

SHOOTING

Illustrated

FEBRUARY | 2021

A Guide to
Modern Body Armor

The Glock G17
And The Concealed-Carry Revolution



Tested

Beretta 92X F Compact

Ruger American
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WCP320

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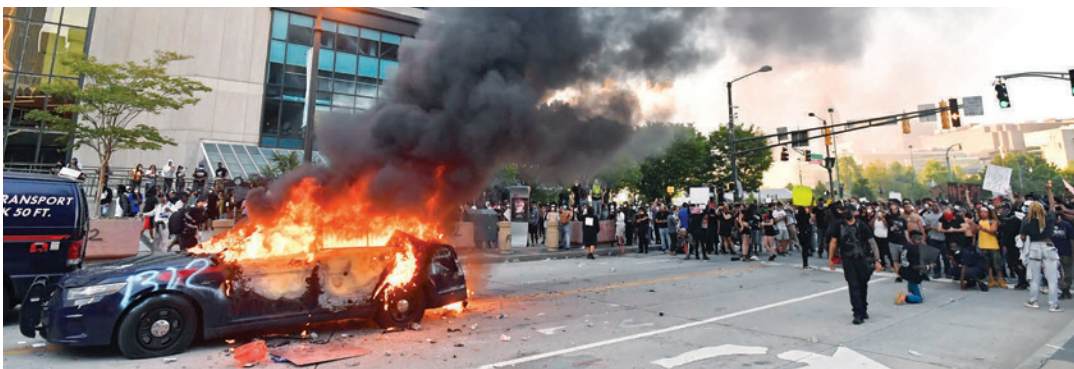
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NRA™ Official Journal of the National Rifle Association of America

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

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10 Reasons to Consider the .22 LR for Personal Defense

The .22 LR is often an overlooked, but effective option for many shooters when it comes to armed defense. It may not be the most powerful round on the market, but there are several reasons it can be a good choice for those looking to defend themselves. Gunsite instructor Ed Head offers 10 reasons to consider the .22 LR for personal protection.

RICHARD MANN



Head to Head: 5.56 NATO vs. 6.8 SPC

Thanks in large part to a lengthy lifespan in the U.S. military, the 5.56 NATO is easily considered one of the most widely used rifle cartridges in the world. Some folks haven't always appreciated the punch it packs, however, which is why other cartridges, like the 6.8 SPC, were developed. Richard Mann compares the 5.56 NATO to the 6.8 SPC to see which cartridge holds the advantage.

RICHARD MANN



Is This The Ultimate Lever Gun for Self-Defense?

There's no question the lever gun has had a storied history in the U.S. among warfighters and civilians alike. While it may not be the most popular option on the market today for self-defense, the lever-action rifle holds real potential for personal protection. Richard Mann modifies his Marlin 1894 CSBL to prove just how capable the lever gun can be for defensive purposes.

News

SAAMI Announces the Acceptance of Three New Cartridges



Glendale Heights (IL) PD Adopts Beretta APX Pistol

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9 mm Pistol



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

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Ammo Mania!

I really enjoyed the great advice of Richard Mann's "Ammo in Bulk, Part 2" article in the December issue. I've long been an advocate of the old adage "keeping your powder dry." There are stories out there of sealed World War II ammo that is still reliable. My family saves me desiccant packets that are included with purchased items like clothes. In addition, we bought a 1.5-pound container of flower-drying crystals (\$5-\$6) at the local craft store. Whenever it's time to load up a new ammo can, I tie a tablespoon of this desiccant in a coffee filter and drop it in. These various desiccant packets also find their way into my gun cases and nylon "storage" holsters. It's a frequent occurrence for a friend to pull out a seldom used firearm only to discover surface rust, which can ruin your day.

In addition to labeling the purchase date on ammo boxes, I include the vendor name and price, then annotate a tally sheet for each type of ammo. The tally sheets keep me from spending too much on the next box (there are some outrageous prices out there) and lets me know which caliber I'm running short on. Since I buy ammo by the box (instead of the case), the tally sheet also tells me which box needs to be shot next.

*Jerry L
Irwin, PA*



RICHARD MANN

Axing a Question

I enjoyed Steve Adelman's December 2020 column, "Rifle Ready," with the quote from MAJ Rogers' Standing Orders. My question, however, has nothing at all to do with what was in the column, but rather with one of the items in the photograph: the hand axe/tomahawk. I'm curious about the use(s) for the 'hawk. As a life-long outdoorsman, I've used hand axes for many purposes, and as a re-enactor I've used and thrown a 'hawk.

My impression is that if I ever get in a self-defense situation requiring the application of a 'hawk, I've already messed up. But, I've seen them advertised in various locations that are supposedly for tactical purposes, and was curious about their use in modern defensive applications.

*John Unger
Huntsville, TX*

Tomahawks have found their way in and out of our military use since before we were the United States. I owned a couple during my own service time and though I deployed with one several times, I don't recall ever carrying it on my body-worn kit. Instead, I carried it in my ruck [for utilitarian purposes] on those rare occasions where I could afford the extra weight. It isn't that I wouldn't want one in-hand if I needed it for

Correspondence is welcomed and encouraged

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offensive or defensive use—I'd defend myself with a 'hawk over a knife any day of the week. But, I had many other, better, tools and limited real estate to work with on my gear.

I can't speak for the various tactical tomahawks advertised and sometimes appearing in modern combat lore. No one I worked with over my 22 years in uniform carried one for fighting purposes, and though some anecdotal reports exist about their use in the Middle East when stealth was required, I suspect those were at best very limited instances, if not greatly exaggerated—that's just my gut feeling.

I use tomahawks fairly heavily in my decidedly non-martial life now, mainly because they're just plain handy and the mechanical advantage tomahawks provide over traditional hatchets is tremendous. I prefer those with hammer heads opposing the blade because my ratio of needing to hammer things versus skull cracking is 10 to 0. The 'hawk featured in the article was crafted by a friend and former teammate of mine through his company, Bobcat Tactical, in conjunction with another friend's company, Bulletproof Blades. The handle's curve provides increased striking force/torque than straight hickory handles and the G10 grip is nearly impossible to lose traction on.

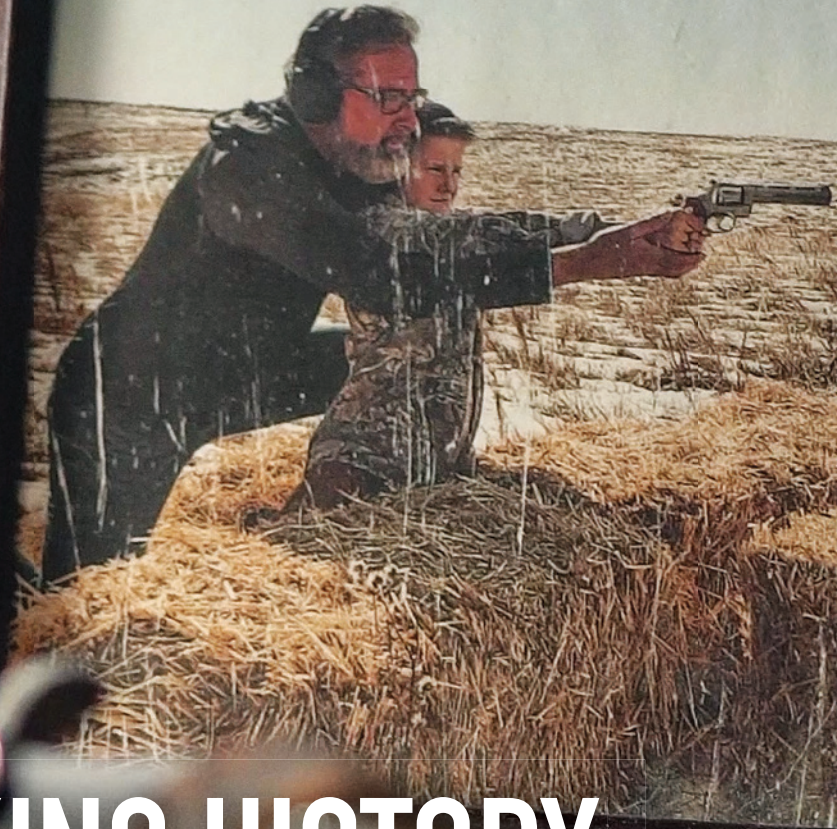
—Steve Adelman

Dotting Handguns

Tamara Keel's column on handgun red-dot sights in the December issue was excellent. Another point in favor of red-dot sights on handguns is, it's not like it's either iron sights or the red dot. With suppressor-height backup iron sights, red dot failure is just a minor thing. You are no worse off than if you had just the iron sights.

With my eyes, I simply can't get a sharp focus on the front sight unless I tilt my head back and look through the bifocal lens. So, the only impediment I see to red dots is the cost, which have been coming down for a while. Red dots on pistol slides today are analogous to scopes on military rifles not too many years ago.

*Liston Matthews
via ShootingIllustrated.com*



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On the evening of Nov. 3, 2020, in Lauderdale Lakes, Fla., a concealed-carry permit holder was forced to draw and use his firearm to protect himself and another person. The victims were approached by two armed men who attempted to rob them. Fearing for his life, the concealed-carry permit holder shot at the suspected robbers, wounding one of them. The suspects fled the scene, driving a couple of miles away before stopping to call 911. The Broward Sheriff Fire Rescue took the wounded accomplice to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The second robbery suspect was taken into custody by the Broward Sheriff's Office and is now facing a felony murder charge since his alleged accomplice died during the commission of the crime. (sun-sentinel.com, Lauderdale Lakes, Fla., 11/3/20)


A stop for late-night takeout took a very unusual turn Nov. 29, 2020. A 53-year-old man had walked into the restaurant, went behind the counter, announced to the employees that they were being robbed and demanded everyone's money. Before anyone could react, a 27-year-old, who was talking on his phone, entered the business. The alleged robber then pointed his gun at the man and demanded his phone. The customer, who has a valid permit to carry, drew his own firearm and shot the perpetrator, striking him in the neck and killing him. The incident is under investigation, but police announced that no charges had been filed against the victim. (nbcphiladelphia.com, Philadelphia, Pa., 11/30/20)

Three armed individuals forced their way into a home in Baton Rouge, La., on the night of Nov. 20, 2020. The homeowner was able to get his gun and fire at the invaders, striking two of them. All three intruders fled the scene, driving to a nearby gas station. According to the Baton Rouge Police Department, one of the men died of his injuries, while the other one was treated at a local hospital and later booked into the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison on charges of first-degree murder and home invasion. The third suspect was also booked as a fugitive from West Baton Rouge Parish. (wafb.com, Baton Rouge, La., 11/20/20)

A construction worker noticed two men trying to steal an air compressor from a home he was working on. The worker confronted one of the men, who jumped into a nearby gray sedan with the air compressor. Another man pulled his gun and pointed it at the construction worker, and then the man with the air compressor dropped it and began firing at the worker. The worker dropped to the ground and

shot back at the suspects while they fled the scene. Upon arrival, the Memphis Fire Department verified that no one at the scene was hurt, though everyone was reportedly "shaken up." Memphis police found seven cartridge cases in the street and driveway of the scene. No charges have been brought against the victim, whom police say appeared to have been justified in the shooting. (wreg.com, Memphis, Tenn., 10/30/20)

A homeowner was forced to defend himself against a suspected burglar he found hiding inside his closet on the morning of Nov. 12, 2020. When the homeowner opened the door, he saw a man he didn't know, holding his wallet and a pair of his shorts, staring back at him. The intruder then became agitated and combative, causing the homeowner to defend himself by firing shots at him. According to Van Buren Police Sgt. Jonathan Wear, the suspect was shot in the leg and taken to a hospital for treatment of his wounds. Once released, the suspect would be arrested and face burglary charges. The homeowner is not facing any charges. (4029tv.com, Van Buren, Ark., 11/12/20)

On Dec. 10 in Maplewood, a suburb of St. Louis, Mo., a clerk was alone in the store after hours when a man came in and threatened him with a gun. The employee was able to defend himself with his own firearm, shooting the robbery suspect three times. When the police arrived, they found the suspect lying on the floor of the employee breakroom. He was transported to a local hospital, where he underwent surgery for his injuries. Police are not seeking charges against the clerk because he acted in self-defense. (wsiltv.com and foac-pac.org, Maplewood, Mo., 12/10/20) 

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By Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President

It's The Criminals, Stupid.

Nearly every big city in America is experiencing a tragic, senseless and preventable violent crime wave of historic proportions.

In Chicago, gun crime is up nearly 60 percent over last year. When asked about it, Mayor Lori Lightfoot blamed "not enough access to the things that we know build healthy and strong families and communities." She also trotted out the tired old lie that neighboring states with so-called "lax gun laws" are to blame for the criminal violence plaguing her own city.

In New York City, illegal shootings have doubled over the last year and homicide is up 33 percent. Mayor Bill de Blasio's response was to blame COVID-19 and then disband his city's anti-crime unit.

In Houston, homicide is up over 46 percent, primarily driven by gang and drug-related murders, as well as the city's revolving-door justice system that keeps criminals out of jail and on the streets. The response from Mayor Sylvester Turner and his police chief has been to lock arms with Michael Bloomberg and attack NRA members and law-abiding gun owners.

But here's the dirty little secret that anti-gun politicians and their allies in the media won't tell you. They have the power right now—today—to clean up their cities, save hundreds of lives and put a virtual end to gun crime. All they have to do is enforce existing gun laws. That's it. Do your job.

We know it works, because it worked to near perfection in Richmond, Va., in the late 1990s. Back then, Richmond's homicide rate was out of control and among the highest in the nation. Enter Project Exile—a simple and enormously effective program that put a laser focus on the root of the problem: criminals with guns. Under Project Exile, if local police arrested a drug dealer, gang banger or anyone committing crime with a firearm in their possession, then that criminal was immediately subject to prosecution under federal gun laws and stiff, mandatory prison time if found guilty.

The NRA helped fund an aggressive public-awareness campaign—billboards, radio ads and posters—putting every criminal on notice that if they were caught committing a crime with a firearm, they were going to prison.

The combination of strict enforcement, plus community and public awareness, soon reversed Richmond's prevailing criminal culture. In the first year alone, Project Exile resulted in the arrest and conviction of 247 gun criminals, the seizure of over 400 illegally possessed guns and a staggering 33 percent reduction in Richmond's homicide rate. Armed robberies dropped 30 percent. A year later, the homicide rate declined another 21 percent—nearly half of what it had been prior to Project Exile.

Even Tim Kaine, who was mayor of Richmond at the time (yes, the same Tim Kaine who is now an anti-gun U.S. senator from Virginia) admitted, "Project Exile is driving the crime rate down, and that is starting to make Richmonders believers again."

Meanwhile, then-Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder (yes, that Eric Holder) demeaned Project Exile as a "cookie-cutter approach to reducing gun violence" that wouldn't necessarily work in other cities. Which, of course, is a lie. Criminals in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Houston, New York and other crime-plagued cities are subject to the same federal laws that were used to save lives in Richmond.

Recently, the acting U.S. attorney in Brooklyn announced an effort to launch a Project Exile-like program to combat rising homicides. Tragically, he's being met with the same nonsensical opposition that's plagued many cities across the nation.

Amanda Chase, a federal defender in Brooklyn, is doing her level best to protect criminals at the expense of innocent New Yorkers. According to her, "These ongoing efforts to federalize local crimes accomplish nothing more than securing the removal of individuals from their communities and undermining the stability of those communities."

Really? Removing violent criminals from city streets undermines the stability of the community? Does she actually think the mom, sitting at home, wondering if her child will make it back safely from school, prefers the "stability" of rampant criminal violence? Does she think New Yorkers forced to navigate armed gangs and drug dealers just to get to work or to shop at the local store wouldn't rather those criminals be arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated?

The question for mayors of every city plagued by criminal gun violence is obvious: How many more have to die before you take the one, simple, proven action that will undeniably save lives?

You can do it right now, Mayor de Blasio, before one more young man or woman becomes a preventable statistic. Enforce the laws on the books and prosecute the criminals. Protect the innocent, Mayor Lightfoot. Safeguard your city, Mayor Turner. You have no excuse.

In fact, your willful negligence can only mean one thing: You don't see the human faces behind your rising homicide statistics as much more than political fodder in your warped crusade against the Second Amendment. You'd rather take guns from the law-abiding than save lives. Your words and inaction speak volumes—and it's a sick, tragic message, to be sure.

Wayne LaPierre



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By Carolyn D. Meadows
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Why They Fear Us

As we brace for impending battles for our freedom, it's worth remembering what gun-control proponents fear most about Americans who cherish their God-given, and Second Amendment-protected, right to keep and bear arms.

First, they fear the Second Amendment because it is a cornerstone of liberty. It is practical and unmoving. In contrast, the Left prefers and advocates for judges and legislators who will, when they can, treat the U.S. Constitution as a "living document" they can reinterpret to dead letters if they so desire. They want the ability to put a gravestone over your rights, but can't because the NRA—most importantly all of you members—are standing in their way.

The gun-control crowd can't stand that our right to keep and bear arms has been a fundamental part of American DNA since before 1776. They've tried many times to rewrite the history books, aiming to erase the truth that this right was always cherished and put to daily use by the American populace. They've done this because if they can revise history, then they can shape the future behind the false claim that this right isn't an individual right at all.

Those who seek to take away our freedom also don't like that the Second Amendment of the U.S. Bill of Rights protects a universal human right to self-preservation. The fact that it empowers women, minorities, senior citizens and everyone else is appalling to the Left, as this individual freedom emboldens and fosters a free people, no matter what their individual characteristics might be. Gun-control advocates want control, but are often stopped because the Second Amendment fundamentally undermines their attempt to turn people into submissive subjects of a controlling state.

