for a .42 caliber (10.7mm) cartridge — the Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g — which used a rimmed, bottle necked case measuring 58mm containing a 77-gr. charge of black powder and a paper patched 370 gr. lead bullet. Muzzle velocity was approximately 1,450 fps.

While Gorlov sought to arrange for manufacture of the obr.1868g at Russian arsenals Berdan, an entrepreneur who never let any grass grow under his feet, visited St. Petersburg and presented the GRAU with a "new and improved" rifle — the Berdan No. 2. After testing the new rifle against the obr. 1868g, the GRAU cancelled the Colt contract and adopted the No. 2 as the Vintovka Berdana obr. 1870g.⁴

The obr. 1870g was a single shot, bolt action design whose two piece, cock on closing bolt was locked by a large rib on the bolt bearing on the front edge of the split bride receiver. The rifle's most distinguishing feature was a very short bolt handle which stuck up at a 45° angle when the bolt was closed. It was a long, ungainly looking rifle with a straight grip stock. Early rifles had sling swivels on the front barrel band and trigger guard while late production rifles had the swivels installed in holes in the buttstock and forearm. The rear sight was adjustable from 200 to 1,500 arshini by tangent and leaf and an inverted V blade front sight was located several inches back from the muzzle.⁵ A socket style bayonet with a 23-inch blade was usually mounted at all times.

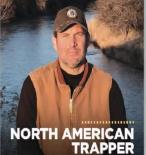
After all his work Gorlov vehemently protested the adoption of the obr. 1870g, but being it was easier and cheaper to manufacture and maintain his [Cont. to page 58]



The Vintovka Berdana obr. 1868g was only "standard issue" in the Tsar's army for less than three years. (Courtesy Morphy Auctions)

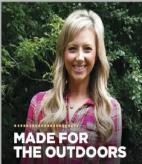








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The Vintovka Berdana obr. 1868g was only "standard issue" in the Tsar's army for less than three years. (Courtesy Nick Stanev)



The obr. 1868g was based upon a "trapdoor" type breech which automatically ejected the spent cartridge case. Note the large, curved cocking piece on the end of the striker. (Courtesy Nick Stanev)



[Cont. from page 56]

protestations were ignored. Until Russian arsenals could tool up to produce it, a contract for 30,000 obr. 1870g rifles was placed with the English firm of Birmingham Small Arms (BSA).

BSA had been manufacturing an earlier version of the No. 2 rifle which can be identified by the large, curved cocking piece on the end of the bolt and a stock similar to that used on the Fusil d'Infanterie Modéle 1866 (Chassepot). About 20,000 were sold to the French government on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871).⁶

Dragoons and Cossacks were issued the Dragunskaya vintovka Berdana obr.1870g and Kazacha

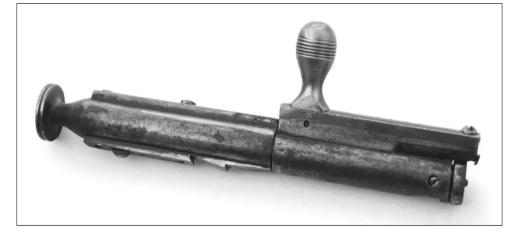
SPECIFICATIONS: VINTOVKA BERDANA obr. 1868g		
Caliber: Pa	atron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g	
Overall Length: 53	3.5 in.	
Barrel Length: 32	2.5 in.	
Weight: 9.	25 lbs.	
Magazine: Si	ngle shot	
U U	ont: Inverted V blade ear: V notch adj. from 300 to 1,550 arshini	
Bayonet: So	ocket style with 23 in. blade	



The Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g used a rimmed, bottle necked case containing 77 gr. of black powder and a paper patched 370 gr. lead bullet. (Lou Behling photo)



The Vintovka Berdana obr. 1870g was a single shot, bolt action rifle. Note how the sling swivels are mounted in holes in the stock. (Courtesy Morphy Auctions)





The rear sight of the obr. 1870g was adjustable from 200 to 1,500 arshini. Note the notch on the right side of the sight slider which was used with a stud on the front barrel band allowing adjustment up to 2250 arshini.

The obr. 1870g used a two-piece bolt with a distinctive short bolt handle and a large cocking piece.



Its most distinctive feature of the obr. 1870g was a bolt handle that stuck up at a 45° angle when the bolt was closed.

vintovka Berdana 1870g. Both had shorter barrels while the Cossack rifle used a stock of thinner dimensions and had a unique button trigger (a common accessory on many pre-1891 Cossack rifles) and did not take a bayonet. Mounted and artillery units were issued the Karabina Berdana 1870g. All three had their slings mounted in metal lined slots in the stocks.

As the BSA order was being completed the Russians placed an order with the English firm of Greenwood & Batley for the necessary tooling to manufacture the obr. 1870g which was installed at the Tulsky Oruzheiny Zavod (Tula Arsenal) in 1874. Early production rifles utilized barrels ordered from German and Belgian manufacturers.⁷

A second order was placed with Greenwood & Batley for tooling for the Ishevsk and Sestroretsk arsenals and by the time production ceased in 1892 the three arsenals had produced in excess of 3,400,000 obr. 1870g rifles.⁸

In Russian service, the obr. 1870g was affectionately known as the "Berdanka."9

The obr. 1870g and obr. 1868g first saw service with Russian troops in the mid-1870s when the Tsar's armies conquered the Muslim khanates of Turkmenistan in Central Asia. In 1877, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire to regain territory lost during the Crimean War, re-exert control over the Black Sea and with the avowed purpose of protecting Christian residents of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Orthodox nations of the Balkans: Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. The latter two countries had declared war on the Turks in 1876 assisted by Russian "volunteers."

During the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), Russian first line units were armed with obr. 1868g and obr. 1870g rifles while most second line troops, Cossacks and allied units were armed with Carlé and Krnka rifles. During and after the conflict the Russians supplied large numbers of rifles — Carlés, Krnkas and Berdans — to their Balkan allies where



BSA sold 20,000 Berdan No. 2 rifles to France in 1870. Note the No. 1 style cocking piece on the bolt and the Chassepot style stock. (Rock Island Auction Co.)





some saw service in the unending ethnic conflicts that plagued the region up until, and including, WWI.

After the Russo-Turkish War some Berdans received new rear sights that were adjustable to 2,250 arshini.¹⁰

The next largest user of Berdans was the Kingdom of Bulgaria who adopted it as standard after the Russo-Turkish War and purchased 108,000 from Russia. Shortly before the outbreak of WWI the Bulgars received an additional 10,000 rifles as Russian military aid.

In 1890, in the name of "Slavic brotherhood," the Russians provided the Kingdom of Serbia with 76,000 obr. 1870g rifles, which supplemented the Berdans that had been captured from Bulgaria during the short lived war Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885). All sides used Berdans during the 1st and 2nd Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and in the early stages of WWI others were issued to Serbian 3rd Ban units (reservists over 50 years old).¹¹

The little kingdom of Montenegro was another recipient of Russian largess when, in 1894, the Tsar's government provided them with 30,500 Berdans.

