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# TACTICAL LIFE

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2  
MARCH 2020

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## FIRST SHOT

The first two decades of the 2000s were a bit rocky, to say the least. We can't forget the attacks on 9/11 and the ensuing Global War on Terror, then the Great Recession, not to mention all the political upheaval between and ever since. Social media truly made its stamp on history—both good and bad—as technology continued ahead at lightning speed. It seems like it's already been 40 years since the new millennium began, right?

Hindsight is always 20/20, but we're using this new year to look ahead. Ford is turning out its first electric "Mustang" SUVs, Tesla unveiled its all-too-angular Cybertruck, and Samsung has promised us folding

smartphones that actually work when you need them to. The future is here!

In the gun world, 2020 is sure to bring new calibers, new guns to satisfy every need and new gear you didn't even know you needed. Just think of Sig Sauer's cutting-edge Cross rifle, the company's return to the bolt-action game with both hunting and tactical applications in mind. It's quite the head-turner, as we all learned at our recent Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous in Idaho, and we thought it deserved two different covers depending on where you picked up this issue.

The "first looks" don't stop there, however. As with every issue of *Tactical Life*, we've included reviews on the latest and greatest. Here you'll learn about the Rise Armament AR9, Faxon FX-19 Hellfire, KelTec KS7 and Remington 700 CP, to name just a few of the guns ahead. We've also pitted combat sights against each other in a battle royale, compared the best range bags and 5.56mm/.223 loads, and interviewed Tu Lam, a retired Green Beret who will make every patriot proud. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Let's get to it! —The Editors



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# TACTICAL LIFE

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2  
MARCH 2020

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## NEW AND NOTEWORTHY PRODUCTS THAT YOU SIMPLY CAN'T MISS



### ACLIM8 COMBAR PRO

← The Combar Pro from Aclim8 includes five outdoor essentials in one handy, portable kit. You'll get a hammer, folding axe, saw, spade and knife as well as a magazine insert, yet the whole package only weighs 3.5 pounds. Developed to military standards, the tools are made from titanium, stainless steel, aircraft-grade aluminum and glass-reinforced nylon to stand up to hard use. (aclim8.com)



### AMERICAN TACTICAL S60 POLYMER MAGAZINES

↑ Need more rounds on tap? American Tactical has partnered with German arms manufacturer Schmeisser to bring the S60 stateside. This is the first polymer stick magazine to hold 60 rounds of 5.56mm NATO/.223 Remington ammunition for an AR-15. It uses a unique follower system that allows for double the capacity of a typical AR-15 design without being too bulky or cumbersome for field use. (americantactical.us)



### DIAMONDHEAD TRANSPORTER PISTOLS

↑ Diamondhead has unveiled its new Transporter series pistols, which are easy to stow in a backpack or case thanks to a special takedown system. You simply pull, twist and separate the front half—the barrel assembly, gas system and handguard—away from the rear half when the gun is fully unloaded and safe. Reassembly is simply the reverse. No tools are needed, and Diamondhead currently offers five different 5.56mm NATO variants to handle a number of missions. (diamondhead-usa.com)



### EAA MC312 SPORT

↑ European American Armory (EAA) has begun importing the Girsan-made MC312, a semi-auto 12-gauge shotgun perfect for 3-Gun matches or whoever needs to beat the clock. This inertia-driven beast from Turkey can run shells up to 3.5 inches long, and it comes with a full vent-rib barrel and fiber-optic front sight as well as a pistol-grip stock designed to help absorb recoil. The magazine tube has a red follower so you can see when you're out of ammunition, and the receiver features a rail for optics. (eaacorp.com)



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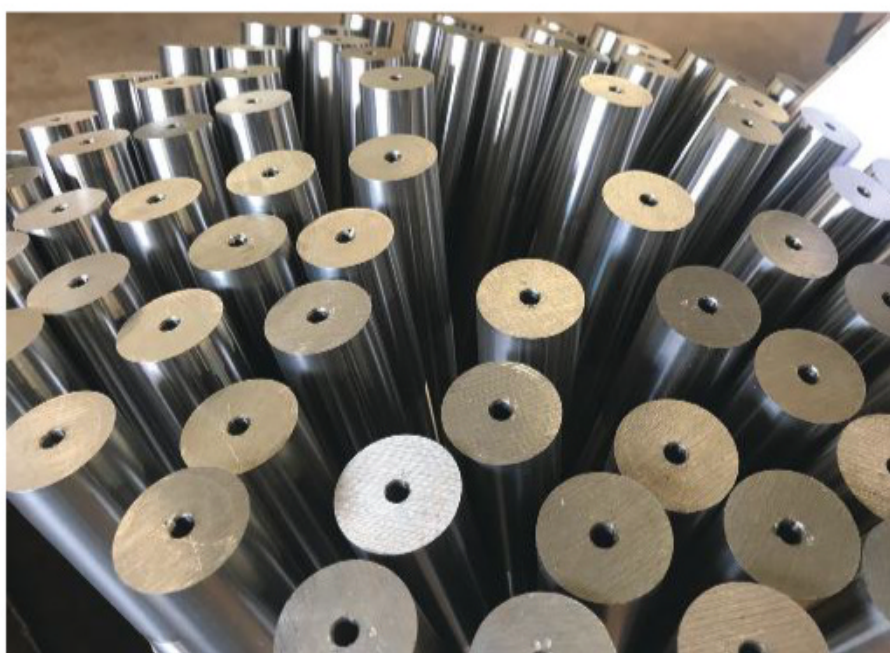
## IDAHO ORDNANCE FACTORY

← While the ammo world is a crowded space, Idaho Ordnance Factory is a newer concern with rifle and pistol rounds at the ready. This company specializes in producing American-made ammunition on state-of-the-art tooling and machining equipment for the ultimate reliability and precision. On top of that, the company employs

U.S. military veterans, so any ammo purchase is a win-win. Look for Idaho Ordnance's distinct bags. (idaho-ordnance.com)

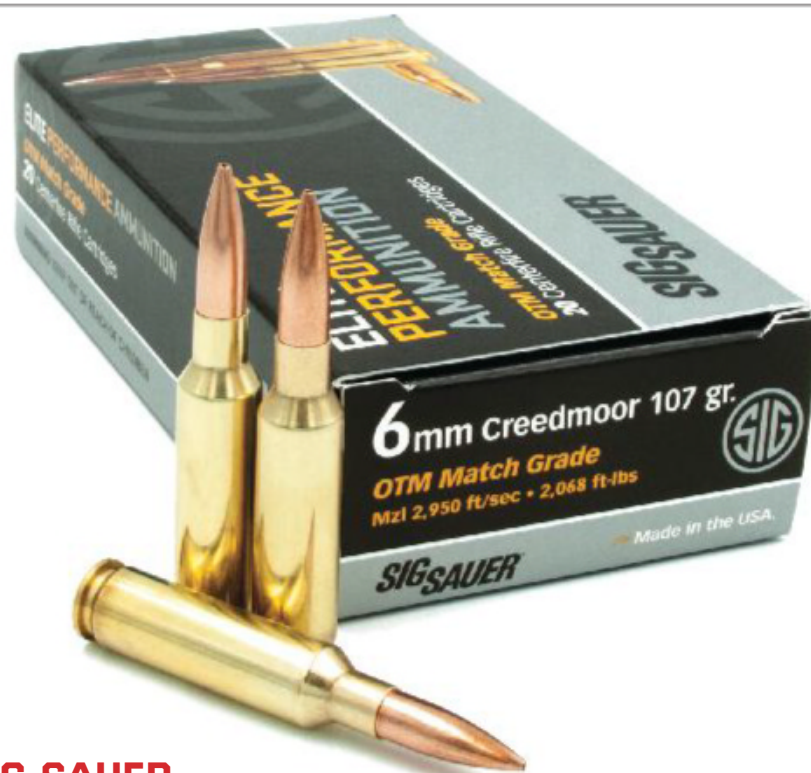
## MEPROLIGHT MEPRO MX3-T

↓ The new Mepro MX3-T from Meprolight is a 3X magnifier that can help you go the distance when your favorite reflex or red-dot sight simply can't handle the range. The MX3-T comes with a Picatinny rail mount that allows you to quickly flip it into or out of position. No zeroing is required, but Meprolight includes windage and elevation knobs for fine tuning in the field. Finally, the wide field of view is perfect for both-eyes-open shooting. (meprolight.com)



## SHAW BARRELS

↑ Shaw Barrels (formerly E.R. Shaw) has opened a new factory dedicated to its custom barrel, rifle and re-barreling divisions. Eleven new state-of-the-art CNC machines help the company maintain some of the shortest lead times in the industry. For example, an order for a custom barrel now takes four to six weeks, re-barreling a customer's action takes six to eight weeks, and custom bolt-action and AR-platform rifles are made within 4 months. On top of that, Shaw now offers a 1-MOA guarantee with its rifles when paired with premium ammunition. (shawcustombarrels.com)



## SIG SAUER 6MM CREEDMOOR AMMO

↑ Sig Sauer has expanded its Elite Match line of premium competition ammunition with the addition of a 6mm Creedmoor loading. Featuring a 107-grain Sierra MatchKing (SMK) bullet, the new 6mm Creedmoor Elite Match OTM load has a rated muzzle velocity of 2,950 fps and muzzle energy of 2,068 foot-pounds. The load also uses a temperature-stable propellant for consistency in any weather condition as well as premium primers and cases. (sigsauer.com)



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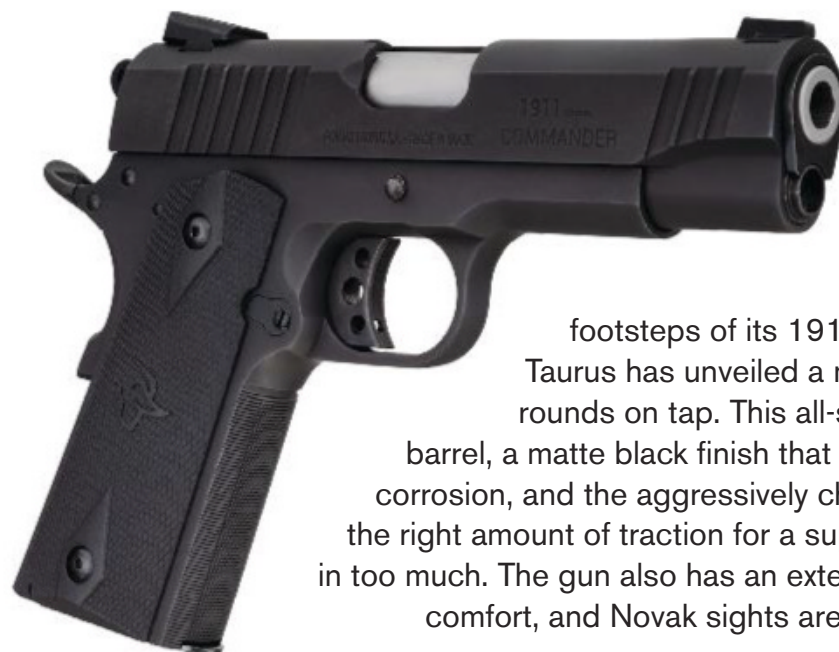
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### SIG SAUER PROFORCE MCX VIRTUS

↑ A new addition to Sig's airgun lineup, the ProForce MCX Virtus airsoft rifle is a battery-powered automatic electric gun (AEG) that runs on a rechargeable battery while mimicking the look, feel and operation of a centerfire MCX Virtus rifle. The airsoft rifle features an adjustable "hop-up" feature that adds spin to the BBs for additional stabilization in flight, resulting in increased distance and accuracy. The airsoft version also has three fire control modes: safe, semi-auto and fully automatic. The included magazine holds 120 rounds of 6mm polymer or biodegradable BBs. (sigsauer.com)



### TAURUS 1911 COMMANDER

← Following in the footsteps of its 1911 Commander in .45 ACP, Taurus has unveiled a new 9mm version with nine rounds on tap. This all-steel classic has a 4.2-inch barrel, a matte black finish that will blend in while resisting corrosion, and the aggressively checkered grips provide just the right amount of traction for a superior hold without digging in too much. The gun also has an extended beavertail for greater comfort, and Novak sights are included. (taurususa.com)



### TOPS A-KLUB

↑ TOPS recently collaborated with Amanda Kaye, who is probably best known for appearing on *Naked and Afraid*, to design the A-Klub. Kaye is no stranger to hard work, having grown up hunting and learning Native American

survival skills, and the A-Klub marks TOPS' first design from a woman. Part war club and machete, the A-Klub has a heat-treated 1095 steel blade with an Acid Rain finish. The 12.38-inch-long blade has a Micarta handle, and TOPS includes a Kydex sheath. (topsknives.com)



### TRUGLO IGNITE SERIES

↑ TruGlo's new IGNiTE red-dot sights are aimed at shooters who need reliability and accuracy without breaking the bank. The 30mm model boasts a large objective lens for a wide field of view as well as molded flip-up lens

caps. Designed primarily for tactical carbines, the IGNiTE 30mm includes a machined cantilever Picatinny rail mount that provides an absolute co-witness with standard-height backup iron sights. The smaller 22mm version comes with a removable dust cover as well as high and low mounts for AR-15s, handguns and shotguns. (truglo.com)





## WEATHERBY MARK V CARBONMARK

↑ Weatherby has announced three new custom-grade rifles built for pinpoint precision while still being aggressively priced. The Mark V Carbonmark, Carbonmark Pro and Carbonmark Elite all have TriggerTech Mark V triggers, sub-MOA guarantees, Cerakote finishes on their metal, spiral-fluted bolts, Accubrakes, and Monte Carlo fiberglass or carbon-fiber stocks. In addition, the carbon-fiber-wrapped barrels promote fast cooling while being extremely lightweight. (weatherby.com)



## XS RAM NIGHT SIGHTS

↑ The new RadioActive Material (RAM) night sights from XS Sight Systems feature a traditional three-dot design, but the front sight uses an Ember Glow tritium insert while the rear is blacked out for faster targeting. Green and orange front sights are available. The rear sight also has a ledge for one-handed slide racking if needed, and both units are machined from steel for enhanced durability. (xssights.com)

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# HIGH-SPEED VARMINTER

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What constitutes a varmint? The answer depends on your region. Any species that spreads disease or destroys crops or animals certainly qualifies. In some areas, this might mean a coyote, while in others, wild boar. In Oregon, it's the sage rat, a type of ground squirrel that can consume a farmer's alfalfa field while leaving burrows that catch livestock hooves, leading to broken legs. Thus, the sage rat qualifies as a varmint on two counts, not just one.

Now that we've identified varmints, the next step is building a rifle capable

of dealing with them. And contrary to what so many anti-gun politicians say, AR-platform guns are superb instruments for whacking critters. Some shooters prefer the .17-caliber magnums for their high velocity and low recoil, but in an AR world, why not go with the ever-popular .223 Remington? For an extra 10 cents or so per round, the muzzle energy is at least quadrupled, and the rifle itself is a lot more versatile. Curious what the founder of DPMS and Panther Arms has been up to recently, I looked to Luth-AR for my personal varmint rifle.

## FIELD REQUIREMENTS

Varmint hunting requires precision and the ability to handle high round counts without too much shift in the point of impact or mirage from barrel heat distorting the image. The rifle should be able to deliver one or two precise shots but also handle quicker-paced shooting. Guided sage rat hunts require as many as 1,000 rounds per day, but taking out a lone coyote on private property might mean waiting for a single shot. And while the .223 Remington isn't known for painful recoil, it can recoil off target, making follow-up shots difficult and watching impacts even more so. Such a build calls for a heavy barrel to not only soak up heat but also mitigate muzzle rise. Rifle-length gas and buffer systems also reduce cyclic rate and stretch the recoil impulse to smooth out the sensation. Finally, you want a rifle with a crisp trigger and a fully adjustable





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Available in black and Flat Dark Earth, the Luth-AR Chubby grip offers enhanced ergonomics while making sure your hand rests in the same spot every time.



buttstock that is comfortable enough to spend all afternoon behind yet is ready to go when a varmint pops its little head out of the ground.

Luth-AR was founded by Randy Luth in 2013, just six years after he sold DPMS. The company began by producing affordable MBA stocks that allow you to adjust the length of pull and cheek height. Since then, it has grown to sell nearly everything needed to build a rifle but the lower receiver and trigger. All of these parts are considerably differently from a standard AR's, including the oversized bolt catch and release, Chubby grip and Palm handguard I used for this build. Also from Luth-AR is the core of any rifle, the upper. It's apparent that Randy Luth is enjoying the freedom of not having to manufacture standard



**...RANDY LUTH IS ENJOYING THE FREEDOM OF NOT HAVING TO MANUFACTURE STANDARD GI-STYLE PARTS. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS DESIGN WAS PERFECT FOR THIS BUILD."**



While Luth-AR supplied most of the components for the author's rifle, the lower receiver is from Windham Weaponry.





## SPEC BOX

CUSTOM  
VARMINTER

|            |                              |
|------------|------------------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 5.56mm NATO                  |
| BARREL:    | 24 inches                    |
| OA LENGTH: | 37 inches                    |
| WEIGHT:    | 7.5 pounds (empty)           |
| STOCK:     | Luth-AR MBA-3                |
| SIGHTS:    | Nikon 4-16x50mm Black FX1000 |
| ACTION:    | Direct impingement semi-auto |
| FINISH:    | Matte black                  |
| CAPACITY:  | 30+1                         |
| MSRP:      | N/A                          |

## PERFORMANCE

| LOAD                           | ACCURACY |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Fiocchi 77 SMK                 | 1.22     |
| Hornady 68 Match BTHP          | 0.74     |
| Nosler 35 Trophy Grade Varmint | 1.62     |
| Nosler 40 Varmageddon          | 1.15     |
| Winchester 69 SMK              | 1.19     |

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.

GI-style parts. His attitude towards design was perfect for this build.

The fluted, 24-inch, stainless steel barrel provides plenty of weight to help the rifle stay on target while helping heat dissipate. With six lands and grooves making one full rotation every 9 inches, bullets of any weight have more than two full rotations to stabilize before heading downrange. In fact, my test loads included projectiles weighing from 35 to 77 grains, yet my accuracy results didn't change dramatically between the lightest and heaviest projectiles. Concentric bullet construction might have played a role, but the advantage of a 24-inch barrel is undeniable. Ideally, premium ammunition can be used for low-volume shooting, and more affordable bulk ammunition can still be reliably used for high-volume days.

The Palm handguard is reminiscent of the early M16 triangular handguards.

This design rests well in the support hand and very well on a bench or shooting platform. It's a refreshing update on a classic design that only lacked modern methods of attaching accessories. Luth-AR has fixed that with a choice of either KeyMod or M-LOK slots running the entire length. The 15-inch handguard does look a little short on a 24-inch barrel but still provides ample room. If used with a bipod, I would want some sort of extension to move the pivot point a little closer to the muzzle.

On the shoulder, the modular buttstock assembly feels light and sleek. Knowing that the length of pull and cheek rest can be adjusted with simple turns of a knob means that nearly any shooting position can be comfortable—a valuable feature on a rifle that might be used from a seated position one moment and prone the next. But while the stock is slim, the grip is not. Luth-



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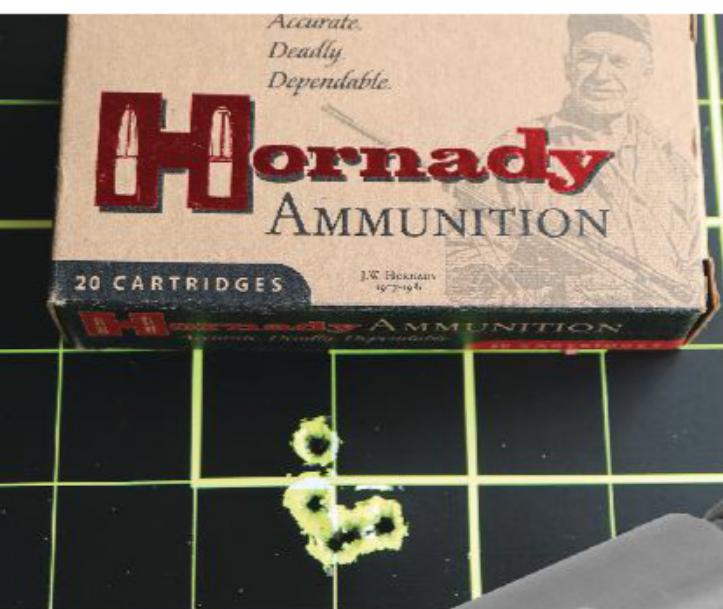
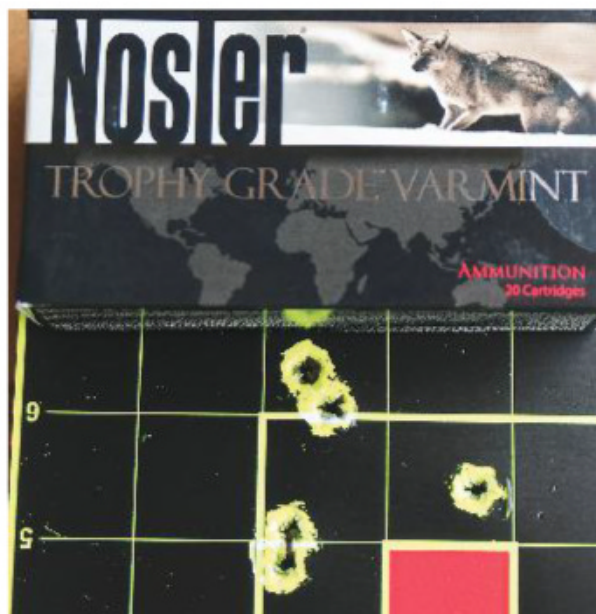
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The varmint rifle printed relatively tight groups with all of the test ammunition at 100 yards, but the tightest five-shot cluster (left) came with Hornady's 68-grain Match BTHP load.



For his custom build, the author chose one of Luth-AR's fluted, 24-inch, stainless steel bull barrels capped with a birdcage-style flash suppressor.



The Luth-AR MBA-3 buttstock is fully adjustable for length of pull and cheek height using two knobs located on the right side.

AR's Chubby grip is one of the few models that lets my larger hands relax. In addition to the slightly larger diameter, a palm swell fills the hand, and ledges are provided for both the thumb and ulnar border of the hand. Resting with the hand still in position for a quick shot is easy and comfortable.

Rounding out the user interface was a straight trigger from Jard Inc. and the Night Switch safety selector from Night Fision. The Jard trigger breaks cleanly at 3.5 pounds without any pre-travel, so shooting off the reset is instantaneous, and it was perfect for follow-up shots. This trigger is an earlier design that sat a little low for most triggerguards. While shooting without a triggerguard is unorthodox, the safety is both quick and positive. That, combined with always using the rifle from a fixed position, makes the rifle relatively safe to use without a triggerguard.

The Night Switch provides that level of confidence. It's low profile to prevent accidental bumping and features a tritium vial for rapid recognition of the rifle's condition from any practical distance. The Night Switch's natural home would be on a law enforcement patrol rifle or loaner rifle in a training class, but considering that some varmint hunting is conducted in low light and may involve periods of the rifle being out of hand either in transport or while resting, the Night Switch seemed a natural fit. As a shooter, the Night Switch provides me



with a nearly ideal profile for this application. And as an instructor teaching new shooters, I enjoy how easy it is to identify the weapon's status.

## GOING THE DISTANCE

I decided to test the final build at 100 yards using a Nikon 4-16x50mm Black FX1000 scope in a Warne XSKEL mount. The XSKEL's cantilever design provides a little extra reach to keep the optic a safe distance from the eye and centers it at a comfortable height without needing to adjust the stock's cheek riser. The Nikon's 30mm tube permits ample light

transmission to see both the target and the first-focal-plane MOA reticle. I know mil systems are all the rage for long-distance shooters, but I prefer the simple math of MOA, and first focal plane means that the measurement scale is accurate at any magnification. This makes zeroing and range estimation easier with targets of a known size.

While standard range lore implies that a rifle's twist rate dictates the bullet weight, this build's six-groove rifling, stretched for 24 inches of barrel, seemed to make it worth testing a wider range of bullet weights. For our test, a selection from Fiocchi, Hornady, Nosler and Winchester spanned 35 to 77 grains. The results might shock those who believe outdated dogma. The data listed in the performance table shows the best five-shot groups fired at a moderate cadence. I also allowed the rifle to rest with the bolt open while switching loads.

Then I went a step further by testing the rifle with the Pulsar Trail XP38 thermal scope, which does an excellent job




**Luth-AR offers a few different AR-15 and AR-10 Lower Parts Kits to help you finish your custom build.**

coons late at night in a filbert orchard approximately 300 yards away. Using Pulsar's companion app, my partner was able to clearly see and capture images and video for later review. We could clearly see the raccoons' posture and gait in the field. With an ambient temperature in the low 60s, their glow was detectable behind thin patches of tall weeds. Property owners looking to protect their crops or find nocturnal pests would be well advised to consider such an optic.

## ALL TOGETHER

While industry trends may have focused on smaller, lighter, more tactical builds

over the last couple of years, it appears quality and affordable options still exist for those needing something a little less *Counter-Strike* and a lot more preemptive strike. For around \$1,000 plus an optic, a rifle can be built to satisfy both days on the range and home on the range. 

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

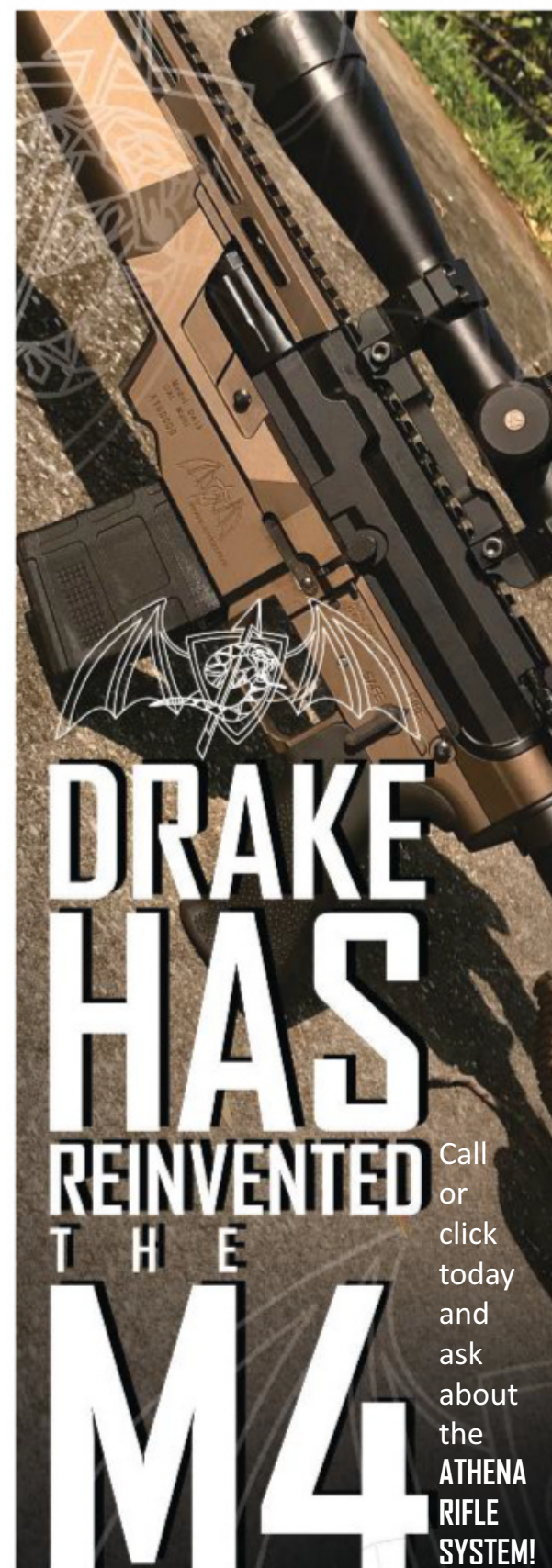
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distinguishing even the smallest of temperature differences. Inside my house, I was able to see not only the studs in my walls, but even the nails in the studs! Although the images are too low-resolution to print here, they are sharp and clear in the optic. While being followed by my house cat, I was able to see paw prints where she had stepped moments before.

Zeroing the Trail XP38 can be done in daylight but requires either heating or chilling a point on the target. In cooler weather, hand warmers work well. And while I wasn't on a hunt, I was able to spot rac-



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# THE CROSS

[BY SEAN UTLEY]





**T**HE FIREARMS SPACE IS CROWDED. So crowded, in fact, that I would hate to be a first-time gun buyer and have to make a solid decision on what products to buy, regardless of the category.

I'm on the inside, so to speak, yet I still find the myriad options dizzying at best. Just like many of you, I consult certain individuals before I buy.

Product development forges forward at an alarming pace in relation to bolt-action rifles, and now a new contender has stepped into the ring. "We didn't want to do anything that wasn't authentic to our brand," said Michael Marotte, manager of media relations

for Sig Sauer, regarding the company's new Cross. This special offering is Sig's first new bolt action in many years, and it serves as a hybrid between the hunting and tactical worlds.

### ORIGIN STORY

We've had an inside track on the Cross for more than a year but were under a strict non-disclosure agreement. Then, in December of 2019, Sig Sauer officially unveiled its plans to dive into the hunting world with new firearms, optics and more, including the introduction of "Sig Hunting Ambassadors"—individuals with extensive hunting knowledge and experience—to help further the company's innovation.

Unlike most bolt-action rifles, the new Cross draws heavily from the AR platform for easy barrel swaps, customization and familiarity among today's shooters.





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As you would imagine, Sig did its research and explored the needs of today's shooters to make sure that its new rifle would actually fit a role, if not multiple. The engineering-heavy company didn't make the decision to create the Cross lightly, and it's been on the company's design board for years.

The Cross is essentially built for both hunting and tactical purposes, but Sig considered every shooter to make sure

the gun would be successful. Marotte pointed out that millennial veterans often turn to hunting after their service. Adventure and long-range hunting is very popular with this crowd. It's a large segment—one that had an influence on the design of the Cross. The idea was to keep the controls similar to what the end-user already knows.

But Marotte was also quick to point out that PRS shooters were also heavily

considered as well. "Twenty of us sat in a room for a week and battled over what this rifle should have on it," he said. That's a good thing, since everyone involved had a different take on what the Cross should be. It's a true collaborative effort encompassing all shooters and niches. Let's take a closer look.

### HYBRID DESIGN

The first thing you'll notice is that the Cross is extremely lightweight at just 6.2 pounds unloaded. It's meant to be a true backpack rifle that can go anywhere, all day, with the user. It's also compact with a folding buttstock that allows it to shrink down for trekking or storage. With an 18-inch 6.5 Creedmoor barrel installed, the overall length is 36 inches. Folding the stock takes it down to 27 inches, so it should tuck nicely into a backpack or case.