They also fear that more gun owners will stand together. This is a big reason why they so often attack the NRA. They fear the massive voting block our membership represents. They fear that the NRA has continued to grow. With over 7.5 million new gun owners in 2020 alone, according to figures gathered by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, gun-control advocates are now very afraid.

This is why even Michael Bloomberg didn't put a lot of emphasis on gun-control before last November's election. They didn't want to rile America's 100-million-plus gun owners, because they know that

an overwhelming majority of American citizens want their freedom left alone.

Anti-freedom advocates also fear the simple, but very profound, truth that gun ownership leads to a safer nation, as individuals can protect themselves from predators on our streets and in their homes until help can arrive. This autonomy is directly opposite to how gun-control groups would like to reshape America.

And make no mistake, politicians like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris aren't kidding when they say they want to fundamentally reshape America. They want to create a subservient citizenry that begs for government handouts and carveouts, that has to cower to thieves, rapists and murderers while they wait for the police to get there. They don't care about you; they care about control.

LET NEW AND POTENTIAL GUN OWNERS HEAR YOUR ENTHUSIASM, YOUR LOVE OF FREEDOM, AS YOU TELL THEM ABOUT THIS RIGHT AND HOW YOU PRACTICE IT.

It is important, right now, to keep this in mind because we do have the power to protect our freedom if we stand boldly together with our shoulders back, our eyes wide open and with a kind, strong and stubborn insistence in our voices and hearts that our civil rights, including our all-important Second Amendment rights, will not be taken from us.

In essence, they are afraid of us because we are free. Never forget that and don't let it go. They are afraid; we are not. We might get frustrated, even angry, when a court or legislature imperils our freedom, but that is not fear—rather, it is our American spirit rising up to the challenge.

With this strength, let new and potential gun owners hear your enthusiasm, your love of freedom, as you tell them about this right and how you practice it. Offer to take others to the range. Let them experience how empowering it is to use this freedom. And then talk to them about joining the greatest organization ever seen for protecting this bedrock of human freedom, the National Rifle Association.

Carolyn D. Meadows



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By Jason Ouimet
Executive Director,
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Trump Rule Restores Banking Fairness

In late November, the Trump administration provided a lifeline to the gun industry with a rulemaking that would restore access to the products and services of America's largest banks.

Modern commercial activity depends on tools like payment processing and lines of credit.

Gun-control advocates have sought to exploit this reality by depriving firearms businesses of the financial services they need to survive.

After all, without companies producing and selling firearms and ammunition, there can be no American gun owners.

The most infamous example of this tactic occurred during the Obama/Biden administration and involved the government itself.

Following the economic crisis of 2008, which resulted in taxpayer bailouts of large national banks, Congress passed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 (Dodd-Frank). The act purported to improve the resiliency of the U.S. financial markets and to protect consumers from abuse.

In practice, however, the Obama/Biden administration used a supposed initiative against banking fraud to target industries that offended their sensibilities.

Dubbed Operation Choke Point (OCP), the scheme was a coordinated effort by banking regulators purportedly to spur the finance industry to more actively manage risks posed by their customers.

Revelations by watchdogs, congressional investigators, and litigation, however, demonstrated the regulators were pressuring banks to reject credit-worthy customers in legitimate industries on the basis of the regulators' own ideological objections to them.

These included sales of firearms and ammunition, both of which were singled out on a list of "high-risk" merchants the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation provided to banks in a 2011 guidance document.

In the circular reasoning of OCP, it wasn't just the businesses' legality or financial performance that created the hazard, but the "reputation risk" they supposedly posed to banks by provoking the ire of anti-gun activists.

The worst of the activism, however, was coming from the regulators themselves. They made it understood that the banks could face expensive and damaging investigations for serving disfavored clients.

Banks took heed and soon began avoiding the "high-risk" industries entirely.

Financially sound and well-performing firearm companies suddenly found themselves dropped by their banks or refused new banking services.

The Obama/Biden administration backpedaled when the scheme came to light. The 2011 guidance was retroactively modified

and new guidance was issued emphasizing case-by-case risk management, rather than debanking of entire industries. The regulators denied wrongdoing, insisting the banks misunderstood their intentions.

Yet, anti-gun activists subsequently embraced OCP's tactics, openly calling for discrimination against the firearms industry.

In 2018, for example, *The New York Times* published an essay that called for the finance sector to "effectively set new rules for the sales of guns in America," arguing, "Collectively they have more leverage over the gun industry than any lawmaker." The essay noted that various payment processors had dropped gun companies entirely and that banks could follow suit, including by dictating what and to whom firearm companies could sell.

After Democrats took over various congressional committees in the 2018 midterms, hearings were held to publicly berate and browbeat officers of large national banks, including for serving firearm-industry clients. While the Obama/Biden Administration tried to disavow OCP as a conspiracy theory, newly-emboldened Democrats were unabashedly insisting that banks had a "corporate responsibility" to curb their relationships with the gun industry.

All the while, firearm-related businesses found their options for financial services shrinking.

The Trump Justice Department officially repudiated OCP in 2017. The new rulemaking by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) goes even further to correct this injustice.

Based on the Dodd-Frank mandate for "fair treatment of customers," it would require large banks to provide access to all the products they offer to every law-abiding customer who is able to satisfy predetermined "quantitative, impartial risk-based standards." The rule would also prohibit activists and federally-chartered banks from conspiring to deprive otherwise-eligible customers of financial services for political reasons.

Under Obama/Biden, and through the subsequent efforts of anti-gun activists, the finance industry was weaponized as a tool of political oppression.

The Trump administration rulemaking, by contrast, encourages banks to promote lawful economic activity and manage financial risk, while leaving policy decisions about what sorts of businesses are permissible in the first place to the political branches and the U.S. Constitution.

This is exactly why all patriotic Americans should support it ... and why you can expect the gun-control lobby and their fellow travelers in banking boardrooms to vigorously oppose it.



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After Lackluster Returns,
Some Urge Democrats to

DITCH GUN CONTROL





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By Jason Quimet
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA



The 2020 election may not have turned out the way gun owners had hoped. The good news is, it didn't quite turn out the way the anti-gun radicals had hoped, either. Moreover, the Democrats' lackluster results have some of the party faithful questioning their devotion to gun control altogether.

The week before the election, The Cook Political Report declared that House Democrats were "poised to expand [their] majority by 10 to 15 seats." Their prediction for the Senate was similar, calling Democrats "the clear favorites to take back the Senate." On November 1, polling aggregator FiveThirtyEight gave Democrats a 75 percent chance of gaining control of the Senate and reported that the most-likely scenario was that Democrats would control the chamber by a margin of 52-48. Nate Silver's outfit also predicted the Democrats to expand their House majority by six seats. On October 16, *Inside Elections* carried the headline "Democrats Poised for a Sweep" over a story that declared "in the House, Democrats will retain and expand their majority" and peddled a scenario where Democrats gained "10 or 11" Senate seats.

The Democrats managed to underperform all expectations. Rather than acquiring new seats in the House, the Democrats had lost at least 10 seats as of press time. Democrats also failed to secure a Senate majority. As of press time, the Republicans had secured 50 Senate seats to the Democratic caucus's 48. Pending the outcome of two runoff elections in Georgia, the best the Democrats could hope for is a 50-50 Senate. Summing up the party's performance in state races, a November 28 New York Times headline blared: "How Democrats Suffered Crushing Down-Ballot Losses Across America."

In the aftermath of the Democrats' disappointing election results, the party devolved to finger-pointing and recrimination. Intemperate messaging, rather than foolhardy policy positions, became the primary scapegoat.

In perhaps the most high-profile incident of Democrat post-election frustration, Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.) criticized House leadership during a November 5 conference call. After barely surviving a stiff challenge from NRA-endorsed Virginia State Delegate Nick Freitas (R), Spanberger was livid with her caucus. The freshman representative stated, "I think that we need to be pretty clear about the fact that Tuesday, from a congressional standpoint, it was a failure." Spanberger went on to criticize Democrats' "defund the police" and "socialist" messaging. In concluding, the congresswoman noted, "If we are classifying [the election] as a success from a congressional standpoint, we are going to get f***** torn apart in 2022."

While much of the attention has gone to the Democrats' imprudent messaging on law enforcement and socialism, a small handful of adept observers have taken notice of another losing issue for Democrats—gun control.

The day following the election, former Democratic U.S. Senator from Missouri, Claire McCaskill, went on MSNBC to offer her take on her party's missteps. McCaskill cited guns as an issue where Democrats had alienated voters, adding, "as we circled those issues we left voters behind and Republicans dove in with a vengeance... we also need to stop acting like we're smarter than everyone else, because we're not."

However, no one was more pointed or astute in their criticism of the Democratic Party's embrace of gun control than Vox co-founder Matthew Yglesias. In a piece titled, "National Democrats' misguided re-embrace of gun control" posted to his website Slow Boring, the former Center for American Progress (CAP) wonk laid out the case that national Democrats should abandon their fanatical support for gun control. As Yglesias put it, "The juice here just isn't worth the squeeze."

Recalling his time at CAP in the mid-2000s, Yglesias noted, "the feeling was that post-2004 Democrats had decided

that [gun control] was not an issue worth losing votes over." According to the former CAP analyst, this was a calculated move based on multiple factors.

First, Yglesias noted, "Even gun regulation measures that poll well did not seem to really motivate voters while opposition to gun regulations was clearly motivating" and that "progressives themselves did not think this was a particularly important issue compared" to a host of others.

This is sometimes referred to as the "enthusiasm" or "intensity" gap between gun-rights supporters and gun-control backers. Political observers have often credited this gap as the determinant factor in 2013's gun owner victory over President Barack Obama's effort to criminalize the private transfer of firearms.

Even professional gun-control advocates understand this reality. In 2012, gun-control advocates commissioned a group of DC consulting firms to craft a gun-control messaging playbook. The final document, *Preventing Gun Violence Through Effective Messaging*, conceded, "There is an intensity gap that has built up over years. In the general public, those who view themselves as supporters of gun rights are more deeply committed to and emotionally invested in their position than those supporting stronger gun violence prevention measures."

Second, Yglesias pointed out that "The kinds of gun control measures that poll well are not the kind of thing that would significantly move the needle in terms of US gun deaths." Taking a swipe at bans on commonly-owned semi-automatic firearms, the writer noted, "homicides are mostly committed by normal, inexpensive easily concealed handguns, not by scary assault weapons." In a challenge to so-called "universal" background check laws, the left-wing activist cited a 2016 U.S. Department of Justice survey of prison inmates that showed they mostly obtained their firearms from the black market or from family or friends.

Yglesias made clear that it's not that he believes gun control can't work. Rather, the progressive activist believes that the severe confiscatory gun control necessary to impact violence perpetrated with firearms is not politically palatable.

Yglesias's contention is similar to that expressed in a 2013 National Institute of Justice memo that examined the various gun controls

proposed in the wake of the high-profile shooting in Newtown, Conn. Firearm turn-ins, bans on commonly-owned semi-automatic firearms, magazine capacity restrictions, and "universal" background checks were all determined to be ineffective absent further extreme gun-control measures, such as confiscation and firearms registration.

To bolster his argument that national Democrats should abandon gun control, Yglesias pointed to how the party's conscious efforts to shy away from gun control from 2004-2012 coincided with a period of electoral success. Recalling that time period, he noted, "That strategy of agenda-suppression largely worked across the 2006 and 2008 cycles. It largely delivered its intended electoral benefits. Democrats ran vocally pro-gun nominees in jurisdictions where that seemed appropriate, and national leaders basically didn't talk about guns so it was not a salient part of the party brand."

A 2005 *Boston Globe* item titled, "Democrats Recast their Gun Control Image," chronicled how both Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chair Rahm Emanuel urged candidates to moderate to reflect their districts on the gun control. By January 2009, the Democrats enjoyed a 58-seat majority in the U.S. Senate and controlled the U.S. House by a margin of 255-178.

Yglesias's piece isn't perfect. There is a strong case to be made that the Democrats' move away from gun control began four years earlier than Yglesias contends, following the 2000 presidential election. In 2002, the *Washington Post* reported on a Democratic Senate caucus confab "at which several senators talked about how the party's position on gun control was killing Democrats, especially in rural states, and urged a retreat." Notably, the more moderate senators were chastised for their sensible suggestion by one Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.).

Moreover, there was a shift evident in the 2004 Democratic Party Platform. The document stated, "We will protect Americans' Second Amendment right to own firearms..." This recognition that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep and bear arms continued in the 2008 and 2012 platforms.

The position was abandoned for the 2016 and 2020 platforms.


Yglesias also neglected to explore an important piece of the Democratic gun control puzzle—the Democratic donor class's affinity for the issue.

In recent years, wealthy Democratic donors have poured money into gun-control groups and causes, granting gun control proponents an outsized influence in the Democratic coalition. That these well-heeled elites would prefer Democrats to spend their finite time and political capital on gun control rather than on raising the minimum wage, a more robust social safety net, an increase in the capital gains tax, or other progressive priorities that might affect their bottom line should come as no surprise to anyone.

The most conspicuous example of this mega-donor influence has been billionaire media tycoon and gun-control financier Michael Bloomberg's political spending. However, the 2020 election provided strong evidence that there are limits to the electoral efficacy of this type of largesse.

Bloomberg's failed 104-day campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination cost more than \$1 billion dollars. For all of that cash, the only jurisdiction the anti-gun magnate carried was American Samoa. During the general election, Bloomberg vowed to spend \$100 million to flip Florida for Joe Biden. Donald Trump improved on his 2016 margin of victory in the Sunshine State by two points. The former New York City mayor also spent millions in Ohio and Texas to no avail. Moreover, as if to admit that anti-gun spending wouldn't work in 2020, Bloomberg's gun-control group Everytown for Gun Safety targeted swing district candidates with mailers that didn't even mention guns or gun control.

NRA has been and continues to be a nonpartisan organization that endorses politicians across the political spectrum who work to defend the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. Cynics should consider that as recently as the 2010 election, NRA endorsed 61 Democratic House candidates and two Democratic Senate candidates.

Time will tell if Democrats will heed the wisdom of the pragmatists in their party and once again work to remove their gun-control albatross. If they do not, gun owners will continue to hold them accountable. 

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By Todd Grable
Executive Director of
Membership

Stand with NRA – Save Money on Your Membership and Receive an Exclusive Gift.

You know it as well as I do. Very soon, you and I are going to be facing the biggest and most important battles in the 150-year history of NRA. And more than ever before, we need steadfast patriots like you to stand with NRA to help defend freedom in the weeks and months to come.

That's why – to honor your past commitment *and* to fortify our defenses for the battles ahead – we've reserved some very generous discounts for every member who extends or upgrades their NRA membership between now and February 19th. Plus, if you respond before this deadline, you'll also receive a hand-selected NRA gift to commemorate your stand for freedom.

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to five years or even become an NRA Life Member at a discount rate – and receive a unique NRA gift to honor your support. If you're a Life Member, Endowment Member, or Patron Member, you'll save hundreds of dollars *and* receive a commemorative NRA gift that will never be offered again when you upgrade to an even higher leadership rank. And if you're a Benefactor Member or one of our Golden Eagles, we have some very special opportunities for you as well.

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Remember, to lock in your discount and gift, *you must act right away*. On February 19th, this limited-time offer will end, and our special website will be taken down.

But the most important reason to respond today is that NRA needs your immediate and generous help to fight and win the battles now headed our way – the biggest and toughest Second Amendment battles of our lives. And more than ever before, the future of American freedom will depend on you and me – and how hard we fight in the coming months.

If we fail, the Second Amendment will be written out of the Constitution, and future generations will never know the full blessings of liberty that you and I enjoy. But if we succeed, we will earn our place among generations of American heroes who fought to protect freedom since the proud, humble farmers of Lexington and Concord left their homes to win their God-given right to liberty.

So please, help strengthen NRA's fight for our Constitutional rights by taking advantage of the limited-time offers we've reserved especially for you. And thank you as always for your unwavering defense of freedom.

Todd Grable



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The Science of Sound

The technology built into today's electronic hearing protection ensures firing-line safety and comfort, yet somehow manages to squeeze casual conversation and range commands through at audible and even enhanced levels.



“Electronic hearing protection works on ‘clipping’ the top of the loud sounds to make them less damaging,” explained Weston Harris, founder and CEO of AXIL Hearing Performance, who speaks with authority on the subject. His company has produced cutting-edge models for the past 26 years and, along the way, he’s launched his own chain of hearing clinics fully staffed by audiologists, established others for pharmaceutical companies and developed more than 50 hearing-aid systems.

“Digital technology ‘filters’ or ‘compresses’ loud sounds by actually converting physical sound waves entering your ears into digital code, which can then be changed to an entirely different sound via the program that has been programmed into the digital circuitry,” he explained when pressed on the subject.

Circuitry employed by the battery-operated units isn’t necessarily created equal, either, according Will Hemeyer, Sr., product manager for Champion Range & Targets. “There are two main types of technology that are being used,” he explained. “You have clipping that will cut off all electronic sound, which is typically found on the lower-end electronic hearing protection. Then you have compression technology that will compress any sound over a certain level, so the lower dB [decibel] sound still comes through. Compression technology is typically found on the higher-quality products.”