After the adoption of the Tri lineinaya Vintovka obr. 1891g (Mosin-Nagant), it has been reported that Belgian companies were contracted to convert some Berdans to fire the Tri lineinaya patron obr. 1891g (7.62x54R) but only a limited number were converted before field trials showed them to be unsuitable.¹²

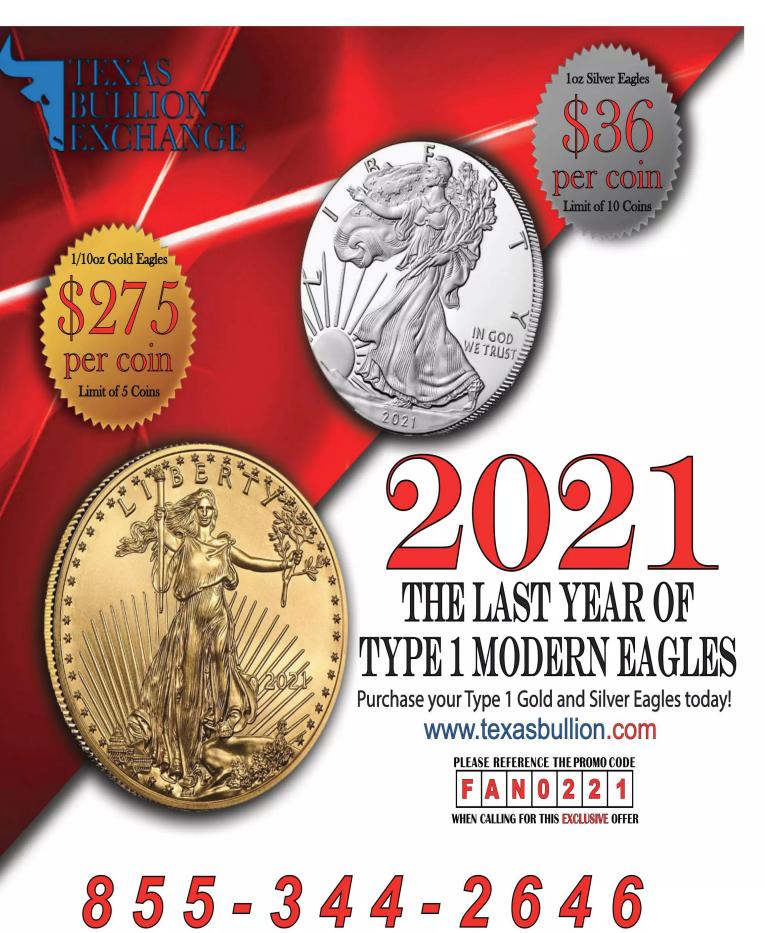
Russian dealers purchased surplus obr. 1870g and converted them into shotguns for sale to hunters, trappers and sportsmen. They were advertised as being available in 16, 20, 24 and 32 gauge. Рис. 197. ПЪХОТНАЯ ВИНТОВХА СИСТОЧИ Бердана №2 Рис. 197. ПЪХОТНАЯ ВИНТОВХА СИСТОЧИ Бердана №2 Рис. 198. Драгунская винтовка системи Бердана №2. Рис. 199. Казачья винтовка системи Бердана №2. Рис. 199. Казачья винтовка системи Бердана №2.

A drawing from a Russian army manual compares (top to bottom) the obr. 1870g infantry, Dragoon and Cossack rifles. Note the button type trigger on the latter.

SPECIFICATIONS: DRAGUNSKAYA VINTOVKA BERDANA obr. 1870g		
Caliber:	Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g	
Overall Length:	48.7 in.	
Barrel Length:	28.3 in.	
Weight:	7.9 lbs.	
Magazine:	Single shot	
Sights:	Front: Inverted V blade Rear: V notch adj. from 200 to 1,400 arshini	
Bayonet:	Socket style with 23 in. blade	

SPECIFICATIONS: KAZACHA VINTOVKA Berdana obr. 1870g		
Caliber:	Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g	
Overall Length:	47.9 in.	
Barrel Length:	28.3 in.	
Weight:	7.4 lbs.	
Magazine:	Single shot	
Sights:	Front: Inverted V blade Rear: V notch adj. from 200 to 1,400 arshini	
Bayonet:	None	

[Cont. to page 62]



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Cossacks armed with Kazacha vintovki Berdana 1870g. Note the button type triggers on the rifles.



[Cont. from page 60]

Before the outbreak of the First Italo-Abyssinian War (1894–1896), the Tsar's government provided Abyssinia (the present-day Ethiopia) with 30,000 Berdans. Some were still in service during the Second Italo- Abyssinian War (1935–1936).

During the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) some Russian second line units were equipped with Berdans. They also supplied anti-Japanese forces in Korea with 7,000 Berdan rifles. As part of the "Great Game" Britain and Russia competed for influence over Persia. In an attempt to gain favor the Russians provided the Persian government, and local leaders who displayed pro-Russian proclivities, with Berdans.

With the outbreak of WWI, Russia aligned itself with the Allies and declared war on Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Despite a great wave of patriotic enthusiasm, it quickly became obvious that Russia was ill prepared for an extended conflict.

SPECIFICATIONS: KARABINA BERDANA obr. 1870g

DEILDANA UNI	10/09
Caliber:	Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g
Overall Length:	37.9 in.
Barrel Length:	18.7 in.
Weight:	6.2 lbs.
Magazine:	Single shot
Sights:	Front: Inverted V blade
	Rear: V notch adj. from 200 to
	1,000 arshini
Bayonet:	None

By late 1914, the battlefield losses of rifles had exceeded even the most pessimistic pre-war predictions and it was estimated that the Imperial armed forces were losing on average 200,000 rifles per month. It quickly became clear that the Russians would need at



1900. A group of Bulgarian komitadji (irregular fighters). The gendarme standing at the rear is armed with a Karabina Berdana obr. 1870g.



Legion, Cossack hosts and various nationalist/bandit/ anarchist groups from 1917 into the early 1920s.

After the initial war reserves had been exhausted, the Russian army was forced to hold troops back from combat for lack of weapons. To make up the

shortages, large numbers of Berdans were issued to

The obr. 1870g saw service throughout WWI the

subsequent Russian Revolution and Civil War. It was

used by both White and Red armies, the Czechoslovak

reserve, training and support troops.

In addition, captured Berdans were issued to Central Power second line troops as the Russisches-Gewehr Berdan II M.71 (German) and the 10.67mm M.1871 (russisches) Infanteriegewehr System Berdan II (Austro-Hungarian).13 The Turks also fielded numbers of them that they captured from the Russians on the Caucasus front.

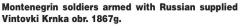
Another nation that used the Berdan was Finland. As the Grand Duchy of Finland, it had been part of the Russian empire since 1809 and Finnish

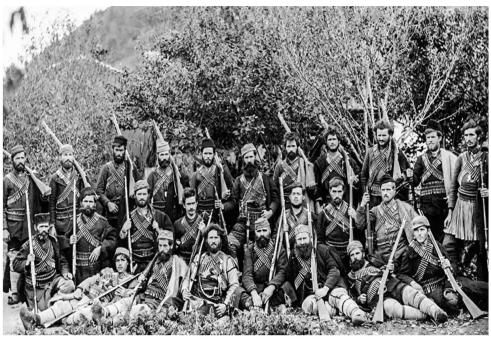


Russian soldiers armed with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g during the Russo-Turkish War.



PAGE 64





A group of Albanian hajduk (irregular fighters) armed with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g.