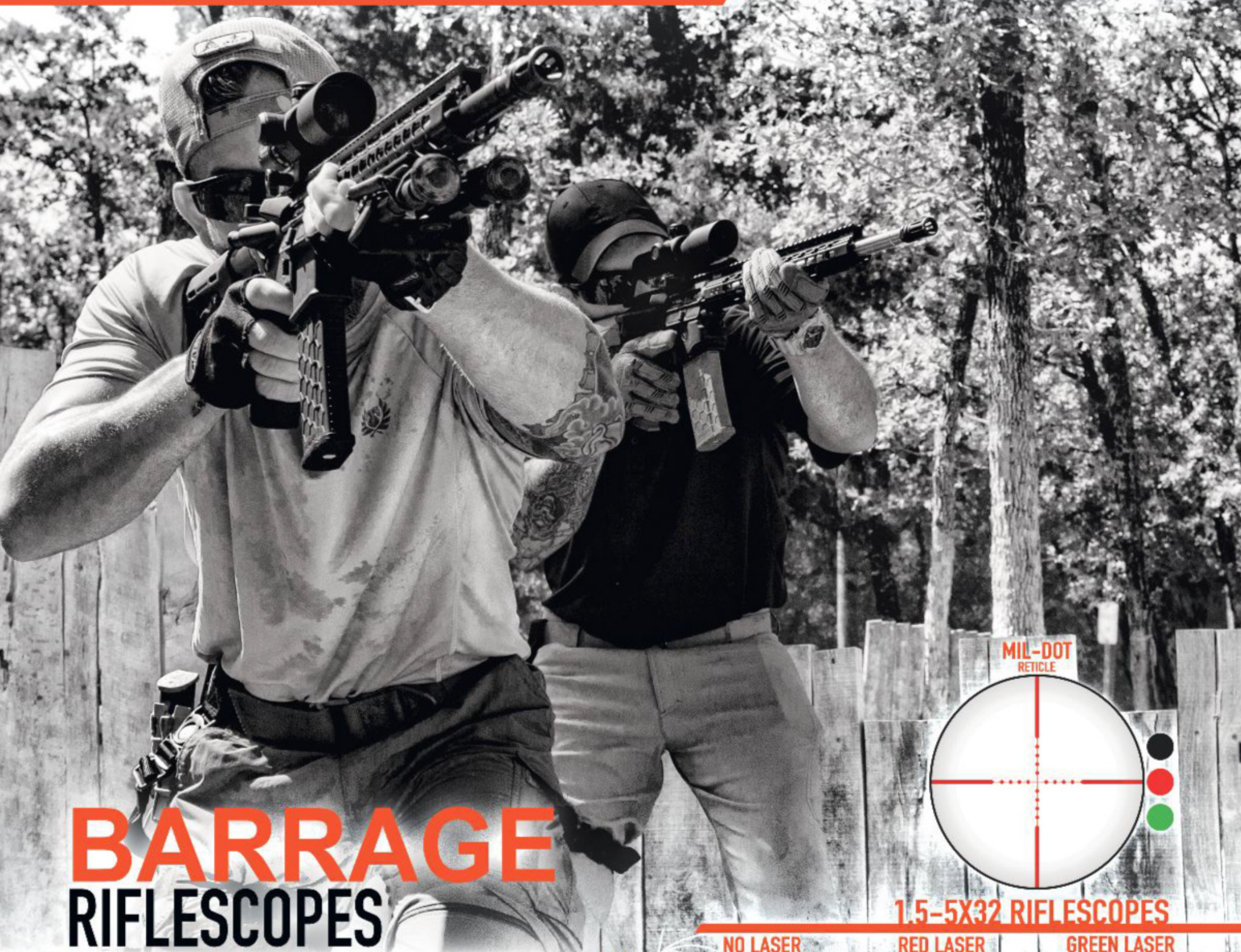
As of this writing, the Cross is available with a medium-heavy, 16-inch barrel in .308 Winchester or .277 Sig Fury, or, as mentioned, a heavier 18-inch barrel in 6.5 Creedmoor. A 24-inch barrel will be available in the future. The Cross also uses an AR-style barrel nut so you can install different barrels quickly in the field with the correct headspacing.

According to Sig, my 6.5 Creedmoor test sample came with a brand-new



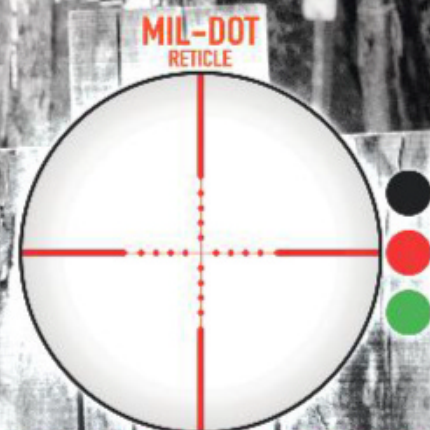
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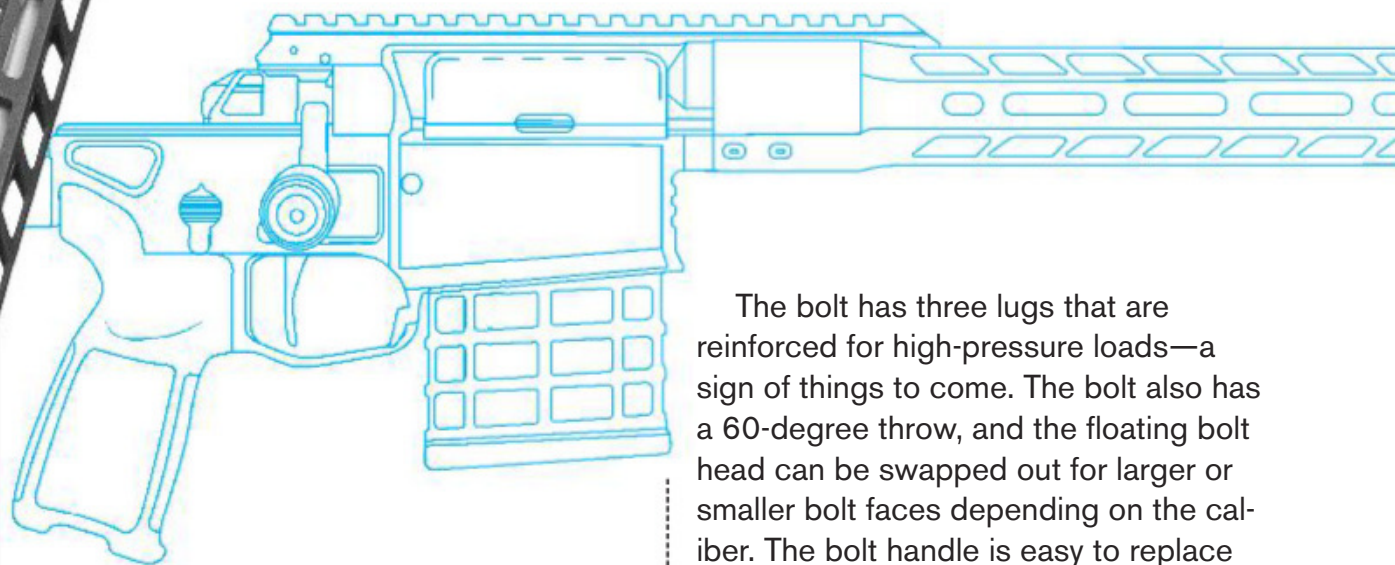


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While the author tested a version with a First Lite Cipher ArmaKote finish, matte black models are also available, and the handguard has M-LOK slots for accessories.



barrel that had never fired a round before. If that's the case, I am beyond impressed with its accuracy. The rifle consistently produced sub-MOA groups with ease. And I bet you could even expect sub-0.5-MOA accuracy with the right ammo and practice. More on that soon.

The one-piece receiver resembles an MCX's, but redesigned as a bolt action. It utilizes the same AR-style pistol grip and safety for familiarity. The stock utilizes the same MCX folding mechanism as well. But that's where the similarities end, because Sig Sauer, in an excellent move, decided to make the Cross compatible with single-stack AICS magazines. This ensures the best feeding possible and provides more room for longer cartridges—a plus for those who handload their own ammo.

The bolt has three lugs that are reinforced for high-pressure loads—a sign of things to come. The bolt also has a 60-degree throw, and the floating bolt head can be swapped out for larger or smaller bolt faces depending on the caliber. The bolt handle is easy to replace by removing the cocking piece and firing pin, which is insanely simple, and I loved the oversized version on my test rifle. I didn't have any trouble running the right-handed rifle as a southpaw.

A Picatinny rail is directly attached to the receiver with either 0 or 20 MOA of elevation for optics. A full-length version that runs from the back of the receiver to the front of the 14.75-inch M-LOK handguard will be available in the future.

The trigger is a drop-in, two-stage unit specifically designed by Sig Sauer for the Cross platform. The pull weight is adjustable from 2.5 to 4 pounds. Changing the pull weight is simple and accomplished via a hex screw positioned behind the trigger blade.

Along with folding to the right side, the buttstock is fully adjustable for







# SIG'S HUNTING AMBASSADORS



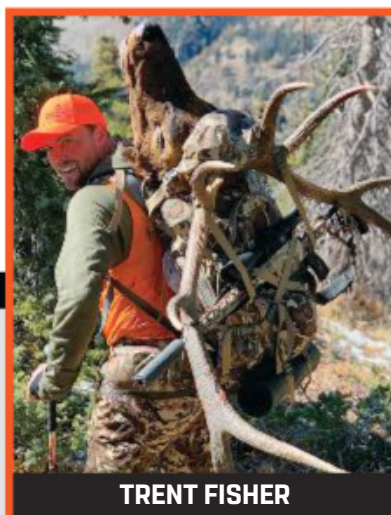
As part of its move into the hunting world, Sig Sauer has named a number of Hunting Ambassadors to spearhead its developments. These professionals have decades of experience bagging game, so make sure you follow their exploits on Twitter with #SIGHunting. The Ambassadors include:

## BORN AND RAISED OUTDOORS:

Kody Kellom, Trent Fisher, Treavor Fisher and Steve Howard are a group of Oregon-based hunters who have spent decades hunting across the United States and provide one of the best sources of digital education online for adventurous sportsmen. ([bornandraisedoutdoors.com](http://bornandraisedoutdoors.com))



KODY KELLOM



TRENT FISHER



JORDAN BUDD

**JORDAN BUDD:** Now part of Running Water Hunting, Jordan Budd began her career as a field producer, editor and author for Rokslide. Growing up and guiding in Nebraska for mule deer, antelope and predators, Jordan has quickly become one of the top young female hunters in the industry. ([runningwaterhunting.com](http://runningwaterhunting.com))

**DANIEL HORNER:** Currently a competitive shooter for Team Sig, Daniel Horner served as a sergeant first class in the Army and a coach for the renowned U.S. Army Marksman-ship Unit. Now he's one of the most accomplished shooters in the world across many disciplines. He currently specializes in long-range and PRS shooting. ([sigsauer.com](http://sigsauer.com))

**COREY JACOBSEN:** Corey Jacobsen is a 10-time world champion elk

caller and sought-after resource for elk hunters with his Elk101 platform. An engineer by trade, Jacobsen provides a high level of technical feedback from the field. ([elk101.com](http://elk101.com))

**JAMES NASH:** A former U.S. Marine Corps officer, Purple Heart recipient and western outfitter since the age of 14, James Nash provides an extensive level of firearms and hunting knowledge that extends across the world, as he's hunted domestically and abroad. Now he's part of 6 Ranch Outfitters. ([6branchoutfitters.com](http://6branchoutfitters.com))

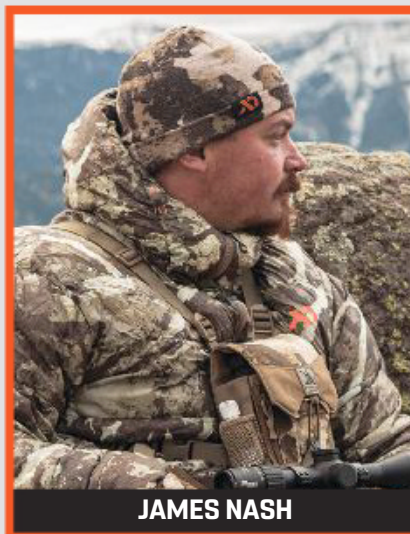
**STEPHEN WEST:** As one of the most traveled North American hunters out there, Stephen West has made his living in the outdoors, braving the harshest conditions to harvest game from a distance. ([westoftexastv.com](http://westoftexastv.com))



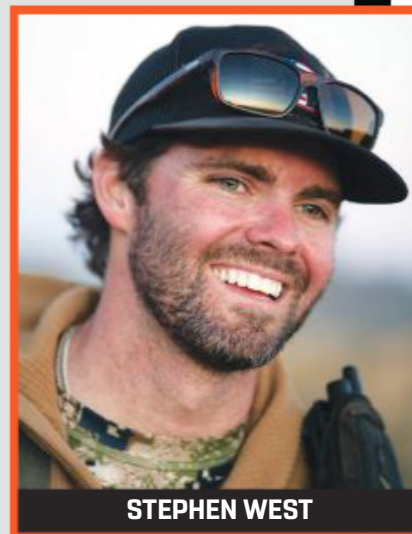
DANIEL HORNER



COREY JACOBSEN



JAMES NASH



STEPHEN WEST





## SPEC BOX

## SIG SAUER CROSS

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 6.5 Creedmoor       |
| BARREL:    | 18 inches           |
| OA LENGTH: | 27-36 inches        |
| WEIGHT:    | 6.2 pounds (empty)  |
| STOCK:     | Folding, adjustable |
| SIGHTS:    | None                |
| ACTION:    | Bolt                |
| FINISH:    | First Lite Cipher   |
| CAPACITY:  | 5+1                 |
| MSRP:      | \$1,700             |

both length of pull and cheek height, and it should comfortably fit all shooters. The length of pull can be adjusted 2 inches via a button and tension screw, and an expertly designed lever allows quick and easy adjustment of the spring-assisted comb. Everything is well thought out.

## CROSS TRAINING

I first got behind the Sig Cross at the 2019 Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous in Driggs, Idaho, where we engaged targets out to 1,000 yards without much fanfare. As you might expect, Sig's team told us that the Cross was a very accurate rifle, but I didn't expect it to be sub-0.5-MOA accurate.

As mentioned, the test sample I received later came with a brand-new barrel, which always gives me pause. I don't expect them to shoot well without having some rounds through them, but this one came out of the gate with impressive results. After roughly five rounds to confirm my zero, I shot a five-round group. While the first shot

went low, the rest grouped into 0.27 inches. Including the flyer, which I attributed to the first-round *pop* from the Sig SRD762Ti suppressor I had attached, the group was only 0.72 inches wide. This came with Sig's

130-grain Elite Hunter Tipped load, which clocked in at 2,743 fps and had an extreme spread of 48 fps after 15 rounds—not bad for factory ammo.

Next, I fired a three-round string, which is common for hunting rifles due to their thinner-profile barrels. The three rounds clustered into 0.18 inches. After getting over the shock, I fired another three-round group that measured just 0.27 inches. I should have stopped there but couldn't resist firing twice more for an even five-shot string. The fourth shot brought the group to 0.29 inches, and the fifth screwed it all up, opening it up to 0.62 inches. Nonetheless, that's still a great group, and the flyer was obviously shooter induced. My best five-shot group measured 0.44 inches, which is good, but I'm absolutely confident that

this rifle can produce 0.25-MOA groups consistently with the right ammo. It's definitely a sub-0.5-MOA rifle.

The action was smooth with a short, comfortable throw even for a southpaw. Some bolt actions are easier to use than others in this regard, and the Cross falls into the easier category. The gun also fed flawlessly with the Elite Hunter Tipped ammo. I did have one 140-grain Sig OTM round nose-dive and hang up as I was closing the bolt, but that only happened once, and I chalked that up to the magazine. I was also shooting a well-worn early prototype, and Sig is well into other versions at this point. The final production models will be completely sorted out.

## DIVING IN

Sig Sauer has a way of diving into a market segment like few other companies in this industry can. While the release of the BDX system was seen by many as the first step, it was more like a toe in the water. Instead, the new Cross represents Sig Sauer's official jump into the hunting world. More than that, it shows that the company is capable of producing guns outside of its typical "tactical" scope. This is a sign of Sig's adaptability and longevity.



The buttstock folds to the right side for stowage and transport, and users can easily adjust the cheek height and length of pull in the field.





**“...I’M ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENT  
THAT THIS RIFLE CAN PRODUCE  
0.25-MOA GROUPS CONSISTENTLY  
WITH THE RIGHT AMMO.”**



A few different barrel options are already available, but each comes with threading for a suppressor or brake, and Sig includes a thread protector as well.

Of course, you shouldn’t let my talk of hunting overshadow the fact that the Cross is an extremely accurate and configurable bolt-action rifle. Its developmental future includes options and accessories that will cater to serious precision shooters and competitors. In the future, you can expect new barrel profiles and calibers and even tungsten-infused polymer technology to add weight in all the right places.

That’s just the start. There’s even talk of a left-handed version. I’ll go on the books right now and say that if a left-handed version becomes available and the final Cross rifle is as good as I think it’s going to be, I’ll be buying one. And why wouldn’t I, especially with an initial MSRP of \$1,700?

Tom Taylor, Sig Sauer’s chief marketing officer, summed up the Cross best: “Right out of the box, the Cross

comes loaded with new innovation and features that hunters and precision shooters will appreciate at a very affordable price point.” He continued, “The Cross delivers on all fronts, and we are especially proud that everything about the Cross, from concept to completion, is 100-percent Sig Sauer and comes directly from our U.S. operations here in New Hampshire.” For more information, visit [sigsauer.com](http://sigsauer.com).

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BY ZACK CARLSON



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Browse any firearm-related forum on the internet and you'll quickly see someone asking which gun to purchase, followed by an inevitable response: "Buy a Glock 19 with ammo and training." This type of response can also apply to long guns. All too often, people buy as much gear as they think they need but don't really have the proper training to effectively use it.

I have fallen victim to this in the past, buying a \$5,000 custom-built long-range rifle without having a day of train-

ing under my belt on how to actually hit anything at long ranges. Previous to this purchase, I had only shot out to 500 yards, and that was mostly luck. If I could rewind time, I would have received the training before purchasing the rifle, which would've resulted in better choices in the build process and an overall better experience.

Typically, classes for this type of thing leave the logistics up to the student. What gear to bring, where to stay and where to eat are all decisions for the student to figure out prior to arrival.





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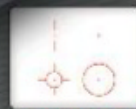
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**I LEARNED MORE IN THOSE FEW DAYS THAN I HAVE IN A LONG TIME, AND I'LL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL FOR THAT."**



But I recently had the great pleasure of attending the Bergara Academy, which removes all these headaches, and that made it an ideal choice for my first long-range shooting class.

### A WARM WELCOME

I made the trek to the Bergara Academy from eastern Washington, driving through beautiful northern Idaho and Montana. About 30 miles past Great Falls, Montana, past missile silos and down a few gravel roads, you approach a beautiful barn converted into a hunting lodge. This multi-story building would be my home for the next few days, shared with the other students. There was none of the stress of checking into a hotel or commuting between the hotel and the range. Bergara takes care of it all.

As soon as I arrived at the lodge, I was greeted by Chad Schearer. You'll recognize Chad and his wife, Marsha, from their show *Shoot Straight TV*. Chad is one of those guys that you meet for the first time and instantly feel like you've known him for years. He and his wife manage the lodge, providing home-cooked meals and anything else you may need during your stay.

After getting unpacked and settled in, there was plenty of time in the evening to get acquainted with my fellow students and our lead instructor, "Bart" Bartholomew. It was interesting to see the vast range of experience the students represented. That first night, I wondered how Bart was going to keep the class interesting enough for the

more experienced students without letting the less experienced fall behind.

### COURSE RUNDOWN

The morning of the first day of class began with a hearty breakfast brought over from Chad and Marsha's nearby residence. Bart started off by educating everyone on his credentials and how the course was going to go.

After some classroom time—but before we loaded up the trucks and headed to the nearby ranges—we had to grab our gear and get it all sighted in. Bergara has become synonymous with highly accurate, reliable firearms. What better way to show off how good they really are than by letting students use them for the company's very own long-range course? Each student was given their own Bergara HMR Pro in 6.5 Creedmoor to use during the class. The rifles were topped with excellent Kahles scopes and muffled by effective Dead Air Sandman sound suppressors. Even the ammo used during the course was provided by Bergara. We used Hornady 140-grain ELD-M rounds, which I found favorable in all my other 6.5 Creedmoor testing. I even had ballistic data already saved for that load out of similar barrel lengths.

Once we had our rifles, Bart visited each student individually to make sure our adjustable rifle stocks fit properly. He also helped each student get his or her scope dialed in before proceeding to live fire. The lodge has nice concrete shooting benches for students to get their rifles sighted in at 100



**"Bart" Bartholomew helped the students settle in behind their rifles and establish a natural point of aim.**



yards. With Bart behind his Swarovski spotting scope, he watched groups materialize and instructed students on how to get their scopes dialed in perfectly before zeroing the turrets.

With all the rifles confirmed at 100 yards, we broke for another home-cooked lunch provided by the Schearers. Bellies full, we piled all the gear into the pickups and were transported a short distance away up a beautiful mountainside. The top perch had a covered, three-sided shooting position overlooking a swath of steel targets that weren't your typical circles and squares. These were life-sized animal targets to simu-

late a hunting scenario. The 15 total targets were placed from 220 yards all the way beyond 1,400 yards.

Under Bart's direction, we all made range cards with the locations and types of targets mapped out on them. Bart told us the sizes of each target, and using the knowledge gained during the classroom portion, we were able to compute the distances by using the reticles in the optics. That method isn't as fast as using a laser rangefinder, but the ability to know you can do it if your rangefinder goes down is invaluable. It was surprising how close we came to matching the distance that the laser provided.

With the distances mapped and some ballistic data given, we were ready to start engaging targets. Everyone paired off and the first group of shooters was up while the partners operated the spotting scopes. As shooting commenced and corrections were made, shooters kept notes of actual scope turret settings that resulted in hits. This "data on previous engagements" (DOPE) becomes invaluable for successful hits in the future. If it were my personal rifle that was staying with me, I would've recorded the data in an actual logbook, but since it was a loaner gun only used in the class, a yellow legal pad sufficed. The

day ended with each student getting a few shots at the bison target at 1,400 yards. I was able to connect on one of my three attempts, and it was exhilarating.

After returning to the lodge, we all received instruction on cleaning the rifles and proper maintenance schedules. You would think something like cleaning would be elementary, but Bart introduced us to a different type of cleaning product that made it pretty quick and easy to clean the bore. I immediately ordered a similar product from Brownells, and it's how I clean my barrels to this day.

The rifles were cleaned and put away, and it was





time to wind down for the evening. The campfire was lit, and the stories began. This was a great time to bond with everyone while also allowing extra time to pick Bart's brain about things that had come up during the class. Bart was a treasure trove of information, and I didn't want to waste any time I had with him. I found it particularly nice to stay in the same lodge as the instructor, as it allowed the students to ask questions as they came up without having to save them for later.

## SKILL BUILDING

The second day took place at a range a little farther away than the first. This time, instead of Bart telling us what the target sizes were, he told us the distances to each target. The second range had more traditionally shaped targets. Knowing the distance allowed us to compute the target size

within a few inches using our scopes' mil-dot reticles.

For hunters, this skill is actually more useful than ranging targets using the reticle. A hunter is typically going to be using a laser rangefinder, and with today's rugged models, the likelihood of it failing is slim. But a hunter will want to know the size of his game before taking the shot. Knowing the distance and then milling the animal in the reticle gave us a pretty accurate size calculation in a fairly short time. If you're worried about taking a shot on a legal versus an illegal animal, this skill is worth knowing.

After all of the targets were calculated, it was time to start engaging. The target distances weren't the same as the day before, but having the notes from the previous day made the shooting much easier. This range's targets were much smaller, too, and the wind became a factor, so the day was more challenging—in a good way.

The shooters really had to employ the fundamentals they learned the day before. Keeping your head on the stock and running the bolt immediately after the shot broke was critical. Many of the students with more traditional hunting backgrounds raised

their heads after the shots; their habits compelled them to look over the scope to see their surroundings. Another key was to always dial your scope back to your 100-yard zero between engagements. This forced the shooters to always know where they were on the turret and ensure that they were dialing properly for each shot taken.

This became apparent when one student didn't dial back to 100 after day one's last shot. He saddled up to take an easy shot at 200 yards on his first target of day two and promptly shot over the top of it. It was immediately clear that



**THE DAY ENDED WITH EACH STUDENT GETTING A FEW SHOTS AT THE BISON TARGET AT 1,400 YARDS. I WAS ABLE TO CONNECT ON ONE OF MY THREE ATTEMPTS, AND IT WAS EXHILARATING."**





he wasn't dialed properly. That was a great teaching moment because we saw the repercussions of not following the basic guidelines.

## OVER TOO SOON

Our second day was cut short because of a surprise thunderstorm that suddenly rolled in. Chad's guide experience was much appreciated, as he immediately called out the inbound weather. Without his quick-witted decision making, we would've had quite the experience traversing through muck to get down the mountain we were on.

That evening, I was able to shadow Bart while he mounted a scope and sighted it in. It's always instructive to see how professionals do their jobs. It either confirms your method or teaches you a new one.

After breakfast the next day, we saw off all the students who had planes to



catch or who needed to hit the road to get home. It was a great experience to have met these people for the first time a few days prior and to leave the lodge as friends.

The Bergara Academy was a perfect first class to

take. The beautiful amenities took all the stress of travel out of the equation. Knowing that the gear was rock solid and would be provided let me focus on the concepts Bart was teaching. I learned more in those few days

than I have in a long time, and I'll always be grateful for that. Don't hesitate when it comes to getting good firearms training—you'll be glad you did. For more information, visit [bergara.online/us](http://bergara.online/us). 🇺🇸



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**BY ROBERT JORDAN**





**I**f someone asked me what type of gun I most enjoy shooting right now, I wouldn't even have to think about it. It has to be 9mm ARs. I love them. They barely recoil. They're super easy to aim. They're cheap to shoot. They're easily accessorized. They can run sound suppressors and optics. In essence, they're all fun, all the time.

I've also noticed that I am clearly not the only one who feels this way. The market has exploded over the last few years with 9mm ARs for competition, home defense and simply fun on the range. I have been building and shooting different models for duty and entertainment for more than 20 years, and I can't remember ever shooting a

reliable 9mm AR and not walking away giggling or raving about it.

At the 2019 Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous, I was introduced to Rise Armament's new 9mm AR carbine—and I'm still grinning! That particular test sample had a great trigger and accepted Glock magazines. On top of that, the bolt locked back after firing the last round. What's not to love?

Rise's marketing director, Camille Torres, told me about the company based in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, before show-

ing me some of the features on the AR9, which I quickly realized had all the bells and whistles for such a little 9mm carbine. Torres told me she would send one my way as soon as they had perfected everything, right down to the color.

A few weeks later, Torres told me she had a pistol version available in "Rise Red." It sounded sporty—who doesn't love a candy-apple red Corvette? When I picked it up from Dave Roan at Beartooth Guns in Billings, Montana, his first comment was, "I don't like brightly colored guns, but man, that thing looks sharp!"

I popped the case open, and there sat a 9mm racecar in a foam-lined case. It looked smooth, proud and fast. I knew this was going to be a fun review. With a pistol stabilizing brace and a 7.5-inch barrel, the AR9 looked like it was built for speed.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Rise Armament plans on offering a few different versions of the AR9. The Flash Series models will be available in four colors: Rise Red, Patriot Blue, Viking Iron and Spartan Bronze. Then you have the Grit Series with black, Flat Dark Earth and olive drab models. Either way, you can choose between 7.5-, 10.5- or 16.1-inch barrels.

As I mentioned, I obtained a Rise Red model with the shortest barrel option, and my favorite feature comes standard on every Flash Series AR9: the RA-535 Advanced Performance Trigger. This single-stage unit is extremely crisp with virtually no overtravel and a super-short reset. Grit Series guns come with the

**"I POPPED THE CASE OPEN, AND THERE SAT A 9MM RACECAR IN A FOAM-LINED CASE... I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO BE A FUN REVIEW."**





# RIGHT TO THE POINT

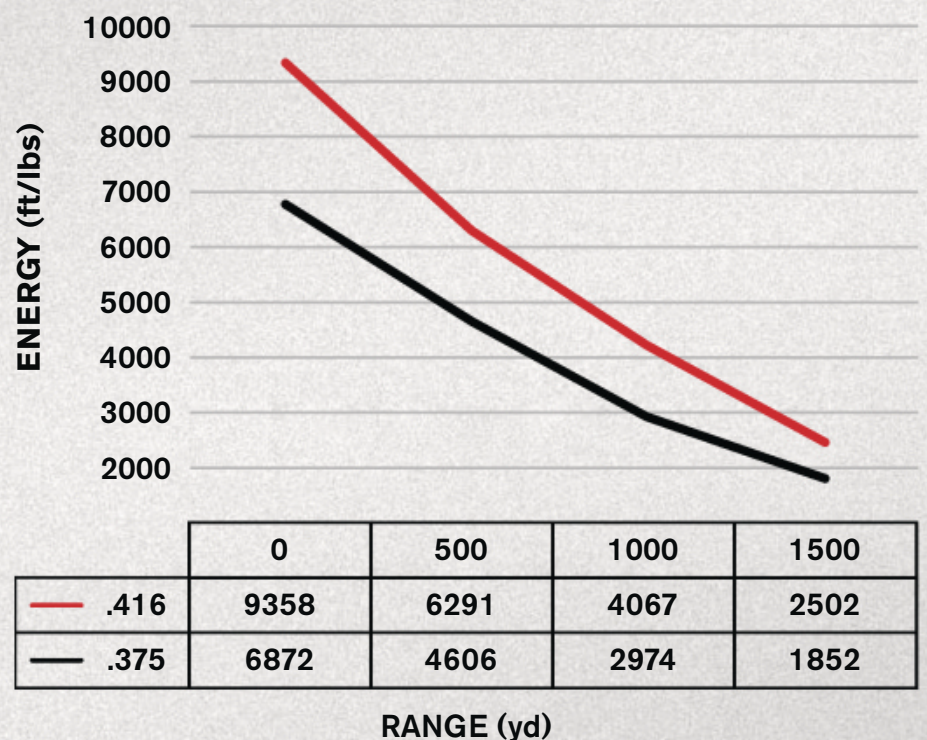
The 416 Barrett cartridge allows shooters to have sub MOA performance capable of hitting targets well beyond 2500 yards. The higher velocity and reduced drop make this cartridge ideal for Extreme Long Range shooting.

With a G1 ballistic coefficient of .830, the 452 gr Cutting Edge Bullet launches at 3005 ft/s. They are available in a 10 round box and 80 round case. Barrett also offers new primed and unprimed RUAG produced match brass for purchase on our web store, [barrett.net/store](http://barrett.net/store).

CIP approved.



**ENERGY - .416 Barrett vs .375 CheyTac**







→ The heart of the Flash Series AR9 is Rise Armament's flat-faced RA-535 Advanced Performance Trigger, which is tuned for a 3.5-pound pull.

**SPEC BOX**

**RISE ARMAMENT AR9**

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>CALIBER:</b>   | 9mm                         |
| <b>BARREL:</b>    | 7.5 inches                  |
| <b>OA LENGTH:</b> | 22.88-25.5 inches           |
| <b>WEIGHT:</b>    | 6.25 pounds (empty)         |
| <b>GRIP:</b>      | Magpul MOE+                 |
| <b>SIGHTS:</b>    | None                        |
| <b>ACTION:</b>    | Blowback-operated semi-auto |
| <b>FINISH:</b>    | Rise Red                    |
| <b>CAPACITY:</b>  | 31+1                        |
| <b>MSRP:</b>      | \$2,499                     |

**PERFORMANCE**

| LOAD                              | VELOCITY | ACCURACY |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| G&I Blazer 115 FMJ                | 1,294    | 2.08     |
| Federal 135 Hydra-Shok Deep       | 1,083    | 1.92     |
| Federal 150 Syntech Action Pistol | 1,004    | 1.74     |
| Hornady 115 Critical Defense      | 1,289    | 2.21     |

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

RA-140 trigger, which is more of a tactical or home-defense design that isn't built specifically for blowing the doors off the competition at the range like the RA-535. However, both have pull weights rated at 3.5 pounds, and I think my test model's will lighten up even more with use.

The AR9 also comes with KNS Precision anti-walk trigger pins, which I would normally consider overkill, but they're a great idea for a 9mm AR that runs on a straight-blowback operating system. These guns tend to break trigger and hammer pins and elongate lower receiver holes due to the violent recoil of the bolt. The locking lugs on direct-impingement guns give the pressure a chance to subside before the bolt comes back. That isn't the case with a straight-blowback setup. Thus, having the additional braces between the trigger and hammer pins gives them a lot of added strength and saves wear and tear on your lower receiver.

Out front, the free-floating barrel wears a KAK Flash Can on 1/2x28-tpi threading. The barrel and gas system are nested inside Rise's RA-905 handguard, which has six sling-mounting points, several M-LOK slots for accessories and a short rail near the muzzle for a front sight. Normally, with more tactical guns, I'd prefer a full Picatinny rail on top so I could mount backup iron sights, a red-dot sight and a magnifier (and occasionally a PEQ-15 for night ops), but for a 9mm race gun, I only wanted a red-dot sight. If the competition did not allow optics, I could clamp on some iron sights and go.

Another thing I like a lot is the AR9's short-throw safety selector. The 90-degree selectors found on many guns are easy to flip to fire, but many shooters have to break their grip to get their thumb behind them and flip them back to "safe." I switched over to

→ No detail is considered too small for Rise Armament. Even the charging handle on the AR9 is meticulously machined with an extended latch for easier operation.







45- and 60-degree selectors years ago and couldn't be happier. The RA-212 charging handle, with its extended latch, was also easy to work by simply sweeping my support hand back to work the bolt and charge the weapon.