Josh Lanz at Traditions Media—marketing agency for Howard Leight Shooting Sports—whose passion for educating enthusiasts

about hearing protection shows. “Electronic hearing protection combines passive sound attenuation—either over-the-ear muff or an in-ear plug—with analog or digital circuitry to compress or ‘shave the peaks’ off dangerous sounds above a certain level,” he explained. “These models employ external microphones, internal speakers and a gain adjustment, allowing the user to hear surrounding sounds at normal or even louder-than-normal levels. When a dangerously loud sound (more than 82 dB for Howard Leight electronic earmuffs) is detected, the circuitry cuts off the amplification to the speakers inside the earcups until the noise returns to a safe level.” During that lull in electronically manipulated sound, noise (range commands) still pass through the passive protection at reduced levels.

The electronic wizardry seems straightforward, but the fact sound varies in frequency can muddy transmission in cheaper units. Dr. Bill Dickinson, CEO and co-founder of TETRA Hearing said, “The more channels or bands of sound processing, the better a circuit can target desirable sounds and separate them from undesirable sounds. It is best to think of this in terms of music. You can have a single singer with no instruments and you turn the words up or down in volume since it is just the words. Add in a guitar and now you have to balance between the guitar and the singer, or one will drown out the other. More input requires more balancing of each input, so that everything is balanced. All of this balancing is done with multiple channels or bands to manage the different sounds.”

The wizardry makes it obvious quality units are a healthy and wise investment, but what about rifle shooters frustrated with cheek welds compromised by earmuffs? Today, there are two solutions: Earcup designs have evolved to allow slim profiles that do not impact cheekweld for precision-rifle shooters. Additionally, in-the-ear models completely close the ear canal and offer protection while allowing access.

Harris explained, “The absolute best and most critical hearing protection is to seal the ear canal off. Properly fit in-ear protection is the best there is, then if you have extreme situations, i.e. large calibers, indoor shooting ranges, etc., and you have sensitive hearing, then doubling up with earmuffs gives added, excellent protection.”

USSOCOM Orders First Barrett MK22s



Barrett Firearms' submission of Multi-Role Adaptive Design Mark 22 (MRAD MK22) rifles for testing has met all U.S. Department of Defense requirements for the Advanced Sniper Rifle to support U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). As a result, Barrett has received an initial production order for the guns and deliveries of the firearm began in January. "We are pleased to have reached this milestone with the

project and look forward to providing our warfighters with this highly capable platform," said Joel Miller, director of global military sales for Barrett.

USSOCOM launched its search for a new modular, multi-caliber, bolt-action sniper rifle in 2016. One of the requirements was the ability to readily convert the gun's chambering to either .300 Norma Mag., 7.62 NATO or .338 Norma Mag.

Shooting Off

"As someone who grew up in a home with guns, I learned at an early age how to load, how to fire and gun safety, and I think that education should be available to everyone."

—The first African-American Miss Mississippi, Asya Branch, answered when asked about gun control by judges in November, only minutes before she was named Miss USA 2020.

Quick Shots

Smith & Wesson has identified two M&P Shield EZ pistols on which the hammers manufactured by the supplier were cracked. In all cases, the firearm will not fire unless the grip safety is depressed. This notice applies only to M&P Shield EZ pistols (including Performance Center models) manufactured between March 1, 2020, and Oct. 31, 2020, and only to a small percentage of that population. Owners of M&P Shield EZ pistol should immediately stop using them and determine if it is included in this safety recall. Visit mpshieldezrecall.com and input the pistol's serial number, or call (888)-871-7114 immediately to determine if the hammer of your M&P Shield EZ Pistol was from a potentially affected manufacturing lot.

Georgia's Berrien County Sheriff's Office has selected the Walther PPQ M2 9 mm 4 inch as its new duty pistol. The Department had previously carried .40-caliber semi-auto handguns.

The U.S. Air Force ordered B&T APC9K 9 mms as part of the acquisitions for its Subcompact Weapon System. The 65 Advanced Police Carbines (APCs) had a price tag of \$128,300 and will likely replace some of the Heckler & Koch MP5s used by the branch's security personnel.

SIG Sauer has announced a safety recall for all Cross bolt-action rifles currently manufactured, and consumers should immediately discontinue use of the gun. Upon evaluation of one suspected rifle, it was confirmed it exhibited a delayed discharge after the trigger was pulled. The company has decided to issue a safety recall to address this potential safety concern by implementing a modification to the firing action. To register for the recall visit sigsauer.com/crossrecall or call SIG Sauer customer service at (603) 610-3000.

Lifestyle | A Tumbler For Ya

After a stressful work week commuting around civil unrest and five-alarm fires, nine out of 10 bosses recommend an evening adult beverage when you've reached the safety of home. Stow the ammo and firearms and pour a tall one on ice, if you're so inclined. Mission First Tactical has your back and can help with the all-important beverage-to-mouth delivery process. The company's new Riot CS, flip-top, 16-ounce cup is a great choice to both convey liquid to your taste buds and show off your passion for all things firearm.

Mission First Tactical is offering four cups and three tumblers in styles tailored for different types of cover. The 155 mm M107 Howitzer version, for example, is ideal for keeping coffee warm in mountainous camping regions. It's also the perfect non-verbal signal that you're about to light

up that boring business meeting. When it's time to pop smoke, grab the M18. It draws knowing nods from veterans everywhere.

The trio of tumblers hold 20 ounces, while the flip-tops have a 16-ounce capacity. MSRPs run \$29.95 and \$24.95, respectively. Visit missionfirsttactical.com to order.



Big Pistol vs. Little Pistol

No matter what size pistol you carry for personal protection, practice is essential.



While ultra-small pistols can be just as effective as their larger siblings for defensive purposes and are easier to carry and conceal, significantly more range time must be allocated to training with the smaller guns in order to ensure proficiency.

A friend and fellow writer contacted me to get some background research on an article he is preparing for publication. He thought interviewing some concealed-carry licensees concerning their choices in hardware for different occasions might reveal useful information he could pass on to his readers. His assumption was that most of us use different pistols for teaching and training versus the ones we routinely carry for defensive purposes.

Do you train with a full-size pistol, then carry something smaller and lighter for defensive use when you're out and about? Perhaps something like your favorite gun worn on your belt for competition and a small pocket pistol worn appendix-style for concealed carry? If so, I would wager you're not alone, as this is a common practice.

I'm not criticizing this choice, but I do wonder how much time and attention you put into the smaller gun. They're more capable than you might imagine, but you'll need to work at it to appreciate what you can do. For example, I recently taught a Pocket Pistol class at Gunsite, and by the time we had finished our 3-day class, the students were performing most of the basic drills we use in our week-long Defensive Pistol class, as well as making head shots at 15 yards and body shots at 25.

I'm going to suggest you go to the range with your practice pistol and your carry pistol(s) and do some comparing. You can use FMJ ammo in the practice gun, but use your choice of carry ammunition in the little boomer to get accustomed to how it feels when you shoot it and to make certain you know exactly where it hits. As an aside, if your carry revolver is a lightweight five-shot chambered in .357 Mag. with heavy loads, you're about to have an interesting experience...just sayin'.

You've seen these drills before but they're the ones I want you to shoot with both pistols and compare the results.

Here are the Drills

5x5x5 Drill:

5 yards Fire five shots from the holster, in 5 seconds, into a 5-inch circle.

Pass/Fail

Gunsite 250 Drill:

Fired on an Option or silhouette target, all shots fired from the holster.

3 yards A single head shot in 1.5 seconds. Repeat.

Total: Two rounds

3 yards Two shots to the upper chest in 1.5 seconds.

Total: Two rounds

7 yards Two shots to the upper chest in 1.5 seconds.

Total: Two rounds

10 yards Two shots to the upper chest in 2.0 seconds.

Total: Two rounds

15 yards Two shots to the upper chest, from standing to kneeling, in 3.5 seconds.

Total: Two rounds

Ten shots total, five points for center hits, two for any shots outside. Possible 50 points.

Give this a try then sit down and have a serious conversation with yourself concerning your carry choices. In my case, I decided to carry, teach and train with the same pistol and ammunition. Your mileage may vary. 🌀

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Designed as a multi-purpose cleaner, when used on firearms **Ballistol** cleans and dissolves copper fouling as well as brass and zinc residue. Since it molecularly bonds to metals, it keeps your guns completely protected. Ballistol is also available in different sizes and types, including aerosol, liquid and wipes.

MSRP: \$25 to \$80; ballistol.com

A must for your workbench, the **Brownells Roll Pin Punch Kit** includes seven of the most popular punches that are the only way to install/remove roll and/or spring pins. Each solid-steel punch contains long, parallel-ground points and a knurled exterior to provide ample purchase.

MSRP: \$45.99; brownells.com

Otis Technology's The Otis Elite Cleaning Kit includes virtually every component a shooter needs to maintain .17- to .50-caliber rifles and pistols, .410 bore and 12/10-gauge shotguns and even muzzleloaders. Three coated, memory-flex cables of varying lengths allow breech-to muzzle cleaning. It also includes assorted patches, brush, solvent, bore reflector and a tool for clearing jammed cases.

MSRP: \$149.99; otistec.com

Measuring a generous 44x15 inches, unlike similar offerings the **TekMat Stealth Ultra Rifle Gun Cleaning Mat** is available in a color other than black, making it easier to find parts during routine cleaning and maintenance. Its smooth, non-marring, thermoplastic-polyurethane surface won't absorb cleaning chemicals or scratch your firearms, while the Vulcanized rubber backing prevents unnecessary movement.

MSRP: \$29.99; tekmat.com



Locking-In Freshness

I am a new gun owner, so I am behind the power curve in equipping myself with guns, ammunition and the support material necessary to stay in the personal-protection arena for the foreseeable future. After seeing the collections of equipment some of my friends (who have been into guns and hunting longer than me) have amassed, I realized that bulk purchases of ammunition where it could be found would be a smart move. That is until my wife, who is a very smart shopper, asked me what the expiration date on the ammunition that I was purchasing was. She was inferring that, like food and other expendable commodities purchased in today's society, the ammunition's useful life was finite and would have to be replaced if not shot by its expiration date. This led to a conversation about how much did I really need, as opposed to how much I would like to have, as ammunition is hard to find—especially in popular defensive calibers. I would like to buy as much as I can afford, but not if it will go bad before I can shoot it.

Does ammunition have shelf life? Is there an expiration date printed in an obscure location on the box it comes in? If so, where do I find it? How do I know how long the ammunition I purchase is good for before I have to replace it?

Like I said, I'm new at this so your help would be greatly appreciated.
*Paul Smythe
 Brunswick, ME*



If it makes you feel any better, you have a lot of company with the same questions. With gun, ammunition and accessory sales at unprecedented levels, shortages stimulate panic buying just to have something, without fully understanding the scope of what is being bought.

Once the ammunition is purchased, where and how it is stored will determine how long it will be viable for its intended use.

Heat and moisture are the two most prevalent enemies of ammunition, followed by chemical contamination.

Temperatures consistently in excess of 150 to 170 degrees Fahrenheit tend to affect the propellant in a negative manner. These temperatures can be reached in car trunks, metal buildings or other uninsulated enclosures subjected to direct sunlight—especially in the southern tiers of the United States.

Anytime ammunition is subjected to continuous exposure to moisture, corrosion is likely to occur, which degrades the performance or disables the usability of the cartridges all together.

Chemical contamination is sometimes the silent killer of ammunition. Although much of today's quality ammunition is protected by sealant-treated primers and bullets during manufacture, exposure to penetrating oils or cleaning solvents will degrade the sealants over time, thereby neutralizing the priming compound, the propellant or both, rendering the cartridge useless. Ammoniated solvents used for removing copper from a bore are detrimental to brass cartridge cases, even with minimal exposure. Since brass is 70 percent copper (with the remaining 30 percent being zinc), ammoniated solvents can create a dangerous condition causing the brass to crack without having been fired. This could cause a hazardous pressure release during firing due to the weakened condition of the brass case.

Ammunition storage can be as simple as storing it in a safe area similar in environment to the office within which you work or the home in which you live. Keeping the temperature and humidity levels similar to what is comfortable for you and the family is an easy way to stay well within the range suitable for ammunition storage.

Many individuals who purchase and store quantities of ammunition are served well by storing it in sealed, military-surplus ammunition containers. Kept in a climate controlled, secure location, away from unauthorized personnel, these containers will preserve the ammunition indefinitely.

The reason there is no expiration date on a box of currently manufactured ammunition is because, when stored properly, it is projected to have an unlimited life span.

As an aside, I personally have fired ammunition loaded more than 100 years ago with excellent results. Advancements in primers, powder, cases, projectiles as well as in storage containers and accessories have improved the reliability of ammunition to a point that, properly treated, there is no reason for concern for your ammunition's longevity.

Correspondence is welcomed and encouraged

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Optimizing Zero

There's a lot to unpack when talking about zeroing a rifle.



a svelte 143-grain, .264-caliber Hornady ELD-M bullet. Likewise, they were designed for very different purposes, so the best zero for each round is going to be determined by these factors.

A rifle's line-of-sight (LOS) and line-of-bore (LOB) form an angle as they extend from shooter to target. Think of LOS as a laser line that extends from your eye through the optic (or sights) to the target. Conversely, LOB angles upward to some degree due to the fact that as soon a bullet leaves the muzzle, gravity begins pulling it downward. The point(s) at which LOS and LOB intersect is the zero distance. Generally speaking, the slower moving, less aerodynamic the projectile and the farther away the target aimed at, the greater the angle between LOS and LOB. Short, slow, stubby bullets will quickly pass upward through LOS on their way to a distant target—like a ball lobbed hard and high into the air to gain distance. The bullet will come back down through the LOS at a farther distance as gravity

Zero distances are sort of like favorite automobiles and preferred EDC handguns: There are many choices and if we do our own part, most of them will get the job done. Nonetheless, the question of the "best" range at which to zero a particular rifle comes my way fairly often. I have traditionally been a 100-yard-zero guy, but more out of habit than for ballistic reasons. I know my holds at all practical distances with the rifles I shoot when zeroed this way, so it is comfortable and easy. Even so, my zeroes are not etched in stone, and over the past couple of years, I have slowly changed my ways to better reflect the cartridges I use and how I use them.

Two key factors have the greatest effect on the optimal-zero distance for a rifle: The external ballistics of the projectile chosen, and the way it is used. For example, a traditional 220-grain, .30-caliber round-nose, jacketed softpoint is going to plow through the air a lot differently than

has its way. This second intersection is typically used as the primary-zero distance. With fast-flying, aerodynamic bullets, the LOS/LOB angle is much smaller. This moves the first bullet/LOS intersection farther downrange and reduces the bullet's deviation above and below LOS. Tweaking the primary-zero distance allows moving the secondary-zero distance (SZD) to a useful spot along a bullet's pathway.

When I covered the popular 50/200-yard zero in 2010, I used 62-grain, 5.56 NATO M855 ammunition to compare zeros at various distances. The AR platform's newfound popularity was still in its early days, and many shooters were using this green-tip, surplus load for the first time. That comparison demonstrated the utility of 50- and 200-yard zeros out to 300 yards when using an average 16-inch barrel's muzzle velocity. The beauty of such a setup is that elevation compensations (over and under intended points-of-impact) are minimized out to

Primary and Secondary Zeroes

Cartridge	Projectile	MV (fps)	Zero (yards)	SZD (yards) & deviation from LOS
5.56 NATO	77-grain SMK	2,634	200	50 (.1-inch high)
6.5 Grendel	123-grain AMAX	2,492	200	50 (.3-inch high)
.300 BLK	135-grain FTX	2,085	200	25 (.2-inch low)
7.62x39 mm	123-grain SP	2,251	200	25 (.5-inch high)
.308 Win.	168-grain AMAX	2,502	200	50 (.3-inch high)

practical distances. But is the 50/200 zero a one-size-fits-all tool? Not quite, but it is still a good starting point for many rifle and cartridge combinations.

In order to compare different zeros with several common cartridges, I referenced JBM Ballistics' Trajectory-Simplified calculator

|| Generally speaking, the slower moving, less aerodynamic the projectile and the farther away the target aimed at, the greater the angle between LOS and LOB. ||

that can be found at jbmballistics.com. JBM's tool allows a much wider variety of data inputs and provides greater detail outputs than most of the ballistic apps in our phones and wind meters. It is also free to use, so long as you have internet connectivity. Using the calculator, I analyzed bullet rise and drop

(relative to LOS) out to 500 yards, with zeros at 25, 50, 100 and 200 yards. My goal was to see if the 50/200 zero could be equally useful for other common rifle loads. The comparison produced a lot of data—too much to be useful here. The condensed results in this table show each cartridge's SZD using a 200-yard primary zero. Regardless of cartridge, this zero yielded less deviation above or below the LOS (out to 500 yards) than all other zeroes checked.

A secondary benefit to determining a close-range SZD is that if you do not have access to a full-size rifle range, you can adjust your sights to the closer distance. Using the examples in the table, zeroing at 25 or 50 yards (depending on the cartridge) will still get you very close at 200 yards. These are just a few examples. So long as you input the correct muzzle velocity, sight height, bullet data and atmospheric info, you can play with any good ballistic program to find the optimal distances for your cartridge. Remember to factor in how you plan to use it. Long-range shooters will likely find very different sweet spots than short-range hunters and home defenders. Always confirm the data provided by ballistic programs and chronographs/radars by shooting your gun-and-cartridge combinations at multiple distances.