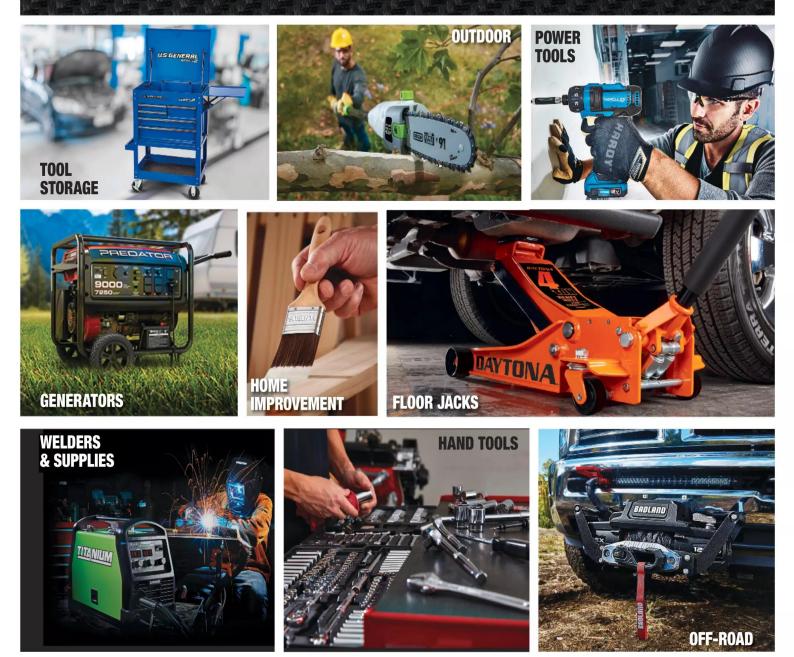
1915. A Bulgarian court marshal tries a deserter. The two guards are armed with Vintovki Krnka obr. 1867g.

SPECIFICATIONS: VINTOVKA BERDANA obr. 1870g		
Caliber:	Patron 4.2 linii obr. 1868g	
Overall Length:	53.4 in.	
Barrel Length:	32.8 in.	
Weight:	9.8 lbs.	
Magazine:	Single shot	
Sights:	Front: Inverted V blade Rear: V notch adj. from 200 to 1,500 arshini	
Bayonet:	Socket style with 23 in. blade	

units served in the Imperial Army. With the Russian Revolution a civil war between Finnish nationalists and Finnish Reds and Russian troops saw the Reds driven out of the country and Finland declare its independence. Among the Russian weapons used by the Finns were several thousand obr. 1870g Berdans which, after the end of the civil war, were issued to the Suojeluskunta (Civil Guard) until more modern rifles were obtained. In Finnish service, the obr. 1870g was known as the Jalkaväenkivääri M/1870 Berdan.

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19th century Bulgarian soldiers armed with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g.



Bulgarian sailors standing inspection. They are carrying Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870.



Montenegrin soldiers during the Russo-Turkish War armed with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g.

[Cont. from page 64]

The last verified use of the Berdan was during the early stages of the Russo-Finnish Winter War (1939–1940) when about 3,000 Berdan rifles were issued to Finnish reservists but were replaced by modern rifles as soon as it was possible.¹⁴

Want to Buy a Berdan?

If you have a hankering to obtain an obr. 1870g for your collection you are in luck. While they were formally rare on the U.S. surplus market those days are over. Uli Wigand, the honcho at Royal Tiger Imports (RoyalTigerImports.com) recently traveled to Ethiopia and discovered a treasure trove of military surplus rifles that the Ethiopian government had acquired since the 1880s. These run the gamut from French Modéle 1874 Gras rifles up to Czech vzor 52 carbines. Included in this cache were — among others — German Mausers, Austrian Mannlichers, British Lee-Enfields, Italian Carcanos ... and almost two hundred Russian obr. 1870g Berdans!

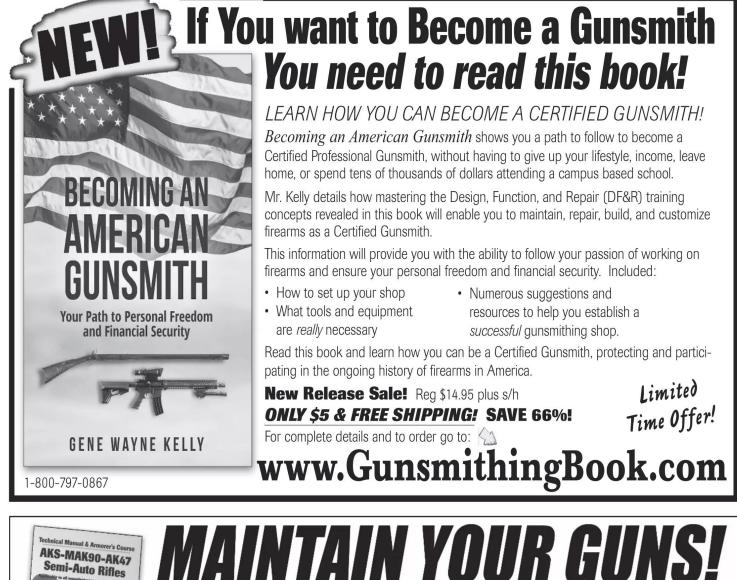
I contacted Uli about obtaining samples of some of these rifles to write about and he kindly agreed. The first that the parcel delivery service dropped off at my doorstep was a Berdan. As was to be expected of a rifle that had been stored in a third world arsenal for over a century its condition left something to be desired.

[Cont. to page 68]



obr. 1891g. Note this early rifle production does not have a handguard over the barrel. (Courtesy Ted Derryberry)







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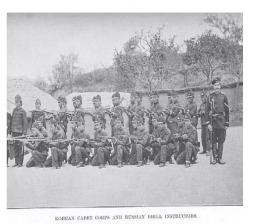
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1914. A Russian squad, armed with Tri lineinaya Vintovki obr. 1891g, pose for the camera.



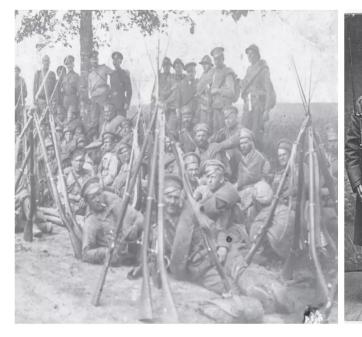
An advertisement for obr. 1870g rifles converted into shotguns.



Korean military cadets, and a Russian advisor,

armed with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g.

British officers training Persian policemen who are armed with Berdan rifles.



WWI Russian soldiers equipped with Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g.



1918. Siberian natives armed with (L to R) a Karabina Berdana obr. 1870g and Dragunskaya vintovki Berdana obr.1870g ... and flintlock pistols!

[Cont. from page 66]

Mechanically, it was in very good condition with a bolt that worked smoothly and locked up tightly and a rather decent trigger, but while there was no surface rust or pitting, the bore resembled the inside of an ancient sewer pipe. While it lacked a cleaning rod, the stock was free of cracks and only had a few dents, but several holes had been drilled in the stock to, I assume, attach slings or pieces of rope.

Markings indicated that it had been manufactured at the Sestroryetsk arsenal in 1884 and it also bore several undecipherable markings in Amharic, the native language of Ethiopia, on the barrel.

I like to think that perhaps it had been carried by some Abyssinian Ras (tribal chieftain) at the Battle of Adowa (March 6, 1896) when the Emperor Menelik II's army defeated an invading Italian army led by



1916. An Austrian reservist armed with a 10.67mm M.1871 (russisches) Infanteriegewehr System Berdan II. (courtesy Heino Hintermeier)



Eritrean Ascari and their Italian officers.



Abyssinian warriors, such as these armed with obsolete French Modéle 1874 Gras rifles, defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adowa in 1896.



1918. Rifles captured by the Finnish Whites included the Vintovki Berdana obr. 1870g and Tri lineinaya Vintovka obr. 1891g.



The Russian soldier of fortune Nikolay Stepanovich Leontiev served Emperor Menelik II from 1895 to 1900.