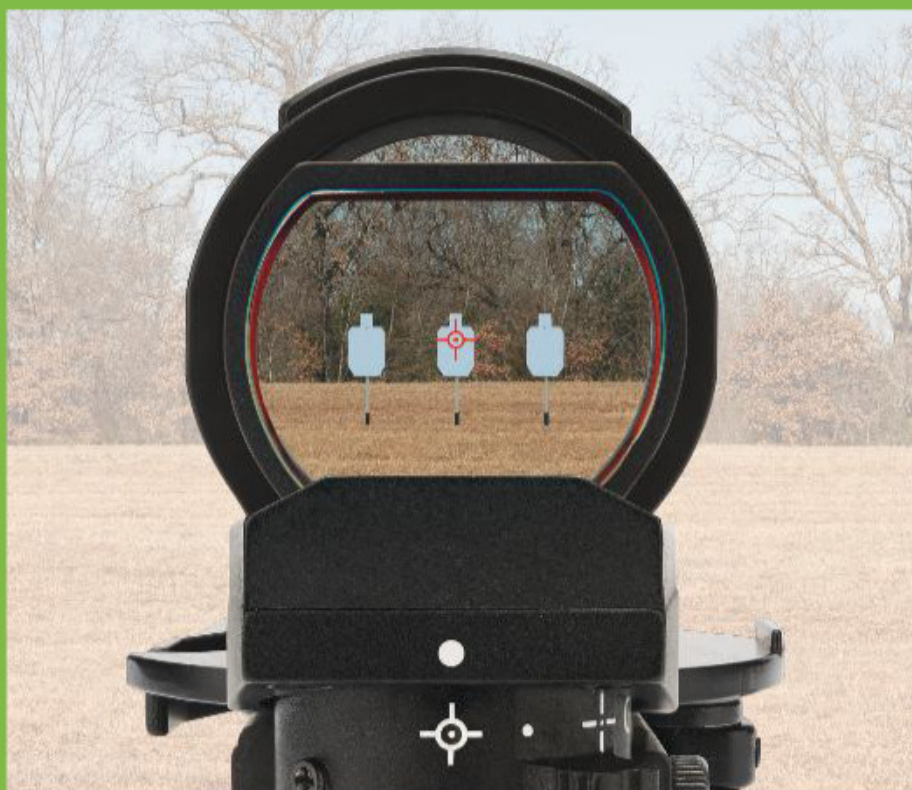
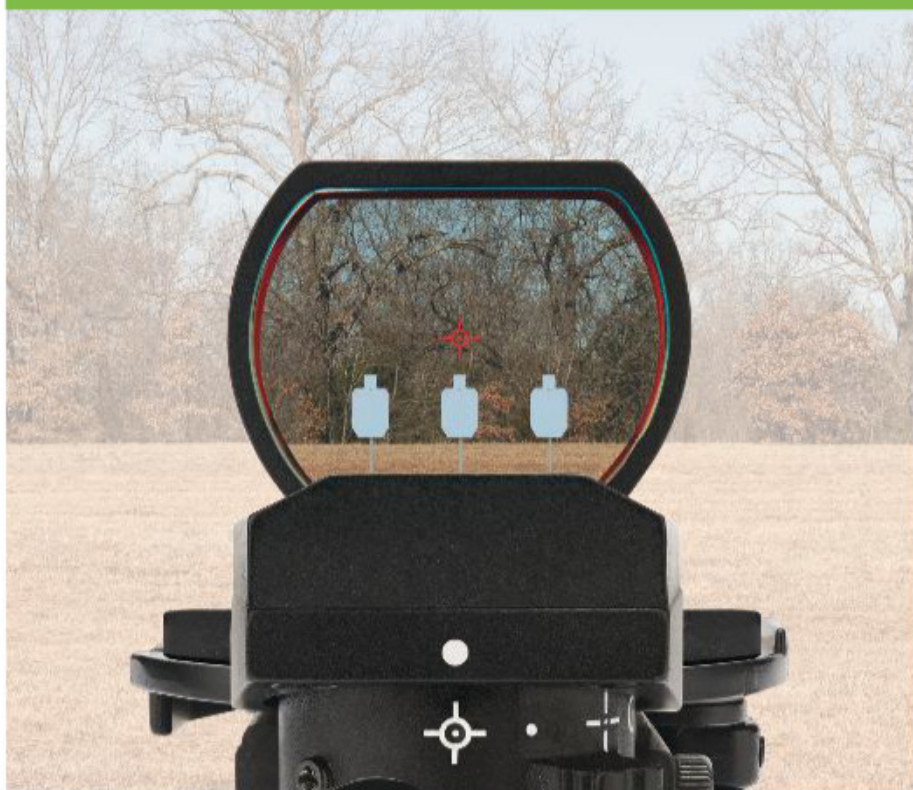
The one disappointment I found was the arm brace. The 7.5- and 10.5-inch-barreled AR9s come with three-position SB Tactical SBPDW arms braces. On my test gun, the SBPDW worked and felt great in the extended position, but fully collapsed, the two rods come forward and make it



difficult to disengage the safety. Most shooters might not notice this, but coming from a tactical background, I rest my thumb on the safety selector whenever the weapon is in my hands. However, it's only an issue when the brace is fully collapsed, and I probably won't carry the gun that way anyway. I would only collapse the brace that far to throw the AR9 in a backpack or small case. The 16-inch-barreled version of the AR9 comes with a Magpul CTR stock, and every model comes with a Magpul MOE+ pistol grip.

## HOLD OVER

## NO HOLD OVER



### SECOND|ZERO™

### LONG RANGE MADE EASY.

The Second Zero® is an optional accessory that enables you to instantly add 4.3 or 11.5 MOA to your optic. Learn more at [AxeonOptics.com/Second-Zero/TacLife](https://AxeonOptics.com/Second-Zero/TacLife)

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# AXEON

OPTIC SOLUTIONS

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**“I DON’T NORMALLY HAVE SUCH QUICK SPLIT TIMES, SO ALL KUDOS GO TO THE GUN.”**

I was also a little surprised to see the lower receiver was not from Rise Armament, but from Quarter Circle 10 out of Tucson, Arizona. Torres explained that this was the first time the company had partnered with another manufacturer for the lower receiver. And it’s also the first time Rise has offered a pistol-caliber weapon. Going with Quarter Circle 10’s well-designed, proven lower receiver just made sense. Why reinvent the wheel?

Finally, the case itself is pretty cool. The foam was custom-cut to match the pistol and certain areas could be removed to accommodate mounted optics as well as cleaning kits, magazines, etc. On that note, Torres also included a translucent 31-round ETS Group magazine with my test sample to complete the package and make sure I had plenty of firepower on tap.

## PERFORMANCE

After breaking the pistol down and oiling the bolt, I attached my Steiner 3-15x50mm M5Xi scope with a G2B mil-dot reticle to the gun’s top rail and set up targets 50 yards away. The AR9 looked a little out of place smooshed between my Champion shooting bag and such a big tactical scope. I believe in putting good glass on all of my test guns and using a solid rest to make sure I get the best results possible.

After achieving some tight five-shot groups, it was time to play. The Steiner went back in its box, and I clamped on a little Aimpoint CompM3 that I still love for its size, dependability and clarity. I had it zeroed two minutes later, and







→  
The author installed an Aimpoint red-dot sight on the AR9 for speed drills, where the little red pistol truly shined on multiple targets.

then the fun began. I loaded up a bunch of Glock 9mm magazines along with the 31-round ETS Group magazine. And every single load and magazine I

tested ran flawlessly. Old 32-round Glock mags, new Glock mags, 17-round mags, 19-round mags and the ETS Group mag. I'll admit that watching the magazine spring compress while loading the translucent ETS Group mag was strangely fascinating.

I set up a couple of target backers with Shoot-N-C targets. Shooting around barrels proved easy, as did some pivot and speed drills. My old Competitive Edge Dynamics CED8000 timer showed 0.2-second splits on

a 6-inch target at 10 yards. I got five rounds on target in just a second. This little red gun was indeed a racer. I don't normally have such quick split times, so all kudos go to the gun.

As a gun writer, it isn't every day that I get to test-drive a racecar. However, there are few other things that compare to the AR9. In terms of looks and performance, the resemblance holds true. Sure, it looks great sitting in the driveway, but take it to the track and watch it really shine. The AR9 will be available by special order only: You pick the model (Flash or Grit), color and barrel length. Then strap in and hold on. For more information, visit [risearmament.com](http://risearmament.com).

 **Sabatti**

## THE NEW BENCHMARK



STR OVERWATCH



- › HIGHER BULLET SPEED
- › IMPROVED GROUP CONCENTRATION
- › LESS COPPER DEPOSITS
- › LESS CLEANING REQUIRED
- › EASIER CLEANING WHEN NEEDED
- › LESS BARREL WEAR







The author measured each load's reliability with a 16-inch-barreled rifle built with an Anderson Manufacturing receiver set.

# SEVEN DEADLY LOADS

**TODAY'S BEST  
55-GRAIN 5.56MM/  
.223 REMINGTON  
ROUNDS COMPETE  
HEAD TO HEAD**

**[BY FRANK MELLONI]**



The .223 Remington is a staple of American shooters. This round has

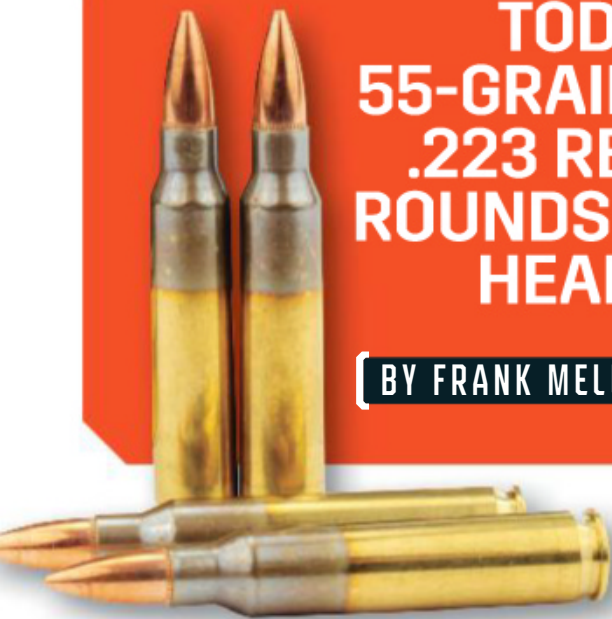
served competitors, hunters and homeowners equally well, and the hotter 5.56mm NATO has been defending our country for more than 50 years. While the latter wasn't accepted in its infancy, today you'd be hard pressed to find a gun safe that doesn't have at least one rifle chambered for it.

Because of its popularity, nearly every manufacturer makes at least one .223 Remington/5.56mm NATO load that uses 55-grain FMJ projectiles. This configuration is important for manufacturers to produce, as it mimics the military's M193 load. From time to time, Uncle

Sam seeks out a new company to run his Lake City plant, so perfecting this round might mean *beaucoup* money.

With the widespread availability of such 55-grain ammo, I set out to see which one was the "best" at doing what it does. My criteria were accuracy and reliability, as most shooters only care about those two aspects. Sure, we can argue one might be "cleaner" than the other, but is there any honest way to quantify those claims? Besides, you shouldn't have any aversion to cleaning your rifle!

This is a no-nonsense evaluation. I'm not going to waste any time talking about powder charge consistency or which rounds have the most





uniform overall length, as these measurements don't tell you half as much about a given ammo sample as loading a magazine's worth and firing it.

## GUNS & PROTOCOL

While there are dozens of AR configurations out there, for the most part, you'll find guns that are built to be accurate and guns that are built to be maneuverable. So, to represent the former category, my friends and I chose an Anderson Manufacturing Sniper upper with a heavy, 24-inch, fluted, stainless steel barrel with a 1-in-8-inch twist rate. We added a Nikon 6-24x50mm Black FX1000 scope as well as a new Warne Skyline bipod. This setup ensures we had a repeatable point of aim every shot. For our "run and gun" tester, we decided on an Anderson Manufacturing M4-style upper with a 16-inch barrel, which represents the most popular AR-15 on the market.

We ran both uppers on an Anderson lower receiver equipped with a crisp Rise Armament RA-535 trigger. We ensured each system had the appropriate buffer setup to support the gas system of the upper we installed. For the last five years, we have had nine

of these lower receivers in service at Renaissance Firearms Instruction, mated to upper receivers chambered in a variety of cartridges. Each year, these guns digest upwards of 10,000 rounds each, and I can't find a reason to spend more money on a lower receiver.

I then rallied up seven 55-grain FMJ loads, all from different manufacturers. With an understanding that these rounds weren't designed to punch one-hole groups when fired through a 16-inch barrel, I limited the "run and gun" rifle to function testing. So, we started by running 60 rounds of each load and counted how many failures we had, if any. We then switched to the 24-inch-barreled Anderson Sniper build to obtain some velocity data by shooting 10 rounds over a simple and precise MagnetoSpeed V3 chronograph. Then it was time to measure each load's accuracy by firing five-shot groups at 100 yards. Both guns were allowed to cool before switching loads.

## BLACK HILLS

As you already know, one of the advantages of having a barrel chambered for the 5.56mm NATO is that you can run lower-pressure .223



Remington ammo as well. Black Hills only makes a 55-grain FMJ in this chambering, so we went with it for our sample. And boy, were we glad to that we did, too, because it turned in a dynamite group of just 0.67 inches at 100 yards and ran fairly well in our long-barrel setup. We experienced just one failure to lock the bolt back on the 24-inch-barreled build but did not have a single malfunction in our carbine function test. (black-hills.com)

## FEDERAL AMERICAN EAGLE

Federal's American Eagle line was born to hit the mark on value for budget-minded shooters. Of course, the company also knows a thing or two about making 5.56mm ammo, as it ran the Lake City plant at one point.

As we filled our magazines, we noticed that the brass was very dull and saw light variances in seating depth. However, every case came from Lake City last



**LOOKING FOR MATCH-GRADE PERFORMANCE WITHOUT THE MATCH-GRADE PRICE TAG? MAYBE HORNADY OR BLACK HILLS IS YOUR TICKET."**







**BECAUSE OF ITS POPULARITY, NEARLY EVERY MANUFACTURER MAKES AT LEAST ONE .223 REMINGTON/5.56MM NATO LOAD THAT USES 55-GRAIN FMJ PROJECTILES.”**



choose heavier projectiles. That said, the accuracy was pretty good, as our groups hovered right around 1.5 inches on all of the targets. In our five groups, we didn't have one single flyer open up the measurement recorded in the table. (hsmammunition.com)

year. This has always been my go-to brass for match reloads, as it is tough as nails and outrageously consistent. The performance was right on par with the Winchester “White Box” ammo, as it provided perfect feeding and ejection and left us with groups in the 2-inch range. (federalpremium.com)

### HORNADY FRONTIER

As a joint project with Lake City, Hornady entered the affordable ammo market with its Frontier line of ammo. The .223 Remington load was naturally at the forefront, and we were excited to have some of this in the mix. We have used the 75-grain variant in our long-range courses, and students were able to successfully hit bowling pins at 1,040 yards using a 1-in-9-inch-twist barrel.

As I ripped the package open, the brass seemed tarnished but clean. These cases were annealed, with the annealing concentrated on the necks and shoulders. More importantly, the rounds cycled perfectly in both guns and even produced a 1.06-inch group at 100 yards, with the first four shots landing inside of 0.5 inches. As we were reminded, Hornady doesn't make anything “cheap.” The best the company can do is inexpensive. (hornady.com)

### HSM AMMUNITION

The 55-grain FMJs from HSM stood out with their deep, uniform annealing. The rounds were exceptionally consistent, down to the WCC brass from 2011. They also ran flawlessly in our 16-inch-barreled upper,

but that wasn't the case with the 24-inch-barreled build. The most common issue: Spent cases ejected, but the bolt didn't cycle hard enough to pick up the next round. This didn't happen frequently enough to stop us, but those looking to run HSM rounds should

### REMINGTON UMC

Naturally, we wanted to hear from Big Green on the subject, so we ran some of Remington's popular UMC rounds through our tabletop armament. Our rounds came out of a 200-count Mega Pack with an MSRP of only \$97. The ammo ran well, too,

### PERFORMANCE

## 5.56MM/.223 AMMUNITION

| LOAD                          | VELOCITY | ACCURACY |      |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|------|
|                               |          | AVERAGE  | BEST |
| Black Hills 55 FMJ            | 3,129    | 1.03     | 0.67 |
| Federal American Eagle 55 FMJ | 3,251    | 2.56     | 1.68 |
| Hornady 55 Frontier FMJ       | 3,191    | 1.19     | 1.06 |
| HSM 55 FMJ                    | 3,058    | 1.62     | 1.58 |
| Remington 55 UMC FMJ          | 3,089    | 1.56     | 1.09 |
| Sig Sauer 55 FMJ              | 3,077    | 1.81     | 1.75 |
| Winchester 55 FMJ             | 3,296    | 2.56     | 2.06 |

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for five 5-shot groups at 100 yards.





and the cases ejected into a neat pile. The accuracy results weren't bad, either. Our best group of the day came in at just 1.09 inches. The brass had some light annealing as well, making it another solid choice for reloading. (remington.com)

### SIG SAUER ELITE PERFORMANCE

A few years back, prestigious Sig Sauer turned its attention to ammunition. And the Elite Performance rounds we received were spotless—just like Sig's guns. The load had good, uniform annealing, and even though I swore I wasn't going to mention it,

absolutely consistent bullet seating depth.

The rounds were also fully reliable and smooth with both guns, and we noticed less felt recoil. Our chronograph readings confirmed they were among some of the slowest rounds fired, but my shoulder told us first. The accuracy was OK, but wasn't a great fit for our guns, as the best group we were able to produce was just inside 2 inches. This was surprising given previous experiences with this ammo. However, although we love being able to simply call ammo "accurate" or "inaccurate," it's important to remember that these were just the



results from one gun on one given day. (sigsauger.com)

### WINCHESTER WHITE BOX

This test wouldn't be complete without this everyday load, especially since Winchester just won the contract to operate the Lake City plant. While the HSM cases required sunglasses to look at, the Winchester rounds had the duller brass. However, that said, the cases were still lightly annealed, extending their reloading lifespan.

While this load ran flawlessly in both guns, the accuracy was a bit so-so,

with our best group landing just inside 2 inches at 100 yards. Still, considering this load's price and availability, I wouldn't hesitate to stock up on it for a 3-Gun match or a day of banging steel on the range. (winchester.com)

### THE VERDICT

Overall, we didn't shoot any "bad" rounds. Of course, some were more accurate than others, and one or two brands had a few hiccups. But, like most aspects of the shooting world, one must take into account their intended application.

While the HSM load is a good fit for someone looking to plink today and reload tomorrow, Winchester's FMJs might be better for the guy who plans on leaving his brass in the dirt. Looking for match-grade performance without the match-grade price tag? Maybe Hornady or Black Hills is your ticket. With the standard 55-grain loads, the possibilities are endless, so grab a box of each and see what your gun prefers. Above all, have fun in your testing, because a day on the range should never feel like work! 🎯

## WILSON COMBAT'S MATCH-GRADE AMMO



**MOST OF US THINK** of heavy bullets when we think of match-grade ammunition. However, High-Power and Service Rifle shooters have reaped the benefits of lightweight pills for decades. This Wilson Combat match-grade ammo is built around a lighter 52-grain projectile for a flatter trajectory, reduced recoil and unbelievable accuracy inside 300 yards. In fact, I was able to shoot a 0.92-inch group on a 200-yard target! (wilsoncombat.com)

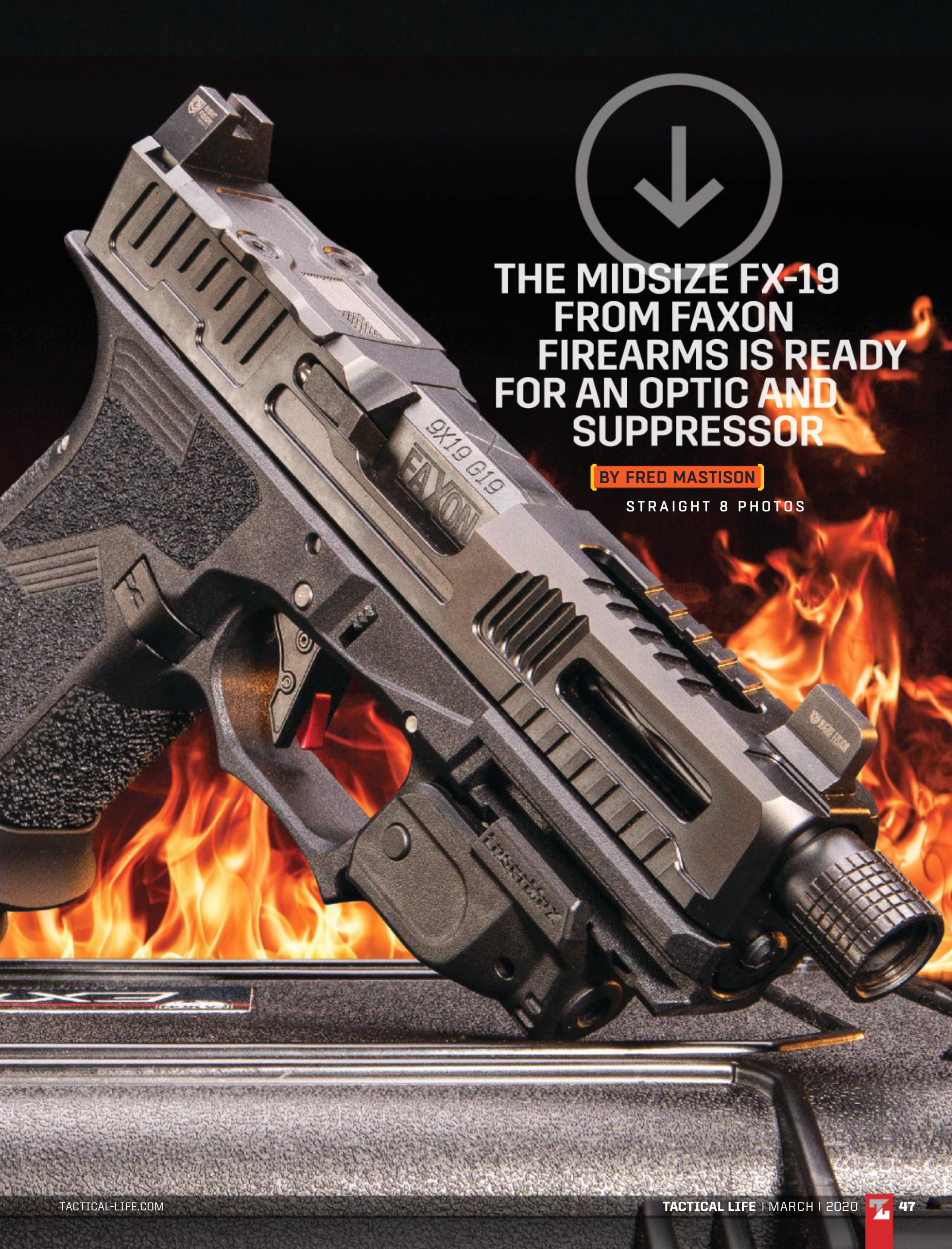
—Frank Melloni





# UNLEASHING HELLFIRE





# THE MIDSIZE FX-19 FROM FAXON FIREARMS IS READY FOR AN OPTIC AND SUPPRESSOR

BY FRED MASTISON

STRAIGHT 8 PHOTOS





The Match Series G19 barrel sports “flame fluting” and 1/2x28-tpi threading, and Faxon includes a thread protector.



Launched in 2012, Faxon Firearms has quickly earned a reputation for producing premier and precise firearms components. In total, the company has machined more than 30 million parts and performed more than 125,000 hours of engineering services for customers. The end result of that time and effort? Faxon parts can now be found everywhere from the ocean floor to the Space Station, and even on Mars. That’s a pretty hefty accolade for a company that quietly makes great guns and parts.

It’s because of this background that my interest was piqued when rumors started circulating about Faxon was producing a complete handgun. And when

the curtain went up, we found that the company had not produced just one, but two pistols as part of its FX-19 series.

The first two guns to leave the Faxon Firearms factory are the Patriot and the Hellfire, similar in design with only slight variations to meet individual customer desires. Both guns have successfully completed 15,000-round durability tests per U.S. military protocols as well as NATO-standard drop tests, so I knew these guns wouldn’t be one-off fads. And when I had the opportunity to test an FX-19 Hellfire for this article, I jumped at it.

## FEELIN’ THE HEAT

The FX-19 Hellfire is a striker-fired pistol based on the Glock 19, but there are many notable differences. For example, the custom polymer frame has a grip angle closer to a traditional 1911’s than a Glock’s. The grip also has very comfortable texturing that reminds me of the old-school skateboard tape we used to put on our Glocks. Faxon’s texturing is well executed and provides excellent control.

The double-undercut triggerguard allows you to get a higher grip on the gun, thus lowering the bore axis and reducing muzzle rise. Along that same line of thought, the frame also has an extended beavertail so the slide won’t remove any flesh when you choke up on the backstrap. Again, this is a great feature when it comes to enhanced recoil management and control.

For quick and easy reloading, Faxon includes an enhanced, low-profile magazine well and an extended magazine release. Then, when you break the gun down, you’ll notice that the front and rear slide rails are polished for smooth cycling. This really speaks to Faxon’s commitment to precision. In this world, smooth equals fast.

**“FROM FULL MAGAZINE DUMPS TO RAGGED-HOLE DRILLS, THE GUN DIDN’T MISS A BEAT.”**



NO MATTER WHAT YOU CARRY  
**DeSANTIS HAS  
YOU COVERED**



  
**PEGASUS**  
by DeSantis  
**SLIM-TUK®**

WE DIDN'T INVENT CONCEALMENT,  
WE JUST PERFECTED IT!®

**DESANTISHOLSTER.COM**





Note the unique rear cocking serrations as well as the tall, suppressor-ready rear sight, which can still be used with a reflex sight installed.



The Overwatch Precision Trigger has a flat face and a red safety tab. Also note the double-undercut triggerguard.

**“THE SLIDE IS BY FAR THE MOST EYE-CATCHING PART OF THE GUN.”**





The Overwatch Precision Trigger deserves special mention. This awesome trigger looks as great as it feels. It's a flat-faced, drop-in design that allows you to get much more out of the Hellfire than a standard Glock trigger would allow. The trigger shoe and safety tab are machined from 7075-T6 aluminum and affixed to the NP3-coated trigger bar using 316 stainless steel coil-spring pins. The small indexing hook ensures consistent trigger finger placement, and the broad, flat face of the trigger provides for straight-rearward presses. Suffice it to say that the trigger is an incredible component!

But that's only half the story. The slide is by far the most eye-catching part of the gun. It has a very futuristic, aggressive look and, for lack of a more refined description, just looks cool. It's machined in house from hearty 17-4 stainless steel and has enhanced front, rear and top serrations. As you can see, there's no shortage of grip surfaces on the gun to help with manipulations of any kind. The slide also has three lightening cuts to decrease weight and increase the cycling speed. Finally,

like other custom-grade guns in this category, the slide has been pre-milled for an optic. In this case, it is cut for the Trijicon RMR or Holosun HS507C. It will also support the new Trijicon SRO since it has the same footprint as the RMR.

One of the biggest concerns that comes with milling this type of slide down is the lack of thread surface for optics. In fact, there have been cases where optics constantly come loose.

#### SPEC BOX

### FAXON FX-19 HELLFIRE

|            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 9mm                     |
| BARREL:    | 4.5 inches              |
| OA LENGTH: | 8 inches                |
| WEIGHT:    | 30 ounces (empty)       |
| GRIP:      | Polymer                 |
| SIGHTS:    | Suppressor-height night |
| ACTION:    | Striker-fired           |
| FINISH:    | Matte black             |
| CAPACITY:  | 20+1                    |
| MSRP:      | \$1,500                 |

Faxon has solved this by including machined posts for the optic. This helps with recoil absorption and provides consistent positioning. These types of things are often overlooked but make a huge difference in a gun's performance.

Faxon is also known for its barrels, and the Hellfire uses one of the company's Match Series G19 barrels with "flame fluting" and 1/2x28-tpi threading. And because you will more than likely run the gun with a sound suppressor, the slide is fitted with a set of Night Fision suppressor-height night sights. These are great sights that are very easy to acquire. The front sight has an orange tritium insert while the rear sight is blacked out. Wrapping it all up, the slide also wears a black diamond-like carbon (DLC) finish for superior wear and corrosion resistance.

Finally, I have always believed that presentation matters, and that small details can make or break a product. To that end, Faxon ships the Hellfire in a TSA-approved hard case. Yes, I know most guns come in plastic cases of some sort, but 99 percent of those cases are thrown into a closet somewhere never to be used again. This is a real lockable case that can be used for range visits and even air travel. So, I offer Faxon a hearty thank you for making life a little easier in this regard.

### LIGHTNING STRIKE

The only thing I did to the pistol before I headed to the range was install the new Lightning laser from LaserMax. This laser is unique in that it has what LaserMax has dubbed "GripSense." All you need to do is grip the gun and a motion sensor in the detection zone activates the laser immediately. You don't need to change your firing grip in the slightest. LaserMax's goal was to simplify the laser-activation process, and it has hit a home run.

The laser is fully programmable with various operating modes, a run time of 20 hours and a 10-minute timeout feature that will help save the battery when no movement is detected. LaserMax offers versions with red and green lasers, and both are very easy to acquire. The housing is also water resistant because LaserMax knows







→  
The new LaserMax Lightning uses GripSense technology to automatically activate the laser whenever you grip the pistol.

most people will use this on a carry gun, where sweat and rain are a real concern. The unit also has an activation button should you need it, but the auto activation system worked flawlessly for me.

One last nice feature is that the laser has an external battery hatch that allows you to change the battery without tools or having to remove the laser from the gun. Overall, I give the Lightning a big thumbs-up. It's small, lightweight and brings a new capability to defensive handguns.

## LIVE FIRE

Of course, no detailed look at the new Hellfire would be complete without a trip to the range. And to cut to the chase, the Hellfire performed well in every test I put it through. From full magazine dumps to ragged-hole drills, the gun didn't miss a beat. The star of the day was the Overwatch trigger. This flat-faced design really

made a difference in getting a consistent trigger press. This showed up in both the ragged-hole accuracy tests as well as speed shooting.


The design of the frame allowed me to really choke up on the gun, minimizing muzzle rise, and the Match Series barrel brought the accuracy we've come to expect from Faxon Firearms. The ragged-hole test consisted of shooting a 1-inch dot at 10 yards with the goal of having all the rounds touching, thus creating a single ragged hole. All three tests ended up with true ragged holes except for one flyer on the last test that was purely shooter induced. I like this test because it's a good way to check not only the accuracy of a handgun but also confirm the sight alignment and test your skills. If you haven't tried it, you need to add it to your drill list. Start at 3 yards, then, once you start crushing it, move back to test both you and the gun.

Ammo-wise, the gun wasn't finicky and ate everything I shoved in the magazines. No, I did not feed it some ComBloc ammo that had been found in an abandoned cargo ship. If you spend good money on a gun, you should protect your investment and get the most out of it with quality ammo.

## THOUSANDS OF ROUNDS

When the sun started setting, I had run more than 500 rounds through the FX-19 Hellfire without a single hiccup. This is impressive performance, though it shouldn't be taken as an endurance test alone. For that, I will refer to you the fact that the gun passed the U.S. military's 15,000-round testing. That is more than most people will shoot in a lifetime. What we can take away from my testing is that the gun ran well and delivered exceptional accuracy.

Faxon Firearms has joined the handgun market with a bang.

With its two new offerings, the company has immediately entered the serious gun category, and we are all better off for it. The world of Glock-style pistols is evolving, and it's nice to see a company bring such a bold design to the market. 

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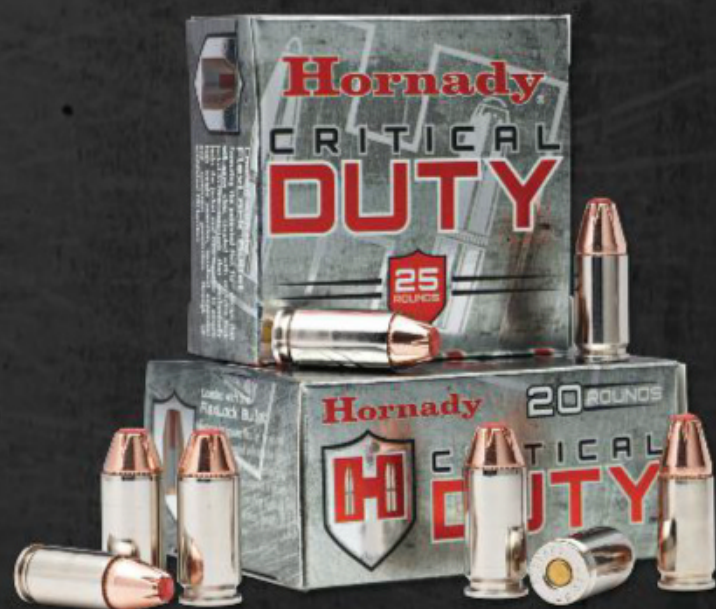


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# BEHIND THE LEATHER



AN INSIDE LOOK AT HOW DESANTIS CONTINUES TO MAKE TOP-QUALITY HOLSTERS

BY FRANK MELLONI

WOJTEK URBANEK PHOTOS



**IT'S** amazing how little we know about the companies that have become household names in the shooting world. My experience with DeSantis Gunhide is the epitome of this statement. Back in 2018, I found myself at a Taurus USA media event in Okeechobee, Florida, having dinner with a number of colleagues when the topic of hometowns came up. Moments after I blurted out “Long Island,” Thomas Gomez said, “Oh wow, there’s a lot of industry there, like DeSantis.”