A hazard of keeping my head over a shop bench or behind a riflescope most days is that I am not fully up to date on trendiest tricks and techniques. If you have a better zero system that already works, such as the Triple Bravo Adenoid zero or the Dropkick-Niner-Niner-Scratchy zero, by all means, continue to use it. The tool that helps you shoot more effectively is the best one to use.🌀




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Recalled to Service

Many heirlooms can be pressed into service with a minimal tune-up and a new holster.



The content of this column is most often addressed to handgun enthusiasts, the sort who have likely been carrying for a while, who may train and/or compete with some regularity. These are readers who therefore probably have a pretty up-to-date handgun that they had the luxury of selecting from a broad marketplace of pistols in all different sizes, configurations and calibers.

The tumults of 2020 have brought a flood of new firearm owners, though; people who felt the need to get a handgun for protection, not only in the home, but while out and about in these uncertain times. Like some game of ballistic musical chairs, people who were late to the purchasing rush often found themselves out of luck, as shelves had been thoroughly picked over and prices on auction sites like Gun Broker went through the roof. It was the very definition of a seller's market. One online commenter quipped that the time to worry about what caliber or size or brand of handgun the new shopper should buy had passed back in March, and the only question now was "Is it in stock?"

In times like these, we see the sock drawers and attic storage of America turned out and heirlooms brought into gun shops. Grandpa's service revolver or a great uncle's war-trophy, semi-automatic pistol will be presented to the clerk behind the local gun shop counter with the questions "Can we check to make sure this works?" and "Can I get ammunition for this?"

Fortunately, the most common pistol I've seen in these situations is the classic Government Model M1911 or 1911A1. There's no telling how many of those service semi-autos came home from America's wars, from World War I through Vietnam and beyond, tucked away in a seabag or suitcase.

I say "fortunately," because the recipient of one of these old GI guns who decides to press it back into service as a defensive piece will at least have no difficulty finding holsters or magazines, thanks to the continuing popularity of 1911-pattern handguns. It's a rare gun shop that would be unable to send the Government Model owner home with a CrossBreed or Galco holster and a couple extra magazines. Wilson Combat, Chip McCormick or Metalform magazines would also likely improve the pistol's reliability slightly, although with an original, un-throated USGI barrel, ball ammunition or hollow points with fairly rounded ogives would be preferred. A well-stocked shop would probably be able to replace the recoil and firing-pin springs off the shelf as well, just to be on the safe side.

The second-most common scenario is the old law enforcement service revolver, usually a K-frame Smith & Wesson. I've seen all kinds brought in, from stainless Model 65s issued in the early 1980s to a .32-20 Win. Hand Ejector that belonged to a great-grandpa who'd been a sheriff in Depression-era Tennessee.

The K-frame Smith & Wesson recipient is almost as lucky as their neighbor who'd been bequeathed an M1911A1. Ammunition is still manufactured, and holsters and speedloaders are widely available. If the gun is still equipped with the old "splinter" stocks, a set of Hogues or Pachmayrs off the shelf may be more comfortable. Probably the only worry here is that if the gun is old enough, the cylinder might not be heat-treated. The actual date when they began heat-treating K-frame cylinders was in 1919, but as a rule of thumb, I just personally restrict +P ammunition to post-World War II guns.

Of course, some bring-backs have virtually no essential accessories available. This is the situation with a lot of Cold War trophy guns. Eastern Bloc pistols may actually be easier to find ammunition for in times of panic-buying than a 9 mm, but gear is scarce. One exception to that rule might be the Makarov. It was common enough in the 1990s and early 2000s that Hornady loads both XTP and Critical Defense ammunition in 9x18 Makarov, and companies like Alien Gear and DeSantis offer holster options should one need to press the Russian relic back into service.

While I wouldn't call any of these solutions ideal, any one of them beats a handful of nothing if you need a carry gun in a pinch. 🌀

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Hatfield Arms SGL



Mossberg Maverick 88



Savage/Stevens 320 Security Pump



Black Aces Tactical Pro Series S Max



Hatsan Escort SDX12



TriStar KRX Tactical

Right now, the latest smartphone will cost you \$1,000. Truck prices have gone up every year since Mr. Ford invented them, I think. Heck, even a top-end bow (without arrows) can cost \$1,500, whereas 5 years ago one was \$999. Yet, some guns—namely shotguns—keep getting less expensive. Here's a roundup of a few notable home-defense shotguns for those who don't wish to part with a lot of jingle.

Hatfield Arms SGL 12 gauge

The Hatfield SGL is a break-open, single-shot hammer gun in 12 or 20 gauge that's about as Spartan as guns come. You can buy it at Walmart for about \$99. Its hinge pin and a recess in its fore-end are built to allow it to be broken open to about 330 degrees, so it can fold up much more compactly than other break-opens like H&R's or Stevens' single-shots. Its 28-inch barrel is not ideal for home defense, but you can have a competent gunsmith trim nearly a foot off of that

so it will fold over nicely for storing in a backpack and still not require NFA paperwork. Its downside? It has no butt pad nor sling studs, but you can add those cheap and easy. And while its trigger is heavier than a lake-record bass—about 15 pounds—what can you expect for a shotgun that goes *bang*, prints its pattern where you point it and costs less than a Benjamin?

Mossberg Maverick 88

If you're looking for a pump-action shotgun, this is one of the least-expensive, yet most effective guns on this list. The Maverick line differs from Mossberg's regular models in that parts are made in Mexico, but the shotgun is assembled in the USA. The Maverick line is reliable, yet it costs a couple hundred less than Mossberg's name-brand stuff because it is a bare-bones model. If I wanted a dedicated home-defense shotgun for less than \$300, it would be the Maverick 88 Security due to the extended-magazine tube that holds 8 rounds—yet this gun only costs \$250. It's styled after the classic Mossberg 500 with its deeply ribbed fore-end. The safety, however, is on the trigger guard rather than the tang.

Savage/Stevens 320 Security Pump

The excellent 320 Security pump has an 18.5-inch barrel, a rotary-bolt head, dual-action bars, a no-nonsense bead sight and a Benelli M4-like stock that is full-size so you actually use it, but also has a legit pistol grip for added control. It also has a sling stud recessed on its side so the gun can be slung flat against the chest or back. Its tube holds five rounds for a total capacity of six rounds, and it loads easily. Best of all, it's as reliable as taxes. All in all, if you want to defend your castle, but only have about \$209 to spend, the 320 Security pump is right up there on the list of the world's best values.

Black Aces Tactical Pro Series S Max

Black Aces Tactical is the company that first introduced the shotgun that led to the Mossberg Shockwave craze. It continues to innovate, but with a new focus on inexpensive tactical shotguns. The company's S Max is a gas-action, semi-automatic that has everything a home defender needs including 6+1 capacity, a full-length/full-contour stock, 18.5-inch barrel, sling studs, a no-nonsense

bead sight and a nickel-plated bolt for smoothness. At just 6.4 pounds and 39 inches overall, it's perfect for the home. Although I haven't fired this gun, Black Aces is a small company from Florida that takes great pride in its stuff. Of all the semi-autos on the list, this is likely the best for the money. And if you prefer a lever-action shotgun, the company has one of those available, too, also for \$399.

Hatsan Escort SDX12

This Turkish-made, AR-style shotgun offers the advantages of a detachable 5-round magazine, M16-style top carry handle, fully adjustable buttstock and more rails than a skateboard park. The SDX's strength is that its controls and feel are similar to AR-style carbines, so even non-shotgun folks can run it without much difficulty. However, they'll find that it handles like a rifle with its A2-style peep sight and straight-line feel. While I haven't spent much time with this particular shotgun, some similarly styled offerings have had reliability problems. But, if you break it in

properly, use shells with more power than the lightest target loads and keep it clean, you should have few problems. Most remarkably, it costs less than \$500 on store shelves (when there are firearms on store shelves, that is).

TriStar KRX Tactical

The KRX is an AR-15-style look-alike that, like the SDX12 and others, shines for folks who desire a shotgun but are more proficient with a modern-sporting rifle. That's because loading and shooting the KRX is just like an MSR. Despite what plenty of online reviewers say, the KRX does have significant recoil, thanks predominantly to its lively 6.8-pound weight, straight-line buttstock and cheekpiece that's harder than a steel bleacher seat after 10 innings. I'll just say you'll know you're shooting something, especially with heavy slug and buckshot loads. Reliability is like most gas-action, box-magazine-fed guns, which is to say that it's not stellar, thanks to a shotshell's inherent square design that doesn't really like to feed from a box magazine. Still, for around \$500 if you search enough online, it's quite a cool shotgun.🌀

Note: Real-world prices are listed, and in normal times consumers can expect to actually purchase these shotguns at or near those prices. In current market conditions, however, demand for firearms is outpacing manufacturing capacity, resulting in supply shortages. Therefore, you might find actual prices much higher than what's listed—if you can find the guns at all.



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SIG Sauer's flagship P320 is already a splendid pistol as evidenced by our military's adoption of it. Nonetheless, Wilson Combat managed to improve it as the WCP320.

Wilson Combat is synonymous with custom pistols. The company built its fantastic reputation by customizing Colt's 1911 handguns, and then solidified it by ultimately building its own. Now Wilson Combat offers exquisite MSRs, customized Berettas and upgraded Glock pistols, too. Still, it was somewhat of a surprise when the company announced it would be offering a custom SIG Sauer P320. I asked Wilson Combat founder Bill Wilson why, and he said, "Let's face it, like the M1911 and the M9 being adopted by the military, the P320 is here to stay for a while. Also, we immediately saw ways we could improve on the basic gun."

Photos By Peter Fountain

By Richard Mann



Wilson Combat applies its X-Tac checkering pattern to the front and rear of the sides of the slide. Not only do I think this looks better than common grasping grooves used, I'm also convinced they work better by providing better purchase for the hand.

We cannot talk about the WCP320—which is the model designation of Wilson Combat's custom SIG Sauer P320 pistol—without first discussing the Wilson Combat grip modules which form the basis for the custom pistol. Yes, SIG Sauer offers various grip modules for the P320 to fit different hand sizes, but they lack the enhancements of the Wilson modules, of which there are currently 14 variants to fit full-size and compact P320s, with and without manual safeties.

This particular Wilson Combat module is just marginally larger than SIG's "small" module. However, it features a higher and deeper cut at the tang, deeply dished cuts for the thumb on the sides near the magazine release and a deeper undercut at the trigger guard. The sides of the grip feature the Wilson Combat starburst pattern and the frontstrap and backstrap have fine stippling with an almost sandpaper-like texture. The magazine well also has a generous bevel, a multi-slot accessory rail is standard, and

steel rods can even be added to the module to increase weight.

I felt the Wilson Combat grip module was unquestionably more comfortable and sticks in the hand better. So does firearm trainer and Benghazi hero David "Boon" Benton. I worked with Benton for a week training patrol and SWAT officers, and he told me he's been using a Wilson Combat P320 grip module since it was introduced. He said, "That Wilson Combat frame makes it [the P320] feel more M1911-ish, it points better for me as well, so I get a better natural point-of-aim...and it helps me get higher underneath the trigger guard." And, get this, these modules retail for only \$64.95. Not surprisingly, Bill Wilson told me they are, "... one of our highest-volume products."

For the WCP320 pistol, Wilson Combat takes its grip module and pairs it with SIG's P320 X-Full Size steel trigger. This is a fantastic trigger for a striker-fired pistol, and while my Timney Trigger gauge said it broke at

WILSON COMBAT | WCP320



SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Steinel 124-grain SCHP Subcompact Carry	1,024	1.36	1.45	1.40
Hornady 147-grain Subsonic XTP	973	1.28	1.51	1.36
Wilson Combat 155-grain TAC-XP +P	1,033	1.08	2.00	1.33

Velocity measured in fps 10 feet from the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with a Caldwell G2 chronograph. Temperature: 62 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Wilson Combat; 800-955-4856, wilsoncombat.com

Action Type: Recoil-operated, semi-automatic

Caliber: 9 mm

Capacity: 17+1 rounds

Frame: Polymer

Slide: DLC-coated steel

Barrel Length: 4.7 inches

Sights: Wilson Combat Battlesight rear, green fiber-optic post front

Trigger Pull Weight: 4 pounds, 3 ounces; (optional, tuned P320X-Full Size Steel Trigger tested)

Length: 8.25 inches

Height: 5.5 inches

Width: 1.5 inches

Weight: 29.2 ounces

Accessories: Two 17-round magazines, hard case, manual

MSRP: \$1,195; \$1,350 (as tested)



A recess beneath the trigger guard maximizes a high hold and protects the knuckle, while a patch of stippling on the frontstrap ensures good purchase • Handsome X-Tac checkering replaces traditional cocking serrations • Two 17-round magazines are included and functioned perfectly • A multi-slot rail integrated into the dustcover easily accommodates accessories.



4.25 pounds, to me it felt closer to 3 pounds. The width of the trigger face along with its near-vertical position at sear release seemed to interface quite well with my finger, and the grip and trigger felt like they were custom designed for my hand. I guess that's just another way of saying it all really felt just right.

With regard to the pistol's slide, Wilson Combat applies its X-Tac checkering pattern to the front and rear of the sides of the slide. Not only do I think this looks better than common grasping grooves used, I'm also convinced they work better by providing better purchase for the hand. The front or nose of the slide is also aggressively beveled with what Wilson Combat calls "carry cuts." This makes the pistol easier to slip into a holster. The repeated X-Tac pattern on the topstrap may serve to prevent reflected glare. In any event, it adds to the overall aesthetics, which are

pretty good to begin with. Pride of ownership always counts.

For sights, Wilson Combat chose its Battlesight rear sight and mated it with a fiber-optic front blade. The Wilson Combat Battlesight features a deeply cut U-notch that measured .152-inch wide, and it pairs very well with the .125-inch-wide fiber-optic front, leaving plenty of room on either side for swift alignment. This is the same sight system that's on my often-carried Wilson Combat EDC X9; I like it and trust it.

Early on I was not a fan of fiber-optic sights; I did not feel they would be easy enough to see in low light. After several years working with them, I must admit I was wrong. Though not as low-light visible as a front sight with a tritium vial, they are fine for low-light work and you never have to worry about the tritium dying out. Another reason for initially not liking fiber-optic sights was that



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I'd had several light filaments fall out. However, I've never had one on a Wilson Combat pistol fall out, and I've fired thousands of rounds through my EDC X9 and my son has done the same with his 1911.

Aside from the Wilson Combat logo on the right side of the slide, which, like the barrel, sports a black DLC finish, that about sums this pistol up. For an extra \$155 you can opt for a curved or straight trigger that has been tuned—like the one on the test pistol—using Grayguns custom trigger parts. You also have the option of selecting a tan or black grip module. Pick the color you like, but I'd strongly suggest the trigger upgrade because it is fantastic.

The standard gunwriter test protocol for defensive handguns is to shoot them over a chronograph with several different loads and then to test precision or accuracy from a benchrest. I did this with the Wilson Combat WCP320, but I don't consider either a viable indication of how well a defensive handgun might perform when it comes to saving your life. Years back, I developed my own test protocol for that purpose so I would have a simple but practical means for evaluating and comparing defensive handguns. It's called the Forty-Five Drill, and I've used it to evaluate defensive handguns for nearly a quarter-century.

The drill is simple, but it encompasses several important elements of employing a defensive handgun, such as establishing a shooting grip in the holster, presentation, sight acquisition, a fast first shot and a sustained engagement at a realistic distance. The goal of the drill is to draw from concealment and put five shots inside a 5-inch circle, at a distance of 5 yards, within 5 seconds. Conducting this drill multiple times provides an opportunity for handgun interface issues or problems to rear their ugly head. To date, my best-ever time on this drill, with no misses, is 2.86 seconds with the Browning Hi Power I sometimes carry.

I ran this drill 15 times with the WCP320. I started out slow and sped up as I got comfortable with the gun. Through my last five runs, my average time was an amazing—at least for me—2.66 seconds, with a best time on my final run of 2.44 seconds. Why was I able to turn in a better score with the Wilson than with a gun I frequently carry? I think this was partly because the more you work



The faceted front of the slide helps the WCP320 ease into the holster • The rear sight has a large notch that combines with the front light pipe for a fast, clean sight picture • Checkering on the top strap may break up glare • The flat trigger actuates at near 90 degrees, giving it a good, "logical" feel • Another strip of X-Tac checkering near the muzzle aids in press checks.



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The Wilson Combat marque indicates the ultimate refinement of a U.S. military-adopted pistol, be it the 1911, Beretta 92/M9 or SIG P320 • The beveled mag well, in conjunction with the tapered, double-stack magazines, speeds reloading. • Starburst and stippling is an effective combination for a secure hold • The ejector—like every other part—functioned strongly.

with any drill the better you get, and partly because of the already mentioned excellent trigger shape and stroke. Fast and accurate shooting with a defensive handgun is primarily delivered by the ability to manipulate the trigger.

I'm not an aficionado of striker-fired pistols, pistols with polymer frames or pistols without a manual thumb safety. I'm not saying handguns with these characteristics are substandard, ineffective or less than ideal; I'm just stating personal preference. There are reasons the two guns I carry most often are a classic Browning Hi Power and a Wilson Combat EDC X9. I will, however, unequivocally say that if I was going to carry a striker-fired, polymer-frame pistol, it would be the Wilson Combat WCP320, though it would be the smaller, 3.9-inch barreled "Carry" version with a thumb safety. This gun worked, fit my hand well, had an excellent trigger, was controllable, easy to reload, reliable and, most importantly, I shot it well.