General Oreste Baratieri, killing or capturing over 5000 Italian soldiers and Eritrean Ascari while the Abyssinians suffered almost 10,000 casualties.¹⁵

It was the worst defeat suffered by a European army in Africa since the Battle of Isandlwana (January 22, 1879) in South Africa when the Zulus wiped out a force of 1,300 British troops.

Menelik's army of more than 100,000 warriors included a small team of Russian advisers and Cossack volunteers commanded by Nikolay Stepanovich Leontiev whose battery of forty-two Russian mountain guns is credited with helping the Abyssinians achieve their victory.¹⁶ Perhaps he arrived with the Berdan rifles that the Tsar had provided the Abyssinians?



The Amharic markings on the Berdan I received from **Royal Tiger Imports.**



Emperor Menelik II's defeat of the Italians at Adowa insured that Abyssinia would remain the only native ruled nation in Africa.

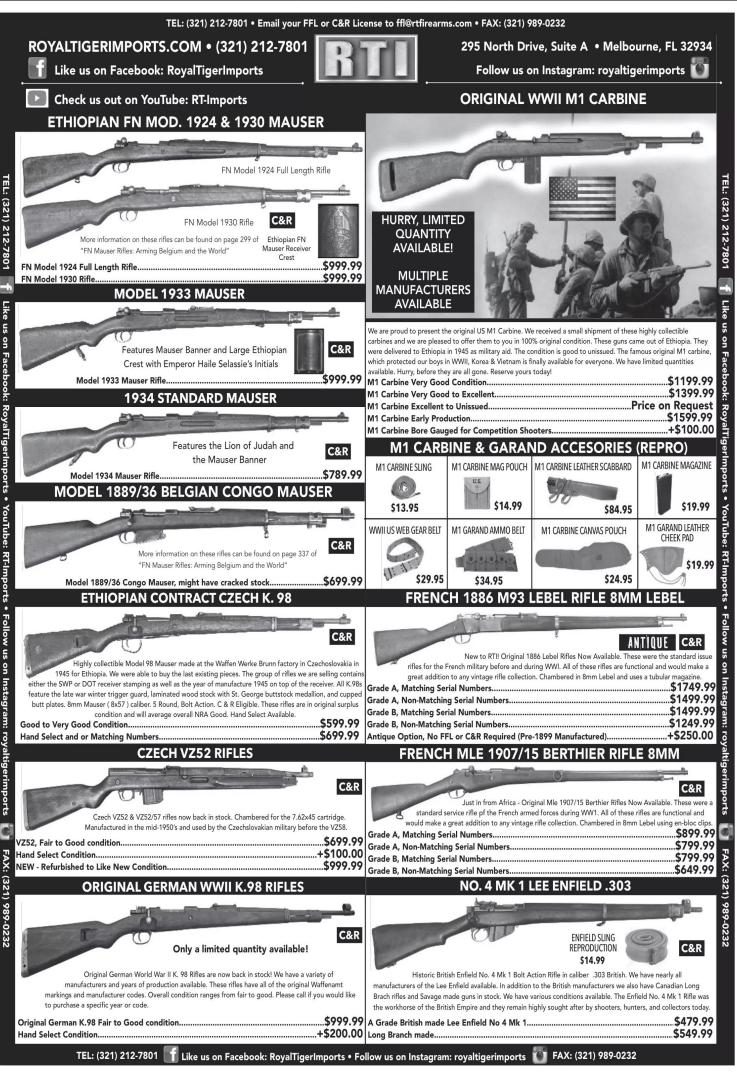
ENDNOTES:

- Vintovka is Russian for "rifle"; plural: Vintovki. The Russians used an archaic measuring system based upon the "linii," (plural: lineinaya) which equaled 1/10 of an inch. Ezell, Edward Clinton. The AK47 Story. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg,
- 3 PA, 1986. Page 40. Ibid. Page 42.
- Arshin (plural arshini) is the Russian word for "pace" and equaled 0.7 meters. Ibid. Page 43
- Stankovik, Branislav V. & John P. Sheehan. Serbian Army Weapons of Victory, 1914 - 1918, Volume 1, 2017. Page 138. Ezell, Edward Clinton. The AK47 Story. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, 8
- PA, 1986. Page 46 47.
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/125491?seq=1
- 10 Stankovik, Branislav V. & John P. Sheehan. Serbian Army Weapons of Victory, 1914 1918, Volume 1, 2017. Page 139.
- 11 Ibid. Page 141. 12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berdan_rifle
- 13 Finze, Wolfgang & Joachim Görtz. Fremde Gewehre in deutschen Diensten 1914 1918. Rostok, München. 2002, Page 37 39 and Hintermeier, Heino. In Der Stunde Der Not. VS-Books, Herne, Austria. 2003. Pages 60- 63.
- 14 Palokangas, Markku. Sotilaskäsiaseet Suomessa 1918 1988. Suomen Asehistoriallisen Seuran. 1991. Pages 14 18.
- 15 Ascari was the term for native troops serving under Italian officers and NCOs.
- 16 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolay_Leontiev

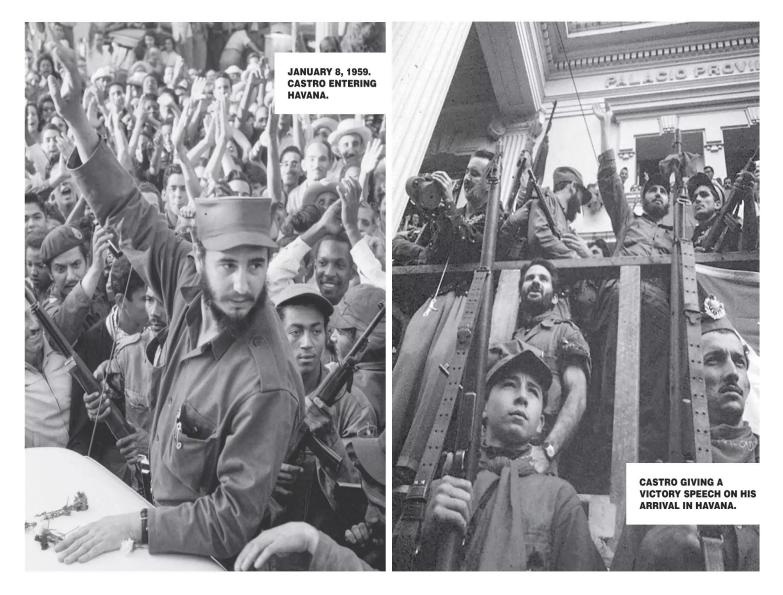
As a fan of classic military rifles, I find this Berdan to be a truly fascinating weapon and as the old saying goes "If it could only speak, what tales might it tell."

I would like to thank the following for providing materials and information used to prepare this report: Uli Wigand, Shawn Skipper, Nick Stanev, John Sheehan, Branislav Stankovik, Joel Kolander, Sarah Stoltzfus, Ted Derryberry (http://7.62x54r.net), Heino Hintermeier, Morphy Auctions and Rock Island Auction Co. FN

FIREARMS NEWS - firearmsnews.com







SMALLARMS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONS El desastre de la Bahía Cochinos¹

By Paul Scarlata

Photos by: James Walters, Nathan Reynolds & Paul Budde (unless otherwise indicated)

s was discussed in Part I of this report, Fidel Castro's forces were armed primarily with U.S. pattern weapons captured from the army and Guardia ... and their members who changed sides ... smuggled in from other countries, purchased on the black market or "donated" by similarly minded organizations. But they made use of any and all weapons they could obtain.