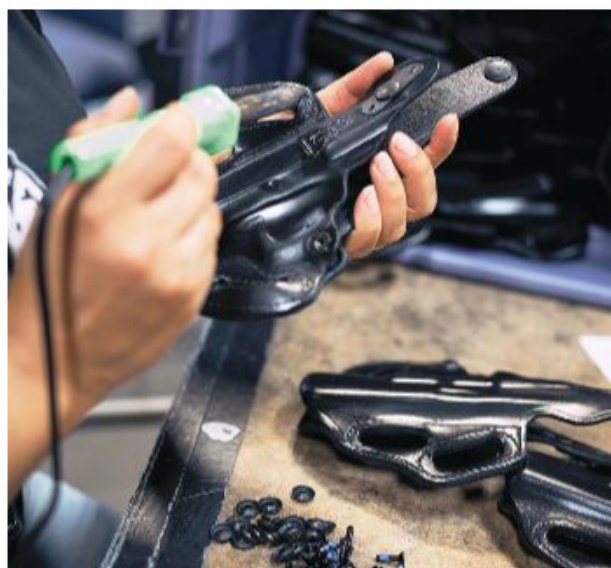
Up to that point, I didn’t know that. A man from New Mexico, sitting across a dinner table in Florida, had to teach me that DeSantis’ headquarters is just a few miles from where I lay my head at

night. So, after returning home, I set out on a mission. I set my alarm for 5 a.m. to beat the traffic on the Long Island Expressway as I headed west towards Amityville. When I arrived, I was greeted by Danny DeSantis, the oldest son, at a *Goodfellas*-style backdoor entrance.

## STRONG ISLAND

Over a cup of coffee, Danny began to tell me a little more about his family and the company they had built. He explained that his father, Gene, started the company in 1972 when a friend in the FBI noticed the quality of his handmade holsters and started ordering a few for his associates in New York City. All of the early holsters were made completely by hand with no machinery









while Gene was still a full-time college student. Danny wasn't even a thought at this point, so the operation was headed up completely by the patriarch. However, when he was old enough to walk, Danny began helping out. His early start in the shipping department eventually led to the factory floor, where he filled several positions. Now, with more than 30 years of experience under his belt, he serves as the company's president.

The youngest of the DeSantis boys and the current warehouse manager, Chad, then walked in to introduce

himself. His history is just like his brother's—learn to talk, learn to walk, learn gun safety and learn to pack boxes. Looking down on his hip, I noticed he carried his handgun in one of the company's best-selling leather holsters. It was refreshing to see that the beauty of

← After the tour, the author put some DeSantis rigs through their paces at the range, including a DS Paddle Holster made for the S&W Shield.

fine gun leather hasn't been lost on the younger generations.

As we walked through the foyer, I noticed a larger-

than-life movie poster of *Die Hard* with Bruce Willis wearing his iconic shoulder holster. Brimming with pride, Chad said, "Yep, that's one of ours. Bruce even asked for it by name in the newer films." He continued, "Our holsters have made quite a few big appearances, such as in *American Gangster* and *Law & Order*. Many celebrities have worn our leather, like Chuck Norris in *Invasion U.S.A.* and Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator*."

After a little more history, we briefly walked through the factory. Chad showed me the more than 70 sewing machines alongside countless molding, grinding, riveting and inspection stations, making it clear just how big this company really is. As we made our way through the factory floor, he took me to the engineering room where some of the biggest ideas have become tangible prototypes.

He explained that he was in charge of obtaining the DeSantis ISO certification in the early 2000s and is essentially the right-hand man in all areas of operation. He told me about his favorite parts of being a holster maker and really came to life when he described some of the customer feedback that he has received. In fact, he sat forward in his chair when he retold the story of a police officer who approached him at a show because his DeSantis Facilitator holster had saved his life. During a confrontation, a perpetrator tried to get his gun from him, but the retention system kept him from being able to do so.

## FAMILY MATTERS

Around that time, our photographer arrived, and Chad showed him around to get some of the shots featured in

**"MANY CELEBRITIES HAVE WORN OUR LEATHER, LIKE CHUCK NORRIS IN *INVASION U.S.A.* AND ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER IN *TERMINATOR*."**



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↑ Gene DeSantis and his sons, Danny and Chad, keep some of their most memorable holsters on display to remind them of their roots and legacy.

this article. I took the opportunity to meet back up with Danny in his skybox office. As we overlooked the entire factory floor, he showed me a few items that will be coming to the market as well as some of the items that started it all. Danny's desk was covered with photos of his family, and with a smile he said, "That's my favorite part of working here—being close to home and spending time with my dad and brother."

I can certainly appreciate that, as working in this industry is a lifestyle,

and if your family isn't into guns, you'll have a hard time spending time together. Danny has a few other points of pride as well, such as a special 1911 holster that is going to be presented to President Donald Trump once the plans are finalized. He also told me about the

→ The Long Island factory is full of skilled craftsmen involved with every step of the build process, even punching holes in leather before it's stitched.

custom hunting holsters that Donald Trump Jr. is currently using afield.

Then the big boss himself snuck in and settled into his office. Gene DeSantis is certainly an interesting man.





After being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1966, he made second lieutenant in just 11 months. He's the kind of man who puts his heart and soul into every project he takes on. Although his business card says "CEO," you are likely to find him out on the factory floor, as he still designs and builds many of the prototypes himself. In fact, he told me he designed the Kurz Shockwave Case out of "boredom." Most of us would just turn the TV on in that situation.

As a business owner myself, I found it very easy to relate to Gene. My company, Renaissance Firearms Instruction, is organized well enough

for me to sit back and allow our instructors to handle the day-to-day operations, but you will always see me in front of the classroom leading our guys. That's how Gene operates his company. Holding up one of the new Gator Sting holsters made from alligator hide, he said, "Our company is best at being consistent and affordable. A competitor is making these for \$375, but we can make them for \$159 with the same leather, and the final product will be as good if not better."

As he explained the company history, I learned that DeSantis has changed facilities six times to accommodate

growth over the past 45-plus years. Then he joined us on the rest of the factory tour, and he left no stone unturned as he walked me through every intimate detail of the holster-making process. Gene's enthusiasm was hard to contain. He explained that the company had to build certain machines because they simply didn't exist before to do what was required. His experience with fabricating tools goes back to his first leather press, which he made from a decommissioned wine press.

As we stopped to admire the stitching operation, Gene explained that in more than 45 years, not a single



→ Danny DeSantis (far right) shows the author the design room, where many of the company's holsters are first conceptualized.







← The DeSantis family takes great pride in its top-quality stitching and dyeing operations.

slice a sheet of leather to within a few thousandths of an inch, allowing for unparalleled consistency.

As we left the cutting room, we entered part of the Kydex operation. Expecting a begrudged answer to what Gene thought of Kydex, I was surprised to find out he actually had warm sentiments about the material. He was equally enthusiastic to pick up a Kydex holster and show me some of the features that DeSantis craftsmen have worked into it. Afterward, I realized that really shouldn't have been a shock, as the man loves every aspect of his work. Why would modern equipment be any different?

It also turns out that the family has been working with Kydex for nearly as long as they have been in leather. "I don't want any pictures of our molding process, as it's more precise than anyone else's and we want to keep that a secret," Gene said.

## LOVING THE WORK

On the way out of the factory, I took a final glance at more than 100 workers just loving what they do for a living. Of these, there were just two sitting off in a corner by themselves. When I asked what they were doing, I was told, "They do just one thing

all day long: hand-inspect each and every holster before it's packaged."

**"...GENE EXPLAINED THAT IN MORE THAN 45 YEARS, NOT A SINGLE HOLSTER HAD BEEN RETURNED BECAUSE OF A STITCHING ISSUE."**

holster had been returned because of a stitching issue. "We were the ones who made the use of bonded nylon cord popular," he said. He also explained that the company set the trend of building highly detailed holsters that always cover the trigger—something that is unfathomable today.

As we entered the cutting room, we came face to face with some of the older die-cutting machines that still punch out shapes with a cookie-cutter-like attachment. However, nowadays, more of the operations are performed by advanced CNC machines that can quickly dice up dozens of holster parts.

Despite being in his early 70s, Gene is up to date with the latest AutoCAD and 3D printing software, as it helps him design products and tweak the quality control. Regardless of which machine is doing the cutting, each sheet of leather is hand inspected, and any imperfection is marked and removed immediately.

"This is what separates the men from the boys," Gene said as we rounded a corner to see some specialized machines. "Those machines are very expensive and are capable of splitting leather holster components down to our desired thickness." In fact, these ultra-precise machines can



After we packed our gear, Chad and I headed to a local range, where we finished our day with some live-fire testing with some of the company's most popular offerings. I found this to be one of the most rewarding experiences in my career, as I watched these very holsters go from raw material to final product just a few hours ago.

During our time together, I asked Chad, Danny and Gene the same question: "Why do you stay in New York?" The answer was the same for each: "Family." At the end of the day, it's all about being together for the DeSantis family. When you love your products almost as much as the people you make them with, it's hard to consider what you do "work." While many factors go into the manufacturing process to ensure top

→ Regardless of the material, every DeSantis rig is inspected by hand before it ships from the factory.



quality, nothing can ever substitute the heart and soul that goes into something created with the ones you care about most. This is evident from Gene's first

hand-laced holster for his prized High Standard .22 to the company's most recent Kydex creations. For more information, visit [desantisholster.com](http://desantisholster.com).

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My wife tells me that I am simple and predictable. My passions may wax and wane, but my interests remain boringly constant. Apparently, I am not alone. I recently learned that there is an 80-percent crossover between gear-heads and firearms enthusiasts. Odds are, if you like anything bearing an internal-combustion engine, you probably like things that send small pieces of lead downrange at hundreds or thousands of feet per second with pinpoint accuracy.

Which brings us to the sixth annual Motoschützen. When my editor told me to go

to Cody, Wyoming, to cover it, I told him I wasn't familiar with it. He laughed and explained that I would be responsible for exposing the week of motors, machine guns and mayhem to the world. (I still can't believe I get paid to do this.) So, I hit the road and picked up photographer Alex Landeen on the way.

Cody might be small, but the people are friendly and everything is named after Buffalo Bill. We arrived in the evening and met up with the Motoschützen crew at the Silver Dollar Saloon. Alex looked a little green around the gills, so I was forced to uphold our manliness by

drinking both his share and mine. Fortunately, I have been in constant training for just such a crisis for the last 20 years. I also got to meet our host, Media Direct's Mark Sidelinger, and learned a little more about the eclectic crew he assembled in the pursuit of embracing everything that makes America such an awesome country. And the longer I hung out with this merry band of rabble rousers, the more enamored I became.

### THE BASICS

So what the hell is Motoschützen, and who goes to it? Well, it's a pretty elite

group by any calculation. Imagine you are the head of a company that makes firearms, or the head of marketing, or someone who has been entrusted with a great deal more responsibility than any sane person would ever give to someone like me. Perhaps you are in charge of a major marketing firm that caters to the firearms industry. Such a position comes with good and bad news. You're a recognized leader, but tremendous responsibility weighs on your shoulders. The gun business also isn't the place to go if you want to get rich. The industry is flooded with good companies, profit

# MOTOSCHÜTZEN

# 2019

**THE INDUSTRY'S  
FINEST GET WILD  
IN WYOMING WITH  
GUNS, MOTORCYCLES  
AND BARBECUE**

**BY ROBERT JORDAN • ALEX LANDEEN PHOTOS**





margins are low, and in case you haven't noticed, demand has gone down since Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump. The "Trump Slump" has made it really hard to sell guns. You might be worth millions, but every penny of equity is tied up in your business and making sure your employees still have a job tomorrow.

With this kind of stress, how do you unwind? By taking a week to hang out with a bunch of people who have the same worries as well as the same aspirations and enjoy the same things. And, man, is it a hoot!

The first day of the event, we met at the Cody Shooting

Complex, where Camillo Velasquez introduced me to some new guns from Rossi and Taurus. He showed me the Rossi Tuffy .410/.22, the RS22 semi-auto .22 rifle and the RB22 bolt-action rifle available in .22 LR, .22 WMR and .17 HMR. After that, we move on to the offerings from Taurus. The crowd really loved the threaded-barrel TX22 pistol that uses 16-round magazines.

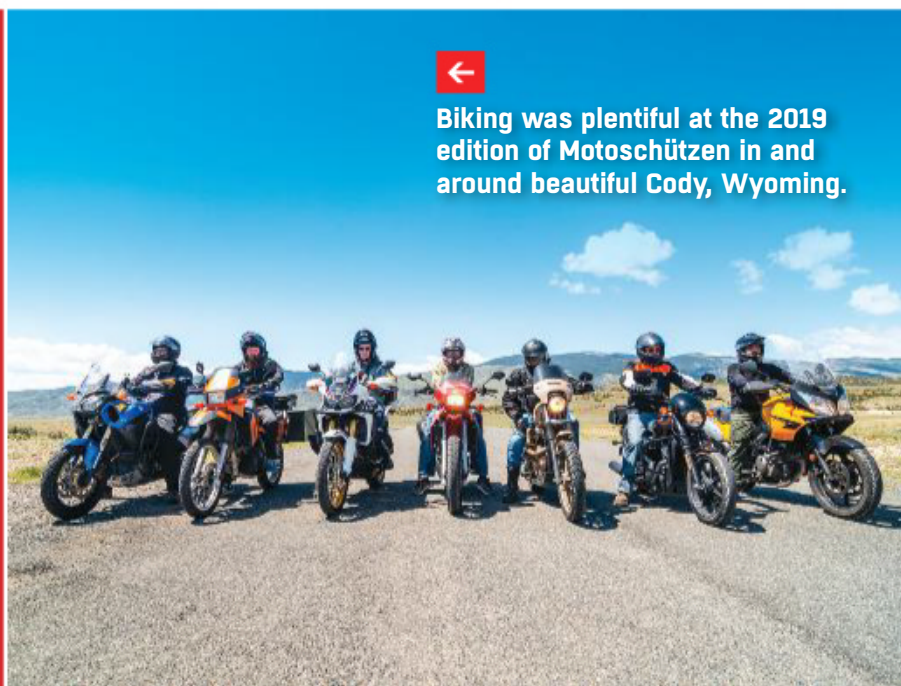
Mike Corkish showed me the latest and greatest from Tactical Solutions. The integrally suppressed Pac-Lite TSS pistol and X-Ring Takedown rifle had people lining up to try them out, and

**FF**

**THESE GUYS BELIEVE IN OUR RIGHTS AND THEIR PRODUCTS, AND WORK ALL DAY EVERY DAY—EVEN WHEN THEY ARE ON VACATION."**



Biking was plentiful at the 2019 edition of Motoschützen in and around beautiful Cody, Wyoming.







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Mixing business with pleasure, the event attendees spent their time at Motoschützen gobbling up whole lots of ammo while on the shooting range.

they did not disappoint. Zach Hein showed off some CZ rifles. With its pinpoint accuracy and beautiful trigger and stock, the CZ 457 was probably the most accurate rifle on the range that day.

Charlie Brown showed me his pistol and carbine from Hi-Point. Brown is a super-nice guy and immediately recognized that I am a gun snob. My guns keep me alive on the job, so I buy the best. But Brown explained that not everyone can afford the best, and new shooters need a gun that doesn't cost \$800 plus magazines, optics,

lights and holsters. I began to see why Hi-Point has its cult following. Brown also introduced me to the Russian Barnaul ammo that his company has begun importing.

Next was a table with Ron Norton from Inland Manufacturing and some pretty cool retro World War II guns. We shot some Rock River Arms BT-9 carbines and pistols, then a Just Right Carabines 9mm and MG Arms' ARs (available in eight calibers), along with the company's Wraith 1911 pistol. And that was just the morning. Mark Sidelinger treated us

all to Fat Racks BBQ, and it was so good we went back there for lunch every day.

The first motorcycle ride came after lunch. Landeen and I chased the road bikes all the way up the fabled Beartooth Pass in Montana that opened the week before and got snowed shut two weeks later. Snowbanks along the road were still 10 feet high and, of course, we had to stop and throw snowballs at each other. It was hard to believe that it was June. The day ended with Millstone Pizza, cold drinks and a lot of very tired guys

making jokes about who had the most fun that day.

## DAY TWO

The second day, we headed back to the very nice Cody Shooting Complex for a morning of long gun shooting. The same guys from before brought along a Rock River Arms prototype rifle that will debut at the 2020 SHOT Show and a D-Day commemorative Inland M37 trench gun that we shot along with several other shotguns at an impromptu Five-Stand competition. A lot of people said things like, "Back when I had time to practice, I used to be pretty good at this." Naturally, any misses were met with jokes, juvenile humor and poignant put-downs. Eventually they all told me to be quiet.

After shooting, we hit up Fat Racks BBQ once again, and a group got back on their bikes. This time Alex and I



**...MY EDITOR...LAUGHED AND EXPLAINED THAT I WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPOSING THE WEEK OF MOTORS, MACHINE GUNS AND MAYHEM TO THE WORLD."**





While some of the attendees are competitors in the firearms industry, everyone united for a few days to renew friendships and make sure a good time was had by all.



went with the off-road crew, and my 2002 Toyota Tacoma 4x4 was pushed to the max to keep up. We went west around Buffalo Bill Reservoir and then into the hills, where we skirted some BLM agents (I think we were riding on legal land), and the guys showed off their hill climbing skills. Tim Matters from Tactical Walls displayed serious man skills on any motorcycle he rode, and he rode several because when he was done with them, parts were falling off. Stopping to look at the views was the only thing that slowed us down as we wound our way up a “trail” on what I believe was Citadel Mountain.

Dinner that night was at the Cody Cattle Company with live music from the Triple C Cowboys. There were about 25 of us from Motoschützen along with 300 other guests in attendance. Afterward, half the crew rolled next door to take in the rodeo

while the rest of us went over to the Juniper Bar before again meeting up at the Silver Dollar and becoming impromptu cornhole champs against all challengers.

### DAY THREE

Our shooting was done, but we were treated to an exclusive tour of the Cody Firearms Museum by lovely curator Ashley Hlebinsky and assistant curator Danny Michael. I'd describe the place in three words: A-MAZ-ING. The museum was just finishing a \$12 million renovation. So much history about firearms is packed into the place that I can't wait to go back. Plus, they have hands-on displays that explain basic gun parts and safety and allow you to mimic shooting a machine gun, for example. Even my wife would love this museum.

Finally, it was time for our last ride, which took

us east from Cody through beautiful canyons, mountains and resorts that are only accessible a few months out of the year. We traveled the backroads and stopped to enjoy the scenery that none of us in our hectic 60-hour weeks would normally ever appreciate. And every one of us wore a wide grin that comes from the satisfaction of knowing we are doing the best we can for the industry, for our products and for the people who depend on us. This is a little slice of how much pleasure and beauty there is in this world.

One of the things that really struck me about all of these guys was how diverse their activities were. Nobody focused on just one product or even one line of products. They were negotiating with distributors, with product providers, with foreign countries, the BATFE, employees and advertisers. At the same

time, even guys who were in competition bent over backwards to help each other. If someone needed a replacement part for their motorcycle, a cell phone, ammo, a ride or just a sympathetic ear to vent, these guys were there for each other. It was impressive and heartwarming at the same time.

I admit that I'm a cynical cop who thinks the worst of everyone, but I felt like participating in Motoschützen was a shining star in a sea of woe. And while this event isn't for the masses, I feel privileged to have peeked behind the curtain and witnessed a little of how the other half lives, even if it isn't all glamour and luxury. These guys believe in our rights and their products, and work all day every day—even when they are on vacation. But they still want to have a good time. And that, my friends, is Motoschützen! 🇺🇸





# ROLLING WITH THE DEVIL

TAKE A TRIP  
ON THE DARK SIDE  
WITH THE  
999-HORSEPOWER  
RAMSMOBILE  
RM-X2

[ BY WILL DABBS, MD ]







From the very beginning, mankind has had an irresistible fascination with darkness, which drives us to some fascinating places. It shapes our books, television shows and movies. In every proper story, there are both good guys and bad. However, if we're being completely honest, it's nearly always the villain who holds us in most compelling sway.

This same preoccupation pervades our enthusiasm for high-end vehicles. The Rams Group of Belarus has capitalized upon this innate human constant to produce the sort of high-end luxury survival

vehicle suitable for the Prince of Darkness. In the Ramsmobile Protos RM-X2, we see the true power of evil.

## DARK MATTERS

For starters, the vehicle is perfused with demonic imagery. Not only is the whole truck black both inside and out save for a few red components, but the sundry highlights are also subtly engraved with creepy runic phrases. It's spooky—and that's the point.

The vehicle at its dark heart is an optimized all-terrain supercar. The chassis and monocoque fuselage are all titanium and carbon fiber, not unlike a combat aircraft. This gives the truck its preternaturally light weight. In its stripped-down version, the curb weight is a mere 3,300 pounds.



That might seem portly until you appreciate that, dependent upon the power plant you choose, this thing could be putting out 999 horsepower.

Let's put that in perspective. The Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp radial that drove the World-War-II-era F4U Corsair fighter plane produced twice that. However, the Corsair weighed more than 9,000 pounds and flew at around 440 mph. So, 999 horses is simply breathtaking in a terrestrial vehicle.

These trucks are made to order for the individual buyer, so the standard automotive rules that might govern the way we describe them do not necessarily apply. The Rams Group plans to produce a mere dozen throughout 2020. However, there are certain standard attributes that apply across the board.

The monocoque chassis is airtight. The system draws air from the top to exclude particulates. The frame, skid plates and undercarriage are Teflon-coated for wear and weather resistance. The hydro-pneumatic suspension features a laser height sensor for accurate positioning. This system allows for a full 12 inches of adjustment.

The RM-X2 can be had with either a 6.2-liter LT5 gasoline engine or a 6.6-liter Duramax diesel plant slaved to an Allison transmission. There are references to a possible electric drive system, but the details are not fully codified. I have a sneaking suspicion that the 999-horsepower output was carefully crafted because 999 is 666 upside down, but perhaps I'm reading too much into it.

The vehicle is designed to incorporate an optional retractable track system that will power the truck through places that wheels might find impassable. The tracks come in both narrow (15-inch) and wide (24-inch) versions. This monster is an electrically-powered, hydraulically-actuated auxiliary mobility enhancement system for those times when life goes truly sideways. The tracks can also be used as built-in jacks when the vehicle needs servicing.

But to me, the doors might be the coolest components. Powered by an electro-hydraulic system, the rear-pivoting side doors are like those of a Lamborghini Countach—only backwards. The doors pop out just far enough to unseal and then







rotate up and back. The end result requires only 8 inches of side space for opening.

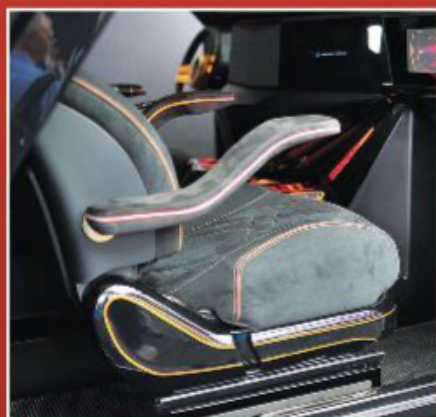
## DIABOLICAL OPTIONS

There are four basic layouts for this truck ranging from simple to ridiculously over the top: Ascetic, Devil's Touch, Ramsider and God's Creation. I warned you that supernatural imagery pervades the thing.

The Ascetic, or RM-X2A, is the base model that weighs 3,300 pounds and will climb all but vertical walls. It's a cool \$999,999. That's just the starting point. Totally tricked out, it is closer to \$3 million. The Devil's Touch edition, or RM-X2D, is the product of six months' effort by the Ramsmobile design team. The company describes this version as a melding of luxury and darkness along with technology and mysticism. I'm not really sure what that means precisely, but it makes me want to start stocking up on stakes and holy water.

The RM-X2D features black wheels with gold trim along with the auxiliary continuous-track hyper-mobility upgrade. This version can also be configured with a tunnel-less body configuration that seats six. If you're going to drop \$1 million on a vehicle of this caliber, you might as well upgrade to the RM-X2D and toss in a few amenities.

The RM-X2G is God's Creation. The technical details for this model won't be finalized until later in 2020. Given its rarefied nomenclature, I would expect it to be epic. Finally, the Ramsider, or RM-X2R, is the weaponized version. It



can be up-armored to either B6 or B7 ballistic standards and includes bulletproof glass. The armored variant incorporates both Kevlar and carbon-fiber upgrades to keep the truck running when lesser vehicles might have to be relegated to the junk pile.

The proprietary hydraulic doors ensure passengers can easily ingress or egress even when the vehicle is wedged into tight spaces. (The kind of folks who can afford such a truck likely have a few enemies.) The up-armored model can also feature a purified air system to survive biological warfare.

Wheel options for all models include an Ai-CTIS (Automatic-intelligent Central Tire Inflation System) that ensures the tires maintain the proper inflation for the terrain encountered. Bead-lock wheels with lightweight polyurethane run-flat rings keep the tires mated to the wheels even when driven

at very low inflation levels. The rims are available in 20-, 22- and 24-inch versions.

The mirrors retract into the hood to prevent damage, and digital "mirrors" display within the cabin. Integrated thermal and night-vision imagers feed into the cockpit as well. Finally, external infrared lights illuminate your path in true darkness.

In terms of performance, the RM-X2 can clear a 30-inch vertical obstacle. The wheels protrude in such a way that the truck can climb without damaging its front end in extreme conditions. With the rear bumper properly configured, the RM-X2 can manage a 50-degree forward incline. The laser height-position indicator and track module help maintain control.

If desired, the vehicle can be outfitted with custom-powered skid plates made from titanium and applique bumpers to help protect the

bottom. These upgrades strengthen the vehicle's structure under critical loads and aggressive operating conditions. The Extreme Pro package also includes two ultralight winches and jacks.

## UP IN SMOKE

Now what would the Devil-mobile be without a little concomitant sin? The interior is too tight for a proper stripper pole, so the next best thing is what Ramsmobile calls its "Smoker's Package." With this upgrade, the RM-X2 operator can smoke flavored tobacco on the go thanks to built-in electronic hookahs that are fed via special tobacco cartridges. The system recognizes your individual smoking preferences and modulates the power and temperature for each individual operator. These values are retained in the system and replicated automatically according to specified parameters.

As a physician, I feel compelled to remind you that smoking is universally bad. Half my professional life is spent trying to beg, threaten or cajole folks out of their sundry tobacco products. However, even I found the built-in hookah thing fascinating.

So if you've got the coin and feel comfortable settling into a genuine Satan-infused, high-performance Devil car, the Ramsmobile Protos RM-X2 is your ride. Dark, powerful and terrifying, it would certainly help you stand out in the pickup line at school. If you dare, then climb aboard and take a spin with this Prince of Darkness. For more information, visit [ramsmobile.com](http://ramsmobile.com).





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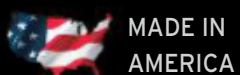


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# BRACE

# FOR IMPACT







## REMINGTON'S SHORT AND HANDY 700 CHASSIS PISTOL RETURNS WITH AN SB TACTICAL UPGRADE

BY MIKE DETTY ALEX LANDEEN PHOTOS



In 2019, Remington introduced the 700 Chassis Pistol (CP) version of its legendary Model 700 bolt-action rifle. Bolted

into an aluminum chassis, the action uses a detachable magazine and is chambered for 5.56mm/.223 Remington, 300 Blackout and .308 Winchester cartridges. But for 2020, Remington has decided to offer the 700 CP in the popular 6.5 Creedmoor. Big Green has also made the 700 CP available with an SB Tactical arm brace, which makes the pistol even easier to shoot.

### OFF TO IDAHO

I first laid eyes on the new gun at the 2019 Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous in Driggs, Idaho, where dozens of gun manufacturers, including Remington, brought along a number of products that had not yet been introduced to the public. Among them was the 700 CP in 6.5 Creedmoor with the SB Tactical arm brace. There, I had a chance to speak with Remington's Eric Suarez about the new bolt-action pistol.

"First off, this is a standard Remington 700 short action with its three rings of steel strength," Suarez said. "We don't do anything to modify the action of the CP models. For this gun, we use the same aluminum chassis as the Remington Precision Chassis Rifle [PCR], and it comes with an extended 0-MOA rail, which is important because it allows forward mounting of optics. The free-floating, M-LOK handguard has no accuracy-robbing contact with the barrel. We use the Remington X-Mark Pro trigger, and it's adjustable from 3.5 to 5.5 pounds. There's also no need to





remove the barreled action from the chassis to make adjustments because the engagement screw is readily accessible. Each model also comes with an oversized bolt knob that makes cycling the action sure and easy, as well as a single-column Magpul AICS magazine.”

I sat down at the bench and engaged a number of distant targets that Suarez pointed out to me while supplying the correct holdovers to make hits. I was amazed at what this pistol could do. The oversized bolt knob made manipulations quick and certain, and the SB Tactical arm brace added another point of contact to the pistol that aided in shooting it consistently.

Suarez’s enthusiasm was contagious, and I placed an order for one of the pistols. Also at the Rendezvous was Riton Optics, a veteran-owned company located in my hometown of Tucson. Riton’s marketing manager, Tony Tarantino, is an industry veteran and an old friend of mine. When I told him I was going to review the new Remington 700 CP, he said Riton had the perfect scope for this gun: the 1-8x24mm X3 Tactix.



← The 700 CP comes with a Magpul MIAD grip and AICS-style magazine as well as a large bolt knob for smooth, quick operation in the field.

## BACK IN ARIZONA

When the Remington 700 CP arrived, I gave it a quick once over and was impressed with the pistol’s design. Like Suarez had said, the 700 CP’s push-feed action is all Remington. Accompanying the pistol was a single-stack, 10-round Magpul magazine. Remington chose this magazine as it negated the need to redesign the bolt to feed from AR-10-style, double-column magazines. The magazine release lever

is conveniently located so that it can be engaged when the shooter grabs the magazine to remove it.

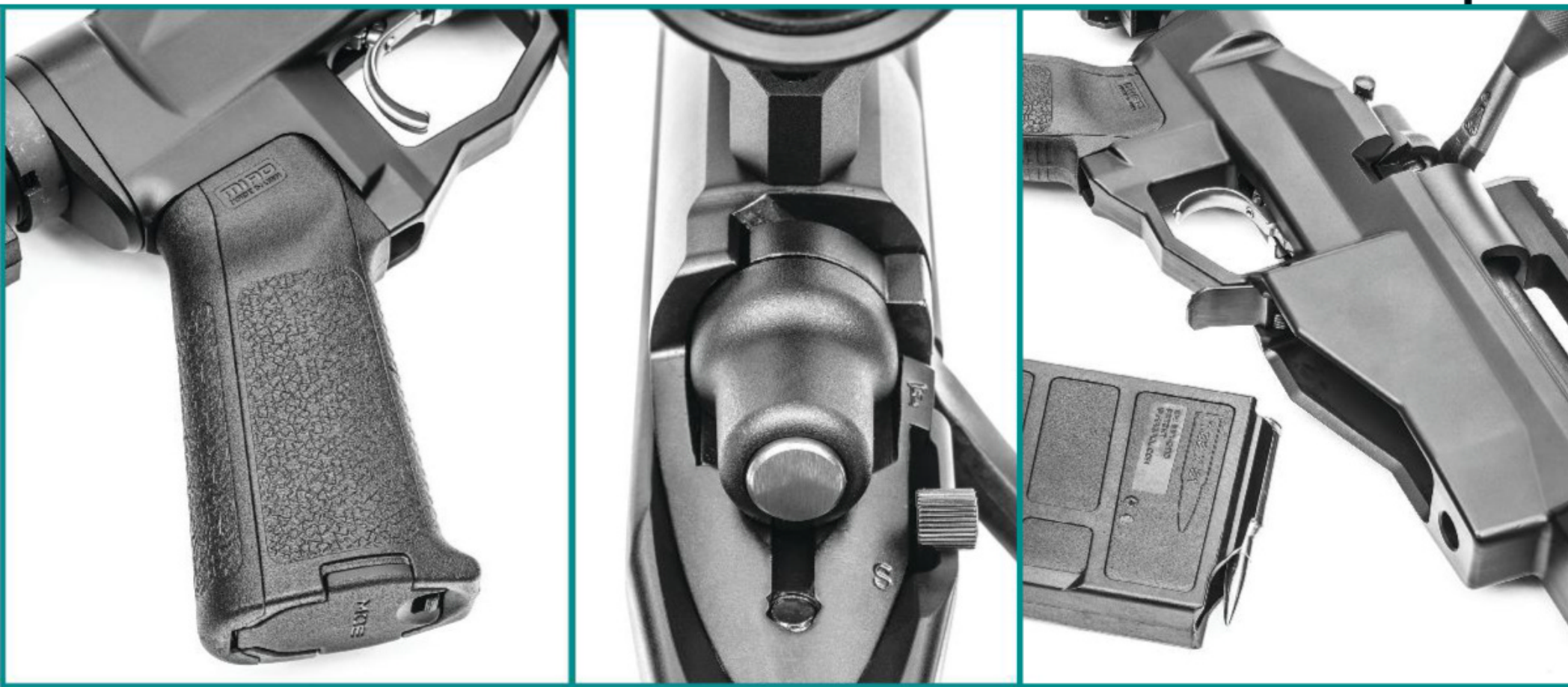
As mentioned, Remington outfits the 700 CP with an M-LOK handguard that is attached to the chassis and does not contact the barrel, which could affect the pistol’s accuracy. On top of the receiver is an extended, 0-MOA Picatinny rail for optics. It’s attached to the receiver with four screws. Out front, the 12.5-inch barrel’s muzzle has 5/8x24-tpi threading for suppressors or muzzle brakes, and Remington supplies a machined thread protector.