Is the WCP320 a better pistol than the standard SIG Sauer P320? I think that's an undeniable fact. The real question is: Is it

\$500 better? Keep in mind you can purchase the Wilson Combat P320 grip module for your P320 for only \$64.95. As I'm fond of saying, when it comes to self-defense, financially, we're all somewhere between a box of ammo and a personal bodyguard. \$1,195 is a lot of money. But, at least with the WCP320 you know you're getting a gun built by the best custom shop in the world, and you should be able to trust your life to it; I fired 400 rounds of various munitions through this pistol without a single hiccup. Apparently, the free market is better at answering this question than a gunwriter; Wilson Combat has been in a backorder situation since the guns were announced.

If all that weren't enough, bear in mind that you're getting a fairly exclusive pistol based on an enormously popular one. Holsters, spare mags and all manner of accessories created for the SIG pistol will be readily available to the WCP320 owner.

Wilson told me he thinks the WCP320 is the ideal pistol for, "anyone who wants a high-end, striker-fired pistol." I cannot present a qualified argument to the contrary. 🌀

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Body Armor 101

Body armor comes in many sizes, shapes and protective levels. Learn what type is best for you with this primer on bullet-resistant gear.

Steel-plate and chain mail armor have long been associated with the knights of the Middle Ages. But, archaeological and written evidence indicate that primitive armors, such as leather and bone, go back at least 4,000 years. A few centuries later, the introduction of bronze and iron metallurgy provided better protection. Even layered silk was once used to protect combatants in some parts of the world. While the steady refinement of blackpowder weapons sped the demise of traditional armor, better steels allowed a limited reintroduction of bullet-protective plating in the trenches of World War I.

Ballistic armor development crept forward through the 20th century, with various metal and synthetic materials used in limited applications during World War II. Individual armor use expanded to ground combatants throughout the Korean and Vietnam Wars. While not always designed to stop bullets, these “flak” vests were nonetheless another step up the ladder for personal protection.

By Steve Adelman

Thanks to advances in synthetic materials and textiles, the post-Vietnam era witnessed dramatic changes in individual armor. While our military transitioned to lighter, more effective, woven-fiber flak vests for fragmentation protection, the law enforcement community began using the same materials to protect officers against handgun bullets. Today, we can all reap the benefits of this slow-rolling, personal body-armor-development train.

Tech

DuPont's Kevlar, an aramid fiber, was the first widely produced commercial product to provide lightweight, flexible protection against low-velocity firearm projectiles. More recently, the development of ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene (UHMWPE) fibers, such as Honeywell's Spectra, allow for even lighter and potentially better ballistic protection.

These soft armors use multiple layers of woven fabric to resist penetration by slower-moving, blunt bullets. The more layers employed in a design, the higher the level of protection, but with limitations. While you could certainly pile up enough soft armor to protect against high-velocity rifle projectiles, you would end up looking like a giant, immobile tick under the weight and bulk of so much material. Thankfully, rifle plates pick up the slack for chest, spine and side protection against these more powerful threats.

A basic understanding of armor ratings is helpful when sorting through the options before a purchase. The common U.S. standard of reference is published by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). At the time of this writing, the current NIJ standard is 0101.06, dating to 2008. This standard tells consumers what the highest levels of protection are for various items tested under the organization's protocol. NIJ's current standard includes these five levels:

Level	Caliber	Projectile	Velocity (fps)
IIA	9 mm	124-grain FMJ-RN	1,225
	.40 S&W	180-grain FMJ	1,155
II	9 mm	124-grain FMJ-RN	1,305
	.357 Mag.	158-grain JSP	1,430
IIIA	.357 SIG	125-grain FMJ-FN	1,470
	.44 Mag.	240-grain SJHP	1,430
III	7.62 NATO	147-grain FMJ-steel jacketed	2,780
IV	.30-caliber	166-grain AP	2,880



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Soft armor comes in many different protective levels, styles, shapes and sizes. The full-torso rig on the left offers more coverage, while the chest-rig on the right provides level IIIA protection to heart and lungs.



PREMIER BODY ARMOR

Concealable soft armor is usually lightweight and can be worn under normal clothing, making it more likely to be utilized.

Velocity ranges for levels IIA, II and IIIA are reduced by approximately 50 to 100 fps when testing "conditioned" or used armor under controlled circumstances. Complete descriptions of each level and test methodologies are given in greater detail in the full NIJ publication, available online at ncjrs.gov.

Handgun-protective levels are usually achieved through the use of soft armor, though some lightweight, composite plates are also rated for the same protections. Level III and IV plates are made of harder materials, and are either designed to "stand alone" or be used in conjunction with soft armor of a specified level. NIJ-certified armor should be labeled with threat level, specifics for use and date of manufacture.

Some armor makers offer variations or enhancements of these protection levels. For example, Safe Life Defense offers a "Level IIIA Enhanced" soft armor that is intended to protect against 9 mm armor-piercing and 5.7x28 mm projectiles. This company also markets a very expensive, soft (yes, soft) armor intended to protect against 5.56 NATO M855 "Green Tip" and 7.62x39 mm M67 FMJ projectiles.

Ballistic steels, such as AR500, are the cheapest option for hard rifle plates and can take multiple hits, but they are also the heaviest choice. Ceramic composite plates are lighter but they cost a little more and cannot take as much abuse as steel. Other hybrid plates exist, but these high-tech models are

expensive and not commonly found in the commercial market. Sizes vary, but 10x12 (inches) is the most common commercial option for chest and back protection. Shapes include “regular cut,” which has rounded edges, as well as “shooter’s” and “swimmer’s” cuts, which have steeply angled top corners to allow more range of motion and better circulation for the arms.

It is worth noting that when a fast-moving projectile suddenly slams into a very hard surface, it tends to flatten out, fragment and send its jacket and core pieces—spall—in multiple and unpredictable directions. Therefore, protection against spall is recommended. Some plates are coated for this purpose, but spall pads in the form of soft ballistic-protective material can be placed in front of hard plates to reduce this threat, too.

Load Bearing

Newly manufactured, commercially available body armor is most often configured as concealment vests, plate carriers or full-size tactical carriers. Concealment armor carriers are designed to be worn under loose outer garments and are relatively comfortable in moderate or cool climates. They hold soft-armor panels—usually Level IIIA—which cover the torso and typically have a small pocket in front for either a blunt force/stab plate or an additional IIIA insert for sternum-area protection.

Plate carriers can hold soft inserts and/or Level III or IV rifle plates, but the trimmest models lack much protection beyond the plates’ edges. Full-size vests that hold larger IIIA soft panels provide full-torso protection, fronted by hard rifle plates. Both plate carriers and full-size carriers normally have internal pouches for front and back rifle plates and many designs have provisions for soft or hard side protection. Most modern plate and full-size carriers also have some method of pouch attachment for ammunition, medical kits, water carriers and other necessities. MOLLE and PALS have become the go-to modular attachment systems. Armor carriers may also be left “slick,” so that traditional load-bearing equipment can be tailored for specific needs and worn on top.

Decisions, Decisions

Which armor type and carrier system best fits your needs will depend upon how you



Hard-armor plates protect against many common rifle rounds, but are heavy and require a plate carrier, making them difficult to conceal • All body armor will have a label indicating details like place and date of manufacture • Soft-armor inserts can be concealed in purpose-built undershirts like this model from Tru-Spec.



intend to use it. I have worn each of the above configurations for days, weeks and months at a time in active ground combat or clandestine environments. Not surprisingly, the lighter and less restrictive the system, the more likely one is to wear it.

If your vest will be mothballed until the zombies are scratching at your doors and windows, your main limitations will be storage space and budget. In a worst-case scenario, where you find yourself fighting for your life in a fixed position (such as your house) or against multiple attackers, a full-size tactical carrier will be worth its weight in gold. But, that same beast of a tunic will not be fun to walk around in regularly, especially after adding your spare ammo, medical gear, etc. to the vest’s soft armor and rifle plate(s). Hopefully, none of us will ever be in a situation that calls for such heavy-duty protection on the home front, but it is available if needed.

Concealment vests and trimmed-down plate carriers are generally more affordable and flexible for periodic or grab-and-go use. Both can easily be stowed behind a truck seat, in a car trunk or in a medium-size gear bag. They can be used together or separately, as

Properly caring for ballistic vest material is the best way to ensure it takes care of you. Manufacturers’ recommendations should be your primary guide, but in general, keep ballistic materials dry, clean, away from chemicals and sunlight and either stored lying flat or on a hanger.



Armor inserts for backpacks can be useful when wearable armor is not a viable option. The backpack can be worn on the front if needed.

situations dictate. Their smaller sizes make them less obvious and better-suited for situations where keeping a low profile is desired. What separately employed, small-plate carriers and concealment vests lack in terms of protection, they make up for in mobility and modularity.

Sourcing

A quick web search will yield more sources for new body armor than most people can stand to sort through. Retailers that cater to law enforcement professionals typically have the most choices and draw from multiple, reputable armor manufacturers. New, U.S.-made armor starts around \$400 for basic level IIIA concealment models and approaches \$2,000 for exotic or elaborate designs. Outfitting the whole family may not be realistic, but equipping the household's primary defender is feasible, especially if you view it as a multi-year insurance policy.

I do not have any experience with new body armor from budget-priced, foreign manufacturers. As a rule, I make it a habit to steer clear of any life-sustaining products from countries that go out of their way to harm the United States, but that is based solely

on my distrust of evil regimes and not on actually testing the armor they produce.

Used armor shows up from time to time on auction and retail websites or at surplus outlets and police-supply stores (as trade-ins). There are many unknowns with these items, such as how they were stored, what levels of protection they provide or what materials were used in their manufacture. A few outlets inspect, grade and back their used armor, but most sell it only as "collectibles."

Military surplus armor, especially "flak jackets," are among the cheapest used options. They are also often the worst cared for and come with the greatest unknowns. Some countries use our NIJ ratings, but most determine their own protection levels that are not exactly comparable to the NIJ system. Used or questionable ceramic and composite hard plates should be closely inspected and X-rayed for cracks or other evidence of abuse or deterioration before use. Poor-condition soft armor and any armor that has been shot or damaged should not be relied upon. The rule of thumb with used or surplus body armor is that its protection will be somewhat diminished at best and significantly degraded at worst.

Odds & Ends

One way to reduce costs is to build your own armor system by shopping for overruns or sale-priced soft inserts and empty carriers. I have assembled several vests this way, spending less than half the cost of new, ready-made models. Multiple sizing systems are used by soft armor and carrier makers, so be sure to verify correct fit before purchasing separate components.

Other, lower-cost armor products may fit your niche, too. Companies like Tru-Spec offer undershirts that hold and conceal front and back soft-armor panels under street clothes. Backpacks with ballistic protective inserts have gained popularity as emergency torso protection and can be worn in the front if need be. Jackets and uniform shirts with soft-armor inserts are also available.

Properly caring for ballistic vest material is the best way to ensure it takes care of you. Manufacturers' recommendations should be your primary guide, but in general, keep ballistic materials dry, clean, away from chemicals and sunlight and either stored lying flat or on a hanger. After sweating in your vest, turn it inside-out so the panels can air out once you take it off. Rifle plates should also be kept clean and dry. Avoid dropping or striking ceramic or composite rifle plates with anything that could crack them.

While body armor is currently legal to own in all 50 states, laws vary slightly and some jurisdictions do not allow ownership and/or use of products designed to protect against bullets. Committing crimes while wearing body armor tends to increase penalties, and convicted felons are generally prohibited from owning armor. Several websites provide up-to-date rules for each state, but you should verify your local laws before making any big purchases.

Finally, just as sound suppressors do not make a firearm silent, ballistic vests are not "bulletproof." They are rated to provide specific levels of protection under certain circumstances and do a great deal more than regular clothing, making them worthy of consideration for emergency planning. But, they do not make you invincible. Ultimately, armor or no, the best defense against bullets is to not get shot in the first place. 🌀

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Best Defense in Civil Unrest

With greater uncertainty and more chaos, keeping your wits about you and your head on a swivel has never been more important.

We, as concerned and responsible citizens of a free republic, are today challenged by some of the most pressing questions of our time. What techniques are available to protect myself and my family if surrounded or attacked by a mob? How do you keep a calm mind in difficult situations so you are able to think clearly? Should you interact with or ignore verbal aggression? What advice is there for using your vehicle to either escape from or use as appropriate force against a mob? If community safety continues to deteriorate, is it better to shelter in place or leave the area? What are viable options for defending your home and your family from extreme physical violence?

By Steve Tarani

You must be willing to hope for the best but plan for the worst. Using mental imagery, visualize yourself in the middle of your worse-case nightmare before it occurs. What would you do? What are your options? How would you best respond?

Working as a federal contract instructor in Quantico, VA, at the end of delivering a week-long, train-the-trainer program, I asked the newly trained instructors if there were any questions. One query worth sharing was about self-defense against a physical attack. The question was “What is the one technique guaranteed to work every time?” The answer is “there is no such technique.” If there was one, we would all know it.

Although there is no such secret-ninja, guaranteed technique or hard skill that exists, there are recommended soft skills to help support your safety and that of your loved ones. These are awareness, avoidance and appearance.

Awareness

The first and foremost recommended soft skill is awareness. Awareness is the currency that affords you time to act. Stay informed. Seek out current and relevant information referencing riots, protests, crime and other areas of concern in your immediate area.

Environmentally speaking, situational awareness is knowing what goes on around you. Whether at home, in your car or on foot, applying good situational awareness eliminates such potential threats as being surprised or placing yourself behind the action-reaction power curve. As such it can be used to control your environment.

Protection experts often use situational awareness as a deterrent. When a predator knows you are on to them, the element of

surprise has been removed and attenuates their motivation. Situational awareness keeps you informed of what your environment is telling you and a step ahead of events emerging around you. It keeps you connected to your surroundings and prepared. When effectively applied, situational awareness can be used to take control of your environment, act as a deterrent and make you a harder target.

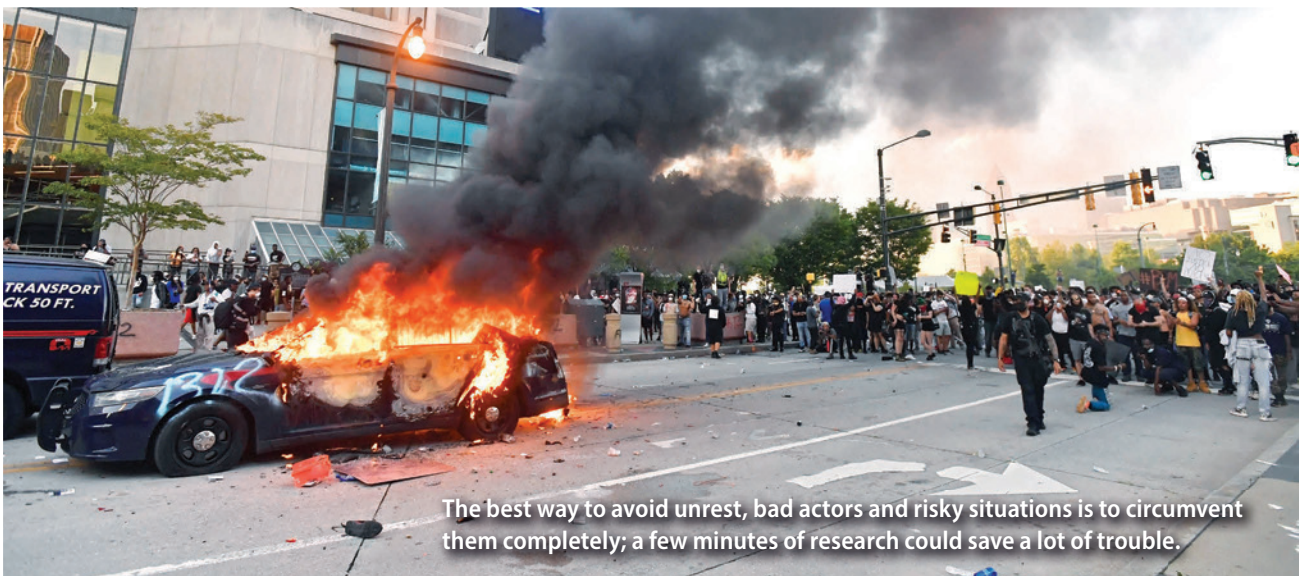
Avoidance

The second-most-useful soft skill is avoidance. In any real-world altercation, your choices are to avoid, mitigate or defend against the threat. Think of a violent physical threat as a freight train coming straight at you. Using this mental-image, you have only one of three choices: Either avoid the freight train altogether, mitigate or make less its impact on yourself or your family or put your hands up and defend against the inbound violence.

Avoidance is the superior answer. If you don't show up for a “peaceful protest” or a mugging, then you cannot be assaulted. Avoidance is, above all, the number-one soft skill that can be applied to any violent physical threat.

Appearance

Failing awareness and avoidance, you may have wittingly or unwittingly placed yourself in a less-than-optimal scenario. You may find yourself staring straight down the



The best way to avoid unrest, bad actors and risky situations is to circumvent them completely; a few minutes of research could save a lot of trouble.

AP IMAGE

barrel of a potential threat. Those intent on causing harm will perceive you as either a soft target or hard target. You want to appear as a hard target—make them ask the question “Are there softer targets?” and respond “Yes.”

To do this, you can eliminate soft-target indicators such as “do you appear to be unaware?” “do you appear to be weak?” or “do you appear to be alone?” You can be any one or even any two of these things, but if you appear to be all three combined, it is like hitting the jackpot in Las Vegas for the predator.

Another soft-target indicator is a breach of informational security (INFOSEC). The information you share can be used against you. Do the bumper stickers on the back of your car tell a predator how many kids you have? Where they go to school? Where you live? A breach of INFOSEC can cause a predator to deliberate: “Is this an easy mark?” Avoid displaying either identifying or potentially antagonistic observable messages.