There are numerous photos of Castro and his fighters armed with bolt action sporting rifles with telescopic sights. Close examination of the photos seems to indicate these were built on military surplus 98-Mauser actions such as were available from companies such as J.C. Higgins at the time and were probably provided by "friendly" sources in the U.S. Faced with a public relations disaster for continuing to support Batista's corrupt government and ineffective military, the U.S. declared an embargo on weapons sales to Cuba.² This forced the Cuban government to seek additional weapons in Europe and in 1958 they placed an order for a quantity of Fusil Automatique Léger rifles (FN-FAL) from Fabrique Nationale in Belgium few of which were delivered



before Batista's forces collapsed.² Castro's forces were also supplied with some FALs from the, then leftist, government of Venezuela. There are several photos of Castro's fighters armed with Venezuelan FALs which can be distinguished by their distinctively shaped forearms.

After they had overthrown Batista, Castro's government purchased an additional 20,000 FAL and heavy barreled FALOs from FN. When the Cuban armed forces were reequipped with Soviet pattern weapons

FN-FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE LÉGER				
Caliber: 7,62mm NATO				
Overall Length:	41.5 in.			
Barrel Length:	20.9 in.			
Weight:	Veight: 9.5 lbs.			
Magazine:	20 rd. detachable box			
Sights:	Front: Blade			
	Rear: Aperture adj. from 200 to			
	600 meters			
Bayonet:	9 in. blade			



Fidel Castro lighting his ever-present cigar and holding a sporting rifle with a telescopic sight.

the FALs were handed down to the militia and some saw use during the ill fated Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961) when U.S. supported anti-Castro Cubans invaded the island. Cuban supplied FALs were also provided to "national liberation" forces in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile and Venezuela.

FN-FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE LOURD (FALO)				
Caliber:	7,62mm NATO			
Overall Length:	43.4 in.			
Barrel Length:	21 in.			
Weight:	13.5 lbs.			
Stock:	Wood or synthetic			
Magazine:	20 & 30 rd. detachable box			
Sights:	Front: Blade			
	Rear: Aperture adj. by ramp			
	from 200 to 800 meters			
Bayonet:	None			



Fidel Castro, armed with an FN-FAL rifle.

FN-FUSIL AUTOMATIQUE LÉGER & FALO

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Rock Island Auction www.rockislandauction.com/

detail/56/592/belgian-production-prebanfnfal-semiautomatic-rifle

Morphy Auctions

https://auctions.morphyauctions.com/ _n_magnificent_original_low_serial_number_fn_ hers-lot464696.aspx

Morphy Auctions (FN LAR HB) www.morphyauctions.com/ jamesdjulia/item/1069-369/

Ruben Mendiola https://dealernfa.com/shop/ fal-g1-fn-belgium-pre-sales-sample-29170c/

PARTS:

Sarco www.e-sarcoinc.com/fal.aspx and www.e-sarcoinc.com/l1a1.aspx

Numrich Arms www.gunpartscorp.com/gun-manufacturer/ fn/fal-metric/parts-list-fal

Falcon Arms www.falconarms.com/fn-fal/fn-fal-metric.html



A group of Castro's revolutionary fighters armed with FN-FAL rifles.



Castro, Che Guevara and other rebel leaders marching arm in arm into Havana.



Note one of Castro's soldiers is holding a Venezuelan FAL with its distinctive forearm.



A group of Cuban regulars armed with FN-FAL rifles.



January 8, 1969. Fidel waving to his joyous supporters upon his arrival in Havana.



On August 21, 1958 Castro's forces began a major offensive on four fronts. Descending from the mountains with new weapons captured from Batista's forces, and smuggled in by plane, Castro's forces won a series of initial victories bringing all of Oriente Province under his control.

Rebel columns, under the command of Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos and Jaime Vega, proceeded westward towards the capital of Villa Clara Province. Batista's forces ambushed and destroyed Vega's column, but the surviving two columns reached the central provinces, where they joined forces with several other resistance groups. Guevara's column was reinforced by the anticommunist Revolutionary Directorate forces which had been fighting Batista's army for many months, and the combined rebel army won the Battle of Yaguajay on December 30, 1958.

On December 31, 1958 the city of Santa Clara fell to the combined forces of Guevara, Cienfuegos and Revolutionary Directorate rebels led by Rolando Cubela, Juan Abrahantes, and William Alexander Morgan. News of these defeats caused Batista to flee Cuba by air to the Dominican Republic the following day, whereupon thousands of Cuban army soldiers and police deserted to the rebels.⁴

Castro learned of Batista's flight and began negotiations with the commander in the city Santiago de Cuba, Colonel Rubido, who ordered his soldiers to surrender on January 2, 1959, the same day that the forces of Guevara and Cienfuegos entered Havana. Castro arrived in Havana six days later to massive, joyous celebrations.

Amid celebration and chaos in the Cuban capitol, the U.S. debated how best to deal with the radical Castro and the ominous rumblings of anti-Americanism in Cuba. Suspicious of what they believed to be Castro's leftist ideology and worried that his ultimate goals might include attacks on the significant American investments and property in Cuba, American officials began voicing grave concerns.

Castro became the "fair haired child" of the international media — especially those with a leftist bent. In February 1960, he declared himself Lído Máximo (Maximum Leader) of Cuba. **VOLUME 75 - ISSUE 4**

FIREARMS NEWS - firearmsnews.com







Fidel Castro celebrating May Day with the communist leaders of East Germany.



1963. Castro in Red Square with Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev.



Members of the Milicias de Tropas Territoriales armed with FN-FAL rifles and vzor 25 submachine guns.

The Cubans obtained large numbers of 7.62mm Samonabiject Pušca vzor 52 and vzor 52/57s from Czechoslovakia.

7,62mm SAMONABIJECT PUŠCA VZOR 52 & VZOR 52/57

Caliber:	7,62mm nábojů ostrých vzor 52 & 7,62mm náboj vzor 43		
Overall Length:	39.6 in.		
Barrel Length:	20.45 in.		
Weight:	9.2 lbs.		
Magazine:	10 rds.		
Sights:	Front: Hooded blade Rear: U notch adj. by tangent from 100 to 900 meters		
Bayonet:	10.25 in. folding blade		

7.62mm SAMONABIJECT PUŠCA **VZOR 52 & VZOR 52/57**

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Rock Island Auctions www.rockislandauction.com/detail/2010/87/

czech-military-vz-5257-rifle-762x39-mm **Morphy Auctions**

https://auctions.morphyauctions.com/ lot-257771.aspx

PARTS:

Sarco

www.e-sarcoinc.com/czech.aspx

Numrich Arms

www.gunpartscorp.com/gun-manufacturer/cz/ rifles-cz/52-rifle

Buy Milsurp

https://buymilsurp.com/rifle-parts-accessoriesczech-vz52-rifle-parts-c-3548 101.html

[Cont. from page 74]

PAGE 76

Popular uproar across Cuba demanded that Bastita's people be brought to justice. Castro helped set-up trials of many Batistanos, resulting in thousands of executions. Although widely popular domestically, critics declared the trials unfair and said Castro's government was more interested in vengeance than justice.

In the summer of 1959, Fidel began nationalizing plantation lands owned by American investors as well as confiscating the property of foreign landowners. He also seized property previously held by wealthy Cubans who had fled. He nationalized sugar production and oil refineries, over the objection of foreign, primarily American, investors.

Although refusing to categorize his regime as socialist and repeatedly denying being a communist, Castro appointed Marxists to senior government and military positions. Expressing increasing contempt for the U.S., Castro openly shared the ideological views of the USSR and established relations with several Marxist-Leninist states.

In March 1960, U.S. President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to overthrow Castro's government. He provided them with a budget of \$13 million and permitted them to ally with the Mafia who were aggrieved that Castro's government closed down their brothel and casino businesses in Cuba. On October 13, 1960, the U.S. initiated a total economic embargo on Cuba.