Out of the box, my test sample had a 4.5-pound trigger. The Remington X-Mark Pro trigger is adjustable for engagement without



→ The action is designed to feed from single-stack magazines, and Remington includes an X-Mark Pro adjustable trigger.





#### SPEC BOX

## REMINGTON 700 CP

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 6.5 Creedmoor    |
| BARREL:    | 12.5 inches      |
| OA LENGTH: | 28 inches        |
| WEIGHT:    | 7 pounds (empty) |
| GRIP:      | Magpul MIAD      |
| SIGHTS:    | None             |
| ACTION:    | Bolt             |
| FINISH:    | Matte black      |
| CAPACITY:  | 10+1             |
| MSRP:      | \$1,169          |

#### PERFORMANCE

| LOAD                          | VELOCITY | ACCURACY |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Black Hills 143 ELD-X         | 2,177    | 1.14     |
| Black Hills 147 ELD-M         | 2,233    | 0.91     |
| Federal 130 Gold Medal Berger | 2,480    | 0.85     |
| Federal 140 Fusion            | 2,378    | 1.31     |
| Sig Sauer 120 HT              | 2,531    | 1.24     |

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.

removing it from the chassis, though it wouldn't be a big chore if need be. I adjusted the engagement screw until the trigger pull weighed about 3.75 pounds.

At the rear of the 700 CP's aluminum chassis is an adapter for an AR-style receiver extension, or buffer tube. Here Remington has attached an SB Tactical SBA3 arm brace that can be adjusted to five different length-of-pull positions, including fully collapsed and fully extended. Currently, the BATFE holds that it is legal to shoulder such designs, increasing your hit probability and accuracy downrange.

Finally, on my way to shoot the 700 CP, I stopped at Riton's office and picked up the company's new 1-8x24mm X3 Tactix. This variable scope features an illuminated, second-focal-plane reticle; an integrated, but removable, throw lever; and a fast-focus eyepiece. One of Riton's technicians had the scope installed in a Riton one-piece mount with quick-detach levers. The scope weighs just 19 ounces, or 26 ounces including the mount.

### TRIGGER TIME

When I arrived at my shooting spot southeast of Tucson, I set up my DOA Shooting Bench and quickly attached

the scope. I set a target 25 yards away and zeroed the scope while chronographing the ammunition I had brought along. By the time I had chronographed the five different test loads, I had the 700 CP zeroed and pushed my target back to 100 yards.

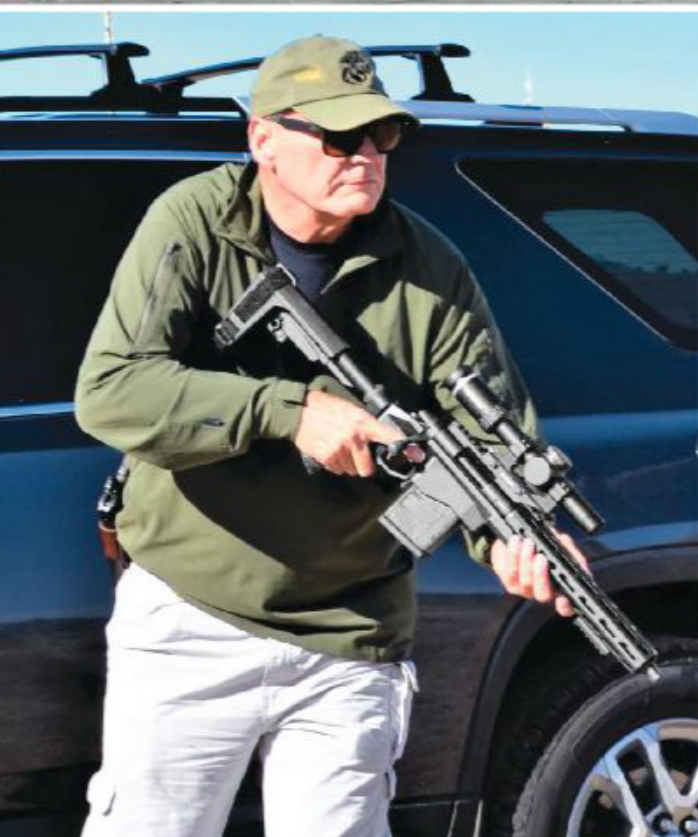
Instead of using a shooting rest, I attached a short Picatinny rail to the bottom of the 700 CP's handguard and attached a Warne Skyline bipod. It features a quick-attach lever, and the legs can be adjusted from 6.9 to 9.1 inches long. You can also adjust the cant by 22 degrees and pan by 44 degrees. After finding the ideal leg height to comfortably shoot the 700 CP, I disabled the pan feature and fired my groups. I fired five groups with each load and included the best five-shot groups in the performance table.

The 700 CP is not a particularly hard gun to shoot, and I was able to develop some technique as I put rounds downrange. I fired groups using my support hand to push the SBA3 brace into my shoulder. My first shot was literally an eye-opener, as I saw a white flash through the scope when I pulled the trigger. The short barrel creates quite a fireball as unburned powder continues to burn after leaving the barrel—so





**“WITH THE SB TACTICAL BRACE, REMINGTON’S 700 CP MAKES FOR A VERY COMPACT PACKAGE THAT IS CAPABLE OF RIFLE-LIKE ACCURACY.”**



much so, in fact, that if it had been fire season, I would have discontinued shooting the gun for fear of igniting some dry buffalo grass.

I was able to use the scope’s fast-focus eyepiece to get an incredibly sharp, clear sight picture. Using 2-inch-diameter Shoot-N-C targets, I was able to center the 1-MOA dot reticle easily, and this made shooting tiny groups simple! Also aiding my groups was the gun’s crisp trigger.

My best group came with Federal’s 130-grain Gold Medal Berger rounds, and I managed to put five shots into a

neat cluster measuring just 0.85 inches wide. During my shooting session, I fired more than 150 rounds, and that was a little much for a single day. By the end of my session, I was jittery as I broke the shot, in anticipation of recoil, and my shoulder remained sore for several days. The SBA3 arm brace is made of a rubbery composite material that acts as a sort of recoil pad. But 150 rounds is just too much in a single session for a lightweight like myself. The only negative that I found to this setup is that it is impossible to obtain a cheekweld. Despite this, the gun performed admirably in terms of accuracy. Quite frankly, these groups were much tighter than I had anticipated.

I looked back through my notes to find another gun that I had fired the same rounds through with a true rifle-length barrel. Last year, I tested the Rise Armament 1121XR rifle with a 22-inch barrel using the same ammunition. The Remington 700 CP’s 12.5-inch barrel had 20-percent less velocity with the same rounds. Unfortunately, this translates into 32-percent less energy. The Remington 700 CP is a short-range gun, and there’s no sense in trying to push its range. Keep your shots

within 200 yards and you should be fine. It’s not that the shorter barrel is mechanically less accurate, but the reduced velocity decreases the distance at which the projectile stays stabilized.

### VERSATILE PISTOL

Remington’s Suarez explained to me that the 700 CP was designed for several different groups of people. “For me personally, I have two young boys, and the adjustable SB Tactical brace fits them better than a full-stocked Remington 700,” he said. “People with disabilities or an injury that has affected their limbs and/or range of motion may find that the shorter overall length and lighter weight allows them to hunt again, whereas a full-sized rifle might just be too hard. Folks hunting out of deer blinds have limited room, and shots are usually limited to 150 yards. That’s where the Remington 700 Chassis Pistol excels!”

While I was shooting the 700 CP, a local rancher and a Bureau of Land Management agent stopped to say hello. They were both impressed with the compactness of the gun. Both spend a great deal of time in their vehicles and believed that the short length would make it much easier to get the gun into action quickly. They were also impressed by the 700 CP’s accuracy and the fact that it fires a full-powered rifle cartridge. After they had a chance to shoot the 700 CP, I am certain that Remington will have two new customers!

With the SB Tactical brace, Remington’s 700 CP makes for a very compact package that is capable of rifle-like accuracy. If your needs require a short, compact gun chambered for a serious cartridge like the 6.5 Creedmoor, the Remington 700 Chassis Pistol just might be the gun for you.

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# W3







**RUNNING  
REMINGTON'S  
LATEST TACTICAL  
12 GAUGE  
THROUGH GUNSITE'S  
TOP-NOTCH TRAINING**

**BY FRED MASTISON**

# VICTORY





Remington offers the V3 Tactical with either XS rifle sights (shown) or a vent-rib bead sight, but both styles use the VersaPort system for greater reliability.



**W**hile the debate rages on over the 9mm versus the .45 ACP, the forever-reliable shotgun sits in the corner just laughing to itself. The shotgun is a versatile and powerful

utilitarian part of any self-respecting gun owner's collection. From bird guns to advanced tactical models, the shotgun seems to be able to fill the needs of just about any shooter. But in my opinion, the gun really shines in the tactical and self-defense world. While it's true that you could use a gun dedicated to goose hunting, for example, there are better options available for personal protection.

Many companies make guns in this space, but few have the decades-long reputation that Remington has earned. From the classic 870 pump action used by millions of police officers worldwide to advanced semi-autos, Remington has it all. "Big Green" also takes pride in continuing to innovate in this arena, as demonstrated by the company's new V3 Tactical scattergun.

## BUILT FOR SPEED

The new V3 Tactical is a high-speed, low-drag fight-stopper. The gun utilizes Remington's ingenious VersaPort gas

### SPEC BOX

## REMINGTON V3 TACTICAL

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| GAUGE:     | 12; 3½-inch chamber |
| BARREL:    | 18.5 inches         |
| OA LENGTH: | 39.5 inches         |
| WEIGHT:    | 7.63 pounds (empty) |
| STOCK:     | Synthetic           |
| SIGHTS:    | XS low-profile      |
| ACTION:    | Semi-auto           |
| FINISH:    | Matte black         |
| CAPACITY:  | 6+1                 |
| MSRP:      | \$1,045             |

system. In essence, after firing a round, high-pressure gas just behind the shot cup is channeled down through ports in the barrel and into the piston system that drives the action. The action actually uses two small pistons just below the magazine tube. The design is brilliant in that the size of the shell controls the amount of gas used. So if you're running 3½-inch shells, only three ports are open, with the rest being covered by the shell. On the other end of the spectrum, a 2¾-inch shell leaves eight ports open, allowing more gas to run the action.

The benefit of this design is that the V3 Tactical will cycle pretty much any ammunition you feed it, from light bird-shot shells that most tactical semi-autos won't run to heavy buckshot and slugs. Another benefit is an exceptionally soft-shooting shotgun. While that might sound like a cliché or even an oxymoron, it's true. The VersaPort system reduces the recoil of a 12 gauge so that it feels more like a 20 gauge. This is true across the board, even when running buckshot or slugs.

The V3 Tactical is ergonomic and feature rich. It includes nicely oversized controls, including the large charging handle and safety as well as the easy-to-use bolt release. This makes the gun fast and easy to run, even under stress. Another sign that the V3 Tactical was designed by shooters is the flared loading port. Gone are the days of catching the back of your thumb in the loading port as you feed your shotgun.

The gun comes with an 18.5-inch, cylinder-bore barrel and is available with XS low-profile rifle sights or a vent-rib bead sight. It also has a 6+1 capacity, and Remington includes a Supercell recoil pad. All of this works together to make a very fast, soft-shooting and reliable semi-automatic shotgun.





**“TO HELP RUN THE COURSE, REMINGTON BROUGHT ALONG ITS WORLD CHAMPION SHOOTER, TRAVIS TOMASIE.”**



Along with hitting the square range, the attendees ran their V3 Tactical shotguns through a number of simulators at Gunsite.



## GUNSITE TRAINING

To unveil the new shotgun, Remington held a writer's event at the world-famous Gunsite Academy. We ended up spending two days running the V3 Tactical through its paces.

My first impression of the gun was positive as we started our general briefing. Right off the bat, the V3 Tactical felt comfortable to operate. It's a fighting gun, and as such, had no harsh edges or unnecessary bling. We had the option of running the V3 Tactical with either the XS rifle sights or the vent-rib bead sight, and I chose the former to really test the boomstick's accuracy. Yes, the bead sight works well, but rifle sights are inherently more precise, and I'm simply more comfortable with them.

First up was patterning the gun. If you're new to shotguns, this is simply finding out what your shot pattern looks like at different distances. It's important to know exactly where your shots are going to land, and hitting the range is the only true way to know. At Gunsite, we mostly ran a mix of Remington's Managed-Recoil and Ultimate Defense buckshot. My gun produced a very nice pattern at 10 yards, with six of the eight pellets inside a 2-inch dot and two flyers that stretched the group out to about 3.5 inches. This is definite headshot patterning at this distance. Then we continued to move back, firing at different distances until the pellets began to wander outside the primary strike zone at the 20-yard line. This is where I would probably transition to slugs.

Shotguns have an undeserved reputation for excessive recoil in many cases. What I find most often is a lack of solid technique in running this great platform. Without going into great detail, you must lean into the gun. Drive it into your shoulder and run it like you mean it. If you are timid or allow the stock to drift out of your shoulder pocket, the gun can be very unforgiving. This is especially true if you start to let space get between you and the buttstock. What follows is the gun punching you in the shoulder—something entirely preventable.

With that being said, running any large-caliber gun with serious recoil can wear on even the best shooters.



## TOMASIE'S TOP TIPS

➔ Travis Tomasie is one of the most recognized and successful professional shooters in the world. He's the captain of Team Remington and, unlike some other pros, has years of teaching experience as well. With this perfect mix of skills, I felt it would be a great opportunity to learn more from him at the Gunsite event. Like everyone else, I was looking for some tips on how to get the most out of my gun and build my speed and accuracy. Tomasie was beyond generous and offered these three solid tips.

**Recoil Management:** "With a shotgun, recoil management is very

important. As always, rule number one is to focus on fundamentals, but you really need to work on your stance. Use your legs to build a really solid platform to mitigate the recoil so you can drive the gun from target to target."

**Reloading:** "Reloading is a huge part of running a shotgun. We were doing speed reloads as well as tactical reloads for two days at Gunsite. This is a reminder to be smooth and fast. Practice both types as much as you can so they become second nature."

**Gear:** "Practicing reloads is a great reminder to have your gear squared







away as far as what you are drawing your extra ammunition from. There's a lot of homework to be done there. No matter what it is, you need to be able to index it and get the ammo in the gun quickly. Make sure it's in the right spot on your body as well."

When Travis put on a show at the Gunsite Academy event, everyone watching was making mental notes of what he was doing. It was a pleasure to shoot with him and an even greater pleasure to visit with him and dig into his 20-plus years of experience. Thanks, Travis! —Fred Mastison

However, the V3 Tactical is by far the softest-shooting shotgun I have ever run. The VersaPort system, the new recoil pad and possibly some Remington magic make this gun a breeze to shoot. All of us gun writers in attendance ran over 2,000 rounds through our shotguns over two days without suffering any shoulder fatigue or soreness. This is one of the reasons why I'm a fan of this gun.

Like any weapon, it's essential that you train with it. If the gun is unwieldy or produces too much recoil, it is less likely that you will shoot it often and, in turn, your skills will be minimal at best. The V3 Tactical, though, is a pleasure to shoot, especially with birdshot, and you can really run it all day. This breeds confidence and ultimately helps you reach a higher degree of skill.

## TOP GUN TOMASIE

To help run the course, Remington brought along its world champion shooter, Travis Tomasie. His background is quite extensive, and he's been winning action shooting competitions for more than 20 years. He is a multiple world and national IPSC/USPSA champion as well as a veteran of the elite U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit (USAMU).



**Team Remington's Travis Tomasie showed off the V3 Tactical's capabilities while teaching the attendees a few new tricks.**

He's used this considerable experience to teach countless hours of training courses to military and law enforcement personnel as well as civilians. For me, it was a major treat to get to watch an experienced pro run the V3 Tactical. While it wasn't all about speed, Tomasie gave us all a show on how important the little things can really be. He's a very humble and genuine person, and I found myself asking him for suggestions and tips. It'd be a mistake not to, considering the fact that he's one of the best shooters in the world.

The class was much more than just square-range work as we hit the Gunsite "Scrambler," which had us engaging steel with slugs at anywhere from 25 to 160 yards from a variety of positions, such as off stumps and from behind trees. Since we were on the clock, we were encouraged to make our shots, then get moving to the next target down the line as quickly as possible. It was challenging to say the least. We also ran the V3 Tactical through a shoothouse and simulated clearing a home that had an unknown number of bad guys inside. In both scenarios, I didn't experience a single issue with the V3 Tactical.

## MAKING THE GRADE

The class wrapped up with a skill test of sorts. This seven-part test had us shooting singles at 7 yards in one second, singles at 10 yards in 1.5 seconds, and so on until we finally were taking shots on steel at 50 yards with slugs. While I have spent some time behind a number of shotguns over the years, the smooth-shooting nature of the V3 Tactical helped me complete the drill without any misses or time issues.

I try to never go overboard about any weapon I test, but the Remington V3 Tactical is one hell of a gun. If you're looking for a shotgun in the home-defense arena, I encourage you to give this 12 gauge a try. You won't be disappointed. For more information, visit [remington.com](http://remington.com).





KelTec first unveiled its KSG bullpup shotgun in 2011. This pump-action design features twin magazine tubes beneath the barrel that each hold seven 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch shells for a total capacity of 14+1 rounds. It also accepts 3-inch shells, which reduces the capacity by one shell in each magazine. The user can manually switch between the two magazine tubes as well.

The KSG really took off after some bugs were worked out in a second-generation model, and special operations units in the United States, Great Britain, France and South Korea took notice. The gun is still quite popular today, but more

recently, KelTec introduced a new version designated the KS7 that's worth a look.

## KS7 SPECS

The biggest difference between these two shotguns is the magazines. To reduce weight and make the KS7 a bit handier, it has a single magazine tube that holds six 3-inch shells or seven 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch shells. This reduces the unloaded weight by a pound—to 5.9 pounds compared to the KSG's 6.9 pounds. Both models still load and eject from the bottom of the receiver. This helps keep debris out of the action and provides for ambidextrous operation.



A close-up photograph of a Keltec KS7 12-gauge shotgun resting inside its black carrying case. The shotgun is black with a textured grip and a folding stock. The case is open, showing the interior lining and a grey strap. The background is dark and out of focus.

# PINT-SIZED

# BULL.

**KELTEC'S COMPACT,  
FAST-HANDLING  
KS7 BRINGS THE  
12-GAUGE THUNDER**

# BOSS

**BY WILLIAM BELL**

JORDAN BELL PHOTOS





The crossbolt safety and pump release lever at the front of the triggerguard are ambidextrous as well.

The lower portions of these guns are fashioned from high-strength polymer while the receivers, barrels and magazine tubes are carbon steel. The KS7 also has a black and non-reflective charcoal gray finish. The pistol grip on the KS7 is similar to the KSG's, with texturing consisting of raised squares for plenty of traction. This same texturing can also be found on the forend/pump handle, which is grooved to keep your support hand in place—something the KSG lacks.

Then there are the sights, which represent another difference. While the KSG has a rail mounted on top of its barrel for the attachment of iron

sights or optics, the KS7 has a carry handle (like a traditional AR) extending from the midsection of the gun to the muzzle. The top of the handle is like a trough and directs the eye toward the front sight, with its green fiber-optic insert, and the target beyond. There's no rear sight beyond a tiny oblong stub that can be aligned with the bottom of the front sight, but a single hole in the handle is provided for a screw-on mount.

My test KS7 came with an orange chamber flag as well as an owner's manual. When I examined the gun closely, I noticed a great detail of attention had been paid to the fit and finish. At the muzzle is a large screw-on ring that, in conjunction with the muzzle plate and magazine tube, keeps the cylinder-bore

barrel secure out front. The muzzle plate also helps secure the forward end of the carry handle. And what looks like twin action bars running back from the forearm to the receiver are actually part of the bolt carrier. The action has a single internal actuation bar.

Two oval slots that act as loaded magazine indicators can be found on the right side of the magazine tube, just above the pistol grip. Peering into the ejection port, you'll note the white plastic magazine follower. Jutting up from the bottom is a small outer catch that retains the shells. It has tiny ledges to make pushing it down easier when removing shells manually from the magazine tube. Two rails on the bottom of the bolt help guide the shells into the magazine. At the very rear, you'll see the internal hammer on its retention pin. Triangular protrusions on both sides, just in front of the safety, protect it from inadvertent activation. There are also M-LOK slots on the carry handle, forend and stock for accessories, and the gun disassembles like an AR using frame pins.



The forend has grooves at the front and rear to prevent your support hand from slipping while firing.

**“TO REDUCE WEIGHT AND MAKE THE KS7 A BIT HANDIER, IT HAS A SINGLE MAGAZINE TUBE THAT HOLDS SIX 3-INCH SHELLS OR SEVEN 2¾-INCH SHELLS.”**





The author tested the KS7 with a mix of buckshot and slug loads to get a measure of the shotgun's accuracy, speed and ease of use. The recoil wasn't punishing, either.



Like the KelTec KSG, the KS7 loads and ejects from the bottom of the receiver so it's easier for right- and left-handed shooters to operate the gun.



## SHOTS FIRED

With my son and photographer Jordan in tow, we headed to an outdoor range to test the KS7 between thunderstorms. It's worth noting that the shotgun stowed easily in a Stealth backpack made by Elite Survival Systems.

Our first task was to pattern the KS7 with a variety of buckshot at 15 yards. For targets, I used some cheap Styrofoam poster boards with black paper on the front and back. The smallest pattern—just 5.24 inches—came with Speer's Lawman 00 buckshot. The largest, at 8.82 inches, came with Remington's Express 00 buckshot. All of the pellets remained in the target area and would have easily stayed within the K-zone of a silhouette target.

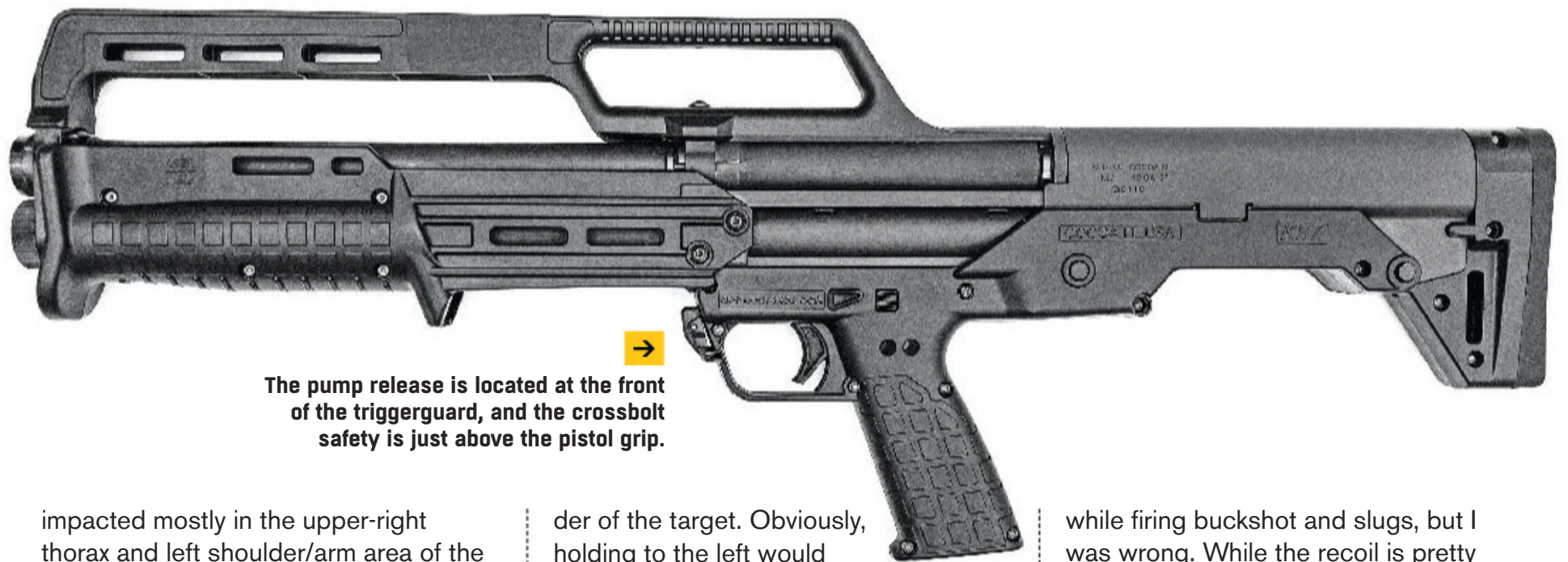
One thing we did note was that, when shooting with both eyes open and superimposing the green fiber-optic front sight on the target center, our shots were below and right of the point of aim. When it came time to test the Lightfield 546-grain Hybrid EXP slugs on Birchwood Casey Dirty Bird silhouette targets, our groups impacted to the right and as high as 4 inches above the point of aim at 25 yards.

For a practical evaluation of the KelTec KS7, we decided on a home-defense-type scenario using an RE Factor Tactical silhouette. We then loaded the magazine tube with two Hornady #4 buckshot shells, two Speer Lawman 00 buckshot shells, two Remington Express 00 buckshot shells and two Lightfield slugs. Upon the signal, I disengaged the safety and fired the first two shots at 5 yards as if I were repelling a home invader. With the shotgun still covering the threat area, I tactically redeployed to 10 yards, fired two more shots, moved back again to 15 yards, fired two more shots, then, at 25 yards, fired the slugs at the head and chest of the target while using a post for a barricade.

The first two shots at close range with the #4 buckshot produced what are known as "rat holes" fairly close to the point of aim in the target's center-mass. If you believe shotgun patterns spread out quickly after the shot leaves the muzzle, think again. You need to aim!

At 10 and 15 yards, the 00 buckshot





The pump release is located at the front of the triggerguard, and the crossbolt safety is just above the pistol grip.

impacted mostly in the upper-right thorax and left shoulder/arm area of the target. At 25 yards, the center-mass slug went low and left, possibly impacting the lower rib cage. The headshot missed completely.

We fired a few more slugs at 25 yards using the base of the neck as the point of aim and found the impacts were high and right, going just over the shoul-

der of the target. Obviously, holding to the left would help center the impacts with this particular KS7.

## BRASS TACKS

My son and I liked the looks, weight and configuration of the KelTec KS7. I originally thought that the bullpup design might be rough on the cheek

while firing buckshot and slugs, but I was wrong. While the recoil is pretty substantial, most of it is directed into your shoulder. The recoil pad worked well, too, but I'd like to see the butt extended down maybe 1 inch more for better recoil distribution. The forend can also be replaced with the kind found on the KSG, which is a nice touch, and the addition of a red-dot sight would help the shotgun get on target a bit better with some adjustments.

It's tough pushing shells into the receiver from the bottom with the gun shouldered. There seems to be a sweet spot the magazine tube follower likes when feeding in shells. It's best to turn the gun over with the ejection port up and slide the shells along the two rails that are perpendicular to the magazine tube. Another problem was double-feeds. This happened several times with all the test shells. I used up a number of shells, just working the pump action and shooting, to try to figure out what was happening. You can't "baby" the pump action, but you also can't go too fast and short-stroke it. Steady, measured fire seems to work best, but try and make that happen when things are fast and furious.

In the end, the KS7 has a great price and a lot of features that I really like. If you decide on one, experiment with different loads to find one that functions perfectly for your needs. Train with this gun and learn its eccentricities. It will be worth it if you want to employ it for personal and home defense or even law enforcement work. For more information, visit [keltecweapons.com](http://keltecweapons.com).

## SPEC BOX

# KELTEC KS7

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| GAUGE:     | 12; 3-inch chamber |
| BARREL:    | 18.5 inches        |
| OA LENGTH: | 26.1 inches        |
| WEIGHT:    | 5.9 pounds (empty) |
| STOCK:     | Synthetic          |
| SIGHTS:    | Fiber-optic front  |
| ACTION:    | Pump               |
| FINISH:    | Black, gray        |
| CAPACITY:  | 6+1                |
| MSRP:      | \$495              |

## PERFORMANCE

| BUCKSHOT                   | PATTERN  |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Hornady #4 Varmint Express | 6.97     |
| Remington 00 Express       | 8.82     |
| Speer 00 Lawman            | 5.24     |
| Winchester 00 Ranger       | 7.64     |
| SLUG                       | ACCURACY |
| Lightfield Hybred EXP      | 4.69     |

Pattern and accuracy in inches at 10 and 25 yards, respectively.







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# BATTLE OPTICS ROYALE







# FIVE OF TODAY'S BEST COMBAT SIGHTS DUKE IT OUT ON THE RANGE

BY DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER

**B**attle optics are fixed low-power sights with reticles that combine CQB aiming points with holdover hash marks for shooting at distances beyond 300 yards. The reticle can be either fully or partially illuminated, and its upper portion usually has a semi-circle that can be used to frame the target's torso when shooting fast at close range, especially in low light. Consequently, battle optics combine the close-up performance of a red-dot sight with the longer-range capabilities of a scope.

Battle optics aren't exactly new. The first commercially successful model

was Trijicon's Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG), which was introduced back in 1987 and has consistently proven itself in battle ever since. More recently, a number of competitive battle optics have become available, establishing a significant presence on the market.

For this article, I decided to focus on optics with fixed 3X or 3.5X magnification. This power level fits well with the effective range of the .223 Remington/5.56mm NATO, and it's easy to use with the Bindon aiming method where you keep both eyes open. My optics included the Crimson Trace CTS-1100, Primary Arms SLx 3 Compact Gen II, Sig Sauer BRAVO3, Sightmark Wolfhound and Trijicon ACOG.

## TEST PARAMETERS

To level the playing field, I used one rifle to test the optics: a 16-inch-barreled Smith & Wesson M&P15 Sport II that was customized by Jamie Zern at the Florida Gun Exchange. For ammunition, I chose Speer's 64-grain .223 Remington Gold Dot JSPs and Federal's 55-grain Trophy Copper rounds. The former is an all-around personal defense and law enforcement load with a bonded bullet that exited the test rifle's muzzle at 2,730 fps with 1,059 foot-pounds of energy (fpe). The Trophy Copper

ammo uses a monolithic-copper hollow point for more rural applications. In testing, it left the muzzle at 2,896 fps with 1,024 fpe.

Both loads are suitable for hunting whitetails and hogs out to about 125 yards and were totally reliable and accurate in the test rifle. I used Gold Dot ammo to test the Crimson Trace and Primary Arms optics, while the Trophy Copper was used for the other three battle optics.

My testing conditions were ideal at the Flagler Gun Club with warm temperatures, light winds and mostly sunny skies. Each optic was evaluated based on cost, construction, image clarity and brightness, ease of use, timed fire at 20 yards, and point scores on full-sized silhouette targets at 100 and 200 yards. By construction, I mean the quality of workmanship. Evaluating the image clarity and brightness involved estimating how well defined and bright the target appeared at 200 yards. Timed fire at 20 yards involved shooting a single shot from low-ready five times at the 10 ring of a full-sized silhouette. The optic with the best average time received five points, and a 0.5-point deduction was taken for every additional tenth of a second. Up to five additional points were added for score.