Soft Skills Applied

The three most recommended soft skills can be applied to the three most prominent environments of your day-to-day activity: at home, in your car and when you are on foot. Your home and your car are considered controlled areas in that you have nearly complete control of that environment. You are most vulnerable when moving between controlled areas.

In Your Home

Starting at home, you have plenty of time and opportunity to prepare for a home invasion. Such preparation should include concentric rings of protection to deter interest in your home, detect the presence of any intruders, delay their entry and defend against a violent physical attack.

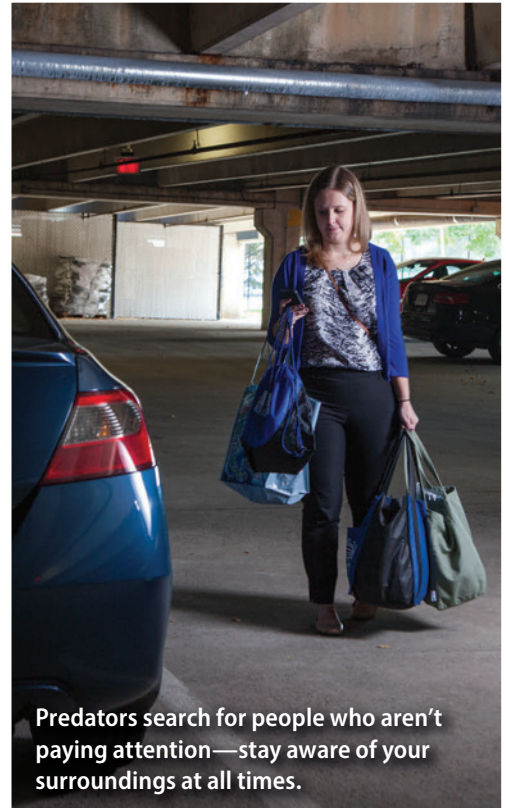
Deterrence is simply a matter of causing would-be home invaders to look for softer targets. Gates, fences, alarm systems and outdoor lighting with motion sensors are a good start. Removing any tools, ladders or valuables within eyesight and accessibility are additional simple, low-cost preventive measures to deter interest in your home.

If they are not deterred and decide to move into your home’s exterior, your next-best protective measure is to detect the presence of an intruder. The sooner you can detect an invasion, the sooner you can call it in and begin critical-incident management. Failing detection, the next concentric ring of protection should be delay. Reliable locks on the doors, difficult-to-open windows and other access-control points are what support delay in a home invasion. The longer you and/or first responders have to respond, the better.

Failing deterrence, detection and delay, your only remaining option is defense. At this stage, the criminal(s) have defeated all earlier protective measures and have effectively pressed you into physical defense.

State law varies from “shall retreat” (try to reason with them because you are not permitted to use force) to “castle doctrine” (you have the immediate right to use deadly force to protect your home and family) and everything in between.

Depending upon those laws, you may want to consider a designated “safe” room—that is, find a location inside your home where there is only one way in and one way out (single ingress/egress point)



Predators search for people who aren't paying attention—stay aware of your surroundings at all times.

that you can clearly monitor and control from a position of advantage. You should have an ample supply of food, water, light (flashlight), firearms and ammunition as well as a backup cell phone, satellite phone or radio (means of communication) plus chargers and batteries. You may be holed up for a while based on the circumstances, so be prepared for the worst.

Have an emergency action plan (EAP) and review that plan with your family in detail. Run drills at alternative intervals to work out any questions or concerns.

In Your Car

Your vehicle, like your home, is a controlled area around which you can apply similar and concentric rings of protection. You can lock all your doors, roll up all your windows, stay off your phone and refrain from engaging or distracting conversation with any passengers when approaching a potentially high-threat environment.

Awareness, avoidance, and appearance apply equally to your car as they do to your home. Your vehicle is a controlled area on wheels. Stay alert and aware. Your situational awareness provides your earliest warning something bad may be about to happen.



Persuading criminals to move on can be accomplished with ample lighting, security cameras and other clear defensive measures.

Using your awareness, if you detect a potential threat, keep moving. A moving target is harder to engage than a stationary one.

Avoidance is critical. If it's not absolutely necessary to roll through a group of protestors lighting police cars on fire, then don't do it. Predators are attracted to softer targets. Remaining aware, alert and prepared to do what it takes to solve a potential problem and you are—and just as important, will appear to be—a more difficult target.

If you perceive that your life and limb or those of your family may be at risk as the mob begins to smash your windows in, then your options are limited. You could stop the car and attempt some physical-defense technique, use the vehicle itself as a justifiable use-of-force option or some combination of the two. Keep in mind all of your activity is almost certainly being recorded, and you may very well end up sitting before a grand jury to defend your decisions and actions.

On Foot

Maneuvering through an airport, shopping center or grocery-store parking lot to your car places you at a disadvantage against a determined assailant or mob because you are external to a controlled area. Applying our soft skills to being on foot, the need for awareness is amplified. If you cannot avoid this condition, then heightened awareness and being mentally prepared to engage a physical threat are your most effective protective measures.

If you detect an intercept approach, one viable option is to duck into a controlled area. If you are confronted with verbal aggression, then read the need. If what they want is for you to chant some slogan, do what it takes to create a bigger reactionary gap between yourself and the perceived threat, move toward a controlled or egress area or a position of advantage. Your primary objective is to de-escalate the situation, not convert it to a violent engagement.

Calmness

Your most powerful weapon—your mind—plays a critical role in building mental resilience and confidence. Protection experts who work in high-threat environments, are sometimes armed only with


this weapon. They need to remain calm and collected when under duress, and they must have what it takes mentally to be successful. To achieve the same success is to choose the mindset that will best serve you.

Remaining calm under duress is a function of mental toughness. Mental toughness is the measure of individual resilience and confidence that can project success at home, at work, in competition and under duress. It refers to any set of positive non-physical attributes that helps you to cope with the threatening situation and perform under duress and in difficult situations.

You must be willing to hope for the best but plan for the worst. Using mental imagery, visualize yourself in the middle of a worst-case nightmare before it occurs. What would you do? What are your options? How would you best respond? If you plan ahead of time, run that movie in your imagination and work out solutions mentally, then, if it ever happens, you've already consciously worked through the problem and are far more prepared than the softer target next to you. Remaining calm makes you a harder target.

Shelter or Shuttle

If things have deteriorated so badly in our society that we are unable to uphold the rule of law, then only the strong will prevail. The decision to shelter in place or leave is one that can only be made based on the totality of circumstances. What are your options? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Who and how many are with you? As you are the protective agent of your family, you are responsible for their safety and well-being. Are they healthy? Injured? Are there any short and long-term medical considerations? Are they capable of movement as a group? What are your contingency plans? Having viable answers to these tenuous questions and a detailed plan of action ahead of time makes you a harder target.

You now know what all protection experts know, that applying your situational awareness affords you control of your environment, acts as a deterrent and makes you a harder target. Avoidance is the "A" answer in most scenarios. If you look like a hard target, think like a hard target and act like a hard target, then you will be a hard target. Amidst the raging chaos of civil unrest, the predator will seek softer targets. 



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is the National Rifle Association's website dedicated to the fastest-growing community of firearm owners, hunters and defenders of freedom. The website offers expert information for women at all levels of their Second Amendment journey, whether they seek to further their knowledge of firearms, personal protection strategies, or the guns and gear that reflects participation in the shooting sports. NRAWomen.com promotes the outdoor lifestyle, and also gives voice to women who walk steadfastly into ongoing battles where gun rights hang in the balance.

Searching for Bigfoot

Just because your pistol and carbine are chambered in the same caliber doesn't mean they make the most of the same ammunition.

Modern-day shooters typically consider a cartridge as either for a rifle or a pistol. But, it has not always been that way. During the dawn of the metallic-cartridge era, there was a lot of crossover. Most all of the cartridges popular in early revolvers, like the .32-20 Win., .38-40 Win. and .44-40 Win. were also quite popular in lever-action rifles. At that time the ammunition worked well in both; velocities were—at least by modern standards—slow and common, lead bullets were sufficient.

As the velocities of metallic cartridges increased and as rifle cartridges become significantly more powerful than handgun cartridges, things begin to change. If a shooter wanted a rifle, they generally wanted a rifle cartridge that would drastically extend the reach and hit harder than a handgun. Still, some revolver cartridges continued to be popular in rifles. With modern munitions, however, a popular revolver cartridge like the .357 Mag.—delivering about 1,200 to 1,400 fps out of a 4-inch revolver—will push the same bullet as much as 400 fps or faster out of a 16- or 18-inch-barrel rifle.

This created a problem for bullets. Modern projectile technology would allow ballistic engineers to create a bullet for .357 Mag. that could perform quite well at handgun or rifle velocities. What was challenging was to create something that would deliver expansion, maintain its weight and deliver decent penetration when fired from a short-barreled handgun as well as a rifle. You see, velocity is the driving force behind terminal performance, and bullets are typically designed to work within a certain velocity range. Extending that performance range so acceptable terminal performance can be had at impact velocities as low as 1,000 fps and as high as 1,800 fps has, at least until now, been similar to the search for Bigfoot.

I found myself trying to solve this conundrum of ammunition selection when I began working with a Ruger 77/357 bolt-action rifle I wanted to set up as a general-purpose rifle and as my companion to a concealed-carry and a general-purpose revolver. My goal was to find a single load with acceptable terminal performance that I could use in all three firearms. I started shooting various loads into test mediums and what I found was that there were a lot of loads that would work well out of the snubnose and the 4-inch revolver, but when they were fired out of the rifle, the bullets either disintegrated or lost their ability to carry a wide wound cavity deeply into a target.

After testing almost two dozen .357 Mag. loads, I'd settled on only two I felt could deliver effective terminal performance out of all three barrel lengths. The first was the 125-grain Barnes TAC-XP load. It provided classic mono-metal bullet expansion out of the 4-inch-barrel revolver, but when fired from the rifle all of the petals broke off the projectile. This allowed for good penetration, but the last three-quarters of the wound cavity was only slightly larger than caliber size. Out of the snubby, the bullet just barely opened up.

The other load was one I tried out of desperation and it turned out to be (what I considered at the time) the best of what was tested. It was the 135-grain Hornady Critical Duty load. What I found to be the most amazing thing about this load was that the average penetration depths—when fired from the 2-, 4- and 18-inch barrels—were within a couple of inches. Penetration ranged



Finding a single load for the .357 Mag. that will deliver adequate terminal performance out of a handgun and a rifle is nearly impossible, but the new Federal HammerDown load can get it done.

PHOTO: RICHARD MANN

RICHARD MANN

from 13 to 17 inches. with impact velocities ranging between 1,113 and 1,542 fps. This was a bit on the slow side for a 135-grain, .357 Mag. load, which is probably why it managed to perform as well as it did out of all three firearms.

|| ...Velocity is the driving force behind terminal performance, and bullets are typically designed to work within a certain velocity range. ||

I'd pretty much settled on the Critical Duty load for all three of my .357 Mag. firearms, and then I received 100 rounds of a new .357 Mag. load from Federal. This new load is out of its HammerDown line, has been specifically engineered to work well with lever-action rifles and was intended to be a hunting load. It has chamfering on the case

rim, which eases loading in lever-action side gates, and the nickel cases are resistant to corrosion. But, the heavy-for-caliber bonded bullet is what really sets this load apart.

Out of a snubnose revolver, the HammerDown load penetrated 15.5 inches and deformed with a frontal diameter 1.5X caliber. Out of the 4-inch revolver, the bullet penetrated 20 inches and across the front it measured 1.6X the unfired bullet diameter. And, out of the 18-inch barrel of the rifle, the 170-grain bonded bullet pushed to 22 inches and had a recovered frontal diameter that measuring 1.3X its original diameter. Unlike Critical Duty, which only showed a 400 fps (38 percent) velocity increase between the 2- and 18-inch barrels, the HammerDown load jumped from 1,102 fps out of the snubby to 1,773 fps out of the rifle, a 61-percent increase in velocity.

The point of all this is that if you're a fan of the .357 Mag., and if you would like a single load suitable for hunting, predator defense and personal protection—a general-purpose or Bigfoot-capable load—you now have a fantastic option. If the best balance of terminal performance out of .357 Mag. revolvers and rifles is what you desire, I believe the new HammerDown load from Federal is the best option currently available.

I will say this though: The 170-grain HammerDown load fired out of a 17-ounce Ruger LCR with a 1.87-inch barrel is just about all you want to wrap your hand around. At best, the recoil would be described as uncomfortable, and a more honest description of the sensation would be painful.☺



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Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

There's more to preparing for personal defense than you may think.



The military has long made use of verbal commands and hand signals in combat, and such means of communication can be equally useful for the armed citizen faced with a life-threatening emergency.

USMC PHOTO

When considering a personal-defense plan, people rarely consider the need to communicate with others who may be on your side. Waiting until the bullets start flying to try to come up with signals that can be understood is probably not a very good idea. When dealing with a violent criminal attack, we need to be able to communicate with our partner, both verbally and with hand gestures, in order to present and utilize a united defense.

We may need to communicate the fact that we have to reload or clear a malfunction, in which case the partner will need to cover us. We also may need to communicate to a partner the number and/or the location of our attackers. Furthermore, we may want to let our partner know what our plan of defense entails, where one is going and

where one's partner needs to go. All of these things, and others, need to be worked out ahead of time so there are no misunderstandings in the midst of a life-threatening emergency.

The first rule of defensive communication is to keep it simple. In the midst of a gunfight might not be the time to say, "I've run out of ammo and am going to need to reload my pistol." The more effective comment might be, "Loading!" To which your partner replies, "Covering!" With these two words, you have established what you are dealing with and your partner has indicated he/she understands and will cover you until you can get back into the fight.

A gunfight also might not be the best place to try to get too tricky with your communication. Hollering "Left" when you actually mean to go right in an attempt to fool your attackers may very well also confuse your partner. The most important thing is to come up with short, clear forms of communication that you've worked out ahead of time, so that your

partner knows exactly what is going on and what needs to be done.

There is also the matter of auditory exclusion that needs to be considered and dealt with. That is the phenomenon where, under certain stressful conditions, a person's hearing is often impaired. Gunshots may sound like firecrackers being set off a few hundred yards away, and normal, conversational tones may not be heard at all. For that reason, defensive communications should be as loud as they are clear. Defenders should shout it out like they are making a speech to a crowd without the use of a microphone.

Communication is also important when a potential threat is spotted. For this, we often will use code words to alert our partner without alerting everyone else who might be around us. I might say to Mary, "Sadie, is it 3-o'clock yet?" By using a fake name,

preferably one she hates, I have alerted her to a possible problem and told her that it is at 3-o'clock to her position.

Some years ago, an Arizona woman was taken at gunpoint during a robbery. She called to her husband, "Cowboy, there is a

▄▄ **There may also be situations during a criminal attack, or any tense situation, where verbal communications are not the best idea.** ▄▄

man here to see you." The armed robber was neutralized because the couple had agreed on the word "cowboy" as an alert that an armed robbery was happening in their place of business.

We may also use code words when we need our partner to create a diversion that

allows us to arm ourselves or draw our handgun. My partner, being held hostage, needs to hear a code word to know that I am ready to shoot and need the partner to kick her feet out and drop like a dead weight so that I can get a head shot.

When you think about it, code words can really be of value to us in our everyday lives, as well as in a defensive situation. Just about all of us have been to a social event that we can't get away from fast enough, yet we don't want to offend our hosts or those around us. The more we establish and work with code words in our everyday lives, the easier it is to implement them during a crisis.

There may also be instances during a criminal attack, or any tense situation, where verbal communications are not the best idea. In these scenarios, it is an excellent idea to have worked out some hand signals with your partner. I once examined several sheets of hand signal illustrations from the military and found them to be too many and too confusing. And, in a personal-defense situation, it doesn't matter what the military does—it only matters what you and your partner have worked out and agreed upon. Again, keep it simple.

When we have a partner to back us during a criminal attack, our advantage isn't added to, it is multiplied. But, this is the case only when we have previously discussed a personal-defense plan and worked out ways—both verbally and non-verbally—to communicate while dealing with a criminal attack. It is an excellent idea to take the time with your spouse, business partner or good buddy and work out the signals that will help you both survive.🌀

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The Glock G17

A revolution in firearm design that begat a revolution in self-defense.



While hardly the first firearm—or even pistol—to employ polymer construction, the Glock G17 certainly popularized the practice and brought it into the mainstream.

At a recent gathering of like-minded friends, the subject of favorite concealed-carry guns arose. As the visitors called out their favorites, I surprisingly found myself seated between two Glock fans, both armed with unnoticeable G17s.

Now, those of you reading the previous paragraph might think the most alarming part of what was recounted was that during this time of COVID restrictions, I actually entertained a gathering of assorted friends for conversation, drinks and cigars. But, if you had read this same passage some 30 years ago, your reaction might be focused on the fact that there was actually a room full of folks with concealed-carry licenses, and not the fact that we were risking infecting the neighborhood with the plague.

In 1986, finding someone with a concealed-carry permit who also didn't have a law enforcement badge was like drawing a Colorado elk permit 3 years in a row—pretty rare indeed. At that time there were only eight states in the Union that would even consider issuing a permit to carry to a citizen, and one lone state (Vermont) that required no permit to carry whatsoever. Today, thanks to the NRA's proactive efforts all 50 states allow some form of concealed carry, with twice as many states (16) requiring no permit at all than those that have restrictive-licensing regimes (eight).