The U.S. also encouraged the anti-Castro rebel groups resulting in the Escambray Revolt by former Batista soldiers, local farmers who lands had been expropriated, and ex-guerrillas who had fought alongside Castro but felt he had betrayed the revolution. It took Castro's forces six years and more than 4,000 casualties before they defeated the rebels.⁵

As Castro's socialist/communist intentions became obvious and he formed closer ties with the USSR, thousands of Cubans fled the island, most to the U.S. where they formed the core of anti-Castro organizations.

The armed forces, la Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Armed Forces - FAR) [Cont. to page 78]



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Cuban militiamen armed with vzor 52 carbines.



[Cont. from page 76]

were reorganized removing any suspected counterrevolutionary elements and the government created a *Milicias de Tropas Territoriales* (Territorial Militia) to arm citizens favorable to the revolution and at least 50,000 civilians received basic combat training. In the best Stalinist tradition, September 1960 saw the creation the *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution — CDR), a nationwide civilian organization which implemented neighborhood spying to detect counter-revolutionary activities.

Fearing a U.S.-backed coup, in 1959 the Cuban government purchased \$120 million worth of Soviet, Czech, French, and Belgian weapons and doubled the size of Cuba's armed forces. The small arms thus obtained included the aforementioned FN-FAL/FALO rifles but the majority were of Czech origin.

The Czechoslovaks had been in the process of reequipping their armed forces with Soviet caliber weapons and were selling off large numbers of rifles, machine guns and submachine guns to all buyers. Numbers of these were appearing in the Middle East, Africa (See Small Arms of the Biafran/Nigerian Civil War — *Firearms News*, Issues 6 & 8, 2020), Southeast Asia, Afghanistan and Latin America.

Two of the most common of the Czech weapons were the 7,62mm Samonabiject Pušca vzor 52 [Cont. to page 80]



Comparing the 7,62mm nábojů ostrých vzor 52 & 7,62mm náboj vzor 43 (7,62mm obr. 1943g).

SAMOPAL VZOR 23 AND VZOR 25					
Caliber:	9mm Parabellum				
Overall Length:	27 in. stock extended; 17.5 in. stock folded				
Barrel Length:	11 in.				
Weight:	6.8 lbs. (unloaded)				
Magazine:	24 & 40 round detachable box				
Sights:	Front: Blade				
	Rear: Rotating drum with V notches for 100, 200, 300 & 400 meters				
ROF:	600 rpm				

CZECH SAMOPAL VZOR 23/VZOR 25

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Rock Island Auction

www.rockislandauction.com/ detail/73/3400/scarce-czech-model-23-fullyautomatic-class-iiinfa-smg

PARTS:

Sarco

www.e-sarcoinc.com/czechvz2325.aspx

Numrich Arms

www.gunpartscorp.com/gun-manufacturer/cz/ machine-guns-cz/sa-vz23

Apex Gun Parts

www.apexgunparts.com/machine-guns/submachine-guns/czech/czech-sa24-26.html



Bay of Pigs. A Cuban militiaman, armed with a Samopal vzot 25, examining an unexploded piece of ordnance.



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Women members of the Cuban militia armed with Samopal vzor 23s.

[Cont. from page 78]

and vzor 52/57. Semiautomatic carbines, they used a unique gas operating system in which employed an annular gas piston surrounding the barrel which reciprocated inside the forearm/handguard. Gas bled off from the barrel moved the piston rearward and a

LEHKÝ KULOMET VZOR 52			
Caliber:	7,62mm nábojů ostrých vzor 52		
Overall Length:	41 in.		
Barrel Length:	23 in.		
Weight:	17.6 lbs. (unloaded)		
Magazine:	30 rd. detachable box or 50 rd. metal belt		
Sights:	Front: Inverted V blade Rear: V notch aperture adj. from 200 to 1500 meters		
ROF:	900 rpm		



Cuban militia women armed with the Samopal vzor 25. Note how the buttplate of the folding stock is used as a forward pistol grip.

sleeve attached to the piston impinges directly upon the bolt carrier forcing it rearwards.

It utilized a ten round, charger loaded magazine and a 10.25-inch-long bayonet that hinges on the muzzle band and was folded into a recess on the right side of the forearm when not in use.

The vzor 52 was chambered for the 7,62mm nábojůostrých vzor 52 which consisted of a rimless, bottle necked case 45mm long whose 130 gr. FMJ Spitzer bullet was propelled to 2440 fps. The Czechs had replaced this cartridge with the Soviet patron 7,62mm obr. 1943g (7,62mm náboj vzor 43) and rechambered rifles were known as the vzor 52/57.⁶

It's not known how many vzor 52s Cuba purchased but in 1961 they ordered 400,000 spare magazines for them.⁷ Cuban supplied vzor 52 and vzor 52/57 eventually turned up in the hands of "national liberation" forces in Nicaragua, Grenada and Angola.

Two other Czech weapons that saw wide service with Cuban forces were the Samopal vzor 23 and vzor 25. Both were revolutionary designs that would influence submachine gun design for decades to come. Designed by Văclav Holek in 1948, the vzor 23 was the first submachine gun to use a bolt that envelopes the rear 6.5 inches of the barrel creating a shorter overall length and allowing the use of a relatively long eleven inch barrel.

The magazine was inserted into the pistol grip which was located forward on the receiver making it easier to fire one handed. Made from steel stampings, the buttstock was wood while the pistol grip and forearm were of high impact plastic. The only difference between them was that the vzor 23 had a fixed buttstock while the vzor 25's was folding metal with the buttplate acting as a forward pistol grip.

Photos from the Bay of Pigs Invasion (see below) indicate that large numbers of vzor 23/25 were issued to militia units. They also feature prominently in photographs of Cuban female soldiers and militia.

Both were replaced in Czech service by the vzor 24 and vzor 26 which were identical except they were chambered for the 7,62mm pistolový náboj vz. 48, an uploaded version of the Soviet Pistoletnyi patron 7,62x25 TT (7,62mm Tokarev).

Another Czech weapon the Cubans obtained was the Lehký kulomet vzor 52. A gas operated light machine gun that was fired from a bipod and could be fed by either a 30-round magazine or a 50-round metal belt. Chambered for the non-standard 7,62mm vzor 52 cartridge the Czechs were anxious to get rid of them.



KULOMET VZOR 53

Caliber:	7.92x57		
Overall Length:	43.5 in.		
Barrel Length:	29 in.		
Weight:	46 lbs. (without tripod)		
Feed System:	225 rd. metal link belt		
Sights:	Front: Hooded post Rear: Square notch adj. by leaf from 200 to 2000 meters		
ROF:	500–800 rpm		
PISTOLET PUL OBR. 1941G Caliber:	EMYOT SHPAGINA		
Colibor			
Galiber.	Pistoletnyi patron 7,62x25 TT		
Overall Length:	Pistoletnyi patron 7,62x25 TT 33.1 in.		
	33.1 in.		
Overall Length:	33.1 in. 10.6 in.		
Overall Length: Barrel Length:	33.1 in. 10.6 in. 8 lbs.		

ROF: 900 RPM



The Cubans used Czech Kulomemt vzor 53 machine guns in the ground and anti-aircraft roles.