Testing at 100 yards involved firing five shots from the bench at the 10 rings in the head and chest. Up to 10 points were awarded for the total score. At 200 yards, five shots from the bench were fired at the 10 ring, and up to 10 points were again awarded based on score. Affordability was judged on MSRP, with the least expensive battle optic getting 10 points. A perfect overall score would be 70 points.







## CRIMSON TRACE CTS-1100

The new Crimson Trace CTS-1100 is a 3.5X optic with a 30mm objective lens. Its 8.5mm exit pupil is good and so is its large, fully illuminated reticle that has 10 brightness levels. In bright daylight, the illumination is minimal, which is an advantage since the reticle does not bloom at all in daylight. All of the controls are conveniently located, and the windage and elevation can be adjusted in 0.5-MOA increments. The BDC reticle

has MOA hash marks, which is a strong point because this battle optic can be used with any cartridge. The reticle also has a 36-MOA CQB ring for fast targeting up close, and the image is bright and crisp with good color rendition.

Overall, this sight's quality was excellent, with no tool marks or flaws in its black anodized finish. It's also one of the most ruggedly built battle optics tested, as it's resistant to shock, dust, impact and water.



## SIG SAUER BRAVO3

The BRAVO3 is a 3X sight with a 24mm objective lens and a reasonable 8mm exit pupil. The BDC reticle has an illuminated center dot and horseshoe for fast target acquisition day or night. However, the windage and elevation hash marks are not illuminated, which could be a problem for longer shots at night. Models with 300 Blackout and 5.56mm/7.62mm reticles are available.

The BRAVO3 is a wide-view optic, which is a plus for tactical shooting in close quarters. The manufacturing quality was excellent, with no tool marks or other flaws. The dials offer 0.5-MOA adjustments. Also, the low-dispersion glass and

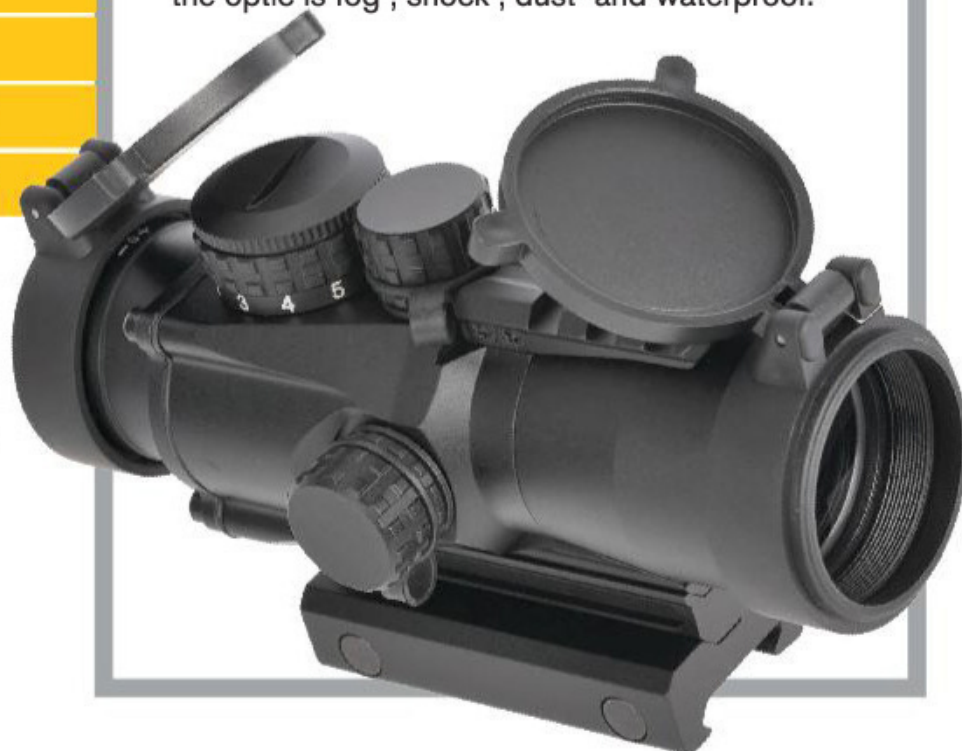
**“ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT, THESE BATTLE OPTICS EXTEND THE CAPABILITIES OF MOST SHOOTERS FROM CLOSE RANGE OUT TO SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS IN DAYLIGHT...”**

aspherical lens combination reduces distortion and promotes edge-to-edge clarity, which is a definite plus. The magnesium housing keeps the sight's weight down to 15.8 ounces, and three Picatinny rails are included for accessories—another plus. The BRAVO3 is fog-, shock- and waterproof to 13 feet.

## PRIMARY ARMS SLX 3 COMPACT GEN II

The SLx 3 Compact Gen II is a 3X prism sight with multi-coated lenses, a large 32mm objective and a 10.2mm exit pupil that provides extremely good light transmission. In fact, it's one of the brightest and clearest of the test optics. It has a fully illuminated ACSS CQB-M2 reticle with holdover marks out to 600 yards, 5-mph windage offsets and 8.6-mph moving target leads, which the manual states is the average speed of a moving target.

I used the model with the 5.56mm reticle, but a 7.62x39mm/300 Blackout option is also available. The windage and elevation can also be adjusted in 0.25-MOA increments, making the SLx 3 Compact Gen II the most precise optic tested. An accessory rail is included on top, and the quality of manufacture was excellent. Finally, the optic is fog-, shock-, dust- and waterproof.



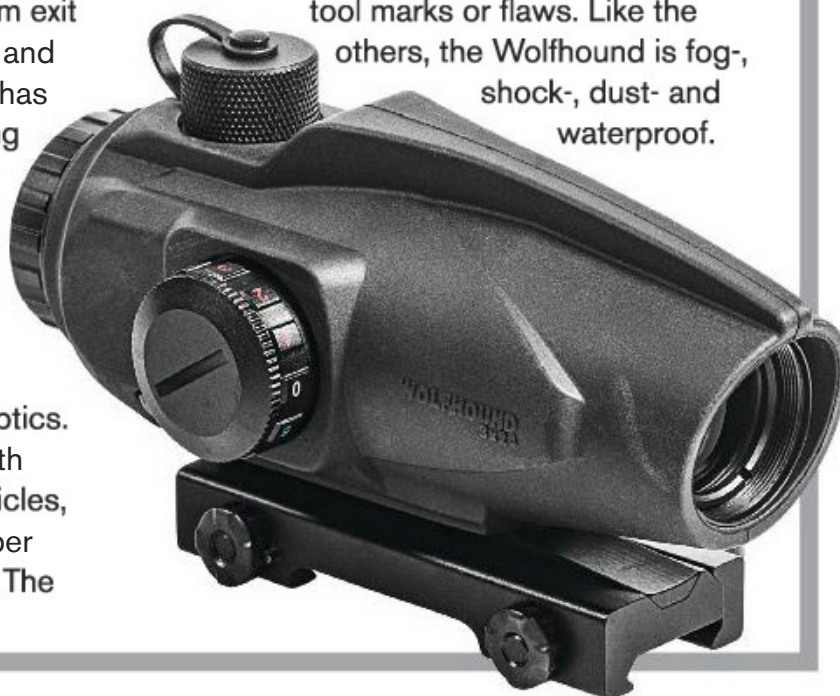


## SIGHTMARK WOLFHOUND

While Sightmark offers several versions of the Wolfhound, I got my hands on a 3x24mm model for this test. It has multi-coated lenses and a reasonable 8mm exit pupil. The image is also clear, sharp and true to color. The small BDC reticle has an illuminated horseshoe surrounding two center dots, but the elevation hash marks are not illuminated. In addition, it only has five brightness settings. The reticle's illumination also tends to bloom, making 200-yard shots somewhat more difficult than with some of the other battle optics.

Separate models are available with .223/5.56mm and 300 Blackout reticles, making this sight limited in the number of calibers for which it can be used. The

Wolfhound's windage and elevation dials offer 0.5-MOA adjustments per click. And once again, I gave the sight high marks for its quality construction, as there were no tool marks or flaws. Like the others, the Wolfhound is fog-, shock-, dust- and waterproof.



## TRIJICON ACOG

For this article, Trijicon sent me the TA33-C-400130 version of the ACOG. This is a 3X sight with a 30mm objective lens and a large 10mm exit pupil that provides excellent light transmission. In fact, this is one of the brightest and clearest optics tested due to its high-quality glass and coatings.

This optic is also unique because the reticle has fiber-optic/tritium illumination so no batteries are required. However, the reticle itself is rather small and blooms somewhat. In addition, the holdover markings are not illuminated. The reticle on my test optic was calibrated for 62-grain 5.56mm NATO rounds, but reticles are also available for

7.62x39mm, 300 Blackout and 7.62mm NATO rounds. Finally, the original ACOG set the standard for durability, and this model will resist the elements as well or better than the competition.



## BATTLE OPTICS ➡

|                         | CRIMSON TRACE<br>CTS-1100 | PRIMARY ARMS SLX 3<br>COMPACT GEN II | SIG SAUER<br>BRAVO3 | SIGHTMARK<br>WOLFHOUND | TRIJICON<br>ACOG |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| COST                    | 8                         | 10                                   | 8.5                 | 9                      | 6                |
| CONSTRUCTION            | 10                        | 9                                    | 9                   | 9                      | 9                |
| IMAGE CLARITY           | 9                         | 10                                   | 9                   | 9                      | 10               |
| EASE OF USE             | 9                         | 9                                    | 9                   | 9                      | 10               |
| TIMED FIRE (20 Yards)   | 8                         | 8                                    | 10                  | 7.5                    | 9                |
| POINT SCORE (100 Yards) | 9                         | 8                                    | 7.5                 | 8                      | 9                |
| POINT SCORE (200 Yards) | 8                         | 7                                    | 4.8                 | 4.4                    | 7                |
| TOTAL                   | 61                        | 61                                   | 57.8                | 55.9                   | 60               |

NOTE: 10 is a perfect score for each category while 70 is a perfect total score.

# THE VERDICT

**AT THE END OF THE DAY,** the Crimson Trace CTS-1100 and Primary Arms SLx 3 Compact Gen II both tied for first place. The Trijicon ACOG came in third, and the Sig Sauer and Sightmark optics came in fourth and fifth, respectively. That said, the difference between the first and last positions was only 5.1 points, so you really can't go wrong with any of these battle optics. The major differences between them were their prices and scores at 200 yards. Consequently, which model you choose depends upon your budget and whether you need to shoot beyond 100 yards at night.

Any way you look at it, these five battle optics extend the capabilities of most shooters from close range out to several hundred yards in daylight, and some are also long-range capable at night as well. Either way, they are bound to play an important role when it comes self-defense, military and law enforcement operations, and medium-range hunting. 🎯

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**CRIMSON TRACE**  
crimsontrace.com

**PRIMARY ARMS**  
primaryarms.com

**SIG SAUER**  
sigsauer.com

**SIGHTMARK**  
sightmark.com

**TRIJICON**  
trijicon.com





Even with a machine gun like the author's Mk 48 shown here, it's important to make sure your infrared illuminator is zeroed properly to prevent misses at a distance.

# EASY INFRARED LASER ZEROING

TWO BATTLE-TESTED METHODS TO HELP YOU MAKE EVERY SHOT COUNT AT NIGHT

[ BY KYLE LYNCH ]



Zeroing your infrared (IR) laser isn't quite as simple as zeroing the red

dot or backup iron sights on your carbine. Since IR light isn't visible without the use of an image-intensifying night-observation device (NOD), and NODs aren't usable in full daylight, we have to zero IR lasers with NODs in darkness. That's simply not possible on some shooting ranges.

Several IR illuminators/aiming devices, such as the PEQ-15 and DBAL-A3, have a co-aligned visible laser in the same housing as the IR laser. This helps somewhat, as an approximate zero at close to moderate ranges can be established during daylight

hours. Nonetheless, we should always obtain a proper zero with the actual IR aiming laser. That means hitting a range at night with NODs.

Here we'll examine the two most common techniques for zeroing your IR laser and explore the consequences of each technique at longer distances. But first, it's important to know your laser device's offset from your rifle's bore, no matter which unit you use or where you mount it. Popular devices like the PEQ-15, DBAL-A2 and DBAL-A3 will position the IR laser to the right and above the bore (as viewed from the shooter's position), so you need to take that into account when it comes to zeroing the laser.





Never assume that your visible and IR lasers are perfectly aligned. On this target, the blue circles show that the DBAL-A3's IR laser is well below the visible laser's green circles.

at 25 to 100 yards, engaging up-close targets will result in bullet strikes that are below your point of aim. The worst case of close-range divergence will be roughly equal to the height of your optic above your bore, so in most cases, it's an easy thing to overcome by simply aiming a couple inches above your desired point of impact.

I began the field work for this article by painstakingly zeroing an Aimpoint CompM3 mounted on my test carbine at 50 meters. The Aimpoint's dot can be used as a quick reference point when making coarse adjustments while setting up a new laser. Simply place the red dot of your day sight on an object at your zero distance, then dial in the laser until it lands on the same object. This is a crude but acceptable way to get close with your laser's initial zero.

Using the convergent-zero method puts your laser in vertical and horizontal alignment with your projectile at one distance, but what does that mean, in practical terms, when engaging targets beyond your zero distance? Establishing your initial zero at 25 meters is recommended because it allows you to see the average center of your group with the least aiming error. Finding a 25-meter range is also easier than finding a 200- or 300-meter range in most places.

To demonstrate the real-world application of this, I used the convergent-zero

## CONVERGENT ZERO

We almost universally zero our day optics and iron sights with the "convergent zero" method. With this technique, we select a distance at which our optic (or irons) will be aligned perfectly with the path of each bullet we fire. If we engage a target that's closer or farther than that zero distance, our point of aim won't match the point of impact. With most sights and optics, there is only one axis of divergence. This is because the sights are directly above the bore. Your point of impact will be above or below your point of aim depending on the distance to the target, but it will be

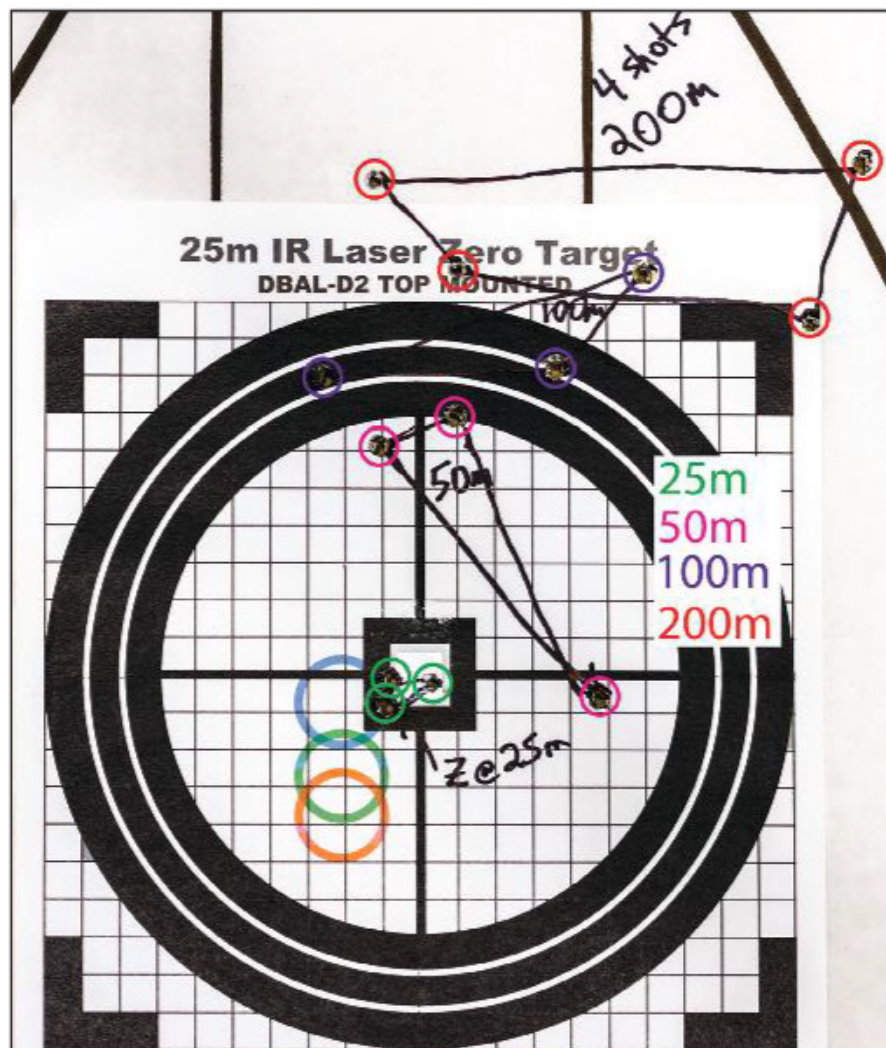
aligned laterally unless wind or other factors affect the bullet from one side or the other. If you've been through just about any intro-level

carbine course, the concept of the "sight offset" was probably introduced early in the first range day. With most carbine optics zeroed





In this graphic, the green line represents the points of impact using a convergent zero. The red line uses a constant offset zero.



These impacts show the effects of using a 25-meter convergent zero at 25, 50, 100 and 200 meters. Even at these moderate distances the lateral spreads are obvious.

### CONSTANT OFFSET ZERO

With a constant offset zero (aka parallel zero), the point of aim and point of impact never converge. Based on the mechanical offset in both vertical and lateral measurements, the constant offset zero allows your point of aim to be consistent throughout your effective range. For example, if your constant offset zero is based on the placement of your laser 1 inch left of your bore, then

your point of impact will be approximately 1 inch right of your point of aim at all distances. This means that the only adjustments you'll need to make are for elevation on longer shots. Excluding wind drift, your point of impact will be 1 inch right at 25 yards, 1 inch right at 50 yards, 1 inch right at 100 yards and 1 inch right at 400 yards.

Once again, to demonstrate this, I used the constant-offset method to precisely zero a Steiner DBAL-A3 mounted on the top rail of an AR-15 handguard with a Telluric Group IR Laser Zero Target at 25 meters. The zero group placed in the green circle at 25 meters corresponds to my preferred 50/200-meter zero distance, so I went through

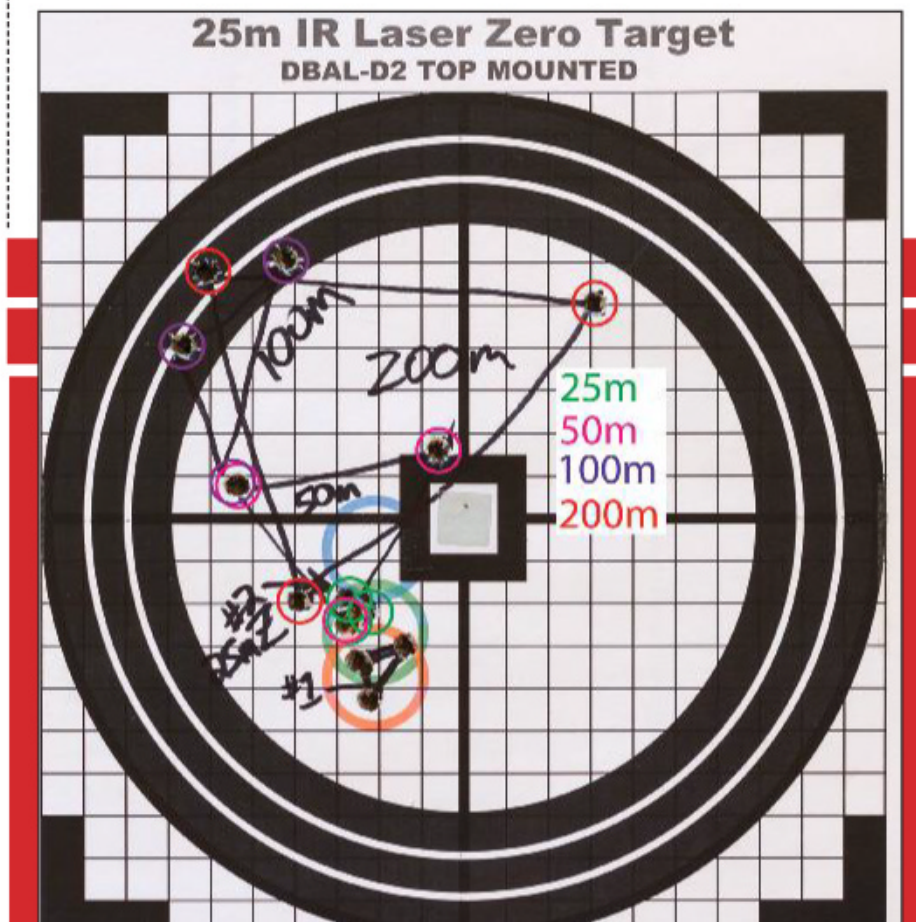
method to line up a Steiner DBAL-A3 mounted on the top rail of an AR-15 at 25 meters. Beyond 25 meters, the impacts move farther up and to the right as the distance increases to 200 meters. Since the IR illuminators on Class 1 lasers are mostly worthless beyond 175 yards, I did not continue the test at longer distances. While gravity will eventually begin to pull the bullet back down closer to your point of aim on the vertical plane (a 25-meter zero aligns with a 300-meter zero), the lateral shift will continue to take the bullet away from your point of aim laterally as distance increases.

The takeaway? When you

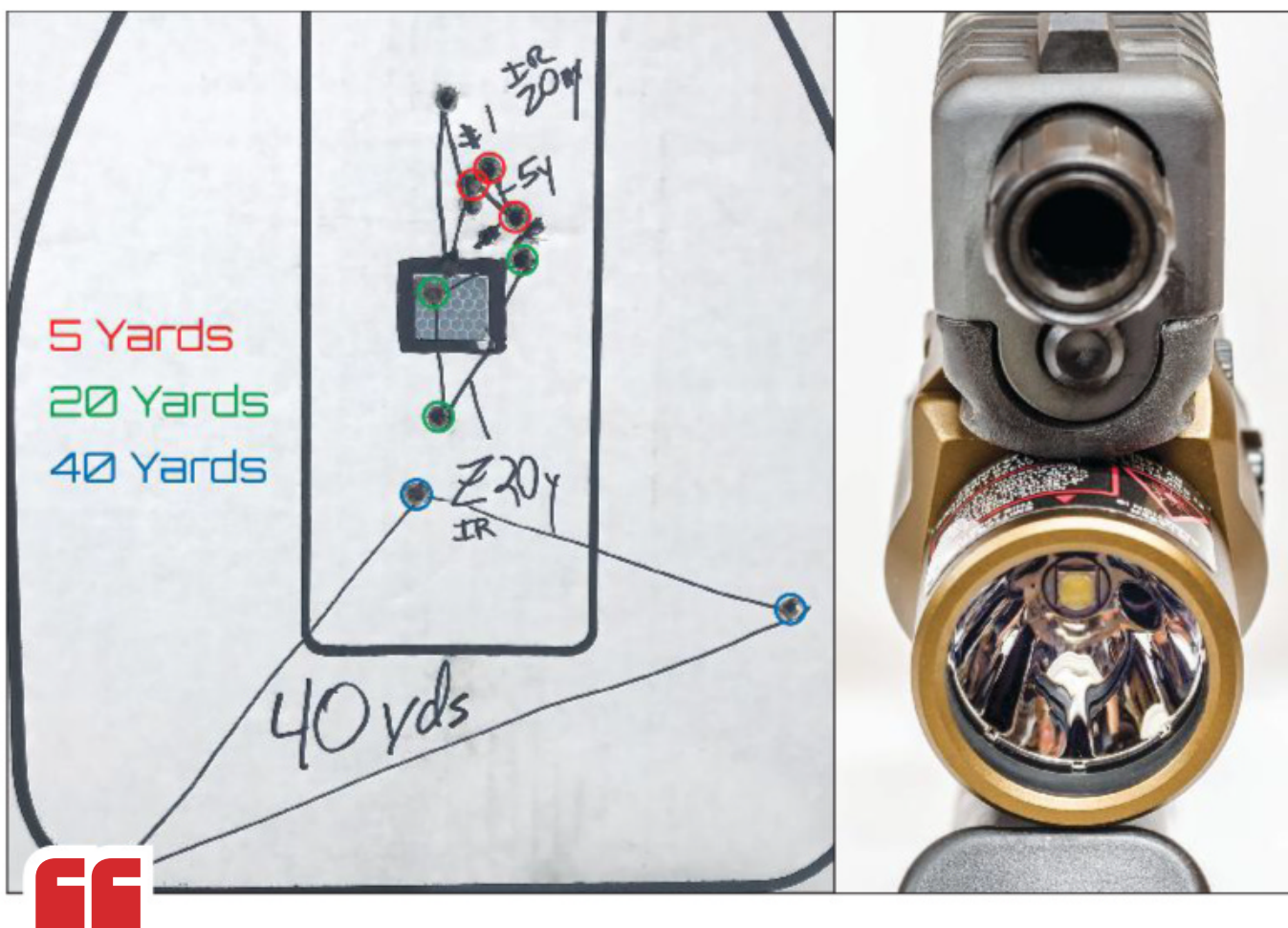
use a convergent zero, the difference between your point of aim and the path of your bullet increases as the distance to your target exceeds your zero range. Starting with a converging point of aim and point of impact at 25 meters, your impacts will be 5 inches high and a little 3 inches to the right by 200 meters. Is that good enough? That's up to you. Carry this shift out to 400 meters or more and you can see the likelihood for aiming error.



This target shows the effects of using a constant offset zero at 25, 50, 100 and 200 meters. The groups are much tighter than with a convergent zero (above).







Even with a pistol-mounted device like the TLR-VIR II, you still need to understand your zero and its effects downrange in order to make precise shots when needed.

## ...IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR LASER DEVICE'S OFFSET FROM YOUR RIFLE'S BORE, NO MATTER WHICH UNIT YOU USE OR WHERE YOU MOUNT IT."

several rounds of adjustments before verifying my final zero with the tight group you see within the green circle in the accompanying image. Next, I fired groups on the same target at 50, 100 and 200 meters. As you can see, all of the groups are in horizontal alignment with the zero group that was established within the green circle at 25 meters. The center of the 50-meter group is exactly aligned with the center aiming square. The centers of the 100- and 200-meter groups are just above the center aiming square by about 2 inches. Consider the vital zone of a tactical target overlaid with all these groups, and you can see that successful engagement of that target from 25 meters to beyond 200 is as simple as

placing the laser where you want the bullet to land. Each shot will be within about 3 inches of your point of aim.

By the way, these groups are from a 10.5-inch barrel shooting 55-grain military-surplus ammo. An accurate rifle with good ammo would obviously offer tighter groups. Compare this with the effects of a convergent zero, where vertical and horizontal divergence increases as the distance to the target exceeds your zero range, and it's easy to understand the advantages of a constant offset zero.

### WHAT ABOUT PISTOLS?

The introduction of the Streamlight TLR-VIR II is a huge step forward for

those who want to integrate their pistols into nighttime operations. This single unit combines a white light, an IR light and an IR laser into one compact housing. I recently used a Glock 17 with a TLR-VIR II during Telluric's Night Vision Operator course and found it to be well executed and reliable. The mode switch is easy to use and positive. Streamlight also managed to fit the TLR-VIR II into a form factor that works with most existing holsters based on the TLR-1.

Just like carbine lasers, there is a vertical offset to be considered with the IR laser on the TLR-VIR II. Fortunately, there is very little horizontal offset to be dealt with, and the 2-inch vertical offset is manageable over the distances where we commonly

use pistols. To determine the effects of a convergent zero with the TLR-VIR II, I zeroed the G17 at 20 yards. Next I fired a group at 5 yards. Not surprisingly, the impact was above the 20-yard group by 2.25 inches. That's something we need to know and account for on precise shots.

At 40 yards, the average point of impact was 6 inches low. Since the laser is zeroed at 20 yards, the beam is above the path of the bullet at 40 yards, causing shots to impact significantly low. Now, 40-yard pistol shots aren't that common, but like a slide-mounted red dot, a frame-mounted IR laser is capable of enabling precise shots well beyond that range if you can manage the trigger.

After seeing this, I think I'd still recommend a constant offset zero with the TLR-VIR II. This will put impacts consistently around 2 inches high at all realistic pistol ranges. As a note, I fired the 40-yard group with my support hand braced against my truck's doorframe to approximate what we'd see in a fight near a vehicle. I also used Magtech's excellent 147-grain flat-point ammo. This is a great subsonic training and practice load that mirrors the feeding performance and recoil of the 147-grain Federal HST carry ammo I prefer. With 20-yard groups averaging 2.5 inches from a supported standing position, it's plenty accurate. 🎯

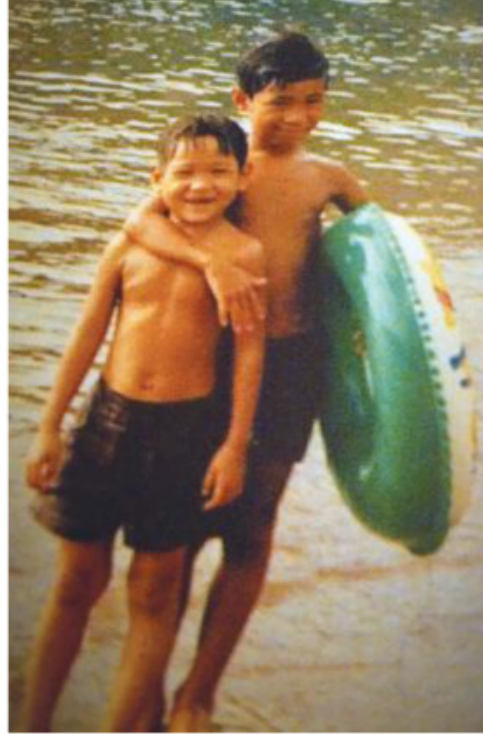


# Retired Master Sergeant Tu Lam details his life and dedication after the Green Berets



After fleeing Vietnam, Tu Lam was adopted by a Green Beret before eventually growing up to become one himself.



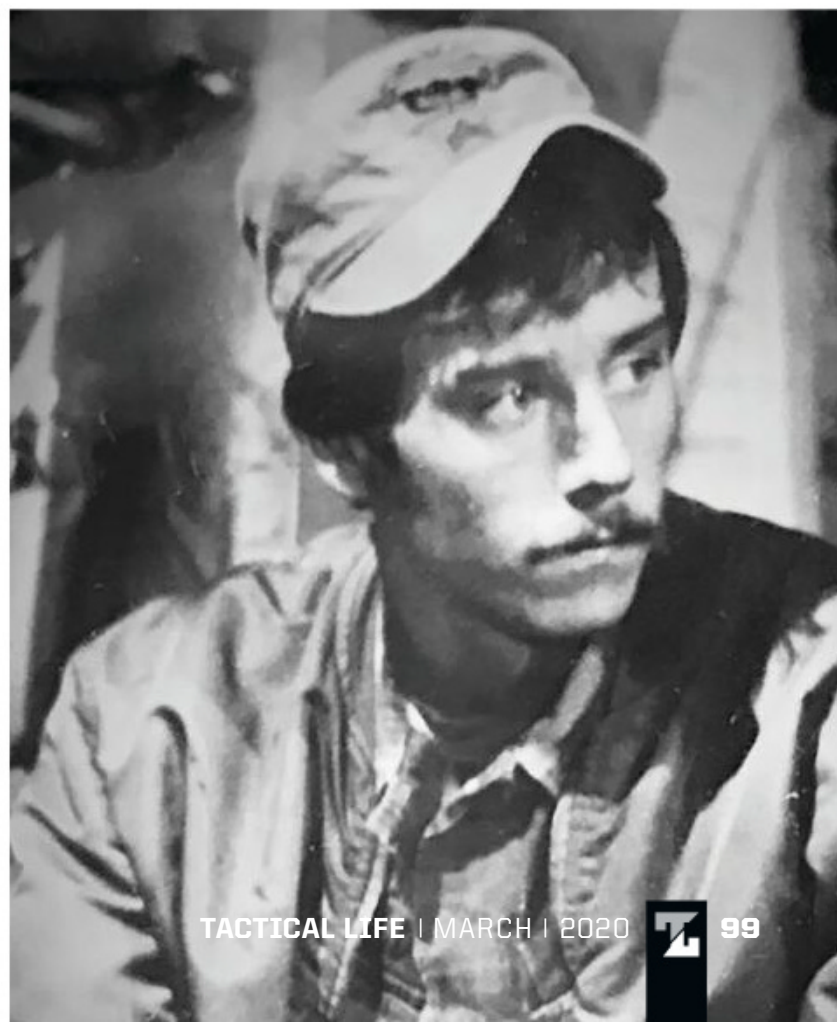
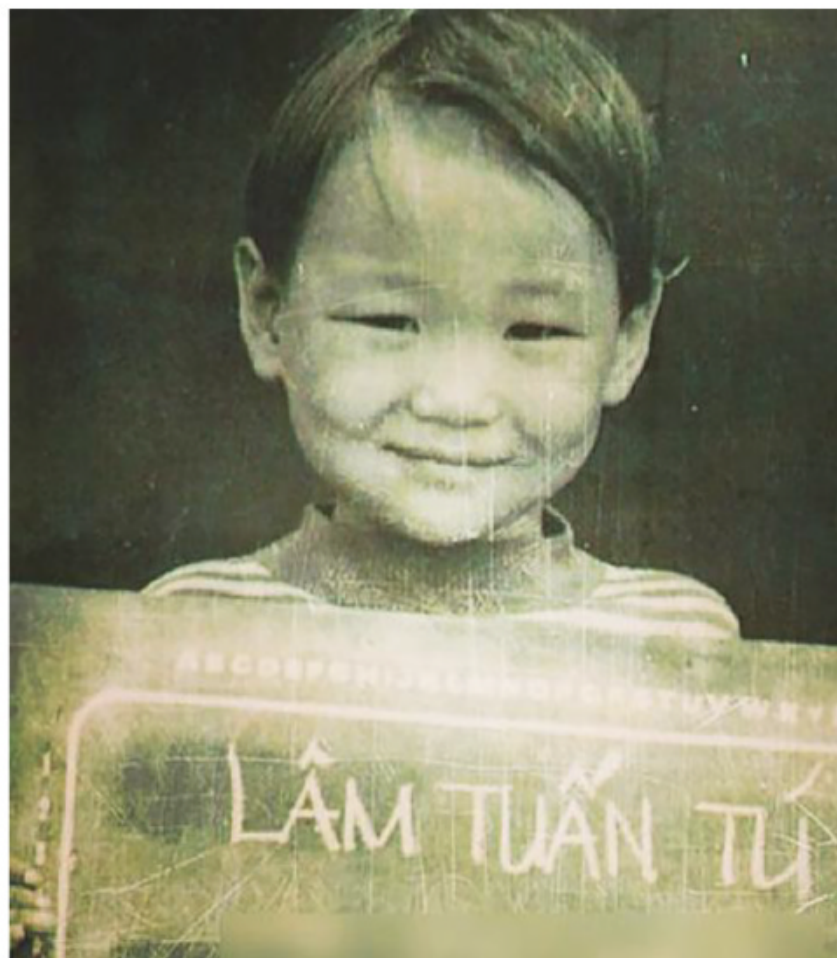


# THE RONIN WAY

BY  
JASON  
BRIGHT

**A** As a screenwriter, the more I listened to Tu Lam talk about his life story, the more I envisioned the cinematic scenes playing out in my head: A young child refugee narrowly escapes from a war-torn country after witnessing what evil looks like firsthand, only to grow up and serve in some of America's most elite fighting units to help protect and fight for those who can't. But this all really happened. It isn't a film.