The quick and pervasive switch in attitudes came about as Board Members, attorneys and staff from the NRA were able to illuminate for the public the racist and politically biased nature behind most concealed-carry bans in this country. It wasn't before long, following the legislative lead set by Washington State and Florida, that the tables were turned 180 degrees.

M I L E S T O N E S
NRA 150

Now, if you're to draw any conclusions about the straw poll taken on my back porch, you may wish to also know a little about what has become one of the fastest-selling products in history, as well as the man behind the name Glock.

In 1963, Gaston Glock was a successful manufacturer of curtain rods and rings in his native Austria. Today, his name is just as well



Efforts of the NRA's Marion Hammer in Florida started the avalanche of concealed-carry reform. As concealed-carry grew in popularity, Glock's G17—and its smaller siblings—also became sought-after.

known as John Moses Browning, Samuel Colt, Horace Smith, Daniel Wesson and William Ruger in the world of firearm development and manufacturing. He is said to have jokingly stated: "In 1980 I didn't know a pistol from a revolver," but by 1982 his Glock G17 was chosen to be the standard sidearm of the Austrian Army. In 1984 it was adopted by Norway, the first of 45 export countries to choose the Glock as a standard sidearm. In 1986, a Glock plant in Georgia was turning out handguns for what would soon be more than 2,000 U.S. police departments. Today, the number of Glocks manufactured numbers in the tens of millions.

Gaston Glock had been making various products in his Austrian factory that utilized a process called injection molding, which created parts from a polymer that Glock himself developed. In 1977, he was manufacturing knives for the

Austrian military when he learned the Austrian Army was looking for a new service handgun. He had the first prototype ready by 1980 using design features found in John Browning's Hi Power pistol as well as a few other features he gleaned from dozens of handguns he examined during his initial research into what would make the innovative pistol that the Austrian Army was looking for.

His Glock G17 chambered, in 9 mm, utilized a steel slide and barrel as well as numerous steel internal parts, but the most innovative aspect was the polymer frame that held all the parts together. This frame provided the platform for the 33 parts utilized in the composition of the gun, which was less than half the number of parts in most other pistols manufactured at that time.

Today, thanks to the NRA's proactive efforts all 50 states allow some form of concealed carry, with twice as many states (16) requiring no permit at all than those that have restrictive-licensing regimes (eight).

Exchanging the traditional steel frame and wooden grips that had featured so prominently in military sidearms since their inception for a polymer frame drastically reduced the weight of the gun, a chief concern of the adoption board. Now, to be sure, Glock did not invent the polymer frame; that idea had been around since Remington made the Nylon 66 rifle in 1959 and Heckler & Koch introduced the VP70Z pistol in 1970, but Glock was the first to employ its use in a pistol that soon gained widespread acceptance and use. His first model, the Glock G17 utilized a 17-round 9 mm magazine, which was also quite innovative for its time (The Glock G17,

however, received its moniker, not because of the number of rounds that the gun held, but from the fact that this firearm represented Gaston Glock's 17th patent).

As many as 2,000 police departments

made the switch to Glock handguns over the next decade, and the public followed their lead. Through the efforts of the NRA, reforms in concealed-carry laws across the country resulted in the fact that a total of around 20 million concealed-carry permits have been issued to law-abiding citizens. Glock's success paralleled the concealed-carry boom, with smaller, more concealable models like the G19 and G43 hitting the market. During that period, between 10 and 15 million Glocks have been manufactured and sold worldwide with back-orders commonly running in the hundreds of thousands.

Glock's success in the handgun market and the explosion of concealed-carry in the U.S. are obviously related, and further assisted by the tireless efforts of the NRA.

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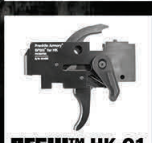
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Beretta 92X F Compact

Fans of the Beretta M9/92 series of handguns now have an updated version geared toward concealed carry.

There's no denying the nostalgic appeal of the Beretta 92 handgun. For those of us of a certain vintage, it was "the" gun in a whole bunch of 1980s action movies and TV shows, in addition to being the U.S. military's official sidearm starting in Ronald Reagan's second term. We grew up with the Beretta 92, like



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Beretta USA;
(800) 929-2901, beretta-usa.com

Action Type: Recoil-operated, DA/SA semi-automatic

Caliber: 9 mm

Capacity: 13+1 rounds

Grips: Polymer

Barrel Length: 4.25 inches

Sights: High-visibility orange front sight; black rear ledge sight

Trigger Pull Weight: 10 pounds, 14 ounces (double action); 5 pounds, 12 ounces (single action)

Length: 7.75 inches

Width: 1.5 inches

Height: 5.25 inches

Weight: 27.2 ounces

Accessories: Wraparound grip, three 13-round magazines, hard case, cleaning rod, lock, manual

MSRP: \$700

SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
Winchester USA 115-grain FMJ	1,107	1.63	3.11	2.43
Federal Premium 135-grain DEEP JHP	921	1.30	2.16	1.81
SIG Sauer 147-grain V-Crown	827	1.21	2.14	1.77

Velocity measured in fps 5 feet from the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with an Oehler Model 36 chronograph. Temperature: 67 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 15 yards from a bag rest.

ON TARGET

Upgraded ergonomics

OFF TARGET

Rather chunky for concealed carry

VHS tapes, "Back to the Future" and the Rubik's Cube. But, before I start yelling at you to get off my lawn, let's circle back to the pistol in question, the Beretta 92X F Compact.

To start, let's unpack the name. The "92" tells you it's the standard, double/single-action pistol first released in 1976. The "X" notes the 2019 updates on the grip frame, slide and trigger, while the "F" denotes the presence of a safety/decocker, rather than the "G" that only functions to decock the hammer. Obviously, and most relevant to the concealed-carry licensee, the "Compact" means it has a shorter barrel and slightly reduced grip frame to make it more amenable to concealability.

But, you ask, Beretta's had a Compact version of the 92 for ages, so why should this be of any interest? I'm glad you asked. The "X" series brought about a number of changes to the platform designed to make it more comfortable to shoot, such as a modular, Vertec-style frame with standard and wraparound grips, a target-crown barrel, high-visibility sights and an enhanced trigger, just to name a few. This may be the best-shooting 92 going. With the addition of the Compact, it's easy (easier) to conceal. The



Serrated to reduce glare, the 92X F Compact's rear sight also features a flat "ledge" for single-handed manipulation • Up front, the sight is a highly visible orange dot in a dovetail should changes be desired • In addition to the standard grips, a wraparound module designed for larger mitts is also included • Three 13-round

barrel shrinks from 4.9 to 4.25 inches from the full-size, and the grip is also slightly shortened, bringing magazine capacity to 13 from the larger M9/92's 15 rounds. Naturally, the Compact can still accept all full-size magazines, including aftermarket models with increased capacity, but they will stick out from the bottom of the frame.

As far as the "F" vs. "G," well, that's simple. The "F" designation means the lever located on the slide functions as both a decocker and a safety: Push down to safely lower the hammer and engage the safety, push up to fire. On the "G," that same lever functions only to decock the hammer, springing back to the up position once the hammer is lowered. If you purchase one variant and decide you would rather have the other, don't worry—the slides are interchangeable. Since the lever is mounted to the slide, simply fieldstrip the pistol and put the other slide in place. Alternately, the lever itself can be swapped, although Beretta does recommend this task be performed by a qualified gunsmith.

Whether you prefer a safety or a decocker-only, there are some extra considerations when choosing a DA/SA semi-automatic pistol. On the range, it is imperative to safely lower the hammer every time before putting a DA/SA gun back in a holster (or just on the range bench). It's not too difficult to remember this step when shooting leisurely on your local range; however in a training environment, sometimes this step gets forgotten when others are already finished shooting. Of course, there's also the bugbear of the two different trigger pulls, but that's a training and practice issue. Quite obviously, neither of these are faults or reasons to avoid DA/SA handguns, just things to be aware of when choosing a pistol for daily carry.

With these caveats in place, it begs the question of who might be interested in the new Beretta 92X F Compact? While it probably would not be my first recommendation to someone brand-new to firearms—although it wouldn't be a terrible

choice, far from it—for a shooter familiar with DA/SA pistols, particularly the Beretta family that served our military for more than 3 decades, it's a great choice. I had a good friend in high school who joined the Army after college, serving our country for more than a decade, who called me, all excited after buying his first handgun. When he told me it was a Beretta 92, I was curious why he chose that particular pistol. "Simple," he replied, "I carried one for 12 years in the Army. I know that gun inside and out."

There are a lot of people out there like my friend who have significant experience with DA/SA handguns, particularly those from Beretta. Even though the standard military sidearm has changed, I know from my son's experience in Navy boot camp that recruits are still being taught on the M9. That's a whole new generation of shooters who might have their first—possibly only—handgun experience with the 92 family. Some of them are going to come around to looking at a self-defense pistol they might carry. When you also consider that many police agencies issued Beretta 92s of some variant, there are even more folks who might want to think about the new 92X F Compact as a concealed-carry option.

Here's one more factor to consider. With many striker-fired pistols having manual safeties grafted to their frames, it's obvious that many new shooters are looking for that extra level of protection. With the various models of Beretta 92s, there's not only a safety option, but the heavier double-action trigger pull acts as a natural guard against inadvertent trigger manipulation on its own, requiring double-digit pull weight to manipulate the DA trigger. For someone new to concealed carry, having a manual safety and a long trigger pull might just be the winning combination that gets them to join the concealed-carry fraternity. That's a good thing, indeed.



magazines come standard with the 92X F Compact • Beretta's DA/SA trigger gives an extra margin of safety, as does the manual safety that also decocks the hammer • Slide-stop and takedown levers are located in their expected positions.



Ruger American Competition

For those looking for victory, Ruger's latest polymer pistol is a winner.

Not everyone needs (or wants) a compact or subcompact handgun. Those looking for a competition pistol, those who want (and can comfortably wear) a full-size sidearm for everyday carry or those looking for a soft-shooting pistol for home defense will look to full-size handguns. And, Ruger has obliged, delivering a scaled-up version of the company's American handgun, ready for competition



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Ruger; (336) 949-5200, ruger.com

Action Type: Recoil-operated, semi-automatic

Caliber: 9 mm

Capacity: 17+1 rounds

Frame: Glass-filled nylon

Slide: Alloy steel

Barrel Length: 5 inches

Sights: Fiber-optic front; adjustable rear

Trigger Pull Weight: 6 pounds, 4 ounces

Length: 8.3 inches

Width: 1.3 inches

Height: 5.6 inches

Weight: 34 ounces

Accessories: Two magazines, hard case, lock, manual

MSRP: \$579

SHOOTING RESULTS

Load	Velocity	Group Size		
		Smallest	Largest	Average
SIG Sauer 115-grain V-Crown	1,303	1.9	2.4	2.2
Federal Syntech 130-grain PCC	1,049	2.1	2.6	2.4
Hornady 147-grain XTP	1,061	1.9	2.5	2.2

Velocity measured in fps 15 feet from the muzzle for 10 consecutive shots with a LabRadar chronograph. Temperature: 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Accuracy measured in inches for four consecutive, five-shot groups slow fired from a supported position at 25 yards.

ON TARGET

Impressive accuracy

OFF TARGET

Overly heavy trigger pull

or those other uses. Introduced in 2015 as a mid-size pistol chambered in 9 mm and .45 ACP, the American offers a number of features that have been carried forward to the competition-ready model.

The first item, and a feature all Ruger American pistols have, is the pre-tensioned striker spring. By having this type of system, Ruger can deliver a heavier impact to the primer without radically increasing the trigger pull. This ensures reliable ignition without making you work harder for it. The American design incorporates an integrated trigger safety as well as an internal automatic-sear-block system. Also, as do all American pistols, the Competition model has a replaceable, wraparound grip system. By changing this part, you can adjust the grip size and shape to fit your hand and allow an easier trigger reach. Each one comes with small, medium and large modules, and you can easily swap them until you find the one that fits the best.

The frame is composed of a glass-filled nylon formula, where the glass fibers work like rebar in the nylon. The American frame is nigh-on unbreakable and doesn't exhibit the squishy feel of polymer pistols that lack a similar glass filling. Despite being harder, the frame is not slick, as Ruger has molded in non-slip, textured panels on the frame as the grip modules. The frame also incorporates a Picatinny rail as a mounting point for accessories. For home defense, a light or laser on the American Competition kept close at hand means more versatility. For those wishing the same for carry use, holster makers are well aware of your desire to holster a light-equipped pistol.

Inside the frame, the stainless steel chassis has been machined from a solid block of steel. The chassis holds the firing-system components and also has the frame rails on which the slide cycles. The chassis is where the serial number is applied, and it is held in place by the takedown lever. You do not need to remove the chassis for routine cleaning. Before it and the frame are married, the chassis receives the same black nitride treatment that the slide and barrel have received.

The slide and barrel are both made of stainless steel and given a black-nitride finish. The barrel has a relatively slow twist rate—one turn in 16 inches—to wring the maximum accuracy out of 9 mm bullets at typical 9 mm velocities. Some 9 mm firearms have been

made with twist rates as fast as 1:10, but Ruger wants maximum accuracy here. The rear hood of the barrel has a viewing notch machined into it, as a loaded-chamber indicator.

The slide has been ported to keep the weight down and ensure reliable function. A slide that is too heavy can be sluggish in cycling, and this can lead to malfunctions. It can also make for an unsatisfying shooting experience, with the shooter (using a pistol with a too-heavy slide) feeling as if they are waiting on the pistol's slide to finish cycling before they can shoot again. Not here. The slide is also machined for—and drilled and tapped to accept—a red-dot optical sight. Ruger specifies Vortex, Burris, Sightmark, Docter and MeoRed MRDS, but there are many that would fit. (Mounting screws are not included.)

If you don't want to use a red-dot sight, the competition comes with a fully adjustable rear sight, and a fiber-optic front blade. The slide stop and the magazine release are both ambidextrous, and the Competition


comes with a pair of magazines. These are steel tubes that are nickel-plated and have hard-polymer baseplates on them. In most locales they will hold 17 rounds. For those states where that isn't permitted, Ruger has 10-round magazines in the box, and they are also available as aftermarket accessories.

The Competition is available only in 9 mm, as that is the cartridge most competitive shooters will be using. In USPSA Production and Carry Optics Divisions, you are only scored Minor, so shooting a .45 ACP is self-defeating. (And in Production Division, you'll have to be using 10-round magazines, as well, so stock up) In competition you'll be shooting buckets of 9 mm ammunition (assuming you can find it, given the current ammunition shortages) that is just barely Minor. The Power Factor you have to exceed is 125,000, so a 125-grain bullet at anything more than 1,000 fps gets you there. However, for defense you may want to consider more robust 9 mm offerings. Ruger has built the American for, and tested the Competition with, sustained shooting

of 9 mm +P ammunition. It is likely better able to handle +P than can most shooters.

One aspect of the American Competition that Ruger has mentioned is that it has changed the barrel-cam geometry, in order to soften the recoil impulse. This is the sort of thing that a manufacturer can do when it builds a full-size version of an established model meant for daily carry and defense. In test-firing, the Competition was softer to shoot compared to other 9 mm pistols that day. How much of that was due to the cam angle, and how much was due to the Competition being heavier than the other pistols, is unknown. It was, however, soft to shoot. The trigger pull, on the other hand, was a question mark. At just slightly more than 6.25 pounds, it was certainly clean and well-behaved. It did not have any grit, and it presented a smooth trigger travel. However, for actual competition use, the weight is heavier than desired. It is perfect as a daily carry or home-defense pistol, though, and the accuracy was superb.

The conclusion here is that the Ruger American Competition is a gem. For defensive use it is soft-shooting and accurate, and the trigger is just about perfect for high-stress situations. For competition purposes, the accuracy and soft recoil are both great benefits. The trigger weight is not an impediment to the new shooter, who has other skills to build before worrying about the "perfect" trigger. Before they arrive at the top spot at their local club, they will have had time to work out the other, more important details. And of all the aspects of a competition pistol that might need attending to, (sights, accuracy, etc.) trigger improvement is by far the easiest to improve.

If you are looking for a full-size, striker-fired 9 mm pistol with which to compete or one that can do double-duty for both matches and personal protection, the Ruger American Competition should be on your must-buy list. 



The pistol's trigger-paddle safety should look familiar to fans of striker-fired handguns • Ports along the slide reduce weight while providing an eye-catching aesthetic • Ruger's modular grip system allows elements like trigger reach and palm swell to be customized by shooters • A cutout in the slide makes the Ruger American Competition optics ready for an MRDS • The serrated rear-sight assembly is fully adjustable for windage and elevation • A green fiber-optic pipe in the front sight provides quick and easy target acquisition.



Obama Still Whining About Gun Owners' Political Power

LATEST
LEGISLATIVE
NEWS FROM
INSIDE THE NRA
INSTITUTE FOR
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ACTION

Barack Obama is still upset about just how bitterly so many Americans cling to their guns. During an interview with Oprah Winfrey that aired November 17, 2020, the former president expressed his anger with the fact that gun owners successfully organized to defeat his radical gun-control agenda in early 2013.

Obama's chief complaint to Winfrey was that gun owners had the temerity to politically organize to defend their Second Amendment rights in opposition to his administration's efforts. Moreover, in doing so, the former president attempted to portray the wisdom of his preferred gun-control policies as so self-evident as to be beyond the scope of politics. To the former president, the rights and concerns of the firearms community deserve no political consideration.