The USSR also supplied the Cubans with PPSh 41 submachine guns. (Courtesy Morphy Auctions)

PISTOLET PULEMYOT SHPAGINA OBR. 1941G

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Morphy Auctions

www.morphyauctions.com/jamesdjulia/item/ lot-26-russian-ppsh-41-sub-machine-gun-34643/

Rock Island Auction Co.

www.rockislandauction.com/detail/59/298/ russian-ppsh41-machine-gun-762x25-mm

IMA (display gun)

www.ima-usa.com/products/ original-russian-wwii-type-ppsh-41-displaymachine-pistol-1?variant=26168753029

PARTS:

Sarco www.sarcoinc.com/ russian-smg-ppsh41-pps43-sling-original-wwii/

IMA

www.ima-usa.com/ pages/search-results?q=ppsh41

Numrich Arms

www.gunpartscorp.com/ gun-manufacturer/ppsh/ppsh-41

Apex Gun Parts www.apexgunparts.com/machine-guns/ sub-machine-guns/more/ppsh.html

The Cubans also obtained a number of Czech Kulomet vzor 53 machine guns. These gas-operated, belt fed, air cooled machine guns could serve in both the infantry support and anti-aircraft roles. It was designed to withstand five minutes of constant fire,



Cuban militia women armed with PPSh 41 submachine guns and vzor 52 carbines.

after which time the barrel had to be changed due to wear.

Another Soviet-bloc weapon seen in the hands of the Cuban militia was the ubiquitous Pistolet Pulemyot Shpagina obr. 1941g (PPSh 41) submachine gun.

It was most widely used of the WWII Soviet SMGs. Except for its bolt and barrel it was made of heavy gauge stamped steel, was a blowback operated, selective fire weapon that fired from an open bolt. The USSR distributed them worldwide to client states and revolutionary movements.

The USSR also supplied Cuba with artillery, antiaircraft weapons and armored vehicles.

Castro's closer ties with the USSR and Eastern Bloc nations caused great concern in the U.S. government who did not want a Soviet client state only 90 miles from the U.S. who, they rightly feared, would spread revolution throughout Latin America.

President Eisenhower had the National Security Council begin plans to "... bring about the replacement

VOLUME 75 - ISSUE 4

Members of the Brigada Asalto 2506 training with a 105mm recoilless rifle.

of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the US in such a manner to avoid any appearance of US intervention." Newly elected President John F. Kennedy approved of the plans to overthrow Castro and his administration began making plans.

exiles for an anti-Castro military unit known as Brigada Asalto 2506 (Assault Brigade 2506) who were trained at CIA facilities in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Panama and Guatemala. The unit eventually consisted of five infantry and one paratrooper battalion numbering 1,500 men supported by five T41 light tanks, eight "former U.S." B26 bombers and four supply ships.

Weapons of the Brigada Asalto 2506

The CIA supplied the Brigade with a variety of WWII era small arms including M1 Garand and Johnson Model 1941 rifles, M2 Carbines, M3A1 submachine guns, M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifles, M1919A4 and M1919A6 medium machine guns.

Plans called for amphibious and paratrooper landings on the Bahia de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs) located on the southern coast of Cuba. It was expected (hoped?) that a successful landing would encourage additional uprisings by discontented Cubans and members of the military.8 The invasion plan called for air attacks on Cuban military facilities and air bases [Cont. to page 84]

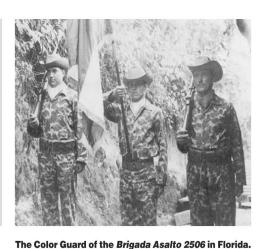
In April 1960, the CIA began recruiting Cuban

Bayonet: 8 in. triangular blade

Paratroopers of the	Brigade	2506 armed	with M3A1	submachine guns.

U.S. RIFLE, CA	LIBER .30, M1
Caliber:	Ball Cartridge, Caliber .30, M2
Overall Length:	43.5 in.
Barrel Length:	24 in.
Weight:	9.5 lbs.
Magazine:	8 round en bloc clip
Sights:	Front: Blade
	Rear: Aperture adj. from 200
	to 1,200 yards
Bayonet:	10 in. blade

JOHNSON SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLE Model of 1941			
Caliber:	.30 M2		
Overall Length:	45.7 in.		
Barrel Length:	22 in.		
Weight:	9.5 lbs. (unloaded)		
Magazine:	10 round, charger loaded rotary		
Sights:	Front: Protected blade		
	Rear: Aperture adj. from 100 to		
	1000 meters and for windage		
Povonoti	9 in triangular blada		



(Lange A)

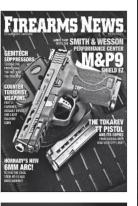


The flag of the anti-Castro Brigada Asalto 2506.



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U.S. CARBINE, CALIBER .30, M2				
Caliber:	Caliber .30 Cartridge, Carbine Ball M1			
Overall Length:	35.6 in.			
Barrel Length:	18 in.			
Weight:	5.5 lbs.			
Magazine:	15 & 30 round, detachable box			
Sights:	Front: Blade Rear: Aperture adj. from 100 to 300 yards			
Bayonet:	6 in. blade			
ROF:	750 rpm (full auto)			

U.S. SUBMACHINE-GUN, CALIBER .45, M3				
Caliber:	.45 ACP			
Overall Length:	22.75 in. (stock folded);			
	29.75 in. (stock extended)			
Barrel Length:	8 in.			
Weight:	8.2 lbs.			
Magazine:	30 round detachable box			
Sights:	Front: Blade			
	Rear: Aperture fixed for 100 yards			
ROF:	450 rpm			



A Brigade 2506 member armed with a scoped M1941 Johnson rifle.

Brigade 2506 members training with M1941 Johnson rifles.



Cuban militiamen armed with a mixture of arms including M1 Garands, M3A1 submachine guns, vzor 52 carbines and a Cristóbal Modelo 2 carbine.

[Cont. from page 82]

and diversionary landings of small units of troops to confuse the Cuban military as to the actual landing zone.

The Cuban security apparatus knew the invasion was coming, via their extensive secret intelligence network, as well as the loose talk by members of the brigade, some of which was heard in Miami, and was repeated in U.S. and foreign newspaper reports. The USSR sent military advisors to Cuba to assist in organizing Castro's military and militia to resist the expected invasion.⁹

On April 17th, Brigade B26 bombers attacked Cuban army barracks and airfields while infantry began landing from the four transport ships. Initially things looked promising, American planes struck at Cuban air force bases and destroyed Cuban planes on the ground.¹⁰ However, the tide quickly turned on the insurgents. While U.S. naval ships were close by they offered no support to the Brigade fighters. After a few air drops of supplies President Kennedy, anxious to cover up America's role, inexplicably called off all American air support, leaving the rebels stranded on the beach.¹¹

More than 200,000 Cuban army and militia units were called in swarming the invasion site to block the rebels from gaining the interior of the island. The Cuban Air Force rallied to strafe the landing site and the supply ships moored in the bay. The Brigade, which had almost no anti-aircraft weapons, could do little to stop them. Later in the day of the 17th, Fidel Castro himself arrived on the scene just as his militiamen had managed to fight the invaders to a stalemate. Cuba had some Soviet-made T-34 tanks, but the invaders M41 tanks evened up the odds. Castro

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U. S. AUTOMATIC RIFLE,					
CALIBER .30, M1918A2					
Caliber:	.30 M2				
Overall Length:	47.8 in.				
Barrel Length:	24 in.				
Weight:	20 lbs. (unloaded)				
Magazine:	20 rd. detachable box				
Sights:	Front: Blade				
	Rear: I I notch & aperture :				

Sights: Front: Blade Rear: U notch & aperture adj. from 100 to 1500 yards.