At just 2 years old, Lam left Vietnam and was adopted by a Green Beret before growing up to become one himself. He's a Christian who lives his life by the bushido code. He runs his own business and has co-hosted TV shows like *Forged in Fire*. Yet, as I learned during our interview, given his many accomplishments, he's humble, kind and passionate about helping others.







←  
Serving his country and those in need has always been a priority for Lam, who now trains others in self-defense.

#### Tell us about Saigon in 1974.

I was born out of war. America's involvement in the Vietnam War lasted from 1965 to 1970. I was born in Saigon on December 17, 1974, as the South Vietnamese government collapsed after the American troop withdrawal. This event was devastating. As a child, my family was pulled out onto the streets. My uncles that served alongside the American military were gunned down, and my other uncles were imprisoned in "re-education" camps.

#### How did you and your family get out?

When I was 2 years old, I escaped on a wooden boat crammed with hundreds of other refugees. During the escape, thousands of refugees were murdered, robbed and raped by men from surrounding countries. These pirates were the first obstacle during our escape. We navigated past the pirates and into Indonesia, where their coast guard stopped us at gunpoint. They told us we couldn't come into their country. They anchored us down and

pulled us back into the ocean on lines, then shot our motor and cut the lines, leaving us out in the middle of the water to die.

Our boat drifted farther and farther into the ocean. My mother told me that people were stealing from each other, fighting and eventually dying due to the terrible



**"AS A FORMER GREEN BERET, I HAVE WORKED IN 27 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."**





conditions. We then got caught up in a storm that took us out into the middle of Russian waters. By the grace of God, a Russian supply boat picked us up as it was crossing the Pacific Ocean into Singapore. They dropped us off at a refugee camp in Indonesia, where we had to live off the land for close to a year. These refugee camps weren't safe, and people were often murdered for supplies.

### **It's a long journey from a refugee camp to Green Beret. How did that happen?**

My mother eventually remarried after we made it to the United States. My stepfather and my uncle (who sponsored our paperwork to the U.S.) were both Green Berets. I was raised at a very young age understanding the complexities of the Special Forces mission. Green Berets were masters at unconventional warfare. Their mission required working covertly in areas of war and conflict around the world. I realized at a young age that joining the Green Berets was my ticket to help fight and free the oppressed. I realized I could help others like my family suffering from conflicts and wars.

### **What can you share about your missions as a Green Beret?**

At 21 years old, I made it to the Special Forces A-Teams. The A-Teams are highly trained soldiers specializing in unconventional warfare tactics. At first, I was assigned to a Combat Search and



→ With over 20 years of U.S. Special Forces experience, Tu Lam has more than a little knowledge to share with those who take his training courses.

Rescue (CSAR) team. We were trained on the recovery of downed pilots in the Southeast Asia region.

Each A-Team is assigned to a Special Forces Group. Each group specializes in an area of the world. As a young Green Beret assigned to 1st Special Forces Group, I was deployed throughout Asia for eight to 10 months annually. I later transferred to a more specialized mission during my time on the teams. I eventually went to the Special Forces Counter Terrorist company for direct-action missions along with cross-training and working alongside other commando forces from around the world. As I matured in experience, so

did the complexities of my security clearance, training and covert missions.

### **There's more to being a Green Beret than combat missions alone. How do you help stop the tide of future generations of fighters?**

The Green Berets were designed to deploy and execute nine primary missions, including unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, counter-insurgency, special reconnaissance, counter-terrorism, information gathering, weapon of mass destruction recovery and security assistance throughout seven geographically focused areas of operations.





As a former Green Beret, I have worked in 27 different countries throughout the world. What I find is that we can drop bombs and conduct direct-action operations against our enemies, but this won't stop them. It's hard to kill off an ideology, a belief or religion. The majority of the high-threat areas of the world are poorly educated with a high poverty rate and oppressed culture ruled by some warlord or dictator. In these areas, there's no room for growth. The local kids are usually forcefully recruited by rebels or terrorist networks at a very young age. Building schools and providing aid to these locations is usually met with more attacks on civilians to take the aid that was given to the needy. We can conduct direct-action raids on these criminals or terrorists, but once we leave, then what?

What I found that works is hunting the leaders of these terrorist networks to break down the support within their infrastructure. This means developing an intelligence network along with a commando force in their country. We need to give the next generation a way out by killing off the network that oppresses their people. Special operations forces must work with the leadership of conflict countries to suppress foreign fighters (terrorists) in their country before the network can develop an offensive capability to attack the United States and our allies. We can never stabilize an area with only combat operations. In order to



**"I FEEL THAT GOOD PEOPLE  
HAVE A RIGHT TO PROTECT  
THEMSELVES FROM THE EVILS  
OF THIS WORLD."**





safeguard our country, we must employ every means possible.

**You eventually joined Delta Force. Can you say anything about your role there?**

The Unit is a highly classified military assignment. The operations and capabilities of The Unit are conducted at the top-secret level.

**Everyone knows about Benghazi. Can you share what some of your mission was in Libya around that time?**

After the attacks on the CIA Annex, Special Operations Command Africa stood up a Crisis Response Force for the continent. This force, along with operational support, was a direct-action option for U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in Africa.

**As a veteran, what are your thoughts on PTSD?**

I feel that any person who has fought wars will deal with some form of stress. I've lost a few of my teammates, which has had a negative impact on me. I will say that I really didn't think too much on things until after my time in war. I feel that if we let our minds linger in the past, then that is where they will always be. I wanted to move past the energy of war, so I had to change the way I look and feel about things. During this process, I've retrained my mind by practicing the ways of *Zazen* (mindfulness). This prac-

tice of controlling my mind allowed me to move past the energy of war.

**And now you've rededicated your life to Christianity.**

I have always been a warrior of God. God has given me life and saved my family from the hardships of the Vietnam War. God has given me a Green Beret as a stepfather, and in time I became one myself. God has taught me strength through the struggles I've faced as a child, the strength I needed to endure as I went back into war to help free those oppressed. During the war, I fought for my God, and I've never doubted my faith. After the war, I've bathed myself in holy water to symbolically wash my body from the evils I have seen during my time in war.

**You've operated in some of the worst places around the world, but how do you feel about America being so polarized right now?**

I feel that the media has a lot to do with how they decide to spin a thought to the public. I also feel that a person's values and upbringing will help define their opinions and loyalties. As a former soldier, I have lived and worked in foreign countries. Many of these Third World places were extremely unstable and unsafe. In my experience, when a country has internal conflicts, then the country can never grow, nor can it truly defend itself.

**Tell us about your company, Ronin Tactics.**

Ronin is a journey for me. It's a journey of education in others and in myself. Team Ronin travels around the United States to teach others the ways to self-protection. I teach my students the experience and the advanced skills I've acquired throughout my time with the Special Forces. The majority of our students are police officers and military, but we do make time to also teach civilians. I feel that good people have a right to protect themselves from the evils of this world. As a Green Beret, I have seen the aftermath of people not being able to defend themselves. During my time in the service, I've helped stop acts of modern-day genocide. As a child born in war, I understand the hopelessness that comes with being untrained.

**How can we get involved?**

Students can enroll in our training at [ronintactics.com](http://ronintactics.com). Along with providing training, I also design, engineer and sell tactical gear to our customers on our web page. The development of our tactical gear comes from my experience during my time with the Special Forces (more than 20 years). Currently, many special operations units from around the world are using our gear operationally, and it feels great knowing that I am helping our warriors. 🇺🇸





# IOS

# UPGRADE

## NIGHTHAWK HAS MADE IT EASY TO ADD A REFLEX SIGHT TO YOUR FAVORITE 1911

BY PAUL SCARLATA



Unless you've sworn off reading gun magazines entirely, you might have noticed that more and more handgun manufacturers are offering pistols that allow you to install miniature reflex sights. Some even come with adapter plates for mounting a number of different red-dot sights.

At one time, such reflex sights were restricted to pistols designed for competitive shooting. They were large, bulky units that required the host pistol to be modified for the mount needed for installation. The thinking at the time was

that red dots were too large for use on service and defensive pistols, and many feared that the sight's battery might run out at a truly inconvenient moment. The latter reason was uppermost in the minds of law enforcement and defensive shooters since most electronic sights, and their positioning and mounts, interfered with the use of the pistol's iron sights.

Thankfully, technology came to the rescue, and over the years, reflex sights have become more rugged and, perhaps more importantly, smaller and lighter. Also, their on/off switches are commonly activated

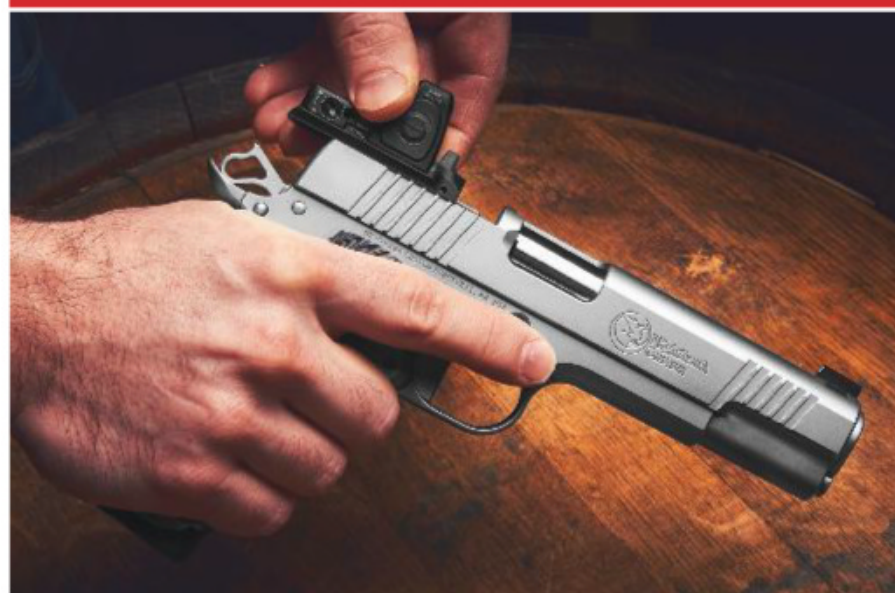
by movement, so when the pistol is drawn and presented, the red dot is already visible. In addition, battery technology has advanced to the point where battery life is no longer measured in hours but months.

### SEEING RED

There are many advantages to using a reflex sight. One is faster targeting. Once a target is acquired, it's easy to quickly center the reticle on the target and pull the trigger. There's no need to align the sights, wasting valuable time. In addition, you can keep both eyes open, providing more situational awareness, and such sights typically provide more accuracy when you're aiming at moving targets.

Another advantage is the unrestricted eye relief offered by red dots, which allows for faster targeting from any position you might find yourself in. Finally, red-dot sights work well at night. While the crosshairs of standard optics become





invisible in the dark, the red dot is visible even in the darkest environments.

While all shooters can benefit from the advantages I've mentioned, miniature reflex sights are especially useful for those shooters who, because of poor eyesight, handicap or age, have trouble using standard iron sights.

One of the newest players in this realm in Nighthawk Custom of Berryville, Arkansas, which is now offering a customization package that makes it easy to

mount a reflex sight on your 1911's slide. To see how it worked firsthand, the company sent me one of its Shadow Hawk Government pistols with the Interchangeable Optic System (IOS) upgrade.

#### EASY ON, EASY OFF

The heart of the IOS is a removable plate at the rear of the slide that allows you to install a reflex sight. Once you remove the cover plate—seamlessly blended into the slide with its own rear serrations and a Heinie Ledge rear sight—you'll find a tapered rib that allows you to add an optic mounted on a special plate. Nighthawk currently offers three different adapter plates for the Trijicon RMR, Viper Vortex and Shield RMR, and each one features a tall, fixed rear sight just ahead of the optic (or behind it for the Shield) that will co-witness with the front sight.

You simply slide the optic, on its adapter plate, onto the dovetail rib and



**THIS INNOVATION IS QUITE REMARKABLE. IN THE PAST, IF YOU WANTED TO MOUNT A REFLEX SIGHT ON YOUR PISTOL, YOU HAD TO MAKE PERMANENT MODIFICATIONS TO YOUR SLIDE...**



**At the range, the author carried the Shadow Hawk Government in a Blade-Tech Kydex rig with an offset attachment for faster draws.**



## SPEC BOX

# NIGHTHAWK SHADOW HAWK GOVERNMENT

|            |                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 9mm                              |
| BARREL:    | 5 inches                         |
| OA LENGTH: | 8.58 inches                      |
| WEIGHT:    | 41.3 ounces (empty)              |
| GRIPS:     | G10                              |
| SIGHTS:    | Tritium front, Heinie Ledge rear |
| ACTION:    | SA                               |
| FINISH:    | Stainless                        |
| CAPACITY:  | 10+1                             |
| MSRP:      | \$4,049 (as tested)              |



secure it with a cross pin inserted on the left side and a setscrew on top. To remove the plate, simply reverse these steps. The rib's tapered design ensures the optic remains zeroed after taking it off and reinstalling it. The IOS also keeps the front and rear fixed sights, which can be seen in the lower third of the optic, in perfect alignment.

This innovation is quite remarkable. In the past, if you wanted to mount a reflex sight on your pistol, you had to make permanent modifications to your slide and mount an adapter plate for a specific optic. This would limit you to the optic you chose and completely remove your rear sight cut. Which is fine if you only want to use that same optic forever. The IOS does away with that, allowing you to use one of three different reflex sights and, if desired, remove it quickly and install a fixed rear sight. The IOS can be added to most existing Nighthawk 1911s with minimal investment—just \$350.

As I mentioned, the good folks at Nighthawk provided me with a Shadow

Hawk Government pistol with the IOS to see what I thought of this setup. I also received an adapter plate so I could install a Trijicon RMR Type 2.

I've tested and owned a number of Nighthawk pistols over the years, and the all-stainless Shadow Hawk Government lived up to my expectations. The quality of materials, fit, finish and ergonomics were impeccable, the frame checkering and G10 grip panels provided a firm purchase, and the flat-faced trigger broke like the proverbial glass rod with exactly 3.5 pounds of pressure, according to my trigger pull scale.

## DRILLING ZOMBIES

My wife, Becky, and I took advantage of a sunny afternoon to run the Nighthawk through its paces. At the range, I removed the cover plate and installed the Trijicon RMR on its adapter plate. Despite being the fumble-fingered type, switching the top plates was extremely simple, taking just over a minute. Or, as



Nighthawk offers a version of the Shadow Hawk Government with a black nitride finish, and you can order the IOS upgrade for other models in the company's lineup (far left).



Becky observed, "As long as you don't drop that little cross pin!"


After verifying the Trijicon RMR's zero, we ran some off-hand drills. Since I believe it is an excellent way to judge a pistol's capabilities, I decided to drop some 6-inch steel plates on a rack 10 yards away. It had been quite a while since I last fired a pistol with a red-dot sight installed, so it took some time to get used to it again. But, once I had the measure of it, I was soon averaging six *clangs* for six *bangs*. My run times show that I quickly got the hang of the pistol and optic: 6.54, 6.09, 5.68, 5.43, 4.95 and 5.08 seconds, respectively.

We then ran the Shadow Hawk through a drill that Becky had thought up a few months ago, inspired by the TV series *The Walking Dead*. Here, three IPSC-style targets set up at 10 yards would serve as our "zombies." At the signal, I drew the pistol and double-tapped each of the undead in the center-mass. Of course, realizing that zombies can only be killed with headshots, I then put a round in each ghoul's cranium. After performing a combat reload, I reengaged the three targets in the same manner.

I ran this drill four times and, as can be seen in the photo at the right, all of my rounds (except three) impacted inside the targets' A-zones and heads. That's not bad considering it was my first time using a reflex-sight-equipped handgun in quite a while.

## TWO AWESOME OPTIONS

When we were finished, I removed the Trijicon RMR plate, reinstalled the cover plate and ran a few more drills on steel targets. I then switched them again and am pleased to report that the red dot was still perfectly zeroed.

In the end, I found Nighthawk's Interchangeable Optic System easy to use and install, and quite rugged. If you want to use iron sights and a reflex sight, the IOS gives you the best of both worlds in one pistol. And you won't have to worry about your wife asking, "Did you buy another pistol?" For more information, visit [nighthawkcustom.com](http://nighthawkcustom.com). 

Becky Scarlata Photos

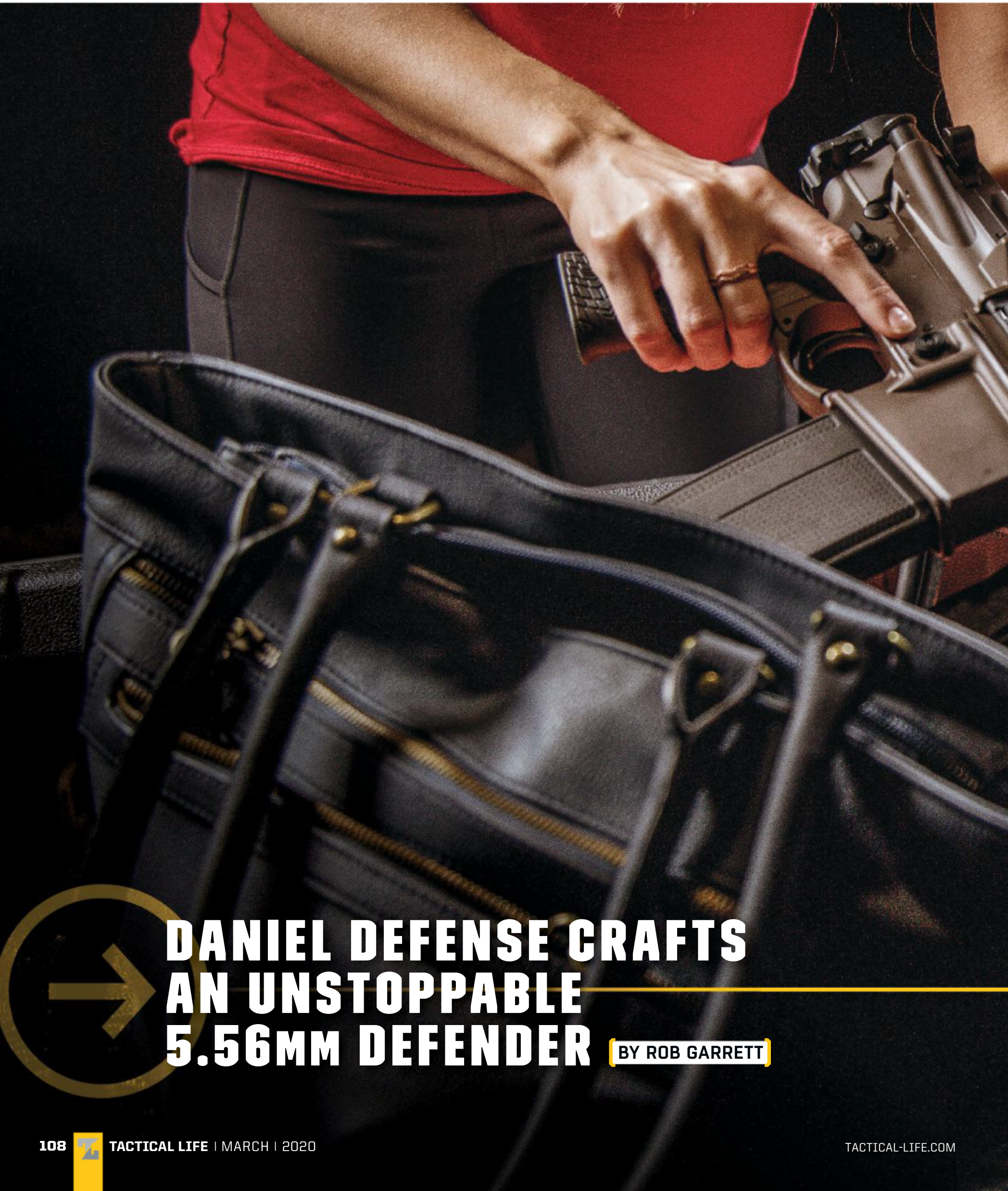


With the Trijicon RMR Type 2 installed using Nighthawk's Interchangeable Optic System, the Shadow Hawk Government proved that it has the speed and accuracy to handle multiple targets.



**I'VE TESTED AND OWNED A NUMBER OF NIGHTHAWK PISTOLS OVER THE YEARS, AND THE ALL-STAINLESS SHADOW HAWK GOVERNMENT LIVED UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS."**





# DANIEL DEFENSE CRAFTS AN UNSTOPPABLE 5.56MM DEFENDER

BY ROB GARRETT







# COMPACT CRUSADER





**F**ounded in 2001 by Marty Daniel, Daniel Defense's slogan, "Lighter, Stronger, Better," is more than just words. When Marty Daniel started the company, he had one product—a sling adapter. From there, the company expanded to produce other accessories, including a new handguard for the M4. The Rail Interface System, or RIS II, was designed to meet a specific request from the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Specifically, the RIS II allowed operators to mount an M203 grenade launcher while the barrel floated freely. After extensive testing, USSOCOM chose Daniel Defense as the sole source provider, and the MK18 carbine with the RIS II has become the standard for U.S. special operations personnel as well as other units around the world.

Over the last 18 years, the company has grown, and in 2017, Daniel Defense moved into a new 300,000-square-foot facility that allowed the company to consolidate its Black Creek, Georgia, and Ridgeland, South Carolina, locations under one roof for more seamless manufacturing and integration.

Building off the success of the MK18/RIS II system, Daniel Defense has continued to expand its line of rifles. The DDM4V7 is a follow-on to the MK18 with the major difference being the handguard. Instead of using a quad-rail system, the DDM4V7 rifles have an M-LOK forend. I first handled the DDM4V7 while visiting my friends at Telluric Group in Brunswick, Georgia, and came away with the carbine's furniture and balance. But as much as I wanted one, another SBR just wasn't in my budget. That all changed when I got to shoot the new DDM4V7 P at the 2018 Athlon Rendezvous.

## PISTOL POWER

Daniel Defense currently offers seven different brace-equipped pistol versions of its popular carbines in both 5.56mm NATO and 300 Blackout. The DDM4V7 P is essentially a pistol version of the DDM4V7 SBR with an SB Tactical SOB pistol stabilizing brace instead of a stock. This makes it ideal for those who want an SBR-sized package without having to deal with the NFA process. I found the brace to be well designed and easy to use.

The DDM4V7 P is built to the high-quality standards customers have come to expect from Daniel Defense. The upper and lower receivers are CNC-machined from 7075-T6 aluminum and feature Type III hardcoat anodizing. The 10.3-inch, cold-hammer-forged, chrome-moly barrel is made in house and comes with an improved flash suppressor. It has a 1-in-7-inch twist rate and a heavy phosphate coating. The low-profile gas block, CNC-machined from hardened 4041 steel, is paired with

### SPEC BOX

## DANIEL DEFENSE DDM4V7 P

|            |                              |
|------------|------------------------------|
| CALIBER:   | 5.56mm NATO                  |
| BARREL:    | 10.3 inches                  |
| OA LENGTH: | 20.75-30.25 inches           |
| WEIGHT:    | 6.14 pounds (empty)          |
| GRIP:      | Polymer                      |
| SIGHTS:    | None                         |
| ACTION:    | Direct impingement semi-auto |
| FINISH:    | Mil-Spec+                    |
| CAPACITY:  | 30+1                         |
| MSRP       | \$2,173                      |



The DDM4V7 P is available with an SB Tactical arm brace mounted on a Law Tactical folding adapter for the ultimate portability without sacrificing stability when it's time to shoot.





The top rail makes it easy to add optics. Also note that you must fully extend the arm brace (below) before firing the gun.



**“HAVING SEEN BEHIND THE CURTAIN, I HAD NOTHING BUT HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR THE DDM4V7 P, AND I WASN’T DISAPPOINTED.”**







a carbine-length gas system. The bolt carrier group is also manufactured to mil-spec standards and has been magnetic-particle (MP) inspected.

I tested a Mil-Spec+ variant in 5.56mm NATO with brown receivers contrasting nicely with the black controls and barrel. The lower receiver has a

flared magazine well, an ambidextrous safety, an enlarged triggerguard and Daniel Defense's unique pistol grip, which is made from glass-filled polymer with rubber overmolding. The mil-spec trigger, while not exactly match grade, averaged 7.38 pounds. The take-up was a little rough, but the break was clean.



Finally, my test model came with a Law Tactical folding brace adapter that makes the pistol easy to stow and transport. It's important to note that the firearm should not be fired with the brace in the folded position, however. Machined from 4140 steel, the adapter also features an integral sling attachment point. Thus, with the brace extended, the DDM4V7 P comes in at 30.25 inches long. Folded, the gun is only 20.75 inches long. That is a significant reduction, especially when it comes to discreet carry.

## SHOTS FIRED

Over the years, I've probably reviewed more than a dozen Daniel Defense carbines. I've also visited the company's facility several times. Having seen behind the curtain, I had nothing but high expectations for the DDM4V7 P, and I wasn't disappointed. On top of performing well, the pistol was also a lot of fun to shoot.

Since the DDM4V7 P is designed for personal defense and tactical use, I set it up with an Aimpoint Micro T-1. The Micro T-1 has a 2-MOA dot with four-night vision settings and eight daylight settings. Powered by a single CR2032 battery, the Micro T-1's power management system gives it a run time of more than 50,000 hours on a daylight setting. I mounted the Micro T-1 using a low-profile LaRue Tactical mount that works well with backup iron sights.

I zeroed the DDM4V7 P using Hornady's 55-grain FMJs. To ensure the most precise zero, I used the Aimpoint 3X-C magnifier. The 3X-C has adjustable dioptic settings that allow you to fine-tune the focus. The tactile clicks of the Aimpoint Micro T-1, combined with the precise half-MOA adjustments, made zeroing at 50 yards a breeze.

I tested the Daniel Defense AR pistol with four different loads, with bullet weights ranging from 40 to 62 grains. I also ran some of Hornady's 75-grain TAP training ammunition. Nonetheless, the DDM4V7 P ran flawlessly with all of the test loads. My initial groups at 50 yards were all under an inch wide.

That said, my astigmatic eyes have

## PERFORMANCE

### DANIEL DEFENSE DDM4V7 P

| Load                            | Velocity | Accuracy |           |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
|                                 |          | 50 Yards | 100 Yards |
| Hornady 55 GMX                  | 2,481    | 0.50     | 1.20      |
| Hornady 62 GMX                  | 2,355    | 0.63     | 1.00      |
| Hornady 75 TAP                  | 2,191    | 0.75     | 1.25      |
| Sig Sauer 40 Varmint & Predator | 2,659    | 0.63     | 0.75      |

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups.



given me problems with red-dot sights in recent years, even the excellent Micro T-1. The issue is aggravated when I use a magnifier. The longer I stay on the gun, the more distorted the dot becomes. At 50 yards, it was noticeable but not necessarily a real issue. Moving to the 100-yard line, the problem became a greater issue. I did not want my performance to reflect poorly on the pistol. By coming off the gun more often, I was able to get consistent groups with all four loads. I was surprised to find that the best group with the Sig 40-grain Varmint & Predator load measured just 0.75 inches. The other groups were between 1 and 1.25 inches. Just for fun, I then proceeded to ring plates at 100, 200 and 300 yards.

## READY TO DEFEND


The DDM4V7 P offers a lot of benefits over an SBR. First, depending on your

local and state laws, you might be able to carry the DDM4V7 P loaded in a vehicle, whereas a rifle might have to remain unloaded. You might also be able to carry it concealed in a backpack with a permit. You can also cross state lines without prior approval from the BATFE—something that isn't allowed with an SBR. These possibilities are only enhanced with the addition of the folding brace that significantly reduces the overall length for transportation.

In many cases, armed confrontations take place in low-light environments. The critical task of clearly identifying the threat can be challenging. When I set the DDM4V7 P up for home and auto defense, I wanted to keep the pistol's profile as low as possible. The first addition I added was an older SureFire X300 WeaponLight. I mounted the light on the top rail, at the 12 o'clock position. This position allows you to activate the paddle switch from either

side of the pistol—a setup favored by Larry Vickers, among others.

While at home, I tend to keep the DDM4V7 P loaded using a Daniel Defense 32-round magazine. However, carried in a case, the longer magazine can prove cumbersome. For that reason, when I'm on the road, I use a shorter 20-round PMAG. The 20-round-er's length is flush with the bottom of the pistol grip and does not change the overall profile of the DDM4V7 P.

All told, the DDM4V7 P is a great platform that is accurate, compact and feature rich. It offers the versatility of an SBR without all the BATFE regulations, not to mention some state laws. Frankly, I couldn't find anything that I didn't like about it. The more I shot it, the better the trigger got. The DDM4V7 P has become my bedside gun, and I find myself throwing it in my truck more than rifles. For more information, visit [danieldefense.com](http://danieldefense.com). 



← Paired with the right gear and plenty of ammunition, the Daniel Defense DDM4V7 P would make a formidable survival weapon.





# SPYCRAFT

## DOWN UNDER

A CLOSER LOOK AT NETFLIX'S *SECRET CITY*, A POLITICAL THRILLER SET IN MODERN AUSTRALIA

BY LEROY THOMPSON



Thankfully, the end of the Cold War didn't mark the demise of spy thrillers. *Secret City* combines a spy thriller with a political thriller—think *Homeland* with an Aussie accent. Unlike traditional spy dramas that rely on the British MI5/MI6 or CIA versus the KGB or its current incarnation, the FSB, *Secret City* takes a different tact. The series portrays the clandestine conflict between the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) and the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD)—equivalents of the CIA, FBI and NSA, respectively—versus China's Ministry of State Security

(MSS). The CIA shows up peripherally, as do the NSA and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). For spy fans, tradecraft is also sprinkled throughout, such as characters putting electronic devices in microwaves or refrigerators while discussing sensitive topics.