Of course, there was no wisdom to Obama's preferred gun-control policy – the criminalization of private firearm transfers (sometimes referred to as "universal background checks"). In fact, Obama's Department of Justice surveyed the efficacy of several gun-control

measures, and in a memo dated January 4, 2013, a DOJ researcher concluded that the criminalization of private transfers would be ineffective absent further draconian gun-control measures, including firearm registration.

Obama's own DOJ told the administration that the gun-control legislation he was championing would not be effective. Yet, the president persisted in pushing the ineffective policy until the legislation was defeated in the Senate on April 17, 2013. A reasonable person could conclude that Obama's decision to promote legislation that would have harmed gun owners while serving no public safety benefit was pure politics.

Gun-rights supporters should take motivation from Obama's statements. His continued whining on guns is recognition of the effectiveness of well-informed, well-organized, and politically-active gun-rights supporters. Armed with the same dedication and effort that led to the victory over Obama in 2013, gun owners will be ready to confront the potential challenges of 2021.

AP photo by Blynn Anderson

NRA-ILA

ILA Grassroots:
(800) 392-8683

NRA-ILA: (703) 267-1170

NRA-ILA website: nraila.org

IN MEMORY NRA-ILA CONTRIBUTIONS

November 1 - 30, 2020

George Petri, Ballwin, MO (from: Carl & Linda Jokerst); **Steward H. Leland, III**, Hellam Township, PA (from: Leonard & Susan Leiphart); **Boo Brott** (from: Dale Zimmerman); **David Riggs**, Saint George, UT (from: Doris Riggs); **George David Underwood**, Baltimore, MD (from: Elaine Spaulding)

NRA Challenges New Jersey's Restrictive Carry Law

The NRA-ILA partnered with The Association of New Jersey Rifle & Pistol Clubs in a lawsuit against the state of New Jersey for infringing on our members' right to carry.

New Jersey's may-issue statute requires that people justify their need to carry. And even though the Supreme Court said that self-defense is "the central component" of the Second Amendment, the desire to defend yourself is insufficient justification under New Jersey law. This makes it all but impossible for law-abiding gun owners to receive a permit, which is required to lawfully carry a handgun in New Jersey.

One of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit is a firearms instructor with a current federal and New Jersey firearms retail license. But when he went to submit his application for a permit at his local police department, he was told not to even bother because it would just be denied for lacking a justifiable need.

"That is egregious but pretty common in New Jersey," said Michael Jean, NRA-ILA Director of Litigation. "The Supreme Court said that the Second Amendment 'takes out of the hands of government ... the power to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the right is really worth insisting upon.' But that's what officials in New Jersey do when they reject applicants who they believe haven't justified their need to exercise their rights. This lawsuit's aim is to put an end to that."

The case is *Mazahreh v. Grewal*, and was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. The Coalition of New Jersey Firearm Owners also joined the lawsuit.

More NICS Records

November 2020 saw, among other things, another new firearm background checks record.

The FBI NICS office conducted 3,626,335 total background checks in November, which is always a busy month with elections, Black Friday, and holiday deals to be had. Even the year-to-date streak of record numbers and reported inventory shortages around the country could not hamper the demand for background checks. November 2019 was beaten by more than a million checks.

Checks were down on Black Friday compared to 2019... but still high enough to be the fourth-busiest day in the history of NICS. There were 186,645 checks this Black Friday, and that would not include any firearms ordered online that day—which would have to be shipped to a federally licensed dealer who would then complete the background check. Black Friday may have been slower than last year, but the first two full weeks of November ranked, in order, as the fourth and eighth busiest weeks for the NICS office. Ever.

Every month in 2020 has set a new record, and the year-to-date number of background checks is already 26% higher than the previous annual record total. The NICS office had run 35,758,249 checks through the end of November 2020. It ran 28,369,750 checks all of last year.

Obviously, 2020 has been quite a year for Americans exercising their Constitutional rights, and we don't even have the final annual numbers as we go to press. Those come out around the time new members of Congress take their oath of office. We expect that these legislators will see the importance of the Second Amendment as demonstrated by the sheer number of Americans exercising their right.

But, if they do not, your NRA will be ready. 🇺🇸

Photo by Mark Mercury

Michael Austin Is NRA COUNTRY



Three things NRA Country loves are our brave service members, first responders and of course country music. When we discovered Michael Austin—a U.S. Air Force veteran, retired deputy sheriff and current country artist—we knew he fit the NRA Country brand. His newest single, which he co-wrote, is called "God, Guns and Country Music" and celebrates what he believes in as an American patriot. Austin even recites the 2nd Amendment at the beginning of the song. With a bold sound influenced by the legends of Outlaw Country, Americana and Rock, Austin achieved chart success in over 25 countries with his debut CD "Neon Halo." He won over fans on Season 4 of NBC's "The Voice" and recently completed 21 concert dates with NRA friend Ted Nugent. NRA Country's Vanessa Shahidi caught up with Michael Austin to ask him a few questions and learn more about the talented artist.

VS: Do you have a favorite personal firearm?

MA: I love my SIG Sauer P226. My father gave it to me when I started at the Sheriff's Academy and it led me to earning the Top Gun Award at graduation. It was the same gun he carried as a deputy and just an all-around great gun.

VS: What was it like to share the stage with Ted Nugent?

MA: Being on tour with Uncle Ted will cause anyone to step up their game. He always talks about being filled with the Spirit of the Wild. It's contagious and was a rush when he called me blood brother. It was amazing to hear him say my name and how he was proud to share the stage with me as a red-blooded American patriot.

VS: You've served our country in the Air Force and as a deputy sheriff. Tell us what you've seen that makes you proud to be an American.

MA: I've had an amazing journey, both serving overseas and then here in the United States. I saw teamwork at its finest. I saw heartbreak at the loss of a teammate, partner, brother or sister who believed, like me, that this country was worth laying it all on the line for. It didn't matter where you were from. By the time you all came together, it was about where you would go as a team.

Visit MichaelAustinLive.com to learn more about the talented artist and his latest release, "God, Guns and Country Music" from his album Good Life.

NRA Country is a lifestyle and a bond between the country music community and hard-working Americans everywhere. It's powered by pride, freedom, love of country, respect for the military, and the responsibilities of protecting the great American life. Visit nracountry.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

NRA Online Regional Report

To search for events in your area, go to

nrpublications.org/regional-report

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



LAW ENFORCEMENT

le.nra.org

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



GUN SHOWS

gunshows.nra.org

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

To become an NRA Recruiter contact NRA Recruiting Programs at recruiter@nrahq.org.



AREA SHOOTS

ssusa.org/coming-events

For more information, send an email to Shelly Kramer at mkramer@nrahq.org or call (703) 267-1459.



FRIENDS OF NRA

friendsofnra.org

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



TRAINING

refuse.nra.org | nrainstructors.org

The NRA's Refuse To Be A Victim® program provides information on crime prevention and personal safety. To learn more about the program, visit refuse.nra.org. The most up-to-date seminar and instructor training schedule is available on the Internet by visiting nrainstructors.org, or online training is available at nraonlinetraining.org. Questions? Email to refuse@nrahq.org or by calling (800) 861-1166.



STATE ASSOCIATIONS

stateassociations.nra.org

Joining NRA-affiliated state associations supports NRA's mission in your state. See clubs.nra.org for more information.

Member Information & Benefits

NRA.ORG

**MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNT
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MEMBER SERVICE (800) 672-3888
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NRA AFFILIATED CLUBS (800) 672-2582

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SHOWS & EXHIBITS (877) 672-7632

MEDIA RELATIONS (703) 267-1595

HUNTER SERVICES (844) 672-6883

The "NRA Regional Report," a service for NRA members, is an up-to-date listing of NRA conducted and/or sponsored events scheduled in your region for the current month. Call to verify event dates and locations before traveling.



**2021 NRA ANNUAL MEETINGS
SEPT. 3-5 • HOUSTON, TX**

For hotel accommodations at the NRA Annual Meetings, visit nraam.org





By Joseph P. DeBergalis, Jr.
Executive Director,
General Operations



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stateassociations.nra.org

**150
YEARS
STRONG**



1871 - 2021

explore.nra.org

NRA's Proud Tradition Of Marksmanship Training

With the calendar turning to 2021, your National Rifle Association of America is celebrating a milestone anniversary. For 150 years, the NRA has been a national service organization dedicated to advancing marksmanship, as well as the country's foremost defender of Second Amendment rights. As we recognize NRA's sesquicentennial year, let's take a look back at how we started.

NRA was chartered in 1871 in New York by a group of National Guard officers with first-hand knowledge of the decline of American marksmanship during the Civil War. Led by Col. William C. Church and Gen. George Wingate, their goal was to improve the state of marksmanship training in the country.

Not long after NRA's inception, the search for a range began, eventually finding Creed's Farm on Long Island—deeded to the National Rifle Association for the price of \$26,250. What became known as "Creedmoor Range" became one of the most famous venues in shooting history. The first formal matches at Creedmoor in 1873 were widely anticipated, with throngs of enthusiastic spectators gathering to witness NRA's hosting of historical shooting events. Rifle tournaments at Creedmoor, and subsequently at ranges located at Sea Girt, N.J., Camp Perry, Ohio, and Camp Atterbury, Ind., captured the country's spirit of nationalism and resulted in key improvements in rifles and target scoring.

By the early 20th century, NRA had grown into a national association that set the standards for military rifle training. That training has saved countless American lives on battlefields around the world. The NRA's high standards for military rifle training even inspired the federal government to form an adjunct within the War Department to focus on promoting rifle practice among soldiers and civilians alike.

In 1903, NRA Secretary Albert S. Jones urged the establishment of rifle clubs at all major colleges, universities and military academies. Three years later, the NRA youth program was in full swing, with over 200 youth shooters at Sea Girt that summer. Youth shooting programs remain a cornerstone of the NRA.

After World War II, the NRA, in conjunction with the state of New York, established the first hunter education program. NRA hunter education courses are now taught by state fish and game departments across the country



and Canada—helping to make hunting one of the safest sports around.

As the NRA continued to evolve, expanding its safety and educational programs to meet the needs of an ever-changing America, some of the nation's most celebrated leaders, including Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George C. Marshall and John F. Kennedy, praised the NRA's inexhaustible efforts to train Americans in firearms safety and marksmanship.

The tradition of marksmanship instruction continues, thanks to thousands of NRA members working tirelessly as instructors, training counselors, coaches and volunteers. Without their support, the majority of programs that the NRA offers would not be possible.

The NRA today—propelled by its legion of members and volunteers—continues to offer educational programs for hunters, marksmen, military, law enforcement, women and youth. These programs, found at nrainstructors.org, underscore a vital commitment to keeping America safe and free. As we look ahead to the future, here's to another 150 years of continuing the traditions upon which the Association was founded.

To learn more about NRA's programs, visit explore.nra.org.





NRA Announces New Dates For 150th Annual Meetings And Exhibits

The National Rifle Association's 2021 Annual Meetings and Exhibits will be held Sept. 3-5, 2021. Originally scheduled for mid-May, the event will remain in Houston, Texas, at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

As many uncertainties around COVID-19 restrictions persist, the National Rifle Association rescheduled its 150th Anniversary celebration to help members and exhibitors make the necessary plans to attend. Approximately 850 exhibitors will provide an exhibit hall that offers attendees a one-of-a-kind experience with thousands of firearms and related accessories, along with all manner of shooting and hunting gear, on display from all of their favorite manufacturers.

Because of the postponement, NRA Board of Directors election ballots and accompanying materials will also be delayed, and accordingly will be published in the June/July 2021 Official Journal magazines. All voting members should take note and watch for NRA Board election communications later than normal.

The 150th NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits is open and free to all NRA members. Some events require a ticket, which can be ordered in advance. Members should watch their monthly membership magazine or go to nraam.org for updates and the latest information. Make your plans to come to Houston and celebrate 150 years of NRA service to America.

Saluting Community Heroes With A 21-Gun Giveaway

Last year COVID-19 presented many challenges, forcing the cancellation of countless events throughout the United States. We had to become creative in the ways we celebrated and honored our heroes. While Santa may be at the top of the hero list for some, a community in Kentucky celebrated their local heroes through the second annual "21-Gun Hero's Salute." Burnside Tourism partnered with the Lake Cumberland Friends of NRA and Somerset 106 and WTLO radio stations to honor Pulaski County's military veterans, EMS, police and firefighters by giving away 21 American flag-pattern Ruger Precision Rimfire rifles. Frank Crabtree Jr., Burnside's tourism director, said "Coronavirus, just like it's done to everybody, has forced people to switch up their plans." Thinking outside of the box, more than 150 community sponsors came together to make the event possible, as reported by Christopher Harris of the *Commonwealth Journal/Somerset-Kentucky.com*. The 21-Gun Hero's Salute Giveaway launched on December 9 at Hall's Pawn Shop, with city officials and local Friends of NRA chair, Ryan Godbey, in attendance. The 21 winners were announced over a three-day period, December 21-23, live on air at Somerset 106 radio. 📻



Photo courtesy Christopher Harris/Commonwealth Journal

Burnside Mayor Robert Lawson, Lake Cumberland Friends of NRA Chair Ryan Godbey, Santa Claus (as portrayed by Burnside Tourism Director Frank Crabtree Jr.) and Fourth District County Magistrate Mark Ranshaw gather at Hall's Pawn Shop in Somerset, Ky., to launch the "21-Gun Hero's Salute" gun giveaway.

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Communications intended for any member of the NRA Board of Directors should be addressed to: (Name of Board member), NRA Office of the Secretary, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030; or nrabod@nrahq.org; or (703) 267-1021. Please include your name, contact information and NRA membership I.D. number, as only communications from NRA members will be forwarded.

enemy soldier. This is called grazing fire, and it can extend out to as far as 750 yards. It is an often-sought, seldom-realized condition that maximizes the potential of the machine gun. Infantry tacticians always try to get their machine guns placed to maximize their ability to produce grazing fire. But, in either offensive or defensive fighting, they also try to do something else.

They try to get the long axis of the beaten zone to coincide with the long axis of the target. We already know what the beaten zone is, so the long axis is simply an imaginary line that divides it in half. The target is a group of enemy troops. Invariably, they are going to be in some kind of formation. Draw the same imaginary line and divide the formation in half. If it's at all possible, get the long axis of the beaten zone right on the long axis of the target. This ideal type of engagement is called enfilade fire.

Consider an incident that was at least rumored and perhaps actually happened in Vietnam. A Marine rifle squad with an M60 machine-gun team attached was on a patrol well into a disputed area of Vietnamese countryside. They stopped along the banks of a shallow river and hunkered down in the undergrowth. In time, a lone North Vietnamese soldier emerged from the trees on the far bank and looked cautiously about. He signaled, and the remainder of his platoon stepped quickly into the river and made ready to cross. Apparently, whoever was in charge wanted to get across as quickly as possible.

He put his troops in a column and hastened to get across. The machine gunner pulled the butt of the M60 into his shoulder and lined up his sights on the closest. He waited until the oncoming column of enemy soldiers was about halfway across before he pressed the trigger. It was over in two or three long bursts.

Now, I think you should understand cone of fire, beaten zone, grazing fire and enfilade fire. It is the essence of the machine gun as fightin' iron. 

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The Beaten Zone

There's a science to the employ of full-automatic weaponry in wartime.



A machine gun crew weighs many environmental and scientific factors to deliver maximum effective use of the platform in combat, as can be seen above with these Soldiers laying down suppressive fire with an M60 while fighting in Southeast Asia.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Life in the beaten zone is apt to be uncertain, but understanding this old military term is essential to fully appreciating one of the most effective types of firearm ever made. The machine gun has been with us since the turn-of-the-century era (19th to 20th). That's more than 120 years of reliable service. Made in factories over all the world, in a great variety of sizes, shapes, calibers and operating systems, the machine gun has long been a source of impactful firepower for the infantry of the world. Before we get to the beaten zone, we have to look at the cone of fire.

Machine guns don't fire a bunch of a shots at a time, but they do fire single shots in rapid succession. As long as the gunner presses the trigger, the gun obediently delivers another shot. Depending on many factors like the ground, stability of the mount and other

things, the trajectories of a group of shots form a cone—literally, a cone of fire. All those bullets start at the same spot in the barrel of a machine gun, but the paths vary a bit when they leave the muzzle. Eventually, gravity calls all those shots back to the ground. Their

pattern of strikes on the ground is known as the beaten zone. It has been designated thus as least as far back as the late 1950s when this writer was a weapons platoon leader in the 3rd Marines. Actually, "beaten zone" was heard well before World War I.

When a machine gun puts a stream of bullets into the air, the effect sort of resembles a garden hose spraying a stream of water. The pattern of water striking the lawn is somewhat elliptical and becomes longer or wider depending on how you tilt the hose. Essentially, the machine gun does the same thing. When these guns were first introduced to the battlefield, they were often used almost like artillery. Massed machine guns were set up to fire parallel to each other.

The cone of fire of each gun was close to its neighbor. If you had enough guns, you could cover a vast expanse of ground with bullets—one massive beaten zone. The organization of infantry units in the Great War included entire battalions of infantry soldiers armed primarily with machine guns. In time, we came to understand that mortars and artillery were a more efficient way to do the same thing.

If the ground on which the fight is taking place is relatively flat, certain aspects of the beaten zone can be used to even greater advantage. When the machine gun is placed so that the cone of fire is nearly parallel with the ground, the beaten zone stretches out in length. If you are shooting over level or uniformly sloping ground, the bullet's trajectory will not rise above the height of an

Continued on page 71



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Wayne L. Pierce



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