U. S. AUTOMATIC RIFLE, CALIBER .30, M1918A2

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Morphy Auctions www.morphyauctions.com/ jamesdjulia/item/52501-1-397/

IMA (display gun)

www.ima-usa.com/products/original-u-sbrowning-1918a2-bar-display-gun-constructedwith-original-parts

Rock Island Auction Co.

https://www.rockislandauction.com/ detail/75/2574/model-1918a2-bar-class-iiinfafully-automatic-machine-gun-1918-dated-barrel-1?variant=44584816325

PARTS:

Sarco www.sarcoinc.com/machine-gun-parts/bar/

Numrich Arms

www.gunpartscorp.com/search#query=BAR

IMA

www.ima-usa.com/pages/ search-results/bar%20m1918

MACHINE GUN, CALIBER .30, BROWNING, MODEL 1919A4

WANT TO BUY ONE?

Morphy Auctions www.morphyauctions.com/jamesdjulia/ item/1051-369/

Rock Island Auction www.rockislandauction.com/detail/ 71/1681/saginaw-1919a4

PARTS:

Ravenna Armory

www.ravennaarmory.com/

Sarco

www.sarcoinc.com/machine-gun-parts/1919a4/

IMA

www.ima-usa.com/pages/ search-results/browning%201919

Numrich Arms

www.gunpartscorp.com/gun-manufacturer/ us-military/machine-guns-usm/1919a4-2

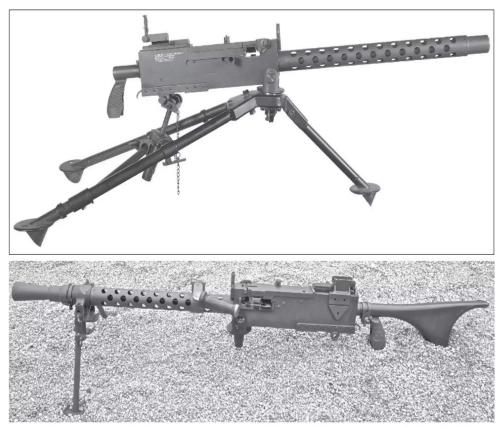
MACHINE GUN, CALIBER .30, BROWNIN	G,
MODEL 1919A4	

Caliber:	.30 M2
Overall Length:	37.9 in.
Barrel Length:	24 in.
Weight:	31 lbs. (gun, unloaded); 14 lbs. (tripod)
Feed System:	250 rd. disintegrating metal link belt
Sights:	Front: Blade Rear: Aperture adj. from 200 to 2400 yards
ROF:	500 rpm

MACHINE GUN, CALIBER .30, BROWNING, MODEL 1919A6

Caliber:	.30 M2
Overall Length:	53 in.
Barrel Length:	24 in.
Weight:	31 lbs. (gun, unloaded)
Feed System: 250 rd. disintegrating metal link belt	
Sights: Front: Blade Rear: Aperture adj. from 200 t	
	2400 yards
ROF:	500 rpm





The Brigade's standard machine guns were Browning M1919A4 and M1919A6.

personally took charge of the defense, commanding troops, and air forces.

For two days, the Cubans fought the invaders to a standstill. The intruders were dug in and had heavy guns, but had no reinforcements and were running low on supplies. The Cubans were not as well armed or trained but had the heavy artillery, anti-aircraft batteries, supplies and the morale that comes from defending their home. Although airstrikes from Central America continued to be effective and killed many

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One of the landing craft used by the Brigade 2506.



FN-FAL armed militiamen marching through Havana on the way to the Bay of Pigs.



Castro's forces had numbers of Soviet artillery pieces which the Brigade could not counter.

Cuban troops on their way to the fray, the invaders were pushed steadily back.

Two of the B26 bombers were shot down, one of the transport ships was sunk while the remaining three barely made it out to sea. Without resupply or air support, the men of Brigade managed to hold out for two



Map showing the location of the Bay of PIgs.



A Cuban militiaman stands next to a downed B-26 bomber.



The Brigade had little in the way of anti-aircraft weapons than a few dual mount .50 caliber M2 machine guns.



Cuban student militia marching off to fight at the Bay of Pigs.

days, until nearly all were either killed or captured by pro-Castro forces. When the smoke cleared, 114 members of the Brigade had died and 1,189 were captured while Cuban casualties numbered over 2,600.

The Brigade prisoners were treated harshly and numbers of them were executed. On December 21,



Cuban militiamen armed with vzor 52 carbines meet with Fidel.





Cuban militiamen armed with FN-FAL rifles.



Fidel Castro observing the fighting from the protection of a Soviet T-34 tank.



Cuban forces had numbers of Russian supplied T-34 tanks.

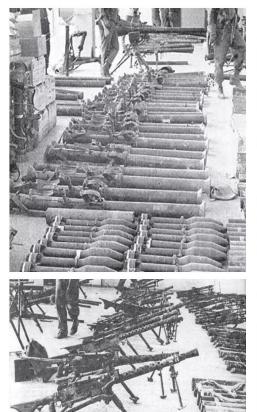


Cuban police displaying M1941 Johnson rifles captured from anti-Castro rebels.

The Cubans had large numbers of Soviet antiaircraft guns.



Brigade 2506 soldiers taken prisoner by Castro's forces.



The Cubans displaying weapons captured from the Brigade 2606 at the Bay of Pigs.

Castro addressing an enthusiastic crowd of militia after their victory at the Bay of Pigs.





Fidel showing off weapons captured from the Brigade 2506 including Johnson rifles.

1962, Castro and James Donovan, a US lawyer aided by Milan Miskovsky, a CIA legal officer, signed an agreement to exchange 1,113 prisoners for US\$53 million in food and medicine, sourced from private donations and from companies. On December 24, 1962, some prisoners were flown to Miami, others following by ship, plus about 1,000 family members also allowed to leave Cuba.

I would like to thank the following for providing materials used to prepare this report: Emily Robinson, Joel Kolander, Sarah Stoltzfus, Tim Hawkins, Kristina Demilt, Stuart Mowbray, Joe Puelo, Garry James, Capt. Monty Mendenhall, Frank Iannamico (www. machinegunbooks.com), John Rasalov, Vincent Scarlata, Century International Arms, Rock Island Auction Co. & Morphy Auctions.

- 1 The Bay of Pigs disaster. 2 The United States secretly funded Castro's forces between late 1957 and the middle 1958. No less than \$50,000 was delivered in hopes of instilling sympa-thies to the U.S. amongst the rebels.
- 3 Many of the FALs purchased by Batista were "sanitized" by removing the Cuban crest which left a circular cut in the magazine housing.
- 4 Bastista and his family reportedly took \$300 million dollars with them. 5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escambray_rebellion
- 6 One reason for the unpopularity of these rifles with Cuban militia was that they were often issued the wrong ammunition for them.

www.military-today.com/firearms/vz_52.htm 8 Small scale uprisings in support of the invasion occurred around Cuba but

- were quickly put down 9 Anticipating an invasion, Che Guevara stressed the importance of an armed civilian populace, stating: "all of the Cuban people must become a guerrilla
- army; each and every Cuban must learn to handle and if necessary use firearms in defense of the nation. 10 Warned about the invasion the Cubans moved many of their aircraft to dif-
- ferent locations.
- 11 Reportedly some of the .30 ammunition air dropped to the rebels was in five round stripper clips and could not be used in their M1 Garand rifles.

ENDNOTES:





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VOLUME 75- ISSUE 4









PAGE 92

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PAGE 94





PAGE 96

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VOLUME 75- ISSUE 4



VOLUME 75 - ISSUE 4

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PAGE 101





VOLUME 75 - ISSUE 4

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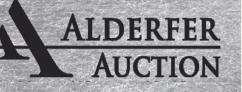
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