The action takes place primarily in Canberra, Australia's capital, where political reporter Harriet Dunkley gets ensnared in the web woven by multiple agencies. Dunkley is played by Anna Torv, an actress known to most Americans as FBI Agent Olivia Dunham in *Fringe*, who provides another compelling performance here. Though caught in various threads of conspiracy, her

character strives to unravel them, and in the process, she faces an attempted assassination and arrest by the ASIO.

### THE PLOT THICKENS

The first two seasons of *Secret City* are available on Netflix. I'll talk about them here, so obviously, spoilers ahead.

In the first six-episode season, Dunkley, while rowing one morning, chances upon the police examining a body recovered along the shore. Without admitting that she's a reporter, she takes a photo of the body with her phone. Then she discovers that the dead man was connected to Sabine Hobbs, an Australian citizen who had self-immolated in China to protest that country's treatment of





Australian special operators work closely with the Australian intelligence agencies portrayed in *Secret City*.

Australian DoD Photo



Tibet. He survives the ordeal, however, despite being severely burned, and has become a celebrity. Dunkley senses a story, but she's warned off by contacts in the Australian intelligence community.

She gets assistance from her ex-husband, Kim, a transsexual who works for the ASD. Dunkley pursues the investigation, but everyone she talks to disappears or is murdered, including her ex-husband, which hardens her resolve to probe deeper. Dunkley eventually gains an ally in Charles Dancer, an ASIO officer and Kim's former lover.

While Dunkley pursues her inquiries, we also see a power play by Catriona Bailey, the Australian attorney general. Played by Jacki Weaver, winner of numerous Australian "best actress" awards, Bailey is ruthless in her quest for power and eventually becomes the minister for home affairs with sweeping powers to surveil Australian citizens as well as foreigners. A vocal hawk and supporter of the U.S. alliance, Bailey has much to hide, but she is so sharp witted



**THE ACTION TAKES PLACE PRIMARILY IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL, WHERE POLITICAL REPORTER HARRIET DUNKLEY GETS ENSNARED IN THE WEB WOVEN BY MULTIPLE AGENCIES."**





that she remains an appealing character.

Disappearing Chinese students and the dead body that started Dunkley's quest are all linked to Hobbs and a university movement in support of Tibet. Meanwhile, a cyberattack knocks out a portion of Australia's air traffic control system for 13 minutes. Evidence points to China as having carried out the attack in response to pressure over Hobbs and dissidents, but was it really China? The Chinese are certainly involved in infiltrating the Australian government, as Weng Meigui, wife of the Chinese Ambassador and an MSS agent, is having an affair with Malcolm Paxton, the Australian defense minister. Paxton is no fan of Dunkley's, as she had previously investigated his alleged corruption, resulting in a libel suit against her newspaper.

Paxton and Bailey are political rivals, and he believes that she might have been behind the air traffic control hack, rather than the Chinese, in an attempt to gain support for her Safer Australia bill that would grant sweeping powers.

In the final episode, we learn that Dunkley's ex-husband was killed by an intelligence agent who also attempts to kill her. She survives the attempt and, despite warnings from the government, goes public with much of what she has learned. Although her dogged reporting probably helped Hobbs return to Australia, Dunkley is sent to prison.

## UNDER THE EAGLE

*Secret City* aired in 2016, followed by the second series, *Secret City: Under the Eagle*, in 2019. The latter opens with Dunkley being released from prison after serving two years. She plans to leave Canberra, but her cellmate, Mina Al Masi, is obsessed with learning the truth about an Australian mission that killed her family in Afghanistan. Masi also becomes involved in her husband's arms smuggling business. When Masi learns that Bailey was responsible for the death of her family, she vows to seek justice.

Dunkley returns to the political arena when Karen Koutoufides, an independent member of parliament, hires her as senior media advisor. As is to be expected with the *Secret City* series, multiple plot lines



emerge and eventually merge. A drone strike takes out members of the Haqqani network but kills a Pakistani general riding with them. Haqqani terrorists retaliate, attacking an Australian safe house and kidnapping a special forces soldier, who they then torture. Guns from the Australian army are being sold on the black market to Masi's husband, though it isn't clear whether he is delivering them to terrorists or criminals.

A home in Koutoufides' constituency blows up, reportedly from a gas explosion. However, Dunkley's investigation indicates it was from a drone strike. Koutoufides attempts to traverse the web of secrecy to get the truth while the government tries to hush up the affair. With an election looming that threatens the prime minister's coalition, Koutoufides, as an independent, suddenly becomes a more important player, which she uses to gain access to information.

When the government finally admits Australian citizens were killed by an armed drone, blame is placed on Pakistan's ISI, which allegedly hacked the drone in revenge for the death of the Pakistani general.

In the background, William Vaughan, director-general of the ASD and one of Dunkley's nemeses from *Secret City*, continues to monitor various players, especially his wife—an army major selling weapons to Masi's husband.


Dunkley keeps encountering Joe Sullivan, a mysterious Australian special forces lieutenant while attempting to

find the truth about the drone strike that killed the Australians citizens. She eventually meets "Cal" Treloar, the pilot of the drone that launched the missile in Australia—who, by the way, is Sullivan's wife. While Koutoufides battles the political establishment and Trebuchet, a vast military industrial player that tries to blackmail her with sex photos, Dunkley manages to track down Cal and obtain a video in which she admits to launching the drone strike on an Australian home to protest the collateral damage she had been forced to inflict in Afghanistan.

With the help of Vaughan, who has retired from the ASD, Dunkley uploads the video so the public is aware that Pakistan did not hack the Australian drone and kill Australians, thus preventing a war between the two countries.

## WORTH THE WATCH

While hopping among plot lines like a kangaroo, the two seasons of *Secret City* offer a marvelous Jumbuck stew of dueling politicians, intelligence services, governments and strong-willed individuals. The show addresses big topics like government infringement on privacy, cover-ups, the role of the press in a democracy, terrorism, drone strikes and collateral damage, the military industrial complex, the alliance between the U.S. and Australia, and much more.

As *Secret City: Under the Eagle* ends, Dunkley leaves Canberra. But I hope she'll be back for a third series. 





INTRODUCING THE ALL NEW

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Traveling to Antarctica like I did in January of 2019 is a dream come true for any adventurer, and the continent is one of the last isolated locations in the world where a change of weather can get you in real trouble in no time—even during summer.

In Antarctica, getting wet from rain or your own sweat can mean death if the temperature drops rapidly. To avoid this, you have two options: heavy, super-insulated down jackets that aren't fully waterproof but will work in ultra-low temperatures where only snow is possible, or much lighter

outer shells with membranes like Gore-Tex that will protect you from rain when it's above freezing and allow to still wear many layers underneath. I took both routes when packing for my expedition just to play it safe.

### RETRO STYLE

Growing up in the early 1970s, there were four types of rain protection: plastic or rubberized ponchos, Barbour greased jackets, Loden wool garments and, last but not least, down climbing and ski jackets. That was it.

We all know how breathable a plastic poncho is,

and a down jacket might be incredibly warm while dry but will lose most of its warmth if wet, even by your own sweat. Greased jackets were the top choice for dirt-bike racers and horseback riders for many years, and when I raced, I sweated until I was totally soaked. While the jackets' waterproofness was reasonably good, their breathability was limited; the grease barrier worked both ways. Rain did not get in, but sweat did not get out, either.

On the other hand, 100-percent wool garments have been in use by hunters and other outdoorsmen for centuries. Wool is breathable

and has natural oils that repel water. It's also an incredibly good insulator, even when wet. It's not without its problems, however, as water will eventually penetrate it. And even though wool keeps most of its warmth while wet, you still risk hypothermia if your skin is wet.

But then, in 1970, a new microporous membrane was used to produce a breathable fabric called Gore-Tex. This fabric represented a major step forward in terms of comfortable, waterproof and breathable garments. In fact, most people still call all membrane garments Gore-Tex, even though theirs

## COMPARING HIGH-PERFORMANCE SHELL JACKETS FIT FOR THE WORLD'S COLDEST CONTINENT

BY EDUARDO ABRIL DE FONTCUBERTA

# COLD BEATERS





← On top of keeping you warm, the 5.11 Tactical Approach has a RapiDraw pocket for quick CCW access if needed.



← Eberlestock's Trinity Peak jacket has exceptionally high waterproof and breathability ratings compared to competitors.

might be from a different manufacturer. So much for brand recognition.

The membrane, basically a thin film, comprises an expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) having more than 1 billion pores per square centimeter. The trick is that the pore size is around 0.2 micrometers, which is significantly smaller than a water droplet. Consequently, water can't cross the barrier. But smaller water vapor molecules are still able to escape away from the wearer's body.

Membranes come in many different types and prices, but normally you want at least three-layer fabrics for hunting and tactical applications. Three-layer (3L) fabrics have all the layers including the lining bonded together, while two-layer (2L) fabrics use a separate fabric lining, which makes for an overall bulkier garment. There is a new trend

towards 2.5L fabrics with a raised pattern screened on the inside to keep it off your skin, but these are best for superlight rain garments like the 5.11 Tactical Tac Dry Rain Shell, not for an Antarctic expedition. The latest 3L membranes feature four-way stretch capabilities and incredible breathability with a 20K waterproof rating. But what does that last number mean?

### BY THE NUMBERS

If you like to hunt in snowy mountains, you already know how critical remaining dry is to your survival. Jackets and pants with waterproof fabrics are the first step to staying dry so that you can stay focused on the hunt or whatever else you're doing, no matter how bad the weather might be.

Membrane manufacturers describe the waterproofing

and breathability of their fabrics using two numbers, like 10K or 20K. The first number, in millimeters, is a measure of how waterproof a fabric is. Essentially, a 1-by-1-inch square of 10K fabric can withstand a 10,000-millimeter (32.8-foot) column of water before it'd begin to leak through. The higher the number, the more waterproof the fabric. Those 32.8 feet might sound like a lot, but pressure from wind or rain can overcome a 10K membrane.

The second number is a measure of how breathable the fabric is and is normally expressed in terms of how many grams of water vapor can pass through a square meter of the fabric from the inside to the outside



in a 24-hour period. In the case of a 20K fabric, this would be 20,000 grams. The larger the number, the more breathable the fabric.

For hunting or tactical applications, I would recommend a minimum waterproof rating of 10K, as that will keep you dry even in a storm. Remember that breathability is as important as waterproofing, so look for outerwear with both waterproofing and breathability in the 20,000-plus range.

### ON A BUDGET?

While breathable fabrics with expanded PTFE membranes are considered the standard and have dominated the market for decades, they aren't the only option. Almost all external layers of outerwear are treated with some sort of durable water repellent (DWR) coating. The goal is not only to bypass the



need for a membrane, but also to keep the fabric from becoming saturated with water and adding weight. DWR coatings help water slide off the surface of the garment, but they can also be affected by abrasion, dirt and even sweat itself. This is why a garment will no longer appear to be waterproof after some use.

The latest coated fabrics are very waterproof but not as breathable compared to membrane-only laminates. They are indeed cheaper than membranes, however.

That said, if you want to survive in Antarctica or on your next snowy hunting trip, forget about coated fabrics altogether. But they can be great for emergency weather protection or for activities that don't involve a high level of exertion.

## PERSONAL GARB

For my trip to Antarctica, I took a heavy down Snow Mantra jacket just in case temperatures dropped below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, but the plan was to use membrane garments as much as possible to see if they'd really workd. After a lot of research, I settled on two options that



represented the perfect options for tactical/hunting membrane garments.

The first was the 5.11 Tactical Approach (\$250), a three-layer 10K/8K outer shell membrane with a tricot backer and fully taped seams. It also has 5.11 Tactical's well-known RapidDraw system for quick CCW access, but I found it very comfortable for driving, too, as the sides allowed a seated position to be much more comfortable.

I have used 5.11 Tactical jackets and pants for decades, and for me, they represent the top option if you want tactical features and performance at a reasonable price. The Approach jacket is representative of what you should buy if you

are on a budget or if you aren't sure if you need to step up to the \$500 range occupied by premium outer-shell manufacturers.

The second jacket reflected the best I could find in regards to performance and features when price is no object. With the Eberlestock Trinity Peak shell (\$429), Glen Eberle and his team placed their emphasis on two features that matter as much as waterproofing to active hunters and operators—flexibility and breathability. I loved the four-way stretch fabric, with its 20K waterproofing and record-high 40K-plus breathability. This fabric will adapt to the layers you wear underneath, keep you dry in a storm and still allow the huge amounts of sweat generated by running or climbing up a mountain to escape.

Eberlestock used a proprietary membrane and laminate fabrics for this shell. The membrane is designed to let your skin breathe but also keep the wind out. The fully taped seams, storm hood, pit zips and inner sleeve cuffs are just a few of the other features that make this weather shell superior.

I wore both shells over a Gamsfeld alpaca wool vest from Jagdhund and an Eber-



**While wool is a great choice for most outdoor activities in the winter, it's not completely waterproof and could eventually cause problems in places that get as cold as Antarctica.**

lestock Lost River jacket, so I had the layered insulation needed for every condition.

## FULL PROTECTION

I think I did fine with both fully waterproof outer shells. They reflect the best of their price ranges and performed fantastically. Of course, the Trinity Peak is a dream for any outdoorsmen, but the Approach is awesome, too. I didn't feel any heat or sweat accumulating until I started running and climbing hills with my heavy pack while wearing the 5.11 Tactical shell.

If you don't want to spend more than \$250, you can't go wrong with the Approach, as the breathability felt much better than the advertised 8K rating. If you have an unlimited budget and want the best performance, take a close look at an Eberlestock Trinity Peak. It is still priced below other premium outer shells, and its performance is second to none. I never owned a jacket with a 40K breathability rating before, and now I'm spoiled. I now know exactly what I have to wear to stay alive and comfortable in the wild. 🚀

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**5.11 TACTICAL**  
511tactical.com

**EBERLESTOCK**  
eberlestock.com



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# 8 RELIABLE RANGE BAGS

GREAT CHOICES  
FOR TOTING ALL OF  
YOUR FAVORITE  
SHOOTING STUFF

BY ZACK CARLSON



For years, I used whatever cheap range bags I could find at my local big box store. Range bags are likely items you don't really give much thought to—I know I definitely didn't. But as I grow older and wiser, I look for areas of my hobby that can be improved to make the experience better.

Attending the most recent SHOT Show gave me a glimpse of just how many options are on the market. Seeing the bags in person opened my eyes to features I had never considered. The thoughtfulness in the design became apparent. Here are eight of the best models I found that you should consider.

## 1. 5.11 TACTICAL RANGE MASTER QUALIFIER SET

The \$130 Range Master Qualifier Set from 5.11 Tactical includes a bag, a single pistol case and a medium pouch.

Measuring 12.5 by 11.5 by 9.75 inches, the Qualifier looks like a large lunch box, but it holds way more than just snacks. The molded EVA lid helps keep the bag





rigid, and the underside features a mesh pocket along with magazine storage loops for both rifle and pistol mags. The front exterior is lined with MOLLE loops to add additional storage. The end panels have handles and shoulder strap points. The exterior also has cinch straps that can be used for compression or to strap shooting mats or targets on it.

The main compartment is a simple, large, padded compartment. It is intended to store the pouches and pistol cases in whatever configuration you want. It will easily accommodate enough shooting gear for a range trip. I like leaving my universal shooting gear in the bag and then swapping in the pistol case and ammo pouches for each specific range session. (511tactical.com)

## 2. 5.11 TACTICAL RANGE MASTER DUFFLE SET

If you like the Qualifier but want more, the \$165 Duffle is for you. It's everything the Qualifier is, but there's more of it. It comes with one pistol case and small and medium pouches. Its 21.5-by-11.5-by-11.5-inch dimensions make it nearly double the length of the Qualifier. The extra space allows you to take enough gear for multiple guns in a trip. Both the Qualifier and Duffle are available in slate or Ranger green. (511tactical.com)

## 3. 5.11 TACTICAL RANGE READY

The Duffle equates to 47 liters of storage, but 5.11 Tactical also sells a Range Ready bag with 43 liters of storage space. This bag has been my go-to for a while now. It's a large bag but has a ton of compartments that allow me to leave all my shooting gear in the bag when not in use. I simply drop in the ammo, mags and pistols I need for that range trip and go. At \$100, I think it hits the sweet spot for size, features and price. (511tactical.com)

## 4. BROWNELLS SIGNATURE SERIES DELUXE

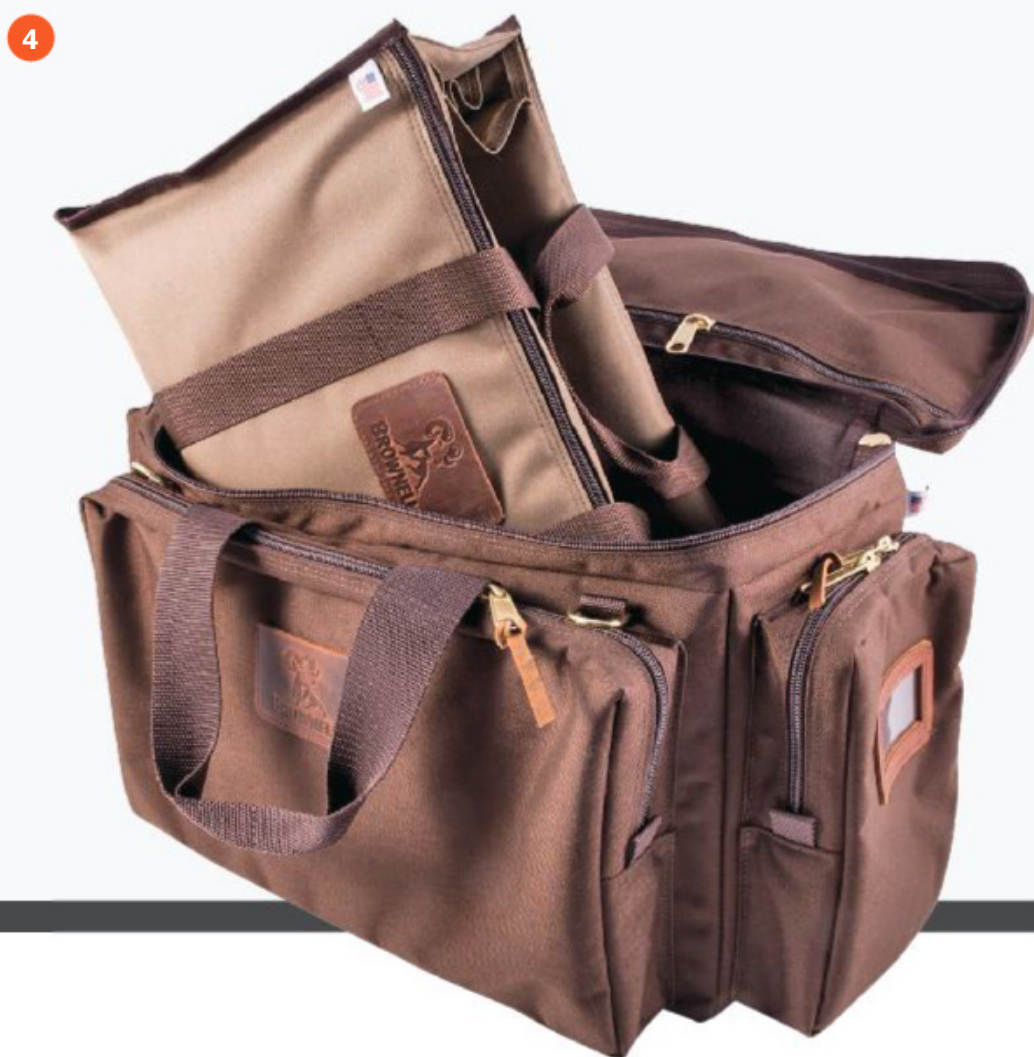
The classical styling of this bag looks good now and will in the future. It's one of the larger bags in this lineup, measuring 18 by 9 by 12 inches. The tough, brown 1,000-denier nylon contrasts nicely with the solid brass pulls on the YKK zippers. The leather straps attached to the zipper



2



3



4



5



pulls make it easy to open the multiple compartments while wearing gloves.

The nylon straps that make up the handles and strap points aren't simply sewn to the bag. Instead, they continue all the way down to encompass the bag—a simple indicator of quality. They will withstand years of overloading and tugging without ripping away.

The bag uses a “bag-in-bag” system like other models here. The outer bag features end pouches, front and lid padded pouches, and a standard pouch on the back. The inner bag is a lighter shade of tan that complements the outer bag's good looks. It's flanked by two full-length zippered compartments that hold padded pistol cases. The interior also has a Velcro divider wall to separate belongings. The short ends each have organizational dividers to keep your smaller items sorted. At an MSRP of \$250, this bag would accompany you on range trips for decades. (brownells.com)

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## 5. EBERLESTOCK R1 BANG-BANG

Eberlestock's hunting pack roots show through in this bag. Its overall size is 22 by 12 by 10 inches. Like the Brownells bag, the R1 Bang-Bang is made from 1,000-denier nylon. It also features a polycarbonate base, which makes it impenetrable to wet ground, rocks or dust. It also opens to reveal a tray for storing delicate items. I found it perfect for keeping paper targets flat and dry.

The cinch straps allow you to attach extra gun cases or shooting mats to the exterior of the R1 Bang-Bang. The MOLLE loops on the exterior are ideal for small pouches or medical kits. The zipper pulls have a hard rubber coating that keeps them open, allowing your fingers to quickly find their home.

The end compartments mirror each other and feature magazine pouches and free space. The main compartment is large and contains Velcro divider panels. Eberlestock also provides enough dividers to satisfy the most demanding customer. The R1 Bang-Bang is available in black, blue, red and tan. This isn't an overt gun bag, either, and can be used for photography, medical and other outdoor uses. At \$179, it will appeal to multiple markets. (eberlestock.com)

7





## 6. ELITE SURVIVAL SYSTEMS LOADOUT

While this is one of the more compact options, don't let the smaller proportions of the Elite Survival Systems (ESS) Loadout range bag fool you. It measures 17 by 10 by 11 inches and can fold out on multiple sides to create work surfaces. It also has generous laser-cut MOLLE slots to attach additional pouches, expanding its capacity further.

The bottom features two hard plastic luggage rails that keep the Loadout bag stiff and elevate it off the ground. Like the Brownells bag, the Loadout uses a bag-in-bag philosophy. Both bags are made from 1,050-denier nylon. The outer bag is available in black or tan. The handles run down the circumference of the bags for strength. The front and side foldout padded compartments are lined with Velcro. ESS includes mating Velcro panels that have multiple organization configurations, allowing you to make the bag work for your needs. The end panel has an integrated water bottle holder, and next to that is a section of MOLLE webbing. ESS also includes a folding dump pouch, which I've found useful for my battle belt setup.

The main compartment unzips on the top and side, giving you more visibility inside while also creating a long panel to use as a work surface. The main compartment is lined with Velcro, which holds the included padded handgun sleeves. I'm able to easily store four handguns here—more if storing two per sleeve. The interior ends also have sleeves for storage. The heavily padded interior bag has two Velcro dividers. With a retail price of \$160, the Loadout provides a ton of versatility for the money. (elitesurvival.com)

## 7. GREY GHOST GEAR RANGE BAG

Some might accuse this bag of being too small, but they probably haven't seen all the nooks and crannies otherwise unused on larger bags. At \$175, this Grey Ghost Gear bag is available in coyote, black or gray. At 20 by 7 by 9 inches, this is the smallest bag of the bunch, but it is also the easiest to lug around. The 500-denier nylon construction almost makes it feel like a commuter



bag, but its key area reinforcements ensure it is tough enough for range duty.

The large zippered front compartment folds down to expose seven magazine loops and a rugged vinyl work surface, which has a clever enclosed magnetized area along with two zippered corner mesh pockets. Anyone who's ever tried to work on a pistol while at the range will appreciate these add-ons. The pockets can hold small parts or tools, and the magnet will ensure they stay put when working.


The two end pockets are simply large, open, non-padded compartments. The back panel has a flap pocket that can retain a gun rug to store your pistol on the outside. It also has two zippered pockets for other gear. Open the main compartment and you'll see a mesh pocket lining the complete underside of the lid. The inside is lined with Velcro and has a movable divider wall along with a Velcro drawstring dump pouch.

The unsung hero is the anti-slip material on the generous shoulder strap. The material clings to your shoulder so you don't have to worry about it slipping off while your hands are full of

other gear. The same anti-slip material runs along the bottom of the bag. (greyghostgear.com)

## 8. SAFARILAND MODEL 4555

While this bag is aimed squarely at competition shooters, its \$78 retail price allows you to spend less on the bag and more on its contents. With overall dimensions of 23 by 11 by 10 inches, it's not too bulky to carry from stage to stage. None of the three exterior pockets are padded, nor do they have Velcro lining, but they are large and functional. The inner bag features zippered, padded sleeves to house at least four pistols. The zippers for the pistol sleeves have loops for padlocks to be installed for extra security.

Between the pistol sleeves is an open compartment to hold your ammunition and miscellaneous gear. It also has built-in mag pouches. The Model 4555 is currently only available in black. While it doesn't have some of the features that the other bags discussed here do, it's fully functional at a very attractive price point. (safariland.com) 





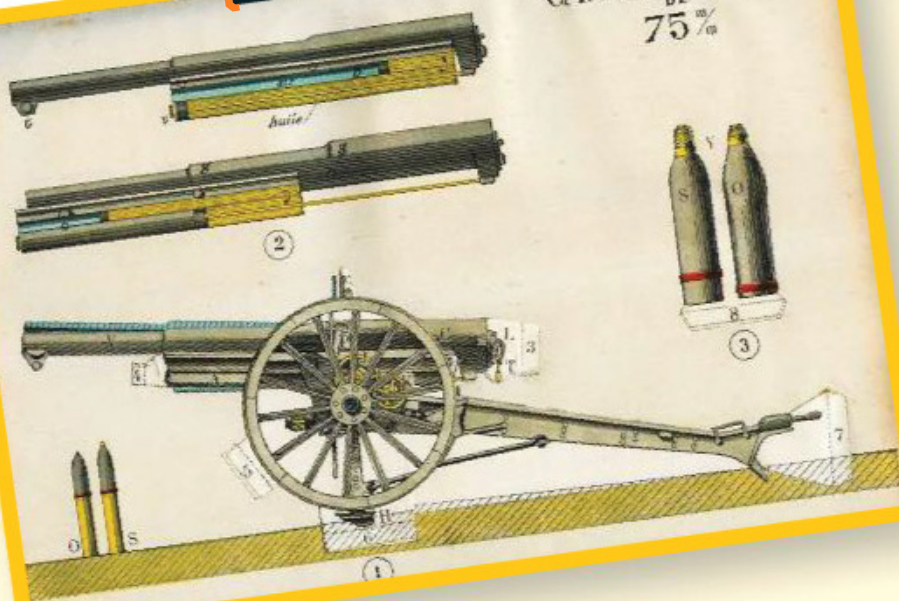
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# QUITE THE KICK

HOW TO MAKE A CLASSIC COCKTAIL NAMED AFTER A FAMOUS FRENCH ARTILLERY PIECE

BY T. LOGAN METESH

CANON FRANÇAIS  
DE  
75 mm



Did you know that the cocktail known as the French 75

is named after an artillery piece from World War I that could fire up to 15 rounds per minute? We'll get to that in a minute, but the drink gained popularity during the height of Prohibition and has been featured in films alongside silver screen legends Humphrey Bogart and John Wayne. Let's take a look at the history of the artillery and the alcohol, then mix up a cocktail at the end.

## THE ARTILLERY

The 75mm field artillery piece known colloquially as the "French 75" was invented in

1897 by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph-Albert Deport and adopted by the French military in 1898. Its design was revolutionary, taking advantage of recent advancements in weapons technology. The gun was the first to be equipped on a large scale with a hydro-pneumatic recoil mechanism that kept the gun's wheels and carriage stationary while the main gun tube moved to absorb the resulting recoil, eliminating the need to sight in after each shot. This meant that it could fire much more rapidly than its predecessors—up to 15 rounds per minute.

Lobbing shells that weighed between 12 and 16 pounds, the 75mm field



artillery piece had an effective range of 8,500 to 11,000 meters depending on the type of shell.

When World War I began in 1914, France had 4,000 of these 75mm artillery pieces. By the time the war ended in 1918, it had 21,000. In fact, it was such an effective weapon in the field that the American Expeditionary Forces even used it during the war.

But by World War II, the French 75 was obsolete. Nonetheless, it continued to serve in a variety of defensive capacities in France and even saw service with British, German, Polish, Hungarian and Romanian forces.

Today, the 75mm artillery piece still serves a role in France, albeit a much more peaceful one: It is used as a saluting cannon during official state ceremonies.



**THE FRENCH 75 COCKTAIL HAS VARIED OVER THE YEARS, BUT TODAY'S MOST COMMON RECIPE HOLDS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY ONE BORN IN AMERICA DURING PROHIBITION."**

## THE ALCOHOL

The French 75 cocktail has varied over the years, but today's most common recipe holds the distinction of being the only one born in America during Prohibition. When, exactly, the drink was created has been a subject of conjecture for more than 100 years. In fact, exactly who made it first is uncertain as well. Some say soldiers came up with it in the trenches during WWI. Others claim a bartender in London created it by modifying a Tom Collins.

We may never know when or by whom the drink was created, but common mixology lore says Harry MacElhone of Harry's New York Bar in Paris, France, created the drink.

Harry may have been making a variation of it as early as 1915. He was certainly making it not long after the war ended in 1918. MacElhone's version of the cocktail was known simply as "The 75,"

since its locale was obvious to those living and drinking at his Parisian bar.

The cocktail as we know it today first emerged in 1927, but it wasn't until 1930 when it was printed in the *Savoy Cocktail Book* in the United States that the ingredients had standardized and the modern "French 75" had truly arrived.

The drink's popularity grew, and Hollywood embraced the drink over the coming decades. Inclusion in *Casablanca* (1942) and two John Wayne films—*A Man Betrayed* (1941) and *Jet Pilot* (1957)—put the cocktail in front of millions of movie-going Americans. By the 1960s, the French 75 was here to stay.

## MIXING IT UP

Like all cocktails, everyone has their own specific way of making it. The recipe listed here comes from David Wondrich, an internationally

recognized expert on cocktails and their history who has perfected the drink to his exacting standards.

Some people add lemon peel for garnish. Some use cognac or brandy instead of gin. Others, still, serve it neat in a champagne flute. Regardless of how you choose to make it, one thing is for certain—the drink packs a punch.

## INGREDIENTS:

- ½ ounce lemon juice
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 2 ounces London dry gin or cognac
- cracked ice
- champagne, chilled
- Collins glass

Add the lemon juice and sugar to a shaker, and stir them to combine. Then add the gin and fill the shaker with ice. Shake and strain the mixture into a Tom Collins glass filled with cracked ice, then slowly fill the glass with champagne. *Voilà!* 🍹



# ANNA RISING

**ANNA PAULINA LUNA IS READY TO TAKE ON CONGRESS AND MORE FOR OUR 2A RIGHTS**

JESSE WALKER/STUDIO ONE ORLANDO PHOTO



It's no secret that smart and fearless women are the fastest-growing demographic among gun owners. The same can be said for women entering the rough-and-tumble world of politics, and women fighting hard to maintain our Second Amendment rights. Dozens of national and local groups of all-female "2A" advocates are letting their voices be heard loudly and proudly.

We prepared this issue of *Tactical Life* alongside the February/March 2020 issue of *Ballistic*, featuring the young firebrand Anna Paulina Luna. She is currently running for election to the U.S. House of Representatives for Florida's 13th Congressional District. In a world of fake news, false promises and well-trained politicians, Luna is a breath of fresh air. As author Karen Hunter put it, "We live in a nation where we're clinging to freedom instead of celebrating it, because, one by one, our rights are being diminished. We need a voice that won't hesitate to speak up and take action, a voice that will fight to preserve this nation, our freedoms and the truth it was founded upon."

Hunter continued, "Patriots still exist today—they're just not always what we stereotypically expect. Anna...is a fiery powerhouse ready to take on anyone that threatens the freedoms of our nation. With the truth of the Constitution etched in her soul and more experience than most of us could obtain in multiple lifetimes, Anna is a force to be reckoned with. On the rise and ready to make her mark in history, this is someone you'll want to know."

Here she's shown holding a 16-inch-barreled Blackbird Armament precision rifle in 6.5 Grendel with a custom Cerakote finish. You won't want to miss our exclusive on Anna in the February/March 2020 issue of *Ballistic*, and head to [ballistic-mag.com](http://ballistic-mag.com) for a video interview with her. The

issue also has a ton more in store, too, including another awesome Blackbird Armament build. You can order your copy or subscribe to *Ballistic* today at [outdoorgroupstore.com](http://outdoorgroupstore.com). And for more on Anna, visit [voteannapaulina.com](http://voteannapaulina.com). She's also on Instagram and Facebook: @realannapaulina.



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